

# Perichoresis

THE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL OF  
EMANUEL UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA

VOLUME 6  
ISSUE 1  
2008



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THE PRICE OF AN ISSUE IS EUR 20, including postage and handling charge.

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# The Controversy between Westphal and Calvin on Infant Baptism, 1555-1556

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**ABSTRACT.** This essay aims to fill a lacuna in the historiography of the Second Eucharistic Controversy in the wake of the Zurich-Genevan *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549). It focuses on the polemics on infant baptism between John Calvin and Joachim Westphal from Hamburg by offering a reasoned survey of the various positions, as well as a critical edition of Westphal's main texts on this matter plus an English translation. The Lutheran's main concern was to maintain sacramental objectivity. Considering Calvin's views to be a depreciation of the sacrament, he attacked the Reformed practice not to baptise dying infants and making the effectiveness of the sacrament dependent on eternal election. Westphal emphasized the inextricable bond within baptism between promise and element, plus the instrumentality of the two. His diagnosis of a spiritualising tendency in Calvin was not unfounded, as the *Consensus* was suffused with the spirit of Heinrich Bullinger. In turn, Calvin's impassioned rejection of the Lutheran view of the *necessitas baptismi* as *sacramentum regenerationis* introduced an imbalance in his sacramentology that shows that his ideas about baptism were more Zwinglian than those on the eucharist. His baptismal theology suffers from a tension between certainty and liberty, between the objectivity of the offer of salvation and the liberty God possesses in his elective grace. Westphal emphasized especially the first aspect, Calvin at the same time also the second.

**KEYWORDS:** Joachim Westphal (1510-1574); John Calvin (1509-1564); infant baptism; predestination; *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549).

## Introduction

In sixteenth-century Europe, agreement on the doctrine of the sacrament was a *conditio sine qua non* for ecclesiastical and political unity. Sacramentology was the prism or crystallization po-

int in which the lines of christology, views on the trinity, pneumatology, and ecclesiology met. This explains why it was especially this focal point of sixteenth-century theology where Protestants tried to find common ground, or attack each other.<sup>1</sup>

John Calvin (1509-1564)—“Luther’s greatest student”<sup>2</sup>—was one of those who for church-political considerations tried to bridge the deep chasm between Lutherans and Zwinglians. To this end, Calvin concluded the *Zurich agreement on the Lord’s Supper* (*Consensus Tigurinus*, published in 1551) with Huldrych Zwingli’s successor Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich in 1549.<sup>3</sup> Calvin’s attempt to convince the German church in this way that the Swiss were no “sacramentarians” failed completely, and in fact had an opposite effect. The orthodox Lutheran Joachim West-

<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the International Academic Seminar for Calvin Studies of the Korea Calvin Society and the Korean Institute for Reformed Studies, Kosin University, Busan, South Korea, 24th August, 2007. A Dutch version of the article—including a critical edition and translation of texts of John Calvin—has been published in *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum: Luther en Calvijn in hun schriftvoertaan*, ed. Wim Balke, Sabine Hiebsch, and Wim Janse (Kampen: Kok, 2007), 120-167.

<sup>2</sup> The soubriquet is Peter Meinhold’s (1964); see Willem van ‘t Spijker, *Luther en Calvijn. De invloed van Luther op Calvijn blijkens de Institutie* (Kampen: Kok, 1985), 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Consensio mutua in re sacramentaria ministrorum Tigurinae ecclesiae, et D. Ioannis Calvini ministri Genevensis ecclesiae, iam nunc ab ipsis authoribus edita* (Tiguri: Ex officina Rodolphi Vuissenbachij, [1551]), in CO 7,733-748; OS 2,246-258, hereafter quoted as: *Consensio*; the Genevan edition: *Ex officina Ioannis Crispini*, 1551. In the same year, a French and a German translation appeared: *L’accord passé et conclud touchant la matiere des sacremens entre les ministres de l’Eglise de Zurich, & maistre Jehan Caluin ministre de l’Eglise de Geneue* (Geneve: Jean Crispin, 1551); *Einhälligkeit der Dienern der Kilchen zu Zürich vnd Herren Ioannis Caluinj dieners der Kilchen zu Genff deren sy sich im handel der heyligen Sacramenten gägen andern erklärt vnd vereinbared habend* (Zürich: Rudolf Wysesbach, 1551). For the *Consensio*, see Ulrich Gäbler, “Consensus Tigurinus,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 8 (1981), 189-192; Paul Rorem, *Calvin and Bullinger on the Lord’s Supper* (Alcuin/Grow Liturgical Study 12) (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books Limited, 1989).

phal from Hamburg (1510-1574)<sup>4</sup> opened the attack on the *Consensus* with three booklets in 1552, 1553, and the beginning of 1555. Calvin replied with three publications, which in turn evoked four reactions and some tracts from Westphal (1555-1558).

The main publications were, in chronological order:

- Ioachimus Westphalus, *Farrago confusaneorum et inter se dissidentium opinionum De Coena Domini, ex Sacramentariorum libris congesta*, Magdeburgi 1552 (VD 16, W 2287);
- Westphalus, *Recta fides de Coena Domini, ex verbis Apostoli Pauli, et Evangelistarum demonstrata ac communita*, Magdeburgae 1553 (VD 16, W 2308);
- Westphalus, *Collectanea sententiarum divi Aurelii Augustini Episcopi Hipponensis de Coena Domini. Addita est confutatio vindicans a corruptelis plerosque locos, quos pro se ex Augustino falso citant Sacramentarii*, Ratisbonae 1555 (VD 16, A 4170);
- Iohannis Calvinus, *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de sacramentis, eorumque natura, vi, fine, usu, et fructu, quam pastores et ministri Tigurinae ecclesiae et Genevensis antehac brevi consensionis mutuae formula complexi sunt, una cum refutatione probrorum quibus eam indocti et clamosi homines infamant*, [Genevae] 1555 (*Bibliotheca Calviniana* 55/6) (hereafter cited as BC), in: CO 9,1-40 and OS 2,259-287, hereafter cited as: Calvin, *Defensio* (1555);
- Westphalus, *Adversus cuiusdam Sacramentarii falsam criminationem, iusta defensio*, Francoforti 1555 (VD 16, W 2260), hereafter cited as: Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555);
- Calvinus, *Secunda defensio pia et orthodoxae de sacramentis fidei, contra Ioachimi Westphali calumnias*, [Genevae] 1556 (BC 56/4), in: CO 9,41-120, hereafter cited as: Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556);

<sup>4</sup> See on him Irene Dingel, "Westphal, Joachim," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 35 (2003), 712-715; Wim Janse, "Joachim Westphal's Sacramentology," in *Lutheran Quarterly* 22 (2008) (in press).

- Westphalus, *Confessio fidei de Eucharistiae Sacramento, in qua Ministri Ecclesiarum Saxoniae solidis Argumentis sacrarum Litterarum astruunt Corporis et Sanguinis Domini nostri Iesu Christi, praesentiam in Coena sancta, et de libro Ioannis Calvini ipsis dedicato respondent*, Magdeburgae 1557 (VD 16, W 2274);
- Calvinus, *Ultima admonitio Ioannis Calvini, ad Ioachimum Westphalum, cui nisi obtemperet, eo loco posthac habendus erit, quo pertinaces haereticos haberi iubet Paulus, refutantur etiam hoc scripto superbae Magdeburgensium et aliorum censurae, quibus caelum et terram obruere conati sunt*, Genevae 1557 (BC 57/11), in: CO 9,137-252;
- Westphalus, *Confutatio aliquot enormium mendaciorum Ioannis Calvini, secuturae Apologiae adversus eius furores praemissa*, Ursellis 1558 (VD 16, W 2278);
- Westphalus, *Apologia confessionis de Coena Domini, contra corruptelas et calumnias Ioannis Calvini*, Ursellis 1558 (VD 16, W 2264), hereafter cited as: Westphal, *Apologia confessionis* (1558).<sup>5</sup>

Others joined the fray; Westphal, for instance, received support from Johann Timann in Bremen, Erhard Schnepff in Jena, and Johann Brenz from Württemberg; Calvin found partisans in Bullinger, Bernardino Ochino from Zurich, and his Genevan colleague Theodore Beza. After Westphal had stopped his contributions, the militant Tilemann Heshusius (1527-1588), from the Lutheran camp, managed to get one more reaction out of Calvin.<sup>6</sup> The controversy between Westphal and Heshusius on

<sup>5</sup> For a brief sketch of the context, see Wulfert de Greef, *Johannes Calvijn: zijn werk en geschriften* (Kampen: Kok, 2006<sup>2</sup>), 248-253; a second edition of Lyle D. Bierma's English translation of this work (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, [1994]) will be published in 2009 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press). See also Richard C. Gamble, "Calvin's controversies," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 188-203, there 193-196.

<sup>6</sup> Tilemannus Heshusius, *De praesentia corporis Christi in Coena Domini Contra Sacramentarios* (Ihenae: Donat Richtzenhan, 1560) (VD 16, H 3103). Calvin replied with *Dilucida explicatio sanae doctrinae de vera participatione carnis et sangu-*



the one hand and Calvin on the other eventually included dozens of authors waging battle with each other. This conflict is known as the “second eucharistic controversy,” with repercussions reaching as far as Poland. It represents a wide spectrum of sixteenth-century Reformed and Lutheran theology, and offers a vital gateway into the Reformed and Lutheran confessionalization processes of the seventeenth century. A complete history of this second eucharistic controversy is yet to be written.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the core of the conflict, the polemic between Westphal and Calvin, four points stand out. In the first place, the literature on this subject is strikingly modest<sup>8</sup>: its extent is in

*inis Christi in Sacra Coena, ad discutiendas Heshusii nebulas* (Genevae: Conradus Badius, 1561) (BC 61/11), in CO 9,457-517. See on this topic David C. Steinmetz, “Calvin and His Lutheran Critics,” in *The Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1990), 179-194, and in id., *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 172-186 (contrary to what might be deduced from the plural form in the title, Steinmetz limits himself to only one of Calvin’s Lutheran critics, i.e., Heshusius); Thilo Krüger, *Empfangene Allmacht. Die Christologie Tilemann Heshusens (1527-1588)* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 87) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 68-96, 154-163; Wim Janse, “Calvin, a Lasco und Beza: Eine gemeinsame Abendmahlserklärung (Mai 1556)? Bericht eines Forschungsseminars mit offenem Ausgang,” in *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae. Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research, Princeton, August 20-24, 2002*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Genève: Droz, 2004), 209-231. For Calvin’s relations with the Lutherans after the *Consensus Tigurinus*, see Willem Nijenhuis, *Calvinus oecumenicus. Calvijn en de eenheid der kerk in het licht van zijn briefwisseling* (’s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1958), 154-199.

<sup>7</sup> The best overview is Wilhelm H. Neuser, “Der zweite Abendmahlsstreit,” in *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte* 2, ed. Carl Andresen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 272-285.

<sup>8</sup> See J.H. August Ebrard, “Calvin und Westfal,” in id., *Das Dogma vom heiligen Abendmahl und seine Geschichte* 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Zimmer, 1845), 525-574; Carl Mönckeberg, *Joachim Westphal und Johannes Calvin* (Galerie hamburgischer Theologen 4) (Hamburg: Nolte, 1865); Joannes T.A. Nieter, *De controversia, quae de coena sacra inter Westphalum et Calvinum fuit, dijudicatio* (Berolini: Lange, [1872]); Ernest Lengereau, *Théorie de Calvin sur la Cène d’après ses controverses avec Joachim Westphal et Tilemann Heshusius* (Toulouse: Chauvin, 1896); Wilhelm Niesel, *Calvins Lehre vom Abendmahl im Lichte seiner letzten Antwort an Westphal* (München: Kaiser, 1930); G. Bouwmeester, “Calvijn contra Westphal over den Doop,” in *Bezinning. Gereformeerd maandblad tot*

inverse proportion to that of the polemic itself. Secondly, the major part of this literature suffers from a confessional bias. The order in which the names of both polemicists are given in the titles of the contributions already shows whether one has to do with a study from a Lutheran ("Westphal and Calvin") or—which is more often the case—a Reformed perspective ("Calvin and Westphal"). Incidentally, it is suggestive that in the more recent literature on the eucharistic controversy discussed here Calvin receives more attention than Westphal, although the latter opened and concluded the hostilities, and devoted the most pages to it. Thirdly, and here, too, Calvin's prominent place is remarkable, Westphal's and Heshusen's writings have until now never been translated or re-published, whereas already in the sixteenth century a French translation appeared of Calvin's side of the polemics, which were carried out in Latin.<sup>9</sup> A nineteenth-century English translation has been reprinted as recently as 2002<sup>10</sup> and is available on the Internet.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, a

*bewaring en bevordering van het christelijk leven* 2 (1947), 130-137, 165-169; Joseph N. Tylenda, "The Calvin-Westphal Exchange: The Genesis of Calvin's Treatises against Westphal," in *Calvin Theological Journal* 9 (1974), 182-209, adapted and summarized as: "Calvin and Westphal: Two Eucharistic Theologies in Conflict," in *Calvin's Books: Festschrift dedicated to Peter de Klerk on the occasion of his seventieth birthday*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser et al. (Heerenveen: Groen, 1997), 9-21; Bernard Cottret, "Pour une sémiotique de la Réforme: Le 'Consensus Tigurinus' (1549) et la 'Brève résolution...' (1555) de Calvin," in *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 39 (1984), 265-285.

<sup>9</sup> In *Recueil des opuscules, c'est à dire, Petits traictez de M. Iean Calvin. Les uns reueus et corrigez sur le latin, les autres translatez nouvellement de latin en françois* (Geneve: Baptiste Pinereul, 1566) (BC 66/3), 1469-1759; also on CD-ROM (Genève: Droz, 2003). Calvin's translation of his *Defensio* (1555), the *Brieve resolution sur les disputes (...) quant aux sacrements* (Geneve: Conrad Badius, 1555) (BC 55/2), also appeared in *Calvin, homme d'Église. Oeuvres choisies du réformateur et documents sur les Églises réformées du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Genève: Labor, 1971<sup>2</sup>), 143-191.

<sup>10</sup> In *Treatises on the sacraments, Catechism of the Church of Geneva, Forms of prayer, and Confessions of faith. Tracts by John Calvin*. Translated from the original Latin and French by Henry Beveridge (Fearn/Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Focus Publications/Reformation Heritage Books, 2002) (also: Eugene, OR:

modern critical edition of Calvin's polemic with the Lutherans is in preparation.<sup>12</sup> Finally, what has more or less disappeared from view is the fact that Westphal, in his paper war with Calvin, not only denounced the latter's eucharistic theology, but also attacked the abolition of the extreme unction,<sup>13</sup> then abolition of the private absolution<sup>14</sup> and that of the church year and its pericope roster,<sup>15</sup> and moreover also attacked the Reformed

Wipf and Stock, 2002), 199-579. This edition is an unaltered reprint of the second volume (1849) of *Calvin's Tracts and Treatises*. Translated from the original Latin and French by Henry Beveridge, 1-3 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing Co., 1844-1851) (unaltered reprints: 1958, 1985, 2002) (hereafter abbreviated as *TT* 2); this last work also appeared as volumes 1, 2 and 3 of the *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, 1-7 (Grand Rapids, MI, 1983). Another translation is that by John K.S. Reid, *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (The Library of Christian Classics 22) (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, [1977], which is a reprint of the London/Philadelphia [1954] edition). A Hungarian translation is: Czeglédy Sándor, *Kálvin János kisebb muvei a rendszeres theológia köréből* (Pápa: Magyar Református Egyház, 1912). Cf. also Mihály Bihary, *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Calvins Werke und ihre Übersetzungen. Calvin's works and their translations, 1850-1997* (Prague: M. Bihary, 2000<sup>3</sup>), 1.3.3.25, 1.3.3.31, 1.3.3.32, 1.3.3.34, 1.3.3.38, 1.3.3.42, 1.3.3.43.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.godrules.net/library/calvin/calvin.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> To appear in *COR* IV (*Scripta didactica et polemica*) (Genève: Droz); a part of it—*Optima ineundae concordiae ratio, si extra contentionem quaeratur veritas* from 1561, an appendix to Calvin's *Dilucida explicatio* against Heshusius (see n. 6 above)—was already published in Janse, "Calvin, a Lasco und Beza" (see n. 6 above), 225-231.

<sup>13</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 105-106. Calvin's reply: *Secunda defensio* (1556), 129-130, in *CO* 9,102 (cf. *TT* 2,320-321). Westphal's rejoinder: *Apologia confessionis* (1558), 361-373. Although Calvin defended the abolition of the extreme unction against Westphal, he personally professed himself warmly in favour of this sacrament; see his letter to Venceslas Zeuleger of 29th August 1558, in *CO* 17,311-312, and that to Caspar Olevianus, 1st December 1563, in *CO* 20,200-201.

<sup>14</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 106. Calvin's reply: *Secunda defensio* (1556), 130-131, in *CO* 9,102-103 (cf. *TT* 2,321). Westphal's rejoinder: *Apologia confessionis* (1558), 373-389.

<sup>15</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 106. Calvin's reply: *Secunda defensio* (1556), 133-135, in *CO* 9,103-104 (cf. *TT* 2,322-324). Westphal's rejoinder: *Apologia confessionis* (1558), 401-427. See on this last point Herwarth von Schade, "Das

numbering of the Decalogue,<sup>16</sup> and especially Calvin's views on infant baptism.<sup>17</sup>

My contribution here aims at briefly highlighting this last issue and offers, in order, a survey of and commentary on the various positions; a critical, unannotated edition of Westphal's main texts on this matter;<sup>18</sup> plus an annotated English translation. For Calvin's text the reader is referred to the existing editions.<sup>19</sup>

fünfte Verbrechen. Joachim Westphal, Johannes Calvin und die Perikopenfrage im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 22 (1978), 124-129 (Westphal's rejoinder to Calvin's reply has escaped Schade's attention). Westphal based his criticism of the extreme unction, the private absolution, the church year, the pericopes, and the numbering of the Ten Words mainly on complaints made in March 1555 by the Lutheran minister Martin Fabri from Hage (East Friesland), about the habits of Reformed fugitives who had found shelter in East Friesland in 1554. This means that for his criticism Westphal did not take his cue from Geneva; moreover, Calvin himself had not raised the points in question. This explains the unexpected character of Westphal's attack.

<sup>16</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 106. Calvin's reply: *Secunda defensio* (1556), 131-132, in CO 9,103 (cf. TT 2,322). Westphal's rejoinder: *Apologia confessionis* (1558), 389-401.

<sup>17</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 105, 130-139. Calvin's reply: *Secunda defensio* (1556), 127-129, 157-172, in CO 9,101-102, 114-120 (cf. TT 2,319-320, 336-345). Westphal's rejoinder: *Apologia confessionis* (1558), 349-361. For an edition of the texts on baptism from Westphal's *Iusta defensio*, together with an English translation, see below. Westphal's rejoinder from 1558 has not been included there, as it does not add any relevant new insights, and the edition and translation would have taken this paper beyond the set maximum number of pages. Calvin summarized Westphal's objections as follows, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 135-136, in CO 9,104-105 (cf. TT 2,324): "Nam quia dixeram facem discordiarum malis auspiciis nunc ab eo esse accensam, unum hoc reperit defensionis genus, faces et Erymnas esse quicunque templa sua idolis non decorant, quibus baptismus promissionis est appendix, et confirmandae gratiae subsidium, non autem salutis causa, qui absolutionis formam cuiusque auribus non insusurrant, qui non feriantur in Sanctorum honorem, et in lectionum fragmentis Missale non sequuntur."

<sup>18</sup> Westphal's text has not been published in a critical edition before.

<sup>19</sup> See n. 10 above.

### Westphal's position

Westphal's and, to a lesser extent, Calvin's views on baptism are "capsules" which contain their sacramentology and eucharistic theology in concentrated form. In the debate analyzed here, both *a fortiori* argued from sacramentology: "What forbids the application of this to baptism?," Calvin could ask.<sup>20</sup> Westphal's main concern in his philippics against Calvin's *Consensus* with the Zurich church was to maintain the objectivity of the gift of the sacrament. This placed him in the line of Martin Luther, who did want to feel and probe Christ with the tongue, and spoke of "Divine water" in order not to have to miss the consolation of God's real presence,<sup>21</sup> but who at the same time justly noted that with Zwingli the sacraments lacked the gift character. Westphal saw sacramental objectivity as implied in the connection between sacrament and promise. He feared an evaporation of the sacramental gift, because Bullinger and Calvin in the *Consensus* seemed to attach more importance to Word and faith than to the elements, the sacrament, and the administering of it. In Article 19, for instance, they declared that outside the sacrament, too, the faithful may receive the reality figured there.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See for instance Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 158, in CO 9,114 (cf. TT 2,336).

<sup>21</sup> Martin Luther, *Auslegung des dritten und vierten Kapitels Johannis in Predigten 1538-1540*, 38. Predigt (over Joh. 3: 22), in WA 47,138.39-139.2: "Also hatt ehr (...) uns gegeben die Tauffe, das Sacrament des altars, die absolution, auff das wir Christum auff's allerneheste hetten, nicht allein im hertzen, sondern auch auff der Zunge, das wir ihnen können fhulen, greiffen und tapen." Id., *Deudsch Catechismus (Der Große Katechismus)* (1529), in WA 30 I,213.31 and 214.10-11: "(...) ein Gottes wasser (...)." "Darümb ist es nicht allein ein natürlich wasser sondern ein Götlich, hymlich, heilig und selig wasser, und wie mans mehr loben kan (...)."

<sup>22</sup> *Consensio*, art. 19, in CO 7,741; OS 2,251.15-16 (cf. TT 2,218): "(...) ita extra eorum [scil. sacramentorum] usum fidelibus constat quae illic figuratur veritas." In Heiko A. Oberman's famous essay "The 'extra' dimension in the theology of Calvin" (among other places in id., *The dawn of the reformation: Essays in late medieval and early reformation thought* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1986; re-

Consequently, regarding the Lord's Supper Westphal emphasized the real, substantial presence of Christ's body and blood in the elements, by the force of the consecration words, and reproached the authors of the *Consensus* with a Zwinglian emptying of the signs of bread and wine.<sup>23</sup> Calvin, in turn, in his defence of the *Consensus*, rejected the doctrine of Christ's physical presence and ubiquity, and the *manducatio oralis et impiorum* (the reception of Christ's body and blood by the mouth by the godless) arising from it. Instead, he proposed the spiritual presence of Christ's actual person and work, effectuated by Word and Spirit for the faithful, who by the work of the Spirit in the eucharist participate in the substance of Christ's body.<sup>24</sup>

pr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 234-258) the "etiam extra usum" of the sacraments is not mentioned.

<sup>23</sup> See for instance Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 46: "Sacramentarii in pane et calice nihil praeter vacua symbola relinquunt. (...) Excogitati sunt tropi, alter in verbo Est pro significat, alter in vocabulo Corporis pro figura seu symbolo; ut statueretur non praesentia sed absentia corporis et sanguinis Christi, detortae sunt multae scripturae (...)." For a first overview of Westphal's sacramentology, which until now has been lacking, now see Janse, "Westphal's Sacramentology" (see n. 4 above); cf. also the literature mentioned in n. 8, and also Helmut Gollwitzer, *Coena Domini. Die altlutherische Abendmahlslehre in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit dem Calvinismus, dargestellt an der lutherischen Frühorthodoxie. Mit einer Einführung zur Neuausgabe von Dietrich Braun* (Theologische Bücherei 79) (München: Kaiser, 1988; München: Kaiser, 1937<sup>1</sup>), passim.

<sup>24</sup> See for instance Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 27, in CO 9,8; OS 2,271.2-10 (cf. TT 2,224); and *ibid.*, 47, in CO 9,33; OS 2,284.10-28 (cf. TT 2,240). Because of the strong stamp put on it by Bullinger, the *Consensus Tigurinus* itself is not the best representation of Calvin's views; so also David Willis, "Calvin's use of *substantia*," in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1984), 289-301, there 297: "This Consensus could not represent Calvin's own preferred way of speaking; it was admittedly a compromise document." For a general overview of Calvin's eucharistic theology, see Joachim Beckmann, *Vom Sakrament bei Calvin. Die Sakramentslehre Calvins in ihren Beziehungen zu Augustin* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1926); Hans Grass, *Die Abendmahlslehre bei Luther und Calvin. Eine kritische Untersuchung* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag Gütersloh, 1954); Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton, NJ: Prince-

Westphal thought he could point to several places where Calvin considered baptism and its administration to be subordinate to the attendant promise and the belief in that promise. The first of these instances was the Reformed practice not to baptize dying infants. To Westphal this was a denial of the regenerative and salutary power of the sacrament of baptism,<sup>25</sup> which in Lutheran eyes was necessary for salvation and effected rebirth.<sup>26</sup> He saw this against the background of Calvin's conviction that the children of the faithful participate in salvation, and are members of the church.<sup>27</sup> Although Calvin did profess to believe that the sacraments are "instruments by which we are planted into the body of Christ,"<sup>28</sup> in reality he proved to attach more weight to an invisible assimilation before the beginning of time, of which baptism was the visible testimony and explanation—in an apparently dualist depreciation of the purely external.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, Westphal also detected a depreciation of the baptismal sacrament and a subjectivization of the baptismal gift—in analogy with an un-Lutheran emphasis on the role of faith in ensuring the efficacy of the celebration of the Lord's Supper—in the stipulation in the *Consensus Tigurinus* (Art. 20), intended to prevent a gnesio-Lutheran overvaluation of the sacramental

ton University Press, 1967); Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); Thomas J. Davis, *The Clearest Promises of God: The Development of Calvin's Eucharistic Teaching* (New York: AMS Press, 1995); Keith A. Mathison, *Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2002), 3-48; Wim Janse, "Sakramentslehre," in *Calvin Handbuch* (Theologen-Handbücher), ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) (to be published simultaneously also in English, Italian, and Dutch; in press).

<sup>25</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 105.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance *Confessio Augustana*, IX (Latin version) and *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae*, IX.

<sup>27</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 105.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-135.

sign, that the use of the sacramental gift is not limited to the moment of reception, "as if the visible sign (...) at that very moment confers God's grace"<sup>30,31</sup>

Finally, Westphal considered it to be a contempt of the sacrament that Calvin, as he saw it, made the effectiveness of the baptism dependent on the eternal election.<sup>32</sup> True enough, the *Consensus* stated that God works through the sacraments only in the elected<sup>33</sup> and that the sacramental gift only applies to the *electi*,<sup>34</sup> something which Calvin repeated in his 1555 defence: "Sacraments (...) are instruments by which God works effectively in his chosen."<sup>35</sup> Westphal, on the other hand, emphasized again in no uncertain terms, and with reference to Augustine, the inextricable bond within the sacrament between Word or promise and element, plus the instrumentality of the two as or-

<sup>30</sup> *Consensio*, art. 20, in CO 7,741; OS 2,251.26-35 (cf. TT 2,218): "Utilitas porro quam ex sacramentis percipimus, ad tempus, quo ea nobis administrantur, minime restringi debet, perinde ac si visibile signum, dum in medium profertur, eodem secum momento Dei gratiam adveheret. (...) Ita Baptismi utilitas ad totum vitae decursum patet. Quia perpetuo viget quae illic continetur promissio."

<sup>31</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 135-137.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-139.

<sup>33</sup> *Consensio*, art. 16, in CO 7,740; OS 2,250.24-29 (cf. TT 2,217): "Non omnes sacramento participantes re quoque participant. Praeterea sedulo docemus, Deum non promiscue vim suam exserere in omnibus qui sacramenta recipiunt: sed tantum in electis. Nam quemadmodum non alios in fidem illuminat, quam quos praeordinavit ad vitam: ita arcana spiritus sui virtute efficit, ut percipiant electi quod offerunt sacramenta."

