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Stromata

“...a vehicle for scholarly expression,”

Edited for the Student Body of
Calvin Theological Seminary
by Katrina Schaafsma

Cover design
in collaboration with Woodrow Dixon

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Back issues of Stromata from 2001 to the present are available online at: http://www.calvinseminary.edu/pubs/stromata.php

All printed issues of Stromata are held at the Hekman Library, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
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Randall Buursma
The Guys

Walter Miedema

Sonny loved nicknames
Most forgot that long ago
He even gave himself one
Though they’re more formal about it now
“When Sonny comes
Sonny will do what he’s gonna do”

There was something fishy about him
from the beginning
and we were ones to know

Claiming he would build his house
His crib
on Rocky
Named the rough one steady
the one who would cut
when others would kiss
The one who was all or nothing
when it came to Sonny

And you and I
By his side
You right
and I left
talking him up to everyone we met, or rumbling,
like dad when we left him to take up our positions
Lieutenants we believed
staying so close we became too comfortable in the positions
and asked to have them for keeps

1
But it was “not for Sonny to say”
“Can you Drink with Sonny”

“We can.”

We did

He left us suddenly in shock
returning to awaken us again
I was the next to leave
my cup drained
my number retired
And you the writer
imitating him
calling your self
“Sonny Loved” when you know we all were
and promising that when we saw him again
He would be handing out names
names on stones
a new command
in names we can hold
and know.
A Fool's Race:  
Hebrews 12:1-3

Jennifer Holmes

I’m sure you’ve heard faith described as a race before. The metaphor is a common one in scripture. It is found here, in Hebrews, and also in Acts, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, & 2 Timothy.

But, it seems like a strange comparison to me. If you think about it, our faith really isn't very much like a race at all.

The races on television – whether it’s the 100M dash, the Indy 500, the Tour de France – they are about the best equipment, the most strength and speed, being fiercest competitor. Most of the time you have to be young, and often your victory will bring fame. People gather in the stands and hunker down in front of their TVs to cheer on the athletes, the elite.

But, that’s not at all what it is like to follow Christ. Our faith is not about strength and speed, but requires us to admit our own weakness and enter into suffering. It is about wisdom and virtue which tend to come more with age, rather than youth. Jesus even says that in the Kingdom of God, “the first will be last.”

What kind of race gives the gold medal to the losers?

So, why then does the author of Hebrews use the race metaphor at all? Well, one of the reasons is that the life of faith, like a race, is hard, and if you want to stay in it at all, you have to know where you are going.

The people to whom Hebrews is written are learning just how hard this race of faith can be. At the end of chapter 10 we read that they are being publically ridiculed and abused. Their possessions are being confiscated. Chapter 12, verse 4, tells us that they have not had to die, but that might be next.

Why would the author mention it if it weren’t coming? “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood,” it says.
As they start to realize just how hard this race is, verse 3 says that they are growing weary and losing heart. Back in chapter 10, the author pleads with them, “do not throw away your confidence.” He pleads because to lose their confidence is to lose everything, because this race is one that can only be run by faith. It doesn’t require physical strength or special abilities, a big car, or a nice bike, only faith.

Their confidence is everything. And if they throw that away, they forfeit the race entirely.

Not much has changed, has it?

Grand Rapids may not be a hotspot of persecution, but we know that a lot of North Americans think that the Christian faith is a joke, or that it is too strict, or that Christians are all just hypocrites.

In the eyes of much of the world, what we believe is absolutely ridiculous. This is easy to spot in popular culture. There we find books like Richard Dawkins’ “The God Delusion” and the slightly more provocative title by Christopher Hitchens, “god is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.”

There are times when we come face to face with it as well.

During my undergraduate degree, I had a psychology professor who absolutely could not stand Christianity and let all 300 of us in the class know it. From the front of the class he would deride Christians and tear down the faith. I remember him specifically mentioning a Canadian football player by the nick-name of Pinball Clemons. Clemons had said publically that he had taken a different job and a pay cut because he felt that it was the will of God. For my professor, that was absolutely impossible, totally stupid. “Because God told him to!? Yeah right!”

I sat there every day next to my friend Dan, both of us Christian, and both of us at a loss for what to do. We just shrank down in our seats, as I’m sure many other Christians in the room did, cause no one said a word.

I often look back at that moment and wish that I could do it over, that I could say or do something.

But that said, I still give in to the temptation to hide my faith.

On a flight not too long ago, when I was coming home from Christmas, I was reading “The Politics of Jesus.” When I put the book down I felt myself wrestling about whether or not to hide the cover. The name “Jesus” is on there pretty big, and what was the guy next to me going to think? I pushed it into the seat pocket in front of me, and it stopped going in just before the title was hidden.
I kept trying to push it down farther. I felt so guilty and childish for hiding, but I just kept doing it.

Maybe you can remember similar experiences? Times when you have downplayed your faith to a friend or co-worker? Or felt embarrassed by it?

This kind of fear even creeps into our relationships with one another: have you ever felt nervous asking another Christian to pray with you? Or, if you’re less inclined to be embarrassed, maybe there are times when you could have been more bold?

Tony and I have been attending Dunamis on Wednesday nights. Dunamis is a class about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In one of the first sessions, we were asked to share the experiences that we had had with the Holy Spirit. Person after person told about the incredible, encouraging things they had seen and experienced by the hand of God. Not too long into the discussion, though, someone noted how strange it was that we had not heard these stories before, and that even though we were a group of people who believe that God works personally and powerfully in our lives, we still felt sheepish talking about it.

It seems that sometimes we are more likely to say that our answers to prayer are luck or coincidence, or the expected results of our own hard work. If we are hardly bold enough to share the work of God in our lives with our brothers and sisters in the faith, how will we ever testify to the rest of the world?

These are the things that the text points to when it says in Chapter 10: “Do not throw away your confidence,” or in our passage when it says that people were growing weary and losing heart.

Our race is only run by faith, and when we lose our faith or become embarrassed by it, we stop running. It’s easy to do it, too, because while we are running our race of faith, the whole rest of the world is running a very different race.

The world’s race looks a lot more like the races that I talked about at the beginning. It is about winning. The people in the world’s race run toward happiness, in whatever form that takes. For some it comes through money, for others beauty and fame, for others success in work or in family. For others it comes through simply gathering people around them, to cheer them on.

And both of these races, the world’s race and the race of faith, are not only happening at the same time, they are happening on the same track, and to those in the world’s race, like my psychology professor, the race of faith looks absolutely foolish.
Right before the three verses we are looking at today is one of the most beautiful sections of scripture. Hebrews 11, the “by faith” passage, celebrates some of our greatest runners in this race of faith. Take a look at the foolish people the author asks us to take our lead from: Noah built an enormous boat on the dry land on a sunny day. Abraham left his home even though he didn’t know where he was going. Moses left his wealth and the only life he’d ever known in a palace to suffer along with the rest of the Israelites. And then the list at the end, from the second half of verse 35:

“Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawn in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated.”

These are the ones who are commended for their faith; they are commended for the way they run the race. This is not the stuff that world applauds, weakness, death, poverty, willingly taking on suffering, walking by faith, without proof, without data. This doesn’t make any sense to the rest of the world.

It is foolishness.

But this is the way that the runners in the race of faith run. We are running on the same track as those who run the world’s race, but we are running in the exact opposite direction.

The world’s race is chasing happiness, and we are running the other way.

The fans along the side-lines are laughing and shouting, “Wrong way! Turn around! You idiot! You’re going the wrong way!!” but we continue on, determined.

Christians are the fools in the world’s race. But, here’s the thing: 1 Corinthians tells us that “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.” The author of the book of Hebrews is writing with the same encouragement to believers who have been hearing the voices and laughter of the fans. They are discouraged and they are starting to believe that they might actually be going the wrong way. They are losing heart and considering turning around.
The writer says to them and to us, “No! Don’t listen to those fans! There are other voices you should be hearing... listen to the great cloud of witnesses. Listen to Abraham and Moses and Sarah and Rahab! They are speaking too. Follow the example that they set for you. You are in the right race. You are going the right direction. And more than that, you are not running alone.”

The stands are not just filled with those who are cheering on the world’s runners...scattered throughout are the heroes of the faith, those who have already run this race, who have kept the faith and persevered. If we look up to the stands, we see their solemn faces amid the laughter. They remind us that the promises are true. That at the end of the race of faith is the wedding banquet, a feast, eternal life.

At the end of the race of faith we will find that all of the brokenness and pain in the world and in us is restored and made new. We will not get a medal, and we will not hear the rest of the world cheering us on; our reward is so much better, so much more lasting.

We are asked to follow these witnesses in laying aside the things that might tempt us to turn around, that might tempt us to join the other race. The things that get in the way of our faith and the sin that so easily entangles, or as other versions say, the sin that so easily distracts. These are the things that draw us to the world's race.

Like those heroes who are watching us and cheering us on, we must put away anything that might turn us around.

But that is not all. Behind us, before us, alongside us, there is another runner. Christ. He is, as verse 2 says, the author and perfecter of our faith. You could also say that:

He is the author and finisher of our faith.
He is the start and end of our race.
If we set our eyes on him, we will never forget what race we're in, because we are not just looking at a pristine picture of Jesus in white robes with a child on his knee. No, we are looking at a resurrected Jesus, still bearing his scars.

We fix our eyes on the one who took onto himself all the shame and disgrace imaginable. He came to us, the ones who disgraced him, and suffered so that we might enter this race at all. And now having finished his race, resurrected on the other side of that disgrace, he promises to bring us to that same end.

The way that Jesus looked at the suffering and ridicule he faced is like the way we might look at a sunrise through a dirty window.
When you're standing at the window, the grime and filth are the first things you see, and if you focus on them, that is all you will see, but if you set your focus beyond that, you will see beauty on the other side.

Jesus endured that shame for the beauty that was on the other side of it. He looked beyond the suffering that he faced in his life, to see the joy that would come of it, and that joy was you.

Jesus was seated at the right hand of the Father so that you could come to the Father through him. The joy set before him was you in the presence of the loving God, cleansed of your sin, and made whole.

Compared to this, what is it if the guy next to me sees my Jesus book? What is it if he even hates me for it?

What is it for you in the different embarrassments that you face? When compared to the great promises, what does it matter what the rest of the world thinks of us, or what they do to us?

When we look to Christ, when we see his cross and what it accomplished, we cannot confuse our race with the race of the world:

The world’s race chases happiness and comfort now and ends in death.
The race of faith chases Christ and ends in unspeakable joy.
Irresponsible Grace
Luke 15:1-7
Ruth Lemmen

My dad worked at Haworth in Holland when I was kid, and every summer they had a huge picnic for all of their employees. It was basically a carnival. There were games to play, like the one where you pick a rubber duck out of the water and get a prize according to the number on the bottom. There were pony rides. Music from live bands filled the air. And there was food—barbecue chicken and orange push-pops. Besides all of the fun, there were also huge crowds. And it seemed like every year the same thing would happen. My dad would stop to talk to someone who we didn’t know. And my younger sister would get bored of just standing there, see something interesting, and wander away. A few minutes later, the question would be, “Where’s Deborah?” After we realized only 4 of the 5 family members were accounted for, a frantic search would start. My parents always managed to find her back within a few minutes. But those few minutes when she was lost were moments of panic. Where is our daughter? How will we find her in all these people? What happened to her?

The shepherd Jesus tells us about in Luke 15 was asking some of the same questions. Where is my sheep? How will I find it back? Is it okay? The shepherd had spent the day in the wilderness with his 100 sheep. Ken Bailey, a scholar who has lived many years in the Middle East, suggests that 100 sheep would probably be the sheep of several families in one village and that perhaps there would have been a couple of shepherds watching so many sheep. But Jesus only tells us about this shepherd. He had been hard at
work, finding grass for the sheep to eat. The sun was beating down on his neck as he found water for the sheep. He watched them carefully to make sure they were well cared for. As the sun started to fall toward the horizon, the shepherd rounded up the sheep. He counted the flock to make sure they were all accounted for. Ninety-seven. Ninety-eight. Ninety-nine. Where was one-hundred? He recounted, but again, only ninety-nine were present. Where was that sheep? The shepherd set out to find it. He worried about where it might be. How long would he have to look? What if a wild animal had found it? What if it had an accident and broke a leg? What if it wandered off a cliff? What would happen if he couldn't find it? He searched frantically for the lost sheep. He didn't think about the ninety-nine he left, but concentrated on the one missing sheep.

It seems like a story of a rather irresponsible shepherd. Why does Jesus tell this story? The first verses of Luke 15 set the stage. The Pharisees were complaining to Jesus. They were the religious leaders of the day. The Pharisees prided themselves on keeping all of the laws in the Old Testament. They even made up more laws to make sure that they would keep the Old Testament laws. One of the Pharisees' problems with Jesus was that he allowed the tax collectors and sinners near him. The Pharisees considered them unclean and unrighteous because they didn't follow the rules. The Pharisees didn't have anything to do with those people. And they didn't want Jesus to have anything to do with them either.

The Pharisees were angry that Jesus welcomed the tax collectors and sinners into his company. Jesus let these unclean people sit at his feet. They leaned forward to catch every word. Jesus spoke to them and taught them. He ate with them and fellowshipped with them. He treated them as persons, no matter what they had done.

So this warm afternoon, the Pharisees were standing at the fringes, making sure they didn't get too close to those people. They muttered all their complaints under their breath. Jesus heard their mumblings. He knew what they were saying. He responded to their complaints by telling them three stories. These were special
stories, called parables, stories that embody a truth. The story of
the shepherd is the first of the three Jesus tells.

Jesus puts his listeners right into the story. He asks, “Suppose
that you owned 100 sheep, and one was lost. What would you do?”
This seems like an innocent question to us. But at the time,
shepherd ing was a despised occupation, one that everyone looked
down on. Shepherds were in the “unclean” category with the tax
collectors and the sinners. Maybe the tax collectors’ and sinners’
ears perked up and their heart skipped a beat when they realized
people like themselves were in Jesus’ story. Was this a story about
them? Or maybe their hearts were filled with dread, waiting to be
the punch line of a joke. The Pharisees probably had an indignant
reaction: Jesus wanted them to imagine they were shepherds?
Those unclean, dirty, people? And then as the story progressed,
their muttering might have increased. The shepherd left his sheep
for the one stupid enough to get lost? He spent precious time on
the one lost sheep?

We might have the indignation of the Pharisees. Or we might
think this is just a story about an animal. But, this is a parable.
There’s a truth involved—there are “lost sheep” in our world, too.

One of my favorite novels, Gilead, tells the story of a lost sheep.
Gilead is a collection of reflections written by a dying pastor, John
Ames. One of the main plot lines is the visit of his best friend’s son,
Jack. Although his father was also a pastor, Jack was the local
troublemaker in Gilead, Iowa. He was involved in mischief as a
child—pranks and petty theft. As a teenager, though, Jack’s crimes
became more serious. Later, when he was in college he “became
involved with a young girl, and the involvement produced a child.”
Jack himself didn’t do anything for this baby except tell his father
about her. His father felt like Jack was confessing a transgression.
Although Jack’s family tried to help the baby, she died when she
was just three. After college, Jack didn’t come back to Gilead but
wandered the Midwest trying to find respectable employment.
Near the end of the book we find out he feels unable to believe in
God. That he is a disappointment to his father. That he doesn’t
belong in the church. Jack isn’t sure what to do with his life. He
feels lost and alone. Ostracized both from society and from God.
Jack is a “lost sheep.” He hasn’t repented of his sin and placed his
trust in God. His lifestyle put him on the outskirts of society.

There are many “Jacks” in our lives. Some are lost because
they have never heard about God’s love for them. Or because society divides us in many different ways, marginalizing those
people who aren’t right, according to its standards. Or because the church only welcomes other people who look like us. Or because we’ve grown up in a Christian home and can live apathetically, ignoring God’s gracious promises.

In fact, we have all been lost sheep at one time or another.
Romans 3 says, “we have all fallen short of the glory of God.” Fleming Rutledge describes it this way: “Bad characters are the only kind of characters God has to work with; there are X marks over against everybody in one column or another.” ¹ So Jesus’ conclusion to his story about the lost sheep and irresponsible shepherd is for all of us.

Jesus’ story continued, showing us what the shepherd did. The shepherd is out searching for this missing sheep. He is determined to search until he finds it. He retraces the day’s steps, going along narrow paths, looking into the brush of the dessert. Where is that sheep?

And then, he comes around a corner and there, just off the path, he sees it! He rushes to it and checks it over. He runs his hands over its body, checking for broken bones. It’s still alive and doesn’t appear to be hurt. Good! He’s found the sheep! All of his fear and frustration melt away. The sheep is scared though, and won’t move. He tries to get it to stand up and walk back with him. But to no avail. It won’t move. The shepherd knows he has to get it back to the village, so he picks it up and lays it on his shoulders. He’s so happy that he found the sheep, it doesn’t feel heavy. He starts back to the village, whistling a tune.

Meanwhile, everyone in the village noticed that one of the shepherds didn’t come back from the wilderness. Maybe the other

shepherds brought his 99 sheep back for him. Maybe they told the villagers the story of the lost sheep. Maybe they worried and waited for his return.

Just as the sun dropped below the horizon, the shepherd walked back into the village, the sheep on his shoulders. He was still whistling, he was so happy about finding the sheep. His friends and family quickly surrounded him, happy that he and the sheep were back safely. He said, “Rejoice with me! I have found my lost sheep!” That night, as they gathered around the fires to eat, there was great rejoicing. Everyone talked excitedly, joyful that the lost sheep was found.

Jesus’ story was finished. The crowd sat in eager expectation for what Jesus would say next. What did the parable mean? The Pharisees wondered if he really thought of them as those wicked shepherds. The sinners and tax collectors wondered if they were the lost sheep. They all wondered why Jesus would tell a story that doesn’t quite make sense. What was he saying about this slightly irresponsible shepherd? There was anticipation in the air. Jesus shifted his weight before making his point. Then he said, “In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who do not need to repent.”

