

Timothy E. Miller, M.A., A.DIV., PH.D.
Foreword by Vern S. Poythress

The Triune God of Unity in Diversity

*An Analysis of Perspectivalism, the
Trinitarian Theological Method of
John Frame and Vern Poythress*

REFORMED ACADEMIC DISSERTATIONS

“This is a highly stimulating work which makes a very helpful and useful contribution in its argument for utilizing the Trinitarian processions in a Frame/Poythress perspectival account of knowledge and apologetics. In terms of originality, I think the meat of the work lies there, and good meat it is too.”

—**Mike Ovey**, Former Principal, Oak Hill College, London

“Triperspectivalism is a theological method based on the Bible’s teaching about the One God in Three persons. Tim Miller’s book presents an accurate formulation of this method and explores in depth the origin of the method in the doctrine of the Trinity. I recommend the book highly to those who aspire to be serious students of theological method and of the Trinity itself.”

—**John M. Frame**, J. D. Trimble Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

The Triune God of Unity in Diversity

Reformed Academic Dissertations

A Series

Series Editor

John J. Hughes

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Trinitarian Theological Method of
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Timothy E. Miller



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The Triune God of Unity in Diversity: An Analysis of Perspectivalism, the Trinitarian Theological Method of John Frame and Vern Poythress. Timothy E. Miller, Ph.D., M.Div., M.A. Submitted to Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, 2015, for the Ph.D. degree. Supervisor: K. Scott Oliphint.

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For Hannah

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Series Introduction

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We look forward to seeing the RAD program grow into a large collection of curated dissertations that will help to advance Reformed scholarship and learning.

John J. Hughes
Series Editor

Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce Timothy Miller's book.

Miller's book has arisen from spending much time and energy in examining triperspectivalism, as developed especially by John Frame and me. Miller is a sympathetic analyst who has succeeded in understanding triperspectivalism from the inside, rather than from a distance, and so you will find in his book an accurate portrayal. The presentation is also clear and helpful for readers. At the same time, Miller has applied his own insights to explain triperspectivalism in his own way. He has rightly been willing to point out areas of weakness and areas that could use further development. He has offered some development himself, by proposing some terminological labels for clarification and by exploring whether there is an intrinsic "order" in some of the triples, an order mirroring the intrinsic order in the Trinity.

All this work makes his book a valuable resource on the subject. I am grateful that someone with Miller's ability has seen fit to offer the first published book-length study of triperspectivalism, and a good book at that. It has helped me to gain perspective (!) by hearing someone else's voice, and seeing details noticed that I had not attended to myself.

John Frame and I have hoped that the methods of triperspectivalism might be of service for the glory of God and for the edification of the people of God. May Miller's book also contribute to these goals, by helping the people of God to serve him with all love and faithfulness.

Vern S. Poythress
Professor of New Testament Interpretation
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Preface

The desire to write this book derived from reading John Frame's *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*. The book was required reading for one of my first PhD classes at Westminster Theological Seminary. And while I did not embrace all of Frame's critiques of Van Til's thought (see the chapter on Processional Triperspectivalism), Frame's unique ability to write clearly provided substantial help in revealing Van Til's Trinitarian-based apologetic method. My final paper for that class concerned the relationship between Van Til and perspectivalism. That paper was my first attempt to understand the enigmatic world of triads, and it set me on a research trajectory that would ultimately end in a dissertation on the perspectival theological method. The present book is a modification of that dissertation.

This book is not a popularization of perspectivalism; rather, it is a detailed analysis of whether perspectivalism is—as Frame and Poythress argue—Trinitarian. My hope is that by defending the Trinitarian basis of perspectivalism, this book will prompt further exploration into the nature of the Triune God. Van Til believed the world was not properly understood unless viewed as a world produced by a Triune Creator. Perspectivalism seeks to do just that, and the final chapters of this book attempts to take perspectivalism one step further on that journey.

Thanks should be given to those who made this work possible. K. Scott Oliphint, William Edgar, and Lane Tipton, my instructors at Westminster, provided a robust Van Tillian framework, without which this work would not have been completed. These men pushed

PREFACE

me to be a better researcher, student, and Christian. Special thanks should be given to Vern Poythress and John Frame who were willing to read my work, provide assistance, and correct my misunderstandings. Both men were exceptionally busy, but they thoroughly interacted with my questions over the space of three years. My editor, Marsha Love, made this work much better than it would have been otherwise. While I take all credit for any shortcomings in this text, I could not have written the work without those I have named in this paragraph.

The greatest expression of thanks must be directed toward the Triune God, who has faithfully provided for my family in inexpressible ways. He has sustained my wife, Hannah Miller, during the writing of this work, and added to our family three times over (Grace, Annie, and Danielle) while the work was in progress.

1

Justification and Introduction to the Study

During the late twentieth-century controversy over theonomy within American Reformed Orthodoxy, both Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and Westminster Seminary in California opposed the modern application of the Mosaic Law to the state.¹ But despite agreement that theonomy was exegetically and theologically problematic, individual critics of theonomy disagreed on both (1) what alternative should be offered and (2) how theonomy should be handled. Meredith Kline, on the one side, argued for an alternative, *intrusion ethic*, which closely resembled a two-kingdom approach.² His essay, *Comments on an Old-New Error*, indicates that theonomy is “a delusive and grotesque perversion of the teaching of Scripture.”³ John Frame and Vern Poythress, on the other hand, argued for a more nuanced position—embracing neither the

¹ Teachers from both schools contributed to the following book, critiquing theonomy from multiple vantage points: William Barker and W. Robert Godfrey, *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991).

² The substance of his view was originally published in the Westminster Theological Journal, but was later detailed more comprehensively: Meredith G. Kline, “The Intrusion and the Decalogue,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 16, 1 (Fall 1953): 1–22; Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 154–71.

³ Meredith G. Kline, “Comments on an Old-New Error,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 41, 1 (Fall 1978): 172.

intrusion ethic nor a theonomy approach. Instead, they attempted to write sympathetically *and* critically, finding within theonomy both helpful and problematic elements.