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 17, in CO 7,740; OS 2,251.2-4 (cf. TT 2,217): "Nam reprobis peraeque ut electis signa administrantur, veritas autem signorum ad hos solos pervenit."

<sup>35</sup> Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 27, in CO 9,18; OS 2,271.2-6 (cf. TT 2,224): "Sacramenta (...) organa esse quibus efficaciter agit Deus in suis electis"; cf. *ibid.*, 36, in CO 9,24-25; OS 2,276.34-277.11 (cf. TT 2,231-232): "Quod dicimus, non omnibus promiscue, sed electis Dei tantum, ad quos interior et efficax Spiritus operatio pervenit, prodesse signa, clarius est quam ut longa refutatione indigeat. (...) Neque enim Augustinus, dum ad corpus ecclesiae, quod in praedestinatis, qui iam ex parte iustificati sunt et adhuc iustificantur, et olim glorificandi sunt, restringit sacrae Coenae effectum [Tract. in Iohan. 26]."



daigned by God.<sup>36</sup> At the same time he distanced himself from allegedly Lutheran *Kreaturvergötterung* and an “automatic” view of the sacraments:

We do not confer some part of salvation to creation, nor do we detract from God’s power or works, even when we say that sacraments are instruments of grace; for, they are always *God’s* sacraments, *God’s* promise, and *God’s* presence which works through the ordained instruments.<sup>37</sup>

### **Calvin’s bullingerianizing position in the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549)**

Even without having read Calvin’s reply we can already say that Westphal’s diagnosis of a Zwinglianising tendency in Calvin was certainly not unfounded: the Zurich *Consensus* reflected the sacramentology of Zwingli’s successor Bullinger rather than that of the Genevan Reformer.<sup>38</sup> Calvin’s preliminary correspondence with Bullinger during the two years preceding the *Consensus* records how much territory Calvin yielded to the Swiss on essential points:<sup>39</sup> “Es ist die Geschichte des Zurück-

<sup>36</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 138-139.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-134.

<sup>38</sup> More on this in Wim Janse, “Calvin’s Eucharistic Theology: Three Dogma-Historical Observations,” in *Calvinus sacrorum literarum interpres: Conference Proceedings of the Ninth Quadrennial International Congress on Calvin Research, Emden/Apeldoorn, August 22-26, 2006* (Reformed Historical Theology), ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) (in press). So also Neuser, “Der zweite Abendmahlsstreit” (see n. 7 above), 272, who flatly calls the *Consensus* “ein Dokument Bullingerscher Theologie”; cf. 272-273: “Der *Consensus Tigurinus* atmet Mißtrauen und verrät ängstliche Bewahrung des zwinglischen Spiritualismus gegenüber Genf.”

<sup>39</sup> For an overview of the negotiations, see Ernst Bizer, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972) (Reprografischer Nachdruck der 1. Auflage, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1940), 243-270 and Rorem, *Calvin and Bullinger* (see n. 3 above); cf. Grass, *Abendmahlslehre* (see n. 24 above), 275-278. Gäbler, “*Consensus Tigurinus*” (see n. 3 above), emphasizes Geneva’s church-political aim in seeking a consensus with Zurich and concludes,

weichens Calvins" [It is the story of Calvin's retreat].<sup>40</sup> If one compares the *Consensus* with, for instance, Calvin's *Confessio fidei de eucharistia* (1537),<sup>41</sup> his *Petit traicté de la sainte cene de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ* (1541),<sup>42</sup> or his eucharistic treatise *Optima ineundae concordiae ratio* (1561) conceived together with Beza,<sup>43</sup> one is struck by the almost total absence from the Zurich compromise of the very essence of Calvin's sacramentology hitherto very *lutherfreundlich*. This *proprium* showed in the instrumental, exhibitiv—offering and actually conferring<sup>44</sup>—character

190.31-32: "Der Schluß liegt nahe, Calvin habe aufgrund solcher Erwägungen in theologischen Fragen nachgegeben."

<sup>40</sup> Neuser, "Der zweite Abendmahlsstreit" (see n. 7 above), 273. Cf. Rorem, *Calvin and Bullinger* (see n. 3 above), 54: "Calvin and Bullinger (...) achieved a consensus statement principally because Calvin agreed to omit a crucial component of his position." Looking back on the genesis of the *Consensus*, Bullinger told Beza in 1571 that at the time he had managed to relieve Calvin of quite a lot of "Buceranica"; see Willem van 't Spijker, "'Bucerisare': Bullingers negatieve taxatie van een edel oecumenisch streven" ["Bucerisare": Bullinger's negative assessment of a noble ecumenical aim], in *Theologia Reformata* 42 (1999), 247-267, cf. 266 (translation mine): "It was exactly because Calvin had learnt to *bucerisare* that he did not find it too difficult to accommodate Bullinger's wishes and allow him to use [specific] terms and formulations, as long as the unity of the brethren could be obtained."

<sup>41</sup> In CO 9,711-712; OS 1,435-436; see only 9,712, and 1,435, respectively: "Ergo spiritum eius vinculum esse nostrae cum ipso participationis agnoscimus, sed ita ut nos ille carnis et sanguinis Domini substantia vere ad immortalitatem pascat, et eorum participatione vivificet. Hanc autem carnis et sanguinis sui communionem Christus sub panis et vini symbolis in sacrosancta sua coena offert, et exhibet omnibus qui eam rite celebrant iuxta legitimum eius institutum."

<sup>42</sup> In CO 5,433-460; OS 1,503-530.

<sup>43</sup> In CO 9,517-524; OS 2,291-295; see n. 12 above.

<sup>44</sup> This in contrast with the simultaneous or parallel character of the eating of the sacramental sign and the experience of spiritual reality. With Zwingli, Bullinger was wary of connecting the Spirit to visible signs. For the convenient distinction between symbolic memorialism (Zwingli), symbolic parallelism (Bullinger), and symbolic instrumentalism (Calvin), see originally Brian A. Gerrish, "The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions," in *Theology Today* 23 (1966), 224-243, reprinted in id., *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited / Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 115-131.

of the sacrament: unlike Zwingli's and Bullinger's views, this gave the *manducatio sacramentalis* (the sacramental eating) at the Table a surplus value<sup>45</sup> over the *manducatio spiritualis* (the spiritual eating) by faith outside the sacrament. Unlike this *proprium*, the *Consensus* emphasized, in Bullinger's line, God's independence of the elements, among other things by diluting the working of the sacraments by means of the adverbs *tanquam* or *quasi* ("as it were," "in a manner of speaking"),<sup>46</sup> and by highlighting the self-sufficiency and liberty of God, Christ, and the Spirit by means of a repeated *solus* and *unus* ("alone").<sup>47</sup> "For it is God alone who works through His Spirit"<sup>48</sup>; "It is Christ alone who baptizes inwardly in truth."<sup>49</sup> It was not the sacrament that was called "seal," but "strictly speaking only the Spirit is the seal."<sup>50</sup>

The sacraments do not confer grace. (...) Because, leaving aside the fact that nothing is received through the sacraments unless in

go: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 118-30; id., "John Calvin and the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," in *McCormick Quarterly* 22/2 (1969), 85-98; id., *Grace and Gratitude* (see n. 24 above), 167.

<sup>45</sup> Namely, for the strengthening of the faith, and the constitution of the *unio mystica* of the congregation as the body with Christ as its head.

<sup>46</sup> So in *Consensio*, art. 7 ("quasi vivas imagines," "quasi in rem ducendo," "quasi sigillis") and 12 ("tanquam adminicula"), in, respectively, CO 7,737; OS 2,248.32.33.36 (cf. TT 2,214) and CO 7,739; OS 2,250.3-4 (cf. TT 2,216).

<sup>47</sup> See for instance *ibid.*, art. 11-13, 15. Cf. Neuser, "Der zweite Abendmahlsstreit" (see n. 7 above), 273: "Unter ihnen [scil. den Artikeln] richten sich die Artikel XI bis XVI, XVII, (zum Teil) XVIII und XIX auch gegen Calvin."

<sup>48</sup> *Consensio*, art. 12, in CO 7,739; OS 2,249.35-250.1 (cf. TT 2,216): "Deus enim solus est, qui spiritu suo agit."

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 14, in CO 7,739; OS 2,250.13-16 (cf. TT 2,216): "Constituimus ergo unum esse Christum, qui vere intus baptizat, (...) qui denique implet quod figurant sacramenta: et uti quidem his adminiculis, ut totus effectus penes eius spiritum resideat."

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 15, in CO 7,740; OS 2,250.17-23 (cf. TT 2,216-217): "Quomodo sacramenta confirment. Sic interdum Sacramenta vocantur sigilla, dicuntur fidei alere, confirmare, promovere, et tamen solus spiritus proprie est sigillum, et idem fidei inchoator est et perfectior. Nam haec omnia Sacramentorum attributa inferiore loco subsidunt, ut ne minima quidem salutis nostrae portio ab unico auctore ad creaturas vel elementa transferatur."

faith, God's grace is certainly not linked to them in such a way that anyone who receives the sign also has the thing.<sup>51</sup>

True, the instrumentality of the sacraments was professed, but this was phrased more often in a neutral ablative (*quibus*) than by means of the stronger preposition "by" (*per*), until then characteristic for Calvin;<sup>52</sup> sometimes, a polyvalent *in* had to suffice, which could mean both "by means of" (Calvin) and "during" or "with" the sacrament (Bullinger).<sup>53</sup> Here, too, the Word did not function as a means of grace in the authentic Calvinian sense, not did the sacrament, which had been joined to the Word as *appendix evangelii*: sacraments are "as it were living images" which are put "before our eyes" and "affect our senses more effectively by as it were taking them to the thing, while they remind us of Christ's death and all his benefactions," and confirm "what God's mouth had proclaimed."<sup>54</sup> Before 1549 Calvin would have formulated: sacraments *confer* Christ's death and all his benefactions upon us, and confirm what God's mouth *proclaims*. Thus, departing from what Calvin had said in the late 1530s and the 1540s, in the *Consensus* the proclamation was not constitutive of the sacrament.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., art. 17, in CO 7,740; OS 2,250.30-251.2 (cf. TT 2,217): "Sacramenta non conferunt gratiam. (...) Praeterquam enim quod in sacramentis nil nisi fide percipitur, tenendum quoque est, minime alligatam ipsis Dei gratiam, ut quisque signum habet re etiam potiatur."

<sup>52</sup> In this context the preposition *per* is only used in articles 7 and 12 of the *Consensus Tigurinus*. A pregnant formulation is found in article 13, in CO 7,739; OS 2,250.10-12 (cf. TT 2,216): "Organa quidem sunt [scil., Sacramenta], *quibus efficaciter, ubi visum est, agit Deus, sed ita, ut totum salutis nostrae opus, ipsi uni acceptum ferri debeat.*" Italics mine.

<sup>53</sup> *Consensio*, artt. 14 and 19, in CO 7,739; OS 2,250.14 (cf. TT 2,216) and CO 7,741; OS 2,251.19 (cf. TT 2,218).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., art. 7, in CO 7,737; OS 2,248.32-36 (cf. TT 2,214): "(...) hoc tamen magnum est, subiici oculis nostris quas vivas *imagines*, quae sensus nostros melius afficiant, quasi in rem ducendo, dum nobis Christi mortem, omniaque eius beneficia *in memoriam revocant*, ut (...) quod ore Dei pronunciatum erat, quasi sigillis confirmari et sanciri." Italics mine.

In a sense it is tragic that the ecumenical Calvin, tied by the 1549 *Consensus*, felt obliged to defend a compromise position that did not completely represent his own sacramentology, and that in doing so—with gnesio-Lutheranism rising—he did not close the chasm with the German church, but widened it. For, the Genevan reformer shared the Lutheran appreciation of the sacraments, loathing and rejecting the Zwinglian evacuation of the sacramental signs.<sup>55</sup> During the negotiations that led to the *Consensus* he was openly suspected of Lutheranism.<sup>56</sup> Undoubtedly, Calvin could agree wholeheartedly with Westphal's powerful argument in the *Iusta defensio*, pages 133-135 and 138 (see below), on the effective instrumentality of the sacraments by the power of God's command. In part, he actually did, albeit with the remark, common in the polemics, that Westphal surely must have copied this passage from his Genevan opponent.<sup>57</sup> In the draft of his reply to Westphal Calvin had tried to accommodate "scholars who agree with us"<sup>58</sup>—Lutherans around Philipp Melanchthon—, citing Luther in countless quotations.<sup>59</sup> Under pressure from Zurich Calvin was forced to revise,<sup>60</sup> even though in his *Defensio* (1555, published privately) he managed to remain closer to his initial position than in the *Consensus*.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Westphal's judgement, *Iusta defensio*, 131: "On the face of it, he [scil., Calvin] holds the sacraments in considerable esteem: about their power, use, and sublime character he speaks with more veneration than do most others."

<sup>56</sup> Bizer, *Studien* (see n. 39 above), 255, cf. also 251, gives as his opinion on Calvin's letter of 25th February, 1547 to Bullinger, in which Calvin denounced his "unbroken subjectivism" (in: CO 12,480-489): "Niemand wird sich hier wundern, daß Calvin in dem Verdacht des Luthertums stand. In dieser Richtung etwa hätte auch Luthers Antwort an die Züricher gehen müssen, wenn er sie geschrieben hätte."

<sup>57</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 165-166, in CO 9,117 (cf. TT 2,341).

<sup>58</sup> Calvin to Bullinger, 6th October 1554, in CO 15,255-256, there 255.

<sup>59</sup> "De defensionis libello D. Ioannis Calvini et Tigurinae Ecclesiae iudicia," 24th October 1554, in CO 15,272-287; cf. Bizer, *Studien* (see n. 39 above), 278-284.

<sup>60</sup> Calvin to the ministers of Zurich, 13th November 1554, in CO 15,303-307; Calvin to Bullinger, 23rd November 1554, in CO 15,317-319.

<sup>61</sup> Compare, for instance, the formulation cited in n. 54 above from Art. 7 of the *Consensus* with Calvin's explanation of it in *Defensio*, 29, in CO 9,20; OS 2,272.23-26 (cf. TT 2,226): "(...) secundo, non esse nuda spectacula, quae ocu-

## Calvin's defence against Westphal

### *Baptism as sacramentum regenerationis?*

Calvin's impassioned reply to Westphal's criticism directed at baptism in his *Secunda defensio* (1556) was governed by his rejection of the Lutheran view of the *necessitas sacramenti*. What was questioned was not the importance of infant baptism, but its necessity for salvation, and by extension the necessity of emergency baptism.<sup>62</sup> The question whether baptism was necessary for

lis nostris ingerantur, sed illic repraesentari spirituales gratias, quarum effectum fideles animae percipiunt." Also compare the statement in Article 19 of the *Consensus*, i.e., that also outside the sacrament the faithful receive the reality figured in it: "(...) ita extra eorum usum fidelibus constat quae illic figuratur veritas," in CO 7,741; OS 2,251.15-16 (cf. TT 2,219) with Calvin's explanation of it in *Defensio*, 42, in CO 9,29; OS 2,281.8-18 (cf. TT 2,236): "Quantum eo minime spectat haec doctrina, ut signorum usu valere iusso, arcanis inspirationibus contenti simus. Neque enim si Dominus interdum, ut suam virtutem nullis adminiculis obstrictam probet, omisso signo idem peragit, quod per signum repraesentat, ideo quod in salutem nostram instituit, quasi supervacuum abiicere censebitur. Nobis vero multo minus id licebit, quorum fides verbo eiusque sigillis intenta esse debet. Vere enim ab Augustino scriptum est, Quavis Deus absque signo visibili quos vult sanctificet, quisquis tamen signum contemnit, invisibili sanctificatione merito privari. [Libr. Quaest. veteris testamenti 3]." Leo G.M. Alting von Geusau, *Die Lehre von der Kindertaufe bei Calvin gesehen im Rahmen seiner Sakraments- und Tauftheologie*, Bilthoven/Mainz 1963, 76, calls the *Defensio* "eine sehr geschickte Interpretation" of the *Consensus*. Bizer, *Studien* (see n. 39), 285-299 analyzes the essential differences that remained between Calvin and Bullinger. For an analysis of the "vital tension within a complex of opposites" in Calvin's eucharistic theology, see John R. Meyer, "Mysterium fidei and the Later Calvin," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25 (1972), 392-411 (this quotation: 392). For a distinguished attempt to do justice to the dialectics of the "paradoxes" in Calvin's theology as a whole, see Michael Beintker, "Calvins Denken in Relationen," in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 99 (2002), 109-129, and in *Calvinus Evangelii Propugnator: Calvin, Champion of the Gospel. Papers Presented at the International Congress on Calvin Research, Seoul, 1998*, ed. David F. Wright et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Product Services, 2006), 19-39.

<sup>62</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 127-128, in CO 9,101 (cf. TT 2,319). Cf. n. 26 above.

salvation was determined by the reformers' views on baptism as *sacramentum regenerationis*. "The question between us," Calvin says about Westphal, "turns on infants: he contends that by Baptism they become members of Christ and heirs of life."<sup>63</sup> For Augustine, the Lutherans, and the Tridentine Council (First Session, 1545-1547) the grace of regeneration was linked to the sacrament, and eventually implied in it; for Calvin this was out of the question.<sup>64</sup> In the 1555 *Defensio* he had already spoken of an inward baptism by the hidden working of the Spirit during the administration.<sup>65</sup> This brought into play the instrumental-exhibitive character of the sacrament of infant baptism, and introduced an imbalance in Calvin's sacramentology which justly led to the conclusion that Calvin's ideas about baptism were more Zwinglian than his views on the eucharist.<sup>66</sup>

There was a reason for Calvin's heated reaction to Westphal. After 1536, influenced by conversations with Anabaptists and contacts with Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, Calvin had jettisoned his initial anchoring of infant baptism—following Luther—in the assumed faith of the children. His newly acquired conviction—one he shared, incidentally, with Zwingli and Bullinger—that the children of believers are already holy in the womb, by the power of the promise of the covenant,<sup>67</sup> had resulted in

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 163, in CO 9,116 (cf. TT 2,340): "De infantibus quaestio inter nos vertitur: eos contendit Baptismo fieri Christi membra, et vitae haeredes."

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Alting von Geusau, *Die Lehre von der Kindertaufe* (see n. 61 above), 264-265.

<sup>65</sup> Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 43, in CO 9,29; OS 2,281.27-30 (cf. TT 2,237): "Aqua tinguntur multi ab utero matris, qui aetatis progressu adeo se intus fuisse baptizatos non ostendunt, ut potius extincto, quantum in se est, Dei Spiritu Baptismum suum exinaniant." Note Calvin's reductionist phrasing: "aqua tinguntur," instead of "baptizantur," in contrast with "intus baptizatos."

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Alting von Geusau, *Die Lehre von der Kindertaufe* (see n. 61 above), 75.

<sup>67</sup> For an overview of Calvin's doctrine of (infant) baptism, see Thomas F. Torrance, "Calvin's Lehre von der Taufe," in *Calvin-Studien* 1959, ed. Jürgen Moltmann (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins Neukirchen Kreis Moers, 1960), 95-129; Egil Grisliis, "Calvin's Doctrine of Baptism," in *Church History* 31 (1962), 46-65; Alting von Geusau, *Die Lehre*

accusations from Catholics and Lutherans that he devalued the sacrament of baptism, denied original sin (from which, according to the Catholic view, baptism cleansed), and practised a form of pelagianism, as if the children of believers participated in salvation already by virtue of their natural birth.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the Lutheran Matthias Flacius Illyricus had asked Calvin in 1549, after the latter's pamphlet against the Augsburg Interim (1548), about the application of Christ's salvation by Word and sacrament as means of grace: "If children in the womb are holy, why then should Christ order them to be reborn? What else is regeneration but being sanctified?"<sup>69</sup> In his answers Calvin admitted that children are not sanctified without the Word, but he seemed now to relate this to the acceptance of the promise of

*von der Kindertaufe* (see n. 61 above); Jill Raitt, "Three Inter-related Principles in Calvin's Unique Doctrine of Infant Baptism," in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11 (1980), 51-62; Jan van Genderen, "De doop bij Calvijn," in *Rondom de doopvont. Leer en gebruik van de heilige doop in het Nieuwe Testament en in de geschiedenis van de westerse kerk*, ed. Willem van 't Spijker et al. (Goudriaan: De Groot, 1983), 263-295; François Wendel, *Calvin. Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse*. Préface de Richard Stauffer (Histoire et société 9) (Genève: Labor et fides, 1985<sup>2</sup>), 242-250; John W. Riggs, "Emerging Ecclesiology in Calvin's Baptismal Thought," in: *Church History* 64 (1995), 29-43; Bryan D. Spinks, "Calvin's Baptismal Theology and the Making of the Strasbourg and Genevan Baptismal Liturgies 1540 and 1542," in: *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48 (1995), 55-78; Karen E. Spierling, *Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva: The shaping of a community, 1536-1564* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), esp. the literature mentioned at 48 n. 55; cf. also the Calvinism Resources Database (H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies), <http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/card>.

<sup>68</sup> See Alting von Geusau, *Die Lehre von der Kindertaufe* (see n. 61 above), 72-78, 188-198.

<sup>69</sup> [Matthias Flacius Illyricus], "Typographus ad Lectorem" (in the Magdenburg edition of Calvin's *Interim adultero-germanum*, 1549), in CO 7, Prolegomena, XLI-XLII, there XLI: "Porro interroganti: si pueri in utero matris sancti sunt, cur a Christo iubentur renasci? quid enim renasci aliud est quam sanctificari? respondet autor, errorem errore defendens, baptisari pueros tantum, ut aggregentur ad corpus Christi ad quod pertinebant antequam in lucem ederentur etc."



the covenant by Christian parents, or to the eternal election.<sup>70</sup> In any case, it seemed that Calvin put into question the application of salvation by baptism as a means of grace, and denied the *necessitas baptismi*; in Lutheran eyes Calvin's baptizing was no more than outward ceremony, comparable to being entered into the church register. In the controversy between Westphal and Calvin this discussion was continued.

To Calvin, Westphal's defence of the necessity of baptism for salvation represented a reprehensible, Catholic veneration of the sacraments, a superstitious overvaluing of the baptismal water as the cause of salvation at the cost of God's promise of the covenant (Genesis 17:7; 1 Corinthians 7:14), to which it was added as a sign and an instrument. Westphal immersed himself "in the deepest vortices of Popery" by stating that "salvation for infants originates in baptism," and by attaching "trust in salvation to the elements, leaving Christ aside" and thus making the sacraments "the cause of salvation."<sup>71</sup> In the same way as the sick could manage without private communion in their homes by calling to mind Christ's sacrifice,<sup>72</sup> Calvin said, so also infants who died suddenly could do without baptism because, by force of the covenant with their parents, they were already participating in salvation.<sup>73</sup>

*Baptism as incorporation in Christ of those who were already members of his Body*

Regarding the inconsistency signalled by Westphal, i.e., that according to Calvin infant baptism incorporates into the body of Christ or the church those who were already members,<sup>74</sup> Calvin pointed to the function of the sacraments as strengthening faith: baptism ensures that the infants of religious parents "are

<sup>70</sup> See Altling von Geusau, *Die Lehre von der Kindertaufe* (see n. 61 above), 189-191, 193.

<sup>71</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 164-165, in CO 9,116-117 (cf. TT 2,340-341).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 129-130, in CO 9,102 (cf. TT 2,320-321); cf. n. 13 above.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 127-129, in CO 9,101-102 (cf. TT 2,319-320).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 157-159, in CO 9,114-115 (cf. TT 2,336-337).

even more deeply incorporated into the community of Christ,"<sup>75</sup> although he showed himself aware of the aporia on this matter: "Yet, I do not persist in this answer (...); the difficulty with this issue has not been solved yet, I admit."<sup>76</sup> His reference to the baptisms of Paul and Cornelius, in whose cases the "thing" (also) preceded the sign,<sup>77</sup> did not contribute to the desired solution—there is a difference between adult believers and infants. Meanwhile, in varying formulations, Calvin stuck to the anchoring of infant baptism—in analogy with the circumcision<sup>78</sup>—in the pre-existent promise of the electing grace of the covenant: baptism seals the salvation in which the infants "already participated earlier."<sup>79</sup>

For, there is nothing that prevents Him, when He seals this grace, from confirming anew what he had given before;<sup>80</sup> (...) those [are] rightly admitted to baptism (...) whom God has accepted before they were born.<sup>81</sup> (...) What I say is that those are now in a specific sense "implanted" in the church who before had been implanted in another sense.<sup>82</sup> (...) Those whom God has already consecrated to Himself [are] justly presented to be baptized.<sup>83</sup> (...) The accepta-

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 157-158, in CO 9,114 (cf. TT 2,336): "Quaerit ergo cur infantes ex fidelibus genitos, sanctos esse tradam, et Ecclesiae membra antequam baptizentur. Respondeo, ut magis coalescant in Christi communionem."

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 158, in CO 9,114 (cf. TT 2,336-337): "Neque tamen in hac responsione insisto. (...) Nondum solutus est quaestionis nodus, fateor."

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 160, 162, in CO 9,115,116 (cf. TT 2,338,339).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 161, in CO 9,115 (cf. TT 2,338).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 128, in CO 9,101 (cf. TT 2,319): "(...) obsignari illic tantum salutem, cuius prius fuerunt participes."

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 160, in CO 9,115 (cf. TT 2,338): "Nihil tamen impedit, quo minus gratiam hanc obsignans, idem quod prius dederat de integro confirmet."

<sup>81</sup> Idem: "(...) ad Baptismum iure recipi, quos Deus adoptavit antequam nascerentur (...)."

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 161, in CO 9,115 (cf. TT 2,338): "Ego autem dico inseri secundum quid in Ecclesiam, qui diverso respectu prius iam fuerant insiti."

<sup>83</sup> Idem (cf. TT 2,338-339): "(...) recte ad Baptismum afferri dico, quos iam Deus sibi consecravat."

tion revealed by the Word [sanctifies] the children not yet born;<sup>84</sup> (...) the infants who had been accepted as God's children before the beginning of time, [are] afterwards visibly incorporated into Christ's body (...).<sup>85</sup>

As "official recognition" on God's part (*solemnis agnitio*), as the "true and efficacious seal of the promise" (*vera et efficax promissionis obsignatio*) and as "pledge of the holy communion with Christ" (*pignus sacrae cum Christo coniunctionis*), baptism justly functioned as "entry and reception into the church" (*ingressus et receptio in Ecclesiam*),<sup>86</sup> and as such was more than an "official statement before human beings,"<sup>87</sup> as Westphal sneered. In this way Calvin wanted to honour God's faithfulness to His promise, and His autonomy *vis-à-vis* the sacrament of baptism, whilst at the same time excluding any sacramental causality.

In his negotiations with Bullinger preceding the *Consensus Tigurinus*, Calvin had initially stated, conform his views on the Lord's Supper, "Those who receive baptism at the same time (*simul*) receive the forgiveness of sins." Bullinger, however, thought that the word *simul* could be interpreted "as if grace is linked to the sacraments, and as soon as one is baptized, one's sins are forgiven."<sup>88</sup> Although Calvin explained that in his view

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 161-162, in CO 9,115 (cf. TT 2,339): "Hic (...) agitur (...) de patefacta per verbum adoptione, quae infantes nondum natos sanctificat."

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 163, in CO 9,116 (cf. TT 2,339): "(...) infantes, qui ante tempora aeterna adoptati erant in filios, (...) visibiliter deinde inseri in Christi corpus (...)."

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 162, in CO 9,115-116 (cf. TT 2,339): "Sed quia Baptismus sollemnis agnitio est, qua Deus liberos suos in vitae possessionem deducit, vera et efficax promissionis obsignatio, pignus sacrae cum Christo coniunctionis, merito ingressus et receptio in Ecclesiam esse dicitur."

