Agapē-centered Epistemology: Christian Life in the Master Story

by

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A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Theological Studies

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
2014

Master of Theological Studies   MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
Hamilton, Ontario
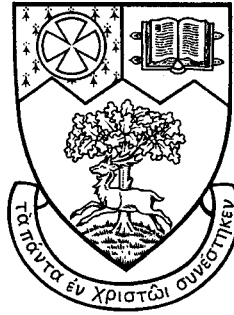
TITLE: *Agapē*-centered Epistemology: Christian Life in the Master
                          Story

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi + 79

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

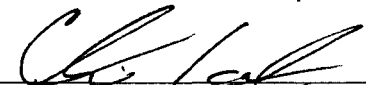Upon the recommendation of an oral examining committee,

this thesis by

Timothy D. Sasaki

is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

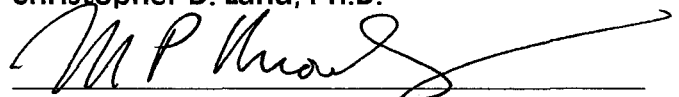Primary Supervisor: _____
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Date: March 27, 2014

ABSTRACT

"*Agapē*-centered Epistemology: Christian Life in the Master Story"

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The purpose of the following is to construct a theological epistemology from analytic religious epistemology and Christian theology. Paul K. Moser's religious epistemology provides an evidentialist account of volitional epistemology centered in *agapē*. Philippians 2:5–11 and its biblical-theological context grounds the historic and eschatological life of Jesus as the basis and means to participate in *agapē*. Moser's epistemological framework is reconstructed with the master story to provide a setting for Kingdom practices and imaginary. I argue that knowing the Triune God through *agapē* centers Kingdom participation. Christians imitate the master story in Philippians 2:5–11 to cultivate *agapē* through Kingdom participation.

CHAPTER ONE:
PAUL K. MOSER'S RELIGIOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

A. Introduction

The following chapter outlines Paul K. Moser's religious epistemology. It begins

with a brief orientation of his religious epistemology in context with analytic reformed

epistemology. Following afterward is the conceptual framework for his religious

epistemology established in *The Elusive God*, *The Evidence for God*, and *The Severity of*

God. The chapter is concluded with a critical assessment.

B. The Context of Paul K. Moser's Religious Epistemology

Religious epistemology is a growing field in the philosophy of religion. The

general move away from 'neutral' claims toward perspectival approaches to philosophy

allows Christians to formulate philosophy without worrying about the impossible feat of

finding foundations that all persons can reasonably accept. Christian philosophy can

confidently construct in fields of philosophy like epistemology and metaphysics while

relying on revelation. The following account can be reasonably designated in the spirit of

'analytic theology' with much of the constructive partners in the 'continental' stream. It

can be categorized as an attempt to construct an account of knowledge that is essentially

ethical in nature.

The philosophy of religion in general, and analytic philosophy in particular, has

become a vibrant form of study for the interdisciplinary integration of philosophy and

theology. One of the most successful and influential analytic movements in contemporary

Christian thought is 'Reformed Epistemology' (Plantinga, Wolterstorff, Alston).[1] Alvin

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[1] This movement has been widely understood as re-introducing Christian belief to mainstream
Anglo-American philosophy, giving it credit in a discipline that had once categorically denied it. In the
early and mid-twentieth century, the predominance of language analysis, especially a then influential

Plantinga is the central figure for the movement. His externalist account of warrant, with dependence on the Holy Spirit for belief, is an approach to evidence that is without the need for "argument" or "proof."[2] He is not confident in the efficacy of classical arguments for the existence of God to render belief in God.[3] Since its introduction, the movement of Reformed Epistemology has had a hard time formulating foundations to mutually support faith and evidence. In turn, this issue largely undermines an account of evidence and its relationship to the witness or display of the Christian faith.

Paul K. Moser is a Christian analytic epistemologist and critic of Reformed Epistemology. He is an evidentialist and defends a voluntarist epistemology. Though Moser is in agreement with Plantinga that Christian faith need not be supported with arguments, especially the traditional arguments for the existence of God, Moser's voluntarist model for Christian belief entails proper *evidence* derived from trustworthy truth-indicators like human experience.[4] But Moser is not trying to reassert an "academic" or a conceptual approach to evidence. Proper belief and evidence of the Christian God requires the appropriate volitional and relational conditions.[5] That is, this volitional

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movement like logical positivism, made religious and Christian belief untenable and embarrassing. Plantinga and a host of other Christian philosophers have risen through the ranks, undermining many of these misconceptions, creating conditions to hone a *Christian* philosophy in mainstream analytic philosophy.

[2] Famously, Plantinga argued for a type of transcendental argument, making epistemological warrant—having one's cognitive faculties in proper order aimed at truth—dependent upon God, and therefore God becomes necessary for knowledge. A part of this project is the accessibility of God to human experience, chiefly through the *sensus divinitas* and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. See *Warranted Christian Belief.*

[3] Plantinga, *Warranted,* 200–201; 495–99. This is especially true with philosophical arguments. However, much of Reformed epistemology has been wrongly caricatured as being anti-argumentative, or being incompatible with positive evidences. Plantinga's project is compatible with such apologetic arguments, and he is explicitly open to improving *justification*—i.e., defined as taking care of one's intellectual duties, "doing one's homework," perhaps reading skeptical literature and or finding adequate apologetic support. One can then improve justification with these tasks, gaining confidence in the existence of God. *Warranted,* 100–10. And it should be noted that his account is concerned with the demonstration of the *rationality* of Christianity, not its truth. Plantinga, *Warranted,* 179–90.

[4] Moser, *Evidence,* 134–36.

[5] Moser, *Elusive,* Ch. 1.

account of evidence requires proper volitional alignment—i.e., the alignment between the respective wills of the inquirer and the Triune God. In prioritizing a volitional association with God as a premise for belief, Moser's volitional epistemology provides the foundations for a robust account of Christian faith, evidence and witness.

Paul K. Moser's project in religious epistemology aims to resituate the predominate assumption of mere intellectual ascent in the philosophy of religion. One such model of mere intellectual ascent is natural theology. A student or professor engaged in natural theology does not require a *personal relation* with the living, elusive God to engage in the discussion. To counter this tendency, he fashions a model of volitional relationship with the living God. Moser argues that natural theology's problem is a "spectator" approach toward the knowledge of God. Such a spectator approach is antithetical to the requirements of believing, and thus volitionally relating to, a God worthy of worship.

Moser's project is largely dedicated toward changing the nature of the debate in the philosophy of religion, especially with skeptics. The theological construction in this project has a parallel concern with the predominating passive, intellectualist approach toward the knowledge God found in contemporary Western ecclesiology. The following will begin to define Moser's project. After the description is an analysis and criticism for an appropriation of his work for the theological project.

C. Evidence in Light of the Authority and Moral Perfection of God

1. Evidence and "God's" Authority

Since Moser's project is to reorient religious knowledge while providing an important argument to skeptics, he begins his project with a modest claim about God. He

thus begins with the idea or notion of the *title* God, "even if such a being fails to exist."[6] The title of God does not presume the existence of God, so as to avoid the skeptical rejoinder of question begging.[7] Avoiding the assumption of the existence of God, the project can plausibly build its case on what such a 'title' *would* require. The title 'God' is a "maximally honorific *title* that connotes an authoritatively and morally perfect being who is inherently worthy of worship as wholehearted adoration, love, and trust, even if God doesn't actually exist."[8] Central to the reversion of religious epistemology is God's authority and perfection.

The titleholder "God" entails a reversion of the nature of authority that is traditionally assumed in natural theology. The titleholder God would have authority over the knower. Such authority assumes personal and purposive evidence. Moser's discontent with natural theology is its categorical inability to include personal and purposive evidence. As such, natural theology leads to minimal claims of deism at best. More specifically, purposive evidence entails "direct telic evidence," and natural theology entails "indirect telic evidence."[9] Direct telic evidence is "inherently and directly purposive," and therefore "immediately indicative of a personal agent."[10] Discerning direct telic evidence includes inquiry of "goal-directed, intentional actions, and not just inanimate things or happenings."[11] We might imagine a person stuck in the wilderness that is receiving help from an agent on a radio.[12] Between the communicants, a personal engagement creates the direct awareness of each person. In contrast, indirect telic

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[6] Moser, *Evidence*, 23.
[7] Indeed, even an atheist can maintain the notion of a God worthy of worship. Moser, "Natural Theology," 306.
[8] Moser, *Evidence*, 1.
[9] Moser, *Evidence*, 8–11.
[10] Moser, *Evidence*, 8.
[11] Moser, *Evidence*, 10.
[12] This is from Moser's parabolic wilderness illustration. *Evidence*, 4–6.

evidence is "extrinsically and indirectly purposive." Therefore one can only "*inferentially*"

conclude with "a personal agent."[13] We can think of natural theological arguments: the

cosmological argument or the argument of design, establishing premises on conditional

reality (inferring an unconditional first-mover) or the fine-tuning of the universe

(inferring a designer). Such arguments do not assign any premises to personal or

purposive engagement between 'God' and the inquirer. This usage of indirect telic

evidence renders natural theology fundamentally a "spectator" approach. That is, one is

not required to make any personal engagement.

If evidence is to be guided with personal evidence of God, then the inquirer must

be subject to God's authority. Generally, being authoritative signifies worthiness of

"executive decision-making status in some area." Thus a "perfectly authoritative" being

has "*inherent* worthiness regarding every relevant area."[14] As maximally perfect, God's

"self-revelation" is necessary—otherwise our mere ability to reach him would

compromise his authority.[15] Such authority creates the priority of the divine call that is

integral to the epistemological relationship, which features more below. In positing God's

authority with a "central cognitive role," it changes the nature of the question and debate

about the question of God's epistemological accessibility.[16] That is, one can expect God's

direct personal engagement toward humans, and God would not be waiting to be

indirectly inferred. The question thus changes to the seeker. Moser asks

> *[a]re we humans known by God* in virtue of (among other things) our
> *freely and agreeably being willing* (i) to be known by God and thereby (ii)
> to be transformed toward God's moral character of perfect love as we are

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[13] Moser, *Evidence*, 8 (emphasis added).
[14] Moser, *Elusive*, 1 (emphasis original).
[15] Moser, *Evidence*, 49.
[16] Moser, *Elusive*, 4.

willingly led by God in volitional fellowship with God, thereby obediently yielding our wills to God's authoritative will?[17]

The question of God's existence thus requires a shift of perception. Given God's authority, we humans must be willing to accept his personal engagement. We should not expect that the inquiry could be left for indirect inferences, as in natural theology.

Personal, purposive evidence requires a cognitive orientation for experience or *de re* influence. Natural theology undermines experience for mere "*de dicto* arguments" (propositions, premises). Thus natural theology favours propositional engagement "rather than on an experienced divine call *de re* to humans."[18] Unlike "mere-existence arguments" of natural theology, there is "directness," an "I-You" relation, in the quality of experiential *de re* evidence, which "cannot be reduced to "mere propositional evidence.""[19] He argues that "awareness *that* God" exists is a *de dicto* claim, and "*de re* awareness *of* God" is about experience, not propositions or premises in an argument. He is thus making a distinction in the kinds of evidence of awareness: one is from experience (*de re*), and the other from proposition (*de dicto*). Furthermore, he claims that experiential *de re* awareness does not require *de dicto* awareness. That is, "one's *having* conclusive evidence of God does not entail one's having a propositional answer to a question about God or any alternative to God."[20] One is properly within epistemic rights with mere experience. Experience can yield adequate truth-indicators. And such indicators via experience will be perspectival, or true according to that person's set of

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[17] Moser, *Elusive*, 4.
[18] Moser, *Evidence*, 179
[19] Moser, *Elusive*, 61.
[20] Moser, "Natural Theology," 309. Conclusive evidence is "the kind of evidence needed for satisfaction of the justification condition for knowledge," *Evidence*, 15.

experience.[21] So long as there is no defeater in place, direct firsthand experiential

evidence of God's personal, purposive engagement is sound.[22] Moser is arguing for a

kind of evidence that does not require natural theological argument, but can reliably be

founded upon experience.[23] Importantly, Moser's understanding of experiential *de re*

evidence does not formally contradict *de dicto* evidence. He argues that "[a] truly

redemptive God would seek to hold together, in actual human lives, *de re* and *de dicto*

evidence of God... That is, God would aim to combine humans' *knowing God* with

human's knowing that God exists."[24] We are right to combine sound thinking about God

with direct experiential evidence from firsthand encounters with God. Moser, however,

makes the distinction and emphasis with *de re* evidence to highlight personal, purposive

evidence. This primacy of *de re* evidence is important for many of his claims in his

epistemology, including religious pluralism (discussed below).

This experiential awareness is mainly within one's conscience. Thus he can argue

that the "foundational evidence of God's reality" is "irreducibly a matter of one's

experiencing, via attention attraction in conscience, what is evidently God's perfectly

authoritative personal call" to live in fellowship.[25] The theological nature of Moser's

epistemology (divine call etc.) will be further discussed below, but it is important to note

here that the kind of cognitive evidence found in conscience is *"diachronic* rather than

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[21] Moser, *Elusive*, 35–36. A truth-indicator is available evidence to a person, and it comes in different forms: deduction, non-deduction; some expressed in propositional form, others are non-propositional like "perceptual experiences that don't depend on our categorization or judgment but just on suitably determinate attention-attraction." But "[i]n all cases...a truth-indicator indicates for a person, in some way or other, that an identifiable proposition is true. The phrase "for a person" captures that justification unlike truth, is *perspectival* in being relative to one's evidential perspective consisting of one's truth-indicators." *Elusive*, 36.

[22] Moser, *Elusive*, 2

[23] Moser, *Elusive*, 63.

[24] Moser, *Severity*, 127 (emphasis original).

[25] Moser, *Evidence*, 64.

just synchronic."[26] Synchronic evidence would be a kind of argument of some state of

affairs, or event, the kind of preoccupation of natural theology.[27] Diachronic evidence can

appeal to personal, purposive experience over an extended period of time.

The cognitive authority of God is resisted in the "spectator evidence" of natural

theology. It therefore "omits any authoritative call from God from humans to enter into

fellowship with God via human repentance and obedience."[28] That is, "firsthand evidence"

is not itself an argument, but rather is "akin to evidence from conscience."[29] God's

authoritative call places a kind of duty or moral change, which is the kind of evidence

that can be willfully suppressed. Inquiry with an authoritative God requires volitional

engagement, not mere intellectual engagement. Precisely because of God's authority and

moral perfection, the inquirer becomes morally culpable. We now turn to the relevance of

God's moral perfection.

2. Evidence and God's Moral Perfection

Moral perfection is also required for God's worthiness of worship. Moser defines

moral perfection: "[s]ince worthiness of worship requires moral perfection, only a

perfectly loving being is worthy of worship." As such, God must be "perfectly loving

toward all people, even enemies."[30] More specifically,

> [a] being worthy of worship and full trust must be perfectly compassionate
> toward all people, even enemies; otherwise, a serious moral failing would
> interfere. So, God must have *all-inclusive* compassion toward other people,
> and thus must be willing to suffer for the moral good for all those need
> help, at least as long as people are genuinely open to such help.[31]

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[26] Moser, *Evidence*, 207; *Elusive*, 26.
[27] Moser, *Evidence*, 207.
[28] Moser, *Elusive*, 53.
[29] Moser, *Elusive*, 62.
[30] Moser, *Elusive*, 19.
[31] Moser, *Elusive*, 87 (emphasis original).

