EDITORIAL

It seems everyone was right. Scotland, post-referendum, is a 'different place'—and so it the UK, although 'different' in what ways it is still too early to tell. In terms of Christian responses to the results, it has been encouraging to encounter a number of thoughtful reflections on the challenges facing the church in Scotland in the new political landscape. Of course, these challenges are largely the same as they were before the referendum, but even this strikes me as encouraging. Why? Because whatever may be the reality of the government under which Christians live, we relate to it as 'resident aliens' first, and citizens second.

The book of Daniel provides a particularly apt text for this sort of reflection. From youth to old age, Daniel—and his friends, in the vignettes in which they appear—are never less than worthy servants of the empire in which they live as aliens. In fact, they are much more than that. From youth to old age, however, their lives are a continual demonstration of the fact that, for the people of God, cooperation with the regime is possible, but equally, conflict with it is inevitable.

When we first see them in as the book opens, they are hostages finding their way in a new language, exposed to a new culture, perhaps even so relishing new possibilities. And yet, they are also isolated, taken from their families and segregated from their community. Lessons must already have been learned, however. Their 'education' requires of them a lifestyle which would be an affront to God. This circumstance is not part of any deliberate campaign to compromise their loyalties: on the contrary, it arises out of the empire's sincere desire for the betterment of its charges.

As the story unfolds, other sorts of relationships emerge. The parallels and echoes between the various episodes are widely noted by the commentators, but their distinctive modes of 'confrontation' are worth observing. The initial sense of benign paternalism that the Babylonian officials show their Jewish charges does not last long; neither does it plummet immediately into outright hostility.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2) provides opportunity for suprises of several kinds. The first is his seemingly unreasonable demand that not only the interpretation, but the dream itself be reported to him. (Has he forgotten it? has he only a hazy recollection to accompany his deeply troubled spirit? or is he suspicious of the interpretative powers of his 'wise men'?) The imminent destruction of the court sages endangers Daniel and his friends, too, but only as members of the company of disgraced courtiers. A further surprise, then, is Daniel's bold confidence to step into the breach (2:16), only after which he enlists his friends in urgent prayer

for God's mercy—a prayer which God graciously answers. Daniel is enabled to describe the dream and discern its meaning. Disaster to Jew and Gentile alike is averted. A third surprise slips by almost unnoticed: God has chosen the pagan king to be a recipient of divine revelation (2:29). God does work in surprising ways.

Only in the next phase, the story of the 'fiery furnace', does direct opposition to the Jews at court emerge. Every subject of the king—regardless of 'people, nation, or language'—is required to give obeisance to the image erected by Nebuchadnezzar. It is a measure designed to stoke the king's megalomania, rather than to oppress subject peoples. Still, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego alone refuse and thereby provoke the king's wrath after the matter has been reported to him by affronted 'Chaldeans', that is, Nebuchanezzar's fellow Babylonians. These three friends, like Daniel, have the confidence in God to place loyalty to the God whom they serve ahead of whatever is due to the king. The expression of their confidence is stirring and profound:

> O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter, for if so it must be, our God whom we serve is able to save us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will save us from your power, O king. But even if He does not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the statue of gold that you have set up. (Dan. 3:16b-18, JPS Tanakh)

Their confidence resides not in some favourable outcome but in the living God alone, no matter what risk their rightly-ordered loyalties bring.

The next moment of confontation in Daniel 5 tightens further the focus of the opposition. Another king, Belshazzar, holds a 'great feast', and during it calls for the 'vessels of gold' from the Jerusalem temple. It's difficult to see this as anything other than a calculated vaunting of this king over the God of that temple, and necessarily involves the desecration of the vessels devoted to His worship (cf. Dan. 6:4). The confrontation here, then, is not so much with the people of God, as with God himself. The 'writing on the wall' appears, and marks the end of Belshazzar's reign, and his life. Like his father Nebuchadnezzar, he is the recipient of divine revelation. But unlike the revelatory glimpse given Nebuchadnezzar, a personal disclosure made public which affirmed his human rule in long perspective, this one to Belshazzar—now public from the outset, but ending in the most personal manner possible—puts an end to human pretensions and is realized in a moment (Dan. 6:30).

The last of the 'court tales' takes the conflict between the people of God and regime to its most overt expression of hostility. There are resonances with a previous story, here with the legislation which embroils the

friends in opposing the state (Daniel 3). This time, however, the statute framed for 'Darius the Mede' is expressly designed to ensnare the devout Daniel at the very point of his worship of God (Dan. 6:12-13). On this occasion, the confession of confidence does not come from Daniel, as it had previously from his friends. Rather, Daniel remains silent while Darius speaks for him: 'Your God, whom you serve continually, will deliver you!' (Dan. 6:16). And He does. Still, the implication of Daniel's silence in the face of the threat tallies with the overt confession of his friends' speech at an earlier time: the nature of a presumed outcome does not influence the unswerving loyalty of God's people to their God.

The elderly Daniel's declaration comes only in the aftermath of deliverance. Given the way the narrative has unfolded—with the cynical legislation expressly framed to make Daniel's guilt inevitable—his affirmation to Darius gives pause (Dan. 6:22). Not only is Daniel innocent before his heavenly King, he asserts that his necessarily defiant actions in giving worship exclusively to God preserved the welfare of his earthly king as well.[1] There is an implication that had Daniel complied with the law, worse would have resulted for the king and, presumably, those he governed.

There is, then, a broad spectrum along which the engagement between God's people, living in a foreign land, and their ruling power takes place. From unwitting but misplaced 'benevolence', to deliberate and provocative oppression, and at each point along the way, the lesson for God's people remains the same: faithful living can only be maintained and nurtured by giving primary loyalty to Kingdom living. And in that sense, although the referendum has changed much—and the process of change rumbles on—for the church, the priority is not the cultivation of cooperation or influence, but remains the gospel and its claims, laden as that commitment is with risk and perhaps even danger.

[1] In fact, the Aramaic *ḥăbûlâ*, 'harm', which Daniel did not do to the king provides a precise counterpart to the 'injury' (root *ḥbl*) that the lions did *not* do to Daniel.

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Genesis and the Justice of God: The Canonical Trajectory of Divine Judgement

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A proper understanding of the trans-canonical theme of divine violence begins with the theology of Genesis.[1] As it establishes the theological groundwork for the canonical narrative of divine redemption, Genesis naturally takes a place of primacy in Christian theology. Its resounding theology displays the wrath of God to be both a retributive response to the sin of humanity while it is simultaneously the restorative effort of redemption. Because God is holy and just and the world is evil and opposed to God, he must judge. However, the divine will is not simply to judge but to restore. In Genesis, the wrath of God is the purposeful energy of redemption, wherein God acts as the judge who rectifies injustice. The love of God then is not action opposed to God's judgment, but it is God's love that drives the movement of his justice forward.[2] The divine will is such because God is love and desires the flourishing and blessing of his creation (1 John 4:16-18). Ultimately, the sustained movement of God's justice and love establishes a canonical trajectory that climaxes in the person and restorative work of Jesus Christ.

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[1] The original version of this paper was first presented at the *Genesis and Christian Theology Conference* at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, on 15 July 2009.

[2] One proposed hermeneutic rejects the Old Testament revelation of God's violence as an 'anthropological' convention in favour of the exclusivity of mercy and theological non-violence in the teaching of Jesus Christ. Michael Hardin writes, 'The God of the Bible is not to be found in the theology of the biblical writers, but in their anthropology as that "voice" that haunts the edge of their violent structuring.' And he goes on to say, 'I am asserting that biblical revelation posits violence and its correlates (substitution, satisfaction, reciprocity) as an anthropological datum, not a divine one. This is the revelatory aspect of Jesus' death and resurrection. It exposes the lie about "divine" violence.' 'Out of the Fog: New Horizons for Atonement Theory,' in *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ*, ed. by Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 61. However, such an interpretation moves forward at the expense of a theological interpretation of divine action in the Old Testament and its vital place in the gospel of Jesus Christ, thereby distorting the logic of divine redemption.

SCENES OF DIVINE JUDGMENT IN GENESIS

In the primary scenes of judgment in Genesis 1–19—the Fall, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah—God actively and consistently demands the satisfaction of his justice in his role as creator. But these scenarios reveal God's justice to involve more than simple punishment.[3] His outpouring of wrath and his administering of justice are consistently forward moving, stabilizing and restoring. His violence, then, is not vindictive, only concerned with vengeance, but is ultimately merciful, leading to the universal blessing through Abraham, which provides important grounding for the canonical theme of divine justice.

The opening creation account in Genesis 1 explicitly introduces God's intent to bless creation and humanity (1:28; cf. 5:2). Yet Adam and Eve's act of rebellion against him introduces the absolute and active nature of God's justice into the biblical narrative. God's response to sin is judgment; he recognizes a curse upon the serpent and the ground, and Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden, ultimately to die (3:3,19).[4] Cursing in the unfolding narrative negates God's original action of blessing, displaying the gravity of sin's entrance into the world. All subsequent texts of judgment in the Bible find their grounding in this original rebellion (i.e., Rom. 5:12-21). Sin proves intolerable in God's creation, and he, accordingly, delivers judgment. But he does not forsake his vision of a blessed creation at rest (2:2).[5] The divine intent to save is inevitably bound to the act of judgment.

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3 Stephen Travis writes: 'In the Old Testament judgement (whether executed by God or by the king as his agent) is not a matter of dispassionately dispensing justice, but of establishing or restoring right relationships. It is action in favour of the wronged or the poor as much as it is about action against the wicked.' *Christ and the Judgement of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution in New Testament Thought* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009), p. 20.

4 According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'The curse is the affirmation of the fallen world by the Creator: man must live in the fallen world; man has his way, he must live like God in his sicut deus world. That is the curse. He may live in it. He is not without the Word of God, even though it is the wrathful, repelling, cursing, Word of God. This is the promise. Thus Adam lives between curse and promise.' *Creation and Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3/ Temptation*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 83.

5 On this point, Bonhoeffer again provides clarifying insight: 'God views his work and is satisfied with it; this means that God loves his work and therefore wills to preserve it. Creation and preservation are two aspects of the one activity of God. It cannot be otherwise than that God's work is good, that he does not reject or destroy but loves and preserves it. God sees his work; comes to rest; he sees that it is good' (ibid., p. 25).

At the very proclamation of God's curse upon the serpent in 3:15, a promise of restoration is given wherein the seed of the woman will one day crush the head of the serpent. This act of judgment coming forth from Eve's seed will presumably destroy the original source of sin in the created order. Thus, in the midst of his judgment, God began the act of merciful redemption, a cosmic struggle between the serpent and the seed of the woman.

In commenting on the curse of Genesis 3:19, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes,

> Now the enmity towards the serpent, the painful community of man and woman and the cursed ground become divine mercy. God has mercy on their ability to live in division. Man can only live as the one who is preserved in division, and he can live only on the way to death. He cannot escape life. Death, this having to return to dust, which burdens man as the ultimate, the most terrible curse, is now to man who lives in merciful preservation, a promise of the God of grace. Adam must understand this death of turning into dust as the death of his present state of death, of his *sicut deus* being. The death of death—that is the promise of this curse.[6]

By not binding humanity to an eternal curse and allowing his redemptive purpose to succeed, death itself is God's merciful confrontation of creation (3:22-24). Accordingly, 'the divine prohibition placed on entry to the garden is an act of grace designed to ensure that man's fallen condition would not be perpetuated eternally.'[7] Therefore, punishment is levied against humanity (and all creation), while simultaneously allowing for its restoration and blessing.

The story of Cain and Abel which follows in Genesis 4 reinforces the escalating and cataclysmic results of sin, namely, human violence. As judgment for murder, God pronounced Cain cursed and banished him from the land (4:11). But God also displayed his commitment to restoration through Eve's seed with the provision of Seth. Yet Genesis 5 transitions to the story of Noah in chs. 6-9 with the observation that 'every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time' (6:5). This pronouncement of humanity's total degradation and giving

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6 Ibid., p. 86.

7 Dumbrell, p. 37. Further, commenting on Genesis 3:24, R.R. Reno considers the expulsion from the Garden as a divine blessing: 'As the human race departs, God can begin to formulate a strategy that redeems rather than annihilates the transgressor. As humanity moves away from the presence of God, the conditions emerge in which God can come to humanity…'. *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), p. 97.

away to sin followed the act between the sons of God and the daughters of humans (6:1-4). God issued the verdict that the entire human race was thoroughly evil (6:5), characterized as 'full of violence' (6:11). He said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth' (6:13). Thus, the sin and violence of humanity was the catalyst for God's wrath of the Flood and the total destruction of all living things (6:17).

But God's wrathful action of destroying by the Flood was simultaneously a means of re-creating and was intentionally salvific. The Flood was not a failed attempt to eradicate evil; it was the necessary measure to preserve the hope of salvation. 'God checked the chaotic powers by which the entire earth was already engulfed, before they also brought Noah and those with him to destruction.'[8] Through Noah, the restoration of humanity was made possible, and, following his exit from the ark, God blessed him and his sons and commissioned them with the same creation mandate of Gen.1:28, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth' (9:1). With his destruction complete, God covenanted to never again destroy the earth by a flood (8:21; 9:11), and thus signified a major transition in the movement of redemption.[9]

According to Gerhard von Rad, reading the Flood story as a theological account is foundational for understanding its purpose. Dismantling an anthropocentric interpretation of God's wrath, he writes,

> It shows God as the one who judges sin, and it stands at the beginning of the Bible as the eternally valid word about God's deadly anger over sin. Thus it protects every succeeding word of grace from any kind of innocuousness…; it undergirds the understanding of God's will for salvation as a pure miracle. Every one of the progressive revelations of salvation springs from God's heart, with whose radical anger over sin man can reckon, and not with the whim of an idol. Such a miracle is the choice of Noah and thus the preservation by divine patience of the whole Noachic aeon.[10]

For von Rad, God's judgment is not an atrocity but a 'miracle' in that through it, he saves. Judgment is the necessary energy of salvation. Knowledge of God's wrath is necessary for knowledge of his saving

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8 G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. edn (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), p. 128.

9 The post-flood era presumably ushers in the time of divine 'forbearance' as defined by Paul in Romans 3:25; von Rad writes that 'a divine will of healing forbearance is at work' (*Genesis*, p. 134).

10 Ibid., p. 129.

grace.[11] A theological reading of the Flood clarifies the unfolding role of God's wrath in redemption and the saving intent of his total destruction (6:17; 7:21-23).[12]

After the flood, sin continued to pervade humanity (8:21). Noah became drunk and Ham observed his 'father's nakedness' (9:20-23).[13] Canaan was, thereby, cursed, and as a result the majority of Israel's enemies (not least of which were the Egyptians and Canaanites) descended from him. Following chs. 6-10, the post-flood sin grew more extensive and more destructive. All the people of the earth gathered together with one language at Shinar to build a city with a tower to reach the heavens so as to, in their own words, 'make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth' (11:4). God intervened in their attempt and confused their language and 'scattered them over the face of the whole earth' (11:9). God thwarted this affront against himself, yet it was an act with salvific vision. The judgment diversified humanity and thereby limited its ability to once again undertake a universal rebellion against God.[14] But immediately following this event, God revealed his intent for this new world reality of scattered, confused, and fragmented humanity.

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[11] Accordingly, David Fergusson writes, 'If God's love and justice are to remain integrated, then we must think of rejection as itself a function of God's love.' 'Will the Love of God Finally Triumph?', in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed. by Kevin Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 186–202 (quote on p. 198).

[12] Claus Westermann emphasizes the important theological relationship of 'total destruction' and salvation in the flood event, when he writes, 'It is something peculiar to human existence, which distinguishes human being from beast, that a person can conceive of the possibility of total destruction. And so a completely new dimension enters human existence: the continuation of existence because of a saving action. Salvation by an act of God, so important a religious phenomenon, is grounded in the primeval event of the flood story' in *Genesis: An Introduction*, trans. John Scullion, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 52.

[13] For a helpful account of Ham's sin and Canaan's curse, see John Bergsma and Scott Hahn, 'Noah's Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27)', *JBL*, 124/1 (2005), 25–40.

[14] Reno notes the connection between the judgment of Babel to the judgments at the Garden and the Flood, 'The confusion of the languages is like the expulsion from the garden and the flood. Just as the punishment of death puts a limit on the downward spiral of corruption and prevents us from having the time to purify our devotion to the serpent's lie into the spiritual project of pure negation, so also does the confusion of the languages bring an end to the building of the tower. Unable to communicate, human beings are no longer capable of combining their wills into worldwide action' (134).

The proceeding genealogy of 11:10-32 leads directly to the new character Abram, the promise of restoration in the aftermath of Babel.[15] And thus the universal judgment at Babel is mirrored with universal blessing in the election of Abraham. The divine plan of redemption that originated in the garden is now clarified: God is sovereignly moving, at times violently, in human history to restore his creation's blessing through his elect seed. In a direct response to the scattered nations of Babel, God established a covenant to bless all nations in and through Abraham (12:1-3, 17:4-6).[16]

Following the establishment of the Abrahamic covenant in chs. 12-17, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah's judgment in 18:16-19:29 introduced a marked shift in the action of God's violence. God, Yahweh, revealed his intent to judge Sodom and Gomorrah to Abraham; 'I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him' (RSV, 18:19).[17] 'Righteousness and justice' (*ṣĕdāqâ ûmišpāṭ*) are here distinguished as central concepts for understanding the role of Abraham and his seed as he carries out the divine mission.

The Genesis writer highlighted the role of Abraham as an intermediary; he exercised his prophetic role in his inquiry into Yahweh's justice (18:22-33).[18] The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was 'great' and 'grievous'

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15 Wenham notes, 'The brevity of this genealogy is a reminder that God's grace constantly exceeds his wrath' (*Genesis 1-15*, p. 254).

16 R.W.L. Moberly's understanding of the concept of 'blessing' differs considerably from such interpreters as von Rad, Westermann, and Childs. He writes: '[T]he supposition that those who invoke Abraham in blessing actually receive the blessing invoked is a non sequitur that goes well beyond the meaning of the Genesis text. The textual concern is to assure Abraham that he really will be a great nation, and the measure of that greatness is that he will be invoked on the lips of others as a model of desirability. The condition of other nations in their own right is not in view, beyond their having reason not to be hostile to Abraham.' *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 155. Regardless of how 'blessing' is interpreted, it remains a foundational theological motif for cosmic salvation and restoration.

17 Concerning the special status of Abraham in Genesis 18, see Ed Noort, 'For the Sake of Righteousness. Abraham's Negotiations with YHWH as Prologue to the Sodom Narrative: Genesis 18:16-33', in *Sodom's Sin: Genesis 18-19 and its Interpretations*, ed. by Ed Noort and Eibert Tigchelaar, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 3–16 (esp. p. 5).

18 See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, pp. 45, 50; cf., Mark Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009) pp. 25-26.

before God (18:20), but Abraham pleaded with him not to destroy the righteous along with the unrighteous, thus presuming that the unrighteous do indeed deserve the wrath of God (18:22-33). Not even ten righteous ones could be found, but God sent messengers to rescue Lot and his family from the coming destruction. As Bill Arnold writes,

> Abraham boldly stepped up to barter with the Judge of all the earth but his strategy is turned upside down, as he learns instead that he has underestimated the mercy of God. In the end, Yahweh is more merciful than Abraham could have imagined, and the encounter becomes a lesson in intercession for Israel's model ancestor.[19]

Yahweh established that he is indeed judge of the world and proved that his judgment is not only righteous but also merciful.[20] In the midst of his just wrath, he will save the righteous despite their sparse numbers, thus highlighting the justice of divine wrath in the process of redemption. The salvific nature of God's 'righteousness and justice' in the seed of Abraham is then displayed in the proceeding judgment.

Divine messengers made it clear to Lot that God's 'punishment' (√*sph*) was imminent (19:15). Total destruction, here only directed against a particular socio-political people group, was again the result of divine judgment (19:25). Yet in the midst of it, 'the LORD was merciful to [Lot's family]' (19:16). The narrative of destruction concludes in 19:29, 'So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.' Concerning the divine 'motivation' to rescue Lot from the coming destruction, Ed Noort writes, 'God remembered Abraham and therefore Lot was rescued. According to this voice, Lot was not rescued because he was righteous but because he was part of Abraham's family.'[21] Abraham secured Lot's salvation from destruction, projecting his covenantal role as universal blessing forward and serving as a foundational example of the 'righteousness and justice' of God for the remaining canon of Scripture.[22] According to Nathan MacDonald, 'If we listen to Yhwh, we learn that Abraham's exchange with Yhwh teaches the kind of response

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19 Bill Arnold, *Genesis* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 183.

20 'Yhwh turns out to be far more merciful than Abraham imagines.' Nathan MacDonald, 'Listening to Abraham—Listening to YHWH: Divine Justice and Mercy in Genesis 18:16—33', *CBQ*, 66/1 (2004), 25-43 (quote on p. 40).

21 Noort, 'For the Sake of Righteousness', p. 14.

22 For example, Sodom and Gomorrah repeatedly serves as the image of God's destructive judgment in Isaiah (i.e., Isa. 1:9; 13:19; also Rom. 9:27-29).

expected from Yhwh's elect so that the divine blessing may be mediated to the nations (12:1-3).'[23] The reader is shown in narrative fashion that God always judges righteously and will continue his plan to save through his covenant with the intermediary Abraham.

The result of the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative shows that God's wrath remains active in the world but is restrained, emphasizing the redemptive role of Abraham in God's plan. Judgment is unremittingly purposeful to the end of blessing. And God's violent movements are not antithetical to his nature of love. As G. Ernest Wright states, 'God the Warrior is simply the reverse side of God the Lover or God the Redeemer. The seeking love of God is only one side of the Suzerain's activity, because, to change the figure,… divine love is a two-edged sword. It is power in action in a sinful world, and redemption is disturbing, painful, resisted.'[24] Mercy is at the centre of the acts of judgment in Genesis 1–19, and these texts of wrath are foundational for establishing the canonical trajectory of divine justice and redemption.

THEOLOGY OF JUSTICE FROM GENESIS

In light of Genesis 1–19, what is God's justice like? These scenarios display the nature of God and his unbending requirement for justice as a clear and forceful contrast between the sin of humanity and the holiness of God. Yet the distinction of God's holiness and human sinfulness, as John Webster shows, is not one of rejection but of a salvific relationship.[25] He writes,

> God's negative holiness is the destructive energy of God's positive holiness; it is the holiness of the triune God who—precisely because he wills to sustain the creature—must obliterate everything which thwarts the creature's life with God. God's holiness destroys wickedness for the same reason that we human beings destroy disease: because it attacks the creature's flourishing and is opposed to our well-being. And as the end of the eradication of disease is health, so the end of the eradication of unholiness is the creature's

[23] MacDonald, 'Listening to Abraham', p. 43.

[24] G. Ernest Wright, 'God the Warrior', *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, ed. by Ben Ollenburger (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraus, 2004), p. 87.

[25] 'Holiness is not the antithesis of relation—it does not drive God from the unholy and lock God into absolute pure separateness. Rather, God's holiness is the quality of God's relation to that which is unholy; as the Holy One, God is the one who does not simply remain in separation but comes to his people and purifies them, making them into his own possession.' *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 47; cf. Travis, *Christ and the Judgement of God*, p. 20.

consecration, that is, the creature's wholesome life in righteous fellowship with God.[26]

Thus, God's relating to his creation in holiness is not destroying it, but is saving it, albeit through 'destructive energy'.[27] According to the nature of God's judgment as displayed in Genesis 1–19, God refused from the beginning to cut off humanity from himself and undertook the process of restoring his original blessing, forcefully removing the curse of death by relating with his creation.[28] God's love is thus evident to the world by his just retributive *and* restorative relating with it.

