The Lord and His Messengers:
Toward a Trinitarian Interpretation of Malachi 3:1–4

By Camden M. Bucey

Biblical scholars have long quarantined the discipline of biblical theology from the conclusions of systematic theologians.[1] For many, the disciplines have been viewed as distinct and, for the most part, unrelated. Yet, this has not been the case in the confessionally Presbyterian and Reformed tradition. Geerhardus Vos, generally recognized as the father of Reformed biblical theology, defined biblical theology as "that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible."[2] In accord with his definition, Vos prefers the name "history of special revelation" (Vos, 14) to "biblical theology," since for him the study deals with revelation as a divine activity that occurs as a process in time. As such, the entirety of revelation has not been given at any single point of time. Rather, it unfolds progressively and organically as God continues to reveal himself in history. Hence, biblical theology studies revelation in this historical fashion, while systematic theology studies it logically through a topical structuring of the entirety of revelation. Vos explains, "Biblical Theology draws a *line* of development. Systematic Theology draws a *circle*."[3] While the two disciplines have different methodological concerns, biblical and systematic theology each mutually serves and depends upon the other. Indeed, systematic theology without biblical theology is speculative, and biblical theology without systematic theology is misguided. But used together, both disciplines inform and regulate each other.

To demonstrate this necessary and mutual dependence, we will exegete Malachi 3:1–4 and suggest that systematic categories uniquely illuminate a particular exegetical issue for which there is no unanimous solution. There are four titles in Malachi 3:1–4: "my messenger," "the messenger of the covenant," "the Lord," and YHWH. Yet upon an initial examination, the personal references behind the first three titles are vague. Notwithstanding, we contend that only through an integrated approach of exegetical, biblical, and systematic theology can scholars add clarity and properly interpret this passage, as they better understand the trinitarian nature of this revelation.

Analysis Of Malachi 3:1–4
Introduction and Passage Boundaries

Scholars almost unanimously agree that Malachi was written during the Persian period, in which case the

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1. This sentiment began with Johann Philipp Gabler's 1787 inaugural address at the University of Altdorf titled "On the Proper Distinction Between Dogmatic and Biblical Theology, and the Specific Objectives of Each." A translation is available in Ben C. Ollenburger, ed., *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 499–506. Gabler's distinction gained momentum as it came into contact with a Kantian philosophy, and developed further through the History of Religions School in such works as Wrede's "Concerning the Task and Method of So-Called New Testament Theology", in Robert Morgan, ed., *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1973), 68–116. Still, the rejection of the interdependence of biblical and systematic theology remains very much in force. See for example, Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary", in George A. Buttrick, ed., *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols; New York: Abington Press, 1962), 418–32; James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 62–84, esp. 74–76. Nonetheless, other interpreters have recently begun to develop a positive relation between the two disciplines though they differ from a confessionally Presbyterian and Reformed approach. See for instance Craig G. Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller, and Robin Parry, eds. *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

2. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1948; reprint, 2000), 5.

3. Vos, 16 (emphasis original unless otherwise noted).

prophet ministers between two important redemptive-historical.[4] The nation had returned from exile and had rebuilt the temple, but they were left in disappointment because they had no indication that the glory of the Lord had or would fill the temple envisioned by Ezekiel (Ezek. 43:4).[5] The promised figures of Zerubbabel and Joshua that were foretold by Haggai and Zechariah came and went. The people existed in a prophetic limbo—having experienced a typological fulfillment while looking for the eschatological fulfillment to be ushered in.

In this context Malachi 3:1–4 promises the coming of the Lord's messenger to prepare the way so that the priesthood may be purified and present acceptable offerings to the Lord. The Lord and his people must be restored to a right relationship. Malachi presents the people of Judah as those who mock God and do not recognize their own sinful behavior. In response to this

sentiment, the book proceeds through a series of judgment oracles followed by blessings. Our text is part of a judgment oracle that begins in 2:17 and concludes in 3:5 with 3:6 acting as a transition to the subsequent dispute. In order to focus on the identity of the characters and the function of purification, we will center our attention on verses 1–4, excluding the oracle's introduction (2:17) and conclusion (3:5) from detailed examination. These four verses are directed at the inner renewal of the priesthood as opposed to the focus of 3:5, which is expanded to include the people generally. This section is nicely marked by the הנני in verse one and concludes with the acceptable offering of Judah and Jerusalem made possible by the purification of the priesthood in v. 3. Malachi 3:1–4 then forms a self-contained textual unit within the judgment oracle (2:17–3:5). We must now present and defend our translation of the passage before turning to exegesis.

Translation and Defense

Behold[6], I send[7] my messenger[8]
and he will clear the way before me.[9]
Suddenly[10], he will come[11]   to his temple,[12]
    the lord[13]   whom you seek[14]
    and the messenger of the covenant[15]   in whom you take pleasure,[16]
behold, he is coming[17]
says the Lord of hosts.[18]

4. Tremper Longman and Raymond D. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 498.

5. Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi an Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove: Inter-varsity Press, 1972), 211.

6. **Behold** (v. 1a) interjection with 1st person common singular suffix (הנני).

7. **I send** (v. 1a) *qal* participle masc. sing. could also be translated "I am sending" or "I will send."

8. **my messenger** (v. 1a) מלאכי or "my messenger" (noun common masc. sing construct with 1st common sing suffix) is a play on the author's name. This has led some scholars to question whether an historical Malachi authored the book. See C. C. Torrey, "The Prophecy of Malachi," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 17 (1898): 1–17; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 493; Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 497–98.

9. **and he will clear the way** (v. 1a) He will clear is a *piel* perfect 3rd person masc. sing. with *waw*-consecutive. **Road** is the object of the verb and is marked by the *maqqef* (ופנה־דרך). **Before me** (v. 1a) לפני is a masculine plural noun in construct with a 1st person common sing. ending. The construction could be translated "before me" or "before my face."

