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Introduction

In August of 2001 the movie “Bug Off” premiered with a pair of siblings, young Tyler and big sister Krista, always at each other's throats. Well, some may wish that their annoying sibling, co-worker, or boss would transform into a bug or something worse. In the movie, big sister, Krista, makes this her wish and it’s granted.

As the plot thickens, big sister Krista and her little brother Tyler can’t stand each other. Tyler is constantly working his sister’s last nerve and getting her in trouble with his manipulative antics.

One day, while their parents are away on an impromptu business trip, they are left with a strange old babysitter by the name of Mrs. Pickle Nickle. Mrs. Pickle Nickle is really an alien in disguise who can transform Krista’s little brother into a bug.

Soon enough, their hatred for each other empowers Krista to finally wish that her brother would turn into a bug. Mrs. Pickle Nickle accepts Krista’s wish, turning Tyler into an insect. Do you have brother or sister like this?

Page 1:

Similar to this movie, in our Bible reading for this morning, we find the siblings of Joseph, who wish to turn him into a bug. This youngest brother Joseph is different from the other brothers. He usually wears a luxurious coat and an ornate Rolex watch because his father, Jacob, makes this elaborately embroidered coat only for Joseph. Father loves Joseph more than any of his other sons. Probably, it is this father’s love keeps Joseph different and makes his other brothers jealous of him.

And all brothers gradually come to hate Joseph and they do not even speak to him. On a particularly cloudy day, their anger blows up and they say, “Father loves Joseph more than us! So, the stuck-up boy Joseph is constantly talking about his dream! Shut up! Shut up! We hate you!” From now on, they call Joseph by this

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1 Originally Submitted to Dr. John Rottman in Fall 2013 for 897 – Preaching Theory and Method: Old Testament Application.
nickname, “Poor dreamer!”

Despite his brothers’ hatred, Joseph goes on and on about his story, which derived from his dream, to all his brothers. He says loudly, “Brothers! Listen to this dream I had. We were all out in the field gathering bundles of wheat. All of a sudden my bundle stood straight up and your bundles circled around it and bowed down to mine.” Immediately his brothers ask Joseph, “So! You’re going to rule us? You’re going to boss us around?” Undoubtedly all the brothers grow to hate this boy all the more. Again, Joseph tells another dream to his brothers, “Listen, I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me!” Who can put up with this stuff? How are his brothers going to respond after they heard, again, about the stupid dream of their father’s boy?

Thus, this stuck-up boy, Joseph, talks directly about his brothers’ bad behaviors to his father. Soon, they really hate him even more and saying, “We hate you, Joseph! We want to remove you!”

Page 2:

For me it’s easier to picture why the brothers hate Joseph. In the summer of 1994, my nephew Josh was born. He suddenly burst out crying and came out of mommy’s water pool. Mommy pushed harder and opened miracle gate that new baby could have fun seeing new house.

Of course my uncle Jack was really excited because he now became the father of Josh when he was 48 years old. My goodness! His wife Louise was 45 years old. So, he and his wife really loved their youngest baby, Josh, more than their other sons. Jack gave him many expensive clothes, accessories, and toys, to which his older brothers did not receive.

But then the brothers became jealous of Josh and said, “Let’s leave him out in the cold.” Also, they often spat at Josh, taunted him, and sometimes beat him badly. One night, they even conspired to break Josh’s arm and send him to the hospital. Finally, Josh suffers a broken arm, which requires surgery.

What is worse, Jack still doesn’t think that his sons are devoted to their youngest, and keeps telling them, “Oh, Boys! You should help him more. Josh is the youngest son.”

As the father keeps warning, the brothers really come to hate
Josh and feel severely uncomfortable with their father’s one way love toward his youngest son, Josh. Jealousy slowly springs up inside them.

Page 3:
In our Bible reading, not like Joseph’s brothers, Joseph’s father keeps Joseph’s dream in his mind, though he rebukes Joseph and says, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?” He knows God gives his Will for his family through Joseph’s dream.

Although his brothers feel deeply wounded for a long time, God exhorts them to accept their future through the showing of the dream. God is ready to draw them from their hatred to God’s unlimited forgiveness. God never wants to give up on Joseph’s brothers and their jealousy of their younger brother. God never quits admonishing them to return to the right, though the brothers tremble and say to each other, “what did we do to Joseph? Did you and I really hate Joseph? He is our brother, our flesh, and our own blood! Surely, God will punish us for our disgust!”

God breaks his silence and shows his plan for their future through the dream. God asks, “My sons, did you complain that Joseph is going to rule you? And are you angry that this poor dreamer is going to boss you around? I’m going to give you my answer. My answer is Yes. Because I want to give you a new future.”

Now, God promises, “Listen, my sons, I’m now preparing Joseph, and he will be able to help you in the future because I want to give you a new world. I promise you, Joseph will help you in everything as I’ve helped you. And he’ll provide you all that you really need as I’ve provided.”

In their anxiety, God listens to their hearts and says, “My boys. Don’t be afraid! I need you to follow my Will as I showed you the dream through your younger brother. Joseph will lead you to the new future I’ve prepared.”

God makes a promise and says again, “Look on the bright side! I forgive you. I won’t punish you! Be free from your anxiety… This is my work for you. Don’t forget it! I always love you.” Finally God embraces the brothers and promises to release them
from their sin. God even gives them his unlimited forgiveness.

**Page 4:**

Several days ago, I got a new message from my nephew Josh. The news is that he passed a test, entering a college where students are not easily accepted. His major is Social Physical Education. His father, mother, and brothers were so proud of Josh that they spent a lot of money to throw a party for him.

Josh is now teaching swimming for kids as a part time job. He makes some money and helps people who have no parents, brothers, and sisters. Especially, he likes to help orphans who are victims of child abuse and have lost their parents. This is because he had a similar experience when he was young.

He is now taller and stronger than his other brothers, though he had surgery for his broken right arm when he was little boy. Through our phone call, he confesses, “I had suffered through the bad memory of his older brothers, but now I can say I really forgive my brothers.” Because of the bad memory of his brothers, God opens his heart to see deeply other people who suffer and need his help.

Now, he says, “It’s great! Can you see me? I’m helping other people with my own two hands! This means, now, I’m submitting to one another as God has commanded! You know? I’m a servant of God! It’s been a pleasure!”

God knows everything that we have done. God continues to give his unlimited grace and forgiveness to us. In other words, God always treats us justly, even though we frequently forget the forgiveness of God in our lives.

This week, why don’t we hug our brothers and sisters? Also, why don’t we embrace a friend who is suffering? God stands you up to face the hatred and the conflict, which has given us trouble in our relationships. And then God will give his unlimited forgiveness to us.
1 Thessalonians 4.13-18

Betsy DeVries

Translation

Now we do not want you to be uniformed, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, in order that you do not continue grieving just as the rest (of mankind) who do not have hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, so also God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive who are left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede the ones who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down

1 Originally Submitted to Dr. Jeffery Weima in Spring 2013 for 831B – I & II Thessalonians.

2 Some Western and Byzantine witnesses (D F G K L Ψ 88 104 257 623 915 1245 1518 2005 Hippolytus Cyril-Jerusalem) write this participle in the perfect tense, κεκοιμημένων, while Alexandrian witnesses (א A B 33 326) have it in the present tense, κοιμωμένων. The present tense variant is preferred because it is found in the earlier manuscripts and it is more likely that κοιμωμένων was altered to κεκοιμημένων because that form of the verb is more common in the New Testament (Mt. 27:52; 1 Corinthians 15:20). Hence, κοιμωμένων is the shorter and more difficult reading (Metzger, B.M.; A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the UBS Greek New Testament; United Bible Society: 564-65). The difference is subtle, but perhaps a present participle makes their death in the past less final/complete.

3 The verb λυπησθε is a present participle, which suggests some kind of continuing action, hence “continue grieving” instead of the simple “grieve” (found in ESV, NIV, NRSV).

4 This is a first class condition, as evidenced by ει + an indicative verb in the protosis, which means that the writer is assuming the truth of the protosis.

5 The question of objective or subjective genitive may come into play here. If it is an objective genitive then the word is about the Lord (i.e. confessional material), but if it is subjective then it may actually be Jesus’ own teaching. Either way, it is clear that “the word” is weighty. Most translations opt for the subjective genitive and communicate that by adding the definite article, “the word of the Lord” (NIV, ESV, NRSV, NET, NASB).

6 Emphatic future negation
from heaven with a shouted command, with the voice of an archangel and with a trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, together with them will be caught up in the clouds for the meeting of the Lord in the air; and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Literary Analysis

1. Boundaries of the Passage

The beginning of this passage made clear by a number of epistolary conventions. There is a “peri; de;” that is somewhat hidden, but present nonetheless. The passage also begins with a disclosure formula as evidenced by the presence of the verb ἀγνοεῖν, which is the absence of knowledge. Finally, Paul also uses the vocative ἀδελφοί, which is a common transitional marker (Weima, J. A. D., “Letters, Greco-Roman,” Dictionary of New Testament Background; InterVarsity: 640-644). Together these three transitional markers make up a phrase that Paul uses to introduce a new topic in Rom. 11:25, 1 Cor. 10:1, and 1 Cor. 12:1 (Wanamaker, Thessalonians, 166). There is also a clear shift in subject matter between the previous section (4:9-12), which addresses brotherly love, and this section which addresses the participation of deceased believers in the second coming (Weima, J. A. D., Comfort Concerning Deceased Believers at Christ’s Return from forthcoming commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians: 3).

The end of the passage is only slightly less clear as the shift in subject matter is subtler. So while 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 both deal with end time matters, 5:1-11 differs slightly in that it deals with the fate of living believers at the second coming rather than those who have fallen asleep (Wanamaker, Thessalonians, 178; Weima, Comfort, 4). The difference in the opening statements in 4:13 and 5:1 also suggests that 4:13-18 constitutes new material for the Thessalonians while 5:1-11 is a return to something Paul has taught

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7 This “πρῶτον-ἐπείγον” construction suggests a temporal chronology of events which would have been comforting to the Thessalonians who were concerned that those who had fallen asleep would somehow miss out on the second coming (Wanamaker, C. A., The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text; NIGTC; Eerdman’s: 174).
them about before (Hendriksen, W., Kistemaker, S. J., *Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*; Baker Academic: 109; Fee, G. D., *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*; Eerdmans: 164). Furthermore, 5:1 opens with peri; de; formula and vocative ἀδελφοί, which as noted above are common transitional markers. A further piece of evidence that they are parallel yet distinct sections is their common closing exhortation to “comfort one another” (4:18, 5:11).

2. Structure of the Passage
Paul begins this passage with a purpose statement: he is writing so that they will not grieve like unbelievers. He then gives two reasons why they ought not to grieve like unbelievers. These two reasons are both introduced with a “gar” in its expected post-positive position. The first reason is given in verse 14. Verse 14a contains the protosis of a first class conditional clause, which means that it is assumed to be true. So Paul assumes that they all believe Jesus died and rose. Therefore (apodosis) they ought not to grieve because God will also raise those who have fallen asleep. The second reason that Paul gives is in verse 15 and it is introduced as a weighty word of the Lord. 15b begins with a o{ti clause that explains what the “word of the Lord” contains (epexegetical), namely, that the living believers would “certainly not proceed those who have fallen asleep”. Verses 16 and 17 then go on to explain why this is true starting with a causal o{ti clause. There is a temporal sequence of events laid out in verse 16 and 17 as suggested by “πρῶτον, ἔπειτα”. Finally, verse 18 concludes this passage with ὁσπερίσκας and a command to comfort one another. This forms a thematic inclusio with verse 13 as it gives a solution to the problem of grieving (Weima, *Comfort*, 5). Therefore, the structure of this passage lends itself somewhat easily to a four-page sermon as verse 13 sets up the “trouble in the text” while verses 14 and 15 give a two-pronged “grace in the text”. Verse 18 can still be a closing exhortation to comfort one another by rehearsing these words of hope in the midst of grief.

Sermon
By this time of year Easter may seem like a distant memory. The trees have blossomed since then, the daffodils have come and gone,
and if you’re in college then finals exams have as well. But for Christians, Easter is often considered the high point of the church year. And it’s personally one of my favorite times of the year. So maybe if you’re like me you go to church anticipating a worship celebration unlike any other Sunday during the year. This is a day for brass instruments and big choirs. And it’s often a day of feasting...at least in my family. And I’m not just talking about a delicious dinner, I’m also talking about indulging in copious amounts of candy. If ever there is a day during the year when everything seems right and good, it is the day of the resurrection, Easter.

But then I wake up on Monday morning...and maybe I’d had too much candy the day before...but at least this year I got this sinking feeling like “…well, it’s back to reality”. And I wonder if there is a part of me that does not see how the resurrection actually matters for my daily life. Especially in the face of relentless tragedy. This year I woke up Monday morning to news that someone I went to high school with, a father and a husband, had died on Saturday night. So much for that Easter Sunday feeling that everything seems right and good. And I have to wonder, is this Christian story of resurrection so completely out of touch with reality that we can boast in a risen savior while so many people grieve over death and suffering? Well, I think this passage suggests that in fact the resurrection has a lot to say about how we grieve, not if we grieve...but how we grieve.

In the passage that we read this morning, Paul is writing to a congregation that is grieving. Paul didn’t just sit down to write or dictate a letter and think of this random topic “…I’ve just written about sexual immorality, brotherly love…hmm, what else is there? Oh, you know I should really mention the end times!” No, Paul is writing to a particular audience with specific concerns that have been brought to his attention...probably by Timothy who had just been back to see the Thessalonians for a second time. We can tell this grieving was a legitimate problem from verse 13. He says that he is writing on this topic so that they won’t be uninformed...so that they will not grieve. This verb “to grieve” is especially vivid as it suggests some kind of ongoing action. You might think of it as Paul saying “so that you will not continue to grieve.” This grieving is a real issue in the church at Thessalonica.
But he doesn’t stop there. Paul does not tell these Christians that he’s writing to them about this topic so that they would stop grieving period. He says, in order that you might not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. And Paul is not simply using hyperbole, or making a theological statement, he is making a cultural observation. The Thessalonians lived in a society where people often grieved with no hope. There is a letter dated back to the early 2nd century written by a woman, Irene to a couple whose son had just died. After stating that she and her family have fulfilled the customary duties in this situation, Irene attempts to comfort the grieving couple by stating: “But nevertheless, one is able to do nothing against such things [i.e. death]. Therefore, comfort yourselves” In other words, comfort yourselves because there’s really no hope. Imagine sitting down to read a letter of consolation after the death of a child. The loss is still vivid in your mind, and someone writes, “Well, perk up! Everybody has to die sometime, there’s nothing we can do about it.” I have a hard time believing that this lack of hope was very comforting.

Consider this too, there was a popular grave inscription found throughout the ancient Mediterranean world in both Greek and Latin that read “I was not, and I was, I am not, I care not.” This was such a common grave inscription that it was often just abbreviated. So Paul is writing this portion of the letter so that the Thessalonians don’t buy into this cultural way of grieving which is void of hope. It was a kind of resignation that things are bad, death is bad, but there’s nothing to be done about it...there was no hope in this grieving.

Another interesting thing worth noting about the Thessalonians is what exactly they were grieving over. Verse 13 implies that they are grieving over those who have fallen asleep, those who have died. But I think it’s even more specific than that. Because as we read on we see that somehow this grief is tied to Jesus’ second coming. Specifically in verse 15 there are some clues as to what they’re grieving over. Here Paul is bringing in the heavy hitters. First of all, he says that this is the Lord’s word...not just his word. He’s not just making stuff up so they feel better. And Paul also uses really strong language in this verse. He says, “those who are still alive...will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.” This is the most emphatic way in the Greek language to
negate something. Perhaps he is using such strong language because the Thessalonians believed that those who are alive \textit{would} precede those who have fallen asleep. Then in the following verses Paul is making a point about the order of events. For when the Lord comes down from heaven (which, by the way seems as though it will be a loud, public, event) those who are dead will rise \textit{first}. Then it literally reads, \textit{“Then we, the living ones who remain, together with them, will be caught up...”} The little phrase “together with them” is emphasized. So taking all those things together, a possible reconstruction of the problem is Thessalonica is that these new Christians were mourning over their deceased brothers and sisters because they thought that they would be at some disadvantage when Jesus comes back. As far as they were concerned his return was immanent, and they felt bad that those Christians who have died would somehow miss out on it. So, I think contrary to popular interpretation Paul here is acting as a pastor, not a predictor! And this is made explicit in verse 18 with the command, “therefore comfort one another with these words!” So we’ve seen from the text that the problem has to do with grief, more specifically it has to do with not grieving as those who have no hope, even more specifically it has to do with grieving over the possibility that those Christians who have died will somehow be at a disadvantage with Christ returns.

So if that’s the case then is this passage irrelevant for us? I guess I would be surprised if anyone here grieves the death of loved ones out of concern that they won’t be able to participate in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} coming. So maybe we don’t grieve for the same reason, but there are certainly still groups of people who grieve with no hope. My husband was recently listening to an interview with Bart Ehrman, a popular agnostic who has written a book about how the Bible does not give an adequate account of suffering. He claims the reasons it gives are contradictory and could not possibly be true if God is all powerful and all good. Instead he chooses to believe that there is no rhyme or reason for suffering whatsoever. He grieves with no hope. Or maybe you’re familiar with the popular phrase “YOLO”. It means “you only live once”, and it’s used (usually by young people) as a kind of prideful rallying cry to do whatever you want while you still can -- whether that means jumping off a cliff, or indulging in a whole box of Krispy Kreme donuts -- because
you only live once. It seems to me that this is a phrase that almost glorifies, or at least prides itself on a lack of hope. It says “You better get in all the good stuff now, because when you die there’s not hope!”

My suspicion, however, is that much of Christianity does not even get that far. We don’t even allow ourselves to grieve in the first place! In fact a scholar on Thessalonians, Abraham Malherbe, states: “Paul’s attitude toward this grief is equally straightforward: it is prohibited ... Paul is thus making an absolute prohibition (against grief)”. In fact, we see the rest of Paul’s argument here as the reason why we ought not to grieve. Instead of grieving death, we ought to rejoice in the triumph of Christ over death. We see grieving as a sign of weak faith. But I’m thinking about the family of my high school classmate who just lost their son, father, and husband. Is Paul really prohibiting them from grieving? Or I think about my brother in-law who lost his uncle a few years ago. My sister told me that in a church service soon after he died they sang the hymn “It is well”. And she recalls being furious because it was not well with her soul. She, along with her husband and his family, were mourning that there is something about death and loss that is not well. When we love someone deeply, it seems as though the only appropriate response is to mourn. So let me just say it again, Paul here is not concerned that all Christians stop grieving, period. He is concerned that we don’t grieve as those people who have no hope.

But that, of course, implies that we do have hope. And Paul’s reason for hope takes us right back to Easter: this seemingly ridiculous season when Christians bask in the radiance of the resurrection, even as we continue to live in a world full of death and destruction. Paul’s argument in verse 14 is like a “first fruits” argument. Just like the first fruits of the season are a sign of more to come, so too is Jesus’ resurrection a sign of things to come. And when he comes again, Paul continues on, those who are dead will rise (i.e. be resurrected, just like Jesus was) and then those who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Now pause for just a minute. Because here we could talk about how this passage does or does not support a “Left Behind” view of the rapture. And while that’s an important conversation to have, it is probably best left for full treatment.
another time.

But I do want to note two things in particular about verse 17. The first is that when Paul says “we will be caught up”, he is likely using a play on words. The verb here, harpazo, means “snatched away”, and it was used by ancient writers to refer to people who had been snatched away from life to death. Maybe you’re familiar with the mythological creatures, “harpies”, who are referred to as the “hounds of Zeus”. They would be sent by Zeus to snatch away things and people from earth and bring them to Zeus. One writer, Plutarch, says in a letter of condolence that those who die early are “harpazo-ed, snatched away” from “the advantages of life, such as marriage, education, manhood, citizenship and public office.” So Paul’s play on words here is that “oh yes, we will be snatched up”...but we will be snatched away from life to more life, even better life, resurrected life. So this play on words is a reason for hope in a society where this word often had negative connotations, especially as it relates to death.

A second word or phrase worth noting is this word “to meet”. This is a technical term, it’s not just referring in general to any kind of meeting. This refers to a specific custom in Paul’s day of sending a delegation of leading citizens – a reception party – outside the city “to meet” a visiting dignitary and then escort that person on the final part of their journey...back to the city. Not just anyone got to be part of this delegation, it was the prominent citizens who went out to meet the visitor. And this practice was not just for any visitor, but for important dignitaries who could enter the town and would sometimes pronounce judgment on prisoners, sometimes liberating them sometimes sentencing them to execution. Notice then that Paul’s comfort to these Christians who are mourning is not that we’re going to get snatched up in the air and escape with Jesus to heaven while the earth burns. Rather we will meet Christ in the air and escort him back to the place where he was headed.

And so as we go from here, maybe some of us are still basking in the Easter season, and maybe some of us grieving with our world, but hear this again...so that when you grieve you don’t do so as those people who have no hope. Because this is our hope: since we believe that Jesus died and was resurrected, those who have died in him will also be resurrected. And when that has
happened, those Christians who are still alive will also be snatched up from life to resurrection life. And together we will all go to meet Christ and escort him back to the place where he was headed all along. And when that happens he will reign over his restored creation. So let us comfort each other with these words, as Paul also instructed those Thessalonian believers to do. When we experience loss, the death of a loved one, grief is okay. It is, in fact, a sign of great love. And let’s not be content to only look forward to the day when we may see them again in heaven. That is not the hope that Paul lays out for us in this passage. The true, full Christian hope is that when Christ comes again our actual bodies and the bodies of our loved ones will be wholly restored and made incorruptible. And we will escort Christ back to earth so that his reign can finally be made known to all parts of creation.