Such an appeal to a suffering God invites the theological character of Moser's

epistemology, which will be of more focus below. The moral perfection creates

engagement that "noncoercively but authoritatively" engages human persons "to

transform human purposes to agree with divine purposes, despite human resistance."[32]

Moser's appeal to freedom is libertarian, and is generally condemning to the classical

Calvinistic constructions of human freedom and divine sovereignty.[33] Persons must be

genuinely free to engage in non-coercive volitional companionship.

God's love renders him a personal agent, "an intentional agent with definite

purposes."[34] Personal, purposive love is God's evident reality. Moser argues,

> [i]f God is inherently perfectly loving, then God is inherently personal as
> an intentional agent with definite purposes. In that case, purposively
> available conclusive evidence and knowledge of God's reality *as God*
> would include evidence and knowledge of God *as personal and perfectly
> loving* as an intentional agent. We thus can't separate God's existence, or
> reality, from God's perfectly loving personal character that defines God's
> reality.[35]

The principal difference with natural theology is its inability to orient a perfectly loving

God's personal engagement. The "conclusive evidence" of this love is of a God that

"must involve an evident divine call in its content." The personal quality identifies a God

that is elusive, who "calls and hides." This perfect love respects the personal engagement

with free persons. The absence of a "divine call" would create a defeater, and therefore

"if there is a perfectly loving god, then this God would call receptive people at opportune

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[32] Moser, *Elusive*, 2.

[33] Despite my own allegiance to Reformed Orthodoxy, I am very sympathetic to demonstrate the compatibility of a molinistic account with Reformed thought. Nonetheless, the philosophical problems with the classical cases of both libertarian freedom and compatibilism respectively renders the present construction agnostic toward the issue.

[34] Moser, *Evidence*, 201.

[35] Moser, *Elusive*, 135 (emphasis original).

times into divine-human fellowship and new life with god for their own good."[36] This

divine call is characterized with a self-revelation of God "by grace" and not

"straightforward redemptive reason."[37] A "volitional crisis" ensues if one attends to the

evidence of God's authoritative call, "in a way that allows it to become a salient

challenge to my life relative to God's perfect love."[38] One must be willing to receive the

divine call that is truly outside of one's control and grasp. A mere rational inference does

not respect the personal and authoritative quality of a divine person. The divine call

places the inquirer at the whim of a personal encounter, and therefore one must accept the

often elusive and mysterious reality that accompanies personal engagements.

The divine call leads to a personal, *will-involving* relationship. This divine love

seeks a "fellowship with God in unselfish love while convicting me of any wrongful

obstacle to such leading."[39] The implementation of God's authority in God's divine call

and love creates an opposition to all other gods. Thus God's perfect love "would place

the world under judgment...to save people from dying with their idols, their ultimately

insecure replacements for God."[40] Such a moral transformation would require turning

away from alternative reliance. In this "corrective judgment" humans require "*volitional

reliance.*"[41] Such reliance is a response to a loving, authoritative divine call: "I thereby

would become God's willing servant." That is, "[o]nly in such volitional yielding on my

part would God become *my* authoritative God, as I obediently receive purposively

available conclusive evidence" and thus know "God's reality firsthand."[42] In willful

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[36] Moser, *Evidence*, 159.
[37] Moser, *Elusive*, 73.
[38] Moser, *Elusive*, 23.
[39] Moser, *Elusive*, 135.
[40] Moser, *Elusive*, 41.
[41] Moser, *Elusive*, 41.
[42] Moser, *Elusive*, 24.

union, the inquirer becomes a participant in companionship, availing herself for moral correction. Such a companionship requires willful or volitional attuning to divine purposes. Volitional attunement is personal and purposively engaged. It is therefore direct, first-hand acquaintance. Thus volitional attunement is purposively relational to God's purposes, leading to human transformation. One becomes subject to moral transformation in this companionship. That is, for this evidence to manifest one does not merely obtain "knowledge *that* God exists but also volition-conforming knowledge *of* God as one's perfectly loving Lord and God."[43] One thus receives person-to-person engagement that requires one's personal commitment to perfect, divine love.

Given the evil in our condition, a perfectly loving God would require "morally perfect forgiveness even to irredeemably evil people." Sustaining his approach to free individuals in salvation, Moser argues that "forgiveness need not succeed or even be likely to succeed as a means of reconciliation."[44] Perfect love entails respect for non-coercive relationship and enemy-love. Enemy-love entails enemy-forgiveness. These conditions are a "litmus test" for divinity and "a central component of the Good News movement from Jerusalem."[45] The companionship promotes divine qualities of perfect love that establish enemy-love and forgiveness. Humans in this companionship should seek to willfully attune to these moral perfections. This modeling of the divine character leads to the subject of moral transformation to which we now turn.

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[43] Moser, *Elusive*, 26.
[44] Moser, *Elusive*, 179.
[45] Moser, *Elusive*, 180.

D. Kardiatheology: Transformative Gift, Gethsemane Union, and *Agapē*

1. The Transformative Gift

The move toward volitional conformity to God's perfectly loving will is aptly

named *kardiatheology*. This is a "theology aimed primarily at one's motivational heart,

including one's will, rather than just at one's mind or one's emotions."[46] As mentioned

above, the personal, purposive evidence of God leads to moral transformation. One's

moral transformation is evidence to others of the existence of God; this is called

'personified evidence'. *Kardiatheology* depends on "personifying evidence of God's

reality in response to a divine call." He argues that

> [d]ivine lordship entails supreme moral leadership, and moral leadership
> entails an authoritative call to moral accountability and moral direction.
> This would be an authoritative call to moral *redirection* and
> *transformation* in the case of selfish human recipients.[47]

The co-operation with God is for "God's advancement of unselfish love toward all people,

even toward God's enemies."[48] Once a person receives the divine call, such a person can

become morally transformed and loving to persons. The centerpiece argument of Moser's

religious epistemology is the "transformative gift." The transformative gift is the core of

kardiatheology. He defines it as

> one's being authoritatively convicted in conscience and forgiven by X of
> sin and thereby being authoritatively called into volitional fellowship with
> X in perfect love and into rightful worship toward X as worthy of worship
> and, on that basis, transformed by X from default tendencies to selfishness
> and despair to a new volitional center with a default position of unselfish
> love, including forgiveness, toward all people and of hope in the triumph
> of good over evil by X.[49]

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[46] Moser, *Evidence*, 25–26.
[47] Moser, *Elusive*, 93.
[48] Moser, *Severity*, 35.
[49] Moser, *Evidence*, 200; *Elusive*, 134–35.

Here, X can be replaced with the titleholder "God." This argument reinforces the emphasis on *de re* evidence. One is to experientially go through moral transformation with divine love. In turn this creates an argument for the existence of God:

1. Necessarily, if a human person is offered and receives the transformative gift, then this is the result of the authoritative power of a divine [God] of thoroughgoing forgiveness, fellowship in perfect love, worthiness of worship, and triumphant hope (namely, God)
2. I have been offered, and have willingly received, the transformative gift
3. Therefore, God exists.[50]

The argument demonstrates 'personified evidence'—one becomes evidence of God's existence. A morally transformed life provides cognitive evidence for belief in the God that morally transforms. The premise of the God worthy of worship in the definition of the transformative gift is the grounding for a God that seeks moral transformation in relationship. A morally perfect God would "work in human history to encourage human agents to seek God's kind of moral perfection."[51] The account of 'theism' is not given theological detail. Moser's emphasis on *de re* evidence provides some room for conceptual compatibility with varieties of theism, most prominently with Jewish and Christian theism. The cogency of such a move will be subject to further analysis and criticism below.

The kind of knowledge that is given from the transformative gift is *filial*. Both Christian and Jewish theism demand a first-hand engagement with God the Father in communion with his children.[52] Repentance and fellowship are a volitional relation that is 'child-parent' oriented.[53] Though Moser grants that Jewish and Christian theism are

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[50] Moser, *Evidence*, 200. I replaced X with God.
[51] Moser, *Elusive*, 91.
[52] Moser, *Elusive*, 95.
[53] Moser, *Elusive*, 95.

projected toward a similar volitional epistemology, he robustly defines his account in the

Christian gospel and theology.[54] The Christian theological nature of the "transformative

gift" requires

> (a) the unique love offered and manifested via God's powerful atoning
> sacrifice in Jesus, the innocent victim of humans, and (b) God's powerful
> resurrection of Jesus as Lord and as Giver of God's Spirit. This gift,
> accordingly, is inextricably linked to its life-giving gift *Giver*. In an
> important sense, the gift of salvation is God himself.[55]

Moser's reference to 'atoning sacrifice' is not *penal substitutionary* atonement.[56] His

account of the atonement is Christ manifesting his righteousness for believers. The death

of Christ was not a punishment from God but an act of Christ's perfect righteousness

manifested for others.[57] The gospel defines Jesus' crucifixion as "(a) his fully obedient,

self-giving love toward his Father on behalf of humans (and not his physical suffering),"

and "(b) God's thereby manifesting divine merciful and righteous love for humans in

order to offer divine-human forgiveness and reconciliation."[58] It is important to note that

the cross does not itself create divine-human reconciliation, but rather it must be

received.[59]

The Spirit's power functions to allow people to love as God loved, "in the self-

giving way and power exemplified by Jesus in his life, death and resurrection."[60] Thus

Paul's portrayal of life in the Spirit is a volitional account of "dying and rising with

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[54] To avoid special pleading, Moser offers attempts to offer a reason why a God worthy of worship would be Jesus. See Moser, *Elusive*, 88–89.

[55] Moser, *Evidence*, 221.

[56] Against Moser's view, in the construction below it is assumed that penal substitutionary atonement provides the only sound grounding for justification: God's moral righteousness given by grace to those that believe.

[57] Moser, *Elusive*, 165–67.

[58] See Phil 2:4-8, Rom 3:21-26, 5:8-11; 2 Cor 5:15-21. *Elusive*, 211.

[59] Moser, *Elusive*, 211.

[60] Moser, *Elusive*, 146.

Christ."[61] Thus receiving the transformative gift in "Paul's Spirit-oriented epistemology" is a volitional account of uniting with "the power of God's transforming Spirit," which is the same "power of the divine self-giving love that motivated the obedience of God's crucified Son, Jesus."[62] The Spirit's participatory union offers "conclusive *cognitive*" support when one experiences transformational change of "divine unselfish love."[63] That is, the Spirit's unconditionally loving relation transforms one's self to that kind of unconditional love. The Spirit thereby makes a fundamental contribution toward the knowledge of God. God's sign and seal are through the Spirit (2 Cor 1:22; see also 2 Cor 5:5; c.f. Eph 1:13), providing an "evidential, cognitive down payment" of God's work in transformation.[64] Therefore the "cognitive norm" of Christian living is presented in the self-giving love of "God's fully obedient Son."[65] While Christ's example in Phil 2:7-8 shows his perfect model for responding to the Father by suffering the loss of "all nondivine things" in obedience, we are to do likewise (3:10-11).[66] This argument will be presented in more detail below.

2. Gethsemane Union

Willful obedience centers the character of Moser's epistemology, which he calls the "Gethsemane union" approach. The Gethsemane path of following the "self-giving cross of Jesus...depends on your volitional sensitivity and submission to the will of God and hence on our dying to our selfishness and everything else contrary to God."[67] Gethsemane union offers experiential, *de re* knowledge. Moser offers a theological

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[61] Moser, *Elusive*, 146.
[62] Moser, *Elusive*, 147.
[63] Moser, *Elusive*, 145.
[64] Moser, *Elusive*, 145.
[65] Moser, *Elusive*, 147.
[66] Moser, *Elusive*, 183.
[67] Moser, *Elusive*, 93.

analogy. Just as "ancient Hebraic knowledge of God as the Creator arguably arose after knowledge of God as the Exodus rescuer" we must learn of via *de re* experience in Gethsemane union—the sacrificial aspect of abiding in God's will—before we understand 'God as Creator.'[68] In Gethsemane union, one's epistemic integrity depends on the extent to which one can faithfully abide in the trial of the will of God. Gethsemane requires the authoritative divine call, for the purpose of transforming one toward "the perfectly unselfish, loving character God."[69] This 'personified evidence' is "the second-best kind of veridical evidence, after firsthand acquaintance with God's intervening personal Spirit."[70] That is, when we become evidence for others (personified evidence), Gethsemane is the character of volition. We thus model Jesus' Gethsemane approach to make our lives become evidence. There is a public or objective register to becoming evidence. In Gethsemane obedience, "we can become personifying evidence of God's reality," and thus "willingly receive and reflect God's reality for others." Christians are to be "'dying and rising' with Christ, as God's obedient child."[71]

From the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, Christians experience the apostle Paul's claim of Christ's indwelling, "Christ in you." This indwelling provides the "inward agent-power" to conduct "psychological and motivational" transformation. We are in "volitional self-commitment" with "an authoritative personal agent with a demanding will," not merely "ideas, principles, practices, or virtues."[72] No mere moral or juridical account of action could replace the necessary condition of Christ's indwelling.[73]

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[68] Moser, *Severity*, 130.
[69] Moser, *Elusive*, 93.
[70] Moser, *Elusive*, 151.
[71] Moser, *Evidence*, 228.
[72] Moser, *Elusive*, 183.
[73] Moser, *Severity*, 174.

The filial relation is essentially personal, "child-parent" engagement.[74] Through

Gethsemane, Christians are adopted "into God's family of obedient children, who thereby

acknowledge God as "Abba, Father" (see Rom 8:9, 15)." Adoption manifests through

"(the power of) God's Spirit (Rom 8:14)."[75] God's Spirit "extends volitional and filial

knowledge of God's reality to humans." The Spirit performs via conscience assurance

"that he or she is a child of God."[76]

3. *Agapē*

Moser's religious epistemology propels him to make the necessary shifts to

accommodate Christ-shaped philosophy. He argues that "[i]f philosophy is the love and

pursuit of wisdom, then *Christian* philosophy is the love and pursuit of wisdom under the

authority of Christ." This style of philosophy "calls for an ongoing union with Christ,

including one's cooperatively belonging to God in Christ."[77] If philosophy is shaped with

Christ-shaped epistemology, philosophy becomes an '*agapē* struggle' with life's severity.

The '*agapē* struggle' is "the needed human struggle" to develop "both *against* human

moral self-sufficiency and *for* human dependence on divine *agapē* for all concerned, even

one's enemies."[78] *Agapē* is characterized by the 'Gethsemane union' that is practically

manifested through the Spirit's filling of the believer's heart (Rom 5:5).[79] Moser calls

agapē an "incarnational relation" that is "*personifying* toward redemptive truth, and not

merely intellectual." Thus "*agapē* exceeds intellectual matters and involves a human *as a*

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[74] Moser, *Elusive*, 96.
[75] Moser, *Elusive*, 147.
[76] Moser, *Elusive*, 148.
[77] Moser, *Severity*, 170.
[78] Moser, *Severity*, 76.
[79] Moser, *Elusive*, 183.

personal, intentional agent with a life to live resolutely in the face of severity."[80] Severity

is life's struggle, especially in the theatre of flux and evil.[81]

As a discipline, Christian philosophy "must be continuous with the rigorous moral

and spiritual content of the Good News of God in Christ."[82] Thus the content of the

kerygma and its character via Gethsemane union shape the philosopher and the discipline.

