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E-mail: [ancientchristianstudies@gmail.com](mailto:ancientchristianstudies@gmail.com). See back cover for contributor information.

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*Editorial:*  
*An “Unspeakably Narrow Discipline”: Martin Hengel and the Need for  
Interdisciplinary Scholarship*

The New Testament discipline, as a scientific enterprise, is still relatively young. Although young, it has blossomed into emphases such as Jesus studies, Pauline studies, and assessing early forms of Christianity. According to Martin Hengel, the earliest chair of New Testament studies was held by Bernhard Weiß during the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Those who studied the New Testament during the 19th century rarely—if ever—were solely New Testament scholars. Rather, they assumed diverse professorial roles and contributed to Old Testament scholarship, systematic and biblical theology, and most notably, church history.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the list Hengel provides, for example,

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Hengel, “A Young Theological Discipline in Crisis,” in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology, Essays from the Tyndal Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel*, WUNT, ed. Michael F. Bird and Jason Mason, trans. Wayne Coppins (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 459.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Hengel notes, “The great scholars who advanced the investigation of the New Testament in the nineteenth century were precisely not ‘New Testament scholars’ according to today’s understanding, but distinguished Old Testament scholars, systematic theologians and above all church historians. I need only mention names such as de Wette, Ewald, Wellhausen and Gunkel for the Old Testament or Ferdinand Christian Baur, Hilgenfeld, Overbeck, Harnack and Zahn for church history. And, as Hengel notes, “Especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the investigation of the New Testament in the nineteenth century were precisely not ‘New Testament scholars’ according to today’s understanding, but distinguished Old Testament scholars, systematic theologians and above all church historians. I need only mention names such as de Wette, Ewald, Wellhausen and Gunkel for the Old Testament or Ferdinand Christian Baur, Hilgenfeld, Overbeck, Harnack and Zahn for

Lightfoot was both a New Testament and Apostolic Fathers scholar. Rudolph Bultmann—regarded as one of the more influential 20th century scholars—was both an exegetical thinker as well as a systematic consortium of sorts. Among 21st century New Testament scholars, John Barclay, Francis Watson, James Dunn readily come to mind that do likewise.

Within the 20th and 21st century, the specialization of disciplines—even intradisciplinary specialization—has increased dramatically. The reality of the Gospel scholar, the Pauline scholar, and Epistle of Hebrews scholar is a fact of biblical scholarship in the modern era. While, these are good and valuable ventures, it is not the entire portrait. We need broader disciplines and scholars willing to embrace a classical interdisciplinary approach to biblical scholarship. Hengel observes this “pernicious specialization” as a post-World War II phenomenon, a fact of academic life that poses a genuine dilemma.<sup>3</sup>

Specializing in the New Testament, focusing on a set corpus, is a noble cause, based on both theological and ecclesiastical importance:

It is the special meaning of this book for the study of theology and the service of the pastor that justifies the relatively young

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church history. Already Schleiermacher especially liked to give exegetical lectures; Ritschl, Lipsius, Cremer and Lütgert were systematic theologians and as such simultaneously theologians with a comprehensive philological, historical, and philosophical education. Their scope of work — so E. v. Dobschütz on H.J. Holtzmann — ‘encompassed the whole of theology’. This competence, which — at least from our perspective, which has become too narrow — covers multiple subjects also distinguishes scholars in the twentieth century who were simultaneously church historians and exegetes, such as W. Bousset, A. Jülicher, H. Lietzmann, E. Klostermann, H. von Campenhausen and K. Aland.” Hengel, “A Young Discipline,” 459–60.

<sup>3</sup> Hengel, “A Young Discipline,” 460.



academic existence of our subject, often with two or even three chairs in a faculty.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the relatively small size, the ecclesiastical importance, and the theological role of the New Testament make specialization understandable.

Placing this relatively and “unspeakably narrow discipline” against its neighborly disciplines, an imbalance emerges.<sup>5</sup> Much work remains in integrating New Testament insights with broader theological and historical scholarship. For instance, there are 378 volumes in the Minge series awaiting full analysis from Latin and Greek scholars. Also, consider the historical, archeological, and philological—let alone theological considerations—of the Old Testament and Jewish literature that New Testament scholars utilize.

Here’s our point: with the scholarly acumen of our New Testament academic predecessors, with the potential over-intraspecialized New Testament discipline, and with the ecclesiastical importance of the New Testament, scholars of the New Testament would do well to add the study of Early Christianity to their scholarly work. This call is for New Testament scholars to consider linking your academic study of the New Testament to a neighboring discipline—Second Temple Judaism, Graeco-Roman backgrounds, Patristics and Earliest Christianity, or others. The fruit of interdisciplinary work is ripe for the harvest.

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<sup>4</sup> Hengel, “A Young Discipline,” 460.

<sup>5</sup> Hengel, “A Young Discipline,” 461.

As Christoph Marksches notes, “Those who only study Second Temple literature know very little of Second Temple Judaism.”<sup>6</sup> Georg Christoph Lichtenberg once said something similar:

The one who understands nothing but chemistry does not really understand it either.”<sup>7</sup> Hengel confirms this sentiment: “Then this applies all the more to our fundamental but simultaneously from its beginning unspeakably narrow discipline.”<sup>8</sup>

The specialization of the New Testament would be greatly aided by a secondary specialty that accentuates and expands one’s understanding of earliest Christianity. Hengel moves towards a solution:

In principle a double major in theology and classical philology would be an ideal solution for the new academic generation in New Testament and in Patristics, and we should encourage gifted students to this end.<sup>9</sup>

Hengel’s clarion call demands attention. Students of the New Testament should seek to incorporate a neighborly discipline in order to better understand the content of their primary study. It would be

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<sup>6</sup> See: Timothy Michael Law and Christoph Marksches, “Coffee Table Talk with Christoph Marksches,” *Marginalia Review of Books*, 29 April 2014, accessed 14 December 2015 <http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/coffee-with-christoph-marksches/>.

<sup>7</sup> Hengel, “A Young Discipline,” 461.

<sup>8</sup> Hengel, “A Young Discipline,” 461 (emphasis in original).

<sup>9</sup> Hengel, “A Young Discipline,” 467.

helpful to observe how the seasoned scholars could heed this call as well.

So what are some solutions moving forward? Here are a few suggestions we have:

- 1) Thoroughly integrate the study of the Greek NT into your study.
- 2) Read primary source literature beyond the 27 NT books. These should be texts that historically precede and subsequently follow the historical era of the New Testament. For example, secondary specialized interest for an NT scholar could be early Christianity and Patristic literature.
- 3) Ascertain text traditions and connect these texts together to observe a general worldview—both with an eye towards intertextually, historical reconstruction, and source influences. In this way, observations of literary, historical, and critical readings should emerge.
- 4) Be mindful of the intraspecialists within the New Testament and read their works. Creatively find ways to connect, refine, and clarify their work to others, including your own.
- 5) Be committed to learning and maintaining ancient languages such as Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Syriac.
- 6) Model integrated work for the study of New Testament with early Christian literature.
- 7) As you incorporate all these, begin to produce work—conference papers, monographs, chapters, etc.—which display the work of intradisciplinary endeavors.

We'd love to hear from readers regarding their own efforts towards intradisciplinary scholarship. Here at the Center for Ancient Christian Studies and in *Fides et Humilitas*, we are excited about the possibilities that can emerge from this sort of labor.

May we all seek to listen to the voices of the past and present within respective academic fields!

Coleman M. Ford  
Shawn J. Wilhite  
*Editors-in-Chief*

*Ignatius of Antioch: Bishop, Theologian, and  
the Apologist of Life and Death*

Ian Clary  
University of the Free State

***The following is a highlight of Ignatius of Antioch, including his life and ministry, his thought, and the history of scholarship.***

Ignatius (c.35–c.107) was the bishop of Antioch in Syria, the place where the term “Christian” was first used to depict the followers of Christ (Acts 11:26). Very little is known about him, as only seven of his letters are extant.<sup>1</sup> Although the view is limited, the letters do provide a window into the life of patristic theology and apologetics.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Of the many translations of Ignatius' letters these two are helpful: “The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch,” in Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 128-201; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers Volume 1*, Loeb Classical Library 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 202-321. Because both translations are used by scholars, references to the letter, section, and paragraph numbers will be used in the body of this essay. Holmes' *Apostolic Fathers* is used when quoted in full.

<sup>2</sup> A number of important studies are Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2009); Thomas Lechner, *Ignatius adversus Valentinianos? Chronologische und theologiegeschichtliche Studien zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochen* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999); Cyril Richardson, *The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935); and the introductory matter to William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius*

author wrote as he was under the apprehension of ten members of the Imperial guard (*Rom.* 5.1). Due to his adherence to what was yet an illegal religion, Ignatius had been displaced from his Antiochan see and brought to Rome where he was presumably tried and executed. His letters were written en route to the so-called Eternal City. In Ignatius we have an example of one who was willing to lose all, including his life, for the sake of Christ. His letters are therefore important as an encouragement to sanctification. They are also important as they shed light on ecclesiastical structures in post-apostolic times. They provide insight into the various theological difficulties facing the earliest church and if anything, are early, non-canonical sources of orthodox Christological teaching. Pre-eminently, the letters draw a connection between the so-called “abstract” debates of theology and real life; Ignatius died for what he believed and defended. This essay will look at the life, letters and thought of Ignatius who is an example for Christians today who need to take serious the issues that challenge the faith. Ignatius was an apologist who laid his life down for the cause of God and truth.

### **Ignatius’ Thought: A General View**

Of his seven letters, six were written to churches, the seventh to a bishop. They were penned from two cities, Troas and Smyrna. Four were drafted in the latter, namely the letters to the churches in Tralles, Magnesia, Ephesus and Rome. Three were from Troas, one each to the churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna and the final one to Polycarp, Smyrna’s bishop. Six of the letters were written in response to kindness shown to Ignatius on his journey to Rome, while the Roman

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*of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985).

letter anticipated his arrival there. The letters to Tralles, Magnesia and Ephesus were written in gratitude for the visitation of members from those churches, primarily their bishops. The two letters to Smyrna and the one to Philadelphia were written after Ignatius had visited them personally.

A number of general themes permeate the letters, most significantly Ignatius' impending martyrdom, the need for church unity under the bishop, and the churches' obligation to disregard false teaching. Themes specific to certain letters are also found, in particular a strong Christology emphasizing the deity and humanity of Jesus, pneumatology, Ignatius' apparent use of creedal statements as well as a fledgling Eucharistic theology.

Both Ignatius' desire for martyrdom and his episcopal encouragements vie for the place of most prominent theme in his letters. Much like the apostle Paul in Philippians 1:21-24, Ignatius' desire was to die and be with Christ. Frequently Ignatius made statements expressing his hope "to succeed in fighting with wild beasts in Rome" (*Eph.* 1.2. Cf. *Trall.* 4.2; 12:3; *Phil.* 5.1; *Smyrn.* 4.2). The most graphic expression of this desire is found in *Romans* 5.3 where he explains, "Fire and cross and battles with wild beasts, mutilation, mangling, wrenching of bones, the hacking of limbs, the crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil—let these come upon me, only let me reach Jesus Christ!" The spirituality of such macabre longing can only be appreciated if one recognizes the all-surpassing worth of Christ in Ignatius' thinking. As Michael J. Wilkins says, such a statement "shows Ignatius' eagerness to undergo any suffering to attain discipleship, which here means final attainment of being with Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> For the bishop, martyrdom was linked with discipleship.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, "The Interplay of Ministry, Martyrdom and Discipleship in Ignatius of Antioch," in Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige, eds., *Worship, Theology*

Of his death he could say to the Romans, “Now at last I am beginning to be a disciple” (*Rom.* 5.3. Cf. *Eph.* 1.2; 3:1; *Rom.* 4.2; 5.1; *Pol.* 71). It is apparent from this letter that the Romans were trying to gain his political freedom through legal means—something that Ignatius was deeply against. Much of the letter is a plea to refrain from anything that might change his martyr’s fate. “Grant me nothing more than to be poured out as an offering to God while there is still an altar ready” (*Rom.* 2.2).

Frequently Ignatius admonished his hearers to pay due respect to their local bishop. So strong in fact is Ignatius’ episcopal ecclesiology that he would often equate adherence to the bishop with adherence to God. In *Magnesians* 3.1 obedience to the bishop is “not really to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the Bishop of all.” Later in the letter Ignatius’ ideal church government is laid out with “the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles and the deacons...entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ” (*Mag.* 6.1). In 13.1 the presbytery and deacons are referred to as “that beautifully woven spiritual crown.” In striking language, Ignatius says to the Smyrnaeans, “the one who does anything without the bishop’s knowledge serves the devil” (*Smyrn.* 9.1). The bishop has sole authority over the church and all members must follow him. Only he, or one designated by him, can administer the Eucharist (*Smyrn.* 8.1) and only he can approve of all marriages (*Poly.* 5.2). Harrington observes that Ignatius’ strenuous encouragement to monoepiscopacy could be due to the lack of its practice in the early church: “In fact, so strenuous is Ignatius’s insistence on one bishop and the harmonious working together of bishop, presbytery, and deacons that one gets the idea that he ‘protests too much’ and that his ideas were not universally

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*and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1992), 311.



obvious or acceptable to everyone.” Daniel Harrington goes on to explain that such a view of the bishop was a means of combating heresy: “Nevertheless, Ignatius and his fellow bishops apparently viewed the monoepiscopate and the threefold structure of church offices as the sure means of defense against Docetists, Judaizers, and other 'heretics.'”<sup>4</sup>

An intriguing observation has to do with the bishopric in Rome. It is worth noting that Ignatius is assiduous in referencing the bishop of every church that to whom he writes, save for the letter to Polycarp who was himself a bishop and to the church of Rome. If it were a fact that the Roman bishop was the Pope, why does Ignatius fail to mention him in the letter? This is especially curious when one considers the very formal and respectful nature of the introduction to *Romans* when compared with the other letters. If Ignatius' purpose in writing to this church was to secure his martyrdom, he would need to enlist the help of the Roman church's bishop. It could very well point to the fact that the bishop of Rome did not have the authority that Roman Catholics would grant him today, or that there was a bishop in Rome at that time.<sup>5</sup> However, Ignatius is strong when he says that salvation is found only in the church. For instance, “All those who repent and enter into the unity of the church will belong to God” (*Phil.* 3.2. Cf. *Phil.* 8.1). This

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Harrington, SJ, *The Church According to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of Early Christianity Teach us Today* (Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 2001), 164. Cited in Matthew Levering, *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity* (Mundelein, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2010), 123n6.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Paul Foster, “The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,” in Paul Foster, ed., *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, T & T Clark Biblical Studies (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 96. See Ian Hugh Clary “Ignatius and Papal Succession” at Sola Scriptura Ministries blog.

<http://solascripturaministriesinternational.wordpress.com/2011/07/18/ignatius-and-papal-succession-by-ian-hugh-clary/> (accessed September 19, 2011).

anticipates similar statements of Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) and can be explained by seeing the continuity between the church and the gospel.<sup>6</sup> If the church turned from the gospel, it would no longer be the church.<sup>7</sup>

As an undershepherd of Christ, Ignatius was concerned to protect the sheep. He uses strong language when speaking of false teachers calling them “wolves” (*Phil.* 2.2), “evil plants” (*Phil.* 3.1) and “wild beasts” (*Smyrn.* 4.1). Two forms of false teaching are specifically attacked: Judaizing and Docetism. It is difficult to tell if Ignatius responded to two separate groups, or if the Judaizers are also Docetic.

Now that a general view of his thought is given, and before getting into his theology and apologetics, a discussion of the text-critical issues involved with the discovery of his authentic letters is in order.

### The Authentic Letters

The authenticity of the seven letters of Ignatius has been debated throughout the history of the church, particularly in the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> John Milton (1608-1674), author of *Paradise Lost*, captures the

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<sup>6</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, “Epistle 72” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* ed., Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), 5:358, 384.

<sup>7</sup> Cf., Martin Luther “Sermon for the Early Christmas Service, Luke 2:15-20 (1521-1522)” *Works* Hans J. Hillerbrand, Helmut T. Lehmann eds., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 52:39-40 for a Protestant interpretation of Cyprian’s phrase “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus.*”

<sup>8</sup> For a survey of this debate see Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1960), 1-30; William R. Schoedel, “Introduction” in *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, William R. Schoedel, ed., Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1985), 1-7; Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 29 (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 9-15.

complexity of the debate in his satirical question, “In the midst therefore of so many forgeries where shall we fixe to dare say this is Ignatius? as for his stile, who knows it? So disfigur’d and interrupted as it is.”<sup>9</sup> While most contemporary scholars are in agreement that the so-called middle recension of letters is authentic, there have been some who have argued otherwise.<sup>10</sup> Our purpose is to survey the scholarship pertaining to the letters to see how the conclusion was reached about the middle recension.

## Recensions

It has been recognised since the work of J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889) that there are three different classifications of letters—called recensions—that claim to be Ignatian.<sup>11</sup> In chronological order the first is the middle recension, containing the seven authentic letters, referred to in Eusebius’ (263-339) *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>12</sup> The second is the long recension that appeared in the latter part of the fourth century. The third, known as the short recension was not discovered until the middle of the nineteenth century. In the following the short recension will be discussed first, followed by the long and concluding with greater attention to the middle.

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<sup>9</sup> John Milton, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, 1641 cited in Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius in Syria and Asia*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> For instance Josep Rius-Camps, *The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius, The Martyr Christianismos 2* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1979). For a response to Rius-Camps and others see William R. Schoedel, “Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?” in *Religious Studies Review* 6.3 (July 1980): 196-201; and Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 11-15.

<sup>11</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp* (London: Macmillan, 1889; reprinted Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1999), 123-125.

## Short Recension

The short recension is so labelled because of the brevity of its form and because the letters “lack phrases, sentences, and even long sections that appear in the text of the uninterpolated seven.”<sup>13</sup> It is thought to be a précis of the middle recension, specifically the letters to Polycarp, Ephesians and Romans with a paragraph from Trallians. William Schoedel surmises that the summary was constructed for monastic purposes.<sup>14</sup> Corwin compares the letter to the Ephesians in the short and middle recensions showing that the former is one-third the length of the latter.<sup>15</sup>

The short recension exists only in a Syriac text.<sup>16</sup> William Cureton was the first to publish it in his *Antient Syriac Version of the Epistles of Saint Ignatius to St. Polycarp, the Ephesians and Romans* (1845) after the letters had been brought from the Nitrian desert to the British Museum. It was Cureton’s argument that these were the genuine letters and that Eusebius had not been absolutely certain of the letters (middle recension) he referenced.<sup>17</sup> Both Theodor Zahn<sup>18</sup> and Lightfoot argued against Cureton’s thesis in favour of the middle recension. Most scholars since their time have followed in their footsteps, dismissing Cureton’s arguments.

The most decisive blow levelled by Lightfoot against Cureton is the comparison he made between the short recension and fragments of

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<sup>13</sup> Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Schoedel, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>15</sup> Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 72-73.

<sup>17</sup> Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochen* (Gotha, Germany: Perthes, 1873).

a Syriac translation of the middle recension. “It is strange that Cureton should not have been struck by the close resemblance between the Syriac fragments (S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, S<sub>3</sub>) and the Syriac version of the three epistles in the Short recension (S).”<sup>19</sup> Lightfoot felt that the coincidences between them were so strong that the only possible conclusion was that one had to be derived from the other. If it can be shown that the short is dependent upon the middle, “all the evidence for the genuineness for the Short recension disappears.”<sup>20</sup> Lightfoot observes, “Cureton failed to see the resemblance, and therefore did not enter into this question, though it was one of paramount importance to him, inasmuch as his theory of the genuineness of the Short recension stands or falls as it is answered.”<sup>21</sup> For Lightfoot, it makes more sense to think that a Syrian had found a copy of the middle recension and summarised it for one reason or another, than to think that it was expanded upon in forgery: “This is the more obvious explanation.”<sup>22</sup> Quoting C. C. Richardson, Milton Brown says, “In the works of Theodor Zahn and of J. B. Lightfoot it was ‘convincingly shown that Cureton’s text represents a rather crude abridgment of the original letters.’”<sup>23</sup>

### **Long Recension**

The long recension has its name because it is the largest collection of letters, thirteen in all. Schoedel claims that it first appeared in the late

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<sup>19</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 104.

<sup>20</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 105.

<sup>21</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 105.

<sup>22</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 105.

<sup>23</sup> Milton Perry Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius: A study of linguistic criteria* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1963), xiii.

fourth century and was first referenced by the monophysite Stephen Gorbarus in 570 AD.<sup>24</sup> The long recension contains the seven letters found in the middle recension, namely those to the churches in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, Smyrna and Rome and to the bishop Polycarp. Accompanying these are five additional letters addressed to the churches in Tarsus, Antioch and Philippi as well as to a man named Hero (said to be Ignatius' replacement in Antioch<sup>25</sup>) and a woman named Mary of Cassabola. There is also included a letter from Mary to Ignatius. Manuscripts for the long recension exist only in Greek and Latin.<sup>26</sup>

Of its style, excluding the letter from Mary, Brown observes, "These twelve letters bear a remarkable resemblance to the pattern of Paul's corpus...There is an inner consistency of form, notably in the salutations and farewell greetings, and there is considerable homogeneity of thought, doctrine, and exhortation. The amount of writing is extensive enough for an application of the customary linguistic or stylistic tests."<sup>27</sup> This description differs widely from the letters of the middle recension, which were apparently written in haste. Corwin describes the writings as "broken, marred occasionally with uncompleted sentences and above all lacking in connected argument. Nowhere is there development of ideas in measured, logical sequence."<sup>28</sup> By noting the style Corwin does not seek to "dispose of the letters as inconsequential," rather, the hurriedness of their style

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<sup>24</sup> Schoedel, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>25</sup> Maier, *Eusebius The Church History*, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Authentic Writings of Ignatius*, xi.

<sup>28</sup> Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 19.

speaks to the external conditions suffered by Ignatius as he travelled in chains from Antioch to Rome. The letters of the middle recension, over and against the long, “bear the clear marks of having been written under external as well as internal pressures.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the structure and form of the long recension described by Brown militate against their being the genuine letters.

The authenticity of the long recension has been the subject of “learned and acrimonious” debate.<sup>30</sup> During the fourth century when the long recension first came into existence, the church was embroiled in the Monophysite controversy regarding Christ’s two natures.<sup>31</sup> Much of the interpolated texts were anachronistic<sup>32</sup> having “reflected the religious and social realities of the time.”<sup>33</sup> Yet the long recension came to dominate in the medieval period, displacing the authentic letters.<sup>34</sup>

In the seventeenth century a debate over ecclesiastical polity erupted and Ignatius was again a key figure. Because his letters were the first in the early church to offer a tripartite distinction between the offices of bishop, elder and deacon,<sup>35</sup> those in favour of monoepiscopalian church order sought to establish an early date for

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<sup>29</sup> Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, reprinted 2003), 44.

<sup>31</sup> For more on monophysitism see Iain R. Torrance, “Monophysitism” in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology* ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), 378-380.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius*, xii.

<sup>33</sup> Schoedel, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius*, xiii; Schoedel, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ephesians* 3.1-6.1; *Magnesians* 3.1-4.1; 6.1-7.2; *Trallians* 2.1-3.2; *Smyrnaeans* 8.1-9.1; *Polycarp* 1.2-1.2.

his letters to demonstrate the antiquity of their view. Many Nonconformists argued against this, hoping to either discredit Ignatian authorship of the letters altogether, or at least demonstrate that they were of a later date. A casualty of this debate was the spurious collection of letters and interpolations that contributed to the long recension whose true nature was realised.

### **Middle Recension**

The middle recension contains seven letters, in uninterpolated form, that constitute modern collections of the letters of Ignatius and are widely recognised as authentic. They exist in Greek (Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus), Latin and Armenian versions as well as fragments in Coptic and Syriac.<sup>36</sup> An early reference to them can be found in Eusebius, who records Ignatius as the second bishop of Antioch after Euodius with Hero succeeding him.<sup>37</sup> The historian also draws attention to references to the letters by Irenaeus and Polycarp in their writings.

The authenticity of the long recension held sway throughout the medieval period. In 1623, when the Genevan Nicholas Vedelius (1596-1642) published a text that contained the middle recension with an appendix of spurious letters attached, scholars began to question the long recension. Vedelius was of the opinion that even the Eusebian letters were interpolated and were dependent upon the *Apostolic Constitutions* that had been written long after Ignatius lived.<sup>38</sup> As much

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<sup>36</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 73; Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 4. Schoedel, "Introduction," 3, notes an Arabic text close in relation to the Syriac.

<sup>37</sup> Maier, *Eusebius The Church History*, 123-125.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius*, xii; Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, 9.



as he tried, Vedelius could not establish the original text of letters.<sup>39</sup> It was not until the work of an Irish primate that serious headway could be made in determining which letters were the ones that came from Ignatius' own hand.

James Ussher (1581-1656), archbishop of Armagh in Ireland, is memorialised for his *Annals of the World* that set the date of the world's creation at 4004 BC.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, Ussher's brilliance as a theologian and historian has been overshadowed by contemporary creation/evolution rhetoric. One discipline that Ussher was regarded as an expert was patristic history.<sup>41</sup> Often engaged in debates with Roman Catholics, Ussher defended the antiquity of Protestantism by tracing its precedence to the early church.<sup>42</sup> As the debate over the authenticity and date of Ignatius' letters continued in the seventeenth century, Ussher was a key authority; it was Ussher who made a major contribution to the final laying aside of the long recension.<sup>43</sup>

Robert Grossteste (c. 1250), bishop of Lincoln, published works of various Latin quotations by Ignatius. In the fourteenth century more quotations were to be found in the writings of John Tyssington (c. 1381) and William Wodeford (c. 1396). Upon reading them, Ussher saw that the quotations coincided with ones found in Eusebius, and differed

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<sup>39</sup> Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> For Ussher see Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History, and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> J. E. L. Oulton, "Ussher's Work as a Patristic Scholar and Church Historian" in *Hermathena* LXXXVIII (November 1956): 3-11; Ian Hugh Clary, "The Conduit to Conveigh Life': James Ussher's *Immanuel* and Patristic Christology," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 30.2 (Autumn 2012): 160-176.

<sup>42</sup> For instance James Ussher, *An answer to a challenge made by a Jesuite in Ireland* (Dublin, 1624).

<sup>43</sup> Ford, *James Ussher*, 237.

with the long recension.<sup>44</sup> Because English writers quoted them, Ussher concluded that the Latin text of Ignatius' letters must be housed in an English library. His search paid off as Ussher discovered two Latin manuscripts of the letters. As he studied them, Ussher surmised that the translator was likely by Grossteste himself. Notes in the margin betrayed an English author: "Incus est instrumentum fabri; dicitur Anglice anfeld."<sup>45</sup> There were also comparisons made in the notes between the Latin translation and the original Greek. Knowing that Grossteste was one of the foremost Greek scholars in England at the time, he was the best candidate for translator.<sup>46</sup> Lightfoot proved that Grossteste was the author by accurately comparing a manuscript from Tours that testified to be authored by the bishop of Lincoln.<sup>47</sup>

The seven letters of the Latin translation were enough to convince Ussher that six of the seven were genuine; he rejected the letter to Polycarp. Ussher came to this conclusion due to a statement from Jerome who argued that the Polycarp letter was inauthentic. In 1644 he published *Polycarp et Ignatii Epistolae* offering his conclusions. Of his importance, Lightfoot could say, "To the critical genius of Ussher belongs the honour of restoring the true Ignatius."<sup>48</sup>

In 1646 Isaac Vossius (1618-1689) published a short form of the Greek text found in the Medicean Library in Florence. Although the letter to the Romans was absent, it was later included as authentic

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<sup>44</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 76; Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius*, xii; Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> "The anvil destroys the workman's tool; says the Englishman's anvil."

<sup>46</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 76.

<sup>47</sup> Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 76-77.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Oulton, "Ussher's Work as a Patristic Scholar and Church Historian," 9.

after it had been found in a Latin manuscript of the “Acts of Ignatius” published by Theodore Ruinart (1657-1709) in 1689 in his *Acta Martyrum Sincera*.<sup>49</sup> The work of these seventeenth-century scholars essentially closed the door on the question of which were the authentic letters. The final work of Zahn and especially Lightfoot placed final confirmation in the minds of scholars that they can rest assured that the seven letters of the middle recension are indeed those written by Ignatius.

Now that we have an understanding of proper Ignatian sources, a survey of his apologetic approaches to Christology and pneumatology are in order.

### **Christology**

In arguments against false teachers, Ignatius provides an apologetic for the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ. A number of Christological statements appear in what could be considered rough creedal form found in *Ephesians* 7.2; 18.2; *Magnesians* 11; *Trallians* 9.1-2 and *Smyrnaeans* 1.1-2. This essay will first evaluate assertions about Christ’s humanity and then his deity. This evaluation is based on the creedal forms and relevant statements found elsewhere in the letters.

### **Humanity**

In the early church an erroneous teaching developed regarding the humanity of Christ called Docetism. Believing the material world to be evil, Docetists taught that Christ did not assume a physical body nor did he suffer on the cross. Though he seemed to possess a human form he was only a spirit. Their name is derived from the Greek *dokei/n* meaning “to appear” because Christ was human and suffered in

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<sup>49</sup> Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius*, xii.

appearance not in reality.<sup>50</sup> Ignatius explained this teaching to the Trallians saying, “some atheists (that is, unbelievers) say, he suffered in appearance only” (*Trall.* 10. Cf. *Smyrn.* 2). These people “mix Jesus Christ with poison...and so with fatal pleasure drink down death” (*Trall.* 6.2). Ignatius combated this “heresy” (*Trall.* 6.1) by stressing both the historical and physical nature of Jesus’ person.

In regard to His historicity, Ignatius told the Magnesians to “be fully convinced of the birth and the suffering and the resurrection” of Jesus (*Magn.* 11). Into each of the five creedal statements Ignatius injects historical figures grounding the life of Christ in space and time. Four characters are mentioned: Mary (*Eph.* 7.2; 18.2; *Trall.* 9.1), King David (*Eph.* 18.2; *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 1.1), Pontius Pilate (*Magn.* 11; *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 1.2) and Herod the Tetrarch (*Smyrn.* 1.2). David is mentioned in reference to Christ who was his descendant; Mary is the mother of Jesus; and both Pontius Pilate and Herod were rulers at the time of Jesus’ death. This attention to detail regarding history is important because it allows the readers and hearers of the letters to think of Christ in relation to concrete people and events. These were not fables or legends. From this it is readily apparent that Ignatius believed Jesus to be a real person who lived in a particular place at a specific point in history.

