the book, no doubt, and any remaining errors are borne by the authors alone. And, of course, we are most delighted that Todd Billings was willing to write the afterword. Todd is an astute historian and as talented a theologian as one will find anywhere. Most importantly, for him those two callings are not separated. Indeed, he embodies the persona of a Reformed catholic, and we are honored that his own proposal concludes this volume and relates it to the life and ministry of local congregations.

We thank our wives, Emily and Leigh, as well as our children for their support in the preparation of this book. We also thank our respective institutions for supporting our research and writing; in particular, Luder Whitlock and Don Sweeting deserve thanks for protecting our time and encouraging this work. The team at Baker Academic has proven remarkable in moving this volume to press with speed and skill; we are thankful for Bob Hosack, Robert Hand, Bryan Dyer, Mason Slater, Jeremy Wells, and Trinity Graeser.

We dedicate this book to Professor John Webster, now of the University of St. Andrews. John has been many things to us: examiner, editor, colleague, and friend. Beyond these various institutional and personal roles, however, he has been a mentor to so many younger theologians in the catholic and Reformed world today. His writings and his institutional service have helped shape a context where Reformed catholicity is a reality and, we believe, one with strong intellectual vitality. For his leadership, example, friendship, and faithfulness, we are most grateful.

Introduction

Renewal through Retrieval

Can Christians and churches be catholic and Reformed? Can they commit themselves not only to the ultimate authority of apostolic Scripture but also to receiving this Bible within the context of the apostolic church?

> There is no other such gulf in the history of human thought as that which is cleft between the apostolic and the immediately succeeding ages. To pass from the latest apostolic writings to the earliest compositions of uninspired Christian pens is to fall through such a giddy height that it is no wonder if we rise dazed and almost unable to determine our whereabouts. Here is the great fault—as the geologists would say—in the history of Christian doctrine. There is every evidence of continuity—but, oh, at how much lower a level! The rich vein of evangelical religion has run well-nigh out; and, though there are masses of apostolic origin lying everywhere, they are but fragments, and are evidently only the talus which has fallen from the cliffs above and scattered itself over the lower surface.[1]

1. B. B. Warfield, *The Significance of the Westminster Standards as a Creed* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 4.

With these pointed words, B. B. Warfield critiques the theology of the post-apostolic church for falling short of the perfections of the writings of the prophets and apostles.[2] The stalwart defender of Reformed Orthodoxy at Princeton Theological Seminary offers a value judgment about not only the biblical writings and their relevance today, but also (by comparison) the post-apostolic witness of the early church. In such a vision, of course, to be Reformed means precisely to cease being catholic or, at the very least, to limit the extent of the catholic tradition that is valid and authentic. Thankfully, Warfield's wider reflections do not demonstrate a consistency in this regard, and he was surely no thoroughgoing iconoclast with respect to the patristic and medieval heritage of the Reformational church; yet his reflections here on the collapse of the catholic faith have resonated through much of the evangelical and Reformed world. Indeed,

2. Charles Hodge had earlier offered both a more subtle approach to the catholic heritage of the church as well as some specific language that was rhetorically unfortunate (see Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970]). In the midst of a sober reflection on the development of doctrine (116–18) Hodge affirms that doctrine does develop, and that this extension of biblical teaching is a positive sign and instrument in the formation of Christians and churches. Later he polemically engages what he terms "Romish" developments in faith and practice and, more broadly, the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition (see 121, where this is the explicit concern). In the course of those polemics, he sometimes speaks more unguardedly of tradition itself as a detriment:

> Tradition teaches error, and therefore cannot be divinely controlled so as to be a rule of faith. The issue is between Scripture and tradition. Both cannot be true. The one contradicts the other. One or the other must be given up. Of this at least no true Protestant has any doubt. All the doctrines peculiar to Romanism, and for which Romanists plead the authority of Scripture, Protestants believe to be anti-scriptural; and therefore they need no other evidence to prove that tradition is not to be trusted either in matters of faith and practice. (128–29)

If one reads Hodge contextually, it is clear that he is opposing the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition, which he has earlier characterized as a view that tradition is a "second source" of independent and "equal authority" to the Scriptures (earlier on 128). Admittedly, however, his rhetoric here can sound much more all-encompassing, and we do well to be cognizant of the danger that he might be easily misread (either by those who would do so to condemn him or to herald what they believe he says). A much more effective account of tradition from the Princeton theologians is offered by Warfield's successor, who maintains the same principled approach but does so without any of the ambiguous rhetoric: see John Murray, "Tradition: Romish and Protestant," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 4, *Studies in Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 264–73, esp. 268–69.

anything after the apostolic age would be a distraction to many. The call, then, is for reform by return to primitivism, peeling back layers of ecclesial development and getting to the canonical core.[3]

Many critiques of Protestantism suggest that if one desires a churchly, sacramental, ancient faith, then one must turn from the Reformation toward Rome or the East. And many have taken to those paths, fleeing what they may perceive to be thin theologies of ministry and of the Christian life in the Reformational world. Others celebrate the Reformed church as decidedly un-catholic and seek to minimize any connection to the ancient shape of the Christian faith. Whether fleeing or staying, such postures derive from a view of theology and history, namely, how one believes Reformed Christians view the catholic heritage of the Christian church. Such postures fit with the assessment of Warfield, as seen above, and their fervor has only increased in more recent decades.

But there is another way, which predates the historical assessment of Warfield. William Perkins, the great source of so much Reformed piety in the Puritan era, penned a treatise entitled *Reformed Catholicke* to make the point that Reformed identity was precisely a matter of Reformed catholicity. Perkins was Reformed, a Puritan even, but he believed that efforts to see the church purified and reformed did not remove its liturgy, its instruments for discipleship, or its approaches to government; rather such efforts refined them. "By a Reformed Catholic, I understand anyone that holds the same necessary heads of religion with the Roman Church: yet so as he pares off and rejects all errors in doctrine, whereby the said religion is corrupted."[4] Perkins teases out this common catholic heritage and cherished tradition with respect to two things: faith and practice. Respecting faith, he later says: "And many things we hold for truth, not written in the word, if they be not against the word."[5] Concerning practice, he writes: "We hold that the Church of God hath power to prescribe ordinances,

3. The frequent language employed by N. T. Wright to refuse to let the Jesus of the creeds get in the way of the Jesus of the gospel is a prime example (see *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* [New York: HarperOne, 2012] as a recent example of this recurring theme in his work).

4. William Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke*, Works of William Perkins 1 (London: John Legatt, 1626), 555.

5. Ibid., 580.

rules, or traditions, touching time and place of God's worship, and touching order and comeliness in the same. . . . This kind of tradition, whether made by general Councils or particular Synods, we have care to maintain and observe."[6] In this book our wager is that Perkins was right: to be Reformed means to go deeper into true catholicity, not to move away from catholicity.

Recent Trends in Faith and Practice

A number of theological trends have arisen in recent decades, each of which celebrates or calls for retrieving elements, practices, and texts from earlier Christian churches. Our call toward Reformed catholicity is not that of a lone voice calling in the wilderness. As we will see in our survey, these movements vary quite a bit and even disagree on a host of issues. In our judgment, they also exhibit varying degrees of historical and theological perception and discrimination. They coalesce, however, in the judgment that modern theology, in more conservative and progressive forms, has exhausted itself as a mode of theological inquiry and that the path toward theological renewal lies in retrieving resources from the Christian tradition. We will offer the briefest of surveys.

Nouvelle Théologie

The first notable movement toward retrieval was led by a number of Roman Catholic theologians, Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac being the most notable. What became known as "the new theology" (*la nouvelle théologie*) was, perhaps ironically, largely characterized by an attempt to recover the riches of patristic theology for the sake of engaging the modern world more effectively. Initially these theologians were marginalized and even disciplined by their superiors; eventually, however, their influence shaped Vatican II and more recent Roman Catholic developments, in particular the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.[7]

6. Ibid., 581.

7. For analysis of the most significant of these theologians (as well as a few others), see Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians: From Neo-Scholasticism to Nuptial Mystery* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

Karl Barth and the Revival of Dogmatic Theology

At roughly the same time, Karl Barth worked—seemingly alone—to turn the scene of academic theology in Germany and Switzerland back to the classical sources of Christian faith and practice. While Barth is sometimes identified as a member of the "dialectical theology" movement or of "neo-orthodoxy" (along with Rudolf Bultmann, Emil Brunner, or Paul Tillich), there are sizable differences between these figures, and it is worthwhile to consider Barth as distinct from these other figures. In terms of ongoing significance, it was Barth's writings (both in his voluminous *Church Dogmatics* and in his published lectures) that reintroduced modern theological students to sources from the classical and Reformational tradition. Barth obviously did his work mindful of the various epistemological and metaphysical challenges of the modern era, but his working approach was by way of resourcing theologians with traditional tools to aid in testifying to the gospel faithfully.

Reception History (Wirkungsgeschichte) *of the Bible*

In the last few years there has been a rising swell of interest in what is often referred to as the reception history of biblical texts. The biblical studies guild has focused largely in recent decades upon historical readings of scriptural texts; reception history remains a historical discipline—in this case, however, focused upon the aftereffects, or reception, of a text rather than the precursors to or background of a text. Among many practitioners, it also remains a largely descriptive, nonevaluative discipline that prescinds from making judgments about the propriety or impropriety of various traditions of biblical reception. Two commentary series illustrate this movement: the Blackwell Bible Commentary and the newly released Illuminations commentary series. Further, a number of monographs, collections of essays, and conferences have focused upon how various figures, churches, or movements have read specific texts.

Donald Bloesch and "Consensual Christianity"

Donald Bloesch, the late United Church of Christ theologian, addressed the Protestant mainline church with the promise of what he

called "consensual Christianity." Bloesch published a multivolume systematic theology entitled "Christian Foundations," and the title is meant to connote the basic firmament of Christian faith and practice, derived from Holy Scripture and developed in the course of the church's witness. In a context where the Protestant mainline church was pulled in directions of revision and pluralism, Bloesch spent his career pointing to the apostolic gospel and the deep consensus of Christians across the centuries and over denominational divides regarding its nature and implications.