10. **Suddenly** (v. 1b) פתאם (ἐξαίφνη in the LXX) carries the force of "surprisingly." It is often present with unexpected or surprising events. Pieter Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987), 288.

11. **he will come** (v. 1b) *qal* imperfect 3rd masc. sing. apocopated; appropriately translated as a future tense in English.

12. **to his temple** (v. 1b) temple includes the direct object marker

linking it with the preceding "he will come" (יבוא). This temple is also possessed by the one who is coming as it includes the 3rd person masc. sing. suffix (אל־היכלו).

13. **the lord** (v. 1b) This formulation is אדון and the definite article, not יהוה as English readers may suspect.

14. **whom you seek** (v. 1b) The lord is the one **whom you seek** (אשר־אתם מבקשים). **You seek** is a *piel* participle, masc. plural and is often found in the context of prayer and pleading. It carries the force of seeking after to petition (cf Dan. 9:3; Ps. 122:9). William Lee Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Eerdmans, 1971), 47. The relative particle אשר clearly refers to the preceding האדון and marks him as the one the people seek. The people are the immediate intended audience of this phrase as is apparent from the 2nd person masc. plural pronoun אתם connected to אשר via a *maqqef*.

15. **and the messenger of the covenant** (v. 1b) **messenger** is in construct with **the covenant** denoting who the messenger is. Messenger, then, is definite since it is in construct with הברית, which bears the definite article. The chain begins with a *waw*-conjunctive, connecting it to the preceding clause.

16. **in whom you take pleasure** (v. 1b) אשר־אתם repeats the construction earlier, though the referent is the messenger. חפצים is a masc. plural adjective modifying the hearers and describes them as those who take pleasure in the messenger.

17. **behold he is coming** (v. 1c) the second interjection of this verse הנה does not bear a suffix, but is connected with the *qal* participle masc. sing. בא via a *maqqef* (הנה־בא).

18. **says the LORD of hosts** (v. 1c) *qal* perfect 3rd person masc. sing.

But who can endure[19]   the day of his coming?[20]
And who can stand[21]   when he appears?[22]
   For he[23]
      is like a refiner's fire
      and like launderer's soap.[24]
   He will sit[25]
      as a refiner[26]
         and purifier of silver[27]
         and purify the sons of Levi[28]
      and refine them[29]
      like gold and silver.[30]
And they will bring
   offerings[31]   in righteousness[32]   to the LORD.[33]
   Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem[34]   will be pleasing[35]   to the LORD[36]
      as the days of old
      and as former years. [37]

Internal Coherence

As was mentioned above, Malachi is organized according to a fairly uniform structure of judgment oracles in the form of a mock dialogue between YHWH and the people. Exploring this interaction helps to set the context for the activity of the shadowy figures in Malachi 3:1–4. In this dialogue, YHWH accuses the unfaithful people and they mock him. Consequently, YHWH responds and indicts them. Interestingly, the unfaithful questions follow a common pattern by beginning with a formulaic ואמרתם.[38] This phrase and its subsequent questions appears nine times throughout the book (1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13).[39] Malachi 3:1–4 falls directly after the sixth unfaithful question, which provides the immediate context for the promises found in 3:1–4. Before moving to a section regarding the failure of God's people to bring their tithes before him, he promises the

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The proper noun **the LORD** (יהוה) has no number and no state, but functions in construct here with **hosts** (צבאות).

19. **But who can endure** (v. 2a) *pilpel* participle masc. sing.

20. **the day of his coming** (v. 2a) *qal* infinitive construct with 3rd person masc. sing. suffix translated gerundatively as a verbal noun of sorts.

21. **and who can stand** (v. 2b) lit. "the standing one" *qal* participle masc. sing. with the definite article.

22. **when he appears?** (v. 2b) *niphal* infinitive construct with 3rd person masc. sing. suffix and a ב prepositional additive. This construction is the temporal use of the infinitive construct and is best taken as "when he appears." Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Eisenbrauns, 1990), §36.2.2b.

23. **For he** (v. 2c) (כי־הוא) the coordinating conjunctive particle coupled with the third person masculine singular personal pronoun.

24. **is like a refiner's fire** (v. 2c) (כאש מצרף) **and like launderer's soap** (v. 2c). The use of כ marks agreement in kind. Waltke and O'Connor, §11.2.9b.

25. **He will sit** (v. 3a) *qal* perfect 3rd person masc. sing. with *waw*-consecutive.

26. **as a refiner** (v. 3a) *piel* participle masc. sing. "As" is supplied to make for a readable translation.

27. **and purifier of silver** (v. 3a) *piel* participle masc. sing. Lit. "one who purifies silver."

28. **and purify the sons of Levi** (v. 3b) *piel* perfect 3rd masc. sing. with *waw*-consecutive focusing the action in the future.

29. **and refine them** (v. 3b) *piel* perfect 3rd masc. sing. with *waw*-consecutive again pointing to future action.

30. **like gold and silver** (v. 3b) As in v. 2c, the use of כ marks agreement in kind. Waltke and O'Connor, §11.2.9b.

31. **… bring offerings** (v. 3c) lit. "and they will be to the LORD ones who bring offerings." **They will** (והיו) is a *qal* perfect 3rd person common plural with a *waw*-conjunctive. **Bring** (מגישי) is a *hiphil* participle masc. plural in construct with **offering** (מנחה). For the sake of more readable English, we have translated "they will bring offerings."

32. **in righteousness** (v. 3c) common feminine singular noun with the preposition ב best taken as "in righteousness."

33. **to the LORD** (v.3c) preposition ל prefixing the proper name (ליהוה).

34. **Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem** (v. 4a) מנחת is in construct with Judah and Jerusalem indicating it is their offering.

35. **will be pleasing** (v. 4b) *qal* perfect 3rd person masc. sing. with *waw*-consecutive (וערבה) placing this phrase as occurring subsequently to the preceding action.

36. **to the LORD** (v. 4b) as part of the parallel phrase is similar to the construction in v. 3c. The preposition specifies that the LORD will find the offering pleasing.