Alongside Christ’s historical reality, Ignatius also places an emphasis on His physical being. The “one physician” was “both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in humanity...” (*Eph.* 7.2). He was not a Docetic phantasm; rather He existed in real flesh and blood. Jesus experienced all of the regular limitations of a human being. For instance, He was conceived (*Eph.* 18.2); he was born (*Eph.* 7.2; 18.2;

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<sup>50</sup> Stuart G. Hall, “Docetism” in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2000), 163-165.

*Magn.11.1; Trall. 9.1; Smyrn. 1.1*); he “both ate and drank” (*Trall. 9.1*); he was baptized (*Eph. 18.2; Smyrn. 1.1*); he suffered persecution (*Trall. 9.1*); he was nailed to a cross (*Trall. 9.1; Smyrn. 1.2*); he died (*Magn.11; Trall. 9.1*); and he was resurrected (*Magn.11; Trall. 9.2*).

In his letter to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius disparaged the idea that Jesus “suffered in appearance only.” Jesus “suffered for our sakes...and he truly suffered just as he truly raised himself” (*Smyrn. 2*). Jesus was “in the flesh even after the resurrection” and appeared in order for His disciples to touch His raised body (3.1). Luke 24:39, “when he came to Peter and those with him” is offered as proof of this (3.2). Ignatius, quotes Jesus as saying, “‘Take hold of me; handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon.’ And immediately they touched him and believed...” As in the statement of *Trallians 9.1-2*, Ignatius again affirms that Jesus ate and drank with the disciples “like one who is composed of flesh...” (3.3).

To show that his belief in the real humanity of Jesus was seriously held, Ignatius points to his eventual martyrdom as proof. “For if these things were done by our Lord in appearance only, then I am in chains in appearance only. Why, moreover, have I surrendered myself to death, to fire, to sword, to beasts?” (4.2. Cf. *Trall. 10*). The physical suffering and death of the “perfect man” as well as His physical resurrection were such fundamental truths for Ignatius that he was willing to lay his life down for them. He did not want the recipients of his letters to think that such teaching was optional for the Christian. For Ignatius, apologetics became a matter of life and death.

## **Deity**

While Ignatius emphasized the humanity of Jesus, he did not do so to the neglect of His deity. To the Ephesians Ignatius could say that He was “God in man” (*Eph. 7.2*) He was “our God, Jesus the Christ” (*Eph.*

18.2). In the opening of his letter to the Romans Ignatius twice refers to Him as “our God” (*Rom.* 1). To the Magnesians he said that Jesus Christ “came forth from one Father and remained with the One and returned to the One” (*Magn.* 7.2).

A beautiful testimony to the deity of Christ can be found in the creedal statement of *Ephesians* 7.2, where Ignatius declares, “There is one physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord.” In this passage, in paradoxical couplets, Ignatius affirms both the humanity and deity of Christ in one relationship that almost seems to anticipate the Nicene Creed published two hundred years later. Jesus is the “one physician” yet is “flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man.” The “one physician” speaks to the unity of Christ’s person, yet His human and divine natures are paired concerning its physical and spiritual character. His temporality and eternity is couched in terms of the natural and divine birth of the incarnation. Jesus was “God in man” both “from Mary and from God.” Later in *Ephesians* 18.2 Ignatius says, “For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God’s plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit” (See also *Trall.* 9.1).

In *Smyrnaeans* 1.1 Ignatius wants the church to be “totally convinced with regard to our Lord that he is truly of the family of David with respect to human descent, Son of God with respect to divine will and power, truly born of a virgin.” Again, the human and divine origin of Christ is affirmed, as well as the virgin birth. Specifically Ignatius points to Jesus as the “Son of God” and is so because of “divine will and power.” This also comes just after Ignatius has said, “I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise.”

In his letter to Polycarp, Ignatius encourages his fellow bishop in the faith. He provides the bishop of Smyrna with a number of practical suggestions (*Pol.* 1.2-5.2) laced with doctrinal affirmations. One such affirmation has to do with the divinity of Jesus. Ignatius tells Polycarp in 3.2 to “Understand the times. Wait expectantly for him who is above time: the Eternal, the Invisible, who for our sake became visible; the Intangible, the Unsuffering, who for our sake suffered, who for our sake endured in every way.” In this one statement a number of important points about Jesus’ life are laid out, including the incarnation, crucifixion and second coming. But there is one affirmation pointing clearly to the divinity of Jesus: He exists outside of time. He can do so because He is eternal, invisible and intangible. Of course, Ignatius has argued firmly for the real humanity of Christ in other letters, so in this statement it is Christ’s divine nature that is being referred to. His humanity is also seen in the affirmation of His becoming “visible” in the incarnation. Therefore, in this one term, “above time” Ignatius paints a clear picture of the divinity of Jesus.

A final note about Ignatius’ letters concerning the divinity of Christ is the place he provides Jesus in the Trinity. Though it appears only briefly in the letters, the Trinity is clearly formulated (*Magn.* 13.1; *Eph.* 18.2). In *Magnesiums* 13.1 those addressed are told to “be eager” to be “firmly grounded in the precepts of the Lord...in the Son and the Father and in the Spirit.” The Son is clearly Jesus Christ as earlier in the letter Ignatius writes “there is one God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word which came forth from silence...” (*Magn.* 8.2. Cf. *Eph.* 4.2; *Trall.* 3.1). In *Ephesians* 20.2 Jesus is called the “Son of man and Son of God.”

Another Trinitarian statement is found in *Ephesians* 18.2. Here Ignatius says, “For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God’s plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy

Spirit.” Jesus is affirmed as God, yet is also spoken of as being conceived by God’s plan. There is a distinction in the two uses of the word “God.” One use is in reference to Jesus and the other is in reference to the one planning His conception. Mentioned alongside God and Jesus the Christ is the Holy Spirit. In *Magnesians* 13.1 Ignatius speaks of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and in 7.2 states that the Son came from the Father. With this in mind it is therefore plausible that the God who planned Jesus’ conception is none other than the Father. Be that as it may, what is clear is that Jesus is referred to as God in what appears to be a Trinitarian statement.

By placing Him alongside the Father and the Spirit in both letters Ignatius recognises Jesus as the Son, the second person of the Triune Godhead. But what of his view of the Holy Spirit?

### **Pneumatology**

Of the three persons of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit appears less frequently than the Father or the Son in Ignatius. The Greek words *pneuma*, *pneumatikos*, *pneumatikon* and their cognates appear over thirty-five times, yet only seven refer explicitly to the Holy Spirit (*Eph.* 9.1; 18.2; *Magn.* 13.1, 2; *Phld.* Intro; 7.1, 2) while one other may possibly be related (*Smyrn.* 3.3). All of the other uses of this word group are in relation to the incorporeal aspect of a physical person, often referred to by Ignatius as “flesh and spirit” (For example *Smryn.* 1.1; 13.2).

This section will address those verses in Ignatius’ writings that relate specifically to the Holy Spirit. By doing so it will be observed that as a Trinitarian, he considers the Spirit to be equally God alongside the Father and the Son. Also, Ignatius’ understanding of the function of the Spirit within the lives of his people in relation to soteriology and ecclesiology will be examined.



## Spirit as God

In the four Trinitarian statements found in the letters of Ignatius (*Eph.* 9.1; 18.2; *Magn.* 13.1-2; *Phld.* 7.2), the Holy Spirit is afforded a place alongside the Father and the Son as a member of the Godhead. The inclusion of the Holy Spirit with the Father and Son in the Trinitarian statements demonstrates that he also is God.

*Magnesians* 13.1 is a clear Trinitarian statement where Ignatius, after exhorting the church to “stand securely” in the faith, tells them that they will prosper in everything done “in faith and love, in the Son and the Father and in the Spirit.” The use of the word faith is significant because God is the only person that Christians are to place their faith in (Cf. *Eph.* 9.1). It would therefore be idolatry if one were to place their faith in the Spirit were he not God. Following this, in *Magnesians* 13.2, Ignatius continues this Trinitarian thinking by exhorting the church to submit to their leaders as the apostles submitted “to Christ and to the Father and to the Spirit.” Again, it would be idolatrous to expect his readers to submit to the Spirit in such a way alongside the Father and Son were he not God.

Ignatius views the Spirit as God, but he also understands him as a person, as in *Philadelphians* 7.1. Here Ignatius refers to those who may seek to deceive him according to the flesh. In contrast to this, he notes that the Spirit cannot be so deceived because “it comes from God.” He then says that the Spirit “knows whence it comes and where it is going.” The Spirit also “exposes the things that are hidden.” By attributing to the Spirit the ability to know, to not be deceived and to expose hidden things, Ignatius personifies him. A non-personal entity would not have the ability to know, nor would it be possible to either deceive or not deceive something that is not a person; the idea of attempting to deceive an inanimate object is absurd. Finally, only a person can do the work of exposing things that are hidden. Later in 7.2

Ignatius speaks of the Spirit preaching about Christian unity. Only a person can preach. He then fills out the Trinitarian nature of devotion by saying, “Keep your flesh as the Temple of God; love unity; flee divisions; be imitators of Jesus Christ as he is of his Father.” Essentially, the Spirit says to imitate the Son who imitates the Father.

In each of these attributes, Ignatius is showing that the Spirit is a person who thinks, communicates and acts. Ontologically the Holy Spirit is God. He is a person who shares equally in the divinity of the Godhead just as the Father and Son. Therefore, the Spirit is one to whom faith and submission are due.

### **Spirit and Salvation**

Economically, the Holy Spirit plays an important role in relation to the created order. With the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit has a specific part to play in the outworking of salvation, both historically and personally. Ignatius’ letters reveal certain aspects of this role in terms of salvation.

Recently, theologians have recognised two aspects of the plan of salvation the so-called *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*.<sup>51</sup> The former has to do with the historical outworking of this plan of the Father to redeem a people to himself primarily through his Son, Jesus Christ. The latter is the application of the finished plan to this people both as individuals and as a collective whole. In Ignatius’ letters, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in reference to aspects of both the *historia salutis* and the *ordo salutis* (though he does not use that terminology). In terms of the *historia*, the Spirit is spoken of in relation to Christ’s earthly life, especially his birth. In the *ordo* he places particular focus on the doctrine of sanctification.

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<sup>51</sup> See Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* trans. John R. DeWitt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 14.

In *Ephesians* 18.2, Ignatius speaks to the human and divine nature of Jesus. He was “conceived by Mary according to the plan of God” and “he was from the seed of David, but also from the Holy Spirit.” Not only does Ignatius argue for the reality of the incarnation, he does so by explicitly stating its Trinitarian nature. The plan of Mary’s conception originated with God. God here is to be understood as the Father, distinct from the other use of the word God in reference to Jesus Christ. It could literally be read, “God the Son was conceived by Mary according to the plan of God the Father.” By being born of Mary, Jesus was of the Davidic line (Cf. *Eph.* 20.1; *Trall.* 9.1; *Rom.* 7.3; *Smyrn.* 1.1). But Ignatius also points out that Jesus was “from the Holy Spirit” reflecting the teaching in Matthew 1:18 as well as Luke 1:35. In the latter the Holy Spirit is said to have come upon Mary and the power of the Most High would overshadow her allowing her to conceive the Son of God as a virgin. Therefore, one aspect of the Spirit’s role in redemptive history is the incarnation of the Messiah.

In regard to the *ordo salutis*, Ignatius pays specific attention to the work of the Spirit in sanctification. Just as Ignatius framed the incarnation in Trinitarian categories, in *Ephesians* 9.1 the progress of sanctification also involves all three members of the Godhead. He says, “You are stones of the Father’s temple, prepared for the building of God the Father. For you are being carried up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using as a cable the Holy Spirit; and your faith is your hoist, and love is the path that carries you up to God.” Ignatius writes this after having expressed his concern over those “with an evil teaching” who had “passed through” and his pleasure that the Ephesians “did not allow them to sow any seeds” among them. Vivid imagery is used to explain the Christian life, utilizing a crane or hoist as an illustration. The cross is the “crane of Jesus Christ” that carries Christians up to the heights of God by the

hoist of faith along the path of love. Interestingly, the Holy Spirit is referred to as a “cable” or “rope” (skoini,on). The idea is that the Holy Spirit carries a person to God by faith based upon the saving power of Christ’s cross.

Another redemptive-historical theme in Ignatius that likely relates to the Holy Spirit is that of Christ’s spiritual union with the Father. In *Smyrneans* 3.3, when explaining Christ’s post-resurrection appearances, Ignatius points out that the Lord ate and drank with his disciples as a “fleshly being.” This was in contrast to the docetic teaching that Jesus never assumed a physical body. Yet all the while that “he was in the flesh even after the resurrection” (3.1) “he was spiritually united with the Father” (3.3). It is this spiritual union between Christ and the Father that has a potential link to the Spirit. The adverb “spiritually” (pneumatikw/j) used to explain this union may have reference to the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 the apostle Paul speaks of the “natural person” who “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.” This is the case because such things are “spiritually discerned.” The word translated “spiritually” is pneumatikw/j the same used by Ignatius in 3.3. Only the “spiritual person” can discern such things (2:15) because he or she has “received the Spirit” (2:12) and is “taught by him” (2:13). Pneumatikw/j is to be understood in relation to the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 2:14; therefore it is a good possibility that Ignatius is using it in the same manner. If this is the case, the implication is that the Holy Spirit united Jesus Christ to the Father while he ministered on earth.

### **Spirit and Church**

Besides soteriology, the Spirit’s role in ecclesiology is also noteworthy (*Magn.* 13.2; *Phld.* Intro 7.2). Ignatius has a very high view of his office and frequently admonishes the recipients of his letters to submit to the

authority of their church leaders. In a number of places he referenced the Spirit as added weight to his argument. For instance, in the introduction to *Philadelphians*, Ignatius claims that the bishop, presbyters and deacons were “securely set in place” by the Holy Spirit. These church officers had also been “appointed in accordance with the mind of Jesus Christ.” At the very beginning of the introduction Ignatius calls the Philadelphians “the church of God the Father.” Although not a formal Trinitarian statement, the church is founded upon the unity of purpose between the three members of the Godhead. It is within this schema that the Holy Spirit’s own role is explained, that of securely setting in place the three offices of the church.

Another text outlining the relationship of the Spirit to ecclesiology is *Philadelphians* 7.2. Here Ignatius makes the claim that the Spirit preached to him saying, “Do nothing apart from the bishop...” and continues on to explain the Trinitarian nature of devotion noted above. It is this appeal to Spirit’s authority for the establishing of a specific form of church government that is important to note. For Ignatius, submission to the bishop is not a mere human requirement and comes not from a “human source” but from the Spirit of God himself. To deny the bishop is essentially to deny the Spirit. However, Ignatius was also quick to distance the authority of a bishop, like himself, from that of the apostles. In *Rom.* 4.3 he says, “I do not give you orders like Peter and Paul: they were apostles, I am a convict.”<sup>52</sup>

Although Pneumatology is not a prominent theme in Ignatius’ letters, they do contain a high view of the Holy Spirit and are a helpful resource when considering the early development of this foundational Christian doctrine.

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<sup>52</sup> For a more complete treatment of Ignatius on apostolic authority see Charles E. Hill, “Ignatius and the Apostolate,” *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001): 226-248.

## Conclusion

Some scholars have detected a certain “mania” in Ignatius’ desire for martyrdom; Michael A. G. Haykin answers this pointing to the dedication of the bishop to his Saviour: “A careful study...of Ignatius’ thinking about his own death reveals a man who rightly knows that Christian believing demands passionate engagement of the entire person, even to the point of physical death.”<sup>53</sup> Ignatius’ passionate engagement involved the demand to give a reason for his hope in Christ, to the degree that he laid his life down to demonstrate the depth of his belief. While not every Christian today is called to martyrdom, we are to live out our faith in our “entire person” as Ignatius did. This includes our apologetic, an important component of our theology. An apologetic that is only worth defending abstractly, without a whole person devotion, is probably not worth much in the first place. May the legacy of Ignatius continue to encourage Christians to whole-hearted devotion, whether theologically or in terms of practice. Christ devoted himself wholly to the church, it is the very least we could do.

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<sup>53</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘Come to the Father’: Ignatius of Antioch and his calling to be a martyr,” *Themelios* (32.3): 27.

## *Inspiration and Inerrancy in the Ancient Church\**

Michael A.G. Haykin  
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Ancient Church uniformly regarded the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures as a given.<sup>1</sup> One possible exception might be the Syrian exegete Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428)—or “Teddy the Mop,” as my *Doktorvater* John Egan was wont to call him! In Theodore’s case, his rejection of the allegorization of the Song of Songs as a love song between Christ and his people appears to have involved serious questions about this one text’s canonical status and inspiration.<sup>2</sup>

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\* Adapted and quoted from "Fundamentum Et Columnam Fidei Nostrae" by Michael A. G. Haykin in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?* edited by James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary, © 2012, pp. 137-46. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org).

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “The Church Doctrine of Inspiration” in Carl F.H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1958), 207; Richard Lovelace, “Inerrancy: Some Historical Perspectives” in Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels, ed., *Inerrancy and Common Sense* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 20. See also H.B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church. A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), 381.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the details, see Manlio Simonetti, “Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428): A Special Contribution” in Charles Kannengiesser, ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), II:806–8. In Theodore’s judgment, the Song of Songs was “a poem written for the occasion of Solomon’s marriage to his Egyptian wife” and was not fit for public reading (M.F.

An apt summary of the Ancient Church's thought about the inspiration of the Scriptures is often found in a phrase from the third article of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed: "We believe...in the Holy Spirit...who spoke through the prophets."<sup>3</sup> The entire pneumatological clause of this codification of Trinitarian doctrine was deeply informed by the thought of Basil of Caesarea (c. 329–379), who made frequent mention of the Spirit's authorship of the Bible. For example, in his refutation of the radical Arian Eunomius of Cyzicus (died c. 393), penned in the early 360s, Basil referred over and over again to the Spirit's inspiration of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> He cited John 1:1 and Ps 109:3 at one point and called these texts "the very words of the Holy Spirit."<sup>5</sup>

About fifteen years later, when Basil was defending the full deity of the Holy Spirit against the Pneumatomachian Eustathius of Sebaste (c. 300–377), he expressed amazement that Eustathius, who believed that the Bible was "God-breathed [2 Timothy 3:16] because it was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," was reticent to confess the divine honour due to the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> For Basil, Scripture was worthy of our total respect because it came from the divine source of the Spirit.

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Wiles, "Theodore of Mopsuestia as Representative of the Antiochene School" in P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], I:495–96).

<sup>3</sup> Timothy P. McConnell, *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 147, 157; Matthew R. Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture* Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 71.

<sup>4</sup> McConnell, *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea's Doctrine*, 154–55. For what follows about Basil, I am indebted to McConnell, *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea's Doctrine*, 155–58.

<sup>5</sup> *Against Eunomius* 2.17.

<sup>6</sup> *On the Holy Spirit* 21.52.



Again, in a pastoral letter that Basil wrote to a widow, who had had a troubling dream, the bishop of Caesarea reminded her that she had the “consolation of the divine Scriptures” and thus would “not need us or anyone else to help you see your duty; sufficient is the counsel and good guidance you already have in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> To heed the teaching of the Scriptures is to be instructed and counselled by the Spirit.

Now, Basil would have been well aware that this view of the Spirit’s inspiration of the Scriptures had been central to the Church’s teaching from the beginning.<sup>8</sup> In the early second century, Justin Martyr (c. 100/110–c. 165) cited Ps 72 as proof of his Christological reading of the Old Testament and described it as having been “spoken to David by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> Later in that century, Theophilus, the bishop of Antioch in Roman Syria (fl. 180), who was actually converted through the reading of the Old Testament,<sup>10</sup> maintained that the writers of the Old Testament were:

Men of God, who carried in them the Holy Spirit and became prophets; they were inspired and made wise by God himself. They were taught by God, and became holy and righteous. That is why they were also considered worthy of receiving this reward of becoming God’s instruments and containing wisdom from him.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Letter 283, trans. McConnell, *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea’s Doctrine*, 157.

<sup>8</sup> For Basil’s respect for tradition, see his *On the Holy Spirit* 29.71–75, for example.

<sup>9</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho* 34.1. See also W.A. Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr* (London: SPCK, 1965), 4–8.

<sup>10</sup> *To Autolycus* 1.14.

<sup>11</sup> *To Autolycus* 2.9; see also *To Autolycus* 2.33.

The Muratorian Canon, which is probably to be dated around this time in the final decade or so of the second century, contains a distinct recognition of the unity of the four Gospels due to their authorship by one and the same Spirit:

“Though different points are taught in the several books of the Gospels, there is no difference as regards the faith of believers, since everything concerning the Lord’s nativity, passion, and resurrection is declared in all of them by one directing Spirit (*uno et principali Spiritu*).”<sup>12</sup>

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–339) has preserved a fragment from an early third-century work directed against the Adoptionism of a certain Artemon—it may have been written by the Roman presbyter Caius (*fl.* 190–220)—in which it is asserted that those who do “not believe that the divine Scriptures have been spoken by the Holy Spirit” are actually “unbelievers.”<sup>13</sup>

Origen, a man of prodigious energy when it came to biblical studies, was also firmly convinced that the:

Sacred books [of the Bible] are not the works of men, but...they were composed and have come down to us as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the will of the Father of the universe through Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Muratorian Fragment, 15–17.

<sup>13</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church history* 5.28.18.

<sup>14</sup> *On First Principles* 4.2.2 (G.W. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles* [1966 ed.; repr. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1973], 272). See also *On First Principles* 4.2.7; 4.3.14.

The emphasis here is on the activity of the Spirit: it is the Spirit who has “composed” or “supervised” the formation of the Scriptures.<sup>15</sup> Again, Origen can maintain:

Not only did the Spirit supervise the writings which were previous to the coming of Christ, but because he is the same Spirit and proceeds from the one God he has dealt in like manner with the gospels and the writings of the apostles.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, this work of the Spirit extends to every letter of Scripture: “the wisdom of God has penetrated to all the Scriptures inspired by God, even down to the smallest letter.”<sup>17</sup> The result is that the entirety of the Scriptures can be called “the words of God.”<sup>18</sup> For Origen, then, the true author of both the Old and New Testaments is the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> A. Zöllig put it rightly when he stated:

[For Origen,] Holy Scripture has a divine nature, and this not simply because it contains divine ideas, nor because the breath of the divine Spirit breathes in its lines...but because it has God for its author.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Michael W. Holmes, “Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 24 (1981): 221.

<sup>16</sup> *On First Principles* 4.2.9 (trans. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles*, 287).

<sup>17</sup> *Philocalia* 2.4 (author’s translation).

<sup>18</sup> *On First Principles* 4.1.7 (trans. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles*, 265).

<sup>19</sup> In *Against Celsus* 4.71, Origen can state alternatively: “The Logos of God seems to have arranged the Scriptures” (trans. Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953], 240).

<sup>20</sup> Cited Dan G. McCartney, “Literal and Allegorical Interpretation in Origen’s *Contra Celsum*,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 48 (1986): 287.

In fact, the twentieth-century theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar has gone so far as to state that Origen “sacramentalized Scripture, stating that God’s Spirit dwells in it with the same real presence as it does in the Church.”<sup>21</sup>

When we turn to the patristic witness in the fourth and fifth centuries, we find the identical conviction. In his *Catechetical Lectures*, Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313–386) explained the Church’s faith in the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Bible thus:

The Scriptures were spoken by the Holy Spirit... He was in the prophets, and under the new covenant he was in the apostles. Such as dare to break in two the work of the Holy Spirit are to be abhorred. There is one God the Father, Lord of the Old Testament and the New. And there is one Lord Jesus Christ, prophesied in the Old Testament and present in the new. And there is one Holy Spirit, who proclaimed the things of Christ by the prophets, and then when Christ came, came down himself to make him known. Let no one therefore draw a line between the Old Testament and the New. Let no one say the Spirit in the Old Testament is not identical with the Spirit in the New. For whoever does so offends none other than that Holy Spirit who is honoured with one honour together with the Father and the Son...<sup>22</sup>

In *The Letter to Marcellinus*, Athanasius’ (c. 299–373) classic reflection on the interpretation and spiritual value of the Psalms, the Egyptian bishop noted that the harmony of the Scriptures, whether

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<sup>21</sup> “Preface” to Rowan A. Greer’s very helpful introduction to Origen’s piety in his trans., *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), xiii.

<sup>22</sup> *Catechetical Lecture* 16.2–4, *passim*.

“prophecy or legislation or the record of history,” was due to the fact that “one and the same Spirit” was involved in the writing of each of these sections of the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Theodoret (393–460), bishop of Cyrus, a city about sixty miles northeast of Antioch and whose series of biblical commentaries encompassed most of the Old Testament as well as the books of the Pauline corpus, was equally certain that all of the Bible was divinely inspired. It was “the innermost sanctuary of the most Holy Spirit.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, he was confident that “all the prophets are instruments of the divine Spirit” and anyone who disputed this was “making war on God.” Most probably he had Theodore of Mopsuestia in mind when he upheld the inspired nature of the Song of Songs in a lengthy preface to his commentary on that Old Testament book and argued that to take any other position was to slander the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

A final witness to this uniform perspective on the Scriptures may be found in Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444), who employed the adjective θεόπνεθτος literally hundreds of times almost exclusively in connection with the Bible.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in his commentary on Isaiah, for instance, Cyril argued that all of “the divinely inspired Scripture” needs to be regarded in a real sense as one book. The reason was patent: it “has been spoken through the one Holy Spirit.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *The Letter to Marcellinus* 9.

<sup>24</sup> Questions on the Octateuch, pref

<sup>25</sup> Cited Jean-Noël Guinot, “Theodoret of Cyrus: Bishop and Exegete” in Paul M. Blowers, ed. And trans., *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 164–65.

<sup>26</sup> Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria’s Trinitarian Theology of Scripture*, 76–77.

<sup>27</sup> *On Isaiah* 29.11–12, cited Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria’s Trinitarian Theology of Scripture*, 67.

If the Ancient Church as a whole thus regarded the primary author of the Bible as the Holy Spirit, was the inerrancy of the Scriptures equally considered normative? In a word, yes.

The famous affirmation of Augustine (354–430) that he believed the authors of Holy Scripture were “completely free from error” and that if he did find something in the Bible that seemed “contrary to the truth,” it was because there was a textual problem, or the translator was at fault, or he himself was deficient in understanding, is especially remarkable for its detail.<sup>28</sup> Yet other authors can also be found who essentially affirmed that inspiration entailed inerrancy.

In what follows in this paper, I wish to look at one author who is equally adamant that the inspired Scriptures are without error, and that is the second-century theologian Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130/140–c. 200). First, I wish to put him in his historical context and then sketch his life. Then, we look at his teaching regarding the inerrancy of the Bible.

### **The Historical Context of Irenaeus**

The discovery of a cache of fifty or so Gnostic texts at Nag Hammadi in 1945 proved to be the major catalyst in the emergence in the twentieth century of the study of Gnosticism as a significant academic discipline. And as that discipline has matured over the years, these texts have confirmed in the minds of some scholars that the earliest communities of professing Christians were truly diverse bodies.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, while an attentive reading of these texts does reveal some clear differences between the various Gnostic communities, such a

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<sup>28</sup> Letter 82.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

reading also makes evident that they shared a number of commonalities over against their opponents in the Ancient catholic church. The majority of the Gnostics were essentially committed to a radical dualism of immateriality and matter. The former was divine and wholly good, while the latter was irredeemably evil. They were essentially hostile to monotheism, since they postulated the existence of a variety of divine beings. Through an upheaval within the supreme divine being, which the various Gnostic systems explained by means of an atemporal myth, elements of the divine became trapped within material bodies. These material bodies and the entire material realm were the work of a lesser divinity (the demiurge), understood as either the God of the Old Testament or even Satan. Since awareness of the divine element's entrapment in the human body was not immediately known, knowledge of one's true state was needed, which, for most Gnostic systems, involved Jesus as the revealer, and hence his role as saviour. Central to this entire quest was an eschatology that entailed escape from all materiality and temporality.<sup>30</sup>

Combating Gnosticism involved the finest of the earliest Christian thinkers, from Justin Martyr to Origen, but it is intriguing that what is probably the most significant reply to the leading heresiarchs of the second century, Valentinus (*fl.* 138–166)<sup>31</sup> and Marcion (*fl.* 150s–160s),<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> For this mini-morphology of Gnosticism, I am indebted to Christoph Marksches, *Gnosis: An Introduction*, trans. John Bowden (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 16–17; Robert A. Segal, “Religion: Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?*” *Times Literary Supplement* (November 21, 2003): 31. For a selection of Gnostic texts, see Werner Foerster, ed., *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972 and 1974), 2 vols.

<sup>31</sup> According to Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.4.3, Valentinus came to Rome during the episcopate of Hyginus (c. 138–c. 142) and was there till that of Anicetus (c. 155–c. 166). For Valentinus and his followers, see especially Marksches, *Gnosis*, 89–94; Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the ‘Valentinians’* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

came from Irenaeus, a missionary theologian who complained about his ability to write theology. Although Greek was his mother tongue, he reckoned that he had spent far too much time among the Celts of Gaul speaking Gaulish, a Celtic language now extinct, and thus he believed he had lost any real facility he had had with his own language.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, he claimed that he had never formally studied rhetoric and that he had neither the literary skills nor the “beauty of language” necessary for the task of a theologian.<sup>34</sup> And yet many later students of his thought rightly believe him to be a truly gifted expositor of what

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In an interesting venture into virtual history, Dunderberg has also written an article about what “Christianity” would have looked like if Valentinus’ heresy had been successful in subverting orthodoxy. As with all virtual history, the further away in time Dunderberg’s speculations are from Valentinus’ actual lifetime, the more “sci-fi-ish” they get. See his “Valentinus and His School: What Might Have Been”, *The Fourth R* 22, no.6 (November–December 2009): 3–10.

<sup>32</sup> According to Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.4.3, Marcion was principally active in Rome during the episcopate of Anicetus. For two recent overviews of Marcion’s life and teaching, see Marksches, *Gnosis*, 86–89; Paul Foster, “Marcion: His Life, Works, Beliefs, and Impact,” *The Expository Times*, 121 (March 2010): 269–80. There were significant differences between Marcion and the Gnostics, and in many ways Marcion should not be classified as a Gnostic. On this, see the brief summary by Marksches, *Gnosis*, 88–89.