Divine retribution, such as in Genesis 1–19, is judicial action in which God repays a wrong made against him.[29] His retributive response to the sin of humanity is his proper response to the injustice brought against him and his creation.[30] God has rights as God. According to Nicholas Wolter-

[26] Webster, *Holiness*, p. 50.

[27] Reno interprets the wrath of Sodom and Gomorrah in correspondence with the judgment born by Christ on the cross in that it is in love that humanity is judged; 'The flaming coal of his love purifies our hearts and lips (Isa. 6:6). Like the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, in Christ we die. In judgment we are joined to the Son of Man, who is revealed on the cross (Luke 17:29). For this we should rejoice in thanksgiving rather than recoil in therapeutic horror. "The Lord scourges those who draw near to him" (Judith 8:27), because he desires fellowship with us in his holiness' (*Genesis*, p. 188).

[28] Terrence Fretheim points out the important relational aspect of God's wrath: 'For God or humans, anger is always relational, exercised with respect to others. Even more, as with human anger, the divine anger is a sign that the relationship is taken seriously (apathy is not productive of anger). God is deeply engaged in this relationship and is passionate about what happens to it. As such, anger is always *provoked* from within such relationships, testifying to the affectivity of both human beings and God.' 'Theological Reflections on the Wrath of God in the Old Testament', *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 24 (2002), 1–26 (quote on p. 7).

[29] A prominent vision in the entire canon of Scripture is that of God repaying all of humanity based upon their deeds (i.e., Deut. 32:35; Job 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; Lk. 17.26-32; Rom. 2.5-11, etc.).

[30] Klaus Koch argued that a theology of retribution does not exist in the Old Testament but that good or bad circumstances are the intrinsic results of obedience or sin. Yet Koch's conclusions seem to neglect a full reading of Old Testament accounts of God's action of judgment and do not consider the witness of the Torah. See Klaus Koch, 'Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?', in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. by James Crenshaw, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), pp. 57-87; cf. Travis, *Christ and the Judgement of God*, pp. 13-17 and H.G.L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root NQM and the Function of the NQM-Texts in the Context of Divine Rev-*

storff, 'The assumption of Israel's writers that God holds us accountable for doing justice has the consequence that when we fail to do justice, we wrong God. We not only fail in our *obligations* to God. We *wrong* God, deprive God of that to which God has a *right*.'[31] Thus, when God's rights are violated by humanity, he has rights of retribution against humanity. As H.G.L. Peels writes,

> If it is said of this God, who is King, that He avenges himself, this can no longer be considered to be indicative of an evil humour, a tyrannical capriciousness, or an eruption of rancour. God's vengeance is kingly vengeance. If He takes vengeance, He does so as the highest authority exercising punishing justice. The vengeance of God is the action of God-as-King in the realization of his sovereign rule. This action is directed against those who offend God's majesty through transgression against his honour, his justice or his people.[32]

God's actions at the Fall, Flood, Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah are just and within his rights because of the great injustice made against him as king and creator.

However, restorative justice, judicial action that brings healing and peace, does not preclude retributive justice.[33] Divine retribution or punishment for evil is a clear motive for God's interventions of wrath. Yet his action in each of the scenes of judgment in Genesis 1–19 is forward moving toward mercy. He does not stop at punishment, but he rights the wrongs made against himself and works toward full restoration. Accordingly, divine judgments are not retroactive or failed attempts but, rather, redemption in action. As Terence Fretheim writes, 'God's anger is never an end in itself, but is always exercised in the service of God's more comprehensive *salvific* purposes for creation…. Generally speaking, wrath may be considered God's circumstantial will that stands in the service of

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elation in the Old Testament, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 302-5, for a refutation of Koch's argument.

31 N. Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 91. He further states, 'God's right to hold us accountable for doing justice, and God's right to our obedience when God does in fact hold us accountable, are assumed by Israel's writers to be grounded in God's excellence' (p. 94).

32 Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, p. 278. Contra James Crenshaw in 'The Reification of Divine Evil', *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 28 (2001), 327–32. He states that 'a cruel streak exists in the depiction of God within the Bible. The overwhelming evidence permits no other conclusion' (p. 327).

33 See Christopher Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) for an introduction to the biblical concept of restorative justice.

God's ultimate will for life and salvation.'[34] Restorative justice necessarily includes the retributive component of God's wrath.[35] Restoration is possible because God rectifies injustice. And there is indeed no concept of mercy without justice. Genesis 1–19 shows that God's judgment and will to save are not two dichotomous events in the narrative but are bound together in unison. The end result of God's judgment shows that it is both a retributive *and* restorative action.

Ultimately, Genesis 1–19 depicts divine wrath and violence as the fundamentally necessary means by which God saves the world. God's wrath cannot be separated from his intent to save; divine violence accomplishes redemption. 'God is wrathful and judges and punishes as He shows mercy, and indeed for His mercy's sake, because without this He would not be really and effectively merciful.'[36] Therefore, one cannot deemphasize the wrath of God in favour of his mercy. They are equally and indistinguishably vital in God's nature and involvement with the world. And

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34 Fretheim, 'Theological Reflections', p. 25.

35 This affirmation stands in contrast to the following interpretation: '[R]etributive justice sticks to the letter of the law, requiring its pound of flesh, demanding re-payment, compensation, an eye for an eye, in order to forgive sin. Conversely, divine restorative justice requires neither payment nor retribution…. [Divine justice] lights the way to forgiveness and restores without violence.' Sharon Baker, 'The Repetition of Reconciliation: Satisfying Justice, Mercy, and Forgiveness,' in *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ*, ed. by Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 233.

36 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 4 volumes in 13 parts (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975), II/2, p. 227. This remark is the context of Barth's theological exposition of Romans 9:13–29 and is immediately preceded by the following statement: 'The *telos* of this election is now expressly indicated.' Thus, God's salvific purpose of mercy is inseparable from his action of wrath. The above quote is immediately proceeded by: 'We now learn explicitly that God's mercy is His glory (His self-confirming and self-demonstrating essence). In His mercy (and therefore not without the justification of man) God justifies Himself, as in the revelation of His wrath. The revelation of His wrath is therefore followed by that of his mercy.' Further, 'God's sentence of rejection on Israel is not a final word, not the whole Word of God, but only the foreword to God's promise of His glory later to be revealed on this shadow-Israel. The witnesses of this final and whole Word of God, of the glory of God in its revelation speaking irrefutably for itself, are called in v. 23 the "vessels of mercy" in the same special sense in which in v. 15 and v. 18 Moses was designated an object of the divine mercy' (all quotes from p. 227). Here Barth distinguishes the 'foreword' of God as wrath and the 'final and whole Word of God' as mercy.

this coherent movement in the biblical narrative culminates in the revelation of God as 'just and the justifier' in Christ (Rom. 3:26).[37]

JUSTICE THROUGH CHRIST

In the context of the canon, the trajectory of God's justice as established in Genesis runs consistently through the entire Old Testament directly into the New Testament. As this storyline is traced, the forward movement of God's justice and mercy climaxes in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection.[38]

The original mediatorial role undertaken by Abraham in Genesis is fulfilled in Christ who secured the salvation of his people by satisfying the demands of God's righteousness and justice. In fact, the Apostle Paul, embracing Isaiah's messianic theology,[39] argued that God's original intention in responding to sin was to demonstrate his justice in Christ:

> God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—

[37] As Tony Lane writes, 'Belief in the wrath of God has, as its correlate, belief in the work of Christ in dealing with that wrath' in 'The Wrath of God as an Aspect of the Love of God', *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better*, ed. by Kevin Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 158.

[38] According to Peels, 'A clear line runs from the judgment prophecy of the Old Testament to Jesus' eschatological preaching. Consistent with this, the judgment of God receives an important place in the New Testament kerygma. In Christ this judgement is anticipated and principally fulfilled. He drinks the cup of wrath. On Golgotha the seriousness of God's vengeance is made fully evident. Christ's death for sin means liberation and life for the people of God; the rejection of Christ's work entails eternal death. The Resurrected One is He who rules as king, until He brings all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25). He stands before the door as the avenging Judge (Jas. 5:1-9). The Lamb and the Lion are one (Rev. 5:5f.)' (*The Vengeance of God*, p. 310).

[39] Isaiah reveals that although God's demand for justice is unremitting, an explicit provision of satisfaction would embrace the collective guilt and just punishment of his people: 'Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed' (53:4-5). In accordance with this theology, the Psalmist proclaimed that the meaning of the combined elements of God's wrath and mercy is directed toward the Messianic promise; 'Kiss his son, or he will be angry and you and your ways will be destroyed, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him' (Ps. 2:12).

> he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:25-26)[40]

God planned from the beginning, namely Genesis, to satisfy his justice in the incarnation of Christ, consistent with the original blessing of Abraham:

> Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Gal. 3:7-9)

Abraham's salvific role as mediator is fulfilled in Jesus, who took the sins of the world on himself and satisfied the wrath of the Father with his atonement. Accordingly, John writes, 'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins' (1 John 4:10). Thus, love is the driving force of the incarnation of Christ and his final and perfect punishment, given once for all (Rom 6:10). Divine wrath and love are revealed in Christ's death at the cross and salvation is secured by his resurrection; 'He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification' (Rom. 4:25).

However, love and mercy do not necessarily 'trump' God's wrath in Christ, but Christ satisfies God's wrath on behalf of those who will believe.[41] As T.F. Torrance explains, 'Reconciliation between God and

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[40] Karl Barth writes in his Romans commentary, 'Everywhere there has been forgiveness of sins, the miraculous outpouring upon men of the wealth of the divine mercy, signs of the forbearance and longsuffering of God (ii. 4). Everywhere men are being healed of the divine wounds. But it is through Jesus that we have been enabled to see that this is so; through Him the righteousness of God has been exposed and presented to us; through Him we have been exposed and presented to us; through Him we have been placed so that we can apprehend history… as God sees it, that is to say, in the light of His dissolving mercy; through Him we know the mercy of God to be the end of all things and the new beginning, and we know what this means for us—it means that we must be led unto repentance (ii. 4, vi. 2, 3).' *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 106.

[41] Elmer Martens: 'Through the cross, peace is established. Love has trumped wrath.' 'Toward Shalom: Absorbing the Violence', in *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Richard Hess and Elmer Martens (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), pp. 33-58 (quote on p. 55). Rather, it seems that love and wrath are inseparable. According to Wolterstorff, 'Yahweh loves justice. Yahweh's pursuit of justice and Yahweh's injunction

man issues in peace when the wrath of God is removed. That wrath is not removed simply by setting it aside, for that would be the setting of the love of God aside, nay, the setting of God himself aside. The wrath of God can be removed only through the righteous infliction of the divine judgement against our sin.' He continues,

> Now it is important to see that we cannot talk here of his mercy as triumphing over his wrath, or of the victory of his love over his judgement—that would be to introduce a schizophrenia into God which is impossible, and to misunderstand the wrath of God and the meaning of the penalty or righteous infliction that is due to sin. Punishment and wrath are terms speaking of the wholly godly resistance of God to sin, the fact that the holy love of God excludes all that is not holy love. Sin must be judged, guilt must be expiated by its judgement and complete condemnation, else God is not God, and God is not love.[42]

In this vein, God's wrath is no longer a reality for the reconciled, but it remains a reality for the irreconciled.[43] Just as Yahweh directly dispensed his wrath in Genesis, Jesus promises to dispense wrath and pass judgment at the consummation of his redemption.[44] Jesus self-consciously adopts the role of Yahweh as wrathful judge of the world and aligns himself with the theology of judgment in Genesis, drawing a direct correlation between the parallel days of destruction of Noah and Lot and the coming judgment of the Son of Man upon the world (Luke 17:26-32).[45] And according

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to practice justice are grounded in Yahweh's love' (Justice, p. 82). Cf. Peels, 'In contrast to modern language usage, vengeance and love in the Old Testament do not form a contradictory wordpair. On the one side, as the research indicated, God's vengeance has nothing to do with a spontaneous, wrathful or hateful urge to destroy. On the other side, the love of God is not just good affections, but it can be expressed as wrath and jealousy; God's love is his dynamic, holy love' (*The Vengeance of God*, p. 293).

42 T.F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. by Robert T. Walker, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), p. 154.

43 According to Rom. 5:9-11, 'Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!'

44 Paul proclaims that God 'has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead' (Acts 17:31).

45 Also note the importance of Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot in Peter's theology of divine judgment. According to 2 Peter 2:5-9, '[I]f [God] did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he con-

to Revelation, the Son of God is one who comes as a conqueror, passing judgment and wrath upon the world; 'They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"' (Rev. 6:16-17; also, 3:21, 6:2). Thus, God's love provides an atonement to reconcile all who will believe, yet his wrath necessarily remains on those who do not.

But the ultimate end of the wrath of God is a 'New Heaven and New Earth' where the original blessing is restored, and all the wrongs of the world are righted (Revelation 21).[46] The final, eschatological picture of the Bible is peace, looking to the day when God will settle the disputes of the nations (Mic. 4:1-3) and when all wars cease (Isa. 2:4).[47] Jesus as Messiah will consummate the final victory of God's justice and righteousness. According to Isaiah 9:7, 'Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this'. Final peace arrives in Christ but cannot be separated from his judgment (Heb. 9:26-28). In summarizing the central role of judgment in Jesus' teaching, Marius Reiser aptly writes,

> The coming of the reign of God means the final restoration of God's good creation, and thus, at the same time, the destruction of all evil that opposes that restoration. Therefore, judgment must come as inevitably as salvation, and the prayer that the reign of God may come…includes the plea that judgment come, too. But that judgment is not only *the precondition for the final coming of salvation*; to the extent that salvation is already present in Jesus' work, judgment is at the same time *the necessary consequence of salvation*

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demned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.' Cf. Matt. 10:1-15, 11:20-24; Rom. 9:29; Jude 7; Rev. 11-7-8.

46 Fretheim states: 'God's exercise of wrath is, finally, a word of good news (for those oppressed) and bad news (for oppressors). Such wrath gives hope that evil will not have the last word; it makes a more positive future possible for those who have no other hope' ('Theological Reflections', p. 26).

47 For the pervading biblical theme of peace, see Walter Breuggeman, Peace (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001). Also, Elmer Martens, 'Toward Shalom' (see note 41).

> *rejected or despised*. That is never more clear, in Jesus' preaching, than in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:23-34). Accordingly, the gift of undeserved grace and forgiveness is the word that God speaks to human beings. The word demands a response. And the refusal to respond leaves inevitably to judgment.[48]

Ultimately, justice satisfied and mercy triumphant in the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah secure the promise of final peace and blessing.

CONCLUSION

The foundational theology of God's justice in Genesis is an ultimate movement of mercy, displayed in the full message of the canon, climaxing in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God's justice is not trumped in the end by mercy, but he mercifully satisfies his justice in Christ. 'Injustice is perforce the impairment of *shalom*. That is why God loves justice. God desires the flourishing of each and every one of God's human creatures; justice is indispensable to that. Love and justice are not pitted against each other but intertwined.'[49] Mercy is the ultimate end of divine justice and the two do not conflict or contradict in the process. Accordingly, God's justice is retributive *and* restorative. The role of divine violence, explicitly necessitated by the entrance of sin, proves to serve the final vision of universal restoration.

An answer to the apparent difficulty of divine violence is grounded in a theology synthesizing divine justice and mercy as incarnated and culminated in Christ.[50] Jesus can proclaim peace in God's kingdom and promise a restored creation solely because of his atonement and final judgment. To condemn the violent judgments of God is to disregard the full vision of Christian Scripture. One cannot laud God's mercy and repudiate his wrath. It is by their combined movement in Christ that God saves the world.

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48 Marius Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in its Jewish Context*, trans. by Linda Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), p. 323.

49 Wolterstorff, p. 82.

50 Peels provides an important reminder, 'In the Old Testament, God's vengeance and God's love are not clashing, irreconcilable descriptions. However, it is equally impossible to define the connection between these two "sequences" in a single closed theological framework. The proclamation concerning the living God ultimately and finally defies a logical systematization' (p. 294).

Human Flourishing Through Imagining Communion In Revelation 19: Confronting Evil By Incorporating Christ's Victory

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INTRODUCTION

In James K. A. Smith's recent work, *Imagining the Kingdom*, he argues that we as human creatures operate with a level of knowledge that he calls the imagination.[1] This imaginative knowing is intuitive, functioning on a subconscious level, and is developed through ritual and habit. The church's liturgy,[2] therefore, ought to reflect carefully on their repeated worship practices, as it is through these that holistic discipleship and the development of a thoroughly Christian (as opposed to secular) imagination occurs. In the history of the church one of the most formative practices for Christian discipleship and the spiritual growth of the body is the Lord's Supper. This paper will argue that practicing communion in a way that explicitly ties it to the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19 retrains our imagination, our perception of the world, to see spiritual warfare as part of a war that is already won. When Christians face the ongoing battles of temptation, trials, or systemic evil and sin, our imagi-

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1 James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Cultural Liturgies 2; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

2 By liturgy I simply mean 'formative practices'. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 24. In other words, a liturgy is a practice or more typically a set of practices that shapes and forms our character. As Smith points out, these can take place in the gathering of the church or in cultural practices like shopping or attending a football game (ibid., 25). Although I define liturgy broadly as Smith does, I will in this article focus particularly on the liturgy of Christian worship in the context of the gathered church. Here it is important to note that all churches have a liturgy, whether formally codified or not. Just try changing the order of worship at an established church to test that claim! See also n. 34, below.

nations have been trained by a martial view of the Supper to know that final victory is already won in Christ. The imagination needed for human flourishing, in this case by confronting systemic evil, is trained through tying our communion practice to Revelation 19.

FORMING THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

Building off of Volume 1 of his Cultural Liturgies project, *Desiring the Kingdom*, James Smith continues to argue in *Imagining the Kingdom* that repeated practice is what forms and shapes our identities as human beings. While in *Desiring the Kingdom* Smith presented a broad vision for understanding virtue formation as oriented primarily around action and then called for more consciously liturgical life in both the church and the university, in *Imagining the Kingdom* he digs deeper into the philosophical and anthropological roots of this understanding of character development. Sanctification, Smith argues, is a matter of forming the Christian imagination, a term he uses to describe our intuitive knowledge of and interaction with the world. Imagination gives us a 'feel for the game' type of knowledge, a knowledge that is not primarily conscious but rather rooted in our subconscious. Further, and most importantly for his project, this knowledge is formed, shaped, and trained through repeated practice, or liturgy. Liturgies are everywhere, according to Smith, and they are either secular or ecclesial. It is the responsibility of the church consciously to reflect on,[3] and perhaps re-order their liturgies and their form in order to shape and form more accurately the imaginations of the congregation.

Furthermore, this reshaping of the imagination provides tangible results for the mission of the church in real life. The church, after experiencing this reorienting of imagination through liturgy, is sent out as those who have been drawn up into the life of Christ in worship. In other words, liturgy impacts and empowers real life. We must ask, then, not only how liturgy shapes imagination but also how liturgy shapes imagination for human flourishing, for Christianity in the real world.

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[3] The word 'consciously' is important here, as Smith is not suggesting that either (a) liturgies function *ex opera operato* or that (b) the church should be uncritical in its acceptance or promotion of certain liturgical practices. Rather, liturgy cannot work without the congregation member having a conscious understanding of what is happening. Still, much of the formation happens on the subconscious level and impacts our daily lives at that level as well. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, pp. 187–90.

CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION AND COMMUNION

For Protestants, the two most imaginatively forming practices are what we call ordinances or sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both of these have the power to kinesthetically and poetically shape our intuition through our liturgical performance of them. For baptism, the vivid picture of going under the (cold) water and being brought up means on a subconscious level, in that it teaches the initiate through action that s/he is dead to sin and alive to God. This of course corresponds to Paul's explanation of baptism on an 'intellectual' level in Romans 6:1–4, but in baptism we do not simply read Romans 6:1–4 to the initiate. Instead we enact the truth of that text with them, performing the doctrinal truth described in Scripture. This is knowledge on a different level, a kinesthetic and poetic level.

The same level of knowing is present in communion. By acting out the Lord's Table, the church performs and incorporates its message, instead of just mentally assenting to it.[4] In most celebrations of the Supper, the congregation is urged to interpret it in at least two ways: (a) memorializing Christ's atonement for sin and/or (b) communicating and invoking Christ's real presence. Many clergy additionally take the opportunity beforehand to urge believers to confess and repent of their sins and to warn unbelievers of the danger of taking the meal (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:27-33).[5]

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[4] See Anthony Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 515–24, for an explanation of how the actions of both baptism and communion visually and physically convey their meaning, as well as this claim's basis in speech-act theory. I should also note here that my emphasis on liturgy, and especially on the Lord's Supper, in this paper, should not be taken as a denial or denigration of the role of Scripture in the formation of the church. Indeed, 'Word and sacrament' (if a Baptist may use that phrase) are integrally tied together. As Thiselton notes, 'Both [the preaching of the Word and the sacraments] are complementary and simply enacted in different modes' (ibid., p. 517). While the preached Word is orally conveyed and aurally received by the congregation, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are corporally conveyed or enacted and visually received. The difference is in means of communication, not priority.

[5] For an overview of the different views on the Lord's Supper, see, for example, Hermann Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 4: *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation* , ed. by John Bolt; trans. by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 550–80. Interestingly, although baptistic churches today mostly practice an exclusively memorial view of the Supper, this was not the case in some early Baptist thought. The Second London Confession of 1689, for instance, interprets the Supper '. . . in Calvinistic as well as Zwinglian terms inasmuch as the Supper is not only a memorial of the death of Christ but

Typically, texts from 1 Corinthians 11, the institution of the Supper in the Gospels, and perhaps a reading from the Passover in Exodus are used. The imagination formed by these practices is one that remembers Christ's sacrifice, hopes for his return, and recognizes his presence with the gathered corporate body.

These are all important for a holistic Christian imagination, but the argument of this paper is that Revelation 19, the marriage supper of the lamb, provides formation of the imagination through the Supper in one more area: spiritual warfare. The message of that text is that the supper is a celebration of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness, and especially over the harlot of Babylon in the previous two chapters, and the victory that is to come over the beast, false prophet, and dragon in the rest of Revelation 19 and 20. Because of its location at the end the book of Revelation, with its apocalyptic imagination, we can further say that the imaginative *telos* of the supper is martial, not just memorial or even just real presence. Paying close attention to this martial view of the Lord's Supper, perhaps through using readings from Revelation 19 along with the words of institution, incorporates and provides the *habitus* for spiritual warfare in the Christian life. Specifically, it can shape our perceptions to understand that Christ has already won victory over sin and the powers and principalities of this world and that our fight is a fight in which we stand in his victory. Human flourishing can happen because communion has trained the corporate body's imagination for confronting systemic evil in the power of Spirit, through the victory of Christ, and for the glory of the Father.

PRACTICING COMMUNION

Typically the Lord's Supper evokes one or more of the following messages: memory of Christ's sacrifice; Christ's presence with his body; and communion between members of the body. Each of these, among the different Christian traditions that support them, is argued to be biblically, theologically, and historically valid. Christ's instructions in the words of institution have a clear memorial bent: 'Do this in remembrance of me'

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also the locale of his spiritual presence and the occasion of spiritual nourishments'. James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), p. 79. This view in the Second London Confession is also noted by John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), p. 281. He goes on to note, though, that this view is '. . . somewhat unusual in Baptist life. The view found most often with reference to the Lord's Supper is memorial' (ibid.).

(Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–26). This memorial view has been the primary understanding for those with a Zwinglian heritage and the typical meaning presented by baptistic churches in North America. For most of the history of the Church this remembrance of Christ's sacrifice has been coupled with an understanding of the Supper as a sign, and in some cases means, of Christ's presence.[6] The Eucharist, as it is called in many traditions that recognize this function of the Table, is intended to incorporate participation or union with Christ through the taking of the meal (1 Cor. 10:16), and specifically through celebrating his resurrection and participating in the resurrected life.[7] Relatedly, the third meaning of the Supper taught by various churches is that it not only leads us to participate with the presence of Christ but that it also allows us to commune with one another (1 Cor. 10:17).[8] Other expositions of the Supper include its place in understanding and interpreting Scripture (Luke 24:30–31),[9] the danger of taking it inappropriately (1 Cor. 11:27–32), and most importantly for our purposes, its eschatological outlook.[10]

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6 There are of course three distinct views here: transubstantiation in the Roman Catholic Church, consubstantiation in Luther, and the spiritual view of Calvin.

7 Note the combination of memory and celebration in the Book of Common Prayer: 'Father, we now celebrate the memorial of your Son. By means of this holy bread and cup, we show forth the sacrifice of his death, and proclaims his resurrection, until he comes again.' And again, 'Recalling now his suffering and death, and celebrating his resurrection and ascension, we await his coming in glory.' Notice also that the last line of each anticipates Christ's return, the *telos* of the Supper, which will be discussed further below.

8 For a combination of these three views in Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 10–11, see G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 592–3.

9 Stanley Hauerwas, 'The Interpretation of Scripture: Why Discipleship is Required (1993)', *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. by John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Duke: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 264.

10 I am not proposing anything new in saying the Supper has an eschatological element; indeed, that has aspect has been acknowledged since the Patristic period. As Christopher Hall states, 'The early church recognized this past-future element in the Eucharist, an awareness demonstrated by the appearance of the Aramaic word *maranatha*—"come, Lord"—in ancient Eucharistic prayers'. Christopher Hall, *Worshiping with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), pp. 62–3.

THE *TELOS* OF COMMUNION

This eschatological outlook is seen both in Jesus' institution (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16) and Paul's exposition of the Supper, as they each clearly look forward to the *telos* of communion. For both Jesus and Paul, the Supper anticipates the second coming, at which Christ's work of atonement, restoration, and victory through his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost will be consummated.[11] For our purposes here, the victorious aspect of Christ's return is most important, because it is here where Christ will finally and fully put all things under his feet and destroy Satan and his followers in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:7–15). When we look at communion, it is interesting that in each of the Synoptics' account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus identifies Judas as his betrayer (Matt. 22:20–25; Mark 14:17–21; Luke 22:21–23), and in John this language is amplified militarily through the reference to Satan entering into Judas (John 13:27). Further, Luke later identifies Judas with 'the power of darkness' that is about to be defeated in his impending death and resurrection (Luke 22:47–53). There thus seems to be an element of spiritual warfare even here in the beginning of the practice. Paul also identifies opposition to demonic powers, idolatry, and divisiveness as a priority when taking communion (1 Cor. 10:14–22; 11:18–22, 27–32).

This martial aspect of the Supper is clarified and intensified when we remember the Old Testament background for its practice. The Passover meal that inaugurated the Exodus has clear martial overtones, as it is YHWH's redemption of his people Israel from the political and spiritual oppression of Pharaoh and Egypt. The celebration of the Passover evoked for Israel the remembrance of YHWH's deliverance of them from Egyptians, accomplished through his cosmic warfare with them in the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 12–15). Furthermore, in the later prophetic warnings of Israel's impending exile and then in other prophets' promise of return, YHWH's restoration of Israel from exile is deemed a New Exodus (see especially Isaiah 40–66). God will once again rescue Israel from the bonds of captivity, this time under Babylon, and restore them to their land through his Messianic king. These martial implications of the Passover meal would not have been lost on Jesus or his disci-

[11] The Anglican liturgy captures this. Note the following eschatological language in their Eucharistic liturgy (Eucharistic Prayer B): 'In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with [_____and] all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.'

ples at the institution of the Lord's Supper – the new Passover and inauguration of the new covenant – or on Paul and his readers.[12] In fact, we can say that Jesus intentionally invokes this martial, conquering, victorious element of the Passover meal in his actions in the Upper Room and in his other important action in Jerusalem, the cleansing of the Temple.[13] Thus, in the words of Anthony Thiselton, '. . . the narrative of the Passover constitutes the appropriate and indispensable horizon of understanding for interpreting the Lord's Supper and its words of institution',[14] and this narrative is one which has clear military and political overtones.

REVELATION 19 AND THE GOAL OF THE TABLE

This martial sense of the Supper[15] is again further and finally clarified in Revelation 19.[16] While this chapter of scripture is conspicuously absent from the liturgical traditions of the church, whether high or low,[17] it

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12 See e.g. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, pp. 526–31, for both broad parallels between the Passover and communion and also between Jesus' words of institution in the Lord's Supper and the Jewish Seder meal. See also, for example, G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp. 816–19.

13 N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 437–8, 615.

14 Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, p. 514.

15 For the idea that Revelation is broadly liturgical, see e.g. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, p. 797, n. 52; and G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 184. Indeed, for Caird, 'The Revelation of John begins on the Lord's Day and ends in Eucharist' (ibid.).

16 '[The Lord's Supper] both brings believers into closer fellowship with God in this world, and anticipates a greater sacred meal, the marriage supper of the Lamb.' L. McFall, 'Sacred Meals', in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), p. 753.

17 Note, for instance, that Revelation 19:1–10 is neither quoted nor alluded to in the Book of Common Prayer's Eucharist Rites, nor is it used in the lectionary. For the latter, see the comprehensive list of liturgical texts at <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/citationindex.php>. For an Orthodox perspective on Revelation's absence from their liturgy, see Petros Vassiliadis, 'Apocalypse and Liturgy', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 41.2 (1997), 95–112; for a Roman Catholic perspective on this lacunae, see Albert Hammenstede, 'The Apocalypse and the Mystery of the Eucharist', *Orate Fratres* 20.3 (1946), 104–110.

certainly pictures a meal that celebrates the Exodus-like18 military and political victory won by Christ '. . . at the consummation of history . . .',[19] which is shared and celebrated by his followers.[20] Believers in Revelation 19:1–10 'praise God for the 'salvation' that he has brought (19:1)', which in this text refers specifically '. . . to deliverance from the oppressive power of the harlot, whose smoke goes up forever and ever as a sign that her demise is permanent (19:3)'.[21] The harlot that is destroyed here is Babylon, the representation in Revelation of political, sexual, and economic depravity and oppression,[22] and thus the Supper of Revelation 19 is a celebration not simply of 'salvation' in a generically spiritual sense but in a full-orbed political, spiritual, physical, and cosmic sense. Thus the celebration that ensues is a celebration of Christ the King, the dominator of sin, death, and earthly powers, and the liberator of his people.

This Supper in Revelation 19, along with the new creation in Revelation 21–22, is also clearly linked to the Lord's Supper instituted in the Gospels and practiced by the early church. It appears to be the final, consummate, and eternal Supper, the one towards which the eschatological language of Jesus and Paul point in the Synoptics and in 1 Corinthians 10–11.[23] It accomplishes both historic interpretations of the Supper, as this is the final realization of the memorial of Christ's death, since that memorial points us towards his future victory, and it is also the final eschatological realization of Christ's presence with his Church since he is seated with them. There are no more warnings here for who should partake, as it is only those who are given clean garments by the Lord that can participate (Rev. 19:8). This Supper is also the fulfilment of all of the marriage language throughout the Old and New Testaments, including the messianic

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18 Caird, *New Testament Theology*, p. 184. Caird specifically compares the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 to the song of saints in Revelation 19:2.

19 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 926.

20 One should especially note the divine warrior and Davidic King language in both Revelation 19:1–10 and also the following section of 19:11–21. See, for example, Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 425–8.

21 Craig Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 168.

22 Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (London T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 338–83.

23 Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, p. 283; and Ralph P. Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 148–9.

banquet in the last days in the OT prophets,[24] the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1–14,[25] and Paul's teaching on marriage as a reflection of Christ and his Bride in Ephesians 5:22–32.[26] Additionally, many have recognized the liturgical shape of the entire book, as it begins 'on the Lord's Day' (Rev. 1:10), includes the elements of Christian worship, such as prayers and hymns, and seems to picture the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.[27]

Strangely, though, Revelation 19 is not used in any liturgical tradition of which I am aware. The closest allusion to any part of it I have found is in the Anglican Proper Preface for marriage, which reads: 'Because in the love of wife and husband, thou hast given us an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, adorned as a bride for her bridegroom, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who loveth her and gave himself for her, that he might make the whole creation new.' Even here, though, the reference is more to Revelation 21 than it is to Revelation 19:1–10. While the biblical warrant for referring to Revelation 19:1–10 is clear above, I want to suggest here that Jamie Smith's argument for imagination formation in liturgy ought also to urge churches to incorporate this text in their communion practice. Specifically, the argument here is that explicitly including references to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will shape the Christian imagination to better participate in the spiritual warfare that rages in the Christian life, and especially to confront systemic evil.

SYSTEMIC EVIL AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:10–20 that we as Christians are fighting a war, waged not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. This conflict is fought through wrestling, hand to hand combat, combat in which we stand in Christ and take up his gospelling acts as armour. While there is much that can be said about this passage, the important point here is that Paul urges Christians to stand firm against principalities and powers. Further, he urges them to do so together. This is not an

[24] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 938–43; Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, p. 267; and Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 532.

[25] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 945.

[26] Ibid., p. 942.

[27] See, for instance, David L. Barr, 'The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis', *Interpretation* 38.1 (1984), 39–50, esp. 45–7; idem., 'The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment', *Interpretation* 40.3 (1986), 243–56, esp. 252–6; Charles A. Gieschen, 'Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation', *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74.1 (2010), 139–43; and Petros Vassiliadis, 'Apocalypse and Liturgy'.

individualized battle in which Christians each stand against their own temptations by themselves, but one a battle in which the church collectively stands against the evil forces of the world for the love of their neighbours who share in the *imago dei*.[28] Evil is not something that Christians only experience through individual temptation or persecution (although it is certainly manifested in these ways); spiritual warfare here, rather, is spoken of mostly as something Christians engage collectively and on a global and holistic level. Principalities, rulers, authorities, and powers in the New Testament are originally created by God in Christ (Col. 1:16) but can now be referred to as the 'powers of darkness' that crucify Jesus (Luke 22:53) and as in opposition to Christ's rule and reign (Col. 2:15; Eph. 6:10–13). They are also used in a more generic sense to simply refer to the structures of our world, especially political ones (1 Tim. 2:2; possibly also Eph. 1:21), and are ordained by God for a positive purpose (Rom. 13:1–7). The issue appears to be not simply battling anything inherently (but temporally) political, but instead those structures, rulers, and powers that are under the rule of the 'prince of the power of the air' (Eph. 2:2). The confrontation thus appears to be with what we might call 'systemic evil'; not simply individual temptations to sin or individual persecution but evil that exists in the very fabric of society and culture.

The exact temporal nature of this confrontation, especially in the political/legal realm is much debated today,[29] but Paul's message is clear: there is inevitably a confrontation, and the church is called to fight. The weapons of warfare are clear: we are to stand in Christ and with his gospel

[28] J. Todd Billings, *Union With Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), p. 111.

[29] Much of the context of the contemporary debate happens within the Reformed community and is a conversation about the so-called 'two kingdoms' approach to Christianity and culture. In this approach, mission and kingdom do not refer to activities of the 'common kingdom', but only the verbal proclamation of the gospel and the gathering of the church. For an introduction to such thought, see David Van Drunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). In contrast, there are those who argue that mission and kingdom work include vocation and activities outside of the gathered church as they visibly point to the rule and reign of Christ over his church even as they are scattered. For this view, see, e.g., Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). For our purposes, the exact nature of political and legal action against systemic evil and the language used to describe those tactics is at issue between the two camps. Of particular contention is the use of terms like 'transform' or 'redeem' to describe our activities in culture and especially in politics.

armour (Eph. 6:14–17), praying in the Spirit for our own opportunities to proclaim the gospel (Eph. 6:18–20), and resisting or fleeing from evil (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:22). Further, Paul tells us here that we sit where he sits, namely 'in the heavenly places' (Eph. 1:20–21; 2:6), the place that denotes his authority and victory over the powers and principalities of this world. Christians share in the rule and reign of Christ here, just as they share it in Rev. 19:1–10 as they sit with him at his Table.[30]

IMAGINATION, THE SUPPER, AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Weaving these threads together, the argument here is that spiritual warfare is bolstered by formation of the Christian imagination, and specifically through practicing communion in a way that explicitly invokes Revelation 19:1–10. There is a clear eschatological goal of the Supper, rooted in the Passover and fulfilled in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which is martial.[31] Christ has already defeated the principalities and powers of the world through his death and resurrection (Eph. 1:20–21; Col. 2:15), the events of which are remembered and celebrated at the current practice of communion. The practice of communion also, though, points forward to the eschatological celebration of Christ's consummation of his victory won at Golgotha and in the empty tomb. The knowledge of this victory and our sharing in it, our love for our neighbour, and the weapons Christ gives us all motivate us in spiritual warfare and in confronting systemic evil.

The idea that participation in the Lord's Supper can shape our political imaginations is not new. Both J. Todd Billings and Craig Bartholomew have recently shown the importance of the Table in confronting, respectively, apartheid in South Africa and the wanton destruction of God's creation.[32] The idea is familiar to Catholic thought as well, as William Cavanaugh has suggested the Table argues against using torture in any setting.[33] I am not suggesting that these articulations of the Supper's

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30 Cf. also Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:4, and other such texts that seem to clearly indicate that Christ shares his victorious reign with his followers.

31 As I hope has been evident throughout, this is not the only goal of the Supper. Communion with God, dwelling in his presence, and final sanctification (the 'white garments' of Revelation 19:7–8) are all also goals of the Supper.

32 See, respectively, J. Todd Billings, *Union With Christ*, pp. 95–118; and Craig Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), p. 246.

33 William T. Cavanaugh, 'The Body of Christ: The Eucharist and Politics', *Word & World* 22.2 (2002), 170–7. See also his monograph on the impact of the liturgy on the Christian and politics, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discover-*

imaginative shaping are legitimate; instead, I am simply offering examples of what others have said about how the Table shapes our thinking about various areas of engagement with culture and, in some cases, with systemic sin. While the question of exactly how one is to confront systemic evil or engage in spiritual warfare is up for debate, especially in regards to political machinations, the point here is that the Lord's Supper can shape our imaginations in ways that help us prepare for and be willing to enter into that battle.

Thus my main suggestion here is that the lacuna in our liturgies, whether informal or formal,[34] concerning Revelation 19:1–10 should be addressed. Our ritual behaviour in our church gatherings, whether in a non-denominational, low church setting or in a high Anglican, explicitly liturgical setting, shapes and moulds us. Indeed, '. . . the church is the place where, in a variety of forms, the biblical story with its centre in Jesus is enacted and re-enacted so that amidst the challenges of life it increasingly becomes for us, in practice and not just theory, the true story of the world which we indwell'.[35] In order to shape and mould our fellow believers into the image of Christ and specifically to prepare them for the opposition they will face in the form of systemic evil, Revelation 19:1–10 ought to be incorporated into our practice of the Lord's Supper as a reminder that Christ has already defeated the principalities and powers and will consummate that victory at his return. This of course will look different for different liturgical traditions and practitioners. For the Anglican, the Eucharistic Rites might be modified to include a phrase in the prayers of remembrance that alludes to Revelation 19, such as, 'we believe that we will sit with you at the final Table of the Lamb'. Additionally, although it has less explicitly to do with communion, perhaps more of Revelation could be included in the lectionary. For less strictly liturgical traditions, something as simple as reading Rev. 19:1–10 before taking the Lord's Supper may suffice. In my own Baptist tradition, the memorial view of the Supper ought not only focus on remembering what Christ already did but, as Jesus and Paul say, remind of us of what he will do when he returns.

In any case, my contention here has been that Revelation 19:1–10 has a powerful ability to shape the Christian imagination regarding confront-

ing the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism (London: T&T Clark, 2002).

[34] Every church has a liturgy, no matter how much they might deny it. Indeed, cultures are immersed in liturgies. The question is whether our liturgies reflect and transform its participants into the image of God. This is James Smith's point in both *Imagining the Kingdom* and in the first volume of the Cultural Liturgies project, *Desiring the Kingdom*.

[35] Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, p. 294.

ing systemic evil if it is included in our communion practice. Explicitly invoking this martial message of the Supper in a variety of ways, whether through reading the passage or alluding to it in some way, will form and shape the Christian imagination to engage in spiritual warfare. The subconscious realm of understanding, the *habitus* of life, will be moulded in such a way that the response of the Christian is not fear or doubt but confidence in Christ's victory. This will promote human flourishing as communion trains the collective church's imagination to confront systemic evil in the power of Spirit, through the victory of Christ, and for the glory of the Father.

Biblical Judgments and Theological Concepts: Toward a Defence of Imputed Righteousness

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According to B. B. Warfield, the term *imputation* has been used in three ways since the time of the Reformation.[1] First, it may refer to the imputation of Adam's sin to his descendants; second, the imputation of believer's sins to Jesus; and finally, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to his people. Crucial to this statement is that 'the divine act called "imputation" is in itself precisely the *same* in each of the three great transactions'. Furthermore, 'the ground on which it proceeds… and the things imputed may be different… [but] in each and every case alike imputation itself is simply the act of setting to one's account'.[2] Warfield's definition is a helpful starting point, but much more needs to be said about imputation in light of recent defences and critiques. In this essay I will specifically focus on the third way imputation language has been used, namely the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness has been a source of comfort to some and frustration to others. On the one hand, the belief that we have been 'clothed' with Christ's righteousness before God has brought great peace to those who see their own 'righteous acts are like filthy rags' (Isa. 64:6). On the other hand, critics argue that imputed righteousness has been *imputed* onto the biblical text as a foreign concept with no biblical roots. While the issues are certainly more complex than this, the debate raises many questions: can this crucial doctrine of the Reformation be found in Scripture at the exegetical level? If imputed righteousness cannot be found in Paul or any other biblical author, then is the doctrine the result of systematic categories being forced upon Scripture? Michael Bird answers that 'the notion of "imputation" is entirely legitimate within the field of systematic theology as a way of restating the forensic nature of justification over and against alternative models and it is implicit in the representative roles of Adam and Christ. However, it is

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1 Warfield calls them three 'acts'. See B. B. Warfield, 'Imputation', in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: P&R, 1968), pp. 262–69.

2 Warfield, 'Imputation', p. 263.

not the language of the New Testament'.[3] At first glance, this appears to validate the use of imputation language within the borders of systematic theology. However, I believe Bird and others are after something else: the *biblical* view based on the Bible's own terms, categories, and context. And, at some point, imputation language falls short of representing Scripture's viewpoint. So, can the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ truly be a legitimate expression of biblical ideas and yet not be *explicitly* found in Scripture? Or, stated more generally, can an external (non-biblical) concept be faithful to an internal (biblical) viewpoint? My answer is 'yes', and I will spend the remainder of this essay exploring the reasoning behind this response. In short, I will demonstrate that imputed righteousness is a suitable theological concept that faithfully represents and corresponds to the judgments Scripture makes with regard to justification. Imputed righteousness is neither imposed on the text, nor is it *deduced* from it.[4] This means that many of the proponents and opponents of imputed righteousness are both wrong and right, and so I will begin by evaluating the views of three opponents—Gundry, Seifrid, and Wright—and three proponents—Piper, Carson, and Vickers—in order to present their views on relationship between imputed righteousness and Scripture. I will argue that none of the six representatives sufficiently explain the relationship between the concept of imputed righteousness and Scripture. At this point, I will employ David Yeago's argument regarding the distinction between concepts and judgments and demonstrate how this distinction can be fruitfully applied to the question of imputed righteousness in Scripture and theology. Here, I will also present what I see is the biblical judgment of 'reckoned righteousness' and how the concept of imputed righteousness faithfully expresses this view. The conclusion will draw out the implications of my account and suggest one other possible way forward.

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3 Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p. 70. On this point, Bird quotes George Ladd who says that 'Paul never expressly states that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers' (George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revised [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], p. 491; cf. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, p. 70, n. 45). However, Bird fails to mention that on the very same page Ladd adds that 'it is an unavoidable logical conclusion that people of faith are justified because Christ's righteousness is imputed to them' (Ladd, Theology, p. 491).

4 This wording stems from Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), p. 344.

I. IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

What is the relationship between imputed righteousness and Scripture? On some level it involves attending to the author's intended meaning, but is the process complete once we discover and express this meaning? Must we seek to translate the message of Scripture into new cultural contexts and do so through the use of new concepts? These are crucial questions that deeply affect the way the doctrine of imputed righteousness must be understood in relation to Scripture. While the discipline of systematic theology is more sympathetic to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, the concept has proven most controversial in the area of biblical studies. Therefore, this essay will focus on contemporary views of imputed righteousness, specifically the way various contemporary scholars see this doctrine in relation to the questions raised above.[5]

Critics of Imputed Righteousness

Robert Gundry. Gundry argues against imputed righteousness in various places, but his most sustained and clearest exposition stems from the 2003 Wheaton Theology Conference.[6] He does not dispute the imputation of

[5] Space does not allow for a full history of the doctrine of imputed righteousness. For the history and background, see Paul ChulHong Kang, *Justification: The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness from Reformation Theology to the American Great Awakening and the Korean revivals* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 31–151; Brian Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), pp. 23–70; Stephen Strehle, *'Imputatio iustitiae*: Its Origin in Melanchthon, its Opposition in Osiander', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 50 (1994), 201–19; idem., *The Catholic Roots of the Protestant Gospel: Encounter Between the Middle Ages and the Reformation*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 60 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 66–85. For a survey and assessment of Owen, Piscator, Wesley, Baxter, and Tilloston, see Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology, 1640–1790: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 186–201. See also Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[6] Robert H. Gundry, 'The Nonimputation of Christ's Righteousness', in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. by Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), pp. 17–45. This essay is a response to John Piper's book, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002); the main argument of Piper's book will be outlined in the next section. Gundry's earlier essays include: 'Why I Didn't Endorse 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration' . . . Even Though I Wasn't Asked To', *Books and Culture*, February 2001; 'On Oden's Answer', *Books and Culture*, April 2001.

our sins to Christ; however, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers cannot be found in Scripture.[7] Instead, 'righteousness comes into view not as what is counted but as what God counts faith to be'.[8] In other words, an external or alien righteousness is not counted or imputed to a person who has faith. Instead, our faith *is* our righteousness because God counts it to be the case: 'faith was reckoned to Abraham *as* righteousness' (Rom. 4:9, NRSV). Gundry argues that those who see the doctrine of imputed righteousness see 'faith as the *instrument* by which that righteousness is received',[9] and his survey of Paul's use of *logizomai eis* reveals that an instrumental view of faith cannot 'make good contextual sense' of biblical passages and 'in most of them it makes absolute nonsense'.[10]

The debate over imputed righteousness is important for Gundry because at its core it is a dialogue about 'what the Bible does and does not teach and . . . whether the doctrine of an imputation of Christ's righteousness represents a valid development of biblical teaching'. Gundry adds: '*Of course* theologians are not limited to repeating what the Bible says, but what they develop in and from their own circumstances should at least arise out of what the Bible says'.[11] The doctrine of imputed righteousness is thus an *invalid* development of biblical teaching and does not arise out of Scripture. Rather, God counts our faith to be righteousness.[12]

Mark Seifrid. Seifrid is also not convinced that imputation language is necessary and makes a biblical and historical argument against the view. When it comes to imputation, 'we are dealing in some measure with the replacement of the biblical categories with other ways of speaking'.[13] This is because 'Paul never speaks of Christ's righteousness as imputed to

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7 Gundry explains that 'Paul does not match the imputation of our sins to Christ with an imputation of Christ's righteousness to us believers because he (Paul) wants to emphasize the life of righteousness that we are supposed to live . . . apart from the Old Testament law, under which Christ was born, and to emphasize the judgment of our works at the end' ('Nonimputation', p. 44).