As such, Christ's love commands (e.g., Mark 12:29–31) are integral to the ethical and

volitional union with Christ.[83] The love commands teleologically define how one abides

in God's will for transformation.[84] That is,

> [t]he divine aim is to make willing humans new in the moral image and the
> companionship of the God who puts *agapē* first, even toward enemies.
> This redemptive judgment works via willing human appropriation of
> redemptive truth whereby one struggles to participate in God's moral
> character and life, including in the power of divine unselfish *agapē*.[85]

Enemy-love is the perfection indicator for God's title. In turn, the Gethsemane union and

the *agapē* struggle entail enemy-love for all.[86] Since alternative forms of love and

dependence can arise, the issue of dependency on another source, say oneself, will

require 'corrective judgment'. As morally perfect, God must practice "judgment on the

world" and all that is "anti-God." This process of transformative judgment seeks to

positively promote enriched companionship.[87] Through "*divine corrective inquiry*," God

subjects his judgment on his disciples so they may meet "the standard of God's perfect

moral character and will."[88] Since God could be suppressed in conscience, the efficacy of

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[80] Moser, *Severity*, 81.
[81] See Moser, *Severity*, 55–86.
[82] Moser, *Severity*, 186.
[83] Moser, *Elusive*, 201.
[84] Moser, *Severity*, 189.
[85] Moser, *Severity*, 82.
[86] Moser, *Evidence*, 25.
[87] Moser, *Severity*, 84.
[88] Moser, *Severity*, 89–90.

this divine-human engagement is dependent on "divine corrective reciprocity." This

reciprocity is the human-divine event of grace in one's life. That is, God's *agapē* morally

corrects the believer. God is received as God, and not an invention or in a suppressed

role.[89]

As *agapē* centers on the character and content of the *kerygma*, philosophy

becomes a mode for love primarily of disciples in redemptive community (John 21:15–

17).[90] *Agapē* serves all people, especially the body of believers. The gifts of the body are

to edify the church (1 Cor 12:7–8).[91] That is, philosophical projects "must get in line with

the life-or-death Good News discipleship mission under God's redemptive love."[92]

Philosophy then becomes "kerygmatic in virtue of being integral to the Good News

power movement stemming from Jesus and Jerusalem."[93] The typical approach of

philosophy as a highly academic discussion is interrupted. Philosophy under *agapē*

becomes a discipline of wisdom.[94] The love commands are not suggestions. As such, the

Socratic approach is interrupted with the "*submission of one's will* to the authority's

commands."[95] In contrast to mere discussion or inwardness, "trust moves outward

obediently, by divine command, in love toward God and thereby toward others." Thus the

"discussion mode" is effectively transcended "for the sake of an obedience mode of

existence under perfectly loving divine authority."[96] It transcends a discussion mode of

existence for the sake of an obedience mode of existence under perfectly loving divine

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[89] Moser, *Severity*, 90.
[90] Moser, *Elusive*, 230.
[91] Moser, *Elusive*, 230–31.
[92] Moser, *Elusive*, 232.
[93] Moser, *Elusive*, 239.
[94] Moser, *Severity*, 86.
[95] Moser, *Elusive*, 232 (emphasis original).
[96] Moser, *Elusive*, 223.

authority. There is an effective "outward thrust" for *agapē*, and the mission of the church thus abides in the unique epistemic relationship. Moser writes that

> [t]his mission is cognitively grounded in the purposively available authoritative evidence outlined in the previous chapters, and it is empowered ultimately by the divine source of this evidence: God's intervening Spirit, the Spirit behind the crucified and risen Jesus. The faithful followers of Jesus, therefore, are *primarily* not scholars, theorists, or philosophers, but rather *obedient disciples* set on the mission receiving for all people, including enemies.[97]

Love is evidence of God's reality in a person and community (1 Cor 13:2).[98] The community's role is to "make known the Good News of God's redemptive love for all people, even using words when necessary."[99] The spirit of the transformative gift, Gethsemane union, and unconditional *agapē* will feature in the theological construction below. A few nuances will have to be made, however, which is the purpose of the following.

E. Analysis: Traditional Problems Revisited with Critical Appropriation

In Moser's reversion of religious epistemology, the intellectualist orientation receives the corrective of purposive *de re* experiential evidence. Since God engages purposively within the universe, the 'spectator' approach of mere *de dicto* propositions (e.g., natural theology) categorically lacks purposive engagement. However, the problem with Moser's project is the sufficiency of *de re* evidence that neglects *de dicto* evidence. If a non-Christian *only* experiences *de re* evidence of unconditional *agapē* of divine X, then justifying a loving relation with divine X worthy of worship is unlikely.[101] The

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[97] Moser, *Elusive*, 213 (emphasis original).

[98] Moser, *Elusive*, 154.

[99] Moser, *Elusive*, 233.

[101] The problem of identifying (*de dicto*) the proper God has been a common problem that philosophers have noticed. Netland, ""Personifying Evidence"," 299; Waidler, "Volitional Evidence," 279; Bishop, Review of *Elusive*, 506. I agree and uniquely highlight the problem of knowing the *right kind* of

notion of sharing a perfect, unconditionally loving relation with divine X requires a *de dicto* theological framework—certain titles or names in the gospel narrative. The gospel's account of *agapē* is *not* intuitive to our basic inclinations and beliefs about love.[102] Human intuitions would likely render *conditional* notions of love, defeating the unconditional *agapē* of the gospel. Religious pluralism presents a plethora of alternative philosophies of love, providing further problems of interpretation of unconditional *agapē*. These alternative forms of love are always live options, making it less likely that a mere *de re* experience render sufficient support for interpretation and the diachronic experience of the *agapē* of the gospel. Thus *de dicto* titles in a story, not natural theological arguments, should feature explicitly, specifically in the message of the gospel.

The various responses to Moser's that seek to salvage *de dicto arguments* via natural theology seem to miss the fundamental point.[103] That is, natural theological arguments categorically lack purposive evidence. If they are merely an appendage to purposive evidence, its value is questionable. With all the rage of apologetics, especially as a tool for evangelism, this point is properly stressed. Natural theology, however, does rightly serve as a medium for conceptual clarification of theism in comparative exchange.[104]

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love (*agapē*) in question. Last I follow the general sentiment: it's not clear that Moser's project fully escapes fideism. Bishop, Review of *Elusive*, 508–09.

[102] Following Bishop, Review of *Elusive*, 505.

[103] Charles Taliaferro argued that an impersonal voice should be maintained in discussion about the existence of God, and thus natural theology could play a role in persuading the unpersuaded. "Evidence for Paul," 286–87. Katharyn Waidler sketched Augustine's famous conversion in the *Confessions* to illustrate the various conceptual, intellectual moves in his engagement in natural theological reasoning *prior* to his conversion. "Volitional Evidence," 279–83. These criticisms fail to notice the categorical difference of the *kind* of evidence at hand. It is not the discipline *per se*, but its categorical lack of access to direct, first-hand acquaintance found in purposive evidence—e.g., with a personal God.

[104] Harold Netland's negative critique of personified evidence in the context of known religious pluralism provides the impetus of this argument. Pluralism provides a good reason to suggest that conceptual distinctions would be necessary in exchange. As such, I do not agree that natural theology as an *argument* for the existence of God, but related *de dicto* titles and definitions can be utilized from the

Moser's emphasis on *de re* evidence allows him to create an approach to the problem of Christian salvation via 'inclusive Christian exclusivism.' From the story of Christ's judgment in Matt 25:31–45, he notes that the issue is not one of ideas but of willful participation. From this it does not follow that one must believe that God exists on earth. His *account* of *de re* evidence makes this conclusion plausible. Thus Moser reasons that

> [o]ne could yield volitionally to God's unselfish love and thereby to God *de re*, without any corresponding acknowledgement *de dicto* and thus without one's knowing (or believing) that one is yielding to God or even knowing (or believing) that God exists.[105]

Widely known as 'anonymous Christians' (Rahner), the 'nondoxastic' inclusivist approach seems fairly sound in certain limited cases. But the *de re* approach to the communication of the Christian *kerygma* is off balance. Moser notes that the Christian community is to practically and outwardly love all, especially enemies, "using words if necessary."[106] As word-constructed creatures in both creation and redemption, humans model the divine act, loving others by speech.[107] In order to properly heed Moser's suggestion of a proper reconciliation of *de re* and *de dicto* evidence, the *kerygma* should be sought as primarily a spoken reality, specifically of the story of the gospel, not natural theological arguments. Instead of a lop-sided approach to *de re* experience, the performative nature of sharing the experience and gospel story should assume a

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deliverances of conceptual framework of natural theology. Thus I do not agree with Netland's final assessment that natural theology along with personified evidence for a cumulative case approach is necessary. "'Personifying Evidence'," 299–304.

[105] Moser, *Evidence*, 251.

[106] Moser, *Elusive*, 233. See above.

[107] Horton, *People*, 39. This discussion will feature in the ecclesiological construction below.

dialectical nature between practical action and idea.[108] That being said, Moser's

emphasis on *de re* evidence is critical for persons experiencing *kingdom* reality, both

believers and non-believers. People may experience the Spirit and hence the Kingdom in

signs, wonders and *agapē* and choose to follow, others may not. Nonetheless such a *de re*

emphasis can provide a wonderful advance toward a charismatic approach to the gospel

and the kingdom, beyond the impasse of shooting ideas into minds. This *de re* advance

with the Kingdom will feature in the theological construction below.

Divine purposive evidence respects the notion of God's personal character,

specifically God's ability to initiate volitional fellowship. With purposive evidence as the

basis, the problem of divine hiddenness receives a fresh perspective.[109] Hiddenness is the

center of the problem of Christian exclusivism in salvation, and a subspecies of the

problem remains for sanctifying Christian believers as well. Moser's approach to

hiddenness plausibly renders it a vehicle for a "wake-up call" for greater filial

knowledge.[110] This would increase practical dependence of the Father, much in the same

way children learn to obey their parents. Generally, hiddenness can thus be revamped as a

challenge to redeemed persons for the purpose of "transformation toward God's moral

character."[111] Moser's reliance on *agapē* as the center of transformative knowledge

generates an important bedrock for Christian cognitive awareness of faith and hope (Rom

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[108] Following Simon Chan's *lex crendendi est lex orandi*, the Christian practice of worship and doctrine are in dialectical relationship. The parallel issue of Chan's response is the post-liberal definition of practice as Christian doctrine. Chan, *Liturgical*, 48.

[109] Indeed Moser calls it the "Archimedean Point" in his argument. Gethsemane is the context that is a secret for directly engaging God. It is a 'secret' because people are not necessarily intellectually unsatisfied but rather lack volitional integrity or willingness to handle the call to Gethsemane union in volitional engagement. *Severity*, 93–94.

[110] Moser, *Elusive*, 108.

[111] Moser, *Evidence*, 262.

5:5).[112] *Agapē* as unconditional love will provide a centering point in understanding volition in the construction ahead.

Although Moser's reliance on the inward transformation of *agapē* presents a remarkable correction for theologies, it leads him to virtually negate 'signs and wonders' as "superficial evidence," much in the same way mere *de dicto* argumentation is superfluous.[113] Moser's account of *agapē* transformation is amazingly sanctifying for charismatic theologies, but it is erroneously dismissive of charismatic reality. Although Moser does not rule out the possibility of signs altogether, his transformative framework has little room for it.[114] Indeed, Moser's project of transformation does not adequately appreciate what is 'here' in the new covenant Kingdom.[115] The newly cut covenant emerges with a Davidic victory of Christ that brings righteousness, an inheritance of a new creation (the new Israel).[116] Christians are *likewise* victorious coheirs, sons and daughters; they are to move in the Spirit with expectation of new creation reality, from healings to prophetic insights. As a manifestation of unconditional *agapē* to others, the Spirit's manifestation of Kingdom reality should be essentially and necessarily linked to the cognitive support of God's reality. Thus 'signs and wonders' should be common expression of the new creation, and thus not relegated to the ineffable and unexpected.

F. Conclusion

Moser's religious epistemology provides the basic structure of the following theological epistemology. God's authority establishes the inquirer in a position of

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[112] Moser, *Severity*, 132.

[113] Moser, *Elusive*, 132.

[114] Moser, *Severity*, 134–36.

[115] Moser puts the reality of signs merely in redemptive-history context—i.e., the signs demonstrate that the person of Jesus is the "miraculous sign" for his generation. *Severity*, 108.

[116] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom*, 512.

reception. The moral perfection of God requires moral transformation according to God's character—perfect, unconditional *agapē*. The free, non-coercive invitation to fellowship makes believers a part of a true relational fellowship. The evidence is personal and therefore susceptible to influence from God's purposes (purposive evidence). In committing to the divine call to personal relationship, human wills are involved, not mere intellects. In becoming morally transformed from such fellowship, the transformative gift makes Christians into objective evidence for others (personified evidence). The emphasis and priority of *de re* evidence is further emphasized with *de dicto* names and titles. Moser's epistemological framework is thus largely assumed ahead, but it does require some critical engagement to establish it within an embodied life in a narrative. This constructive effort will be undertaken in chapter three.

CHAPTER TWO:
A NARRATIVE THEOLOGY OF THE MASTER STORY

A. Introduction

This chapter has three major parts. In each part, Phil 2:6–11 establishes the baseline for a broader NT biblical-theological discussion of the master story. The first part describes the master story. The second part establishes a narrative theology for Christian living. The third part defines *agapē* from the preceding biblical-theological narrative.

B. The Master Story: Philippians 2:6–11 and Biblical Theological Context

The master story is presented in an early Pauline narrative in Phil 2:6–11.[1] The master story depicts Jesus' life and death (vv. 6–8), and his exaltation and ascension (vv. 9–11). Jesus lives a self-emptying life, and is eschatologically vindicated as a reigning king. This master story defines the Christian story for living life.

The kenotic life of Christ is the story of Jesus humbling his status. The main finite verb and the reflexive pronoun ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν ('humbled himself') depicts Jesus lowering his status (v. 7),[2] sacrificing his higher status for a lower way of life.[3] Jesus' kenosis is self-emptying, effectively lowering his status, becoming a servant, a *doulos*, for humanity. The μορφῇ θεοῦ (v. 6) is parallel with μορφὴν δούλου (v. 7).[4] The contextual meaning of μορφῇ is form. That is, the form defines "the characteristics and qualities that

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[1] I will interchangeably refer to the Phil 2:6–11 text as the gospel or the master story. The primary concern is the narrative of the text. The lack of scholarly consensus in the form and style of the text promotes a minimal claim of its narrative content. The following reading is thus not concerned with its form as a hymn or a poetic text. The minimal claim here is its narrative content.

[2] Much ink has been spilled on the question of what or how did Christ 'empty' himself. The "Kenotic Theory" that posited Christ's emptying of his ontological divinity placed enormous weight on ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν ('emptied himself'). Martin, *Hymn*, 67–68. Ultimately, the problem is that the reflexive verb is not unto itself, but rather the aorist participial λαβών modifies it, explaining the metaphor 'emptying.' Fee, *Philippians*, 210.

[3] O'Brien, *Epistle*, 227.

[4] Fee, *Philippians*, 204.

are essential" to θεοῦ and δούλου.[5] The narrative depicts Jesus self-humbling himself,

taking the form of a slave. His servant status is in the form of a human (σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς

ὡς ἄνθρωπος').[6] By lowering his status, Jesus is humiliated. This humiliation leads toward

his death on the cross (v. 8). Gordon Fee aptly characterizes the force of vv. 7–8,

> Here is where the one who as "equal with God" has most fully revealed the
> truth about God: that God is love and that his love expresses itself in self-
> sacrifice cruel, humiliating death on a cross for the sake of those he loves.[7]

The sacrificial act of dying on the cross establishes his exaltation, creating the kind of

love that Christians should embody (more below). Christ's life (vv. 7–8) is connected to

the reason διὸ ('therefore')(v. 9). Thus ὁ θεὸς is the subject of Christ's vindication. Jesus'

purpose for his sacrificial lifestyle is obedience to the Father.