Perhaps the Pharisees and the tax collectors were a bit puzzled by this statement. Certainly those of us steeped in the writings of the Apostle Paul are puzzled. We hear this and think: What? Who doesn’t need to repent? Don’t we all need to repent? Commentators aren’t sure exactly what to do with this sentence. Some suggest that Jesus was being ironic. Some suggest that Jesus didn’t mean that there are people who are perfect, but meant people who have repented and are right with God.

Whatever Jesus meant, I imagine that the Pharisees were indignant when they heard this. They worked so hard to be righteous. Jesus couldn’t really mean that one lost, dirty sheep was more important than them. Why, they kept all the laws! The tax collectors and sinners sat in incredulous silence. Was Jesus really saying that each one of them was important? That there was joy in
heaven when one of them repented? More joy than over the righteous people? It seemed too good to be true.

The good news of grace often seems too good to be true. But it is true. Like the shepherd, God searches out “lost sheep” and rejoices when he finds us. This isn’t just a theological doctrine or belief, but something we see in our lives and the lives of people around us.

A few years ago, in my home town, some teenagers started skateboarding in church parking lots. These kids would spend their afternoons there, learning new tricks and practicing their skateboarding skills. They’d hang out and talk. No one paid too much attention to them. Many of them were from broken homes, and most had no church affiliation or had turned their backs on it. They were living on the fringes of the society. They were lost sheep.

Some of the churches in town were nervous about what would happen if one of the kids got hurt on church property. So they asked them to not skate there. My church didn’t say anything, but kind of looked the other way. This may not have been their wisest legal move, but it opened the door for relationships with kids – kids who would not have come to church on Sunday morning. One afternoon, God prompted our pastor to go out and start talking to the kids. Another afternoon, our pastor invited them into the church for pizza. He got to know them. He learned their names and listened to their stories. And God was at work in the kids hearts. He created a hunger in them and drew them to himself.

Our pastor started meeting with some of them after school. He began mentoring them and discipling them. The kids started coming to worship services. And they brought their friends. God was drawing them to himself. He showed them how much he loved them. That he wanted a relationship with them. God embraced them through the church. The kids sometimes dressed in all black, or wore skirts shorter than I would have been allowed to wear. They didn’t know the songs. They came with their friends, not their parents. Yet God equipped his people with love. To warmly
welcome these kids to the church. To learn their names. To allow them to sing on the worship team...even when they sing off-key.

Eventually, God enabled these kids to place their trust in him. He found his lost sheep and brought them back to the fold. And he rejoiced with the angels in heaven. And his people, the church community, rejoiced here on earth. They celebrated with these kids as they stood before the church to be baptized and profess their faith. The church community praises God for the work he has done in their own hearts. And they praise God for bringing more lost sheep into his fold. Together they rejoice in the grace they have been given.

We praise God for the work he has done in our midst as well. Our relationships with God are all broken. We were all the lost sheep at some point in our lives. And God loves each of us and searches us out, caring for us like the shepherd cared for the one lost sheep. For some of us, God found us early in our lives and rejoiced over us. For some of us, God found us when we were older, and rejoiced then. But God has found us, and through faith in Jesus Christ, made us righteous. He has restored our relationship with God so that we aren’t lost sheep anymore. God rejoices over us with singing!

Because of the great grace we have been given, we have a chance to respond to Jesus’ story. We can respond in love, because God first loved us. One response is to rejoice over what God has done in our lives, especially in our community. Like the shepherd’s family and friends rejoicing together, we can rejoice together. We rejoice when we sing “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” together. Each time we witness a baptism, we have an opportunity to rejoice together at God’s grace to the baby or adult being baptized. And at the grace God extended to us in our baptism. When you chat over coffee after the service, and tell how God has been with you through a time of darkness, you rejoice with the community.

A second response to God’s lavish grace to us is to lavish grace on other people. We can allow God to use us to speak a word of welcome to someone who has just walked through these doors and might not feel very comfortable. Or to forgive someone who hurt
us. Or to eat lunch with the person at school we really don't like. To tell a coworker about the hope we have in Christ. In the end of *Gilead*, Jack is leaving the town of Gilead. He doesn't know what life will hold. He still doesn't believe in God. John Ames accompanies him to the bus station.

While they are waiting for the bus, he gives Jack a blessing from Numbers: “The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”² In this moment, John Ames extended the grace of God to someone he didn’t always like. My home church extended the grace of God to kids that didn’t fit their mold. We can follow their examples and share the grace God has given us.

God has shown his love to us, searching us out like the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep and searching for the one lost sheep. God sent his only Son, Jesus Christ—to take on humanity, to die in our place, to be resurrected, and to ascend to God the Father's right hand. Because of Jesus' work, God calls us to repent and offers his forgiveness, salvation, and healing. It seems too good to be true, but it’s not. We have received irresponsible love and grace. Now we get to share that irresponsible grace! Let us rejoice.

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Via Media or Tertium Quid?:
A Critical Examination of Meredith G. Kline’s Interpretation of rûaḥ elōhîm in Genesis 1:2

Laurence R. O’Donnell, III

1. Introduction and State of the Question

The interpretation of rûaḥ elōhîm in Genesis 1:2 is a matter of perennial debate among theologians and exegetes. Scholars generally interpret these words in one of two ways: (1) Some relate the phrase to God directly as in “Spirit/spirit of God,” which is the traditional Christian interpretation. (2) Others understand rûaḥ elōhîm as a reference to an inanimate force or power from God, such as a “wind from God,” an interpretation prevalent in the Jewish tradition. This scholarly ambivalence is reflected somewhat in


modern English Bible translations. It is not my intent to cover all the arguments and rejoinders. My aim, rather, is to evaluate one scholar’s unique contribution to the question, namely, Meredith G. Kline’s (1922–2007) *Images of the Spirit*..

In the first chapter of *Images* Kline presents a creative and nuanced interpretation of *rûaḥ elōhîm*. While he firmly follows the traditional “Spirit of God” rendering, Kline argues uniquely that “the ‘Spirit of God’ in the creation record is surely to be understood as a designation for the theophanic Glory-cloud.” Kline’s interpretation appears to integrate both the supernatural orientation of the traditional “Spirit” rendering and the mundane meteorological perspective of the inanimate “wind” translation. This unique formulation thus raises the question: Is Kline’s position a *via media* between the two perennially-debated interpretations, or is his formulation better conceived as a *tertium quid*? I will argue that, viewed within the context of the exegetical debates, Kline’s interpretation of *rûaḥ elōhîm* as a theophanic Glory-cloud is an orthodox, albeit idiosyncratic, *tertium quid*.

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Meaning of Rûaḥ Elōhîm in Genesis 1, 2,” 518-519, cites evidence to show, however, that not all Jewish interpreters prefer “wind” over “spirit”; cf. Young, "Interpretation of Genesis 1," 175.

3 Translations following the “Spirit of God” rendering include the ASV, CEV, ESV, KJV, HCSB, NET, NASB, NIV, NLT, RSV, and TNIV. Those following the “wind” rendering include the NAB, NEB, NJB, and NRSV.


Scholarship on Meredith G. Kline's Interpretation of ḫ̄ēlōhîm

While Kline’s scholarly contributions have not been completely unnoticed, the amount of attention given specifically to his interpretation of ḫ̄ēlōhîm in *Images of the Spirit* is limited. Jeffrey Niehaus, for example, affirms and develops Kline’s formulation of a theophanic Glory-cloud in Genesis 1:2. Niehaus, however, limits his scope to Kline’s shorter treatment in *Kingdom Prologue*. Paul Helm critiques chapter 1 of Kline’s *Images*, but he limits his critiques to systematico-theological implications, whereas Kline describes *Images* as a collection of “exegetical studies of a biblico-theological character” that are “not presented here in the manner of doctrines in a volume of systematic theology.” Helm, furthermore, does not analyze Kline’s exegesis of the cloud theophany, nor does Helm compare *Images* with Kline’s other writings. Bruce Waltke, moreover, briefly references Kline’s *Images*, ch. 1, but without any elaboration.

*Images of the Spirit* has received several brief reviews, and many of them mention Kline’s formulation of the Glory-cloud. J. Andrew Dearman, for example, takes note of Kline’s interpretation of ḫ̄ēlōhîm in Genesis 1:2, but Dearman does not develop this point beyond offering a general note on Kline’s tendency to

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12 Helm, “Image,” 203.
13 Kline, *Images*, 10. Kline does view his biblico-theological study as having systematico-theological implications (see pp. 10-11), but he himself only deals with these implications briefly (i.e., pp. 30-34).
interpret OT texts via NT texts.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, Horace D. Hummel comments that “Kline prefers to speak of the ‘Glory-Spirit,’ which he argues was present as a cloud-theophany already at the creation.”\textsuperscript{17} Hummel, however, offers no analysis beyond a general caveat on the whole book.\textsuperscript{18} Likewise, James A. Borland asserts that “Kline’s concept that the physical theophanic Glory of the Holy Spirit, who hovered over the original earth creation in Gen 1:2, served as the ‘divine model’ for man’s creation” is “[k]ey to understanding” Kline’s formulation of the \emph{imago Dei}.\textsuperscript{19} Boreland offers not only general caveats,\textsuperscript{20} but also a specific criticism of Kline’s exegetical methodology:

Much that follows page 19 [of \emph{Images of the Spirit}] is based on seeing Gen 1:2 as depicting the Spirit overarching the creation ‘as divine witness to the Covenant of Creation’ (pp. 55-56). This is apparently read back into the text after a contemplation of Gen 9:12 ff. and Rev 10:1 ff. and then used as a paradigm for the crux of the book’s interpretation regarding replication of the visible Glory-Spirit in tabernacle, priestly investiture, and so on (p. 21).\textsuperscript{21}

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\textsuperscript{16} “The success of Kline’s enterprise will be judged, in part, on how well he has illumined the intention of Old Testament writers with his frequent appeal to the New Testament for confirmation of a point” (Dearman, review of \emph{Images of the Spirit}, 16).
\textsuperscript{17} Horace D. Hummel, review of \emph{Images of the Spirit}, by Meredith G. Kline, \textit{Concordia Journal} 8, no. 1 (January 1982): 34.
\textsuperscript{18} “Inevitably, one will not be equally convinced about all the exegetical judgments…” (Hummel, “review of \emph{Images of the Spirit},” 35).
\textsuperscript{20} Borland asserts the following caveats for evaluating Kline’s use of typology: “Any form of typology must exercise care to avoid (1) forcing types based on possibly coincidental identifications, (2) drawing unwarranted conclusions, (3) reading one’s own deductions into certain texts, (4) reasoning in a circle, and (5) flight into the sometimes nebulous realm of symbolism” (Borland, review of \emph{Images of the Spirit}, 275). Borland’s ensuing elaboration, however, does not make clear whether Kline violates all or some of these principles in \emph{Images of the Spirit}.
\textsuperscript{21} Borland, review of \emph{Images of the Spirit}, 275.
\end{flushright}
As will become evident below, however, Boreland’s criticism conflates a subsidiary point in Kline’s first chapter (i.e., the witness character of the Spirit) with the crux of the entire book.

Several scholars have briefly noted the uniqueness of Kline’s interpretation of ֶלֹהִים and the implications his view has for his formulation of the imago Dei. No study, however, has attempted to critically evaluate Kline’s interpretation in the light of current biblical scholarship. What remains to be done, therefore, is to state Kline’s view of the Glory-cloud, to compare Kline’s methodology with other approaches, and to discern whether Kline’s formulation is best seen as a mediating position or as a unique statement within the context of current exegetical debates.

2. Meredith G. Kline’s Interpretation of ֶלֹהִים in Genesis 1:2

Kline asserts a twofold thesis in Images of the Spirit, ch. 1: First, he argues “that the theophanic Glory was present at the creation,” and, second, he infers that the theophanic Glory “was the specific divine model or referent in view in the creating of man in the image of God.” Thus Kline’s argument starts with the identity of the ֶלֹהִים and then proceeds to his function.

ֶלֹהִים Identified as Yahweh’s Theophanic “Glory-cloud”

Kline begins his exegesis of ֶלֹהִים by analyzing its infrequent verb, ֶרֶפֶט. Deuteronomy 32:11, Kline notes, is the only other place in the Pentateuch where this verb is used, and in this verse ֶרֶפֶט describes God’s leading Israel to Canaan using the imagery of “an eagle hovering protectively over its young, spreading out its wings to support them, and so guiding them on to maturity.” Regarding this avian hovering action, Kline notes, “In Exodus 19:4 God similarly describes himself as bearing Israel on eagles’ wings.” For Kline, then, ֶרֶפֶט metaphorically

22 Kline, Images, 13. NB: Throughout Images Kline employs the masculine generic “man” as a synonym for imago Dei, a usage which includes both man and woman.
23 The only other occurrence of this verb in the Masoretic Text is in Jeremiah 23:9; cf. Kline, Images, 14n2.
24 Kline, Images, 14; cf. Kline, Kingdom Prologue, 30.
25 Kline, Images, 14.
connotes the “overshadowing protection,” “outspread wings,” and “divine aegis” provided to Israel by Yahweh’s theophanic Glory-cloud.\(^{26}\)

In addition to its function, Kline adduces the Glory-cloud’s form as further evidence for relating the avian imagery of mĕraḥepeṭ to Yahweh’s Glory-cloud. “To describe the action of the Glory-cloud [in the Pentateuch] by the figure of outspread wings was natural,” Kline argues, “not simply because of the overshadowing function it performed, but because of the composition of this theophanic cloud.”\(^{27}\) Regarding its composition Kline recalls that Ezekiel describes the sight of the Glory-cloud as full of cherubim and seraphim and the sound of the Glory-cloud as that of fluttering wings.\(^{28}\) Kline avers, therefore, that the form and function of avian imagery and cloud theophany coalesce in the Glory-cloud.\(^{29}\)

Another infrequent biblical word in Genesis 1:2, tōhû, serves a pivotal role in Kline’s identification of the rûaḥ elōhîm.\(^{30}\) The only other Pentateuchal usage of tōhû is in Deuteronomy 32:10, and therein tōhû describes the chaotic wilderness out of which Yahweh’s Glory-cloud rescued and protected Israel. Thus, reasons Kline, the “comparison between God’s presence as Israel’s divine aegis in the wilderness and God’s presence over creation in Genesis 1:2b is put beyond doubt.”\(^{31}\)

Kline claims, moreover, that this creation-exodus comparison is confirmed by the “broad parallelism” which exists between both events:

\(^{26}\) Kline, Images, 14.

\(^{27}\) Kline, Images, 14. Regarding the composition of the Glory-cloud, Kline asserts elsewhere that the Glory is composed of functional (i.e., authority, dominion), formal (i.e., theophanic and incarnational glory), and ethical (i.e., holiness, righteousness, and truth) components (p. 31).

\(^{28}\) Kline, Images, 14. Kline specifically references Ezekiel 1:24 and 10:5 (Kline, Images, 14n4; cf. 17n13).

\(^{29}\) Regarding the Spirit’s theophanic presence in avian imagery Kline notes elsewhere that “at the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit descending over the waters in avian form, as in Genesis 1:2, was a divine testimony to the Son…” (Kline, Images, 19).

\(^{30}\) Tōhû occurs 20 times in the Masoretic Text, most frequently in Isaiah: Gen. 1:2; Deut. 32:10; 1 Sam. 12:21 (twice); Job 6:18; 12:24; 26:7; Psa. 107:40; Isa. 24:10; 29:21; 34:11; 40:17; 40:23; 41:29; 44:9; 45:18, 19; 49:4; 59:4; Jer. 4:23.

\(^{31}\) Kline, Images, 14.
We find that at the exodus reenactment of creation history the divine pillar of cloud and fire was present, like the Spirit of God at the beginning, to bring light into the darkness (and indeed to regulate the day-night sequence), to divide the waters and make dry land appear in the midst of the deep, and to lead on to the Sabbath in the holy paradise land.\textsuperscript{32}

Therefore, Kline concludes that, based on the “reuse of the unusual verbal imagery of Genesis 1:2b in Deuteronomy 32:11, the ‘Spirit of God’ in the creation record is surely to be understood as a designation for the theophanic Glory-cloud.”\textsuperscript{33}

**The Glory-cloud Identified as a Multivalent Theophany**

Kline identifies the Glory-cloud as not only a theophany of the Spirit, but also a theophany of the Son. Kline presents three arguments for the Spirit theophany: (1) Passages such as Nehemiah 9:19, 20; Isaiah 63:11-14; and Haggai 2:5 attribute the Glory-cloud’s activities specifically to the Spirit; (2) The Holy Spirit’s work at Pentecost parallels “the functioning of the Glory-cloud at the exodus and at the erection of the tabernacle”\textsuperscript{34}; (3) Correspondences attain between the Spirit’s hovering over the primordial waters in Genesis 1:2 and the Spirit’s similar activities in two wind-related re-creation events—Noah’s Flood and the Exodus. Before looking at these two events, however, Kline first connects the Spirit’s theophanic wind to the Glory-cloud via Psalm 104. Kline correlates the cloud-chariot and wing-wind metaphors of Psalm 104:3 with the \( \text{rûaḥ} \) of verse 30\textsuperscript{35} and concludes that

\textsuperscript{32} Kline, *Images*, 14-15.


\textsuperscript{34} Kline, *Images*, 15.

\textsuperscript{35} Kline writes, “Reflecting on Genesis 1:2, Psalm 104 envisages the Creator Spirit (\( \text{rûaḥ} \)) as the one who makes the clouds his chariot and moves on the wings of the wind (\( \text{rûaḥ} \)), making the winds his angel-messengers and flames his servants (vv. 3f.) (Kline, *Images*, 15). Kline does not reference v. 30 specifically; rather, he simply asserts that \( \text{rûaḥ} \) is “the Creator Spirit.” Out of the 4 occurrences of \( \text{rûaḥ} \) in this psalm (vv. 3, 4, 29, 30), verse 30 seems the most likely referent for “the Creator Spirit.”
Psalm 104 reveals a “theophanic cloud-and-wind form of the Spirit in Genesis 1:2.” After securing this alleged cloud-and-wind theophanic form in Psalm 104, Kline then finds correlations between Genesis 1:2, the Flood, and the Exodus. At the apex of the Noahic flood account, for example, God sends a wind (rûaḥ, Gen. 8:1) to subdue the chaotic waters. Likewise, in the exodus event God subdues the waters of the Red Sea with “a strong, east wind (Exod. 14:21) and, more poetically, as the breath (rûaḥ) of God’s nostrils blown upon the waters (Exod. 15:8, 10).” Kline understands these two wind-related re-creation events, therefore, to be recapitulations of the Spirit’s original theophanic cloud-and-wind presence in Genesis 1:2.