37. **as the days of old and as in former years** (v. 4c) both phrases include the preposition כ which compares this event with past events in **days of old** and in **former years**. **Days** is in construct with **old** (עולם), but **former** (קדמניות) modifies **years** (וכשנים) as a feminine plural adjective in agreement.

38. Malachi 1:13 is the sole exception. It does not follow the form of a question, but rather a mocking statement.

39. Mal 3:14 begins another statement/question but with אמרתם "you have said"—It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? (ESV).

coming of מלאך (my messenger) to prepare the way for the LORD to refine and purify the priesthood and presumably the people.

The unit begins with the interjection הנני (behold) and begins to describe the speaker's action. The *qal* masculine singular participle שלח refers to יהוה צבאות, the one who is speaking. YHWH announces that he is sending his messenger, מלאכי, a paronomasia, or word play on the prophet's name and the first of three elusive titles in 3:1.[40] The root noun מלאך appears three times in the book of Malachi; in 3:1, 2 and earlier in 2:7, which suggests that מלאכי may be one of the Sons of Levi. But in this case, the specific function assigned to מלאכי is clearing the way before YHWH (דרך לפני ופנה), who employs him for the particular task of removing any obstacles so the LORD may come in judgment unhindered. But מלאכי is but one of the elusive figures in Malachi 3:1–4. Verse 1 also speaks of האדון, who is described as coming פתאם (suddenly)—a word often connected with disaster and distress (Isa. 47:11; 48:3; Jer. 4:20; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 243). Additionally, פתאם bears a time-based element, but the force of this particular use also includes the element of surprise or unexpectedness.

The ambiguity regarding the identities of the three figures in Malachi 3:1 has elicited four interpretive solutions. David M. Miller classifies the typical responses under four categories: 1) three titles for one messenger 2) God and two messengers, 3) God and one messenger and 4) God is one of the two messengers.[41] Categories 1) and 3) maintain that מלאכי has the same personal referent as מלאך הברית, the third figure in 3:1, primarily because the repetition of the noun מלאך lends force to the idea that they are the same individual.[42] But

a sufficient number of textual features overcome this identification. The primary feature is the chiastic arrangement of verses 1b-1c, which is organized as follows:

A יבוא אל־היכלו

B האדון אשר־אתם מבקשים

B' ומלאך הברית אשר־אתם חפצים

A' הנה־בא

The chiasm begins with a description of the manner of the Lord's (האדון) coming. The chiastic arrangement denotes that the one coming (יבוא) to his temple is not מלאכי but האדון. Verhoef argues that the parallelism and chiastic structure demands that מלאך הברית be identified with האדון and not with מלאכי (Verhoef, 289). The fact that both figures in B and B' come simultaneously is one primary reason for identifying the two.[43] The *qal* imperfect masculine singular of בוא in A parallels the *qal* masculine singular participle of בוא in A' with no change in temporal focus. The text then strongly suggests these are indeed two titles for the same figure, in which case the *waw* is functioning epexegetically. Thus, the parallelism between האדון and מלאך הברית, which also excludes מלאכי, argues against the single-person view.

A preponderance of Jewish and Christian commentators agree that האדון (the Lord) here refers to YHWH.[44] This is evident first, since he will "come to his temple."[45] Every other time היכל (temple) appears in the MTT with the 3rd person masculine singular suffix it is in explicit connection with YHWH (Jer. 50:28; 51:11). Moreover, אדון (Lord) is found seven times with the definite article (Exod. 34:23; Isa. 1:24; 3:1; 10:16, 33; 19:4; Mal. 3:1).[46] Every other occurrence of אדון with the definite article is immediately followed by יהוה, which clearly demonstrates its intended referent. Though Malachi 3:1 contains the only האדון not immediately followed by יהוה, the particular use of היכל, the general MTT use of אדון with the article, and the presence of יהוה in 1c argues that האדון in 3:1b is indeed יהוה. But as we identify האדון with יהוה, we are then prevented from identifying האדון with מלאכי since YHWH is the one who sends מלאכי. We must then conclude Miller's fourth option: God is one of the two messengers but not both.

At this point we have concluded that the Lord and the messenger of the covenant are YHWH, but the identity of מלאכי (my messenger) still remains. A look at his reception may provide helpful information for identifying "my messenger." Baldwin considers אשר־אתם מבקשים (whom you seek) to be an ironic statement (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 243). One reason for this

40. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 530.

41. David M. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," *New Testament Studies* 53, no. 1 (2007): 5.

42. R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission*, 1st ed. (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), 91.

43. Baldwin writes "He comes simultaneously with the Lord, if indeed he is not to be identified with Him (so AV, RV), a view encouraged by a Messianic interpretation in the light of the New Testament." Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 242–243.

44. Andrew Hill, *The Book of Malachi: Its Place in Post-Exilic Chronology Linguistically Reconsidered* (University of Michigan, 1981), 287.

45. Paul Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 176.

46. Exodus 34:23 is written defectively with a *holem* (הָאָדֹן) rather than with a *holem waw* (הָאָדֹון).

interpretation stems from the phrase's location, which closely follows the introduction of the judgment oracle in 2:17. Taken alongside the need for the purification of the priesthood in 3:1–4, a sarcastic tone seems to be natural. The parallel אשר־אתם חפצים (in whom you take pleasure) would then be another sarcastic phrase—a reading congruent with the satire and ridicule found throughout the book of Malachi (cf. 1:8; *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 530).