The vindication is Christ's exaltation. Christ's exaltation establishes his name

over all other names. There is clear lexical reference to Isa 45:23 (ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν

γόνυ καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα τὸν θεόν) 'every name shall bow, that every tongue

may confess' in vv. 10–11.[8] The substitution of YWHH (45:24) is not lexical, but

contextually linked. Jesus' name is identified with the authority of YHWH. Although it is

not clearly established, this lexical connection suggests a possible backdrop of the

suffering servant for the entire master story in Phil 2:6–11.[9] However, Jesus' 'becoming

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[5] Fee, *Phililippians*, 204. Contra Fowl, "glory" seems to be an inappropriate formulation since it would needlessly extend the usage of the term in the context of the slave in v.7. *Phillipians*, 204 n.49; O'Brien, *Epistle*, 208–9. The same force of 'glory' manifesting in slave-hood can be rendered *logically* but not syntactically.

[6] *BDAG*, "σχῆμα," 981; Fee, *Philippians*, 215.

[7] Fee, *Philippians*, 217.

[8] Fee, *Philippians*, 222; O'Brien, *Epistle*, 241; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 127.

[9] Scholars are fairly unanimous for noting the lexical influence of Isa 45:23. However there is not much support for references in Isa 52–53 for vv. 6–8. As such, the view here does not make an association.

obedient unto death' (γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου) depicts important language reminiscent of covenant.[10]

The phrase ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων depicts Jesus' universal reign, and the likely background of these three adjectives is a pattern of antiquity that describes reality in three tiers (heaven, earth, below the earth).[11] Jesus is universally acknowledged as Lord. It was common to pray standing (e.g., Jer 18:20; 1 King 18:15; 17:1; Luke 18:11, 13), and there were special instances where one fell or dropped to worship on his knees (Ezek 9:5, 15; Matt 26:39; Mark 14: 35; Luke 22:41).[12] All the members in the three tiers of reality are confessing the highest name above all names. The sense in Isa 45:23 is a confession of praise to YHWH.[13] Confession is typically the demarcation of belief, as it is utilized in Rom 10:9 and 1 Cor 12:3.[14] Hawthorne argues that the confession "Jesus Christ is Lord" is the earliest expression of the early church (cf. Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 11:23; 12:3; 16:22).[15]

The broader NT witness presents Jesus' life in an eschatological orientation. The Gospels depict prophetic fulfillment of Jesus' ministry. He announces the eschatological Kingdom. By announcing that the Kingdom has come, Jesus is fulfilling Messianic expectation. The dominant expectation in first century Judaism is a Messiah that will vindicate and make the world aright.[16] Making the world aright is an eschatological sign

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[10] Silva notes similarity in Rom. 5:19, and perhaps this covenantal import remains the closest link to an implicit Adam-Christology motif in the text. Silva, *Philippians*, 106–7.

[11] Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 128; O'Brien, *Epistle*, 244.

[12] O'Brien, *Epistle*, 241.

[13] O'Brien, *Epistle*, 247.

[14] Fee, *Philippians*, 225.

[15] Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 129.

[16] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 203.

of the reigning king. In the witness of Luke, an association is made between Jesus and the Davidic dynasty (1:27).[17]

The Spirit precedes the invitation to the eschatological. In Mark 1:11 the association is not only kingship (Ps 2:7), but it makes an allusion to Isa 42:1. In Isa 42:1–4, the Spirit comes on the Messiah to conquer the nations.[18] It is through the Spirit that Jesus conducts his ministry. Jesus' ministry is immediately thrown into opposition with the principalities in his temptation (Mark 1:12–13) and exorcisms (3:23–27; 6:20; 9:14–29). Jesus' kingship faces opposition on the way to his final enthronement over the world.

After Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah (Mark 8:27-30; cf. Matt 16:15-16), Jesus makes his "quasi-royal" royal entrance into Jerusalem (Mark 11), defining the humble and servant-like king or Messiah.[19] The meager entrance is not only an allusion to Zech 9:9, but it also demonstrates the humility of the king that will eventually conquer through personal sacrifice.

Jesus' sacrifice is oriented toward the future Kingdom (Mark 14:25). Thus Jesus is the sacrifice for a new covenant of redemption (Mark 14:58; John 2:19). The sacrifice of the Messiah founds the Kingdom. G. K. Beale an important parallel that offers insight into the crucifixion with salvation. Jesus effectively becomes a temple sacrifice. Beale highlights the narrative similarity of Mark 14:23–27 and 15:36–38:

Wine is offered	Vinegar is offered
Crucifixion	Christ dies from crucifixion
Christ's garments divided	The curtain of the temple is torn in two
(14:23–27)	(15:36–38)

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[17] Goldsworthy, "Kingdom of God," 13.

[18] France, *Gospel of Mark*, 81.

[19] I'm borrowing Wright's usage of "quasi-royal" to depict Jesus' entrance. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 422.

The temple sacrifice is identified with Jesus' body.[20] This identification marks the new covenant sacrifice. Jesus is the new temple (John 2:19), fulfilling the Davidic line (2 Sam 7: 12–14). Jesus has become the temple that is anticipated from the Davidic line (2 Sam 7:12–14) and fulfilling the Messianic expectation of one that builds the new temple.[21] Jesus is the salvation for his people.

The new covenant reign is a king in priestly clothing (Rev 1:13). The revelation to John presents the symbolism of the Messiah in kingly and priestly garb (Rev 1:13), establishing judgment (v. 16), which alludes to Isaiah's messianic prophecy (Isa 11:1–4).[22] His priestly way is a kind of knowledge (vv. 1–3) that brings salvation and righteousness for the poor (v. 4). Jesus' eschatological ministry in the Spirit is a fulfillment of his Messianic status.

C. The Master Story as the Mode of Christian Life (Analogy)

1. Kenotic Life

Christians are to live worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27), modeling their lives after the master story. Christians must love like Jesus. The character of the love they are to share is *kenotic* (2:6–8), but the condition of such love is eschatological reality (vv 9–11). The narrative depicts love that is at once self-emptying (*kenotic*) and with reigning power (eschatological). They are to be obedient ([c.f. 2:7, ὑπήκοος]) so as to work toward their salvation in fear and trembling (2:12). Paul's pedagogical motivation for the Philippians is to model a life of sacrifice in an eschatological orientation. Fee writes

> [i]n the light of the grandeur of this passage (all of 2:6–11), one can easily forget why it is here. Paul's reasons are twofold: first, as throughout the letter, to focus on Christ himself, and thus, second, in this instance to point

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[20] Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission,* 193.
[21] Beale, *New Testament Theology,* 632.
[22] Beale, *New Testament Theology,* 344.

to him as the ultimate model of the self-sacrificing love to which he is calling the Philippians.[23]

Paul's exhortation through the master story follows his prayer that love may abound with knowledge and discernment (Phil 1:9–11). The kind of love is modeled in the story.

The narrative depicts the kenotic career of Jesus' self-emptying and humbling life as a human. The phrase ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν is a metaphor. The usage is for narrative explication of selflessness or humility. Paul utilizes similar metaphorical usages for κενόω in the passive voice at Rom 4:14, 1 Cor 1:16, and 2 Cor 9:3. Similarly the active aorist of κενώσει in 1 Cor 9:15, means "deprive." Four of the five usages in the NT have a metaphorical rendering.[24] Paul is communicating this metaphor for Christian service. Thus Christians are to likewise self-sacrifice in serving others.

Michael J. Gorman outlines an important rhetorical formula for Phil 2:6–8, highlighting the theme of humiliation.[25] Gorman summarizes the formula:

Although [x], not [y] but [z].
That is,
Although [status], not [selfishness] but [self-abasement/slavery].
Or, more fully,
Although [*equal with God*], not [*selfish exploitation*] but [*self-emptying slavery in incarnation and self-humbling obedience in death*].[26]

This narrative formula provides a model for sacrificial living for Christians. Although Jesus has a significant status, he forgoes his status to become a human servant. Paul utilizes this rhetorical formula to depict his life as an apostle; as an apostle Paul does not take advantage of his status (3:5–8). Paul utilizes this formula to exhort Christians to

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[23] Fee, *Philippians*, 226 (emphasis mine).
[24] O'Brien, *Epistle*, 217.
[25] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 90.
[26] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 91.

living the kenotic aspect of the master story. Christians are to likewise forgo their status for Christ. In so doing, Christians can humbly serve others.

Jesus takes the form or status of a slave (δούλου). Paul typically utilizes δούλου to render a positive sense of Christian service.[27] Jesus' servant status is the model for early Christian identity.[28] Paul utilizes this language for his own embodiment for a way of life. Paul uses δούλου to affirm his identity in 1:1; and Paul depicts this service for ecclesial life.[29] The Lord's service is portrayed in the gospels, including Mark 10:43–45, which may suggest a likely early tradition of imitating Christ that informed Paul's background influence.[30]

Sacrificial living is embodied in the apostolic life and witness for the church. The church likewise models the gospel in their lives through sacrificial living. Thomas Shchreiner argues that Paul's conception of sacrificial living does not entail inherent goodness. Rather, sacrificial living is evidence "of the truth of his gospel." That is, his sacrificial life is "a corollary of the sufferings of Jesus."[31] Paul's sacrificial life is evidence of the integrity of his message. And the Thessalonians likewise became "imitators of us and the Lord" in their persecution (1 Thess 1:6), becoming evidence for "the believers in Macedonia and Achia" (v. 7).[32]

Such sacrificial evidence is the Spirit's work of power (v. 5). The Spirit's evidence comes not with a high status of oratory, but weakness (1 Cor 2:3–4). Thus Paul's preaching, argues Schreiner, "replicates the cross of Christ." It is foolish to those

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[27] Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example," 122.

[28] Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example," 121.

[29] Hurtado also argues for the exchangeable sense of *diakonos* for the sense of service in the Christian church. For the list of citations See "Jesus as Lordly Example," 122.

[30] Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example," 124.

[31] Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory*, 87.

[32] Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory*, 89.

that desire human wisdom (1 Cor 1:18–25). But high status flourishing robs the cross of its power (v. 17). Paul endured suffering so that "his manner and message would function as a corollary to the cross of Christ."[33] The gospel can gain traction through the Spirit's 'low status' of power (*kenotic*). That is, the power of the "word of the cross" manifests sacrificial life. This weakness is what Paul can boast in (1 Cor 12:7–10).[34]

2. Eschatology and Life in the Spirit

The master story in Phil 2:9–11 includes Christ's eschatological vindication. Can Christians imitate the eschatological vindication of Christ in Phil 2:9–11? This question remains a problem for the exemplar view of Phil 2:6–11. It is maintained here that Paul has pedagogically oriented his letter to include an eschatological aspect for Christian living.

Paul's depiction of Christian identity is rooted in eschatological categories. Paul depicts the Philippians as a sanctifying eschatological community. The community must be 'innocent, children of God' that 'shine like stars in the world' amongst a 'perverse generation' (2:15). James P. Ware cites extensive Jewish sources for the identification of "Philippi with the purified eschatological Israel," which supports Pauline theme that the church is the "true Israel."[35] Paul is aiming for an eschatological orientation for Christian life. Paul's eschatology, influenced by the prior Jewish context, is 'future oriented' (vv. 9–11). However, eschatology is also for present fulfilled reality in the life of the church. Salvation is in context (v. 12), and God is the subject of the community's willing and

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[33] Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory*, 93.
[34] Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory*, 98–99.
[35] Ware, *Mission*, 252.

doing (v. 13).[36] Thus the eschatological context for the Philippian church "is the *present* 'outworking' of their *eschatological salvation* within the *believing community* in Philippi."[37] Eschatological life is depicted in Paul's exhortation for the church's sanctification.

For Paul, the Spirit connects the eschatological with the present Christian life. Youngmo Cho writes that the "Spirit as one of preparation for the future, enabling believers to experience a foretaste of the future kingdom in the present because the Spirit is the ἀρραβών of the coming age."[38] The Spirit connects the Christian's present life with fulfilled eschatology.

Paul's understanding of the Spirit is through the Kingdom. The Kingdom promotes a distinct way of life. Eschatological fulfillment requires a distinct way of life. Paul makes this connection in Rom 14:17. Cho writes,

> Romans 14:17 is the most explicit example of Paul referring to the kingdom of God in relation to the Spirit. The verse conveys the idea that the Spirit is the vigorous source of the kingdom which 'produces the effects in the present human life that are appropriate to future life in the kingdom'. The Spirit is integrated into human life and a life yielded to his workings clearly produces the blessings of the kingdom. According to Paul, 'life in the Spirit' is a life which produces the 'kingdom blessings' of 'righteousness, peace and joy'.[39]

Thus the Spirit is the primary "vertical" (eschatological) agent while Christians live in the "horizontal" (history).[40] The reception of the Spirit in Galatians is closely associated with justification (3:3). The pneumatological and ethical distinctness of the Kingdom way of

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[36] Fee, *Philippians*, 238.

[37] Fee, *Philippians*, 235.

[38] Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 63.

[39] Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 60. Cho persuasively argues that Paul's lack of explicit message of the 'kingdom of God' is simply owing to Paul's discussion of the same reality through the Spirit. *Spirit and Kingdom*, 11.

[40] Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 6. I'm borrowing Horton's conceptual structure of the vertical and horizontal. My presentation will uniquely draw on a pneumatology that would differ from Horton's.

life reassures believers in the present that they are ready for the final eschatological end. Cho argues that

> Paul maintains that if they do not continue to live and walk in the promised Spirit, the eschatological inheritance will become futile in the end (Gal 6:8). Thus, the way to inherit the final blessing as promised by God is 'to live and walk in the Spirit' in their present life (Gal 5:16, 25).[41]

For Paul, no "flesh and blood" can inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50). Thus the presence of the sanctifying eschatological Spirit in the Christians day-to-day life reassures them that they are ready for the future eschatological end.

As a Christian, living by the Spirit is analogical to Christ's life in the Spirit. In the Gospels, Jesus fulfills and presents the Kingdom, often practically engaging in the miraculous. Although Christ's messianic fulfillment is a distinct act in redemptive history, Christ's life in the Spirit is for Christian imitation. Before the oncoming of the Spirit at Pentecost, Luke quotes the discourse of John the Baptist (Matt 3:11), concerning the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1:5).[42] The church is living in an inaugurated state of the Kingdom, performing the same reigning eschatological reality.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit inaugurates the new age (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16), fulfilling John the Baptist's message. In his reigning power Jesus inaugurates the church with the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the Abrahamic promise.[43] Christians are to be participants in the Kingdom, first having been re-born (John 3:3). This entrance into the Kingdom is a fulfillment of the promise of being born into God's people (Ezek 36: 25–27).[44] Through the sacrifice and resurrection, Christians participate in new life (John 6:54). Paul argues that no "flesh and blood" is able to inherit the

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[41] Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 64.
[42] Macchia, *Baptized*, 91.
[43] Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 26.
[44] Beale, *New Testament Theology*, 235–36.