<sup>33</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.pref.3. For discussion of Irenaeus and Gaulish, see also C. Philip Slate, “Two Features of Irenaeus’ Missiology”, *Missiology* 23, no.4 (October 1995): 433–35.

<sup>34</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.pref.3. All translations from *Against Heresies* are by the author unless otherwise indicated. For the Greek and Latin text of *Against Heresies*, I have used Adelin Rousseau, et al., ed., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies*, 5 vols. (Sources chrétiennes, vols. 100.1–2, 152–153, 210–211, 263–264, 293–294; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965 [vol.4], 1969 [vol.5], 1974 [vol.3], 1979 [vol.1], 1982 [vol.2]).

On Irenaeus’ claim to have no knowledge of rhetoric, see Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London: Routledge, 1997), 46–53; M. A. Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 10–11; Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3–4.



would become the core of orthodox Christianity.<sup>35</sup> There is a vigour and winsomeness about him that makes many students of his extant works wish that far more was known about his life than is available.<sup>36</sup>

### A Brief Sketch of the Life of Irenaeus

There seems to be no consensus in patristic scholarship about the place of Irenaeus' birth. There is a good likelihood that it was Smyrna (the modern Turkish city of Izmir), since he heard Polycarp of Smyrna (69/70–155/6) preach there when he was young and Polycarp appears to have been something of a Christian mentor to him.<sup>37</sup> His date of

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<sup>35</sup> W. Brian Shelton, "Irenaeus" in Bradley G. Green, ed., *Shapers of Christian Orthodoxy: Engaging with Early and Medieval Theologians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 15–16.

<sup>36</sup> F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Irenaeus of Lugdunum," *Expository Times* 44 (1932–33): 167. Cyril C. Richardson was surely right when he stated, "The significance of Irenaeus cannot be overestimated" ("Introduction to Early Christian Literature and Its Setting" in his trans. and ed., *Early Christian Fathers* [The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 1; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953], 18). It needs noting that there are some, however, who "find Irenaeus and what he stood for to be truly and genuinely unappealing" (C. E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 52). Hill details the dislike of certain contemporary scholars for Irenaeus and his thinking (*idem.*, *Who Chose the Gospels?*, 52–68).

For what follows in terms of a biographical sketch of Irenaeus, I have found the following sketches of his life helpful: Denis Minns, *Irenaeus* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1997), 1–9; Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 1–10; Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 7–10; Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 1–7; Shelton, "Irenaeus" in Green, ed., *Shapers of Christian Orthodoxy*, 17–24; D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Irenaeus of Lyons" in his ed., *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought* (London: Routledge, 2010), 137–39; Michael Todd Wilson, "Preaching Irenaeus: A Second-Century Pastor Speaks to a Twenty-First Church" (unpublished D.Min. thesis, Knox Theological Seminary, 2011), 60–76.

<sup>37</sup> *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 22.2 and "The Ending according to the Moscow Epilogue" 2; Irenaeus, Letter to Florinus (Eusebius, *Church History* 5.20.4–8); Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.4.

birth is also obscure, with suggested dates ranging from 98 to 147.<sup>38</sup> Most likely he was born between 130 and 140.<sup>39</sup> It is also quite possible that Irenaeus studied under Justin Martyr, either in Ephesus or later at Rome.<sup>40</sup>

By the mid-150s, the time of Polycarp's martyrdom, Irenaeus was residing in Rome,<sup>41</sup> where he may have come with Polycarp on the latter's visit to Rome in 153 or 154, two years prior to his death.<sup>42</sup> It was during this time in Rome that Irenaeus had significant contact with the followers of Valentinus and Marcion, whose ideas Irenaeus would seek to refute in his *magnum opus*, *The Detection and Refutation of the Pseudo-Knowledge* (c.180), known today more simply as *Against Heresies*.<sup>43</sup>

From Rome, Irenaeus travelled to Lyons (Latin: Lugdunum) in southern Gaul as a missionary. This move would have taken place before the mid-160s, when Justin Martyr was put to death in Rome for his faith in Christ.<sup>44</sup> Situated at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône rivers, second-century Lyons was a miniature Rome in many ways. A bustling cosmopolitan center of some seventy thousand or so in

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<sup>38</sup> Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> See Michael Slusser, "How Much Did Irenaeus Learn from Justin?" in F. Young, M. Edwards and P. Parvis, eds., *Studia Patristica* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2006), 40:515-520.

<sup>41</sup> *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, "The Ending according to the Moscow Manuscript" 2.

<sup>42</sup> Irenaeus, Letter to Victor of Rome (Eusebius, *Church History* 5.24.11-18).

<sup>43</sup> The title of the treatise is based on the wording of 1 Timothy 6:20. On Irenaeus' encounter with disciples of Valentinus, see *Against Heresies* 1.pref.2. Irenaeus also had a collection of Gnostic works that he studied so as to better respond to his theological opponents. See *Against Heresies* 1.31.2.

<sup>44</sup> Hitchcock, "Irenaeus of Lugdunum", 168.

Irenaeus's day, it was the key port on the trade routes up and down the Rhône river. It was also a provincial capital, the heart of the Roman road system for Gaul, and the seat of an important military garrison. Similar to Rome, its population contained a large Greek-speaking element, and it was among this element that Christianity had become firmly established in the city.<sup>45</sup> For example, in an account of the martyrdom of a large number of believers from Lyons and nearby Vienne in 177 there were two individuals who were identified as coming from Asia Minor and who would therefore have been Greek-speaking: Attalus, whose family came from Pergamum, and a certain Alexander of Phrygia.<sup>46</sup>

Irenaeus was away in Rome during this brutal outburst of persecution. When he returned to the Rhône valley, he found the leadership in the churches of Lyons and Vienne decimated. He was subsequently appointed bishop of Lyons, as the previous bishop, Pothinus (c. 87–177), had succumbed in prison after being beaten during the persecution.<sup>47</sup> Within a couple of years after his return to Lyons, Irenaeus was hard at work writing *Against Heresies*.<sup>48</sup>

The final sight we catch of Irenaeus on the scene of history is a letter that he wrote to Victor I (189–198), bishop of Rome, seeking to defuse the Quartodeciman controversy. Differences between the

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<sup>45</sup> For this overview about the city of Roman Lyons, I am indebted to Edward Rochie Hardy, "Introduction" to "Selections from the Work *Against Heresies* by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons" in Richardson, trans. and ed., *Early Christian Fathers*, 347–48.

<sup>46</sup> Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.17, 49.

<sup>47</sup> Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.29–31.

<sup>48</sup> For the date of *Against Heresies*, see Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 182–83; Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 9–10.

church at Rome and various churches in Asia Minor regarding the dating of Easter had led the former to threaten excommunication of the latter if the eastern churches did not get into line with Roman practice. Irenaeus pled for tolerance and diversity of practice.<sup>49</sup>

This display of irenicism appears to have been typical of the second-century theologian. When it came to the Gnostics and their thinking, though, Irenaeus was fiercely antagonistic of what he saw as sheer error.<sup>50</sup> At the heart of this antagonism was Irenaeus's deeply-held conviction about the perfection of the Scriptures and the fact that this perfection provided solid ground for saving belief in the meta-narrative of the Bible.

### *Scripturae perfectae*

Norbert Brox has rightly noted that in “Irenaeus this principle stands at the beginning [of his thought]: that the Bible is in every respect perfect and sufficient.”<sup>51</sup> Irenaeus's stress upon the perfection and sufficiency of the Scriptures is due in part to the strident affirmation by the Gnostics of the errancy of the Bible.

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<sup>49</sup> Eusebius, *Church History* 5.23–25. On Irenaeus' role in this controversy, see also Roch Kereszty, “The Unity of the Church in the Theology of Irenaeus,” *The Second Century* 4 (1984): 215–16; Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 5–6. According to a late, and unreliable, tradition, first mentioned by Gregory of Tours (d. 594), Irenaeus died as a martyr (*The Glory of the Martyrs* 49). For a discussion of the claim that Irenaeus was martyred, see J. van der Straeten, “Saint Irénée fut-il martyr?” in *Les Martyrs de Lyon (177)* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la Recherche scientifique, 1978), 145–53.

<sup>50</sup> It was Eusebius of Caesarea who first described Irenaeus as a peacemaker, making a play on the meaning of his name. See Eusebius, *Church History* 5.24.18.

<sup>51</sup> Norbert Brox, “Irenaeus and the Bible. A Special Contribution” in Charles Kannengiesser, ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), I, 486. On Irenaeus' bibliology, see also D. Farkasfalvy, “Theology of Scripture in St. Irenaeus,” *Revue Bénédictine*, 68 (1968): 319–33.

When confronted with biblical arguments against their views, the Gnostics, according to Irenaeus, maintained that the Scriptures cannot be trusted. They rejected key aspects of the Old Testament out of hand, while they were adamant that the apostolic documents of the New Testament were penned by men who could be mistaken and thus introduced contradictions into their writings. What alone could be trusted was the teaching from the apostles that had been passed down to them by word of mouth (*per vivam vocem*). And for support of this secret oral tradition, they adduced Paul's words in 1 Cor 2:6 ("we speak wisdom among the perfect").<sup>52</sup>

Over against the Gnostic distortion of the Scriptures, Irenaeus reveals himself to be, as Reinhold Seeberg aptly put it, "the first great representative of biblicism."<sup>53</sup> The Scriptures are to be the normative source for the teaching of the Christian community. As Ellen Flesseman-van Leer noted, when "Irenaeus wants to prove the truth of a doctrine materially, he turns to Scripture."<sup>54</sup> They are the "Scriptures of the Lord" (*dominicus Scripturis*) and it would be absolute folly to abandon the words of the Lord, Moses, and the other prophets, which set forth the truth, for the foolish opinions of Irenaeus' opponents.<sup>55</sup> Given the Gnostic argument that the Scriptures had been falsified and the Gnostic propensity to fob off their writings as genuine revelation,

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<sup>52</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.2.1–2.

<sup>53</sup> "Irenäus...ist der erste große Vertreter des Biblizismus" [*Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., 1908), 290]. Though, note the caution by Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 172.

<sup>54</sup> *Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1953), 144.

<sup>55</sup> *Against Heresies* 2.30.6. For the translation of the phrase *dominicus Scripturis*, see John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 23–24n4.

Irenaeus rightly discerned that a discussion of the nature of Scripture was vital.

Scholars disagree over the exact boundaries of Irenaeus's New Testament,<sup>56</sup> with some even asserting that Irenaeus was the creative genius behind the creation of the New Testament canon.<sup>57</sup> And there is also no essential agreement as to how Scripture relates to tradition in Irenaeus' thought.<sup>58</sup> But what is not disputable is his view of Scripture. The bishop of Lyons was confident that the "Scriptures are indeed perfect (*perfectae*)" texts because they were spoken by the Word of God and his Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Referring specifically to the human authors of various

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<sup>56</sup> For differing perspectives on Irenaeus' canon, see, for example, G. Nathanael Bonwetsch, *Die Theologie des Irenäus* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1925), 40; Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 180–82; Brox, "Irenaeus and the Bible" in Kannengiesser, ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 484; M.C. Steenberg, "Irenaeus, *Graphe*, and the Status of *Hermas*," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 53 (2009): 29–66; Andreas Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 151–75.

<sup>57</sup> For example, see Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003), 74–142, and Arthur Bellinzoni, "The Gospel of Luke in the Apostolic Fathers" in Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett, eds., *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 49n17. According to Bellinzoni in this footnote: "Irenaeus...essentially created the core of the New Testament canon of Holy Scripture." But see the convincing riposte by Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*, 34–68.

<sup>58</sup> See, for instance, Juan Ochagavía, *Visibile Patris Filius: A Study of Irenaeus' Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), especially 174–205; Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, "Introduction" to *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies*, trans. Dominic J. Unger and rev. John J. Dillon (New York: Newman Press, 1992), 8–11.

Also critical to note, but which I do not have space to deal with in this essay, is Irenaeus' emphasis on the role of the Church in the interpretation of Scripture. For this emphasis, see the helpful remarks of Brox, "Irenaeus and the Bible" in Kannengiesser, ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 495–99.

<sup>59</sup> *Against Heresies* 2.28.2. See also *Against Heresies* 4.33.8.

books of the New Testament, Irenaeus asserted that they were given perfect knowledge by the Holy Spirit and thus were incapable of proclaiming error. Irenaeus argued:

After our Lord rose from the dead, and [the apostles] were clothed with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them, [they] were filled from all [his power], and had perfect knowledge; they went out to the ends of the earth, preaching the good things that were [sent] from God to us, and announcing the peace of heaven for human beings... Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth and there is no falsehood in him, even as David also said when he prophesied about his birth from a virgin and the resurrection from the dead, "Truth has sprung from the earth" (Ps 85:11). And the Apostles, being disciples of the Truth, are free from all falsehood, for falsehood has no fellowship with the truth, just as darkness has no fellowship with the light, but the presence of the one drives away the other.<sup>60</sup>

Here Irenaeus based the fidelity of the apostolic writings upon the absolute truthfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ and the conviction that truth and falsehood are polar opposites. From Irenaeus's standpoint, if Christ is the embodiment of truth, it is impossible to conceive of him ever uttering falsehood. By extension, the writings of his authorized representatives are also incapable of error. This quality of absolute truthfulness can also be predicated of the authors of the books of the Old Testament, since the Spirit who spoke through the Apostles also spoke through the Old Testament writers.<sup>61</sup> Thus the Scriptures form a harmonious whole:

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<sup>60</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.1.1; 3.5.1.

<sup>61</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.6.1, 5; 3.21.4; 4.20.8; *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 49. See also Bernard Sesboüé, "La preuve par les Ecritures chez S. Irénée; à propos

All Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found to be perfectly consistent...and through the many diversified utterances (of Scripture) there shall be heard one harmonious melody in us, praising in hymns that God who created all things.<sup>62</sup>

A second major emphasis in Irenaeus's bibliology is the unity of the testaments, and by extension, the unity of the history of God's salvific work. Marcion's denial of the revelatory value of the Old Testament led Irenaeus to affirm that the God who gave the law and the God who revealed the gospel is "one and the same." One piece of proof lay in the fact that in both the Old and New Testaments, the first and greatest commandment was to love God with the entirety of one's being and then, to love one's neighbour as oneself.<sup>63</sup>

Another line of evidence was the similar revelation of the holiness of God in both Testaments.<sup>64</sup> Irenaeus also urged his readers—which he hoped would include his Gnostic opponents—to "carefully read (*legite diligentius*)" both the Old Testament prophets and the apostolic writings of the New Testament, and they would find that the leading contours of Christ's ministry were predicted by the prophets of ancient Israel.<sup>65</sup> There is therefore a common theme that informs both Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles: Christ. He is that

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d'un texte difficile du Livre III de l'*Adversus Haereses*," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 103 (1981): 872–87.

<sup>62</sup> *Against Heresies* 2.28.3. Elsewhere, Irenaeus speaks of the "order and continuity of the Scriptures" (*Against Heresies* 1.8.1).

<sup>63</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.12.3.

<sup>64</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.27.4–28.1.

<sup>65</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.34.1. See also *Against Heresies* 4.7.1; 4.9.1; 4.11.4; 4.36.5.



which binds together the covenants.<sup>66</sup> And this commonality speaks of one God behind both portions of Scripture. To reject the Old Testament is therefore tantamount to a failure to discern this Christological center of the entirety of the Bible and to show oneself as not truly spiritual, a strong indictment of the Gnostics and their exegesis.<sup>67</sup>

### *Fundamentum et columnam fidei nostrae*

Help in elucidating this unified history of salvation was especially found in the words of the Apostle Paul, particularly those Pauline texts that had to do with the unity of the Church.<sup>68</sup> Irenaeus viewed the Old Testament prophets as having an essential unity with the New Testament since, in his mind, they were actually members of the body of Christ. As Irenaeus explained:

Certainly the prophets, along with other things that they predicted, also foretold this, that on whomever the Spirit of God would rest, and who would obey the word of the Father, and serve him according to their strength, should suffer persecution, and be

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<sup>66</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.9.1; 4.26.1. See in this regard Iain M. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching. A theological commentary and translation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 60–62.

<sup>67</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.33.15. Irenaeus had been asked—possibly by a Gnostic—if the ministry of Christ had been announced and typified in the Old Testament, what then was truly new about his coming? Well, Irenaeus explained, the difference was this: what had been a matter of types and predictions was now reality, the Lord himself had come among them, and filled his servants with joy and freedom. See *Against Heresies* 4.34.1.

<sup>68</sup> John S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Basis of the Concept of Scriptural Form in Irenaeus* (Protocol of the colloquy of The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, no.8; Berkeley, California: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 1–3; Richard A. Norris, “Irenaeus’ Use of Paul in His Polemic Against the Gnostics” in William S. Babcock, ed., *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 91–92.

stoned and killed. For the prophets prefigured in themselves all these things, because of their love for God and because of his word. For since they themselves were members of Christ, each one of them in so far as he was a member...revealed the prophecy [assigned him]. All of them, although many, prefigured one, and proclaimed the things that belong to one. For just as the working of the whole body is disclosed by means of our [physical] members, yet the shape of the total man is not displayed by one member, but by all; so also did all the prophets prefigure the one [Christ], while every one of them, in so far as he was a member, did, in accordance with this, complete the [established] dispensation, and prefigured that work of Christ assigned to him as a member.<sup>69</sup>

The diverse predictive ministries of the Old Testament prophets were essentially part of the unity of the revelation of Christ. Irenaeus went on to borrow Pauline passages that spoke of the unity of the universal church in Eph 4 to describe the attentive reader's perception of the inerrant unity between the prophetic texts of the Old Testament and the texts that contain their New Testament fulfillment. In his words:

If any one believes in the one God, who also made all things by the Word, just as both Moses says, "God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light" [Genesis 1:3], and as we read in the Gospel, "All things were made by him, and nothing was made without him" [John 1:3], and similarly the Apostle Paul [says], "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, who is over all,

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<sup>69</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.33.10, trans. Alexander Roberts and W.H. Rambaut in A. Cleveland Coxe, arr., *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol.1; 1885 ed.; repr. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 509, altered.

and through all, and in us all” [Ephesians 4:5–6]—this man will first of all “hold the head, from which the whole body is firmly joined and united together, and which, through every joint according to the measure of the supply of each several part, causes the body to grow so that it builds itself up in love” [Ephesians 4:16]. Then afterwards shall every word also seem consistent to him, if he will carefully read the Scriptures among those who are presbyters in the Church, among whom is the apostolic doctrine, as I have shown.<sup>70</sup>

In another instance, Irenaeus applied 1 Cor 12:4–7, a passage that speaks of the diversity of the gifts in the body of Christ as being essential to the unity of the church, to the unity between the different prophetic ministries in the Old Testament and the saving work of Christ in the new covenant.<sup>71</sup> As John Coolidge has rightly pointed out, it appears that, for Irenaeus, perception of the unity between the Testaments is concomitant to participation in the communal unity of the Church.<sup>72</sup>

It is surely this use of Pauline statements about ecclesial unity to affirm the unity of the Scriptures that explains Irenaeus’s curious treatment of a phrase from 1 Tim 3:15. The church, the Pauline verse declares, is the “pillar and ground of the truth.” This striking statement becomes for Irenaeus an affirmation about the Scriptures. At the outset of Book 3 of *Against Heresies*, where Irenaeus explicitly rejected the claim by some of the Gnostics that the Apostles

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<sup>70</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.32.1. On Irenaeus’ conviction of the vital importance of reading the Scriptures within the context of the church catholic, see also *Against Heresies* 3.24.1; 5.20.2.

<sup>71</sup> *Against Heresies* 4.20.6.

<sup>72</sup> *Pauline Basis of the Concept of Scriptural Form*, 3.

compromised the truth in their transmission of it, the missionary theologian defended the integrity of the “plan of salvation (*dispositionem salutis*)” as it had come down to him in the written text of the Bible. The oral message of the Apostles was identical to what was enshrined in the Scriptures and thus the latter could serve as “the ground and pillar (*fundamentum et columnam*) of our faith.”<sup>73</sup>

Again, when Irenaeus insisted that there had to be four gospels, and only four, because of the four corners of the earth and the earth’s four winds—there being an aesthetic harmony between the four gospels and creation<sup>74</sup>—he again stated that “the pillar and ground of the Church is the Gospel and the Spirit of life.”<sup>75</sup> The inclusion of the Holy Spirit here is not accidental, for if Christ is the common theme of all of the Scriptures; the Spirit is the One who perfectly inspired all of the authors of the Bible to speak of the one Saviour and that without error.

### **An Irenaean prayer**

Irenaeus was confident that a humble listening to and reading of the inerrant Word of God would produce a faith that was “firm, not fictitious, but solely true.”<sup>76</sup> And one of his manifest goals in *Against Heresies* was to produce such a faith among his Gnostic opponents. Irenaeus’s fierce opposition to Gnosticism did not arise from a hunger for power, as some recent scholars have argued, but out of a genuine love for truth and a sincere desire for the spiritual well-being of his

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<sup>73</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.1.1.

<sup>74</sup> Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*, 34–38.

<sup>75</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.11.8.

<sup>76</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.21.3. On humility as an interpretative principle, see *Against Heresies* 2.28.2–3.

fellow believers and their theological opponents.<sup>77</sup> This pastoral heart is well revealed as he prayed for the latter at the close of his third book of *Against Heresies*:

And now we pray that these men may not remain in the pit that they have dug for themselves, but...being converted to the church of God, they may be legitimately begotten, and that Christ be formed in them, and that they may know the framer and maker of this universe, the only true God and Lord of all. This we pray for them, for we love them better than they think they love themselves. For our love, as it is true, is saving to them, if they will receive it. It is like a severe remedy, taking away the excessive and superfluous flesh that forms on a wound; for it puts an end to their exaltation and haughtiness. Therefore we shall not tire in endeavoring with all our might to stretch out [our] hand to them.<sup>78</sup>

May a similar pastoral spirit inform our commitment to inerrancy.

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<sup>77</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.2.3; 3.6.4; 3.25.7. See also Marian Balwierz, *The Holy Spirit and the Church as a Subject of Evangelization According to St. Irenaeus* (Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1985), 50–57; Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 5; Bingham, “Irenaeus of Lyons”, in his ed., *Early Christian Thought*, 145.

<sup>78</sup> *Against Heresies* 3.25.7 (trans. Roberts and Rambaut in Coxe, arr., *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, 460).

*Number Symbolism and the Feeding of the  
Four Thousand in the Gospel Matthew*

Patrick Schreiner  
Western Seminary

**Abstract:** This study argues that the feeding of the 4,000 in Matthew 15:32–39 should be read as a Gentile feeding. There are a number of arguments that support this reading (structurally, geographically, thematically, and OT background), but the most debated aspect is the role of the numbers 4,000 and seven. These numbers have been interpreted symbolically throughout the history of interpretation but in the time of the Reformation an allegorical reading of numbers began to be rejected. The number 4,000 should be understood representing people coming from the four corners of the earth, and seven points to the completion and fulfillment of God’s purposes. By seeing these numbers as symbolic, the argument that this is a Gentile feeding becomes more secure.

Number symbolism in the modern age is generally looked at as passé. To even usher this topic to the surface evokes deep skepticism on the part of biblical scholars although there are a few who have

argued for value in numerology.<sup>1</sup> One positive example comes from François Bovon in his SNTS presidential address. He asserted, “It is my hypothesis that the early Christians used the categories of ‘name’ and ‘number’ as theological tools. Often they consciously interpreted names and numbers in a symbolic way.”<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, distinguishing between numbers with symbolic meaning and numbers used simply to state a calculation is difficult. But to conclude that numerological interest arose only after the composition of the early Christian writings would be a grave blunder.

In this article I will argue that the feeding of the 4,000 in Matt 15 is a Gentile feeding based on five arguments.<sup>3</sup> First, the numbers 4,000 and seven should be interpreted symbolically. Second, the literary structure points towards a Gentile mission in Matthew. Third, the geographical overlay in Matthew conveys such idea. Fourth, this position notes the unique language used by Matthew in the passage. Fifth, the Old Testament allusions to banquets point toward a

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<sup>1</sup> Although some commentaries do mention that it was popular in the patristic period they rarely engage the arguments. There are still modern interpreters who see numbers as symbolic, but it would be fair to say they are in the minority. For an example of a more recent modern interpreter who argues for symbolic numbers see Richard Bauckham, “The 153 Fish and the Unity of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: The Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 271–83. Mikeal C. Parsons, “Exegesis ‘By the Numbers’: Numerology and the New Testament,” *PRSt* 35, no. 1 (2008): 25–43. For a slightly different view of numbers, see Labuschagne who argues that counting the words and syllables regularly serve as boundaries by which the text was composed that regulates the words, sentences, and verses. See Casper Labuschagne, *Numerical Secrets of the Bible* (Texas: D. & F. Scott, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> François Bovon, “Names and Numbers in Early Christianity,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 267.

<sup>3</sup> A cursory look at the commentaries appearing in the last decade shows that they are equally divided on the question of the ethnic identity of the four thousand. See J. R. C. Cousland, “The Feeding of the Four Thousand Gentiles in Matthew? Matthew 15:29–39 as a Test Case,” *NovT* 41, no. 1 (1999): 1–23.

worldwide mission. Since the first point is the most debated and least researched, I will spend the majority of time on the topic of number symbolism in light of the history of interpretation of the passage. Various modern interpreters have argued for a Gentile understanding, but few put significant weight on the numbers to argue their case.<sup>4</sup>

On the surface of Matt 15 and the feeding of the 4,000, the numbers (4,000 and seven) look like the calculating type, but the fact that a very similar story (the feeding of the 5,000) occurs in the same Gospel raises the probability that the numbers are symbolic. In addition, Matthew drew special attention to the numbers. He uses the number “seven” in vv. 34, 36, and 37 and the number 4,000 once is direct contrast to the 5,000 just previous in the narrative.

In the following paragraphs I explain how pre-moderns interpreted the numbers in Matthew’s feeding of the 4,000.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, this essay will reveal how they understood numbers as fundamental realities, and not only mathematical quantities, and therefore regularly interpreted them allegorically.<sup>6</sup> Without pretending to be exhaustive, I will cover the major interpreters, stopping to make brief comments about their hermeneutics.

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<sup>4</sup> Here is a list (not complete) of those who think this is a Gentile feeding: Argyle, Bacon, Beare, Blomberg, Bruner, Carson, Davies, Fenton, France, Gaechter, Gundry, Hill, J. Weiss, Klostermann, Lohmeyer/Schmauch, McNeile, Morris, Mounce, Reinecker, Schmid, Schniewind, S. E. Johnson, Tasker, Wilkens, Zahn.

<sup>5</sup> As David Parris says if we are going to learn from the giants of the past then we need to learn to read them sympathetically and not assume that their readings are outdated or ignorant. See David Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants* (London: Paternoster, 2006), 57.

<sup>6</sup> I will use allegorical, symbolic, and figurative all interchangeably.



## History of Interpretation: A History of Number Symbolism

To begin it is important to outline an overview of the history of number symbolism. A symbol is usually understood in several ways. First, symbols work cognitively to help people understand non-symbolic concepts, ideas, and things. Second, symbols are understood as enhancements or adornments to real life. Symbolic language has rhetorical effect and power to elucidate or make more arresting an idea or concept. With number symbolism both realities are probably at play. The symbolic number would then play a number of roles. It (1) enhances the language, (2) helps one didactically remember, (3) and moderately conceals the concept in dissimilar language.<sup>7</sup> But why would numbers be used as symbols? Like all symbols the power resides in the understatement. Rather than making the point obvious or unambiguous, the author puts a clue in the text for the reader to figure out. As Strunk & White say in their book *Elements of Style*, “It is seldom wise to tell all.” The reader is given enough information to figure it out and use their imagination. Like all symbols, numbers seem to perform the same function.

The history of number symbolism goes back to earliest literature we have.<sup>8</sup> But number symbolism is still generally frowned upon today. As A. M. Farrer says, the study of number-symbolism is generally unpopular for two good reasons, not to mention many that are bad.

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Leithart is right to say in an important sense; all language is symbolic because it employs visual symbols or sounds that mean something other than themselves. Even if we put that point to the side, it is still evident that there is a spectrum from less metaphorical to more metaphorical language rather than a clear boundary line. Peter Leithart, “Embracing Ritual: Sacraments as Rites,” *CTJ* 40 (2005): 12.

<sup>8</sup> Hopper says, “Nothing in the history of number symbolism is so striking as the unanimity of all ages and climates in regard to the meanings of certain few number symbols.” Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression* (New York: Cooper Square, 1969), 3.

First, it lends itself easily to rabbinical folly and gnostic extravagance. Second, it has an intrinsic formality or tenuity which unfits it to be the vehicle of substantial doctrine. Both objections must be admitted. But the first only tells us that the interpreter must handle number-symbolism with special caution, prune his fancies and confine himself to what his author contains...(and to the second) it can very well provide the principles of arrangement...It is rash, then, to refuse to consider such numbers...<sup>9</sup>

In ancient times, numbers were regarded not abstractly but concretely. Mathematics slowly encouraged the idea of abstract numbers.<sup>10</sup> If numbers are abstract their objects do not have to be specific, and therefore numbers do not have to be interpreted. Farbridge even says, “primitive man could form no idea of an abstract number. Want of familiarity with the use of numbers...must result in extreme indefiniteness of mental conception, as well as almost entire absence of exactness.”<sup>11</sup> Although Farbridge’s point may be overstated, his point the interpretation of numbers stands.

The earliest known development of an extensive number system is found in ancient Babylon. One also sees evidences of it in the *Creation Epic* (2225–1926 BCE) and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.<sup>12</sup> But it was not until

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<sup>9</sup> Austin Farrer, “Loaves and Thousands,” *JTS* 4 (1953): 1–14.

<sup>10</sup> Of course the Ancients understood numbers in a Mathematical fashion as well, however, the argument here is that this is not the only way they used them. See M. Pope, “Number, Numbering, Numbers,” in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (vol. K-Q; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 561–67.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism* (New York: KTAV, 1970), 88.

<sup>12</sup> See Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, 12–21.