Let me finally close with this. I hope that this comfort does not become a thing that causes us to sit idly by while the world continues in death and destruction. Because this thing that is so comforting for us, Jesus 2nd coming, could be bad news for a big number of people. Those people who Christ will judge when he returns. Those people who, when they die, will not sleep in Christ…so to speak. So we are sent out with a high calling to share our hope with those people who have none… the goods news of the gospel, Christ’s defeat of death and his resurrection.

Thanks be to God for the comfort and the high call that this season of Easter, this season of resurrection, brings.
I. Introduction

At times, Dr. Van Til’s Presuppositional Apologetic has been misunderstood and he has been labeled a fideist by significant Christian Apologists like R. C. Sproul. In the book *Classical Apologetics*, Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsey are criticized by Dr. Greg Bahnsen and John Frame for having misrepresented Dr. Van Til. This essay will refute the claim that Dr. Van Til rejected rational evidences and will lay out the fact that Dr. Van Til’s Presuppositional Apologetic utilizes natural theology and theistic proofs; which make him neither fully a fideist nor an evidentialist as his opponents have argued. In Dr. Van Til’s writings, (1) he presupposes Christian-Theistic Revelation. Additionally, (2) Dr. Van Til rejects the classical Theistic Proofs. Instead, he advocates for his own argument; namely, his Transcendental Argument. (3) Lastly, Van Til utilizes rational evidences through historical apologetics and rational argumentation.

In the first place, we address the notion of Dr. Van Til’s Christian-Theistic Revelation as a foundational presupposition to his epistemology. Dr. Van Til saw non-Christians and, from the “get-go,” acknowledges the failure of their unbelief. The amount of revelation that they have is insufficient for making claims about the existence and being of God. The matter of addressing God’s existence is less about argument and more about world and life view. For Christians (and for Van Til personally), worldview begins with God. He is personal, self-sufficient, sovereign, triune, and the creator of humanity, all things, out of nothing. Moreover, God is the revealer of Himself to humanity. Since this is the case, non-Christians are dependent on God for their intellectual

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1 Originally Submitted to Dr. Susan Carole in Fall 2013 for 801BT.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
inquiries. Reasoning from God to men and women is how Dr. Van Til perceives, rather than the non-Christian (or Classical Apologist for that matter) who reasons from man-to-God. We note Dr. Van Til’s presupposition, Christian-Theism, because it is necessary knowledge for readers before we examine the mischaracterizations about Dr. Van Til.

II. Common Misunderstandings about Van Til

A. The Ligonier Apologetic’s Mischaracterization of Van Til’s Presuppositionalism

One recent mischaracterization of Presuppositionalism is written in the book entitled, Classical Apologetics. In this book, Christian apologists R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur W. Lindsey make some significant mischaracterizations of the highly esteemed Presuppositional Apologetics that originated from the teachings of Dr. Van Til. After the publication of Classical Apologetics, two former students of Dr. Van Til came to defend his epistemology. The reformed scholars Greg Bahnsen and John Frame responded vehemently against the straw man arguments and mischaracterizations. The first to respond was Dr. Bahnsen.

In the Presbyterian Journal, Dr. Gregory Bahnsen addresses the book Classical Apologetics.6 His review is entitled “A Critique of Classical Apologetics,” and it refutes the misrepresentations of Dr. Van Til’s apologetic method. Dr. Bahnsen was “outraged” by the book’s release, in part, because of the poor scholarship in the effort, but also because of the blatant misrepresentations of Dr. Van Til. Dr. Bahnsen says their scholarship is neither “helpful” nor “relevant” toward the apologists’ thesis promoting classical apologetics because they are based on false claims.7

The authorship of Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsey are not

6 Dr. Gregory Bahnsen was a student of Dr. Van Til and was one of the first to speak out against the Ligonier Apologetic, particularly against the book Classical Apologetics. Dr. Bahnsen’s opinions are well respected among the community of Reformed Apologists because he is possibly the best candidate for representing Dr. Van Til’s presuppositional apologetic as accurately as Dr. Van Til would himself.

distinguished, so Dr. Bahnsen addresses them as a whole. Although these authors acknowledge that Van Til is not a self-proclaimed fideist, they argue that functionally he is fideistic in his epistemology. Additionally, it is worth noting that this fideism they presume is common among evangelicals and is expressed by Dr. Van Til through his rejection of the theistic proofs and Christian evidences. For Dr. Bahnsen, this claim is erroneous since he once defended Dr. Van Til’s use of theistic proof, evidences, and rational argumentation against R. C. Sproul.

In the book Christian-Theistic Evidences, Dr. Van Til himself explicitly criticized fideism because it asked people to believe in their hearts the very thing they allow to be “intellectually indefensible.” Further, Dr. Van Til teaches that “objective evidence(s) are “in abundance.” If Theistic Proofs are constructed properly, they are considered to be objectively valid, regardless of how the debater receives them. As a last piece of evidence, Dr. Bahnsen cites Dr. Van Til’s refutation of the Kuyperian view of the uselessness of reasoning with natural man. Dr. Van Til said that he does not reject theistic proofs and that historical apologetics are “absolutely necessary” and “indispensable;” “Christianity is the only reasonable position to hold.”

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B. Van Til the Misperceived Fideist

In defending Dr. Van Til against the claims that he is a fideist, whether his opponents think he is a self-attesting fideist or an implicit fideist by the presuppositions of his position, our concerns will focus more on what Dr. Van Til says in his defense. In order to do that adequately, it is beneficial to examine two primary elements of Van Tillian Epistemology. In the first part, we will exam Dr. Van Til’s Christian-Theistic Revelation to establish the source from which Christians and non-Christians reason.

1. Van Til’s Christian-Theistic Revelation

One central point of Dr. Van Til’s epistemology is the matter of Christian-Theistic Revelation. In the first place, we note that the theism is a particular theism, namely “Christian” Theism. There is a relationship between God and Christ which is necessary for Christians and different from Theists and non-Theists. Dr. Van Til says that the non-Christian always speaks univocally. By this of course he means that non-Christians reason from themselves, from a position of “Natural Man.” The inadequate reasoning of the Natural Man cannot be overcome until God does a work of regeneration. There are not simply small modifications that can be made to the reasoning of the Natural Man in their reasoning. It has to be an entire overhaul for them to move from univocal reasoning to analogical reasoning. The idea here that Dr. Van Til is advocating is a biblical one. Paul writes, “Be transformed by the


The term “Natural Man” is a Pauline term which Dr. Van Til uses frequently to show the debasement of the mind of non-Christians. No reasoning can be done from an unregenerated state since analogical knowledge comes after regeneration and true knowledge only comes from analogical reasoning.
renewing of your mind.”15 There is an entire overhaul of the person that involves more than the morality of the individual. It involves a reformation of their intellect and epistemologies.16

Dr. Van Til’s understanding of Paul’s words from Romans 12:2 plays into his understanding of God’s revelation to humanity. Which brings us to our second point. The word “revelation” in the term “Christian-Theistic Revelation” presupposes that God is revealing something to us. The revelation received from God by believers is from both general and special revelation. This is seen in every aspect of the Christian’s life, notwithstanding Christian epistemology and reason. The non-Christian always speaks univocally, says Van Til, and the Christian always speaks analogically.17

2. Van Til’s Rejection of Rational Evidences

When examining Dr. Van Til’s writings on rational evidences, nowhere does it say that he explicitly rejects rational evidences, as far as this author is aware. It is more inferred from his writings that the use of rational evidences or modifications in reasoning are not the aid of the non-Christian. That is not to say that a certain knowledge must be taught to non-Christians or that God uses unique or extraordinary means to bring a person to salvation, such as the Theistic Proofs. This question is not particularly addressed in Dr. Van Til’s survey of epistemology. The point he makes is that there are not simply small modifications that can be made to the reasoning of the Natural Man in their reasoning. It has to be an entire overhaul for them to move from univocal reasoning to analogical reasoning.18 Acts 17:16-34 is a helpful example that Dr.

Rom. 12:2.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 203.
Van Til sites in expounding his epistemology, which he equates as the biblical definition for Christians in their epistemology. We move on to our second Reformed and pupil of Dr. Van Til, John Frame.

III. Correctives for Van Til’s Apologetic
   A. John Frame’s Analysis of the Ligonier Apologetic

   In John Frame’s article, Van Til and the Ligonier Apologetic, Frame asserts, like Dr. Bahnsen, that Dr. Van Til’s presuppositionalism has been misunderstood by the Ligonier Apologists. These apologists perceive presuppositionalism in its various forms as a majority report among Reformed Theologians. This is only a partial truth since it has been the classical apologetic method that has maintained the apologetic majority throughout church history. Frame responds by addressing their basic presupposition by saying that the truth value of Van Tillian Presuppositionalism is not contingent on its age. Protestantism as a whole is younger in comparison to the majority of the branches of Christendom, but the validity of its claims are not contingent on age, but rather, on its truth claims. One of these truth claims that is important among orthodox Christian apologists is the supremacy of Scripture over human reason. This is one topic that both classical apologists and Van Tillian apologetics find agreement. Unfortunately, the differences are in greater quantity than the similarities.

   Dr. Van Til’s Apologetic makes two basic assertions that are misunderstood by the Ligonier Apologists. First, human beings are obligated to presuppose God in all of their thinking. This presupposition led Van Til to criticize intellectual autonomy, which places human reason above the authority of Scripture. The book Classical Apologetics analyzes Van Til’s understanding of

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 280-281.
22 Ibid., 281.
23 Ibid., 282.
24 Ibid.
autonomy incorrectly. The authors conclude that Van Til “start(s) with” God, rather than human autonomy. Frame dislikes the apparent vagueness of the term “start with.” The phrase is slippery and could be used for a variety of reasons like a method of teaching, study, a highlight for importance and so forth. In reality, the most likely definition is a “criterion of truth.” The Ligonier Apologists explain that a person cannot simply logically start outside of himself or herself because that would mean “departing from” him or herself. The authors use this claim against Van Til’s consistency in his thought. In actuality, Van Til views the self as “proximate” but not “ultimate.” According to Frame, Van Til means the self makes decisions in thoughts and in practical life. In the human experience, we are regularly faced with decisions that rely on trusting our own judgments or the judgments of someone else. As a result, there are two key questions that are to be resolved. The first is a metaphysical question of whether all decisions are decisions of self. Secondly, there is the epistemological-ethical question that asks what the standard is for determining a conclusion to decisions.

In response to the first question, Van Til and the Ligonier Apologists are in agreement. However, the second question is open for debate. The Ligonier Apologists set autonomy as their standard rather than Scripture. Although, like Van Til, they maintain the Supreme Authority of Scripture, they say that one cannot think about God before we can know Him. If we think about God before knowing Him, then we at least “provisionally” adopt presuppositions of some other standard until one knows God and assumes Him as a presupposition. This contradicts Romans 1:20-21, and Van Til’s basic assumption, that everyone knows God innately in their hearts and suppresses the truth. It also posits a

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 283.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 284.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 285-286.
contradiction to 1 Cor. 10:31 which puts the potential of beginning the quest for knowledge with the glory of God, not the glory of something else.\textsuperscript{33}

Having addressed the basic presupposition of the supremacy of Scripture, we explore, secondly, how unbelievers resist the obligation to presuppose God in all of their thinking, and every aspect of thought and life. This second point opens up discussions regarding the noetic effects of sin for Van Til.\textsuperscript{34} The Ligonier Apologists begin their assessment of Van Til by asserting that he thinks that the noetic effects of sin mean that nothing can be known unless we know everything. Contrary to the apologists’ conclusion, Van Til finds a comprehensive system of knowledge in the God of Scripture. He does seem to convey comprehensive knowledge as something God possesses, yet he never attributes that knowledge as a necessary attribute to humanity for knowledge.\textsuperscript{35}

Moreover, the Ligonier Apologists find some agreement with Van Til in at least part of his view of what they name “Natural Theology.”\textsuperscript{36} The problem, they say, that the dilemma “pagans” have is “not that (they) do not know that God is, but that (they) do not like the God who is.”\textsuperscript{37} Though this statement is something that

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 287.
\textsuperscript{34} The “Noetic Effects of Sin” refers to the effect that sin has on “knowledge” after the fall.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 289.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 290. Greg Bahnsen’s comments from his book reviews had some helpful commentary to the definition of “Natural Theology.” Their understanding of natural theology (defined as the human activity of devising proofs for God’s existence) is dependent on divine revelation (p. 25). However, “divine revelation already presupposes the Existence of God. The Natural Theology presented by the authors depends on, at the outset, what is intended to be proved in its conclusion. Natural man using natural reasoning does not look at divine revelation at all. The authors try to demonstrate that Scripture advocates Natural Theology, but are unable to do so because their evidences pertain to Natural Revelation. Paul and the Psalmist say nothing about inferences and proofs devised by human reflection.
\textsuperscript{37} R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, \textit{Classical apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of
both classical apologists and Van Tillians would agree with, the
distinction between the two groups is significant. The classical
apologists hold argumentation as a means to knowing God,
whereas the Van Tillians say that the unbeliever already knows
God from creation and they suppress that revealed truth. Frame
asks, “Why, then, do people need complex arguments in order to
believe?” If the unbeliever can come to a knowledge of God from
argumentation naturally, why is it that classical apologists deny the
revelation that is naturally revealed to them in creation? The
answer is that they know God, but not with a saving knowledge.
Non-Christians resist the presupposition that a saving knowledge
of God is necessary for a true knowledge of God in every aspect of
thought and life. The result is rebellion in the moral sense and also
in the intellectual sense that involves a suppression of the truth of
God’s existence, which leads them to a complete denial of God’s
person altogether. In Dr. Van Til’s argumentation, his primary
argument is the Transcendental Argument. This particular
argument is a unique attempt to reform the classical Theistic Proofs
and strengthen them. Frame writes that Van Til did not reject
proofs, arguments, and evidences. In fact, the contrary is true since
Van Til endorses them in the strongest terms.

B. Van Til’s Use of Theistic Proofs: The Transcendental
Argument

In Reformed Theology, Christian Theism and the Transcendental
Argument go hand-in-hand. This is largely because Dr.
Van Til once wrote that every system of thought has its own
method. In defining his Christian theistic method, he said that his
method was one that was based on Scripture. The specific method
that he derived from Scripture was the Transcendental Argument.
Although Van Til did use other proofs for the existence of God, it

Presuppositional Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing
House, 1984), 49.

38 Ibid., 290.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 287.
41 Don Collett, "Van Til and Transcendental Argument."
is worth focusing on this method for a time because he said that this particular method is the “only argument for an absolute God that holds water.”

For Van Til, his Transcendental Argument was methodologically distinct from other argument forms.

This form of argumentation differs from typical argument forms, namely inductive and deductive reasoning. Within these argumentation forms, there are certain axioms that are more absolute than God. For example, inductive reasoning begins with any fact and seeks with a straight line to move from a cause to an effect and could conclude that the universe must have had a cause. Deductive argumentation would assert that every cause must have an effect in all its conclusions. These arguments used to defend Christianity are not truly Christian, Van Til says. The forms of the classical Theistic Proofs arguments do not presuppose God and therefore reason as one on the outside looking in, so to speak. Since these same arguments could apply to any god and not necessarily the one true and triune God, they do not measure up to his definition for biblical apologetics that is seen from the Apostle Paul and the rest of the council of God revealed in Scripture. God’s existence is derived rather than stated as a primitive attribute at the starting point of an argument.

However, the Christian and the non-Christian both derive

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42 Ibid., 289.
43 Ibid., 289-291. Typical arguments are typically inductive or deductive forms of reasoning. More recently, contemporary interpreters of Van Til have argued the Transcendental Argument is not methodologically incompatible with other argumentation forms, though Van Til himself disagreed with this. One proponent of the permissibility of differing methodological forms is John Frame. Frame has influenced recent scholars, including classical apologists like Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsey, to think more openly about combining the Van Tillian argument with other forms of argumentation.
44 Ibid., 289.
48 Collett, Don, Van Til and transcendental argument, 291.
knowledge from God. The non-Christian, ignorant and unbelieving of this truth, deceives himself or herself into thinking otherwise. By not naming this presupposition, apologetics are less effective for Van Til. He not only equates boldness in naming one’s presuppositions, but requires it for all participants in apologetics. When speaking about Christians engaged in apologetics, he writes, “Our reasoning … must always and everywhere be truly analogical.” In order to do so, he does not follow inductive and deductive lines of reasoning but moves on to his own form of argumentation, which is the Transcendental Argument. The Transcendental Argument is unique because it starts with God’s existence as a necessary precondition for argument. Van Til saw that his argument was dependent on God, and not God on the argument or human autonomy, as was common among other inductive and deductive forms of argumentation.49

Secondly, Van Til’s argument alone does justice for arguing the existence of the one true God. Whereas other theistic proofs for the existence of God argue for the broad existence of “a” god, Van Til’s Transcendental Argument maintains the necessary character of God’s existence, meaning that it does not allow for God’s existence to be falsifiable.50 As a result, Van Til used his argument as his primary Theistic Proofs in place of the classical Theistic Proofs. The only time he used the classical proofs were to disprove them by pointing out the folly of the proofs. He did so by showing that the non-Christians argument was falsifiable reduction ad absurdum.

VI. Conclusion

In my analysis of Dr. Van Til’s apologetic method, it appears that he was trying to reform the Theistic Proofs, and not reject them, rational evidences, or arguments. Although Dr. Van Til is supposed by many to be a fideist and a rejecter of Theistic proofs, this is no truer than it is to quickly categorize a politician as one who hates politics, when in reality the politician simply has an untraditional method of politics as a politician. In the same way,

50 Collett, Don, Van Til and transcendental argument, 291.
Dr. Van Til is a presupposition apologist who starts with God and His revelation at the forefront of his presupposition. Since God is the creator, He sets the rules whereby humanity comes to know Him. Van Til’s view on infallibility is a necessary Christian presupposition that is validated by the incarnation and self-attesting claims of Scripture. The Bible is a point of contact between God and humanity.\(^\text{51}\) God is knowable and the means of knowledge for believers is from God’s Word, the Bible.

This Christian-Theistic presupposition coincides with Dr. Van Til’s complaints about the theistic proofs. The proofs start with deistic presuppositions and speak as an outsider of the Christian faith. As we have said in this essay, the proofs only prove “a god” and not “the God,” which leave these argument as Theistic arguments that could point to any particular “god.” Dr. Van Til saw that it was essential for Christianity and its exclusive claims to be presupposed in the exercise of its proofs, arguments, and evidences. The result was his Transcendental Argument. Here is an example of a Transcendental Argument:

Premise 1: If there is no Yahweh, Knowledge is not possible.
Premise 2: Knowledge is possible.
Conclusion: Therefore, God exists.

(It must be noted that this particular argument illustrated is one example that expresses a presupposition of God and moves to the necessity of God based on that presupposition.) The Transcendental argument was unlike any of the Theistic Proofs because it presupposed God. The Theistic Proofs began by presupposing derived knowledge from God as their starting point and that made them weak arguments because the very systems of logic that they depended on were univocal systems that concluded in autonomous conclusions of the arguer. Van Til transcends univocal systems entirely and depends on an analogical system that comes from a living relationship with God. The outcome that he saw as a required presupposition; namely Christian-Theistic

Revelation.\textsuperscript{52} This particular revelation places Scripture, and the truths found within Scripture, as an authoritative focal point and non-negotiable tenant for the Christian faith.

Secondly, Van Til rejects the Theistic Proofs and only uses them to disprove themselves. The reduction ad absurdum examination that Van Til applies to the Theistic Proofs can be applied to all arguments that start on false premises that presuppose non-Christian Theism and are, therefore, falsifiable.

Thirdly, this author holds along with Frame that, in addition to not rejecting the Theistic Proofs, Dr. Van Til himself stated that he finds Historical Apologetics\textsuperscript{53} to be necessary and dispensable because Christianity is a reasonable position to hold.\textsuperscript{54} As such, he reveals two things: first, presupposes the validity of rational evidences. Secondly, he advocates for arguments that presuppose the Christian God revealed by the Bible. It makes sense that all arguments, even weak ones, would point to God. What he disagrees with is that these arguments be the prima facie above stronger arguments, namely the Transcendental Argument and other Christian-Theistic based arguments. From there, he maintains Christian-Theistic proofs, primarily expressed in his transcendental argument, and rejects classical theistic proofs that are not particular to Christian Theism. What the other means of univocal and autonomous reasoning cannot achieve for non-Christians and Christians is resolved most clearly by Van Til’s embrace of the Transcendental Argument. Unfortunately, Van Til’s Transcendental Argument and basic epistemology is not easily understood.

A. Van Til as a Straw Man.

Two ideas may be helpful for future readers of Dr. Van Til. He does admittedly write with weighty terms and a vast knowledge of

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{52} When Van Til presupposed Christian-Theistic Revelation, he also implied all the truths that comes along with Scripture, including the existence of God and Lordship of Jesus Christ.
\item\textsuperscript{53} Historical apologetics is also referred to as Historical arguments in this essay and in Van Tillian Scholarship.
\item\textsuperscript{54} Cornelius Van Til, \textit{Defense of the faith}. P & R Publishing; 4 edition (July 14, 2008), 256.
\end{footnotes}
philosophy and theology are often required before one can even engage the discussion. Perhaps the complexity of Dr. Van Til’s writing is one of the reasons why so many authors set him up as a straw man. When examining any other, careful consideration of their arguments is required, lest they be misunderstood, falsely represented, and argued on false terms. This was one of Dr. Bahnsen’s critiques of the Ligonier apologists, as he said of them “Anyone can knock down a straw man” in reference to their writings on Dr. Van Til. If we attack Van Til’s arguments, let us let Van Til speak for himself before doing so.