8 Gundry, 'Nonimputation', p. 18.

9 Gundry, 'Nonimputation', p. 19.

10 Gundry, 'Nonimputation', p. 21.

11 Gundry, 'Nonimputation', p. 43 (emphasis in original).

12 Michael Horton comments that Gundry's formulation ends up saying that 'we are justified by faith, through faith, on the basis of faith. Beyond the question of imputation, this exegesis represents a remarkable position in the history of exegesis and doctrine'. See *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), p. 117.

13 Mark A. Seifrid, 'Luther, Melanchthon and Paul on the Question of Imputation: Recommendations on a Current Debate', in *Justification: What's at Stake*

believers'.[14] Even if imputation is not a biblical category, is it still a warranted historical development? Seifrid admits that Luther spoke of the imputation of righteousness, but 'he does not speak of the imputation of *Christ's* righteousness—or does so only rarely—because he regards Christ himself as present in faith'.[15] For Luther, the work of Christ is meditated through union with Christ. But for Melanchthon, imputation becomes necessary to mediate Christ's work. Therefore, those who claim that the doctrine of imputed righteousness is a crucial Reformation teaching must realize that 'to insist that one define justification in terms of "the imputation of Christ's righteousness," is to adopt a late-Reformational, Protestant understanding'.[16] This indicates that the doctrine only makes sense as a contextual response to the Tridentine understanding of infused righteousness. Even if this is the case, Seifrid attempts to qualify his objections: 'it is not so much wrong to use the expression "the imputed righteousness of Christ" as it is deficient'.[17] For Seifrid, Paul's doctrine of justification encompasses forgiveness, reconciliation, righteousness, and so forth. But justification is bigger than any one of these aspects alone, including imputation. As a questionable teaching of Scripture and development of late-Reformational thought, the doctrine of imputed righteousness remains troublesome.

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in the Current Debates, ed. by Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), p. 151.

14 Seifrid, 'Luther, Melanchthon, and Paul', p. 149. Seifrid also finds the idea of imputing the active and passive obedience of Christ to be 'unnecessary and misleading' (*Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], p. 175). Michael Bird makes a similar move in his *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), pp. 562–3.

15 Seifrid, 'Luther, Melanchthon and Paul', p. 144. Seifrid claims that language of the 'imputation of Christ's righteousness' is lacking in the 1530 *Confessio Augustana*, the First Helvetic Confession (1536), including Melanchthon's 1543 *Loci*. After the Osiander controversy (1550–1551), however, the language can be found in Melanchthon's 1555 Loci, Calvin's 1559 *Institutes*, and other confessions after this time (Ibid). Even if the language may be lacking in later works, Luther spoke more than *rarely* of Christ's righteousness. See the discussion and references to 'alien righteousness' in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1966), pp. 227–32.

16 Seifrid, 'Luther, Melanchthon and Paul', p. 149. Seifrid is clear at the end of the essay that he prefers Luther's formulation of justification which, he argues, gives a different and lesser role to imputed righteousness than later reformers.

17 Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, p. 175 (emphasis in original).

N. T. Wright. Wright has been a longstanding critic of imputed righteousness; however, it is arguable that his position has softened in more recent publications.[18] For Wright, the key question is this: 'if "imputed righteousness" is so utterly central, so nerve-janglingly vital, so standing-and-falling-church important…, isn't it strange that Paul never actually came straight out and said it?'[19] Wright is clear at the outset that imputed righteousness is not a Pauline teaching nor something emphasized in Scripture. At best, the doctrine of imputed righteousness is 'sub-Pauline' and is ultimately a 'blind alley'.[20]

Imputation is also 'a straightforward category mistake' since it assumes that the righteousness Jesus obtained can be reckoned to a believer.[21] The judge may declare the defendant 'not guilty' but confusion 'arises inevitably when we try to think of the judge transferring, by imputation or any other way, his own attributes to the defendant'.[22] The background for this

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18 For his earlier views, see Wright's *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). His more recent position can be found in *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009); and *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013). See also his 'Justification: Yesterday, Today, and Forever', *JETS* 54 (2011), 49–63.

19 Wright, *Justification*, p. 46.

20 Wright, *Justification*, pp. 142, 231.

21 Wright, *Justification*, p. 232.

22 Wright, *Justification*, p. 66. Horton correctly notes that 'Wright is refuting a position that confessional Lutheran and Reformed traditions do not hold. None of the Reformers taught that *God's righteousness* is imputed, although the one who fulfilled the terms of the law-covenant as the human servant is also the divine Lord. A third party, a representative, is left out of the courtroom in Wright's description. There is only a judge/plaintiff (God) and the defendant (Israel). However, Christ is both, and this complicates the picture' (*Covenant and Salvation*, p. 104). Horton adds that 'the mature Reformation doctrine of justification was articulated against both Rome's understanding of justification as an infused quality of righteousness and Andreas Osiander's notion of the believer's participation in God's essential righteousness. The Reformers and their heirs laboured the point that it is Christ's successful fulfilment of the trial of the covenantal representative that is imputed or credited to all who believe. His meritorious achievement, not God's own essential righteousness, is imputed' (Ibid.).
Wright also seems to misunderstand imputation when he links it to 'transfer' language. Mark Garcia offers a helpful caution: 'it is important to observe that "to reckon" and "to transfer" are not identical. To "reckon" is akin to the understanding of imputation . . . for it communicates a verbal or linguistic action, something which works naturally with understanding justification as

confusion 'goes back to the medieval ontologizing of *iustitia* as a kind of quality, or even substance, which one person might possess in sufficient quantity for it to be shared, or passed to and fro, among others'.[23]

Instead of relying on the concept of imputation, Wright leans more heavily on Paul's language of union with Christ. Yet, this still entails an aspect of imputed righteousness, but in a very limited and qualified sense. For Wright,

> 'righteousness' is something that believers have because they are 'in Christ'—though it is quite illegitimate to seize on that and say that therefore they have something called 'the righteousness of Christ' imputed to them, in the full sixteenth– and seventeenth–century sense so emphasized by John Piper. There is, as we have already glimpsed, a great truth underneath that Reformation claim.[24]

In a biblical understanding of the believer's union with Christ 'we find that [Paul] achieves what that doctrine [of imputation] wants to achieve, but by a radically different route'.[25] Similar to Gundry and Seifrid, Wright

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judicial *declaration*. As such, "to reckon" suggests attribution and to "impute" is understood in those terms. To "transfer", however, immediately suggests something quite different. The term suggests the reification [i.e., making concrete or real] of sin or righteousness, even if it does not require such a conception' ('Imputation as Attribution: Union with Christ, Reification and Justification as Declarative Word', *IJST* 11 [2009], 421). Therefore, even in our union with Christ, Christ's righteousness is not somehow *transferred* to us in the midst of the union. This language makes righteousness sound like a substance whereas imputation refers more to a legal status or account.

23 Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, p. 947. The problems raised in footnote 21 can be applied to this statement as well.

24 Wright, *Justification*, p. 157. Elsewhere, Wright states: 'As with some other theological problems, I regard [the imputation of Christ's righteousness] as saying a substantially right thing in a substantially wrong way, and the trouble when you do that is that things on both sides of the equation, and the passages which are invoked to support them, become distorted' ('Paul in Different Perspective: Lecture 1: Starting Points and Opening Reflections', unpublished lecture delivered at Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Louisiana [January 3, 2005]. <http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Auburn_Paul.htm> [accessed Jan 15, 2014]).

25 Wright, *Justification*, p. 233. A page earlier, Wright expresses his sympathies with John Piper and other defenders of imputed righteousness, yet he is clear that he still sees significant problems: 'John Piper is rightly concerned to safeguard the great Christian truth that when someone is "in Christ" God sees him or her, from that moment on, in the light of what is true of Christ. But, in line with some (though by no means all) of the Protestant Reformers and

objects to the use of the imputed righteousness of Christ when talking about Scripture's teaching on justification.[26]

Defenders of Imputed Righteousness

John Piper. Piper is an influential proponent of the imputed righteousness of Christ and has written a book–length defence of the doctrine.[27] Piper sees the external imputed righteousness of Christ as the ground of a believer's justification and defines it as 'the act in which God counts sinners to be righteous through their faith in Christ on the basis of Christ's perfect "blood and righteousness," specifically the righteousness that Christ accomplished by his perfect obedience in life and death'.[28] As a crucial doctrine with practical implications for the Christian life, the key question is this: 'Does *Paul* believe and teach the imputation of Christ's obedience for those who are in Christ by faith alone?'[29] With this question in mind, Piper's aim is 'to show that the imputation of Christ's divine righteousness (as opposed to impartation) is what *Paul* teaches'.[30] From the outset the goal is to understand and explain imputation on the exegetical level.

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their successors, he insists on arriving at this conclusion by the route of supposing that the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ—his "active obedience" as opposed to the "passive obedience" of his death on the cross—is the ground of this security. Jesus has "fulfilled the law", and thus amassed a treasury of law-based "righteousness", which we sinners, having no "righteousness" of our own, no store of legal merit, no treasury of good works, can shelter within. I want to say, as clearly as I can, to Piper and those who have followed him: this is, theologically and exegetically, a blind alley' (*Justification*, p. 236).

26 Interestingly, while Seifrid is moderately critical of imputed righteousness, he argues that Wright's view of the 'righteousness that justifies us' is 'nearly Tridentine' and 'is certainly not evangelical or reformational' ('The Near Word of Christ and the Distant Vision of N. T. Wright', JETS 54 [2011], 294). Although Seifrid questions imputed righteousness, he has been a consistent critic of the New Perspective on Paul. For example, see his 'Blind Alleys in the Controversy Over the Paul of History', *TynBul* 45 (1994), 74–95.

27 Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*. This book is a response motivated by Gundry's two shorter essays from 2001 (see footnote 5). Along with Gundry's 2004 essay and Wright's 2009 book, Don Garlington has responded to Piper's book in 'Imputation or Union with Christ? A Response to John Piper', *Reformation and Reformed Journal* 12 (2003), 45–113.

28 Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*, p. 41 (emphasis mine).

29 Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), p. 167. He adds that 'the concept of 'imputation' is in Paul's mind as he writes these verses' (p. 69).

30 Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*, p. 110 (emphasis mine).

Piper spends considerable time interpreting the key passages that he believes teach imputed righteousness. Of particular importance is 2 Corinthians 5:21 which, for Piper, 'gives us biblical warrant for believing that the divine righteousness that is imputed to believers in Romans 4:6 and 4:11 is the righteousness of Christ. Becoming the righteousness of God "in him" implies that our identity with Christ is the way God sees his own righteousness as becoming ours'.[31] Even if there is biblical warrant for the doctrine, Piper also notes that it is the result of a synthesis of biblical and theological teaching.

> If one allows for biblical reflection and comparison and synthesis and a desire to penetrate to reality behind words (as with, for example, the biblical doctrines of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, or the substitutionary atonement), then the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness is not an artificial construct of systematic theologians but is demanded by the relevant texts.[32]

For Piper, imputed righteousness is both the teaching of Paul and an essential concept for expressing other biblical texts. Additionally, and despite the mistaken views of some critics, Piper also argues that imputation happens because 'we are united to Christ in whom we are counted as perfectly righteous because of his righteousness, not ours'.[33]

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31 Piper, *The Future of Justification*, p. 180. See also *Counted Righteous in Christ*, p. 82.

32 Piper, *The Future of Justification*, p. 90. My concern with this statement is twofold: (1) Piper says this in passing and never develops the claim any further. This is a significant assertion and without expansion it appears as special pleading; (2) this defence presents imputed righteousness as an acceptable concept that expresses a biblical reality (behind the words); however, Piper's goal is to show that imputed righteousness is not just *behind* the words but is *in* them. That is, imputed righteousness is *Paul's* teaching.

33 Piper, *The Future of Justification*, p. 123. The simple inclusion of 'in Christ' in the title of Piper's book makes this point. Other statements by Piper on imputed righteousness and union with Christ include: 'God counts us as having his righteousness in Christ because we are united to Christ by faith alone' (*The Future of Justification*, p. 164); 'the implication seems to be that our union with Christ is what connects us with divine righteousness' (*The Future of Justification*, p. 172); 'The reality of being "in Christ" is all-important for understanding justification' since 'our union with Christ is what connects us with divine righteousness' (*Counted Righteous in Christ*, pp. 84–5). Wright (*Justification*, p. 157) and Bird (*Evangelical Theology*, p. 563) 'add' union with Christ imagery and language to the discussion as though it was not there from the beginning. To be sure, it could be argued that Piper and

D. A. Carson. In response to Gundry's 2004 essay, Carson analyzes Genesis 15 and Romans 4. Paul's argument in Romans 4 interprets Genesis 15:6 differently than previous Jewish exegesis, and so Carson outlines the parallelism in Romans 4:5–5 to help clarify Paul's teaching:

4:5	God	justifies	the ungodly
4:6	God	credits righteousness	apart from works

This means that '"justifies" is parallel to "credits righteousness"; or, to put the matter in nominal terms, justification is parallel to the imputation of righteousness'.[34] Because of this and other arguments, Carson concludes that imputed righteousness 'makes [the] most sense of most passages'.[35]

But, is imputed righteousness a concept found in Scripture? In order to answer this question, Carson states that two dangers must be avoided: (1) the biblical scholars must avoid being 'narrowly constrained by the exegetical field of discourse' and, (2) the theologian must be exegetically sensitive in order to avoid tying their doctrine to the wrong passages.[36] This leads Carson to agree with critics that imputation language is not present in Scripture. However, this is not a problem since, as he demonstrates regarding sanctification and reconciliation, it is not an unprecedented issue 'if our terminology in our theological expression does not perfectly align with Paul's terminology'.[37] Furthermore, even if there is no *explicit* passage on the imputed righteousness of Christ, 'is there biblical evidence to substantiate the view that the *substance* of this thought is

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others may be subordinating union with Christ to imputation, but it cannot be said that union with Christ does not play an important role for Piper. Critics also miss the fact that union with Christ has been part of a doctrine of imputation since the time of the Reformation. This is especially true of the either–or setup by Garlington in 'Imputation or Union with Christ?' See J. V. Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517-1700)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012); Mark A. Garcia, 'Imputation and the Christology of Union with Christ: Calvin, Osiander, and the Contemporary Quest for a Reformed Model', *WTJ* 68 (2006), 219–51.

34 D. A. Carson, 'The Vindication of Imputation: On Fields of Discourse and Semantic Fields', in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. by Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), p. 61.

35 Carson, 'The Vindication of Imputation', p. 78.

36 Carson, 'The Vindication of Imputation', pp. 49–50.

37 Carson, 'The Vindication of Imputation', p. 78. See Carson's discussion of this issue in relation to sanctification and reconiliation (pp. 48–50).

conveyed?'[38] Carson answers positively and believes a doctrine of imputed righteousness is both exegetically informed without being exegetically constrained.

Brian Vickers. Similar to Piper, Vickers offers a book–length defense of imputed righteousness.[39] After presenting a historical survey of the doctrine (this is one of the better ones available), he examines three texts—Romans 4, Romans 5, and 2 Corinthians 5—in order to assess the relationship between imputed righteousness and Scripture. The doctrine of imputed righteousness 'is not theology apart from exegesis'[40] even if 'Paul never says explicitly, word-for-word, that the righteousness of Christ counts for, is reckoned to, or is imputed to believers'.[41] Furthermore, although neither Romans 4 nor 5 'paints a full picture in regard to the question of "imputation",'[42] when seen *together* the doctrine begins to emerge from the text. Vickers concludes that 'the imputation of Christ's righteousness is a legitimate and necessary *synthesis* of Paul's teaching. While no single text contains or develops all the "ingredients" of imputation, the doctrine stands as a component of Paul's soteriology'.[43]

What are the ingredients? Vickers locates five 'common threads' that run throughout Scripture: '(1) an external act, which is specifically (2) God acting in Christ, (3) on behalf of sinners, and is, thus (4) an act of grace, and is affected or applied in (5) union with Christ'.[44] He admits that these do not *prove* imputation, but they 'they do argue forcibly against any conception of justifying righteousness apart from Christ'.[45] In the end, the doctrine of imputed righteousness is not explicitly stated in Scripture but is the result of common themes which, when seen together, is best expressed through a doctrine of imputed righteousness.

Summary

After briefly surveying some opponents and proponents of imputed righteousness, what can be concluded for the purposes of this essay? First, even if both sides end up with different conclusions, those involved in the debate recognize the significance of a close reading Scripture and its

38 Carson, 'The Vindication of Imputation', p. 50 (emphasis mine).

39 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*. This is a revised version of his dissertation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

40 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, p. 18.

41 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, p. 191.

42 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, p. 157 (emphasis mine).

43 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, p. 18.

44 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, p. 195; see also p. 235.

45 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, p. 195.

relation to theology. This is clear and none of the scholars surveyed above should be faulted on this issue.

Second, most, though not all, agree that the language of imputation is an external concept that cannot be found in Paul or other writers of Scripture. The key difference is that proponents of imputed righteousness see the concept as expressing a biblical aspect of justification. They argue that this is a warranted move due to precedent (e.g., the Trinity), whereas critics still see this as an imposition on the text of Scripture.

Third, there is great need for clarity when it comes to the term 'righteousness'. Unfortunately, some defenders of imputed righteousness are unclear on this crucial detail. For example, is *God's* righteousness imputed to the believer? Or *Christ's* righteousness? Is the righteousness a status, or is it a transfer of God or Christ's *attribute* of righteousness (i.e. divine righteousness)? If not, is it a form of human righteousness earned by Christ?[46] The answers are not always clear and it is therefore understandable why N. T. Wright protests that 'it makes no sense whatever to say that the judge imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers his righteousness to either the plaintiff or the defendant. Righteousness is not an object, a substance or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom'.[47] This assumes that we are speaking of *God's* righteousness as an attribute or characteristic and the confusion creates unnecessary problems within the debate. As Garcia has pointed out, 'it is unquestionably the case that explanations and defences of the concept of imputation frequently treat sin and righteousness as "things".'[48] Until these points are

[46] For example, Piper refers to righteousness in a number of ways: 'divine righteousness' (*Counted Righteous in Christ*, p. 53); 'imputation of external righteousness' (ibid., p. 67); 'God reveals his own righteousness that we receive' (ibid., p. 68); 'his righteous act, his obedience, is counted as ours. . . . It is a real righteousness' (ibid., p. 110); 'The ground of our being declared righteous is the imputed righteousness of God, manifest in the righteousness of Christ' (ibid., p. 122). The righteousness is divine, external, God's, an act, real, and manifest in Christ. This crucial concept deserves greater clarity not only for the academic debate but for both teaching and preaching. To speak of the righteousness as 'divine' sounds unnecessarily similar to Osiander. He asserted that the righteousness we have is God's essential righteousness. For a recent reflection on Osiander, see Stephen Strehle, '*Imputatio iustitiae*'; Julie Canlis, 'Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God', *IJST* 6 (2004), 169–84.

[47] Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, p. 98. Similarly, Bird wants to avoid speaking of 'righteousness molecules floating through the air to us' (*Evangelical Theology*, p. 563).

[48] Garcia, 'Imputation as Attribution', p. 421. God's righteousness is not a thing or a property that can be separated from his other attributes. To speak as though *God's* righteousness, as a 'part' of his character, could be given to a

clarified, there will likely continue to be additional confusion on both sides of the discussion.

If we are to retain imputed righteousness, it seems that we must be willing to *confess* and be able to *explain* how imputed righteousness is an external concept and yet somehow expresses a biblical teaching. On the one hand, it is not enough to assert, as the defenders do, that there is historical precedence for using external concepts or that imputed righteousness is a legitimate synthesis of biblical teaching. This is a mere statement and does not wrestle with the question: how and why is this concept warranted? On the other hand, although I agree that the Reformation teaching on imputed righteousness cannot be found in Paul on the exegetical level, I disagree with the critics that this means that the concept of imputed righteousness is unwarranted. How does this work? It is at this point that I turn to David Yeago's helpful distinction between concepts and judgments as a helpful resource for defining the relationship between a theology of imputed righteousness and Scripture.

II. CONCEPTS AND JUDGMENTS: A CRUCIAL DISTINCTION

David Yeago's essay, 'The New Testament and Nicene Dogma', has been widely cited by those working on theological exegesis or theological interpretation of Scripture and has the potential to be a key resource in the debate on imputed righteousness.[49] He analyzes Philippians 2:6–11 and argues that 'the ancient theologians were right to hold that the Nicene *homoousion* is neither imposed *on* the New Testament texts, nor distantly deduced from the texts, but, rather, describes a pattern of judgments *in* the texts, in the texture of scriptural discourse concerning Jesus and the God of Israel'.[50] To support this claim, Yeago investigates Paul's use of

human being is to miss the significance of divine simplicity and its importance for understanding God and his attributes. On divine simplicity, see Stephen R. Holmes, '"Something Much Too Plain to Say": Towards a Defence of the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity', in *Listening to the Past: The Place of Tradition in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 50–67; James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011).

[49] David S. Yeago, 'The New Testament and Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis', in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. by Stephen E. Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 87–100. This essay was originally published in *ProEccl* 6 (1997), 16–26.

[50] Yeago, 'The New Testament and Nicene Dogma', p. 88. A somewhat similar proposal can be found in Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God:*

Philippians 2 in Isaiah 45:21–24 and concludes that in this passage 'no stronger affirmation of the bond between the risen Jesus and the God of Israel is possible'.[51] How does this work? Yeago argues that we must 'distinguish between *judgments* and the *conceptual terms* in which those judgments are rendered'.[52] As Michael Allen paraphrases:

> judgments are the material claims made by any given communicator, while concepts are the particular and contingent forms used to express that judgment. Importantly, judgments may be rendered by a variety of concepts, and concepts can be employed to express a number of judgments. In other words, categories and metaphors are tools.[53]

So, to return to Philippians 2 and Isaiah 45, 'the judgment about Jesus and God made in the Nicene Creed—the judgment that they are "of one substance" or "one reality"—is indeed "the same", in a basically ordinary and unmysterious way, as that made in a New Testament text such as Philippians 2:6ff'.[54] Put differently, doctrines can be faithful to Scripture even if they use concepts or terms that are not found in Scripture. This is because the concepts express and correspond to the judgments found in Scripture.

Yeago's distinction between judgments and concepts is helpful because it offers a way to see how the imputed righteousness of Christ, as found and developed in the early Protestant Reformation, is not deduced *from* Scripture nor is it *forced upon* the text.[55] The crucial point, here, is that

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One Being Three Persons (London: T&T Clark, 1996), pp. 88–107. Torrance presents three levels of theological inquiry: an evangelical and doxological level that pertains to our faith and worship of God; a theological level that incorporates new terms in relation to God's self-revelation to us; and a third, higher theological level that moves from God's economic self-revelation to theological statements about the immanent being and life of God. So, in affirming *homoousios*, the early church was not going beyond Scripture, but was following Scripture while also digging deeper into the logic involved in its teachings.

51 Yeago, 'The New Testament and Nicene Dogma', p. 90.

52 Yeago, 'The New Testament and Nicene Dogma', p. 93.

53 R. Michael Allen, *Justification and the Gospel: Understanding the Contexts and Controversies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), p. 62.