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 163, in CO 9,116 (cf. TT 2,339): "(...) ac si receptio quae fit per Baptismum, nihil aliud foret quam externa coram hominibus declaratio"; see Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 131-132.

<sup>88</sup> "Ioannis Calvini propositiones de sacramentis. Annotationes breves adscripsit Henricus Bullingerus," November 1548, in CO 7,693-700, there 695-696: "'IX. Ergo qui baptismum recipit, simul peccatorum remissionem percipit.' In hac propositione offendit nos particula Simul. (...) Et particula Simul

the remittance of sin was not caused by baptism but by Christ's blood, he nevertheless felt it necessary to heed his colleague's remark, and in order to ward off any causal, Lutheranising interpretation, replaced the word *simul* by *similiter* (analogously), a word that served as an assurance: "We will fully possess the matter signified, as sure as we see the sign with our *eyes*."<sup>89</sup> With this, Calvin did in fact on the subject of baptism yield to Bullinger's sacramental views, which only recognized an analogous or parallel relation between sign and the thing signified.<sup>90</sup>

### The temporary ineffectiveness of baptism

Calvin took the same route when he tried to refute Westphal's accusation that he diluted the effect of baptism as *sacramentum regenerationis* by stating, as Westphal put it,<sup>91</sup> that baptism is temporarily without effect but eventually proves effective,<sup>92</sup> and by making the effect of baptism dependent on predestination.<sup>93</sup> Regarding the first point, both opponents saw themselves confronted with the reality that some baptized persons when adults did not show any sign of an actual rebirth. To

perinde sonat ac si sacramentis alligata sit gratia, et quasi iam primum, quum baptismus percipitur, remissio peccatorum conferatur." Cf. Bizer, *Studien* (see n. 39 above), 258-267; Gäbler, "Consensus Tigurinus" (see n. 3 above), 190.8-12; Willem van 't Spijker, "De leer van de doop bij Zwingli, Bullinger en Bucer," in *Rondom de doopvont* (see n. 67 above), 221-262, there 244-245; Rorem, *Calvin and Bullinger* (see n. 3 above), 35-36.

<sup>89</sup> "Calvini responsio ad annotationes Bullingeri," January 1549, in CO 7,701-708, there 704: "Atque hic sensus est: tam vere nos fieri compotes rei signatae, quam vere signum oculis cernimus." Cf. "Henrici Bullingeri annotata ad Calvini animadversiones," CO 7,709-16, there 713, IX. Italics mine.

<sup>90</sup> See n. 44 above.

<sup>91</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 166, in CO 9,117 (cf. TT 2,341), reported Westphal's objection in a phrase from the *Consensus Tigurinus*, giving the impression that Westphal had said that the value of baptism should remain limited to the moment of administration—*quod non*. See Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 135-137.

<sup>92</sup> See Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 166-169, in CO 9,117-118 (cf. TT 2,341-343).

<sup>93</sup> See *ibid.*, 169-171, in CO 9,118-119 (cf. TT 2,343-344).

Westphal this did not necessarily imply that this made their baptism useless or ineffective.<sup>94</sup> Rather, its effect remained invisible for the time being: with Augustine, Westphal pointed to the gradual realisation of the regenerative power of baptism. While Calvin here muddled the discussion by distorting Westphal's position—he made the Lutheran say that the unconverted “are *always* truly reborn and sanctified in baptism”<sup>95</sup>—he meanwhile pointed to the gradual putting into effect of the baptismal gift as much as did his opponent and Augustine: “In the end, baptism is effective, even though its workings are not revealed at the same time as it is administered.”<sup>96</sup> Again it became clear that the essential point for Calvin was to do justice to God's liberty: “*Whenever he pleases* God fulfils and realises in an instantaneous effect what He prefigures in the sacrament. However, we should not impose a fictitious necessity here, as if to prevent that His grace sometimes precedes, sometimes follows the use of the sign. For the dispensation of grace is *at the disposal of the*

<sup>94</sup> Westphal, *Iusta defensio* (1555), 135.

<sup>95</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 166, 167, and 168-9, in CO 9, 117, 118 (cf. TT 2, 341-343): “[Somewhat further down Westphal adds] that those who, lacking instruction in doctrine, later lapse into the iniquity of sin, are *always* [*semper*] truly reborn and sanctified in baptism” (p. 166). “Westphal protests that the power of baptism should not be deferred to the distant future, as if God would not regenerate infants *as soon as* [*simul ac*] they are baptized. If one wants to maintain this, one should prove that they are *always* [*semper*] reborn” (p. 167). “From this it immediately follows that the rebirth is not received *always at the very moment* [*eodem semper momento*] God offers it” (168-169). Italics mine. The words in italics had, however, not been used by Westphal; see the passage in question: *Iusta defensio* (1555), 135-137. On the contrary, Westphal recognized that “people who have not been reborn as children—even though they were baptized—could still be reborn when they were adolescents or old people,” but he did not consider this “a reason to shift the power of baptism to adolescence or old age” (p. 136).

<sup>96</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 167-168, in CO 9, 118 (cf. TT 2, 341-342); this quotation 167 (cf. TT 2, 342).

*author himself (...)*;<sup>97</sup> “the free run of God’s grace” should not be tied to “specific moments.”<sup>98</sup>

### **Baptism and predestination**

To Calvin, however, this liberty of God’s grace eventually proved to be primarily His liberty regarding the eternal election:

I have said (...), that the Spirit of God does not work indiscriminately in all, but that, in the same way as He illuminates to faith only the elected, in the same way He also ensures that they do not use the sacraments in vain. (...) I say that the promises are made to all, offering eternal salvation to all together, but that their confirmation is a gift of the Spirit, who in the elected seals the offered grace. (...) Whereas he invites everybody by the Word, [God calls] those whom He has elected inwardly and powerfully. (...) (...) I will show that it is the direct implication of the source of the election that those to whom it has been specifically granted make good use of the sacraments.<sup>99</sup>

Calvin’s denial of Westphal’s accusation that he made the effectiveness of baptism dependent on the predestination cannot hide the fact that the Lutheran here put the finger on an ambivalence in Calvin’s thought that gave rise to contrary interpre-

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 168, in CO 9,118 (cf. TT 2,342): “Implet Deus quoties visum est, ac repraesentat effectu praesenti quod in Sacramento figurat. Sed nulla hic necessitas fingenda est, quin eius gratia interdum praecedat, interdum sequatur signi usum, cuius tamen dispensationem author ipse (...) temperat (...)” *Italics mine.*

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 169, in CO 9,118 (cf. TT 2,343): “(...) perperam tamen quis inferat, liberum gratiae Dei cursum temporum articulis astringi.”

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 170, in CO 9,119 (cf. TT 2,343): “(...) dixi, non promiscue in omnibus operari Dei Spiritum: sed quemadmodum solos electos in fidem illuminat, sic etiam efficere, ne frustra utantur Sacramentis. [Dico] promissiones omnibus communes esse, et communiter omnibus offerre aeternam salutem, ut autem ratae sint, peculiari Spiritus dono fieri, qui in electis obsignat oblatam gratiam (...). (...) verbo omnes invitans, intus efficaciter vocat quos elegit. (...) ex fonte electionis manare ostendo, quod in Sacramentis proficiunt, quibus peculiariter datum est.”

tations and in the twentieth century even contributed to a schism.<sup>100</sup> Was it at all possible for Calvin to maintain at the same time both the freedom of election, and the reliability of the covenant and of infant baptism as a sign of the gracious election? Was it possible to anchor baptism in the certainty of God's promise of the covenant and His command to baptise, and at the same time in His autonomy regarding election? Was Calvin right in fully maintaining, regarding all "infants born from believers," that they are "holy and members of the church before they are baptized"?<sup>101</sup> Calvin's invoking a rule from classical lo-

<sup>100</sup> I am alluding to the court case in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands preceding the 1944 schism over Abraham Kuiper's doctrine of baptism, based on the assumption of a pre-existent regeneration. Following Gerhard Kramer, *Het verband van doop en wedergeboorte. Nagelaten dogmenhistorische studie. Met een inleidend woord van Dr. A. Kuiper* (Breukelen: De Vecht, 1897), 133-149, esp. 144-148, Calvin, among others, was cited regarding this doctrine, and especially his writings against the Lutherans; see *Praeadvies van Commissie I aan de Generale Synode van Utrecht 1943 inzake de bezwaarschriften tegen een zinsnede uit de Verklaring van Utrecht 1905 of (c.q. en) tegen de uitspraak van Sneek-Utrecht 1942 (...)* (Groningen: J. Niemeijer, 1943), 68-70; Aart de Bondt, Jan Weggemans, *Verbond en Doop. In verband met de huidige leergeschieden in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, 2: Is de sacramentsbeschouwing van onze Synode ongereformeerd?* (Groningen: Van der Wal, 1944), esp. 34, 47-48; cf. for the opposite view Roelf Jan Dam, Benne Holwerda, and Cornelis Venhof, *Rondom "1905". Een historische schets* (Terneuzen: Littooi, 1944), 130. An overview is given in Egbert Smilde, *Een eeuw van strijd over verbond en doop* (Kampen: Kok, 1946), esp. 247-361. Kramer and others rightly detected a certain development in Calvin's statements, but these formed too small a basis to present Calvin as a representative of the above doctrine. The same conclusion is reached by Alting von Geusau, *Die Lehre von der Kindertaufe* (see n. 61 above), 191-221, esp. 192, 194, 198, 220-221, and Van Genderen, "De doop bij Calvin" (see n. 67 above), 285-290, with the latter leaning towards emphasizing the unity in Calvin's thought, and the former Calvin's dialectics, "aber auch seine Unklarheit und Unsicherheit" (p. 220-221) regarding covenant, baptism, and regeneration.

<sup>101</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 157, in CO 9,114 (cf. TT 2,336): "Quaerit ergo cur infantes ex fidelibus genitos, sanctos esse tradam, et Ecclesiae membra antequam baptizentur." Alting von Geusau, *Die Lehre von der Kindertaufe* (see n. 61 above), 193, 195-196; cf. 194: "[es] scheint (...) konsequenter zu sein, von den Kindern zu sagen, daß sie 'filii Dei censentur,' das heißt, nur

gic that “propositions that are subordinated to one another cannot be contrary to each other”<sup>102</sup>—so that a seal set by the Spirit as the “first and more inward seal” (by means of the election) does not cancel an “inferior sealing of grace by the sacraments”<sup>103</sup>—does not alter the fact that his view on infant bap-

äußerlich als Kinder Gottes *angesehen* werden können. Dann wird aber die Kindertaufe eine bloße Zeremonie, und dann wird sie nur auf Grund eines äußeren, juristischen, inhaltsleeren Titels gespendet. (...) Auch Zwingli sah sich vor diese Schwierigkeit gestellt und löste sie mit Hilfe seines Dualismus, indem er nämlich die Bundeslehre und folglich auch die Kindertaufe konsequent auf das Äußere bezog und uns im Ungewissen ließ über dasjenige, was diesem Äußeren innerlich in der Ordnung der Heiligung entspricht. Obgleich Calvin in diesem Sinne kein Dualist ist, hat es doch stark den Anschein, daß es bei ihm gerade hinsichtlich der Kinder, die noch keinen Glauben haben können, wegen des Fehlens von *criteria iustificationis* eine ebenso große Ungewißheit über die *electio* gibt wie in Zwinglis Lehre, die er hier übernommen hat.” Cf. Van Genderen, “De doop bij Calvijn” (see n. 67 above), 289-290, who asks whether Calvin does not in fact open the door to a doctrine of instantaneous rebirth, and whether he did right to state that the matter sometimes does precede the sign: “Is that option a solid basis for the baptism of all infants?” (p. 289). Grislis, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Baptism” (see n. 67 above), 56-57, draws attention to the “basic tension” in Calvin’s doctrine of infant baptism, but considers it prototypical of the whole of Calvin’s theology: “(...) in so far as the doctrine of election is a very central theme of Calvin’s thought, the tensions which surround it are consistently reflected also in his other doctrines. Calvin himself obviously did not regard such a situation as a liability but rather as the very strength of his position. He believed that the mystery of predestination in its various ramifications was not of his own making, but dependent upon the human inability to explore the ultimate depth of the divine revelation. (...) Viewed in such light, Calvin’s doctrine of baptism may be appreciated as a thorough witness to his theological convictions.”

<sup>102</sup> See Aristotle, for instance *Analytica Priora* I, 5, 27 b 24-28; *Topica* II, 1, 109 a 3-6; *Topica* III, 6, 119 a 34, and many others, among whom William of Ockham, *Summa logicae* I, 36, in *Guilielmi de Ockham Opera philosophica et theologica ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum edita* 1 (St. Bonaventure, NY: [St. Bonaventure University], 1974), 101, 11.46-47: “Ex praedictis patet quod propositiones subalternae et subcontrariae non opponuntur, quia possunt simul esse verae.”

<sup>103</sup> Calvin, *Secunda defensio* (1556), 170-171, in *CO* 9,199 (cf. *TT* 2,344): “Nam quum proverbio vulgari iactetur, quae subalterna sunt, inter se non pugnare,



tism shows a certain tension between certainty and liberty, between the objectivity of the offer of salvation and the liberty God possesses in his elective grace. Westphal emphasizes especially the first aspect, Calvin at the same time also the second.

All those who want to judge theological views on the merit of their dogmatic or philosophical consistency will give their vote to Westphal. Anybody who as a (church) historian takes into account the changes of battle fronts, and allows for the historical genesis and the specific phrasing of ideas, will not feel the need to assign qualifications. Incidentally, one may wonder whether consistency is a valid criterion by which to judge a theological position, but it is not the historian's job to answer that question. What we can say is that the consensus between Geneva and Zurich was not the most suitable tool to forge the desired *rapprochement* between the Swiss and the Lutherans. This was not only because the rising confessionalism—in this case, on the part of Westphal and his partisans—showed little tolerance for a conciliatory position, but also because a compromise reached by sacrificing principles—in this case on Calvin's part—cannot serve as a bridge to third parties. The battle into which they all allowed themselves to be drawn eventually could not fail to turn the attempt at reconciliation into its opposite.<sup>104</sup>

non ideo negatur inferior Sacramentis gratiae obsignatio, dum Spiritus vocatur prius et interius sigillum; et simul notatur causa, [171] quia eos Deus elegit, quos adoptionis tessera dignatur." Election and (the sealing of it by) baptism, so Calvin, are to each other as higher and lower, as first and second cause, and are not contrary to each other: the sealing of grace in baptism has not been called into question by the election. Following Augustine, Calvin undoubtedly intended to emphasize the aspect of grace inherent in salvation (as sealed in the sacraments). This does not alter the fact that in this way he introduced a tension between the liberty of election and the certainty of the (seal on the) promise of the covenant.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Neuser, "Der zweite Abendmahlsstreit" (see n. 7 above), 276: "Die Schwächung der vermittelnden Positionen und die Stärkung der entstehenden konfessionellen Parteien ist das eigentliche Ergebnis des Kampfes."

### Westphal's text (1555)

The following edition, here presented for the first time, is based on the text of the *editio princeps*. Orthographic details have been preserved as much as possible, including capitalization, but excluding printing errors, accents, and where relevant punctuation. The *e caudata* has been represented by *ae* or *oe*, *j* by *i*, *u* by *v* and *v* by *u* in cases where phonetics required it, & by *et*. Abbreviations and contractions have been spelled in full, and new paragraphs have been started where necessary. Page numbers in brackets are those of the *editio princeps*.

*Adversus cuiusdam Sacramentarii falsam criminationem, iusta defensio Ioachimi Westphali, ministri Ecclesiae Hamburgensis, in qua et Eucharistiae causa agitur.* Francoforti excudebat Petrus Brubachius, anno 1555,<sup>105</sup> 105, 130-139.

[105] (...) Alicubi sinunt<sup>106</sup> infantes non baptizatos mori, quia scilicet spem faciunt sine baptismo salutem consequi posse, et plebeculae persuasum volunt, per baptismum non regenerari aut salvari quenquam, baptismo obsignari tantum et externa professione declarari, iam ante esse sanctos et salutis participes qui accipiunt baptismum. (...)

[130] (...) Nunc postremo loco subiiciam [131] quaedam iudicio Ecclesiae Dei iudicanda et discutienda ex scriptura Catholica, quam recte cum regula Christianae doctrinae congruant. Plus aliquanto honoris Sacramentis in speciem defert:<sup>107</sup> de vi, usu et dignitate eorum maiori cum reverentia loquitur quam plerique alii, attamen complures perniciosos errores phanaticorum tegit et pingit, et animos circumducit perplexis labyrinthis.

<sup>105</sup> VD 16, W 2260. The copy I used was that in the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, A: 815.24 Theol. (2).

<sup>106</sup> *Scil.* Sacramentarii.

<sup>107</sup> *Scil.* Calvinus.

Recte<sup>108</sup> docet Sacramenta instituta esse, ut nos ad Christi communionem deducant, adminicula esse et media, quibus vel inseramur in corpus Christi, vel insiti magis coalescamus. Cur igitur infantes natos ex fidelibus parentibus contendit sanctos esse, et membra Ecclesiae antequam baptizantur? Si inseruntur per baptismum et deducuntur ad Christi communionem, certe ante baptismum non sunt inserti Ecclesiae. Si asserit insertos esse priusquam abluuntur baptismo, lu[132]dit ambiguo sermone, et ad Christi communionem deduci, et inscribi intelligit de externa coram Ecclesia professione et declaratione, quod ante inserti nunc externe inserantur, et quasi asscribantur albo Ecclesiae. Nam quae tectius scribit in hanc sententiam, apertius declarant alii, affirmantes, Sacramentis nos visibiliter inseri consortio Christi et sanctorum eius, cui invisibiliter quidem per ipsius gratiam inserti fuimus priusquam Sacramentis participarem: baptismo non primum exhiberi quod eo significatur, sed adesse prius. Infantes ex sanctis parentibus natos, sanctos esse et salutis participes in utero matris, non primum in baptismo pertinere ad Ecclesiam, sed ante tempora aeterna, quo adoptati sint in filios Dei, quae paradoxa manifeste pugnant cum verbis Christi, dicentis: Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit, salvus erit. Item: Nisi [133] quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu non potest intrare in regnum Dei.

Porro si vera est definitio, Sacramenta esse organa, quibus efficaciter agit Deus et suam gratiam nobis testatur atque obsignat, cur Sacramentarii negant per baptismi lavacrum renasci homines et peccata dimitti? Cur caecitatis nos Calvinus arguit, et traducit, perperam nos affigere illis salutis fiduciam, et quod solius Dei est proprium ad illa transferre? Non a nobis salus Sacramentis affigitur, sed salutis promissio baptismum et fidei addita est a Domino nostro Iesu Christo, qui ait Marci decimosexto: Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit, salvus erit. Non transferimus partem aliquam salutis ad creaturas, neque Dei potentiae et operationi detrahimus, etiamsi perhibeamus Sacramenta esse or-

<sup>108</sup> *In margine*: Calvinus quid de Baptismo doceat.

gana salutis, quia sermo est de Dei Sacra[134]mentis, de Dei promissione, de praesentia Dei operantis per ordinata media, sicut Paulus dicit: Evangelion esse potentiam Dei ad salutem omni credenti. Cum organa Dei appellantur, certe omnis dignitas, virtus et efficacia Sacramentorum Deo tribuitur, a quo ut sunt instituta et ordinata, ita ab eo solo habent suam virtutem et dignitatem. Quia vero Deo placuit ea instituere, et virtutem suam in illis exerere, ob hanc causam Sacramentis, ut organis sanctis tribuenda est, non adimenda sua virtus. Neque propterea ministerium nihil est, quia Paulus scribit, ministros nihil esse, et nihil sine Deo plantando et rigando efficere, non ideo Sacramenta fere in nihilum redigit. Commendat presbyteros propter ministerium, condecorat honorificis nominibus, appellans dispensatores mysteriorum Dei, legatos Christi. Quomodo Sacramenta nihil [135] sunt, aut nihil operantur, cum a ministerio tam magnifice praedicatores commendentur, quod sint operarii Dei et ministri per quos homines credunt? Deus Sacramentis et verbo suo adest, operatur in hominibus fidem et salutem; sunt ergo efficacia ex Dei ordinatione, praesentia, et operatione: et non illorum sed hominum culpa fit, quod virtutem suam in incredulis minus exercent.

Parum scite ergo effectum baptismi adversarius partim aufert, partim in dubium adducit. Tollit quidem, dum scribit, effectum baptismi ad tempus nullum esse, et tandem emergere: utilitatem quae percipitur ex Sacramentis ad tempus, quo ea nobis administrantur, minime restringi debere. Quod aetatis progressu nullam vim baptismi ostendunt, qui infantes sacro fonte abluti sunt, non ideo baptismus illorum irritus et sine ullo effectu fuit. Aliqui in baptismo vere re[136]generati et sanctificati, progredientibus annis neglecti, et non pie instituti recidunt in peccati sordes; multi relabuntur tempore persecutionis, qui cum gaudio acceperunt verbum Dei. Vis et utilitas baptismi extendit se per totam vitam. Haec ratio non efficit quo minus prosint Sacramenta eo tempore quo administrantur; non ideo virtus baptismi, vel in adolescentiam, vel senectutem releganda est, ut adolescentes et senes regenerentur, qui in pueritia non

sint renati, cum baptizarentur. Quanto rectius docet Augustinus libro primo, de moribus Catholicae Ecclesiae capite trigesimosecundo, sacrosancto lavacro inchoari renovationem novi hominis, ut proficiendo perficiatur, in aliis citius, in aliis tardius. Et libro decimoquarto de Trinitate, capite decimosexto: Non in uno momento fieri renovationem ipsius conversionis, si[137]cut momento uno fit illa in baptismo renovatio remissione omnium peccatorum. Et quemadmodum aliud est carere febribus, aliud ab infirmitate, quae febribus facta est, revalescere, ita primam curationem causam remove re languoris, quod per omnium indulgentiam fit peccatorum; secundam, ipsum sanare languorem, quod fit paulatim proficiendo in renovatione huius imaginis.

Dubium autem facit adversarius effectum baptismi, quia ad praedestinationem revocat, quum scriptura nos revocet ad Verbum et Sacramenta, et per haec deducat ad praedestinationis et salutis certitudinem, et eos in electorum numerum referat, qui audiunt Christi vocem, promissionibus Evangelii credunt, et in fide perseverant. Etsi autem stulte faciunt, qui ad nuda tantum signa, et non potius ad promissiones illis annexas respiciunt, et ap[138]posite in hanc sententiam allegetur illud Augustini, fieri Sacramentum, cum verbum accedit ad elementum, cautio tamen adhibenda est,<sup>109</sup> et ita negandum, nos aquae, panis et vini materia, Christi ac spiritualium bonorum nequaquam fieri compotes, sed promissione nos ad ipsum deduci, ut fide in nobis habitans impleat quicquid signis offertur, ne divellatur verbum seu promissio a Sacramentis, neve baptismus nihil nisi aqua, et Coena Domini nihil nisi panis et vinum esse putentur. Nam ab aqua, pane et vino tam non est separandum verbum, quam Sacramentum non constat solis elementis, sed etiam verbo. Quod Augustinus urget emphasim ac pondus in verbis Christi, qui dixit Apostolos mundos esse, non propter baptismum, quo loti erant, sed propter verbum, non eo pertinet, quod in ea fuerit sententia, baptismum constare sine verbo, et [139] negare voluerit,

<sup>109</sup> *ed. princ. erat.*

mundari nos baptismo, sed quia, ut statim subiicit declarationem, verbum connexum est cum aqua baptismi, et in aqua mundat. Detrahe, inquit, verbum, et quid est aqua nisi aqua? Quaerit unde sit tanta virtus aquae, ut corpus tangat, et cor abluat, nisi faciente verbo? Porro fides adhaeret verbo, et ita fide mundantur corda per baptismum. Ideo, addit ille, aquae virtutem abluere cor, faciente verbo, non quia dicitur, sed quia creditur. Ac subdit paulo post: Verbo sine dubio, ut mundare possit, consecratur baptismus. Caeterum tota doctrina de baptismo, Christo dante, alias tractabitur accuratius et plenius. FINIS.

### **Westphal's text in translation**

*Justified defence against the false accusation brought by sacramentarians, by Joachim Westphal, servant of the Church in Hamburg, in which the matter of the Lord's Supper is also discussed. Frankfurt, printed by Petrus Brubach in the year 1555, 105, 130-139:*

[105] (...) In a way they<sup>110</sup> allow infants to die unbaptised, because they offer the hope that one may attain salvation without baptism. And they set out to convince the common people that nobody is reborn or saved by baptism, but that baptism only seals, and represents as it were a public affirmation that those who receive baptism have already been sanctified, and participate in salvation. (...)

[130] (...) Finally, I will now submit [131] some matters to the judgement of God's church, in order that it [the church] may consider and decide on the basis of Catholic Scripture to what extent these conform to the rule of Christian doctrine. On the face of it, he<sup>111</sup> holds the sacraments in considerable esteem: about their power, use, and sublime character he speaks with more veneration than do most others. However, in actual fact he obscures and honours many a pernicious aberration of the

<sup>110</sup> I.e., the "sacramentarians" Westphal mentioned earlier.

<sup>111</sup> I.e., Calvin.

fanatics, and leads the people astray by ambiguous complexities.

He correctly teaches that the sacraments have been ordained in order to bring us to communion with Christ, that they are instruments by which we are implanted into the body of Christ or, once implanted, become even more fused with it.<sup>112</sup> But why does he then say that infants born from Christian parents are sanctified, and are members of the church, before they are baptised?<sup>113</sup> If by baptism they are incorporated and taken into communion with Christ, they surely have not been incorporated into the church before baptism. If he maintains that they have been incorporated before they are cleansed by baptism, [132] he is speaking with two tongues and interprets “being led to the communion with Christ” and “being registered” to refer to the outward/external<sup>114</sup> registration and the statement before the church, so that those who had been incorporated before are now being outwardly<sup>115</sup> integrated and written, as it were, into the church register. For what he writes on these matters in rather circumlocutory language is explained more clearly by others, namely by assuring us that by the sacraments we are visibly incorporated into the communion with Christ and his saints, a communion into which, however, we had already been incorporated by means of His grace before we partook of the sa-

<sup>112</sup> See Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 25, in CO 9,16-17; OS 2,269.26-36 (cf. TT 2,222-223): “Quorsum vero instituta sint Sacramenta, recte a nobis traditum, vel iniquissimi quique fateri cogentur: nempe ut nos ad Christi communionem deducant. (...) Si illis cordi est Sacramentorum dignitas, quid obsecro ad eam ornandam aequae magnificum, quam dum adminicula et media vocantur, quibus vel inseramur in corpus Christi, vel insiti magis ac magis coalescimus, donec solide nos secum uniat in caelesti vita?”

<sup>113</sup> Calvin had not addressed this issue in the *Defensio* (1555), but he did mention it in the pamphlet he wrote against the Interim: *Interim adultero-germanum: cui adiecta est Verae christianae pacificationis et Ecclesiae reformandae ratio* (1549), with *Appendix* (1550), in CO 7, 545-686, there (among other places) 677-681; see also n. 69 above.

<sup>114</sup> Or: official.

<sup>115</sup> Or: visible.

craments: what is represented by baptism is not figured there for the first time but was already present. Infants born from holy parents are already holy in the womb and participate in salvation; they belong to the church, not by baptism, but from before time, when they were accepted as God's children. These paradoxes clearly contradict Christ's words: Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved,<sup>116</sup> and Nobody [133] can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born again of water and of the Spirit.<sup>117</sup>

Also, if the definition is correct that the sacraments are the instruments by which God works his power and affirms and seals to us His grace,<sup>118</sup> why then do the sacramentarians deny that people are regenerated, and their sins forgiven, by the water of baptism? Why then does Calvin accuse me of blindness, and does he tell all and sundry that we err when we place our trust in the sacraments, and award them a power that is God's alone?<sup>119</sup> It is not we who ascribe the power of salvation to the sacraments, but our Lord Jesus Christ has attached a promise of salvation to baptism and faith, and says in Mark 16: Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.<sup>120</sup> We are not transferring some part of salvation to created beings, nor do we detract

<sup>116</sup> Mark 16:16.