During the controversy, Meredith Kline published a faculty paper at WSC arguing against Frame and Poythress's analysis.⁴ The substance of his critique focused on the theological method of *perspectivalism* that Frame and Poythress embraced as they critiqued theonomy. Kline maintained that perspectivalism had impaired both theologians' abilities to critically assess theonomy. Further, Kline believed that perspectivalism could cause further problems in Reformed theology if not adequately addressed. In the faculty paper, written twenty-nine years ago (1986), Kline challenged his colleagues, "If we are to be responsible guardians of Reformed orthodoxy we must add to our agenda of study and discussion a scrutiny of multiperspectivalism. Is it an acceptable method of doing theology?"⁵

While theonomy and the intrusion ethic will not be the focus of the dissertation, that theological battle provided one of the earliest expressions of Reformed concern over perspectivalism. To date, no study of significant depth has been done on perspectivalism by anyone other than Frame and Poythress.⁶ This dissertation will seek to partially fulfill Kline's request. More specifically, the dissertation will

⁴ Meredith G. Kline, *A Paper Pursuant to the Faculty Forum* (Escondido, CA: Westminster Seminary in California, 1986).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The following two authors provide partial treatments of perspectivalism. Mark Karlberg wrote two articles on the method, but, due to the medium, could not engage deeply. Paul Elliott, the second critic, evaluated the method in only one chapter of his book. Mark W. Karlberg, "On the Theological Correlation of Divine and Human Language," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32, 1 (March 1989): 99–105; Mark W. Karlberg, "John Frame and the Recasting of Van Tilian Apologetics: A Review Article," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 9, 2 (Fall 1993): 279–96; Paul M. Elliott, "What Is Perspectivalism, and Why Is It Dangerous?," in *Christianity and Neo-Liberalism* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2005), accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.teachingtheword.org/apps/articles/?articleid=74632&columnid=5772>.

seek to confirm, as John Frame and Vern Poythress have argued, that perspectivalism is a distinctively Trinitarian, creatively Reformed, and therefore eminently useful theological paradigm.⁷ The remainder of this chapter will seek to further justify the study and lay out the method of the study.

Justification of the Study

We will mention four reasons an extended discussion of perspectivalism is needed. First, the influence of both Frame and Poythress in American Reformed Orthodoxy is vast and extensive. Because perspectivalism always follows in their wake, the broader their influence, the more important it is to evaluate their method. Second, perspectivalism has grown in influence, appearing in fields foreign to the expertise of Frame and Poythress. As perspectivalism multiplies in breadth of use, the importance of analyzing the method similarly multiplies. Third, the claims of perspectivalism—particularly that it is distinctively Trinitarian, principally Reformed, and eminently useful—are worthy of consideration. If they are true, perspectivalism deserves a wider hearing than it has heretofore obtained. Finally, Frame and Poythress have received very little thoughtful and critical engagement. This work seeks to provide some remedy for that lack.

The Influence of Frame and Poythress

John Frame is one of the most significant figures in twentieth-century conservative American Reformed Orthodoxy.⁸ His influence

⁷ This thesis is stated in a perspectival fashion. It will be our goal to prove that the method has normative (deriving from the Trinity), situational (grows out of the Reformed heritage), and existential (eminently useful as a theological construct) elements. This triad was not intentionally chosen for its adherence to perspectival form. Instead, the organization of the study naturally led in that direction, providing a way to demonstrate the usefulness of the method even while arguing for it.

⁸Feinberg sweepingly suggests, “it would be hard to imagine an evangelical theologian working broadly in the Reformed tradition during the latter part

can be discerned in the following ways: first, Frame has taught in the classroom for forty-five years at three of the most influential American Reformed schools (Westminster Theological Seminary, Westminster Seminary in California, and Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando). Second, because of his prolific teaching career, Frame has influenced thousands of students. Of particular importance are the *influencers* he has influenced. *Influencers* are those who have a wide audience for their own teaching. Consider the following list of influential *influencers* Frame has taught:⁹ Greg Bahnsen (previously Professor at Reformed Theological Seminary),¹⁰ Richard Bedsoe (Professor at Rivendell College, Boulder), Mark Futato (Professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando), Wayne Grudem (Professor of at Phoenix Seminary),¹¹ Frank A. James (Professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), James B. Jordan (Director of Biblical Horizons), Peter Leithart (Senior Fellow at New St. Andrews College), Vern Poythress (Professor at Westminster

of the twentieth century who didn't know of John Frame." John S. Feinberg, "Personal Words: John Feinberg," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), xliii. Derek Thomas adds, "John Frame is one of the most outstanding theologians of the twentieth century. Like most other geniuses, his greatness may not be fully uncovered until long after his passing." Derek Thomas, "Frame on the Attributes of God," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 368.

⁹ This is not to suggest that each of these individuals have embraced and reinforced the teaching of Frame. In fact, some will be the chief critics of perspectivalism.

¹⁰ In an audio lecture critiquing Frame's apologetic method, Bahnsen indicated that after graduation from Westminster he told Frame, "As important as Dr. Van Til is to me, I really think the most influential of all my professors here at the seminary has been you." Greg Bahnsen, "Answer to Frame's Critique of Van Til," Covenant Media Foundation Transcript (Escondido, CA, April 1994), accessed January 25, 2014, <http://www.cmfnow.com/answertoframes-critiqueofvantil.aspx>.

¹¹ Grudem dedicated his massively influential *Systematic Theology* to Frame (among others). Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

Theological Seminary), Richard Pratt (President of III Millennium Ministries and Adjunct at RTS, Orlando), John Sowell (President of The Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta), Lane Tipton (Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary), Kevin Vanhoozer (Professor at Wheaton College and Graduate School).¹² Added to these are those who have held professorships at Westminster in California: S. M. Baugh, R. Scott Clark, J. Van Ee, Bryan D. Estelle, Darryl G. Hart, Michael S. Horton, Dennis E. Johnson, Joel E. Kim, Julius J. Kim, James R. Lund, and David M. VanDrunen. While not everyone represented in the list above has embraced each (or any) of Frame's distinctive teachings, certainly his influence has been extended through this theological progeny.

Third, and perhaps the most important way Frame's influence has been evident, is through his writings. D. A. Carson states that Frame is among "a list of major contemporary figures whose works have helped shape me but whom I do not really know."¹³ R. J. Gore, after noting the influence of Frame's writing on his own life, notes, "Like many others, I have never studied under John Frame, although I have been his student for two decades."¹⁴ Frame's Lordship series has been his greatest and most influential work.¹⁵ Beyond this series, Frame has written both extensively and widely,¹⁶ delving into topics

¹² Vanhoozer also dedicated a book to Frame. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹³ D. A. Carson, "Personal Words: D. A. Carson," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), xxxix.

¹⁴ R. J. Gore, "Personal Words: R. J. Gore," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), xlviii.

