

Abstracts of Recently Published Dissertations in the School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“The Church as Place in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Theology.” By W. Madison Grace,
II. Supervised by Malcolm B. Yarnell.

This dissertation argues that the three main doctrinal loci of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology—ecclesiology, Christology, and ethics—find continuity and expression in his concept of the church as place. In recognizing this theme of the church as place in Bonhoeffer’s mind, one is able to see that from his earliest days to those in prison he was concerned with the church. This concern was expressed and developed in the three major theological enquiries of his life addressing not just formal ecclesiological themes but how Christians are to exist as the church in Christ for the world.

Methodologically, this thesis is argued by examining a selection of Bonhoeffer’s writings concerning each of the three doctrines in turn to exhibit how it functions and coinheres with the others. Thus the interconnection of ecclesiology with Christology and ethics becomes apparent. Specifically each doctrine will be examined chronologically from his major writings, especially coming out of Bonhoeffer’s first work *Sanctorum Communio*, wherein an examination of it introduces Bonhoeffer’s three doctrines as well as his methodological style.

Chapters three, four, and five are similar in so far as each chapter concerns one of the three loci. The examination of ecclesiology shows the emphasis not just upon the structure of the church, but the necessary essence of the church existing in Jesus Christ. Building upon this, chapter four shows Bonhoeffer’s turn to Christology wherein Christ exists not just as the church, but exists *pro me*. This concept is helpfully illustrated in the concept of *Stellvertretung*, vicarious representative action, which is an action Christ performs for humanity by incurring humanity’s guilt and suffering. This develops into the final loci and chapter five on Ethics wherein Bonhoeffer finds Jesus Christ as the only form for ethics. Such an affirmation leads to an ethic of love wherein Christians, in the church in specific places, are to act as representatives for the world.

The conclusion of the dissertation summarizes the previous work and helps one see the forest for the many trees of Bonhoeffer’s thought and thoughts. In the concept of the church as place, seen in each of the loci, one has a way to understand Bonhoeffer’s theological concerns and impulses for ministry and life.

“The Ideal of Moral Formation in Anglican Puritanism from 1559-1662.” By Micah S. Meek. Supervised by William Goff.

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the moral development efforts of the Anglican Puritan clergy from 1559-1662. The thesis is that the Anglican Puritan pastor sought to enhance the moral concern in the lives of church members by focusing on the development of the individual conscience through personal pastoral ministry. This ministry encompassed both the public and private duties of the pastorate.

Chapter 1 introduces the problem and thesis of the dissertation as well as the general historical explanation of Puritanism.

Chapter 2 explains the role of the pastor within Puritanism. It is established that his work was viewed as integral to the moral education of those under his care.

Chapter 3 provides details related to the Anglican Puritan understanding of morality. It is revealed that the conscience was viewed as the judicial center for an individual and, thusly, was of great significance for ethical training.

Chapter 4 describes the public means utilized by Anglican Puritan ministers to develop the consciences of their flocks. These include preaching sermons which were practical and understandable, the giving of the sacraments, the use of discipline, and pastoral modeling.

Chapter 5 reveals the private avenues of Puritan pastors to form consciences. In particular, this included personal pastoral visitation, assessment functions, and the providing of moral guidance through comforting and counseling.

Chapter 6 summarizes the various chapters and details some implications of the dissertation.

“The Meaning of the Hebrew Word [Torah] in the Book of Psalms.” By Kevin James Moore. Supervised by George L. Klein.

This dissertation seeks to refine the meaning of [Torah] in Psalms 1, 19, 37, 40, 78, 89, 94, 105, and 119. Through an exegetical analysis of the nine Psalms that utilize the term, the study argues that [Torah] most frequently refers to the written Pentateuch.

Chapter 1 introduces the research question, thesis, and surveys the various approaches to the meaning of [Torah] in book of Psalms.

Chapter 2 evaluates current linguistic methods that have been applied to the semantic study of Hebrew words. This chapter also explains the exegetical approach of the dissertation.

Chapter 3 surveys the meaning of [Torah] in the Old Testament. The purpose of this chapter is to study the diverse manner in which the term is employed throughout the Old Testament. The procedure of establishing a definition will produce the parameters within which [Torah] can be understood in the book of Psalms.

Chapter 4 surveys the semantic usage of [Torah] in Psalms 1, 19, 37, 40, 78, 89, 94, 105, and 119. The exegetical analysis will include an evaluation of words, phrases, and themes that might indicate the semantic usage of [Torah] in context. The exegetical analysis will also compare the usage of [Torah] with other contexts outside the book of Psalms where the meaning of the word is more apparent.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings of the exegetical analysis.

“The Confessing Community as the Ecclesiological Core of the Baptists in the Soviet Union, 1960-1990.” By Yaroslav Pyzh. Supervised by Malcolm B. Yarnell.

This study will enable the author to conclude that identification with a confessing community was a key feature in the development of the ecclesiology of the Baptists of the Former Soviet Union (BFSU) from 1960 to 1990.