Thomas Oden's "Paleo-Orthodoxy"

A contemporary of Bloesch, Thomas Oden, experienced a major shift during his academic career from a commitment to liberal Protestantism to a deep devotion to what he referred to as "paleo-orthodoxy." Oden taught systematic theology in a Methodist context, and his own published theology is best received primarily as a pastiche of patristic theology, a demonstration of the "consensual tradition" that he argues underlies seemingly divergent denominational traditions and stems from the roots of patristic theology, exegesis, and, ultimately, worship. Oden's most significant contribution, however, was his editing the influential series the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (InterVarsity Press). This series covers the entire Bible and provides paragraph-length excerpts from a smattering of patristic sources on every verse, allowing pastors or students to familiarize themselves with some of the exegetical and theological reflections of early Christian fathers. More recently, the publisher has released parallel series that provide excerpts on various topics (Ancient Christian Doctrines) or make accessible new translations of ancient commentaries (Ancient Christian Texts).

Robert Webber's Ancient-Future Christianity

Robert Webber, longtime professor of theology at Wheaton College and then professor of ministry at Northern Seminary, launched a ministry movement known as the ancient-future movement. In the 1970s Webber had begun to speak of *Common Roots* and the need for evangelicals to draw from the Christian past, and he then followed

that notable book in the 1980s with *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*.[8] Over the years to come, he developed a worship institute and a series of books that sought to provide biblical teaching on worship, discipleship, and ministry and did so by drawing upon the patristic heritage of the church for the sake of engaging postmodern culture in a profound way. For example, Webber argued that evangelicals would do well to rethink the spiritual significance of time for the sake of discipling Christ-followers in the postmodern era.[9] The Webber Institute for Worship Studies continues to educate pastors and laypeople in these principles, and other institutions have adopted similar approaches (for example, Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, hosts the Robert E. Webber Center).

The Modern Hymns Movement

A contemporaneous movement, especially in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, has been dubbed the "modern hymns movement." This development, spearheaded by groups like Reformed University Fellowship, Indelible Grace, and Keith and Kristyn Getty, has recast traditional hymns from the church's history into new arrangements that are more modern and very easily sung by a congregation.

Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson's Evangelical Catholicism

Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson both taught within seminaries and colleges in the mainline Lutheran world. They were founding editors of the journal *Dialog*, which introduced modern theological debates into the American Lutheran context in the 1960s. Twenty years later, however, they shifted their focus from calling the church into conversation with recent debates to focusing the church on the classical resources of the ecumenical tradition. They launched the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, began a new journal *Pro Ecclesia*, hosted a number of conferences, and published many

8. Robert E. Webber, *Common Roots: A Call to Evangelical Maturity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); Robert E. Webber, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail* (Waco: Word, 1985).

9. Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004).

books that sought to further ecumenical activity and, to that end, conversation across and through the tradition. For example, one of their most significant edited collections of essays was *The Catholicity of the Reformation.*[10] Engagement of the past was no promise of continued reaffirmation of every facet: Jenson's own systematic theology is revisionary in many ways (especially regarding the doctrine of God's triune being). While Oden and Bloesch may have argued that engagement of the classical tradition led to a continued reaffirmation of what has been called classical theism, others like Robert Webber and Robert Jenson have argued that key elements of that theological heritage require revision in light of scriptural testimony. A shared commitment to retrieval and engagement of the past clearly does not foreclose discussion about how best to proceed.

Theological Interpretation of Scripture

One of the most frequently discussed movements in contemporary theology goes by the names of "theological interpretation of Scripture," "theological exegesis," or "theological commentary." There are various facets to such hermeneutical approaches, but they all include a renewed appreciation for reading the Bible within the context of the catholic church.[11] A number of commentary series in this vein have launched or will soon launch, including the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, the Two Horizons Commentary, and the T&T Clark International Theological Commentary. Monograph series, a journal (the *Journal of Theological Interpretation*), degree programs, and conferences have also been offered regarding theological interpretation. A major focus of this movement is retrieval of premodern modes of scriptural reasoning, suggesting that figural

10. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, eds., *The Catholicity of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

11. See Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), esp. chaps. 1–3; J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), chaps. 1–5; and Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), chaps. 4–5.

and spiritual hermeneutics as well as the creedally disciplined approach of the early church fathers has something to teach us today.[12]

Radical Orthodoxy

In the 1990s a group of theologians in the United Kingdom, largely in Cambridge, began work on rethinking the place of the church in the modern world. To combat the marginalization of theology, as they saw it, John Milbank and others offered a genealogy of decline: an account of how moves in philosophical theology from the late medieval through the early modern period led to the sociological diminution of theology. Milbank's tome *Theology and Social Theory* was crucial in putting forward this account, and the team-written collection *Radical Orthodoxy* followed a few years later with an account of how this genealogy of decline explained ills in various areas of thought (ranging from aesthetics to economics).[13] A book series followed, and a Center for Theology and Philosophy was launched at the University of Nottingham. In its own way, Radical Orthodoxy sought to explain the decline of the church and to provide a counter-narrative by drawing on the heritage of Christian Platonism (which involved readings of Augustine, Aquinas, and others). The nature of historical retrieval offered by those within the Radical Orthodoxy movement has been quite controversial on historical grounds, but the vigor of those debates only manifests how significant historical retrieval is to the Radical Orthodoxy project (whether accurate or not).[14]

12. On retrieving patristic hermeneutics, see John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); on the benefit of creedally disciplined readings of the Bible, see David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1994): 152–64.

13. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1998). For brief analysis, see Michael Allen, "Putting Suspenders on the World: Radical Orthodoxy as a Postsecular Theological Proposal or What Can Evangelicals Learn from Postmodern Christian Platonists?" *Themelios* 31, no. 2 (January 2006): 40–53.

14. See, for example, Paul DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 2011).

Evangelical Ressourcement

In recent years a number of evangelical theologians from the Free Church and Reformed traditions have called for a *ressourcement* that draws from the ancient and medieval heritage of the church. D. H. Williams teaches patristics at Baylor University, and he has launched the Evangelical *Ressourcement* series. His own writings argue that evangelical theology needs to look back past the Reformation to the consensus of the early church.[15] Indeed, Williams specifically uses the language of retrieval and renewal in his call for engaging the past for the sake of theology's future.[16] More recently Hans Boersma, a Reformed theologian teaching at Regent College in Vancouver, has offered an academic monograph on the *nouvelle théologie* as well as a popularly accessible book that calls for an evangelical recovery of what he calls a sacramental ontology from the patristic and medieval era.[17] Boersma goes quite a bit further than Williams, suggesting a very particular ontology as the most promising aspect of retrieval. Both have marshaled this call, however, for an "evangelical *ressourcement*" and both intend it to involve a broad retrieval of not only the theological or doctrinal, but also the exegetical and liturgical resources of the church.

The Emerging or Emergent Church(es)

Throughout the 2000s the emerging church received a massive amount of attention from church leaders, especially in North America. While much of the energy surrounding this movement involved an intentional effort to minister to people in a purportedly new postmodern era, a good deal of the literature and focus of this movement involved retrieval of various practices, texts, and ideas from the Christian past. Ranging from Celtic spirituality to patristic liturgical practices, the emerging church sought to recover certain practices from what was

15. See, most recently, D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

16. D. H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

17. Hans Boersma, Nouvelle Théologie *and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

viewed as the long-lost treasures of the church. Over time it became apparent that there was a sizable difference between what might be called the "emerging church" and the more radical "emergent church" (identified largely with the Emergent Village online).[18] The way in which emerging churches sought to draw on the past also proved very controversial, in that they fell prey to charges of picking and choosing as they wished and in that (at least in the more emboldened versions that go under the name "emergent") they tended toward revisionism in many ways regarding theology, ethics, and ministry practices.

Ressourcement *Thomism*

Over the last few years a number of Roman Catholic theologians have again sought to recover the Christian past for the sake of renewal. Unlike de Lubac and Congar, however, their primary emphasis has not been patristic and medieval exegesis. Theologians like Matthew Levering, Gilles Emery, and Reinhard Hütter have encouraged a renewed focus upon the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, reading him within the deeper exegetical and theological streams of patristic theology.[19] Hütter has described the movement in this way: "These are students of the *doctor communis*, Thomas Aquinas, who seek a coherent and rigorous Catholic theological inquiry that has the intellectually and spiritually formative power of a school. They are in conversation with biblical exegesis and intentional about receiving the documents of Vatican II in a spirit of renewal and development." But they are not only students of Thomas: "This emerging Thomist *Ressourcement* is aware of a certain tendency in all schools to become narrow, and it seeks to avoid this danger by pursuing its work in dialogue with Protestant theology and with Jewish and Muslim thought."[20] *Ressourcement* Thomists have written largely in advanced academic formats, though they have addressed a wide spectrum of

18. For analysis, see Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009).

19. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering, eds., *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

20. Reinhard Hütter, "The Ruins of Discontinuity," *First Things* 209 (January 2011): 41.

issues (ranging from biblical exegesis to liturgics to ethics, as well as matters of dogmatic theology).

As can be seen here, retrieval seems to be afoot in various ways.[21] Of course these movements sometimes coalesce, sometimes diverge, and sometimes inevitably conflict with one another. We hope that seeing the panoply of ways in which the catholic tradition is being retrieved piques your interest, but we also hope that seeing the diverse ways in which this *ressourcement* occurs prompts your concern for thinking about a principled way to do so. Unfortunately, many Protestant programs of retrieval to date cannot seem to get beyond practicing a kind of "theological bricolage." That is to say, the various rationales for appropriating this or that bit of the catholic tradition are either (ironically) not catholic enough—that is, they are independent acts of reasoning rather than acts of reasoning in and with the church—or they are not evangelical enough—that is, they are unable to muster distinctly Protestant reasons for appropriating the catholic tradition of the church. We are convinced therefore that there is need for a programmatic assessment of what it means to retrieve the catholic tradition of Christianity on the basis of Protestant theological and ecclesiological principles.