¹⁵ As an indication of the importance of the series, the second volume, *The Doctrine of God*, won an ECPA gold medallion as Book of the Year in Theology and Doctrine. "ECPA Gold Medallion Book Award," *Library Thing*, last modified 2003, accessed February 14, 2014, <http://www.librarything.com/bookaward/ECPA+Gold+Medallion+Book+Award>.

¹⁶ For the most recent bibliography of his works see, John M. Frame, "John

far beyond the range of most theologians.¹⁷ While these works have not seen the popularity Frame's more systematic works have, nevertheless, they have broadened the reach of Frame's prolific, perspectival pen.¹⁸

A final element of Frame's influence comes through his online presence. His partnership with Vern Poythress on the Frame-Poythress website, where much of their published material is available for free, has given open access to Frame's (and Poythress's) perspectival method. Further, Reformed Theological Seminary's *iTunes University* audio ministry provides free access to two of Frame's classes,¹⁹ giving Frame a wider hearing than the physical classroom alone.²⁰

We have emphasized Frame's influence in order to show the extent to which perspectivalism has had a hearing within (and beyond) the American Reformed community. Wherever Frame has gone, his perspectival method has accompanied him. While the first major exposition of perspectivalism would not be written until the *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* in 1987,²¹ articles, reviews,

Frame's Bibliography," *The Works of John Frame and Vern Poythress*, last modified 2013, accessed February 14, 2014, <http://www.frame-poythress.org/bibliographies/john-frame-bibliography/>.

¹⁷ Frame has written on culture, music, church union, and even wrote a series of film reviews.

¹⁸ Frame's works are thoroughly saturated with perspectival triads. As one reviewer, A. T. B. McGowan, observed of Frame's writing, "There are more triads here than in Chinatown." A. T. B. McGowan, "The Doctrine of God," *Reformation & Revival* 12, 3 (2003): 178.

¹⁹ One class is devoted to Apologetics, and the other to the History of Christian Philosophy. Both are saturated with perspectival methodology.

²⁰ James Grant and Justin Taylor note the influence RTS Mobile has had with their friend, Daniel Phillips: "Here is someone who had never met Frame, never taken a class from him in person, never even read a book by him—who in this digital age is being influenced by Frame's teaching and is suggesting it to others." James H. Grant, Jr. and Justin Taylor, "John Frame and Evangelicalism," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 276.

²¹ Frame calls this volume his "fundamental source for . . . triperspectivalism."

and personal testimony show that Frame had already developed the perspectival method early in his career.²² These early essays indicate that while Frame's method would undergo some clarification in later years, even his earliest students and readers were introduced to his perspectival triads.²³ Indeed, William Edgar has argued, "John's triperspectival approach to knowledge . . . is essential for the entire structure of his worldview."²⁴ As such, there is relatively little within Frame's corpus of literature (either early or late) that has not been subject to perspectival exploration. In sum, it could be accurately said that all who have been exposed to John Frame have been exposed to perspectivalism.²⁵

John M. Frame, "Recommended Resources," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 1064.

²² As early as 1973 Frame was developing his ethics along perspectival lines. A few years later, in 1976, Frame began using it as a method to critique other theologians' positions. John M. Frame, "The Institutes of Biblical Law: A Review Article," *Westminster Theological Journal* 38, 2 (Winter 1976): 215–17.

²³ Poythress shows how early perspectivalism entered Frame's teaching: "From an early point in his classroom teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary, John Frame deployed his key perspectival triads." He continues, "When I became at [sic] student at Westminster in 1971, Frame was already using as a major pedagogical tool both the triad for lordship (authority, control, and presence) and the triad for ethics (normative, situational, and existential)." Vern S. Poythress, "Multiperspectivalism and the Reformed Faith," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 176.

²⁴ William Edgar, "Frame the Apologist," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 404.

²⁵ Perspectivalism is the distinguishing mark of Frame's theology. J. I. Packer has suggested that "History will perhaps see this technique [of perspectivalism] as John Frame's major contribution to the conceptual toolkit with which systematic theology works." J. I. Packer, Foreword to *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), xxix.

Joyce Oldham Appleby, Introduction to *Common Sense and Other Writings*, by Thomas Paine (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005), xxxvii.

To the extent that Frame's widespread influence and ministry have been shown, we would argue an analysis of his perspectivalism is justified. But Vern Poythress, who describes himself as a student of Frame, has also embraced and developed perspectivalism.²⁶ Poythress's fields of study show only incidental connection to Frame's. That is, while Frame is a systematic theologian with a penchant for church unity, Poythress is a New Testament scholar with a penchant for the natural sciences. Where Frame's most distinctive work is his Lordship series in systematic theology, Poythress's most distinctive work is his series of *A God-Centered Approach*, which seeks to show how Biblical presuppositions influence various scientific and sociological fields.²⁷

The distinction between Frame's and Poythress's areas of expertise indicates both that perspectivalism is flexible enough to be

²⁶ Having been asked about the influence Frame had on his perspectivalism, Poythress responded, "After the initial period that we had to interact, when I was a student in many of his classes, we did not actually talk or correspond with one another much at all. We just did our work, and it 'naturally' came out that our thinking corresponded. The influence of Frame on me, after a period of years, is pervasive. But for that very reason I generally don't in my informal moments single out some particular parts and try to say, 'Now this is Frame's, and this is mine.' Beyond some basic memories, I don't worry about sorting out which is which, because it is almost as if it were all Frame's and simultaneously all mine, in the sense that I have internalized it and I don't need to think, 'Now am I following Frame's thought accurately?'" Vern S. Poythress, e-mail message to the author, January 30, 2014.

²⁷ This series has focused on science, logic, math, language, sociology, and probability. Vern S. Poythress, *Chance and the Sovereignty of God: A God-Centered Approach to Probability and Random Events* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014); Vern S. Poythress, *Logic: A God-Centered Approach to the Foundation of Western Thought* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Vern S. Poythress, *Inerrancy and the Gospels: A God-Centered Approach to the Challenges of Harmonization* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Vern S. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009); Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

applied to a wide range of topics and also that the influence of perspectivalism reaches beyond Frame's theological works. Vern Poythress's bibliography is just as impressive as Frame's in both breadth of material and theological acumen.²⁸ If we include the influence Poythress has had in the classroom as well,²⁹ we find that two of the most prolific and influential theologians in American Reformed Orthodoxy have embraced a theological method that has not been subject to any *considerable* external evaluation.