Kingdom (1 Cor 15:50). The flesh must be transformed before entering into the Kingdom of God.[45] Thus being transformed in a renewed life in the Spirit is necessary for Kingdom participation (Gal 5:16, 18, 26). Transformed life in the Spirit can conquer the deeds of the flesh (Rom 8:13).[46]

Walking in the Spirit allows one to become a son or daughter of God (v. 14). This is the familial language is the analogical status to Christ; the believer is a coheir of Christ (v. 18). The identity of Jesus' body with the sacrificial temple establishes the calling for Christians to be a "holy priesthood," offering "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet 2:4). The new people of God are bound in the Spirit, glorifying God in their bodies for worship (1 Cor 6:19–20).[47]

Jesus' humble service is dedicated to God. Jesus' service results in his exaltation; thus διὸ (v.9) orients the reason or rationale of vv. 6–8 for his exaltation (vv. 9–11).[48] Following Hurtado, Peter O'Brien adds that "the hymn provides the supreme illustration of Jesus' own statement, 'whoever humbles himself will be exalted' (Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14; cf. Jas 4:6, 10)."[49]

3. Eschatology and Sacrifice in the Church's Mission

Paul highlights sacrifice and suffering in his fellow ministry partners. Paul begins to utilize this master story to depict the character of *mission* in his testimony and for Timothy and Epaphroditus. The shape of the sacrificial love is contextualized through the ecclesial lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19–30). Timothy exhibits *doulos*-like behavior in his service (2:22, ἐδούλευσεν [cf. 2:7, μορφὴν δούλου]), which is in the service

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[45] Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom,* 57.
[46] Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory,* 316.
[47] Schreiner, *New Testament Theology,* 496.
[48] Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example," 123.
[49] O'Brien, *Epistle,* 235.

of the gospel. Epaphroditus was likewise obedient to the point of death for the work of

Christ (2:30, μέχρι θανάτου [2:8, μέχρι θανάτου]).[50] Ware suggests that the exhortative

force is found in their missiological expression.[51]

Michael Gorman finds the similar rhetorical structure of 2:8 'although X, not Y,

but Z' in Paul's testimony (3:4–11). His status of a Pharisee ([although x], vv. 4–6), the

decision to regard that status as dung ([not y], vv.7–8), and the desire to gain Christ in his

sufferings in conforming to his death ([but z], vv. 10–11) define Paul's imitation of Christ

in renunciation of status.[52] Gorman writes that

> [s]haring in Christ's sufferings is Paul's hope for sharing in the future
> power of the resurrection from the dead. As Christ was vindicated by God
> after his obedience to the point of death, so also will the suffering
> Philippians be vindicated.[53]

Paul is first making an apostolic-modeling claim that is representative of his work:

"through imitating him, his churches will be joining him in imitating Christ."[54] There is

an authoritative apostolic link with imitation, between Christ and Paul (1 Thess 1:6; Rom

6:1–14; 8:17, 29–30; 15:1–7; 1 Cor 10:23–11:1; 2 Cor 4:7–15; 12:9–10; Gal 2:19–20;

5:24; 6:14).[55] The loving work of the *doulos* is christologically and apostolically modeled

for the church.

As mentioned above, there is a definite link with Isa 45:23 and the master story in

Phil 2:6–11, as well as a possible background reference to the suffering servant narrative

of Isa 53 (however unclear of what the exact import reference would be). This places the

text within a Jewish matrix, which brings some difficulties for missiological reference.

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[50] Ware, *Mission*, 232.
[51] Ware, *Mission*, 233.
[52] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 330.
[53] Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 331.
[54] Hays, *Moral*, 31.
[55] Hays, *Moral*, 31.

For example, did early Judaism have any real category for mission? Ware offers a satisfactory solution:

> one key aspect of the Jewish hope of eschatological redemption was the expectation of a pilgrimage for the nations to Zion in the impending time of the God of Israel's eschatological reign. The eschatological time of restoration and the conversion of gentiles belong inseparably together in Jewish thought, and this connection is also made explicit in Paul's letters and in other early Christian documents.[56]

Thus Paul is well within his rights citing Isaiah to shape a missiological argument in eschatological context.

Jesus' arrival comes in the baptism of the Spirit (Mark 1:9–11; Matt. 3:1–12). The Spirit comes with announcement and demonstration of "'the kingdom of god' denotes the coming of Israel's god in person and in power."[57] This act has significance in defining his Messianic identity, as N.T. Wright notes,

> [h]e was thus in the same position as David between his anointing by Samuel and his final enthronement. He had the authority to act as he did because YHWH had given it to him, in and through John's baptism.[58]

Christ inaugurates the new covenant by the power of the Spirit, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, demonstrating the reign of God. Christ's covenantal obedience defines the new covenant. Christ "obeys perfectly and completely, in every aspect of his life and especially even unto death on a cross (Phil 2:6–11)."[59] Christians likewise exercise obedience to the Father.

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[56] Ware, *Mission*, 228.

[57] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 615.

[58] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 497.

[59] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 610.

Christian covenantal obedience entails proclamation. This proclamation is the eschatological fulfillment of the Messiah gathering his flock (Isa 40:9–11; 52:7).[60] Christ is bringing a new exodus of salvation out of the desert (Isa 40:3–5).[61] The exodus proves that the other kingdoms are powerless. It is Christ's reign that is foretold, that ends all other forms of rule (Dan 2:44; 7:18, 22, 27; 12:4; cf. 12:9).[62] Thus proclamation of the good news diminishes the Satanic "kingdom" (Mark 3:27), offering repentance and salvation (Mark 1:15).[63]

Christ serves as a model servant while being the Spirit-baptized Messiah, making sacrificial living a part of the life in the Spirit. But this is the link, especially in Phil 2:6–8 for the church. Hurtado writes

> [i]n all the Synoptic Gospels there is the tradition that Jesus commanded his disciples to be servants of one another after the analogy of his own role (Mark 10:43-45/Matt 20:25-28/Luke 22:24-27; Mark 9:35; Matt 23:11). Further, in the well-known foot-washing episode in John 13:5-17 a similar tradition appears, where Jesus uses *doulos* imagery. We may even note Heb 5:8-9, where the obedience of Jesus is referred to, as a possible echo of this same sort of tradition.[64]

The way of the *doulos* is after Christ, and it is therefore living a life in the Spirit. The self-emptying care is not asceticism but one of *agapē* in the Spirit. As Hurtado argued, we analogically model our lives after his. Christians live sacrificial lives in the Spirit. This is the Christian act of love. If Christ is the King doing the will of the Father,[65] we are the children of the Father, the co-heirs bringing the *agapē* of light to the people. Christians should live in the Spirit as Jesus lives in the Spirit.

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[60] Evans, "Inaugurating the Kingdom," 53.
[61] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 661.
[62] Evans, "Inaugurating the Kingdom," 54–55.
[63] Evans, "Inaugurating the Kingdom," 67.
[64] Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example," 124.
[65] Macchia, *Baptized*, 91.

D. The Master Story and *Agapē*

The master story of Phil 2:6–11 and the biblical-theological context of the NT define an imperative for living like Christ in the Spirit. The Christian life in the Spirit is both kenotic and eschatological. Agape is the source of the kenotic and the eschatological life in the Spirit.

The Spirit is the primary agent to empower Christians to love. Following Moser, the *agapē* in Phil 2:6–8 is only possible with agents under the power of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). This volitional-union love is founded in God's perfect moral character, and thus God's love is commensurate with God's character. Christians thus seek to become filled with the Spirit to love others as God loves. Frank Macchia writes

> [i]f Spirit baptism is ever to reconnect to sanctification and the fulfillment
> of the kingdom of God, it will do so with the help of Spirit baptism
> conceived as a participation *in the love of God as Father, Son, and Spirit.*[66]

By the power of the Spirit, Jesus is the "man for others." And he is obediently participating with "the Father for creation as the "God of others.""[67] The perfect covenantal obedience led to his crucifixion. Christ's perfect obedient *love* created believer's justification (John 3:16). Justification is a completion of the law: "it is the covenant verdict pronounced on Christ and his coheirs on the basis of his merits."[68] God justifies the ungodly through Christ's perfect work (Rom 4:5–6).[69] It is through this justification that Christians have perfect liberty from the world. Christians are free to love and serve others, modeling Christ's life in the Spirit. In fact, this is a reasonable way of Paul explaining his motivation as a servant (Phil 3:9). That is, the freedom to love is

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[66] Macchia, *Baptized*, 259.
[67] Macchia, *Baptized*, 90.
[68] Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 121.
[69] Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 119.

stemmed in justification. And the character of Christ's sacrifice becomes the model to

live in day-to-day life. As Murray Harris argues, when James mentions of

> 'the law that gives freedom' (Jas 1:25; 2:12), he is referring to the
> divine law enshrined in the gospel that requires neighbour-love: 'You
> shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Lev 19:18, cited in Jas. 2:8
> where it is called 'the royal law'). Obedience to this law emancipates
> people from self-pleasing (cf. Jas 1:27; 2:1–13).[70]

Justification liberates the Christian to walk in the Spirit, replacing the old way of life in

the flesh. In Christian sanctification, covenantal obedience is the character of *agape* (Phil

2:6–11). *Agapē* replaces all other conditional acts of love. Thus, following Moser, *agapē*

is an unconditional form of love. Vincent Brümmer rightly argues that in gift-love or

agapē,

> I identify with you by serving your interest as being my own. This
> devotion to your good is unconditional in the sense that I do not serve
> your interests on condition that you serve mine in return. That is what
> distinguishes love from an agreement of rights and duties where I serve
> your interests in order to earn your services in return. I enter such
> agreements with you for the sake of the advantage which I can gain
> from it for myself. My aim is purely self-regarding whereas in love my
> aim is other-regarding since there I devote myself to serving your good
> which through identification I have made my own. In this sense love is
> indeed unconditional *agape* or gift-love rather than the desire for the
> fulfillment of one's own needs or interests.[71]

The character of Christ's love in (Phil 2:6–8) creates a form of love that is utterly without

conditions that can minimize the obligation to love another. Unconditional *agapē*

completely disregards the conditions of reciprocal behavior of conditional love. It is only

through the Spirit that Christians can attempt to model their lives on perfect *agapē*

without succumbing to alternative forms of justification. As such, *agapē* in the Spirit is a

kind of personal relation that defines our constitution of *being* as *agapē* that is further

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[70] Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 74.
[71] Brümmer, *Models of Love*, 239.

becoming agapē. The Spirit brings a deposit and resources from fullness of eschatological to give us *agapē,* so that we can be a true *doulos* in service.

E. Conclusion

The master story depicts Jesus' status decline (2:6–8), earning his vindicated status (2:9–11). The biblical-theological narrative depicts Jesus eschatological life of Christ in the Spirit, contending for the Kingdom against all forms of opposition, living in a mode of sacrifice for others. By living in the step with the Spirit, Christians are to likewise model their lives after Christ. This pneumatological empowerment pursues obedience to the Father's will, creating the means for the self-emptying, unconditional *agapē* for others. These contours provide the narrative orientation for the theological epistemology in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE:
A THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

A. Introduction

Volitional participation in Moser's epistemology is centered on the Spirit filling

believer's hearts with *agapē* (Rom 5:5), emphasizing the believer's Gethsemane struggle

to love others. One then becomes evidence for God to others (personified evidence).[1] The

purpose of the following is to reorient Moser's epistemology with Phil 2:5–11, making

the necessary theological and philosophical updates to his volitional epistemology. The

following begins with a critique and reconstruction of Moser's epistemology. The last

portion is dedicated to the ecclesial dimensions of these findings.

B. Against Sentimental Love: Concrete *Agapē* in the Kingdom

1. Critique of Moser's Account of *Agapē*

Although human volitional attunement centers on *agapē* in Moser's epistemology,

the practical manifestation of *agape* is a problem. Exactly how does Christian volition

participate in acts of *agapē*? Moser's model of the transformative gift argues that the

knowledge of the existence of God is accessible when one participates in volitional

attunement with God's perfect, moral character (personified evidence). In embodying

agapē, Moser suggests enemy-love as a key condition for this kind of evidence. The

leading question is how should one do this? What is the practical culture that supports

this kind of enemy-love? The problem is that Moser's account lacks a concrete and public

expression of *agapē* in the Spirit. This problem, in turn, leads to an account that does not

sufficiently express the transformative gift—the personified evidence. Nor does it offer

an adequate account of personal, filial evidences through the Spirit (purposive evidence).

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[1] Moser, *Elusive*, 183. Moser sees the Christian call to suffer and become evidence in Phil 2:5–11 as well. Moser, "Agapeic Theism," 6.

Moser's volitional account is far too susceptible for an *inward* turn into one's own self. One could seek to love others unconditionally, including enemies, in a negative sense: not interrupting or invoking harm, reciprocally responding with due sentimental kindness, which may be the standard *ethos* in the modern West. And we have all spent too much time in sentimental love. The problem is that loving one's enemies can be merely massaging one's intuitions, making one's inner thoughts more moral than yesterday, displacing the possibility of practical, public expression of *agapē*. Love becomes mere intellectual exercise. Thus Moser's account requires a reconstruction for concrete and publicly oriented *de re* experience in the Kingdom.

For this theological epistemology, Moser's *agapē*-centered volition is fundamental. However, Moser's epistemology requires more attention in three areas: narrative, practice, and collective imagination. First, *agapē* should be applied in the context of the master story, requiring an epistemic narrative identity. Second volitional-attunement requires embodiment in Kingdom practices of healing, prophecy, miraculous provision and all significant acts of non-reciprocal, unconditional *agapē*. Third the cosmic Kingdom requires a 'social imaginary,' which is a collective, social-historical epistemology. It defines a collective epistemological orientation; it is a pre-theoretical sensibility, comprised of the fundamental stories and myths that establish the plausibility structure of what one can do and believe (Taylor). James K.A. Smith's philosophical anthropology in *Desiring the Kingdom* and *Imagining the Kingdom* provides a narrative orientation for volitional attunement.

2. James K.A. Smith's Embodiment: Narrative, Practices and Imaginary

Smith's notion of love is primarily horizontal, not sufficiently vertical. Thus love is virtually synonymous with desire (perhaps merely *need-love*). As such, the aim here is to utilize his philosophical anthropology so that *agapē* is situated in a setting for the *tactile*, vertical aspects of Kingdom. Smith argues that if humans are motivated by 'love' (or desire), then human bodies, not minds, do much of the 'thinking' in the world.[2] Thus humans are 'creatures of love.'[3] Human love guides the perception of the good life. Smith reminds us that we all pursue "the kingdom" but we do not all pursue the same kingdom.[4] To desire a kingdom presupposes an imagination: "we first *imagine* what we ought to love."[5] Imagination is shaped with the body. That is,

> [t]he body is not waiting for a directive from the control center of the intellect. In many ways it already "knows" where to go and what to do because it has absorbed a habitual orientation to an environment.[6]

Smith calls the original bodily, imaginative process the *praktognosia*: "the *original* and *primary* 'access to the world' by which I 'understand' the world without recourse to discursive, propositional processing."[7] This primary bodily, imaginative orientation is enacted belief, not mere intellectual data.[8] Its motivation is primarily the aesthetic that prompts the imagination. Smith argues that

> we live at the nexus of body and story—a 'between' space where the aesthetic force of a narrative or poem captures our imagination because it resonates with the bodily attunement that so fundamentally governs being-in-the-world. The imaginative logic of *poiesis* plucks our deepest

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[2] Smith, *Desiring*, 24.
[3] Smith, *Desiring*, 46.
[4] Smith, *Desiring,* 54–55
[5] Smith, *Imagining*, 125.
[6] Smith, *Imagining*, 54.
[7] Smith, *Imagining*, 56.
[8] Smith, *Imagining*, 89.

heartstrings, and such aesthetic resonances reverberate in deep corners of our unconscious, attuning us in ways we are not even aware of.[9]

This primary bodily orientation is refined in the pedagogy of bodily life in habits and practices.[10] We enact our imagination in ways and methods, like prayers or liturgy or other secular practices. These habits define our anthropology as "liturgical animals." For Smith, liturgy is

> the shorthand term for those rituals that are loaded with a Story about who and whose we are, inscribing in us a *habitus* by marshaling our aesthetic nature. Liturgies are 'cunning' pedagogies that extort what is essential while seeming to demand the insignificant, precisely because they are stories that are told by—and told upon—our bodies, thereby embedding themselves in our imagination, becoming part of the background that determines how we perceive the world.[11]

Practices and habits help persons construe the world. For Alasdair MacIntyre, practices are centered in virtue. Virtue allows for the appropriate function of practices.[12] Thus practices aim to achieve goods for the life of the practitioner and the life of her community.[13] They are thus ethically and communally constrained, not overcome with individual, ethically-neutral pragmatic utility.[14]

For Smith, as liturgical animals we are also "imaginative animals who live off the stuff of the imagination: stories, pictures, images, and metaphors are the poetry of our embodied existence."[15] Our lives of desire in habits and practices formulate something more like a 'social imaginary,' not a mental 'worldview.'[16] A social imaginary is a

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[9] Smith, *Imagining*, 108.