The Movement of This Manifesto

Reformed catholicity is a theological sensibility, not a system. And this book is merely a manifesto, not a full-blown theological methodology. This book, therefore, does not address every topic or theme involved in describing a prolegomena to theology or the foundations of Christian faith and practice. This book is a volley in an ongoing discussion about the way in which Christians and churches do theology and offer their lives as living sacrifices. It is rooted in a theological judgment about where theology in the West stands in the twenty-first century and wagers that, at this moment at least, theology stands in

21. Todd Billings mentions still further movements in the English-speaking world in the afterword of this volume. We might mention only one example in another linguistic context: G. Van den Brink and C. van der Kooi, *Christelijke Dogmatiek: Een Inleiding* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012), which offers a lengthy analysis of the churchly and catholic nature of the Christian life (501–53).

particularly acute need of resources from the Christian past if it is to find renewal. It also wagers that we need to approach this process of remembrance with theological acuity. Not every form of retrieval or every case of remembrance will be helpful.

Our thesis is that there are Reformed theological and ecclesiological warrants for pursuing a program of retrieval, that we can and should pursue catholicity on Protestant principles, and that pursuing this path holds promise for theological and spiritual renewal. We do not claim to have found in the Reformed tradition specifically or in the broader Protestant tradition more generally a fully developed dogmatics of *ressourcement*. Martin Chemnitz's *Examination of the Council of Trent* or John Jewel's *Apology of the Church of England* perhaps come the closest to providing the elements for developing such a framework.[22] However, we do believe that classical Reformed thought, both in the era of the Reformation and beyond in the era of Reformed Orthodoxy, provide numerous *examples* of thoughtful appropriation of the catholic tradition and, moreover, that the *principles* of classical Reformed orthodox prolegomena, as well as the principles of classical Reformed ecclesiology, provide a salutary framework within which a Reformed dogmatics of retrieval might be developed.[23]

Again, our purpose here is not to develop a full-blown dogmatics of retrieval but rather to offer exploratory excursions into some of the major theological places where we have found examples and principles of Reformed theology that might commend an embrace of Christian tradition (both catholic and Protestant). We will proceed as follows.

First, "Learning Theology in the School of Christ" (chap. 1) sketches a theological portrait of the way in which the catholic church is the context for doing theology. Retrieval is not merely a pragmatic maneuver or strategic approach to hermeneutical analysis or ministry philosophy. Retrieval is a mode of intellectual and spiritual operation because it fits well with the divine economy and the principles of

22. Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 4 vols., trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971); John Jewel, *Apology of the Church of England*, ed. Henry Morley (London: Cassell, 1888).

23. See, for example, Irena Backus, ed., *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

theology. Postmodern and contextualist approaches to epistemology and communication theory may tend toward an appreciation for reception history, but such are at best secular parables of the truth. Christians and churches need a theological argument for a catholic and Reformed theology: our methodology ought not simply shift with the rising and falling of various academic and cultural fads. This chapter, then, offers a Christology and pneumatology that positions the catholic location wherein God reforms his people.

Second, nothing so undermines the work of good theological retrieval as common misperceptions about the Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. In two chapters we seek to retrieve this doctrine, prying away some modern malformations and returning to the catholic context of its original advocates. First, we consider what *sola Scriptura* meant to its classic formulations (chap. 2). By looking at figures like Martin Bucer and texts like the early Reformed confessions, we consider the powerful claims made by this slogan as well as the limits of its import. Second, we consider biblical traditioning, that is, the biblical insistence that we not read the Bible by itself (chap. 3). Indeed the more committed one is to biblical authority for faith and practice, the more one is compelled (by the Bible's own teaching) to honor other authorities in the life of the Christian and of the church.

Third, a particular way in which the catholic shape of the church is meant to shape our lives and witness is by the exercise of churchly authority in the function of ecclesial confessions. In "A Ruled Reading Reformed" (chap. 4), we consider the hermeneutical function of the authoritative texts of the Christian church.

Fourth, no modern challenge so runs against the functioning of tradition as the divide between biblical and theological studies in the modern academy. Modern specialization has only exacerbated a divide that was breached initially for political reasons, namely, to seek peace by reading the canonical writings in an objective or historical (rather than dogmatic or confessional) way. "In Defense of Proof Texting" (chap. 5) attempts to tackle and traverse this divide and turns to one feature of classic theological work, the proof text reference, as a sign and symbol of a different vision of theological culture. The proof text, at its best, signals a symbiotic relationship between commentarial specificity and dogmatic synthesis as well as exegetical precision and

confessional cognizance. We describe the way in which proof texts helped shape the theological program of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin, arguing that there are many lessons to be gained not only from what these spiritual ancestors believed but also from how they went about doing theology.

The book concludes with an afterword by J. Todd Billings. His plea for "rediscovering the Catholic-Reformed tradition for today" sums up the sensibilities of this manifesto and connects the vision of Reformed catholicity with congregational life on the ground. Billings contrasts the notion of a catholic and Reformed tradition with the piety of common American religion (what Christian Smith has called "moralistic therapeutic deism"). Further, he compares two visions of congregational ministry, juxtaposing the ministry of a church shaped by consumerism with another intentionally devoted to Reformed catholicity in the city.

1

Learning Theology in the School of Christ

The Principles of Theology and the Promise of Retrieval

A program of retrieval in theology rests upon the judgment that modern theology exhibits "a stubborn tendency to grow not higher but to the side,"[1] and that the path toward theological renewal lies in moving from "a less profound to a more profound tradition; a discovery of the most profound resources."[2] Moving into such a tradition, discovering such resources, requires the cultivation of attitudes and practices that have not been especially prominent in modern

1. To borrow Alexander Solzhenitsyn's language in "The Relentless Cult of Novelty," Catholic Education Resource Center, 1993, http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/arts/al0001.html.

2. Yves Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église*, Unam Sanctum 20 (Paris: Cerf, 1950), 601–2, cited in Gabriel Flynn, "Introduction: The Twentieth-Century Renaissance in Catholic Theology," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

Protestant theology, such as a certain receptivity toward the church's past, particularly its normative creedal and confessional deliverances, and a willingness to engage in self-consciously theological and spiritual patterns of biblical interpretation, including those that many moderns have deemed useless for obtaining theological understanding. This in turn requires reconsidering the relationship between key elements in the economy of salvation (which is also the economy of theological intelligence): preeminent here is the relationship between Scripture and tradition and the varying levels of authority that a properly construed understanding of that relationship implies.

In later chapters, we will direct our attention to some of these practices and relationships. Before doing so, it is important to consider a more fundamental topic. *Ressourcement*, properly conceived, is not driven merely by a traditionalist or communal sensibility in theology. The deepest warrants for a program of retrieval are trinitarian and christological in nature. Formally stated, they concern the relationship between the principles of theology and the church, specifically, the relationship between the Spirit of Christ (the *principium cognoscendi internum* or internal cognitive principle of theology) and the renewed mind of the church (the *principium elicitivum* or elicitive principle of theology).

That relationship, and its immediate promise for a program of retrieval, may be stated as follows: Christian theology flourishes in the school of Christ, the social-historical reality to which the apostolic promise applies: "But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him" (1 John 2:27). Because the anointing of Christ dwells within the church, the church is *the school of Christ*. The Spirit of Christ teaches the church in sufficient and unmixed verity such that the church need not seek theological understanding from any other source or principle. Moreover, because the anointing of Christ dwells within the church, the church is *the seedbed of theology*, the fertile creaturely field within which alone Christ's teaching has the promise of flourishing in renewed human understanding. By the Spirit's presence the church has been born of God (1 John 2:29). The church thus possesses the heavenly

principle of spiritual life, knowledge, and love (1 John 3:9), which enables it to see and to enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3, 5). By the Spirit's presence the church is equipped to discern and receive the truth confessed by the apostles (1 John 4:6; with 1 John 1:1–3) and to test and reject the spirit of false prophecy (1 John 4:1). Because the church alone has received these gifts, we should not expect theological understanding to flourish in any other field: "the world cannot receive" the Spirit of truth "because it neither sees him nor knows him" (John 14:17).

The preceding characterizations of the church are not indications of its intrinsic wisdom or academic prestige: among the called, not many are wise, not many are powerful (1 Cor. 1:26). These characterizations, rightly understood, indicate the measure of Christ's gifts and the strength of Christ's power to cause his gifts to flourish within the church. "The Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth."[3] Nor do the preceding characterizations of the church prescribe or preclude a specific institutional setting for theology, say, the seminary or the modern research university. Rather these characterizations serve to identify the social and intellectual culture whose questions and commitments, texts and traditions, attitudes and aspirations direct and enable the pursuit of divine wisdom under the Spirit's tutelage. The unsearchable riches of Christ are made known *here*: "with all the saints" (Eph. 3:18).

What follows is a dogmatic amplification of the preceding claims and, accordingly, evangelical warrant for a program of retrieval in theology. The discussion will unfold in three steps. First, through interaction with recent discussion of the relationship between church and theology, we will attempt to identify some desiderata for establishing specifically Protestant warrants for a program of retrieval. Second, we will consider the identity of the Spirit of truth—the "anointing" of Christ—who, with the Father and the Son, is the principle and source of theology; and we will consider the nature of his illuminating presence in and with the church. Third, we will suggest that the relationship between the Spirit and the church's renewed reason

3. Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," in *Trinity Hymnal*, rev. ed. (Suwanee, GA: Great Commission Publications, 1990), no. 92.

constitutes the church's intellectual culture as a sign and instrument of the Spirit's illuminating presence.