Uses of Perspectivalism Outside of Frame and Poythress

While Frame and Poythress have applied perspectivalism to a wide range of issues, including epistemology, theology proper, ethics, science, math, language, logic, and other disciplines, their followers have developed new applications of the method. The following are examples of perspectivalism in which the authors claim Frame as the origination of their organizational ideas.³⁰ The purpose of this section is not to develop others' views in detail. Rather, we will seek only to (1) show the general way each author uses perspectivalism and (2) make a notation of the author's reliance on Frame. Here it will be argued that the diversity of the ways perspectivalism has been applied provides ample justification for a study on the method.

In ethics, David Clowney, who previously held a professorship at WTS and presently teaches at Rowan University in New Jersey, has used perspectivalism as a method of developing environmental

²⁸ Vern S. Poythress, "Vern Poythress's Bibliography," *The Works of John Frame and Vern Poythress*, last modified 2014, accessed February 17, 2014, <http://www.frame-poythress.org/bibliographies/vern-poythress-bibliography/>.

²⁹ Poythress has been a Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia from 1976–present.

³⁰ Because these authors cite Frame or Poythress as the origin of their perspectival view does not mean they properly understand perspectivalism. Further, because they put perspectivalism to use in various categories does not mean that Frame and Poythress would agree with their uses of the method. This section is merely a reflection of the influence and extent to which perspectivalism as a method has been used outside these two prolific authors.

ethics.³¹ While Clowney does not explicitly cite Frame as the origin point for his perspectival analysis, Frame has elsewhere argued that while Clowney was at Westminster the latter made “ample use of Van Til’s work and of my multi-perspectival approach.”³² Further, Clowney verified through personal correspondence that he continues to use perspectivalism.³³

As a second example, Esther Meek has built her epistemology on the foundation provided by John Frame and Michael Polanyi. From Frame she adopts the perspectival triad:

Created reality everywhere evidences those aspects—the normative (or covenantally constitutive), the existential (or interpersoned intimacy), and the situational (the real, uncreated and created). I and many others have found that the Framean triadic motif proves most apt to develop and orchestrate the fundamental dimensions of most any subject.³⁴

Again, she notes, “John [Frame’s] approach to a biblically shaped epistemology, in particular, his signature triad motif, has figured prominently both as a guide to my growing understanding and in my mature thought.”³⁵ Frame’s praised her book, *Longing to Know*, for its perspectival analysis, especially as it focused on knowing through the existential lens.³⁶ Her second epistemological work,

³¹ David Clowney, *Earthcare: An Anthology in Environmental Ethics*, ed. Patricia Mosto (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 8–11.

³² John M. Frame, “Systematic Theology and Apologetics at the Westminster Seminaries,” in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine*, ed. David Van Druenen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 96.

³³ David Clowney, e-mail message to the author, February 12, 2014.

³⁴ Esther Meek, “Servant Thinking: The Polyanyian Workings of the Framean Triad,” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 615.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 611; Esther Meek, *Longing to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003).

³⁶ John M. Frame, “Review of Esther Meek’s *Longing to Know*,” *Presbyterian*

Loving to Know, further develops a covenantal epistemology built on Frame's unique insights.³⁷

James Anderson also develops perspectivalism in epistemology. He has argued that while Frame's perspectivalism was "developed in an explicitly Christian context," it has application to mainstream epistemology.³⁸ Anderson seeks to prove this thesis by showing (1) how perspectivalism anticipates the threefold tradition in the history of philosophy (rationalism, empiricism, and subjectivism), (2) how perspectivalism correlates with the tripartite definition of knowledge, and (3) how Plantinga's understanding of warrant can be understood through the perspectival paradigm.³⁹ Anderson concludes by suggesting, "The fact that Frame's triad of normative, situational, and existential perspectives can be discerned here and elsewhere in 'mainstream' epistemological discussions suggests that Frame is on to something important."⁴⁰

Perhaps the most popular way Frame's perspectivalism has been taught is in ecclesiology through the Prophet, Priest, and King distinction.⁴¹ In addition to websites devoted to a perspectival

29, 2 (Fall 2003).

³⁷ Esther Meek, *Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

³⁸ James N. Anderson, "Presuppositionalism and Frame's Epistemology," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 441.

³⁹ Anderson notes, "Plantinga's sophisticated post-Gettier analysis of warrant also reflects Frame's triperspectival scheme. The normative perspective is found in the notion of proper function; a cognitive faculty can be said to function properly only if it proceeds according to certain design norms. The situational perspective is found in Plantinga's concept of a cognitive environment. Our cognitive faculties are designed to furnish us with true beliefs in specific environments. Finally, the existential perspective is found in Plantinga's suggestion that the degree to which a belief is warranted will depend (among other things) on the firmness or subjective confidence with which the belief is held. James N. Anderson, "Presuppositionalism and Frame's Epistemology," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 445–46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁴¹ Dennis E. Johnson, "A Triperspectival Model of Ministry," in *Speaking the*

ecclesiology,⁴² Tim Keller and Mark Driscoll have done much to popularize the perspectival triad. Mark Driscoll emphasized this triad in an address to the *Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation*, arguing that each church needs a balance of kingly, prophetic, and priestly pastors.⁴³ Keller, in harmony with Driscoll, sought to summarize the potential usefulness of this triad as it related to Keller's visit to Willow Creek Community Church:

John Frame's 'tri-perspectivalism' helps me understand Willow [Creek]. The Willow Creek style churches have a 'kingly' emphasis on leadership, strategic thinking, and wise administration. . . . The Reformed churches have a 'prophetic' emphasis on preaching, teaching, and doctrine. . . . The emerging churches have a 'priestly' emphasis on community, liturgy and sacraments, service and justice.⁴⁴

In a series of articles in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Keller also developed the perspectival triad in the context of preaching.⁴⁵

Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 631–58.

⁴² The following blog provides links to others advocating this perspectival relationship. Drew Goodmanson, "Triperspectivalism," *Goodmanson: Leadership, Church Web & Tech, Mission Alignment (blog)*, last modified 2014, accessed February 17, 2014, <http://www.goodmanson.com/category/church/triperspectivalism/>.

⁴³ Driscoll recognizes Frame as the origin source for this triad in ecclesiological application. Mark Driscoll, "Fighting the Air War and Ground War," 2008, <http://www.ccef.org/fighting-air-war-and-ground-war-1>; Jamie Munson, "Prophet, Priest, King | The Resurgence," *The Resurgence*, last modified 2010, accessed February 17, 2014, <http://theresurgence.com/2010/12/13/prophet-priest-king>.

⁴⁴ Timothy Keller, "The 'Kingly' Willow Creek Conference," *Redeemer City to City (blog)*, September 13, 2009, accessed February 17, 2014, <https://redeemercitytocity.com/blog/2009/the-kingly-willow-creek-conference/>.