Regardless of the way we understand these phrases, the object of the people's pleasure (אשר־אתם חפצים) is either the messenger or the covenant associated with him. The antecedent of the accusative אשר is ambiguous (Waltke and M. O'Connor, §19.3b), since אתם acts as a resumptive element to the relative clause and could refer either to הברית or מלאך. The אשר found earlier in relation to האדון does not carry the same ambiguity since "his temple" (היכלו) is prefixed by the direct object marker (אל). This construction links היכלו to the preceding verb (יבוא). Nonetheless, there are at least two reasons for taking אשר to refer to the messenger and not to the covenant he is associated with. First, הברית מלאך is clearly a title for this figure. It is more natural to consider the אשר as referring to the entire construct chain since it is in reference to the person behind the title מלאך הברית. Second, the chiastic structure argues that the messenger is what the people take pleasure in, because the prior אשר refers to the figure האדון. YHWH, the Lord and messenger of the covenant, comes to his temple and the purified people delight in him. הנה־בא (behold, he is coming) repeats the emphasis of 1a (A in our chiasm). This verse concludes with the phrase צבאות אמר יהוה (says YHWH of hosts), which adds to the surety of these events. YHWH of hosts has stamped his own arrival and all its related events with his guarantee.

Verse two begins with a set of questions that further describe the force of the coming of האדון ‖ הברית מלאך (the Lord and messenger of the covenant), and sheds light on what he will do. The verse begins, "Who can stand?" The repetition of the interrogative animate pronoun מי here further emphasizes the question and refers back to the people who are addressed in 2:17 (Waltke and M. O'Connor, §18.1d). It is a rhetorical series of questions that implies a negative response. The *pilpel* participle מכלכל gives the sense of holding in, containing or managing. Within the context of judgment, the question becomes "Who can endure the day of his coming?" The answer is an implied "no one" (Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 290). מלאך הברית ‖ האדון is a powerful figure who comes to judge.

The temporal use of the *qal* and *niphal* infinitive

constructs with ב prepositional additives specifies that they will have to endure *when* he comes/appears. The particle כי coordinates the subsequent phrase by specifying why no one will be able to stand before him, namely, because he is like a refiner's fire and launderer's soap. This comparison is described in 3:3, which introduces another chiasm.

A	וישב מצרף ומטהר כסף	He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver
B	וטהר את־בני־לוי	and purify the sons of Levi
A'	וזקק אתם כזהב וכסף	and refine them like gold and silver

The chiastic structure emphasizes that YHWH cleanses the priesthood (A) in two actions: refining and purifying. The *piel* stems in this verse signify that the action is causing a state. YHWH comes and causes the priests to enter the state of refinement and purification (Waltke and O'Connor, §24.1i.).

The *waw*-consecutive perfect והיו in 3c describes the result that follows the purification process. The Sons of Levi will bring acceptable offerings to YHWH in his temple. This particular construction of היה with the *hiphil* participle of נגש describes a continuous action signifying that the people will bring acceptable offerings repeatedly (Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 292). Furthermore, these offerings are specifically brought to YHWH, which is evident from the quasi-allative dativel use of the preposition ל (Waltke and O'Connor, §12.2.10d). This purification leads to offerings from the hands of Judah and Jerusalem. As a result of the purification coinciding with the arrival of מלאך הברית, verse four describes that the offerings brought in righteousness will be pleasing. ערב is used in conjunction with מנחה also in Exod 29:41 and Num 28:8 to describe the YHWH's pleasure with offerings brought in faith by his people.[47] The unit concludes with the typical prophetic phrase, כימי עולם (Amos 9:11; Mic 7:14), the scope of which refers as far back as the time of the patriarchs (Mal 1:2–5; Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 292). The coming of הברית מלאך brings YHWH and his people into a relationship that recalls better days—perhaps alluding to the Mosaic administration in view as the ideal time of the past (Jer. 2:2–3; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 244).

It is evident that much can be gathered from an internal analysis of Malachi 3:1–4 alone. First, we have been able to confidently identify the twin figures, the Lord, and the messenger of the covenant, as one figure, namely YHWH.

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47. Exodus 29:41 and Numbers 28:8 focus specifically on the YHWH's pleasure with the aroma of the offering.

Second, YHWH must be distinct from "my messenger." We have also seen that he comes quickly to judge his people, and no one can withstand his judgment and purification. Yet the righteous delight in him, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to YHWH when the Lord and his people are restored. But an internal analysis is only one piece of a larger picture. So we must now expand our view to consider Malachi 3:1–4 in light of other texts.

External Coherence

In order to explore further the identities of the figures of Malachi 3:1–4, we must examine the passage's connections to other texts in Malachi and elsewhere in the Old Testament. Immediately, our attention should turn to the function of Elijah in Malachi 3:19, which is closely related to the focus of 3:1–4. The בא of 3:19 has the same scope as the parallel יבוא and בא in the chiasm of 3:1b-c. The day is coming when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. This description echoes the questions of 3:2. Who can manage? Who can stand? Elijah comes to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers in order that YHWH might not strike the land with a decree of utter destruction. In that sense Elijah is preparing the way, because he comes before YHWH performing preparatory works in anticipation of YHWH's coming purification-refinement-judgment.

But in looking beyond the immediate context, Isaiah 40:3 is perhaps the text most strongly associated with Malachi 3:1. In each synoptic gospel Jesus quotes Isa 40:3 in conjunction with Malachi 3:1 and combines them as one. The intertextual connection between the דרך לפני ופנה of 3:1 and the פנו דרך יהוה of Isaiah 40:3 is very strong and suggests that מלאכי is the "voice crying in the wilderness." Meredith G. Kline expands this connection by linking מלאך הברית with the Angel of the Presence in Isaiah 63:9.[48] As he traces the thread of YHWH's messenger through Scripture, Kline centers on the messenger

of Exod 23–24, a related passage that speaks of the Angel of the Lord. By coming to an understanding of מלאך־יהוה, the Angel of the Lord, in this passage, we can understand better the role of the messenger of the covenant in Malachi 3:1–4, since their mutual relation to YHWH links these two figures. For instance, God's name was "in" the angel (Exod. 23:21) suggesting a heightened relation or even identity with YHWH. Furthermore, the Lord of the covenant is the one speaking in Exodus 23–24 and the book of the covenant (ספר הברית) is being read in Exodus 24:7. The connection between the LORD and his covenant suggests that the "messenger of the Lord" in Exodus 23:20, 23; 32:34 and 33:2 is most likely the מלאך הברית in Malachi 3:1. For Kline, Elijah's role as messenger repristinates the messenger's role in Exodus 23. Kline writes:

> In Israel's exodus march to Zion, the Angel of the covenant of Presence proceeded as king at the head of the processional way (Exod. 23:20). In the new exodus there is again the royal procession, the way prepared by prophets (and disciples, cf. the triumphal entry into Jerusalem), and it is again the Angel of the Lord, now the Lord incarnate, who is the royal leader.[49]

This "new exodus" theme provides further context for understanding the reappearance of the Elijah figure as a recapitulation of major Old Testament prophetic figures that would naturally accompany a recapitulation of one of its most significant events (cf. Mal. 4:4, 5 [3:22, 23]). "My messenger" Elijah once again appears to prepare the way for the Lord incarnate to lead his royal procession (cf. Matt. 11:10; Luke 7:27).