[10] Smith, *Desiring*, 55–62; *Imagining*, 110–16.

[11] Smith, *Imagining*, 139.

[12] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191. MacIntyre is the driving influence for Smith's understanding of practices.

[13] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.

[14] In his construction with MacIntyre's view of practices, Bryan P. Stone articulates a similar approach to practices. Cf. *After Christendom*, 34–37.

[15] Smith, *Imagining*, 126.

[16] Smith, *Desiring*, 64–66.

depiction of life that is pre-theoretical and that is socially generated. Charles Taylor

defines it as

> the ways in which they [society] imagine their social existence, how they
> fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows,
> the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions
> and images which underlie these expectations.[17]

It utilizes narrative and myth to define the societal way of relations and purposes (more

on this below).[18] For Smith imaginaries command our bodies and thus our attention—

even if we do not necessarily have a strict definition of them. Its primary direction and

accompanying narratives define our being. Smith defines this interrelationship of body

and story. Smith writes that

> insofar as we are immersed bodily in these microperformances, we are,
> over time, incorporated into a Story that then becomes the script that we
> implicitly act out. The Story becomes the background narrative and
> aesthetic orientation that habitually shapes how we constitute our world.
> We don't memorize the Story as told to us; we imbibe the Story as we
> perform it in a million little gestures.[19]

Practices create our story, honing our imaginary.[20] The fundamental imaginary

establishes a context to think, feel, and provide a purpose. Its stories thus allow us to

situate our lives in a way that can grant cognitive support for our direction—e.g., moving

from point A to B in a plot. The stories orient us practically, feeding an overall direction

of the imaginary. Moser's work requires an update in these areas to orient volitional-

attunement in *agapē* for embodied and publicly oriented Kingdom participation.

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[17] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 171. Charles Taylor is the driving influence for Smith's understanding of the social imaginary.

[18] Smith, *Desiring*, 64; cf. Taylor, *Secular*, 172. It is important to notice there is a fundamental 'imaginary' for the 'secular West,' which may or may not have countering imaginaries (discussed below).

[19] Smith, *Desiring*, 110.

[20] Smith never quite utilizes strict usage like 'story' and 'imaginary,' and they are often used interchangeably. I make the distinction between 'story' and 'imaginary.'

C. Narrating Moser: Volitional *Agapē* in Narrative, Practice, and Imaginary

1. The Narrative and Analogy of the Master Story

The master story tells of Christ's willful obedience in his death and resurrection (Phil 2:6–11). The Christian community is to behave in a similar way (5, 12), looking for Christ's historic ministry as a guideline to the life of self-emptying (vv. 6–8). The final eschatological end is for all those who will be vindicated with him (vv. 9–11). Therefore Christians analogically imitate Jesus' self-emptying (*doulos*) and his eschatological reign (*kingship*). Moser's epistemology requires a significant rejoinder to include epistemic narrative. This rejoinder is necessary to orient the filial, analogical identity of *doulos* and eschatological *kingship*. These narrative identities of Christ are analogically necessary to orient volitional obedience with the filial language of 'children of light,' living-out the story until the final eschatological end.

The purpose of *de dicto* evidence is to provide narrative names, titles and plot lines. This evidence supplies the narrative orientation to make sense of Kingdom participation. As such, *de dicto* evidence supports the *de re* Kingdom experience. Thus, for example, one shares the story of the Kingdom in a tactile practice—healing, prophecy, or miraculous provision—that changes the body and thus the story and imaginary. As bodies change, names and identities become reoriented. Christians thus share the name above every name, the *de dicto* title, in the transformative event (2:10–11). In narrative terms, Christians are 'children of light' in the Father's story of *agapē* for the world (Phil 2:6–11; John 3:16).

2. Kingdom Practices

By embodying volitional attunement, *agapē*-centric activity becomes tactile in Kingdom practices. Such Kingdom practices *enact* the master story and thus share it. These practices are provided by the Spirit's empowerment, transmitting the narrative of the Gospel to the participants. Christians do not relate to the master story as merely 'thinking things.' Because they enact the story, it is shared in a bodily, imaginative orientation (*praktognosia*)—a register that is *de re* and affective rather than merely rational.[21] Thus the Spirit empowers Kingdom practices, and the body is practically participating in the master story, creating an embodied *way* of living.

Because volition becomes embodied in practices, the 'Kingdom practice' orientation updates the evidence of transformation in *agapē* (personified evidence). Human volition in practices makes personified evidence tactile. Christians therefore become practical and tangible evidence of the Kingdom. People can thus 'understand' the message through the tactile purposes of the Spirit (purposive evidence). Thus Christians access *primarily* experiential, affective *de re* truth-indicators. The *de re* awareness comes from the *personal* purposes of the Triune God. Christians invoke and share this experiential sensibility through the tactile Kingdom practices. As such, all participants in Kingdom experiences should be able to truly sense, observe and feel the Kingdom changes around them, most prominently the *agapē*—the key purpose(s) of the Triune God.

Since these practices are centered with *agapē*, they embody Christ's alternative form of justification that contrasts with every other form of justification. The practices do not simply add on to the moral reality present in the world; the 'light' replaces what is

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[21] Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 65.

dark (cf. 1 John 2:8–11, 15–17). That is, unconditional *agapē* undermines the many

conditions of day-to-day 'love.' As such, these practices put the *ekklesia's* intra- and

extra- relations at personal and social risk (1 John 3:13–15). The *ekklesia* is put in the

social position of a *doulos* that has little to no claim on the values of higher statuses that

require other conditions of love—e.g., social, political, and corporate ladders.[22]

3. Kingdom Imaginary

The master story is a specific message about Jesus and his work. Such a message

presupposes a *cosmic* world of purposes of Kingdom participation in *agapē* (Phil 2:9–11).

That is, the master story requires a (cosmic) social imaginary for the totality of all beings

(v. 10), orienting the fundamental purpose of *agapē* for the cosmos (John 3:16). Moser's

epistemology rightly emphasizes the authority of God's presence to the knower. However,

Moser emphasizes the individual conscience as the theatre of the transformative gift.[23]

Although the conscience is necessary, the unified, cosmic *de re* experience for all

persons confessing a *de dicto* truth (v. 10) is needed for a present-future eschatological

orientation. Thus a wider, vertical-horizontal epistemology is necessary—one that is

fitting for an eschatological age; one that, in some sense, all persons expect. As

mentioned above, a social imaginary is a social way of seeing the world that presupposes

myth and story, providing what is and is not culturally, politically and socially acceptable.

The social imaginary registers public experience, not merely the direct experiences of

individual conscience (unique *qualia*).[24] Thus it orients collective experience. Indeed,

crowds followed both Jesus and the early church, sharing a common understanding of

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[22] Following MacIntyre, practices are not to be sidetracked with external goods. *After Virtue*, 190.

[23] Moser, *Elusive*, 43.

[24] *Qulia* here defines a completely unique, individual subjective consciousness that is only true for a single person. Hart, *The Experience of God*, Ch. 4.

something profound for all. These public events, both in his historic ministry and after his ascension, are proleptic with respect to his final eschatological lordship (v. 11). The nature of knowing his personal reality is thus moving from the present eschatological age to the final eschatological end. Thus Moser's note on diachronic experience is oriented in the present eschatological reality toward its future end.[25]

The social imaginary orients the cosmic context of the master story (2:9–11). If all the sentient beings that live in the heavens, the earth, and below the earth are included (2:10), then all share an epistemological purpose in Christ (Col. 1:15–20; Cf. 2:11). Thus the telic unity is gained in a cosmic imaginary, maximally combining the horizontal and vertical.[26] That is, the social imaginary provides the conceptual epistemological basis for unified, collective eschatological experiences, for the present toward the final end. This collective and diachronic eschatological experience is primarily registered *de re*.

It also establishes a participatory reality of *agapē* for the cosmos that grounds the Christian story (John 3:16). Moser's epistemology of authority provides the entire basis of its intentional structure from the personal kingship of Jesus. Thus the present and final eschatological reality is correlated with his personal purposes. Persons thus respond to and receive eschatological experience. It is a *de re* phenomena that orients *de dicto* stories. That is, stories (*de dicto*) become believable when the experience 'feels right' (*de re*). People experientially sense Christ's purposes, cognitively comprehending his master story.

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[25] Moser, *Evidence*, 207; *Elusive*, 26. Persons gain more confidence of one's experience over a period of time.

[26] This is comparable to MacIntyre's unity of experience through narrative. Cf. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 218–19.

Thus *agapē*-centered volition is made concrete through the elements of narrative, practice, and social imaginary. But how is the local church to understand the master story in Kingdom participation through its practices and imaginary? The following now turns to the ecclesial practices of healing and speaking the gospel. Afterward, an approach to the church sanctifying in the world with competing imaginaries is offered.

D. Ecclesial Kingdom Practices: Healing and Speaking

1. Practicing the Master Story by Healing

As it was argued above, the primary purpose of Phil 2:6–8 is to depict the kenotic humbling of Christ's status. The biblical-theological depiction of Jesus' life demonstrates his ministry of humble and Spirit-empowered service. Christians are thus following his ministry as an exemplar. For Moser, volitional attunement requires 'Gethsemane union,' a mode that allows one to become evidence for others (personified). Likewise, self-emptying or kenosis in the master story depicts the historic struggle of ministry in the life of Jesus that Christians are to model. Christians become evidence of *agapē* in the kenotic act. But this kenotic character of *agapē* depends upon eschatological empowerment by the Spirit, so that one can become able to self-empty. Following the life of Jesus, volitional *agapē* manifests its ministerial context in an eschatological orientation of Kingdom practices. These practices are concrete, fragrant, and they challenge the embodied imaginaries of the world. And so "the imminence of the inbreaking kingdom dramatically relativizes the norms of the old order."[27]

Volitional *agapē* is tactile in the kenotic struggle. As in Jesus' historic ministry, *agapē* informs the primary imaginative, bodily orientation (*praktagnosia*) in the Kingdom. The body in action excites our imagination. From *agapē*, the body accesses the

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[27] Hays, *Moral*, 87.

master story that is ready at hand (Mark 1:14–15). Christ is both the *doulos* and the king of *agapē* who brings *warfare* to the house of Satan (Mark 3:23–27).[28] Jesus withheld his status to be a servant-son, and with the Spirit waged war on a 'house-hold';[29] the house presents an embodied life that is contrary to the Kingdom—an alternative bodily access to the world (*praktagnosia*) with its own imaginary.

Exorcisms and healings are bodily events that influence our primary orientation to reformat, edit, and amend our embodied stories and imaginary—a way of living. In the power of the Spirit, Jesus (1) exorcised the Gerasene of the legion (5:8–13), and (2) commanded him to tell his testimony from that experience (5:19). The Gerasene's body was abused by the demonic and then liberated for a new way, story and imaginary to emerge. Thus the Gerasene first experienced bodily change that gave him a new story to share. The *de re* experience is logically prior to the *de dicto* message. In this instance, the *de re* experience is also substantively and chronologically prior to the *de dicto* message.[30] The Church likewise imitates the *doulos* and the King—e.g., Paul in Acts 19:11–20. Christians demonstrate the 'transformative gift' in healing practice, becoming love toward others (personified evidence).

In the local *ekklesia*, the act of hands-on prayer for healing challenges the world and the principalities. In his discussion of the elder's responsibility to pray to heal the sick (Jam 5:13–15), Allison writes

> [w]hen approached by one who is sick, the elders are to anoint the person with oil as a symbol of consecration to the Lord; the idea is that of marking out the sick person for the Lord's particular attention and blessing.

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[28] Evans, "Inaugurating the Kingdom," 64.

[29] *BDAG,* "οἰκία," 695.

[30] The suggestion here is that it might not be that way always. Indeed, the very act of speaking the story could be considered to provide a *de re* experience for someone else. At any rate, the suggested point is the experience is logically prior to the story.

> While anointing the sick person, the elders pray over him (quite commonly, the elders lay their hands on the sick person), believing that the Lord can heal him and beseeching the Lord to grant such healing.[31]

The usage of hands and oil demonstrate how important our bodily contact is when conducting practices. Practical healings manifest a specific relation to the body that is primarily a *de re* experience. This body contact affects the way one understands the master story and the imaginary of Christian life.

However, the act of healing is legitimated only through *agapē*. Although Moser did not positively utilize signs and wonders for Christians in his account (only for Christ), it is similarly maintained here that that the core of all the miraculous is *agapē*. Moser writes

> Miraculous signs could come in two forms: *agape impotent* and *agape potent* miraculous signs. *Agape impotent* miraculous signs can astonish people, but they aren't intended to transform a person to become less selfish and more loving, in fellowship with God. In contrast, *agape potent* signs are intended to reveal divine love and to elicit love of God from people by way of response; in particular, they are intended to move a person toward God's moral character of perfect unselfish love, or *agape*, in fellowship with God.[32]

Regardless of 'success' or 'failure' of the miraculous, the core message is always the *agapē* of the master story. As such, the bedrock for volition in Kingdom practice is *agapē*. The Spirit's witness may not be in a healing, but in presenting the purposes that God loves them dearly. The purposes of *agapē* are personal and *de re*. They are I-You, not I-It, fundamentally communicating *agapē* to the stranger.

2. Practicing the Master Story by Speaking

In the account of the master story above, the confession ἐξομολογήσηται (Phil 2:11) is comparable to the confession that distinguishes believers from non-believers. It is

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[31] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 221.
[32] Moser, *Elusive*, 130 (emphasis original).

speaking the name of Jesus that is above every name. There is a 'final' eschatological end in confession depicted in the master story, but the Spirit bridges this end into the present, displaying the Kingdom reign. Speaking the master story is a part of re-narrating an imaginary; one is challenging the fundamental horizontal imaginary of a certain place and time (e.g., the West) with the master story. In challenging the imaginary of the day, speaking the *kerygma* is therefore 'doing something.' Practical Kingdom volition speaks the gospel.