54 Yeago, 'The New Testament and Nicene Dogma', p. 94. At this point Yeago criticizes Dunn's *Christology in the Making* for disrespecting the distinction between judgments and concepts (pp. 95–7).

55 This is similar to Vanhoozer's view on the issue: 'what systematic theology at its best can contribute to the discussion [is] not an imposition of some foreign conceptual scheme onto the text *but rather a conceptual elaboration of what is implicit within it*' ('Wrighting the Wrongs of the Reformation? The State of

imputed righteousness is the *concept* used to express the biblical *judgment* of righteousness that is reckoned, credited, and counted. Yet, what does it mean to reckon, credit, or count in relation to imputation? Garcia helpfully cautions us against a simplistic solution. Imputation is

> an instance of theological vocabulary attempting to refer and capture faithfully a biblical teaching that is not wholly identifiable with any one Hebrew or Greek word or expression employed by the biblical writers. Much depends, then, on the extent to which the explanatory vocabulary chosen by theologians faithfully communicates the biblical and theological idea.[56]

So, what is the biblical judgment that corresponds to the concept of imputed righteousness? In short, to reckon, count, or credit means to 'ascribes to one what belongs properly to another'.[57] More specifically, it aims to demonstrate how *the righteousness that justifies* apart from the law and our works *does not derive in any way from us but from Christ and his work alone*. For example, in Romans 5:12–21 Vickers points out that 'there must be a way in which God considers Christ's obedience as the ground upon which he will view "sinners" as "righteous" … Christ's obedience "counts" for our righteous status'.[58] Imputed righteousness—the crediting of Christ's righteousness to our account—is the concept that continues to best explain what we see Paul doing and saying in Scripture and critics must sufficiently explain why this concept is unacceptable. It does not help the discussion to simply point out that Paul never uses imputation language.

Similar to proponents of imputed righteousness, Yeago points out that this kind of move is not without precedent. In contrast, Yeago more clearly explains what the precedent is and how it works. The early church attempted to draw out the judgments in Scripture and *how* they were made with regard to God. How do we make sense of monotheism, the Incarnation, Pentecost, and the equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? The language of being, essence, person, *homoousios*, and so forth were employed in order to provide concepts that faithfully expressed judgments found

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the Union with Christ in St. Paul and Protestant Soteriology', in *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright*, ed. Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011], p. 247).

56 Garcia, 'Imputation as Attribution', p. 421.

57 Garcia, 'Imputation as Attribution', p. 419. Warfield says that 'imputation itself is simply the act of setting to one's account' ('Imputation', p. 263).

58 Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness*, p. 157.

in Scripture.[59] Similarly, imputed righteousness is an external concept that expresses an internal (i.e., biblical) judgment and is suitable because faithfulness to Scripture's judgments does not require a continual act of repetition.[60]

III. CONCLUSION

If imputed righteousness is a concept that faithfully expresses biblical judgments regarding justification, then what might we conclude? First, proponents of imputed righteousness need not worry whether the *Reformation expression* of this doctrine can be found in Paul or anywhere else in Scripture. It is not there! But this does not mean that the Reformers missed the heart of the biblical judgment that we are justified apart from the law, our works, or anything in us and that the righteous status we have is external, extrinsic, and alien. Their aim was to express this teaching clearly and faithfully in response to what was deemed as false or harmful teaching that deviated from Scripture.

Second, this means that the debate should not *first* be on the level of concepts (i.e. can we locate imputed righteousness in Paul), but should begin with the biblical judgments. In this sense, opponents and proponents of imputed righteousness are both right and wrong. Critics are cor-

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[59] For a further reflection on this issue, see Vanhoozer's discssion of 'doctrine and canonical improvisation' in *The Drama of Doctrine*, pp. 340–44.

[60] Some scholars attempt to describe this judgment through other concepts. For example, Michael Bird proposes that 'incorporated righteousness' better attends to what Paul is saying at the *exegetical level* and that it more clearly explains how a believer attains such righteousness through union with Christ. ('Incorporated Righteousness: A Response to Recent Evangelical Discussion Concerning the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness in Justification', *JETS* 47 [2004], 253–75). I am sympathetic to this position and agree that it may alleviate some of the concerns of various critics, but Bird wrongly assumes that union with Christ is not already a part of the doctrine of imputed righteousness (see footnote 31 above). Second, I am not convinced that 'the medieval mind-set of a treasury of merits' forms the real background to the imputed righteousness of Christ's active obedience (*Evangelical Theology*, p. 562). For example, Michael Allen points to the significance of imputation for the distinction between justification and renewal in Luther (*Justification and the Gospel*, p. 50). Greater clarity is needed on the history and background of imputation before it is decided that it is in need of replacement or revision. If union with Christ is already included, and if the doctrine is not a remnant of outdated mind-sets, then perhaps the current concept of imputation sufficiently fulfils the task of theologically expressing Scripture's teaching even if it is in need of further clarification.

rect to argue that the concept of imputation is not found in Scripture. However, defenders rightfully argue that imputed righteousness faithfully represents Paul's theology is not in conflict with the rest of Scripture's teaching.

Third, to some extent we can agree with Bird that 'to equate the gospel as consisting of the doctrine of imputed righteousness makes about as much sense as saying that the gospel is the pre-tribulation rapture'.[61] The gospel is not *identical* to imputed righteousness, but if one loses the *judgment* that grounds the concept of imputed righteousness, then it is arguable that the gospel is altered or at least begins to fall apart. As T.F. Torrance says, 'that he is our righteousness, is the gospel message, so that its being freely offered to us for our righteousness is the glad tidings of the gospel. That is why repentance is not ascetic love of feeling guilty but the life of joyful self-denial in which we find our righteousness and truth *not in our selves but in Christ alone*'.[62]

Fourth, imputed righteousness should never be stated in such a way that it negates or causes problems for our understanding of union with Christ. Union with Christ forms the context for a doctrine of imputed righteousness in contrast to an abstract doctrine that resembles the idea of a transference of a righteous substance. Imputation is personal and relational and takes place with regard believers who are *in Christ*. Together, union with Christ and imputed righteousness help articulate the depths of justification.

Fifth, another angle may provide an additional way forward: defenders of the imputation of Christ's righteousness might stand on more solid ground if, for example, they compared the doctrine of imputed righteousness (and its relation to Scripture) to translations that seek dynamic equivalence rather than a more literal word-for-word result. Opponents appear to claim that imputed righteousness is not a true representation of the teaching of Scripture in a word-for-word sense since Paul never uses this language nor can it be found elsewhere in Scripture. However, if dynamic equivalence is after 'freedom rather than literality, paraphrase rather than repetition',[63] then the defenders are at liberty to use this concept in order to express the judgment they find in Scripture. This may be another way to move the discussion forward, or at least another point

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61 Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, p. 69.

62 Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. by Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), p. 108 (emphasis his).

63 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'Translating Holiness: Forms of Word, Writ and Righteousness', *IJST* 13 (2011),: 387.

of discussion. Then again, this is essentially another way of expressing Yeago's distinction between judgments and concepts.

Whenever we choose concepts to articulate various judgments in Scripture we surely run the risk of misinterpretation and misrepresentation. But this does not mean that we are locked into mere repetition of biblical terminology. Scripture's terms and categories surely express judgments that must determine and constitute the concepts we use—and not the other way around—but we must have the courage to express carefully these judgments with concepts that faithfully represent Scripture and speak clearly to our cultural contexts. This paper defends both the freedom to use concepts like imputation as well as the fact that this concept faithfully corresponds to the biblical judgment of crediting righteousness to a believer that properly belongs to Christ. My hope is that this essay also helps remove the pressure to find imputed righteousness at the exegetical level. I do not believe it is there. Nevertheless, imputed righteousness is a helpful and crucial shorthand concept. Although it may not sum up all that can be said of justification, we cannot truly have a sufficient doctrine of justification without it.

Dogmatic and Biblical Theology: Continued Tension or Restored Relationship?

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The aim of this article is to reflect briefly on the rather unsteady relation of biblical theology and dogmatic theology by first asking where the relationship atrophied and, second, by asking what can be done to encourage more effective discussion which might lead to a restoration of relationship between these disciplines. At the outset, however, it is important to keep in mind that 'dogmatic theology' does not refer here to the 'rediscovery' of contextualised approaches to doctrine, but to the task whereby conceptual vocabularies and arguments are arranged around exegetical themes, with the aim of informing the church's reading of and listening to Holy Scripture. And by 'biblical theology' what is implied here is not the 'authorial' discipline of exegesis *in abstracto*, but rather exegetical practice set within the broader attempt to trace the unfolding drama of divine revelation in its historical and canonical aspect.

Initial Exemplars of Dogmatic and Biblical Theology

Given the latter, the Reformation offered the important bedrock upon which later proposals of biblical theology were founded. At the most basic exegetical level, the Reformers applied their humanist education to the study of Scripture and, secondarily but no less importantly, to the patristic thinkers. Hesitations may well be registered regarding their achievement in particular cases, of course, but it cannot be denied that they brought to their craft a humanistic focus on context, history, and philology which had been absent in the commentaries of the medieval period.

That their vernacular translations of the biblical text is often recognised as having a seminal impact on current Western languages is a sign of the sheer depth of the Reformers' philological skill as well as their awareness of the history of source-criticism. This is likewise the case in looking to the Reformation's rekindled attention to the literal sense of

the text and the resultant hermeneutical statements of the basic clarity of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the 'analogy of faith'.[1]

Many of the exemplars of dogmatic theology were also exegetes, virtuosos of language and textual criticism. Although his commentaries are consulted more frequently today than in his own time, for instance, John Calvin was not only one among many of his colleagues, but in terms of technical education and proficiency he was outstripped by many of contemporaries whose names are largely forgotten to the pages of history.

Catholic and Protestant scholastics, in spite of their method of dogmatics, were often as skilful in preaching, liturgy, and pastoral care. They acknowledged that different duties called for different techniques, but their varied corpus was united by their ecclesial vocation and responsibility. Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva and an influential scholastic, is perhaps more widely known today for his offerings to New Testament scholarship than for his tract, *Tabula praedestinationis*.[2] Although some tend to juxtapose the pastoral spirit of the Heidelberg Catechism with a fanatically depreciatory dogmatic scholasticism, Ursinus and Olevianus—the Catechism's authors—were among the most exact and meticulous of the scholastic federal theologians. And even if material differences are found with these writers, the Protestant scholastics and orthodox embody a refined endeavour in scholarly exegesis, catholic freedom, and a thirst for concurrently solidifying the achievements of the Reformation whilst surveying still greater hinterlands in the interest of 'always being reformed according to the Word of God'. The importance of such endeavours are perhaps sketched in Karl Barth's concluding comments to his 1923 lectures on the Reformed confessions:

> I hope that it has become clear to you how worthwhile it is to research the thinking of the Reformed fathers. Although they were not exempted from the 'confusion of humans'… they lived in a world of rich and profound insights and learnings […] Beyond that, it is possible earnestly to *stand quietly* before the eternal questions and answers which once required of our fathers that they confess […] When that is done, more seriously perhaps by a *young* generation that knows better what real questions and answers are than do many

[1] For an overview of the Reformation and post-Reformation approach to the 'properties' of Holy Scripture, see R. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy* ca. 1520 to ca. 1725, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MN: Baker Academic, 2003), 2, ch. 5.

[2] Beza's 'Table of Predestination' has various English translations, e.g., J. Stockwood (trans.), *The Treasure of Trueth, Touching the grounde works of man his salvation, and Chiefest Points of Christian Religion* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1576).

older folks, then we need *not* be ultimately fearful about the future of theology and the church, in spite of all serious concerns about their present internal confusion.[3]

POST-REFORMATION DOGMATIC AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Federal theology, moreover, was a vital historical link between classic dogmatics and an early biblical theology. The founding father of biblical theology, Johannes Cocceius, was himself a typical representative of his circle of thinkers. The growing significance of 'covenant' as a theme was not advanced as a substitute for the seemingly speculative categories of scholastic method but was produced from within the Protestant scholastic project itself. It therefore signifies a protest to the distortion of post-Reformation theology as engrossed in mere ahistorical abstraction.[4] Of course, none of this is to be simply repeated wholesale. For example, developments in biblical studies essentially alter the course of discovery and refinement. But such discoveries can also add further facts in support of preceding consensus. Despite gains since their day, the massive accomplishments of the older systems signify the realities which once were achieved in combining exegesis and dogmatics in a ceaseless dialectic which was profitable not only for the academy but for the church and not only for faith but for practice as well. However similar the Protestant scholastics appeared to be to their medieval forefathers in terms of method, their extent of learning helped them not only to criticize the older theological schemes at needed points but to do so with constructive awareness in order to produce alternative dogmatic accounts.

It may well be that post-Reformation dogmatic theology is less lively than the preaching and popular polemics of the Reformers themselves. Yet in its increasing appreciation for the model of Christ the Mediator, the 'second Adam', this dogmatic theology turned away from the dualisms that not only engrossed the medieval synthesis but also disturbed modern criticism and apologetics. In so doing, they turned away from the ideal of timeless ideas, namely, in approaching the object of theology as one might approach another person. By drawing on the covenant theology that they were convinced originated in the biblical text, theology had a

3 K. Barth, *Theology of the Reformed Confessions*, trans. D. Guder and J. Guder (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), pp. 224f. (emphasis original).

4 J. Cocceius, *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* (Leiden: Elseviriorum, 1654), esp. XVI. See the recent English translation in C. Carmichael (trans.), *The Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

fundamental obligation to a historical-eschatological hermeneutic which centred on Jesus Christ. One may indeed disagree with the conclusions of a Cocceius, a Beza, or an Ursinus, but only with insufficient knowledge could one say that they exchanged a speculative method for exegesis and levied an abstract system upon the biblical text.

Yet with the rise of rationalism, criticism exiled authority, whether ecclesial or textual. Instead of beginning with the Anselmian *credo*, one was to begin with the Cartesian *cogito* and establish universal grounds for an understanding which transcended texts and traditions. Helped by the pietistic polemic against dogmatics, the Enlightenment established as the criterion for 'truth' that which was comprehensible to an allegedly universal autonomous reason. It is the Enlightenment, not Protestant scholasticism, which treated the scriptures as a source to be pillaged by criticism until the historical characteristics of divine revelation were detached from the timeless truths of reason and morality. When the Romantics added experience as a foundation—or in Schleiermacher's terms, a 'feeling of dependence'—pietism and rationalism united in Protestant liberalism, and the specific, historical, dynamic shape of revelation was considered as less genuine than the universal, abstract, static gnosis accessible to anyone with the right method. For instance, Johan Gabler's 'Distinction between Dogmatic and Biblical Theology' of 1787 set out to mark the limits of biblical theology and dogmatics, comparing them in terms of the historical versus the didactic, antedating the now widespread conflict between dynamic and static methods.[5]

SUSPICIONS AND TENSIONS

Yet the current biblical theology programme is undergoing an inner debate. On the one hand, there are those who insist a biblical theology grounded in the church, and those who, on the other hand, favour biblical theology as being a relatively independent academic discipline, concerned with 'authorial' exegetical practice, and wary of dogmatic schemes. Why does this tension currently exist? Undoubtedly, there are many reasons that could be put forth. However, when the latter approach to biblical theology is pressed—namely that, as an academic discipline, biblical theology reduces to 'authorial' exegesis—several surprising reasons come to

[5] J.P. Gabler, *De justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus* (1787). See the excellent English translation and commentary in J. Sandys-Wunsch and L. Eldredge, 'J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (1980), 133–44.

light as to why the current tensions between biblical and dogmatic theology exist.

(1) The first reason is an academic suspicion of dogmatic theology which acts as an alien structure imposed on the biblical text. Oscar Cullmann states that doing theological 'justice to the material' inherently involves the avoidance of 'imposing an external dogmatic scheme upon [for example] the Christology of the New Testament'.[6] Such a suspicion of dogmatics in biblical theology is due, in part, says Walter Brueggemann, to the 'tyranny of reductionism (in the *church*)', namely, the danger that 'we want our interpretation to be included in the scope of the authority we assign to the Bible, so that we imagine we possess an "authorized" interpretation.'[7] While one may understand the irritation which often attends reactionary fundamentalism, what is the effect of stating the extensive generalisation of 'reductionism (in the *church*)' or avoiding an 'external dogmatic scheme'? The effect, of course, is that one cannot really know what Scripture says without appropriate authority—that is, the biblical scholar. Thus something akin to biblical literalism gets closer to the content of the text than the fundamentalism against which it often registers complaint.

Across the continuum of theology, therefore, one notices a retort against doctrine and particularly against dogmatic schemes. Several biblical scholars place the collective consensus of an ecclesial community to one side. That is, one either accepts the 'reductionist' view of God that one meets in the church theologies and confessions, or allows the Bible to have its say. The reason for this, says James Barr, is a matter of the different sources for the two disciplines. Whereas biblical theology finds its source in the Bible, dogmatic theology finds its source 'not in the Bible' but in 'the tradition of regulative decisions which had a part in the formation of the biblical texts'.[8] And yet can interpretation be identified merely with doing 'justice to the material' by 'what the Bible says' in light of what a great cloud of witnesses has said the Bible says? The choice that biblical scholars often put to their students, though offered as a choice between domineering church systems and the 'obvious' interpretation of Scripture, is nothing more than a choice between the church's consensual reading of

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6 O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. S.C. Guthrie and C.A.M. Hall, revised edition (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1963), p. 315.

7 W. Brueggeman, *The Book that Breathes New Life: Scriptural Authority and Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), p. 44.

8 J. Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 74.

Scripture over against the interpretation offered by a current consensus of the academic guild or individual scholar.

However, after deconstructing the totalising assertions of individual biblical scholars against the totalising assertions of the past, biblical scholars did indeed positively challenge the summative interpretation of the medieval church. Yet these exegetes who challenged some traditional interpretations were also servants of the church who outlined confessions and catechisms in order to articulate a common faith. The Reformers did not start *de novo*, that is, doggedly determined to wipe the slate and begin anew with the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and other broad topics of agreement. Nevertheless, we would do well to be attentive to Brueggeman, Cullmann, Barr and others in not allowing biblical scholarship generally and biblical theology particularly to be hushed in their unique contribution by placing our confessions above Scripture, as though placing our hands over our ears. An authentically 'confessional' approach has maintained that the only basis for contribution is that these affirmations faithfully echo the fundamental teachings of Holy Scripture. Reading Scripture faithfully with the church is the only constructive way forward, but exegesis must continue to remind the Christian reader that dogmatics is never finished even if confessional declarations remain faithful accounts of Scripture.

The assumption of some biblical scholars seems to be that the very proposal of a dogmatic scheme is to do an injustice to the text, a task deemed both foolish and brash. Is it wise, much less possible, then, to uphold that a particular confession of faith itself includes the system of doctrine taught in Scripture? And is it then still possible to articulate the features of such a system? On one hand, it is beneficial to ask that question. For too long this was taken for granted, and in that setting it became easier for dogmaticians to lord over the text and to engage in exegesis only to validate a position that may not arise naturally, either directly or by warranted results from clear passages. In some instances, particularly amongst the tomes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there emerged unoriginal dogmatic schemes. It is as likely for Protestants as anyone else to forfeit the awe and wonder of labouring with a text and instead rely on stock formulations. Just as the Reformers protested that if one wanted to investigate the scriptures it was almost always done by digging through several layers of commentaries, too much current theology has been inhaled as second-hand orthodox smoke.

Given this, it would be useful perhaps, with more space, to trace an appraisal of recent dogmatic and biblical theologies. There is satisfactory warrant, of course, for biblical scholars to worry that their dogmatic colleagues raise a 'Theology and . . .' approach to such a hermeneutical

status that exegesis is labelled servant rather than lord. In present circles of evangelical opinion, for example, the increasingly prevalent examples of 'Theology and . . .' tend to be focused either on wooden amplifications of post-war anxieties or on the seemingly endless 'rediscovery' of aesthetic and contextualised approaches to doctrine. Lacking the breadth and depth of classic dogmatic schemes, this formulaic and 'innovative' approach tends to depict such presentations as hollow and predictable. Important theologians are frequently taken into account, but interaction with paradigmatic proposals in biblical studies, historical, and even important dogmatic theologies from other traditions are scarce. None of this bears a likeness to the superior examples of patristic or early Protestant dogmatic systems and the more recent ones situated in that stream. Nevertheless, a reintegration and restoration of these two disciplines is required for the health of each.

(2) Briefly, a second reason for the biblical scholar's suspicion of dogmatic theology is found precisely in the system or scheme itself—that is, the critique of dogmatics as a discourse foreign to the biblical domain. On the one hand, biblical scholars vote in favour of 'existence' over the 'rational objectivity' of the so-called scheme of dogmatics; namely, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob over against the god of the philosophers. The God of biblical theology, it might be said, is a living Subject who acts in history and in the concrete life of a historical community; the God of theology is an Object who is 'known' as the *causa sui*, the supreme being in the chain of Being. Caricatures aside: a personal relationship with a 'Thou' who is truly 'other' and beyond understanding is exchanged for an impersonal, abstract, and scientific concept of *deitas*. Thus (onto) theology lives and moves and has its being in someone or something other than YHWH.

THE GROUND OF DOGMATIC AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

As with the concern to ensure the possibility of exegesis to always surprise and reform our dogmatic paradigms, the suspicion that dogmatic theology subjects its discourse to questions and sometimes even answers that are irrelevant and at points even hostile to biblical faith is, unfortunately, well founded. However, if post-structuralist critics of the onto-theological scheme can themselves appeal to such pre-modern sources as Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther, perhaps biblical scholars will patiently wait for contemporary dogmatics to come into stride with critique.

It was not twentieth-century phenomenology, after all, but Calvin who demanded that theology avoid the speculative metaphysical question 'What is God?' and instead pursue the knowledge of who God is and

'what is consistent with his nature'.[9] Thus dogmatic theology seeks to provide the 'godly mind with a sort of index to what they should particularly look for in Scripture concerning God, and to direct their search to a sure goal'.[10] Perhaps more pointedly:

> [W]hen faith is discussed in the schools, they call God simply the object of faith, and by fleeting speculations…lead miserable souls astray rather than direct them to a definite goal. For, since 'God dwells in inaccessible light' [1 Tim. 6:16], Christ must become our intermediary. Hence, he calls himself the 'light of the world' [John 8:12] […] For God would have remained hidden afar off if Christ's splendour had not beamed upon us.[11]

Calvin and his scholastic heirs insisted that theological prolegomena are related to the dogmatic scheme itself in an *a posteriori* rather than *a priori* fashion. By turning away from the 'god of the philosophers' and instead to the 'definite goal', and from the knowledge of 'What is God?' to the knowledge of God's self-revelation in 'Christ's splendour'—such thoughts can help retrieve a biblical narrative from its Platonizing falsifications, here and now. Christ as the Mediator—that is, his becoming 'our intermediary'—is the foundation of all foundations. Mindful of the departure from the medieval system at essential turns, such rhetoric issuing from Calvin and Protestant orthodoxy pronounces an innovative approach with a clear aim: questions of ontology are wholly secondary to the fact that 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself' (2 Cor. 5:19, ESV).

One can therefore agree with the assertion that the material narrative of the gospel determines the outline of Christian dogmatics. At the same moment, even approaching the theological task in this way, one must participate in metaphysical propositions. To proclaim, for instance, 'God is One' or to affirm the Trinity, the hypostatic union, and so forth, is to practice metaphysics. At stake here is not merely the prospect of dogmatics, but the prospect of faith and piety: prayer would be a misdirected cry, and praise would be deprived of an object beyond individual or communal experience, assembling a *deitas* on the grounds of creaturely needs or mystical assumptions. What is required here is a reintegration of exegesis and dogmatics, whereby Christian theology can begin to be distrustful of conjectural, false metaphysics that critics have every reason to scrutinise.