B. Van Til is understood best as a Reformer

Secondly, Dr. Van Til is best understood as a reformer of apologetics. It is a rather bold move, I think, to argue against the validity of Theistic Proofs that many churchmen have maintained throughout history; Thomas Aquinas being one of them in his use of the proofs. The Theistic Proofs have functioned as a mutual ground between believers and unbelievers in discussions about the possibility of “a god.” Dr. Van Til appears as though he intends to valid God as God revealed Himself to humanity. By doing so, he takes a bold position that isolates him from a unity with other realms of apologetics, notwithstanding, classical apologetics and perhaps one of the reasons why the Ligonier Controversy and the need for an essay such as this arose in the first place.

I hope that this essay informs and corrects readers of Dr. Van Til to pursue his material cautiously and with a spirit of learning in order to understand the depths of what he says. His is truly an epistemology based on what God has revealed, rather than a mere logical position or reasonable argumentation that could be applied to any god, as the classical theistic proofs have done. Perhaps future readers will better understand the apologist.

Visions of Grace: Sacramental Metaphors in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* and John Calvin’s *Institutes of The Christian Religion*

Doren G. Snoek

In *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.14.1-26, Calvin employs a number of metaphors to make clear the nature and efficacy of the sacraments. He uses the metaphors in three ways: first, to assert that the sacraments are like or function like a particular thing, second, to communicate the nature and cause of dysfunction in the sacraments, and finally, to argue against improper understanding of the sacraments.

The first metaphor Calvin uses imagines the sacraments as an official seal. These seals have no weight of their own, but they become significant by confirming what is promised. Calvin immediately provides another depiction of the sacraments, “they represent [promises] for us as painted in a picture from life.” The sacraments are thus a visual of God's promises. Calvin also imagines the sacraments as “pillars of our faith.” Scripture is faith's foundation; the sacraments stabilize faith. Sacraments are also like “mirrors, in which we may contemplate the riches of God's grace.”

The next depiction is a composite image. The sacraments without the operation of the Holy Spirit are like “the splendor of the sun shining upon blind eyes, or a voice sounding in deaf ears.” Then, Calvin uses the same image positively. The sacraments are like the natural faculties of sight and hearing, he says, with one important

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1 Originally Submitted to Dr. So and So in Spring 2013 for Class Number: Name.
3 *Inst.*, IV.14.5. Calvin reuses this metaphor in IV.14.20. “Still the ancient sacraments had the same end in view as our own – viz. to direct and almost lead us by the hand to Christ, or rather, were like images to represent [Christ] and hold him forth to our knowledge.”
5 Ibid.
difference, namely that the faculty by which believers apprehend the sacraments is not naturally present, but is rather a faculty dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Just as hearing and seeing help us confirm our beliefs about the world, so the faculty by which we apprehend and benefit from the sacraments confirms our faith.\(^7\)

In the next section, Calvin has developed the image of the sacraments as light received by our faculty of vision, and there employs it with a slightly different purpose in this simile: God illuminates our minds by the sacraments as light illumines the eyes. The sacraments coax a person to willful obedience by softening her mind.\(^8\) Calvin recycles the image of the sacraments as light a third time in the next section, combining it with two others: food and warmth. Sun, food, and fire (for warmth) are simply the means by which God sustains our lives, and as these are to the body, the sacraments are to the life of the soul.\(^9\)

The next image is used to emphasize the importance of faith in the proper function of the sacraments. “As with wine or oil or some other liquid, no matter how much you pour out, it will flow away and disappear unless the mouth of the vessel to receive it is open.”\(^10\) Then, keeping with the metaphor of liquid, Calvin writes that the sacraments are not efficacious in themselves like “wine is given in a cup,” but require the operation of the Holy Spirit.\(^11\) The sacraments are, rather, “as messengers of glad tidings or guarantees of the ratification of covenants are from men.”\(^12\)

Calvin's discussion accounts for sacraments early in the biblical narrative, namely, the tree of life for Adam and Eve, and the rainbow for Noah. These natural sacraments, Calvin says, were like silver: “once stamped with an official mark, it becomes a coin and receives a new valuation.”\(^13\) At other times, God's supernatural activity is evident in sacraments. The final metaphor Calvin uses

\(^{7}\) Ibid. Calvin employs this metaphor again in IV.14.10 and IV.14.12, near the end of each section.

\(^{8}\) *Inst.*, IV.14.11.

\(^{9}\) *Inst.*, IV.14.12.

\(^{10}\) *Inst.*, IV.14.17.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) *Inst.*, IV.14.19.
also concerns pre-Christian sacraments. Jewish ceremonies were
sacraments, he says, but these ceremonies were to Christ's coming
as a shadow to sunlight, and are hence obsolete.\textsuperscript{14}

Calvin rejects two metaphors in \textit{Institutes} IV.14.13. Some, he
says, build an argument solely on the word “sacrament” (Greek
\textit{μυστήριον}, Latin \textit{sacramentum}). These people, Calvin writes, say
a sacrament is like a military oath of fidelity and service, or that it
is like a particular garment, color, or trinket that distinguishes one
rank or class of people from another. The difficulty with this
metaphor, says Calvin, is that it is not within the range of meaning
of the word \textit{sacramentum}.

\textbf{II. Metaphors for the Sacraments in \textit{Summa Theologiae}}

Aquinas uses fewer, less extensive metaphors than Calvin in his
discussion of the sacraments. He uses brief analogies and does not
make as many explicit comparisons as Calvin. For the sake of
brevity, this survey will focus on metaphors concerning the
sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular.

One metaphor seems most influential for Aquinas. As a man's
physical life is constituted in birth and growth, and sustained by
food, so a man's spiritual life also needs birth, growth, and
sustenance; the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and
Eucharist are spiritual birth, spiritual growth, and spiritual food.\textsuperscript{15}

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\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Inst.}, IV.14.25, see also IV.18.20.
\textsuperscript{15} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae}, trans. Fathers of the
English Dominican Province, (New York, Benzinger Bros., 1948),
III.84.7. The combination of these images in its most succinct form
occurs late in Aquinas' discussion of the sacraments. For Aquinas,
Penance, Marriage, and the other sacraments are not essential to
spiritual life in an absolute sense. However, it is clear that Penance, at
least, is necessary in a different sense because people sin after baptism,
and by so doing, damage their souls. This survey will be confined to
Aquinas' discussion of sacraments in general and particularly Baptism,
Confirmation, and Eucharist.

It is of interest that in this same section Aquinas says, “[Penance is
like] a second plank after shipwreck. For just as the first help for those
who cross the sea is to be safeguarded in a whole ship, while the second
help when the ship is wrecked is to cling to a plank; so too the first help
in this life's ocean is that man safeguard his integrity, while the second

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This metaphor of the sacraments as life-giving (birth) or life-sustaining (food) appears multiple times, especially in Aquinas’ discussion of the Eucharist (see below), as well as in other works.  

Another metaphor—which Aquinas uses first and often repeats—is that of the sacraments as medicine. They “are spiritual remedies ordained to the health of the soul.” In his initial discussion, Aquinas also considers the sacraments as a “sacred secret.” This idea of a sacrament is first raised in an objection to Aquinas’ position, and Aquinas refutes the objection without rejecting the metaphor.

A sacrament is a sign: on this Aquinas and Calvin agree. Aquinas makes an oblique comparison of the sacraments to a sign, “by means of which one attains to the knowledge of something else.” This function of the sacraments is like that of Scripture: revealing what is spiritual in what is “sensible.” The sacraments reveal the spiritual, but paradoxically, they are also a veil, concealing spiritual reality in what is material for people’s benefit.

Aquinas rejects a different metaphor: the sacraments are like a

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17 ST, III.60.5, cf. also III.61.1c, III.61.2c, III.63.1c, III.79.7c, III.80.4, and Aquinas, Devoutly, 73, “as one infirm, I approach / the balm of life... I ask that from the abundance / of Your immense generosity / you may bestow that which is needed / to cure my illness...” Baptism especially is “a remedy for original sin,” see ST III.70.3.

18 ST, III.60.1 ad. 2.


20 ST, III.60.4c.

21 ST, III.61.1c. Also Aquinas, Devoutly, “Adoro Te Devote” and “Ante Communionem,” esp. 69, 77.
lead coin exchanged for something of great value, but the coin does not itself have significant value. The coin is “a sign of the king's command that [the bearer] should receive money.” If this is the case, then the sacraments are “mere signs of grace.” And this, says Aquinas, is not true, given the testimony of the church.\textsuperscript{22} He rejects another metaphor for the same reason, considering the following, “as a canon is invested by means of a book, an abbot by means of a crozier, a bishop by means of a ring, so by the various sacraments various kinds of grace are conferred.” All of these (the book, the ring, the lead coin), Aquinas says, are \textit{mere signs}, but the sacraments actually \textit{cause} grace.\textsuperscript{23}

The sacraments do not have a principal causality but an instrumental causality; they are unlike fire, which produces warmth by its own nature, as God causes grace by his own nature.\textsuperscript{24} Aquinas uses several metaphors to make this more clear. The sacraments, with their instrumental causality, are like an ax or saw. The tool always cuts, but only according to the principal cause of the cutting (a person) and the aim to which it is yielded. The next image Aquinas employs indicates that grace is in the sacraments as destruction is in a weapon.\textsuperscript{25} Understood in this way, the sacraments do in fact contain and cause grace. They are like an implement or a stick in a person's hand.\textsuperscript{26} The sacraments are a special kind of implement that is separate from the principal cause (God) of the outcome they produce. This “separate instrument” is impelled by another “united instrument,” by which Aquinas means an instrument inherently united with the principal cause (a hand). In the case of the sacraments, the “stick” is the sacraments, and the “hand” is Christ's nature as both God and man. Christ as God is inherently united with God, who is the principal cause of grace.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{ST}, III.62.1c, III.62.1 ad 2.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{ST}, III.62.1 ad 2. This is likely a response or objection to Bernard of Clairvaux, who raises these three metaphors a century earlier in one of his sermons. See \textit{St. Bernard on the Christian Year: Selections from his Sermons}, trans. A. Religious of C.S.M.V., London: A.R. Mowbray, 1954.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{ST}, III.62.2c.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{ST}, III.62.3 ad 1.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{ST}, III.62.5c, III.64.4c.
Aquinas employs a metaphor similar to one which Calvin rejects: the sacraments are like an oath to military service, which is accompanied by a sign marked on the body. As that mark seals a soldier for military service, so the sacraments mark “the faithful... to the enjoyment of glory... [and] to receive, or to bestow on others, things pertaining to the worship of God.” This sort of “setting aside” seal is like the marks put on a coin, which set it apart “for use in exchange of goods.”

There are a handful of metaphors in Aquinas' lengthy discussion of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is food, and as bodily food preserves and sustains physical life, so this spiritual food preserves and sustains the life of the soul. Concerning Christ's presence in the Eucharist, Aquinas rejects the metaphor that the Eucharist is like a mirror (Christ is present differently in the broken host than the whole host). He argues rather that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is more like the presence of the nature of air in any part of air—Christ is present when, after being consecrated, the host is broken as well as when it is whole. Aquinas also rejects that the Eucharist operates like the smell of food, “as a man is heartened by the odor of meat, and intoxicated by the fumes of wine.” It nourishes in actuality. Also concerning the Eucharist, there is an interesting quotation from John of Damascus “for a live ember is not simply wood, but wood united to fire; so also the bread of

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27 ST, III.62.5c, III.64.4c. On the instrumental power of the sacraments, see also ST III.78.4 ad 2, “the instrumental power which lies in the form of this sacrament [Eucharist] is not excluded [by the operation of the Holy Spirit]: just as when we say that the smith alone makes a knife we do not deny the power of the hammer.”

28 ST, III.63.1, III.63.3. This is like Calvin's metaphor of an oath, garment, or trinket, that sets one person apart from others.

29 ST, III.63.3c.

30 Ibid.

31 ST III.73.1c, also ST III.79.2c, III.79.7c, III.80.1, which consider the sacrament as food or eating.

32 ST III.76.4c. See also Aquinas, Devoutly, 105, “Left entire for each partaker / Neither broken nor divided / He is received into the soul / If one or multitudes consume / however many, He still is one / Consumed, He yet stays whole.”
communion is not simple bread, but bread united with the
Godhead.” The Eucharist is, finally, “an image representing
Christ's Passion.”

III. Shared Metaphors: Common Ground?
We have now cataloged a number of metaphors: Calvin and
Aquinas share at least three of those metaphors. Both use the
metaphor of “sign” for the sacraments, and in their liturgical
depictions, they both portray the sacraments as medicine and as
spiritual food. We should note that while Aquinas' understanding
of the Eucharist as medicine emerges strongly in the Summa,
Aquinas does not use this metaphor explicitly in his sacramental
hymns. Calvin discloses the image of medicine in his form for the
institution of the Lord's Supper, saying, “Let us understand that
this sacrament is a medicine...” The image of sacraments
spiritually nourishing food is used explicitly by in his hymns and
prayers (see notes above). Calvin seems to think that in the case of
the Eucharist, some nourishment of the soul does somehow occur,
although he is somewhat reticent in saying precisely how this

33 ST III.79.2c. See also ST III.79.8, where Aquinas again quotes
John of Damascus, “the fire of that desire which is within us, being
kindled by the burning coal [Eucharist], will consume our sins, and
enlighten our hearts, so that we shall be inflamed and made godlike.”

Aquinas seems to agree, with the exception that this sanctifying effect
of the Eucharist may be hindered by certain sins.

34 ST III.83.2 ad 3.

35 Cf. Aquinas, Devoutly, 73. For Aquinas, of what are the
sacraments signs? “the reality signified in signs called sacraments is
none other than Christ... the grace-filled Christ, head of the church, is
the sanctifying reality signified in the sacraments.” Liam G. Walsh,
Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, University of Notre

36 John Calvin, “Form of Administering the Sacraments,” in
Calvin's Tracts, containing Treatises on the Sacraments, Catechism of
the Church of Geneva, Forms of Prayer, and Confessions of Faith,
happens.  

But do these metaphors of the sacraments as sign, as food, and as medicine work similarly for Calvin and Aquinas? Yes, and no. We may say yes because the sacraments are doing similar things: spiritually healing, nourishing the soul or faith, and signifying these things (as well as many others). But we must say “no” when we consider how the sacraments are doing these things. Aquinas understands the sacraments to have an instrumental causality, that is, he will say that the sacraments actually cause grace. Calvin is not willing to adopt such a strong instrumental causality; for Calvin, the activity of the Holy Spirit causes the effects of the sacraments, not the sacraments themselves, even though Calvin retains a “theistic instrumentality” in which God is working through the sacraments.

To put it perhaps too simply, Aquinas was in some ways compelled to work out the instrumental causality of the sacraments. Philip Reynolds argues that Aquinas' historical

37 Cf. *Inst.* IV.17.10, “That sacred communion of flesh and blood by which Christ transfuses his life into us, just as if it penetrated our bones and marrow, he testifies and seals in the Supper, and that not by presenting a vain or empty sign, but by there exerting an efficacy of the Spirit by which he fulfils [sic] what he promises.” See also Calvin, “Form for Administering,” 121, “and although we see only bread and wine, yet let us not doubt that he accomplishes spiritually in our souls all that he shows us externally by these visible signs; in other words, that he is heavenly bread, to feed and nourish us unto life eternal.”

context influenced his understanding of sacramental causality.\(^{39}\) His predecessors, notably Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard, argued that the sacraments actually caused grace without developing a model upon which this might happen. Thomas was thus left to hammer one out in his own sacramental theology. His explanation is that the sacraments are instrumental causes of grace, that is, that the sacraments cause grace in that they are chosen by God and suited or designed to cause grace.

By contrast, Calvin is unwilling to adopt the idea of the instrumental causality of the sacraments. His historical context seems to compel him to find a middle road between the sacramental theology of Zwingli and the Roman Catholic Church.\(^{40}\) But in his article, “Sacrament as Action, not Presence,” Nicholas Wolterstorff so far as to write that there is “no difference over causal principles” between Calvin and Aquinas, because “both reject occasionalism.”\(^{41}\) Wolterstorff might be easily misunderstood to be saying that Calvin and Aquinas conceive the causality implicit in the sacraments in the same way. But he later


\(^{40}\) B.A. Gerrish states that Calvin is attempting to tread a middle road between Zwingli’s sacramental memorialism, Martin Luther, and the Roman Catholic stance on the sacraments, and in steering clear of the Zwinglian position, he cannot avoid some instrumental language. See B.A. Gerrish, “Sign and Reality: The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions,” in The Old Protestantism and the New, ed. B.A. Garrish, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark: 1982), esp. 122f and his endnote 50. It cannot, perhaps, be said any better, “...in sacramental theology, as in other dogmatic themes, Thomas invites the image of a causal sequence, in which the effect of the divine activity is imparted to, and resides in, its object, whereas Calvin thinks in terms of the ever-present activity of God. But Calvin's retention of the instrumental language seems to me to be of some theological importance just because of these differences.”

notes that for Aquinas there is an extended sort of instrumental causality in the sacraments that is not present for Calvin. Wolterstorff seems to mean that Calvin and Aquinas are agreeing that mere occasionalism will not suffice to explain the sacraments. He attempts to illuminate Calvin's understanding of sacramental causality by making use of the distinction between symbol systems and discourse systems. Wolterstorff suggests that Calvin operates with different causal categories than Aquinas, categories that allow for things like speech-acts (and particularly promissory words that effect what they promise). This distinction constitutes a significant difference in how Calvin and Aquinas conceive the causality of the sacraments. Calvin is changing the paradigm for understanding sacramental efficacy from “sign-agency” to “God-agency.”

But does Calvin leave the back door open to a more Thomistic instrumental causality? There seems to be some tension even in Calvin's own position,

We do not deny that God himself is present in this institution by the very-present power of his Spirit. Nevertheless, that the administration of the sacraments which he has ordained may not be unfruitful and void, we declare that the inner grace of the Spirit, as distinct from the outward ministry, ought to be considered and pondered separately. God therefore truly executes whatever he promises and represents in signs; *nor do the signs lack their own effect* in proving their Author truthful and faithful. The only question here is whether God acts by his own intrinsic power (as they say) or resigns his office to outward symbols. But we contend that, whatever instruments he uses, these detract nothing from his original activity.

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42 What Wolterstorff does not suggest is the inexcusable anachronism that Calvin is operating with discourse categories identical to those proposed by recent philosophies of language. He says Calvin is using *similar* categories.

43 Ibid.

Can God resign his activity to the sacraments themselves? Calvin doesn't say no here, but later in the same section he speaks unequivocally,

Moreover, we must beware lest we be led into a similar error through what was written a little too extravagantly by the ancients to enhance the dignity of the sacraments. That is, to think that a hidden power is joined and fastened to the sacraments by which they of themselves confer the graces of the Holy Spirit upon us, as wine is given in a cup... [the sacraments] do not bestow any grace of themselves, but announce and tell us, and ... ratify among us, those things given us by divine bounty.45

While some tension may be read in Calvin’s own understanding of the sacraments, he is ultimately unwilling to go so far as to adopt an instrumental causality similar to that of Aquinas.

Do Aquinas and Calvin by virtue of their shared metaphors understand the sacraments to be functioning similarly? Yes, and yet no. For both men, the sacraments are an irreplaceable part of the Christian life, as a visible representation of God and his promises, and as spiritual food and medicine. Nonetheless, the way in which the sacraments do what they do—how spiritual healing and the nourishing of faith actually happens via the sacraments—is conceived by Calvin and Aquinas within different causal systems. Aquinas proceeds with the instrumental causality of the sacraments—the sacraments themselves signify, nourish, and heal. Calvin adopts a different causal system—one in which Holy Spirit enacts God’s promises through the sacraments.

The Theology of John Chrysostom from his 21 Sermons delivered in 387 on the Riot that occurred in Antioch\(^1\)
David Zigerman

Chart I

This calendar has been created as a result of the research conducted by Fran Van De Paverd. It has been provided to help the reader visualize the chronology of the events that occurred in 387 C.E.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Originally Submitted to Dr. So and So in Date Here for ClassNumber: Name.

\(^2\) Frans Van De Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom, The Homilies on the Statues: An Introduction* (Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, Piazza S. Maria Maggiore, 7, 00185 Roma, 1991), 363-364. A calendar depicting Frans Van De Paverd’s conclusions regarding the correct dating of sermons is provided here. Frans Van De Paverd’s dating is used throughout this entire paper. Points in dispute are also noted in footnotes later in the paper.
John Chrysostom’s sermons during and around the season of Lent in 387 C.E. described the city of Antioch in fear and anguish. Following a riot in the city after the announcement of increased taxes, John Chrysostom used the incident to articulate a theology that was meant to console in times of trial and suffering. He argued that suffering is used by God to cleanse and purify both individuals and cities.

John Chrysostom was born, raised, and began his ministry in Antioch. Antioch was a rich and colorful city. The main road that cut through the center of the city was lined with colonnades that housed shops between them and were lit at night. Within the city were temples, a library, and an amphitheater. Situated along the river Orontes, it had access to the Mediterranean Sea located 20 km away. On an island in the river Orontes connected to the city by five bridges were the public forum, hippodrome, and the Great Church. These great structures were built to contain, control, and entertain an estimated 400,000 citizens who lived in or around Antioch (This was the estimated population in the second half of the fourth century).