<sup>117</sup> John 3:5.

<sup>118</sup> See *Consensio*, art. 7, in CO 7,737; OS 2,248.29-30 (cf. TT 2,214): "Sed hic unus inter alios praecipuus, ut per ea nobis suam gratiam testetur Deus, repraesentet atque obsignet." Ibid., art. 13, in CO 7,739; OS 2,250.10-11 (cf. TT 2,216): "Organa quidem sunt, quibus efficaciter, ubi visum est, agit Deus (...)" ; Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 29, in CO 9,20; OS 2,272.21-23 (cf. TT 2,226): "(...) esse tamen hunc finem praecipuum inter alios, ut per ea Dominus suam gratiam nobis testetur, repraesentet atque obsignet."

<sup>119</sup> See Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 31, in CO 9,21; OS 2,273.18-23 (cf. TT 2,227): "Ubi vero accedit immodica commendatio, vix se a pravo et vitioso reverentiae excessu continet centisimus quisque. Ita et illis perperam affigitur salutis fiducia, et quod unius Dei proprium erat, indigne ad illa transfertur. Qua in re plus quam caeca est istorum qui nobis obtrectant pervicacia." Cf. *Consensio*, art. 11, in CO 7,739; OS 2,249.26-28 (cf. TT 2,215): "Hinc concidit eorum error, qui in elementis obstupescunt, et illis affigunt salutis suae fiduciam."

<sup>120</sup> Mark 16:16.



from God's power or activity, even if we say that sacraments are instruments of deliverance; for we speak of *God's* sacraments, [134] *God's* promise, and *God's* presence working through the ordained means, as Paul says: The Gospel is the power of God to save all who believe.<sup>121</sup> If they are called God's instruments, surely all the honour, power and efficacy of the sacraments is ascribed to God; in the same way as they have been instituted and ordained by him, they also acquire their power and honour from him alone. However, the fact that it has pleased God to institute them and demonstrate his power through them does not mean that the sacraments should be denied power—this should be allotted to them as holy instruments. Nor is it correct to say that the ministry means nothing, only because Paul writes that the ministers are nothing and cannot deliver anything without God planting and watering them;<sup>122</sup> for Paul that is no reason to reduce the sacraments to virtually nothing. He recommends elders because of their office,<sup>123</sup> and adorns them with honorifics such as “stewards of the mysteries of God”<sup>124</sup> and “ambassadors for Christ.”<sup>125</sup> How can sacraments be nothing<sup>126</sup> [135] or effect nothing,<sup>127</sup> if office holders honour preachers by calling them “God's labourers,”<sup>128</sup> and “servants via whom people attain faith”?<sup>129</sup> God is present in the sacraments and in his word, and effects faith and salvation in people; thus, the sacraments are effective by virtue of God's order, pre-

<sup>121</sup> Romans 1:16.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:7.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. 1 Timothy 5:17.

<sup>124</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:1.

<sup>125</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. *Consensio*, art. 11, in CO 7,739; OS 2,249.28-29 (cf. TT 2,215): “(...) quum sacramenta a Christo separata nihil sint quam inanes larvae.”

<sup>127</sup> Cf. *Consensio*, art. 13, in CO 7,739; OS 2,250.6-10 (cf. TT 2,216): “Itaque, quemadmodum Paulus admonet, eum qui plantat aut rigat nihil esse, sed unum Deum qui dat incrementum: ita et de Sacramentis dicendum est, ea nihil esse, quia nihil profutura sint, nisi Deus in solidum omnia efficiat.”

<sup>128</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:9.

<sup>129</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:5.

sence, and action; it is not their fault, but the people's, that they demonstrate their power to a lesser degree in unbelievers.

This makes it rather unwise for our opponent partly to cancel the effect of baptism,<sup>130</sup> and partly to make it dubious.<sup>131</sup> He is cancelling the effect when he writes that baptism temporarily remains without consequence, but will eventually yield a result: [stating] that the benefit derived from the sacraments should certainly not be limited to the moment of administering.<sup>132</sup> However, the fact that some who as infants were washed in the holy source do not evince any effect of baptism when they get older, does not imply that their baptism has been in vain or without effect.<sup>133</sup> Some who by baptism [136] were truly regenerated and sanctified but were abandoned as they grew up and did not receive the obligatory sound instruction, have lapsed into the iniquities of sin; many who have received the Word of God with gladness have relapsed in times of persecution.<sup>134</sup> [Truly,] the effect and the benefit of baptism extend over the whole of life.<sup>135</sup> [But] this does not mean that the sacraments do not have effect at the moment they are administered. The fact that people who—although they were baptized—were not re-born as children, may still be regenerated as adolescents or in

<sup>130</sup> Westphal discusses this in more detail on 135-137.

<sup>131</sup> Westphal discusses this in more detail on 137-139.

<sup>132</sup> See *Consensio*, art. 20, in CO 7,741; OS 2,251.27-29 (cf. TT 2,218): "Utilitas porro quam ex sacramentis percipimus, ad tempus, quo ea nobis administrantur, minime restringi debet (...)." Cf. Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 42, in CO 9,29; OS 2,281.19-23 (cf. TT 2,236): "Utilitas Sacramentorum non restringenda ad tempus perceptionis. Huic capiti affine est quod proxime addidimus, nempe quae ex Sacramentis percipitur utilitas, eam ad externae sumptionis tempus non debere restringi, acsi Dei gratiam eodem secum momento advenherent."

<sup>133</sup> See n. 65 above.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Mark 4:16-17.

<sup>135</sup> See *Consensio*, art. 20, in CO 7,741; OS 2,251.33-34 (cf. TT 2,218): "(...) Baptismi utilitas ad totum vitae decursum patet."

their old age<sup>136</sup> is no reason to shift the power of baptism to adolescence or old age. How much more correct is Augustine's teaching in book 1 of *The morals of the Catholic Church*, chapter 32,<sup>137</sup> i.e., that by the holy water the regeneration of man is started, to be completed gradually; in some people sooner, in others later.<sup>138</sup> And in book 14 of *On the Trinity*, chapter 16:<sup>139</sup> The regeneration resulting from actual conversion does not happen in an instant, like [137] the regeneration in baptism which does happen instantaneously by the forgiveness of all sins. And in the same way as being free of fever is not the same as recovering from the infirmity caused by the fever, so is the aim of the first treatment to take away the cause of the illness—which is done by the pardon of sins—and the second sets out to cure the illness itself, which happens slowly and gradually in the renewal of this image.<sup>140</sup>

Our opponent also puts the effect of baptism into doubt by referring to the predestination,<sup>141</sup> even though the Scriptures focus our minds on the Word and the sacraments and by these assure us of the predestination and salvation, and count those among the elect who heed the voice of Christ, believe the promise of the Gospel, and persevere in their faith. Now then, even though one may call foolish those who focus on mere signs rather than on the promises attached to them, and [138] even though we would be justified in citing here the famous word of Augustine's that a sacrament is made when the Word is added to the element,<sup>142</sup> caution is still needed: the view that it is not

<sup>136</sup> See idem, in CO 7,741; OS 2,251.31-33 (cf. TT 2,218): "Nam qui in prima infantia baptizati sunt, eos in pueritia, vel ineunte adolescentia, interdum etiam in senectute regenerat Deus."

<sup>137</sup> Should be: chapter 35; see next note.

<sup>138</sup> Aurelius Augustinus, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum libri duo*, I, 35, 80, in CSEL 90, 86.

<sup>139</sup> Should be: chapter 17; see next note.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate libri quindecim*, XIV, 17, 23, in CCSL 50/1,454.

<sup>141</sup> See notes 34-36 above.

<sup>142</sup> See Calvin, *Defensio* (1555), 31, in CO 9,21; OS 2,273.30-38 (cf. TT 2,227): "Ut superstitioni obviam iremus, primo loco diximus stulte eos facere, qui

the substances of water, bread and wine that lead us to communion with Christ and the spiritual goods but that we are led to Him by the promise,<sup>143</sup> is incorrect in so far that it is faith that makes dwell in us everything that is offered by the signs, in order to prevent the Word or the promise from being torn out of the sacraments, and baptism from being seen as nothing but water and the Lord's Supper as nothing but bread and wine. The Word should not be separated from water, bread and wine; for, the sacrament does not consist only of elements, but also of the Word. Augustine emphatically attaches great weight to the words of Christ, who said that the Apostles were pure, not because of their cleansing by baptism, but because of the Word;<sup>144</sup> he did not stress this because he might have thought that there is a baptism without Word and [139] he might have wanted to deny that we are cleansed by baptism, but because, as he immediately explains, the Word has been added to the water and cleanses by means of the water. Take away the Word, he says, and what is the water but water? From where, he asks, does the water derive such a power as to touch the body and purify the heart, if not from the Word? On the other side, faith latches on to the Word and in this way, by faith, the

ad nuda tantum signa, ac non potius ad promissiones illis annexas, respiciunt. Quibus verbis nihil aliud voluimus, quam quod omnium consensu vere et scite Augustinus docet, tum demum ex elementis Sacramenta extare, dum verbum accedit, non quia profertur, sed quia creditur (...) [Homil. in Iohannem 80]." See Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* CXXIV, 80, 3, in CCSL 36,529. Cf. *Consensio*, art. 10, in CO 7,738; OS 2,249.17-19 (cf. TT 2,215): "Neque enim ad signa nuda, sed potius ad promissionem, quae illic annexa est, respicere convenit."

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *Consensio*, art. 10, in CO 7,738; OS 2,249.21-25 (cf. TT 2,215): "Ita materia aquae, panis aut vini, Christum nequaquam nobis affert, nec spiritualium eius donorum compotes nos facit, sed promissio magis spectanda est: cuius partes sunt, nos recta fidei via ad Christum ducere: quae fides nos Christi participes facit."

<sup>144</sup> John 15:3; Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* CXXIV, 80, 3, in CCSL 36,529. Westphal's subsequent references to Augustine are all to the same passage.

heart is purified by baptism. Hence, he says, the power of the water to cleanse the heart: this is because of the Word—not because it is spoken, but because it is believed. And a bit further down he explains: it is undoubtedly the Word that sanctifies baptism in order to cleanse. For the rest the whole doctrine of baptism will, Christ willing, be analyzed in more scope and more detail another time.<sup>145</sup> THE END

<sup>145</sup> Westphal realised this intention a year later in his *Loci praecipui, de vi, usu, et dignitate salutiferi Baptismi ex Evangelistis et Apostolis collecti a Magistro Ioachimo Westphalo, Ecclesiae Hamburgensis Pastore* (Argentorati: Blasius Fabricius, 1556) (VD 16, 2298). For a typical specimen, see there, 75-76: “Definitur a Christo baptismus esse lavacrum regenerationis ex aqua et spiritu, per quod homo renatus haeres sit regni Dei. Haec definitio complectitur baptismi elementum, causam efficientem, finalem, virtutem, et usum baptismi. Elementum est aqua; causa efficiens, Spiritus sanctus; effectus, regeneratio et ingressus in regnum Dei. Coniungit Christus aquam et Spiritum; non ponit aquam solam absque Spiritu, nec solum Spiritum absque aqua. Non debent ergo separari in regenerationis sacramento aqua et spiritus, neque a baptismo Spiritus removeri. Ex aqua non posset homo renasci, aqua non ablueret peccata, si Spiritus sanctus abesset. Vere dicitur, res externas non conducere ad regenerationem et peccatorum absolutionem, si absint Dei verbum [76] et Spiritus. Aqua quidem est res externa, quae nihil confert ad renascentiam et salutem hominis. Baptismus autem est non solum aqua, sed habet coniunctum Dei verbum et Spiritum sanctum. Nihil igitur movemur clamoribus pseudo-prophetarum vociferantium, baptismum esse rem externam et inutilem.”



# The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy: A Second Look at Travers' *Supplication* and Hooker's *Answer*

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**ABSTRACT.** The Hooker-Travers controversy was a local squabble with far-reaching implications. Travers' *Supplication* was intended to neutralise Hooker's more generous approach to the task of theology especially regarding Rome, at least by reformation standards. Not least was Travers' *Supplication* intended to defend his living in light of his expulsion from the Temple Church. Yet the debate disclosed attitudes towards the tasks of ministry that show up in ways not perhaps intended by their supporters. The *Supplication* and *Answer* bring into sharp and personal relief two ministers each of whom was passionately committed to the cause of reform. Hooker distinguishes himself as an erudite debater and one who was willing to achieve his polemical goals by going no further than the question demanded. It is clear that if Travers was the better preacher, he was no match for Hooker's rhetorical skills. Travers' own case was not helped by conflating his theological polemic and characteristic Puritan anxieties over episcopal governance (whose assent he himself needed), with a rational need for the support of a parish living he was at the point of losing.

**KEYWORDS:** Hooker, Travers, *Supplication*, *Answer*, Temple Church, Hooker-Travers Controversy.

## Preamble

In this paper, I explore the complaints and polemic of Hooker's relationship with Walter Travers as two ministers sharing a common vocation yet whose appropriation of Genevan reform was quite different. Their conflict disclosed the usual range of

disagreements in reformation England but the main purpose here is to examine something of the cares and questions that arose as a matter of course in the exercise of ministry. The Hooker-Travers controversy was a local squabble with far-reaching implications. Travers' *Supplication* was intended to neutralise Hooker's more generous approach to the task of theology especially regarding Rome, at least by reformation standards. Not least was the *Supplication* intended to defend Travers' living in light of his expulsion from the Temple Church. The debate disclosed attitudes toward the tasks of ministry that revealed the assumptions that guided their approach to reformed ministry. The *Supplication* and *Answer* bring into sharp relief the cause of reform in England and very different temperaments to which it seems reform appealed. In the final analysis, Hooker refused to be drawn into reducing the high theological questions of reform to matters of personality. Therefore, in this respect, Hooker resolutely developed those procedures which came to serve him in both the *Lawes* and his extant sermons by examining the actual charges Travers' brought against him and the underlying theological issues which for Hooker were to be considered more dominant.

### **Travers' Complaint**

When Walter Travers' was silenced in March of 1586 for his challenge to Hooker's preaching, he must have been aware of the questionable wisdom of doing such a thing, at least so far as his future living might be concerned. His reception of presbyterian orders in Antwerp situated him as a recognised leader among Puritans—the "neck" to Cartwright's "head"—and his appointment as lecturer at the Temple Church placed him in line to be rector. However, after the appointment of Whitgift in 1583 Travers' situation was no longer secure. Whitgift's appointment of Hooker was of course strategic and resulted inevitably in a collision of both views and personalities.

Before turning to an outline of Travers' complaints, it is reasonable to consider that, as in many such situations, the purity



of Travers' outrage against Hooker was in some measure diluted by the completely practical matter of being dismissed from employment—his living. Strength of theological conviction does not diminish the need to make a living and we notice Travers defending as best he can “that litle benefitt whereby I lyve”<sup>1</sup> appealing to the larger precedent of the maintenance of ministers of the Gospel. There is accordingly an ingratiating tone to the Supplication which seems somewhat out of step with Travers' grand assurances of sacrificial and single minded ministry in the service of just about everyone which, in case they had failed to notice, Travers would on at least three occasions “referre to your Honours wisdoms.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, men of much weaker ability than Travers himself, even having “ben convicted of notorious transgressions of the laws of god and man, being of no abilitie to do other service in the Church then to read: “These men have been much more charitably dealt with and he therefore feels very badly done by. But of course, this is somewhat to be expected from the point of view of Puritan piety especially as it was characterised by Hooker and not without truth. The Scriptures declared that a link existed between godliness and suffering and that in the hands of Puritan piety such a link was necessarily prescriptive. Did not Second Timothy declare that “all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”?<sup>3</sup> However, Hooker took the view that a good deal of human suffering was due to nothing more than bad decision making, and the simple propensity of humans to err whether or not such error was always to be considered sin. People respond accordingly. Therefore, Travers attempts to construct the equation that Jesus suffered without benefit of a proper hearing and he, Travers, will conduct himself with the same dignity as Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hooker, “A Supplication Made to the Privy Counsel by Master Walter Travers,” in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 208:29.

<sup>2</sup> Hooker, “Supplication,” 192:1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim 3:12. See also 2 Tim 2:3–13; 1 Pet 4:12–19; Rom 8:17.

Christ. It immediately becomes clear to him that he has just cast the Privy Council in the role of the Pharisees and himself in the role of Jesus. So although "Much lesse do I presume to liken my cause to our Saviour Christs..."<sup>4</sup> he presses on confident that everyone cares about fair dealing. It might ultimately have been better for him to remove the reference to Jesus before the Pharisees!

So now with a new archbishop, Travers has lost his living and Hooker is "the roote of all inconveniente events which are now sprounge out."<sup>5</sup> That is, Hooker is surly and argumentative and has deliberately picked a fight with Travers. Travers, by contrast is all light. He is open, accessible, and is driven by an unassailable quest for the truth and it is in this respect Travers considers Hooker most suspect. Before the Privy Council, Travers insists his appointment by the congregation is the ratification needed notwithstanding. His ploy was really to get Hooker to accept his authority within the congregation on this account. Had he been able to establish that, Hooker's role as Master would have been even more difficult.

Travers' complaint is not just against Hooker. Archbishop Whitgift is also a target. The case can be summed up as follows:

1. By the test of the Scriptures, Travers ministry is lawfully carried out and similarly authenticated by English ex patriots in Antwerp. The French and Scottish churches recognised his order and as part of a larger Christian commonwealth, England should recognise his order too. Archbishop Grindal did! Furthermore, Travers went to Antwerp of his own accord.

2. Travers preached without a licence. But of course, Travers had refused to sign the subscription.

<sup>4</sup> Hooker, "Supplication," 191:5f.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Hooker, "Master Hookers Answer to the Supplication that Master Travers made to the Counsell," in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 227:24f.

3. Hooker was intractable and had actually conspired against Travers. He was arrogant and closed to all appeal when confronted with Travers' reasonable concerns, which were after all, motivated by his concern for the spiritual condition of his congregation and the purity of its doctrine. Hooker's appointment was a human artifact. Had it been a *congregational* decision the authority of the Holy Spirit would have stood behind it. As a result, Hooker sought an ungodly superiority over Travers though he responded to Hooker with a restraint the gravity of the situation did not justify.

4. Travers' theological concerns dealt with four things: an array of minor liturgical and pious irritants, Hooker's apparent easy toleration of Romish doctrine, his specific handling of predestination and the status of Mary in the church. But we should note that this is Hooker's assessment of the charges. Travers never develops the status of Mary to any extent, nor the questions of assurance and predestination in the "Supplication." His main concern is Hooker's attitude towards Rome and the attendant question of justification.

The cumulative effect of such a catalogue in Travers' mind was intended to enlist Privy Council's reconsideration of his dismissal. Without Travers, the pace of reform could only be hindered. Naturally, Travers appears somewhat selective in his charges and, if Hooker's response is to be believed, a few interesting omissions on Travers' part would only have served notice to Whitgift that his dismissal was for the best interests of Canterbury and the Crown. Certainly, Hooker's response, as a model of limited and highly focused argumentation, did nothing to make life easier for Travers and to that we now turn.

### Hooker's Response

Travers' defence involved the very uneven criticism of Hooker as the newly appointed Master of the Temple. We learn this not from Travers but from Hooker. It is actually quite surprising that Hooker would spend so much of his "Answer" handling such issues as his praying before sermons but not after he had

delivered them, kneeling for prayer and at the reception of Communion. But when we learn of Hooker's claim that Travers objected to supplication for bishops, it becomes clear that the accumulation of such apparently small matters is part of Hooker's defence against Travers' charges. In effect, since Hooker is making his defence to Whitgift himself, pointing up Travers' lack of interest in praying for bishops positions Hooker as evermore the loyal son of the church and the respecter of persons — respect which Travers claimed Hooker denied him. But when a clash of personalities occurs it is difficult to maintain one's sense of balance and Hooker notes, with perhaps exaggerated toleration that under normal circumstances Travers would have regarded such concerns as mere curiosity but since Hooker was their target, they have been magnified out of all proportion. "Yf therefore I have given him [Travers] occasion to use conference, and exhortations unto peace, if when they were bestowed upon me, I have despised them; it will not be hard to shewe some one worde, or deed, wherewith I have gone aboute to worke disturbance, one is not much, I require but one."<sup>6</sup>

In a superb piece of strategy Hooker resorts to his favourite tactic by appeal to the idea of "the reasonable man" and common wisdom and behaviour. Could Travers himself be in mortal danger? Could he have abandoned his own conscience by behaving in such a reckless way and making such baseless accusations? He cares for Travers' condition in a way Travers does *not* care about Hooker's. But the conscientious pastor in Hooker concludes that perhaps it was a good thing for Hooker to be appointed in order to lead Travers into truth. At best, Hooker thinks Travers has simply been thoughtless in his speech. Nevertheless, because Hooker is crafty, he injects the possibility of more sinister purposes since Travers has laid open exactly this with respect to Hooker's alleged sympathies for Rome. To the accumulated charges Hooker writes:

<sup>6</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 230:16-20.

Theis things are not laid againste me for nothinge. They are to some purpose if they take place. For in a mynde perswaded that I am as he discifereth me, one which refuse to be att peace with suche as imbrace truth, (...) any thing that shall be spoken concerninge the unsoundnes of my doctrine cannott choose but be favourablye interteyned.<sup>7</sup>

Thus far, Hooker has been on the defensive. He has defended his integrity but now the balance has shifted. Perhaps Travers is not the best person to be making judgments about others, Hooker reasons. Travers' credentials as a prosecutor of Hooker's "unsoundnes" do not qualify for such a task since "A thing greatly to be lamented that such a place as this which mighte have byn so well provyded for, hath fallen into the handes of one no better instructed in the truth."<sup>8</sup> How can one account, asks Hooker, for such a combative and irrational attitude in Travers? Travers was himself aware that he could easily be accused of jealousy or mere personal dislike of Hooker and he spends an inordinate amount of time distancing himself from such a charge. Naturally, Hooker has his own analysis for this. He thinks Travers is simply afflicted with a predisposition to see matters in one way alone such that "colours which looke upon with greene spectacles and thinke what they see is greene? when indeed that is greene whereby they see."<sup>9</sup> So if one's Christian desire is mainly to root out error, then a person will certainly find it everywhere, even where none exists. Now all this preliminary sparring from Hooker is designed for one thing and that is the substantive issues of theology. By this point in his "Answer" Hooker has fashioned a portrait of Travers that bears a stronger resemblance to reality than Travers' characterisation of Hooker. Both have a considerable amount at stake but it is Hooker that understands strategic debate rather than Travers and Hooker clearly does not view Travers as his

<sup>7</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 235:13-19.

<sup>8</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 235:22-24.

<sup>9</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 235:26f.

intellectual equal. As Hooker moves to discuss the classic themes of Puritan theological interest, initially, the ever-present question of Christian assurance, we note just how economic Hooker is in his responses. He never extends his rebuttals beyond what logic or rational response seem to demand—we are not yet in the *Lawes*. Nevertheless, Hooker does broaden the implications of the charges.

Travers takes the expected line that friendship with Rome is the enemy of justification and that error here renders all other questions around salvation moot. But Hooker argues here as he does in the sermons and the *Lawes*, that insofar as Rome does not reject the basis of the Gospel, such areas of agreement should be the basis for conversation. So Hooker writes, “In dee-de they [Catholics] teache that the merytt of Chryste doth not take away actuall synne in such sorte as it doth originall: where in if theire doctryne had byn understood I for my speeche had never byn accused.”<sup>10</sup> For Travers this is impossible to imagine. Yet Hooker declares that where he needs to disagree with Rome he does so: “No man doubteth but they [Trent] make another formall cawse of justification then we do, in respecte whereof I have shewed alrebye that we disagree aboute the verye essence of that which cureth our sprituall disseas.”<sup>11</sup> Hooker constantly wants to make a distinction between the effects of the Gospel and official pronouncements. The agreement over the meritorious death of Christ in Hooker’s mind is not at issue but rather the means of applying it. Again, the question of the sinlessness of Mary is raised by Travers but Hooker spends very little time discussing its viability because he says, “...the fathers of Trente have not sett downe any certenty aboute this question, but left it doubtful and indifferente...”<sup>12</sup>, which we would at the present time characterise as *adiaphora*. In any case, he thinks Travers has misquoted his remarks concerning Mary.

<sup>10</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 242:21-24.

<sup>11</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 242:25-245:1.

<sup>12</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 241:6-8.

The entire matter is clearly tedious to Hooker when in the midst of grave debate he has to defend not only the content of his preaching (which he thinks Travers is poorly qualified to judge), but also "the manner of my teaching."<sup>13</sup> He has been accused of defending himself using the methods of the Schoolmen and thus indulging in obfuscation and ambiguity, to which Hooker replies that this merely shows how incapable Travers was of mounting a charge of unsound doctrine against him. And in a familiar flourish Hooker notes that Travers' "private judgements"<sup>14</sup> "is no canon"<sup>15</sup> so that "it doth not muche move me when master Travers doth saie that which I truste a greater then master Travers will gainsaie."<sup>16</sup>

### Hooker's Own Accusations

Now in a wonderful rhetorical reversal. Assume, he says, that everything Travers has said is true.<sup>17</sup> Yet the manner of his bringing the charges has been without restraint. His accusations have increased disturbance and dissension, not lessened it. He has not guarded his own tongue and there are many Scriptures which speak to that kind of behaviour. By royal and episcopal decree says Hooker, erroneous doctrine taught publicly should not be refuted publicly.

Now he reaches for his decisive defence. He puts the thinking behind Travers' accusations on view. One can argue endlessly about details but Hooker never follows that road. The real issues always reside in a person's thoughts and desires and these can never be hidden for long. Thus he summarises Travers as a libeller and asks whether Travers could possibly have imagined that libelous statements against Hooker could be justified by the sincerity of motive to cause Hooker to recant his views.

<sup>13</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 245:7.

<sup>14</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 246:18.

<sup>15</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 246:15.

<sup>16</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 246:27-30.

<sup>17</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 247:1ff.

*His thinking it meete he shuld firste openly discover to the people the tares that had byn sowen amongst them and then require the hand of auctorithy to mowe them downe doth onely make it a question whether his opinion that this was meete maye be a previledge or protection againste that lawfull constitucion which had before been determined of it as of a thing unmeete.*<sup>18</sup>

The matter has now come full circle and it is Hooker who now censures Travers who has consistently maintained that he was only doing his solemn duty. But of course, as Hooker has earlier noted one's duty does not include libel. And now Hooker is the attentive pastor. If the question of personal scruple or reformed conscience is at stake for Hooker, then it is also at stake for Travers.

*If the order be suche that it cannott be kepte without hasarding a thing so precious as a good conscience the perill whereof could be no greater to hym then it needes muste be to all others whom it towcheth in like cases, when this is evydente it wilbe a moste effectuall motive not onely for England but also for other reformed churches even Geneva it self (for they have the like) to chaunge or take that awaie which cannott but with great inconvenyence be observed.*<sup>19</sup>

The entire dispute could have turned out very differently but Travers chose to attack Hooker without sufficient private consultation—he did it publicly which transgressed both the law of the church and of Christ.<sup>20</sup> To listen to Travers says Hooker without the benefit of actually knowing what was said “mighte ymagyn that I had att the least denyed the divinitye of Christ...”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 248:22-27.

<sup>19</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 248:28-249:4.

<sup>20</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 250:19.

<sup>21</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 251:11f.