Tradition as Divine Institution

Modern Protestant theology has not always been amenable to a churchly approach to theology. Philip Schaff identified "rationalism" and "sectarism" as two peculiarly nineteenth-century Protestant impediments to such an approach.[4] The former impediment blocks the path to heavenly wisdom by requiring theology to accommodate its material claims and interpretive methods to that which natural reason can discern or interpret on its own.[5] The latter blocks the path to heavenly wisdom by cutting itself off from the communion of saints extended through time, whether through individualist or sectarian isolation.[6]

Of course much has changed since Schaff rendered his diagnosis of modern Protestant Christianity—as the introduction to the present book bears out. The last several decades have witnessed increasing awareness among scientists, philosophers, and theologians of various ideological commitments that knowledge and the attainment of knowledge have an intrinsically social and historical dimension and therefore that the pursuit of excellence in any field of knowledge requires apprenticeship to a tradition: its normative texts, perennial puzzles, and ultimate aims. One cannot make real progress in the quest for understanding apart from a tradition.[7]

4. Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism: As Related to the Present State of the Church*, trans. J. W. Nevin (Chambersburg, PA: German Reformed Church, 1845).

5. It is a strange irony, therefore, given his rationalist commitments, that Johann P. Gabler is regularly cited by contemporary evangelicals as a model for theological encyclopedia (how to distinguish/relate biblical theology and systematic theology) and theological method (how to construct systematic theology out of biblical theology).

6. For the pervasive effects of individualism on contemporary American evangelicalism, see Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), esp. chap. 1.

7. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989); and Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2011).

There are significant Christian reasons for affirming this point.[8] The Bible mandates the social and historical transmission of apostolic truth under the reign of the risen Christ (Eph. 4:11–16; 2 Tim. 2:2); also, the promise of the Spirit, and of spiritual understanding, applies not only to individuals but also to succeeding generations of God's people (Isa. 59:21; Acts 2:39). Indeed, the social reception and transmission of theology is the creaturely correlate of the unsearchable greatness of God: because the Lord is great and greatly to be praised, he must be praised in all places and at all times; one generation shall commend his works to another and shall declare his mighty acts (Pss. 145:3–4; 113:3). The fact that tradition can err does not disqualify its status as a divine institution. The abuse of a divine institution does not rule out its proper use. In the case of this institution the principle applies as well: grace restores and perfects nature.[9]

Nearly thirty years ago, George Lindbeck underlined the significance of the present point for Protestant theology with the publication of his widely acclaimed book *The Nature of Doctrine*.[10] Therein, Lindbeck argued that the acquisition of theological understanding is never merely a matter of grasping doctrinal assertions or of experiencing religious feelings. Rather, acquisition of theological understanding involves being socialized within a specific theological culture, learning what this culture means when it asserts "Jesus is Lord" (and what it doesn't mean), and learning to enter into this culture's peculiar experience of the grace of God in Christ. Theology, according to Lindbeck, is a "cultural-linguistic" phenomenon: a rule-governed form of thought, feeling, and behavior that is irreducibly and concretely communal in nature.

What Lindbeck didn't address in his book, at least to the satisfaction of many, was the theological or metaphysical basis for his claims about the nature of theology. Is Lindbeck's proposal perhaps a form of religious pluralism—"This is how I see things *from here*,

8. For further discussion, see Stephen R. Holmes, *Listening to the Past: The Place of Tradition in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), chaps. 1–2.

9. This point is well emphasized by Herman Bavinck throughout his dogmatics. See, for example, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 362, 493, 605.

10. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984).

and that's OK"? Though some have read him this way, this does not reflect Lindbeck's intention.[11] Still, the theological question remains: How are we to articulate the social and historical nature of theology as a churchly enterprise in a manner that doesn't merely amount to a defense of custom, which may well be simply the history of error, rather than a defense of tradition, the faithful transmission of apostolic truth through time?

Enter Reinhard Hütter. Hütter's book *Suffering Divine Things* (written while he was still Protestant)[12] represents a full-scale attempt to address the shortcomings of Lindbeck's proposal by providing a sophisticated dogmatic answer to the predicament that concludes the previous paragraph. We may summarize Hütter's basic response to this predicament in his own words: "Pneumatology without ecclesiology is empty, ecclesiology without pneumatology is blind."[13] According to Hütter, whereas ecclesiology provides the concrete "public" of the Spirit's work as teacher—the visible, social manifestation of the knowledge of God in the form of the church's doctrine, worship, and mission—pneumatology provides the metaphysical guarantee that the church's doctrine, worship, and mission are indeed divine and not merely human cultural products—"tradition" and not merely "custom."

We may more fully appreciate Hütter's theological and metaphysical shoring up of Lindbeck's project by setting it within the context of two of Hütter's other dialogue partners: Erik Peterson and Karl Barth,[14] both of whom attempt to spell out an account of the church's status as the school of Christ by theologically describing the relationship between church and Trinity, albeit in two very different ways. Peterson, the Roman Catholic theologian, conceives a relationship of "strict continuation" between the Incarnate Logos and the social and intellectual

11. Bruce D. Marshall, "Absorbing the World: Christianity and the Universe of Truths," in *Theology and Dialogue: Essays in Conversation with George Lindbeck*, ed. Bruce D. Marshall (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 69–102; Bruce D. Marshall, "'We Shall Bear the Image of the Man of Heaven': Theology and the Concept of Truth," *Modern Theology* 11 (January 1995): 93–117.

12. Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, trans. Doug Scott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

13. Ibid., 127.

14. Here we leave aside the question of whether Hütter's reading of Peterson and Barth is accurate.

practices of the church.[15] Hütter, however, finds this view problematic, because it fails to account for the ongoing sinfulness of the church.[16] Barth, the Protestant theologian, conceives the relationship between the Spirit and the church as one of "fundamental diastasis . . . in which the various elements, although certainly related to one another, nonetheless remain strictly separated within this relationship."[17] The problem with Barth's view, according to Hütter, is that by separating the Spirit's theological activity in the world (which is largely internal to the human being on Hütter's reading) from the church's concrete theological culture, Barth reduces the "mediate forms" of the church's theological understanding (e.g., its creeds, confessions, etc.) to the level of human artifact alone rather than identifying them as products of coordinated divine and creaturely action.[18]

Hütter's alternative—which seeks to avoid both Peterson's "strict continuation" and Barth's "fundamental diastasis"—is pneumatological in nature. According to Hütter, the church with its social and historical doctrinal practices is "enhypostatic" in the Spirit.[19] In other words, the Spirit is the personal subject or agent of these ecclesiastical practices. Consequently, theology is fundamentally "pathic" rather than "poetic" in nature, a *receiving* of the Spirit's gifts of wisdom and understanding in and through church practices rather than a free creation of the human spirit. On Hütter's scheme, because the Spirit is the ultimate subject of the church's theological culture, we may be confident that participation in this culture will lead us to theology's ultimate aim, the knowledge and love of the Triune God.

How might we respond to the preceding discussion?[20] We will attempt to summarize the positive contribution of Hütter's proposal

15. Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things*, 104.

16. Ibid., 102.

17. Ibid., 104.

18. Ibid., 104–5, 112–13.

19. Classical post-Chalcedonian Christology affirmed that the Son of God "personalized" the human nature he assumed in the incarnation (i.e., his human nature is "enhypostatic" in the Logos) and that his human nature was "impersonal" apart from its assumption by the Son of God in the incarnation (i.e., his human nature is "anhypostatic" apart from the Logos).

20. Here we should mention Kevin J. Vanhoozer's significant response to Lindbeck and Hütter's proposals, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005). Vanhoozer's

in a moment. For now, we must register two concerns. First, we question the application of the christological concept of enhypostasis to pneumatological and ecclesiological realities, as this seems to compromise the *sui generis* nature of the Son's relationship to the human nature he assumed in the incarnation. Second, and following from the previous point, we worry that this "personalization" of the church's practices in the Spirit at once blurs the distinction between the divine Spirit and the spirit of the church while actually diminishing the full creaturely density and therefore responsibility of the church's being and action.

Does this leave us with Barth's "fundamental diastasis" between Spirit and church, where the church's theological culture is relegated to the status of one intellectual culture among many, and where, for example, the creeds of the church are to be privileged in biblical exegesis no more than other contemporary interpretive schemes produced by the scholarly guild (e.g., "salvation-historical" or "apocalyptic" approaches)? Not necessarily. But to see why this is the case, we need to draw upon some tracts of Protestant teaching that Barth was reluctant to employ and that he in fact criticized in his dogmatics.

Before doing so, however, it will be helpful to take stock of Hütter's contribution to our own argument for retrieval. We believe Hütter's work suggests two desiderata for a Reformed program of retrieval.

Hütter's first contribution lies in retrieving a lost Protestant sensibility regarding the relationship between church and theology. Drawing specifically upon Luther's "On the Councils and the Church" from 1539, Hütter has unearthed a Protestant theology that ties the Spirit's work of sanctification to core practices of the church such as preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper, church discipline, ordination and office, the various activities of public worship (including prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and instruction), and discipleship.[21] Significant for Hütter's argument is that, according to Luther, "The economic

argument is complementary to our own, with two small caveats: (1) while Vanhoozer grounds his proposal in the trinitarian economy of salvation, our focus is also upon the intratrinitarian basis of theology; (2) we remain unconvinced that the categories Vanhoozer develops out of the dramatic metaphor (e.g., "Masterpiece Theater," "Regional Theater," "Local Theater") provide the most instructive concepts for appreciating the function of creeds and confessions in Christian theology.

21. Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things*, 128–29.

mission of the Holy Spirit, its soteriological work of sanctification and renewal, is performed *through* these seven activities."[22] These practices are "constitutive for the mode of enactment of the Holy Spirit's economic mission and thus for the church itself."[23] By retrieving Luther's concrete pneumatological ecclesiology, Hütter helps us appreciate that Reformation-era Protestantism had not yet fallen prey to the bifurcation between the work of the Spirit and the external and ordinary ecclesiastical processes of acquiring and transmitting knowledge that would afflict later modern thought.[24]

Indeed, looking beyond Luther, we see the point confirmed in the Reformed tradition as well. This is evident, not only in its doctrine of the external and ordinary means of grace, but also more broadly in its appropriation of the products and processes of the church's catechetical tradition—specifically, the use of the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer—to instruct Christians at all levels of learning (from the cradle to the university) in the virtues of faith, hope, and love. We see in these doctrines and practices a form of Protestantism that, rather than constituting an absolute break from the intellectual and spiritual culture of the catholic church, represents a new development within that culture and a redeployment of that culture's processes and products of learning to achieve that culture's end: the knowledge and love of the Triune God.[25]

This leads to our first desideratum: *a Reformed theology of retrieval must help us perceive the processes and products by which the church receives and transmits apostolic teaching not simply as human cultural activities and artifacts but also as fruits of the Spirit.* For understandable historical and contextual reasons related to their polemics with Rome, Reformed theology historically did not provide a fully developed theology of church tradition as the "public" context of theology. Reformed theology did, however, articulate theological principles whereby such a theology of church tradition could be developed.

22. Ibid., 129 (emphasis original).

23. Ibid., 132.

24. For theological analysis of this bifurcation, see Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 7.

25. Examples of this appropriation occur throughout the major eras of Reformed theology, from Heinrich Bullinger's *Decades* to the Heidelberg Catechism to Herman Witsius's commentaries on the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

Drawing upon these principles, we hope to lay the groundwork for a theological account of church tradition in what follows.

Hütter's second major contribution lies in rightly identifying the doctrinal *locus* that must be addressed most directly in developing a theology of the church's intellectual culture, namely, pneumatology. Hütter's missteps in construing the Spirit-church relation, however, suggest a second desideratum: *a Reformed theology of retrieval requires a pneumatology of the Spirit as teacher that rightly conceives both his distinction from and relation to the church and its theological culture.*[26]

In the sections that follow, we will seek to address these two desiderata in reverse order. In "The Spirit of Truth" we will address the second desideratum by reflecting upon the identity of the Spirit of truth, who "teaches" the church and who "abides" with the church according to Christ's promise (1 John 2:27). And in "'In your light do we see light': The Promise of Ecclesial Theology" we will address the first desideratum by considering how the Spirit's abiding presence as teacher assures that the cultural products and processes whereby the church receives and transmits doctrine can indeed be conceived as fruits of the Spirit.

The Spirit of Truth

It is tempting to begin our discussion of the Spirit's identity as teacher *in medias res* with a discussion of his temporal mission to indwell the church as teacher rather than with his eternal identity as the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father and the Son.[27] To do so, however, would be to risk missing that which gives the Spirit's presence its pedagogical prestige and potency. Not every spirit that has gone out

26. Here we wish to develop John Webster's suggestion that Protestantism not be understood "as segregating the supernatural from the natural" or "as denying any stable or enduring presence of the former in the latter" but rather "as following through the logic of the distinction between uncreated and created . . . in thinking about the church and its existence in time" (John Webster, "*Ressourcement* Theology and Protestantism," in Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 491).

27. Cf. Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things*.

into the world is the Spirit *of* God; and it is only the Spirit of God who may be regarded as the Spirit of truth (1 John 4:1–6; see also 1 Cor. 2:9–13). So that we might avoid this risk, we will order our discussion to the order of being: first, we will consider the identity of the Spirit as teacher in terms of his eternal relation to the Father and the Son; second, we will consider (briefly) the identity of the Spirit as teacher in terms of his abiding presence within the church. Such an approach will demonstrate how the church's reception and transmission of divine teaching follows "from God's self-knowledge" and is "shaped by his self-manifestation," how "reproductive intelligence" follows "productive intelligence."[28]

The Spirit of Truth's Person and Presence

We may expect to learn the mind of Christ within the school of Christ preeminently because the one who dwells within that school as teacher is himself the untaught source (*principium*) of theology. "Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?" (Isa. 40:13–14). The answer, of course, is "no one." With the Father and the Son, the Spirit alone is the untutored author of divine wisdom who alone comprehends the immeasurable depths of divine wisdom (Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 2:10–11). Didymus the Blind ably summarizes biblical teaching on the Spirit's identity in this regard: "He will not teach as an instructor or teacher of a discipline which has been learned from another. For this method pertains to those who learn wisdom and the other arts by means of study and diligence. Rather, as he himself is the art, the teaching, the wisdom, and the Spirit of truth, he invisibly imparts knowledge of divine things to the mind."[29] The Spirit's identity as the sovereign source of theological understanding must be described under a twofold aspect if we are to appreciate its full trinitarian integrity. We may appreciate

28. John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 135–36.

29. Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, in *Works on the Holy Spirit: Athanasius and Didymus*, trans. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 187.

this twofold aspect of the Spirit's eternal identity by means of a brief commentary on Jesus's promise to the apostles in John 16:13–15.[30]

John 16:13–15 indicates the intratrinitarian reality that energizes the apostolic witness (of which Holy Scripture is the literary expression). According to Jesus, the mission of the disciples draws its potency from the mission of the Spirit: because "the Spirit of truth comes" to the disciples and guides them "into all the truth" (John 16:13), the disciples will be able to fulfill their apostolic commission of bearing witness to Christ (John 15:26–27). The mission of the Spirit toward the disciples, in turn, draws its potency from the Spirit's procession from the Son: The Spirit is capable of leading the disciples into all the truth because he does not speak ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ—"from himself"; rather "whatever he hears he will speak" (John 16:13). The Spirit receives *from* the Son, and so declares what he receives *to* the disciples (John 16:14). How are we to understand this?

It might seem overly speculative to speak of an intratrinitarian reality in relation to this text. Is not the focus of this text the "economic Trinity"? The question fails to perceive the nature of the Spirit's economic mission and therefore the significance of what this text has to say about the Spirit.[31] The Spirit's activity in the economy of salvation is not separate from his immanent identity. The former is not an external, visible instance of some alternative, internal, invisible reality that we can only identify through transcendental deduction. Rightly understood, the Spirit's activity in the economy, his mission, is the temporal extension and manifestation (to the eyes of faith) of his eternal procession. To be sure, this temporal extension and manifestation is a matter of the Spirit's free and gracious self-giving: the economy in no way establishes the Spirit's eternal identity; it rather establishes the Spirit's free and gracious relation to us. Nevertheless, the Spirit's free relation to us is nothing other than the extension and expression of his internal relation to the Father and the Son usward,

30. Our comments upon this text are deeply influenced by those of Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 189–96; and Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 13–21*, trans. Fabian Larcher (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press of America, 2010), 142–47.

31. NB: retiring the language of the "immanent Trinity" and the "economic Trinity" might serve the avoidance of this common misunderstanding.

an embracing of temporal creatures within his eternal movement and energy. The Spirit's temporal "whither" (his economic mission) includes and expresses his eternal "whence" (his eternal procession).[32]

With this clarification in mind, we may better perceive the twofold identification of the Spirit in this text. First, this text identifies the Spirit with the selfsame divine truth that characterizes the Father and the Son: he is "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13) who holds all truth in common with the Son and with the Father: "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14–15). Truth, according to the Johannine witness, is a notion with "metaphysical heft."[33] Katherine Sonderegger summarizes this notion with characteristic eloquence:

> Truth is not simply a property of certain propositions—that the whole, say, is greater than a part—not simply a state of affairs for which sufficient evidence can be marshaled—that Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States in 1862. Truth, to speak in this ancient way, is more substantial, more exalted and transcendent, than that reached even by the scholastic "correspondence theory of truth." This time-honored definition of truth is an epistemic category—the "adequation of concept to reality," to cite Thomas Aquinas's celebrated treatment of knowledge in the *Summa Theologica*. Truth as transcendent and substantial also supersedes truth as "fact," the events and laws that hold good in our world, and in a practical and commonsense way, are true. The substantial Form of Truth radiates far beyond human knowledge as "justified true belief," to borrow one classic philosophical definition—far beyond the evidence of our senses or the deliverances of our reason. Truth, the ancients would say, simply is: Truth in the end is Reality, Being Itself, lit up from within by its own surpassing Rationality.[34]

32. Here we are rendering Thomas's doctrine of divine missions as summarized in *Summa Theologiae*, 1a.43. See also Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), chap. 15.

33. Katherine Sonderegger, "The Humility of the Son of God," in *Christology Ancient and Modern: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 64.

34. Ibid., 64.

This divine truth, we must further observe, is not something that the Spirit possesses, as a message that is distinguishable from its messenger. Truth is what the Spirit *is*: "The Spirit is the truth" (1 John 5:6; cf. John 14:6). Commenting upon the teaching in John 16:13–15 regarding the common "possession" of truth by Father, Son, and Spirit, Didymus explains:

> Now when such things are said be careful not to slip into the error of a depraved understanding and think that the Father and the Son hold some object or possession. Rather, that which the Father has substantially, that is, eternity, immutability, incorruptibility, immutable goodness subsisting of and in itself—the same things the Son has as well. . . . From this text and in the sense already established, it follows that the Son also possesses what belongs to the Father (we mentioned above what those things are), and that the Holy Spirit also possesses what belongs to the Son. For he said: *From what is mine he will receive, for this reason he will announce to you what is to come.*[35]

Second, John 16:13–15 identifies the Spirit *with* divine truth by identifying him as the Spirit *of* divine truth: the Spirit who comes to the disciples in the economy proceeds from the Father and the Son, from him who is "the only true God" (John 17:3) and from him who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The Spirit speaks as one who *hears*; the Spirit proclaims as one who *receives* (John 16:13, 14). Again, given divine simplicity, the Spirit's hearing and receiving are identical with his being: "The Holy Spirit receives from the Son that which belongs to his own nature. . . . For the Son is nothing other than those things which are given to him by the Father, and the substance of the Holy Spirit is nothing other than that which is given to him by the Son."[36] Nevertheless, while there is no distinction between the Spirit and the divine truth that he receives, there is a distinction between the Spirit and those from whom he receives it.[37] The distinction "is not in what is had, but in the order of having."[38] Consequently, when the Spirit

35. Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, 195–96. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chaps. 13–21*, 144–46.
36. Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, 194.
37. Aquinas, *Commentary*, 144–46.
38. Ibid., 145.

speaks and proclaims the truth to us as one who hears and receives from the Father and the Son, he acts toward us in his distinctive personal identity: "Just as the Son does not act from himself but from the Father, so the Holy Spirit, because he is from another, that is, from the Father and the Son, *will not speak from himself, but whatever he will hear* by receiving knowledge as well as his essence from eternity, *he will speak*, not in a bodily way but by enlightening your minds from within."[39]

Though we will have to spell out the significance of the present point below, it is worth noting the relationship between the Spirit's distinctive personal identity and the church's act of traditioning. Aidan Nichols describes the general rule that governs this relationship: "The relations of the divine Persons with human persons have as their purpose to manifest the divine Persons to the human persons so that the human may participate in the divine."[40] Put in terms of the present discussion: The Spirit is the "Lord of the hearing" (Karl Barth) when it comes to the reception of the gospel within the economy of salvation, because he is the Lord who hears within the internal life of the Trinity. The church's activity of receiving and transmitting apostolic truth is therefore a fellowship with the Spirit's immanent personal act of receiving and speaking the truth, an act that the Spirit extends into the economy through his temporal mission in order to embrace us within its eternal energy and movement. In Pauline idiom, because God has sent "the Spirit of his Son" into our hearts, we cry: "Abba! Father!" (Gal. 4:6). Because the one true God has sent the Spirit of truth into our hearts, we receive and profess the truth that "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:1–3) and that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2, 13–14). The church's reception and transmission of its trinitarian confession is a sign and consequence of its fellowship with the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

We may summarize the preceding discussion and prepare ourselves for the final point of this section by identifying the Spirit as teacher in relation to three moments of divine self-knowledge and self-manifestation: (1) With the Father and the Son, the Spirit is the ontological principle (*principium essendi*) of theology. The deep source

39. Ibid., 142 (emphasis original).
40. Aidan Nichols, *The Chalice of God: A Systematic Theology in Outline* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012), 107 (6.4.3).

of the church's theology is the Spirit's unique and unfathomable divine self-knowledge: "The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:10–11). The divine self-knowledge of the Spirit unfolds itself, by God's free grace, in two moments of divine self-manifestation. (2) By his work of inspiration, the Spirit produces Holy Scripture, the external cognitive principle of the church's theology (*principium cognoscendi externum*). The Spirit causes the prophets and apostles first to "understand" and then to "impart" the "secret and hidden wisdom of God" in "words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:7, 12–13) with the result that, in hearing the prophetic and apostolic writings, we hear "what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:6).[41] (3) By his work of illumination, the Spirit completes the movement of divine self-manifestation by causing the divine wisdom published in the prophetic and apostolic writings to be received and confessed by the church. In his illuminating activity, the Spirit is the internal cognitive principle of the church's theology (*principium cognoscendi internum*). The Spirit causes the church to "accept the things of the Spirit of God"—things "decreed before the ages for our glory" concerning the crucifixion of "the Lord of glory"—by enabling the church spiritually to discern those things (1 Cor. 2:7–8, 14). The Spirit's activity as the internal cognitive principle of the church's theology is the subject of what follows.

The Spirit as Teacher

How shall we characterize this activity of the Spirit as the internal cognitive principle of the church's theology? We will reserve our discussion of the creaturely coordinates of divine illumination for the next section. For now, we may summarize the nature of the Spirit's abiding presence as teacher.

The Spirit of truth abides with the church as teacher in accordance with Christ's promise (1 John 2:27). Just as he led the disciples "into all

41. For further discussion, see Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009); and Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), chap. 3.

the truth" (John 16:13), enabling them to bear their apostolic witness (John 15:26–27), so he teaches the church "about everything, and is true, and is no lie" (1 John 2:27), enabling the church to receive and respond to the apostolic witness (1 John 1:1–3). Although the Spirit's presence in the church as teacher completes the movement of divine self-manifestation that is rooted in God's self-knowledge, it does not complete the Spirit's being. The Spirit's being is complete within the perfect inner movement of God's triune life. The Spirit comes to the church not in order to fulfill his being but in order to fill the church with a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God (Eph. 1:17; 3:14–19). Nevertheless, when the Spirit comes, he comes to stay: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever" (John 14:16). The Spirit's abiding presence as teacher is thus a matter of his sovereign self-determination and commitment, what we might call his "covenant identity" (Ezek. 36:27–28).[42] Because the Spirit has come to dwell with the church forever, because he has established the church upon the prophetic and apostolic witness through inspiration, and because he continues to enable the church to receive and respond to that witness through illumination, the school of Christ holds the promise of theological flourishing.

This, then, is the identity of the Spirit as teacher. And it is *his* identity as the Spirit of truth and *his* faithfulness to dwell with us forever that is the fundamental reality in the school of Christ, the infinite fountain of divine wisdom that causes the knowledge of God to flourish in our midst. Everything else that we can and must say about the promise of ecclesial theology flows from this fundamental reality.

"In your light do we see light": The Promise of Ecclesial Theology

The Spirit alone is the principle of theology, the infinite ocean and transcendent fountain of divine truth. The church is not that ocean; the church is not that fountain. Do such assertions threaten to naturalize

42. For further discussion of the theological metaphysics involved in this assertion, see Scott R. Swain, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology*, Strategic Initiatives in Evangelical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), chaps. 6–8.

the church and its theological tradition or to impose a false extrinsicism upon the God-world relation? Not necessarily. To the Spirit's identity as divine teacher there corresponds a creaturely community that is taught: "In your light do we see light" (Ps. 36:9). The Spirit, who hears and speaks the truth within God's triune life, creates, sustains, and directs a fellowship that hears and speaks the truth within history. Indeed, so effectual is the Spirit's role as teacher that the community's corresponding vocation is simply to "abide" in what it has been taught "from the beginning" (1 John 2:24; 2 John 1:5–6): it need not search about anxiously for truth or for teachers; it only needs to assume a stance of historical continuity and faithfulness in relation to the apostolic deposit that it has received by the Spirit's illuminating presence (1 John 1:1–3; 2:7). Tradition is the church's stance of abiding in and with apostolic teaching through time, the "creaturely social co-efficient"[43] of the Spirit's activity as the internal cognitive principle of theology. How shall we characterize this relationship between the Spirit who abides in the church and the church that abides in the teaching vouchsafed to it by the Spirit in Holy Scripture?

Our answer to this question will emerge in three steps. First, we will consider the relationship between Scripture and tradition that follows from Reformed theological principles. (Our discussion here will be brief since we develop this point more fully in later chapters.) Second, we will consider the nature of the creaturely coordinates that emerge within the sphere of the Spirit's pedagogical economy. Two creaturely coordinates in particular will command our attention here: the nature of created reason and of the spiritual habit by which the Spirit renews and perfects created reason. Third, following from the previous point, we will conclude with how the products and processes of the church's intellectual culture may be understood both as signs and instruments of the Spirit's illuminating work.

Scripture and Tradition

Under the influence of John Henry Newman, many Roman Catholic theologians (including Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI)

43. John Webster, "'In the Society of God': Some Principles of Ecclesiology," in *God Without Measure* (London: T&T Clark, forthcoming).

have described the Spirit-guided relationship between Scripture and tradition by means of an organic metaphor. Tradition, on this understanding, is "the living process whereby the Holy Spirit introduces us to the fullness of truth and teaches us how to understand what previously we could still not grasp . . . yet was already handed down in the original Word."[44] According to this metaphor, the Spirit enables tradition to take what dwells "preconceptually, obscurely, and in an unformulated state" within the apostolic deposit and make it "at last explicit to illumine minds and rejoice hearts."[45] Though this construal is to be preferred to the "two-source theory" of Scripture and tradition espoused by the Council of Trent, and though Vatican II arguably gestures toward a doctrine of the material sufficiency of Scripture in relation to tradition,[46] this construal still seems to compromise the finality and sufficiency of Holy Scripture in relation to tradition.[47] On the contrary, we must confess: "Holy Scripture is *sufficient* for the instruction of the saints as they are conveyed by God towards eternal fellowship with himself. The prophets and apostles are not one element in a larger canvas, or even the most important element. Rather, in their words we have the fullness of what for now the Spirit says to the churches. Scripture is *enough*."[48]

Some will worry that such a confession necessarily retards a fully developed theology of tradition. And, admittedly, Reformation and post-Reformation polemic against Roman Catholic doctrine can be taken as a harbinger of the Enlightenment desire to release reason from its state of self-imposed tutelage to tradition.[49] However, a rightly ordered understanding of the principles of theology will preserve us from this tendency toward a retarded conception of tradition.

44. Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), 58–59.

45. Nichols, *Chalice of God*, 55 (emphasis original).

46. See Thomas G. Guarino, "Catholic Reflections on Discerning the Truth of Sacred Scripture," in *Your Word Is Truth: A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, ed. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 79–101.

47. We will develop an alternative construal more fully in chaps. 2 and 3 below.

48. Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 18.