Within this city, John Chrysostom was taught rhetoric by the great rhetorician Libanius, was ordained deacon in 381, and

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5 Ibid, 7.
Presbyter and main preacher in 386. He showed mercy to the poor who begged outside the church on the island in the Orontes River and witnessed the fine clothes and manners of the aristocrats who milled about at the nearby public forum.

Chrysostom began his career as a preacher and Presbyter before the season of Lent in 386. By the Lenten season of the following year, Chrysostom’s skill as a rhetorician would be used to articulate a theology that gave meaning and purpose to an apparently senseless anarchy. His sermon on Sunday, February 21 in 387 urged his congregants to reform the city and correct those who were blaspheming God by their lewd conduct. According to Chrysostom, these reforms did not occur. The result was the judgment of God who brought about the calamities of the days to come. Between Sunday, February 21 and Saturday, February 27 in 387, the governor decreed a message from Emperor Theodosius on the island in the river Orontes declaring a new tax would be collected. The crowds who gathered wept audibly.

When the governor’s speech ended, some from among the crowd began to make their own inflammatory speeches inspiring part of the crowd to riot. The rioters began smashing the nearby statues of the Emperor and his family and dragged them through the streets. When the protesters neared the public forum and

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7 Rudolf Brandle, Chrysostom, 6-7.
8 Rudolf Brandle, Chrysostom, 23.
9 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 363.
12 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 363.
14 Ibid, 21.
threatened to set fire to it, they received a volley of arrows from those who guarded it. Later, an official of high rank arrived with additional troops and ended the rebellion by noon.\textsuperscript{15} Messengers of the city were immediately sent to Constantinople to inform the Empower of the event.\textsuperscript{16}

The riots took place during the week. On Saturday, February 27 Chrysostom addressed his congregants.\textsuperscript{17} He began his sermon with a lamentation, acknowledging the events that recently occurred. Then he described the aftermath of the riot. He said, “The forum has become impassable to us, and every one is pent up within the walls of his own house . . . on account of those who are everywhere hunting for the innocent as well as the guilty.”\textsuperscript{18} A witch hunt occurred in the days following the riots forcing residents either to flee the city altogether or hide within their homes.\textsuperscript{19}

Even though people were filled with lamentation and with fears because of the witch hunt, Chrysostom chastised his congregants for not doing as he told them to do in his first sermon. Because his parishioners failed to rebuke and silence the blasphemers of God, they were suffering the present calamity. He told the crowd that sat before him, “But if we had taken them [i.e. the blasphemers] in time, and cast them out of the city, and chastised them, and corrected the sick member, we should not have been subjected to our present terror.”\textsuperscript{20} He identified the blasphemers as, “certain strangers, men of mixed race,” and accused them to be the perpetrators of the riot.\textsuperscript{21} Because the Christians in Antioch had failed to obey Chrysostom’s command, the city was experiencing God’s judgment actualized by the riots and events that followed. Not only did a witch hunt occur that swept up, “innocent as well as the guilty,”\textsuperscript{22} but there was also a general fear of the Emperor’s

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 22-23.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 24.
\textsuperscript{17} Frans Van De Paverd, \textit{St. John Chrysostom}, 363.
\textsuperscript{18} Chrysostom, “Homily 2,” 345.
\textsuperscript{19} Frans Van De Paverd, \textit{St. John Chrysostom}, 43.
\textsuperscript{20} Chrysostom, “Homily 2,” 347.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 347.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 345.
retribution. In his third sermon delivered on Sunday, February 28,\textsuperscript{23} he stated, “Nevertheless we are still in fear, for he who had been insulted has not as yet heard what has taken place, nor pronounced sentence, and we are all trembling.”\textsuperscript{24} This fear compelled the Bishop of Antioch, Flavion, on that Sunday to go to the Emperor and try to persuade him against destroying the city in revenge.\textsuperscript{25}

Chrysostom described the witch hunt in his 3\textsuperscript{rd} sermon. Both the innocent and guilty alike were killed by sword, fire, and wild beasts.\textsuperscript{26} Apparently many listening to him were troubled by this because he gave an explanation for why both the innocent and guilty were killed. He explained that the guilty deserved the punishment they received for the deeds they had recently committed. Then he argued that the innocents who received the same fate were being punished by God for past hidden sins.\textsuperscript{27} Chrysostom, in his first three sermons articulated a doctrine of retribution that results form disobedience. By applying this doctrine to the recent riots, Chrysostom revealed that he believed that God’s retribution occurs through present calamities because of disobedience.

In his 4\textsuperscript{th} sermon, which he gave on Monday, March 1,\textsuperscript{28} Chrysostom began to articulate the positive use of God’s retribution. As a result of the riot and suffering it produced, more people came to listen to his sermons. In this specific sermon he argued that suffering is necessary to bring about reform in character. He did not mention the specific fruit reaped by suffering, but merely said, “Let us thank God even for these things, that we have reaped so much fruit from the tribulation,”\textsuperscript{29} and, “For great is the gain that comes of tribulation.”\textsuperscript{30} He was trying to persuade those who were listening that their present misfortunes

\textsuperscript{23} Frans Van De Paverd, \textit{St. John Chrysostom}, 363.
\textsuperscript{24} Chrysostom, “Homily 3,” 361.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 354.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 361.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 362-363.
\textsuperscript{28} Frans Van De Paverd, \textit{St. John Chrysostom}, 363.
\textsuperscript{29} Chrysostom, “Homily 4,” 364.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 365.
were not in vain.

On Wednesday, March 10, 31 Chrysostom preached his 6th sermon. In this sermon he further developed his theme that God’s retribution produces positive results. The recent calamity had brought an end to drunken lewd singing parties. Impure laughter and inappropriate words had also ceased. Instead, the city had become more graceful and gentle. As a result of the recent riots, “The city is now in all respects, like the pattern of a modest and virtuous woman . . . [and] that by the terror of a few days He hath put an end to such stupidity.” 32 The recent retribution of God was used by God to reform the city. Even though the city had benefited from the calamities in this way, Chrysostom still argued that much improvement was needed. He complained that the riots were partially caused by the citizen’s lack of asceticism, and he implored those who were listening to visit the monks in the nearby mountains to learn from them. 33 Also, Chrysostom told his audience that the messengers that were sent by the city to inform Emperor Theodosius were delayed, allowing for their bishop to possibly reach the Empower before the messengers. 34

In his 7th sermon concerning the riots that took place he expounded further on the purpose of pain and suffering. Pain and suffering were sent that the inhabitants may become aware of their sins. Because they had failed to rebuke the blasphemers, God had sent a calamity to expose the sins of the city to produce grief for their sins. Chrysostom distinguished between grieving for the results of the calamity and grieving for sins. Grieving for their present situation would not profit them, but grieving for their sins that caused their present misfortunes would restrain their sin. 35 The theology of John Chrysostom articulated in his first seven sermons says that retribution occurs that we may learn to weep for the sins that we commit.

31 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 363.
32 Chrysostom, “Homily 6,” 382.
33 Ibid, 384.
34 Ibid, 383. Even though Bishop Flavion was trying to reach Constantinople before the city messengers, he most likely did not according to Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 49.
The chronology of the sermons at this point has been debated. The most recent scholarship argues that the 15th and 16th sermons were delivered sometime after the 8th sermon. Chrysostom’s 15th sermon argued that his sermons alone would not have been enough to reform the people. Because of this, God needed to send a calamity that would arrest his congregant’s attention. His sermons had failed to prevent people from going to the theaters and watching the dancers. However, the riot brought about a change in character. People stopped participating in blasphemous activities and began attending church. Instruction was necessary, though. Chrysostom had to teach his congregants to make a connection between the recent catastrophe and the need to dread and fear hell. If their sins could kindle God’s retribution in their lifetime, how much greater would their punishment be in hell. Therefore, he repeatedly admonished his congregants to fear hell so that vices could be stunted and virtues could grow.

Chrysostom has thus expanded his theology. The calamities sent by God provided teachable moments to be used by preachers. Chrysostom used this opportunity to advance his belief that the fear of hell could restrain sin and promote virtue. Their present fears of the destruction of Antioch for their recent sins were to be used to realize the eternal destruction that awaits those who do not reform their lives.

About a week later he gave his 16th sermon on either March 12 or 13 (the weekend). The preceding day some people had spread a rumor because the city had learned that judges from the Emperor were soon to arrive with the Emperor’s judgments. This meant that the messengers of the city had presented their case before Emperor Theodosius before Bishop Flavion of Antioch had even reached the city. The rumor that was spread stated that an army sent by Emperor Theodosius was nearing the city to destroy it. In response to the rumor, an official, Celsus, entered into the church before Chrysostom spoke to assure the congregants that the rumor was false.

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38 Ibid, 439.
false. After Celsus’ speech, Chrysostom chastised his audience. Ashamed that they would need to be taught by a pagan official, Chrysostom contrasted his congregants with Job who praised God despite the calamities that surrounded him. Later in the sermon, Chrysostom argued that calamities are helpful for producing virtues. In this sermon Chrysostom argued that the city of Antioch and its inhabitants were to be thankful to God for calamities because they produce virtues. Chrysostom’s doctrine is thus: We are to be thankful for the calamities sent by God because they teach the fear of hell and produce virtues.

His 9th and 10th sermons, delivered the Monday and Tuesday respectively after his 16th sermon, focused on the Lenten fast. Many stopped attending church because they had been failing to keep the fast. In response Chrysostom confronted his church and commanded them to re-invite those who had been missing.

On Wednesday, March 17, the judges that were sent to the city arrived and set up a court. These two judges, Caesarius and Ellebichus, ordered the ruling elders of Antioch to be arrested and tried. The trial is recorded in depth in Chrysostom’s 13th sermon delivered one week after the trial occurred. Many citizens of Antioch again fled the city while many others were arrested to be tried. Many of those who were arrested were the leaders of the city, the aristocrats. Great crowds gathered outside the city forum waiting nervously for the verdicts to be delivered. Inside the forum were many soldiers who kept order during the court proceedings. The judges condemned many of those tried to prison and execution. How long the trials lasted is unclear. However, enough time elapsed for the monks in the residing mountains to learn of the incident, leave their mountains, and plead mercy for

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40 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 55-56.
42 Ibid, 450.
43 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 363.
44 Chrysostom, “Homily 9, 10,” 400 and 406.
45 Rudolph Brandle, John Chrysostom, 30.
46 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 363.
the city and for those recently tried. The judges listened to their pleadings and the execution of the prisoners was postponed until the judges’ decisions could be ratified by the Emperor. After the intervention of the monks, Caesarius returned to Constantinople to relay what had occurred.

What is notable is that the judges did not utter a pronouncement of destruction upon the city. For this Chrysostom thanked God in his 11th, 12th, and 13th sermons delivered the week after the trial occurred. A common theme is apparent in all three of these sermons. Though the destruction of the city that all dreaded had passed, they were not to forget the recent calamities. Rather, they were to remember their recent suffering with thanksgiving to God for providing them with a way to reform their city and lives. Chrysostom said in his 12th sermon, “For although the evils [i.e. the destruction of Antioch] we dreaded have passed away, we should not suffer the memory of them to disappear . . . For if the memory of these terrors abide with us, we shall never be overtaken by the actual experience of such terrors.” The retribution of God had produced the intended result, according to Chrysostom, which was reform of the city. It was now important for the citizens to remember the past calamities and fears in order not to forget the greater terror of hell. With this remembrance, the citizens would always be able to live virtuously before God.

Another incident occurred on Thursday, March 25, a week and a day after the judges arrived and a day after the delivery of the 13th sermon. The incident that occurred is unclear. However, in his 14th sermon, delivered on Friday, March 26, Chrysostom related that the public baths were closed. It is possible that the incident that occurred was the decree that the public baths and theater were to be closed and the city would be stripped of its metropolitan

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48 Frans Van De Paverd, _St. John Chrysostom_, 74.
49 Chrysostom, “Homily 17,” 453-454.”
50 Rudolph Brandle, _John Chrysostom_, 30.
51 Frans Van De Paverd, _St. John Chrysostom_, 363.
52 Chrysostom, “Homily 12,” 418.
54 Frans Van De Paverd, _St. John Chrysostom_, 363-364.
The incident that occurred, whatever it may have been, was used by Chrysostom to further articulate his theology of God’s retribution. Chrysostom said regarding the recent disturbance, “That not only our deliverance from evils, but also the permission of them arises from the benevolence of God.”\(^{57}\) Chrysostom stated that the recent disturbance occurred by the mercy of God to refocus his congregants upon God because they had begun to lapse from their religious duties.\(^{58}\) Indeed, in this sermon and nearly all his sermons concerning the riots, he pleaded with his congregants to put an end to their bad habit of making oaths.

In his 17th sermon, delivered sometime after the 14th sermon, there is a change in tone from the 14th sermon. This sermon reflects the general relief experienced by the masses and offers praise for those who acted nobly. The masses no longer had to fear, only the aristocrats. Because of this, Chrysostom pleaded that his congregants pray that city aristocrats who were imprisoned be released.\(^{59}\) In addition to this, Chrysostom, while acknowledging that the city had been deprived of its metropolitan status and that the theaters had been closed,\(^{60}\) rejoiced in the relief that had been given to the masses since a pardon for the city was nearly secured.\(^{61}\) Then he praised the monks, priests, and congregants for their noble behavior despite the trying time and past calamities.\(^{62}\) The Emperor was even praised for closing the theater and stripping the city of its status because that action was used by God to arrest

\(^{56}\) Rudolph Brandle, *John Chrysostom*, 30. Brandle related that the public baths and the theater were closed in addition to the city being stripped of its metropolitan status when the judges arrived. He does not conclude that those public decrees were issued on March 25. If it were true that the incident that occurred on March 25 was the closing of the baths, etc. then the 18th sermon would have been delivered on April 4. However, this conclusion is in opposition to Frans Van De Paverd who concluded this sermon to have been preached on March 28 and the incident which occurred on March 25 to be a mystery.

\(^{57}\) Chrysostom, “Homily 14,” 431.

\(^{58}\) Ibid, 431.

\(^{59}\) Chrysostom, “Homily 17,” 458.

\(^{60}\) Chrysostom, “Homily 17,” 455.

\(^{61}\) Ibid, 452.

\(^{62}\) Ibid, 454-455.
Even though those institutions were closed, the inhabitants of Antioch still sought after their benefits as related in Chrysostom’s 18th sermon.

Chrysostom’s 18th sermon related how many rejoiced that they were half way through the fast and said, “Behold then how all the poor escaped, and the populace are delivered from danger, and enjoy an entire freedom. But those who manage the affairs of the city . . . have borne other public charges, they are now inmates of the prison, and fear the worst.” Some used this lack of fear to bathe (the public baths had been closed for some time at this point) in the nearby river Orontes in a manner that drew condemnation from Chrysostom. Chrysostom thus rejoiced in the freedom given to the masses but longed that they use it in a disciplined way so they do not kindle the wrath of God again and bring further retribution on the city.

A few weeks later and nearing the end of the Lenten fast, Chrysostom delivered his 20th sermon. In this sermon Chrysostom congratulated the progress many members of his congregation had made in overcoming their use of immoral oaths. Yet he warned that they must continue to improve morally to receive any benefit from the communion that was to be served on Easter. Fasting would be of no profit, he argued, if it was not

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63 Ibid, 455.
64 Chrysostom, “Homily 18,” 460.
65 Ibid, 463.
66 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 363-364. There is general agreement that the traditionally numbering of the homilies is wrong. Both Frans Van De Paverd in 1991 and W. R. W. Stephens, translator of John Chrysostom, “Homilies on the Statues: Concerning the Statues: Homily 1,” in A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Father of the Christian Church, Volume IX: Saint Chrysostom: On the Priesthood; Ascetic Treatises; Select Homilies and Letters; Homilies on the Statues in 1956 acknowledge that some of the sermons are numbered incorrectly. Stephens argued that the ordering is thus: Homily 20 occurred on April 16, Homily 21 occurred on April 25, and Homily 19 occurred on June 28. Frans Van De Paverd argued that the ordering is thus: Homily 20 occurred on April 9, Homily 19 occurred on April 19, and Homily 21 occurred on April 25.
accompanied by moral reform. To those who complained that they could not fast because they were sick, he told them that they did not need to have good health to morally improve. He said this was possible because of Christ’s love towards mankind that enabled a person to love and show virtue regardless of bodily inhibitions. Therefore, he argued, all were required to forgive their neighbors and seek to be reconciled with them regardless of what physical or bodily state they were in. The congregants were to empty themselves of their vices just as they hoped the Emperor would empty himself of his vengeance toward the city. This could be accomplished, he argued, very quickly by a proper fear that God had graciously provided them through the retribution he imposed on the city through the riots and subsequent events.

In his 19th sermon delivered April 12, a day after the Festival of Martyrs, Chrysostom began to expound on the ideal attributes of a great city. A great city would be one that is virtuous. Also, in this sermon he admonished his congregants to continue to strive toward virtue, specifically concerning abstaining from oaths.

The final sermon of his Lenten series was delivered on April 25, Easter day. This sermon described the speech given by Bishop Flavion while he was in Constantinople. The context for this speech will be described first; then the value of Bishop Flavion’s speech and Chrysostom’s 21st sermon for developing his theology will be related. The event of the riot took place in late February, and messengers from the city were immediately dispatched to inform the Emperor of the event. The journey from Antioch to Constantinople was 700 miles and would have taken at least six days to complete. A few days later, on February 27, Bishop Flavion began his journey to Constantinople with the hope of turning the Emperor toward mercy. Four days after Bishop Flavion began this journey Chrysostom learned and related to his congregants in his 6th sermon that the messengers sent by the city

68 Ibid, 472.
69 Ibid, 479-480.
70 Frans Van De Paverd, *St. John Chrysostom*, 364.
71 Chrysostom, “Homily 19,” 471.
were delayed. This produced hope momentarily that Bishop Flavion would reach Constantinople first and be able to persuade the Emperor to show mercy\textsuperscript{74}. However, this did not occur.

The messengers of the city won the race to Constantinople. As a result, the Emperor sent two judges, Caesarius and Ellebichus, to hold a trial and execute the aristocratic elite who ruled the city.\textsuperscript{75} These two judges met Bishop Flavion as he continued on his journey toward Constantinople.\textsuperscript{76} Caesarius and Ellebichus then conducted their trial, were persuaded by the monks of Antioch to delay pronouncing their sentences until the Emperor should ratify the decision (and to plea that mercy should be shown and the execution not be carried out), and returned with haste back to Constantinople.\textsuperscript{77}

While Caesarius was returning to Constantinople, Bishop Flavion finally reached Constantinople and pleaded his case before the Emperor.\textsuperscript{78} When he entered before Emperor Theodosius in his royal palace, he did so with tears and silence. The Emperor was moved, came toward the Bishop, and listened to him.\textsuperscript{79} The Bishop then began his speech, recounted in Chrysostom’s 21\textsuperscript{st} sermon. In his plea, the Bishop contented that the Emperor should show his great love for Antioch by forgiving it as Emperor Constantine had once shown mercy in a similar instance when a crowd had toppled statues of Constantine. Constantine received glory for the virtues he displayed,\textsuperscript{80} and Bishop Flavion urged Emperor Theodosius to gain glory as well by forgiving the city of Antioch.\textsuperscript{81} As the Emperor was being moved to pity, Caesarius arrived and asked that the Emperor would approve of his decision of forestalling the executions and even grant a pardon. Emperor Theodosius agreed and a messenger was sent immediately to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[74] Frans Van De Paverd, \textit{St. John Chrysostom}, 49.
\item[75] Ibid, 57.
\item[76] Ibid, 56.
\item[77] Ibid, 145.
\item[78] Ibid, 145.
\item[79] Chrysostom, “Homily 21,” 484.
\item[80] Chrysostom, “Homily 21,” 484-485.
\item[81] Ibid, 487-488.
\end{footnotes}
inform this city of the Emperor’s mercy. Bishop Flavion then began his journey back to Antioch at his slow pace. Bishop Flavion returned to Antioch before Easter. Chrysostom praised God for this during his 21st sermon. He said, “Blessed be God who hath granted us this day to celebrate this holy Feast with much joy and gladness; and hath restored the head to the body.” The head of the body was Bishop Flavion who received glory and praise for his virtuous actions.

Chrysostom, in his 21st sermon, praised the Bishop, the Emperor, and the city of Antioch for the glory that God had given to each. “God, by means of this same calamity [i.e. the riots and subsequent events], hath adored the city, the [Bishop], and the Emperor; and hath made them all more illustrious,” said Chrysostom. By means of the suffering inflicted upon the city by the riots, God had brought glory to the Bishop, the Emperor, and the city by allowing each to display virtues.

The Bishop gained glory by making his sacrificial voyage to Constantinople and putting himself personally at risk by going before the Emperor on behalf of the Christians and pagans in the city of Antioch. Neither his old age nor the ill health of his sister prevented him from showing love and care for the city of Antioch. The riots provided the means by which the Bishop was to display virtue and thus receive glory.

The Emperor won fame as well by hearing the Bishop and then quickly granting a pardon. By acting as such, he imitated Constantine and would thus receive the admiration and praise that belonged to that Emperor (It is interesting to note that this action of mercy was not repeated three years later when Thessalonica rioted. Pardon was not granted to that city and over 7,000 citizens

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82 Frans Van De Paverd, St. John Chrysostom, 145-146.
83 Ibid, 159.
84 Chrysostom, “Homily 21,” 482.
85 Ibid, 482.
86 Chrysostom, “Homily 21,” 489.
87 Ibid, 483.
88 Ibid, 483.
of Thessalonica were killed in revenge\textsuperscript{89}).\textsuperscript{90} The calamity served here as a means by which the Emperor would be able to practice virtue and receive a crown of glory.