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9 J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1960), I.ii.2.

10 Ibid., I.x.1.

11 Ibid., III.ii.1; cf. II.vi.4.

Beginning with the revelation of the divine name, leading to other confessional statements, God authorized Israel to ascribe specific attributes and to form concise propositions regarding the divine reality and God's relation to the world. And given the decisive revelation of God in Jesus Christ—that is, the fact that 'God would have remained hidden afar off if Christ's splendour had not beamed upon us'[12]—it is not surprising that the New Testament would contribute expressly to this account. Although this is not the place to make the case, the unanimity of the first five centuries regarding the two natures of Christ, for example, is unthinkable apart from the momentous expressions that one reads in the Gospels, Epistles, and in the sermons in Acts. If the biblical writers had not been instructed in the theology of the Hebrew scriptures, they would hardly have communicated so meaningfully the fact of Christ as the lens which made the whole canonical picture come into focus.

In light of present ideological and cultural setting, it may be time for a fresh proclamation of Christ and a renewed commitment to kerygmatic task. A doctrine of God in our day will therefore be best articulated not only by reiterating classical principles, but by simply tracing God's relation to history as the 'God of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Eph. 1:17). New schemes in dogmatic and biblical theology should indeed be encouraged. Moreover, new challenges to classic articulations cannot merely be rejected as 'heterodox', but such challenges will nevertheless have to be examined by the wise dogmatic reflection of the church on Holy Scripture, as is seen in its creeds, confessions, and catechisms. Theology thus serves to build up the church; it is not the gospel; it is not a 'means of grace', but rather a human work of thinking and speaking 'to please God' (1 Thess. 2:4). Because it is continually a *human* work, it shares in the weakness and shortcomings of its 'scholars' and of their age. And although it will not shrink from making needed metaphysical assertions, it will seek primarily (albeit in a weak, creaturely manner) to proclaim not itself, 'but Jesus Christ as Lord' (2 Cor. 4:5).

CONCLUSION

Can there be an approach to dogmatic and biblical theology which does not merely recycle past labours but builds on them in the light of current exegesis as well as suitable conceptual insights from contemporary thought? Perhaps the notion of 'covenant', upon which this article first embarked, might be further expounded in a biblical-theological manner by tracing the specific arrangements throughout salvation history, and it

[12] Ibid.

could be developed dogmatically by organizing the material in an evangelical manner. Thus, for instance, the union with Christ could become the paradigm within which one could relate election, reconciliation, sanctification, and glorification. In this way, the covenant—that resolve of the Father that there should be a 'people for his own possession' (1 Pet. 2:9)—becomes an integrative arrangement, and in so doing, it keeps each of these other elements from shifting or concealing the other, and allows for greater sophistication as well as range.

Yet in the end it is worth recognising that whilst biblical theologies are helpful for some tasks, dogmatic theologies are helpful for others. Biblical and dogmatic theology mutually 'condition' one other: each guiding the other away from false dichotomies and over-zealous enthusiasms, and instead point one another back to a proper grounding in gospel and exegesis. Thus, to obscure the real distinction between dogmatics and biblical theology is to fall into the danger of what Barr called 'amateurism pretending to be professionalism'.[13] Likewise, to reduce dogmatic theology to biblical theology, or vice versa, as if only the latter actually engaged in genuine exegesis, and that the former need not engage in exegesis, is to echo an inimical notion which maintains that these disciplines retain their mutual tension instead of offering needed restoration.

[13] Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, p. 70.

Gospel and Doctrine in the Life of the Church

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Biblical doctrine is rooted in the gospel and bears fruit in the church. Unfortunately, many in the church today have denigrated the role of doctrine and set it at odds with the message of the gospel. I believe this false dichotomy between gospel and doctrine is one of the most dangerous ideas in all of Christianity. The common perception that doctrine goes beyond the gospel into more advanced areas cultivates a church that too often exchanges doctrines for slogans, biblical literacy for cultural relevance, and sanctification for moralism.

As pietistic as this 'gospel rather than doctrine' sentiment may sound, it is actually a current within a broader academic stream of thought that has carved a not-so-grand canyon between the Christian gospel and Christian doctrine. Adolf von Harnack, the mouth of this stream, argued that the development of doctrine in the early church gradually corrupted the 'simple gospel' of Jesus.[1] Are Harnack and the current anti-doctrine age right to pit gospel against doctrine? Does doctrine corrupt or even distract from the gospel? Does Scripture reveal how the two should relate? This essay will demonstrate that rather than going beyond the gospel, the task of theology is to further understand the depths of the gospel. Doctrine, therefore, is the product of faith seeking understanding of the gospel and exists to promote the gospel by defending and defining it in order to help the church understand and respond to what God has done in Christ. In biblical terms, 'sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel' (1 Tim. 1:10–11) leads to a 'manner of life . . . worthy of the gospel of Christ' (Phil. 1:27). Although the burden of this essay does not depend on an exact definition of 'the gospel', and Scripture itself uses the term in a variety of ways, I offer my own summary definition up front.

> The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ – that through his life, death, and resurrection God, has reconciled sinners and established his kingdom.[2]

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1 Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, vol. 1, 7 vols., 3rd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997).

2 Most definitions of the gospel focus either on Jesus' preaching of the kingdom (Mark 1:15) or Paul's emphasis on the death and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3–4). I believe both are necessary in their respective roles and are actually present in both Paul and Jesus. While the reign of God on earth is the

The unfortunate divide between gospel and doctrine has resulted in a two-fold problem: a gospel-less theology (usually in the academy) and a theology-less gospel (in the church). A concomitant aim of this essay, therefore, is that by providing a robustly theological gospel and gospel-centred theology, a right relationship will be encouraged between the church and the academy. The main argument, however, is that a way forward is dependent on a proper understanding of doctrine, namely that doctrine is rooted in the gospel and bears fruit in the church. I will discuss five ways in which the gospel and doctrine are inseparably related and then apply this practically to the life of the church.

DOCTRINE: THE PRODUCT OF FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL

While the *task* of theology has reached consensus throughout church history as 'faith seeking understanding', the *object* of the theology has been greatly disputed. The key historical figure here is Anselm, who not only famously coined the phrase for the task of theology ('faith seeking understanding'),[3] but also infamously (in my opinion) determined the object of theology ('the supreme being'[4]). Assuming that Christian theology is bound by its canon of Scripture, it is questionable whether this generic concept of 'god' measures up to the LORD of the Bible who has revealed himself in the redemptive history of Israel and ultimately its promised messiah. Another common alternative for the object of theology emerged from the Enlightenment when Friedrich Schleiermacher, accept-

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eschatological goal of redemptive history, the atoning death of Christ is the glorious means and eternal foundation for that kingdom. This is consistent with John Calvin's understanding of the gospel, which claimed that the word 'gospel' has a 'broad sense' which encompasses all the promises of God in redemptive history and a 'higher sense' of God's grace in Christ for sinners. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeill, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), II.ix.2.

3 The phrase (*fides quaerens intellectum*) was originally coined by Anselm. Anselm, '*Proslogion*', in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 83; The concept, however, was clearly present in Augustine: 'May God grant his aid, and give us to understand what we have first believed. The steps are laid down by the prophet who says: 'Unless ye believe ye shall not understand' (Isa. 7:9 LXX).' Augustine, 'On Free Will', in *Augustine: Earlier Works*, ed. by J. H. S. Burleigh, Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), pp. 114–15.

4 Anselm, '*Proslogion*', p. 89.

ing Immanuel Kant's premise that God himself cannot be apprehended because he is outside of the world of the senses, redefined the object of theology as the human feeling of absolute dependence.[5] In other words, when one 'does theology' he or she is not talking about God, but about the human experience of God.

As a third way between the two dominant strands of designating the object of theology—medieval scholasticism (God) and liberal Protestantism (us)—I believe the object of theology is the gospel (God for us).[6] Theology is not a search for the essence of God detached from the world, nor the inward reflection of something inexpressible, but the true-yet-not-exhaustive knowledge of the triune God who has revealed himself in the gospel. This appeal to the gospel as the object of theology must not be read as a contrast between God and the gospel, but is rather an assertion that the traditional understanding of the object of theology as a generic 'god' is not distinctly Christian.[7] Christian theology seeks to understand the 'God of the Gospel'8 who makes himself known in the history of his deeds found within the Scriptures. This is truly an evangelical (gospel-centred) theology.

Perhaps the most obvious and disappointing example of the attempt to do theology apart from the gospel is found in accounts of the doctrine of God. In his essay 'The Triune God of the Gospel', Kevin Vanhoozer laments the longstanding tradition in the church that focuses solely on the divine 'what' rather than the divine 'who', especially considering that Scripture itself identifies God by his words and actions: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt' (Exod. 20:2). According to Vanhoozer, 'The God of the gospel is not a generic deity but has spoken and acted in concrete ways, revealing his identity in history with Israel and ultimately in the history of Jesus Christ'.[9] In agreement

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5 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).

6 John Webster and Kevin J. Vanhoozer also speak of the gospel as the object of theology. John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 3; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), p. 35.

7 I concur with Calvin: 'I subscribe to the common saying that God is the object of faith, yet it requires qualification...that apart from Christ the saving knowledge of God does not stand' (Calvin, *Institutes*, II.vi.4).

8 Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 5–6.

9 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'The Triune God of the Gospel', in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. by Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier

with Vanhoozer on the triune shape of the gospel, Fred Sanders argues that the Trinity is the essential yet tacit background to the gospel and therefore calls for a recovery of trinitarian theology by going deeper into the gospel. 'The deeper we dig into the gospel, the deeper we go into the mystery of the Trinity.'[10] To understand the gospel is to encounter the triune God of the gospel.

Furthermore, to speak of the gospel at all is to speak of the 'gospel of God' (Mark 1:14; Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:8–9). The gospel is *good* news because it is *God* news. The greatest good of the gospel is not the many blessings given *by* God, but that in Christ God has given *himself*. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, 'The redeemed have all their objective good in God. God himself is the great good which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by redemption. He is the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased.'[11] I elaborate this point to make clear that arguing for the gospel as the object of theology is not to displace God (although it does seek to displace the generic 'supreme being'), but is to further define this God and be explicit about the way in which we know who he is, namely through the gospel.

Lastly, just as it is not enough to claim a generic 'god' as the object of theology, it is even insufficient to claim Jesus, since this could be (and is) used to speak of Christ's person apart from his works. 'Gospel' upholds the unity of Christ's person and work within a broader unity of Old Testament promise and New Testament fulfilment (Gen. 12:3; cf. Gal. 3:16; Isa. 52:7; cf. Mark 1:15). The mediatorial task of Jesus ('one mediator between God and men') is fulfilled not only in his person ('the man Christ Jesus'), but also in his work ('who gave himself as a ransom for all') (1 Tim. 2:5–6). As Graeme Goldsworthy says, 'The hermeneutic centre of the Bible is therefore Jesus in his being and in his saving acts—the Jesus of the gospel',[12] or as Calvin says, Jesus 'clothed with the gospel'.[13]

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 44.

10 Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), p. 13.

11 Jonathan Edwards, 'God Glorified in the Work of Redemption by the Greatness of Man's Dependence upon Him, in the Whole of it (1731)', in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader*, ed. by Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 74.

12 Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), p. 63.

13 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.i.6.

To ask the question 'What is the object of theology?' is an esoteric way of asking 'What is the Bible all about?' The Bible is not merely about God in and of himself, but about God 'for us'. It is not a manual on *what* God is or even *that* God is, but a revelation of *who* God is in his reconciliation of the world to himself. In sum, if the object of theology is the gospel, then the task of theology is never able to go beyond the gospel, but ever-deeper into its riches.

DOCTRINE PROMOTES THE PRIMACY OF THE GOSPEL

Theology is not the good news, but it seeks to promote the news in a way that upholds its goodness. Since the gospel alone is 'of first importance' (1 Cor. 15:3), doctrine must be ministerial to, although inseparable from, the gospel. For Paul, 'sound doctrine'[14] must be 'in accordance with the gospel' (1 Tim. 10–11) because the gospel is the ultimate reality around which all Christian thought and life revolve. Though in this instance (1 Tim. 1:10–11) Paul is using the gospel as a standard for gauging doctrine, the broader context of the letter[15] and the Pauline corpus as a whole show that the very reason for doctrine's existence is to serve the gospel.[16] In other words, the gospel is normative for theology because it is both its generative source and its doxological aim. In the words of John Webster, theology operates in 'submission to the gospel'.[17]

Humanity is not created for the ultimate purpose of *understanding* God, but to know, love, and worship God—of which understanding is an essential component. Likewise, one is not justified by right belief in doctrines but rather through faith in the one to whom the doctrines point.

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[14] *Hygiainouses didaskalias* translates literally as 'healthy teaching' and therefore should not anachronistically bring to mind thoughts of scholastic systematic theology. However, it is clear that by this point there was an established body of doctrine in the church and so the phrase does not always simply refer generically to teaching. Based on this, along with the fact that *hygiainouses didaskalias* always appears in the singular, Phillip Towner concludes that 'sound doctrine' is a 'technical term in these letters for the authoritative apostolic doctrine'. (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus* [The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006], p. 130).

[15] Gordon Fee says Paul's concern for the gospel is the 'driving force' behind all of the Pastoral Epistles and 'absolutely dominates' Paul's first letter to Timothy. (*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* [New International Biblical Commentary, 13; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988], p. 15).

[16] 'It is [the Gospel's] priority . . . to the sound teaching that explains its presence here as a normative source' (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 131).

[17] Webster, *Holiness*, p. 27.

Salvation is not by means of a proposition, but a person, Jesus Christ. Emil Brunner, known today mostly for his clash with Karl Barth on natural theology, offers great insight on the subsidiary role of doctrine. According to Brunner, because theology exists 'for the sake of the Christian message, not *vice versa*', it is called not to proclaim itself, but 'to create room for the Divine Word itself'.[18] The greatest danger of doctrine, therefore, is to forget that 'a servant is not greater than his master' (John 13:16) and to seek its own glory rather than that of 'the gospel of the glory of the blessed God' (1 Tim. 1:11). As Grünewald's *Crucifixion* painting served as a constant reminder to Karl Barth, theology is a finger pointing to the crucified Christ.

In sum, doctrine is not the be-all and end-all, but rather serves the understanding, proclaiming, and responding to the gospel. Ironically, by 'putting doctrine in its place', its importance is actually magnified rather than minimized. The higher one's view of the gospel, the greater their appreciation of doctrine. The more clearly one understands the gospel, the more he or she will praise the God of the gospel. Just as a microphone without amplification is useless, doctrine apart from the gospel has nothing to say. Theology, when done well, produces doctrine that promotes (and does not compete with) the gospel.

DOCTRINE DEFENDS THE GOSPEL

Doctrine's service of promoting the gospel entails the two-fold task of defending and defining. The defending of the gospel is particularly evident in Paul's commanding Timothy to 'charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine' (1 Tim. 1:3). Why, in one of Paul's most pastoral letters, would he begin with such a strong order about doctrine? As noted above, doctrine matters because the gospel matters. Timothy and his church have been entrusted with the gospel (1:11; cf. 2 Tim. 2:14) and therefore must defend it against every enemy and counterfeit. In 1 Timothy, as in the rest of the New Testament, sound doctrine is developed in the context of unsound doctrine. As made especially clear in the controversies of the church fathers, heresy forces orthodoxy to define itself. Theology is a never-ending task because the unchanging truth of the gospel must always be defended against new enemies and counterfeits. 'For the time is coming when people will not endure sound doctrine [*hygiainouses didaskalias*], but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves

[18] Emil Brunner, *The Mediator: A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), pp. 594–5.

teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths' (2 Tim. 4:3–4, my translation).

It is important to notice Paul's qualification of doctrine in 1 Timothy as either 'sound' (*hygiainouse*) or 'different' (*hetero*). Everyone is a theologian. Everyone has doctrine. The question is whether or not their doctrine is sound and whether it conforms to the gospel. Although it is accurate to speak of this contemporary time as an anti-doctrine age, Herman Bavinck perceived long ago that opposition to doctrine or dogma is always merely opposition to *certain* doctrines, for as Kant says, 'unbelief has at all times been most dogmatic'.[19] Why is 'different' (*hetero*) doctrine so dangerous to the gospel that has been entrusted to the church? Because *hetero* doctrine is 'in accordance with' a *hetero* gospel (Gal. 1:6; 2 Cor. 11:4). In other words, while sound doctrine exists to promote the gospel by defending and defining it for the glory of God, *hetero* doctrine exists to promote a *hetero* gospel by defending and defining it for the glory of a *hetero* god. Unsound doctrine is dangerous not because it provides the wrong answers on a test of orthodoxy, but because it promotes a different gospel and therefore a different god.

DOCTRINE DEFINES THE GOSPEL

Contrary to the 'other doctrine' that must be defended against, Paul commends 'sound doctrine' that must be defined in accordance with the gospel (1 Tim. 1:3–11). The primary task is the proclamation of the gospel; the role of doctrine is to make sure the gospel is proclaimed rightly. Paul explains to Timothy that doctrine not only engages false teaching, but seeks primarily to discern the 'pattern of sound words' (2 Tim. 1:13), 'rightly handling the word of truth' (2 Tim. 2:15). Timothy is to be 'trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine' (1 Tim. 4:6). William Mounce explains the significance:

> Paul is differentiating between the basic gospel message ('the words of faith') and the doctrinal teaching that comes out of it ('the good teaching') . . . A reading of the gospel should always be accompanied by the correct interpretation or doctrinal understanding of the gospel. This emphasis on doctrine is similar to Paul's teaching elsewhere that Timothy must handle the gospel correctly.[20]

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[19] Quoted in Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. by John Bolt, trans. by John Vriend, 4 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003-2009), 1, p. 33.

[20] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Word Biblical Commentary, 46; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 249.

The gospel is to be proclaimed, but it is to be done so in a way that is faithful to Scripture's witness to God's character and ways. If there is 'no other name' (Acts 4:12) by which one must be saved, then whether in prayer, praise, or preaching, it is imperative to get that name right.[21] The awareness and rise of the global church makes theology's task of promoting the gospel by defending and defining it in new contexts especially important for the future of the church.

DOCTRINE HELPS THE CHURCH UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE GOSPEL

Doctrine promotes the gospel *so that* the church might understand and respond to the gospel in a way that is faithful to Scripture. The gospel is good *news* about what God has done in Christ, not good *advice* about what needs to be done. The church, therefore, is not called to 'do' the gospel, but to believe (Mark 1:15), receive (2 Cor. 11:4), proclaim (Mark 16:15) and live in line with (Gal. 2:14) the gospel. One cannot 'do' the gospel because it is by definition something that God has done (in fact, what we have 'done' is the very reason for the necessity of the gospel). The gospel need not be repeated because it is 'once and for all' (Heb. 9:26). The gospel need not be completed because 'it is finished' (John 19:30). Doctrine, therefore, acts as an aid in the Christian's understanding and responding to the gospel for the glory of God and the edification of his church.

Inasmuch as theology is 'faith seeking understanding', the mind is crucial for its task. Just as God's people have always been called to love him with their minds (Deut. 6:4–5), it is imperative that they *think* about God in accordance with the gospel. The process of doing theology is too often thought of apart from the great work of redemption that it seeks to understand, as if the untouched mind were reflecting on God's restoration of an otherwise broken world. On the contrary, the mind understands the gospel because it is also being transformed by the gospel, meaning that sound doctrine is ultimately a result of the gospel's renewing effects on the fallen mind. John Webster rightly asserts that theology is an aspect of the sanctification of the mind.

> Christian theology is an aspect of reason's sanctification . . . Like all other aspects of human life, reason is a field of God's sanctifying work. Reason, too . . . must be reconciled to the holy God if it is to do its work well. And good

[21] Michael S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), p. 111.

> Christian theology can only happen if it is rooted in the reconciliation of reason by the sanctifying presence of God.[22]

> Christian theology is biblical reasoning. It is the redeemed intellect's reflective apprehension of God's gospel address through the embassy of Scripture, enabled and corrected by God's presence and having fellowship with him as its end.[23]

Although Luther was correct to call the fallen mind 'whore reason', one must also designate the redeemed mind as 'holy reason'. Like Gomer, reason has been reconciled by God's covenant love and restored to seeing God and his works through Christ, our true and better Hosea. As the Holy Spirit sanctifies the Christian, the gospel orders their thinking so that their thoughts about God and the world are consistent with the pattern of Scripture.

Just as doctrine helps the Christian *think* in accordance with the gospel, it also helps the Christian *act* 'in step with the truth of the gospel' (Gal. 2:14).[24] The two, of course, are related inasmuch as belief informs behaviour.[25] Paul shows the interdependence of doctrine and living in his first letter to Timothy by saying that the opposite of sound doctrine is not only 'different doctrine', but also ungodly and sinful behaviour (1 Tim. 1:10–11). In fact, the broader context of the letter is striking in its implications for pastoral ministry. How does Paul oppose the sinful behaviour of this church in Ephesus? Not by focusing solely on the conduct itself, nor by implementing a discipleship program, but by explaining the practical importance of sound doctrine and the need to silence the teachers of different doctrine. If one's understanding of discipleship is detached from sound doctrine in accordance with the gospel, then sanctification will

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22 Webster, *Holiness*, p. 10.

23 John Webster, 'Biblical Reasoning', *Anglican Theological Review* 90 (2008), 747.

24 Ellen Charry has demonstrated that historically this has been the church's understanding of doctrine, namely that it functions to shape one's character and life; *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

25 This is not a denial of the corollary point that behaviour shapes belief. I am simply emphasizing that the 'renewal of your mind' plays a significant role in transformation (Rom. 12:2). Charry is very helpful in this regard, refusing a false dichotomy between the cognitivist and behaviourist positions, arguing that proper knowledge of God leads to obedience and that practices are 'a way not only of reinforcing the knowledge of God but also of shaping the mind so that knowledge of the love of God fits into a life prepared to interpret it properly'. (*By the Renewing of Your Minds*, p. 28).

dissolve into self-improvement. 'Without the creeds, the deeds surrender to vague moralism.'[26]

The divide between doctrine and living often operates under the guise of spirituality. For example, in *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis says, 'I would much rather feel profound sorrow for my sins than be able to define the theological term for it'.[27] Thomas is certainly right to argue that conviction of sin is more important than understanding the doctrine of sin, but there is potential here to set up a false dichotomy between the two, as if one had to choose between conviction and doctrine.[28] Though conviction of sin (and the repentance that follows) is paramount to the doctrine of sin, understanding the latter is certainly integral in practicing the former. The more one understands the nature and severity of sin, the greater one's appreciation for the saviour who provided the remedy. Fred Sanders offers a positive example of this with the Trinity, arguing that although *fellowship* with the triune God is primary, the *doctrine* of the Trinity is essential because it leads deeper into fellowship.[29]

In *The Drama of Doctrine*, Vanhoozer gives perhaps the most thorough and compelling treatment of the relationship between doctrine and life. Although Vanhoozer covers a vast amount of territory, one of the main burdens of the book is to show that 'Doctrine is direction for the fitting participation of individuals and communities in the drama of redemption'.[30] According to Vanhoozer, doctrine is not concerned merely with abstract theory, but with providing practical guidance for Christians as they walk in the way of Jesus Christ. In a more recent essay, Vanhoozer says,

> Theology is faith seeking theodramatic understanding, and understanding is best demonstrated not by those who can rightly parse Greek verbs (important as that may be) or by those who can defend past theological formulas but by those who can participate in the ongoing drama of redemption by speaking and doing the gospel truth in new cultural situations.[31]

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26 Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 24.