As Hooker concludes his “Answer,” the question of God’s election is never far away. It is not a doctrine Hooker ever denied and was for him as for Travers, the surest sign of divine mercy and not an instrument of rejection. As such it is intimately linked to assurance which, if the godly did not think so, was not primarily associated with conscious sensation of desire or pleasure. The presence or absence of holy joy must, according to Hooker, include the observation that mercy implies misery at some level else it could not be described as mercy. In a passage whose rhetorical construction makes the point for itself, Hooker writes,

(...) because election is through mercie and mercie doth alwaie presuppose misery it followeth that the very chosen of god acknowledge to the praise of the riches of his exceeding free compassion that when he in his secrett determinacion sett it downe *those shall lyve and not dye*, they laie as ougly spectacles before him as leapers covered with dounge and mire as ulcers putrefied in their fathers loines miserable worthy to be had in detestation. And shall any foresaken creature be able to saie unto go *Thou diddest plounge me in the deepes* and assigned me unto the endlesse tormentes onely to satisfie thine owne will, finding nothinge in me for which I could seeme in thy sight so well worthy to feelle everlasting flames?<sup>22</sup>

Thus the persuasion of the senses does not secure an absolute degree of trust that our senses have been reliable, and in the matter of faith, doubt does not invalidate the truth of divine election. In fact the truth of election is just as likely to be appropriated in the midst of misery as in holy joy by the very nature of election itself – perhaps more so.

## Conclusions

Hooker has clearly reversed the debate with Travers who has been less concerned with arguing theology, so far as the “Sup-

<sup>22</sup> Hooker, “Answer,” 253:13-24.

plication" is concerned, than complaining about his dismissal. The more he complained, the more leverage he gave Hooker and the less it appeared he had a case. Hooker for his part ends his "Answer" in conciliatory manner much as he does in the Preface to the *Lawes* where he says, "My minde leadeth me... to flye and to convey my selfe into some corner out of sight, where I may scape from this cloudie tempest of maliciousnes, whereby all parts are entered into a deadly warre amongst themselves, and that little remnant of love which was, is now consumed to nothing."<sup>23</sup> In the "Answer" it is with a similarly heavy heart that Hooker observes "...there can come nothing of contention but the mutuall waste of the parties contendinge till a comon enemye daunce in the ashes of them both..."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the Anglican Communion of our generation can still take heed of Richard Hooker's sage advice in the contentious debates of his own age.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity: Preface, Books I to IV*, vol. 1 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Georges Edelen, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), Preface, 9.3:1.52.20-24.

<sup>24</sup> Hooker, "Answer," 256:31f.

# Christian Psychological Identity

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**ABSTRACT.** The article reviews the history of self as a concept, from corporate self to self differentiated from human being and person. Views of self extended from Augustine and Aquinas to Locke and the Christian existentialists. The fragmentation of self, however, has resulted in fragmented persons, marriages, and societies. It is through identification with Jesus Christ that self is reclaimed to the place intended by the Creator. Therefore, formal explication is made of arguments for identity as well as for character and theological virtues. A sidelong glance is paid to nihilistic and spiritualist trends, while the reader is called back to the certainty of self-in-relationship to God and in fact. The article was written for academic theologians and teachers of religion primarily; however lay readers who persist will grasp meanings as they are conveyed in language that befits an august journal.

**KEYWORDS:** human being, person, self, identity, virtue.

## **The History of Self with Some Definitions/Descriptions**

Professor Phillip Cary of Eastern Baptist University in Philadelphia (and formerly of Yale Divinity School) has credited Augustine of Hippo—Saint Augustine—with the beginning of the invention of self as we know it in the West.<sup>1</sup> Theretofore, self had a more corporate meaning, especially when used by New Testament writers. To equate self in the way that it has been used after the Enlightenment, for example, to pre-Augustinian denotation would mean that one most probably would be reading into Scripture through a 21<sup>st</sup> century lens or viewpoint.

<sup>1</sup> Phillip Cary, *Augustine. Philosopher and Saint*, audio edition (Chantilly, Virginia: The Teaching Company, 2007).

Some further elaboration could help specify terms. "Human being" as a term generally refers to what is shared by all people who can be so described: a heart-kidney pumping system, genetics codes that are approximately the same regardless of race or gender, central nervous system coordination of sensation-perception, and ability to use abstract symbols such as speech, language, and to think about thinking in due course or to recognize the gifts of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (love). The animating force for such a being is often called soul. The difference between a human being who is alive and one who is not involves respiration, circulation, electrical activity of the brain, and non-*rigor mortis* (although some professors have doubts about some students concerning this last qualifier, while the opposite surely is true from the perspective of some students).

A "person" is a human being whose identification is much more specific: s/he has a definite date and time of birth, a given name, identifiable parents, and racial and gender characteristics that include color of eyes, pigment of skin, and secondary sexual characteristics. Each person's fingerprint is unique among human beings, both those alive and over the history of the race. A person for the first two weeks or so of gestation has no definite gender markers or markers to be an individual. Each pregnancy, for example, can result in twins and that demarcation does not take place until about the 14<sup>th</sup> day or so after egg-sperm having been joined. It would be an error, then, to speak of an individual person as having had solo existence from the moment of conception; however, that error in naming would be human error since God knows whether the conception will or will not be a single child, twins, or even triplets or quadruplets (and recently quintuplets who have survived). Either way, the pregnancy will result in one person or more. About one of three (1:3) first pregnancies will result in miscarriage; and, approximately five of eight (5:8) eggs implanted with sperm in the fallopian tubes will not be attached to the mother's uterus but will

be discharged from her body. From these data alone, human personal life is indeed precious.<sup>2</sup>

The “self” of the human person, discernible over history in all cultures, represents a more porous or narrow concept depending upon relational factors. Augustine credited self with the ability to use memory, especially memory from the past that could be called into the present moment. He argued that the person looked outside of him or herself upward toward God, proving that the self was a nonphysical operating process. Thomas Aquinas relied upon Augustine but argued that, unlike the neo-Platonists (the philosophical school that so influenced Augustine), Aristotle as preserved through Islamic writers made a better case for selfhood. He argued for the concept of rational animal in that each person was much like other animals with a spinal cord and brain, but that we each were rational or had soul infused with the body from the moment of conception. He called this animating principle of amalgamation hylomorphism. It could be argued that Aquinas was the first existentialist, preceding Luther in the sense of standing here on one’s own as an integer, and preceding Kierkegaard in the sense that existence was foundational to life itself—especially a life of belief and creative speculation. Above all, self is a story teller, that person whose unique life events make this self Paul, or Claudia, or Adrian, or Simona.

### **Fragmenting the Self**

Descartes tried to doubt all that he had been taught, but he could not doubt that he doubted—he was certain of that. That certainty led him to conclude that because he thought, therefore he existed. Of course, Descartes was not able to join the thinking self with the physical self, and he thereafter left humanity with a problem greater than the one with which he began; namely, dualism (which invariably opens the road to skepticism).

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Love and Steven Stosny, *How To Improve Your Marriage Without Talking About It* (New York: Broadway Press, 2007).

On the Continent, the rationalists such as Leibnitz and Kant tried to show that selves existed for practical purposes, although in the later case they could not know reality but only their perception of reality called the idea. To refute this line of argument, one need only kick a wall or experience a tooth ache to realize that there is direct perception of reality since in either case the pain does not belong to someone else and is not some vacuous idea. Professor Johnson is credited with the first salvo,<sup>3</sup> while the latter is familiar to readers of Richard Rorty.<sup>4</sup>

In the British Isles, Bacon, Locke, and Hume could be described as emphasizing the physical aspects of human beings. They were called empiricists. Locke argued for self that developed within the content of a black box (*tabula rasa*), somewhat akin to arguments from Galileo. Hume thought self was nothing more than a name for associated habits, such as self as father or husband, self as believer, self as warrior, anon. He argued that the concept of cause was nothing more than a habit of one idea or event associated with another. His associations were called into question by the Scottish theologian-philosopher, Thomas Reid. Reid asked Hume, effectively, to explain why night which followed day was not caused by day. Hume realized that his arguments were caught in the fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* thanks to Reid's persistence.

To rescue self from both the idealists and empiricists, Søren Kierkegaard argued for a being who found him or herself in life—especially the Christian life—and who had some either/or choices to make. The very fact of making such choices could be described as existential. Since the whole self-as-being made the choices, Kierkegaard built upon Luther's "Here I stand" argument. However, Kierkegaard was very careful to see the ground of individual existence as Christian community. Down the road, other thinkers (Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Jaspers)

<sup>3</sup> Roger Scruton, *Kant* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

built upon Kierkegaard's pioneering efforts to attempt to rescue self from the fragmentation bequeathed to it by Descartes.<sup>5</sup>

Others who further fragmented self after Descartes were the philologist (Nietzsche) and the psychoanalyst (Freud). Nietzsche argued that self was created within relationship, but that the choices a person made were better made without religion, metaphysics, or a being most people call God. To some extent, Marx and Engels argued similarly but independently—neither one of them having ever been inside a factory or living as members of the working class, the proletariat. Freud tried to reduce human beings to a series of drives that went unfilled or were frustrated, a drive being a combination of instinct-social forces. Whether the individual, like Humpty Dumpty, could ever be put back together again remained an enigma for Freud and his followers.

### **Reconstruction of the Self**

Other psychologists such as Carl Rogers posited the concept of self as the ontological starting point for each of us, and he has been followed by interventionists such as Albert Ellis who argued for unconditional self acceptance, and Raymond Cattell whose mathematical models have shows the genetic necessity of the concept of self. From the Christian perspective, Paul Tillich and Rollo May each have argued for self, while the atheist British philosopher Ayer argued for a dimensionless self who was merely the owner of means—a thin executive self who directed roles that persons learned to play as a matter of survival.

Lastly, the postmodernists have entered the fray. For those who argued that truth was not something to be discovered but that it was a term that was created by each of us (from arguments by Derrida and Foucault, for example), Barbara Held has

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Solomon, *Existentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

argued that a dose of reality could be offsetting to them.<sup>6</sup> For Buber and Levinas, however, there is the possibility that self-in-relation to God carries the day while overcoming the fragmentation residual to so many theorists after Descartes. Fragmented selves, then, seem to go hand-in-hand with fragmented marriages, and then with fragmented families, and then with fragmented neighborhoods, and then with fragmented societies. Self created in the image of God, then—our Biblical heritage—is worth not only another look but consideration as a basic ontology more profound than that of Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, or Kierkegaard.

### **Postmodernism, Spiritualism, and Theology**

Aside from having no Archimedean point except God from which to begin, many more Christians could be lumped as postmodernists than might admit to that term. Individuals who interpret Scripture, say, differently than their neighbors do would be an example, as would Christian followers of the Jewish philosophers of theology, Martin Buber and Emanuel Levinas. Both of them taught that the focus on self as individual ontology emphasized by Aristotle and his progeny contradicted Scripture. More foundational (ontological) they taught was the biblical imperative that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God. From the beginning of each person-self, then, s/he was in relationship to God, s/he was conceived within relationship, and s/he could only survive as an infant within relationship with another self-person. Levinas pushed this envelope further than the I-thou relationship of Buber with his arguments that the *other* in the relationship was reason to invoke the beginnings of ethics; namely, to do good unto others as you would have them do good unto you.

The American psychologist at Swarthmore, Kenneth Gergen, could be considered a quintessential spokesperson for the post-

<sup>6</sup> Barbara S. Held, *Back to Reality. A Critique of Postmodern Theory in Psychotherapy* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 1991).



modernism of this generation in social science. Some might take exception that the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Jean Bakker Miller of Harvard, might have not only taught from a relational venue but that she championed a coherent intervention that replaced the individuation of object-relations theory with appropriate dependence. Daniel J. Adams, the Presbyterian theologian, has earmarked four aspects that guide most postmodern appraisals of theology; namely: 1). decline of the West; 2). legitimacy; 3). rejection of metaphysics; 4). the play of arguments concerning meaning.<sup>7</sup> Defenders of the modernist perspective (that period of time when the four factors according to Adams reigned supreme) would argue that there is no decline in the West, that the present is just a period of globalization that more adequately includes the North, East and South; that some ideas are not legitimate such as challenges to the Resurrection, or challenges to direct creation of the human soul by God, and challenges to the doctrine of the Trinity; or challenges that each person is rooted in an abstraction called self as a basis for individual responsibility but also is rooted in a discernible relationship—commencing with God—that also is foundational to self development; that various interpretations and arguments about the meaning of a text (Derrida) have nudged postmodernism into place ever since the Reformation with its plethora of meanings but that scholarly agreement about texts and sources overwhelms disagreements.

Beginning with Schleiermacher and then with sidelong glances at both Barth and Tillich, denominationalism according to them wanes in importance compared to individual faith. Process or relationship to each other in the sense of love (how Christians are supposed to recognize each other) has become more important for them than loyalty to metaphysical principles—or interpretation of those principles—such as Calvin's

<sup>7</sup> Daniel J. Adams, "Toward a Theological Understanding of Postmodernism", in *CrossCurrents Magazine* (web edition), [www.crosscurrents.org](http://www.crosscurrents.org), 47.4 (1997-1998).

teaching concerning the elect, how an elect can exist side by side with individual repentance, or how God could permit the greatest sin in history – the murder of his son. With the internet, individual computers, fax copies, email, e-texts, quick printing formats, journals galore, Bible study groups independent of churches, anon, the challenge to intellectuals who lead congregations has never been greater.

Along with Vaclav Havel, many believers in transcendent reality (his term) or God (variously reported as *axis mundi* by 95 percent of Americans, for example, according to consistent result from polls taken by George Gallup of the Gallup Polls, Princeton, New Jersey) claim something uniquely spiritual about themselves. This whole argument can be referred to as spiritualism. Spiritualist adherents believe that God resides within them but generally without them aggrandizing to here-and-now-*theosis*. A greater problem and possible danger comes when the individual thinks that s/he is endowed to make god-like decisions, as did the murderers at Columbine, or the planners against the Jews for National Socialism, or the inquisitors who believed that because they were promised the spiritual keys to the kingdom that they had rule over life and death in the temporal realm. These last issues bespeak two further arguments; namely, connectedness and values. Once they are dealt with, this paper will turn to Christian identity.

Spiritualist adherents generally recognize their longing to connect or hook up with a reality outside of themselves that is greater than each person – whether it be a hookup with God, or with God's church, or with God through Scripture, or with God through the theological and cardinal virtues, *inter alia* – or with God through all of these institutions.<sup>8</sup> The longing to connect or to be in relationship seems fundamental to each human being, and from Scriptural sources is fundamental to each human being. The balance between subjective and objective, or between

<sup>8</sup> Benedict J. Groeschel, *The Virtue Driven Life* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2006).

the created and Creator seizes the point. This is precisely the argument that Barbara Held made in her text, *Back to Reality*; namely, that the subjective or postmodern rationale runs the risk of solipsism lest each person come to appreciate reality. The ultimate reality for Christians is God and God working through his gifts of Scripture, Church, and Covenants.

### **Identity and Virtues**

Identity in philosophy means that two objects are the same, so much so that they occupy the same space and time. Strictly speaking, then, identical twins are not philosophically identical, but they have such great similarity that they are referred to by onlookers that way. When someone says, for example, that he identifies with the Spartan's football team, or she says that she identifies with a particular manufacturer of women's jeans, identity in that sense represents the broadest possible use of the term in street argot. The psychologist who wrote *Young Man Luther*, Erik Erikson, coined the term "identity crisis" to mean that adolescents tended to identify with processes typical of that age group: rebellion against authority, willingness to adopt hair and clothing styles typical of their age group, and trying to belong to or be accepted by the in-group of friends at school or church.

The Apostle Paul has written eloquently that the Church is the Body of Christ (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12). In some sense, then, as elaborated by the Romanian theologian Paul Negruț, Christ and His Church are identical.<sup>9</sup> Professor Negruț has also written about the Church from both the vertical and horizontal points of view, one as the Body of Christ that has visible presence in the community and the other as the invisible church that is guided by the Spirit. These two vectors merge in Einstein's sense of the fourth dimension where time and space meet: that identical merger is called the Eternal. When an individual accepts the Church of Christ through the gift of faith and s/he

<sup>9</sup> Paul Negruț, "Evangelism and the Local Church", in *Perichoresis* 1.1 (2003).

then participates in the Body of Christ visibly and passionately, identification with the Eternal has taken place. An adult sign of this identity would be Baptism, for example.

In order to keep identity strong, Groeschel among others has elaborated the cardinal and theological virtues.<sup>10</sup> The cardinal virtues can be nourished within the identity process with the Church and through contact with its members: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. However, the theological virtues that encourage identity are gifts through grace from the Triune God: faith, hope, and love (or charity). Again to Paul the Apostle who referred to love as the greatest of the theological virtues: he did so to emphasize that through love, Jesus was obedient so that Christians could have life everlasting. It was the obedience of Jesus to accept his murder and his actual death that saved us, not the murder itself. He further elaborated that love was the point of recognition of one Christian for another, and it was love that permitted us each to reflect the likeness of God since Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors as we each loved ourselves. What is lovable about us is that capacity to care for each other, especially for the poor, and to give self as a matter of the larger reality called the Church. In that very special sense of identity, *nihil est veritatis luce dulcius*. It is that relationship that enables Christian selfhood, that supports Christian selfhood, and that is Christian selfhood.

### Trinity and Self

With this explication of top-down theology (i.e. that human selfhood is enabled, maintained and made evident in relationship), knowing God through Christ and being thoroughly identified as a Christian can be either an intellectual exercise or a true religious experience. Augustine analogized the Trinity as Love, Beloved, and Loving when speaking of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. His comments were clearly meant to reflect revealed relational experience within the Trinity. Our own nature

<sup>10</sup> Groeschel, *The Virtue Driven Life*.

also calls for relationship between those binary processes within us that reflect our physical and abstractive qualities. According to the law of entropy, however, any object set in motion stays in motion—unless some force impedes that motion. Thus, we physically are impeded from living very long corporal lives since disease, oxidation, and other impeding factors are at work to confirm the law. However, that process within us that is not physical, that cannot be quantified, and that can think about thinking about thinking finds nothing in experience to defy entropy so that process can live without end. That process or soul then longs for its Creator, and that longing strengthens the self-Trinity bond unique in Christian life.

### Conclusion

The history of ideas shows that self moved from corporate considerations, to staunch individualism, to the fragmented self, to the relational self of postmodernism. Lest it regress to solipsism, the postmodern self yearns to hookup or merge with greater realities outside of itself, and especially to forge relationship with God through the Church. It is most reasonable, then, for Christians to work ceaselessly at the identity process through the lessons of Scripture as the voice and word of God, and to engage identity with the Eternal through the Church that is the Body of Christ. As the Episcopal religious and historian Bonnell Spencer wrote: *Ye Are the Body*.<sup>11</sup> Therein lies Christian identity—theologically, scripturally, logically, practically, and in fact!

<sup>11</sup> Bonnell Spencer, *Ye Are the Body* (West Park, New York: Holy Cross Publications, 1952).



# *Deus Dixit*: The Power of the Word of God in Luther and Barth

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**ABSTRACT.** This article is an investigation of Martin Luther's theology of the cross as interpreted by Karl Barth who seems to have rejected Luther's dialectic of the Law and Gospel. Nevertheless, as Barth strongly defends Luther's theology of the cross, the fundamental question which arises is whether a theology of the Word can be proposed solely on the grounds of his theology of the cross, namely without taking into consideration his dialectic of the Law and Gospel. The author's suggestion resides in a good apprehension of Luther's and Barth's contexts which—if understood properly—demonstrate that their theologies share a high degree of similarity. This is allegedly proved by the fact that Barth had successfully recaptured Luther's traditional Reformation slogans: *sola fide*, *sola gratia* and *sola scriptura*.

**KEYWORDS:** Martin Luther, Karl Barth, theology of the cross, word of God, Law and Gospel

Martin Luther (1483-1546) held that the proper differentiation between Law and Gospel was integral to any theology of the Word. It is the hermeneutic of his *theologia crucis* (his Theology of the Cross). Formally, Karl Barth (1886-1968) rejected Luther's interpretation of the Law/Gospel dialectic; seeing it as an *a priori* assumption on Luther's part. To Barth there must be no *a priori* decisions made when one confronts scripture or when doing theology.<sup>1</sup> Barth does side firmly with Luther regarding the *the-*

<sup>1</sup> See Daniel L. Migliore, "Introduction," in Karl Barth *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, volume 1, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen and Translated by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.,

*ologia crucis*. We must ask if it is possible to take the Theology of the Cross and leave the Law/Gospel Dialectic and still maintain a proper theology of the Word. Here I will argue that once the distinction between Luther's and Barth's contexts are clearly understood, their different understandings of the Word of God and the Theology of the Cross are, despite Barth's protestations to the contrary, very similar.

Concerning Barth, I have chosen to focus on his *Göttingen Dogmatics*. While Barth quotes frequently from Luther in the *Church Dogmatics* (going so far as to use a quote from Luther as the preface to CD I/2) the *Göttingen Dogmatics* has as its focus preaching and the Word of God. The immediate context of the *Göttingen Dogmatics* also lends itself to comparison with Luther. Thus it seems fitting for this discussion on the Word of God to begin in Göttingen.

The *Göttingen Dogmatics* were written in 1924. They are Karl Barth's first lectures in theology. They have only become widely available to scholars in the last decade, therefore there is very little study already done on this era in Barth's theology. It is especially fitting to this study because Göttingen was a Lutheran school. Barth's main foil in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* was Lutheran orthodoxy. The question that remains is how different their views actually were.

### **A Time of Crisis**

The social, political, and cultural situations that Barth and Luther came out of are at the same time vastly different and strikingly similar. Both men sought to save the church from destroying itself. Both looked to scripture as the objective ground upon which to base their theological convictions. The eras in which they lived caused both to question human achievement

1991), xl: "Certainly in Lutheran Dogmatics the doctrine of justification has monopolized attention. Barth wants to avoid setting his dogmatics on the summit of a single dogma... For Barth the center and object of Christianity, of Christian proclamation, and of Christian dogmatics is God in his self-revelation."



and trust only in God. Their splits with the respective “orthodoxies” of their ages grew out of pastoral concerns. Both saw the aim of theology (dogmatics) was to serve proclamation. Both debated the most influential theologians of their age (Erasmus and Eck; Harnack and Brunner). Even the theological landscapes which look at first glance to be quite dissimilar have much in common. This section will show that the experience of crisis, however, was the determinative factor that drove each theologian to seek security in God and not in human achievement. It was this common experience (precipitated by different factors) that brought each man to a renewed respect for and conviction about the Word of God.

With respect to Luther, the late medieval period was marked by an overarching crisis of meaning or value. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the Plague had reached its height, leaving large areas desolate. Famine nearly always follows both wars and plagues, and this era was no different. Urbanization and social dislocation only added more misery to the mix. In other words, one’s physical existence was a torment day to day. But above the heads of the people hung a more terrible torment—eternal damnation.

The issue for Luther, then, was one of salvation. In many ways, Luther reflected the angst of his age.<sup>2</sup> The crises of the time combined with the predominate theology that stressed human achievement in earning salvation led him to question his

<sup>2</sup> Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), 33: “Luther knew perfectly well why youths should make themselves old and nobles make themselves abased. This life is only a brief period of training for the life to come, where the saved will enjoy an eternity of bliss and the damned will suffer everlasting torment. With their eyes they will behold the despair which can never experience the mercy of extinction. With their ears they will hear the moans of the damned. They will inhale sulphurous fumes and writhe in incandescent but unconsuming flame. All this will last forever and forever and forever. These were the ideas on which Luther had been nurtured.”

own goodness and salvation (*Anfechtungen*<sup>3</sup>). This started him on his search for a gracious God. Luther's response to the medieval crises was to be certain of God but to never be secure in human society. This engendered his rejection of indulgences and his movement to the *theologia crucis*.

Barth also lived in an era of extreme (some might even say unparalleled) crisis. As a young pastor in Safenwil, Switzerland he could often hear the rumbling of the guns of World War I in the distance. Into this crisis a somewhat naïve Barth dropped his own bombshell—his famous *Commentary on Romans* (*Das Römerbrief*). The question that confronted Barth in this commentary was similar yet slightly different from that of Luther. Luther struggled with how one can speak of a gracious God in light of sin, death, and the devil. Barth struggled with how one can speak of God at all.

In August of 1914, Barth's theological world shattered as the Guns of August roared. How can one speak of God after the destruction and carnage of that Fall? This was more difficult for Barth than one might imagine today. Why? In the *Humanity of God*, Barth described the theology of age as "religionistic, anthropocentric, and in a sense even humanistic."<sup>4</sup> With its focus

<sup>3</sup> Later Luther described the weight of this angst or foreboding in his *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses*, see LW, 31:129ff: "I myself 'knew a man' [2 Cor 12:2] who claimed that he had often suffered these punishments, in fact over a very brief period of time. Yet they were so great and so much like hell that no tongue could adequately express them, no pen could describe them, and one who had not himself experienced them could not believe them. And so great were they that, if they had been sustained or had lasted for half an hour, even for one tenth of an hour, he would have perished completely and all of his bones would have been reduced to ashes. At such a time God seems terribly angry, and with him the whole creation. At such a time there is no flight, no comfort, within or without, but all things accuse."

<sup>4</sup> Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Selected Texts) in Clifford Green, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 48. Barth continues his definition, "To think of God meant for them, with scarcely any attempt to hide the fact, to think of human experience, particularly the Christian religious experience. To speak of God meant to speak about humanity."

on man instead of God, now when humanity seemed so inhumane, the theology Barth had learned in seminary seemed to be nothing more than sinking sand. There was no objective ground (no solid rock) upon which to stand. For Barth this made the task of preaching nearly impossible. He had learned that theology was about God, yes; but it was also about the nobility of the human spirit. In 1914 the human spirit looked anything but noble and theology was silent as the guns roared.

Out of this crisis of meaning Barth began to write his *Commentary on Romans*. Like Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*, he did not intend it to be a document that would set off a firestorm or start a new theological system,<sup>5</sup> he wanted to learn afresh what it meant to proclaim the Word of God in a world gone mad. In *Romans* he sought to recapture the Reformation motif that scripture is the Word of God and that most importantly God is God! For Barth, like Luther before him, then, the theological issue most at stake was a proper understanding of God and how that God may be best proclaimed to a world in need of his Word.

The theology in which Barth was reared and educated had turned "God" into the religious feelings of dependence (Schleiermacher) or worse as mere projections of anthropology (Feuerbach). For Barth, then, the *krisis* of modern theology was not the distinction between the Law and the Gospel but the proper understanding of the "infinite qualitative difference between God and humanity."<sup>6</sup>

As much as Luther contends that a theologian must be able to properly distinguish between Law and Gospel,<sup>7</sup> Barth holds

<sup>5</sup> Barth writes that he began his theological reconfiguration: "[not out of any] desire of ours to form a new school or to devise a system; it arose simply out of what we felt to be the 'need and promise of preaching'..." Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (WGWM). Translated by Douglas Horton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 100.

<sup>6</sup> Barth, WGWM, 99.

<sup>7</sup> See Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," no. 20 in *LW*, 31:40: "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."

that a theologian must be able to properly distinguish Creator from creature. Any theology that fails to do so is a theology of glory. Only in and through Christ (that is to say a Theology of the Cross<sup>8</sup>) can one properly speak the Word of God. Only in and through Christ can we (the created) know the Creator.

For both Barth and Luther the *theologia crucis* meant the rejection of all preconceived notions of God. It meant that theology is always *fides quarenes intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) and never the reverse.<sup>9</sup> For Luther this meant a rejection of philosophy as a theological starting point.<sup>10</sup> For Barth it meant an absolute rejection of the *analogia entis* (the analogy of being) and a movement towards an *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith). Here Barth and Luther are making identical movements: it is never

<sup>8</sup> See Barth, *WGWM*, 119: "The cross is the demand of God that we ask about him, about God; it is his declaration that as long as we live, though all other question may finally be answered, we may not tear ourselves loose and be free from *this* one."