Finally, the city of Antioch itself was praised by Chrysostom. When the messenger bearing the news of the pardon of Antioch arrived sometime before Bishop Flavion, there was a large celebration. The city forum was decorated with flowers, bonfires were lit, and people left their homes to celebrate in the streets.\textsuperscript{91} Chrysostom described that celebration of renewal as a type of inward renewal they received from the recent calamities that taught the city to act according to virtue.\textsuperscript{92} He said, “And let us never fail to give God thanks continually for all these things, not only that he hath freed us from these calamities, but that he also permitted them to happen; and let us acknowledge his abundant goodness for by both these has he adorned the city.”\textsuperscript{93} God’s retribution had purified the city producing within it virtue that brought the city glory. That God should send his retribution is considered an act of mercy, for otherwise the city would have continued in its blasphemous ways. Lastly, Chrysostom urged his congregants to teach their children how God had reformed Antioch so that their children would benefit from God’s retribution as well.\textsuperscript{94}

Chrysostom, in his 21 sermons during the Lenten season of 387, articulated a theology of God’s retribution and its benefit to mankind. God’s retribution profits both individual and cities by bringing about reform and producing virtues that bring glory to them. God’s mercy produces calamities so that individuals and cities may considerer their ways, learn to fear hell, seek God, and begin to live virtuously. Because these benefits could be lost, those who benefit were required to constantly remember and teach others about the calamities and their results in order to bring about continual reform.

Chrysostom’s doctrine of retribution articulated in his 21

\textsuperscript{89} Rudolph Brandle, \textit{John Chrysostom}, 29.
\textsuperscript{90} Chrysostom, “Homily 21,” 485-486.
\textsuperscript{91} Rudolph Brandle, \textit{John Chrysostom}, 31.
\textsuperscript{92} Chrysostom, “Homily 21,” 489.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid, 489.
\textsuperscript{94} Chrysostom, “Homily 21,” 489.
sermons before and after the riots that toppled the Emperor’s statues can benefit the modern reader. By considering the teachings of Chrysostom and the events about which he preached, the modern reader, “May themselves be profited, being stimulated to piety by means of all which has happened. For the history of what has lately happened to us, will have power to profit not only ourselves, if we constantly remember it, but also those who shall come after us.”95 These words of wisdom delivered by John Chrysostom may profit us today by teaching us to consider our ways, fear hell, seek God, and begin to live virtuously as they once challenged their original hearers.

95 Ibid, 489.
Correction & Guidance:
The Role of Reason in Hadewijch of Antwerp¹
John C. Medendorp

Since the discovery of her work in the late 19th century, Hadewijch has quickly arisen to a prominent place in studies of Medieval mysticism. Before their discovery, they were largely lost for about five-hundred years, since the writings of Jan van Ruusbroek and Meister Eckhart, on whom she clearly had influence, although her works may have circulated until as late as the 14th century as St. Adelwip of Brabant.² Hadewijch’s works were first translated into English in 1980 through The Classics of Western Spirituality series by Paulist Press.³ Up until that point, Hadewijch was primarily studied by Dutch linguists and the occasional historian or theologian, but in the 1980s and 1990s became widely referenced among scholars in the fields of theology, history, and gender studies. She is now given an automatic place in surveys of Medieval Christianity.⁴ Hadewijch is a particularly intriguing figure, in part because there is really

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very little that we know about her, and in part because the little that we do know is quite intriguing. Although her writings are concerned primarily with spiritual topics, there are several historical details that scholars have gleaned out of the texts themselves. Paul Mommaers, who has several works translated in English, has firmly established the thesis of Joseph van Mierlo (whose works have, unfortunately, not been translated): that Hadewijch’s works are written with a didactic purpose in mind, for the instruction of a Beguine group over which she had authority and possibly even founded; and the four volumes that we have of her works were likely collected, organized, and edited by Hadewijch herself. Through her List of the Perfect, scholars determine that she flourished in the mid-13th century.

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6 Mommaers, Hadewijch, 45.

7 The List of the Perfect offers two clues to date Hadewijch: a reference to “A beguine who was killed by master Robbaert for her perfect Love” and “Among the still living there dwell seven as hermits on the walls of Jerusalem, and three live in the city.” Helen Rolfson, “List of the Perfect by Hadewijch of Antwerp,” Vox Benedictina: A Journal of Translations from Monastic Sources, 5:4 (Saskatoon: Peregrina Publishers, 1988) 277-87. Paul Mommaers concludes that “master Robbaert” probably refers to “Robert le Bougre, who led the inquisition in Flanders between 1235 and 1238,” and since Jerusalem was captured by Muslims in 1244, it is safe to conclude that Hadewijch completed her List sometime between 1238 and 1244. Paul Mommaers and Elizabeth Dutton, Hadewijch: Writer—Beguine—Love Mystic (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Press, 2004), 8.

Note: Hadewijch’s List of the Perfect originally followed Vision 13. However, the fact that she chooses favorites from among the saints and then lists herself among them has “embarrassed her modern commentators more than it should” (Louis Bouyer, Women Mystics: Hadewijch of Antwerp, Theresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Edith Stein, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Fransisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 22-23). It is not included in Hart’s English translation of Hadewijch’s works, but an English translation has been published by Helen Rolfson: “List of the Perfect by Hadewijch of
clearly the leader of some sort of spiritual community of women, believed by most scholars to be Beguines, located in the Duchy of Brabant. She writes in Brabantic, a Middle Dutch dialect, and has historically been associated with the city of Antwerp. The historical person of Hadewijch, however, has remained frustratingly elusive, as Hart reports: “Scholars endeavored for years to solve the mystery of her family name, but since for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries 111 pious women named Hadewijch are known of, no answer could be found. Her familiarity with chivalry and courtly love, however, and the refinement of character she invariably displays, permit little doubt that she belonged to the higher class.”

Hadewijch is uniquely valuable because of the variety of literary media via which she communicates, including poems, letters, and vision accounts. Most scholarship on Hadewijch has focused on one of three things: theological study has focused on her contributions to Love mysticism, literary study has focused on her linguistic novelty, and feminist studies have focused on the role of gender and body in her writings. Precisely because

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9 Hart, Hadewijch, 2-3.

10 Of particular interest, given that, along with Beatrice of Nazareth, Hadewijch is the earliest extant vernacular Dutch literature that is available. Most of this literature is, naturally, in Dutch, but some of it is addressed at various points in Mommaers, Hadewijch.

11 Unfortunately, much of English-language feminist study of Hadewijch suffers from a misunderstanding of gender in the Dutch language. Hadewijch uses the word Minne to refer to Love, a complex word which she uses quite loosely, sometimes referring to God, and sometimes referring to the experience of love itself. Since the word Minne is a feminine noun, some scholars have used this to claim that Hadewijch understands God to be a woman. Since feminist critique is outside the scope of my paper, I will not interact with these sources.
Hadewijch makes no attempt to systematize her thought, it is difficult to format her writings into a concrete and coherent theological whole. She is very comfortable with paradox and mystery, even reveling in it. Theologically, Hadewijch, like most western Christians, lies in the tradition of Augustine, with whose writings she displays a level of familiarity.\textsuperscript{12} She also seems to have been quite strongly influenced by writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry, and Richard of Saint-Victor.\textsuperscript{13} Axters writes that “her outstanding achievement is to have given a metaphysical basis to that spirituality which the Low Countries had received from the Cistercians.”\textsuperscript{14} She also perhaps had some familiarity and affinity with the writings of Peter Abelard, a surprising conclusion that has been independently proposed by two leading Hadewijch scholars.\textsuperscript{15} Nevertheless, Hadewijch is quite unique in some of her emphases, and many scholars have pointed out her ingenuity and novelty in developing a uniquely Dutch love mysticism, creatively translating many themes and concepts from secular French troubadours as well as courtly love poems into a distinctively Dutch spiritual matrix. One French scholar praises her in these magnificent words: “We have, in the person of Hadewijch, a spiritual master almost without equal as well as an exquisite feminine figure, endowed with the greatest gifts of intelligence and of heart as well as of culture.”\textsuperscript{16}

The topic of Love, or Minne, is clearly the focus of Hadewijch’s writings, as attested by the contributions of most Hadewijch

\textsuperscript{12} Augustine is listed tenth in The List of the Perfect. For Hadewijch’s familiarity with Augustine see Hart, Hadewijch, 29-31.

\textsuperscript{13} Mommaers, Hadewijch, 59-74.

\textsuperscript{14} Axters, The Spirituality of the Low Countries, 24.

\textsuperscript{15} Hart, Hadewijch, 382 (n. 79). Mommaers, Hadewijch, 77-79.


\textsuperscript{16} Bouyer, Women Mystics, 19.
Despite her clear emphasis on Love, however, Hadewijch puts particular emphasis on the important and vital role of reason in the Christian’s ever-deepening journey into God’s love. In Hadewijch’s writings, reason plays an important corrective role to the ecstatic experience of divine Love in forcing Hadewijch to recognize her limited humanity, and a guiding role in directing her toward a faithful life of virtue which aims to imitate Christ in his Humanity.

Many scholars, especially in later literature, recognize that Hadewijch has an important emphasis on the role of “reason” in the spiritual life, and also that she is more emphatic about its necessary positive role than many other mystics. Despite the general recognition of this fact, only one English-language publication has explored it in any specific manner. Elizabeth Dreyer’s Passionate Spirituality devotes about four pages to the Hadewijch’s treatment of reason in the Poems in Stanzas. Mostly a paraphrase of various parts of Hadewijch’s work, Dreyer posits that reason is a positive, noble part of a person which keeps one’s eyes on the truth and safeguards brings understanding to the experience of passion. Dreyer also notes Hadewijch’s realization of the limits of reason: “Hadewijch also acknowledges that Reason is not infallible. It too is subject to error, and when it errs the results

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17 For a thorough, but short summary of Love (Minne) in Hadewijch’s writings, see McGinn, The Flowering of Mysticism, 200-222.
20 Dreyer here uses the term “passion” to refer to the intense experience of God’s Love. A perhaps unfortunate word choice since until the modern era, “passion” referred almost exclusively to negative affectations which hinder one’s will. Hadewijch does not use “passion” to describe her mystical union with God, preferring the term “sweetness.” Dreyer, Passionate Spirituality, 112-13.
are far reaching.”  

Dreyer seems to understand that Hadewijch’s place for reason derives from a holistic anthropology, by which she recognizes both reason and love as important parts of the human person’s experience of God, which need to be balanced.

This study will explore the role of reason in Hadewijch’s writings, moving from her characterization of reason in the Visions to the broader role of reason in her theology. The essay will proceed in two parts. Part I will expositarily trace the treatment of reason in Hadewijch’s Visions, with reference to reason in her other works where they offer helpful illumination. Part II will analyze the role of reason in Hadewijch’s theology as a whole, rooted in Hadewijch’s theology of the Humanity of Christ.

Part I: Reason in Hadewijch’s Visions

In her various works—the Letters, the Poems in Stanzas, the Visions, and the Poems in Couplets—Hadewijch explores many of the same themes with different emphases. Even in their tone, the four works differ remarkably. The Visions, which recount Hadewijch’s personal mystical experiences and theological commentary and interpretation for her audience, are overall quite positive and optimistic, even triumphant, as Hadewijch learns along her spiritual journey of “growing up” that ecstatic union is not enough, and that she must learn to live in the world, as Christ

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21 Dreyer, Passionate Spirituality, 114.
22 The “Humanity of Christ” is an important concept to Hadewijch, but the topic is too broad to be thoroughly explored in this essay. Essentially, one of Hadewijch’s key theological insights is that true union with God must be understood to include not only his Divinity, but also his Humanity, in Christ, which ought to govern our behavior in this life. As Hadewijch writes in Letter 6.227:

“People wish to live with God in consolations and repose, in wealth and power, and to share the fruition of his glory. We all indeed wish to be God with God, but God knows that there are few of us who want to live as men with his Humanity, or want to carry his cross with him, or want to hang on the cross with him and pay humanity’s debt to the full.”

Paul Mommaers very concretely explains what it means to live the Humanity of Christ in Mommaers, Hadewijch, 122-129.
did. In the Poems and Letters, Hadewijch takes a much more subdued, even bitter tone. Nevertheless, all various works deal extensively with Hadewijch’s common themes of Love, fruition, abjection, virtue, and fidelity. In each of these works, reason plays a distinct, and unique role.

The Visions provide us with a uniquely personal look at Hadewijch, not experienced in her other works except for momentary glimpses. Although accounts of the visions of mystics were not uncommon in the 13th century, Hart notes that Hadewijch’s visions are unique for their “lofty seriousness, power of imagery, and metaphysical-mystical meaning.” As mentioned above, the Visions are overall quite positive and optimistic, in stark contrast to the rest of Hadewijch’s writings. Newman writes: “Despite their allusions to suffering with Christ, the Visions on the whole tell a story of joy and triumph.”

Paul Mommaers has expertly defended the thesis that Hadewijch’s Visions do indeed comprise a narrative whole. Building on the earlier scholarship of Jozef van Mierlo and Norbert de Paepe, Mommaers argues that the Visions were written later in Hadewijch’s life, for the purpose of teaching her Beguine community, as evidenced by the fact that “each Vision is thoroughly structured with a teacher’s care.”

Mommaers writes:

The Book of Visions was to offer some guidance to those on their way to Love. … The visionary narrative depicts Hadewijch’s spiritual coming of age and further development. Apparently this “growing up” of the writer serves then as a mirror to the audience: by showing the evolution of her experience of Love Hadewijch sets out a course for those who find themselves in the same “adventure.” … Thus in the Visions we can see the spiritual leader at work as she tries through her

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23 Newman notes that in the Letters and Poems, Hadewijch adopts the role of the courtly lover who seeks to win lady Love. “Hadewijch’s courtly persona is unhappy and often bitter, but determined to serve Love because no other life has any worth.” Newman, From Virile Woman to WomanChrist, 147.

24 Hart, Hadewijch, 22.

25 Newman, From Virile Woman to WomanChrist, 147.

26 Mommaers, Hadewijch, 46.
writing to give hope to her friends who feel lost in the “winter” or “desert,” lacking the comfort of Love’s felt grace.  

The story told by the Visions is one of spiritual triumph. It is a “coming of age” story in which Hadewijch grows from one “still too childish and too little grown up” (V 1.1) to the “strongest of all warriors [who has] conquered everything” (V 14.172). Hart recognizes that “Hadewijch’s basic conception of life as dynamic is apparent throughout” the Visions, as Hadewijch’s spiritual journey shows, moving from the ecstatic mystical experience of Love to the recognition that she must learn to live the “Humanity of Christ.”

In this journey, reason plays a vital balancing role. The theme of reason is not introduced until Vision 6, but what comes before is important for understanding the role of reason throughout the rest of the book. Up until this point, the Visions have been primarily concerned with the importance of virtue in Hadewijch’s life, referred to as “living Christ’s humanity,” often with the implicit or explicit understanding of suffering (V 1.288). Christ’s words to Hadewijch in Vision 1 make clear that the purpose of Hadewijch’s mystical experience is to lead others into the will of God:

> With understanding you shall wisely carry out my will, in all those who need to know, through you, my will, which is still unknown to them. You have not failed anyone until now; never fail anyone until the day when I say to you: “Your work is totally accomplished.” (V 1.391)

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27. Mommaers, Hadewijch, 47-8.
28. In referencing Hadewijch’s works, I will use the following abbreviations: V for “Visions,” L for “Letters,” PC for “Poems in Couplets,” and PS for “Poems in Stanzas.” These are the four parts of Hadewijch’s completed works. For ease of reading, and stylistic preferences, I have chosen to use in-text citations for Hadewijch’s works.
29. Hart, Hadewijch, 24. The call to live the Humanity of Christ is repeated throughout the Visions, and throughout Hadewijch’s work, as will become apparent.
Vision 4 introduces an important concept to the Visions as well, which is also hinted at in the Letters and Poems in Stanzas. In Vision 4 Hadewijch sees two kingdoms, which “are the same” (4.9). It is later revealed that these two kingdoms are the kingdoms of “the ideal Hadewijch in her image in God,” and Christ. This presents an important theme in Hadewijch’s writings: that the eschatological promise of fruition is already a present reality. It is my thinking that this is precisely what the mystical experience of Love is for Hadewijch—the present experience of an eschatological reality. It is a premature blessing in which one participates in the eschatological reality of fruition of God’s presence. This experience is both a blessing and a curse: a blessing in that by the assurance of fruition, Hadewijch is empowered to live a life of virtue in suffering (living the Humanity of Christ); a curse in that it makes all the more keen the reality that Hadewijch does not yet have fruition, and makes her life of unfulfilled desire all the more painful.

It is here that Hadewijch picks up the topic of reason. After Hadewijch beholds the divine Countenance in V 6.43, she writes:

I saw his greatness oppressed under all. I saw his littleness exalted above all. I saw his hiddenness embracing and flowing through all things: I saw his breadth enclosed in all. I heard his reasoned understanding and perceived all reason with reason. I saw in his breast the entire fruition of his Nature in Love. In everything else I saw, I could understand that in the spirit. (V 6.67)

30 See Hart, Hadewijch, 380, n. 49.
31 Interestingly, no English language scholarship recognizes this in Hadewijch, although the evidence seems, to me, to be abundantly clear. This view makes sense of Hadewijch’s frequent use of the word “fruition” (ghebruken) to describe the mystical experience. Hadewijch also makes consistent references to a difference between one’s identity and one’s reality. See L 6.19 “[We] have not yet become what we are, and have not grasped what we have, and still remain so far from what is ours.” Perhaps there is a place here for further research.

For more on Hadewijch’s language of “fruition” see Mommaers, Hadewijch, 96-144.
Undoubtedly, this is, at first glance, a troubling place to introduce the concept of reason in the Visions, as Hadewijch revels in seemingly irrational contradictions. Hadewijch immediately follows by explaining that she was “engulfed and lost, without any comprehension of other knowledge, or sight, or spiritual understanding” (V 6.76), but then was “called back again in a spirit, and again I recognized and understood all reasoning as before” (V 6.90).

By introducing reason at this point, Hadewijch makes an important point, which prefaces her dealing with reason later in the book: that reason (when enlightened by God’s Love) allows us to understand the apparent paradoxes of God’s being, and although the mystical experience itself transcends reason (and even perception!), the life we live on earth is governed by reason (and, as we shall see later, must be governed by reason). This is followed, in V 6.92, by a renewed command from God “to live in conformity with my Divinity and my Humanity—back again into the cruel world, where you must taste every kind of death—until you return hither in the full name of my fruition, in which you are baptized in my depths.” Once Hadewijch reveals to her reader that reason governs our non-ecstatic life, the call to live the Humanity of Christ is repeated.

Vision 8, although it does not mention reason, is worth noting as well, precisely because of the debated identity of the Champion, as noted in the introduction. Both Hart and Mommaers identify the Champion of Vision 8 as Peter Abelard.\footnote{See note 14 above.} The vision centers around a mountain, of which Hadewijch writes:

> Five ways went steeply upward to the mountain; they all led to the highest seat of the noble mountain, which was there on high. But they went higher, and higher, and still higher, and to the highest, so that the summit itself was the highest of all and the highest Being himself. (V 8.1)

The Champion tells Hadewijch that, although he is her “trustworthy finger post on the four ways,” the fifth way has been revealed to her alone (V 8.1). It becomes clear that the Champion...
is unable to lead Hadewijch up the fifth way, to the summit. He says:

“I bear witness to you concerning the four ways, and I travel them to the end; in these I recognize myself, and I conquer the divisions of time. But the Beloved gave you the fifth way; you have received it where I am not. For when I lived as a man, I had too little love with affection, and followed the strict counsel of the intellect. For this reason I could not be set on fire with the love that creates such a great oneness, for I did the noble Humanity great wrong in that I withheld from it this affection.” (V 8.112)

It is this claim of the champion, that “I did the noble Humanity great wrong in that I withheld from it this affection,” that causes Mommaers and Hart to identify it as perhaps being Peter Abelard. Mommaers writes that Abelard is “the first mediaeval figure for whom the God-man is no longer part and parcel of the experience of God.”33 This does not mean that Abelard rejects Christ; rather it is related to his method of rational inquiry, which Bernard of Clairvaux so vehemently opposed as not recognizing the importance of Christ’s Humanity, and for which Abelard was eventually condemned. If it is Peter Abelard whom Hadewijch had in mind in this vision, then it is an important lesson in the limits of reason as a way to God. Abelard’s rational inquiry cannot lead Hadewijch up the fifth and highest way, the “privation of what you desire above all,” that is, complete abandonment to Love (V 8.33).

After this vision, the importance of reason in the Visions increases dramatically. Immediately following the vision of the Champion on the mountain is Vision 9, which Hart appropriately entitles “Queen Reason.”34 Because of the pivotal nature of this vision (the Visions clearly take an upward turn after it), it is worth dwelling on with special attention to its detail. Hadewijch writes:

I saw in the spirit a queen come in, clad in a gold dress; and her dress was all full of eyes; and all the eyes were completely transparent, like fiery flames, and nevertheless like crystal. And

33 Mommaers, Hadewijch, 77.
34 Hart, Hadewijch, 285.
the crown she wore on her head had as many crowns one above another as there were eyes on her dress; you shall hear the number when she herself declares it. Before the queen walked three maidens. One had on a red cloak of state and carried two trumpets in her hands; and she blew on one of them and said: “Whoever does not hearken to my Lady will be eternally deaf to happiness and nevermore hear or see the highest melody and the wonder of powerful Love.” And the other trumpet sang and said: “Whoever flies and goes the ways my Lady loves shall be powerful in the kingdom of Love.” (V 9.6)

Shortly after this Hadewijch narrates:

The queen approached me dreadfully fast and set her foot on my throat, and cried with a more terrible voice, and said: “Do you know who I am?”