⁴⁵ Timothy Keller, "A Model for Preaching: Part One: Three Perspectives on Preaching & the Biblical Aspect," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 12, 3 (1994): 36–42; Timothy Keller, "A Model for Preaching: Part Two: The Situational

In another field, Jeffrey Ventrella has applied perspectival insights to the Christ and Culture debate.⁴⁶ In his 28 page article, Ventrella attempts to show how one can “triangulate cultural restoration” through means of *thirty-five* triads.⁴⁷ Ventrella believes that the most helpful aspect of perspectivalism concerns the future: “Frame’s triangles are certainly descriptive; yet they are also prescriptive, and therefore prospective. When employed prospectively, these triangles not only provide tactical insight, but identify strategic targets for cultural engagement and restoration: the robes of culture.”⁴⁸

A second way perspectivalism has been used in cultural studies is evident in the work of Nathaniel Claiborne.⁴⁹ In Claiborne’s Th.M. thesis at *Dallas Theological Seminary*, he used perspectivalism as a method to develop a philosophy of film criticism. Within the thesis, he argued that one of his major goals was “to demonstrate the usefulness of Frame’s triperspectivalism, being as it is ‘generic Calvinism.’ To offer a truly Calvinist philosophy of film, a triperspectival approach is the best framework available.”⁵⁰ On his website,

Aspect,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, 1 (1994): 39–48; Timothy Keller, “A Model for Preaching: Part Three: The Personal Aspect,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14, 1 (1995): 54–62.

⁴⁶ See also, John Barber, “John Frame’s Theology in the Present Cultural Context,” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 884–907.

⁴⁷ Jeffrey J. Ventrella, “Passionately Demonstrating Truth: Triangulating Cultural Restoration,” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 856.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 882–83.

⁴⁹ Claiborne embraced perspectivalism through the ministry of Mark Driscoll. Nathaniel Claiborne, “Triperspectivalism: More Than Church Leadership Analysis,” *Nate Claiborne (blog)*, last modified July 26, 2011, accessed February 19, 2014, <http://nathanielclaiborne.com/triperspectivalism-more-than-church-leadership-analysis/>.

⁵⁰ After his thesis was accepted, Claiborne presented it in absentia at the 2012 Evangelical Theological Society Conference. Nathaniel Claiborne, “Hollywood, Geneva, and Athens: A Reformed Philosophy of Film” (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2011); Nathaniel Claiborne, “Hollywood, Geneva, and Athens: Towards a Reformed Philosophy of Film” (Oral

Claiborne has continued applying perspectivalism to further issues, noting that he found perspectivalism to have “numerous applications outside where Frame has made it and where I made it (film).”⁵¹

Harvie Conn, who was a missionary to Korea and later a professor of missions at *Westminster Theological Seminary*, also developed an application of perspectivalism to practical missionary ministry. In his *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Missions in Trialogue*, Conn argues that theology with an eye to foreign contexts must take into account all three of Frame’s perspectives. As a consequence, Western theology will be significantly affected.⁵² But Conn believes that this should not be taken negatively:

For the missionary this can be a liberating exercise. Theologizing becomes more of a dynamic process rather than one virtually completed in the West. More than simple indoctrination, it is transformed into a dynamic discovery engaged in by human beings in all human cultures. It is hemmed in and bombarded from three perspectives (to use the formulae of John Frame)—the normative perspective of the Bible, the situational perspective of cultural, social time and place, and the existential perspective of our humanity as images of God.⁵³

By embracing such a system, Conn is convinced that theology can move forward in a way that embraces the perspectives of people from all nations.

Presentation presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Milwaukee, WI, 2012), 41.

⁵¹ Nathaniel Claiborne, “Perspectives on Triperspectivalism,” *Nate Claiborne (blog)*, last modified September 25, 2011, accessed February 19, 2014, <http://nathanielclaiborne.com/perspectives-on-triperspectivalis/>.

⁵² Harvie Conn, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Trialogue* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), 338.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Kevin Vanhoozer, one of the most broadly influential Christian theologians alive today, studied with Frame at Westminster for one year of intense study.⁵⁴ Though Frame left after Vanhoozer's first year, Vanhoozer secured Frame as the supervisor for his MDiv honors thesis.⁵⁵ The influence of perspectivalism can be seen in Vanhoozer's book, *The Drama of Doctrine*, where he proposes a theological method that seeks to triangulate doctrine in a way very similar to Frame's perspectivalism.⁵⁶ That Vanhoozer's *triangulation* is modeled after Frame's perspectivalism is implied both from the similarity in development and from the following dedication of a later book: "To John Frame: my first graduate-school theology professor, a master-pedagogue and triangulator extraordinaire, whose multiperspectival approach to the doctrine of God has been a source of continuing inspiration."⁵⁷

It should not be surprising, considering that perspectivalism finds its "natural home in ethics,"⁵⁸ that counselors would find helpful themes in the method. David Powlison has described his own counseling as "Frame's ethics on wheels."⁵⁹ Later in the same

⁵⁴ Vanhoozer was one of the few students who successfully completed the program originally created for Vern Poythress. The advanced program allowed exceptional students to attend classes as desired while maintaining the rigor of required knowledge and competency through intense testing. In e-mail correspondence with James Grant and Justin Taylor, Vanhoozer revealed that he "took every class that Frame offered that year since Frame was leaving for California, and he obtained notes from other students for the courses he wasn't able to take with Frame." Grant, Jr. and Taylor, "John Frame and Evangelicalism," 281.

⁵⁵ Kevin Vanhoozer, "Personal Words: Kevin Vanhoozer," in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), lxxix-lxxx.

⁵⁶ He brings together propositions/beliefs, experiences/feelings, and narratives/actions into one comprehensive act of developing theology. Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

⁵⁷ Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, xix.

⁵⁸ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 187.

⁵⁹ David Powlison, "Frame's Ethics: Working the Implications for Pastoral

article Powlison argues that “[Frame’s] triperspectival outlook heads straight in the direction of counseling.”⁶⁰ While the influences that have led to Powlison’s prolific and significant career are more numerous than can be indicated here, Powlison reserves a significant place for Frame and his method of perspectivalism:

Frame’s influence was direct. I sat under his teaching in Doctrine of the Christian Life and Doctrine of the Word, two blockbuster courses at Westminster Theological Seminary in the late 1970s. The flexibility and adaptability of his triperspectivalism proved hugely provocative and helpful as I developed into a pastoral counselor.⁶¹

Finally, we will consider the perspectively influenced works of Frame’s students. Ezra Hyun Kim’s DMin thesis under Frame is self-descriptive: *Biblical Preaching is Apologia: An Analysis of the Apologetic Nature of Preaching in Light of Perspectivalism*.⁶² Third Millennium Ministries has also published several articles from Frame’s students, who have analyzed theological and cultural issues through a perspectival lens.⁶³

Care,” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 759.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 762.