49. John Barton, "Historical-Critical Approaches," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 1.

While Holy Scripture, as *principium cognoscendi externum*, is the divinely authoritative and sufficient *source* of theology, tradition, the Spirit-enabled reception of Scripture, is the divinely appointed *goal* of theology: "the word changed into grace in our hearts."[50] None have made the point with greater clarity or consistency than Herman Bavinck:

> After Jesus completed his work, he sent forth the Holy Spirit who, while adding nothing new to the revelation, still guides the church into the truth (John 16:12–15) until it passes through all its diversity and arrives at the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 3:18, 19; 4:13). In this sense, there is a good, true, and glorious tradition. It is the method by which the Holy Spirit causes the truth of Scripture to pass into the consciousness and life of the church. Scripture, after all, is only a means, not the goal. The goal is that, instructed by Scripture, the church will freely and independently make known "the wonderful deeds of him who called it out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). The external word is the instrument, the internal word the aim. Scripture will have reached its destination when all have been taught by the Lord and are filled with the Holy Spirit.[51]

Creaturely Coordinates: Renewed Reason and the Habit of Grace

Given such a positive conception of the Scripture-tradition relation, how should we conceive the creaturely coordinates of the Spirit's presence as teacher? Stated simply, tradition is the temporally extended, socially mediated activity of renewed reason: theology's *principium elicitivum*, or elicitive principle. Through the reception and transmission of what it has received from the Holy Spirit in the prophetic-apostolic embassy of Holy Scripture, renewed reason abides and flourishes within the school of Christ. We may appreciate how this is the case by considering the nature of reason and the nature of reason's renewal through the gift of a spiritual habit.

Created reason emerges within the economy of divine teaching as "a grace and gift of love."[52] As in the case of all other creatures, "Reason is

50. John Owen, *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 3 in *The Works of John Owen* (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), 470.
51. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:493–94; see also 380, 506.
52. Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 126. For what follows, see ibid., 122–28.

created, fallen, and redeemed."[53] First, reason is *created*: "The creator endows creatures with reason in order that, hearing his intelligible word of promise and command, they may know him, and so love and obey him."[54] Reason is a grace, given to creatures made in God's image in order that they might actively and intelligently engage in covenant fellowship with their Triune Creator. Second, however, reason is also *fallen*: Reason's "nature is defiled. In the regime of sin, the structure of human desire collapses, because creatures do not give active consent to their creaturely vocation. And in the general collapse, reason also falls into futility and darkness; alienated from the life of God, it is overwhelmed by the callousness and squalor into which we betray ourselves." Alienated from the divine teacher, reason is fruitless in the knowledge of God and therefore an active agent of idolatry and immorality (see Rom. 1:18–32). Third, by God's mercy reason is *rescued and renewed*: "Like all other aspects of created being, weakened and rendered dark and futile by sin, reason is encountered by the assurance and creative power of the forgiveness of sins. Divine judgment renews; it slays in order to make alive. There is not only declension; there is a renewal in the spirit of the mind, a new creaturely nature created after the likeness of God. The gracious, sovereign movement of Word and Spirit outbids the fall."[55] In its rescue and renewal by God, reason is raised and restored to its proper function within the economy of divine teaching. In terms of the present discussion, this means that everything that the Spirit does *in* us to illumine Holy Scripture, he does *by* us, by the instrumentality of created reason in its social and historical expression.[56]

Under the sovereign sway of the Spirit's illuminating aid, created reason functions as the elicitive principle of theology (*principium elicitivum*). As elicitive principle, reason is both "the receiving subject of faith" and "the instrument and principle . . . that elicits faith and factual knowledge."[57] Thus understood, reason's vocation to abide in apostolic

53. Ibid., 124.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., 125.
56. Owen, *Discourse*, 204.
57. Gisbertus Voetius, "The Use of Reason in Matters of Faith," in Willem van Asselt et al., *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2011), 228; with Henk Van Den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 167–69.

teaching is anything but a passive enterprise. Though this vocation is rooted in the obedient reception of divine truth, it is aimed at acquisition of further knowledge through disciplined and virtuous study of Holy Scripture under the Spirit's tutelage within the communion of saints. Reason pursues its studious vocation by functioning as a "principle that draws conclusions (*principium quod*) from the only, infallible principle of the Scriptures, and so by means of simple apprehension, of composition, of division, and of discursive reasoning it achieves understanding of what is revealed supernaturally or spiritually."[58] Furthermore, though reason can only proceed in its vocation on the basis of shared communal assumptions about the nature, norms, and goals of theology, because reason is finite, and because it has not yet received its patrimony in the beatific vision, reason's vocation is "inseparable from ongoing enquiry, from reformulating old questions, testing established beliefs, asking new questions, and so providing new resources for teaching."[59] Reason's vocation is inseparable from a lively tradition of debate about what does and does not count as the faithful extension of tradition toward its goal, the knowledge and love of the Triune God.[60] Within the context of such a tradition, reason can only fulfill its vocation with the aid of the intellectual and moral virtues, spiritual requisites to reason's communal pursuit of divine wisdom in its pilgrimage from idolatry to the vision of God.[61] It is only as reason exercises and excels in these virtues by the grace of Jesus Christ, through the mortifying and vivifying power of the Spirit of Christ, that it becomes docile before its teachers and also discerning enough to distinguish doctrinal treachery from want of instruction, irreligion from immaturity, and thus is equipped to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as it pursues its communal calling to know and love the Triune God.

This leads us to a second creaturely coordinate of the Spirit's illuminating presence: the spiritual habit of grace that is given, sustained,

58. Voetius, "The Use of Reason in Matters of Faith," 228.

59. MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities*, 68.

60. For an instructive recent survey of diversity within the Reformed tradition and of how the Reformed tradition has managed diversity in diverse ways, see Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones, eds., *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

61. On which, see Webster, *Domain of the Word*, chaps. 8 and 10.

and directed by the Spirit in order to aid reason's sanctified exercise in the knowledge of God. In summarizing the main lines of this topic, we follow John Owen's exquisite discussion in two works, *Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* and *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*.[62]

According to Owen, in regenerating fallen human beings, the Holy Spirit plants a new spiritual habit within them, replacing the old sinful habit inherited from Adam and purged by the blood of Christ. This new spiritual habit exists preeminently and in fullest measure in Jesus Christ, the head of the new humanity, and flows to the church from Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of ectypal theology—that is, human knowledge of God.[63] Owen defines this habit as "a new, gracious, spiritual life, or principle, created, and bestowed on the soul, whereby it is changed in all its faculties and affections, fitted and enabled to go forth in the way of obedience unto every divine object that is proposed unto it."[64] This habit is distinct from the rational faculties of the soul, but it is essential to their functioning in the knowledge of God. Far from replacing our rational faculties, this new spiritual habit energizes their various operations toward God and creatures.[65] It enables the mind to discern spiritual things: "All sanctified believers have an ability and power, in the renewed mind and understanding, to see, know, discern, and receive, spiritual things, the mysteries of the gospel, the mind of Christ, in a due and spiritual manner."[66] It also enables the soul to embrace Christ by faith as he is offered in the gospel and to rest with "delight, desire, and complacency" in Christ, "being, indeed, the principle suiting all the faculties of our souls for spiritual and living operations, according to their natural use."[67] Although natural habits

62. Our analysis here is indebted to Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), chaps. 3–4.

63. Owen, *Discourse*, 159–88, 514–19. More fully, see Willem van Asselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 (2002): 319–35.

64. John Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 2 in The Works of John Owen (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), 200.

65. Owen, *Discourse*, 168–69, 502–3.

66. Ibid., 493.

67. Ibid., 200.

may be acquired through repeated activity, this spiritual habit is a free and unsolicited gift of God: "This nature is from God, its parent; it is that in us which is born of God. And it is common unto or the same in all believers, as to its kind and being, though not as to degrees and exercise. It is that which we cannot learn, which cannot be taught us but by God only, as he teaches other creatures in whom he planteth a natural instinct."[68] And yet, while this habit is not acquired through repeated activity, because grace restores and perfects nature, this habit may be "preserved, increased, strengthened, and improved" through spiritual acts of duty and obedience.[69]

Barth expressed great reservations about appropriating the notion of habit in Protestant theology, regarding its use in older Protestant dogmatics as a "fatal" and "sinister" side-glance away from the gospel of Jesus Christ. His chief objection was that the notion of habit turned grace into a *given*, a static possession rather than an ever-new event of divine giving and human receiving.[70] We believe Barth's objection is misguided for two reasons. First (due to Barth's actualism?), it fails to appreciate that the permanence of this particular divine gift constitutes its particular modality: "God's seed *abides* in him" (1 John 3:9). Second, it also fails to appreciate that, rather than undermining the continuous, eventful nature of divine giving and human receiving, this notion in Owen's evangelical hand requires it:

> This *habit* or principle, thus wrought and abiding in us, doth not, if I may say so, firm its own station, or abide and continue in us by its own natural efficacy, in adhering unto the faculties of our souls. Habits that are acquired by many actions have a natural efficacy to preserve themselves, until some opposition that is too hard for them prevail against them; which is frequently (though not easily) done. But this is preserved in us by the constant powerful actings and influence of the Holy Ghost. He which works it in us doth also preserve it in us. And the reason hereof is, because the spring of it is in our head, Christ Jesus, it being only an emanation of virtue and power from him unto us by the Holy Ghost. If this be not actually and always continued, whatever is in us would die and wither of itself. *See* Eph. 4:15, 16; Col. 3:3; John 4:14. It is in us as the fructifying sap is in a branch of the vine or olive. It is there really and formally, and is the next cause of the fruit bearing of the branch: but it doth not live and abide by itself, but by a continual emanation and communication from the root; let that be intercepted, and it quickly withers. So is it with this principle in us, with respect unto its root, Christ Jesus.[71]

68. Ibid., 469.
69. Ibid., 476.
70. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, part 2, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 89–90.

The Headship of Christ and the Church's Spiritual and Intellectual Culture

We are now in a position to draw the preceding argument to a conclusion and to suggest what it means, on Reformed theological principles, to regard the products and processes of the church's spiritual and intellectual culture as fruits of the Spirit. Doing so requires that we reflect a bit more fully on the relationship between Jesus Christ and the church.