Kline presents one argument for the Son theophany: “What Genesis 1:2 identifies as Spirit,” writes Kline, “Hebrews 1:2, 3 identifies as Son; God is one.” Key to Kline’s claim is his reasoning that the “description of the likeness of the Son to the Father” in Hebrews 1:3 “does not refer to the eternal ontological reality of God apart from creation but to the revelation of the Father by the Son in creation.” Since v. 3a, argues Kline, is situated between affirmations of the Son’s roles in creation (i.e., v. 2b) and in providence (i.e., v. 3b), v. 3a must refer to a “pre-incarnation theophany [of the Son], and, in particular, the Glory revelation of the Creator spoken of in Genesis 1:2b.” Kline adduces further support for this correlation between Genesis 1 and Hebrews 1 in the parallel usage of the Greek verb pherō in Hebrews 1:3a and Genesis 1:2 (LXX) and in the Son’s mysterious “identity with the Spirit and his personal distinctiveness and his procession from the Spirit in the figure of that Angel associated with the Glory-cloud and called ‘the Angel of the presence’ (Isa. 63:9ff; Exod. 32:2, 12-15).” Rather than finding a one-to-one correspondence, therefore,

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Kline, Images, 15.
Kline, Images, 15-16; cf. Kline, Kingdom Prologue, 223.
Compare Kline’s correlation of the Spirit in Gen. 1:2 with the life-giving divine breath of Gen. 2:7 (Kline, Images, 21-22).
Kline, Images, 16.
Kline, Images, 16.
Kline, Images, 16.
between רְעָח הֵלֹהִים and a single person of the Godhead, Kline formulates a multivalent theophany in the Glory-cloud of Genesis 1:2.44

**The Glory-cloud Functions as Yahweh’s Heavenly Paradigm for his Earthly Images**

“The theophanic Glory,” writes Kline, “was an archetypal pattern for the cosmos and for man, the image of God."45 However, “In order to perceive this archetypal working of the Spirit and appreciate its significance for the image-of-God idea,” continues Kline, “we must have a fairly distinct apprehension of the Bible’s representation of the multifaceted phenomenon of the Glory-Spirit that was present at creation.”46 Kline thus presents the general function of the Glory-Spirit before treating the Glory-cloud’s twofold paradigmatic function for cosmology and anthropology.

The underlying function of the Glory-Spirit is, according to Kline, to be “a revelational modality of heaven.”47 Kline finds support for this assertion in biblical passages which describe the heavenly throne and divine council,48 and he draws the following inferences regarding modality: (1) The Glory-cloud manifests visibly “the King of glory enthroned in the mist of myriads of heavenly beings;”49 (2) To see the inner reality of the Glory-cloud is to gaze upon God in heaven; (3) At his resurrection Christ ascended into the heavenly/invisible dimension represented by the Glory-cloud;50 (4) “Genesis 1:2b answers to the invisible heavens of Genesis 1:1;”51 (5) The Glory-cloud itself “is preeminently the place of God’s enthronement” and may be interpreted as a “a royal palace, site of the divine council and court of judgment;”52 (6) The Glory-

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50 Kline, *Images*, 17.


cloud is a mobile throne/chariot propelled by winged beings;\(^{53}\) The Glory-cloud adapts its form to its function, appearing variously as modes of sky, firmament, canopy, whirlwind, thunderhead, and lightning;\(^{54}\) etc.\(^{55}\) The theophanic Glory-cloud, therefore, is a “vastly complex theophanic reality”\(^{56}\) which functions as a visible, multi-faceted nexus between two dimensions—the heavenly and the earthly.\(^{57}\)

With the underlying function of the Glory-Spirit’s heavenly modality in mind, Kline then focuses upon the Glory-cloud’s two paradigmatic functions in Genesis 1:2, namely, that the Glory-cloud is the theophanic archetype for his cosmic and anthropological ectypes. Since, as we noted above, Kline views the Glory-cloud as God’s royal temple, both the cosmic and the anthropological ectypes are described as temples.

The cosmic temple is literally patterned after the Glory-cloud. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” argues Kline, “in the special sense that they are a copy of the archetypal Glory of God.”\(^{58}\) Thus the Glory-cloud is not an accommodation to pre-existing earthly meteorological phenomena; rather, earthly clouds are a revelation of heaven’s glory-ink, so to speak, which write “in the medium of natural revelation . . . the supernatural Glory-heaven.”\(^{59}\) Furthermore, Kline avers that this specific archetype-ectype imaging relationship between the Glory-cloud and the cosmic temple underlies the biblical metaphors of (1) the earth as God’s regal temple (Isa. 66:1; II Chron. 6:18; Matt. 5:34f.)\(^{60}\) and (2) the heavens as “God’s royal chambers and chariot” (Psa. 11:4; 68:4(5); 93; 103:19; 104:1-3; 115:16; 148:1-4; Isa. 40:21-23).\(^{61}\) The cosmic temple, therefore, is an image/ectype of the heavenly

\(^{53}\) Kline, *Images*, 18; cf. 21, 21n27.
\(^{54}\) Kline, *Images*, 18; cf. 18n15.
\(^{55}\) For the complete list of examples see Kline, *Images*, 17-20.
\(^{56}\) Kline, *Images*, 20.
\(^{58}\) Kline, *Images*, 20.
\(^{59}\) Kline, *Images*, 20.
\(^{61}\) Kline, *Images*, 21, 21n27.
original/archetype. The anthropological temple/ectype (i.e., the *imago Dei*) is also literally patterned after the Glory-cloud/archetype. “God created man,” writes Kline, “in the likeness of the Glory to be a spirit-temple of God in the Spirit.” Strikingly, Kline asserts that just as earthly clouds are drawn in Glory-ink, so “[t]he statement in Genesis 1:27 that God created man in his own image . . . finds a concretely specific and in fact a visible point of reference in the Glory-Spirit theophany of Genesis 1:2.”

Kline supports the Glory-cloud’s cosmological and anthropological paradigm function by interpreting the Spirit’s inbreathing in Genesis 2:7 in terms of a fathering metaphor. In light of the Spirit’s inbreathing-related works in Genesis 1:2, 1:26, Psalm 104:29-31, Lamentations 4:20, Ezekiel 37, Luke 1:35, and John 20:22, Kline argues that “we are to understand that it was the Spirit-Glory of Genesis 1:2 who had hovered over the lifeless deep-and-darkness, sovereignly blowing where he would to bring the world into life, who was the divine breath that fathered the living man-son in Genesis 2:7.”

Genesis 5:1-3, moreover, serves to confirm Kline’s point, for these verses set the creation of Adam in God’s likeness in apposition to the fathering of Seth in Adam’s likeness.

Picking up on his earlier multivalent theophany formulation, Kline argues that the fathering metaphor applies not only to the Holy Spirit, but also to the Son. “The Glory theophany,” writes Kline, “in which God was present as Logos-Wisdom and Spirit-Power, stood as archetype at the creation of man as God’s image.” The structure of John’s Apocalypse is Kline’s primary example of the Son’s “fathering”: Revelation opens with a vision of the archetypal Christ and closes with a prophetic glimpse of his ectypal body/church. That Christ’s “fathering” extends beyond humanity to the entire cosmos is seen in the intentional recapitulation of creation themes

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62 For further explication regarding Kline’s view of the cosmos as the ectype of the Glory-cloud archetype, see Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 30-33; Kline, *God, Heaven and Har Magedon*, 30-39.


65 Kline, *Images*, 21-22; Quotation from p. 22.


67 Kline, *Images*, 23; emphasis added.

Kline concludes, therefore, that “the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ interprets to us the apocalypse of Elohim in Genesis 1 and clarifies our view of the Spirit in Genesis 1 as the theophanic Glory, the divine archetype for the creation of man in the image of God.”

3. Analysis

Kline’s Exegetical Methodology

Perhaps the most salient feature of Kline’s exegetical method is his robust use of the *analogia Scripturae*. Whether performing parallel word studies (e.g., rûaḥ elôhîm and mĕrahepet) or tracing redemptive-historical motifs (e.g., re-creation and exodus), we have seen in *Images*, ch. 1, that Kline shows no qualms about interpreting Genesis 1:2 in light of a myriad of biblical texts from both the Old and New Testaments—even the whole book of Revelation. Kline boldly asserts, moreover, that every biblical text referring to the heavenly throne or the divine counsel explicates the Glory-cloud. In contradistinction to scholars who resist interpreting the OT in light of the NT, Kline freely employs the full

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70 Kline, *Images*, 26; cf. 24, 24n35.
71 Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally From Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2006), s.v. *analogia Scripturae*. Kline was an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and he taught at confessionally Reformed institutions (see Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, “preface” (n.p.)). It is likely, therefore, that Kline’s methodology can be viewed as an outworking of his commitment to the *analogia Scripturae* as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, I.9.
72 For Kline’s own comments about his proclivity for turning frequently to the book of Revelation, see Kline, *Images*, 11; cf. 24, 26.
74 John Goldingay, Israel’s Gospel, Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 24, *idem, Israel’s Faith, Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 13-14, for example, argues that the NT is like footnotes to the OT. Accordingly, he is ardently concerned with reading the NT in light of the OT rather than vice versa.
range of biblical revelation to interpret Genesis 1:2.\textsuperscript{75}

Despite his robust use of comparative exegesis, there are at least two aspects of Kline’s method that find analogs in other scholars: (1) word studies and (2) literary analysis along redemptive-historical lines. Regarding word studies, just as Kline turns to Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11 to confirm the meaning of \textit{mĕraḥepet} in Genesis 1:2, so others make similar connections.\textsuperscript{76} Likewise, just as Kline turns to Deuteronomy 32:10 in order to confirm his rendering of \textit{tōhû}, so other scholars turn to this and other \textit{tōhû}-related texts.\textsuperscript{77}

Regarding literary analysis, Kline’s use of redemptive-historical motifs to provide a deeper perspective on Genesis 1:2 is similar to the methodology of Sailhamer’s narrative analysis in three ways: First, Kline’s exegesis of \textit{tōhû} can be identified in Sailhamer’s terms as a “\textit{thema}” word;\textsuperscript{78} Second, Kline’s connection between the Spirit’s activity in the exodus event and the Spirit’s role in Genesis 1:2 can be understood as an example of Sailhamer’s “principle of

\textsuperscript{75} Kline, \textit{Images}, 9, argues that “heuristic capability” (i.e., cumulative-case exegetical argumentation) is one test of an interpretive model’s validity.


\textsuperscript{78} Sailhamer, \textit{Pentateuch}, 29-31, defines a \textit{thema} word as a word which the author either assumes the reader will already know or plans on unfolding the meaning in the work itself. \textit{Thema} words present modern readers with the difficulty of knowing where to turn to find the meaning of the ancient term.
Third, Kline's inference that the Spirit's creative role in Genesis 1:2 is structurally related to the Spirit's re-creative role in the Flood (Gen. 8:1) and the Exodus (Exo. 19:4 and Deut. 32:11) is analogous with Sailhamer's argument concerning the structural relationship between Genesis 1:2 and Exodus 31:1-5—accomplishing God's work requires the filling of God's Spirit.\(^\text{80}\) Kline's use of creation and exodus motifs, moreover, finds an analog in Waltke's application of the creation motif to the same major events connected by Kline: (1) Creation (Gen. 1:2), (2) the Flood (Gen. 8:1b-2), (3) the Exodus (Exo. 14:21), (4) Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4), and (5) the Consummation (Rev. 21-22). The first four events, notes Waltke, involve creations by the \(\text{rūaḥ vis-à-vis water}\).\(^\text{81}\) Thus, like Kline, Waltke interprets these events as structurally related via a common creation motif.\(^\text{82}\) At least in general terms, therefore, Kline's word studies and his analyses of redemptive-historical motifs find methodological analogs in related scholarship.

One difference between Kline's method and traditional approaches to interpreting Genesis 1:2 is that Kline does not attempt to take on questions of genre, source criticism, or extrabiblical cosmogonic adumbrations. Whereas other writers consider these sorts of questions at length,\(^\text{83}\) Kline only makes passing

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\(^{79}\) Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 31, defines the principle of contemporization as an author's interpreting historical events with meaning relevant for the author's own day. He adduces Genesis 1:2 and Deuteronomy 32:10—two texts important in Kline's interpretation—as an example of this principle.

\(^{80}\) Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 32-33; cf. 87. Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 60, add further warrant for seeing a similarity between Sailhamer's and Kline's use of structural relationships by affirming a third structural relation: Waltke connects Sailhamer's view of Exodus 31:1-5 with Psalm 104:1-3, 30, a Psalm which played a major role in Kline's argument concerning the wind phenomenon of the theophanic Glory-cloud.

\(^{81}\) Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 292-296. Kline would likely include water in the consummation event too; for, he views the absence of the sea as the water aspect of that event (Kline, *Images*, 26). DeRoche, “Ascribe to the Lord,” 309-315, provides a similar analysis of the first three events.


\(^{83}\) See Young, “Interpretation of Genesis 1”; Luyster, “Wind and Water”; Orlinsky, “The Plain Meaning of RU\(\text{H}^\text{b}\) in Gen. 1.2”; DeRoche,
comments about them. Kline simply dismisses, for example, alleged extra-biblical, antecedent creation accounts as perversions of the biblical original.\textsuperscript{84}

**The Glory-cloud’s Identity**

The most outstanding, and perhaps most idiosyncratic, aspect of Kline’s exegesis is his identification of the \textit{rûaḥ elōhîm} in Genesis 1:2 as a theophanic Glory-cloud—a simultaneous theophany of the Spirit and Son, no less. Even on this point, however, there are general antecedents to aspects of Kline’s formulation. He is not the only interpreter, for example, to see a theophany in Genesis 1:2. Although some scholars prefer to interpret the Sinai event as the first biblical theophany, properly speaking,\textsuperscript{85} others allow for pre-Sinai theophanies. Jeffrey Niehaus, for example, avers three pre-Fall theophanies (i.e., Gen. 1:2; 1:27-30; 2:15-17) and three pre-Sinai theophanies (i.e., Gen. 3:8; 15; Psa. 29).\textsuperscript{86} Therefore, although his theophany interpretation is relatively unique, it is not entirely idiosyncratic.

Likewise, Kline’s connection between clouds and theophanies has at least three analogs: First, Kline himself views his arguments in \textit{Images} as developing ancient exegetical insights into cloud theophanies;\textsuperscript{87} Second, other modern scholars have noted various

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\textsuperscript{84}Kline, \textit{Images}, 14n2, 14n4, 15n6, 23n32; cf. Kline, \textit{Kingdom Prologue}, 28-29.

\textsuperscript{85}Samuel Terrien, \textit{The Elusive Presence}, 68-72, terms the patriarchal appearances of Yahweh “epiphanic visitations” rather than “theophanies”; for, the former lack characteristic features of the latter, properly defined. Terrien, moreover, does not treat the appearances of Yahweh in the primeval history (i.e. Gen. 1-11). He does, however, briefly refer to the effulgence of Yahweh’s divine glory in Genesis 1:2 based on an allusion to this verse in Ezekiel 43:2 (pp. 211-212). Cf. Gwyneth Windsor, “Theophany: Traditions of the Old Testament,” \textit{Theology} 75, no. 626 (August 1972): 411-416.

\textsuperscript{86}Niehaus, \textit{God at Sinai}, 142-180. At various points Niehaus explicitly builds upon Kline’s exegetical arguments.

cloud theophanies in biblical texts; Third, several exegetes have attempted to combine the “wind” rendering of ־רוּהַ הָאֱלֹהִים in Genesis 1:2 with the theology of the “Spirit/spirit” translation so as to affirm Yahweh’s divine presence in the “wind.” Rashi, for example, asserts the “wind” translation; yet, he comments that “[t]he throne of Divine Glory was standing in space, hovering over the face of the waters by the breath of the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, and by His command, even as a dove hovers over its nest.” Wenham, moreover, adopts a personified translation—“Wind of God”—in order to “express the powerful presence of God moving mysteriously over the face of the waters.” Likewise, Waltke renders the phrase as “wind from God” and notes, “Since the wind is from God, it is not part of the primordial chaos, but a dynamic, creative presence.” Nicolas Wyatt, furthermore, argues that “We may perhaps take it [i.e. ־רוּהַ הָאֱלֹהִים] as ‘the wind of God,’ but the deity who is in total control of the cosmogonic process is surely present, even perhaps in the notionally neutral form of his ‘wind,’ from the beginning.” These subtle attempts to combine Yahweh’s presence with the wind clearly evince the same theological sensibility which is foregrounded in Kline’s interpretation.

These antecedents and analogs notwithstanding, Kline’s specific formulation of the Son and Spirit being simultaneously present in the theophanic Glory-cloud is without precedent. Patterson notes several Christological cloud theophanies, but none in Genesis. Similarly, besides a few comments on Daniel 7, Sabourin’s references to Christological cloud theophanies are limited primarily to the New Testament. Despite several subtle

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89 Rashi, Genesis, 3.
91 Waltke and Yu, An Old Testament Theology, 182.
attempts, moreover, to combine aspects of the “Spirit/spirit” and “wind” translations, the exegetical debate remains largely polarized. In this light Kline’s interpretation of the Glory-cloud’s identity—especially his inclusion of the Son theophany—is unique.