⁶² Ezra Hyun Kim, “Biblical Preaching Is Apologia: An Analysis of the Apologetic Nature of Preaching in Light of Perspectivalism” (DMin, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2000).

⁶³ Robert Kemp, “Aesthetic Perspectivalism and the Nature of Art: Two Proposals,” *IIIM Magazine Online* 5, 22 (June 2003), accessed October 18, 2014, http://www.thirdmill.org/files/english/practical_theology/6280~6_12_2003_2-36-48_PM~PT.Kemp.epistemology.hall.frame.pdf; Michael Fourth, “Christian Reflections on the Phenomenological Epistemology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty,” *IIIM Magazine Online* 5, 22 (June 2003), accessed October 18, 2014, http://thirdmill.org/files/reformedperspectives/hall_of_frame/HOF.Fourth.Merleau.Ponty.epistemology.pdf. While Third Millennium only published a few of these papers (those receiving the honor of Hall of Frame), it

As a consequence of their significant influence, Frame and Poythress's perspectivalism has been put to wide use within (and outside) Reformed theology. If perspectival methodology is flawed, it is essential that a critical analysis be formed, but if the method is essentially or even partially valid, a critical analysis should also be formed to emphasize the usefulness of the paradigm. Either way, an extended study is needed.

The Claims of Perspectivalism

A third justification for this study is the explicit claims of Frame and others in favor of perspectivalism. While many claims could be examined, perhaps the most important are the following three: (1) the claim that perspectivalism derives from the Trinity, (2) the claim that perspectivalism is a Reformed concept, and (3) the claim that perspectivalism is an eminently useful theological paradigm.

Perspectivalism as Trinitarian

Poythress unreservedly claims a Trinitarian focus for Frame's triads: "Frame's multiperspectivalism is grounded ultimately in the Trinity and is therefore possible only within the circle of Christian Trinitarian theology."⁶⁴ While Frame has historically vacillated over the Trinitarian origin of perspectivalism,⁶⁵ the overall trajectory of his thought leads the observant reader to conclude that Frame agrees with Poythress. For instance, in his inaugural book espousing the perspectival view, Frame asserted, "God's word tends to present relationships perspectively because it reflects the nature of God himself, I would surmise. God is one God in three persons; He is many attributes in one Godhead—the eternal one

would not be a stretch to believe that others have also written papers under Frame applying a perspectival grid to a variety of theological issues.

⁶⁴ Poythress, "Multiperspectivalism," 180n22.

⁶⁵ Frame's equivocation over the Trinitarian origins of perspectivalism will be examined later. For an example of his reservation, see, Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 15n31.

and many.”⁶⁶ More recently, in an interview written for his *Festschrift*, Frame confirmed, “[the perspectives] are ultimately based, I would say, in the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Spirit are all ‘in’ one another (*circumincessio*), so that to know one is always to know the others.”⁶⁷

Because of the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Christian religion, Frame’s claim that perspectivalism is Trinitarian takes on massive importance.⁶⁸ This is especially true for those engaged in apologetic dialogue with unbelievers who believe in a unitarian god. If it can be shown that all of creation reflects the Trinitarian nature of God, Van Til’s transcendental methodology may be strengthened.

Van Til, following Herman Bavinck, believed that the world exhibited, as much as possible, the Trinitarian nature of God.⁶⁹ Frame is simply asserting that perspectivalism is one way God’s reflection is shown in in creation. An evaluation of this claim from someone other than Frame or Poythress is overdue.

This dissertation will be chiefly concerned with this question,

⁶⁶ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 192.

⁶⁷ John M. Frame and P. Andrew Sandlin, “Reflections of a Lifetime Theologian: An Extended Interview with John M. Frame,” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 82.

⁶⁸ Frame does warn the reader about putting too much theological weight on the triads. Nevertheless, he suggests, “these triads are of some interest and that they may in some measure reflect, illumine, or provide evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity in some measure.” Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 743. Poythress seems to agree, arguing, “[perspectives] enjoy a mysterious coinherence testifying to God’s Trinitarian character.” Vern S. Poythress, “Reforming Ontology and Logic in the Light of the Trinity: An Application of Van Til’s Idea of Analogy,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 57, 1 (Spring 1995): 197.

⁶⁹ We will see this Reformed connection through Bavinck below. Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 364–65.

for from it the other two claims are established.⁷⁰ If perspectivalism is Trinitarian, then it should be consonant with Reformed theology.⁷¹ Further, if perspectivalism is a vestige of the Trinity, it will be the most practical of insights, showing how all things are reflective of and understood in light of the Trinitarian God.

Perspectivalism as a Reformed Concept

In *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, the first major exposition of perspectivalism, Frame recognized that many of his viewpoints were not consonant with other Reformed theologians.⁷² Nevertheless, Frame believed, despite the lack of any direct argument for Reformed theology, his book would be an indirect argument for Reformed theology, showing the resources contained in Reformed orthodoxy that are unavailable to other theological persuasions.⁷³

While perspectivalism is often noted as one of Frame's original developments, he says, "Strange as all of that may sound to Reformed people, I insist that this approach is nothing less than generic Calvinism." How is perspectivalism generic Calvinism? Namely, it stresses the interrelatedness of knowledge and creation as united under the sovereign, Trinitarian God. After expressing his continuity of thought from Calvin to Van Til, Frame suggests that only the Reformed could speak the way he does about the internal

⁷⁰ In the last chapter of the dissertation we will argue for a processional triperspectivalism in which the situational and existential flow from the normative. This pattern is evident here in the construction of the dissertation.

⁷¹ What is the Reformed theology? We will follow Frame in indicating that it is both *reformed* (emphasizing the creeds and historical development) and *reforming* (emphasizing the continual refining of theology in light of Scripture). Further, we will argue that perspectivalism should be understood as Reformed in that it is grounded in the thought of Reformed theologians (*reformed*) and provides a step forward in theological understanding (*reforming*). John M Frame, "Introduction to the Reformed Faith," *Frame-Poythress*, last modified 1999, accessed April 1, 2011, http://www.frame-poythress.org/frame_articles/Trinitarian.htm.