This expanding context also provides a richer understanding of the covenant associated with מלאך הברית, which may help to reveal the figure's identity. The covenant could refer simply to the shadowy covenant of Malachi 2:7, but it may allude to the duties given to Levi (Deut. 33:8–10).[50] Jeremiah 33:20–26 and Nehemiah 13:29 refer to more specific covenants made with Levites, and these arrangements may even be in view. Regardless, the covenant of Malachi 3:1 may simply be a general reference to the Mosaic Covenant or even the New Covenant. The close connections among Exodus 24:7–8, Jeremiah 31:31–34, and Ezekiel 36:25–28 lend support to this latter view.

The refining and purifying in Malachi 3:1–4 should be read against the backdrop of the prophetic corpus. The theme is common to Isaiah (Isa. 40:19; 41:7; 46:6; 48:10), Jeremiah (Jer. 6:29; 9:6; 10:9, 14; 51:17), Daniel (Dan. 11:35; 12:10) and Zechariah (Zech. 13:9). Jeremiah, however, is the only prophet to speak of launderer's soap in conjunction with the refinement process.[51] Jeremiah

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48. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 70.

49. Meredith G. Kline, *Glory in our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah's Night Visions* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001), 56n20.

50. This covenant could perhaps refer to the covenant of peace made with Phinehas in Numbers 25:11–13. See Steven L. McKenzie and Howard N. Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1983): 550. Covenant and the priesthood is a theme of Numbers 25:11–13, Nehemiah 13:29, Daniel 9:26; 11:22 and Jeremiah 33:18. See Bruce V. Malchow, "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 253.

51. The linguistic connection between בְּרִית (soap) and בְּרִית

2:22, then, is an interesting foil for understanding the work of מלאכי in conjunction with YHWH, who is הברית מלאך. There, YHWH states that the people wash themselves with much lye, but their guilt remains before them, but in Malachi 3:2–4 YHWH comes to purify and refine his people himself.

Indeed, Malachi 3:1–4 draws on several prominent prophetic themes. But as we turn to consider expanding biblical and theological connections beyond what the Lord had revealed by the time of Malachi, the depth and complexity of this passage becomes even more apparent. Many intertextual and motif connections can be identified within the prophets and the broader Old Testament canonical context, and these connections lay the foundation for the New Testament revelation regarding the identity of מלאכי as well as for understanding the eschatological significance and function of מלאך הברית and האדון.

Jesus identifies John the Baptist as both מלאכי and Elijah from Malachi 3:1 and 3:23, respectively (Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:76; 7:27).[52] However, Luke associates both Jesus and John with Elijah (Luke 1:17; 4:25; 7:11–17; cf. 7:27; David M. Miller, 2). We cannot examine the intricacies of these uses at this time, but we must agree with Jesus' own words that John is Elijah insofar as Elijah prepared the way for Jesus. Christ, however, carries on the prophetic and particularly miraculous functions of Elijah throughout his earthly ministry.[53] YHWH's activity in Malachi 3:1–4 and 4:1 is picked up further in the discussion of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:11 and throughout Luke-Acts. For instance, John baptizes with a preparatory baptism of repentance, but one is coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί). This alludes to the refining and purifying role of YHWH in Malachi 3:3, and is used throughout the New Testament.[54]

Though much can be said regarding the figures of Malachi 3:1–4 strictly from the immediate context and its connections within the Old Testament, the overall canonical witness to the person of the Son of God is perhaps the most enlightening perspective on Malachi 3:1–4. Indeed, it requires that we nuance our prior view of Malachi 3:1. Recall that we argued that God, that is YHWH, is one of the two messengers, since on the basis of Malachi 3:1–4 alone, האדון appears to be הברית מלאך. The reference to YHWH in Malachi 3:1–4 specifically has the mission of the Father in view particularly because he is the one who sends his messenger. This is part of the Father's economic function. According to orthodox trinitarian theology in the West, the Son is begotten of the Father and the Spirit proceeds from

both the Father and the Son. The Father, however, is unbegotten and does not proceed. Economically speaking, it is the mission of Son and Spirit to move and act while the Father decrees and sends. We then ought to identify the function of YHWH in Malachi 3:1–4 economically with the Father since he is the divine person who sends his messengers. However, doing so will create tension between our identification of YHWH with מלאך הברית, since further biblical-theological reflection will lead us to identify מלאך הברית with a figure distinct from the Father.

The connection between the messenger of the covenant in Malachi 3:1 and the Angel of the Lord of Exodus 23–24 becomes helpful for understanding the personal referent behind the messenger-angels, and the covenantal context becomes the principle vector through which we may identify the מלאך הברית of Malachi 3:1–4 with מלאך־יהוה of Exodus 23–24. Yet Exodus 23–24 is but one passage that describes the covenantal context of Malachi 3:1–4. Several other passages develop the contours of this picture, one primary example being Judges 2:1–5. In this passage the angel of the LORD delivers a judgment verdict upon the people for their failure to eradicate the inhabitants of the land and destroy their altars. As a result, the LORD will not drive the inhabitants out and the people will become snares to Israel. In response to this judgment, the people weep loudly and sacrifice to him. As with Malachi 3:1–4, the immediate context of Judges 2:1–5 does not offer enough information regarding the precise identity of the Angel of the LORD. He may be a human representative—a protoprophetic figure—but he may be something else. The immediate context allows for several interpretations. Van der Kooij notes five major similarities between Judges 2:1–5 and the accounts of the Angel of the LORD in Exodus 23 and 34 (van der Kooij, 298).