The Glory-cloud’s Function

Insofar as function follows essence, where Kline’s identity of the rûaḥ elōhîm is idiosyncratic, so are the cosmological- and anthropological-paradigmatic functions he assigns to him. Even though some interpreters infer similar archetypal-ectypal connections as Kline, as, for example, connections between the tabernacle/temple as a microcosmos and the cosmos as a macrocosmic temple,95 no scholars connect the archetypal-ectypal anthropological dots in such stark terms as “creative cloning of the archetypal Glory-temple.”96

In a masterful understatement, Kline refers to his argument for the paradigmatic function of the Glory-cloud as “some breaking of fresh ground.”97 This sentiment is appropriate in two ways: On the one hand, the paradigmatic aspect of Kline’s thesis can be seen as building on the basic principle clearly evident, for example, in the building of the tabernacle (Exo. 25:9), namely, that a heavenly antecedent undergirds Yahweh’s earthly consequents of creation, redemption, and consummation. Kline, then, can be interpreted as simply extending this principle all the way back to the Glory-cloud in Genesis 1:2 and all the way forward to Rev. 22. On the other hand, the profundity of Kline’s theopanic paradigm thesis is striking once one grasps both the pervasiveness of Yahweh’s Glory theophanies throughout Scripture and the weighty implications of claiming that the cosmos and humanity are revelational, ectypal modalities of heaven; for, in this sense all of reality becomes the image of God.

4. Conclusions

Viewed within the context of the perennial exegetical debates, Kline’s interpretation of rûaḥ elōhîm in Genesis 1:2 evidences many

96 Kline, Images, 21.
97 Kline, Images, 10.
similarities with both the “Spirit/spirit” translation and the “wind” rendering. The comparative exegetical method, for example, employed by Kline, especially in terms of individual word studies, is commonplace for advocates of both views. Likewise, Kline’s use of creation and exodus redemptive-historical motifs is shared by advocates of both views. Kline’s combination, moreover, of the divine “Spirit’s” presence with the meteorological “wind” phenomenon lends support for interpreting his view as a possible via media between the debated interpretations.

Nevertheless, upon analysis Kline’s interpretation evinces striking idiosyncrasies. Although several interpreters on both sides of the debate assert some form of Yahweh’s presence in the rûaḥ elōhîm, Kline is virtually alone in identifying Yahweh’s presence specifically as a theophanic Glory-cloud. No other scholar, moreover, specifically identifies the simultaneous presence of the Son and the Spirit in Genesis 1:2. Furthermore, the paradigmatic function of Kline’s multivalent theophanic Glory-cloud for both cosmology and anthropology is another unique feature of Kline’s formulation. In the context of current scholarship, Kline’s intriguing view, therefore, should be classified not as a via media, but as an orthodox tertium quid.

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History and Theology: A Reflection on Ernst Troeltsch’s Historical Critical Method

Reita Yazawa

1. Introduction

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the flourishing of the historical critical method. This method raised the question of the relationship between theology and history, a question still vexing for theological inquiry today. The emergence of the historical-critical method drew attention to the historically contingent character of biblical writings. Furthermore, the recognition of the plurality of religions in the world and the study of the history of religions have raised questions concerning the absoluteness of Christianity. Additionally, the study of the historical emergence of the church has led to a skeptical attitude regarding the authenticity of ecclesiastical authority. All these tendencies have led to a questioning of the legitimacy of dogmatics, as the intellectual mindset of the Enlightenment no longer presupposes the transcendent reality of God and divine intervention in this world.

1 This paper was originally submitted to Dr. Ronald Feenstra on May 27, 2009 in partial fulfillment of D41A: Nature of Theology and Doctrine. This is its abridged version.
4 Troeltsch, “Half a Century of Theology,” in Writings on Theology and Religion, 68-69.
One of the forerunners who took the emergence of the historical method seriously and attempted a theology in the modern context is Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923). Questions of faith and history which Troeltsch engaged are still alive in the work of contemporary theologians such as Van A. Harvey and Wolfhart Pannenberg. In the trajectory of the relationship between theology and history, Troeltsch is situated in an important place in the sense that he provides insight into the origin and condition of the modern problem of historicism.

This paper aims to theologically assess the issue of history and Troeltsch’s engagement with it. Additionally, I hope to relocate his legacy in the contemporary postmodern intellectual environment, where the claim to absolute truth is beginning to lose its validity. I argue that Troeltsch’s theology indicates both the strength and the weakness of the historical critical method. The strength of this method is that it helped theology to discern the inseparability of history from the nature of theology. The weakness of the method is that it naively assumes that absolute objectivity is achievable. Awareness of this issue in a postmodern era may help theology to assert its own perspective of history in competition with others in a pluralistic world.

In order to clarify this thesis, I will first identify Troeltsch’s strength in his delineation of the inherently historical nature of theology. Then I will point out a weakness of the historical method, namely that little attention is given to the interpreter’s commitment and to the presuppositions unavoidably made in the process of historical judgment. I will conclude by suggesting the possible opportunities which are available in the postmodern context for Christian ministry today.

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2. Contrary to Subjectivism: Theology Inherently Historical

Firstly, Troeltsch reaffirmed theology’s inherent historical nature. When Arthur Drews (1865-1935) published *The Christ Myth* and argued that Jesus never historically existed, Troeltsch responded with his *The Significance of the Historical Existence of Jesus for Faith*. The point of Troeltsch’s argument is that the historical method can plausibly demonstrate the historical existence of Jesus. In Troeltsch’s words:

> It is not a question of individual details but of the factuality of the total historical phenomenon of Jesus and the basic outline of his teaching and his religious personality. This must be capable of being established by means of historical criticism as historical reality if the ‘symbol of Christ’ is to have a firm and strong inner basis in the ‘fact’ of Jesus.

According to Troeltsch, apart from historical details regarding Jesus, the essential historical elements of his life and teachings need to be outlined. He insisted on the necessity of “the decisive significance of Jesus’ personality for the origin and formation of faith in Christ, the basic religious and ethical character of Jesus’ teaching and the transformation of his teaching in the earliest Christian congregations with their Christ cult.” Troeltsch believes that these essential facts can actually be reconstructed and that the historical basis of theology can thereby be solidified.

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12 Troeltsch, *Significance*, in *Writings on Theology and Religion*, 200.

In other words, theology should not retreat into mere inner subjectivity. Theology cannot be content with feelings or emotions that have no historical basis. If the historical existence of Jesus is false, then “thousands of years have been lived under a lie.”\footnote{Troeltsch, \textit{Christian Faith}, 84.} In order to overcome this type of “dreadful thesis,”\footnote{Troeltsch, \textit{Christian Faith}, 84.} it is necessary to implement the historical method. Troeltsch contends: “No matter how many people are unaffected by all this and just want to follow their religious impulse and feeling, nevertheless an atmosphere and mood of security about the reliability of the historical basis is necessary for their purely practical existence to be natural and possible.”\footnote{Troeltsch, \textit{Significance}, in \textit{Writings on Theology and Religion}, 200.}

When an attempt is made to discredit the historical existence of Jesus, theology should not disregard it, but argue for the plausibility of the historical existence of Jesus.\footnote{Robert Morgan, “Troeltsch and Christian Theology,” in \textit{Writings on Theology and Religion}, 222-223.} Behind the picture of Jesus that keeps enlivening and shaping the Christian community is the historical Jesus who actually existed and lived on earth. The object of theology is the eternal God who yet manifests himself in historical reality and acts in concrete historical events.\footnote{Gerhard Spiegler, “Overcoming History with History: Some Unfinished Old Business at the New Frontiers of Theology,” in \textit{The Future of Empirical Theology}, ed. Fred Berthold and Bernard Eugene Meland (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), 280.} Theology cannot engage its object apart from historical concreteness. Devaluing the connection with historical facts will lead theology to mere groundless imagination and wishful thinking. Troeltsch warns: “If it were decided against the historicity of Jesus or against any possibility of knowing about him, that would in fact be the beginning of the end of the Christ symbol amongst scientifically educated people.”\footnote{Troeltsch, \textit{Significance}, in \textit{Writings on Theology and Religion}, 198.} It is Troelsch's important contribution to theology that he expounded the inherently historical nature of theology.
3. Beyond Historicism: Theology More Than History

Troeltsch has contributed to theology by clarifying its innately historical nature; however, it also needs to be emphasized that theology will never be exhausted by history.20 Theology includes history, but goes beyond it. In other words, history is a necessary condition for theology yet is not its sufficient condition. As Gerhard Spiegler points out, Christians believe that the absolute God manifested himself in history as the particularity of Jesus Christ.21 In this sense, Christian faith cannot separate the historical particularity from the eternal presence of God. The historical method does not recognize this supernatural reality in the midst of historical reality. This perceptional gap derives from what Van A. Harvey calls perspectival difference:

The situation is not so much that the Christian has access to realities to which the non-Christian does not, or that the Christian believes that certain entities exist which the non-Christian finds doubtful. The situation is, rather, that both Christian and non-Christian are confronted with the same realities but interpret them differently. They regard them from different perspectives.22

On the one hand, the Christian faith sees in Jesus of Nazareth that God is acting and working in historical reality. On the other hand, the historical method recognizes a human being whose unique personality produced a pictorial image which formed a cultic community and continues to influence it, although he was not different from other humans. The same thing can be said of the cross. The Christian faith interprets the historical fact of the crucifixion of Jesus as the symbol of redemption from sin. Yet the historical method does not see an essential difference between Jesus’ cross and the crucifixion of the two robbers who died beside Jesus. A historical fact and its meaning do not always correspond to each other.

22 Harvey, Historian and Believer, 284.
This epistemological difference suggests the inevitable involvement of a human subject in a judgment-making process. It seems that the historical critical method does not fully take into consideration the inevitable partiality of the agent who engages in critical judgments. Troeltsch seems to presuppose that the historical critical method provides absolutely objective criteria according to which every concrete historical fact is judged and adjudicated. Yet it must be noted that this critical judgment and adjudication are carried out only through a human subject who himself/herself is not totally free from a particular community and its perspective. Each community holds its own interpretation of historical facts. Hermeneutics does not stand on its own; it is bound to the community that shares the same perspective. Each adjudicator has been raised in a particular community and has been constantly influenced by its tradition. Historical fact is one thing; how an observer interprets it is another.

Recent postmodern philosophers and theologians have started to pose questions on the reliability of “pure and disinterested reason.” For example, Hans-Georg Gadamer calls attention to the tradition’s shaping influence on each interpreter. While the Enlightenment presupposes an impartial rational judgment free from any prejudice, this assumption itself is a prejudice for Gadamer. Thus he says: “the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power.” An absolute impartiality and objectiveness are impossible as hermeneutical work inherently involves the interpreter’s tradition and situation. Gadamer writes:

Here, too, application was not the relating of some pre-given universal to the particular situation. The interpreter dealing with a traditional text seeks to apply it to himself. But this does not mean that the text is given for him as something universal, that

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he understands it as such and only afterwards uses it for particular applications. Rather, the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal thing, the text; i.e., to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text. In order to understand that, he must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation if he wants to understand at all.\textsuperscript{27}

In this way, Gadamer “introduced the interpreter into the interpretive process.”\textsuperscript{28} Put in a different way, “we always stand somewhere, and where we stand affects what we can see.”\textsuperscript{29} Crude historical facts are connected with meaning and significance through the interpretation of a particular context.

Taking this postmodern insight into consideration, it may be possible to update Troeltsch’s theology for today. First, without losing the recognition of inherently historical character of theology, the Christian doctrine needs to restore its connection with the absolute, divine transcendence. Theology needs to get beyond mere historicism. Doctrine is neither merely a repetition of proposition, nor merely the expression of piety. Doctrine is also the grammar of the community that shapes and molds its members with a particular perspective of life and the world.\textsuperscript{30} Troeltsch tends to think that doctrine is an abstraction which detaches data from their historical context. He emphasizes cult and community as opposed to doctrine:

\begin{quote}


\end{quote}
Now one perfectly clear result of the history and psychology of religion is that in all religion what really counts is not dogma and idea but cult and community. Living communion with the deity is a communion of the totality which has the roots of its life in religion generally and its ultimate power for uniting individuals in a belief in God.\textsuperscript{31}

However, postmodern theology recognizes doctrine as “the grammar that informs the way the story is told and used”\textsuperscript{32} in a community. Doctrine is a vital direction in the community of faith.\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, this Christian community itself is involved in the divine economic action in the world.\textsuperscript{34} Doctrine does not necessarily produce a detachment from historical context, but rather provides the community with a context that connects historical knowledge with theological awareness. Theology is more than history. It includes the historical dimension, but goes beyond it.\textsuperscript{35}

Secondly, taking advantage of the current postmodern intellectual environment, theology should narrate its own story unashamedly. I argue that the post-modern intellectual climate will actually work to the advantage of Christian theology. The postmodern intellectual situation encourages the competitive nature of witness to each community’s universal claim. Of course, other communities may have different stories and different perspectives about the same historical facts.

The universal validity of a doctrine is held only by members of a particular community. It cannot be presupposed outside the community. Members in different communities have different interpretations and perspectives. Their voices are also legitimate as the postmodern world takes this plurality of stories for granted. For this reason, the historical critical method is losing its autocracy: “Postmoderns have discovered an alternative to the modern extremes of the absolute objectivity of universal reason.

\textsuperscript{31} Troeltsch, \textit{Significance}, in \textit{Writings on Theology and Religion}, 194 (See also 195, 202, 206-207).
\textsuperscript{32} Lindbeck, \textit{Nature of Doctrine}, 80.
\textsuperscript{34} Vanhoozer, \textit{Drama of Doctrine}, 401-444.
and the absolute subjectivity of personal preference: a relatively absolute intersubjectivity, in a word, the authority of communal tradition.”36 Each community can narrate its own story rightfully in the plurality of the postmodern world.37 The Christian church as God’s community should also unashamedly and dauntlessly proclaim its own narrative. In this sense, the postmodern circumstance is providing a chance for theology to restore its own identity. The Christian community believes that the universal truth claim will be vindicated by God at the end of history (1 Cor. 13:12). Until then, the message of the cross remains “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor. 1:23). For now, the Christian church needs to engage with its own mission in this pluralistic world.

4. Conclusion

I identified Troeltsch’s strength in his assertion of the inseparability of history and theology. Then I examined the weakness of the historical method in its naïve assumption about the impartiality of the interpreter in the interpreting process. Contrary to the presupposition of the historical method, there is no universally valid rational judgment. Each community holds its own narrative and grammar where a particular perspective and a pattern of life are shaped and molded in a specific way. The postmodern world is becoming aware of this reality and is beginning to discern that the universal standard of rationality was an illusion.

Therefore, I argue that Troeltsch provides both valuable insights about the historical method and at the same time its limits. It is impossible to assume an absolutely pure and impartial objectivity. The postmodern era that is aware of this issue may help theology to proclaim its own interpretation and perspective of salvation history, fighting its own fight in a pluralistic world.

36 Vanhoozer, Drama of Doctrine, 10.
37 Placher, Unapologetic Theology, 67.
Finding Freedom in Forgiveness: Exploring the Cost of Miroslav Volf’s Free of Charge

Heather Stroobosscher

A blindfolded statue of Lady Justice adorns many courthouses in this country—a visual symbol of how highly we regard justice in our culture. In one hand, Lady Justice holds scales “that represent the impartiality with which justice is served”; the sword typically found in her other hand “signifies the power held by those making the decision.”¹ We like justice and to see it enforced. The United States Pledge of Allegiance, which many of our nation’s children recite daily, ends with the words, “with liberty and justice for all.” Justice is fair, clean and even.

As Christians, we take comfort in knowing that God is a God of justice. God commands the Israelites: “Do not pervert justice or show partiality... Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.”² In the psalms we read, “The L ORD is known by his acts of justice,”³ and “The L ORD loves righteousness and justice.”⁴ In the New Testament, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for neglecting the “more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”⁵ God’s intentions for his created world are grounded in justice, on that which is morally right. God loves justice. And so do we. So, where does that leave forgiveness?

² Deuteronomy 16:19–21
³ Psalm 9:16
⁴ Psalm 33:5
⁵ Matthew 23:23
Forgiveness seems to contradict justice. “Justice for all” cannot possibly go hand-in-hand with “forgiveness for all.” With justice, those who owe, pay. But with forgiveness, someone seems to get away with something, namely the person who wronged us. John Calvin defines forgiveness this way: to “spare and pardon all who have in any way injured us, either treating us unjustly in deed or insulting us in word. . . . [This] is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice.” Calvin seems to imply here that forgiving requires us to abandon justice. In a world filled with injustice, this understanding of forgiveness is difficult to reconcile. Yet Scripture commands us to forgive: “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.”

Three relevant questions loom: How can God simultaneously be a God of justice and a God of forgiveness? Further, how do we, a justice-loving people, operate as a forgiving people? Finally, where does forgiveness take us? A study of Scripture and Miroslav Volf’s *Free of Charge* casts fresh light on the nature of forgiveness: in forgiving, the one who is owed pays and that payment leads to freedom.

**God of Justice, God of Forgiveness**

That God is a God of justice is not in question here, but how forgiveness fits into the equation remains problematic. Forgiveness seems unfair. Someone mistreats us—physically or emotionally abuses us, falsely judges us or speaks maliciously about us, destroying community in some way—and those actions are wrong. We want acknowledgement for what has been done, preferably an official apology. Vindication and restitution would be better still. In fact, we feel entitled. However, in his study on giving and forgiving, *Free of Charge*, Christian theologian Miroslav Volf maintains that this kind of thinking is destructive: “consistent enforcement of justice would wreak havoc in a world shot through with transgression. It may rid the world of evil, but at the cost of the world’s destruction.” According to Volf, we relate to offenders and

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7 Colossians 3:13
their offenses in three ways: revenge, or taking; justice, or acquiring; and forgiveness, or giving. Christians are called to forgiveness.

Jesus clarifies this call when he instructs his disciples, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.” Volf’s comments above and Jesus’ instruction here imply that forgiveness means we simply overlook sin, ignore it as if it never happened. But this is not the case.

Volf observes that true forgiveness contains first condemnation and then release. To forgive is to name the offense and then to absolve the debtor from due punishment. The process of forgiveness includes saying, “You’ve done something terribly wrong.” This is a critical step to forgiving. Volf explains further, “When we forgive, we acknowledge the offenses and blame the perpetrator. But then we treat the person as if the offense did not happen. To forgive means most basically to give a person the gift of existing as if they had not committed the offense at all.”