27 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. William Creasy (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 2000), p. 30 (I.iii).

28 Ibid., pp. 33, 159.

29 Sanders, *The Deep Things of God*, p. 35.

30 Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, p. 102.

31 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'On the Very Idea of a Theological System: An Essay in Aid of Triangulating Scripture, Church and World', in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. by A. T. B. McGowan (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), p. 181.

Sound doctrine helps Christians understand and respond to the gospel so they can think and act in a manner fitting with its truth. Michael Horton helpfully puts several of these pieces together by describing the pattern of drama, doctrine, doxology, and discipleship. 'The narrative generates the doctrines and practices, evoking thanksgiving that then fuels discipleship.'[32]

GOSPEL DOCTRINE IN THE CHURCH

The last section of this essay will briefly discuss the primary location for gospel doctrine—the church—and then unfold several implications for its practice. By definition, gospel, doctrine, and church cannot be understood apart from one another. Webster provides a concise example of how the three are interwoven: 'dogmatics is that delightful activity in which the Church praises God by ordering its thinking towards the gospel of Christ'.[33] The church is the primary location for sound doctrine in accordance with the gospel because it is the church to which the gospel has been entrusted (1 Tim. 1:11). The task of theology (faith seeking understanding of the gospel) ultimately belongs to the church because only the church is bound to and under the authority of the gospel. Therefore, although academia can greatly serve the church in its understanding of the gospel, theological academic *disciplines* must find their place in the church's mission to make *disciples* (Matt. 28:18–20).

EMBEDDED AND DELIBERATIVE THEOLOGY

So how does this all apply practically to the church? A helpful distinction can be made between embedded and deliberative theology for both measuring and addressing the theological (im)maturity of a church.[34] *Embedded theology* is what people really believe, and it comes out in prayers, songs, conversations, and behaviour. The following are examples of embedded theology:

- The language of 'going to church' reveals the embedded belief that the church is a building, not the people of God (a lack of a biblical doctrine of the church).

[32] Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 203.

[33] Webster, *Holiness*, p. 8.

[34] This distinction is made by Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), pp. 13–21.

- The common prayer 'God, be with _____' reveals the embedded belief that God might not always be with his people (a lack of a biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit).

- A life of constant unrepentant sin reveals an embedded belief that God does not take sin seriously (a lack of a biblical doctrine of the holiness of God).

- A preacher talking about the gospel only when speaking to non-Christians reveals an embedded theology that Christians graduate from the gospel (an unbiblical doctrine of sanctification).

The sources of embedded theology can vary, but are usually one's upbringing, church tradition, culture, life experiences, and so forth. *Deliberative theology*, on the other hand, is the understanding of the Christian faith that emerges from intentional study of Scripture and critical assessment of one's own embedded beliefs. This task of deliberately conforming one's views to that of Scripture is not only for the pastor or the professor, but for all the ransomed of the Lord.

Acknowledging that everyone has embedded doctrines is the first step to diagnosing a church's theological maturity. An attuned pastor must listen for these assumptions so they can then correct them through sound doctrine both in embedded and deliberative ways. While most assume that the only way to teach theology is, well, to teach theology, sound doctrine can also be embedded in the practices of the church. Not only will a church learn sound doctrine through the deliberative theology in preaching, but also in the embedded theology of corporate worship, public prayers, and even announcements. The aim, then, is not to have people merely repeating theological formulas, but to have an embedded theology that is reflected in language, liturgy, and life that is consistent with Scripture and informed by the tradition of the church. Then, the theological language of deliberative theology will have the rich meaning with which it was developed. People will pray 'in Jesus' name' not merely as a formal closing to a prayer, but because they understand that it is only through the gracious mediation of the Son that they were able to come before the throne of grace in the first place.

GOSPEL DOCTRINE AND PRAYER

Doctrine is the grammar of the Christian faith, and what more important use of words than those directed to the Lord himself. According to one disciple's request, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1), the ability to pray

well is not simply bestowed on all Christians but is a skill to be learned. The following examples demonstrate how doctrine is an essential element in learning to pray. Praising God for who he is and what he has done is dependent on the knowledge and understanding of these very truths. The confession of sin is motivated by the holiness and love of God. Asking for forgiveness of sins must be rooted in the knowledge of how that forgiveness is accomplished (Christ's atoning death) and applied (the Holy Spirit's uniting the Christian to the risen Christ). Doctrine matters for prayer because Christians are not only to call on the Lord, they are to 'call on him in truth' (Ps. 145:18). Prayer is a great example of how pastors can teach theology through practices that are embedded with sound doctrine. Take, for example, the following prayer:

> Father, I pray that your Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures long ago, would shed light on them today, that we may know Christ and be conformed to his image.

If a pastor prayed this prayer every week as he opened the Word to preach, he would embed in his congregation not only a sound doctrine of Scripture, but an implicit understanding of the Trinity as well; and all without ever saying, 'Today we're going to learn about doctrine'.

GOSPEL DOCTRINE AND PRAISE

Theology exists for doxology. In other words, understanding the depths of the gospel lifts the worshiper to the heights of the glory of God. This connection between doctrine and worship is rather simple: the more one understands who God is and what he has done in Christ, the more reason to worship him. 'Sound doctrine fuels worship'.[35] The structure of Romans 1–11 is telling: it begins with the gospel (1:1–17) and then unfolds one of the most theologically explicit sections in all of Scripture (1:18–11:36), culminating with an elaborate song of praise, declaring that 'from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever' (Rom. 11:36). Theology exists for and is secondary to doxology. As Bavinck says, 'The end of theology, as of all things, may be that the name of the Lord is glorified'.[36]

Nevertheless, doxology also needs theology. Stated positively, 'worship is ritualized theology'.[37] In negative terms, 'Without knowing the dramatic plot and its doctrinal significance, our doxology becomes unfo-

[35] Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 23.
[36] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1, p. 46.
[37] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, p. 411.

cused. Our praise lacks not only depth but even its rationale: For what are we praising God?'[38] The relationship between theology and worship is mutually edifying: 'Theology without worship is empty; worship without theology is blind.'[39]

GOSPEL DOCTRINE AND PREACHING

If worship is ritualized theology, then preaching is 'theology on fire'.[40] The above understanding of 'sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel' is extremely significant for preaching, because it provides a third way between either challenging the faithful or making sense to the seekers. Since theology is understanding the depths of the gospel (as opposed to going beyond it), then preaching doctrine should never drift into theoretical speculation, nor should preaching the gospel slip into shallow aphorisms. The gospel is simple enough for a child to understand and deep enough for a life-long Christian to still be dumbfounded by it; preaching should reflect both the simplicity and depth of the gospel. Charles Haddon Spurgeon agrees: 'we cannot afford to utter pretty nothings',[41] but 'it will be a happy circumstance if you are so guided by the Holy Spirit as to give a clear testimony to all the doctrines which constitute or lie around the gospel'.[42] P. T. Forsyth saw the temptations in his day to soften theology in order to water down the message of the gospel, that it might be easily understood and less offensive. May his response be ours:

> The power of the gospel as a preached thing is shaped in a message which has had from the first a theological language of its own creation as its most adequate vehicle. To discard that language entirely is to maim the utterance of the Gospel.[43]

A preacher need not choose between preaching the gospel or theology. Rather, the theological gospel must be preached from the Scriptures.

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38 Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 23.

39 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'Worship at the Well: From Dogmatics to Doxology (and Back Again)', *Trinity Journal* 23 (2002), 11.

40 Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972), p. 97.

41 C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954), p. 70.

42 Ibid., p. 74.

43 P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Blackwood, Australia: New Creation, 1993), p. 197.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this essay has argued that the task of theology is not to go beyond the gospel, but deeper into its riches. Doctrine, theology's product, promotes the gospel by defending and defining it, in order that the church may understand and respond to what God has done in Christ. Sound doctrine is rooted in the gospel, bears fruit in the church, and serves the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God.

The Strange New World of Confidence: Barth's Dialectical Exhortation to Fearful Preachers

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INTRODUCTION: UK PREACHING—HUMILITY OR COWARDICE?

Where have all your preachers gone? This was the question, not too long ago, that one prominent Evangelical voice from across the pond hurled towards the purportedly stale pulpits of Great Britain. The critique centred upon the distinct lack of 'courage' in the heralding of the Gospel both within and beyond the walls of the church.[1] Effectively, this amounted to the fact that there are few *well-known* preachers in wider British culture anymore, and of those voices that do have a significant platform, not too many of them are getting into trouble for it as perhaps they *ought*. The media attention given to street preacher arrests in Scotland in the past year, for example, stood out more because such events are so *un*-representative of British preaching in general.[2] As expected, Mark Driscoll's controversial criticism caused a relative tidal wave of defensive blogging across all spheres of the UK Church. Whether such a sweeping assessment of British preaching is *entirely* valid or not, what might have led to such an observation? We certainly do not need to look too far into British church history to see the significant difference between what used to happen as a result of sermons and what tends to happen today, especially when we consider the wider social and ecclesial impact of the likes

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1 'Please ask why there is a lack of courageous young Christian preachers heralding the word of God across Britain... Please pray for the next Spurgeon, and if you are a Christian leader, do all you can to, by the grace of God, provide opportunities to see those kind of preachers and leaders raised up to lead the cause of the gospel in your country!' Mark Driscoll, 'A Blog Post for the Brits' (12 January 2012), available: <http://pastormark.tv/2012/01/12/a-blog-for-the-brits> [retrieved: 02/04/14].

2 'Another street preacher arrest' (11 January 2014), available: <http://libertarianalliance.wordpress.com/2014/01/11/another-street-preacher-arrest/> [retrieved: 02/04/14].

of Knox, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Booth, or Lloyd-Jones.[3] Indeed, such legacies, though inimitable in their particularity, are bound together by the *kind* of confidence that emanated from their pulpits (or, indeed, their town squares and fields). Such preachers not only 'spoke' words in their sermons, but they 'proclaimed' these words as though—at *that* very moment—those words were the *only* words in the universe that seemed to matter.[4] 'How *dare* they!' we might say today.

Perhaps the charge from the nagging American critic could be waved away as mere generalization, dismissed for its lack of attentiveness to the wider issues of secularisation or a fatal forgetting of the infinite qualitative distinction between US and UK? One wonders, however, if it might be more constructive to at least *pretend* there is actually something in it. The almost vitriolic reactions to the critique across the blogosphere and beyond—even where they seemed valid—belied something of an inappropriate defensiveness at the heart of what is surely a very real problem. To avoid further knee-jerks in attempting to address the issue, it might be helpful to imagine we're talking about a land far, far away (in no way resembling *your* pulpit, or those of any of your friends). In this way, we might trick ourselves into some genuine self-examination, which, in face of such radical criticism, is always in danger of being outgunned by an obstinate fortress of self-defence.

Clearly, of course, there are many reasons to be cautious in the pulpit, and many reasons a preacher might *not* want to imitate the guise of a

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[3] Of eighteenth-century Edinburgh, for example, Cosh writes: 'It is hard today to appreciate the enthusiasm with which society in general flocked to listen eagerly to sermons that might easily last two hours, often twice in a day, and the adulation, almost hero worship, lavished on the preachers of the time. Congregations hung on their every word, and good preachers were discussed with as much earnestness as fine actors, their doctrines dissected, their delivery critically analysed and their every foible and idiosyncrasy—facial detail, hair, expression, changing emotions—implacably noted.' Mary Cosh, *Edinburgh: The Golden Age* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2002), p. 30. Many thanks to David Reimer for pointing me to this book.

[4] It is fair to say that as a direct result of their preaching, *things happened*. It is possible, of course, to escape down the rabbit hole from the purported charge by pointing to the 'unseen' fruit of much ordinary preaching; i.e. that which steadies and sustains over the long haul in contrast to the firework-like impact of an itinerant evangelist ('here today, gone tomorrow'). Of course, there need be no call for preaching to conform to previous effervescent modes purely because they *seemed* to be more immediately transformative or 'exciting'. Despite this caveat, the question remains: is there something of the inherent 'confidence' of such preachers which is overlooked in the contemporary pulpit?

Reformer or a Great Awakener. We stand on the shoulders not only of great faithful preachers, but also of pulpiteers and false prophets—those who would use the notion of what *ought* to be said to convey what they *want* to be said. Also emanating from this unfortunate legacy is the inescapable 'postmodern' suspicion of authority, in which preachers—as well as their hearers—are hopelessly entangled. Best, then, not to say something *too* radical or convincing, lest preachers draw attention to themselves, speak 'above their station', or worse, get it wrong. After all, we might ask, was not Adolf Hitler one of the most powerful preachers in the history of mankind, whose 'confident' rhetoric was rotten to the core? The fear of speaking 'out-of-turn' (an undeniably *British* trait) is surely bound up with the fear of sounding in any way like a tyrant.

It is at this juncture that we introduce Karl Barth into our fable. We enlist Barth's help in addressing this problem not because he has any especial *legacy* in the formation of the homiletical *Zeitgeist*,[5] but more because of his relentlessly *dialectical* approach to the question of preaching. In this article we will bring his dialectic of preacherly authority into the atmosphere of the problem of preacherly confidence. We may indeed find that the idol of perpetual uncertainty which dominates many pulpits today may be brought face to face with the *true* implications of the dialectical condition: a preacher standing not only before their demanding congregation, but before their demanding God who commissions and empowers them for this task.

1. 'NO': FALLIBILITY AND IMPOSSIBILITY

Karl Barth is a theologian who has the highest conceivable view of preaching whilst maintaining the lowest conceivable view of the preacher. He is also a theologian who witnessed first-hand the misuses of preaching, particularly in the hypnotically enthusiastic rhetoric of 'nationalism'. Such preaching *twice* deceived large swathes of the German people, many of whom were Barth's own teachers, colleagues and friends. The conflation

[5] Indeed, quite the opposite is the case. Most contemporary homileticians have sought to move away altogether from Barth's heraldic emphasis upon preaching, which many saw as a 'stranglehold'. See David M. Greenshaw, 'The Formation of Consciousness', in Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley (eds.), *Preaching as a Theological Task: Word, Gospel, Scripture: In Honor of David Buttrick* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), pp. 1-17 [11]. Barth is often criticised for harbouring a 'potentially delusional' neglect of the human side of preaching, whereby the preacher is assumed to be transparent to their message. See William H. Willimon, *Conversations with Barth on Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), p. 191.

of *God* and *Volk* seeped into their pulpits and thundered into their pews with utterly disastrous consequences.[6] It was, in many ways, Barth's quest as a dialectical theologian to restore theologically faithful preaching *to* the Church. This quest involved, firstly, pressing 'mute' to the preacher's voice, before proceeding to amplify it: 'The word of God is not for sale; and therefore it has no need of shrewd salesmen.'[7] Yet, far from yielding to apophatic uncertainty in the face of pulpit abuse, Barth emerged from the fog (as he often did) clutching a paradox: Barth declared (more fiercely than ever) that the church—precisely *because* of her appropriate mutedness in and of herself—has been given words not only to *speak*, but to shout from the rooftops.

Barth's theology of preaching has a complex history. Variations of homiletical trajectory may be found ranging from his Safenwil years, the *Römerbrief* period, through to his *Homiletics* seminars, and even between the earlier and latter sections of the *Church Dogmatics*. During his full-time pastorate, and particularly in the years following the advent of the First World War, Barth reflected much upon the *impossibility* of the task of preaching. He saw preaching as such a high calling that no finite human being should ever wish to attempt it: 'Moses and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jonah knew of a certainty why they did *not* want to enter into the preacher's situation... There can be no such thing as a minister. Who dares, who can, preach knowing what preaching is?'[8] The close examination of this impossible task centred upon the finitude and sinfulness of humanity, which cannot possibly withstand—let alone 'herald'—this wholly *other* Word of God.[9] How, then, he reflected, can any preacher be truly *confident*?[10]

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6 For a fascinating insight into the religious and political context underlying Barth's homiletical emphases, see Angela Dienhart Hancock, *Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletic, 1932-1933: A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

7 Karl Barth, 'The Freedom of the word of God', in Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Come Holy Spirit*, trans. George W. Richards, Elmer G. Homrighausen, and Karl J. Ernst (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1934), pp. 216-29 [219].

8 Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), p. 126.

9 No doubt it was also a polemical *response* to the anthropocentric, immanentist preaching prevalent during this period, in which 'God' and 'nation' became one and the same ideal.

10 Barth never ceased to come down hard upon any theological student with pretensions of prophetic grandeur, self-stylizing themselves upon the radical voices of church history. See one letter in which he gives a student a suitable dressing-down because he let slip his true 'reformational' intentions

At this early point, Barth wanted to articulate as strongly as possible the 'crisis' situation, that preachers must do what they *know* to be impossible (and that if they *don't* know it, they *ought* to know it before daring to climb into a pulpit!):[11] 'The Word of God on the lips of man is an impossibility; it does not happen: no one will ever accomplish it or see it accomplished.'[12] Preachers are locked in the tension of this absurdity, and are made restless by it, even as they must actually *continue* this impossible task week after week. It is no wonder that cowardice may creep in when the relentlessness of this task seems to shackle it at its very foundations. Indeed, 'who *can* preach, knowing what preaching is?'

2. 'YES': COMMISSION AND PROMISE

Thankfully, Barth does not terminate his homiletical trajectory with outright pessimism but comes to articulate a more *overtly* positive theology of preaching. Here, he *emphasizes* the divine 'Yes' to preaching over the divine 'No', without dispensing with the No altogether: 'our possibility of knowing God's Word is the possibility of a clear and certain knowledge, not equal but at least similar to the clarity and certainty with which God

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of a grant-funded visit to Edinburgh, saying: 'What shall I really do in the land of John Knox?' In reply, Barth rubbishes these 'high-flying plans for the reformation of dogmatics,' cautioning: 'Before one can say (or meaningfully ask) anything, one must first listen'. Barth, 'To a Theological Student, Basel, 22 August 1961', in *Letters 1961-1968* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), p. 19. However, this does not mean Barth is *a priori* opposed to such radical voicing or action; this is evident in his musings over the controversial subject regarding God's raising-up of a prophetic voice in a time of crisis: 'Calvin, Theodore Beza and John Knox, while they did not allow tyrannicide as a general possibility or raise it to the level of a legal institution as popularly supposed, also pointed to extreme public emergencies in which it might happen that God would raise up an avenger and deliverer whose destructive work would not be murder but would be done in obedience to His command.' Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [hereafter *CD*], 4 vols. in 13 pts., ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956–75), III/4, p. 449.

11 It is, of course, possible to see here Barth's emphasis on grace in an embryonic form (at least, it is embryonic in comparison to that of the *CD*). Here, the 'promise' element of preaching is affirmed in that God does indeed promise to speak through preaching in spite of a preacher's fallibility. But Barth is certainly more concerned at this point to emphasise the dialectical elements and the tension involved in the act of preaching rather than to *emphasise* grace in the way he did later on.

12 Barth, *Word of God and Word of Man*, p. 125.

knows Himself in His Word.'[13] We might pause to reflect upon just how 'high' a view of functional epistemology this actually is. Such a conception of analogous theological knowledge is the foundation underlying the 'possibility' of preaching. However, such effective knowledge does not come at the expense of the simultaneous 'impossibility' of preaching. Barth retains as high a view of preaching as he had in his earlier years; the difference here is the nuance which we might call the *paradoxical possibility* of preaching. We *cannot* speak for God, and nevertheless we *can*—and *must*—speak for God. This paradox is articulated by Barth as being resolved either *by* or *in* God Himself, despite the fact that we have no access to *how* this is possible: 'We can see the stick dipped in water only as a broken stick. But though we cannot see it, it is invisibly and yet in truth a completely unbroken stick.'[14] Essentially, the paradox here is only apparent rather than ontological: the stick does not remain broken *beyond* the water-line as well as *above* it, hence it does not correspond—in *reality*—to how it 'seems'. What is perceived as a 'broken stick' is '*in truth* a completely unbroken stick', meaning that our knowing God's Word—upon which our preacherly courage (or cowardice) depends—is *actual* knowledge.

Barth's shift to *highlighting* the 'possibility' for preaching demonstrates that preaching cannot be forever caught reflecting upon its own 'illegitimacy' lest it be unfaithful to the reality of God's effectual authorisation and commission.[15] Attention to the dialectical condition and the need to emphasize 'humility' in preaching is still important for Barth (crucial, even), but not to the extent that it could subsequently undermine the paradoxical 'confidence' that preaching simultaneously requires. In a key paragraph of *CD* I/2 he says that the impossibility of preaching 'does not permit [preachers] to be faint-hearted, as though in their humanity they were not able to speak the Word of God, but only their own human words.'[16] The genuine possibility of the Word of God in preaching remains at the forefront. Far from paralysing preachers with unsolveable dialecti-

[13] Barth, *CD* I/1, p. 240.

[14] Barth, *CD* I/1, p. 240.

[15] Whenever this happens, God's commissioning of the preacher and God's own willingness to speak through the preacher is undermined by human preoccupation with limitation, which may even become a newly-birthed anthropocentrism. The very existence of the dialectical condition that makes preaching 'impossible' is a product of our finite humanity, since we cannot articulate dogmatic statements with absolute certainty. A preoccupation with our finitude, then, can become a turning away from the *in*finitude of God, who in his grace calls the finite to proclaim the infinite.

[16] Barth, *CD* I/2, pp. 746-47.

cal riddles, Barth not only exhorts preachers to be bold but he does not allow them *not* to be!

Even though Barth continues to operate within theological dialectics here, this is a marked change from his earlier *restlessness* between the dialectical polarities.[17] He is here acknowledging the dialectical condition, yet doing so alongside an emphatic *affirmation* of the Church's paradoxical call to preach:

> It is true that to think we can do this is always a venture for which without God's own action we necessarily lack the authority, insight and courage. It is true that God alone can speak about God. Only it is not to be forgotten that all these considerations can only be qualifications and elucidations of the positive affirmation that God gives the Church the task of speaking about Him, and that in so far as the Church fulfils this task God Himself is in its midst to proclaim His revelations and testimonies.[18]

The *reality* of God's commissioning of preaching is of greater weighting within the aforementioned dialectic of possibility and impossibility. It is the *paradoxical possibility* of preaching that transforms this dialectic into something more taxonomical than a perpetually uncertain tension. There is an order to this dialectic; the endgame is not the wrestling itself but the reality of *actual* proclamation. This means that, although the dialectical *im*possibility remains (and *must* remain) the emphasis must be

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[17] Even in his earlier essays, of course, we see a self-criticism of 'dialectic' in and of itself; Barth does not think dialectic is 'privileged' as a method in any way, but merely that it publicises the reality of the contradiction without solving the problem of preaching itself, that this activity *does* (and *must*) continue. See 'The Word of God and the Task of Ministry', in *Word of God and Word of Man*, pp. 206-12. In many ways, Barth's 'development' of thought over dialectic and preaching can be seen as more spiralling than linear; he tends to circulate and return to this issue a number of times, even doing so *within* the first volume of *CD*, as this thought becomes more ordered, even though it never settles into a static mode. For more on Barth's dialectical development, see Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1910-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). See also Berkouwer's reading of Barth's dialectical method: 'Barth was certainly not concerned to play a game of paradoxical dialectics, nor to compensate for the No by the speaking of a reassuring and moderating Yes. He was concerned to expose the exclusiveness of the salvation that is in *God's* hand alone, and which can only in *that* exclusiveness be salvation for us.' G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (London: The Paternoster Press, 1956), p. 31.