(covenant) is intriguing. Both Jer 2 and Mal 3 draw on each word in connection with the necessary purification for covenant faithfulness.

52. The quotations in the NT consistently render "prepare the way before *you*." The LXX, however, preserves the MTT's "before *me*." Interestingly, the NT does not alter "Behold I send *my* messenger."

53. Verhoef suggests a "pyramid of forerunners" approach to the question of Elijah's return, the pinnacle of which would be John the Baptist (cf. Gen. 22:18 with Gal. 3:16; Hos. 11:1; with Matt. 2:15, etc.). Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 288.

54. This purification by fire imagery is particularly influential in the eschatological discussion of the new creation in 1 Pet. John Proctor, "Fire in God's House: Influence of Malachi 3 in the NT," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36, no. 1 (1993): 9–14.

Angel of the LORD	Jdg 2:1, 4	מלאך־יהוה
	Exod 23:20, 23	מלאך
Make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land	Jdg 2:2	ואתם לא־תכרתו ברית ליושבי הארץ הזאת
	Exod 23:32; 34:12	לא־תכרת להם ולאלהיהם ברית
Break down their altars	Jdg 2:2	מזבחותיהם תתצון
	Exod 34:13	כי את־מזבחתם תתצון ואת־מצבתם
Use of the verb גרש in the *Piel*	Jdg 2:3	לא־אגרש
	Exod 23:28–31	(x2) אגרשנו // וגרשה // וגרשתמו
Their gods will be a snare to you	Jdg 2:3	יהיו לכם למוקש
	Exod 23:33b cf Exod 34:12	כי־יהיה לך למוקש פן־יהיה למוקש בקרבך

The textual similarities demonstrate that Exodus 23:20–33 is indeed the historical-covenantal background to Judges 2:1–5, an insight that adds additional assistance in our endeavor to identify the Angel of the LORD and to connect him specifically with YHWH, the Son, and ultimately with the figures of Malachi 3:1–4. To this point we have identified מלאך־יהוה with מלאך הברית of Malachi 3:1. However, the relation of these figures to YHWH will require much more attention. The specific title מלאך־יהוה appears throughout the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 16:7–14; 21:17–21; 22:1–18; Exod. 3:2–22), and Pieter Verhoef notes that this figure is at times both identified and distinguished from God.[55] Kline makes the same observation, but also provides several insights that help to alleviate Verhoef's concern.

Kline notes that the biblical contexts, which refer to the Angel as early as Genesis, oscillate between the Angel and God (Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 70). He sees this oscillation as evidence that the Angel is God's self-manifestation—a conclusion further evidenced by the fact that the Angel's presence coincides with the presence of holy ground (Exod. 3:5; Josh. 5:15). Because of this and the strong analogy between Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 11:10, Luke 7:27 and Malachi 3:1, we must conclude that Malachi's מלאך הברית is indeed the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son. Therefore, equally forceful arguments can be made for seemingly competitive statements. On the one hand מלאך הברית is YHWH (referring most locally to the Father),[56] but on the other hand the external coherence suggests identifying him with the Son. The tension between identification and distinction with the Father can then be explained since the Son is the one whom YHWH's name is in (בקרבו כי שמי, Exod. 23:21), who is distinct from the Father, yet the same in substance and equal in glory and power. Therefore, we must turn to systematic theology and the doctrine of *perichoresis*, if we are to explain the tension between the figures of Malachi 3:1–4 and their respective economic missions.

A Perichoretic Understanding of the Angel of the Lord

A Reformed doctrine of Scripture presupposes the

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55. Verhoef writes, "It is apparent from the parallelism and chiastic structure of the two sentences [in Mal. 3:1] that 'the Angel' is associated or identified with 'the Lord.' 'The Angel' is therefore not to be identified with the forerunner. The relationship between 'the Angel' and 'the Lord' is clearly the same as elsewhere in the OT where 'the angel of the Lord' is both identified with and distinguished from God (cf. Gen. 16:7–14; 21:17–21; 22:1–18; Exod. 3:2–22; etc.)" Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 289.

56. Indeed, YHWH is the triune God and, therefore, Father, Son, and Spirit are equally in view with reference to God's covenant name. Nonetheless, the specific economic functions of the Father mentioned above (esp. sending the messenger) are most proximately in view in Malachi 3:1–4 when it speaks of YHWH. And therefore, a textual tension remains between identifying the messenger of the covenant with YHWH or with 'another' person (e.g. the Son).

Triune God who has condescended by way of covenant to reveal himself in creation (WCF 7.1). Fundamentally, the Scriptures are the self-revelation of the Triune God. Since God cannot deceive, aspects of his being necessarily will be apparent in that revelation if he is to reveal himself truly. Consequently, Scripture bears a trinitarian character, and aspects of God's trinitarian personality will be evident when God acts in history. Since the same God has revealed himself in all ages and he is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, it is no less the case that trinitarian theology should assist an interpretation of Malachi 3:1–4 than a passage from the Gospel of John. Indeed, a trinitarian theology is particularly helpful for understanding the tension inherent in the use of the titles in Malachi 3:1–4. Specifically, an understanding of the doctrine of *perichoresis* is particularly fruitful, because it explains the presence of real distinctions between persons while maintaining identity among the Godhead. The person of Christ is perichoretically related to the other persons of the Godhead. While distinct from the Father and the Spirit, the Son cannot be divorced from his position within the Godhead. The three mutually indwell each other. Such a systematic perspective helps to situate the interpretive difficulties of Malachi 3:1–4 within the full canonical context. This trinitarian understanding provides a helpful perspective on the tension between identifying and distinguishing YHWH and various messenger figures throughout Scripture. האדון of Malachi 3:1 is perichoretically related to מלאך הברית of the same verse.