In addition to the Introduction and Conclusion, this research is divided into four chapters. In the Introduction, the author defines the scope and emphasizes the need for undertaking the project. The term “Baptist” is defined in the context of the Soviet Union. The reader is provided with an introductory guide to available sources and literature on the ecclesiology and history of the BFSU.

The first chapter reconstructs the historical-theological development of the ecclesiology of the BFSU, formulates the methodological strategy, sets the limits

of the research, and outlines the main theological developments that affected the later ecclesiology of the BFSU. Special attention is paid to the various groups who formed and shaped the Baptist faith, and to a number of their important leaders who labored in developing theology among the Baptist churches.

The second chapter presents a study of various sources of Baptist theology written prior to and during the 1960-1990 period. First, the author analyzes the important Baptist creeds, comparing and emphasizing the ecclesiological developments in each of them. Second, the official Baptist magazines are studied in order to form an overall picture of the ecclesiological issues that the BFSU considered. Third, the official book, *Dogmatic*, and the published theological works of various Baptist authors on ecclesiological questions are examined.

In the third chapter, the author systematizes and formulates the ecclesiology of the BFSU, using material from the first and second chapters and breaking it into four main categories: the nature and mission of the church, the organization of the church, the membership of the church, and the activities of the church.

In chapter four, the author argues that the model of the confessing community was the main factor that affected the ecclesiology of the BFSU since it enabled them to survive persecution and maintain their Baptist identity. Afterwards, the ecclesiology of the BFSU, with its emphasis on the confessing community, is placed in a wider context in a discussion of communal ecclesiology.

“Neither Mystic nor Muentzerite: The Controversial Theology of Hans Denck.” By Ralf Schowalter. Supervised by Malcolm B. Yarnell.

This dissertation argues that Hans Denck’s concept of theology and Christian life does not primarily depend on medieval mysticism and on the thought of Thomas Müntzer. Instead, Denck pursues conversational theology in discussion with various theological-theoretical traditions and religious phenomena of his times.

Chapter one reviews the scholarly literature on South German Anabaptism and Hans Denck and shows a need to challenge assessments on the theology of Hans Denck which have become commonplace since the 1970s.

Chapter two presents the historical context and relevant biographical data of Hans Denck, a necessary precondition for an understanding of his written works.

Chapter three concentrates on the refutation of inadequate assumptions concerning Denck’s dependence on medieval mysticism. A reading of relevant primary sources is a fundamental first step. Complemented by a reading of secondary sources, the achieved definition of mysticism will be applied to the works of Denck.

Chapter four challenges the assumption that Denck is strongly influenced by Thomas Müntzer. While considering Müntzer’s and Denck’s biographies, the focus is on a comparison of their extant written works.

Because essential elements of the prevalent picture of Denck in scholarly literature have been called into question throughout the preceding chapters, chapter five will try to offer a new approach: An inductive study of Denck’s works read in their chronological order, following an approach of conversational theology presented by Malcolm B. Yarnell III, reveals new insight into Denck’s theology. In consequence, a reading of Denck’s works from a believer’s church perspective is needed for an adequate understanding and assessment of his works.

A conclusion summarizes the findings of the present study and offers suggestions for further research.

“Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of Scripture: The Legitimacy of Utilizing the Concept of Canon as a Control on the Interpretive Task.” By Ched Edward Spellman. Supervised by Jason K. Lee.

This dissertation seeks to answer two broad and basic questions. First, “How did the biblical canon come to be?” Second, “What hermeneutical effect does that canon have on its readers?” Though these questions have often been pursued in virtual isolation from one another, there are considerable gains from noting the inherent interconnections between the two lines of inquiry. In examining these questions, the author seeks to demonstrate that contemporary interpreters of the Bible have legitimate grounds for utilizing the concept of canon as a control on the interpretive task.

In chapter one, methodological issues central to the canon debate are delineated, including the nature of a broad and a narrow understanding of “canon.” In chapter two, the author examines and develops the nature of “canon-consciousness.” Internal and external evidence suggests that a form of canon-consciousness was active among the biblical writers and among the believing community during the composition and canonization phase of the formation of the Christian canon.

In chapters three through five, the author seeks to provide a theoretical framework for how the concept of canon might function for a contemporary canon-conscious interpreter. In chapter three, the author describes the guiding function of the canonical collection in terms of *mere* and *meant* contextuality. If the biblical authors and those who were collecting the biblical writings were aware of a larger body of literature, then it is plausible that they could have strategically composed and arranged certain writings in particular ways in order to create a particular intended effect.

After noting the shape generated by the broad canonical context, in chapter four the author investigates how the concept of canon informs the study of biblical intertextuality. This chapter examines the way a “production-oriented” approach to the study of intertextuality can function within the canonical context. In chapter five, the author utilizes the notion of “implied reader” and “ideal reader” to examine the way biblical authors envision a certain type of reader and a certain type of response that their writings are intended to produce. The collective argument of chapters three through five is that the concept of canon guides biblical readers as they investigate the context of a biblical writing (*contextuality*), the compositional strategy of its author (*intertextuality*), and the proper response demanded by that author’s textually mediated message (*ideal reader*).