⁷² Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, xv.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, XV.

harmony of revelation. Perspectivalism, he insists, seeks “only to carry this [harmony] one step further.”⁷⁴

Not everyone agrees that perspectivalism is generic Calvinism. R. Scott Clark rhetorically asks, “Isn’t the whole point of John’s [perspectival] method to dispense with the [Reformed] tradition?”⁷⁵ Mark Karlberg contrasts Van Til as the defender of Reformed theology with Frame as the eclectic (i.e., broadly evangelical) perspectivist.⁷⁶ William Dennison concurs, specifically arguing that while “Frame attempts to demonstrate that perspectivalism is in tune with historic Reformed theology . . . in the history of Reformed epistemology, the language is entirely new and foreign.” Dennison concludes by suggesting that Frame has embraced “a principle which logical positivism would endorse.”⁷⁷

Clearly, Frame’s claim that perspectivalism is congruent with Reformed theology is contested. Ironically, in light of the strong invective used against Frame and his approach, little serious work has been done to show the incompatibility between perspectivalism and the Reformed faith.⁷⁸ This dissertation will seek to do the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁷⁵ Lane Keister, “John Frame’s Newest Tome,” *Green Baggins (blog)*, last modified August 20, 2008, accessed February 23, 2014, <http://greenbaggins.wordpress.com/2008/08/20/john-frames-newest-tome/>. In another post, Clark calls Frame’s method a “cancer” in the Reformed community. R. Scott Clark, “Peace (with Evangelicalism) in Our Time,” *The Heidelblog*, last modified October 7, 2009, accessed October 2, 2013, <http://heidelblog.net/2009/10/subjectivism-and-peace-with-evangelicalism-tim-keller/>.

⁷⁶ “Van Til is the uncompromising defender of the Reformed faith, Frame the genteel perspectivist whose eclectic approach embraces diverse and contrary formulations.” Karlberg, “John Frame and the Recasting of Van Tilian Apologetics,” 281.

⁷⁷ William Dennison, “Analytic Philosophy and Van Til’s Epistemology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 57, 1 (Spring 1995): 47.

⁷⁸ Some minor works have attempted to critique perspectivalism from a Reformed perspective. Notably, Mark Karlberg wrote two critical articles. His conclusion to the articles called for more interaction: “Hopefully, this critique of multiperspectivalism will stimulate constructive discussion among evangelical theologians who cherish the system of truth they find in Scripture in

opposite by showing that the foundation of perspectivalism is established in the Reformed heritage, particularly in the formative works of Herman Bavinck and Cornelius Van Til.

Perspectivalism as an Eminently Useful Theological Paradigm

Frame and Poythress have sought to confirm that perspectivalism is a useful method through the varied topics they have applied the method toward. More broadly, James Anderson has noted three ways that he finds perspectivalism useful: “(1) as a guard against imbalance and omission in our analyses, . . . (2) as a means of obtaining greater insight into any topic under examination, and (3) as a source of inspiration for new theories or methods.”⁷⁹ Anderson’s comments concern perspectivalism in epistemology, but he notes that it also applies “to ethics, theology, apologetics, psychology, and other fields.”⁸⁰

If, as Frame has argued, perspectivalism is a vestige of the Trinity present throughout creation, then it is of utmost importance that a study be done to ascertain its proper function. In this way, it can be used to describe, analyze, and predict the elements of the world that God has called man to subdue. While the dissertation will not seek to directly address this question, the usefulness of the method will be constantly expressed as we defend its Trinitarian basis and apply the method to various theological and philosophical issues.

Need for Critical Analysis

That Frame has desired critical engagement with his work is the final reason this dissertation is needed. In his recent festrichft, Frame lamented, “one blessing I’ve largely missed has been that of

the face of modern-day theological eclecticism.” Karlberg, “Theological Correlation of Language,” 105; Karlberg, “John Frame and the Recasting of Van Tilian Apologetics.” We will interact with Karlberg and other critics throughout the dissertation.

⁷⁹ Anderson, “Presuppositionalism and Frame’s Epistemology,” 446.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 446n39.

sympathetic, critical analysis. . . . I have wished for someone to come along and give my work a professional going-over, a careful analysis and evaluation.”⁸¹ Notice that Frame desires a *sympathetic* and *critical* analysis. He has had his share of non-critical and non-sympathetic critics.⁸² The fountains of Frame’s thought are deep in both theological and philosophical sophistication, and most of his critics have failed to dig as deeply as necessary to see the intricate connections flowing within.

In honor of Professor Frame and of his service to the church, his call for a sympathetic-critical analysis needs to be heeded. As he approaches full retirement, the time for his enjoyment of such an analysis is drawing shorter. It is the goal of this dissertation to provide a partial answer to Frame’s request.

Summary of the Study

The first chapter has sought to develop the significance of perspectivalism by analyzing the importance of the two major theological figures representing the method. Further, the chapter has served to show that an analysis of perspectivalism has been called for in light of (1) its wide use within and outside Reformed theology, and (2) its central claims to be Trinitarian, Reformed, and eminently useful. If successful, this first chapter has shown the necessity of the following chapters.

In chapter two we will examine the two types of perspectivalism

⁸¹ John M. Frame, “Preface,” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), xx–xxi.

⁸² Garcia notes, “Frame has experienced what far too many working in our day also experience: the near absence of criticism that reflects a careful, extensive reading of one’s work as the necessary prelude to assessment, or, alternatively, the absence of reasonable charity in the handling of it.” He continues, “In addition, the standards of analysis frequently fall far short of what we as Christians should expect of one another, and Frame has had more than his fair share of incompetent critics.” Mark A. Garcia, “The Word Made Applicable,”

(general perspectivalism and triperspectivalism) and clarify the language used in reference to the system. Having made the necessary clarifications, we will develop the metaphysical basis of general perspectivalism by an examination of both man's knowledge and God's knowledge. More specifically, we will show that the dual effects of sin and finitude necessitate creaturely perspectival knowledge. Further, we will show that neither sin nor finitude is the *ultimate* basis for the perspectives; rather, the innate perspectival knowledge of the triune persons provides the model by which the perspectives exist, are distinct from one another, and yet are able to cohere. Because knowledge has historically been considered an attribute of the essence and not the individual persons of the Trinity, it will be necessary to examine the Trinitarian theology of Cornelius Van Til, who argues for the equal ultimacy of the one and many. There we will develop what Van Til meant by God being a "tri-conscious being." Armed with the equal ultimacy of the one and many, we will have the resources to show that the foundation of man's diversity of perspectives is ectypally reflective of the archetypal intra-Trinitarian knowledge.