Naming the offense and releasing responsibility for that debt does not seem to satisfy justice, however. We live in a divinely created, morally ordered universe. Tim Keller asserts, “You can’t have a universe if you don’t have justice. . . . There are moral laws. There’s a moral accounting. That’s what guilt is—a sense of it. . . . Because of [God’s] holy nature, because he does not overlook evil, we have hope for the future.” In other words, in forgiving, we cannot simply sweep sin under the rug. Justice does not allow for that, and God is a God of justice. Someone has to pay for the crimes committed.

In fact, someone always does pay. When we pursue justice, offenders pay, but with forgiveness, the offended are the ones who pay. They pay in humiliation, in damaged property or reputation; they pay through a wounded ego, a broken heart or devastated life

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9 Ibid, 157–9
10 Matthew 5:38–40
11 Volf, Free of Charge, 166.
12 Ibid., 175.
circumstances. In forgiving, we let go of our demand for ‘just desserts’ and, as Volf says above, treat the offender as if the offense never happened. This seems unreasonable, a nearly impossible task, and it is.

**How Do We Forgive?**

Forgiveness is impossible if we rely on ourselves to accomplish it. But forgiveness becomes possible when we look to Christ – we are not alone in this process. When God calls us to a life of forgiveness, he does not abandon us in that call: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Before God required forgiveness of us, he first gave us a model for how to forgive others: himself. God’s own demonstration of forgiveness offers guidance on how we might forgive.

Our wounded pride or battered hearts coupled with our sense of justice and entitlement might cause us to sit in an arms-crossed position, waiting for our offender to offer a confession and seek our forgiveness. In fact, Christianity leads us to believe this is the way God intends it: confess your sins and receive forgiveness. Many churches practice this ritual every Sunday in worship during the Service of Confession: call to confession, prayer of confession, assurance of pardon and response of thanksgiving. This regular observance serves to remind us that confession is a part of our daily living.

The ritual, however, implies that I have tasks to perform in order to be forgiven, that I have something to do with it. In fact, Scripture tells us differently: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” This means, before I confess, before I even approach the throne of grace, God forgives. Miroslav Volf writes, “God loves us and forgives us before we repent. Indeed, before we even sinned, Jesus Christ died for our sins. Forgiveness is not reactive—dependent on our repentance. It’s original, preceded and conditioned by absolutely nothing on our part. We can do nothing to become worthy of it. . . . Before we do anything . . . God’s forgiving [is] already there, free of charge.”

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14 Ephesians 4:32  
15 Romans 5:8  
16 Volf, *Free of Charge*, 179–80
First, it changes the art of confession. If God forgives us before we even speak the words, confession is no longer about bringing a proper list of sins before God so we can be cleansed. Rather, confession becomes more closely tied to a relationship with Christ. My motivation for confession becomes more than a task preceding reward. Instead, I confess because I love Jesus and want to be in good relationship with him. Confession is not about avoiding damnation, but about a rightly ordered heart in communion with Christ. Through his forgiveness, God demonstrates a no-strings-attached generosity. Salvation, forgiveness and membership in the family no longer hang in the balance as a result of my sin. Rather, confession leads to restored relationship as soon as my heart is positioned to receive it.

Second, Volf’s observation that forgiveness is not dependent on repentance broadens my capacity to be a forgiver. If I am to forgive per Ephesians 4:32, as God forgives me, then I must forgive long before steps of reconciliation or confession come into play. This means, forgiveness is not about a feeling, because feelings cannot be manufactured that quickly. And it means forgiveness is not about resolution, because some things are left undone indefinitely. Forgiveness is not dependent on the offender, who may never repent of his or her offense. Rather, forgiveness is glorious participation in the life of the Gospel. Forgiveness is to share in a gift that Christ initially gave to each of us. Forgiveness is a response of love—love for Jesus and obedience to his command: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Finally, we have the ability to do this forgiving because God in Christ has already done the work. Forgiveness is hard work – to forgive is to sacrifice – but Christ gives us the ability to perform the mechanics of forgiving. Volf observes, “God alone has the power to forgive. . . . Because God has forgiven, we also have the power to forgive. We don’t forgive in our own right. We forgive by making God’s forgiveness our own.” In fact, we are a prideful people. It isn’t in us to magnanimously release each and every person from each and every infraction committed against us, past, present and future. Thankfully, the One who laid the foundation for forgiveness before time began gently shepherds us through the process. The more we forgive, the more habitual forgiveness becomes.

17 Matthew 5:44
18 Volf, Free of Charge, 196.
Eventually habits of forgiveness grow into a forgiving way of life. And where does that life take us?

**Where Does Forgiveness Lead?**

Forgiveness leads to freedom. In the Matthew 18 parable of the Unforgiving Servant, a king takes pity on a servant begging for his mercy and forgives the servant an immense debt. Immediately following, however, the servant goes out and chokes another servant who owes him money, showing no mercy or forgiveness. In response, the king hands the first servant over to the jailers to be tortured. This parable offers an image of what happens when we do not forgive. When we choose to remain in unforgiveness, we put ourselves in jail—bound, trapped, caged. We are imprisoned by what may feel like emotions, but by what is actually a decision to withhold forgiveness.

Sometimes we stand behind Proverbs 4:23—“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it”—as justification for withholding forgiveness. Sometimes we get stuck in our anger or our wounded pride. Reviewing the events causes us to fume with outrage hundreds of miles or dozens of years away from the scene of the crime. Tim Keller says that the quickest way to cut off the oxygen to our anger and self-pity is to forgive and that we do this by making a series of small, simple decisions throughout the process:

> When you want to slice them up, you refuse. When you want to tell them off, you refuse. When you want to root against them in your heart, replay the tapes and boil in your heart against them, you refuse. By refusing, you cut off the oxygen to the self-centeredness, the self-pity, the self-righteousness and the anger. You grant forgiveness before you feel it.¹⁹

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Forgiveness is a decision we must make a dozen times a day, even “seventy times seven”\textsuperscript{20} times a day. But it is a decision we cannot take lightly because it is a decision we are commanded to make, and the results are glorious.

Jesus says, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”\textsuperscript{21} That life in Christ is a life modeled after forgiveness, a life of freedom. Both Scripture, “You are not your own; you were bought at a price,”\textsuperscript{22} and the Heidelberg Catechism Question & Answer 1, “I am not my own but belong body and soul to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ,” remind us that our freedom is in Christ, not apart from him. When we choose not to forgive, we are handing over a portion of ourselves to the one who consumes us, the one against whom we hold a grudge. In part, that person owns us. In so doing, we withhold from God what belongs to God: ourselves. We are unable to love the Lord our God with all our heart because we are not available to do so; we are tied up, in part, nursing a grudge. The choice not to forgive is indulgent, destructive and contrary to the Gospel. Choosing not to forgive is to choose prison, to withdraw our hearts from God.

When we choose to forgive, however, we choose life. We do make a sacrifice and may even suffer pain and humiliation. But as with most cases of self-sacrifice, somehow we come out ahead, though never in the way we expect. In Volf’s words, “When we forgive, we find inner peace and freedom.”\textsuperscript{23} When we offer forgiveness, we offer a gift, the same life-giving gift we received in Christ. Yet, when we forgive, we ultimately receive that which we give. The peace and freedom we offer in forgiveness is what we ourselves come away with.

Sixty-five years ago, during World War II, my grandpa went off to serve in the South Pacific. When he returned he purchased acreage just up the road from the family farm in Wichita, Kansas. When it came time for my great-grandma to sell the family farm, however, she sold it to Uncle Frank, her younger son, not to my grandpa. Grandpa felt so slighted in the deal, he didn’t speak to Uncle Frank for fifteen years. Neighbors and brothers within a mile of each other, raising children within the same community, did not speak for more than a decade because Grandpa felt he had been

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Matthew 18:22
  \item \textsuperscript{21} John 10:10
  \item \textsuperscript{22} 1 Corinthians 6:19–20
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Volf, Free of Charge, 168.
\end{itemize}
wronged, and he could not let it go. He remained in a prison of unforgiveness for fifteen years. Forgiveness turns an enemy into a friend, but Grandpa chose to keep an enemy and at great cost. For fifteen years, he nursed his anger, jealousy and resentment. For fifteen years, he was not a free man.

God is a God of justice. God is a God of forgiveness also. He invested his life in it. In fact, throughout Scripture God promises us freedom, to “free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”  

When God forgives, he follows through on that promise. By action of forgiving, we somehow reap the fruit of that promise then too, not for those who we forgive, but for ourselves. When we forgive, we turn enemies into friends and release the parts of our heart that we have been keeping from God. To forgive is to live life “to the full.”

To forgive is to participate in the Gospel. To forgive is to be free.

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24 Isaiah 42:7
25 John 10:10
John Calvin’s Commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia: A Reception Study

Kory Plockmeyer

In the year 1532, a previously unknown lawyer named John Calvin published his first work, a commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia (On Clemency). At the time a loyal French Humanist, the precocious 22-year old, hoping to make his mark on academic circles, dared to challenge the greatest scholar of his day, Erasmus, who had recently published not one, but two editions of the Senecan corpus. While Calvin’s first work did not have the impact for which he was hoping, his eventual ‘conversion’ to Protestantism and his subsequent theological work soon eclipsed his early shortcomings. For later Calvin scholars, the Commentary offers fascinating insight into the education and early thought of this important figure. For scholars of Seneca, on the other hand, this work represents one more example of Seneca’s Nachleben, or his literary afterlife. John Calvin’s commentary, coming near the end of Seneca’s 16th century humanist renaissance, represents one more example of Seneca’s popularity and also offers insight into Calvin’s world and thought. In particular, Calvin’s commentary serves not only as an attempt to establish himself in the power relationships within academic circles, but also as a plea for clemency in troubled times.

Seneca’s De Clementia was written near the beginning of the reign of the Roman emperor Nero, in 56 A.D. In it, Seneca attempts to define ‘clemency’ as a virtue and encourages the young emperor to adopt this virtue in his ruling practices. Unfortunately, Seneca’s advice went unheeded and Nero became known throughout history as one of the most brutal Roman emperors. In the De Clementia Seneca praises Nero as one with the potential for greatness: “Never has one man been as dear to anyone as you are to the Roman people” (1.1.5). Descriptions such as this stand in ironic juxtaposition to the historical truth of Nero’s brutality.
This paper approaches the Commentary from the perspective of a reception study, investigating the way in which the received text (the De Clementia) is interpreted within another culture and context (John Calvin and the 1530’s). One key concept of reception studies is the 'horizon of expectation,' the collection of expectations one brings to the production of a literary work, such as a pre-understanding of the genre, the form and themes of already familiar works, and the opposition between poetic and practical language (Jauss 1982: 22). By attempting to reconstruct Calvin’s horizon of expectation, we can begin to reach an understanding of how he understood Seneca’s De Clementia. Calvin’s understanding of the De Clementia then has an impact on the history of the De Clementia itself. In other words, this paper examines the Commentary as an essential part of the existence of the De Clementia, rather than as an interesting footnote in the history of Seneca’s works.

In order to approach the Commentary from the approach of reception studies, we must first establish a working vocabulary. Acculturation, the assimilation of a work into a cultural context (Hardwick 2003: 9), is important for exploring the way in which Calvin integrated the De Clementia into the sphere of education and literary criticism. Appropriation is the process of “taking an ancient image or text and using it to sanction subsequent ideas or practices” (2003: 9). Appropriation will be less important than its opposite, what I call 'disappropriation:' instances where Calvin explicitly disagrees with Seneca and suggests that the philosopher is wrong in his teaching. Dialogue, “the mutual relevance of source and receiving texts and contexts” (2003: 9), emphasizes the important interplay between past and present, between a text and its future. Foreignization is the translation or representation of a text in such a way as to emphasize the difference between source and reception (2003: 9). Hybridization, the fusion of material from classical and other cultures (2003: 9) results when Calvin engages numerous authors besides Seneca in order to explain the source text. Finally, migration is the “movement through time or across place” of a text (2003: 9).

Much of Calvin’s horizon of expectation is shaped by the genre of the Commentary. Calvin, as commentator, is expected to fade into the background: “But the louder the commentator’s voice, the more it may be judged obtrusive or overbearing, and the more it attracts parody and criticism” (Kraus 2002: 5). The assumptions and limitations of the commentator dictates the extent to which he can
disappropriate Seneca’s thought and forms the essential backdrop for the hybridization of ancient and contemporary cultures.

When dealing with Calvin’s commentary specifically, past scholars have divided into two camps: classicists and theologians. The classicist approach tends to see Calvin’s commentary merely as one more part of Seneca’s literary afterlife. These authors tend to dispense with the *Commentary* in a sentence or less. Particularly indicative of this approach is A.L. Motto’s treatment of the *Commentary*: “Seneca’s habit of being independent, individualistic, forward-looking, and of debunking the rituals of superstitious religion rendered him inordinately popular with leading figures of the Renaissance—Petrarch, Erasmus, More, Vives, Reuchlin, Ascham, Quevedo, Lipsius, Calvin” (1973: 133). Here, Calvin is merely one more member of the group of figures who worked on Seneca. Conte treats the commentary in a similar manner: “Erasmus devoted two editions to [Seneca’s] works (1515, 1529), arguing in the second and much improved one on the authority of Jerome that Seneca was a saint; Calvin wrote a commentary on the *De Clementia*; Montaigne’s conception of philosophical writing was deeply influenced by Seneca; and Seneca’s moral treatises have left unmistakable traces on Corneille and Diderot” (1994: 423). For these classicists, the *Commentary* is just further proof that Seneca had a lasting influence on literature.

Theologians, on the other hand, tend to view the *Commentary* entirely in terms of Calvin’s later life. To these scholars, studying this work is useful only insofar as it reveals insights about Calvin’s classical education and its influence on his thought. So, for instance, Ford Lewis Battles devotes a chapter of *Interpreting John Calvin* to “The Sources of Calvin’s Seneca Commentary.” By studying the sources of the *Commentary*, Battles concludes that “the commentary—slight though it is when measured by the standard of Calvin’s later work—illuminates the latter.” Thus, the importance of the *Commentary* is primarily to gain a better understanding of Calvin’s classical education and to elucidate the ways in which he transformed this education in light of his later ‘conversion’ to Protestantism (Battles 1996: 84-85). Similarly, in the paper which later became the aforementioned chapter, delivered to a Renaissance Conference at Yale University in 1965, Battles includes the importance of the *Commentary* as a precursor to Calvin as a scholar: “In the Commentary can be seen the beginnings of Calvin the exegete. The same attention to the close study of the text will later mark Calvin’s Christian writings” (Battles
1965: 23). Under the theologian's approach, the *De Clementia* derives its importance from the later works of Calvin, not from its original source, Seneca. Thus, these scholars completely divorce the *Commentary* from its source context and its horizon of expectation.

Similarly, some scholars use the *Commentary* as a precursor for Calvin's theological thought, looking for hints of what would later become the hallmarks of Calvinist theology and philosophy. Partee, for instance, uses the *Commentary* as a proving ground for the extent to which Stoic philosophy influenced Calvin, showing, for instance, that Calvin approves of the Stoic doctrine of providence to some degree (1977: 121). For McNeill, the *Commentary* is a starting point from which to investigate democratic elements in Calvin's thought. Thus, already at this early stage of Calvin's career, he already believes that “the test of tyranny is not the usurpation of power, but the will of the governed” (1949: 155), an idea which will later formulate itself in a political view similar to the modern conception of a representative democracy (1949: 169). To such theological scholars, the *Commentary* is most useful as a springboard from which to investigate Calvin and his later work.

Reception theory offers a valuable way to fuse these two approaches. For the classicist, an understanding of Calvin's commentary leads to a fuller understanding of Seneca's *De Clementia*. On the other hand, reception theory sheds light on aspects of Calvin's thought that otherwise go unnoticed. By examining the *Commentary* as a unique moment in the history of the *De Clementia*, Calvin becomes more than a collection of educational influences or Stoic doctrines, but a living individual who interacted with and changed the history of a work. In addition, the emphasis of the interplay between past, present, and future in reception theory offers much to the theological approach. By understanding the *Commentary* as a reception, theologians have a better context in which to interpret the reception of the *Commentary* within Calvin's later thought.

After obtaining his degree of *licentiat ès loix* in late 1530 from Bourges University, Calvin traveled to Paris, ostensibly to attend the lectures of the *regii interpretres*, five eminent scholars appointed to the University of Paris outside of the control of the Faculty of Theology (Battles and Hugo 1969: 3-4). Shortly after his arrival, Calvin visited his father in Noyon, where was detained by the unexpected illness of his father, who died on 26 May, 1531 (Battles and Hugo 1969: 6-8). He quickly returned to Bourges to pack his things, a journey of 200 miles, and then immediately departed for
Paris, traveling a total of 350 miles in only three weeks (Battles and Hugo 1969: 8). His time in Paris was soon disrupted when an outbreak of plague swept the city, forcing Calvin to take up residence in the village of Chaillot for much of the fall of 1531, a place away from the libraries necessary for academic work (Battles and Hugo 1969: 5; 10). Yet, the Commentary makes it to the printers early enough in 1532 to be published in April. By a thorough examination of this chronology, Battles and Hugo convincingly demonstrate that Calvin began writing the Commentary sometime in 1529-30, while still a student at Bourges (Battles and Hugo 1969: 10-11). Throughout their explanation, Battles and Hugo demonstrate the fervor with which Calvin devoted himself to the publication of the Commentary. Calvin himself goes to great pains to demonstrate that the decision to publish the Commentary was not made in haste (Praefatio i.5-ii.5). What, then, influenced young Calvin to undertake such an endeavor? Why did Calvin choose to write a commentary at all, and in particular, a commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia? The answer to these questions is of great importance for an understanding not only of Calvin’s commentary but also of the De Clementia itself.

In their excellent introduction to the Commentary, Battles and Hugo trace the spiritual and intellectual background to the text. Calvin was especially influenced by the teachings of Budé and Erasmus. Budé, a strong anti-Stoic, who taught that philology, philosophy, and theology were all intertwined and influenced each other, published his De Transitu Hellenismi ad Christaniamum in 1535, which discouraged strong philhellenism (Battles and Hugo 1969: 53-55). This attitude, itself a form of Augustinian thinking, had some influence on Calvin, and Battles and Hugo suggest that “Budé certainly had something to do with the few Augustinian elements that can be discerned in the Commentary” (1969: 55). Battles notes seven explicitly named references to Budé in the Commentary, as well as some 90 quotations or direct parallels (1996: 69-70).