<sup>9</sup> See Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 58: "For Luther, in the realm of true theology reason functioned only *ex post facto*, that is, as an ordering principle by which the biblical revelation was clearly set forth. Enlightened reason, reason which is incorporated into faith, could thus 'serve faith in thinking about something,' for reason informed by the Holy Spirit 'takes all thoughts from the Word'." And Barth's *Anselm: Fides Quarenes Intellectum*.

<sup>10</sup> See David Whitford, "Martin Luther," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "Thus revelation is seen in the suffering of Christ rather than in moral activity or created order and is addressed to faith. The *Deus Absconditus* [the hidden God] is actually quite simple. It is a rejection of philosophy as the starting point for theology. Why? Because if one begins with philosophical categories for God one begins with the attributes of God: i.e., omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, impassible, etc. For Luther, it was impossible to begin there and by using syllogisms or other logical means to end up with a God who suffers on the cross on behalf of humanity. It simply does not work. The God revealed in and through the cross is not the God of philosophy but the God of revelation. Only faith can understand and appreciate this, logic and reason—to quote St. Paul become a stumbling block to belief instead of a helpmate." And Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation* no. 29: "He who wishes to be philosophize by using Aristotle without danger to his soul must first become thoroughly foolish in Christ."

possible to begin with human wisdom and get to God. The only way to God is in God's own self-revelation. That understanding led each to focus their ministry, writing, and theology on the Word of God.

### **The Word of God**

Luther's theology of the Word can be summed up in the short phrase, "Scripture holds Christ like a cradle." Luther states in his "Preface to the Old Testament:"

[In scripture] you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds. Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them.<sup>11</sup>

Here, Luther uses the image of swaddling cloths in two different, but important, ways. First, scripture creates an image of Jesus wrapped in mere strips of cloth. Then, he changes the image and transforms the metaphor in the second sentence. While still speaking of the lowly nature of the cloths, they now refer to two different things. The first is the cloths themselves, simple cloth wrapped around the Lord of lords. Second, the scriptures themselves. Just as those simple strands of cloth held the Lord, so too the simple words of humanity, simple characters of a book, carry the incarnate Lord.<sup>12</sup>

This provides us with a powerful tool by which to examine his view of scripture. Scripture is not merely the imagination of past generations projecting their own religious perspectives out onto the world, rather it is the carrier of Christ. To carry some-

<sup>11</sup> Luther, "Preface to the Old Testament (1545)," *LW*, 35:236.

<sup>12</sup> See George, *TR*, 84: "Holy Scripture is God's Word clad in human words, 'inlettered,' Luther said, 'just as Christ, the eternal Word of God is incarnate in the garment of humanity'."

thing implies it is active. Scripture is not passive for Luther. The *Verbum Domini* is alive and active.<sup>13</sup>

In an understanding of the Word as active and alive, Barth echoes Luther. For Barth, scripture is a human creation that “witnesses” to Christ.<sup>14</sup> Luther uses the concept carries, Barth opts for witness—it is a distinction without a difference. In both the words themselves do not have any inherent superiority to other human words. In this sense both reject any type of mechanistic plenary inspiration that would become prevalent in the fundamentalist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both Luther and Barth are looking beyond the words to the “Word.”

Barth also echoes Luther in his understanding of the Word as event. Barth casts this distinction in terms of an I-Thou encounter. He writes in the *Göttingen Dogmatics* :

What makes scripture holy scripture is not the correctness of the prophetic and apostolic statements about God but the I-Thou encounter, person to person. (...) Only within this I-Thou relation, in which one speaks and another is spoken to, in which there is communication and reception, only in full *action* is revelation revelation.<sup>15</sup>

Just as carrying something, so too witnessing or communicating involves participation. The *Deus dixit* elicits a response in the one to whom it is spoken. One cannot remain passive. The *Deus dixit* (the Word of God) elicits a response in the one to whom it

<sup>13</sup> *Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum* (the Word of God stands forever) was the first Protestant confession of faith adopted by the princes as they walked out of the Diet of Speyer in 1529. It refers to Isaiah 40:8, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.”

<sup>14</sup> See Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 1:201, “The Word of God is this second form, as the communication of God in history, is scripture, naturally not as a record of ancient religions, but as holy scripture; that is, as the witness of the prophets and apostles to Jesus Christ in which, and over against which, God the Holy Spirit bears witness to Himself.

<sup>15</sup> Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 1:58; emphasis original.

is spoken. One cannot remain passive, to do that is not to hear (*fides ex auditu*) the Word in the words.

For Luther, the Word of God is both revelation and redemption. Both words are nouns, but nouns that imply action. Revelation means to reveal something; redemption means to redeem. This sense of action may be connected to Luther's primary work as an Old Testament professor. In Hebrew the word for "word" is *dabar* which connotes not just word but deed and action.<sup>16</sup>

For Barth, too, revelation and redemption cannot be separated. In keeping with Barth's total rejection of natural theology, he held that there can be no partial non-salvific knowledge of God. Here we must recall that for Barth revelation is an I-Thou relationship. It is encounter. For Barth there can be no partial encounter with God. He writes, "Either God speaks, or he does not. But he does not speak more or less, or partially, or in pieces, here a bit and there a bit."<sup>17</sup>

The encounter with God and its elicited response (faith) forms the basis for his *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith). Whereby "human action becomes an analogy to the divine action; the free action of faith corresponds to the divine act of free grace."<sup>18</sup> Because Barth's understanding of ontology is actualistic rather than static, to be encountered by God is to be in relationship with God. For Barth, that relationship is in essence salvation. To be in relationship with God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ—the Incarnate Word—is to be redeemed.

For Luther, this double meaning of "word" undergirds his understanding of the incarnation and his understanding of the incarnation undergirds his interpretation of the Bible. The incarnation is what binds the two testaments together. In both the Word of God is revealed in redemption. It is in fact the same

<sup>16</sup> See Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, volume 1, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 325ff.

<sup>17</sup> Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 1:92.

<sup>18</sup> Migliore, "Introduction" in *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 1:xxxii.

Word spoken to humanity: in Christ the Word spoken in the Old Testament is spoken again more clearly.

Here Barth, being Reformed, takes a different approach than Luther. Barth, too, strongly maintains that in both the Old and New Testaments God's Word is revealed in redemption. He also maintains that it is the same Word spoken to humanity. Where he parts company with Luther is in his understanding of how the Incarnation binds the two Testaments together. Whereas Luther uses the a Testamental model, that is to say, in both the Hebrew scriptures and the apostolic writings, God has testified to our righteousness through his Word, Barth opts for Covenant. The God who confronted the prophets in the Old Testament is the same God that confronts us in the New. In either case the point that must be stressed is that in this fulfillment it is God's faithfulness to creation that is effective not creation's faithfulness.

Luther's incarnational framework also helps to explain the distinction he makes between Scripture and the Bible. For him, strictly speaking, both Scripture and the Bible are the Word of God. Both proclaim redemption. However, some parts speak more clearly, some, it could be said, carry Christ better. For example, is Christ not better carried in Paul than in James? Luther writes:

From all this you can now judge all the books and decide among them which are the best. John's Gospel and St. Paul's epistles, especially that to the Romans, and St. Peter's first epistle are the true kernel and marrow of the books. (...) For in them you do not find many works and miracles of Christ described, but you find depicted in masterly fashion how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death, and hell, and gives life, righteousness and salvation.<sup>19</sup>

Luther's hermeneutic is a hermeneutic of Christ-centeredness. Because Luther is primarily concerned with proclaiming the

<sup>19</sup> LW, 35:361f.



testament of God's graciousness, those texts which announce God's redemption of humanity most clearly are set forth by Luther as the center of scripture.

Barth is silent on a differentiation between scripture and the Bible in the *Göttingen Dogmatics*. He does note that we must look at the whole Bible and not "just a specific truth in the Bible as in the case of Luther."<sup>20</sup> However, in his *Epistle to the Romans* commentary he quotes Luther when he exegetes Romans 3:22-24, noting that here is the "very center and kernel of the Epistle and of all scripture."<sup>21</sup> So while Barth was unwilling to identify a formal hermeneutic, he was, nevertheless, willing to employ one in his thinking. He was unwilling to identify his internal hermeneutic because he wanted to stress the absolute objective encounter of God in revelation. The vastly different contexts between Luther and Barth may also have played a role in Barth hesitation.

Barth sought to insulate his theology and thus the proclamation of the church from any subjectivism. Following the nineteenth century's search for religious knowledge in oneself, Barth maintained that one encountered God only in God's self-revelation. Barth is also foreshadowing his later debate with Rudolf Bultmann. Barth is most interested in maintaining the objectivity and historicity of God's revelation witnessed in scripture. Thus, while his theology does demonstrate a Christocentric framework and his examination of scripture is always judged by Christ he was unwilling to set that out formally.

It is in their understanding of proclamation that Barth and Luther may be at their closest. Luther's understanding of preaching is also undergirded by his incarnational framework. Jesus Christ is the incarnate word, i.e., the incarnation of proclamation. For the salvation of humanity today, then, it is more important to proclaim the Word, than to read the Word. This idea

<sup>20</sup> Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 1:54.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Luther quoted in Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1968, reprint 1977), 99.

lies behind the reformation dictum, *fides ex auditu* (Faith comes through hearing). When reading the reader can remain separate from the thing read, there is a distance. This is much less possible in proclamation. In conversation it is very difficult to remain distant, when someone is speaking to you it is difficult to ignore him or her.

While Barth does not choose the same words to describe his theology the intention is very similar. One might say that the vocabulary is different but that the grammar remains the same. In the *Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth makes clear that God is the content of revelation and that Jesus Christ is the *Deus Dixit*:

If we presuppose that the church is the place where revelation is known through Jesus, and the *Deus dixit* is perceived, then the first and most natural and basic meaning is obviously that by means of his voice the voice of the other is heard. Who is this other, the Father (...).<sup>22</sup>

Barth also echoes Luther in his concern for the importance of proclamation and of the dangers of not getting involved. For Barth this is where the rubber hits the road: proclamation. Barth began his "reformation" because of the need to preach, and he saw all that he ever wrote dogmatically as support for the preacher. (Notice that the index volume to the *Church Dogmatics* is subtitled, "With Aides for the Preacher.") He saw dogmatics as the study work of a good preacher. You do not preach dogmatics but dogmatics provides the *regula fidei* of proclamation.<sup>23</sup> Theology, then, is for proclamation. This makes the task of preaching much more important, for at the end of a sermon one does not say, thus saith I, but Thus saith the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Barth, *GD*, 1:111.

<sup>23</sup> Barth, *GD*, 1:30: "Dogma does not relate to faith but to what faith says. It does not lay down what faith has to say. The question to the 'what' is far too serious to be answered by rules. Preaching is not the same as dogma. But in order to be correct teaching, pure dogma, [preaching] rests on reflection ... This is why we study dogmatics and not just symbolics."

### **The *Theologia Crucis***

For Luther a proper theology of the Word was not possible without both the Law/Gospel dialectic and the *theologia crucis*. As we noted above, the different social and historical context between Luther and Barth can, in part, explain why Barth rejected the Law/Gospel dialectic as a formal principle of interpretation. In spite of their different contexts, however, they both maintained strong theologies of the Word. Could Barth maintain a *theologia crucis* without the Law/Gospel dialectic?

Alister E. McGrath in his book *Luther's Theology of the Cross* states that there are six traits evident in Luther's *theologia crucis*. By examining each one and looking at similar traits in Barth we will demonstrate that there is significant similarity between Luther and Barth regarding the *theologia crucis*.

The first trait of the *theologia crucis* is that it is a "theology of revelation, which stands in sharp contrast to speculation."<sup>24</sup> The speculative theologies that Luther and Barth both attacked were different not so much in their content but in their context; the same is true for their attacks. Luther attacked the rampant speculation of the scholastics (note theses 47 through 49 of the *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* where he attacks the idea that even the inner Trinitarian life can be proved by syllogism!).

Barth's concern was with subjective anthropocentric speculation. Liberal nineteenth-century theology began with humanity as theological prolegomena. Whether it was human feeling or moral law or history, humanity was the starting point for thinking about God. Barth absolutely rejected this. For Barth theology must operate from above to below, that is to say from God's self-revelation to humanity and not from humanity to God.

The second trait is that revelation must be indirect and concealed. Because of humanity's fallen condition man can neither understand the redemptive word nor can he see God face to

<sup>24</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1985), 149.

face. Here Luther's exposition on number twenty of his *Heidelberg Disputation* is important. It is an allusion to Exodus 33, where Moses seeks to see the Glory of the Lord but instead sees only his backside. No one can see God face to face and live, so God reveals himself on the backside, that is to say where it seems he should not be. For Luther this meant in the human nature of Christ; in his weakness, his suffering, his foolishness.<sup>25</sup> This is, in brief, Luther's doctrine of the *Deus Absconditus*. The revelation of redemption in Jesus Christ is both hiddenness in revelation and revelation in hiddenness.

Barth holds to a very similar understanding. In fact the concealment of God in Christ and the hiddenness/revealedness dialectic runs throughout the *Göttingen Dogmatics*. For Barth, revelation must be mediated. Because of humanity's sinful condition man needs a mediator between God and himself. That mediator is Jesus Christ. Barth is picking up on Calvin's understanding of the three-fold office of Christ, but he maintains Luther's dialectic. He states that if "nonrevelation is to be revelation, everything hinges on God covering his inaccessible divineness with a humanness so that we may grasp him."<sup>26</sup> The relationship between Barth's understanding of the *Deus Absconditus* and Luther's understanding warrants a study in and of itself, and a full examination of it here is impossible. Nevertheless, Barth does hold to a doctrine where God reveals himself in hiddenness similar to Luther.

The third and the fifth traits both deal with revelation and suffering. In the third revelation is seen in the suffering of Jesus Christ rather than in moral activity or created order. Barth to holds that revelation should be seen in Christ and not in either the created order or moral law because both trigger his aversion

<sup>25</sup> See Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," no. 20 in *LW*, 31:40: "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."

<sup>26</sup> Barth, *GD*, 1:136. Barth discusses the *Deus Absconditus* in some length in his section on the "Historicity of the Incarnation." See *GD*, 1, 6.2:135-141.

to either the *analogia entis* or natural revelation. Likewise for Barth, Christ reveals God most fully in the cross.<sup>27</sup>

The fourth trait, and the last one we will deal with, states that revelation is addressed to faith, “which alone recognizes it as a revelation of God.”<sup>28</sup> This is very similar to the position held by Barth concerning the *analogia fidei* that was discussed above. Barth uses an I-Thou model for his understanding of the encounter of faith, where human faith is the analog of divine grace.

### Conclusion

We have been comparing the different understandings of Barth and Luther concerning the Word of God. If we understand doctrine as second order discourse (as opposed to first order discourse like preaching) and we understand its role as regulative (note that Barth states that dogma stands above and below proclamation) then we can compare how the regulative rules of one theologian’s doctrine match up with the other’s.<sup>29</sup> We have not argued that Barth was a repristinated Luther. What has been argued is that once you move below the surface dissimilarities between Barth and Luther you find a convergence; a simple difference between grammar and vocabulary. Barth used different words and images than Luther, but did not use a different grammar. Point by point, whether it is in his understanding of the *theologia crucis* or his understanding of proclamation or incarnation there is a difference in shade but not in color. Barth attempted to recapture the reformation ideals of *sola fidei*, *sola gratia*, and *sola scriptura*. Given the above analysis we may assert that he succeeded.

<sup>27</sup> See especially paragraph 59 in CD, IV/1.

<sup>28</sup> McGrath, *LTG*, 150.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).



# John Chrysostom's Homilies on Hebrews: An Antiochene Christological Commentary?

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**ABSTRACT.** The dominant thrust of scholarly readings of Chrysostom's Christological exegesis of Hebrews label it as being typically Antiochene. Patristic scholars like Rowan Greer and Frances Young have asserted that Chrysostom's commentary on Hebrews has all the hallmarks of the Antiochene Christological tradition. It highlights Christ's human achievement of obedience by progress through temptation and suffering; it stresses Christ's human experience and condition to such an extent that one is obliged to separate the Logos from it; and focuses on the moral or virtuous Christian life rather than on the transformation of nature. The point being conveyed is that these emphases betray an Assumed-Man Christology and place Chrysostom squarely in the Antiochene Christological tradition. In response, I will attempt to demonstrate that although Chrysostom belongs to the Antiochene exegetical tradition, he does not belong to the Antiochene Christological tradition. Two critical points will be outlined from Chrysostom's commentary on Hebrews: the personal continuity of the Logos-Son in Christ and the reality of Christ's identification with us in his obedience, suffering, and death as being essential for our salvation. Moreover, it will be shown that Chrysostom views Christ's identification with us as grounds for our reconciliation with God and adoption into his family. In short, I argue that Chrysostom's understanding of the Christian life is an outworking of his unitive Christology. Chrysostom, it will be pointed out, views Christ as one divine acting subject.

**KEYWORDS:** John Chrysostom, Christology (Antiochene/Alexandrian perspective), Soteriology (patristic perspective), Hebrews (patristic perspective), Patristics

### **A Brief Survey of Scholarship on John Chrysostom's Exegesis of Hebrews**

The dominant thrust of the scholarly readings of Chrysostom's Christological exegesis of Hebrews label it as being typically Antiochene, and hardly focus on the doctrinal framework that undergirds his preaching on the Christian life.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Rowan Greer's study of Antiochene exegesis of Hebrews presupposes that Chrysostom's exegesis as being essentially similar to his fellow pupil Theodore. He even argues that Chrysostom's Christology is Antiochene in nature because of his emphasis on the moral aspects of the Christian life betraying his assumed Man Christology. Such a Christology underscores the co-operation of the free will of the assumed Man with the divine will of Word: "The incarnation is totally the work of God, but that work could never have been effective had not the free will of the assumed Man allied him with the divine purpose."<sup>2</sup> Greer deduces the aforementioned conclusion from Chrysostom's use of double predication when speaking of Christ, and artificially imposes an "assumed Man" concept wherever Chrysostom speaks of Christ's humanity in his exegesis of Hebrews.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Greer contends that Chrysostom's understanding of salvation in moral terms with its emphasis on the life of virtue affirms this idea, "Chrysostom prefers to conceive salvation in moral than metaphysical terms. That is, the perfection of man as a moral creature more than it is the transformation of his nature. Certainly, despite Chrysostom's use of philosophical cate-

<sup>1</sup> This article is an adaptation of a paper that was delivered in November 2007 at the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual ETS Meeting in San Diego, California, USA.

<sup>2</sup> Rowan A. Greer, "The Antiochene Exegesis of Hebrews" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1965), 22. For an interesting discussion on the problems with the Alexandrian and Antiochene exegetical dichotomy see, Donald Fairbairn, "Patristic Exegesis and Theology: The Cart and the Horse," *Westminster Theological Journal* 69 (2007), 1-19.

<sup>3</sup> For instance commenting on Chrysostom's exegesis of Heb. 1:2ff, Greer asserts, "What Chrysostom seems to mean is that the Word is Son by nature, and the assumed Man Son by grace, and that through the incarnation there is but one Son." *Ibid.*, 49.



gories attendant upon the notion of mutability, he never regards salvation as the divinization of man's nature."<sup>4</sup> Reading Chrysostom's commentary without reference to its context can be misleading, and this is reflected in Greer's conclusion. He concludes that Chrysostom nowhere develops a "satisfactory Christology" in his exegesis of Hebrews, and that much of what he says has no "explicit basis in the text of the epistle. But one must give him credit for attempting to preserve in more careful language the religious insights of the text. Thus the strong double judgment of Hebrews regarding Christ's person finds expression in Chrysostom's double predication."<sup>5</sup>

In a later publication of his work, Greer seems to have altered his views slightly, admitting that there are instances in Chrysostom's exegesis of Hebrews where the, "absence of the assumed Man is most severely felt," but in doing so Chrysostom, "introduces a considerable degree of confusion and obscurity into his thought." Yet, Greer maintains that Chrysostom's exegesis and Christology must be viewed in reference to the classical Antiochene exegesis presented by Theodore, and wherever he departs from the Antiochene line, he does so deliberately in order "to avoid controversy."<sup>6</sup>

Discussing Christological ideas in Greek commentaries on Hebrews both from Alexandrian and Antiochene perspectives, Frances Young categorizes Chrysostom's homilies on Hebrews as typical of the Antiochene commentaries which focus on the theme of Christ's human achievement of obedience by progress through temptation and suffering. In other words, the exemplary nature of Christ's human struggle and triumph is underscored in the work of salvation, in contrast to Cyril who speaks of the pre-incarnation Logos and the post-incarnation Logos, and not of the distinction between the Logos and Man, safeguarding

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 59-60; 74.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., *The Captain of our Salvation, A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews*, 289, 291.

the unity of Christ's person. Although the presupposition of the commentators is the Nicene Faith (viz., that Christ is *ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρὶ*, and the assertion of the *Λόγος ἄτρεπτος*), where the idea of any change or improvement in the person of Christ through the incarnation was inconceivable, Young avers that Cyril concentrates on the "invincible activity of divine power, the injection of divinity into humanity, while Chrysostom underscores the exemplary power of human suffering and the achievement of human victory over sin."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Young points out that whereas Cyril's anxiety to safeguard the unity of Jesus Christ, "tended to underplay the suffering apart from the physical aspects which he could attribute to the flesh alone, Chrysostom emphasizes his experience of the human condition to such an extent that he is obliged to separate the Logos from it; this is the only way he knows of safeguarding both the reality of Jesus Christ's involvement, and the divine nature of the Logos."<sup>8</sup>

Young also finds Chrysostom's understanding of Christ's sacrifice for sin and his attribution of our salvation to the love of God as reflecting a Christology that is essentially Antiochene in character, in the sense that his human nature (which functions as mediator) and divine nature (as one sitting on the throne) are divided, consequently implying a division of will and purpose, and thus a division in Christ's person. She concludes:

Chrysostom wants to attribute salvation to the love of God dealing with sin, and yet he assumes that the sacrifice offered by the Man, Christ, propitiates the wrath of God, the Father. Father and Son are apparently divided, but since he consistently speaks of the High Priesthood of Christ being a function of his Manhood, while his sitting on the throne of judgement is a function of his Divinity, the implication is an uncomfortable division between God and Man within the Person of Christ himself.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Frances M. Young, "Christological Ideas in the Greek Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20.1 (1969), 150-163.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

Essentially, Young is underscoring the point the Chrysostom's Christology is divisive in nature and is therefore consistent with Antiochene Christology.

The aforementioned studies on Chrysostom's exegesis of Hebrews presuppose Chrysostom's Christology to be Antiochene in nature and study it in the light of the Antiochene Christological thought of his contemporaries, without making much qualification. Scholars like Greer and Young seem to take Chrysostom's use of double predication when speaking of Christ's human and divine nature as implying a division in the person of Christ, and therefore assume that his Christology is not a unitive one, in the sense of viewing the Logos-Son as single subject in Christ. Wherever Chrysostom's Christology appears to be strongly unitive in character, it is dismissed as being obscure or confusing (Greer) or whenever he speaks of the different operations of Christ's humanity and divinity, it is taken as lending support to a duality in Christ's person (Young). I will demonstrate that Chrysostom's picture of Christ, as it emerges in his homilies in Hebrews, is a unitive one, consisting of a varied mosaic that is rich in practical theology when viewed from the perspective of the Christian life in the context of the life and faith in the Church.

### **Chrysostom's view of the Ontology and Personal Continuity of the Son in His Incarnate and Post-resurrection Existence**

In the light of the scholarly readings which portray Chrysostom's Christology as being rather less than sure footed, even suggesting a duality in his understanding of Christ's person and consequently viewing his soteriology as being inconsistent, my purpose here is to suggest otherwise. I propose that Chrysostom's Christological thought is unitive: he views the Logos-Son as the single subject in Christ who entered brotherhood with humanity, identifying with us in his human nature, suffering, and death in order to make us members of one family and restore our fellowship with God.

Chrysostom's Christological picture with reference to the ontology of the Son in Hebrews is structured by two intertwined foci: incarnation and humiliation (*kenosis*). The exegetical use of the prologue of John's Gospel and the kenosis theme of Philipians 2 in his exposition of the first two chapters of Hebrews, suggests that he views the Christological concepts of these passages as being consonant with each other. For Chrysostom, the motif of the Word becoming flesh from the Johannine prologue is parallel to the motif of the humiliation of Christ in Phil 2:6-7, and he often blends these two themes together in his exegesis. This is apparent from his commentary on these two key Christological passages. Conflating the two ideas of the incarnation and humiliation in his commentary on Jn 1:14, he writes:

The Word became flesh and the Master took on the form of the slave. He became the Son of Man although he was the true Son of God, in order that he might make the sons of men children of God (...) He did not lower his own nature (*ιδίαν φύσιν*) by his descent, but elevated us, who had always been in dishonor and darkness, to ineffable glory."<sup>10</sup>

The Logos, the true Son of God, descended and assumed human nature (took on the form of the slave) in order to make us God's children and give us the privilege of divine fellowship. Likewise, in his exposition of Phil 2:6-7, Chrysostom observes:

Speaking here of his divinity, Paul no longer says, he became, he took, but he says he emptied Himself, taking the form of a ser-

<sup>10</sup> John Chrysostom, Homily 11, in *John (Patrologia Graeca 59.79)*. Chrysostom's commentary on the Gospel of John is now available in an updated English translation in the Fathers of the Church series. See *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist*, trans. Sr. Thomas Aquinas Goggin, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 33 (Washington, DC: The CUA Press, 1957); *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist*, trans. Sr. Thomas Aquinas Goggin, Fathers of the Church, vol. 41 (Washington, DC: The CUA Press, 1960). The Fathers of the Church series will henceforth be cited as FOC and *Patrologia Graeca* as PG.

vant, being made in the likeness of men. Speaking here of his humanity he says, he took, he became. He became (ἐγένετο) the latter [i.e. human], he took (ἐλάβειν) the latter; he was (ὑπῆρχε) the former [i.e. God]. Let us not then confuse or divide. There is one God, there is one Christ, the Son of God, when I say, "one" I mean a union (ἐνωσιν), not a confusion (σύγχυσιν); the one nature (φύσεως) did not degenerate into the other, but was united (ἡμωμένης) with it.<sup>11</sup>

Three points in particular are noteworthy in these two passages which shed light on Chrysostom's discussion of the Sonship of Christ in Hebrews. First, in the incarnation, the Logos descended to assume human nature without undergoing any change in his own nature. Second, it is apparent that Chrysostom views the Logos as the Christ's personal subject because he equates God, Christ, and the Son of God (there is one God, there is one Christ, the Son of God"). Third, the Logos is viewed as the person to whom being and becoming is applied, in that Chrysostom distinguishes being (who the Logos is in his divinity) from becoming (what the Logos does in his humanity). Christ, the Logos-Son, did not become God or assume deity upon himself, because he always was (ὑπῆρχε). Rather, the Son of God became man and took (ἐλάβειν) the form of a servant upon himself. These presuppositions animate Chrysostom's Christological exegesis of the first two chapters of Hebrews, where he speaks of the one subject Christ the Son of God, and refers to his person as the Word, the express image of the Father, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the one who took the form of a servant (or slave), often distinguishing who he is from what he does.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Homily 7, in *Philippians*, section 3, 13:214-215. *Homilies on the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. Philip Schaff, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975). Henceforth *NPNF*.

<sup>12</sup> See Ibid., Homily 1, in *Hebrews*, sections 2-4, *NPNF* 14:367-368 (PG 63.21-24).