Speech-act theory has important value for biblical ontology. In speech we 'do things' with words. God spoke creation and redemption into existence. In this theory, made popular with the philosophical work of J. L. Austin and John Searle, words are not static entities with static meanings. Instead, words are different kinds of performances. For example, one could have multiple meanings for the phrase: "get the punch." One intention could be for the office boss to command someone else to get a fruit drink; perhaps the boss is also intimidating or scaring a co-worker with that command; or perhaps the boss is commending someone after a victory in the office etc. The words receive meaning according to the performance and its effect. A locution is a sign or sound that consists of the parts of speech. However if one is "doing" or performing anything in speech, then the speech has an illocutionary component. That is, one is doing something with words like commanding, promising, warning. The effects of one's speech is the perlocutionary aspect, which defines the effects on the listener like responding, hoping, agreeing.[33]

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[33] Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 139–50 ; Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 126–46; See Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*.

Moser argued for a complete revamp of philosophy centered in the love commands. If Christians are to love their neighbor, Christians must be: (a) "eagerly obeying God to the best of our ability" and (b) "contributing...to the life-sustaining needs of our neighbor."[34] The practical volition in speech by the Spirit brings Kingdom identity. If agapē volitionally motivates Kingdom practices, speaking the master story becomes an agapē-based Kingdom language with transformative effects (perlocutions). Speaking the master story is the agapē-based, horizontal performance of justifying and sanctifying others in agapē. That is, when speaking the kerygma, one participates in the vertical acts of justification and sanctification, by horizontally participating with certain effects (perlocutions).

These vertical realities of justification and sanctification have elements of law and promise. Horton finds a helpful subset of "divine discourse" in the illocutionary acts of "commanding" and "promising." To specify the difference in nature of "law (command) and gospel (promise)," he writes, "[w]hile in the law God promises eternal life on the condition of perfect obedience, in the gospel God promises the same on the basis of Christ's perfect obedience."[35] Jesus is the promise of perfect lawful obedience that unilaterally justifies Christians. Horton also notes the perlocutionary effects in being judged (Ezek 37) and being justified (Rom 10).[36] Likewise, Christians speak of this legal obligation and fulfilling promise that justifies and newly sanctifies the identity of new believers. Christians are participants in horizontally liberating others in their speech through the fulfilled promise of justification, speaking forth the new identity in Christ (sanctification).

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[34] Moser, *Elusive*, 206.

[35] Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 136.

[36] Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 136.

Christians thus participate in the message of salvation. The message is a revelation, and revelation is entirely bound to salvation.[38] In speaking the message, Christians become participants in revelation, and the salvation is *"the locutionary of the Father's speaking and the Son as the illocutionary content. The internal call (effectual calling), synonymous with regeneration, is the Spirit's perlocutionary effect."*[39] The revelation is an act of salvation that then becomes the believer's constitution of a new being in *agapē*, a new regenerated reality. This salvific context is at least a part of the confessional reality as mentioned above in Phil 2:11 (ἐξομολογήσηται). Gordon Fee writes

> [f]or Paul this confession is the line of demarcation between believer and nonbeliever (Rom 10:9). Such confession, he argues in 1 Cor 12:3, can come only by way of the Spirit; hence the crucial role of the Spirit in conversion. This confession in Rom 10:9 is linked with conviction about the resurrection of Jesus.[40]

The Spirit of *agapē* presents the unique purposes of salvation found in the *agapē* of Christ. When speaking the *kerygma*, Horton relays the Reformed understanding that *"the ministry of the Word was understood simply in its illocutionary function of presenting the content of the gospel."*[41] Speaking the gospel is being a participant in the salvific act, witnessing its intended effects.

With respect to the eldership in the *ekklesia*, "Christ's performative speech is mediated through appointed officers."[42] Through the elders analogically speaking the Word of God, Christ performs his work. Thus "Christ reigns from heaven by his Spirit

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[38] Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 145.

[39] Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 240 (emphasis original).

[40] Fee, *Philippians*, 225.

[41] Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 237 (emphasis original).

[42] Horton, *People and Place*, 243.

through his canon."[43] The canon supports the gospel message and its mission. Speaking the master story is a justifying discourse from darkness to light. The master story demands that the 'children of light' become a community that is outbound to the nations (Matt 28:18–20). The external Word thus creates "extroverted, evangelically constituted" community, not an inward, Gnostic community.[46] Volitional practice in speaking makes Christians outbound, participating in the Kingdom.

A covenantal anthropology that is constituted in the Word is one of response. Thus "Here I am," is "diametrically opposed to the autonomous self that is the product of one's own introspective reflection."[48] Being called out into the world of mission requires a disposition that can 'hear' a filial call. Bonhoeffer gets at the importance of the filial act of 'responding.' He writes that

> [s]ilence is the simple stillness of the individual under the Word of God. We are silent before hearing the Word because our thoughts are already directed to the Word, as a child is quiet when he enters his father's room.[49]

The children are called to the Father's intentions and purposes, seeking to volitionally participate in them. Moser's filial distinction orients the nature of response. He writes that "one yields as God's child in response to a perfectly authoritative and loving call to repentance and fellowship."[50] Repentance creates the fulfilling act of being a familial member in the Kingdom. The Spirit filially mediates Christian hearts with *agapē* so that they can participate in the mission of speaking the master story. Following Moser, Christians become participants in the 'love commands' to conduct a life of praise,

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[43] Horton, *People and Place*, 91.
[46] Horton, *People and Place*, 76.
[48] Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 98.
[49] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 79.
[50] Moser, *Elusive*, 95.

thanksgiving and love with 'one another' *in the mission of the kerygma.*[51] The 'children of light' act and obey horizontally, "looking up to God in faith and out to our neighbor in loving service."[52] True words of *agapē* do not fit into conditional categories of the world, and so the eschatologically-empowered kenotic act of self-emptying positions the *ekklesia* as *doulos.*

The justifying discourse leads to a sanctifying discourse. Christians speak to witness these intended effects. They participate in the act of justifying new believers, and then they speak about the nature of one another as fundamentally persons constituted in *agapē*—i.e., sanctification. In such sanctifying speech, Christians seek to speak *agapē*, 'doing' the work of the Kingdom: speaking the gospel, praising God, giving thanks, healing, praying and so on. With the exclusive source of unconditional *agapē*, Christians speak to heal one another of a woe of fragmentation of other conditional sources of justification. There is mediation in healing. James K. A. Smith succinctly defines the illocutions in healing: "(1) one of the hearers is God, and the *desired* perlocutionary effect is for God to act in healing; but also (2) the other hearers of the utterance include the person seeking healing and others who are interceding for her."[53] Thus there is a public mediation in prayer, speaking of the new identity in Christ; here, it is emphasized that such an act is sanctifying one another in *agapē.* Christians speak *agapē* in prayer, conversing with the Triune source that performs *agapē* to restructure being and identity (John 17:1–26).

And therefore such speech is inherently destructive to the imaginaries of the world. Smith comments on this eschatological interruption:

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[51] Moser, *Elusive*, 205–9.

[52] Horton, *People and Place*, 90–91.

[53] Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 144. The original context is tongues, but the parallel is helpful.

perhaps we should say that tongues-speech is the language of faith communities that are marginalized by the powers-to-be, and such speech can be indicative of a kind of eschatological resistance to the powers.[54]

Smith's meditation on tongues can be easily extended to the broader sense of speaking in the Spirit. He concludes that this speech is "the language of an eschatological imagination that imagines the future otherwise—the foreign speech of a coming kingdom."[55] Though Smith's dialogue in a political philosophy of Marxism is an interesting turn, his insight of a practical cultural-political difference is at least correct. Christian speech is not of this world, and it therefore allows Christians to disrupt the principalities and authorities. Speaking is therefore inherently cultural-political, demanding a new society with an alternative imaginary.

Christians thus utilize the locutions of hands and movement of tongues in the illocutions of praying, blessing and speaking the *kerygma*. Such bodily locutions frame the primary imaginative, bodily orientation (*praktagnosia*). The healing and speaking of Christian Kingdom practice is embodied activity. Thus a *de re* experience is prominent if not logically prior to the *de dicto* awareness. Christian speech is participating in the 'doing' of *agapē* in justifying and sanctifying. Together it creates the fragrance of another imaginary—one that is challenging the primary imaginary of an age.

E. The Cosmic Experience: the Kingdom Imaginary (Phil. 2:9–11)

1. The Real King: A Personal Imaginary Amongst the Conceptual

There are imaginaries that involve metaphors of complex mechanisms that then create philosophies to handle the flux and change (i.e., Social Darwinism). The imaginary for Christians, though not denying our world's mechanisms, is inherently personal. The

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[54] Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 147.
[55] Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 150.

ascended king is central in the master story. Impersonal philosophies contrast with the cosmic imaginary that provides the foundation for Kingdom participation. As Moser argued, the inherently personal nature of *agapē* through Christ makes impersonal philosophies deficient to handle the severity of flux and evil. That is, they give "no power to a person beyond the power of the intellectual content of that philosophy."[56] A premise does not save one from actual flux. Impersonal philosophies, along with dark personal principalities, create alternative forms of experience the church is to discern and combat.

Moser's epistemology requires the perfect authority and moral perfection of God. The cosmic reign of Christ is the personal embodiment of such authority and moral perfection in *agapē* for the world. Thus the nature of the cosmic Kingdom imaginary is unilaterally defined with the personal-relational king. Persons thus *experientially* receive the Triune reign in volitional fellowship. The following will begin with the cosmic imaginary of *agapē* in the church. Afterward, an account of how the church is to combat the imaginary in the West is offered.

2. The Kingdom Imaginary for the Church in the World

The present reign of Christ participates with the Church through the Spirit, defining the Church's nature and functions. Reflecting on Ephesians 4:7–10, Horton writes

> The ascended Lord of the covenant distributes the spoils of his conquest. Interpreting Psalm 68, verses 7-10 of Ephesians 4 explain that in the incarnation, the Son of God "descended into the lower parts of the earth," and now he ascends "above all the heavens"—for above all power, rule, and authority.[57]

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[56] Moser, *Severity*, 64.
[57] Horton, *People and Place*, 31.

The king's perfect, covenantal obedience merits Christian justification and his kingly ascension. He now participates with the Church in the Spirit. The present reality of cosmic rule is amongst the Church, particularly through the distribution of gifts (v. 8). And these "*gifts* (plural) being distributed here by Christ in his ascension refer specifically to offices in the church."[58] These teaching and evangelizing practices promote knowledge of his cosmic reign. Christians speak to know that he reigns, and the Spirit establishes volitionally attuned speech (1 Cor 12:3). Though gifts can function without *agapē*, they are delegitimized as such (1 Cor 13:1–3).

The presence of the Word in the Spirit makes the community critical of itself and the local imaginary it is in. For Moser, perfect love requires judgment. He writes "[i]n perfect love, God would place the world under judgment to try...to save people from dying with their idols, their ultimately insecure replacements for God."[59] The cosmic imaginary has a sense of judgment interwoven in it that ultimately stems in *agapē*. The cosmic Kingdom imaginary thus has an inherent mode of critique and judgment of all other imaginaries, including the *ekklesia*. The Church is then forced to handle the tension. Horton adds that

> [t]he Word and the Spirit create a historical community, but precisely because they are Word and Spirit, they always put that community in question, breaking up its presumptuous autonomy, so that the event of Christ's action among us will not be assimilated to the history of this passing age.[60]

There is a vertical critique that establishes and legitimates the historical continuity of the Church. If *agapē* is to remain in its integrity, the reality of sin must become serious to the community. The nature of church discipline is eschatological. For Allison,

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[58] Horton, *People and Place*, 31.
[59] Moser, *Elusive*, 41.
[60] Horton, *People and Place*, 238.

> [c]hurch discipline may be defined as a proleptic (or anticipatory) and declarative sign of the divine eschatological judgment, meted out by Jesus Christ through the church against its sinful members and sinful situations. As a proleptic sign, church discipline forecasts in part and in the present age the anticipated eschatological judgment to take place in full in the age to come; thus, it s a harbinger foreshadowing things to come.[62]

The eschatological reign sanctifies the church. To distinguish itself from the world, the Word of Christ speaks through the proleptic speech from *ecclesial* governance. Such speech opposes the oppression of the world and the principalities. In contradistinction to the words and imaginary of the present age, Christians speak forth the reign of Christ for their self-understanding. However, the classical Reformed external marks of the church: word, sacrament and church discipline[63] require an explicit centering *agapē*. Is there any other *explicit* mark of the church that is referenced more than *agapē*? Ecclesial justice, like atonement, is centered in unconditional *agapē*.

The king who sends a rich provisioning of gifts thus binds Word and Spirit, supporting the horizontal apostolic and missional nature of the church. The apostolic nature of the church is determined by "the *content* of the church's ministry rather than by the historical succession of *persons* ordained in office."[64] The gospel, the master story, is the true sign of apostolic teaching in a community (Acts 2:38). And this master story founds the social-dynamic of difference from the primary imaginary of the age in the Great Commission. Michael Frost thus writes

> any collective of believers set free from the disorder of this present age, who offer themselves in service of the mission of their God to alert people to the new unfolding order of things, can rightly be called a missional church.[65]

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[62] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 181.
[63] Horton, *People and Place*, 231.
[64] Horton, *People and Place*, 239.
[65] Frost, *Road to Missional*, 38.

Christians are thus alerting people to the difference of two ages—two irreconcilable imaginaries. However, the two imaginaries have a unity of experience in the throne of the king. The nature of the king's throne is *agapē* (Isa 16:5), who reigns, unlike the kings of the day of Isaiah—or our day for that matter—in righteousness and justice.[66] The king's rein unilaterally defines the cosmic imaginary, and the unconditional nature of *agapē* unifies the totality of imaginary experience. The throne in Eph 4:8 establishes the children of the Father to speak 'truth in love.' Because of the king's unilateral fulfillment and personal demand of confession (Phil 2:9–11), Christians speak with the cosmic imaginary that unifies all human expectation.

The difference between 'worldviews' or 'beliefs' can seem unassailable. However, since Jesus is the final expectation, Christians have a common reality and experience with the world. They can engage the world through the cosmic Kingdom imaginary through Kingdom practices. The supreme authority and moral perfection of the king makes the nature of all things *agapē*. Thus this *de re agapē* experience is for all, no matter what local imaginary is dominant. Ultimately, ecclesial Kingdom practices are grounded in the cosmic Kingdom imaginary of *agapē*.

The *de dicto* nature of 'speaking the truth in love' with Kingdom practices presupposes and depends upon the experiential, *de re* imaginary of *agapē*. The *de re* assumption of *agapē* is the ground of understanding *de dicto agapē*. Practically, one may provide the reality of the Kingdom through transformative prayer before explaining the master story. The experience of the Kingdom provides the legitimacy of the master story. Narrating Moser's model of the transformative gift, Christian personification is through personal, volitional union with the reigning king that extends authoritative dominion

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[66] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 577.

toward all—this is Kingdom participation. The cosmic imaginary becomes a matter of salient experience, of awareness, through Kingdom practices; thus Christian personification of *agapē* is embodied in its practices, becoming light for the imaginaries of darkness (Eph 5:6–14).

As the content of the master story is embodied in practices, the lines between believers and non-believers are always blurred. Despite the unity of experience found in a cosmic imaginary, it will remain in steady conflict with all other imaginaries, notably highlighting its difference in cultural exchange. *Agapē*-centric volition in Kingdom practice creates relations with non-believers that cannot be parsed in mere horizontal imaginaries. Charles Taylor offers an example with the gift:

> [b]ut suppose the highest good consists in communion, mutual giving and receiving, as in the paradigm of the eschatological banquet. *The heroism of gratuitous giving has no place for reciprocity*. If you return anything to me, then my gift and no communion between us is possible.[67]

Agapē knows no bounds of reciprocity. Unconditional *agapē* is founded upon justification, and so Christians are free to share *agapē* with no reciprocity. Gifts are formed in *agapē*—a key sign of the real cosmic, eschatological imaginary at work.