Considerations provided in chapter two necessitate a discussion of both the major implications and the major critiques of general perspectivalism in chapter three. We will begin by answering the common criticism concerning the relationship between perspectivalism and relativity. In order to show that perspectivalism is not inherently relativistic, we will show that a belief in a divergence of perspectives does not necessarily lead to relativism. Further, we will contrast Frame and Poythress's perspectivalism with the relativistic systems of Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Werner Kriegelstein. While these men have developed relativistic systems that are similar in name to perspectivalism, they differ substantially in content. Having answered the charge of relativism, we will turn to a discussion of the major implications of general perspectivalism.

in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 247.

These implications will help the reader recognize the utility of perspectivalism.

Chapter four will introduce the second form of perspectivalism, triperspectivalism. The chapter will begin with a brief overview of the method of triperspectivalism. This overview is designed merely to introduce the system in order that the Trinitarian basis may be examined. A further exploration of the depths of triperspectivalism will await chapter six. After the brief introduction to the method, we will propose the Trinity as the foundational triad. In order to do so, we will need to first address two potential criticisms: first, whether Frame really believes perspectivalism is Trinitarian; and second, whether referring to the Trinity as perspectival entails Sabellianism. Having answered these criticisms, we will explore both perichoresis and simplicity as the models of unity in diversity whereby Frame grounds his perspectival groupings. But in order to ground perspectivalism in both simplicity and perichoresis, we will have to fashion a model by which we can relate perichoresis and simplicity together. We will introduce the need for such a perichoretic-simplicity model by examining the weakness of the simplicity model of Thomas Aquinas. By examining the Trinitarian shortfalls of his simplicity account, we will set the foundation for the next chapter in which we will develop a perichoretic-simplicity model.

Chapter five will show the benefit of adopting the perichoretic-simplicity model by comparing it to Aquinas's understanding of the nature and persons of the Godhead. We will maintain that perichoretic-simplicity is beneficial for the following reasons: first, it is born out of Trinitarian revelation; second, it is capable of maintaining proper predication (contra Aquinas's model); third, it provides a foundation for unity; fourth, it shows the similarity of function in the unity and diversity of the *persons* and *attributes* of the Godhead; fifth, it maintains the aseity of God; sixth, it is the product of absolute personality; seventh, it is not entirely a-historical in that Duns Scotus offered some of the fundamentals necessary for such a system. After arguing for the model, we will summarize

the implications of perichoretic-simplicity, showing that the product of the model is consonant with how Frame and Poythress describe perspectival relationships. As such, this chapter is critical in showing that perspectivalism is ectypally reflective of the archetype of God's attributes (simplicity) and persons (perichoresis).

Chapter six will continue showing the Trinitarian basis for triperspectivalism by making explicit the three reasons Frame and Poythress believe creation necessarily reflects the Trinitarian Creator. First, God's nature as *absolute* implies ectypal manifestation of his archetypal nature. Second, God's work of imaging in man and creation provides extensive reasons to seek analogies of his nature in creation. Third, God's creation as the product of his speech implies Trinitarian reflection into creation. That Frame and Poythress seek vestiges of the Trinity in creation is ultimately sourced out of the pioneering work of Herman Bavinck on *vestigia trinitatis*. Therefore, we will develop Bavinck's views, showing how Frame and Poythress follow his lead in developing the Trinitarian analogies. Having established the foundations for *vestigia*, we will turn to the ectypal manifestation of the Trinity in perspectival dynamics. These dynamics are the core attributes of perspectival groups, and they will show the foundational relationship of the perichoretic-simplicity model to perspectivalism. To finish the chapter, we will seek to show the way Frame and Poythress derive their triads. In doing so, we will see that the derivation is not random or unreflective, but is intentionally Trinitarian, aligning the various triads according to the nature, persons, and acts of the triune God. Here we will see that not every triad in Frame is perspectival. Further, not every triad is built upon lordship. Instead, there are at least three ways of deriving perspectival triads, for which the ultimate commonality is the unity in diversity of the triune Godhead.

Chapter seven focuses on Frame's most prolific triad, the lordship triad. Because many of Frame's triads are a reflection of his analysis of God's lordship in triperspectival fashion, we will develop and defend that model. We will seek first to show that authority, control, and presence are accurate reflections of the theme of

lordship. We will observe this theme in God's covenants, his acts, and biblical descriptions of his character. That each of the lordship characteristics is associated predominantly with one of the members of the Trinity is critical to perspectivalism, and it shows the connection between perspectivalism and God's Trinitarian nature. While each characteristic is not exclusive to one member of the Trinity, the Father is predominantly identified as the authority, the Son as the controller, and the Spirit as the presence of God. It is this foundation that provides the key to understanding the majority of Frame's triads. As such, this chapter argues that Frame is seeking to understand creation through the lens (i.e., perspective) of God's lordship, which is necessarily Trinitarian.

Chapter eight will seek to show that while perspectivalism is Trinitarian it is not yet sufficiently Trinitarian. More specifically, we will argue that perspectivalism is not Trinitarian enough in that the method eliminates all order and priority, yet order and priority are fundamental to the Trinitarian persons. On this basis we will develop a model of processional perspectivalism, which images the order and priority of persons. We will apply processional perspectivalism to two issues in order to show the benefit of the system. First, we will apply it to the knowledge triad in order to show why God's norms maintain a priority over all of life. Second, we will apply it to Frame's apologetics, seeking to show that Frame's position on presuppositional apologetics and the transcendental argument are sourced out of a perspectivalism that dismisses priority and order. If priority and order are reintroduced through processional perspectivalism, Frame's criticisms of Van Til's presuppositional approach are considerably reduced. Overall, this chapter seeks to refine perspectival methodology in an even more robust Trinitarian direction.

Because of the limitations necessary for this dissertation, it is not possible to cover all of the important aspects of perspectivalism here. Much work needs yet to be done, so the final chapter will conclude the dissertation by focusing on research questions yet to be adequately answered.

TIMOTHY MILLER DEFENDS AND FURTHER develops the foundationally Trinitarian, multiperspectival theological method of John Frame and Vern Poythress, an eminently useful, historically Reformed tool for understanding all created reality.

“This is a highly stimulating work that makes a very helpful and useful contribution in its argument for utilizing the Trinitarian processions in a Frame/Poythress perspectival account of knowledge and apologetics. In terms of originality, I think the meat of the work lies there, and good meat it is too.”

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