In keeping with the personal continuity motif, Chrysostom invokes the kenosis theme to expound Heb 1:5 ("For to which of the angels did God say, 'you are my Son, this day I begotten you.' And again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my son'.")) asserting:

For these things indeed are spoken with reference also to the flesh: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son" – while this, "You art My Son, this day have I begotten You," expresses nothing else than "from [the time] that God is." For as He is said to be, from the time present (for this befits Him more than any other), so also the [word] "Today" seems to me to be spoken here with reference to the flesh. For when He hath taken hold of it, thenceforth he speaks out all boldly. For indeed the flesh partakes of the high things, just as the Godhead of the lowly (καὶ γὰρ σὰρξ κοινωνεῖ τῶν ὑψηλῶν, ὡσπεροῦν καὶ ἡ θεότης τῶν ταπεινῶν). For He who disdained not to become man, and did not decline the reality, how should He have declined the expressions? (...) For [if] He Himself being God and Lord and Son of God, did not decline to take the form of a slave, much more ought we to do all things, though they be lowly.<sup>13</sup>

Chrysostom equates God, Lord, and Son of God with Christ, noting once more that being who he is, he took the form of a slave in becoming human and thus as the Son of God he partakes of the flesh in the incarnation. In this union the divine partakes of the lowly and the flesh partakes of the divine. Earlier in his commentary, Chrysostom refers to this same thought, making use of the kenotic motif again to explain who the Son is in his deity (the brightness of his Father's glory) and what is accomplished through the incarnation. The one who now sits at the right hand of the Father is the same who partook of the flesh in his humiliation:

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., *NPNF* 14:373 (PG 63.24).

Therefore just as "the form of a slave" (Phil 2:6-7) expresses no other thing that a man without variation [from human nature], so also the 'form of God' expresses no other thing than God (...) Having said, "Who being the brightness of His glory," he added again, "He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty."<sup>14</sup>

The one who descended in the incarnation is the one who now sits on the throne. Furthermore, the ontological consistency of the Son is underscored from the perspective of his ministry of reconciliation and subsequent exaltation: the Son himself purged our sins and then sat down:

"By Himself," (*δι' ἑαυτοῦ*) he says, "having purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He here sets down two very great proofs of His care: first the "purifying us from our sins, then the doing it "by Himself." And in many places, you see him making very much of this—not only of our reconciliation with God, but also of this being accomplished through the Son. For the gift being truly great, was made even greater by the fact that it was through the Son.<sup>15</sup>

He illustrates the soteriological exigency of the Son's personal continuity in the incarnation using two images. He calls the first image an *ἐξόδου* or a "going out," where the Son himself "went out" in order to effect a reconciliation between God and humanity. The image is that of king who wishes to be reconciled with those who have offended him and are in chains outside, therefore he himself goes out of his palace to bring about this reconciliation. Commenting on Heb 1:6, on Christ as the *πρωτότοκος ἐισαγάγη* (firstborn who brings in), he observes:

For as in royal palaces, prisoners and those who have offended the king, stand without, and he who desires to reconcile them, does not bring them in, but himself going out discourses with them, un-

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., NPNF 14:372 (PG 63.22).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., NPNF 14:373 (PG 63.24).

til having made them meet for the king's presence, he may bring them in, so also Christ has done. Having gone out to us, that is, having taken flesh, and having discoursed to us of the King's matters, so He brought us in, having purged the sins, and made reconciliation.<sup>16</sup>

The other image is that of obtaining an inheritance or receiving something as a possession, and this is viewed as an *ἐλθοδον* or a "coming in," where the Son is depicted as returning with human nature and thus exalting it on the throne of God:

For the saying, "and when again He brings in the First-Begotten into the world," means this, "when he puts the world into His hand." For when He was made known, then also He obtained possession of the whole thereof, He did not say these things concerning God the Word, but concerning that which is according to the flesh. For if according to John, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him" (John 1:10): how is He "brought in," otherwise than in the flesh?<sup>17</sup>

In both these images Christ the Son is viewed as the one who "goes out" and "comes in": in the incarnation he went out (from the Father) and entered brotherhood with us by becoming the firstborn in order to make it possible for us to become the sons of God and to enjoy divine fellowship by bringing us to glory.

Furthermore, Chrysostom capitalizes on the theme of the heavenly session of Christ and the reverence and worship that is extended to him to underscore the continuity of the Son in his pre-incarnate and post-resurrection existence. In his commentary on Hebrews 1:6, "Let all the angels worship Him," he states that the writer underscores the superiority of Son among the hosts of heaven from the fact that he is worshiped. This adoration is extended to the ascended Son who, after assuming hu-

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Homily 3, section 1, *NPNF* 14:375 (PG 63.27).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Cf. Homily 5, section 1, *NPNF* 14:388 (PG 63.45-46).



man nature in the incarnation, is now seated on the throne. Like a master who introduces someone into the house and commands all those entrusted to his care to respect and reverence him, the ascended Christ likewise receives the reverence and worship that is extended to him by all the angelic beings in heaven.<sup>18</sup> The one who is the object of angelic worship cannot but be divine intrinsically. This becomes the focus of Chrysostom's exposition in the rest of the first chapter of Hebrews. The ascended Christ who is now worshiped in heaven is the preexistent Son. This was not an external honor bestowed on him but something which belonged to him before the incarnation because he is the same person.

Although the Son is now enthroned and exalted, he had entered brotherhood with us, having assumed our nature in the incarnation, identifying with us in his suffering and death in order to reconcile us with God. He who sits at the right hand of God is the humiliated Son who became our brother in order to make us the children of God. In a crucial passage Chrysostom underscores these issues and lays out the reason for the very incarnation of the Son:

He that is so great, He that is "the brightness of His glory," He that is "the express image of His person," He that "made the worlds," He that "sits on the right hand of the Father," He was willing and earnest to become our brother in all things, and for this cause did He leave the angels and the other powers, and come down to us, and took hold of us, and wrought innumerable good things. He destroyed death, He cast out the devil from his tyranny, He freed us from bondage: not by brotherhood alone did He honor us, but also in other ways beyond number. For He was willing also to become our High Priest with the Father: for he adds, "That He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." For this cause (he means) He took on Him our flesh, only for love (*φιλανθρωπία*) to man, that He might have mercy upon us. For neither is there any other cause of the economy, but this alone.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Homily 3, section 1, *NPNF* 14:375 (PG 63.27-28).

For He saw us, cast on the ground, perishing, tyrannized over by death, and He had compassion on us.<sup>19</sup>

Being who he is, the Son was willing to enter brotherhood with us in all things. He condescended in partaking of the flesh in the incarnation in order to free us from the bondage of death and to reconcile us with God to share in the fellowship of heaven as sons through his own personal mediation.

### **Chrysostom's View of the Necessity of Christ's Solidarity with us in His Humanity, Suffering, and Death**

Chrysostom's exposition of the motif of Christ's entering brotherhood with us in his homilies on Hebrews reflects a soteriological thrust consistent with his incarnational thought on the prologue of John's Gospel. In partaking of the flesh and identifying with us in his human nature, suffering and death, Christ made it possible for us to become members of God's family. Consequently, in uniting with him in faith, we are made joint-heirs and express that reality in the practice of the Christian life. Before studying Chrysostom's view of Christ's experience of suffering and death, we shall briefly examine his understanding of the need for Christ's solidarity with us in his humanity.

Christ's oneness with us in his humanity is viewed from both incarnational and sacerdotal perspectives, themes that are closely connected in Chrysostom's soteriology. By entering brotherhood with us, the divine Son united human nature to himself and by virtue of his ascension and exaltation raised it to glory.<sup>20</sup> Chrysostom consistently underscores the idea that the incarnation was not an appearance but a reality: the Son of God truly entered the human realm, he partook of flesh and blood just like humans are made of flesh and blood.<sup>21</sup> Out of divine love

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Homily 5, sections 1-2, *NPNF* 14:389 (PG 63.47).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Homily 4, section 5, *NPNF* 14:384 (PG 63.59-60).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Homily 4, section 5, *NPNF* 14:384 (PG 63.59-60).

he pursued human nature and took hold of it in the incarnation in order to elevate it to heaven:

For when human nature was fleeing from Him, and fleeing far away (for we “were far off” – Ephesians 2:13), He pursued after and overtook us. He showed that He has done this only out of kindness (*φιλανθρωπία*), and love (*ἀγάπη*), and tender care (*κηδεμονία*). As then when he saith, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (c. 1:14) – he shows His extreme interest in behalf of human nature, and that God makes great account of it, so also in this place he sets it forth much more by a comparison, for he says, “He taketh not hold of angels.” For in very deed it is a great and a wonderful thing, and full of amazement that our flesh should sit on high, and be adored by Angels and Archangels, by the Cherubim and the Seraphim.<sup>22</sup>

Although we have been given the privilege of being made the brothers of Christ and therefore the sons of God, Chrysostom (as always), safeguards the distinction between the Son and us as sons by noting who Christ *is* in relation to the Father and what he *does* in his function as the one who entered brotherhood with us. The difference between him and us is made clear by the fact that he possessed that dignity by nature. In order to bring many sons to glory and make us members of the same family (2:10-11), the Son of God became our brother. The divine Son united us as members “of one” (*ἐξ ἑνὸς*) family. Chrysostom writes:

Moreover “He” is of the Father, as a true Son, that is, of His substance (*ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ*); “we,” as created, that is, brought out of things that are not, so that the difference is great. Wherefore he says, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (v. 12), “saying, I will declare thy name to my brothers.” For when He clothed Him-

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Homily 5, section 1, NPNF 14:388 (PG 63.46).

self with flesh, He clothed Himself also with the brotherhood, and at the same time came in the brotherhood (*ἀδελφότης*).<sup>23</sup>

In distinguishing who Christ is by nature and what he does in his function as our brother, Chrysostom safeguards the unity of Christ's person by pointing out the ontological distinction between him and us. Being of the same substance as the Father, he clothed himself with brotherhood in order to make us by grace what he is by nature.

Moreover, in Chrysostom's view, Christ entering brotherhood with us and his function as our high priest are two aspects of one soteriological picture. The corresponding motifs of adoption and reconciliation are viewed as complementary. As the Son he gives us the privilege of brotherhood with him, and in his function as our high priest he reconciles us with God having purified us from our sins:

For the Son is a faithful High Priest, able to deliver from their sins those whose High Priest He is. In order then that He might offer a sacrifice able to purify us, for this cause He has become man. Accordingly he added, "in things pertaining to God," that is, for the sake of things in relation to God. We were become altogether enemies to God, (he would say) condemned, degraded, there was none who should offer sacrifice for us. He saw us in this condition, and had compassion on us, not appointing a High Priest for us, but Himself becoming a High Priest. In what sense He was "faithful," he added [viz.], "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."<sup>24</sup>

The Son himself became our high priest through the economy of the incarnation out of divine compassion, in order to restore fellowship with the Father who was alienated from us. He was not only willing to become man and identify with us in his humanity, but also acts as our high priest representing us before

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Homily 4, section 4, *NPNF* 14:384 (PG 63.41).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Homily 5, section 2, *NPNF* 14:389 (PG 63.47).

God, "Even the mere willing to become man was a proof of great care and love; but now it is not this alone, but there are also the undying benefits which are bestowed on us through Him, for, he says, 'to make reconciliation'."<sup>25</sup> Christ's solidarity with humanity is viewed in tandem with his ministry of reconciliation as our high priest. He is God's Son and our personal representative. Furthermore, Chrysostom employs the head-body image to explain Christ's identification with us and its implications for the faithful. His oneness with us in his humanity ultimately leads to our exaltation. He partook of our nature in order that we might be able to partake of his. He is the head and we are his body. Discussing the phrase, "For we have been made partakers (μέτοχοι) of Christ" (Heb 3:14), Chrysostom comments:

We partake of Him (he means); we were made One, we and He (ἐν ἐγγενόμεθα ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτός) — since He is the Head and we the body, "fellow-heirs and of the same body; we are one body, of His flesh and of His bones." (Eph 3:6; Rom 12:5; Eph 5:30) "If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence [or, the principle of our subsistence, our faith] steadfast unto the end."<sup>26</sup>

The reason we can enjoy the privilege of being called fellow heirs of Christ and be united with him is due the fact that he first partook of the flesh in the incarnation. As the ascended Son and our high priest he has accomplished the task of restoring our fellowship with God.

Moreover, Chrysostom notes that in entering brotherhood with us in the incarnation, Christ also identified with us in his suffering and death. His suffering was part of his human nature, "he was willing and earnest to become our brother in all things" for, "He was born, was brought up, grew, suffered all things necessary and at last He died."<sup>27</sup> In partaking of the

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., section 3, *NPNF* 14:389 (PG 63.48).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Homily 6, section 4, *NPNF* 14:394 (PG 63.56).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Homily 5, section 1, *NPNF* 14:388 (PG 63.47).

flesh, he also entered the realm of human suffering; he made our suffering his own. His suffering was no different from our experience. Chrysostom presses the point that the divine Son identified with us in every way in his human nature, except sin.

Discussing his understanding of Christ's suffering as his glory, Chrysostom adduces the words of Christ from John 12:23 (where he refers to his sufferings and subsequent death as "glory") in his interpretation of Heb 2:7 (Ayou crowned him with glory and honor") to affirm that the cross of Christ was his glory and honor. He endured suffering for our salvation and called it his glory, in order to persuade us to bear our affliction and to look forward to our sharing in the "fruit of the Cross" and future glory.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Christ became the "Captain of our salvation" through his suffering (2:10). In enduring the suffering that he was subjected to, he was made perfect (*τελειῶσαι*), like a champion wrestler who serves as an example to others. Commenting on how Christ has "become" the "Captain of our salvation" Chrysostom avers:

He [God] has done what is worthy of His love towards mankind, in showing His First-born to be more glorious than all, and in setting Him forth as an example to the others, like some noble wrestler that surpasses the rest. "The Captain of their salvation," that is, the Cause of their salvation (...) "To make perfect through sufferings." Then sufferings are a perfecting, and a cause of salvation. Do you see that to suffer affliction is not the portion of those who are utterly forsaken; if indeed it was by this that God first honored His Son, by leading Him through sufferings? And truly His taking flesh to suffer what He did suffer, is a far greater thing than making the world, and bringing it out of things that are not. This indeed also is [a token] of His loving-kindness, but the other far more. And [the Apostle] himself also pointing out this very thing, says, "That in the ages to come He might show forth the exceeding riches of His goodness, He both raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph 2:7, 6)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Homily 4, section 3, *NPNF* 14:383 (PG 63.39).

"For it became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through-sufferings." For (he means) it became Him who takes tender care, and brought all things into being, to give up the Son for the salvation of the rest, the One for the many. However he did not express himself thus, but, "to make perfect through sufferings," showing the suffering for any one, not merely profits "him," but he himself also becomes more glorious and more perfect. And this too he says in reference to the faithful, comforting them by the way: for Christ was glorified then when He suffered. But when I say, He was glorified, do not suppose that there was an accession of glory to Him: for that which is of nature He always had, and received nothing in addition.<sup>29</sup>

Several points are noteworthy in this passage. First, Christ's experience of suffering is exemplary; he was allowed to suffer in order to set an example for the faithful and not because he was sinful or imperfect and needed to be perfected morally. Second, his suffering was a means of perfection in the sense he qualified (humanly speaking) as an exemplary champion. The Son was honored through this process, whereby he was willing to suffer in his flesh for our salvation. Third, he did not need to be perfected in order to be glorified, for that is his prerogative by nature; his perfection belonged to his incarnate experience. Finally, Christ's suffering is viewed as a prerequisite for our glorification. As an accomplished wrestler who has been perfected through enduring affliction sets an example to others, Christ likewise, through his exemplary suffering, has done the same for the faithful. In this sense he has become the "cause of our salvation" through his experience of suffering and ascension to glory. This thought is complemented in Chrysostom's exposition of Heb 5:13, where he speaks of perfection through suffering. He points out that this perfection (*τελειότης*) is not of nature but of virtue (*ἀρετή*).<sup>30</sup> Christ therefore is viewed as the

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., section 4, *NPNF* 14:384 (PG 63.40-41).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Homily 8, section 6, *NPNF* 14:406 (PG 63.73).

archetype of perfection for the faithful. His suffering is a paradigm for the virtuous Christian life, for perfection of virtue comes through suffering. The language of perfection therefore is ascribed to the process by which we are saved and perfected and not to the Son's being.

Two points in particular can be inferred from Chrysostom's interpretation of the passages that deal with Christ's suffering in his homilies on Hebrews. First, he draws attention to the reality of Christ's experience of suffering, underscoring the idea of knowledge through experience. Second, in keeping with the epistle's focus, he maintains that because the ascended Christ knows what it means to suffer, he truly sympathizes with us. In his commentary on 2:18 ("for he himself suffered, when he was tempted, he is able to help them who are tempted"), Chrysostom observes that in entering brotherhood with us and enduring affliction, Christ knows not only as God but also as man:

He went through the very experience of the things which we have suffered; "now" He is not ignorant of our sufferings; not only does He know them as God (ὡς Θεός), but as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος) also He has known them, by the trial wherewith He was tried; He suffered much, He knows how to sympathize. And yet God is incapable of suffering; but he describes here what belongs to the Incarnation, as if he had said, Even the very flesh of Christ suffered many terrible things. He knows what tribulation is; He knows what temptation is, not less than we who have suffered, for He Himself also has suffered.<sup>31</sup>

Just as the experience of suffering was real, so is the knowledge that was gained through his suffering in the flesh. Further on in his commentary on the passage, Chrysostom underscores the latter point again saying, "since many men consider experience (πειραν) the most reliable means of knowledge, he wishes to show that He who has suffered knows what human nature suf-

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Homily 5, section 2, *NPNF* 14:389 (PG 63.47).



fers."<sup>32</sup> In Chrysostom's view, Christ's experience of suffering was imperative in order to become our sympathetic representative. By underscoring Christ's experiential knowledge through his suffering, Chrysostom can confidently speak of Christ's knowledge as being complete. He can sympathize with us because he himself entered our suffering and knows it first hand.

In addition to underscoring Christ's solidarity with us in his humanity and suffering, Chrysostom also considers the death of Christ. In keeping with the epistle's teaching, Chrysostom emphasizes the complete human experience of Christ: a Savior who has identified with us his human nature, suffering *and* death. The reality of our salvation depends on this complete identification with us. Chrysostom resorts to his oft employed metaphor of a physician to expound the idea of Christ "tasting death" in his discussion of Heb 2:9 ("...so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone"): Christ "tasted" death like a physician who partakes of what is prepared for his patient in order to persuade and encourage him to follow suit without fear:

For as a physician though not needing to taste the food prepared for the sick man, yet in his care for him tastes first himself, that he may persuade the sick man with confidence to venture on the food, so since all men were afraid of death, in persuading them to take courage against death, He tasted it also Himself though He needed not.<sup>33</sup>

Further, Chrysostom notes that the expression Christ "tasted" death signifies that he genuinely partook of that experience, albeit only for a short period of time because he arose immediately thereafter. Christ's death is also viewed as a means of purification and a completion of what was foreshadowed in the old covenant. Capitalizing on the imagery presented in Hebrews 9, Chrysostom speaks of a real spiritual cleansing made possible

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., section 5, *NPNF* 14:390 (PG 63.50).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Homily 4, section 3, *NPNF* 14:384 (PG 63.39-40).

through the death of Christ. In the Old Testament the sacrifices could only cleanse outwardly: because their efficacy was restricted to the physical, the purifying was bodily, and their effects were temporary. This contrasts with the sacrifice and death of Christ, where the purifying is spiritual and the effects are everlasting. Chrysostom emphatically speaks of the death of Christ in regard to its role in the reversal of our alienation with God. Christ's death is understood as a once for all event, plumbing the depths of the sins of humanity through his death:

He became a ransom by one death... His death nullified the tyranny of death... He died that He might deliver us... For He died indeed for all, that is His part: for that death was a counterbalance against the destruction of all men... Lo! He bore the sins. He took them from men, and bore them to the Father; not that He might determine anything against them [mankind], but that He might forgive them.<sup>34</sup>

It was necessary that the Savior himself experience death on behalf of the ones whom he will release from its bondage, in order to restore our fellowship with God. His death was more than just an identification with us in our mortality but a means through which he accomplished a deliverance for us. Christ could only "destroy death" and "cast out the devil from his tyranny" by entering brotherhood with us in all things.<sup>35</sup> His experiencing death is viewed as the ultimate salve that saved humanity from its fatal disease of sin, for his death ended the plight that humanity was subjected to since the fall. Remarking on the uniqueness of Christ's death, Chrysostom avers:

For as a medicine, when it is powerful and productive of health, and able to remove the disease entirely, effects all after one application; as therefore, if being once applied it accomplishes the whole, it proves its own strength in being no more applied, and

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Homily 17, section 4, *NPNF* 14:447 (PG 63.129).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Homily 5, section 1, *NPNF* 14:389 (PG 63.47).

this is its business; whereas if it is applied continually, this is a plain proof of its not having strength. For it is the excellence of a medicine to be applied once and not often.<sup>36</sup>

The point being underscored is that the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is akin to a potent medicine. Christ's death was the fulfillment of the shadow of the Old Testament ritual sacrifices, for its effectiveness is reflected in the soteriological effect: securing redemption on behalf of sinful humanity once and for all. Ultimately, in Chrysostom's view, this is the main purpose of the incarnation, that Christ, "might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."<sup>37</sup> In entering brotherhood with us in his incarnation, Christ entered the experience of death as well in order to secure our salvation.

Thus Christ's complete identification with us in his humanity, suffering and death is viewed as a prerequisite for our spiritual renewal. He partook of the flesh in order that we might partake of the blessings of heaven. Chrysostom's threefold emphases of Christ's solidarity with us in his humanity, suffering and death, suggests that he views the reality of these experiences as essential for our salvation. For Chrysostom a docetic Christology is untenable, for a Savior devoid of a complete incarnate experience is deficient and imperfect. Christ's solidarity with us is the means to our purification and perfection as sons. As the Son he is our redeemer, as the high priest he is our mediator, and as the captain of our salvation he is our example.

### **The Christological Implications of the Personal Continuity of the Son and His Solidarity with us in His Humanity, Suffering and Death**

Chrysostom's view of the personal continuity of the Son in the incarnation and ascension in Hebrews is consistent with his incarnational reflections on John's Gospel. The ontology of the

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., Homily 17, section 5, *NPNF* 14:448 (PG 63.130).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Homily 4, section 6, *NPNF* 14:385 (PG 63.41).

preexistent Logos-Son, similar in nature and equal in power and honor to the Father, was not altered in the partaking of the flesh. The single personal subject of Christ in the incarnation was the Logos-Son. The one who is the heir of all things, the very brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of the Father, who had a distinct hypostatic existence before all ages, partook of the flesh by entering brotherhood with us. His humiliation in the incarnation, his solidarity with humanity, and his subsequent exaltation provided the means for us to enjoy the privilege of sharing in his glory. On this basis, Chrysostom can speak of the continuity of Christ the Son in his incarnate existence with regard to his identification with us in all things. His identification with us in his human nature, suffering and death did not distort his personal integrity. The Logos-Son is the one to whom being and becoming are referred, therefore whatever is said of Christ with regard to his incarnate state refers to the person of the Son. Being who he is, the divine Son willingly identified with humanity in entering brotherhood with us in order that we might be able to partake of the grace he enjoys by virtue of his nature.

In speaking of the incarnation of the Logos-Son in terms of "the flesh partaking of the high things and the Godhead of the lowly," Chrysostom is essentially making use of the *communicatio idiomatum* principle to affirm the divinity and unity of Jesus Christ's person.<sup>38</sup> When Chrysostom speaks of Christ' perfection through suffering, his learning of obedience, and death on the cross, it is clear that he means the single subject behind all

<sup>38</sup> He also makes use of this idea in his homilies on John's Gospel. Commenting on the statement of the Son being given his disciples by the Father in Jn. 17:6, he reasons how can the divine Son receive anything since he is one with the Father? Chrysostom explains, "this cannot be said of the Son merely as man, for it is clearly evident to all that what belongs to the lesser nature belongs also to the greater, but the opposite is not the case." The point being made is that the attributes of both natures are the attributes of the person. The properties of the flesh are the properties of the Son. Ibid., Homily 81, in *John*, FOC 41:380 (PG 59.339).

of this is the Logos-Son. He made these human experiences his own in entering brotherhood with us, in the humanity that he assumed. Chrysostom is aware of confusion this might cause and is quick to point out the misuse of the principle by the Neo-Arians in particular, who reasoned that since God cannot be born or suffer, Christ could not be God.<sup>39</sup> Although Chrysostom is careful not to ascribe the human experiences to the divine nature of the Son, he nevertheless speaks of the Son as the single subject of the union. Perfection through suffering, knowledge through experience, learning of obedience, and death are ascribed to the Logos-Son in his humanity per se, he went through these human experiences as man rather than in his divine nature. The predications with reference to Christ should be considered with regard to his person and actions: who he is and what he does. Moreover, in speaking of Christ's actions in terms what he does "as God" and what he does "as man," he is employing terminology that is essentially similar to that of Athanasius.<sup>40</sup> Chrysostom takes the same view as Cyril did later; both ascribe the experiences of Christ to the Logos while still maintaining that the Logos did not change in his own nature. Chrysostom's Christology should therefore be regarded as being unitive, in the sense that he views the Logos-Son as the single subject of Christ, whose complete solidarity with humanity was exigent in order that he might become our redeemer.

In Chrysostom's view, it was soteriologically imperative that Christ identify with us in every way, for the reality of our salvation is contingent on the authenticity of his identification with us. In order to make us partakers of the divine fellowship, the

<sup>39</sup> See, *Ibid.*, Homily 3, in *John*, FOC 33:34 (PG 59.41).

<sup>40</sup> See Robert L. Wilken, "Tradition, Exegesis, and the Christological Controversies," *Church History* 34 (1965), 123-142. Cf. Charles Kannengiesser, "Athanasius of Alexandria and the Foundation of Traditional Christology," *Theological Studies* 34 (1973), 103-113. For a well balanced discussion on patristic Soteriology from an evangelical perspective, see Donald Fairbairn, "Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 50.2 (2007), 289-310.

Son had to partake of the flesh, and this can only happen if there is a personal continuity of the Son in the incarnation, his human experiences of suffering, his knowledge through experience, and his “tasting of death.” He can therefore sympathize with us in his ministry as our high priest for he made our experiences his own. His identification with us is grounds for our reconciliation with God and adoption into his family. To say that pre-existent Son entered brotherhood with us is consistent with saying that God himself has personally entered the experiences of human life and identified with us in order to atone for our sins and save us.

# A Study of the “I Am” Phrases in John’s Gospel

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**ABSTRACT.** This work is a brief analysis of one of the specific features of theological discourse in John’s Gospel, namely the *I am* sayings. These assertions are interwoven in the fabric of the Gospel and intended to prove out some certain facts regarding the role and identity of Christ. The article is based on the premise that the *I am* sayings are the genuine assertions of Jesus which John reproduced through the Holy Spirit and not sayings attributed by John (or the author of the book) to Jesus in order to achieve his purpose. Starting from this premise, the aspects regarding the cultural and religious background of the sayings are still important, but not decisive. The primary role of the *I am* sayings is to reveal the person of Christ. Therefore I chose for the present study the seven *I am* sayings which appear in the majority of biblical commentaries, to which I also added the assertion from 8:58, probably the most important of all, in order to see the truths they reveal concerning the identity of Christ.