And I said: “Yes, indeed! Long enough have you caused me woe and pain! You are my soul’s faculty of Reason, and these are the officials of my own household with whom you walk abroad in such fine style! The trumpeter is my Holy Fear...the second maiden is Discernment between you and Love...the third maiden is Wisdom, through whom I have acknowledged your power and your works when you let yourself be led by Love, and through whom I learned to know God alone as God.” (V 9.37-40)

The vision is worth quoting in near entirety because of the importance it holds not only for the topic at hand, but also for understanding the rest of the Visions. As the vision continues, after Hadewijch recognizes Reason, Reason responds:

“It is true, with this eye-covered dress you yourself are adorned, and you have clothed me with heavenly glory. The number of these eyes is one thousand, the full number of every virtue. The fieriness of the eyes comes from each eye’s knowledge of Love. The crystallinity of the eyes is past and quenched a hundredfold in painful mystical knowledge. And every eye of knowledge, either of love or of pain, had the crown of Love, formed according to its significance. Thus every eye had a mighty crown.”

When Reason had thus spoken to me, she ordered me to acknowledge the whole number of my company; and I truly
acknowledged it. Then Reason became subject to me, and I left her. But Love came and embraced me; and I came out of the spirit and remained lying until late in the day, inebriated with unspeakable wonders. (V 9.55-65)

Although Hadewijch elsewhere personalizes Reason, this vision is clearly remarkable. And although Hadewijch talks often about “conquering” and being a “warrior,” Vision 8 is unique in its striking violence and narrative immediacy. The terror and fear is palpable, as Reason knocks Hadewijch over and pins her down, demanding she acknowledge her. The vision is notable based upon its uniqueness alone.

A few things are of important note, however. First, Reason is called a queen. The only other place where Hadewijch mentions a queen in the Visions is in Vision 13, where Love is described “in the form of a queen” (V 13.66). This is important because by limiting the imagery of “queen” to only Reason and Love, Hadewijch is, in a sense, raising them to equality. This is made clear in Letter 18, where reason and love are characterized as the two eyes of the soul:

The power of sight that is created as natural to the soul is charity. This power of sight has two eyes, love and reason. Reason cannot see God except in what he is not; love rests not except in what he is. Reason has its secure paths, by which it proceeds. Love experiences failure, but failure advances it more than reason. Reason advances toward what God is, by means of what God is not. Love sets aside what God is not and rejoices that it fails in what God is. Reason has more satisfaction than love, but love has more sweetness of bliss than reason. These two, however, are of great mutual help one to the other; for reason instructs love, and love enlightens reason. When reason abandons itself to love’s wish, and love consents to be forced and held within the bounds of reason, they can accomplish a very great work. This no one can learn except by experience. (L 18.80)

35 Cf. Poems in Stanzas 25; 30; 43.
36 Letter 18.80ff is borrowed from William of Saint-Thierry. See Hart, Hadewijch, 369, n. 74.
Love and reason, to Hadewijch, are mutually beneficial, in fact, mutually necessary. Without Love, one cannot ascend to the fifth and highest way, and become God with God (V 8). Without reason, one becomes trapped in “the emotional attractions of frivolous love...and in this emotional attraction we lose enlightened reason, which is our rule and teaches us how to observe Love’s right” (L 12.108). Both reason and love are equally necessary to achieve the highest ways of Love.

Second, as “Holy Fear” remarks, first negatively and then positively, Hadewijch must heed Reason if she is to understand Love in its totality. We have already seen that for Hadewijch, reason is the “rule of life.” Without reason, one cannot understand the wonderful paradox which is God’s nature, and this is confirmed in Hadewijch’s broader works. Hadewijch writes in the Poems in Stanzas that reason “illuminates the entire abyss of Love,” and this illumination leads to fidelity, which allows Hadewijch to practice a life of virtue even when she feels that Love has abandoned her (PS 19.4-5). Reason makes clear the limitations of Hadewijch’s humanity; that precisely because of the limitless debt which she owes to Love, she can “spare nothing for Love” (PS 40.15); and offers her the guidance that only by a life of virtue can one attain to become Love (PS 8.4-5).

Furthermore, Reason is clad in a dress adorned with the virtues, and tells Hadewijch “with this eye-covered dress you yourself are adorned,” forcing Hadewijch once again to recognize and live into the eschatological ideal of herself which, as Hadewijch sees in later visions, is already a reality. In Vision 10, the bride in the city who is Hadewijch’s own soul clothes sinners with her virtue (V 10.29); and in Vision 12, all the virtues conduct the perfect bride to her Beloved (V 12.49). The bride (who is Hadewijch herself, cf. V 12.152), is “clad in a robe made of her undivided and perfect will, always devoid of sorrow, and prepared with all virtue....And that robe was adorned with all the virtues, and each virtue had its symbol on the robe and its name written, that it might be known” (emphasis mine). So the dress adorned with virtues, with which Queen Reason is clad and with which Hadewijch herself is adorned, continues as an image through the rest of the Visions. Queen Reason presses Hadewijch to this realization.
Finally, once Hadewijch acknowledges “the whole number of [her] company” (that is, the virtues), we are presented with the striking result that “then Reason became subject to me; and I left her.” Hart notes here: “Since Hadewijch is adorned with the gold robe of virtues, Reason has no further complaint against her.” This amplifies the important theme in Hadewijch’s characterization of reason throughout her works: that reason directs us toward a life of virtue. When Hadewijch lives a life of virtue in union with the Humanity of Christ, reason becomes subject to her, and expands her understanding of her union with God.

As mentioned above, Vision 12 describes the “perfect bride” as she goes to meet the bridegroom, who is the great unlimited Countenance (V 12.21). Hadewijch, at first, does not realize that she is the bride, but the truth of the matter quickly becomes apparent. She is clad with a robe adorned with virtues, and this time Hadewijch mentions the virtues by name with a descriptor. Interestingly, Reason is mentioned as one of the virtues:

\[
\text{The ninth, Reason, showed that she \text{[the bride]} was well ordered and that Reason was her rule, by which she always performed works of justice, and which enlightened her with regard to all the dearest will of her Beloved, so that like him she gave blessing and condemnation to all that he loved and all that he}\]

\[\text{37 Hart, Hadewijch, 383, n. 87.}\]
\[\text{38 When Hadewijch falls down to worship the Countenance, a series of eagles cry our “The loved one does not yet know all she shall become!”; “The loved one does not yet know what her highest way is!”; and “The loved one does not yet know what the great kingdom is that she as bride shall receive from her Bridegroom!” A fourth eagle tells her to stand. V 12.33-42.}\]
\[\text{39 It ought to be noted that Hadewijch develops lists of virtues in several places, of differing numbers, and differing members. Hadewijch clearly has no systematically consistent list of the virtues. As mentioned above, in Vision 9 she says there are 1,000 virtues. Here in Vision 12 there are twelve. In Vision 1, where the trees represent the “perfect virtues,” she has eight. One of the trees (wisdom) has a branch which is “the wholly unique Virtue” (V 1.163).}\]
hated; and she gave all that he gave, and she took all that he took. (V 12.98)

Reason, which is the bride’s rule, shows that she is well-ordered and performs works of justice, and enlightens her toward union with the will of God. In V 12.140, Command of the Virtues escorts the bride into the city, where she is met by Fruition of Love.

Vision 13 is the climax of the book of Visions, in which Hadewijch is brought into complete union with the Countenance. As Hart points out, it clearly parallels Vision 1:

Both visions are made up of two parts. In both, the first part falls into seven sections, during which Hadewijch enjoys the help of a specially appointed angelic guide. Again, in both, Hadewijch finds herself in the second part in the presence of Christ in Vision 1, and in the presence of Mary in Vision 13. In both, Christ, or Mary, speaks to Hadewijch at some length; and in both it is evident that the wonder and mystery of the meeting call for complete reverence, and that Hadewijch can only listen without uttering a word.40

In the Book of Visions, Vision 13 is followed immediately by The List of the Perfect, which, in an unfortunate editorial decision, was not included in Hart’s English-language translation.41 In Vision 13 the “great throng of Seraphim” bring forth “a great number of adorned spirits” who “were all adorned with loftiest fidelity to godly reason, with powerful love” (V 13.46). In a striking revelation, a Seraph tells Hadewijch that even Mary, the “highest of the twenty-nine” (V 13.128), did not experience the fruition that Hadewijch now knows before her assumption:

For she was full of silent reasoning and of divine Love, and was confirmed by association with her Son and by his behavior, through which, enough to the full, the inmost and highest heaven was made known to her. (V 13.97)

40 Hart, Hadewijch, 27.
41 cf. note 6 above.
So even the souls of “the perfect” have not cast off reason, and precisely because of reason, their human knowledge of Love is greater than that of the angels, “who know Love only by wonder” (V 13.109). The fact that “the perfect” have not cast off reason serves as an implicit reminder to Hadewijch that even as she has already tasted in the present the eschatological fruition of divine union, reason demands that she must still return to fulfill the commands of Christ from Vision 1, as she is reminded at the end of Vision 13, where Mary tells her:

“So, if you wish to have ampler fruition, as I have, you must leave your sweet body here. But for the sake of whose whom you have chosen to become full-grown, and above all for the sake of those whom you love most, you will yet defer it. … Now after you return to yourself, the world will scarcely let you live; and then, a short time after the fortieth day, you will again resume your body, which you keep so nobly for Love.” (V 13.241)

The Visions as a whole move from Hadewijch’s mystical experience of God’s divine “sweetness” to the realization that in order to “conquer” God she must grasp both his Humanity and his Divinity, a fulfillment of Christ’s command to her in Vision 1: “live in misery as a man” (V 1.341). By recognizing the Humanity of Christ and living into that, Hadewijch learns that she must “live the whole God-Man.”42 The purpose of this is didactic, as she carries out the will of Christ for the sake of all those who will come to know his will through her (V 1.139).

Part II: The Role of Reason in Hadewijch’s Theology

As can be seen in the Visions, reason in Hadewijch’s thinking is variegated, as are many themes in her writing. Reason does not have one simple part to play, after which it is no longer necessary. Key to Hadewijch’s work is, as mentioned above, the dynamic quality of life. Mommaers traces this out quite nicely in the latter third of his book on Hadewijch, showing Hadewijch’s contrasting themes of fruition and want of fruition, speaking and being silent,

42 Jozef van Mierlo, referenced in Hart, Hadewijch, 380, n. 42.
satiety and hunger, fulfillment and desire. Hadewijch’s entire understanding of her relationship with God is rooted in the idea of paradox, as we see in her reference to the hymn “Alpha et Omega, Magne Deus,” in Letter 22, as well as in other places discussed above, such as Vision 6. Because of the centrality of paradox to Hadewijch’s thinking, many themes in her writing appear at first glance to be self-contradictory, but on further analysis it becomes clear that rather than opposing two contradictory ideas, she is vacillating between two realities which are in tension: the present reality of suffering in this world, and the eschatological reality of fruition and union with God in Love. For this reason, Love is sometimes “sweet,” and sometimes “bitter.” The same is true with reason, which also seems to have two sides.

Hadewijch refers to reason in a couple of different ways. In the Letters and Visions, reason is often referred to as “enlightened.” In the Poems in Stanzas, reason is defined as “cruel.” Given Hadewijch’s common practice of contrasting the two sides of a paradox, it does not seem necessary to develop any sort of thesis that Hadewijch has two different kinds of reason in mind when she does this. It seems clear that Hadewijch’s apparently contradictory portrayal of reason is properly referring to what she perceives as the negative and positive functions of reason: negative in that it reveals Hadewijch’s own limitedness, and positive in that it enables her to become something greater.

The Negative Function of Reason

The negative function of reason reveals to Hadewijch her own limitedness in various ways. It serves as a necessary corrective to

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43 Mommaers, Hadewijch, 84-137.
44 L 22.17. Hart notes that the hymn is classified both as Peter Abelard’s as well as Hildebert of Lavardin’s, but that the paradoxical ideas which it expresses are also present in the church fathers, such as Isidore of Seville, who is mentioned in the List. See Hart, Hadewijch, 7; 370 n. 93.
45 Certainly, Hadewijch does refer to the limits of reason in several places, clearly referring to reason that has not been enlightened by Love, as in Letter 4 (“reason errs in these things”), but even here she writes that it is really because “reason is obscured” (L 4.1), not because reason is inherently misleading or wrong.
the ecstatic experience of fruitive union in Love. First, reason forces Hadewijch to recognize her own spiritual immaturity. In an imagined interaction between Hadewijch’s Reason, Desire, and Pleasure; Pleasure is glad to simply “close her eyes and enjoy what she possesses,” but fierce Desire always demands more of Love.

Thus she [Desire] awakens Reason, who says to Pleasure:
“Behold, you must first reach maturity!”
Alas! That Reason should refuse Pleasure
Cuts more than all other pains. (PS 25.5)

Hadewijch views the excessive longing for God’s sweetness (i.e., the mystical experience of Love) to be in and of itself a sign of spiritual immaturity. True maturity is found in the humble obedience to live virtuously in suffering (i.e., living the Humanity of Christ). In PS 30, Reason tells Hadewijch: “Behold what conformity you are after, and all that you must undergo beforehand!” (PS 30.7). Like Christ in Vision 1, Reason in the Poems in Stanzas reminds Hadewijch that she has a long way to go before she becomes “fully grown.”

Second, reason reveals to Hadewijch the great debt she owes to Love. In Letter 30, Hadewijch uses the analogy of lightning, which represents “the light of Love,” and thunder, which is “enlightened reason, which holds up before us the truth, and our debt, and our failure to grow up to conformity with Love, and our smallness compared to God’s greatness” (L 30.162). Reason is “Love’s surgeoeness,” who makes clear to Hadewijch all her faults against Love, but also is the only one who can “best heal all faults against [Love]” (PS 25.9). Through reason, Hadewijch finally realizes that she “can spare nothing for Love” (PS 40.2).

Reason also reveals to Hadewijch the severe limitations of her humanity. In Letter 29, Hadewijch writes that reason showed her the place of Love, which was

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46 This is especially clear in L 10, where Hadewijch describes the “imperfect man” who “imagines he is in greater love because he tastes sweetness” (10.19), “For we discover in these souls that as long as sweetness endures in them, they are gentle and fruitful. But when the sweetness vanishes, their love goes too” (10.26).
so far above human thought that I was obliged to understand I might no longer have joy or grief in anything, great or small, except in this, that I was a human being, and that I experienced Love with a loving heart; but that, since God is so great, I with my humanity may touch the Godhead without attaining fruition. (L 29.44)

The place of Love is “far above human thought” precisely because God is so much greater than humans. The limitations of humanity are also shown in Letter 12, quoted above, where Hadewijch talks about the “emotional attachments of frivolous love,” which obscure reason. Hadewijch writes that “no one wishes continually to renounce his emotional attractions for the honor of Love” (L 12.76), but this is precisely why reason must be “our rule” (L 12.108).

As can be seen above, this negative function of reason comes across most clearly in the Poems in Stanzas, where Hadewijch laments against “cruel reason” (PS 16.3). Reason is seen as “cruel” in the Poems in Stanzas precisely because reason jolts Hadewijch from the experience of Love’s sweetness with the realization that she owes Love a great debt, in fact, an infinite debt—and that she must accept and even embrace the painful reality of living faithfully in virtue and hope apart from Love’s bliss as she grows in union with the Humanity of Christ:

When Love first traps someone, she shuts his eyes With all her sweets: he thinks his fortune made And fancies he will meet nothing but joys: Thus she lures all with her cleverness.

Then comes reason, in force, And with new works of obligation: So is desire’s intensity allayed. (PS 19.12)

The Positive Function of Reason
In addition to this negative function of reason, however, Hadewijch is very clear that reason also plays an important positive role in the life of Love. Throughout her corpus, reason has a guiding function, as reason “illuminates,” “opens,” “counsels,” “instructs,” “enlightens,” and “informs” Hadewijch and her
devotees.\textsuperscript{47} Reason “enlightens the soul in all the truth of God’s will,” and leads the will to conform itself to the “law of Love,” which “is to be obedient” (L 18.130). Reason leads to discernment, which in turn leads to virtue, hence Hadewijch’s command to “give reason its time, and always observe where you heed it too little” (L 24.1). Reason is a gift from God, “which instructs man in all his ways and enlightens him in all works. If man would follow reason, he would never be deceived” (L 14.57). Hence, reason must be Hadewijch’s “rule,” a gift from God which instructs her and guides her toward a life of virtue, living the Humanity of Christ. Several times throughout her work Hadewijch mentions the necessity of reason for spiritual maturity: “No one can become perfect in Love unless he is subject to his reason” (L 13.17).\textsuperscript{48}

By this it becomes clear, therefore, that the positive role of reason is one of guidance, and that this guidance can come from nothing but the soul’s faculty of reason. The guidance that reason offers demands of Hadewijch that she abandon her desire to taste God’s sweetness, and follow the commands of Christ in Vision 1, to “live in misery as man…that on earth my life in you should be so fully lived in all the virtues that you may in no point fail me in myself” (V 1.341). Hadewijch must live a life in imitation of Christ’s Humanity, and so be drawn through union to his Divinity. This must be done, at times, without the feeling of Love’s sweetness, and sometimes this feeling becomes so keen that Hadewijch refers to it in terms of “exile” and “abandonment” in the Poems in Stanzas.

But an interesting point ought to be made here, from PS 19.4 and 19.10:

\begin{quote}
[Love] first made me beautiful promises
And then grew cruel, I now know.
That Love did not deceive or mock me
In that woe, would I might understand it!
\hspace{1cm} But she meant to make clear
\hspace{1cm} And reveal to me
How reason illuminates the entire abyss of Love. …
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47} See PS 19.4-5; 26.7; 43.11-12; L 14.57; 18.80.
\textsuperscript{48} See also L 13.1; 12.108; V 9.6.
Since I have followed in her train with strong fidelity,
That Love might stand me in good stead,
I have renounced all alien sadness,
And I am firm in confidence
   Through which I know
That Love one day
Will embrace me in oneness.

After mentioning the unfulfilled promises of Love in stanza 4, in stanza 10 Hadewijch affirms her confidence in the knowledge that these promises will one day be fulfilled. The word “fidelity,” in the first line of stanza 10, is a thematic word in the Poems in Stanzas, which are characterized by present fidelity in suffering, and a future hope of fulfillment. In Hadewijch’s view, reason helps her to realize that the fulfillment of Love’s promises is certain. This is reminiscent of the role that Reason plays in Vision 9, when she demands that Hadewijch recognize that the dress adorned with virtues is her own dress. Reason not only causes Hadewijch to recognize the eschatological fulfillment of promises and gives her confidence of them, but as we see in Vision 9, Reason demands that Hadewijch recognize the eschatological reality into which she is being made to grow. This is precisely how Hadewijch is able to endure in her life of “misery as man” in “exile” without the experience of God’s sweetness: with reason as her rule, she is able to acknowledge the certainty of the eschatological fulfillment of God’s promise of fruitive union, and this certainty allows her to embrace a life of suffering in conformity with the Humanity of Christ.

Conclusion

In Hadewijch’s mystical theology, it is clear that reason plays an important, even essential role. In her Visions, reason, personified as a queen, serves as a pivotal catalyst which drives the book of Visions toward its end. In her broader work, reason is shown to have both a negative function, revealing Hadewijch’s limitedness and spiritual immaturity, as well as a positive function, encouraging Hadewijch to live a life of virtue and assuring her that the promises of Love will be fulfilled. Reason reveals to Hadewijch the many ways in which she is limited, causing much
suffering as a result. But Reason also serves as Hadewijch’s God-given guide, which, recognizing the certainty of the fulfillment of God’s promises, drives Hadewijch toward a life of virtue in conformity with the Humanity of Christ.
The Birth Dearth and Classis Toronto:
Why it’s worth noting why we stopped having productive sex
Wayne Veenstra

Our church has a sex problem.¹

I’m not talking about the anxiety experienced by youth pastors everywhere as they try furiously to respond to the raging hormones of adolescence; or, for that matter, the anxiety experienced by pastors everywhere as they try furiously to respond to the raging hormones of adulthood!

In fact, in a way, I’m calling for more sex. Well, more productive sex.

Here’s why I think this topic is important: our churches are shrinking. Both anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest as much. Of course, the problem of shrinking churches is a complex problem with more facets than we can address even if we allow ourselves two servings of cheesecake; however, we can at least broach this one particular problem—sex in our classis—that contributes to the larger problem of shrinking congregations. We’ll do this in two courses (so as to help you pace out your dessert): first, we’ll diagnose the specific problem and take a look at the historical factors that have led to declining birth rates that have affected both church and state. Then, I will briefly suggest a couple of ways that we, as leaders in Classis Toronto, can move forward in light of this diagnosis.

To begin, allow me to clearly state the problem as I see it: the

¹ Remarks Prepared for Classis Toronto on the Problem of Declining Birth Rates. Originally submitted to Dr. James Bratt in Spring 2013 for 305B – Church History II.

² A brief introductory word is necessary to provide the reader with some critical context to what they are about to read. The following article was a course assignment for the class ‘The Church in the Historical Context II’. Students were asked to assume they were asked (supposing they were recognized as a ‘church history maven’) to deliver some after dinner remarks at a Classis meeting. This will explain the scattered references to dessert (although I admit to having a soft spot for my wife’s cheesecake). This will also explain why some discussion focuses on the situation in the Greater Toronto Area, but I believe the problem of declining birthrates applies across the West.
married people in our congregation are having sex, but they’re not having enough productive sex. Christian Reformed couples are not having enough babies.