Pythagoras (c. 580–500 BCE) that number symbolism received systematic treatment.<sup>13</sup> For Pythagoras, the number was a kind of objective principle from which the whole objective world proceeds. During the intertestamental period, apocalyptic writings employed the numbers 3, 4, 7, 10 and 12, both rhetorically and symbolically.<sup>14</sup> With the rise of the Gnosticism, considerable attention was given to numbers. Augustine is representative of Patristic interpretation of number when he says:

There is a relation of numbers which cannot possibly be impaired or altered, nor can any nature by any amount of violence prevent the number which comes after one from being the double of one. This can in no way be changed; and yet you represent God as changeable!<sup>15</sup>

The middle ages continued the Augustinian understanding of numbers.<sup>16</sup> But in the Renaissance numbers began to be seen as more mathematical, as people began to understand that nature reflected mathematical principles. Therefore modern people have been more wary of number symbolism. Statements such as these follow, “in the Bible itself there is no reference to numerical gematria, or the symbolic use of numbers.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Although Farbridge thinks Pythagoras is indebted to the Babylonians, where numbers played an important part because of their use of musical instruments and building and constructing. See Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 93–94.

<sup>14</sup> See John Davies, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 109–10.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, “On the Morals of the Manichaeans,” in *NPNF*, IV:76.

<sup>16</sup> See Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, 89–135.

<sup>17</sup> Isidore Singer, ed., “Gematria,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnals, 1905), V:589.

Although the summary above was necessarily brief, it situates one in the history of interpretation. It seems fair to say that those who reject the idea of number symbolism are a modern phenomenon and the anomaly, not the other way around. The history of number symbolism goes back to the earliest literature we have. Therefore when we turn to the history of interpretation for Matt 15:32–39 it is not surprising to find those who saw the numbers 4,000 and seven as symbolic. Although not all in the history of interpretation saw the symbolism as pointing to a Gentile feeding this does not necessarily overturn the argument. Like any symbol, there is fluidity in interpretation. Therefore, having more than one explanation does not mean that it is not symbolic, but rather that the symbol was understood differently by different interpreters. Symbols by their nature are more difficult to determine because their meaning is not directly spelled out for us.

### **Patristic**

Virtually all the patristic and many medieval interpreters saw numbers as significant in the Scriptures. This stemmed from the belief that “all nature bespeaks of God. All nature teaches human beings. All nature imparts reason, and there is nothing barren in the universe.”<sup>18</sup> Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315–67/8) is most famously known at the ‘Athanasius of the West,’ because of his involvement in Arian disputes.<sup>19</sup> However, for our purposes his comments on Matthew’s second feeding in 15:32–39 provide an example of a symbolic understanding of numbers. Hilary, without appealing to literary structure or geographic location, but only to the fact that there are different numbers represented in the

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<sup>18</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalion* 6.5 [PL 176:805].

<sup>19</sup> F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 769–70.

feedings concludes that this feeding was for Gentiles and not for Jews. The significant passage is as follows:

Previously the faith of the Israelites is portrayed, now the faith of the Gentiles. Indeed, many who are young run to meet [him]. The disciples, feeling pity for those going hungry for some days, wanted to let the 5,000 men go back to buy food in the village, but they remained silent the entire three days. And one after another the greater multitude was spread out on the grass: They reclined on the ground. There fifteen loaves are offered, here seven [loaves]: there the number is two fishes, here [it is] unspecified, yet under the sign of scarcity. There 5,000 men, here 4,000 [men]; there twelve baskets, here seven baskets full. Indeed, I think the answer to be by the greater multitude, and all near to the personality of the people appropriately to be the subject. Now, let us also try to bring the relevancy of the matter and also the reasoning of the cause: just as those Jewish believers corresponded to the common people, so these were compared with the people of the Gentiles.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, for Hilary, the numbers seven and 4,000 alone uncover that this passage is meant to be a feeding of the Gentiles. Hilary proceeds saying:

They brought forward seven loaves of bread. The Gentiles received no salvation from the law and the prophets. However, they live because of the grace of the Spirit whose sevenfold light, as noted by Isaiah, is a gift. Therefore through faith in the Spirit

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<sup>20</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentarius in Matthaicum* [PL 60.9:1006]. My translation.

the Gentiles receive salvation.<sup>21</sup>

and:

As that first multitude which he fed answers to the people among the Jews that believed; so this is compared to the people of the Gentiles, the number of 4,000 denoting an innumerable number of people out of the four quarters of the earth.<sup>22</sup>

Although this might seem antiquarian to us, Hilary is not alone in seeing the significance of these numbers. Chrysostom comes to a different conclusion but also asks, “What the purpose is in the seven baskets?”<sup>23</sup> Origen makes a veiled statement about “the different orders” and how “those who ate of the seven loaves are superior to those who ate of the five which are blessed.”<sup>24</sup> By superior, Origen may be incorporating a special significance to the number seven which was regularly understood as symbolic.<sup>25</sup> Jerome also sees the numbers as symbolic:<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Manilo Simonetti and Thomas Oden, eds., *Matthew 14-28* (ACCS; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 34, 36.

<sup>22</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, “St. Matthew,” in *Commentary on the Four Gospels* (vol. 2; Oxford and London: James Parker and Co., 1874), 2571. Hilary is quoted in his *Catena Aura*.

<sup>23</sup> Saint Chrysostom, “The Gospel of St. Matthew,” in *NPNF*, X:328. He concludes that it is to rouse the recollection by the difference. The disciples by the variation might be able to make a distinction between the two feedings and be reminded of both.

<sup>24</sup> Origen, “Origen’s Commentary on Matthew,” in *ANF*, IX:449.

<sup>25</sup> See Davies, *Biblical Numerology*, 115–19. Also consider, Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 119–40.

<sup>26</sup> Notice that I am using both “Antiochene” and “Alexandrian” interpreters, although this division has been questioned in recent scholarship. See Frances Young,

For these are not five, but four thousand; the number four being one always used in a good sense, and four-sided stone is firm and rocks not, for which reason the Gospel also have been sacredly bestowed in this number. Also in the former miracle, because the people were neighbours unto the five senses, it is the disciples, and not the Lord, that call to mind their condition.<sup>27</sup>

Augustine, who writes a harmony of the Gospels, states nothing about the significance of numbers in relation to this passage. But this can be explained by the fact that he was writing this harmony for apologetic purposes.<sup>28</sup> Although it has been popular to chalk these interpretations up to allegorical nonsense, pre-critical exegetes were not bereft of method but followed a different method of exegesis.<sup>29</sup>

### Medieval

The influential medieval interpreter, Thomas Aquinas, makes similar hermeneutical steps. Aquinas, in his *Catena Aurea* (The Golden Chain), combines comments from earlier interpreters on the gospels with his

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“Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation* (vol. 1: The Ancient Period; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 334–54.

<sup>27</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, “St. Matthew,” in *Commentary on the Four Gospels*, 2:571.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, “Harmony of the Gospels,” in *NPNF*, VI:103. He says he writes in order to explain to those with “perverted inclinations...perverse ways...and who exhibit more curiosity than capacity...and held up (these things) as objections in the spirit of contention.” Therefore, he simply says that both feedings actually took place, because of the differences in details. Later we will see that he was with the contemporaries of his day in seeing numbers as symbolic and significant for interpretation.

<sup>29</sup> See Richard Muller and John Thompson, “The Significance of Precritical Exegesis: Retrospect and Prospect,” in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 335–45. And John O’Keefe and R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005).

own interpretation. And although Aquinas does not come to the same conclusion as Hilary, the same type of hermeneutical move is evident. He says:

The seven loaves are the Scripture of the New Testament, in which the grace of the Holy Spirit is revealed and given. And these are not as those former loaves, barley, because it is not with these, as in the Law, where the nutritious substance is wrapped in types, as in a very adhesive husk; here are not two fishes, as under the Law two only were anointed, the King, and the Priest, but a few, that is, the saints of the New Testament, who, snatched from the waves of the world, sustain this tossing sea, and by their example refresh us lest we faint by the way.<sup>30</sup>

What is important to understand is that for medieval interpreters, like the Patristics, the Bible was a special type of literature because it was written by God. Therefore, “in divine literature not only do meanings signify things, those things signify other things.”<sup>31</sup> The Bible not only tells stories but those stories and the minute elements of those stories indicate meanings. Therefore, for Aquinas, the seven pieces of bread signify the seven gifts listed in Isaiah 11.<sup>32</sup> In this passage, the author speaks of the root of Jesse as a signal for the peoples and the nations. As Hopper says, “the medieval mind (was) a web-like structure of abstract ideas and concrete realities so closely interwoven and interdependent that no serious gap was felt to exist between them.”<sup>33</sup> As stated earlier, most patristic and medieval

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<sup>30</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, “St. Matthew,” in *Commentary on the Four Gospels*, 2:572.

<sup>31</sup> Richard of St. Victor, *Speculum Ecclesiae* [PL 177:375]

<sup>32</sup> This was a common interpretative move.



interpreters detected significance in the number change from the first feeding to the second feeding in Matthew.

### **Reformers and Post-Reformers**

With the Reformers and post Reformers one begins to see interpreters who fail to find symbolic significance in the shift of numbers. Most Reformers noticed the switch of the numbers in the feedings, but their explanations generally turn it into some kind of moral lesson. The Reformer's readings can be partially explained by the pastoral aim of most of their writings; their statements tended to be employed for rhetorical effects. But they were also quick to shun "allegorical" interpretations and stuck to a more "historical understanding." Three examples should suffice. Calvin in his *Harmony of the Gospels* says:

Let us learn from this (the difference in numbers) that God is not restricted to means or outward assistance, and that it is all one with Him whether there be much or little, as Jonathan said when speaking of his own moderate army and the vast multitude of enemies: *there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few* (1 Sam. 14:6) as the blessing of God can make one loaf suffice as well as twenty for satisfying a great multitude, so, if that be wanting, a hundred loaves will not be a sufficient meal for ten men; for when *the staff of bread is broken* (Lev 26:26) though the flour should come in full weight from the mill, and the bread from the oven, it will serve no purpose to stuff the belly...The disciples manifest excessive stupidity in not remembering, at least, that earlier proof of the power and grace of Christ, which they might have applied

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<sup>33</sup> Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, vii.

to the case in hand.<sup>34</sup>

His solution to the two stories with different details is that God is not restricted by outward means. God is bountiful in his provision, no matter what we provide. In addition Calvin points out the stupidity of the disciples. John Gill similarly takes the numbers as teaching a moral lesson commenting that the seven baskets which were taken up showed they had full return of what was given. For Gill, the number 4,000 shows that this is a distinct miracle.<sup>35</sup>

An example of this from the 19th century is C. H. Spurgeon who taught from this passage that history repeats itself and that what Jesus has done once he can, and will do again should the need arise.<sup>36</sup> Spurgeon was not so concerned about the numbers and the differences in the details; he went straight for the tropological aim of the text. Surely the observations made by Calvin, Gill, and Spurgeon are not wrong, but they reveal an attempt to stick closer to a “historical” understanding of what happened in this passage.

### **Modern**

Since the 1980’s there has been an increased interest in Matthew’s Gospel, and the monographs on Matthew show no signs of slowing down.<sup>37</sup> In fact, I must restrict myself to “hot spots” from modern

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<sup>34</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (trans. William Pringle; vol. II; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 274.

<sup>35</sup> John Gill, *An Exposition of The New Testament* (Atlanta: Turner Lassetter, 1954), 146.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon: Commentary on Matthew* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), 303.

<sup>37</sup> See Sean Kealy, *Matthew’s Gospel and the History of Biblical Interpretation (2)* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1997), 474–80.

interpreters or one will be over-whelmed by the bulk of material. We can divide the interpretation of the feeding of the 4,000 into two categories: (1) those seeing it as doublet; (2) those seeing it as an independent story so that two feedings took place. I will spend more time on those who reject it being a doublet, since these are the interpreters who are more likely to make comments about the interpretation of number symbolism.

First and briefly, since the end of the nineteenth century there has been the idea that these two miracles are the same miracle appearing twice (doublet).<sup>38</sup> The basis for this idea is the similar language, scene, and that the disciples are at a loss just as they were with the previous miracle. For example, in one of the most comprehensive commentaries on Matthew, Davies and Allison reject the notion that the second feeding represents the feeding of the Gentiles:

all speculation as to the symbolic significance of the various numbers is quite uncertain, there is nothing in the unqualified phrase, the sea of Galilee, to indicate Gentile territory, the precise meaning of the different baskets are unknown, the God of Israel phrase is usually found on the lips of Jews.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, they conclude that this is probably a doublet. But their (and others's) explanation of the two feedings as a doublet seems implausible. First there are a number of differences in the story itself: (1) only the second story takes place on a mountain; (2) here the

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<sup>38</sup> H.J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptischen Evangelien* (Leipzig, 1863), 85. To support his theory he gives the names of Schleiermacher, Schultz, Kern, Credner, Hase, De Wette, Neander, Ewald, Hilgenfeld.

<sup>39</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, *Matthew*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 2:564.

initiative lies with Jesus and not the disciples (3) only here in chapter 15 the crowd is said to be with Jesus for three days; (4) the numbers are not the same; (5) the word for baskets is different.<sup>40</sup> Second, as Carson remarks:

Even if one of Mark's or Matthew's readers knew there was only one miraculous feeding, and that of Jews, the point about the Gentiles would be lost and the credibility of the two evangelists impugned...The validity of the theological point depends here on the credibility of the historical record.<sup>41</sup>

Carson's point is that early readers would have been confused by the inclusion of two feeding stories if they knew there was only one. According to Carson, the Gentile feeding only stands as a theological point if the historical record is credible. The third and final argument against the idea that the two feedings are doublets is that both Mark 8:17–19 and Matt 16:9–11 report that Jesus referred to the two feedings as separate events. These two statements stand outside the actual feeding narratives and give one more piece of evidence for multiple feedings in the life of Jesus.

In the second category (two feedings), some support the notion that the two feedings record two different events.<sup>42</sup> Those who incline to this interpretation must explain the theological implications of two

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<sup>40</sup> See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:562–63 for list of differences. Admittedly, the differences do not directly support a different feeding but based on other evidence the differences do make it more likely.

<sup>41</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, EBC vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 407.

<sup>42</sup> Some of the interpreters that I will not discuss who think this way on Mark are, E.P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark*, ICC (Edinburgh, 1896), 140–41., C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London, 1972), 205.

feedings. In other words, why does the author put two very similar feedings in his Gospel? Scholars are split about whether they think this is a Gentile feeding or not, what they are unanimous on is a hesitation to the symbolic nature of the numbers.

N. T. Wright says that nobody has come up with a convincing explanation of what all the numbers might mean, and that there is no reason to suppose that this crowd is either Gentile or in Gentile territory.<sup>43</sup> Therefore he rejects it as a Gentile feeding. Unfortunately, Wright leaves us with no solution at all, and never gives a positive answer for the second feeding.

Similarly, Ben Witherington III writes “it is uncertain whether we should make much of the different numbers involved here.”<sup>44</sup> However, he thinks the second feeding in Mark relates to Gentiles because the geographical location of the feeding on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, but rejects a Gentile feeding in Matthew.

Frederick Bruner concludes that the significance is that Jesus really does care about people’s physical needs. He says the following about the numbers:

Is allegorical exegesis of numbers credible any more? Examples: Do the four thousand point to the four compass points from which the Gentile world comes to Jesus, the seven baskets to the seven “deacons” in the service of Gentiles in Acts 6 or the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, the five thousand the five books of the Torah, the twelve baskets of leftovers the twelve tribes? Though numerology was popular in the early church, we do not feel as comfortable with it today. It is best to stick with the text's plain

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<sup>43</sup> N. T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone Part 1* (Great Britain: SPCK, 2002), 24.

<sup>44</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Matthew* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 303–5.

meaning.<sup>45</sup>

Grant Osborne concludes that it is a Gentile feeding, but does so hesitantly, and will not say anything conclusively about the numbers.<sup>46</sup> Carson, unlike most modern interpreters, finds it hard to believe that the number of the leftover baskets is symbolic in 14:20 and not here. Therefore, he concludes that the number “may” be significant. He also thinks that the Gentile feeding may explain why the disciples are incredulous again. The disciples may have not been prepared for Jesus to have a messianic banquet prepared for the Gentiles.<sup>47</sup> We could go on for pages discussing modern scholars and their conclusions. However, some concluding comments should be made in regards to modern interpreters.

As stated above, modern scholars can be divided into two camps regarding this passage: 1) those seeing it as doublet; 2) those seeing it as an independent story so that two feedings took place. Scholars who detect a Gentile feeding are still hesitant to come to any conclusions regarding the numbers. One hears a lot of “maybe,” “cannot be proved,” “would be a stretch,” and “possible” language. They are

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<sup>45</sup> Frederick Bruner, *Matthew A Commentary* (vol. 2: The Churchbook Matthew 13–28; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 110.

<sup>46</sup> Osborne writes: “It is likely that the “twelve” in the earlier story, this number is symbolic of the perfect provision of God for his people. It is more of stretch to say with some that “twelve” connotes provision for the Jews and seven connotes provision for the Gentiles. Matthew’s term for baskets here refers to slightly larger baskets woven from rushes.” Osborne then concludes, “The important implicit addition is the extension of these blessings to the Gentiles, not explicit in the text but implicit in setting and possibly in some details (like the term for “baskets”). Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 601–9.

<sup>47</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 408. See Luz who also questions why the disciples’s non-understanding comes up again since Matthew is not as interested as Mark in portraying the disciples as completely lacking understanding. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 345.

happy to see it as a Gentile feeding, but will not say anything conclusively about the numbers being symbolic.

### **Tracing the History of Interpretation**

The study of the history of interpretation began with Hilary of Poitiers and his conclusion that this feeding was for Gentiles based solely upon the numbers. Other patristic writers also saw significance in the numbers, although they came to different conclusions.<sup>48</sup> The symbolic character of numbers continued in medieval tradition, but the Reformers and their successors no longer saw the numbers as symbolic in the text because of their distrust of allegory. Many modern interpreters influenced by form criticism concluded that this feeding was a doublet. However, a subset of modern interpreters were more prone to see this as a separate feeding and therefore drew out theological significance in the passage. Still, they tend to look at the numbers with suspicion, although some of them also concluded that this was a Gentile feeding.

There seems to be little evidence that the idea of symbolic numbers was ever refuted. Rather, a turn in understanding occurred. Modern scholars are probably wary of some of the conclusions that the pre-moderns drew regarding the symbolic nature of numbers, and therefore have rejected it wholesale. Looked at from this vantage point, it seems that modern scholars may have overreacted to a loose interpretation of numbers and therefore were hesitant to open to the door too far, so that they cast aspersions with words like “maybe” and phrases like “cannot be proven.” And I, as a modern interpreter, am

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<sup>48</sup> Although some might use this as evidence against the fact that numbers are symbolic, I think this is missing the point. Like any symbol, there is fluidity in interpretation. Therefore, having more than one explanation does not mean that it is not symbolic, but rather that the symbol was understood differently by different interpreters.

with them in many cases. Not every number is to be interpreted symbolically. But Hilary of Poitiers has caused me to rethink my misgivings concerning numbers since he bases a Gentile reading solely on the numbers.

### **Gentile Feeding Arguments from Modern Scholars**

The correlations of a Gentile feeding with the symbolic use of both 4,000 and seven are striking, yet the argument for a Gentile feeding does not rest on this evidence alone. At least four other arguments are used by modern scholars to support a Gentile understanding of the passage: (1) the literary structure of the passage, (2) the geographical location, (3) a thematic argument of the use of the phrase “God of Israel,” (4) and finally the Old Testament background. Although modern scholars are not using the numbers as symbolic, they are still coming to the same conclusion as the 4<sup>th</sup> century church father, Hilary of Poitiers. Because these arguments are more widespread, I will spend less time covering each item but provide references for further research.

#### **Literary Structure**

That the feeding of the 4,000 is a Gentile feeding in Matthew is supported by the literary structure. The structural analysis of the entire book of Matthew falls into two camps. Some lay the emphasis upon the repeated phrase Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς (4:17 and 16:21), the other camp sees Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (7:28–29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1) as the structural markers. This would allow the emphasis to fall upon the alternation between narrative and discourse. Although in this analysis there is no need to decide on a set structure (and surely many outlines are imposed by readers), it is clear from Matthew’s alternation between narrative and discourse that Matthew was



conscious of structure, and did not haphazardly put material together. Rather he organized the book in a way that served his purpose, as a wood-smith fashions a rocking chair. Therefore, interpreters should be asking themselves why a particular passage was placed in a precise place.

With this in mind, Matt 13:53–17:27 can be looked at from a literary perspective. It generally follows the Markan sequence. First Jesus is rejected in his hometown (13:53–58), then John the Baptist is killed by Herod (14:1–12). Jesus feeds the 5,000. Careful readers notice that Jesus feeds the 5000 in a deserted place (ἔρημον τόπον; 14:13) echoing Exodus imagery. He then performs a water-crossing miracle (14:22–33), which seems to confirm the Exodus typology.<sup>49</sup> Jesus heals in Jewish territory (14:34–36) and then the Pharisees and Scribes come from Jerusalem, testing him with questions.

Matthew then has a transition section where he begins to show Jesus' ministry outside of the nation of Israel. This transition comes in 15:1–21 where Jesus explains why he and his disciples break the tradition of the elders. His basic answer is that it is not outward conformity to traditions but inward obedience from the heart that matters. The debate with the Pharisees and teachers of the law clues readers into a turn toward Gentile inclusion. The antagonism towards Jesus by the Jewish leaders propels him into a Gentile mission. The faith of the Canaanite women in the next section confirms this switch (15:21–28). The shift from a Jewish to a Gentile focus is made explicit in two ways. First, unlike Mark (who calls her a Syrophenician woman) Matthew unambiguously calls her a Canaanite, the common OT term

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<sup>49</sup> Every feeding is followed by the water miracle. For a strong argument that the Gospels should be read as echoing much of the OT, see Richard Hays, "The Canonical Matrix of the Gospels," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 53–75.

for Israel's adversaries. Second, Matthew has Jesus affirm that even the crumbs go to the dogs, and it seems from other passages that Jews identified Gentiles as dogs.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, a close literary and structural reading of Matthew 15 indicates a modification of focus.

What is evident from this survey of the landscape of Matthew's narrative is that he has made a conscious alteration from Jesus preaching and ministering to the Jews to ministering to the Gentiles. Many of the same actions are mirrored (such as healings and feedings) but with slight nuances, signaling a change of audience. Hence, scholars who have paid close attention to the progression conclude it is a Gentile feeding.

### **Geography**

The geography of the feeding of the 4,000, although debated, also supports a Gentile feeding. Matthew gives the following details about Jesus' travel itinerary: Jesus, after his dispute with the Pharisees and scribes, withdraws to the district of Tyre and Sidon, which are Gentile territories. He is then approached by a Canaanite woman, and after he heals her Matthew says Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee and goes up on the mountain and sits down there and feeds the people (Matt 15:29). When they had been fed, Jesus got into the boat and went into the region of Magadan.

Although the above summary seems to be stocked with details, Matthew has Jesus moving through these locations in a total of 20 verses. Therefore, in Matt 15, his travel itinerary is actually quite vague. We get more clarity when we compare it with Mark's parallel passage, who gives us more details about Jesus' travels regarding this part of his life than Matthew. The argument is that Matthew does

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<sup>50</sup> See Phil 3:2

indeed follow Mark here, and therefore we can consult Mark to confirm geographical details.<sup>51</sup>

In Mark 7:31, instead of giving the generic Sea of Galilee he makes it more specific and says Jesus went specifically to the region of Decapolis, a Gentile territory. Jesus feeds the 4,000 and then goes to the district of Dalmanutha. So, for Mark Jesus goes north to Tyre and Sidon near the Mediterranean Sea, and then south-east to the Decapolis on the Sea of Galilee. What is important is that what Matthew leaves out in no way contradicts Mark. Rather, he seems to be following Mark, but leaving out specific details.<sup>52</sup> Why would he leave out such details? This is question I am not sure Matthew even considered. He probably thought that those reading his gospel would understand where Jesus was without giving specific details, and therefore left out unnecessary details.<sup>53</sup> Contra to Cousland, I think it makes most sense to understand Matthew as following Mark's itinerary here.<sup>54</sup> While there is still some debate about why Matthew omitted some of Mark's itinerary just prior to these episodes,<sup>55</sup> it is most likely, though not conclusive, that this

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<sup>51</sup> I do not presume to think that this is something that Matthew intended interpreters to do, but we can learn from it.

<sup>52</sup> McGown asserts that Matthew makes changes almost always by omission in C. C. McGown, "Gospel Geography: Fiction, Fact, and Truth," *Gospel Geography* no. 60 (1941): 13.

<sup>53</sup> Although if Matthew is read without benefit of Mark, there is nothing to suggest that Jesus proceeds through Gentile territory from Tyre and Sidon. The most straightforward route to the Sea of Galilee is through Galilee.

<sup>54</sup> Cousland, "The Feeding of the Four Thousand Gentiles," 8. Cousland says that argument will only work if Matthew conforms "slavishly" to the itinerary as it is presented in Mark. But this is framing the question in a negative light. Positively, Matthew uses Mark's material and puts difference nuances on some of the pericopes. I think because Matthew and Mark present this material in similar order, it is more likely that Matthew follows Mark here.

<sup>55</sup> Cousland said he changes the itinerary, but it makes more sense to say that he omits Bethsaida in the feeding of 5,000.

feeding was done in Gentile territory, on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee in the Decapolis.

### **Thematic**

Because the feeding passage is so debated, it is difficult to come up with an argument for it being a Gentile feeding without significant disagreement. And that is the case with the phrase “God of Israel” (τὸν θεὸν Ἰσραήλ) in Matt 15:31. This phrase comes in the middle of the narrative about the feeding of the 4,000. Davies and Allison note that this phrase is cited in the Jewish Scriptures regularly,<sup>56</sup> and in all these texts the phrase is on the lips of Jews.<sup>57</sup> Cousland says that “Israel” appears rarely in Greek and Roman authors.<sup>58</sup> Instead, he asserts that the people of Israel were usually referred to as Jews both by pagans and themselves.<sup>59</sup> Cousland goes on to argue that this is the strongest evidence that Matthew used a deliberate Hebraism to suggest that Jesus’ healings and feeding are seen as an aspect of Yahweh’s covenantal care for his people. In sum, many take this as a phrase that only Jews would utter and therefore conclude this is not a Gentile feeding.

But France rightly turns this argument on its head. He responds saying this is Matthew’s summary as to what the crowd said, not necessarily their chosen vocabulary.<sup>60</sup> It seems that Cousland and

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<sup>56</sup> Exod 5:1; 1 Kgs 1:48; 1 Chr 16:36; Ps 41:13; 59:5; 68:35; 69:6; 72:18; 106:48; Is 29:23; Luke 1:68.

<sup>57</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:569.

<sup>58</sup> Cousland, “The Feeding of the Four Thousand Gentiles,” 15.

<sup>59</sup> Cousland, “The Feeding of the Four Thousand Gentiles,” 17.

<sup>60</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 597n6. In addition when the term occurs in the OT it is used by Israelites in the full

others are the ones reading this phrase a little too woodenly. Matthew, as an editor, has deliberately added this to give a clue of what he is doing with his narrative. The Gentiles are praising the God of Israel, the one they thought was far off for them but now is near. This does not mean that the crowd did not say something similar to this, but maybe not the exact phrase. It is the *ipssima vox* not the *ipssima verba* of the people. Matthew, as the editor and writer of this material, is cueing his readers to conclude that these are Gentiles by using a unique phrase highlighting the contrast between Israel and the rest of the world.

### **Old Testament Background**

The final argument for this being a Gentile feeding concerns the OT background to the feeding. Although Matthew does not explicitly allude to the OT there are several passages that speak of a feeding for all people. One of the more prominent passages in regard to mountain feeding is Isa 25:6–10.<sup>61</sup> Isaiah has previously painted a picture of judgment on the nations (Isa 24:21–23), but in the midst of judgment, or even after the judgment, he spreads a banquet on the mountain where he makes a feast for “all peoples” (לכל־העמים).<sup>62</sup> This tradition of a feast for all peoples is likely picked up by Matthew, who has used Isaiah consistently through his Gospel. YHWH swallows up the covering, the veil that is cast over all peoples, over all nations (כל־הגוים). And the feast is abundant, with rich food and well-aged wine,

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sense “Yahweh God of Israel.” But in Exod 5:1 it is simply “God of Israel” to identify Israel’s God to a non-Israelite audience.

<sup>61</sup> Other significant mountain feeding passages are Jer 31:10–14 and Ezek 34:14, 26f.

<sup>62</sup> See Terence Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology* (England: JSOT Press, 1985), 129.

just as the abundance in Matt 15 overflows into seven extra baskets. Jer 31:10–14 also speaks of the nations coming to a great banquet. YHWH tells the “nations” and those “far away” that they will be “radiant” (נהר) over the grain, the wine, the oil and they will languish no more. There is also the passage in 2 Kings 4:42–44 where Baal-shalishah brings Elisha loaves of barley and ears of grain and although it does not seem like it will be enough, Elisha tells them that the Lord will provide and they will have some left.

In all three passages there is the common theme of a banquet and those outside the people of God coming to eat from this banquet. In the OT, YHWH shows his people that he is inviting *all peoples* to come to him. In Matthew Jesus comes as the fulfillment of this messianic feast where all nations are gathered before him on the mountain. On the mountain he provides for Jews and Gentiles alike. If Matt 15 parallels these passages, then the disciples’ incredulity at the feeding does not seem so odd. Although they may have known the OT promises they are regularly surprised in the Gospels at Jesus’ actions. They are astounded, and cannot believe that Jesus invites Gentiles to share with them in the covenant promises.

### **Tying it Together**

Taken separately these five arguments may not seem conclusive, but taken together they provide a thesis to be considered. Throughout church history the numbers in this passage have been interpreted symbolically. Matthew has also made the shift structurally, geographically, and even thematically in his gospel. There is also OT precedent for Yahweh having a messianic banquet for all nations. Added to all this is the nagging question of why both Matthew and Mark would provide two feedings with only minor differences, in such

close proximity. Therefore it makes the most sense to see this as a Gentile feeding.

### Conclusion

Interpreting the numbers 4,000 and seven symbolically provide further support that Matthew's narrative of the feeding of the 4,000 points toward a Gentile feeding. The seven loaves and seven baskets point to the completion and fulfillment of God's purposes, which is a common theme in Matthew.<sup>63</sup> Jesus was inviting a Gentile crowd to participate in a messianic banquet with him, which can explain the disciple's lack of understanding a second time. The 4,000 is symbolic for people coming from the four corners of the earth. He is inviting all to come sit and dine with him, not only the people of Abraham. This theme has been hinted at even in the genealogy and is reiterated when Jesus sends them out into the entire world in the Great Commission. This does not mean that these numbers are non-historical; symbolic does not equal *a*-historical. Both the numbers four and seven were used symbolically in Semitic and other literature. Four came to mean completeness because of its symbolism of the four corners of the earth. The OT speaks this way of the earth. Ezek 37:9 says to the wind, "*Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.*" Job 9:9 mentions the same type of idea.<sup>64</sup> These passages make sense

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<sup>63</sup> See J. R. Daniel Kirk, "Conceptualizing Fulfillment in Matthew," *TynBul* 59, no. 1 (2008): 77–98. Robert Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* Supplements to Novum Testamentum 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1967). Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968). Graham Stanton, "Matthew's Use of the Old Testament," in *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 346–63.