**KEYWORDS:** „I am”, sign, person of Christ, image, wonder

Even at first sight, for the non-critical eye as well as for the neophyte, John’s Gospel stands in sharp contrast to the synoptic Gospels. From the very beginning, the reader will notice that John’s prologue is very different from the narrative of Jesus’ birth told by Matthew or Luke. Nevertheless, the most striking features are to be found in the wonders performed by Jesus as well as in His speeches. John writes in chapter 20:30 that Jesus “performed many signs”, yet from all of them, he selects only seven. Most of them do not appear in the synoptic Gospels ei-

ther. John makes a certain selection having a clear purpose in mind, as mentioned in 20:31 where it reads: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Not only does John winnow the wonders, but he also enriches substantially their purports, calling them *signs*. They are not simply wonders, but signs; therefore, they have a special meaning. As W. Barclay asserts, "the wonderful works of Jesus were not simply wonderful; they were windows opening on to the reality which is God."<sup>1</sup> John wants to reveal the real meaning, which lies beyond appearances. That is why we can detect in John a special connection between wonders and speeches. For example, the healing of the paralyzed man in chapter 5 represents the introduction of a speech about Jesus, as being the life giver; the bread distribution is followed by a speech in which Jesus says He is the Bread of Life; Lazarus' resurrection is closely linked to Jesus' identity as the resurrection and the life.<sup>2</sup>

We have cited the two aspects, the wonders and the speeches, because they are essential for the study of the "I am" sayings. Reading John's Gospel, one cannot ignore the fact that the "I am" sayings represent a significant feature of the Fourth Gospel. David Mark Ball writes that "like many of the major themes of John, they are interwoven in the fabric of the Gospel, gathering further meaning each time they occur. Because the 'I am' sayings also focus attention on the person of Jesus, each time the words occur they further reveal something of Jesus' role or identity so that the narrator's point of view first disclosed in the prologue is reinforced."<sup>3</sup> Thence the "I am" sayings are scattered throughout this whole Gospel, and they cannot be redu-

<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1965), xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> "To John a miracle was never an isolated act, it was always a window into the reality of that which Jesus always was and always is and always did and always does." Barclay, *John*, xxv.

<sup>3</sup> David M. Ball, "I Am" in *John's Gospel. Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 149.



ced to being a pattern or having a particular setting. Sometimes the statement follows the wonder (e.g. "I am the bread of life") but in other instances it precedes it (e.g. "I am the light of the world" precedes the wonder of healing the blind man). Likewise, there are cases when the affirmation is interwoven with the wonder (e.g. the resurrection of Lazarus).

What is the role of these assertions? Leon Morris thinks that through the "I am" sayings, Jesus reveals "important teachings about his person."<sup>4</sup> There are a few questions, which appear repeatedly in the Gospel of John: "who is Jesus?", "who are you?", and "who is he that I might believe in him?" (John 1:11, 4:10, 5:12, 6:64, 8:25, 53, 9:36, 18:33). Thus, the whole Gospel is preoccupied to give an answer to these questions. Therefore, we can state that through the "I am" sayings, not only does Jesus Christ teach important truths about himself, but he also reveals his identity. If so, the primordial role of the "I am" statements is to reveal the person of Christ. This would fit very well within the clear expressed purpose of John regarding his Gospel, namely that everything he said targeted the revelation of Jesus Christ in order "that ye might believe" (20:31). Accordingly, Ball is persuasive when he declares that, *inter alia*, an important function of the use of *ego eimi* is soteriological.<sup>5</sup> Of course, we can talk here about the problem of the addressees of the Gospel, whether it was written primarily for the Jews or for the Gentiles. We must not be one-sided in developing a theory, but it is obvious that the readers who were hinted at had some acquaintance to the Scriptures and the Jewish customs. From this point of view, the "I am" sayings acquire a new significance because through these, Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Yet, we cannot confine John's Gos-

<sup>4</sup> Leon Morris, *The "I Am" Sayings in "Jesus is Christ"* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 107-125.

<sup>5</sup> Ball, "I Am", 283.

pel to a single purpose. It is addressed to the Jews, as well as to the Gentiles, Christians, or non-Christians.<sup>6</sup>

Returning to the "I am" sayings, it is generally accepted that there are two groups of affirmations: those in which the "I am" sayings are accompanied by a certain image (I am the bread of life), and those in which the "I am" sayings are self-contained. The latter have also been called "absolute" or "predicateless".<sup>7</sup> An important aspect in the study of these assertions is the speech similarity with the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which led to the opinion that the Old Testament represents the context, or the source of John's usage of this formula.<sup>8</sup> It is neither the place nor the aim of this paper to debate this particular context. Still, few remarks need to be made. It is inappropriate to say that every exegesis of the biblical text should include the study of the appropriate context. This does not mean that the study of the context is not important for the "I am" sayings. However, the perspective from which one approaches these assertions seems to be crucial. Are these statements of Jesus (writ-

<sup>6</sup> I.-A. Bühner, *The Exegesis of the Johannine "I am" Sayings*, translated from *Der Gesandte und Sein Weg Wunt*, 2 Reihe (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 168-180, does not see the "I am" sayings as a revelation formula, but only as a self-introduction of a messenger: "Accordingly there are good grounds, both in cultural history and in the Fourth Gospel, for asserting that what we have in the 'I am' sayings is not a revealer or divine being disclosing himself directly in a kind of epiphany, but rather the one sent by God, the only one, the mediator, who stands obediently at God's service and thus receives high legitimacy—as the 'Son'." Thus, according to Bühner, "John is using a messenger formula common in Ancient world. The 'I am' sayings should be understood in the context of prophecy." Bühner argues that the Fourth Gospel has a "Sending Christology" and that this messenger formula is central to understanding John's whole Christology." Ball, "I Am", 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ball, "I Am", 162.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Morris, *The "I Am" Sayings*. David Mark Ball is especially concerned to demonstrate the Old Testament background of the "I am" sayings (particularly Isaiah). Some of the scholars who agree on the non-Jewish background are the following: Wetter and Deissman, who agree on Hellenistic background, and Bultmann and Schweitzer, who believe that the primary source should be found in Gnosticism and Mandaism.

ten by John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), or are these "I am" sayings the sayings of the Johannine Jesus? In other words, are the "I am" sayings the historical assertions of Jesus, recorded by John, or are they attributed by John (or the author of the book) to Jesus in order to achieve his purpose? If we go too deep into the study of the background, one can reach the conclusion that John simply assumed these types of affirmations and transposed them, giving them a Christian meaning and attributing them to Jesus. An even further step would be to believe that the "I am" sayings are the result of "a certain development within the Johannine tradition, one that is bound up with Christological centering and structuring." By accepting the Jewish background, the whole issue does not change much. As we shall see later on, it is clear that Jesus, through his sayings, draws some references to Jewish concepts, beliefs, and expectations. Nevertheless, one can still raise the question whether Jesus himself made these statements or it was John who attributed them to Jesus. If these are the words used by John to characterise Jesus, then the context is essential. If Jesus was the one who made these affirmations, as recorded by John, the context still remains important but not crucial. As far as we are concerned, the "I am" sayings are the genuine assertions of Jesus which were recorded by John through the Holy Spirit. It is true that John, like all the evangelists, selected and adjusted his material, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, following certain patterns in order to emphasize certain aspects and themes, with the clear purpose that the readers should believe in the Son of God (see 20:31)<sup>9</sup>. Although such a view may not meet the expectations of many contemporary scholars, it is definitely neither irrational nor impossible.

Another problem arises at this point. How many "I am" assertions are there in John's Gospel, and how many of them are just formal coincidences? David Mark Ball explains that "the

<sup>9</sup> The reference is to what critics generally call the "theology" of each evangelist.

belief that *ego eimi* in John is a formula leads to a further danger that where *ego eimi* in John does not fit the formula that has been assumed, it may be excluded from discussion.”<sup>10</sup> There is always the danger of attributing to the text certain aspects which are not presupposed by it, or of excluding other aspects which seem to be inconsistent with a generally-accepted view. In order to avoid these tendencies, Ball takes into account all the occurrences of the “I am” sayings. Even if one wishes to avoid the above-mentioned mistakes, some may still believe that the “I am” sayings are only a common formula of addressing or identification. Therefore, in John 6:20, where Jesus presents Himself as the One that walks on water, *ego eimi* may have a deeper meaning as reference to the Old Testament,<sup>11</sup> although this is far from being unanimously accepted. The same problem occurs in connection to the “I am” sayings in chapter 18 and particularly to Jesus’ arrest. Concerning the reaction of the soldier, who fell when Jesus identified Himself, the power of *ego eimi* should not be ascribed to the words themselves, because it would mean that the words have some kind of magical powers, but to the presence of Jesus Christ as divine. The danger to categorise these affirmations in too much details can be detected in Ball’s writings, which reveal that chapters 4:26 and 8:18 present in fact a subcategory of these affirmations with no image or absolute. However, two occurrences do not seem to be enough to form a category. The very fact that John’s sayings occur in such diverse contexts is a strong proof that John does not follow a preordained pattern. To make sure, he selects some *semeia* and assertions, which disclose the person of Jesus Christ in a special way, with the intended purpose stated in 20:31.

Ball though makes a useful distinction between the two categories by suggesting that the “I am” sayings with an image to

<sup>10</sup> Ball, “*I Am*”, 15. He also cites Schweitzer and Schultz who focus on the “I am” sayings with images. On the other hand, Dodd, Hener, Richter and Stauffer prefer those without images.

<sup>11</sup> According to Ball, “*I Am*”, 74.

be seen "as emphasizing Jesus' identity in relation to *his role* (for others)," while the other "I am" sayings should be seen as emphasizing Jesus' *identity in itself*. In other words, while the "I am" sayings without a predicate are primarily concerned with *who Jesus is*, those with a predicate focus on *what Jesus does*."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Ball himself admits that one cannot make such a strict division, because of the very close relationship between the two categories. However, one can easily detect the obvious connection between who Jesus is and what he does, in the sense that the things he does actually disclose his identity; at the same time, what Jesus really is, his very Self, can be seen in what he does. Therefore, the primary role of the "I am" sayings is to reveal the person of Christ, as mentioned before. To quote Morris: "when Jesus used the 'I am' construction, he was speaking in the style of deity. 'I am' mostly represents the speech of the heavenly Father or of the Son."

As we have already seen, the number of the "I am" utterances is far from being unanimously accepted. Therefore, it is difficult to make a selection based on certain criteria. It is interesting though that some seem to ignore these affirmations, in the sense that they do not set them apart from the main text or they select a certain number of sayings without mentioning the criteria they used for such a selection. Thus, in his commentary, Barclay does not include these affirmations in the category of the special features of the Fourth Gospel. On the other hand, W. Hendriksen and R. H. Lightfoot simply affirm that John is the Gospel of the seven *I am*'s or the seven self-declarations.<sup>13</sup> The two also agree upon the seven signs: the *bread of life* (6:35), the *light of the world* (8:12), the *door* (10:9), the *good shepherd* (10:11), the *resurrection and the life* (11:25), the *way, the truth and the life* (14:6), and the *true vine* (15:1). We shall briefly present the "I am" say-

<sup>12</sup> Ball, "I Am", 174, 175.

<sup>13</sup> W. Hendrickson, *The Gospel of John* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), 37, and R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, ed. C. F. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 167. See also Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 361.

ings for two reasons: first, because they appear incontestably in the majority of commentaries, and secondly, because the “I am” sayings are self-evident to all the readers of the Gospel. It is relevant to mention at this point that they belong to the category of assertions *with an image*. However, we shall also add the “I am” assertion in 8:58 to the cited assertions, because it is of great importance as the absolute “I am” saying. Its importance is disclosed by the Jewish reaction to Jesus’ teaching. Unfortunately, given the restricted space of this work, we can only give some hints regarding each *I am* saying.

### **I Am the Bread of Life**

The assertion “I am the bread of life” (6:25) is included in the speech, which follows the distribution of bread. As we have already mentioned, the wonders are not isolated events, but *signs*, through which we can transcend visible reality. This speech serves perfectly for the accomplishment of this purpose. Morris writes that the section 30-40 of the discourse “is to be understood against the background of a Jewish expectation that, when the Messiah came, He would renew the miracle of the manna.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as it emerges from the previous verses, 30 and 31, by the signs asked for by the Jews, they expressed their expectation that Jesus should perform the same signs as Moses did. In this context, the Lord’s words come as a reinterpretation of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ highlights two errors of the Jews: it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven to the people but God; and not only did God give them bread in the past, but He also *gives* the true bread from heaven today.<sup>15</sup> Through the distribution of bread, Jesus demonstrated the power to sustain life physically. At the same time though, Jesus emphasizes his power to satisfy the real hunger, which is spiritual. The Jews, however, were interested only in the physical aspects of the wonder, which is why Jesus declares in verse 26

<sup>14</sup> Morris, *The “I Am” Sayings*, 109, 110.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, *The “I Am” Sayings*, 109, 110.

that the real reason of their presence there is not the *sign*, but the physical act of eating.

The way the Samaritan woman asks Jesus for the water of life, without being aware of its significance, the Jews ask Jesus for the bread of life. It is at this point that Jesus does not only speak about the bread of life, but actually identifies himself to it. His "I am" saying is a solemnly emphatic statement, and in this context it discloses his divinity.<sup>16</sup> Lindars also believes that this saying constitutes a self-revelation.<sup>17</sup> As for Ball, he maintains that with these words "Jesus claims that the 'authentic' sign which they seek is actually fulfilled in him."<sup>18</sup> The uniqueness of Christ is proved even through the way the affirmation is stated. Jesus Christ is not a bread of life among the others; he is *the bread of life*. As Morris declares, this remark regarding the emphatic definite article (*the*), which is included, can also be made with respect to each of the remaining "I am" sayings.<sup>19</sup>

What else should be noted in connection to this statement, beyond the fulfillment of a Jewish expectation in Christ? The statement is directly linked to faith. In fact, faith in him is an essential theme of this chapter (see verses 40, 47). To have this bread means to have faith in Jesus Christ, to appropriate him by faith. As soon as Jesus says that "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (6:47), he repeats again in verse 48, "I am that bread of life". Thus, in this text, the accent is placed on faith in Jesus Christ, and not on the reality of the Eucharistic bread.<sup>20</sup>

### **I Am the Light of the World**

The background of this chapter is very important for the understanding of this assertion, because it presents the Feast of the Tabernacles, as in the previous chapter. The festival backgro-

<sup>16</sup> Morris, *John*, 365.

<sup>17</sup> Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Marshall, Morgan, Scott, 1987), 259.

<sup>18</sup> Ball, "I Am", 207.

<sup>19</sup> Morris, *The "I Am" Sayings*, 110.

<sup>20</sup> As Lindars believes, *John*, 259.

und indicates the starting point for the understanding of the saying.<sup>21</sup> Water and light were essential for this feast. We should remember the illumination provided by the great candelabrum (*menorah*), which was a crucial aspect of the festival. In the light of this event, Jesus' assertion is even more important. Through this, Jesus fulfilled the symbolism suggested by the ceremony of the lights as part of the Feast of the Tabernacles.<sup>22</sup> However, its significance is deeper. Ball thinks that Jesus' claim to be the light of the world resides in Isaiah's concept of the servant of the Lord, who is a light for the nations. Therefore, as in the first assertion, Jesus takes over a concept from the Old Testament and applies it to himself.<sup>23</sup>

Light is one of the essential themes in John's Gospel. The word is used 23 times, starting with the prologue (1:4). Light is a prominent theme not only in John's Gospel, but also in the Old Testament. Therefore, we do not need to seek non-biblical sources to support this affirmation. It might be possible that, as the reference to the water in chapter 7 hints at the rock in the desert, the light should refer to the fire pillar seen at that time. Therefore, in three consecutive chapters, Jesus uses the wilderness imagery to reveal certain aspects of his work and his person.<sup>24</sup> Beasley Murray offers an adequate explanation of the fact that Jesus asks people to "follow" the light, and not to receive it or to walk in it. The Jews did the same: they followed the light in the desert. Moreover, this image matches perfectly Jesus' appeal to the disciples, who are urged to follow him.<sup>25</sup>

Jesus sets light and darkness in sharp contrast. To believe in Christ is to be *in* the light. To refuse him is to be in great danger, to walk in darkness.

<sup>21</sup> G. R. Beasley Murray, *John*, 36, 128.

<sup>22</sup> Morris, *John*, 436.

<sup>23</sup> Ball, "I Am", 217.

<sup>24</sup> Morris, *John*, 437.

<sup>25</sup> G. R. Beasley Murray, *John*, 128.



## I Am

This assertion is the climax of the discussion in chapter 8. Even if at the beginning of the Gospel, John talked about the pre-existence of the Word: "In the beginning was the word" (1:1), the whole Gospel is anchored in this very truth. The faith we must display must be placed in the Son of God, who existed before all ages. Leon Morris correctly notices that this assertion from 1:1 means more than that. Nevertheless, the meaning of the pre-existence of God is set off in a more striking fashion.<sup>26</sup> This emphatic form of speech was not commonly used in the regular conversation of the time. Therefore, its use signified the divine style. As Ball highlights<sup>27</sup>, due to the contrast between *genesthai* and *eimi*, the accent is on the verb, rather than the pronoun. Jesus does not only claim to have existed before Abraham, but he also talks about his existence in the present. Therefore, we should connect this assertion with chapter 1:1; the result is probably the most profound affirmation of Christ's nature or essence in John's Gospel.

The contrast between the tenses of the verbs is evident. The meaning of the aorist is translated "came into existence". Thus, "a mode of being which has a definite beginning is contrasted with one which is eternal".<sup>28</sup> It seems that behind this affirmation lies the text of Exodus 3:14, "I am that I am". In other words, through this statement, Jesus Christ identifies himself with God. This was also the reason why the Jews picked up stones to kill Jesus. Beasley-Murray writes that this affirmation does not refer mainly to his being but to what Jesus means for salvation. Following the remark that in Exodus 3:14, Yahweh does not disclose his nature but his faithfulness towards the people, Beasley-Murray states that "in this context the assertion 'Before Abraham was I am' forms the basis of the promise of

<sup>26</sup> Morris, *John*, 437.

<sup>27</sup> Ball, "I Am", 195.

<sup>28</sup> Morris, *John*, 473.

salvation to God's people". This is why Jesus can give true freedom and the life which overcomes death.<sup>29</sup>

### **I Am the Door**

By this assertion, Jesus says he is the only possible way of access to God. As Morris states, "There is something exclusive about the door".<sup>30</sup> Jesus is set off in direct contrast with the others, those before him who claimed to be *the door* (verse 8). Nevertheless, he is the only one who opens the way to God. Barclay shows that Jesus described what it means to have access to God by using a well-known Jewish comment: "To be able to come and go in and out unmolested was the Jewish way of describing a life that is absolutely secure and safe. When a man can go in and out without fear, it means that his country is at peace, that the forces of the law and order are supreme, and that he enjoys a perfect security for his life."<sup>31</sup> Biblical examples which support this understanding can be found in Numbers 27:17, Deuteronomy 28:6, and Psalm 121:8.

Through this assertion, Jesus talks again as a divine person. "Thus once again we encounter the thought of one exclusive salvation, exclusive in the sense that it can be entered only through the one door, Jesus Christ. If there is but one door for the entire race, than once more we are reminded of something very important about Jesus. Like the other 'I am' sayings, this one leads us to think of deity."<sup>32</sup>

### **I Am the Good Shepherd**

This image Jesus identifies himself with is well-known and suggestive for every Christian. Jesus is the good shepherd who lives within ourselves, and this represents the one who takes care of us. The image of the shepherd originates in the Old Testa-

<sup>29</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 129.

<sup>30</sup> Morris, *The "I Am" Sayings*, 114.

<sup>31</sup> Barclay, *John*, vol. 2, 68.

<sup>32</sup> Morris, *The "I Am" Sayings*, 114-115.

ment. Psalm 23 is famous in this respect. God presented himself as the shepherd who cares for his people, Israel. Ezekiel 34 is an important text in which God asks Ezekiel to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel (verse 1). Then, in verses 15 and 16, God presents himself as the one who takes his sheep to green pastures, so he is Israel's shepherd. It is very likely that Jesus considered this prophecy when he said he was the Good Shepherd. As in John's text, in Ezekiel 34 the emphasis is between the real shepherd, who is God, and the false shepherds, namely those who think only of themselves. The important aspect that needs further attention is this: since God introduces himself as the shepherd of his people, and Jesus says the same thing, it means that Jesus identifies himself with God. So again, the "I am" saying is revelatory.

However, the image of the shepherd that guides his sheep was common in the time of Jesus. Jesus also used the pastoral metaphor on other occasions (e.g. Luke 12:32). Jesus, as the perfect model of the shepherd, also appears in the epistles. For example, Peter asserts in chapter 2, verse 25 of his first epistle: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Later on, in chapter 5:4, he writes: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The main feature which characterizes the good shepherd is the fact that he gives his life for us. This is clearly emphasized by Jesus. As Morris declares: "This must have been a fairly rare occurrence among Palestinian shepherds. But for Jesus it is the characteristic thing... Moreover when the Palestinian shepherd did die<sup>33</sup> in defence of his sheep, that was an accident. He planned to live for them not to die for them." Jesus wants to draw our attention to this particular fact, namely that he willingly gave his life for us. Consequently, his death was not accidental. Verse 18 clearly shows Jesus Christ unveiling that he was in control, that his death was not a tragic misfortune, but it was

<sup>33</sup> Morris, *John*, 510.

his purpose for his sheep to have abundant life. The only way the sheep can have life is through his death, the death of the good shepherd.

There is one aspect which should be noted at this point. The original word for “good” is *kalos*, which in Greek does not only refer to the idea of goodness but also to that of *beauty*. Therefore, even if we cannot translate this verse by using the word “beautiful”, we should not lose sight of this aspect. It is logical then for Morris to write that “in the present passage, the emphasis is not on the way we are morally upright, but on the attractiveness of the Good Shepherd. Whatever be the case with his followers, Jesus is the Beautiful Shepherd as well as the morally Good Shepherd.”<sup>34</sup>

### **I Am the Resurrection and the Life**

This assertion was uttered in the context of Lazarus’ resurrection. Chapter 11 is crucially important for the architecture of the Gospel because it is placed between the public work of Jesus and the Passion Week. The wonder appears somehow as a climax of Jesus’ works and the “I am” saying is at the same time a climax of the wonder. Ball is not mistaken when he writes that “this whole episode is set up as a revelation of God’s glory to Jesus... Without the claim to be the Resurrection and the Life, the raising of Lazarus would be no more than a spectacular miracle.”<sup>35</sup> Ball also shows that this wonder took place exactly before the Passion Week. Lazarus’ resurrection is the event which makes the Pharisees and the priests decide to kill Jesus (verse 53): “thus the ‘I am’ saying is crucially placed at the beginning of the Passion story.”<sup>36</sup>

John states in 1:4 that “in him was life; and the life was the light of men.” What Jesus says here is not that he just offers the

<sup>34</sup> Morris, *The “I Am” Sayings*, 115.

<sup>35</sup> Ball, “I Am”, 102, 103.

<sup>36</sup> Ball, “I Am”, 110.

life and resurrection, as Lindars thinks<sup>37</sup>, but also that he is *the life*. It is certainly true that Jesus talks about the future (eternal) life. In this sense, the words are an actual assurance to the believer who, following physical death, enters eternal life and worships God forever. To have eternal life is to believe in him and "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (3:36). This means "that the moment a man puts his trust in Jesus he begins to experience that life of the age to come which cannot be touched by death."<sup>38</sup>

### **I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life**

This saying is a bit more difficult to understand because of its different translations. Part of the problem is the fact that, in some translations, the words "truth" and "life" are treated as adjectives of the "way". Thus, Lindars thinks that the "truth" and the "life" are explanatory of the "way": "It is a matter of believing him as the one sent by the Father (the truth) and existing in the relationship which he creates between them and the Father, a relationship which is not ended by death (the life)."<sup>39</sup> However, there is not enough evidence and no certain reason that the *truth* and the *life* should be exclusively the attributes of the *way*. The best solution is to treat these words as three coordinated nouns, expressing three things about Jesus. Besides, one should not forget that while the "way" appears for the first time in John's Gospel, the "truth" and the "life" are major themes within the same Gospel. "*Way, truth, and life*, all have relevance, the triple expression emphasizing the many sidedness of the saving work."<sup>40</sup>

Again, as with the other assertions, there is something exclusive in Jesus' sayings. He is the way, the only way of access to God. Moreover, Jesus does not only show us the way, he *is* the

<sup>37</sup> For him, the saying means "through me men are raised up and receive eternal life", see 395.

<sup>38</sup> Morris, *The "I Am" Sayings*, 550.

<sup>39</sup> Lindars, *John*, 472. See also Ball, "*I Am*", 126.

<sup>40</sup> Morris, *John*, 641.

way. Secondly, the truth is not represented by Jesus' by what he said and his teachings; the truth *is* Jesus. While the "way" offers man direction, the "truth"—as seen in chapter 8:32—gives him freedom. Jesus though is more than that; he is *life itself* (we have already seen this in Matthew's statement recorded in chapter 11, verse 25). These three words reaffirm the uniqueness of Jesus, who identifies himself with God. Therefore, there are three aspects which prove who Jesus was. In this respect, Morris says: "*Way* stresses the fact that mere physical existence matters little. The only life worthy of the name is that which Jesus brings, for He is life itself."<sup>41</sup>

### **I Am the True Vine**

G. Beasley-Murray notices that this is the only "I am" saying to which an additional predicate is conjoined ("and my Father *is* the Vinedresser"). He explains that the relationship of the Son to believers, which represents the theme of the passage, resembles that of the Father to the Son as means of relating the belief of the Father.<sup>42</sup>

Israel is often compared in the Old Testament to a vine (Hosea 10:1-2, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, Ezekiel 15:1-5, 17:1-21, 19:10-15, Psalm 80:8-18). As Morris notes, "all the Old Testament passages which use this symbol appear to regard Israel as faithless or as the object of serve punishment."<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, it is against this background that we must see Jesus' affirmation concerning the true vine. Thus, Jesus is described in contrast to faithless Israel.

The text itself discloses two important aspects. The first is the importance of the Christian's life, which must bear fruit. Should his life be fruitless, he will be rewarded with punishment. The New Testament clearly explains that the fruit is a sign of the true Christian. The second essential aspect highlighted by the

<sup>41</sup> Morris, *John*, 141.

<sup>42</sup> G. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 271.

<sup>43</sup> Morris, *John*, 668, also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 272.

text is the necessity to abide in Christ. Bringing fruit is not a result of personal human effort, but of abiding in Christ.<sup>44</sup> The natural, human *self* can never bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Believers are called to abide in Christ the same way Christ abides in his heavenly relationship to the Father. They are indeed one single being. Left on their own and by their own power, Christians can do nothing. This is why Jesus says "for without me ye can do nothing" (15:5). This was actually the secret of Jesus' life: his relationship and dependence to God. As far as the Christian is concerned, his life should closely follow this particular model of existence. This fundamental truth is competently revealed by Morris, who writes that "the passage is the Johannine counterpart of the Pauline view of the church as the body of Christ and of believers as *in* Christ. Both are ways of bringing out the vital connection that exists between Christ and His own."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Morris, *John*, 668.

<sup>45</sup> Morris, *John*, 668.

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Str. Nufărului Nr. 87, 410597 Oradea, Bihor, România/Romania

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Str. Nufărului Nr. 87, 410597 Oradea, Bihor, România/Romania.

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## PERICHORESIS

is published by

Editura Universității Emanuel/Emanuel University Press and  
Centrul pentru Cercetarea și Promovarea Valorilor Evanghelice/  
The Centre for the Research and Promotion of Evangelical Values  
Str. Nufărului Nr. 87, 410597 Oradea, Bihor  
România/Romania

and printed for EMANUEL UNIVERSITY PRESS by

S.C. ROPRINT S.R.L.  
Str. Horea Nr. 82, 400275 Cluj-Napoca, Cluj  
Tel/Fax: +40-264-432384, Email: [roprintcluj@xnet.ro](mailto:roprintcluj@xnet.ro)  
România/Romania



## PERICHORESIS

THE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL OF EMANUEL UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA

Editura Universității Emanuel/

Emanuel University Press

Centrul pentru Cercetarea și Promovarea Valorilor Evanghelice/

The Centre for the Research and Promotion of Evangelical Values

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ISSN 1224-984X