If the problem is infertility (self-selected or otherwise), why is it a problem? Why should we, as pastors, care what goes on in the bedrooms of our congregations? As one TIME magazine columnist put it, “…if enough people over time decide not to be fruitful and multiply, eventually their churches will disappear.”³ While, as pastors, we might not be confident mathematicians, I can boldly venture to say that if more people are dying than being born, then even if every single child that is born to CRC parents stays in the CRC (which, of course, does not seem likely given our current success in this area), we’ll continue to experience plunging membership rates. And, as that same TIME columnist, Mary Eberstadt, has said, if a church is not growing, it “is just a bed and breakfast waiting to happen.”⁴

Again, it is important that you understand that the decline in membership we’re experiencing in our churches is more than a demographic problem, but demography is certainly an important part of explaining our present plight. Jonathan V. Last, author of the book “What to Expect When No One’s Expecting”, seems to be speaking to most of the women in our predominantly Dutch-Canadian congregations when he points out that the fertility rate for white, college-educated women is 1.6 children per woman, well-below the 2.1 rate that is needed to sustain current population levels.⁵ No country, organization, or church can survive those statistics.

By contrast, it is now an undeniable fact that the greatest growth in the Christian world is taking place in the Global South.

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⁴ Ibid.
⁵ On a global level, the world’s fertility rate has dropped from 6.0 to 2.52 in less than 40 years. Canada saw the number of children born fall from 3.77 to 2.33 in the 1960’s alone [Diarmaid MacCulloch, Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years (New York: Penguin, 2010), 986)].
Christianity’s unique ability to indigenize—for the gospel to be contextualized, yet not compromised—has been responsible for Christianity’s “center of gravity” shifting to the Global South, and places like Buenos Aires, Manila, and Lagos. In countries like Nigeria or the Philippines, where reproduction rates are high, rapid population growth is expected. A significant percentage of their populations are Christian. If the populations of these countries continue to rise and Christianity maintains its percentage share of the population, then naturally a bigger pie equals a bigger slice. Uganda is the perfect example. Simply by maintaining its current percentage share of adherents, the Church in Uganda, by some projections, “should grow from around 17 million [in the early 2000’s], to 24 million in 2025, and to 43 million by mid-century (55 million if the higher projections are accurate)” (Jenkins 91). That’s an increase of 26 million people professing Christ—and that’s without factoring in growth via evangelism!

Our churches tend to reflect this downward trend of having fewer children and it threatens us at a number of levels. As the population pyramids of our congregations point to older, retired church

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8 The contrast between the population growth, as well as the swell in Christianity, in the Global South versus emptying churches in the global northwest is brought into stark contrast by Philip Jenkins assessment, “Even if Christians just maintain their present share of the population in countries like Nigeria and Kenya, Mexico and Ethiopia, Brazil and the Philippines there are soon going to be several hundred million more Christians from those nations alone. Moreover, conversions will swell the Christian share of world population. Meanwhile, historically low birth rates in the traditionally Christian states of Europe mean that these populations are declining or stagnant. In 1950, a list of the world’s leading countries would have included Britain, France, Spain, and Italy, but none of these names would be represented in a corresponding list for 2050” (Jenkins 2).
members being disproportionately larger percentages of our churches than young families and professionals, we find our numbers in decline and our ability to finance our churches and ministries severely impeded, and eventually, threatened.

In some ways, there is no historical precedent to the problem we face. Yes, the world population—and, of interest to us, the number of individuals who attend church—has, at certain periods, declined due to plague, famine, or war. Yet, as author Jonathan V. Last has put it, the world has never seen population decline simply “because people simply can’t be bothered to have enough children.”

However, the problem of declining birth rates does have its roots firmly planted in history, which is why a church history maven such as myself decides to speak about demographic crises today. The historical roots of the demographic problem that we, as a church, are experiencing are found in two revolutions: the Industrial Revolution and the Sexual Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution refers to a period, beginning in the early 1800’s, which saw a massive shift in labor patterns. It was a monumental shift that saw men and women move from rural agricultural work to urban factory work. Rapid urbanization took place during the 1800’s. In 1800, Europe had 20 cities with a population over 100,000 but by 1900 it now had 150 cities of that size. Farmers beat their plowshares into heavy machinery parts and began working long days in urban factories as part of the dawning of the age of mass production. Many people no longer produced their own food, but consumed food that was shipped into the cities by new and expanding forms of transportation, such as the rail line. Increasing numbers of people lost their close relationship with the natural environment, “For the first time in history, more than one-half of a nation’s population did not work in agriculture or live in the countryside. As more workers ceased

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to depend upon the soil for their livelihood, and as technology replaced human power, a sense of human superiority over nature displaced the traditional understanding of the role of humans as dependent on nature.”

The Industrial Revolution bred a class of persons that lived in cities and that gradually accumulated more wealth. Larger urban centers, increased wealth, mass production and consumption, and a sense of mastery over the natural world are still in the air we breathe today; and, each of these factors, while not directly causing the present birth dearth, do contribute to it in some way.

Urbanization, accelerated by the Industrial Revolution, describes the movement of people from rural environments to the city, where housing and cost of living are more expensive. This makes having children more difficult, as supported by the lower fertility rates witnessed in urban centers. We certainly face these same obstacles to having children here in our classis. In 2013, the average price for a house in Toronto was $519,879. Prices are actually higher if you only consider detached houses. A detached home in Toronto sold for an average of $846,828, with similar homes outside the city centre still selling for a whopping $592,265. We aren’t seeing children in our Classis Toronto churches, in part, because Doug and Debbi needed to live in Toronto and so they decided not to have Dougy Jr.

Less innocent is the fact that the Industrial Revolution, particularly following the Second World War that mandated a certain personal frugality in favor of national war efforts, has produced the wealth and easy access to material and technology that drives consumerism. So, while it may be the case Doug and

11 Ibid., 447.
Debbi passed on Dougy Jr. because they were strapped for cash, it may also be they were strapped for cash because Doug got a new truck while Debbi got her nose done. The prosperity that (eventually) trickles down to the middle class on account of industrialization also seductively promises a quality of life that may be compromised by having a child or three. A 23-year-old Indiana school teacher quoted in a 1967 article of *TIME* magazine captured this spirit when she said, “When I got married I was still in college, and I wanted to be certain that I finished. Now we want to buy a home, and it's going to be possible a lot sooner if I teach. With the Pill I know I can keep earning money and not worry about an accident that would ruin everything.”14 Children, she said, “would ruin everything.” By this, of course, she meant that children might mean she’d have to endure the insufferable fate of living in a smaller house or no longer getting her regular pedicure. An apocalyptic view of children, fuelled by self-interested materialism, is not absent in our congregations and it affects the sex married couples have and the families they plan.15

The second revolution that has impacted the fecundity of Classis Toronto is the Sexual Revolution of the 1960’s. The Sexual Revolution was a period of rapid reexamination and change to understandings related to sexual activity, sexuality, gender, and family. The Sexual Revolution manifested the sense of mastery


15 Russ Douthat, “More Babies, Please,” New York Times (New York). 1 December 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/opinion/sunday/douthat-the-birthrate-and-americas-future.html?_r=0. Russ Douthat, writing in *The New York Times*, stated the problem of prosperity well, “The retreat from child rearing is, at some level, a symptom of late-modern exhaustion — a decadence that first arose in the West but now haunts rich societies around the globe. It’s a spirit that privileges the present over the future, chooses stagnation over innovation, prefers what already exists over what might be. It embraces the comforts and pleasures of modernity, while shrugging off the basic sacrifices that built our civilization in the first place.”
over nature that humanity came to possess over the course of the Industrial Revolution. With the introduction of the Pill (which coincided and perhaps even catalyzed the Sexual Revolution of the 1960’s) and other chemical forms of contraception, in a way previously unknown to humankind, pregnancy was seen as an option entirely up to the woman (and if the circumstances were right, her partner may be allowed to have some modicum of input). Crassly put, parenthood became similar to choosing between a pack of gum or a chocolate bar at the pharmacy checkout counter.

The Church’s response to contraception has been mixed. In 1930, at the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Church opened the door to artificial contraception (although not referring to the Pill yet obviously) as a means of planning a family by saying that while abstinence is the preferred method when trying to limit or avoid children, “…other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of… Christian principles.”16 The Anglican Church seemed, after the beginnings of the Sexual Revolution, to lose any reservations it had about artificial contraception by the end of the century. “We don't have any problem about contraception,” said Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey in 1992. “It is wrong that the wife should bear the burden of lots of children.”17

The contraceptive debate in the Roman Catholic Church became especially heated during the 1960’s when Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council. There was widespread anticipation that the Pope would change the church’s teachings on the immorality of artificial contraception and make pronouncements


that were more inline with rapidly changing views about sexuality and birth control. However, Pope Paul VI (successor to John XXIII) affirmed the Church’s previous condemnation of artificial contraception in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Catholics in the Western World responded with widespread dissent; by 1970, two-thirds of American Catholic women used birth control, directly disobeying official church teaching.

The Christian Reformed Church was hesitant to endorse contraception in 1936, cautioning against the “growing evil of selfish birth restriction.”\(^{18}\) In the 1971, there was a motion to change the denomination’s position because of concerns about overpopulation (which have proved embarrassingly false, as Jonathan Last’s book *What to Expect When No One’s Expecting: America’s Coming Demographic Disaster*).\(^{19}\) This motion failed. In 2003, however, Synod effectively removed the 1936 emphasize on procreation as a purpose of marriage when it said “a married couple’s decision whether or not to use birth control to prevent the conception of a baby is a private, disputable matter.”\(^{20}\)

All this to say, that perhaps with the exception of the *official teaching* of the Roman Catholic Church, the 1960’s acted as a tipping point that marked the period when major Christian denominations began to more readily adopt artificial contraception as a viable means of controlling fertility.

Hopefully the problem—lack of offspring—and the historical roots—the Industrial and Sexual revolutions—are clear. Briefly, let me propose some ways forward:

1. As pastors and church leaders, we must recommit ourselves to challenging idols of wealth and prosperity. As

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\(^{18} \) “Birth Control,” *Christian Reformed Church*. 

This warning was given in the 1936 Synodical Document, “Birth Control Testimony.”

\(^{19} \) Last, 12-36.

\(^{20} \) “Birth Control,” *Christian Reformed Church*. The document here adds the generic “out clause” that married couples should “consider the size of their families prayerfully before God.” While this is true, baptizing a contentious answer in the language of vague piety does not change the fact that the sex act was separated from procreation by this 2003 statement.
followers of Jesus we do not—and must not—live for comfort and worldly pleasures. Comfort and stuff ought not be the determining factors in our decision-making. While this doesn’t mean that couples have to mindlessly fill their quiver, it does mean that we should gently challenge the motivations for whatever family decisions are made.

2. We must also do a better job of exalting motherhood and fatherhood. Parenting is not something that you settle into once you’ve ticked off important life goals. Parenting is, and should be, spoken about as a significant commitment that is a choice of immense value on an individual and social level. Those who commit to lives of selfless love and sacrifice should be celebrated, not pitied or frowned upon as if settling for something less than ideal.

3. Our congregations should consider ways they can help offset the cost of having a family. Free babysitting services within the community. More community dinners. Organized clothing exchanges. Given the steep cost of living within our classis’ boundaries, we must make a conscious effort to make having a family financially possible.

4. We must remind our congregants that, as Christians, we do not believe the present moment is all we have. In fact, we are capable of making decisions that have serious consequences in the long term, consequences that can outlive those who make the decisions. Decisions such as having and raising children who are committed to loving God and serving others is one such choice that emerges out of this worldview that looks beyond this moment and the years that a given person lives.

The hostility—sometimes passive and unintended, but at other times quite intentional—towards having and raising children is one reason our congregations are shrinking and our doors may be closing. We must not only understand the importance of having and raising children, but we ought to examine the historical roots of our current predicament. We must be shown the assumptions of
our own age that have created a culture where adults have more cars than children because unless our Churches affirm and promote the virtue of having children our churches are bed and breakfasts waiting to happen.
Impossibility of Adam: Genetics as a Challenge to the Historical Adam
Jonathan S. Owens

I. Introduction
For the past several decades, there has been an increasing wave of scholarship that challenges some of the basic operating beliefs of the Christian faith. Big-Bang cosmology confronts belief in a literal seven-day creation and the idea of a young Earth; evolution calls into question the specialness of human beings and the purpose of life; and the topic of this paper, genetic evolution, challenges some of the very basic assumptions of Christian dogmatics. The science of modern genetic theory suggests several difficulties with the classical understanding of an historical Adam and Eve. If these challenges are valid, then this widely held and religiously significant conception of the first humans must be rethought, along with such ideas as the *Imago Dei*, the Fall, Original Sin, and redemption itself. This paper considers a wide swath of literature on the topic of genetic theory and human origins and concludes with some suggestions on how the Christian community might proceed in reformulating their understanding of Adam and Eve.

Fundamental teachings within historically orthodox Christianity have a few particular doctrines at their center: one, that the Bible contains reliable truth about reality; and two, that Christ’s life, death, and resurrection are necessary to bring about reconciliation between humanity and God. If evolution and big-bang cosmology are correct, then it becomes difficult to read several biblical passages in a straight-forward and literal manner – calling into question the validity of other sections claimed to be true for the immediate context. If evolutionary genetics is correct, then it becomes difficult to explain how there could have been a real, historical couple who sinned against God, from whom all of humanity is descended, and who passed on their guilt of trespass to their progeny. These challenges are summed up in the following two quotes:

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1 Originally Submitted to Dr. Mary Vanden Berg in Fall 2013 for 564BT – Intersections of Science and Theology.
The debate over whether Adam was historical is ultimately a debate over whether we trust what the Scriptures clearly teach. If we cannot be certain of the beginning, then why would we be certain about what the Scriptures teach elsewhere?²

- Simon Turpin, Answers in Genesis

The true meaning of the fallen and the regenerate consciousness cannot be maintained unless in the back of both lies the history of Adam and his fall. This does not mean that it is a matter of indifference whether or not we take the Genesis narrative with respect to Adam as historical. It is only if we do take this narrative as historical that a sound theology can be maintained. Adam's sin was the willful transgression of man to the known revelation of God. If we deny the historicity of the Genesis narrative, we shall be compelled to reduce man's responsibility for sin so drastically that in reality nothing remains of it.³

- Cornelius Van Til, Westminster Theological Seminary

These two authors, Turpin and Van Til, come from opposite banks of the academic stream, yet they both see the challenge of genetic evolution as a serious threat to the basic doctrines of the Christian Church. They are not alone in their beliefs, and together, they show the breadth of those concerned by the influence of science on theology.

Unfortunately, many of the responses made to the current scientific consensus by theologians and creationists are often inadequate defenses of the classical understanding of Adam and Eve, either ignoring the science at hand or abandoning Scripture in attempt to accommodate popular thought. Before discussing these specific issues, it will be appropriate to look at exactly what the historic understanding of Adam and Eve requires and at four of the genetic concepts that challenge that understanding.

II. Classical Understanding of the Historical Adam & Eve

Until relatively recently, the general consensus in Christianity is that the first few chapters of Genesis contain, at least, what the author believed to be true events. Included in these chapters is that God specially created humanity, two persons as Adam & Eve specifically, and that all of humanity is descended from them. Their place is near the top of creation, and created in the Image of God, they have dominion over the world. When Adam & Eve chose to disobey God, a curse fell upon the world (commonly called the Fall) which introduced decay and death. That first sin committed was subsequently passed on to every generation of humanity, and evil spread exponentially throughout the world with the population.

While there are some variations, a few of which will be discussed near the end of this paper, the global Church holds to this understanding of Adam and Eve. Whatever approach that one comes with to Scripture, there are a few requirements of historical orthodoxy that must still be met concerning the original pair of human beings: (1) Adam and Eve were real, historical figures; (2) they were specially created: even if there was some evolutionary force going on, humanity exhibits a miraculous break from it; (3) Adam and Eve are the original bearers of the Image of God and all of humanity possesses it, demonstrating that all of humanity are descended from this one original pair; and, (4) a real, historical, and moral fall occurred, introducing death and sin into the world.

These four aspects are the necessary ones, but those who agree with them will often posit four additional requirements as well: namely that, (5) the first pair lived between four and seven thousand years ago, especially if the genealogies in the Bible are to be given any credit; (6) there is no connection between humanity and any previously discovered hominid (Adam was made from the dust of the earth, and Eve was made from his rib); (7) that creation

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5 Just a little below the angels, Hebrews 2:7.
8 Proof of this – I was in college before I learned that I had the same number of ribs as folk of the female gender. I know several
was all made wholly perfect in a seven day creation via non-evolutionary means; (8) and that (ontologically evil) death and suffering was not present in the world until the Fall. Given these, many persons within both the global and western evangelical church will find that even some of the basic assumptions of genetic theory conflict with robustly orthodox understandings of Adam and Eve.

III. Four Considerations that Challenge the Historic Couple

To give an understanding of the basic assumptions operating within genetic theory, four different approaches in genetics will be discussed. The genetic ideas that will be considered all share a few common challenges to Adam and Eve – especially considering their status as recent, historic persons who are also the ancestors of all of humanity. Genetic theory, in general, suggests that all of humanity is directly and causally descended from previous forms of life. The evolutionary process of genetic descent took an amazing long time to occur; thus when properly understood, it is highly unlikely that humanity could have all descended from a single pair of human beings, no matter how far back in time one places them. That said, each approach offers its own perspective and its own challenges to the historical Adam and Eve.

III. A. Genetic Evolution & Common Ancestry

The first of these ideas to consider is that of the origin of human genes. Homo sapiens, the only extant species of the genus Homo, are crafted from around 25,000 different pairs of genes. As the people who will adamantly defend the thesis that the genders differ in their number of ribs.

9 David Zeigler, Understanding Diversity, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 53-5. An interesting note here: it is commonly assumed within Christian circles that one of the marks of humanity’s superiority (dominion over) to the rest of created order is the immense complexity of human beings – 25,000 pairs of genes is a lot! That said, some flower plants are significantly more complex. Arabidopsis thaliana, for example, has been a primary subject in genetic research, thus far scientists have clocked 150,000 genetic pairs (300,000 genes) in the plant and that number is still climbing as they try to determine the genetic structure that causes the flower to bloom. Zeigler, 54; Patrice
human genome$^{10}$ is compared with other organisms that have been sequenced, a striking feature that stands out is that human beings share more than 99% of their genetic material with Chimpanzees.$^{11}$ In fact, there are only about ten significant pairs of genes that separate Homo sapiens from their primate relatives, and these are mere rearrangements of structure – not integrally different structures. Even “long before genome sequencing had zoomed into the research stratosphere, microscopists had been comparing human and chimpanzee chromosomes. They discovered the human chromosomes perfectly aligned with chimpanzee chromosomes except in a few places…”$^{12}$ The general evolutionary assumption that is drawn from this is that human beings and chimpanzees must have descended from the same, in common, ancestor. Obviously, such an assumption by itself is inadequate; the evidence must go beyond logic that is based on the presupposition of evolutionary force.

As scientists look at genes, specifically the pairs of genes in human beings and chimpanzees, they can “rollback” their DNA in time. Within the DNA structure of any organism, there is effectively leftover detritus of genes that did not pair up. Scientists can study the genes that are not mated up with other genes, along with some other signs in the DNA structure, and determine how the DNA looked in its previous generation, and the generation before that, and so on. Basically, by looking at the deep structure of a present strand of DNA, genetic researchers can disassemble it, and put together a time-line of how it reached its present


$^{10}$ That is, the entirety of the human hereditary structure – all the genes, RNA/DNA, etc.


$^{12}$ Fairbanks, Relics of Eden, 88.
arrangement. Consider some of the old cities of Europe; in the center of a town, one may find a magnificent library which has stood for five-hundred years. But if one removes the modern improvements, a similar – but different, structure will be found underneath; by digging into the walls and beyond the plaster, even previous embodiments of the building can be found. The further one investigates, the deeper structure that is revealed, and the more can be known about history of the building and about those who built it. The same is true for DNA and human genetics.

Although no such definitive parent-creature has been found, geneticists have rolled back the DNA of both human beings and chimpanzees so far that they have reached identical stages in each. As such, even today, there are only ten pairs of genetic combinations that distinguish the two genera. This research not only logically suggests that human beings and chimpanzees share a common ancestor, it demonstrates the high likelihood that they both descend from the same parent species. As a subset of contemporary genetics, this research into the origins of DNA manifests an interesting set of challenges for classical understandings of human origins. A couple of these aspects are of direct concern to the requirements mentioned in the above discussion of Adam and Eve. If it is the case that humanity is causally descended from some previous creature, what does that say about Adam and Eve as unique and special creations? Furthermore, what is the Image of God? Is it bound up in the ten genetics pairs that are in difference from humanity’s closest relative? At what point in the history of genetic development did Adam and Eve specifically arrive?

III. B. Toolkit Genes

This type of genetic research, digging back through time via the deep structure of DNA, demonstrates common ancestry, but these structures can reveal even more. Researchers working with fruit flies (drosophila, classically simple creatures) have identified

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13 Fairbanks, Relics of Eden, 78-83. Fairbanks offers a detailed description of how this works, in a manner that is beyond the scope of this paper.

14 Fairbanks, Relics of Eden, 90-92.
seven basic “toolkit” genes that, upon investigation, every complex living being shares. By demonstrating that these seven genes persist in almost every living creature, scientists are able to show how these important genes are passed on, thus reinforcing the concept of common ancestry. This research is able to push the timeline farther back, well beyond human-chimpanzee relations.