<sup>64</sup> For other interesting uses of four in the Bible see Is 11:2; Jer 15:3; 49:36; Ezek 1; 10; Zech 2:6; Rev 7:1, 9:13–15 and many others.

when one understands that the Hebrews viewed the earth as a disc surrounded by water, with heaven arching over it. The four corners of the earth correspond to the four corners of heaven (Dan. 7:2). The Babylonians also saw significance to the number four in relation to the earth. They divided the world into four quarters.<sup>65</sup> To the Greeks the world was made up of four elements: water, air, earth, and fire. Needless to say there is strong historical evidence for understanding the number four as symbolic for the entire earth.

The number seven has a similar history and may have an even clearer biblical symbolism.<sup>66</sup> It appears in Sumerian epic tales and myths, in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, in a Hittite document, in Ugaritic mythology, and repeatedly in the OT. It is used in a historical sense, a ritualistic sense, and apocalyptic sense. It is generally agreed that seven denotes completeness or perfection. L. A. Muirhead said:

In regard to 7, the ritual arrangements found in the Pentateuch would alone warrant the conclusion that this number was regarded as in some sense sacred. If we read that God blessed the 7<sup>th</sup> day and sanctified it, and find that peculiar religious observances or customs with a religious basis attached, not only to the 7<sup>th</sup> day, but to the 7<sup>th</sup> month, the 7<sup>th</sup> year, and the 7 x 7<sup>th</sup> year, we seem warranted in saying that, among the people of the Bible, 7 represents a mystic cycle of work and rest, within which God both accomplishes His purpose in the universe and

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<sup>65</sup> Farbridge says “the Zikkurat or temple tower was quadrilateral, with the four corners towards the four cardinal points to symbolize the four quarters over which the Babylonian kings held dominion.” See Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, 116n1. See Parsons for a good overview of all the sevens in the Scripture. Parsons, “Exegesis ‘By the Numbers,’” 27–30.

<sup>66</sup> See Davies, *Biblical Numerology*, 115–22.



cooperates with sanctified men.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, it was generally understood that seven was symbolic. Although the entire argument for a Gentile feeding may seem somewhat circular and unconvincing when taken separately, taken all together it seems worth considering. As we have seen, it is intrinsically possible that the numbers be assigned symbolic significance, and this interpretation is accounted for in the history of interpretation. Therefore, although moderns have been wary of assigning meaning to the numbers in this passage, it has prevented a more convincing view of this passage. When Jesus feeds the 4,000 and then the disciples collect seven baskets, Matthew is indicating this is a Gentile feeding in fulfillment of the OT promises.

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<sup>67</sup> L. A. Muirhead, "Numbers," in *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 92.

*The Holy Spirit, Caritas, and the Bond of Unity in  
Augustine's Anti-Donatist Writings*

J. Daniel McDonald  
Boyce College

**Abstract:** Written over a period of twenty years, Augustine's *De Trinitate*, one of Augustine's greatest works, serves as the pinnacle of the development of Trinitarian doctrine in the ancient church. Found within his anti-Donatist writings, however, is a well-developed doctrine of the Trinity. Particularly in *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, *Contra litteras Petilianii*, and Letter 185 (works that were written before the publication of *De Trinitate*), Augustine links the Holy Spirit as *caritas* and the bond of unity in the Trinity as the source of unity within the Catholic church. Augustine would later develop an argument identifying the Holy Spirit as *caritas* and the bond of unity in length in *De Trinitate* Book XV.5. This indicates that Augustine already had a mature understanding of Trinitarian doctrine early on in his ministry.

Augustine's bishopric spanned nearly four decades during which he faithfully served the congregation of Hippo Regius and the Catholic churches in surrounding Numidia. In the midst of his numerous pastoral duties, Augustine produced nearly one hundred books, close

to three hundred letters, and six hundred sermons in addition to one hundred twenty-four sermons on the Gospel of John, and one hundred fifty sermons on the Psalms.<sup>1</sup> Augustine's major works (such as *De Civitate* and *De Trinitate*) and his deeply personal *Confessions* still garner attention by scholars and general readers today. Though these works give one a clear idea of Augustine's life and thought, his minor works and letters provide a fuller picture of Augustine's thought and his development over time.

The range of topics in Augustine's works is wide and varied, touching on issues ranging from the Christian life to contemporary theological and philosophical discussions. Of note are Augustine's letters and works of the first two and half decades of his ministry which are dominated the Donatist schism. The question on the nature of the church is at the forefront of these works as Augustine seeks to expose the Donatists' error and to bring them back to the true Catholic Church;<sup>2</sup> thus his anti-Donatist writings are an important source of his ecclesiology.

### **Thesis and Methodology**

In Book XV.5 of *De Trinitate*, Augustine argues that the apostle John's claim in 1 John 4:8, that "God is love (*caritas*)," refers to the Holy Spirit,<sup>3</sup> drawing support from 1 John 4:7-16, John 4:1-29, and Romans

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<sup>1</sup> William Harmless, ed. *Augustine in His Own Words* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), xiii.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, "Catholic Church" refers to the church universal as Augustine utilized the phrase in his writings; this is not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church, which is sometimes shortened to just the "Catholic Church." Likewise, when referring to individuals of the catholic church, I will use "Catholics," but not to be confused with "Catholics" in the modern sense.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.27-31.

5:5, among others.<sup>4</sup> Though his identification of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* in *De Trinitate* is argued formally in Book XV.5, Augustine's anti-Donatist writings—particularly *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*,<sup>5</sup> *Contra litteras Petiliani*,<sup>6</sup> and Letter 185 (*The Correction of the Donatists*)<sup>7</sup>—contain within them the idea of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* as well, which Augustine then uses as the basis of the church's unity.<sup>8</sup> As such, this paper seeks to argue that in his anti-Donatist writings, Augustine already has a developed understanding of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* which he employs as the ontological basis of the universal church's unity. Based upon his view of *caritas*, Augustine can then label the Donatists as heretics because they are out of fellowship with the universal church and the Holy Spirit.

This essay begins with a discussion of Augustine's argument for the Holy Spirit as *caritas* in *De Trinitate*, Book XV.5. Here, attention is given to various Scripture and methods of argumentation Augustine

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, Psalm 68:18; John 7:37; Acts 2:37, 10:44, 11:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:7.

<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas* [*De Baptismo*], trans. J.R. King, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, part 1, *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 411–514.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Contra litteras Petiliani* [*Contra Petiliani*], trans. J.R. King, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, part 1, *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 519–628.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, Letter 185, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 3 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 178–206.

<sup>8</sup> Another source for Augustine's anti-Donatist works is his sermons, particularly his *Tractatus in Iohannis epistolam ad Parthos* and *Tractatus in evangelium Iohannis*.

uses for support in order to serve as a point of comparison to his earlier views on the Holy Spirit and *caritas*. Books I–XIV are first summarized, followed by an outline of Augustine’s argument in Book XV.5, and concludes with a discussion on the dating of *De Trinitate* with Augustine’s anti-Donatist works. This section then serves as a backdrop to the thesis.

The argument for the thesis begins by discussing how Augustine understood the true point of contention between the Donatist church and the Catholic Church—the issue of unity. This is then followed by summarizing Augustine’s understanding of the connection between unity, *caritas*, and the Holy Spirit in his anti-Donatist works. Due to the constraints of space and time, focus is given primarily to Augustine’s *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, and Letter 185, with references made to other letters written in regard to the Donatist schism. Finally, the paper concludes by offering a summary of the argument and the relevance of Augustine’s doctrine of *caritas* for Evangelical churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Holy Spirit as Caritas: De Trinitate XV.5**

The crux of Augustine’s argument for the Holy Spirit as *caritas* occurs in Book XV.5 of *De Trinitate*. This idea, though, also occurs in earlier sections of Augustine’s work on the Trinity as he either alludes to it or employs the idea as support for another argument for the Trinity. In what follows, a brief summary is provided on Augustine’s appeal to the Holy Spirit and *caritas* in earlier sections of *De Trinitate*, followed by a summary of his argument in Book XV.5. This section concludes with the significance of the dating of *De Trinitate* in light of Augustine’s anti-Donatist works.

### **The Holy Spirit and Caritas Prior to XV.5**

Augustine touches on the theme of “God is love (*caritas*)” throughout Books I–XIV and foreshadows his argument in Book XV.5. In Book VI, Augustine discusses the perceived difficulty of predicating attributes of each Person in the Trinity while maintaining their unity. Here he alludes to the Holy Spirit as *caritas* when he discusses the Spirit’s distinct Personhood while being of the same substance as the Father and Son:

Therefore the Holy Spirit too takes his place in the same unity and equality of substance. For whether he is the unity of both the others or their holiness or their charity, whether he is their unity because their charity, and their charity because their holiness, it is clear that he is not one of the two, since he is that by which the two are joined each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter. Thus *They keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3), not in virtue of participation but of their own very being, not by gift of some superior but by their own gift.<sup>9</sup>

The Holy Spirit, then, is equal in substance to the Father and Son, and a distinct Person within the Godhead. The Holy Spirit serves as the bond of unity between the Father and Son and is also the love (*caritas*) between them. The distinctive role and nature of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity serves as the bases of unity between the believer and the Catholic Church.

Augustine goes on in the same chapter to make an explicit reference to the Holy Spirit as *caritas* when he states:

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<sup>9</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.1.7, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010), 212, Kindle. Italics in quote.

So the Holy Spirit is something common to the Father and Son, whatever it is, or is their very commonness or communion, consubstantial and coeternal. Call this friendship, if it helps, but a better word for it is charity. And this too is substance because God is substance, and *God is charity* (1 Jn 4:8, 16), as it is written.<sup>10</sup>

The charity found in the Trinity is not less than wisdom or any other attribute of the Godhead; rather, it is equal to God as wisdom is equal to God. Hence, the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Augustine argues in Book XV.5 that *caritas* refers specifically to the Holy Spirit and generally to the Father and the Son, here in VI.1.7 it is *caritas*—a divine attribute—that proves the Holy Spirit’s divine equality to the Father and the Son.<sup>12</sup>

In Chapter 2 of the same book, Augustine quotes Romans 5:5 in his appeal to Christians to love God “with the charity that *has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*”<sup>13</sup> Charity, then, is not only identified with the Holy Spirit, but it is also the love given to us by the Spirit to enable the believer to love God. Because the believer is able to love God with the love given him by the Spirit, he is also able to love his neighbor as commanded by God. Further, it is

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<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.1.7, 210. Italics in quote.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.1.7, 210.

<sup>12</sup> See also IX.3.17—where Augustine seeks to argue that love, like wisdom, is begotten and therefore equal to the begetter—in which Augustine says: “This presupposes that truth itself has convinced us the Holy Spirit is charity, just as no Christian doubts that the Son is the Word of God” (Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX.3.17, 283). Up to this point, and eventually up to XV.5, Augustine has not formally argued his case for identifying the Holy Spirit specifically as *caritas*; however, based upon what he has said thus far regarding this matter, it should be plainly evident to the believer, according to Augustine, that the Holy Spirit is charity.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.2.5, 225. Italics in quote.

necessary that one love his neighbor if he loves God “because if a man loves God it follows that he does what God has commanded and loves God to the extent that he does this; it follows that he loves his neighbor too, because God has commanded this.”<sup>14</sup>

The love of God, which is the Holy Spirit, given to the believer must necessarily flow from the believer to his neighbors—the believer is not a passive recipient, but just as God has given love to the believer, so the believer must actively give God’s love to his neighbor. In Book VIII, Augustine states:

Embrace love which is God, and embrace God with love. This is the love which unites all the good angels and all the servants of God in a bond of holiness, conjoins us and them together, and subjoins us to itself. And the more we are cured of the tumor of pride, the fuller we are of love. And if a man is full of love, what is he full of but God?<sup>15</sup>

Here Augustine employs in this passage the verb *diligo* for the word “love,” and throughout VIII.5.12 he switches between the use of *diligo* and *caritas* for “love.” For instance, when Augustine quotes from 1 John 4:8 “God is love,” the Latin for “love” is the form of *caritas*. However, in the passage just quoted above, Augustine uses the accusative singular form of *diligo* to speak of that “love which is God.” Augustine’s use of two different Latin words for “love” does not betray a tendency to distinguish different kinds of love in God; rather, according to Stanislaw Grabowski, Augustine uses “either charity or love indiscriminately for the same supernatural act or virtue.” Hence, Augustine’s use of *caritas* and *dilectio* (the verb form is *diligo*), and even

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* VIII.5.10, 253.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* VIII.5.12, 255.



*amor*, are employed to designate the same supernatural act or virtue of love.<sup>16</sup>

The theme of “God is love (*caritas*)” runs throughout *De Trinitate*, and Augustine’s specific<sup>17</sup> identification of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* is presupposed as a truth from the teaching of Scripture. In Book XV.5, Augustine presents a formal argument to this end.

### **The Holy Spirit and Caritas in Book XV.5**

In Book XV, Augustine claims that the “holy scriptures” teach that the Holy Spirit is “the common charity by which the Father and Son love each other.” This truth, however, is such that “the divine word has made us search with greater diligence into things that are not set out in open display, but have to be explored in obscurity and dragged out of obscurity.” That is, Scripture does not say that “the Holy Spirit is charity;” rather, Scripture says in 1 John 4:8 that “God is charity.”<sup>18</sup> What the believer must investigate, then, is whether 1 John 4:8 refers to God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit.

Augustine first rules out that “charity is a substance worthy of the name of God,” and instead claims that charity is God’s gift to the believer. Whereas patience is God’s substance given to us from Him,

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<sup>16</sup> Stanislaw Grabowski, *The Church: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Augustine* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), 352. Grabowski refers to Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 31:5 Part II where Augustine says: “Amor Dei, amor proximi, caritas dicitur,” or “Love of God, love of neighbor, charity is the same” (my translation). Again, Grabowski refers to *De Trinitate* XV.18.22: “Ipsa vero dilectio sive caritas (nam unius rei est utrumque nomen),” or “But if a man has this love or charity (they are two names for one thing)” (translation from *De Trinitate* XV.5.32, trans. Edmund Hill, 424).

<sup>17</sup> As opposed to the general identification of the Father and Son as *caritas* (ref. *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, which is discussed below).

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.27, 421.

allowing the believer to say “For from him comes my patience” (Ps. 62:5),<sup>19</sup> the believer cannot say of God “You are my charity.” Rather, Scripture says “‘God is charity’ (1 Jn 4:8, 16) just as it says ‘God is Spirit.’”<sup>20</sup>

Augustine begins his argument that the Holy Spirit is *caritas* with a discussion on the use of particular words in Scripture—words that can be applied either in a general sense in some instances or applied to particular objects or ideas in other instances. One such example Augustine provides is that of the word “law,” which can refer to that which was given by God through Moses to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai (the Law), or it can refer to the prophets of the Old Testament.<sup>21</sup> The implication Augustine draws from this discussion regarding the Trinity is that while the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are equally charity—each Person is charity in his own nature, but it does not differ in them<sup>22</sup>—there is distinction within the Trinity. Only the Son is called the Word of God, only the Spirit is called the gift of God,<sup>23</sup> and only the Father is called the One Who begets the Son and from Whom the Spirit proceeds.<sup>24</sup> As such, if “God is love (*caritas*),” then it stands to question

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<sup>19</sup> As quoted by Augustine in this discussion in Book XV.5.27, 421.

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.27, 421.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.30, 423.

<sup>22</sup> Here Augustine alludes to a previous discussion in which he uses the analogy of the trinity of the mind (understanding, memory, and charity) as a way of understanding the Trinity. Augustine, however, acknowledges the limited nature of any analogy for the Trinity (XV.6.43), for they do not truly capture the essence of the Trinity. In regard to the analogy of the trinity of the mind, while understanding, memory, and charity are equally said to be of the mind, they each are different in relation to each other. Unlike the trinity of the mind, the three Persons of the Triune God are distinct but equal.

<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.33–35.

<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.29, 422.

to whom this distinction is made. For Augustine, though the Father and Son are charity in a general sense, “the Spirit is distinctively called by the term charity.”<sup>25</sup>

Augustine first appeals to 1 John 4:7, which states: “Beloved, let us love each other because love is from God...and everyone who loves is born of God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because love is God.”<sup>26</sup> Augustine highlights the phrase “love is from God,” and refers to the end of 1 John 4:7 that states “God is love.” If love is God and is from God, then one can say “God is from God.” But, “God is from God” cannot refer to the Father, for the “Father alone is God in such a way that he is not from God;” the love that is from God must either refer to the Son (Who alone is born of God) or the Spirit (who proceeds from the Father).

Augustine then moves to 1 John 4:10 where John refers to God’s love for man—not one’s love for God, but the love of God for man through which He sent His Son as an atonement for the sin of mankind. It is with this love that John commands believers in 4:11–12 to love one another as God has loved them, and in so doing the believer abides in God. One knows he abides in God because God has given him—the believer—His Spirit. It is the Spirit, then, who makes the believer to abide in God.<sup>27</sup> But, according to 1 John 4:16, which states that “whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him,” it is love that makes one to abide in God.<sup>28</sup> Augustine connects 1 John 4:13 and 1 John 4:8, 16, and claims that “it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding

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<sup>25</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 423.

<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424 (the translation of John 4:7 is that of Edmund Hill from Augustine’s Latin).

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424.

from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, when Scripture says “God is charity,” this particularly refers to the Holy Spirit.

The charity of the Holy Spirit is what not only causes the believer to abide in God and He in the believer, it is what distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever. Without charity, one’s faith, good works, and any other gifts given by the Spirit (such as prophecy, the gift of tongues) are of no avail—they are nothing but the “booming bronze and a clashing cymbal.”<sup>30</sup> Without God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, the believer would be indistinguishable from the unbeliever; with the gift of God’s charity—the Spirit—the believer now abides in God, God abides in the believer, and the believer is able to love his neighbor with the love of God as commanded, all of which distinguishes him from the unbeliever.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Dating of *De Trinitate***

Though *De Trinitate* is not an anti-Donatist work, understanding how Augustine argues for his view of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* helps to shed light on how he utilizes this idea in his charge against the Donatists; more will be said to this end later below. Another point that bears noting is the time period in which Augustine wrote *De Trinitate*—a period that largely coincides with Augustine’s dealings with the

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<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424.

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.32, 424. Augustine argues that one can have faith even without charity and appeals to Galatians 5:6 and James 2:19.

<sup>31</sup> In Book IX.2.13, Augustine seems to contrast the love of man, which is covetousness, and the love of God, which is charity. With covetousness, man loves the object of love essentially as an end in itself; with charity, one is able to take pleasure in relationships and other goods in this world, but the believers pleasure in these things refers back to God—“the only wholly satisfying object of enjoyment” (see footnote 24 in *De Trinitate* IX.2.13, 285).

Donatists.

Augustine's involvement in the Donatist controversy began around 393 when he was a priest under Velerius<sup>32</sup> and continued in various forms (attending councils against Donatists, writing letters to Donatist bishops, and writing anti-Donatist treatises) until about 423 when Augustine wrote his last letter on Donatism to a converted Donatist and Catholic nun, Felicia.<sup>33</sup> The period of Augustine's anti-Donatist works also spans approximately the same time period in which Augustine wrote *De Trinitate*. Though scholars do not agree on the exact dates it took Augustine to write *De Trinitate*, general consensus is that he began around 399 and completed the work in 417 or 419.<sup>34</sup> The works considered in this paper cover roughly the same time period as the writing of *De Trinitate*. The approximate dates for Augustine's anti-Donatists works are as follows: *De Baptismo contra Donatistas* appeared around 400/401; *Contra litteras Petilliani* appeared around 401/405;<sup>35</sup> and Letter 185 around 417.<sup>36</sup> The bulk of his letters fit

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<sup>32</sup> W.H.C. Frend, "Augustine and State Authority: The Example of the Donatists" in *Orthodoxy, Paganism and Dissent in the Early Christian Centuries* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 57.

<sup>33</sup> John Anthony Corcoran, *Augustinus Contra Donatistas* (Donaldson, IN: Graduate Theological Foundation, 1997), 58-69.

<sup>34</sup> William Harmless has Augustine completing *De Trinitate* in 419/420, while J. Corcoran has him completing the work in 417. Phillip Schaff in his *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* has *De Trinitate* completed in 420, while J.J. O'Donnell has it completed as late as 422/426 (J.J. O'Donnell, "Chronological Table of Augustine's Works," accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/chrontable.html>). C.C. Pecknold claims that the first eight books of *De Trinitate* were written from 399-416 ("How Augustine Use the Trinity: Functionalism and the Development of Doctrine", 132).

<sup>35</sup> William Harmless, "Augustine's Works: Dates/Editions," accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www02.homepage.villanova.edu/allan.fitzgerald/>; Internet.

<sup>36</sup> Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 9.

within the dates of *De Trinitate*. What is significant about the dating of these works is that as Augustine wrote *De Trinitate*—a work in which his identification of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* serves as the distinctive identity of the Spirit within the Trinity—he utilized the Holy Spirit as *caritas* as a foundational truth of his ecclesiology in his anti-Donatist writings.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> A helpful book regarding the development of Augustine's idea of *caritas* in relation to Church unity is David. C. Alexander's *Augustine's Early Theology of the Church: Emergence and Implications, 386-391* (in *Patristic Studies*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. 9 [New York: Peter Lang, 2008]), in which he points out in Augustine's early works an already developed understanding of *caritas*. For instance, Alexander states that even in Thagaste, Augustine's teachings "reflected a commitment to charity as the center of his relationship with God and with the church as the communion of shared charity with all believers" (226-27). He later states that in Augustine's last year at Thagaste, Augustine's ecclesiology "is refined in understanding catholicity as derivative from the unity of God himself and from charity" (300-1). Thus, if Alexander is correct, then Augustine did not develop his ecclesiology of *caritas* as a result of his dealings with the Donatist controversy.

For instance, Frederic van der Meer states that the Donatist controversies "awakened" in Augustine the deeper meaning of the church—beyond it being "a thing rooted in the world of hard facts" to a growing consciousness "of the real nature of its unity, of the reasons which necessitated that unity...Hard experience of the facts before him taught Augustine that the rendering apart of the body of the Church was a worse thing than any handing over of books" (*Augustine the Bishop*, 126-27). Thus, according to this account, Augustine was forced to develop an ecclesiology of *caritas* because of what he encountered in the Donatist controversy. This may well be true, but it does not seem to fit with the story of Augustine's life up to the point of his dealings with the Donatists.

In his early wanderings after truth, Augustine states that he "had absolutely no confidence in [the] Church," yet over time, he began to see the Church as holding to the Truth—that which he had sought after passionately since reading Cicero's *Hortensius* (Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 88, 116, 119 respectively). Eventually, Augustine could say of the Church: "I now gave my preference to the Catholic faith. I thought it more modest and not in the least misleading to be told by the Church to believe what could not be demonstrated—whether that was because a demonstration existed but could not be understood by all or whether the matter was not open to rational proof" (Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. Chadwick: 95). As such, I would find David Alexander's thesis that Augustine began to develop his ecclesiology *before* his dealings with the Donatist

## The Holy Spirit, Unity, and *Caritas* in Augustine's Anti-Donatist Writings

In order to better understand Augustine's ecclesiology in his anti-Donatist writings, a brief discussion is needed regarding how Augustine understood the nature of the problem of the Donatist schism. Once this is laid out, the backdrop will be set for the thesis of this paper.

### The Heart of the Donatist Schism

When Augustine became a priest in Hippo near the end of the fourth century, Donatism was going strong despite imperial efforts to halt their baptisms and end their violence.<sup>38</sup> The Donatist church was well-established in North Africa with churches in both rural and urban areas,<sup>39</sup> whose history began around 303 with the edicts of Diocletian.<sup>40</sup> While Augustine is perhaps the most prolific writer against the Donatists, he was not the first Catholic to publish a book-length work against the schismatics. The first known polemic against the Donatist

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church one that fits better within the narrative of Augustine's life than the theses presented by van der Meer and Wright.

<sup>38</sup> Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 30.

<sup>39</sup> W.H.C. Frend, "Donatist and Catholic: The Organization of Christian Communities in the North African Countryside," *Orthodoxy, Paganism and Dissent in the Early Christian Centuries* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 611. Frend mentions archaeological digs of North African towns that show evidence of having several Donatist churches in each town. He conjectures that the towns did not have several Donatist churches because of splintering within the church, but because the individual churches had been set up in honor of Donatist martyrs. Frend states: "Their worship had been centered on martyrdom" (Frend, "Donatist and Catholic," 616).

<sup>40</sup> Mark Edwards, "Introduction," *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, ed. and tran. Mark Edwards (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), xi.

church was written by Optatus of Milevis in 384,<sup>41</sup> who wrote in response to Donatist bishop Parmenianus' anti-Catholic work, *Epistola Parmeniani*.<sup>42</sup> Augustine utilized the work of Optatus in his own attacks against the Donatists, "expanding and deepening" Optatus' arguments in his efforts to convince the Donatists of their error.<sup>43</sup>

The Donatists claimed that the Catholic Church was impure because they allowed back into the fold of the church priests and bishops who had turned over the sacred writings during the persecution of Diocletian (called *traditors*) without rebaptizing them. As such, they believed that anyone baptized by these men did not receive a true baptism. Further, because these *traditors* handed over the sacred writings during persecution, but sought forgiveness once the persecution subsided, they were not worthy of remaining in their role as priest or bishop. The Catholic Church, then, was impure, so they broke away in order to be the true, pure church.<sup>44</sup>

Augustine tailors his arguments to answer the Donatists' charges that the Catholic Church's baptism is invalid and to discredit their

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<sup>41</sup> Edwards, "Introduction," xviii. According to Corcoran in *Augustinus*, Optatus' *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam*, also known as *Against the Donatists*, is "the only substantial surviving anti-Donatist work before the time of Augustine," but nothing is known of Optatus beyond what is given in his anti-Donatist work (Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 26–27).

<sup>42</sup> Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 26.

<sup>43</sup> Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 71.

<sup>44</sup> This summary of the Donatist schism is merely an attempt to get at the heart of the controversy. The situation is indeed more complex and involved than what is outlined above. Augustine spilled much ink in his letters (especially) and his works recounting to the Donatists the history of the schism and the Donatists inconsistencies in their actions compared to the charges they bring against the Catholic Church. Some of Augustine's works that contains detailed accounts of the history of the schism include, in part: Letter 43, Letter 44, Letter 88, Letter 185, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, and *Contra litteras Petiliani*.



claim that they alone are the true Church. For Augustine, the true issue is not that the Donatists baptize outside of the Catholic Church (though he does hold that their baptism is outside of Christ).<sup>45</sup> Rather, the root issue of the schism is that the Donatists seek to divide the Church. Augustine brings the charge against the Donatists that they “design their own church through the vanity of human lies,” for they “do not recognize his Church through the authority of the divine writings.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, their schism is a “wicked error” from which they need to be delivered,<sup>47</sup> for when one separates himself from the Church, the Church does not abide in him, for the Church cannot “exist” in both those who are in the Catholic church and in he who has torn himself away from the body.<sup>48</sup> In short, Augustine “disapproves[s] in them only of their dissent by which they became heretics or schismatics.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> In Letter 43.21, Augustine says of the Donatist baptism: “the baptism of Christ is subjected to the rite of exsufflation.” (Augustine, Letter 43, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001], 167). According to footnote 8, the translator Roland Teske states that exsufflation is “that part of the baptismal rite in which the devil is blown out of the candidate for baptism by the breathing upon him of the minister” (167).

<sup>46</sup> Augustine, Letter 185 1.2 (ed. Boniface Ramsey II/3: 181).

<sup>47</sup> Augustine, Letter 185 1.2 (ed. Ramsey II/3: 180).

<sup>48</sup> Augustine, Letter 93.25, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 392.

<sup>49</sup> Augustine, Letter 61.1, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 245. As one reads through Augustine’s letter, a noticeable shift is observed in Augustine’s labeling the Donatists as “schismatics” or “heretics.” In the quote above, Augustine calls the Donatists “heretics or schismatics,” whereas in later letters, Augustine chooses to refer to them as “heretics.” Daniel Doyle in “Doctrinal Discipline in the Letters of St. Augustine” points out that early in Augustine’s career he refers to the Donatists as “schismatics,” but later refers to them as “heretics” “to take advantage of the legislation passed in 405” against the Donatists. Daniels goes on to say that while the terms were used interchangeably, they were soon no longer

What, then, is the nature of this unity such that Augustine's focus and energy in his anti-Donatist writings is to convince the Donatists that they are out of unity with the church?<sup>50</sup> It is to this question the paper

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synonymous (Daniel Doyle, "Doctrinal Discipline in the Letters of St. Augustine" in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1999, St. Augustine and His Opponents, Other Latin Writers*, eds. M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold, vol. XXXVIII [Louvain: Peeters Publishing, 2001], 85).

<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the issue of unity is so vital to Augustine that he even comes to the point of justifying the use of state coercion to bring the Donatists back into the fold of the church. Augustine's appeal to state coercion has garnered much attention over the years by scholars, particularly in their attempt to understand the motivations behind his shift in thought. Early in his ministry, Augustine did not believe that the church should appeal to the state for help in church matters, particularly in regards to dealing with schismatics. In Letter 61.1 that "we desire to gain them for God through the love of Christ in order that in the peace of the Church they might have for their salvation the holy sacrament that outside of the Church they have for their destruction (Augustine, Letter 61.1 (ed. Rotelle II/1: 245). However, Augustine shifts his opinion on the matter when his fellow bishops share with him the positive results they received (the conversion of Donatists to the Catholic Church) when utilizing state coercion. Augustine states in Letter 93.17: "I yielded, therefore, to these examples, which my colleagues proposed to me...this opinion of mine was defeated, not by the words of its opponents, but by examples of those who offered proof" (Augustine, Letter 93.17 (ed. Rotelle II/1: 387).

