

# REFORMED CATHOLICITY

The Promise of Retrieval for Theology  
and Biblical Interpretation

MICHAEL ALLEN  
AND SCOTT R. SWAIN

AFTERWORD BY J. TODD BILLINGS

  
**Baker Academic**  
*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*  
Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2015. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2015 by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain

Published by Baker Academic  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287  
www.bakeracademic.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Allen, Michael, 1981–

Reformed catholicity : the promise of retrieval for theology and biblical interpretation / Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain. — 3.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8010-4979-8 (pbk.)

1. Theology. 2. Bible—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 3. Church renewal. I. Title.

BR118.A435 2015

230—dc23

2014028821

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2007

Scripture quotations labeled NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, Reformed Catholicity  
Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2015. Used by permission.

# Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction: *Renewal through Retrieval* 1

1. Learning Theology in the School of Christ: *The Principles of Theology and the Promise of Retrieval* 17
2. Retrieving *Sola Scriptura*, Part One: *The Catholic Context of Sola Scriptura* 49
3. Retrieving *Sola Scriptura*, Part Two: *Biblical Traditioning* 71
4. A Ruled Reading Reformed: *The Role of the Church's Confession in Biblical Interpretation* 95
5. In Defense of Proof Texting 117

Afterword: *Rediscovering the Catholic-Reformed Tradition for Today: A Biblical, Christ-Centered Vision for Church Renewal* by J. Todd Billings 143

Index 163



# Acknowledgments

We rejoice in the fact that this book is not suggesting a new path but is offering analysis of what we see occurring around us already. So we give thanks for friends and exemplars of Reformed catholicity and of renewal through retrieval. We are delighted to be involved in a number of projects that exemplify, in many ways, the project of Reformed catholicity: specifically, Baker Academic's *Christian Dogmatics* project and Zondervan Academic's New Studies in Dogmatics series. We realized, amid these varying ongoing involvements, that it was time to step back and speak programmatically about what such projects assume, namely, a passionate commitment of many to do theology in the context of the catholic and Reformed church. We think there is a serious need for a dogmatic proposal as to why these various recent movements are to be encouraged and how they can best be furthered. We hope that this manifesto does not conclude a conversation, by any means, but acknowledges the progress of developments already taking place and offers some analytical clarity regarding this newfound commitment to a Reformed-catholic *ressourcement* for the sake of mission and renewal.

We should note those who were willing to read the manuscript (or portions thereof) and offer feedback: John Webster, Todd Billings, Paul Nimmo, Wesley Hill, Jono Linebaugh, Dan Treier, and Kevin Vanhoozer. Their keen eyes and insightful suggestions have reformed

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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.”<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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*.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> The Webber Institute for Worship Studies continues to educate pastors and lay-people 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*.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

### *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).<sup>13</sup> 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).<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Williams specifically uses the language of retrieval and renewal in his call for engaging the past for the sake of theology's future.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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).<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.”<sup>20</sup> *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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

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,”<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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 elicivum* 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."<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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*.<sup>10</sup> 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 Post-liberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984).

and that's OK"? Though some have read him this way, this does not reflect Lindbeck's intention.<sup>11</sup> 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)<sup>12</sup> 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."<sup>13</sup> 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,<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> Hütter, however, finds this view problematic, because it fails to account for the ongoing sinfulness of the church.<sup>16</sup> 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.”<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> 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?<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> These practices are “constitutive for the mode of enactment of the Holy Spirit’s economic mission and thus for the church itself.”<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup>

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.