Church tradition exists as the school of Christ, and Christian theology flourishes within the school of Christ because Jesus, the messianic Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), has sworn a promise: "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Christ lays the foundation for his church through the prophetic and apostolic witness and by the Spirit's work of inspiration: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18; with Eph. 2:20). As we have seen, the laying of this foundation, in turn, has a goal. Christ lays the foundation of the church in the prophets and apostles in order to build upon that foundation by the Spirit's illuminating work in and through the renewed reason of the people of God: in accordance with the riches of his glory and by the strengthening power of his Spirit in the church's inner being (the *principium cognoscendi internum*), God the Father causes Jesus the messianic Son to dwell within the hearts of his people through faith, strengthening us to comprehend with all the saints the immeasurable depths of Christ's saving love (the *principium elicitivum*), filling us with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14–19).

71. Owen, *Discourse*, 475–76.

The relationship between Christ's foundational work through the Spirit by his prophets and apostles and Christ's constructive work through the Spirit by the church's renewed intelligence may be described under two aspects. According to Owen, Jesus Christ is the head of his body the church "in the double sense of that word": in terms of *authority*, Jesus Christ "is the political head of it in a way of rule and government"; in terms of *anointing*, Jesus Christ "is the really spiritual head, as unto vital influences of grace, unto all his members."[72] We will consider these two senses of Christ's headship in order.

First, Jesus's work of building his church is an expression of his messianic *authority*. Accordingly, the relationship between Christ and his church reflects a distinctive *pattern of authority*. Jesus, the messianic Son of Man who possesses *all* authority (Matt. 28:18), establishes in the witness of his prophets and apostles what we may call a *foundational* authority. The apostles have laid a foundation, and no one else can lay a foundation (1 Cor. 3:10–11): as Childs puts it, "We are neither prophets nor apostles."[73] This foundation, of which Holy Scripture is the literary product and deposit, is sufficient to equip the church with all it needs in order to know, love, and serve God (2 Tim. 3:16–17). All that is said or done in the church in the name of Jesus Christ is accountable to this foundation and will be measured by its faithfulness to this foundation: "Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it. . . . If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:12–15). This is the negative correlate of *sola Scriptura*: Holy Scripture provides the supreme and sufficient foundation to which theological tradition is accountable and by which theological tradition is measured. It is the norm that norms all other norms and that is not itself normed.

There is, however, a positive correlate of *sola Scriptura* as well, a correlate that has not always received due recognition in Protestant

72. Ibid., 518–19.

73. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 381.

theology. Through Holy Scripture, the church's foundational authority, the Lord who possesses all authority *authorizes the church to build* on that foundation. Again, as we have seen, the reason for laying a foundation is in order to build; Scripture is a means to the end of church tradition (Herman Bavinck). Christ not only gives prophets and apostles, he also gives evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:11). And he gives them in order that they might build up the body of Christ "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12–13).[74] The process of receiving and transmitting apostolic truth has a *terminus a quo*, Holy Scripture, from which it flows and to which it is accountable. And the process of receiving and transmitting apostolic truth has a *terminus ad quem* to which it flows, the maturity of the saints and their obtaining the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The church is authorized to pursue this end; and theology flourishes within the sphere of the church's authorized pursuit of this end.

Although the apostolic deposit cannot grow, the church's understanding of that deposit can, and indeed must, grow. The church is always poised between the alternatives of immaturity, characterized by instability and ignorance (Eph. 4:14), and maturity, characterized by stability in and knowledge of the truth (Eph. 4:13). Christ has appointed authorized instruments within the church by which the church may avoid the former and attain the latter. By the strength which the Lord its head supplies, the church "*builds itself up* in love" through the operation of these instruments (Eph. 4:15–16, emphasis added).

To cite one example: dogma is a vital instrument by which the church builds itself up in love. Donald Wood describes well the pattern of authority operative in the church's production of creeds: "Because all genuine authority is self-communicating, Scripture engenders in the reading church dogmatic statements that themselves enjoy a derivative, limited, but just so proper authority of their own."[75] As Wood observes, under Jesus's messianic rule in Holy Scripture, such

74. See Michael Horton, "Ephesians 4:1–16," in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. R. Michael Allen (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 129–53.

75. Donald Wood, "Some Comments on Moral Realism and Scriptural Authority," *European Journal of Theology* 18 (2009): 152.

dogmatic statements serve not only to *limit* theological and interpretive reflection but also to *enable* it: "The intention and effect of appeals to the authority of the creeds and confessions is not simply to close down the church's interpretive options but also to liberate the church from merely parochial readings of Scripture—including those readings which . . . no longer even aspire to catholicity. In this sense, active deference to creedal and confessional documents as authorities—secondary, derivative authorities, subject to Scripture's absolute judgment, but authorities nonetheless—opens up theological discourse rather than closing it down."[76] We will develop this theme more fully in the chapters that follow, articulating the pattern of authority that flows from Christ through Scripture to the church and considering some of the practices of biblical reasoning that flourish within Christ's authoritative, church-building dominion.

Second, Jesus's work of building the church is an expression of his messianic *anointing*. Just as Christ's supreme authority establishes a pattern of authority in the church, so Christ's supreme anointing issues forth in an anointed community: "God who *establishes* us with you in Christ . . . has *anointed* us" (2 Cor. 1:21, emphasis added). The Christ who establishes and builds his church on its apostolic foundation, fills his church with every spiritual blessing by means of the Spirit's abiding presence (Eph. 1:3, 23; 5:18). As we have seen, these blessings include the Spirit's abiding presence as teacher and also the effects of the Spirit's presence in the awakened activities of renewed reason. It is time to address more directly the manner in which the reality of this anointing informs our understanding of the products and processes of the church's theological tradition.

Recall Hütter's concern that Barth's proposal unnecessarily separates the Spirit's teaching activity from the church's concrete theological culture. How does our proposal fare in relation to this concern? While we have been determined to distinguish properly the Spirit's identity and presence as teacher in the church from the church's reception and transmission of apostolic teaching, we have also attempted to account for their positive relationship and affinity. Indeed, we believe that a failure to account for the positive relationship between the Spirit, who

76. Ibid.

is the *principium* of theology, and church tradition, which is among the Spirit's *principiata*, is a failure to honor divine wisdom and power. As the efficient and exemplary causes of theology, divine wisdom and power exhibit their perfection precisely in the production of active creaturely counterparts in the wisdom and power of the church.[77]

In light of this, we believe that the activities and artifacts of ecclesial tradition—that is, both the processes of traditioning, such as preaching and teaching, receiving the sacraments and engaging in schooling, as well as the products of traditioning, such as biblical commentaries, theological tracts, disputations, *loci communes*, creeds, and confessions—should be regarded as *natural signs* and *instruments* of the Spirit's illuminating presence. The products and processes of tradition may be regarded, first, as natural signs of the Spirit's illuminating presence not because they emerge within the order of nature; they are in fact creatures born and sustained within the order of grace. The products and processes of tradition may be regarded as natural signs of the Spirit's illuminating presence because they constitute true and proper effects of his pedagogical grace. They are fruits of the Spirit. The life-giving water that flows forth from the throne of God and of the lamb, and from the temple that Jesus Christ has founded and constructed, grows ever deeper as it proceeds, and the many trees that spring forth on its banks, along with the manifold creatures that swarm in its waters, are signs of its life-giving presence (Ezek. 47:1–10). Because "the river of the water of life" (Rev. 22:1) flows *here*, the activities and artifacts of tradition spring forth as *natural* fruits of the Spirit's life-giving presence.

The products and processes of tradition may be regarded, second, as instruments of the Spirit's illuminating presence for reasons we have already discussed. The Christ who authorizes ecclesial agents to build up the church employs these ecclesial agents as instruments in his sovereign hand (Eph. 4:15–16) and empowers these ecclesial agents in order that, through them, he might cause the church to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The various products and processes of church tradition are certainly fallible, and

77. See John Webster, "'Love Is Also a Lover of Life': *Creatio ex Nihilo* and Creaturely Goodness," *Modern Theology* 29 (2013): 169–70.

their existence and exercise are certainly accountable to their prophetic and apostolic foundation. Their weak and subordinate nature notwithstanding, these instruments do not stand as obstacles to a knowledge of God that can be gained more immediately through the reading of Scripture without them. They stand as divinely authorized instruments and divinely appointed aids to reading Scripture, part of the fullness of Christ's gift that he has bestowed in and through his anointing upon the church. Having received this anointing, and the fruits of this anointing, the church and the church's theology can do no better than to abide in the one who has given by abiding in the gifts he has given (1 John 2:27).

Conclusion

In 1553, Peter Martyr Vermigli returned to the Strasbourg Academy, having spent his past six years in Oxford as professor of theology. In an oration on the study of theology delivered to future bishops of the Reformed churches, he reminded his audience of the location of the true school of theology: "The location or school of this philosophy is in heaven; they therefore who creep along the ground and have not made their commonwealth in heaven, as the Apostle commanded, are in danger lest they waste their efforts in studying." He also reminded them of the true teacher of theology: "The teacher of this subject is the Holy Spirit. Although you will have had countless teachers, preachers, instructors, and pedagogues, unless the Holy Spirit refashions your inmost hearts, they will all be sweating in vain."[78]

These are the warrants for a program of retrieval in theology: the church is the school of Christ, taught by the Spirit of Christ; the church is the seedbed of theology that flourishes by the anointing of Christ. We conclude our discussion with Peter Martyr's prayer that theology may flourish in this field:

> O thrice blessed God, may the things that I am going to teach your disciples not be the winds of error but the needed and fruitful rains

78. Peter Martyr Vermigli, "Strasbourg Oration," in *The Peter Martyr Reader*, ed. John Patrick Donnelly, Frank A. James III, and Joseph C. McLelland (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999), 64.

> of the truth. May my interpretations not be a violent rain destroying the Church and casting down consciences but a dew of consolation and a useful edification for souls. I would wish, after you have heard and answered my prayers, that all those who are here present may not listen to the sacred seed of your Word like a footpath of thorns or a rocky field. But may they be the good soil and the field prepared by your Spirit that will bring forth from the Scriptures, which have been implanted in the furrows of their hearts, fruit thirty- and sixty- and a hundredfold.[79]

79. Ibid., 66.