Perichoresis and Trinitarian Personality

Ever since the Council of Constantinople in 381, the Church has spoken of God as three persons (*hypostases*) in one essence (*ousia*). The Father is distinguished from the other persons as unbegotten, while the Son is begotten of the Father and the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. These are the distinctions between the members of the Trinity and are sometimes called their personal properties. These three persons are equally God and subsist in the same essence. Hence, there is only one God, though we speak of three persons. *Perichoresis* is the doctrine, which describes how the persons of the Godhead relate to one another. The Father, Son, and Spirit mutually exhaust and interpenetrate one another in such a way that no residue obtains yet real distinctions between the persons persists. No part of the Father exists apart from the mutual indwelling of the Son and the Spirit. Yet we can truly say that neither the Son nor the Spirit is the Father. Charles

Hodge describes his understanding of *perichoresis* in volume three of his *Systematic Theology*.

> As the essence of the Godhead is common to the several persons, they have a common intelligence, will and power. There are not in God three intelligences, three wills, three efficiencies. The three are one God, and, therefore, have one mind and will. This intimate union was expressed in the Greek church by the word *perichoresis*, which the Latin words 'inextentia,' 'inhabitatio' and 'intercommunio' were used to explain.[57]

At this point, Hodge stresses the unity of the Godhead while at the same time connecting this doctrine to the trinitarian developments of the early church. Hodge further describes the inference of his statement.

> This fact—of the intimate union, communion, and inhabitation of the persons of the Trinity—is the reason why everywhere in Scripture and instinctively by all Christians, God as God is addressed as a person, in perfect consistency with the tripersonality of the Godhead (Hodge, *ST*, 1:461).

Hodge's formulation of *perichoresis* moves beyond the language of substance (Tipton, "The Triune Personal God," 52). He writes that "the three persons are one God, one not only in substance, but in knowledge, will, and power" (Hodge, *ST*, 1:462). For Hodge, the creedal formulation of the Trinity, while entirely true, is not the whole story. He saw his formulation of *perichoresis* as advancing beyond creedal trinitarian language.

But as we approach the doctrine of the Trinity with this perichoretic understanding, we must guard against blurring the distinctions in the Godhead. God's diversity is equally ultimate to his unity and all orthodox trinitarian formulations must affirm this.

In his dissertation on Van Til's trinitarian theology, Lane G. Tipton warns against a formulation of *perichoresis* that does not account for diversity in the Godhead.

> *Perichoresis* involves both an affirmation that God is one person and the differentiation of the personal sub-

57. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988), 1:461. In his development of trinitarian personality, Cornelius Van Til consciously built upon the trinitarian theology of Charles Hodge as a theological means of protecting against an abstract *ousia*. See especially Cornelius Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (P & R Publishing, 2007); Lane G. Tipton, "The Triune Personal God: Trinitarian Theology in the Thought of Cornelius Van Til" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2004).

sistencies within the Godhead. In other words, *perichoresis* helps cut a straight course between the twin heresies of Sabellianism and Tritheism. For Van Til, then, the persons of the Godhead are not artificially attached to an impersonal essence, since that would involve three distinct and *independent* centers of consciousness within the Trinity. Instead, we ought to say that God is an "absolute personality" in such a way that the genuine distinctions among the persons are not obliterated or compromised (Tipton, "The Triune Personal God," 49).

Following Tipton as he develops Van Til's thoughts, we should stress that *perichoresis* is not to be mistaken for nominalism or a form of Sabellianism. Rather, the very technical use of the word *perichoresis* exists in order to describe a mode of relation for which we have no other instance. We cannot provide an earthly example of a perichoretic relationship, though Scripture allows, and even necessitates, that we think of God in this manner. The members of the Godhead relate in such a way that they exhaustively indwell one another without losing distinction.

It is important to note that the *hypostases* do not share their personal properties with each other. To the contrary, the distinctions arise primarily from these very properties. The Father is eternally unbegotten and is distinct from the Son, who is eternally begotten from the Father. The Spirit is distinct from both the Father and the Son in that He eternally proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Our notion of *perichoresis* does not mean that each *hypostasis* loses his distinctiveness. *Perichoresis* is mutual indwelling, not mutual obliteration of distinctions. Within the Trinity, there are distinctions without separation. This is a fundamentally unique type of existence and ultimately mysterious—reminding us of God's incomprehensibility.

Gregory Nazianzus is a helpful exemplar when he wrote: "I cannot think of the one without quickly being encircled by the splendor of the three; nor can I discern the three without being straightway carried back to the one."[58] The oscillation of our thoughts from the one to the three and back again is the natural response of a finite creature to an incomprehensible God. Though this discussion inevitably reminds us of our limitations, we can and must positively say certain things about the Godhead. Divine revelation discloses *perichoresis* as the proper mode for understanding how the members of the Godhead relate, and given their mutual and exhaustive

indwelling, certain concomitant truths obtain as the Godhead is revealed in Scripture. When one person of the Godhead is in view, the other two necessarily are represented in some measure. For instance, we cannot conceive rightly of the Son of God independently of his relation to the Father and the Spirit. Since they exist in perichoretic relationship from all eternity, revelation of any one divine person must also bring into view revelation of the other two.

We must ask, then, do these eternal ontic truths uncovered by systematic theology intrude upon the text of Scripture? When we allow for the systematic doctrine of *perichoresis* to have a hermeneutical function, we acknowledge that the text is not simply a collection of brute facts for systematicians to work with. Rather, because it is the self-communication of the triune God, Scripture is an organic revelation that unfolds progressively, while also lending itself to faithful systematization. So it should not be inappropriate for interpreters to invoke *perichoresis* in Malachi 3:1–4 when the figures in view are divine.