W.H.C. Frend states that the path that led Augustine to favor state coercion was "long and complex." Augustine was not a cruel person and "recoiled" at the thought of using the death penalty against the Donatists (several times he pleads to Christians in imperial roles to abstain from using their authority to apply the death penalty to heretics) and his "favourite images of correction are those derived from family discipline...Yet behind this was the ambitious man who had once aspired to an imperial governorship, and hated to lose. It was total victory or nothing" (Frend, "Augustine and State Authority," 71). In this essay, Frend traces Augustine's progression from one who avoided appealing to state coercion to one whose support for state coercion defined the views on church and state "throughout the Middle Ages and beyond" (49). Frend delves into possible motivations based upon Augustine's past: his relationship with Monica, the social class into which he was born, his education, etc. Similarly, Frederick Dillistone states: "To Augustine, who had been trained in the classical tradition and had imbibed much of the spirit of imperial Rome, the rebellion of a small faction against the accumulated wisdom and tradition of the whole seemed madness" (Frederick W. Dillistone, "The Anti-Donatist Writings" in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy Battenhouse [New York: Oxford University Press, 1955], 198).

now turns.

### **The Nature of Unity: the Holy Spirit and Caritas**

Augustine's view of the nature of unity will be discussed in three facets: first, Augustine understood that the unity of the Church is communion with the Church that has spread to all the nations, which was prophesied by Scripture. Second, unity goes beyond the number of believers united to the same Church—Augustine roots unity in *caritas*. Lastly, Augustine identifies *caritas* with the Holy Spirit, without whom no one can have *caritas*.

**Unity in the universal church.** One charge Augustine consistently brought against the Donatists was that they set themselves up as the true church against the Catholic Church that could be found in all the nations. In Letter 49 to Honoratus, a Donatist bishop, Augustine claims that Scripture has predicted that the church of Christ will be spread throughout the world, and appeals to Psalm 2:7-8: “The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and *I shall give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession.*’”<sup>51</sup> Augustine then points to the existence of the church

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While Frennd's methodology does seem to coincide with Augustine's belief that one's background greatly affects who one is in the present, and Dillistone may be correct about Augustine's imbibing “the spirit of imperial Rome,” they seem to neglect what seems to be a basic facet of Augustine's motivation—the theological issue of the nature of the church, and in particular, the unity of the church. While Augustine is indeed a product of his past, this past does not necessarily dictate all he does; one must consider as well the changes that occur in him through his conversion and growth as a believer—especially a believer who once rejected Scripture as the source of truth, but soon came to embrace it as Truth. I am not condoning Augustine's appeal to state coercion in Church matters; rather, I am trying to point out that his motivation may be more theologically driven (however incorrect it may be) than Frennd and Dillistone make it out to be.

<sup>51</sup> Augustine, Letter 49.2, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY:

in Africa as evidence that the prophecy in Psalm 2 has come true<sup>52</sup>—the church which began in Jerusalem has now spread to the entire world. When the Donatists sever ties with the Catholic Church, they break away from the Church universal, not just the Church in Africa.

The appeal to the universal Church is, at the very least, an attempt on the part of Augustine to place the Donatists at odds with a multitude of believers who are of the same faith and in the same church; however, it does not provide the grounding for unity. Strength in numbers does not make a church the true Church. Augustine thus establishes the ontological basis of unity in the concept of *caritas*.

**Unity in *caritas*.** With just a cursory glance through Augustine’s anti-Donatist works, one is struck by his use of and appeal to charity in the Catholic Church. Stanislaw Grabowski says of Augustine that he is “the doctor of charity,” for he has

described the need and role of charity in the individual toward God, in one individual toward another and extended his theology of charity to encompass nations and mankind. His thoughts on charity run like a golden thread throughout the pages of his voluminous works...They are necessary to bring unity in the

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New City Press, 2001), 195. The quote of Ps. 2:7–8 is that of the translator Roland Teske provided in his translation of Letter 49. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>52</sup> A note of interest is how Augustine reads particular passages in Psalms as prophecy for the Catholic church, and Christian emperors and their use of state authority to punish heretics (Ps 2:1, 2, 10, 11; Ps 18:37; Ps 72:11)—passages that were not seen by NT writers as prophecy. What is unclear to me (perhaps primarily because my research was not directed to this end) is his hermeneutical method for determining whether a particular passage in Psalms was prophecy for the Church.

Indeed, the idea of charity plays a significant role in the theology of Augustine, particularly in his understanding of the unity of the church. In *De Baptismo*, Augustine establishes unity upon the basis of charity. In Book III.19.26, Augustine describes the true Christian, as opposed to the Donatist who is not a true Christian, as one who keeps God's commandments and therefore abides in His love (*dilectione*);<sup>54</sup> the fulfilling of God's law is love (*caritas*). The schismatic, on the other hand, do not have love (*caritatem*) towards God, "but are busied about those by whose pride they are led astray...For thus arise heresies and schisms, when the fleshly people [are] not founded on the love (*caritate*) of God."<sup>55</sup>

Later in Book VII of *De Baptismo*, Augustine says of Christian brotherly love that "the very sacrifices of the Lord declare that Christians are united among themselves by a firm and inseparable love (*caritate*) for one another."<sup>56</sup> In *Contra litteras Petiliani*, Augustine understands charity to be "the unitive bond of the Church, and outside of this unity, one lacks charity."<sup>57</sup> Thus, outside of the unity of the Catholic Church and of charity, the Donatists' faith, baptism, and any other gift given by the Holy Spirit, was to no avail. Augustine appeals

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<sup>53</sup> Grabowski, *The Church*, 351.

<sup>54</sup> Reference footnote 12 above.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo* III.19.27 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 445).

<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo* VII.50.98 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 511).

<sup>57</sup> Augustine, *Contra Petiliani* II.81.178 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 571): "But who will be utterly insane as to declare that the name of the Son may be of avail even beyond the communion of the Church?...But it is manifest that outside the communion of the Church, and the most holy bond of unity, and the most excellent gift of charity," one cannot obtain eternal life.

to 1 Corinthians 13:1–2 as biblical support for his charge against the Donatists:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.<sup>58</sup>

The Donatists' works, though done in the name of Christ, are of no eternal benefit, for they "overthrow" charity, thus breaking the bond of unity with the Catholic Church.<sup>59</sup>

Charity, therefore, is necessary to the unity of the Church, and if one lacks charity, he sets himself against this unity. If charity, then, is necessary to the unity of the Church, how does Augustine understand the ontological nature of *caritas*? In his biography on Augustine, Frederic van der Meer contends that it is the sacraments which are the "bond of unity through which [believers] are bound to one another,"<sup>60</sup> and these sacraments give believers the love of God. Jonathan Wright, in his book *Heretics*, sees the use of *caritas* as the encapsulation of the Church's "rehabilitation" of the Donatists: "This meant being kind, relying on reform and instruction, in order to save a person's eternal

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<sup>58</sup> Augustine, *Contra Petilianum* I.9.12 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 417). The verse quoted is King's translation of Augustine's quote of 1 Cor. 13:1-2.

<sup>59</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo* I.8.10 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 416). See also John Paul Hoskins, "Augustine on Love and Church Unity in 1 John" in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2003, Augustine and Other Latin Writers*, eds. F. Young, M. Edwards, and P. Parvis, vol. XXXIX–XLIII (Louvain: Peeters Publishing, 2006), 127.

<sup>60</sup> Frederic van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. B. Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 283.

soul.”<sup>61</sup> However, when one reads Augustine’s use of 1 Corinthians 13:1–2 as support for his idea that any work done in the name of Christ *outside* of charity is of no eternal value, he is harkened back to Augustine’s similar arguments in *De Trinitate* XV.5.32. Likewise, by making charity the basis of unity, Augustine reflects his appeal to 1 John 4:8–16 in *De Trinitate* XV.5: when one abides in God, he has God’s *caritas*, and then is able to love his neighbors with this same love from God. If Augustine’s understanding of *caritas* as the basis of unity reflects his understanding of *caritas* in *De Trinitate*, then perhaps his understanding of the ontological nature of charity in his anti-Donatist writings goes deeper than what van der Meer and Wright propose.

**The ontological nature of *caritas*.** As pointed out earlier, though Augustine does not formally argue for the identity of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* until *De Trinitate* Book XV.5, his earlier books utilize this idea without argument.<sup>62</sup> Written in roughly the same time period as the early books of *De Trinitate*, Augustine’s anti-Donatist writings “presuppose” the same truth regarding the Holy Spirit as *caritas*.

According to Augustine in *De Baptismo*, charity is “the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit, without which any other holy thing that there may be in a man is profitless to his salvation.”<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere, Augustine says that “divine love is breathed into [believers’] hearts so that they may be able to say ‘Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.’”<sup>64</sup> At Pentecost, Jesus Christ sent

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<sup>61</sup> Jonathan Wright, *Heretics: The Creation of Christianity from the Gnostics to the Modern Church* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 77.

<sup>62</sup> Reference footnote 11 above.

<sup>63</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo* V.23.33 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 475).

<sup>64</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo* III.16.21 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 433). Augustine quotes Romans 5:5.

the Holy Spirit “in tongues of fire, that He might make manifest the glowing heart of charity, which [one] certainly cannot have who does not keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with the Church.”<sup>65</sup> In these two passages, Augustine links the presence of charity in one’s heart with the presence of the Holy Spirit—the same Spirit given to the disciples is given to believers today—and it is only in the unity of the Church where one can find Christian unity and the love (*caritas*) of the Holy Spirit—that is, the love that is of the Holy Spirit.<sup>66</sup> This is perhaps the closest Augustine comes to linking the identity of the Holy Spirit to *caritas* apart from explicitly saying that the “Holy Spirit is love (*caritas*)” as he does in *De Trinitate* XV.5.

Augustine states his identification of the Holy Spirit with *caritas* in a less formulaic way, however, throughout his writings when he discusses the consequences of being out of unity with the Church. At the beginning of *De Baptismo*, Augustine, after quoting Romans 5:5, claims that those who are cut off from communion with the Catholic Church lack the love (*caritas*) of God by through the Holy Spirit. Conversely, those who lack the love (*caritas*) of God “do not care for the unity of the Church.” Therefore, Augustine concludes, “we are right in understanding that the Holy Spirit may be said not to be received except in the Catholic Church.”<sup>67</sup>

For Augustine, then, the Donatists are in grave eternal danger because of their schism, for by rejecting the unity of the Church, they

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<sup>65</sup> Augustine, *Contra Petilianum* II.32.74 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 549).

<sup>66</sup> Augustine, Letter 173.6, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 3 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 127. In this passage, “love of Christ” in Latin is “Sancti Spiritus caritas” where *caritas* is in the genitive form; *caritas* here, therefore, is not the love the believer has toward the Holy Spirit, but the love that is of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>67</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo* III.16.21 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 442–43).



essentially reject the Holy Spirit, and one who rejects the Holy Spirit is one who does not abide in God. When believers are directed to God, they have one mind and one heart because of the Spirit poured into their hearts—the same Spirit that serves as the unitive bond of the Trinity.<sup>68</sup> The ontological nature of *caritas*—that unifying love of the Catholic Church—is the Holy Spirit.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> John Paul Hoskins, “Acts 4:32 in Augustine’s Ecclesiology” in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2007, St. Augustine and His Opponents*, eds. J. Baun, A. Cameron, M. Edwards, and M. Vinzent, vol. XLIV-SLIX (Louvain: Peeters Publishing, 2010), 76.

<sup>69</sup> Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 95. Of the scholars I studied in my research for this paper, Stanislaw Grabowski is one who stood out for the amount of ink spent on the issue of *caritas* and the Holy Spirit in Augustine’s writings. He sees the role of *caritas* and the Holy Spirit as central in Augustine’s works (recall that he calls Augustine “the doctor of charity”), yet when discussing the nature of the relationship between the two, he claims that “The Holy Ghost and charity are not identified in the writings of St. Augustine except metonymically;” that is, “The person of the Holy Ghost is the source, the cause of charity, and charity is the concomitant element, the effect” (Grabowski, *The Church*, 354). Thus, the relationship is a cause-effect relationship. Later he says in the same chapter that the Holy Spirit’s role in the Trinity is love—“the mutual love of the Father and the Son;” the Holy Spirit, though, is uncreated love while charity is a created love and a “finite gift” (Grabowski, *The Church*, 355). Ontologically, then, charity and the Holy Spirit are not the same thing.

J.N.D. Kelly also sees the Holy Spirit as the “life-principle of the unity of the Church; he sees the Spirit as “love personified, *the product* of the mutual love of the Father and Son, the life-principle of the Church can be equally well described as love” (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. [London: Continuum, 2012], 414). Unfortunately, Kelly’s understanding is unhelpful as his statement is ambiguous: is the Holy Spirit as personified love a *product* of the Father and Son’s love for each other, thus making the Spirit begotten by them in some way? Or, is the *product* referring to the actual love given to the believer by the Spirit—that love which the Father and Son have for each other is the Spirit, producing the unitive love of the Church?

Perhaps most helpful in understanding the ontological nature of *caritas* in Augustine’s writings are Corcoran’s *Augustinus Contra Donatistas* (referenced several times throughout this paper). See also Gabriel Mendy, “Augustine’s Analogy Between the Spirit in the Church and the Soul in the Body and its Implications for Communion Ecclesiology” (Ph.D. diss., Duquesne University, 2009) and Gavril Andreicut, “The

## Conclusion

Augustine's various works against the Donatists span nearly three decades, and during that time he also produced numerous sermons and theological treatises on various subjects. While his anti-Donatist writings serve as a great source to understand his ecclesiology (especially considering that this is an excellent case of taking theology out of the ivory tower and putting it to use in the heat of ecclesiological battles), they should be understood in light of his other works. No work or group of works is an island unto itself, separated from the concerns, ideas, and context of other works by the same author, and the same goes with Augustine. *De Trinitate* and his anti-Donatist writings (particularly *De Baptismo*, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, and Letter 185) span roughly the same time period, and all of these works touch on the issue of *caritas* and the Holy Spirit. Without neglecting the specific concerns and purposes of each work, together they can help to provide a clearer understanding of Augustine's use and understanding of *caritas*. In particular to the concern of this paper, one concern of Augustine's for *De Trinitate*—that of identifying the Holy Spirit as *caritas*—is the theological belief put into action against the Donatists and their schism from the true Church.

Since the Reformation, the Western church has witnessed a growth in the number of denominations as a result (in part) of doctrinal disagreements and difference in church governance. In particular, as American evangelical churches deal with moral issues

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Church's Unity and Authority: Augustine's Effort to Convert the Donatists" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2010), and David C. Alexander's book, mentioned above, titled *Augustine's Early Theology of the Church*. Corcoran and Alexander particularly take Augustine's understanding of *caritas* and its identity with the Holy Spirit, and seek to comprehend it in light of his other works, not just in isolation with the anti-Donatist writings. Done this way, one gains a greater appreciation for the depth of this doctrine.

(such as homosexuality), political issues (such as the issue of free speech versus hate speech), and gender roles (such as the role of women in church leadership), Evangelical churches will continue to witness the breakup of congregations and the formation of new denominations. Though Augustine's anti-Donatist works tackle the issue of who constituted the true Church, his elaboration upon the Holy Spirit as *caritas* and as the basis of the unity of the Church ought to give pause to those denominations encountering doctrinal battles. Though a break away may be inevitable, the gravity of such a move should not be lost for the sake of ending theological disputes.

Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* is perhaps more relevant, however, for the local church body. Though church denominations are an important way for churches to align with like-minded congregations for fellowship, evangelism, and missions, the concept of a "denomination" is not biblical. That is, one does not find in Scripture such a concept. Further, Augustine charged the Donatists for leaving the universal Church which was manifested on Earth in the Catholic Church. To leave the Catholic Church was to leave the fellowship of the true believers.

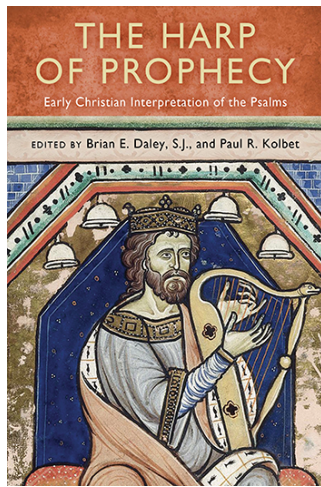
After the Reformation, Evangelicals do not see the denomination as the embodiment of the universal church, nor is the universal church manifested in a particular institution. Rather, the church universal is the invisible church which consists of all true believers. The local church body reflects the universal church, but consists of both believers and unbelievers. Despite the mixed nature of its congregation, the local church is where the believer comes under the authority of the preaching of God's Word, fellowships with the saints, disciples others and receives discipling, and reaches out to the lost world through the proclamation of the Gospel through word and deed. The local church body is the image of the unity of the Trinity, for each

of her members (those who are true believers) are united by the Holy Spirit.

If Augustine is correct, then, unity in the local body ought to give pause to churches experiencing a lack of harmony over serious issues such as doctrinal differences and musical style, or trivial matters such as carpet color or committee makeup. The decision to break up a church is no small matter, and in light of Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* it should be the last resort (if at all). Too often, however, the decision to split up a congregation seems to be viewed as the best way to solve seemingly endless disputes.

Further, the idea of *caritas* helps to deepen the idea of unity as it includes not only a like-mindedness on doctrinal and church practice matters, but it also encompasses how church members interact with one another. That is, is the church truly a family? Do the members enjoy the company of one another? Is there a healthy respect for various viewpoints (on areas of practice or those matters that Scriptures does not explicitly speak to) while maintaining a like-mindedness regarding mission and purpose? Does the local body actively seek to share responsibility within the church as opposed to leaving 80% of the tasks to 20% of the congregation? And, is the local body actively pursuing the evangelization of their surrounding area, state, nation, and the world, while baptizing and discipling new believers? Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* entails that believers are active participants in God's love as they seek to exemplify his gift of love to fellow believers and to the lost.

In an age of individualism and deep theological divides, the Evangelical churches would do well to visit the doctrine of church unity. A study of Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* is a theologically-rich place to begin when seeking to understand the theological basis for the bond of the local church body.



Brian E. Daley, S.J., and Paul R. Kolbet, eds.  
*The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms.* Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series 20.

University of Notre Dame Press, 2015  
Pp. xvi + 332. ISBN: 978-0268026196. \$39.00  
[Paperback].

Wyatt A. Graham

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*The Harp of Prophecy* spawned in October 1998 at the University of Notre Dame when a number of scholars assembled to discuss the Early Christian study of the Psalter. The group wrote and revised essays on the Psalms, whereas other scholars later joined the group. Finally, Notre Dame's brain-trust deposited its knowledge in *The Harp of Prophecy*, which thus represents a carefully thought-out discussion of the Early Church's interface with the Psalter.

After Paul Kolbert introduces the volume, twelve essays furnish the remainder of *The Harp of Prophecy*. First, Brian Daley surveys Early Christian interpretation of the Psalter, highlighting the aims and strategies of such interpretation. Next, Gary Anderson shows how pre-modern readers use and embrace imprecatory Psalms. Ronald Heine, afterwards, reconstructs Origen's introduction to his Caesarian Psalter commentary. Paul Kolbert then presents Athanasius's letter to Marcellinus as an exercise in "the reformation of the self" (p.75). Luke

Dysinger discusses Evagrius Ponticus's use of the Psalter as a handbook for contemplative Christians.

Chapters six through eight focus on Psalm 45. Using the imagery of bride and groom, Nonna Verna Harrison discusses Basil of Caesarea's gender focused allegories in Psalm 45. David Hunter explores how Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine use the language of virgin, bride, and church for a social and political purpose, providing historical insight into these three interpreters. Ronald Cox compares Cyril of Alexandria's reading of the Psalm with Theodore of Mopsuestia's reading of Psalm 45, demonstrating the similarities of the Alexandrian and Antiochene exegetes. John J. O'Keefe explicitly argues for what Cox exemplified: The Antiochene School does not embrace a pure historical reading in contrast to the Alexandrian allegorizers, which he proves by testifying to Theodoret's embrace of his Antiochene roots alongside a respect for Alexandrian influences.

The next two chapters highlight Augustine. Michael Cameron explicates the idea of *totus Christus* as the hermeneutical center of Augustine's interpretation of the Psalms, underscoring the tool of prosopological exegesis. Michael McCarthy applies *uox totius Christi* as a means to envelop Augustine's congregation into the Psalter, a Psalter that testifies to an ecclesiology of groaning.

Paul Blowers finishes the sequence of essays with a discussion of Maximus the Confessors' commentary on Psalm 59 before providing a translation of that commentary at the end of his essay.

While each essay argues its thesis well, *The Harp of Prophecy* as a volume *unsuccessfully* articulates its purpose in writing. Kolbert's introduction states that each essay relates to prayer and meditation (p.2), and he also indicates the volume provides research into the area of virtue-formation/Christian psalmody (p.3). These stated goals fail to cover the broad scope of the articles found in subsequent chapters.

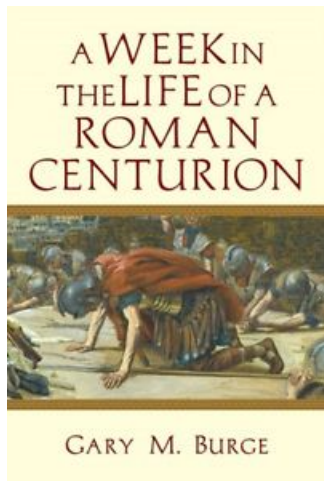
If the work's subtitle, *Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, provides the stated purpose in writing then it allows for a very broad goal but one that the work accomplishes. In any case, the essays found within excellently argue their theses, but one could wish for a clearer purpose in writing such a volume.

On the positive side, *The Harp of Prophecy* exhibits clear organization, chronologically and topically, making the volume feel coherent. After Daley provides an overview of the field, the rest of the essays progress from a focus on pre-modern views of David to an essay on Maximus the Confessor (AD 7<sup>th</sup> cent.). In terms of topical organization, three essays, for example, focus on Psalm 45 from different angles (chs. 6–8); the last essay (ch. 8) relates closely to the content of chapter 9, both of which highlight the interaction between the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools of thought. Whereas multi-author volumes can feel disjointed, the *The Harp Prophecy* feels like a united work.

Additionally, in a field where resources often hide in obscure volumes, *The Harp of Prophecy's* bibliography provides a beneficial repository of primary and secondary sources. While students of Early Christian studies will appreciate knowing the location of primary sources, they will equally benefit from a learned repository of secondary literature.

*The Harp of Prophecy* contains a wonderful collection of essays that will both introduce novices to the field while also challenging veterans to think more deeply about their field of study. Anyone interested in Early Christian studies and the Psalms should read *The Harp of Prophecy*.

Wyatt A. Graham  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



Gary M. Burge  
*A Week in the Life of a Roman Centurion*

InterVarsity Press, 2015

Pp. 189. ISBN: 978-0-8308-2462-5. \$12.80  
[Paperback].

Alexander M. Long  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Gary Burge's *A Week in the Life of a Roman Centurion* provides a brief introduction to the Roman background of the NT. It uses a fictional story, interwoven with little snapshots of key historical concepts, events, and locations.

The narrative follows the life of a Syrian slave named Tullus. The narrative begins with Appius, an important Roman centurion, and his arrest of Tullus. He assists Appius to read and to write so as to supplement Appius's own educational shortcomings. He and Tullus develop a warm relationship that is nevertheless appropriate to the social stratification that divides them. Appius even demonstrates an element of self-sacrifice when he saves Tullus from a Parthian arrow that grievously injures him, resulting in his inability to lead combat troops, and consequently leads to his transfer to an administrative role.

This administrative role takes Appius and his *familia* (household) to Palestine, where he is eventually stationed in Capernaum. At



Capernaum, Appius comes into conflict with the conservative Jewish leadership whom he is assigned to control, and Tullus must act as a mediator. It is here that it becomes clear that Burge intends to connect his narrative with an event recorded in the Gospels: the healing of the centurion's slave (Matt 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10). It is a powerful moment in the story when the centurion cautiously encounters the Galilean healer, who is the only hope for his beloved slave.

The features of the book can be divided into two parts: (1) the narrative itself and (2) the background information that is interspersed within the narrative. Burge presents a compelling story, and resists verbosity even as he provides vivid descriptions of key places and events. One example of this will suffice: "The scribe heaved back and heard the air scream as the sword whipped past him and crashed into a stand of arrows on the wall. Wood splinters flew from dozens of arrows cut in half" (p.40). These terse yet exciting descriptions keep the reader interested and engaged.

The other major component of the book is the background information interspersed within the narrative. This background makes his narrative more accessible to the non-NT scholar. It is here that Burge's research in NT backgrounds shines forth, as he illuminates key concepts, people, and events from his narrative. These episodes, though accessible, are nevertheless full enough to be useful to a wide variety of readers. There are also images associated with many of the people, places, and things that add a nice touch to the descriptions in both the narrative and the background notes.

Although both the narrative and the accompanying background information are very well done, the combination of the two within the body of the book can lead to frustration for the reader. Because the narrative flows so well, occasional background information may become frustrating to readers because it hampers its value as fiction.

Intermittently, it is possible to read around these snippets, but remains nearly impossible with the more in-depth interruptions. With a textbook, this would not be an issue; but this work falls under the genre of fiction, and so becomes a reading stumbling block.

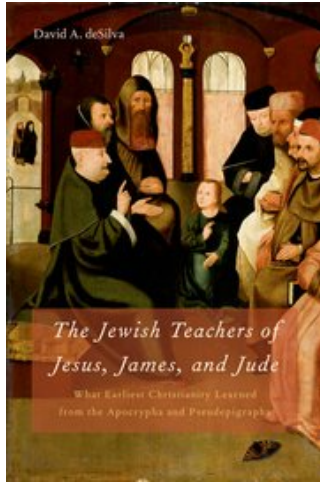
As a work of fiction, then, the blocks of background information sprinkled throughout hinder the work. It might have been more helpful to relegate the background information to endnotes or appendices in the back of the book, to clear the way for a better reading experience.

In terms of educational helpfulness, though, the book as a whole shines because of the well-written narrative and accompanying background that illuminates the Graeco-Roman world.

In terms of other related works, this book occupies a niche along with others. For examples, consider only a few other historical fiction books, including but not limited to, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* by Bruce W. Longenecker and *The Flames of Rome* by Paul L. Maier.

*A Week in the Life of a Roman Centurion* is a book that seems to be best suited for Bible College or seminary students in a New Testament introduction course—although it is certainly accessible to a wide variety of people. For the aforementioned students, this book is certainly going to be an engaging and entertaining way to learn about the Graeco-Roman background of the New Testament.

Alexander M. Long, BA  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



David A. deSilva

*The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James, and Jude:  
What Earliest Christianity Learned from the  
Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*

Oxford University Press, 2012

Pp. x+ 343. ISBN: 978-0-19-532900-1. \$38.95.  
[Hardback].

Trey Moss

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The aim of this work is to show that it is more correct to say that Jesus spoke from within Judaism than against it (p.4). Most readers assume that because Jesus's words are distinctly different than the Old Testament in many places, then he must have been radically different from the Judaism of his day or that he was the only faithful interpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus, according to David deSilva, many who read the canonical gospels unintentionally hold to a caricature of Jesus found in *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, where Jesus learns and develops his teachings in spite of his Jewish heritage, than they do a historically informed canonical reading of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

This is in part because of certain criteria in historical Jesus research. Jesus's differences with Judaism and its literature were emphasized, particularly through the criteria of dissimilarity. deSilva, however, is not thwarting the entire discipline of historical Jesus research in one fell swoop. Yet, he affirms, "Reliance on these criteria is inversely proportional to confidence in the historical reliability of

the sources” (p.26). And, “Skepticism embraced for its own sake is not therefore *critical*” (italics authors; p.29). deSilva believes that a survey into Jesus’s use and adaptation of the teachings found in the Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha help give a fuller picture of the historical Jesus. deSilva's second chapter “Recovering the Voices of James and Jude” makes a similar argument for the historical existence of James and Jude through emphasizing their use of Jewish pseudepigrapha (*1 Enoch* and *Testament of Job*). To be clear, deSilva is not arguing for Jesus’s, James’s or Jude’s dependence on these sources; rather, they “creatively engaged” with these texts, and traditions related to these texts (p.13).

deSilva traces this engagement, selectively choosing several Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal texts, which seem to have shaped the teachings of Jesus, James, and Jude. First, texts available to Jesus and his brothers in first century Palestine (*Wisdom of Ben Sirach, Tobit, 1 Enoch*) are considered. Other texts are selected for their importance; for the concepts were available to Jesus and his followers concerning his mission and identity (*2, 4 Maccabees, Psalms of Solomon, Lives of the Prophets*). A third group, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Testament of Job*, are examined for their respective influence on the Sermon on the Mount and the book of James (Jas 5:11).

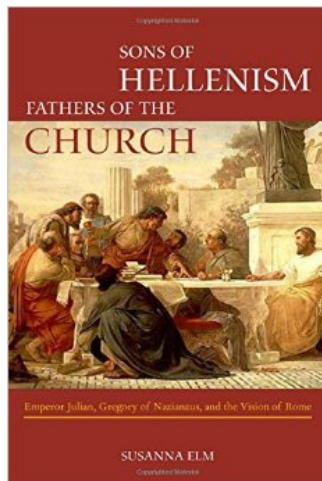
Two criteria are used by deSilva to determine a texts influence over Jesus and his brothers: availability and distinctiveness. These criteria ask (1) whether the texts would have significant enough presence in Palestine to influence Jesus and his brothers, and (2) is there enough similarity between these Jewish texts and that of the New Testament. deSilva is not showing literary dependence, per se, but, he demonstrates that a level of influence took place. Therefore deSilva is hesitant to say some texts had a great deal of affect on Jesus and his contemporaries as, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Testament*

*of Job*—which to date were not discovered in Palestine or thought to show any connection to Palestine.

This volume presents a solid introduction into the Jewish backgrounds of Jesus and his brothers.

Trey Moss, M.Div.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



Susanna Elm

*Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012

Pp. xvii + 553. ISBN: 978-0-520-26930-9. \$35.95  
[Paperback].

Rev. D. Blair Smith  
Durham University

Almost twenty years separate Susanna Elm's two monographs in the field of Late Antiquity. Her first, *'Virgins of God': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, challenged reigning paradigms for understanding the character and shape of monasticism in the early Church, especially by highlighting the important role inhabited by female monastics. The way she constructed her argument was crucial: a meticulous reading of classical texts.