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1 Ganoczy 1987: 75, on the other hand, believes that Calvin wrote the whole of the Commentary after his arrival in Paris in 1531, but does not support the position. The timeline of Battles and Hugo is much more detailed and documented.
2 For a brief overview of Alexandrianism and Augustinianism, see Battles and Hugo 1969: 47-49.
Perhaps the most influential figure on the *Commentary* is Erasmus, one of the leading scholars of his age. Erasmus was a strong advocate of education and the importance of understanding classical literature: “To be a Christian was to him no problem; but to be a barbarian Christian, unacquainted with the *litterae sacrae* and hostile towards the *litterae humanae*, that was unworthy of a true member of the *orbis Christianus*” (Battles and Hugo 1969: 55). Erasmus himself published two editions of the corpus of Seneca, one in 1515 and one in 1529. Calvin himself dares to stand up to the venerable scholar: “Indeed, even though Erasmus, the second ornament and first delight of literature, sweated twice in this arena, certain things passed unnoticed before his eyes, noticed first by me, which I say without ill-will” (*Praef. ii.1*). This shows a sense of respect for Erasmus combined with a desire to establish himself as a scholar, which will be discussed in greater depth below.

The years in which Calvin wrote the *Commentary* are part of the calm before the storm. Francis I was still protecting the Protestant movements, even showing some sympathy for them in his installment of the *regii interpretēs* to the University of Paris. These professors were free to choose their own course material and topics, and even dared to teach Greek and Hebrew to the lay students. Such practices “were regarded by the Paris theologians as dangerous in the extreme. The theologians smelt Lutheranism, and they did not hesitate to say so; but neither the King nor his chosen band of professors heeded such talk” (Battles and Hugo 1969: 4). At the moment, the political scene was relatively calm, but the intellectual and religious realms were already beginning to froth. Luther was condemned as a heretic in 1521, Noël Béda wrote *One Book of Annotations against Desiderius Erasmus* in 1526, and in 1525-26 several works of Erasmus were censured by the church (Battles and Hugo 1969: 16-17). At the very time at which Calvin is writing, it is becoming less and less possible for a scholar to side with the Theological Faculty of Paris: “It was now a clear-cut issue of freedom against tyranny, of rational science against bigotry and obscurantism” (Battles and Hugo 1969: 17-18). Yet, while Calvin could no longer support the Theological Faculty, he was not yet ready to support Protestant teachings (Battles and Hugo 1969: 18).

In light of this intellectual background, Battles and Hugo ascribe Calvin’s choice to write the *Commentary* to a desire for a

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3 All subsequent translations are my own.

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way out from the intellectual battles raging around him. To write a commentary on a classical treatise, particularly a Latin one, was still innocuous enough, and it might be a way to make his mark on academic circles: “He wanted time to consider, he wanted peace, he wanted to see his way more clearly. And in the meantime he wanted something worth while [sic] to do, something to get his mind off those harassing questions, something also to satisfy for the moment his ardent ambitions of making a name for himself” (Battles and Hugo 1969: 19). To write a commentary on the *De Clementia* was an opportune way to do so.

Yet, is this really a satisfactory explanation for why Calvin chose to write the *Commentary*? After all, if Calvin were hoping to avoid the political and intellectual turmoil churning below the surface, he would likely have chosen a less politically charged treatise of Seneca! The *De Otiō*, the *De Brevitate Vita*, the *Epistulæ Morales*, are works that would fit the poetic explanation of Battles and Hugo much better than the *De Clementia*. Given the political context, McNeill is right that “there is no proof that [Calvin] intended the book specifically as an admonition to Francis I to cease persecution of Protestants” (1949: 153), but the choice of clemency (*clementia*) is still an important one worthy of inquiry. By examining the *Commentary* in light of Calvin’s horizon of expectation, a fuller picture emerges.

Already in the preface, Calvin’s preconceptions and the ideas he brought with him to Seneca begin to reveal themselves. Calvin’s avowed purpose is to preserve an author he holds in high esteem: “I was bearing it most harshly that the best author was hated by most and was considered to be of no account. And so for a long time I desired that some great champion would emerge who would return him to his own place of worth” (*Praef.* i.36-ii.1). Calvin desires to vindicate Seneca as a stylist and an author, to restore him to his proper place within the Latin canon. In the 1529 edition of Seneca’s text, Erasmus himself had indicated that he would like to see Seneca explained with notes (Erasmus, quoted in Battles and Hugo 1969: 34). Yet Calvin does not mention this invitation, for Erasmus had extended it to those who were “more learned, more felicitous (that is to say, more gifted with the talent of critical divination), and more free” than he; for Calvin to mention Erasmus’ comment would be tantamount to claiming superiority to Erasmus himself (Battles and Hugo 1969: 35). This does much to explain why Calvin chose to write his commentary on a work of Seneca, but
it still does not answer the fundamental question of why he chose the *De Clementia*.

One part of the preface is often passed over without comment. In their haste to examine Calvin’s self-justification for publishing at such a young age, Battles and Hugo make no comment on the stated recipient of the *Commentary*, Claude de Hangest, Abbot of St. Eloi’s at Noyon. Calvin himself speaks of a personal relationship with de Hangest and explains why the work is dedicated to this religious leader:

> You will receive our Commentary, which places itself in your protection, not otherwise than as the first-fruits of the harvest, which are devoted and dedicated to you rightly and deservedly; not only because I owe to you my whole being and all I have, but indeed even more because I was educated in your house as a boy, initiated into the same studies with you, and I owe to your noble family my first education in life and literature. *(Praef. iii.30-36)*

Ostensibly, Calvin has chosen de Hangest as the recipient because he is an old friend, someone who would enjoy reading the first-fruits of Calvin’s labor. Given the historical context of the *Commentary*, however, perhaps there is an even better explanation. In the midst of the religious turmoil gripping France at the time, Calvin chooses to write an academic treatise about clemency and chooses to address it to a religious figure. Battles and Hugo vividly describe the inner turmoil Calvin with which Calvin was struggling during this period of his life (1969: 18-19); in some ways, Calvin is asking de Hangest for clemency as he approaches what will soon be a heretical decision. According to McNeill, the likely date of Calvin’s ‘conversion’ was April 1534, but Calvin was already inwardly half convinced of the Protestant position by 1532 (1949: 153). As he becomes more and more convinced of this, he vividly reminds an old friend and religious leader of the benefits of clemency by writing a commentary on the *De Clementia*.

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4 In addition, the choice of a pagan philosopher, while certainly in vogue at the time, introduces an element of foreignization to Calvin’s preface. By address a commentary on a pagan author to a Christian leader, Calvin implicitly highlights the difference between himself and de Hangest.
The *Commentary* is meant for more readers than just de Hangest, as Calvin is clearly aware. He addresses this part of his audience at the end of the preface: “As for the other readers, however they feel about it, even if it does not happen to receive the approbation of everyone, I am confident that it will not be considered the worst by the fairest critic" (*Praef.* iii.38-iv.2). Calvin is aware of the other people who may read his work, and one has to imagine that at least on some level Calvin is hoping that Seneca’s appeal to clemency will have a positive impact on these readers. Part of Calvin’s horizon of expectation is the expected audience of a commentary. Certainly Calvin did not expect the average person to read his commentary; his work was intended for academic circles. By opening his preface to these other readers, Calvin invites the educated public to join in the dialogue he has created with the *De Clementia*. When a source text migrates into a new context, the original context creates dialogue with the sphere into which it has been acculturated. Calvin has taken the concept of clemency as presented in Seneca, moved it from its place in a philosophical treatise intended for the emperor and put it instead into an academic treatise meant for religious and academic figures. By so doing, he invites his readers to consider the source and reflect on it, which, given the culture of the 1530’s, means an implicit appeal to clemency.5

The dialogue between source and received text and context is made clearer by Calvin’s appropriation and disappropriation of the *De Clementia*. The commentary genre brings with it certain limitations and expectations, all of which would have been part of Calvin’s horizon of expectation. One of the purposes of the commentator is to explain the original text, to put it in its context

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5 It is important to note here that this differs from the type of clemency that both McNeill 1949 and Ganoczy 1987 eschew. Thus, Ganoczy 1987: 73 is correct to say that “Calvin did not exploit this theme [clemency] to attack the contemporary religious persecutions.” Ganoczy is referring here to the “persecution which the King of France himself had unleashed, or at least approved, against the Lutherans” (1987: 74). Breen 1968: 80, on the other hand, sees some merit to the thesis that Calvin was hoping to engage the attention of King Francis I. I am not trying to argue that Calvin was hoping to convince the king to exercise clemency. I believe that Calvin is encouraging de Hangest and his other readers to adopt an attitude of clemency towards those who disagree (or may soon disagree, as is the case between Calvin and de Hangest) with them. This may seem a minute difference, but an important one for my thesis nonetheless.
and to help the modern reader better understand the original. For the most part, this is what Calvin does: "It is clear... that Calvins' [sic] aim is quite simple, to ensure that the reader will understand what Seneca is saying" (Battles and Hugo 1969: 62). Yet, there are times when Calvin steps out from behind the mask of commentator and explicitly approves or disapproves of Seneca’s teaching. For Battles and Hugo, these “rare intervals” are of no especial importance (1969: 62), they show merely that even at a young age Calvin already was tending towards the moralist preaching that characterized much of his later work and an affinity for Seneca’s moralist tendencies (1969: 38-41). For a reception study, however, these moments of appropriation and disappropriation are essential to understanding the text. 6

At De Clementia 1.1.6, Seneca warns Nero that those who mask a corrupt nature with goodness will soon be revealed as fake, for the “false quickly returns to its own nature.” After a brief explanatory comment, Calvin turns the statement to his own age:

What? Have not, in our age, certain monsters of men been seen, dripping with vice beneath their skin, but who nevertheless put forth the outward appearance and mask of upright behavior? Yet, they will melt like wax, when truth, the daughter of time, will reveal herself. Let them sell as they wish the sad-faced acts of piety to the public, at some point he who has sold smoke will die by smoke. (15.18-23)

6 Fantham (2002: 407) notes, “among ancient commentators perhaps only the writers on philosophical texts, generally adherents of a philosophical school, felt a pressure to establish both the ethical validity and the metaphysical consistency of, say, Aristotle’s or Chrysippus arguments comparable to that of a scientific commentator. Probably Christopher Rowe and Andrew Dyck find themselves motivated not only by the desire to understand Plato and Cicero, but also to find justification for their authors.” As was previously mentioned, Calvin is not a pure Stoic, so we should not understand these as trying to establish the ethical validity of Seneca’s teaching, for certainly Calvin’s disappropriation of Seneca demonstrates that this is not the case. While Calvin is certainly concerned with the defense of Seneca as an author, we must yet find another explanation for Calvin’s moments of disagreement with Seneca.
Here Seneca’s admonition of such individuals was not enough, and so Calvin appropriates and emphasizes Seneca’s point by his Commentary. When seen in light of the historical context of 1532, it is not at all difficult to see Calvin’s inner turmoil and growing hesitation with the Catholic Church. When Calvin makes a comment such as this, it forces the reader to go back and reread the original Senecan statement:

But you have placed a huge burden upon yourself; no one now speaks about the deified Augustus or the early years of Tiberius Caesar, nor seeks any exemplar beside yourself that he wishes you to copy; your principate is demanded to taste. This would have been difficult, if that goodness were not natural for you, but taken up just for a time (ad tempus). For no one is able to wear a mask for long, the false quickly returns to its own nature; those things with truth as its foundation and which, so to speak, are born from solid ground, by time itself become better and better. (1.1.6)

Calvin and his audience know that Nero’s goodness (bonitas) did not last and that his good qualities did fade away shortly after the time of the De Clementia. Thus, Calvin’s admonishment is even more poignant. Is Claude de Hangest’s goodness real or will his acts of piety melt away like wax? Will Calvin’s educated audience remain committed to clemency and understanding or will the religious differences separate them too? Braund notes that Seneca’s use of ad tempus refers to the beginning of a ruler’s reign, when “watch was kept for pretence or lack of it by the new emperor” (Braund 2009: 175). In a period of unrest and unease, when everyone is watching the leaders for pretence or lack of it, Calvin’s stern warning reminds all of his readers of the importance of matching life and character.

Similarly, Calvin twice bemoans the sad state of his current age compared with previous times. In the divisio where he lays out the structure of his text, Seneca mentions that there are some vices that imitate virtues. In response to this, Calvin says, “But if ever that was true, we, with great pain, experience it most truly today” (27.20–21). Here Calvin has not exactly appropriated Seneca’s teaching; he has, in fact, brought to the foreground the foreignization of his commentary. He highlights that his
commentary was written in a different age, one that is, in fact, worse than Seneca’s own age. When considered in light of Calvin’s cultural context, the emphasis is once again on those who are well meaning but may in fact be doing more harm than good. Calvin calls for clemency from the religious and academic circles as they grapple with these new ideas and different beliefs.

Later, when commenting on the nature of cruelty, Seneca notes that eventually “cruelty is turned into pleasure, and now it is pleasing to kill a man” (1.25.2). In response, Calvin says, “I do not know how it has come to this point, that some men are evil voluntarily, they are so crazy with the pleasure of sinning that the act of sinning itself is a pleasure, even if there is no cause” (132.15-17). What is perhaps most remarkable about this comment is that it has little to do with Seneca’s point. Whereas Seneca was talking about the possibility of acting cruel so often that one can begin to enjoy the act of cruelty, Calvin speaks of those who are willingly evil and sin for the sheer pleasure of it, not necessarily by acts of cruelty or because they have become evil by cruelty. Calvin’s comment interprets the “certain men” as those who engage in acts of cruelty for pleasure. It is not difficult to understand who such men may be in the 1530’s: those such as the Theological Faculty trying to suppress those with different viewpoints, those in the church who are beginning to move against outspoken leaders of the Protestant movement (leaders who include some of Calvin’s close friends), those who are attempting to convince the king to remove legal protection from the Protestants and who will soon put thousands to death. It should come as no surprise that Calvin would hope that more importance be ascribed to clemency in such a climate.

One final moment of appropriation is especially important for an understanding of the Commentary, though in this instance it is actually a case of disappropriation. At 2.4.4, Seneca writes, “...for many (pleri) praise [pity] as a virtue and call a pitying man good.” Calvin, however, blatantly disagrees with this: “Clearly we ought to be persuaded that pity is also a virtue; nor is a man able to be good who is not a pitying man, whatever these idle wise men discuss in their shaded places” (148.32-35). While Battles and Hugo write this off merely as evidence of why one cannot call Calvin a pure Stoic, perhaps there is more to this. Calvin’s job as a commentator is not to correct Seneca; rather, it is to explain him. Calvin could have treated this like any other passage by explaining who the pleri are or what in Stoic teaching gives rise to Seneca’s position. Instead, he
disappropriates Seneca’s teaching in order to disagree with the philosopher and make his own point. In Calvin’s mind, the more empathetic virtues that existed in the volatile climate of the 1530’s, the better. Calvin wanted to ensure that Claude de Hangest and other educated individuals would feel pity as well as clemency on those around them who dared to disagree with the church.

The conclusion that Calvin is using the Commentary to encourage clemency and pity in his current charged climate helps to make sense of Calvin’s comment in the next section. In furthering the differentiation between clemency (clementia) and pity (misericordia), Seneca notes that the Stoic wise man (sapiens) is unaffected by worldly calamities and that “his mind is serene” (serena eius mens est). Calvin responds, “Here he attributes lack-of-suffering (apathia) and lack-of-feeling (analgesia) to the sapiens, so that no emotion directly touches him. Whether or not this is true, it is not the task of this work to discuss” (152.14-16). Battles and Hugo are at a loss as how best to understand this comment:

What does he mean by that? He has just had his say about the question of misericordia. Why should he not also speak his mind about the wonderful apathia of the Stoics? His remark shows clearly enough that he did not believe such a thing as real apathia possible; but why should he not say it? What was there in the set-up of this Commentary (hoc propositum) to prevent him? One plausible reason that suggests itself is simply that Calvin was getting in a hurry to finish the manuscript. Or should we perhaps understand from this remark that it had not been his intention to attack Seneca at all, and that the few criticisms which we have enumerated had escaped him unawares? That seems very unlikely. (1969: 62)

By reading Calvin’s outcry in light of the charged cultural context, we are able to make sense of his apathy to this question. Discussing apathia and disputing its existence says nothing to de Hangest or the other readers of the Commentary. Calling pity a virtue, on the other hand, sends a clear message: have pity on those who may disagree with you.

It is clear by now that the Commentary is more than just an attempt to break into academic circles. While Calvin is attempting
to make a name for himself and to restore Seneca to his ‘proper place’ as a Latin author, the work goes beyond this. Some may argue that the number of disagreements and moralist preaching moments are insufficient to prove any political or religious purpose. Yet, by viewing the Commentary through the lens of reception study, these moments reveal a dialogue with Seneca in which Calvin invites his readers to participate. By addressing the Commentary to a religious leader, the importance of his choice of clemency for his topic becomes all the more important. By acting out of line with the horizon of expectation for a commentary, Calvin emphasizes the elements of foreignization in his work. What is more, the moments of appropriation and disappropriation take on special importance when seen in light of their Senecan originals. By keeping in mind both source and reception text and context, a new facet of the Commentary comes to light.

One important tenet of reception studies and phenomenology in general is the impact of perception on the object itself. That is, the De Clementia receives some part of its existence from its interaction with future responses to it, such as the Commentary. Hardwick noted that receptions provide a venue for the practice and study of contest about values and their relationship to knowledge and power (2003: 11). We can now briefly examine what Calvin’s Commentary tells us about the nature of Seneca’s De Clementia.