Upon an internal examination, the most natural understanding of our passage was that the Lord was indeed the messenger of the covenant. We also argued that the Lord was YHWH. Yet, a look at the external coherence argued for a distinction between YHWH and the Angel figure, who is both the messenger of the covenant of Malachi 3:1–4 and the Angel of the Lord of Exodus 23–24; Judges 2:1–5; et al. By allowing *perichoresis* to have a positive hermeneutical function, we see that in these texts, Jesus Christ is both fully God, and a figure distinct from—but also mutually indwelt by—the Father. Hodge brings this reality directly into the orbit of our discussion of the figures in Malachi 3:1–4 as he writes:

> Much more important, however, is the fact, that not only in Genesis, but also in all the early books of Scripture, we find a distinction made between Jehovah and the angel of Jehovah, who himself is God, to whom all divine titles are given, and divine worship is rendered. As the revelation is unfolded, such distinction becomes more and more manifest. This messenger of God is called the word, the wisdom, the Son of God. His personality and divinity are clearly revealed. He is of old, even from everlasting, the Mighty God, the Adonai, the Lord of David, Jehovah our Righteousness, who was to be born of a virgin, and bear the sins of many (Hodge, *ST*, 1:447).

58. Quoted in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), §1.13.17, 141.

Conclusion

Hodge's words are insightful, and he draws our attention to the rich dependence of biblical and systematic theology. Yet Hodge's words should not be altogether new or surprising to Reformed expositors. Indeed, *perichoresis* has been presupposed if not consciously employed by numerous Reformed interpreters. For instance, John 1:1–14 presupposes a perichoretic relationship between the Father and the Son. John writes "… and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Consider this glory and the glory that Moses saw as he received the law from the Lord. This glory, Paul says, is just a shadow of the glory that believers will see when they see the Son in his fullness (2 Cor. 3:14–18). Moreover, this glory is not some vague concept divorced from the character of God. Since it originates with God and is a manifestation of his being, it must be a *trinitarian* glory. Though radiating from the Son, it is then substantially the same glory that shone off of Moses' face when he, most locally, experienced the glory of the Father (Exod. 34:29ff; 2 Cor. 3:7ff).[59] That glory at Sinai does not differ in substance or origin from that glory that Christ displays at his transfiguration, in revelation, or at his return. References to this trinitarian character are found throughout Scripture.

John 14:5–11 continues to demonstrate the Son's relationship with the Father. Philip came to Jesus asking for him to reveal the Father, and Jesus responded to Philip's request with a thoroughly trinitarian response. He said that whoever has seen the Son has also seen the Father, because they dwell within one another (John 14:9–10). Jesus can tell Philip that he has seen the Father because the Son is fully God represents and reveals the Trinity as he himself is revealed.[60] The Father and Son revealed to be in perichoretic relation. Elsewhere, the Spirit is also brought into view as he is described as searching the deep things of God in 1 Corinthians 2:6–16.[61] The Spirit would have no opportunity to search these deep things in the manner described other than through an exhaustive indwelling. Indeed, 2 Corinthians 3:17 declares that "the Lord is the Spirit"—another identification with the Spirit.

These are just a few passages that demand a proper hermeneutical function for *perichoresis*. For without this systematic doctrine, the full weight of these texts cannot be displayed. Likewise, Malachi 3:1–4 cannot be understood properly except in this light. By not allowing *perichoresis* a hermeneutical function in Malachi 3:1–4, we are forced to make a choice between two equally forceful arguments: 1) the messenger of the covenant is Jesus Christ and 2) the messenger of the covenant is האדון and YHWH. Yet by understanding the mutual relationship of biblical and systematic theology, a systematic reflection upon the passage allows us to recognize that both arguments may be true if understood properly. The messenger of the covenant is Jesus Christ, fully God yet distinct from the Father, who in the fullness of time has been revealed as the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), the radiance of the glory of God and exact imprint of his nature (Heb. 1:3), through whom the triune God's manifold glory is displayed.∎

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59. Again, YHWH is the trinitarian God throughout Scripture. However, economically speaking, Exodus 34:29ff likely has the Father specifically in view. The Son is typically depicted as the Angel of the LORD, and the Spirit is identified with the Glory-Cloud. This is to speak purely in economic categories. Because of the organic nature of revelation, we must reject the notion that the God revealed to Israel was somehow a unitarian God only to be revealed as a trinitarian God in later revelation. Lane G. Tipton's work in identifying a "transtestamental Gospel" is particularly helpful in this regard. See Lane G. Tipton, "The Gospel and Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutics" in *Confident of Better Things: Essays Commemorating Seventy-five Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, John R. Muether and Danny E. Olinger, eds. (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2011), 185–213.

60. Cornelius Van Til called this phenomenon the "representational principle." Behind this principle is the idea that the Trinity fully represents each member of the Godhead equally. In reference to the *ousia*, no single *hypostasis* is privileged in its representation. Van Til writes "the foundation of the representational principle among men is the fact that the Trinity exists in the form of a mutually exhaustive representation of the three Persons that constitute it." Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, 2nd ed. (Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co, 1980), 96.

Insofar as the Trinity has been revealed to men, each *hypostasis* has been equally represented. The whole of the Godhead represents each member and each member is an exhaustive representation of the whole. Van Til continues by connecting the representational principle to the problem of the one-and-many. "The emphasis should be placed upon the idea of *exhaustion*. This is important because it brings out the point of the complete equality as far as ultimacy is concerned of the principle of unity and the principle of diversity (emphasis original)." *Ibid*.

Therefore, we must not say that whenever the Trinity acts or is revealed, any single member of the Godhead is privileged. The Father is not any more represented in the Godhead's unity than the Son or the Spirit. The representational principle allows Van Til to maintain a concrete universal that is eternal in both unity and diversity. For a fuller treatment of Van Til's representational principle, see chapters five and six of Lane G. Tipton, "The Triune Personal God."

61. For a treatment of this passage in light of epistemological concerns, see Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. "Epistemological Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2:6–16" in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton, eds. (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2007), 13–40.