In widely divergent species, such as horses and salamanders, there is a common set of genes, referred above as toolkit genes, they are also commonly called “housekeeping genes.” These genes control things such as body plan, metabolism, biosynthesis, and oxygen transport. Each of these seven genes can direct the arrangement and pairing of 1,500 or more different genes. If there is a mutation of one of these toolkit genes, then the resultant organism generally cannot survive, or if it does, it persists in life at a great disadvantage.\(^15\)

By looking at systemically more complex organisms, one can trace the evolution of a genomic toolkit, seeing how it combines in different ways to form different structures; for example, compare a fly leg with a human leg – same controlling genes, deploying differentially evolved genetic toolkits. By looking at the evolution of the toolkit genes from one species to another, scientists can easily track development backwards to a very small set of common ancestors for almost all of organic life.\(^16\) This research serves to reinforce the idea that Humanity is not a special creation, but that it evolved in a fluidly predictable pattern from some previous organism. Furthermore, because of the way that toolkit genes function, there is no sense in supposing that the current species \textit{Homo sapiens} is the end of the genus’s development. Toolkit genes have been observed to positively develop new characteristics in \textit{drosophila}, and looking back through other DNA, this development can be seen in other creatures.\(^17\) Because of this, there


\(^{17}\) Carroll, et al, \textit{DNA to Diversity}, 127. The simplification of this topic into simple enough terms for the scope of this paper was facilitated by a friend of mine, Dr. Kelly Beumer at the University of
is great potential for human beings to continue in their evolution as well – questioning that if Adam and Eve were specially created, then why were they not made exempt from the evolutionary process inherent in all other living organisms? If creation was made perfect, why then, does humanity possess all that it needs to further evolve (and has likely evolved in minor ways since its inception)?

III. C. Human Lineage & Required Diversity

The genetic time-line and the functionality of toolkit genes are only two aspects of a whole field of genetic research that connects humanity to a much larger web of life. As one scientist points out, “the history of the human species over the past 100,000 years is sometimes depicted as a branching tree, but… we are much more of a trellis than a tree; or perhaps a wisteria vine is a better metaphor.” Two further fields of genetics that support this idea and pose new challenges to the historic conception of Adam and Eve, arise from the mathematics of how the various genetic differences develop in variant species. Human beings themselves demonstrate several genetic differences. For all of the diversity that can be seen in human beings, those genomic differences are surprisingly relatively minor. That said, even tiny differences like those found amongst humanity, such as hair color, skin color, average height and build, constitution, etc., would take at minimum hundreds of thousands of years each to develop. This brings to mind immediate challenges to young-earth creationism, and certainly calls into question the genealogies given in both the Old and New Testaments. The further question brought up is about the singularity of Adam and Eve; much research seems to suggest

Utah. She is an evolutionary geneticist who has prize-winning research with the genetic structures of Drosophila; it was her tutelage that helped me to understand the power of toolkit genes in living organisms, and the potential they point toward.

18 Even from a biblical standpoint – compare the descriptions of humanity in the first few chapters of Genesis with the present life of human beings.

that, if they did exist, that they were either representatives of a fairly large group of human beings, or there were many pairs of Adams and Eves in diverse locations.

This first issue, of time, is evidenced through the means of genetic change. Genetic change only occurs when two different beings mate together and produce offspring. Even if humanity is given exponential breeding capability, only so much change towards diversity can happen in a given period of time. Because of this, it is possible to trace something as simple as skin color backwards through human development. It is known that humanity, in general, migrated throughout the world from sub-Saharan Africa. As this migration happened, skin color had to change to enable human beings to survive in different climates with variant exposure to the sun – in sub-Saharan Africa, lack of dark pigmentation in one’s skin can lead to gaining skin cancer in only a few years; conversely, having too much pigmentation in a far-north latitude will inhibit the body from maintaining enough vitamin D, thus causing diseases such as rickets. As human beings migrated, they necessarily evolved different skin tones. Looking solely at the genes responsible for skin color, scientists have determined that it took a minimum of 50,000 years of genetic evolution for skin color to change to adapt to different regions.

Given the diversity present in human beings from one race to another and even from region to region within the same race, it can be safely assumed that present humanity is easily older than 50,000 years. Basic geological evidence seems to point along the same lines, showing that the migration of human beings from Africa began at least around 60,000 years ago.

Those pre-migration human beings living in Africa were likely around for a long time before the great migrations began. The complexity and diversity of DNA in sub-Saharan Africa would

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21 Fairbanks, 112-114.
23 Fairbanks, 114.
require genetic combining through procreative means to go back a minimum of 250,000 years, and likely longer, as the smaller the population size, the longer it takes to create diversity. The basic mathematics involved in how genes function, demonstrate that even the contemporary extant species of Homo sapiens has a very long time-line indeed.

III. D. Mathematics & Diversity

However, time alone does explain the whole diversity present in the genome of Homo sapiens. To begin with, any manifestation of diversity requires an initial minimum population size. As humanity developed, it could have never originated in a pair of beings; and given the diversity seen even in the best computer models, humanity must have begun as a differentiated group, or even more likely, as several groups of beings. For the required genetic diversity to exist in humanity’s early development, then pre-hominid groups would already exist as independent, autonomous communities with their own genetic pools. It is from these pre-hominid collectives that humanity developed, as genetically diverse beings are necessary from the beginning in order produce non-similar offspring.

If the genetic clock is rolled back further beyond hominids, the requirement for multiple communities of beings is made obvious through the evolution of sexual differentiation. From the perspective of advantageous, or selective, evolution, having reproduction occur through non-asexual means only happens when genetic material can be combined for a gain. This only occurs when the genetic pool of beings is significantly broad enough to encourage differentiation so that genetic lines become advantageously combined. Because of this, there would have

26 Kaufman, 63-70.
definitely existed a very broad group of living beings in the common ancestry held between human beings and chimpanzees; by the time of a pre-hominid ancestor, these groups would be increasingly diverse. If Adam and Eve were the first human beings, then they were only the first among many, and certainly not the parents of all humanity. If this position held by contemporary genetic theory is true, then there are some issues with the Christian understanding of original sin. If Adam and Eve are not the progenitors of humanity, then how is it that sin is passed on from generation to generation? From an ethical view, if Adam and Eve as a pair, are only representatives of a broader humanity, then how can their sin be fairly applied to the whole of the human race? The required initial population of humanity is broad enough, that it puts up several challenges such as these to the historically orthodox understanding of not only Adam and Eve, but of the nature of sin, and thus, also the role and function of atonement and salvation.

Combined together, these four aspects of genetic evolution: common ancestry, toolkit genes, required time for genetic evolution, and the population pools needed for diversity, all work together to make it difficult to argue for a pair of historic beings from whom all of humanity has descended. Trying to accommodate Adam and Eve in a literal reading of the biblical record while accounting for modern genetic theory becomes almost impossible; but there is yet another side of evolutionary genetics to consider that reinforces the need to bring these two books of revelation together.

IV. A Scientific Response to Teleological Evolution

In defense of the historically orthodox understanding of Adam and Eve, many critics will point to the atheistic basis of the Darwinian evolution on which all of the above challenges, brought by evolutionary genetic theory, are based. They will say that science has no bearing on theology or on a right understanding of Scripture, because science is, by its nature, anti-God. However, this attempt at a defense is actually unfounded; many scientists, both from atheistic and religious paradigms, point to the necessity of God playing an active role for evolution to even be possible.
Contemporary quantum physics, within which evolutionary theory must operate, does not actually require anything of direction or purpose – interactions between entities are, in actuality, wholly random. As such, for the universe to develop into any type of functionality does require some outside force to purposefully guide it. That force, however one thinks of it, must be something that both exists outside of the laws of physics, and yet that can operate within them. Definitions may vary, but it seems likely that this force is God.  

Physicists will also point out that, despite the non-relativity and potential true randomness of quantum physics, the processes involved in the universe are actually amazingly ordered and obviously very predictable. The track of evolution over time, including human development, has functioned like perfect clockwork. Often, observed mutations result in deformation or injury – they are not typically positive events; yet, the record of evolution shows a constantly improving direction in the adaptation of species. When this record is examined, physicists see strong evidence that things could not have occurred in a different way than they have presently unfolded. Given this odd dichotomy between the requirements of quantum physics functionality and the way in which evolution has worked, there is yes/no answer to the question of God’s involvement. It is evident that evolution functions smoothly enough that God is not needed for humanity to have developed; yet without God’s purposeful activity, evolution would not happen at all within the parameters of the universe.

These two arguments for God’s involvement come from scientists who are religious, but the most compelling argument for theistic evolution comes from an ardent atheist – John O. Reiss.

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30 Christian, Muslim, Jewish, et al.
Reiss is an atheist and an anti-teleologist. His argument here is two-fold: (1) the time required for such a rapid and advantageous evolution as seen in Darwinian theory is too short for the allowances physics, and (2) that there is entirely too much positive direction/purpose in Darwinian evolution to match physical law. The human genetic development discussed above is believed by its proponents to have taken place in a framework of around 250,000 years, something Reiss says to be utterly impossible. The diversity in DNA present in the human world would require human DNA to be in development for millions of years, if not eons. Furthermore, as someone who sees quantum physics as the overarching reality of the solar system, Reiss believes that the world has reached its current arrangement through complete randomness, and that it holds no purpose or direction in its development. Evolutionary geneticists, who rely upon Darwinian evolution for their theories, require God’s active involvement in evolution for things to have manifested in the ways that have led to the present state of reality.

Amazingly, most scientists will concur with Reiss’ claim; and while not necessarily pointing to a theistic entity such as God, they will hold to the requirements of evolution with a certain deistic allowance. Some viewpoints, such as Reiss’s own anti-teleology are arguable, but they not tenable for living life. Even dogmatically atheistic scientists will colloquially admit that there could easily be something else “out there” guiding things along; in reality, despite popular representations, there are very few evolutionary scientists who have Reiss’ or Dawkins’ fierce atheism.

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31 An anti-teleologist is one who believes there is no purpose or direction in the universe or in life itself.
33 Reiss, 195-201. This is further reinforced by Kingman, chapter 2 on natural selection.
34 This is the main point behind Richard Rorty’s work *Philosophy and Social Hope*, where he discusses how certain philosophies are probably true, but not useful for living life.
35 This comment is largely from conversations I’ve had with friends who are scientists; those who are not Muslim or Christian, easily admitting to a kind of agnosticism. Such an idea has also been
Given these perspectives, the argument that evolution is anti-God, or even anti-Christian is not easily defendable. Interestingly, Reiss’ accusation that Darwinian evolution can’t happen without God’s involvement, while intended to strip God from the discussion, actually strengthens the scientifically-minded Christian’s argument against the historical understanding of Adam and Eve. Such a position can no longer be claimed as an attempt to remove power from God or importance from humanity.

V. Summary of Genetics’ Challenge / Recap of the Damage

With evolutionary genetics able to be seen as something directed by God, its challenges to some of the basic tenants of Christian doctrine need to be taken all the more seriously. To recap the issues at hand, here are the eight requirements presented by broadly held understandings of Adam and Eve, and the specific challenges to each brought by the genetic theories discussed:

(1) Adam and Eve were real, historical figures.
It is possible that Adam and Eve were real historical figures who lived four to seven thousand years ago, but it is not possible that they were also the first human beings, nor is it possible that all of humanity is descended from them. This is accounted for by the requirements of the present genetic diversity within modern Homo sapiens.

(2) Adam and Eve were specially created: even if there was some evolutionary force going on, humanity exhibits a miraculous break from it.
Not likely; the evidences within human DNA and RNA show a clean evolutionary track back to something pre-human and pre-hominid. The deep structures revealed within human genetics show that there is no need for special divine intervention in the evolutionary program.

(3) Adam and Eve are the original bearers of the Image of God and all of humanity possesses it, demonstrating that all of

reinforced by conversations with Loren Haarmsa and Ralph Stearly of Calvin College.
humanity are descended from this one original pair.

The story of genetic development calls into question the identity of the *Imago Dei*; if it is something physical, like many suggest, when did it first appear? What stops it from being in other advanced non-human entities, such as dolphins and orangutans?

(4) *Adam and Eve were the first to sin, causing a real, historical, and moral fall that introduced death into the world.*

Two problems here: given the initial human population size required for the present diversity within the human genome, Adam and Eve could not have been the sole human beings, thus the likelihood of their being the first sinners is suspect, and if they were, why should their guilt be passed on to the others? Furthermore, death, suffering, and evil are clearly already present in the world before the arrival of humanity – the “Fall” did not introduce anything new.

(5) *Adam and Eve lived between four and seven thousand years ago, otherwise the genealogies in the Bible are suspect.*

Again, see #1; furthermore, the genealogies of the Bible conflict with one another.

(6) *There can be no connection between humanity and any previously discovered hominid; humanity is a special and unique creation (Adam was made from the dust of the earth, and Eve was made from his rib).*

Genetics clearly show the interconnectedness of all living beings, and basic genetic science demonstrates common ancestry. The story in Genesis 2:5, 21-22 is clearly not related to scientific reality, and should not be treated as such.

(7) *Creation was all made wholly perfect in a seven days via non-evolutionary means.*

Genetics points to a constantly evolving creation; if nothing else, the presence and role of toolkit genes in DNA
demonstrate the ability of beings, including humanity, to continue the evolutionary process. If creation was perfect initially, why should it continue to improve? The general operational framework for the science of genetics requires evolution for its functionality, thus allowing for creation through evolution, but not without it.

(8) Ontologically evil death and suffering was not present in the world until the Fall.
Though some attempt it, it is very difficult to separate natural evil (cataclysmic earth events) and moral evil (murder, etc.). There is obvious evidence of suffering and death before the time of humanity – to claim that as not evil is very difficult. Interestingly, this is one of the biggest challenges to a Christian conception of evolution.

The difficulties brought by genetics to the historically orthodox understanding of Adam and Eve, and to the widely held conceptions about them, are manifest. If the science behind these challenges is true, then Christianity needs to reevaluate its stance on Adam and Eve, and may possibly need to rework some of its core dogmatics in response.

VI. Christian Response / Adaptation
It should be obvious from the above that any attempt to fully reconcile both positions will be a futile exercise; however, if one is willing to allow for a non-literal reading of Genesis, consider rethinking the nature of sin, and as such, atonement doctrine, a few responses that attempt to adapt orthodox Christianity to science can be found. These concessions, though, are generally unappealing to the majority of evangelical Christians and are typically found in the more liberal wing of the church.36

Of responses that are accommodationist, the most generally tenable ones take a generous view of God’s sovereignty, allowing

36 See theologians such as John Polkinghorne, Arthur Peacocke, William Hasker, Roger Collins, et al. Open theism and Process Theology certainly have no problem relinquishing the requirements of popular evangelical theology in favor of scientific law.
for God to have created humanity in whatever way that God saw fit – and that the first few chapters of Genesis demonstrate an archetype of humanity and explain why things in the world are as they appear and are experienced. Another idea is that there is no reason why God could not have specially intervened in the evolutionary process – speeding things up dramatically or even skipping steps. Such would result in a clear timeline such as is visible in genetics, but is not excluded from possibility by science. This would allow for God to use evolution even within seven literal days, and for humanity to be a truly special creation. Adam and Eve could be the sole originators of all humanity if God intentionally brought about diversity through each successive generation.

Unfortunately, both of these accommodating perspectives, along with others and the whole theistic-evolutionary framework utilized in many scientific apologetics, fail to satisfy the much of evangelical world. The dissatisfaction felt with such theories stems predominantly from a very high-view of Scripture. If Scripture does not plainly describe reality as it is, than one can easily fall down an actual slippery slope into relativism. If one successfully accommodates science in with the words of Genesis 1-4, it is easy to move from a high-view of Scripture into a perspective where other parts of the Bible may be held into question. The concern brought by Turpin in the opening paragraphs of this paper is a real one – it is not a difficult project to find those who initially held a very literal reading of Scripture; but who, by having allowed some parts of the Bible not to be true, in a few years slipped into a position that views the whole of the Bible as a fairytale that offers occasional bits of useful advice, much the same as any other holy book. This is a definite concern.

38 Grey, 287.
39 This is a real danger; many of my own friends have fallen into this trap; and it is one that I myself had to climb out of. It is equally hazardous to hold the whole of Scripture to a strict modern-literalist
to those who believe that the Bible is God’s Word, and figuring out the balance, if one can be found, is very important.

The second serious argument against theistic evolution, and thus against evolutionary genetics’ challenges to Adam and Eve, is that of theodicy. The process of evolution requires millennia and generations of living, development, adaptation, competition, suffering, mass extinction, and death previous to the appearance of humanity. Though it can be done, it is very hard to construct a satisfactory explanation of how non-human suffering and death is not real, and does not have a moral component. The gratuitous and cataclysmic suffering revealed by the fossil record and, indeed, required by evolution, even if natural, is still evil present in the world. Those who distinguish between natural evil and moral evil do not have an argument that is easily supported by folk who have had relatives horrifically maimed by nature or killed in “natural disasters.” Theistic evolutionists must somehow accommodate for the existence of pain and death in pre-hominids, and explain how those creatures, barely less than human, can be allowed by God to suffer without any reflection on the goodness of God.

Furthermore, the theology of Paul presented in much of the New Testament, requires for suffering and death to have been brought in to the world by human sin; otherwise the atonement of Christ is lacking in much of its biblical character, and it is God, not Adam and Eve, who is responsible for the evil present in the world.

The argument from theodicy is probably the strongest available against evolutionary challenges to Adam and Eve. A more literal reading of the first four chapters of Genesis make it much easier to answer the origin of evil in the world in such a way that is significantly more comforting than having it part of the natural processes of things, as is offered through evolution and contemporary genetic science.

The evidence brought by evolutionary genetic theory makes it seem as if Adam and Eve are impossible historical constructions;

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perspective; maintaining a robust reformed hermeneutic is a good way of keeping a high-view of scripture while allowing for the validity of science.

40 The problems of theodicy in evolution are discussed in length by Russell, 366; also see the works of Marilyn McCord Adams.
yet there are compelling reasons to follow the biblical account, and those reasons are not necessarily precluded by science itself.

VII. Conclusion

As Christians on both sides of this issue struggle to develop sophisticated answers, moving forward is clearly a difficult undertaking. The scientific evidence overwhelming seems to point toward a very specific time-line of human development. And taking that evidence seriously calls into question many of the central doctrines of historically orthodox Christianity. Yet, the orthodox understanding is clearly worth defending – thousands of years of thought and doctrine developed by intelligent, sophisticated, and devout persons cannot be easily discounted by a few decades of contemporary scientific research. Reconciling these two books, the Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation, must start with a robust respect for and knowledge of Scripture. Here, the historic Reformed hermeneutic of biblical interpretation is useful. When considering what science has to say about this world, recognizing the complexity of biblical texts and respecting that there are differences of genre, purpose, culture, form, and audience helps to view these two “books” as not in competition with each other. Holding a complex view of Scripture enables one to view science as something that can compliments knowledge of God and the world, not as conflicting with it or discounting what is said in the Bible.

Similarly, contemporary scientific understanding needs to be respected for what it can know and demonstrate – but its theories, while often very well vetted, tested, and widely held, must be grasped with a certain ambivalence that allows for mystery (just like well received theological doctrine). The placing of mystery alongside science is something that quantum physicists have become quite used to, and it is a habit that should be acquired by those attempting to reconcile “hard” science with biblical texts.41

If anything, progress is not going to be found in burying one’s

head in theological sand and ignoring the evidences of science; nor can any Christian claim that Scripture is a only a story of moral example. Finding a solution will require those involved to be prayerfully concerned with each other as well as with their own work – the biggest problem in the debate has been the demonization and labeling of the two sides, as fundamentalists on one hand or as liberals on the other. Neither rhetoric nor semantics will be helpful in developing useful answers for the Church. Patience with one another, intellectual honesty, and serious piety can work together to find a solution that is truly ecumenically beneficial.

In going forward, a few steps are essential that could aid in progress towards an agreed understanding. It seems that a good start is with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Both sides should sit down and prayerfully consider who Jesus is, why the second person of the Trinity became incarnate, and what it is that Jesus accomplished. Admittedly, that task may be somewhat harder than first appears, but at the least, there should be a hearty discussion of what salvation is and what it entails. From there, work backwards to Genesis – who do Adam and Eve need to be for the narrative of God’s salvation of the world to be true? Does a reinterpretation of the first few chapters of Genesis, more along Augustinian guidelines, corrupt the truth of Scripture? If Scripture can be viewed through the lens of a sophisticated hermeneutic that is responsible to Christology and soteriology, then an understanding of Adam and Eve can be found that accommodates the science of genetics, yet that does not compromise the heart of the Christian message, even if that understanding does not necessarily entail an actual, historical pair from whom all of humanity descended.

No answer crafted will ever satisfy all of those involved in the discussion, on either side; but given the strength of both science and of Scripture, it is possible to hold both together in a way that

\[\text{\textsuperscript{42}}\text{ See Augustine's comments on the proper interpretation of }\]
\[\text{Scripture in }\textit{De Doctrina Christiana} 0.1\text{ (the preface) and following.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{43}}\text{ From my own bias, I mean a Reformed hermeneutic that holds a very high view of scripture, but still allows for responsible criticism.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{44}}\text{ It is my opinion that you can have any two of these qualifiers, but not all three.}\]

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honors the tradition and respects the gifts of God in revelation and intellect. Perhaps the words of Peter should be the guiding principle and closing of this discussion:

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.\footnote{The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Peter 3:15–16.}

- 1 Peter 3:15-16, NIV.