In 1532, Calvin uses the De Clementia as a way to remind his contemporary audience of the importance of mercy in troubled times. He acculturates the De Clementia into a new academic context, but nevertheless he continues the debate about values that Seneca started in the De Clementia. Regrettably for Calvin, the Commentary made almost no impact on his academic career, and practically no one noticed that the Commentary had even been written (Battles and Hugo 1969: 30-31). History shows us that reintroducing clemency to the church had little effect either, as some of the most intense persecution of French Protestants was just about to begin.

Calvin’s failure in some ways reflects that of Seneca. Despite the pleas of the De Clementia, Nero did not adhere to the virtues of clemency and was afterwards remembered as one of the harshest tyrants of the Roman Empire. The Commentary, then, highlights the

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7 “Reception practice and its analysis reveals both commonalities and differences between ancient and modern” (Hardwick 2003: 11).
inability of the *De Clementia* to bring about real transformation, as Calvin and Seneca both failed in their attempts to bring about effectual change via philosophical treatise.

When one studies Calvin’s *Commentary* only as a product of Calvin’s education independent of the *De Clementia* itself, much is lost. Instead, by reading the *Commentary* in light of reception theory, a more complete picture of Calvin’s work emerges, one that reflects back upon its source as well. Calvin’s *Commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia* has greater worth than as merely one more instance in Seneca’s literary afterlife or as a veritable gold mine of information on the early education of John Calvin. Rather, the *Commentary* is a unique instance of interaction with the Senecan text, attempting and failing to revive clemency in an age of turmoil.

**Works Cited**


The Meaning of “A Kingdom of Priests” in Exod 19:6 Revisited

Kyu Seop Kim

1. Introduction

What does מִלְטָלֶת הָעֵדֶה (kingdom of priests) mean in Exod 19:6? God declares Israel’s unique role and identity in this expression, which is known to “suggest the peculiar nature of the history of Israel.”¹ Echoes of מִלְטָלֶת הָעֵדֶה are found in the New Testament: ‘βασιλείαν, ἱερείς’ (Rev 1:6); ἔσται ἵερες τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ (Rev 20:6); and ‘βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα’ (1 Pet 2:9). This designation of Israel has had a great influence on Protestant doctrine,² and current liturgical discussions take a kingdom of priests to describe a people worshipping God.³ But the meaning of this phrase is still disputed.⁴ There are also the

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questions of what function this phrase has in the Sinai pericope or in the Old Testament⁵ or even in the second temple Judaism.⁶ This paper begins with a review of the current debates surrounding this expression and then evaluates the options in the light of the meanings of each word and the grammatical analysis of the construct.

2. Literature Review

This phrase has a long history of interpretation, beginning with the ancient versions. The LXX translates it as βασιλεία των ἱερεῶν, that is, a kingly or royal priesthood. The Vulgate understands it as regnum sacerdotale, namely “a priestly kingdom,” and Targum Onkelos reads “kings, (and) priests” as separate positions.⁷ Rashbam understands “priests” to be nobles.⁸ Likewise, in recent scholarship the interpretations are many, but fall into three categories: (1) Israel ruled by priests; (2) a kingdom set apart like priesthood; (3) a royal priesthood.

Israel Ruled By Priests

The phrase המלך המלך הקדושים can be used to identify the ruling priestly elite within Israel. William L. Moran argues that המלך המלך הקדושים; and מנהיגים连 with ימי קדושים together form the totality of Israel. Consequently, המלך המלך הקדושים is a separate group from the general people, and המלך המלך הקדושים refers to a regime of priests.⁹ Georg Fohrer contends that המלך המלך הקדושים implies the rulers had the attribute of priests in the early era of Israel and that the phrase could have originated in the Jerusalem

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⁵ John A. Davies, A Royal Priesthood: Literary And Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19, 6 (London: T&T Clark, 2004)
⁷ Israel Drazin, Targum Onkelos to Exodus: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary (Denver: Ktav, 1990), 190.
priestly tradition before the exile. Arie Van der Kooij makes the case that this phrase means “a kingdom ruled by priests under the supreme direction of a king who is also a priest.” First of all, he shows that μεταβασις in LXX refers to “a particular and official group,” that is, a body of priests in distinction from μέταβασις, which denotes the priesthood in the sense of the priestly office in LXX. He thinks that later understandings of this phrase support its interpretation as “leaders of the people,” not as a whole people. In other words, this phrase refers to the form of government of the people, the priesthood with royal status. He also suggests that Exod 19:6 reflects a similar idea to the dual kingship/priesthood of Melchizedek of Salem in Gen 14:18. Similar political constitutions (priesthoods with royal status) are found in Phoenician cities, such as Tyre and Sidon. However, though many find the origin of this phrase in the post-exilic era, it does not fit with the post-exilic situation that a kingdom of priests allows for the rule of a king who is also a priest. In addition, there is no evidence supporting the concept of reigning priests in the context of Exod 19. The primary concern in Exod 19:4-6 is the covenant with a collective people, and it is unfitting to the context that a priestly government is suddenly mentioned in the context of Israel being separated out of all nations for the covenant with YHWH.

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14 Steins, “Priesterherrschaft,” 27.
15 Scott, “A Kingdom of Priests,” 217; Gowan also says, “I doubt that the two Hebrew words can support the idea that priestly rule is implied. Parallelism suggests the meaning ought to be similar to be similar to “holy nation,” in his Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 177; Davies calls this view the active-elite interpretation and says, “It is commonly held that vv. 3b-8 must in some way be an introduction to the theophany, yet,
A Kingdom Set Apart Like a Priesthood

This reading is called “the simplest reading of the text.” Scott suggests this phrase describes Israel as a kingdom set apart like a priesthood from among other nations. Just as a priesthood has a privileged position within a society, so Israel as a priestly kingdom is set apart from among all people. Scott says, “this phrase simply designates Israel as worshippers of Yahweh, a positive counterpart of the idea of separation from the worship of other gods expressed in ” And according to Houtman, and function as synonyms in 19:6. And functions to modify as and should be understood in terms of the term in 19:5. As priests occupy a privileged position with their own obligations compared to ordinary people, so Israel occupies a special position with their own duties and responsibilities, because they are a holy nation, distinct from others. Finally, Houtman contends that this phrase refers to Israel’s unique position as a people in its entirety, not the position of the individual Israelite.

Though Houtman argues that and should be understood in terms of the term in 19:5, 19:6 is not syntactically under 19:5. Therefore, and cannot be understood in terms of the term, as Van der Kooij points out. In addition, Scott contends that means “set apart among all people.” But neither Scott nor Houtman takes into account, which occurs in Exod 19:22 and provides an important hint about the meaning of in Exod 19:6. Let us now review the final possible meaning – a royal priesthood.

A Royal Priesthood

on the active-elite interpretation, these verses are seen as rather intrusive,” in his A Royal Priesthood, 81.

16 Gowan, Theology in Exodus, 177.
19 Van der Kooij, “A Kingdom of Priests,” 177.
John Davies understands the whole of Israel to be designated as מֶמְלָכָה הָכֹהֵן. He argues that Israel was given the divine grant of kingly authority, as found in ancient Near Eastern literature, but this perspective has been overlooked so far. Davies does not see this grant as separate from the grant of priesthood. He explains that royalty is the honorific status of Israel, and it makes Israel participate in the royal court of the divine king with reference to the priesthood. In this way, he accepts Martin Buber’s view that priesthood involves a secular meaning, related to a court office.  

But we need to consider that in the general order of constructs, the second noun usually modifies the first, and so the reading of “a royal priesthood” is unlikely. מֶמְלָכָה הָכֹהֵן stands in a parallel relationship to the second title מֶמְלָכָה הָכֹהֵן, and מֶמְלָכָה and כֹּהֵן are observed as a common word pair in the Old Testament. This supports the idea that מֶמְלָכָה functions as a noun, not an adjective. For this reason, a royal priesthood reading of this phrase cannot be sustained.

3. Meaning of מֶמְלָכָה

An important question about the meaning of מֶמְלָכָה should be raised – does it mean “kingdom” or “king”? Moran and Fohrer argue that מֶמְלָכָה means “king.” Moran writes, “We can now point to a greater number of passages in which mamlaka most probably means ‘king, royalty’; and among them there are some in which mamlaka together with a goy constitutes a state.” He explains the evidences that are used to support the meaning of ‘king’ in the Old Testament. He explains from Jer 1:15 that in the מֶמְלָכָה of the North, the throne is made for a king, not for a kingdom, and represents royal authority. And in Ps 135:11, the psalmist mentions the mighty kings such as king of the Amorites and the king of Bashan and finally, מֶמְלָכָה undoubtedly refer to kings, not kingdoms, and he gives other

21 Davies, A Royal Priesthood, 76-102.
examples (1 Sam 10:18; 1 Kgs 5:1; 10:20; Isa 13:4, Jer 25:26; Amos 7:13; Ps 68:33; Lam 2:2; 2 Chr 12:8; 17:10). Moreover he seeks from Phoenician inscriptions evidence that מִלְּכָּה and מֵמַלְכָּה are synonyms. For these reasons, it seems that מֵמַלְכָּה includes the meaning of “king.”

But it is not clear that all of these examples definitely mean “king,” The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew indicates that these “perhaps” mean king. However, the BDB lexicon does not even include this meaning of “king.” Though the term can be used to signify the occupant of the office, such a use is abnormal. Moreover, Davies says, “If it is taken as a construct phrase, which is the most natural reading, the concrete reading ‘king’ will not suit, as ‘king(s) of priests’ yields little sense.” Contrary to Moran’s view, it is natural to understand ממלכת גֵּוֹי as nations of Canaan rather than kings of Canaan in Ps 135:11. And it should be noted that in Ps 105:13, ממלכת and מִלְּכָּה are used not only as parallels but also as synonyms. Even Moran acknowledges this point. Thus, though the term may also have the meaning of king, the context in Exod 19 requires the meaning of kingdom. Therefore we can conclude מֵמַלְכָּה refers to kingdom.

4. Meaning of מִלְּכָּה

As with מִלְּכָּה, scholars diverge on the meaning of מֵמַלְכָּה, but there are two main interpretations – a literal meaning, which refers

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26 Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament is an exception, but they quote only Caspari who argues хk’l’m.m; can mean king and they do not consider other’s,
28 Davies, A Royal Priesthood, 78.
29 ESV, NKJV and NRSV adopt the reading “kingdoms of Canaan.”
31 “Against Caspari the principal objection has been that the comparision with Phoenician mmlkt is irrelevant, because in biblical Hebrew mamlaka does not mean king,” in Moran, “A Kingdom of Priests,” 11.
32 E. Schüssler Fiorenza organizes the possible meanings into four sorts. First, מֵמַלְכָּה can mean the separated and chosen people from other...
to a priestly group among Israel, and a metaphorical meaning, which refers to the whole Israel. E. Schüssler Fiorenza discusses the basic meaning of קָהָנָּ֖ים as people who are assigned in a sanctified area or who serve the deity.  

In other words, קָהָנָּ֖ים is literally the group of the cultic officers in Israel.  

However, I will show that קָהָנָּ֖ים in Exod 19:6 can be used in a metaphorical sense for two reasons.

First, it does not fit the context that a specific group among Israel is abruptly mentioned, so a literal meaning of קָהָנָּ֖ים in Exod 19:6 (cultic officers) is unlikely. It is obvious that Exod 19:4-6 is a proclamation for the whole of Israel according to 19:3b (לִבְּנֵי שִׁבְּאֵֽי). Mentioning the polity or cultic group does not fit in the context of the proclamation of the privileges and obligations of the whole of Israel.

Secondly, though Van der Kooij argues קָהָנָּ֖ים cannot be used metaphorically and that “there is no parallel of such a use of קָהָנָּ֖ים elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible,” it is used in the Old Testament as a title of honor which refers to the king’s sons and to high court-officials, and none of these had any special relationship to the cult. In this sense, we can understand the Israelites are called “priests” and that they are intimate friends of the king Yahweh in Exod 19:6. In 1 Kgs 4:5, Zabud who is Nathan’s son is called קָהָנָּ֖ים.

nations. Secondly, it can stand for the priestly function of Israel as a mediator and a servant for all nations. Thirdly, it can indicate the accent and superiority about Israel’s access to Yahweh as priests can approach Him. Fourthly, קָהָנָּ֖ים can be a synonym of קָדְשֵׁי and be understood as a sanctified worshipping Yahweh or the bigger intensity of holiness of Israel. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Priester für Gott: Studien zum Herrschafts- und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), 115-117.

33 Schüssler Fiorenza, Priester für Gott, 114.


36 Buber says, “the word kohanim, which usually means priests, is synonymous, where it describes a secular court office, with “the first at the hand of the king; or with companion, adjutant,” in Martin Buber, Moses (Oxford: East and West Library, 1946), 106; “Israel as a “kingdom of priests,” could not be adopted, because in the Exodus passage kohanim simply means “direct servants,” while Deuteronomy its meaning is naturally the sacred position of sanctuary officers,” in Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith (New York: Harper, 1960), 160; Schüssler Fiorenza refutes this view, contending that
(a priest, the king’s friend). As well, in 2 Sam 8:18, it should be noted that David’s sons are called priests (מלכתי פנים ויהי). One might read this text as proof that kings of Israel held the office of a priest. But in 1 Sam 13:8-14, Saul, a king of Israel, is denied the office of a priest; rather, he was strongly denounced for his cultic behavior by Samuel and disqualified for kingship. Accordingly, we can conclude that can hold a secular and metaphorical meaning in the Old Testament and that it can refer to a high court-officer or an intimate friend of a king. In the same manner, we can understand in Exod 19:6 metaphorically.

5. Grammatical Analysis of מֶלֶכֶת פָּנִים

Now that the meanings of מֶלֶכֶת פָּנִים have been explained, we turn to analyzing the relationship between these two words in the construct form. If this phrase is obviously a construct form, it can be understood as a sort of genitive. Therefore the most it could be only a honored title or David’s sons might have served the cults and especially the author might have regarded it as a technical term. But there is no evidence that it is used as a honored title and David’s son were related to the cult in the Old Testament.

37 LXX also interprets as chiefs of the court (αὐλάρχαι).


39 “As the priesthood meant a variety of things and exercised a range of functions, it will be necessary to ask which particular aspect or aspects of priesthood may be intended by the use of the word in Exod. 19.6.” See Davies, A Royal Priesthood, 91.

40 One can think is absolute because many ancient readers chose not only as a construct form (of the usual absolute מלכתי) but also as an absolute such as readings of the Syriac Peshitta (kingdom and priests), Targums(kings (and) priests) and Jub. 16:18. Among modern interpreters, J. B. Bauer rejects the general understanding in favor of a construct. He presents the similar cases in the Old Testament. For example, he argues “אַלְמֵנָה יִלְעָלִית עֲרוֹן" (a loving doe, a graceful deer) in Prov 5:19 has absolute noun + absolute noun - absolute noun + adjective structure just like מלכתי פָּנִים in Exod 19:6. But “אַלְמֵנָה" should be understood as a construct and each pair of “loving doe, a graceful deer” can be regarded as construct relations most naturally. He also presents two other examples in Ps 48:17, Zech 1:13. But Joion says both of these cases are ambiguous. A possible alternative 77
important question should be what kind of genitive this is, because this determines the meaning of the phrase. Possible genitive meanings can be divided into three categories: (1) genitive of agency (a kingdom with priests as rulers); (2) genitive of quality (a royal priesthood); (3) attributive genitive (a priestly kingdom).

**Genitive Of Agency (A Kingdom With Priests As Rulers)**

If we understand this phrase as a genitive of agency, it refers to a priestly group within Israel identified as a ruling priestly elite. Moran argues that מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל and מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי יִשָּׂרָאֵל are complementary to each other in their relationship and that the two together refer to the totality of Israel. Van der Kooij argues that in terms of מֶלֶךְ בָּאָרָן (the kingdom of Og) in Num 32:13 and Deut 3:13, מֶלֶךְ מֵאֹמֶר more likely points to the leaders of the people. In this case, מֶלֶךְ is

Explanation is that each pair is introduced by a plural construct followed by an enclitic mem. Therefore we can conclude each example which Bauer presents doesn’t provide proofs for his argument and מֶלֶךְ מֵאֹמֶר is finally a construct form: J. B. Bauer, “Könige und Priester, ein heiliges Volk (Ex 19, 6),” BZ 2 (1958): 283-286; John Davies, A Royal Priesthood, 83.

But Steins suggests 5 possible genitive meanings as following: (1) genitive of agency: a kingdom with priests as rulers; (2) genitive of quality: a royal priesthood; (3) objective genitive: the royal ruling over priests or a kingdom having priests; (4) attributive genitive: a priestly kingdom; (5) genitive of genus: a kingdom which priests belong to. Steins, “Priesterherrschaft,” 23-24. But we can more narrow down the possible genitive meaning into (1), (2) and (4) because (3) and (5) are seldom supported by contemporary scholars. If we accept objective genitive view (3), means “a body of priests subject to kingly rule or a kingdom possessing a legitimate priesthood.” But this view should be rejected for the reason following. Scott explains that first of all, this view is not fit for the context, “where Israel collectively as a people or kingdom is contrasted with other peoples, not her priesthood with theirs,” and the royal ruling over priests can not convey the notion of fellowship with YHWH in the covenantal context, Scott, “A Kingdom of Priests,” 217. And the genitive of genus view (5) includes the idea that all of citizens individually have the right of direct approach to God. This view is supported by Rev 1:6, 5:9-10 and 20:6. But this view can not be sustained in that the primary interest in the context is the covenant as made with a collective body, “the house of Jacob… the children of Israel (v.3)”, not individually in Scott, “A Kingdom of Priests,” 217; “The point is Israel’s unique position as a people in its entity to God (cf. 19:3b, 5), not the position of the individual Israelite. The notion of the universal priesthood of believers lies outside the horizon of Exod. 19,” in Houtman, Exodus II, 446.

the genitive of agency to מְצָלֵה. And Moran argues that מְצָלֵה and yAG constitute one nation in Jer 18:7-8, 27:7-8. But this cannot be the only an alternative. In Jer 18:7-8, 27:7-8, מְצָלֵה and yAG can be understood as the whole national entity and מְצָלֵה and yAG as synonyms. 43 Indeed, they occur together and are interchangeable terms in Ps 105:13 and 1 Chr 16:20. 44

However, the context of Exod 19:4-6 does not support this reading. מְצָלֵה is the privilege as the result of obedience to the conditional clause, “If you hear my voice and keep my covenant (אָשֶׁר אָשֶׁר תֹּמַם תִּשְׁמַשׁ בְּךָ, אֲשֶׁר אָשֶׁר אָשֶׁר אָשֶׁר אָשׁוּב),” and it is implausible that the covenantal privilege is the political constitution of a government under the priestly leaders. 45 On the contrary, Van der Kooij argues that 19:6 is not related to the conditional clause in 19:5, and that 19:6 introduces a new aspect to organize the people of YHWH as a political entity - the ruler and the ruled. 46 He suggests the structure of 4-5 as below.

v. 4 אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתָ
v. 5 תֹּמַם אֲשֶׁר תֹּמַם תִּשְׁמַשׁ
v. 6 יִהְיֶה תָּרָם יִהְיֶה

43 Davies observes, “Synonymous parallelism would even appear to be the simplest explanation of such passages as Jer. 29.18, 51.20 and Ps. 46. 7, where the remaining terms in each hemistich are synonymously parallel,” in Davies, A Royal Priesthood, 80.