Trained in classics, and a professor of history and classics at UC Berkeley, Elm brings the refined tools this discipline requires to evaluate — in painstaking detail — the texts of Late Antiquity. The freshness of her readings and creativity of her judgments have demanded the attention of scholars from a number of interlocking fields, precisely because she has done the hard work of building an argument from the “ground up.” Such work does not come easily or quickly. It also requires time to ‘digest’; and now twenty years hence, as her conclusions in *'Virgins of God'* have worked their way into the

present operating assumptions of a whole field of study, she serves up another *bahnbrechende* work of breathtaking scope, the full tremors of which are still to be felt within the field of Late Antique studies.

*Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church* is conceived by juxtaposing two men who have traditionally been held apart in the study of this period: the Emperor Julian and the Bishop Gregory of Nazianzus. They have been held apart largely because one, Julian, was pagan and the other, Gregory, was a preeminent theologian of the Trinity. Yet, while this fundamental difference remains, Elm's protagonists share much more than is often admitted — they are both “Sons of Hellenism.” Elm insists it is in exploring this shared background that the differences between the two men come into relief. Furthermore, through “micro studies” (Elm calls her work a “micro-social history of ideas”; p.9) of these two representative men one gains spectacles through which to view the larger picture of the monumental times in which they lived. Their very *particular* interactions provide the material needed to understand the more *general* transformations occurring within Roman culture: “Only by observing...the literary duels between Julian and Gregory may we see the adaptation and transformation of traditional Roman themes in Christian self-definition, theology, and political theory” (p.2).

The representative power of Julian and Gregory stems from their shared status as “elite” men (pp.7-8, *passim*). What made them elite can of course be seen in that they rose to prominence in their respective arenas. But behind their eventual status of position was an entire way of being brought up — of being “groomed” — within a common *paideia*. This is a comprehensive education access to which required family status and connections. It led both Julian and Gregory (and his friend, Basil of Caesarea) to study in Athens, the intellectual center of their day. While there was a certain baseline for access to

such a place, one would attain prestige through mastering the elements of *paideia* and demonstrating that mastery through rhetorical power. Someone like Gregory, for example, stood out among his elite peers because “he was better than most at writing himself prestige” (p.9). Elm’s focus on Gregory and Julian, as elite men of influence trained within a shared *paideia*, provides an enriching interpretive lens that moves across her narrative, through which the reader is able to observe the many cultural entanglements of the time shared by both pagan and Christian alike.

After Elm sets-up the nature and subjects of her study in her “Introduction,” and gives a preview of the importance of a common *paideia*, she begins to meticulously march through the history and texts pertaining to Julian and Gregory. In “Part One” she takes three chapters to contextualize both men’s familial backgrounds and the roads that led them to their eventual public careers. Of particular interest within this section is the introduction of the theoretical foundations for how each man conceived of his leadership (pp.71–87, 103–5), wherein he sought the appropriate tension between the “practical life” (*bios praktikos*) and the “theoretical life” (*bios theoretikos*)

Parts Two and Three of the book are comprised of seven chapters that bring Julian and Gregory into close dialogue through examination of their relevant literature. Elm features Julian as a more powerful thinker and skillful ruler than is often recognized, especially within Christian writings. As the title of the book suggests, Elm goes so far as to call Julian a “Father” of the Church because, through his erudition and the deliberate consequences of his pagan rule for the Roman public square, he served as a mighty foil that definitively shaped the true Father of the Church, Gregory.

Indeed, well before the soaring heights of Gregory’s Trinitarian works of the 380s, Elm demonstrates, in close readings of his first six



orations, that the die of his thought was cast in thinking through the wide-ranging implications of Julian's pagan Roman rule from CE 361–363. For both men, no less than the order of the cosmos was at stake.

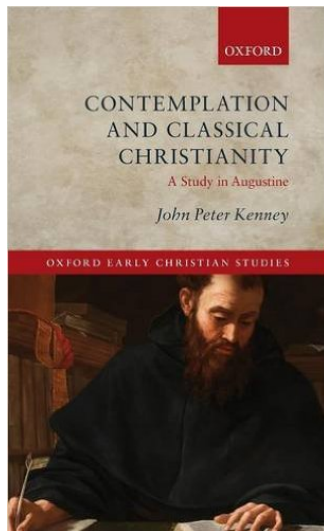
For the pagan Julian, he wished to order the *politeia* by linking it up with the pagan gods, with himself as emperor paving the way for the Roman populace to please the gods through proper sacrifice. Elm argues it was in Gregory's equally strong concern for *eutaxia* ("good order") that the universal character of his thought took shape — from the Trinity all the way down.

The result was a vision of Rome as Christian empire. For Gregory, the "intrinsic link between philosophy, theology, religion, and governance or politics" (pp.485–6) meant a vision big enough to encompass all of Rome and, because it touched all of Rome, it presented Christianity as a religion with universal claims. In the end, Elm depicts Gregory and Julian's battle as one between "competing universalisms" (p.485), with Christianity's longevity and dynamism credited to its ability to transform an existing Roman order.

Elm's sweeping work deserves a sweeping audience: it should be read by every scholar who toils in the broad field of Late Antique studies. Historical events are illuminated to such a degree that our understanding of two of the most significant fixtures in Late Antique studies — the Roman Empire and Christianity — can only be deepened by interacting with this work. The fact that our windows into these times are intertwined biographies of two fascinating men makes the reading all the more compelling. While *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church* should be read thoroughly and with patience, its layout, with many clearly labeled subheadings, and its index, which is stunning in its finely grained detail, make it conducive for frequent referencing. What is more, its nearly forty-page bibliography provides many inviting trailheads for further discovery. If it takes Dr. Elm twenty

more years to produce a work of similar scope and depth, it will be well worth the wait. But scholars of Late Antiquity will certainly not complain if it is sooner.

Rev. D. Blair Smith, Th.M.  
Durham University



John Peter Kenney  
*Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study  
in Augustine*

Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford:  
Oxford University Press, 2013.

Pp. xi+191. ISBN: 978-0-19-956370-8. \$83.00  
[Hardback].

Darron T. Chapman  
University of Louisville

*Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine* is a prequel to John Peter Kenney's earlier work *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions* (2005). The aim of this current work is to "retrieve conceptions of contemplation found in the early texts of St Augustine and then to consider them in reference to Augustine's classic depiction in the *Confessions*" (p.vii). In *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine*, Kenney focused, as the subtitled suggests, on Augustine's *Confessions*; his purpose here is to move "back chronologically to the earlier works Augustine wrote during the time of his first encounter with the transcendent . . . the purpose of this retrospective inquiry is thus to achieve a more secure grasp of what Augustine understood contemplation to be and thereby to discern more clearly the grounds for his claim that God transcends the cosmos" (p.iv).

Augustine's understanding of contemplation and transcendence is the focus of Kenney's work. For readers unfamiliar with these concepts Kenney explains that transcendence refers to "a level of reality that is both separate from the world of space and time and also superior to that world" (p.15). Contemplation is an "immediate knowledge of a transcendent God discovered within the soul" (p.vii). The connection between the two is of course that the transcendent is only accessible by the soul via contemplation. Mysticism is a term now commonly used to describe what the ancients meant by contemplation, but Kenney reminds readers that, for Augustine at least, contemplation is not a "passive psychological state," but a type of knowledge (p.79).

Kenney's key claim in *Contemplation and Classical Christianity* is that while Augustine was indebted to Platonism for awakening him to the transcendence of God, which allowed him to break free from the materialism of Manichaeism and also to reassess the Christianity of his youth, his development of contemplation and transcendence represented a distinct Christian understanding of those concepts. Augustine did not simply "Christianize" Platonism, nor is it satisfactory to just see Platonism anachronistically as the philosophical foundation for Augustine's own thought (p.166). Rather, it would be better to say, according to Kenney, that Augustine developed an "alternative transcendentalist tradition" and that Platonism remained for Augustine a "distinct intellectual tradition and a live spiritual option, if not for himself, then perhaps for others" (p.166, 169).

*Contemplation and Classical Christianity* is composed of 5 central chapters with two additional chapters comprised of an introduction and conclusion. After a brief preface and introduction, Kenney provides an overview of transcendence and contemplation in the Platonic monotheism that was the catalyst for Augustine's discovery of transcendence and contemplation. In chapter 2 Kenney focuses on

Augustine's developing view of the nature of God and the human soul through several of his early catechumenal texts, including, *Soliloquia*, *Contra academicos*, *De ordine*, and *De beata vita*. The central claim of chapter 2 is that while Augustine was influenced by the transcendence of Platonism, his own conception of God diverged in important ways from the Platonic tradition he found in the *libri Platoniorum*.

Chapter 3 continues examining Augustine's pre-baptismal writings but with a focus on Augustine's conception of contemplation. Augustine recognizes, according to Kenny, that Platonism's teaching concerning the soul's capacity to ascend to God cannot deliver what it promises: "We can conclude . . . that, from the very beginning, Augustine was aware of the limitations of philosophy as a way to secure deep and stable access to the eternal world, and hence to salvation" (p.62).

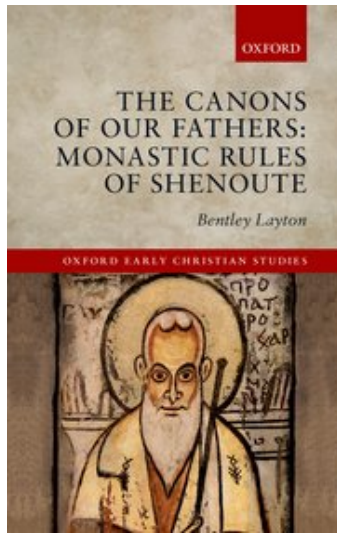
Chapter 4 turns to ecclesiastical and monastic texts written after Augustine's baptism but prior to the *Confessions*. Kenny examines how Augustine's ecclesiastical context shaped his understanding of contemplation.

Augustine's treatment of contemplation and transcendence as found primarily in the latter books of the *Confessions* is the subject of chapter 5. Particular attention is given to the theme of the "heaven of heavens" and Augustine's treatment of it in his exposition of Gen 1:1. In the final chapter Kenny provides a fitting summary of the findings of his book: "Contemplation is the mirror in which we glimpse the shining of our souls in the light of eternity. So Augustine came to believe. Through its practice were resolved the uncertainties of his earlier life and a spiritual God more real than the material cosmos revealed. His soul was arrested by the certainty of contemplation and, on his account, made newly aware of the poverty of its fallen state.

Contemplation thus cleared the way for the action of grace within his soul” (p.163).

Kenney’s book is a welcomed addition to Augustinian studies. The relatively slim size of the volume (169 pages, excluding the preface and index) belies the depth of information it contains. Those working in the scholarly field of Augustinian studies will certainly find much in Kenny’s volume to stimulate thought, especially with respect to Augustine’s relationship with Platonism. While it is certainly written at a high level of scholarship, because it deals with important themes found in the *Confessions*, it should be of value to anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the *Confessions*. And given that the *Confessions* is almost universally the first text that is used to introduce students to Augustine, and given that *Contemplation and Classical Christianity* is not a book of excessive length, it should find an audience beyond those who specialize in the scholarly study of Augustine.

Darron Chapman, MA, M.Div.  
University of Louisville



Bentley Layton

*The Canons of our Fathers: Monastic Rules of Shenoute* (Oxford Early Christian Studies)

Oxford University Press, 2014

Pp. xv + 359. ISBN: 978-0199582631. \$145.00 [Hardback].

H. Clifton Ward  
Durham University

Bentley Layton's *The Canons of our Fathers* marks the first collection and translation of the rules of Shenoute of Atripe (CE 347–465). These Coptic rules, assembled primarily from the *Canons* of Shenoute, are the primary evidence for communal life within the White Monastery Federation, a fourth century CE monastic federation founded by a Pachomian monk named Pcol in Upper Egypt (near the modern city of Sohag) on the western bank of the Nile River across from the Pachomian Federation in Panapolis-Shmin (modern Akhmim).

These rules should be viewed in the tradition of St. Pachomius, though they are much more extensive than the Pachomian rules. In addition to the fact that most have never been published, especially as a separate corpus of texts, “the rules in Shenoute’s *Canons* have hardly been used by historians of monasticism” (p.ix). In other words, the value of Layton's study lies explicitly in his reconstruction of a particular fourth century cenobitic community.

These rules mark one of the most detailed expressions of early cenobitic monasticism prior to the sixth century CE. This fact alone makes Layton's contribution valuable for anyone—scholar and student alike—interested in early Christian history, and even more particularly for those interested in the history of monasticism. Therefore, while the collection and translation of the rules may be worth the price of the book alone, the contextual chapters that precede the rules offer a fruitful perspective on early Christian asceticism.

To situate his reconstruction, Layton helpfully outlines the nature of the rules in four chapters, each of which is concerned with contextual issues that either help in understanding the rules themselves—chapters on the “corpus of monastic rules” and their “historical context”—or sketch a picture of cenobitic monasticism as emphasized in the rules—such as those chapters concerned with “monastic (communal) life” or “monastic (individual) experience.”

In the first chapter, on the historical context of the rules, Layton emphasizes that the “White Monastery Federation”—the scholarly term for the federation of three monastic communities associated with Shenoute of Atripe, who assumed charge of the Federation around 385 CE—had an extensive record of communal rules, which are mostly known in quotations, paraphrases, or allusions in the extensive writings of Shenoute. Providing a highlight to the first chapter, Layton offers the first English translation of the significant Naples fragment. The Naples fragment emphasizes the founding of the northern monastery and its affiliation with the central monastery of Pcol, one of Shenoute’s predecessors. Based on the accounts of the Naples fragment, then, Layton provides a compelling reconstruction of the general history of the Federation (p.19–26).

In chapter two on “The Corpus of Monastic Rules,” Layton shows the extrapolating process of identifying the rules of Shenoute, drawn



as they were primarily from Shenoute's *Canons*. Layton devotes space to the important question of how such rulebooks might have been used in monastic communities in late antiquity. He, then, also explores questions of authorship for the rules, the language they employ, and the role of the rules in the Federation. Layton argues that such rules were used "primarily by the monastic hierarchy" (which he describes in the third chapter), noting that the Layton even discusses the sanctions and punishments that a few of the rules propose, though he notes that this is a rarity.

I was disappointed that Layton simply shrugged off the interesting questions of why certain rules *did* anticipate clear punishments (when the vast majority of them are silent on this very issue), and that he never questions from where these particular rules might derive. He humorously quips, "I have to leave these questions unanswered" (p.49), which in all probability is where they must be left although we all might wish he had concerned himself with providing some conjectures.

The third and fourth chapters concern communal life in the White Monastery Federation and the individual experiences of monastics, respectively. Of course, Layton rightly warns at the outset to chapter three that any description of cenobitic life in the rules is incomplete and ideal. It is incomplete since the rules are derived primarily from Shenoute's *Canons*, which itself is missing many pages. It is an ideal description of the communities since "the rules *prescribe* behavior—they do not necessarily describe reality on the ground, nor tell us how much the rules were obeyed" (p.51).

With these qualifications set out, Layton then clearly describes the prescription for communal life offered in the rules, structuring his description in six headings: (a) the cenobium as physical plant, which describes the various jobs and duties of the Federation, (b) the

community, which describes the social composition of the Federation, (c) ascetic observances, (d) the monastic hierarchy, (e) liturgy, and (f) economical issues. Layton's structure is quite conducive to a clear portrayal of Shenoute's monastic community. Though the fourth chapter is the shortest, Layton turns to discuss the experience of individual monks and nuns in the development of ascetic identity clearly emphasizing the “resocializing” experience of cenobitic monasticism in late antiquity. Layton discusses both the “conversion” to monastic life (p.78–80) and the acquisition and maintenance of monastic life through “relationships with significant others, enabling the newcomer to identify with roles and attitudes” prevalent in their new communities (p.81–85).

The remainder of the book, then, is the collection and translation of the 595 rules. The Coptic text is provided with Layton’s English gloss on the facing page. Layton has provided an invaluable resource for scholars of late antiquity in general and in the development of Christian asceticism—and especially cenobitic monasticism—in particular.

His reconstruction of the ideal monastic community outlined in the rules is clear and lucid, but it seems to me that there yet remains much work to be done in analyzing the rules. For instance, Layton never discusses the theological perspectives outlined in the rules, and there is no evaluation of the way this particular monastic community reads Scripture in the subscription to these rules, which may be surprising in light of the fact that the rules themselves link the reading of Scripture with their communal expectations (cf. Rule 50).

Perhaps two examples of the value of this question will suffice. In a close reading of the rules, one is struck by the prevalence of echoes from Deuteronomy. Could the frequent echoes of Deut 27–28 (cf. Rules 20, 76, 97–99, *et al.*) provide any direction in answering the questions

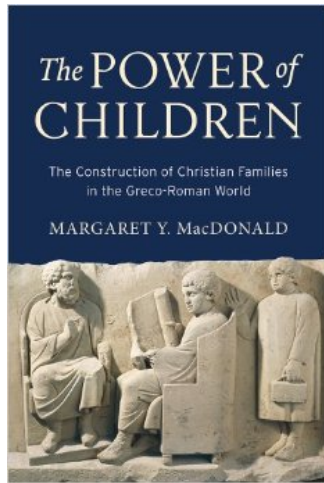
that Layton leaves unanswered on the origins and uses of the rules which prescribe either a specific curse (ⲥⲗⲟⲩⲟⲣⲧ) or a specific blessing (ⲥⲙⲟⲩ).

Similarly, the rules of Shenoute often implicitly use the Pauline reference to “fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12) as a framework for their ideal monastic life. For instance, in Rule 200, prescribing the proper eating habits during Lent, it is said that each monk must exercise restraint and “eat whatever he needs *in trembling and the fear of God*” (ⲛⲓⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲛⲧⲉⲩⲭⲣⲉⲓⲁ ⲗⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲱⲧ ⲙⲛⲟⲩⲗⲟⲧⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ). Similarly, in Rule 42, Shenoute condemns showing preference to anyone under care in light of God's wrath. Instead, one must “take care of one another with fear and trembling” (ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲕⲓⲡⲣⲟⲩⲱ ⲛⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲛⲉⲧⲛⲉⲣⲏⲏⲩ ⲗⲛⲟⲩⲗⲟⲧⲉ ⲙⲛⲟⲩⲥⲧⲱⲧ).

In such instances, the monastic life is grounded in a Pauline ethic, which itself is intended to placate the curses for disobedience to the rules *in toto*. In each of these examples, it is the interpretation of Scripture that drives the monastic experience in the Federation.

To be sure, it is more than understandable that Layton could not include this in his work. His reconstruction of the life found in the White Monastery Federation in accordance with the rules of Shenoute is clear and compelling. For this reason alone, the book is an extremely valuable addition to scholarship on Coptic Christianity in late antiquity. Nevertheless, for those interested in the theological reasoning and use of Scripture in the development of Christian monasticism, there remains plenty of work still to be done, and Layton's *Canons of our Fathers* will be a key voice in this continuing dialogue.

H. Clifton Ward, Th.M.  
Durham University



Margaret Y. MacDonald

*The Power of Children: The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World*

Baylor University Press, 2014

Pp. viii + 239. ISBN: 978-1-4813-0223-4. \$49.95  
[Hardcover].

J. Ryan Davidson

Free University of Amsterdam

Garnering endorsements from specialists in the particular niche of early Christian studies involving family, MacDonald's work on children within the Christian families of the Graeco-Roman world is a welcomed addition to the literature. Mixing historical realities from the larger Graeco-Roman culture of antiquity with biblical texts, *The Power of Children* provides an insightful look at the role that children played within the early church, as well as the implications of their presence within early Christian communities. While every reader may not agree with some of the New Testament hermeneutical implications that MacDonald makes based on her historical inquiry, the work will be of particular interest to those seeking to understand and/or research the early Christian family. It could be argued that the work blends the fields of Early Christian Studies and New Testament together. The intended audience for the work appears to be academics and researchers within the field of ancient Christian studies, yet pastors and laypersons alike could find benefit among the pages.

MacDonald begins by giving four questions that her work will seek to address. First, she states that, “In this book, one new question that will be asked is how a focus on children can influence perception of the household codes as an apologetic response” (p.4). Following from this, she presents three other inquiries that she will pursue regarding the household codes (*Haustafeln*) seen in various epistolary writings within the New Testament. Her first introductory chapter seeks to map out the terrain of this research emphasis. She summarizes by writing that, “This study of the household codes is ultimately an exploration of the relationship between the ideal relationships described in the ethical exhortations and social reality” (p.31).

In her second chapter, she explores the place of the slave child within the early Christian community as seen through the lens of Col 3:18–4:1. Inherent to the observations is the belief that recipients of the epistle, “usually belonged to more than one category” (p.33) contained within the Colossian household code. From the vantage point of considering slave children, she makes observations concerning the early Christian community. One such observation is her discussion of the sexual use of slaves within the time period, and how this factor may be connected to the canonical writings she engages.

In her third chapter, from a social constructivist perspective she addresses socialization and education from the lens of Eph 5:21–6:4. Of particular historical import is her discussion in this chapter of both “pseudo-parenting”, particularly of surrogate fathers, and the larger discussion of the education of children within the time period.

She moves into chapter four to a discussion of the early house church as a type of school using the Pastoral Epistles as a backdrop. Here, she relies heavily upon the idea that Paul was a type of “fictive-father” to both Timothy and Titus. She also provides a lengthy

discussion on the roles of women and education among the older/younger women found in Titus. She closes the work in her fifth chapter by giving concluding remarks in summative fashion. Her thesis in short is that in order to rightly understand the household codes and instructions found in various New Testament books, one must consider the presence of children in the *oikos* (household) and the *ekklesia* (church) and what that may imply regarding the understanding of such texts.

This work has many strengths which benefit the academic field. First, she provides a focused view of an oft-overlooked group within early Christianity: children, and particularly slave children. Her questions provide thought-provoking material for further research. A second strength is her willingness to stay focused on her topic, and to state when further research is needed. For example, she writes, “There are many unanswered questions about the content and the methods of teaching employed by the communities reflected in the Pastoral Epistles.” (p.141)

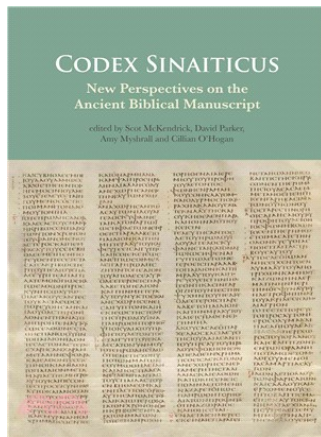
While MacDonald includes non-canonical writings in the work, even more references to such works could further round out the research. Some scholars will disagree with some of the positions MacDonald takes, or seemingly implies with regarding to exegesis and interpretation of some New Testament texts (i.e. role of women, the inference that the pastoral epistles accept the institution of slavery (p.4), the view that Ephesians is responding to “imperial ideology” (p.105), authorship issues regarding Paul, a lack of Christological focus, and possibly whether Colossians and Ephesians may be seen as a united whole (p.68).

Lastly, while providing an excellent addition to the consideration of families within early Christian communities overall, it may be argued that MacDonald blurs *oikos* and *ekklesia* too much. While she

accomplishes her goal of using children as an interpretive lens, she often seems to downplay traditional interpretive insights into canonical texts (i.e. elders as an office within the body of Christ) in favor of family roles (i.e. elders as a kind of new *paterfamilias*, or head of household, with a focus on household roles more dominant than spiritual office (pp.124–26).

These issues aside, MacDonald has given the field of early Christian studies a valuable resource, and one that humbly invites further scholarship. Her depth of knowledge in the field is evident, and even those who may disagree with some of her interpretations of Scripture or historical data will nonetheless be aided by her research.

J. Ryan Davidson, Th.M.  
Free University of Amsterdam



Scot McKendrick, David Parker, Amy Myshrall, and Cillian O'Hogan, eds.

*Codex Sinaiticus: New Perspectives on the Ancient Biblical Manuscript*

The British Library, 2015.

Pp. xix + 320. ISBN: 978-0-7123-5860-6. £50.00 [Hardback].

Gregory S. Paulson

Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung

This book is a collection of papers given at the Codex Sinaiticus Conference on July 6–7, 2009, at the British Library, held to celebrate the digitization of a fourth century manuscript, Codex Sinaiticus, often referred to as “the world’s oldest Bible” (cf. <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/>). The purposes of the book and website of Codex Sinaiticus are to provide “a suitable starting point for those new to the world of late antique Christianity or Biblical textual criticism, a worthy resource for scholars already working in the field, and an illuminating guide for the general reader” (p.xix). The diverse range of essays makes the book approachable by novices and beneficial for practitioners. This publication is divided into five sections, discussed below.

### 1. Historical Setting

This section contains a single essay. Gamble offers a magisterial treatment of the fourth century CE context of Sinaiticus. He offers



compelling evidence against commonly asserted origins of the codex. For example, he argues Sinaiticus did not originate by the command of Constantine.

## **2. The Septuagint**

Following, then, are three short essays on the Septuagint. One of the essays, by Kevern, only incidentally concerns the Septuagint. Her focus is on the painstaking process of manuscript conservation and transcription.

Tov provides a masterful analysis and discussion of the order of books within Sinaiticus by situating it within its fourth century CE Christian environment while considering its earlier, formative Jewish traditions.

In discussing Psalms, Pietersma uses Rahlfs's *Psalmi cum Odis* as a conversation partner. He shows where Rahlfs's criteria for establishing the text come up short and argues that there are instances where Rahlfs should follow Sinaiticus when it does not.

## **3. Early Christian Writings**

This is the lengthiest section, in which each essay provides a (para-)textual study of the New Testament or apocryphal text of Sinaiticus, with the exception of Epp's discussion of the nineteenth century context of the Codex. Epp regales the reader with a fascinating history of the use of Sinaiticus in printed editions and the modern historical context in which the manuscript emerged.

Trobisch's discussion of *nomina sacra* offers a typical introduction (summary of Traube's seminal work), but provides no empirical evidence from Sinaiticus. His brief discussions of titles within the codex (Gospel According to Matthew, etc.) and order of books,

however, are rich with evidence and provide solid, intriguing conclusions.

Wachtel provides a data heavy essay on the correctors of Sinaiticus, noting that though Milne and Skeat discussed the correctors in detail, a profile of each corrector's corrected text has never been produced in full.

Hernández documents several textual items in Sinaiticus in Revelation and includes discussions of interesting readings, indicating that Revelation in Sinaiticus was "Perhaps...considered fit for use within worship settings, at least by its earliest copyists and readers" (p.110), which is especially striking since no known Greek lectionaries include Revelation.

Head analyzes para-textual features in the work of scribe D in the NT portions of Sinaiticus, focusing on how the scribe ends lines of text, e.g. contraction of letters, abbreviations, and fillers. Myshrall provides compelling evidence that there were four original scribes of the codex, functioning as two teams: scribes A and D, and scribes B<sup>1</sup> and B<sup>2</sup>, suggesting that there were apprenticeships. Batovici analyzes the codicological and paleographical features of the *Shepherd of Hermas* and discusses the debate concerning its placement within the codex. Archbishop Damianos of Sinai gives an exciting first-hand account of finding fragments and missing leaves of Sinaiticus, focusing on the Shepherd of Hermas.

#### **4. Modern Histories**

Böttrich offers a well-written essay of the history of Tischendorf's dealings with St. Catherine's Monastery, the Russian government, and the Russian Orthodox Archimandrite Porfirij Uspenskij, who also deserves recognition for the discovery of the Codex. Fyssas sympathetic essay provides several letters to the end that the Codex

was sold by the Monastery, superficially as a donation, due to extortion.

Frame recounts how the British Museum acquired the Codex, juxtaposing political, social, and financial considerations against the backdrop of the economic depression of the 1930s. Nikolopoulos gives his first-hand account of the New Finds of the Monastery, which most importantly were the 17 leaves of Sinaiticus.

## **5. Codex Sinaiticus Today**

The essays in this section encompass three areas: manuscript digitization process, New Finds, and St. Catherine's library. An essay on the importance of the Codex for contemporary Christians is also included.

Moorhead, Mazzarino, Marzo, and Knight, the conservation team at the British Library, offer details about the physical construction of the Codex, including commentary on the quality and size of the parchment, its binding, the way the folios were ruled for writing, and the ink used.

Hieromonk Justin describes areas within St. Catherine's where books are kept, how the New Finds were discovered, and the process of photographing Sinaiticus at Sinai. In the same chapter, Sarris describes how he identified portions of Sinaiticus in the New Finds of St. Catherine's Monastery.

Three further essays in this section are primarily first-hand accounts of digitization, focusing on transcription of the Codex (Brown), online user interface (Robinson), and user-end website navigation (Parker).

The final essay, provided by Walton, reads somewhat awkwardly as an *apologia* for the type of text that Sinaiticus represents. Some of his essay is a refutation of the Majority Text theory; he also

inappropriately ventures into the territory of the “fallibility” of the Qur’an.

## **Conclusion**

The volume suffers from several oversights and shortcomings. Because of the six-year gap between the conference and the book’s publication, contributions after 2010, “with very few exceptions” were unfortunately not considered in the essays (p.vii). Also, a number of URLs were no longer valid when the volume was finally published (e.g. Dubai School of Government [p.276]; Patriarchal Text Online [p.303 n.16]).

There is a dearth of Septuagint research represented in this volume. Organization of the essays is problematic. Kevern’s topic has more in common with essays that deal with the conservation and digitizing of Sinaiticus rather than the studies of the Septuagint text. Epp’s historical essay would have been better situated in the Modern Histories section and the section, Codex Sinaiticus Today, lacks a common theme.

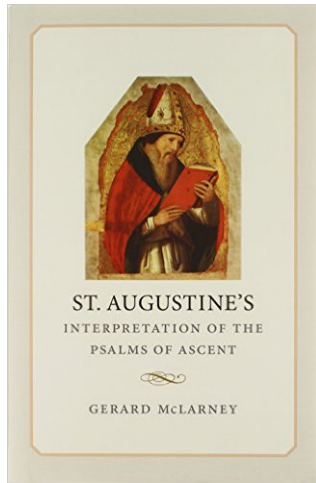
The editors failed to cross-reference authors within the volume at crucial places of contrast, e.g. Trobisch and Batovici disagree on what constitutes an appendix, and there are obvious disagreements about the modern history of Sinaiticus.

There are many flummoxing features of the indices, e.g. NT manuscripts are placed prior to OT manuscripts, pages references for the 101 manuscripts listed in the index of manuscripts are missing (Sinaiticus is listed twice, once as Ⲛ and again as S), and the Latin manuscripts, t and gig, are referred to by their alphabetic sigla (p.310), but listed imprecisely as “Gregory-Aland numbers” (cf. p.307).

