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Cody MacMillan

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MacMilling@csl.edu

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Letter from the Chairman: Why We Are Not our Own

Cody MacMillin

In his book, *You Are Not Your Own*, author and professor Alan Noble argues that the fundamental lie of modernity is the one which says we belong to ourselves.¹ He is concerned with our society's increased emphasis on individualism, and he asserts that it requires serious and intentional effort to remember how we belong to Christ. This truth, Noble says, is not just a doctrine to which we must subscribe but a reality which touches every part of our lives.² It runs contrary to the narratives of self-discovery and self-ownership that we are surrounded by today, and it is the means by which the Church asserts herself as a community which is set apart from the rest of the world.

In light of Noble's argument, the question for us becomes the following: what does it mean to belong to Christ? How is it that our lives are touched by the reality of the Gospel, and how do we live out our Christian identity so that others can see Jesus more clearly? Most immediately, I believe there are three ways that we can see Noble's argument come to bear, each of which have their roots in the Scriptures as well as the ancient creeds of the Church. We are not our own and we belong to Christ because Christ is our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, and these truths bear significance for how we see ourselves today.

Christ our Creator

Jesus Christ is our Creator because He is the Maker of all things. He was the Word in the beginning which spoke the universe into existence. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:3) Christ is also the Sustainer of all things, the One in whom all things hold together and continue to have their being. (Col 1:16–17) When we combine these two realities, we realize that Christ as the Maker and Sustainer of all things is also the Owner of the things He makes and sustains. "The sea is his, for He made it," declares the Psalmist. "And the heights of the mountains are his also." (Ps 95:5–6) Jesus is in complete and total possession of the things He creates. All of Creation is contingent upon his Word, and as his creatures, humanity is utterly dependent on Him for every breath we take.

Christ our Redeemer

Jesus Christ is our Redeemer because He reclaims us from our sinful condition. Jesus goes to the Cross to seek and to save the lost, (Luke 19:10) and in so doing He marks his territory against sin, death, and the devil. Jesus delivers us from the devil's dark dominion and into his kingdom through the forgiveness of our sins. (Col 1:13–14)

He is the one mediator between God and man who gave Himself as a ransom for all. (1 Tim 2:5–6) Because Christ is our Redeemer, we know that we have been bought with a price and are therefore valuable in his eyes. (1 Cor 6:19–20) We have been justified by Jesus and brought into right standing with the Father through this redeeming work. We receive the gift of this work in faith, (Rom 3:25) and we are grateful for how Christ has shown us the Father's grace.

Christ our Sanctifier

Jesus Christ did not save us for our own sake but for the sake of the whole world. He has adopted us into his family through Baptism, (Rom 8:15–17) and He has given us the gift of his Spirit, in whom we are constantly being formed into his own image and likeness. We are now imitators of Christ, so that our entire way of life belongs to Him. With the help of his Spirit, we walk as Christ walked, we talk as Christ talked, and we love as Christ loved. As Spirit-filled members of his Church, we also recognize that we imitate Christ among the whole communion of saints. We belong to the Body of Christ as members of it, (1 Cor 12:27) and as the Body of Christ we belong to Christ as his Bride. (Eph 5:22–24) As Christ's Bride, we submit to Christ in every way, loving and serving one another while proclaiming the Good News of his reign and rule. We do so eagerly waiting for the day when all of creation will be restored.

We belong to Christ because He has made us, saved us, and now walks with us in every step we take. There is no way to run from his presence, nor is there a way to outrun his grace. We live our lives in humble submission to Christ because He is the basis for our identities. We are not our own. We are not made by our own hard work and determination. We are not saved by our own moral scruples and sense of superiority. We do not find our own paths but rather follow the path that He has laid before us. It is a path to the Cross, one which reminds us of our utter dependency on Him.

In the articles and materials that follow, this year's edition of Grapho provides further reflection on these truths for the good of the Church. On behalf of the entire publication team, we thank you for your time spent reading and considering how God is speaking through them. We pray that these words would encourage, challenge, and inspire you in your ministry. You are not your own, you were bought with a price, and you too belong to Christ. Amen.

Cody MacMillin
Student Publications Chairman
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¹ Noble, Alan. *You Are Not Your Own: Belonging to God in an Inhuman World*. Intervarsity Press. 2021. p.4
² Ibid, p.6