44 Houtman says, “Apart from the question whether מְצָלֵה can mean ‘king’ in Hebrew – doubtful in my view – it should be noted that the duality ruler(s)-ruled ill fits the subject ‘you,’ and leads to a strained interpretation,” in Houtman, Exodus II, 445.

45 The supporters of this view seeks the grounds of the argument in historical reconstruction of this text. But this text should be understood in the final form. cf) “Modern scholars have, I believe, failed to do justice to this passage, and that for two reasons. On the one hand, they have been unable to agree on its literary source, which has in turn hampered them in its interpretation. On the other hand, in their obsession with historical origins and parallels, they have overlooked its significance within the present arrangement of Exodus,” in John W. Kleinig, “On Eagles’ Wing: An Exegetical Study of Exodus 19:2-8,” Lutheran Theological Journal 21 (1987): 18.

46 Van der Kooij, “A Kingdom of Priests,” 177.
Van der Kooij argues that this whole structure denotes that it begins with the use of the plural pronoun פָּרֹשׁ, as in 19:4, and that 19:6 syntactically does not belong to the sentence of 19:5. The focus of 19:5 is the status of Israel among other nations, and this sentence is completed with the last clause - “for all the earth is mine.” Van der Kooij also contends that 19:6 begins the new focus, which is a new statement about organizing the people of God. Finally, he thinks that mentioning a specific group among Israel fits the context.\[47\]

However, Van der Kooij overlooks the parallel of the verb קְדוֹשׁ in 19:5 and 6. He mentions that the element קְדוֹשׁ is common to both verses, but he insists the setting between the two verses is different, although how the setting is different is unclear in his article.\[48\] However, he misses the inverted parallel structure of 19:5-6 as below.\[49\]

\[
\text{הָיוּ הַיָּעַה יִלְּכָלָה A} \\
\text{מְפָלֶלָהּ בֵּיתָו B} \\
\text{כֵּיָּיְלָ מְפֶלֶלֶהּ B'} \\
\text{ואֶשֶׁת עָדוּרִי: מְפָלֶלָהּ כּוֺהָנָה וּמְפָלֶלָה כּוֺהָנָה A'}
\]

This chiasmus makes the relationship between הָיוּ הַיָּעַה יִלְּכָלָה and מְפָלֶלָה כּוֺהָנָה clearer. יִלְּכָלָה in A corresponds to מְפָלֶלָה כּוֺהָנָה in A’, while מְפָלֶלָה כּוֺהָנָה pairs up with מְפָלֶלָה כּוֺהָנָה in B-B’. That is, הָיוּ קְדוֹשׁ יִלְּכָלָה and מְפָלֶלָה כּוֺהָנָה do not refer to different objects. This structure is plausible because this chiasmus clearly shows the parallel of קְדוֹשׁ between A-A’ and כּוֺהָנָה of between B-B’. In this chiasmus, Israel is

\[47\] Along with his syntactical argumentation, he deals with early reception history of the text such as LXX, 2 Macc and Targumim, and historical arguments in his article. But these arguments are beyond the range of this paper.

\[48\] He only says, “it makes sense to have Hebrew term קְדוֹשׁ combined with the phrase ‘among all peoples’, but this does not apply to the expressions of v. 6. This verse bears upon the people of Israel as a political entity (נֵבֶד), with a particular emphasis on the issue of its constitution (קְדוֹשׁ כּוֺהָנָה),” in Van der Kooij, “A Kingdom of Priests,” 177.

\[49\] Davies, A Royal Priesthood, 59; Wells suggests the similar structure. See Wells, God’s Holy people, 47.
positioned on either end with the verb לְשׁוֹן. This chiasmus can explain the complicated structure in 19:3-6 better than Van der Kooij’s, and we can conclude that 19:5 and 19:6 are not separate. Likewise Jagersma explains: 50

The two instructions in verse 5a are, therefore, not only textually but also functionally at the center of the LORD’s speech....If, therefore, on the basis of the Lord’s three acts referred to in the first series (vs. 4), the Israelites carry out the two instructions of verse 5a, they will be able to function completely according to the three characterizations mentioned in the third series (vv. 5b-6a)

That is to say, if Israel keeps the two requirements of listening to God’s voice and covenant, Israel can function according to three characterizations, namely, לְשׁוֹן and מְצַמַּעְתָּם כְּהָנִים. These characterizations of Exodus 19:5b, 6a are subordinate to the two instructions in verse 5a, 51 and this gives us the foundation against the interpretation of כְּהָנִים as a specific group separated from general people. Therefore we can conclude that כְּהָנִים is not a separate group from כָּל and that מְצַמַּעְתָּם כְּהָנִים is not a genitive of agency.

**Genitive of Quality (A Royal Priesthood)**

The genitive of quality denotes that the first term of the chain has the quality of the second term, 52 and this is a plausible reading in Exod 19:6 based on the ancient Near Eastern context and the Sinai pericope. 53 This interpretation would mean that Israel has not only a priestly but also kingly function among other nations. However, it is doubtful that מְצַמַּעְתָּם can contain the meaning of royalty in Exod 19:6, because it is semantically located in the same field as כָּל, and they are a common word pair in the Old

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53 Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 93, 170-188.
Furthermore, in Exodus 19:6, this interpretation misses the parallel with חֶדֶשׁ (הַקָּרָאוֹת) and מַמְלֵכָה (הַקָּרָאוֹת). As Fohrer notes, חֶדֶשׁ (the modifier) corresponds to חֶדֶשׁ (the modifier), and מַמְלֵכָה (the modified) to מַמְלֵכָה (the modified). It is the most natural to say that חֶדֶשׁ and מַמְלֵכָה have the same nominal function as the modified in terms of the fact that חֶדֶשׁ and מַמְלֵכָה are a common word pair in the Old Testament. Therefore the parallel between חֶדֶשׁ and מַמְלֵכָה is evidence against the view of genitive of quality.

**Attributive Genitive: A Priestly kingdom**

Interpreting מַמְלֵכָה חֶדֶשׁ as an attributive genitive is the view most suitable to the context. As מַמְלֵכָה חֶדֶשׁ is qualified by חֶדֶשׁ, so מַמְלֵכָה חֶדֶשׁ is qualified by חֶדֶשׁ (a plural of abstraction). This appears to be the simplest understanding of grammar. Scott argues that מַמְלֵכָה חֶדֶשׁ means “a kingdom set apart like a priest.” His analysis depends on synonymous or conceptual parallelism with חֶדֶשׁ חֶדֶשׁ mainly; however, this parallelism should be regarded not as synonymous parallelism, but as a list according to Geller’s category.

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55 Fohrer, “Priesterliches Königstum,” 151.
56 Mosis, “Ex 19,5b, 6a,” 21.
58 If מַמְלֵכָה חֶדֶשׁ and חֶדֶשׁ have the same meaning, they constitute synonymous parallelism. Stephen Geller explains the members of synonymous parallelism “belong to semantic paradigms the numbers of which are essentially interchangeable logically,” in Stephen A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), 34. According to Geller’s definition, מַמְלֵכָה and חֶדֶשׁ should be interchangeable. But the meaning of מַמְלֵכָה denotes the broad meaning in the Sinai pericope. Wells points out that priesthood in Exodus means “distinctive to the Nation of Israel”, “Covenant Identity of God’s people”, “drawing near to God like Moses”, “holy to YHWH”, “Acting on behalf of Israel”, “to serve the cult as YHWH commanded” and “revealing YHWH’s holiness” in Wells, *God’s Holy People*, חֶדֶשׁ is used as “holy to YHWH”(e.g., 29:44), but it can not be confined into only that meaning. For example, priests is the people “who come near to YHWH” in Exod 19:22. Wells says, “The nearer a person draws, the more preparation is required (19:22). By implication, therefore, Moses is the most ‘priestly’ of all. This status is measured by the extent of the access priests are given in ‘drawing near’ to YHWH and thus responsibility they take in the role of mediating between YHWH and his
Steins makes a different suggestion about the meaning. He argues the background of Exod 19:3-8 is the covenant story with YHWH and the introduction of Exod 19-24 which proclaims the unique privilege of Israel and emphasize their binding with YHWH. is one of the analogies about it. It should be considered that points to the relation between YHWH and Israel, and denotes the special feature of Israel, their closeness to God (Nähe zu Gott). Let us look at Exod 19:22a:

\[\text{Exod 19:22a}\]

Steins explains Israel’s priestliness with this feature in this verse. That is, Israel is the priestly kingdom in that it is near to God and hears his voice. As well, we can find a similar idea in Isa 60-62. Therefore we can conclude that this construct uses the attributive genitive, and that Israel is the kingdom which has a priestly attribute (closeness to God).

6. Conclusion

After reviewing the current debates about this issue, was shown to be better read as kingdom, not as kings. Furthermore, the metaphorical meaning of , not as a specific group in Israel but as the whole of Israel, was shown to be best. Synthesizing these two meanings, it is concluded that the relationship between two people….The essence of the role of priest is to draw near to YHWH. Thus Moses is depicted as the ultimate priest.” Thus we should not overlook the priestly role to have an access to YHWH and it’s an important conception of priesthood in Sinai periscope. Therefore we can conclude and are not interchangeable in Exodus and so and are not synonymos parallelism. Geller suggests semantic parallelism includes synonym, list, antonym, merism, epithet, proper noun, pronoun, whole-part or part-whole, concrete-abstract or abstract-concrete, numerical, identity, and metaphor. In these categories, and is the list. Geller defines the list as the semantic parallelism whose members belong to a type of paradigm that members of this category “are related by an understood common denominator and are not logically interchangeable, even in the most general way,” in Geller, Parallelism, 35.

61 cf Isa 61:6 “But you shall be called priests of YHWH.”
words is attributive genitive, and so מִמְלֶכֶת כַּהֲנִים can be read as a priestly kingdom. Specifically, a priestly kingdom means not a kingdom set apart from all peoples, but the kingdom near to God. Therefore, a priestly kingdom is the most suitable interpretation of מִמְלֶכֶת כַּהֲנִים.

Bibliography


“To God Be the Glory”: A Reflection on Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 8

Heather Stroobosscher

In his book Subversive Spirituality, Eugene Peterson observes:

There’s no area of the spiritual life that’s more subject to pride, to ambition, to self-assertion, to non-humility than leadership positions in ministry. Yet there’s no area in which the pursuit of excellence is more important either.”

Leadership is tricky, because when a leader is up in front of people—even for holy purposes—ego is right up there too. Or at least that’s the obstacle leaders are forced to confront. It gets even muddier when leaders in worship settings receive praise: What an excellent sermon you gave! What a beautiful voice you have! What a great thing you did! You are awesome!

Or take genuine acts of humility and kindness: a person makes a meal for a friend on the exact day she’s unraveling; after a long day of educating five-year-olds, a teacher drives home a child who forgot to get on the bus; friends give a seminarian a check for a $1,000 because they just felt moved to do so. It is so easy to praise the people in each of these situations: how giving, how sacrificing, how kind, how generous. They deserve credit, after all.

Unpacking Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 8 offers good perspective on the above scenarios:

Q. Are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?
A. Yes, unless we are born again, by the Spirit of God.

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Are we unable to do any good? Yes—we are inclined toward all evil. In other words, without the Holy Spirit, acknowledged or not, people don’t make meals, drive kids home and write checks. Without the Holy Spirit, people aren’t able to deliver powerful sermons or bless others through music. It’s only through the Holy Spirit that we’re able to do any good. Recognizing the truth of Q & A 8 allows us to see the Spirit more clearly at work in the lives of his people. We naturally see people. They’re right in front of us, tangible, tactile. What’s more, they’re gifted and amazing. They work hard, learn well, overcome huge obstacles and accomplish incredible tasks. People are truly amazing. And we are quick to give people all the credit—the people who are “unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil.” In reality, though, God is amazing. He takes those who are inclined toward evil and pours out his Holy Spirit on them, and brilliance shines forth. Q & A 8 equips us to give credit where credit is due, acknowledging God’s grace at work in the lives of his chosen ones.

My children’s school theme last year was “See God,” and their theme verse was Jeremiah 29:13: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Throughout the school year, my children were on the constant lookout for God. They often saw God in people, and not just in the pastor or the person who said a prayer. They saw God in people’s loving responses or kind words. They saw God when a child gave up her place in line to help a student pick up her overturned backpack, when a secretary shared her lunch because a child forgot his, when someone was a friend because another needed one. Their vision was accurate, and Q & A 8 does a good job clarifying why. Q & A 8 allows us to look at people and proclaim: “To God Be the Glory!”
The Widow of Nain

Randall Buursma

Retelling a scripture text in dramatic form helps the listener to picture the events. The following reading is based on Luke 7: 11-17, where Jesus raises the widow of Nain’s son. The story is retold at the funeral of the boy who was raised from the dead – only this is his second funeral and the story is told by his grandchildren. (The story is told from the grandchildren’s perspective so that Middle School age children can participate in the service). The context allows the story to be told in a way that prompts the listener’s imagination while reminding us of the power of Jesus.

Luke 7: 11-17
Jesus Raises a Widow's Son

A coffin is carried in and set at the front (we used a rectangular board with the son covered completely with a black cloth on the board). People are gathered around for the funeral service.

Man: Welcome to my father’s funeral. I’m glad that you came. Father was an interesting man who had a fascinating life. He loved life. He had a way about him, a sensitivity that was unusual. He loved his family and he loved his grandchildren. He spent time with them sharing stories about his adventures. It was as if he wanted to make sure that he was leaving them a legacy of sorts. We thought it might be best if the grandchildren shared certain aspects of his story, so they will be coming up to tell you a bit more about their grandfather and my Father.

Child 1: Grandpa was born in a small town called Nain. Not many people lived there at all. Grandpa called it a dead-end town that didn't have much to offer for either those who lived there or those who visited. People who grew up in Nain often left for other places that presented more opportunity.
Child 2: Grandpa had a difficult childhood. When he was young, his father died, leaving just him and his mother. Losing his father like this meant that he and his mother would rely on the kindness of others. They had no money and his mom had no job. They barely could make ends meet. There was always the question of whether or not there would be enough food for them and how they would manage to live from one day to the next.

Child 3: But grandpa and his mom managed to keep things together. His mom would do whatever she could to make his life comfortable. Grandpa was the only good thing in her life and she loved him deeply. We knew this because of the story grandpa told of the most amazing event in his life. When grandpa was a young man, he became very sick. No one could do anything to stop the sickness, and soon he died. His mother, who had already lost her husband, was devastated. The only good part of her life was taken away. She now had nothing, and the sadness overwhelmed her.

Child 4: The funeral was painful to watch. The people of Nain gathered around and carried the body out of the town so that her son could be buried. (*The other children who are at the funeral get up and begin pantomiming what is described next. The widow should be in the front of the coffin*). They cried together over the death of her son. It made no sense that someone should have to endure such grief again. The feeling of emptiness and helplessness filled the air. As they were leaving through the town gate, they came upon a man who was entering the town. (*Jesus comes up to greet those who are carrying the body. Jesus was played by the son, although another character could be added*). This man saw the tears that ran down their faces. He heard their crying and their sobbing for the loss of this young person. He felt their emptiness in the core of his own heart. He paused and then went up to our great-grandmother and said:

*Jesus: Don't cry*

Child 3: She could tell by the look in his eye that he also felt the sadness of this moment, but she did not have the strength to stop crying. This man then moved toward the coffin, and he touched it. No one should touch the coffin that has a dead body in it, but he deliberately touched the coffin and called out in a loud voice: (*The scene is acted out*)
Jesus: Young man, I say to you, get up!

Child 3: There was a stirring under the black cloths. Grandpa sat up, took off the funeral cloths, and began talking to his mother. (Child actor pantomimes these actions)

Young Man: What is going on here? What is happening? *(Looking at Jesus)* Who are you?

4: Grandpa later found out that the man’s name was Jesus. He gave Grandpa back to his mother. The people of the town were stunned. In their greatest moment of sadness and darkness, a light had come. At the moment of hopelessness, there was suddenly hope. They called out: *(The rest of the procession calls out)*

Voice(s): A great prophet has appeared among us!

Voice(s): God has come to help his people! God has come to help his people! Praise God!

Child 4: Grandpa loved to tell this story, although he always included that Jesus was more than a great prophet. Grandpa called him the Messiah. A short time after giving Grandpa life, this Jesus died on a cross. Only he didn’t stay dead. Grandpa told us that three days after Jesus’ death, Jesus came back to life. Jesus lived for a while longer on this earth, and then something strange happened. Jesus went up into the sky and went into heaven.

Child 3: Grandpa told us that when Jesus died, came back to life, and then went into heaven, Jesus was pointing to what will happen to all of us. Grandpa told us that he would die again, only this time, he would be raised again, by Jesus, and then be with Jesus forever. He is with him now.

Son: So today we have come to bury my father for a second time. He would like nothing more than to be remembered for the man who died twice but because of God’s grace, lives forever in God’s presence. That same grace is extended to all of us, from generation to generation. Thank you for sharing with us in this celebration of that grace.