Positively, the essays provide various perspectives, unique studies, and first-hand accounts, which are useful contributions

individually, flavoring the volume with the apparent complexities that Sinaiticus has to offer. In spite of its tardy publication and a number of quibbles/short-comings resulting from poor editing, the contributors of this long-awaited volume are to be heartily commended. I cannot foresee how this work could be ignored when considering the rich history of Codex Sinaiticus.

Gregory S. Paulson, Ph.D.  
Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung



Gerard McLarney

*St. Augustine's Interpretation of the Psalms of Ascent*

The Catholic University of America Press,  
2014

Pp. xviii + 244. ISBN: 978-0-8132-2703-0. \$65.00  
[Hardcover].

Wyatt A. Graham

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Gerard McLarney, Adjunct Professor at St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta, has written a monograph on Augustine's interpretation of the Psalms of Ascent, contributing to the field of theological exegesis (p.4). He argues that Augustine uses a hermeneutic of alignment, aligning "the listeners and the text within this unfolding narrative," a narrative chronicling a journey of salvation spanning from Abel to Augustine's present (p.37). Augustine's alignment hermeneutic allowed his audience to participate "in the life of the text" (35).

McLarney demonstrates his thesis with an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The monograph's title, however, unsuccessfully describes the book's contents. It is only in the fourth and fifth chapters that McLarney directly deals with Augustine's interpretation of the Psalms of Ascent, meaning that the first 122 pages describe introductory and related issues. Chapter 1 describes patristic exegesis of the Psalter in general, while the second chapter details how

the Psalms of ascent were delivered and transmitted. The third chapter addresses the social, cultural and ecclesial context of the homilies.

Even though the monograph's title may not accurately describe its contents, the first three chapters provide a learned introduction to issues surrounding Augustine's use of the Psalter. The skill with which McLarney wields both primary and secondary sources in, for example, the third chapter's discussion on Augustine's context bestows upon readers a wealth of measured knowledge that will inspire junior scholars and will inform interested readers.

McLarney's monograph on Augustine also aids Christian ministers. For example, Augustine's alignment hermeneutic implies that preaching a text's original setting is insufficient; a text's meaning must be interpreted in the local church. The text and reader are the place or context of interpretation (p.34). In other words, Augustine advocates contextualizing Scripture to bridge the gap between the "then" and "now." Whatever one's conviction is on the issue of contextualization, McLarney confronts readers with relevant issues of the day that shine from the past.

Additionally, McLarney provides rationale for why Augustine interprets a particular Psalm in the way that he does. Readers of ancient texts know that discerning an author's rationale or assumptions behind an interpretation can be quite difficult. McLarney details such assumptions when, for example, he speaks of Augustine's interpretation of Ps 119 (Eng: 120) in which Augustine interprets the Psalm as "a pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem" (p.148). "The Bishop's rationale," writes McLarney, "is based on his interpretation of the superscription, and other biblical references, in addition to his theological presumptions about the fallen human condition, the interiority of the ascent, and the salvific descent and ascent of Christ" (p.148).

Due, in part, to his careful reading of Augustine that takes into account his rationale for interpretation, McLarney's monograph also contributes to the retrieval movement, a movement that aims to recover earlier Christian tradition to reinvigorate the church. Augustine's theological exegesis of Psalms challenges modern conceptions of exegesis. Even though few modern scholars will adopt Augustine's model of the theological exegesis, awareness of the bishop's thought and of early Christian exegesis will allow scholars to become more aware of their own situatedness and the situatedness of their interpretations.

Consider, for instance, Augustine's interpretation of Ps 121 (Eng: 122). He argues that the city being built in Ps 122 is the heavenly Jerusalem, not the earthly city. Immediately, one may suspect Augustine to have allegorically read the text, but actually he "appeals to authorial intent" (p.172). After weaving together texts that furnish a biblical-theological understanding of the city, Augustine explains that the Psalmist wrote of Jerusalem which is (a) being built (*aedificatur*) (b) like a city (*ut civitas*). The bishop reasons that the passive present participle ("being built") cannot be David's city, which already has been constructed but it must be another. Indeed, the Psalmist's Jerusalem is only "like a city." Thus, the Psalmist himself engages in a figural reading akin to Peter's words in 1 Pet 2:5 where "Christians are to be built 'like living stones, into a spiritual house'" (p.172).

Such an interpretation combines grammatical and theological exegesis into an undivided whole, and McLarney's presentation of it rejects a fine distinction between historical and spiritual exegesis. From a twenty-first century point of view, such interpretations appear at first blush allegorical. But McLarney makes readers aware that Augustine uses grammatical and theological reasoning to derive his

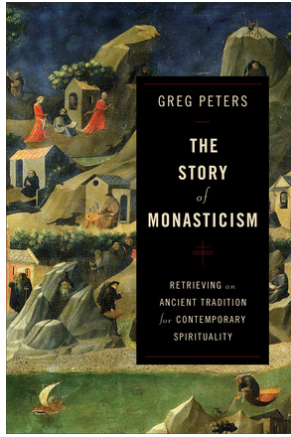


interpretation, exposing the situatedness of readers who might otherwise dismiss Augustine's reading as non-historical and invalid.

McLarney's monograph deserves to be read by Augustine enthusiasts and those interested in patristic interpretation in general. Indeed, the breadth of McLarney's scholarship lends itself to history, textual criticism, and hermeneutics, making his volume valuable to different sorts of readers.

Wyatt A. Graham

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



Greg Peters

*The Story of Monasticism: Retrieving an Ancient Tradition for Contemporary Spirituality*

Baker Academic, 2015

Pp. ix + 278. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4891-3. \$22.99  
[Paperback].

Edward L. Smither

Columbia International University

In this new work, Biola University professor Greg Peters has crafted a work “on the history of Christian monasticism geared toward a *ressourcement* of the tradition for the twenty-first century” (p. 2). Peters’s book bears resemblance to other introductory works on monasticism—such as Harmless’s *Desert Christians* (2004) and Dunn’s *Emergence of Monasticism* (2003)—however, his work has a broader scope and aims to capture the entire narrative of monasticism down to the present day. His interest in making connections (*ressourcement*) for his tribe (evangelical Protestants) is similar to the goals of Dennis Ockholm’s *Monk Habits for Everyday People* though Ockholm’s work is limited to reflection on Benedictine monasticism.

In a brief introduction, Peters communicates his rationale for writing, offers a definition of monasticism, and then builds a case for monastic spirituality from the Scriptures. The book is divided into four parts and is organized both chronologically and biographically around the lives of innovative monks. In part 1 “Antony to Benedict,” he spends three chapters discussing the origins of monasticism,

distinguishing between anchorites and coenobites, and describing the rise of monastic rules. In part 2 “Benedict to Bernard,” Peters begins with the sixth-century innovation of Benedict of Nursia and narrates the monastic story and its key players and contexts through the medieval period until the time of Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153).

Part 3 “Bernard to Luther” continues to survey medieval monasticism until the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. Finally, in part 4 “Luther to Merton,” the author discusses both Roman Catholic and Protestant monasticism from the time of the Reformation through the twentieth-century. Each chapter ends with a brief *ressourcement* reflection for the modern reader and the closing epilogue offers some thoughts on how monastic values might shape the future of Christianity.

In terms of strengths, Peters succeeds in accomplishing his goal of narrating nearly two millennia of monastic history in a personal and inviting manner and the *ressourcement* portions of each chapter are effective in showing the relevance of aspects of monastic life for modern evangelicals who are not monks. Second, as most works on monastic history begin sometime in the fourth century, Peters does a good job (pp.6–17) of showing monastic-like spirituality among biblical characters and rooting his narrative there. Third, and quite related, by appealing to Jewish and earliest Christian ascetic practices, he provides a fresh perspective on monastic origins that pre-date the fourth century (pp.23–34) and makes a good case that “monastic impulse was a part of the Christian church from its very birth” (p.35).

A final strength of the book (parts 2 and 3) was Peters’ ability to guide the reader through the details, people, and events associated with medieval monasticism. The author has filled in the gaps of

understanding in a period that is often under appreciated by evangelicals.

I do have a few points of constructive feedback. First, in the beginning of chapter 3, Peters seems to suggest that within a developing Christendom paradigm, the Emperor Constantine gave life and support to the development of coenobitic monasticism in the West (p.54). In my reading of this period, it seems that Christianity's approved and later favored status actually worked to push spiritual men and women away from such a status toward isolated and cloistered withdrawal in which a new martyrdom could be pursued. So I struggle to see how Constantine or any of the subsequent Christian emperors promoted monasticism.

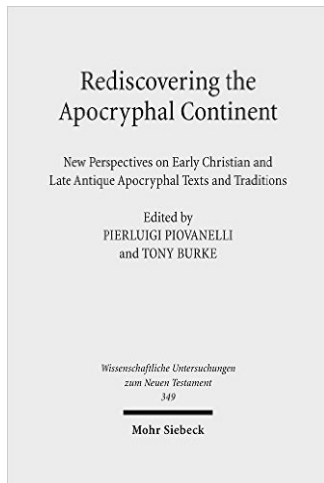
Second, while Peters's survey of medieval monasticism is a strength of this book, I was a bit surprised at the relative lack of detail given to some monastic innovators in the first few chapters. Specifically, I think the book would have been strengthened by more discussion of Pachomius, Basil, and Augustine and their monastic rules. Also, more space could have been given to Syrian and Egyptian monasticism and semi-hermitic innovators such as Abba Shenoute (d. 466).

Finally, one key element of the monastic story that seems absent is the work of missionary monks. Though Peters has discussed Basil (pp.54-56), Francis (pp.179-81), Celtic monks, (pp.88-96), and the Jesuits (pp.216-19), it seems that their rich cross-cultural missionary work—clear evidence of their active spirituality—has been overlooked.

Critiques aside, this is a good book for undergraduate and seminary students—particularly those with little background in monastic studies—that could be read in church history and spiritual formation classes. I think it is also a great resource for members of new

monastic communities to inform and deepen their convictions as they engage monastic history and thought.

Edward L. Smither, PhD  
Columbia International University



Pierluigi Piovanelli and Tony Burke, eds.  
*Rediscovering the Apocryphal Continent: New Perspectives on Early Christian and Late Antique Apocryphal Texts and Traditions.* WUNT 349

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015

Pp. XI + 439. ISBN: 978-3-16-151994-9.  
134,00€/ \$220.00 [Hardback].

Shawn J. Wilhite  
California Baptist University

In 2004 and 2006, three conferences were held in Groningen, Edinburgh, and Ottawa. Both Groningen and Edinburgh were part of the SBL International Meetings; whereas the meeting in Ottawa was a funded event. *Rediscovering the Apocryphal Continent* is the product of such meetings. Editors, Pierluigi Piovanelli and Tony Burke, helpfully gathered and edited such *ad hoc* papers from these gatherings to highlight methodological and literary studies on Christian Apocrypha (hereafter CA). Seasoned and nascent scholars convened to present a host of papers—of which, *Rediscovering the Apocryphal Continent* is a by-product.

The volume comprises of four general sections: (1) Introduction; (2) General Perspectives; (3) From Early Christian Texts to Late Antique Apocryphal Literature; and (4) the Pseudo-Clementines. Piovanelli leads the introduction, detailing the scope and origins of the project. Part 2 offers perspectives of CA to Historical Jesus scholarship, its relation to OT Pseudepigrapha, and “Jewish-Christian” Apocrypha’s

relationship to the field of Patristics and Rabbinics. Part 3, which is the main body of the present volume, offers essays on specific texts and “literary ensembles” (p.13). The final part offers five focused essays devoted to Pseudo-Clementine literature.

Tony Burke’s chapter, by far, is the most helpful—and for many reasons. In “Entering the Mainstream: Twenty-five Years of Research on the Christian Apocrypha” (p.19–47), Burke continues the tradition of J.H. Charlesworth’s article on the research of CA (Charlesworth, “Research on the New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” *ANRW* 2.25.2 [1988]: 3919–68). Burke attempts to provide a *status* update of the CA discipline over the past 25 years. His article covers five sections: (1) Defining CA; (2) Major studies on CA texts; (3) Collections and series on CA texts; (4) Role of Internet and media outlets; and (5) Assessment.

Three particular items are worth mentioning that Burke highlights. First, the collections of primary texts, as Burke comments, do “not meet expectations” (p.36). Albeit growing and improving, English scholarship in particular “has yet to see a truly comprehensive CA collection” (p.36). Schneemelcher’s, Elliot’s, and Ehrman and Pleše’s volumes are helpful for English speaking scholarship, but they lack up-to-date critical texts and can be confused to reflect the *whole* of CA (p.36–37).

Second, Burke identifies *attitudes* towards the CA that reflect continental scholarship. Accordingly, North American scholars are more inclined to utilize CA as they intersect with Historical Jesus scholarship or relate to canonical texts (p.22–23). Rather, CA, as it’s own discipline, has an array of literature and complexities that require its own discipline—distinct from NT scholarship (p.47).

Third, the amount of literature that Burke discloses beckons for further study in CA. He reveals an exorbitant amount of secondary texts and primary literature for modern readers. For English-only speaking scholars, it will be helpful to note the critical and primary texts appearing beyond the aforementioned volumes and those in other languages: Christoph Marksches and Jens Schröter, *Antike christliche Apokryphen*, 2 vols (Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Dieter Lührmann, *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache* (2000); *Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha* (Peeters); *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*; *Écritis apocryphes chrétiens* (2005); and *Clavis apocryphorum Novi Testamenti* (1992–). Also pertinent for English speaking scholarship, *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* (Eerdmans) is forthcoming in 2016).

*Rediscovering the Apocryphal Continent's* is highly valuable. Although the lag between initial papers (2004–2006) and the final publication form (2015), the volume still contributes to CA scholarship in helpful ways. First, the focused articles on Pseudo-Clementines reflect a continued effort to elucidate such text. Part 2, as a whole, highlights methodological considerations and perceives how CA relates to broader disciplinary questions.

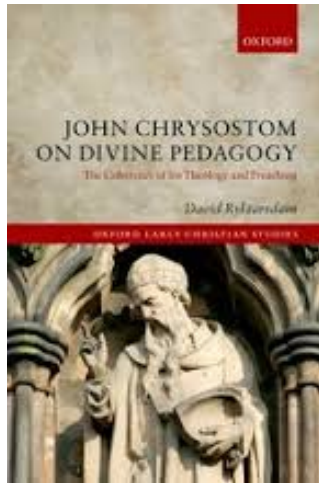
The particular volume is a unique contribution from the three study groups, although *Rediscovering the Apocryphal Continent* is one of a number of volumes in the field. For example, *Forbidden Texts on the Western Frontier* (Cascade, 2015) may provide more up-to-date findings since it reflects articles delivered at the York University CA Symposium in 2013.

Being a Mohr Siebeck volume, this text will not find its way into personal libraries, but will be found in research libraries. Researchers of early Christianity would do well to reach, at the least, for part 2 of



this book. Methodological considerations and up-to-date summaries will provide helpful insights into the broader world of early Christianity and CA that will aid specialists and non-specialists alike.

Shawn J. Wilhite, Th.M.  
California Baptist University  
Riverside, CA



David Rylaarsdam  
*John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The  
Coherence of His Theology and Preaching* (Oxford  
Early Christian Studies)

Oxford University Press, 2014

Pp. xxvi + 287. ISBN: 9780198715382. \$105  
[Hardback].

Jon English Lee  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

David Rylaarsdam, Professor of the History of Christianity at Calvin Theological Seminary, seeks to defend John Chrysostom against many of his modern assailants. Chrysostom, some recent critics claim, was merely a popular speaker “largely devoid of theology” and who was “exegetically impaired” (p.2). This modern picture of Chrysostom as having no coherence to his theology and method is something that Rylaarsdam is seeking to change. More specifically, the author seeks in this volume to demonstrate how prominent the theme of divine adaptation (*συγκατάβασις*) is in the biblical theology of Chrysostom. This theme provides the sturdy spine of his theology and ministry (p.3).

This thesis is demonstrated by first examining the classical understanding of rhetoric and pedagogy, principally shown through references to Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and others. Rylaarsdam then argues that Chrysostom re-appropriates much from the classical rhetoric tradition and explains God’s interactions with mankind

through the lens of this tradition—especially through the idea of adaptation. As the consummate rhetorician, God perfectly adapts his dealings with humanity in such a way as to enable his people to progress toward their ideal form (*paideia*).

In the first chapter, Rylaarsdam does a thorough job explaining several of the aspects of classic rhetoric. For example, he gives an extended discussion to the idea of adaptation (*συγκατάβασις*), especially as it relates to God’s overall love for mankind (*φιλανθρωπία*), the character (*ἦθος*) of a classic orator, the nature of the audience, and the nature of the message. The author also points out that this understanding of adaptation was not a deviation from his theological tradition, especially that of the Cappadocians (p.29).

In the second chapter, Rylaarsdam explains how, just as the goal of a classical education is inculcation of an ethical ideal, so too is God’s pedagogical goal to implant a virtuous way of life in his people. God’s methodology for imparting virtue in his people parallels much of what is found in classical *paideia*: the use of corporeal images (principally seen in the incarnation), variation, and progression.

Having discussed God’s pedagogy for mankind, Rylaarsdam then moves to the heart of the book—an examination of the theology of Chrysostom. He demonstrates how the theme of divine adaptation is integral to every major theological area of Chrysostom’s thought, and even contributes to his theological coherence (contra his modern detractors). This section surveys Chrysostom’s understanding of creation, history, Christology, soteriology, ethics, sacramental theology, and pastoral theology. Additionally, and of particular note, is an analysis of Chrysostom’s exegesis and hermeneutics (p.111ff.). The author classifies Chrysostom’s exegesis as a “sacramental reading” that does not neatly fall into dubious the categories of “Alexandrian” or “Antiochene.” Chrysostom avoids the twin pitfalls of “literalism” and

“allegorism.” Rather, God’s goal in accommodation is to lead us to a higher truth; thus, Chrysostom is able to steer between the “excesses of Origen and Theodore” (p.128).

Also of note, Chrysostom’s understanding of Christology is informed by the theme of divine adaptation. Principally seen in the incarnation, God’s purpose is to bring humanity back into fellowship with him. God adapts himself to humans through various OT appearances. Then, God becomes enfleshed, continuing his teaching and saving activity, actively adapting his pedagogy in order to persuade his people to believe his plan of salvation (*οἰκονομία*) and, by the incarnation (*οἰκονομία*), making salvation possible (p.132ff.).

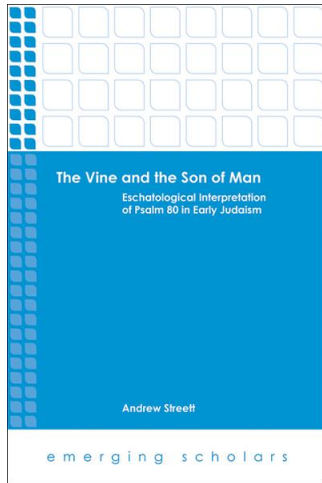
Rylaarsdam then gives an entire chapter to the apostle Paul, the most accomplished imitator of God’s adaptive pedagogy. According to Chrysostom, no one else was willing to adapt to others to the same degree that Paul was. Paul followed Christianity more precisely and accurately than anyone else and, thus, was the most willing to adapt to the weak (p.158). This adaptation is demonstrated by comparing Paul to the consummate teacher of philosophy. As argued, this mimics God’s techniques of persuasion, his character, and his rhetoric.

The final two chapters provide the theoretical framework and the historical example of Chrysostom’s understanding of the priesthood and its relationship to Christianized *paideia*. Scripture is the literature that priests are to use to form people into a Christian culture. Priests are to follow God’s adaptive example by adapting their philosophy lessons to all people. Like God’s character, the character of priests also plays an important role in their persuasiveness. This understanding of the priesthood is further demonstrated through an examination of Chrysostom’s homiletical methods in the final chapter. The author demonstrates that Chrysostom’s theoretical understanding of adaptability is consistent with his practice. Rather than seeing

Chrysostom as having an unsophisticated theology, a harsh and naïve tone, and apparent contradictory approaches to ethical issues, Rylaarsdam shows that these curiosities are best explained by a coherent theology of adaptability that informs Chrysostom's homilies.

Overall, this book is a welcome response to the recent scholarly antagonism shown toward Chrysostom. While he certainly did not reach the theological heights of Nyssa or Nazianzus, the pastoral and pedagogical concern of Chrysostom does shine through his homilies. This work by Rylaarsdam is a worthy introduction to the thought of Chrysostom for any serious student of early Christian theology. With technical precision and a wide range of conversation partners, this volume is a serious contribution to Chrysostom studies.

Jon English Lee, M.Div.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



Andrew Streett

*The Vine and the Son of Man: Eschatological Interpretation of Psalm 80 in Early Judaism*  
(Emerging Scholars Series)

Fortress Press, 2014

Pp. xiv + 232. ISBN: 978-1451472066. \$59.00  
[Paperback].

Matthew Y. Emerson  
Oklahoma Baptist University

Andrew Streett's recent welcome contribution to Fortress Press' "Emerging Scholars" series, *The Vine and the Son of Man: Eschatological Interpretation of Psalm 80 in Early Judaism*, is a needed addition to the growing work on the history of interpretation. Streett, Assistant Professor of New Testament at Redeemer Seminary in Texas, revised his dissertation (Univ. of Wales Trinity St. David) for this volume.

In the monograph Streett argues “(a) that Jewish and Christian interpreters found material in Psalm 80 pertaining to events at the end of the age, a time that some interpreters believed had already come upon them and their communities; and (b) that the meaning derived from Psalm 80 most often comes from the images of the vine (vv. 9-17) and the potentially messianic man (vv. 16b, 18), which because of the ambiguity of the text are open to a wide variety of interpretations” (p.1).

The reader familiar with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures will recognize the potential fruitfulness of exploring the history of

interpretation of Ps 80, as it is alluded to in significant passages of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, as well as in Second Temple literature and Rabbinic Judaism. But, as Streett notes, the study of Ps 80 and its use in later Jewish and Christian writings, and particularly a study of its eschatological interpretation, is relatively scant. Streett's volume therefore fills a lacuna in the study of ancient Judaism and early Christianity.

The book is tightly organized, beginning with two chapters on Ps 80 in its historical and literary contexts respectively. Over the course of the remainder of the work (chs. 3–7), Streett traces the use of Ps 80 through various Hebrew Bible, Second Temple, and New Testament texts, including Dan 7 and Jn 15:1–8. Streett is particularly keen to show how the history of interpretation of Ps 80 developed into a messianic and then Christological reading—and, more notably, how it is an exegetically feasible reading.

This type of book—one that traces the history of interpretation of a particular passage through its various stages—seems to be increasingly popular, and I think rightly so. While the outline of this book and others like it may appear relatively simple, the work done by Streett in this volume is important and useful on a number of levels.

First, it sheds light on a comparatively understudied but still important passage in ancient Judaism and early Christianity, and one whose varied interpretations helps us to understand why Christianity ultimately departed from Judaism. The interpretation of Ps 80, and particularly the Gospel authors's reading of it as a reference to Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, is one of the hermeneutical tipping points for early Christianity. Streett's careful exegesis of the passage, coupled with his nuanced explanation of how ancient Jewish and early Christian writers read it differently, is of great assistance to scholars of these ancient texts and of the history of religion.

Second, Streett provides readers with what I consider to be a robust interpretive method. He describes it as "eclectic", drawing on both historical and literary tools. On the latter, he is most interested in describing how Ps 80 can be read canonically and intertextually (p.11). This type of reading is one that I wholeheartedly commend—it historically situates a passage of Scripture while simultaneously reading it with the whole canon.

Third, while Streett does not describe his project this way, in my mind it is helpful for Christians who wish to understand better the rationale of the New Testament writers as they used the Old Testament. *The Vine and the Son of Man* demonstrates that, while there are other interpretive options for the passage, early Christian messianic and Christological interpretations fit well within the realm of possibilities when considering the intentions of the author of Ps 80.

On that note, one question I continue to have after reading the book, and after re-reading the relevant passages to this question a number of times, is what Streett means by "meaning," "intention," and "intentionality." A number of times Streett uses these terms to my mind in seemingly disparate ways, so that at one point they can refer to a (single?) intent of the original author—i.e. "what it meant"—while at others they seem to refer to what later readers understood it to mean, and at still other times they appear to refer to what the passage means in a canonical context. Perhaps Streett means all three, and maybe more, but it is still not clear to me exactly what he means by the terms "meaning" or "intention."

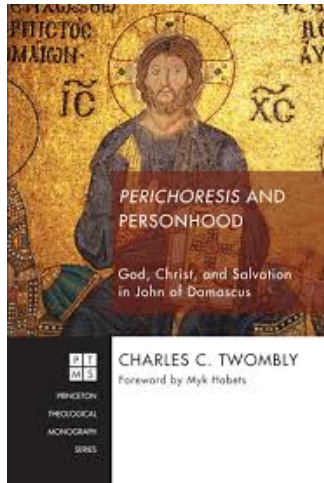
I would also hope to see a subsequent article or book on the interpretation of Ps 80 not just in the New Testament but in early Christianity and perhaps even beyond. It seems to me that looking at the history of interpretation would bolster these types of projects, not



only in the Christian canon and its background literature but also in subsequent Christian writings.

That question and small quibble aside, *The Vine and the Son of Man* is a carefully argued, methodologically robust, and therefore welcome addition to the study of the Hebrew Bible in subsequent literature. I would recommend it to those interested in a rigorous study of the Psalter, the history of interpretation, or early Christian origins and exegesis.

Matthew Y. Emerson, Ph.D.  
Oklahoma Baptist University



Charles C. Twombly

*Perichoresis and Personhood: God, Christ, and Salvation in John of Damascus* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series)

Pickwick Publications, 2015

Pp. 114. ISBN: 978-1-62032-180-5. \$14.67 [Paperback].

Rafael N. Bello

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Charles C. Twombly's work on John of Damascus comes in an era in which not only the Damascene's perspective on *perichoresis* is lost and misunderstood, but the entire enterprise of *perichoretic* theology has been falling into pieces. This text represents a critical, but also engaging presentation of John of Damascus's theology on the subject.

Twombly has three main sections that clearly show how he wants to see John and the interpenetration of the three persons in the Trinity. The sections are on the relationship of *perichoresis* and the Trinity, the person of Christ, and Salvation. However, even before diving into these sections, Twombly spends great energy and time on the apophatic theology of John of Damascus. Even though there is great truth in the idea that God is fundamentally transcendent in John, the Damascene, it seems that Twombly pushed some of the readings of John too far. Twombly was eager to say that this means that John is pervasively apophatic. To be fair, however, he also understands that

apophatic theology does not imply a total unknowability of God. He sees that “through the manifestation of the Son and his revelation of the Father and bestowal of the Spirit, all that can be known is given to us.” (p.15). However, the amount of energy spent discussing the possibility of an apophatic theology seems to divert the reader.

Twombly's efforts in demonstrating John's classical Trinitarian Theology pay high dividends. In this first section, the reader encounters articulations of the *extra-calvinisticum* and a solid, but embryonic defense of *dyothelitism*. *The Orthodox Faith* is a forgotten gem in terms of trinitarian Theology. For example, Twombly does an excellent job by demonstrating how plurality of *persons* does not imply plurality of *wills* in the Trinity. His basic premise in this section is to show that John of Damascus used the concept of *perichoresis* as a shorthand word that encapsulates some of the Nicene confession (p.42). Another example of John's classical trinitarian theology is defense of inseparable operations and divine simplicity. Without simplicity, for John of Damascus, then “God would be composed of many things, he would not be simple, but compounded, which is impious to the last degree” (p.33).

In the second section of the book, Twombly enters into more precarious territory. How is one to elaborate on *perichoresis* and the person of Christ? Does the hypostatic union borrow any of the Nicene conceptions of *hypostasis*? According to Twombly, *perichoresis* “in relation to the Trinity [Nicene conceptions] summed up and gave condensed expression to a centuries-long development that integrated insights drawn from Chalcedonian Christology with those of Cappadocian theology” (p.53). Overall, Twombly navigates well through John of Damascus's work. Twombly even recognizes the idea that the *perichoretic* relation is not that mutual by appealing to the *Orthodox Faith* when John says that the human nature cannot

interpenetrate the divine (p.54). Also, he notes how the divine penetrates the human only *via* omnipresence. Anything that goes farther than this is to run the risk of residing outside the Orthodox Faith.

However, as Twombly searches more for a different meaning for *perichoresis*, he ends up finding one in John of Damascus. It is, however, debatable if John really expanded the meaning of *perichoresis* to mean an indwelling of the hypostatic union. When John speaks of deification of the will (p.83) *via* union, it seems to refer to a communication of grace, rather than an infusion of the natures.

Mixed feelings can arise from the last section. Participation and *perichoresis* have never been used to mean the same thing in theological vocabulary. Twombly recognizes that even John of Damascus did not use those terms in such manner (p.94).

A quick evaluation seems to give the impression that the term *perichoresis* would be better applied to the Trinitarian relations only. Twombly's interpretation of John by saying that *perichoresis* is a word that sums up "what binds [the persons of the Trinity] together, inseparably, in common substance, action, and so on, is 'their existence in one another,' their mutual indwelling" (p.32). This seems to exclude an application of *perichoresis* to other areas of theological studies.

*The Orthodox Faith* will continue to be a valuable source for Christian theological investigation. Overall, Twombly's research is thorough and engaging. This will be a valuable contribution to the field of *perichoresis*.

Rafael N. Bello, M.Div.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

# Information for Contributions to the Journal

*Fides et Humilitas: The Journal of the Center for Ancient Christian Studies*

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- Place full name, degree, and current institution on the title page. Do not put name in the article for blind review.

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- Articles should begin with an abstract of 100–150 words.

- Article submissions should be between 2,000 and 6,000 words in length.
- Use primary and secondary headings.

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- Use Gentium Font for all articles.
- Use the available SBL Fonts for foreign and biblical languages.
- Quotations from other languages (e.g. German, French, Latin, etc.) should also be translated along with the original text.

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- When quoting canonical and non-canonical texts, consult Patrick H. Alexander, et al., eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).
  - When references begin a sentence, fully spell the source. E.g., Matthew 7:6 says...
  - When references do not begin a sentence, abbreviate the source. E.g., As Matt 7:6 says... or (*Did.* 9:5)
  - All references in the footnotes must be abbreviated regardless if they begin a sentence.

### **Footnotes**

- Chicago Style (Turabian) is required throughout the article.
- Footnotes only; no endnotes.
- No *ibid.* Use Shortened forms on all repeating entries: Last Name, *Shortened Title*, page #.