3. The Kingdom Imaginary and the West Imaginary

As Moser argued, amongst the flux of life in the world, Christians are to endure in an '*agapē* struggle.' There is a conflict of imaginaries; a chaos of misunderstanding shared by all. We are historic beings that participate in horizontal imaginaries around the world. At the same time, the 'master story' requires that Christians uphold a cosmic imaginary that is true no matter what imaginary is dominant. Each social imaginary (e.g., the West) finds fulfillment in the cosmic imaginary, establishing a unity in human

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[67] Taylor, *Secular*, 702 (emphasis mine).

experience. Each social imaginary creates the need to sanctify by the cosmic imaginary of *agapē*.

The horizontal imaginary of the West must sanctify with the cosmic Kingdom imaginary. That is, the horizontal beliefs and expectations of Western cultural philosophy must be corrected and redirected with the Kingdom. Christians do not have a lasting city here, but are seeking the city that is to come (Heb 13:14). Compared to the movements of the global south—why is this process in the West so difficult? The effort of this work his to state that the 'children of light' in the new covenant should analogically expect the same kind of instances of the Spirit as the *doulos* and king of the master story.

Churches in the modern West have certainly been influenced by the empirical epistemology of the enlightenment. Our modern Western pretentions invite a kind of reductionism of anything spiritual. The self of the modern West suffers from being 'buffered': independent, self-directed, not given to an interconnected sense of the cosmos with divine reality.[68] This self is a part of the development of the modern malaise of religious options (a 'nova-effect', bursting with options). Modern Westerners are autonomous and closed, and somehow remain simultaneously open to the idea of something beyond the cosmos. This sensibility creates the need for new theses, reforms, hypotheses for religious life.[69] But there is a hardened resolution to be this-worldly, making immanence the goal, avoiding transcendence.[70] The Western imaginary is thus not seemingly 'open' to the world of a cosmic Kingdom imaginary.

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[68] Taylor, *Secular*, 35.
[69] Taylor, *Secular*, 303.
[70] Taylor, *Secular*, 310.

The imaginary of the West is very rational and functional.[71] A person's value is weighed according to rational ability. The cosmos and world is painted with sound reasons, utility, efficiency and functional value. One of the most advanced constructions to define liberal democratic values is John Rawls' Kantian constructivism.[72] In the rational contract, persons are worthy when they agree to a certain set of social values.[73] Once they can agree to those values they can then participate in public discourse that is bound to reasons that all fellows can reasonably accept.[74] Though this view has come under debilitating criticism, it is a kind of metaphor of how a modern imaginary construes value of persons. In a true Kantian fashion, reason replaces grace.[75]

The cosmic, Kingdom imaginary is construed with *agapē*. How does it counter the functional approaches to human worth? Whether in creation or justification, *agapē* is bestowed on persons, not because of their ability to do certain things. Inherent worth is not a product of rational, creative, or social ability. Indeed what if a person is unable, like a child or a disabled person? Rather a person's worth comes from God's bestowing love. Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that

> being loved by God gives a human being great worth. And if God loves equally and permanently each and every creature who bears the *imago dei*, then the relational property of being loved by God is what we have been looking for. Bearing that property gives to each human being who bears it the worth in which natural human rights inhere.[76]

The cosmic imaginary of *agapē* contrasts with such functional accounts. Kingdom participation, of imaginary and practice, orients all relations to respect this inherent

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[71] Taylor, *Secular*, 561–71.

[72] Cf. Taylor, *Secular*, 704–6

[73] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 136–40; 188–94.

[74] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 137.

[75] See Kant, *Religion Within the Mere Boundaries of Reason.*

[76] Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, 353.

worth.[77] James Davison Hunter's notion of 'real presence' yields some good ground: a "commitment oriented to the fruitfulness, wholeness, and well-being of all. It is, therefore, the opposite of elitism and the domination it implies."[78] To add to this definition: the work of *agapē* demands the kind of fullness found in the eschatological end, which can only be mediated by the empowerment of the Spirit. It would not be a humble asceticism, but rather real eschatological fullness of *agapē*, whether physical, psychological, or social.

The temptation is to amalgamate Kingdom practices with a Western imaginary, particularly its prominent governing metaphor of socio-economic, political contract—e.g., Kantian rational consent. Contracts are associations of belief and consent to protect one another, presupposing an ontology of violence (Hobbes).[79] Theologies that become contractual invite a violent political atmosphere.[80] Hunter sees a political ontology in churches, wherein a political sensibility is homogenized with theologies.[81] Such politicization comes with values. 'Ressentiment' is resentment with rage and revenge for motive of political action (Nietzsche), a modern political psychology for modern politics. Perceived injustice becomes the motivation and identity formation tool.[82] For example, one can see the leaders, literature, and clichés that motivate the day-to-day culture of the Evangelical "left" and "right."

Reformers of any tradition often attempt to function with political technique. The technique becomes the tactic that will change it all, whether it is taking back the culture or bringing down heaven. The technique becomes violent. Bonhoeffer reminds us that

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[77] Cf. Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, 360.
[78] Hunter, *To Change the World*, 260.
[79] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 25.
[80] Cf. Taylor, *Secular*, Ch. 15.
[81] Hunter, *To Change the World*, 110.
[82] Hunter, *To Change the World*, 107.

> [h]e who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.[83]

Violent reductionism is taking a real community and squeezing it through a thought.

Importantly, Taylor attributed the destruction of the pre-axial religious sentiment (ghosts,

interconnected life, spirits etc.) in the Reformation toward axial religious life (something

for an elite few like the clergy priesthood) to the creation of modern immanence.[84] The

'reforming' sentiment violently wields theological premises.

Indeed, the violent difference is amplified when the sociological definition of

"Christianity," complete with its contractual culture, is faced with other systems like

secularism. There is no commonality, no possible unity of experience. One either makes a

kind of political war with opposing contractual systems or submits to their respective

ontologies—e.g., Evangelical left and right. One simply does not expect to be understood

or received because of all the different allegiances. How can this violent metaphor be

challenged? If the Kingdom imaginary of *agapē* is assumed in the world (John 3:16),

then all value is simply bestowed—a social economy for practices of grace and gift. The

metaphor may be more akin to a shared well of reality for all people, Christian or not.

Thus Kingdom culture assumes an ontology of *agapē* for all.[85] Love is simply there, and

Christians participate with it, hoping to 'pour out' and share as much as possible.

Instead of the 'technique' of the politically violent, the kenotic aspect of self-

emptying allows the Christian to descend to love another (2:6–8), becoming salient

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[83] Bonhoeffer, *Living Together*, 27.

[84] *Secular Age*. Although deeply problematic in many ways (what about the Great-Schism?), Taylor's genealogy presents important evidence for modern Christian life.

[85] This is comparable to Milbank's ontology of peace, contrasting with the ontology of violence of secular theology. Here, the ontology of *agapē* is primarily a reality from the Kingdom, which is 'here and not yet,' placing a less complete view of the body of Christ for the incarnation than Milbank. Cf. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 367; 413–14.

evidence of *agapē* (personified evidence). The violent ontology with its accompanying culture is precisely a way of hiding such evidence, a wallowing in the darkness (1 John 2:9–11). The fundamental Kingdom imaginary is a Triune God personally and relationally sharing unconditional *agapē*. Love is always governing the background being bestowed to all. It is not a contract. Such love is awaiting a bridge with Christian Kingdom practice. Kingdom practice shares this imaginary, with its personal *de re* experience. Through Kingdom practices, people become aware of *agapē* via *de re* experience, manifesting the cosmic Kingdom. Through these enacted practices of *agapē*, Christians can participate in the world as the master story, making an invitation to all to follow the *way* of *agapē*.

The *agapē*-centered volition invests in practices of the church that practically invoke the bodily senses, participating in the Kingdom imaginary. In the gathering of the church, the identities are bound to bodies and their respective experiences. Volition is corporeal, embodying itself in practices. Cerebral idealizations that attempt to pressure a corporeal community through a reform or new idea should subside. Christians should begin with the real bodies of the church, allowing the eschatological fullness of *agapē* in the Spirit to guide through differences. Practicing unconditional *agapē* requires one to extend *real hands to pray over bodies for wellbeing*, no matter the violent circumstance. Unconditional hands provide a *de re* experience of a Kingdom imaginary for Christians and non-believers. Christians confess *agapē* with hands and mouths, transcending social barriers and investing in the value of every person. Macchia writes,

> Spirit baptism fills us with the love of God so that we transcend ourselves
> and cross boundaries. We find the power to transcend limitations through
> divine infilling to pour ourselves out for others. In transcending ourselves
> we are fulfilled, for we have been made for the love of God. God as a self-

> giving fountain of love poured out abundantly begins to shape us into something similar. Jesus pours out the Spirit so that the Spirit may pour forth in our empowered love for others...Spirit baptism as an experience of empowerment is not just renewed energy to do things for God, it is rather the power of self-transcending, self-giving love. It involves us entirely.[92]

Whether it is a response to a form of offence or defense, *agapē* delivers the power to transcend them both. It knows no bounds (1 Cor 13:7–8). The empowerment of the Spirit is eschatological, bringing gifts from the eschatological end (Phil 2:9–11). The Spirit gives Christians the ability to take the *kenotic* position that presumes never taking advantage of status, the 'lower' state, within a world that utilizes alternative forms of contractual competition (Phil 2:6–8). The church's knowledge is through *agapē* (John 13:34), and it is the only legitimate form of evidential witness (John 13:35).

The Western imaginary promotes conditional love, availing itself of the varieties of volition to construe inherent worth (natural right) and cultural value (social, political and economic). The *kenotic* aspect renders all possible forms of conditional love, whether in the gathering or outside of it, as non-constitutive and non-constraining to the expression of *agapē* (Phil 2:6–8). Christians invest in unconditional, *agapē*-centered Kingdom practices access the Kingdom imaginary. Christians that are transformed in its reality participate in its practices, becoming a living evidence of its reality: *agapē* (personified evidence). The eschatological nature of the Kingdom sets the real horizon to which all persons are drawn (Phil 2:9–11). All know that the most fundamental and real thing to 'see' and experience is *agapē*. Thus this Kingdom imaginary is always emerging in all imaginaries, experientially drawing all toward the end with invitations to participate in *agapē*.

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[92] Macchia, *Baptized*, 281.

F. Conclusion

The master story functions as a narrative to analogically imitate Christ's historic ministry and eschatological victory. It defines the gospel message, establishing the reality and participatory model of *agapē*. To cohere the master story, Moser's volitional epistemology requires embodiment in narrative, practice and an imaginary. In order to have life in the Spirit that has historic ministry in practices, volitional-attunement needs corporeal embodiment. Evidence necessarily includes bodies in practice. Volition becomes identified with embodied life for Kingdom practices (personified evidence), and *agapē* is manifest through Kingdom practices. They invoke and participate in the cosmic imaginary of the Kingdom that unifies all human experience toward the end. This imaginary is unilaterally defined by Jesus's personal, relational kingship. He defines the imaginary's overall epistemic structure in *agapē*. Thus unconditional *agapē* is the bestowed structure of the cosmic imaginary, giving all inherent worth and providing the means to become filial with the Triune God.

CHAPTER FOUR:
CONCLUSION

A. Conclusions for an *Agapē*-centered Epistemology

Moser's epistemological reversion required the necessity of God's authority and moral perfection. The inquirer is in the position of reception and response; the inquirer cannot passively ask mere intellectual questions, but must be willing to be volitionally committed to respond to a morally perfect God. Such a reversion places the authoritative divine call to persons as the initiation to engage in a free, non-coercive fellowship. The call aims at moral transformation to the perfect moral character of God. The character of the transformation is through a "Gethsemane" union, or here "kenotic," making it a life struggle. The volitional transformation and dedication to the love commands is centered in unconditional *agapē*.

The master story in Phil 2:5–11 depicts the historic life of Jesus, who is vindicated as king of all for his sacrifice. The vindication depicts the cosmic end for all persons, who will confess the name of the Lord. The master story becomes a pattern for the community to embody, as it did for Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. As Jesus is on a throne, he reigns through the Spirit. The Spirit empowers Christians with the gifts for their eschatological lives. Thus Christians have access to the eschatological end through the Spirit, experiencing the Kingdom today.

Volitional participation in *agapē* requires a concrete basis to embody one's volition in narrative, practice and imaginary. The 'transformative gift' is the evidence of God's existence based upon one's moral transformation, and it is updated to include embodied eschatological Kingdom practices. Practices like speaking the gospel and healing are corporeal enactments manifest the bodily life (analogy) and message of the

master story. As Christians conduct such practices, they participate in the broader, collective cosmic Kingdom imaginary. The imaginary provides a united experience for present eschatological reality toward the final end, and it is unilaterally defined with the authority of the personal king with his purposes—a bestowed *agapē* in all things. Practices and the imaginary are thus primarily experiential *de re*, comprising Kingdom participation. Together they orient the epistemology of the *de dicto* master story as a salient *way*, opposing the West's imaginary of individualism, rationalism and contractual culture of conditional love.

B. Concluding Personal Reflection

My greatest fear is that I will never truly learn to experience and practice *agapē*. As I now reflect on my own Christian experience in churches, the average church member takes five minutes to move from the grin of sentimentality to resentment. Something was said or done and the smile is gone, and awkward political tactics remain. Most of these tactics embody very sophisticated bodies of moral reasoning that systematically oppose expressing agapē. My new fear is that 'love' is obvious to most, and we move on to other more sophisticated 'reforming' ideals, whether changing politics, shaping the arts, bringing down heaven, or waiting for the apocalypse to occur.

As a charismatic, the idea of revival is quite interesting in a time when churches in the West are not as fruitful as the 'Global South.' However, I now ask: the revival of what? As I think about how the idea is communicated, 'revival' follows a sincere, ascetic vertical faith (hours of prayer meetings etc.). However, it is my experience that the claim of vertical faithfulness is often the deadliest veil and justification for horizontal resentment. It displaces *agapē* for another higher ideal. But if *agapē* is a form of

participation with fundamental being, then suppressing *agapē* prevents all being-toward (volition). One is something else if he moves without *agapē*. There is no movement without it—in fact it is darkness (1 John 2:9–11). *Agapē* just is eschatological light. I think its genuine expression is a 'revival.'

My Reformed heritage gets me in trouble, whether it is yesterday's self-contradictory cliché of 'doctrine divides' or tomorrow's temptation to become an autonomous thinking troll. 'Being' and 'doing' *agapē* must logically precede the body of ideas to be known and shared. If *agapē* cannot transfuse doctrine, then I am a clanging cymbal, whether echoing in my being or playing in front of a crowd. If I cannot extend *agapē* to another then there will be no evidential witness of the faith. During the next apologetics setting or theological rumination, I will not hesitate to call myself an *agapē* evidentialist. I feel as though the whole structure has shifted, and I need to carefully rebuild.

Tomorrow I face the possibility of being *agapē* to some people I know but would rather not. My plan is to begin to steer my body in the right places, as it already plans and thinks to do otherwise than love someone else. The highest hope is that it will be a genuine eschatological spark toward someone else, perhaps spreading far and wide. And why shouldn't it? The analogy of a game or a serious contest does not capture the onset of light against darkness. Its reality and claim is quite clear. May it arise and surprise us all.

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