[18] Barth, *CD* I/2, p. 757.

placed upon the confessional situation that God has indeed 'promised' this task to the Church. This means we must presuppose the impossibility of preaching in our fallibility, but we must also 'pre-presuppose' that the Church *has* (not maybe, but *definitely*) been called to preach. This dialectically positive affirmation becomes, for Barth, the new starting point for understanding preaching:

> we must begin with the affirmation that, by the grace of revelation and its witness, God commits Himself with His eternal Word to the preaching of the Christian Church in such a way that this preaching is not merely a proclamation of human ideas and convictions, but...it is God's own proclamation.[19]

Thus, Barth is now able to begin not from apophatic paralysis, but from the *reality* of divine promise: 'the Church rests, not on the presupposition, but very definitely on the recollection and the expectation that God in fact has spoken and will speak the Word to us in the Bible.'[20] This expectation must shape the way the preacher approaches the ever-complex task of attaining preacherly confidence.

3. 'NO ...YES': PARADOX AND FAITH

But how does this help us British 'cowards' to actually *do* this? How do we walk the dialectical tightrope of the imposter/prophet with our perpetual awareness of how ridiculous, pretentious or tyrannical we *may* sound when the purported 'Word of God' protrudes from our pulpits? Barth's answer is that the preacher must orient themselves towards faith, believing that God truly has spoken and truly does speak through preaching. Faith is crucial to apprehending this paradox, as in Hebrews 11:1: 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' The paradox of *how* a preacher may speak of God even as they *cannot* speak of God is conceptually inaccessible *except* by faith. For Barth, this faith takes

[19] Barth, *CD* I/2, pp. 746-7.

[20] Barth, *CD* I/1, pp. 254-5. For Barth, the Bible is entrusted to the Church *for* proclamation, even though the Word may never become its static *possession*: 'If a man, the Church, Church proclamation and dogmatics think they can handle the Word and faith like capital at their disposal, they simply prove thereby that they have neither the Word nor faith. When we have them, we do not regard them as a possession but strain after them, hungering and thirsting, and for that reason blessed.' Barth, *CD* I/1, p. 225. This is, in fact, a 'point of contact' Barth shared with Emil Brunner: 'This truth cannot be *held*, or possessed. Its nature is, rather, such that it takes possession of us, "lays hold of us."' Emil Brunner, *Truth as Encounter*, trans. David Cairns (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 28.

place in the ongoing activity of preaching itself; preaching *as if* we really *can* preach the Word of God: 'The proof of faith consists in the proclamation of faith. The proof of the knowability of the Word consists in confessing it. In faith and confession the Word of God becomes a human thought and a human word.'[21] Thus, the possibility of preaching is grounded in the concrete act of *real* preaching, risked in faith that God will fulfil his promise to speak. Any presupposition that preaching is *solely* impossible (removed from the paradoxical condition) is actually faithless.

'Faith', of course, could easily imply 'fideism', as though this were simply a subjective confidence in *any* intimation that comes to our minds (even within the bounds of Scriptural exposition). For preaching, this could lead (and *has* led) to all kinds of homiletical disasters. Faith, although essential, does not discount the importance of theological reflection upon the dialectical condition. Barth was keen to hold to both, even as he stressed the faith polarity more emphatically because it is grounded in the *reality* of the preaching task. Where a preacher is torn in the dialectical storm over what or how to preach, Barth grounds the words of the preacher in their authoritative divine source:

> It does not cling to its own humanity—either in arrogance or diffidence—but to the task imposed upon it in its humanity. And as it does so, it can confess...with a final certainty, that as it speaks about God in human words, it proclaims God's own Word. But doing this, how can it fall into arrogance or indolence? It can do so only if it is uncertain in this confession. And it will be uncertain in this confession only if it allows itself to look elsewhere than to Jesus Christ.[22]

Thus, both prideful assertiveness *and* prideful reticence in preaching are countered by embracing the paradox of grace that undergirds church proclamation. A purely 'apophatic' stance renders preaching powerless by remaining in the dialectical condition rather than under God's grace. For, although we are indeed 'powerless' to preach, such apophatism is not reticent *enough*. Preachers are indeed *absolutely* powerless to preach; they cannot speak a single word; and it is through this paralysis that God enables them to preach by his power, precisely because they are powerless. To deny this reality in the name of supposed 'humility' could actually be more arrogant by denying God his grace-giving freedom from a supposedly superior vantage point. Barth calls such a diversion, 'scepticism in the guise of piety.'[23]

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21 Barth, *CD* I/1, p. 241.

22 Barth, *CD* I/2, pp. 757-8.

23 Barth, *CD* I/2, p. 758.

For Barth, then, the dialectic of faith and humility grounds the proper theological justification for preaching. In this taxonomical dialectic, 'possibility' *supersedes* 'impossibility'. Although such preaching can never be done in a whimsical 'spirit of self-assertion',[24] it can nonetheless be *confident* because its assurance relies upon God's own promise in his Word: '[The preacher] is not sure of himself but of the Word of God, and he is not sure of the Word of God in and of himself but in and of the Word.'[25] Thus, faith is the mode through which the preacher may grasp their paradoxical God-speech. There is no confidence whatsoever in a preacher's own ability or worthiness to do so. Yet, in faith they may believe the promise that God chooses to speak through preaching by actually *doing* it.

4. '...YES!': THE STRANGE NEW WORLD

And so, in the end, confidence in pulpit speech is not merely a theological possibility, it is a theological reality. As we have seen, Barth proclaims not only a chastening of *over*confidence but an even sterner rebuke of reluctance:

> There is no possible place for idleness, indifference or lukewarmness. No appeal can be made to human imperfection where the claim is directed to the very man whose incapacity and unworthiness for this ministry is known and admitted even when he is charged with it, without altering the fact that he really is charged with it. If there is no escape in arrogance, there is no escape in pusillanimity or indolence.[26]

Barth does not let his preachers off the hook in false humility or cowardice. Indeed, a preacher must proclaim their appointed word 'even if it costs the preacher his neck'.[27] This is no *un*dialectical confidence.[28] This is a *new* confidence, an *un*welcome confidence which continually wrestles through the dialectic and emerges with a paradoxical 'yes!' Indeed, a

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[24] Barth, *CD* I/2, p. 765.

[25] Barth, *CD* I/1, p. 224.

[26] Barth, *CD* I/2, p. 757.

[27] Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991), p. 115.

[28] 'The sense of being a swinging pendulum protects the speaker against the arrogance of acting officially in virtue of a vocation, of deriving authority from any society, of trying to make prophetic announcements, of yielding to any human pride or conceit. It is the free moving of the Spirit that initiates the swinging of the pendulum, and this swinging takes place in sincerest unity with each and all and in complete equality , destroying every first and last and every earthly order.' Barth, *Homiletics*, p. 21.

true preacher of the Gospel is to be as confident (*more* confident, even) than the most arrogant pulpiteer or tyrant. This is a confidence which emanates from the perpetual awareness of dialectical humility. Preaching may be confident because of the real *act* of God's calling the Church to the task of proclamation. In this sense, it is vital that 'confidence' as a homiletical imperative takes dialectical precedence over 'uncertainty'. Preaching is confident not because preachers *can* speak for God, but precisely because they *cannot*, by which they may only rely on God's gracious commission to do so.[29]

Ultimately, this means we may not be permitted to look back to the powerful preaching of bygone eras with a *mere* wistful nostalgia. We may remind ourselves that preachers are called to speak as though they themselves are *bringing* the Word of God, speaking *for* God in the midst of their hearers with distinct authority.[30] William Willimon, one of the notable contemporary voices to interact with Barth's preaching, says: 'Preaching is not only talk about God but miraculous talk by God.'[31] Indeed, far from being caught in between the throws of dialectical uncertainty, 'preachers risk everything to speak because they are confident that God has spoken to them'.[32] However much we may wish to extol the other side of this coin (and it should never be far from our minds), the notion of appropriate preacherly confidence is bound up within what preaching actually *is*, as heraldic proclamation of the kingly message.[33]

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29 'That man really cannot really speak of God is only realised when it is known that he really can really speak of God, because God Himself with His Word and Spirit steps forth, and has already stepped forth, into the midst, in order to make possible for man that which is not possible for him of himself. It requires the God Who Himself speaks for Himself, it requires the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the power which enables us to speak rightly of God.' Barth, *CD* I/2, p. 752.

30 'Preaching does not reflect, reason, dispute or academically instruct. It proclaims, summons, invites and commands...It calls each and all to decision for faith instead of unbelief, to obedience instead of disobedience, to knowledge in the battle against ignorance.' Barth, *CD* IV/3, p. 869. This is the *sui generis* 'event' which takes place in Christian preaching.

31 William H. Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), p. 56.

32 Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology*, p. 23.

33 Confidence, for both preacher and hearer, is located in the knowledge that the preacher is not alone in the moment of preaching, as Paul speaks of his preaching to the Thessalonians: 'when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers' (1 Thess. 2:13). It is not only that God is revelatory in preaching, then, but that he is revelatory

It seems fitting, on this notion of heraldic witness, to conclude by quoting Barth speaking to his homiletical students in Bonn in the aftermath of Hitler's appointment as chancellor and the oncoming commencement of the Third Reich. It is a typically *preachy* comment in which Barth appears to take the guise of a regaling Hebrew prophet (as he occasionally liked to do). It is our task as theologians, of course (and as UK preachers, in particular), to decide whether or not we believe him, and if so, whether we will be willing to do anything about it. I leave you, then, as sinners in the hands of an angry Barth:

> But *woe* to the preachers who do not see first how *relevant* the Word of the Bible is to the people of *today*! Woe even *more* to preachers who *do* see the ... relevance of the biblical Word ... but who are then *fearful* or un*willing* to give *offense* and thus become *deserters* of the Word—the Word which seeks to *seize* and *disturb* and *confront* the people of today, and in this way to lead them *truly* to the rest of God, but which is *buried* by the *cowardice* and *disobedience* of the preachers, and thus *prevented* from doing its proper work![34]

in a particular way in preaching, *through* the preacher's words. This is an especially chosen method of God's self-revelation—a *promised* self-revelation through the preaching of his Word in the power of the Spirit.

[34] Barth, *Homiletics*, p. 114 ('heraldic' emphasis added!).

We Preach Christ Crucified

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When Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he clearly felt himself forced on the defensive. Some parties in the church there were highly critical of his ministry and compared him very unfavourably with the 'super-apostles': men distinguished both by the superior wisdom they taught and by the rhetorical skills they deployed in delivering their message. Paul has no inclination to answer the charges on these terms. He cannot claim to be either as erudite a philosopher or as mesmeric an orator as these brilliant communicators. But, then, that wasn't what he was about. His call was to a very different kind of ministry: 'we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1:23-24). Nor was he merely claiming that this was the best style of ministry for him personally. His claim was that if we are called to the ministry of the word (whether as apostles, prophets, evangelists or pastors) this is the only legitimate way of performing the duties of our office.

But, more specifically, what is he saying?

FIRST AND FOREMOST A PREACHER

He is saying that first and foremost he is a preacher: we *preach*. Of course, Paul did much else besides. Sometimes he organised collections, sometimes he set structures in place for infant churches, sometimes he encouraged young men like Timothy and Titus, and sometimes he wrote letters. The 21st century minister will similarly find himself involved in many different activities: visiting the sick, looking for the lapsed, providing hospitality, to name but three. And sometimes, like the original apostles, he will find himself distracted by having to serve tables (or, more likely in the case of most of us, by the state of the church-roof or the condition of the drains). Every problem becomes his to solve, every activity demands his presence, and if he is not careful he will find himself reduced to a firefighter rushing from one emergency to the other.

Then there is the more subtle pressure generated by the social problems of the wider community. Involvement in these can bring the sort of

immediate and tangible rewards mere preaching can never deliver. What is more, the community itself, far from being scandalised by the church's social work, is delighted by it and sees it as 'real Christianity'; which, of course, it is, but it then becomes tempting to conclude that this is what makes our ministry worthwhile and that preaching, after all, is only a small part of the work of a pastor.

Paul, by contrast, saw it as the main part of his. His appointment was as a 'herald' (1 Tim. 2:7). First and foremost he was a minister of the word; and if the minister of the word doesn't preach the word, who will? Other tasks such as pastoral care he shares with the elders, some others with the deacons, and yet others with that army of fellow-workers who strive with us for the cause of the gospel (Phil. 4:3). But he is the preacher, and no amount of involvement in any other task, no matter how worthwhile, can make up for his neglect of his own specific duty. Nor can anyone perform it in accordance with the terms of their commission unless they make it the main business of their lives: the preoccupation of all their waking-hours; the stuff of their dreams (and of their nightmares).

A PREACHER OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

But then, secondly, Paul states the great theme of his preaching: *Christ crucified*. Here again we have to say that this was not the only topic on which he preached. Many other themes also featured in his proclamation: the Parousia, coping with suffering, the use of spiritual gifts and the respective duties of husbands and wives, to name but a few. But the cross stood in the forefront, as he makes plain in 1 Corinthians 15:3: 'I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins'. Whether he was evangelising a Gentile city or addressing the elders of a young church (Acts 20:28) or asking for liberal contributions to a collection (2 Cor. 8:9) or pressing home the duty of putting the interests of others before our own (Phil. 2:4) the cross was never far away. Just as Christ is united to every believer, so the cross is united to every other doctrine. Nor is this confined to St Paul. The story of the cross dominates the gospels: so much so that they have been rightly described as 'passion-narratives with extended introductions'. In St John the cross is the greatest demonstration of the Father's love (Jn. 3:16). In St Peter we owe our redemption to the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:19). In the Apocalypse it is the crucified Lamb who stands in the centre of the throne (Rev. 5:6). And when we look at the central rite of the New Testament church, the Lord's Supper, we find the cross once again at its very heart. It is precisely the death of Christ we are to remember and recount; for his sacrifice we are to give thanks; on his body and blood that we are to feed.

This, then, is the apostolic norm for Christian preaching. Whether it is addressed to the converted or to the unconverted it must never move far from the cross. We have to give our main strength to telling *this* story and to persuading men and women to believe in *this* Christ: the one who redeemed by his blood. Everything else orbits around it. The incarnation was in order to Calvary; God's love is proclaimed at it; justification is based on it; sanctification and glory are secured by it; our lives are to be modelled on it; we are to glory in it.

Yet, as we preach it we cannot but be aware, as Paul makes plain, that it is not the message the world wants to hear; and certainly not what it wants us to major on. The cultured intellectual thinks it absurd; the religious think it scandalous. No age would ever have called it 'relevant'. Indeed, the chorus of derision which sounded in the ears of the dying Christ has never subsided. Nor has the message of the cross ever appealed to the mighty, the prudent or the self-confidently pious. It carries with it in every age the enormous disadvantage that you have to become a little child to appreciate it. Contemporary music, wonders and signs, disquisitions on the world banking crisis, loud condemnations of Syria's Assad regime, are far more likely to fill churches than the gospel of the cross. But a herald has no liberty to choose his own message. He must proclaim what's on the paper: *Christ crucified*.

The precise form of human contempt for this message varies, of course, from age to age. Today, many Christian theologians shrink with revulsion from the idea that Christ was condemned in our place and that our guilt is covered by his vicarious obedience and sacrifice. But then, already in the 12th century, Abelard was expressing exactly the same revulsion: 'how cruel and wicked it seems that anyone should demand the blood of an innocent person as the price for anything, or that it should in any way please him that an innocent man should be slain—still less that God should consider the death of his Son so agreeable that by it he should be reconciled to the whole world!'[1]

Today, the language has changed, but the revulsion remains. Some of the bitterest criticisms come from feminists, who see the Christian account of the cross as but one other expression of the patriarchy which has brought such misery to the world's women and children. The Christian doctrine of the atonement, they say, glorifies violence; or, it glorifies meek acquiescence in violence, particularly meek acquiescence by women in male violence. And, taking their cue from feminism, men like Steve

[1] From Abelard's *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*. See Eugene R. Fairweather (ed.), *A Scholastic Miscellany* (LCC; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 283.

Chalke and Alan Mann speak of the Evangelical view of the cross as a story of 'cosmic child abuse'.[2]

Shocking as such language seems to us, we have to listen to it patiently, and present the world with a radically different view of the divine fatherhood: one in which the Father himself bears the cost of redemption, acts only in agreement with the Son, upholds him with constant encouragement, and finally exalts him to the highest honour. But at the same time we have to remember that the ancient world used equally shocking language. Indeed, the preaching of the cross was even more ridiculous to people of the first century than it is to us, not least because of their proximity to the event itself. How could a Jewish criminal crucified only a few years ago be the Saviour of the world and Lord of creation? Nothing could be more absurd to Jesus' near-contemporaries. To follow such a religion was, as Justin Martyr records, a sign of madness (*mania*),[3] and the ancient world expressed its contempt in biting satire, most famously in one of the second-century graffiti now on display in the Palatine Museum in Rome. It portrays a crucifixion, but the man being crucified has the head of an ass, and beneath is the inscription, 'Alexamenos worships his god'.[4] 'Cosmic child abuse' is no advance on depicting Christ as an ass.

In such a world the apostles might easily have said, 'We don't do the cross,' and if we today tailor our message to the demands of the consumer we won't preach it either, because on the face of things it is a message doomed to failure. Yet it will not fail; and it will not fail because God is committed to honouring it. In the last analysis this message preached by human beings is *his* witness to his Son, and in *his* hands the foolishness of the cross becomes divine wisdom and the weakness of the cross becomes divine power. In a culture dominated by the market there is no niche for the cross. Yet our commission is clear: 'Preach Christ crucified; and trust me.'

We have to be conscious, then, of the Jew and the Gentile, each with their own contempt for the cross. But we must remember that there is a third group: the Christian believers who love the cross and can never get enough of it. If our presumed hearer is always the objector and the scoffer there is a real danger that the church itself will never be led into the wonder of the divine love expressed on Calvary or into the depths of Christ's suffering and the many-faceted beauty of the atonement. In the

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2 Stephen Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p. 182.

3 *The First Apology of Justin Martyr*, XIII (ANF, Vol. 1, 1885; reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p.167.

4 See Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 19.

New Testament, however, it is precisely the church that is the presumed reader: the saints at Rome, Corinth and Ephesus; Theophilus and his circle (Luke 1:3); the elect scattered throughout the world (1 Pet. 1:1). And if they are the presumed readers they must also be our presumed hearers, otherwise we are not faithful expositors. They have a divine right to hear all about the cross because only then can they engage in 'joyful eucharist' (Col. 1:11-12). We certainly have no right to stand over one of the great atonement-passages and say, 'This is too deep for my people! This is only for theologians!' Nothing in the New Testament is only for theologians. All of it is food intended by God for his children, and to hold back any part of it will result only in a flock suffering from serious malnutrition. It is a terrible mistake to aim all our preaching at the unconverted and to direct our sermons to 'the cultured despisers of religion'. We are pastors with sheep to feed, and the cross in all its glory must be their daily diet.

SACRED RHETORIC?

There is, however, one caveat. As we have already seen, Paul made no attempt to imitate the rhetoricians. Indeed, if he himself is to be believed he wasn't cut out to be a brilliant communicator. He had no magnetic presence, his diction was poor, and he was always extremely nervous (2 Cor. 10:10; 1 Cor. 2:3). These were natural limitations: one, or all of them together, may have constituted Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). But it wasn't simply that he was by nature ill-adapted to be an orator. As a matter of principle, he avoided the persuasiveness of human wisdom. (1 Cor. 2:4)

This doesn't mean that if we have natural gifts we shouldn't use them. If we have the dynamic force of a Thomas Chalmers, the voice of a Charles Spurgeon, or the cumulative persuasive power of a Martyn Lloyd-Jones, of course we should capitalise on them. But what Paul is saying is that it is not the *how* of the message that matters, but the *what*. It is to this we must give our strength. There is no point in the delivery being brilliant if the message is not 'Christ crucified'; and if that is the message, it needs no embellishment. It was the false teachers who had to use oratorical 'wizardry' (Gal. 3:1). Paul even seems to suggest that the cross cannot be preached in enticing words. It won't fit into such a mould. Instead, it needs 'great plainness of speech' (2 Cor. 3:12, AV). What matters (and sometimes we have to sweat over this) is that our words be accessible to ordinary people and persuasive to whatever audience we are addressing. Our sermons, like the Bible itself, have to be in servant-form, accepting the humble (though immensely honourable) role of explaining the sacred text.

When Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones first spoke of giving his life to the Christian ministry, someone asked him, 'But how do you know you can preach?' 'I don't,' he replied, 'but I know I have something to say.' That 'something' is the great thing: the thing we must get out. But Paul was also close to paranoid about giving a false impression as to the power of the message, lest people attribute it to himself. It might sometimes be said of George Whitefield, for example, that it was easy to understand how so many could be won over by such brilliant oratory.[5] Paul went out of his way to ensure that this could never be said of him. He was an earthen vessel and must never give the impression of being anything different. In Christian proclamation, there is no place for being preoccupied with the question of how well we are speaking. God is given the glory.

THE SOURCES

What then is the source from which we draw this message? The short answer is, The New Testament account of the cross. That account, however, contains two different kinds of material: the diachronic and the synchronic.

The diachronic is the cross in narrative form: the story, frame by frame, of the road to Calvary; and then, in slow motion, the events of that extraordinary 24-hour period (Good Friday) that began with the Last Supper and ended with the burial of Jesus (Mk. 14:17–15:47). As we have seen, it is not so much that the gospels *contain* passion-narratives. They *are* passion-narratives, and any preaching of the cross must give them sustained and repeated attention.

The temptation is to assume that because these are *narratives* all we have to do is repeat the story as if there were no theological issues to be explored here. Nothing could be further from the truth. The story of the Lord's journey from Bethlehem to Golgotha raises some of the most challenging (and most rewarding) moments in the whole of biblical revelation. Part of this is the way that key moments such as the Baptism and the Transfiguration bring out so clearly the involvement not only of Jesus but

[5] Jonathan Edwards's wife, Sarah, described Whitefield's preaching as a mixture of 'spiritual zeal and raw charisma'. See Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: the Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p. 98. Cf. Noll's own summary of Whitefield ministry in London in 1737: 'In the pulpit he simply exuded energy; his speech was in the highest degree dramatic; he offered breathtaking impersonations of biblical characters and needy sinners; he fired his listeners' imagination; he wept profusely, often, and with stunning effect.' (Op. cit., p. 81).

also of the Father and the Holy Spirit, reminding us that the cross is an act of the triune God, and that in that act both the distinction between the divine persons and the communion between them are seen with brilliant clarity. But they remind us, too, that at critical moments in the Lord's journey the Father and the Spirit exercise a ministry of encouragement toward God the Son, attesting him and assuring him of their love. Gethsemane, too, is part of the diachronic narrative, but what a window it gives us into the emotional life of Jesus! And what challenges it throws up! Why did Jesus dread death in a way that the dying Socrates, for example, never did? And why was it not possible for 'the cup' to pass?

These are issues with which God, the supreme witness to his Son, intended to confront the Christian mind, and the story of the Lord's last hours presents even more. We cannot simply ignore the great cry of abandonment, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' This, after all, was the curse which Jesus suffered for us. What was that place where love couldn't reach? How could God be forsaken by God? Was the pain only on the Son's side, or did the Father also suffer loss? Of course, these are not 'problems' waiting for solutions. They are mysteries. But we have to show the mystery. We have to let the adoring church see the mysteriousness.

And what are we to make of the last words in the story, when Jesus himself chooses the exact moment of his dying: 'Abba, into your hands I commit my spirit.'

This is not simply a narrative of what God did. God is what God does,[6] and the cross is therefore the preeminent revelation of who he is and of what his love is. It is this story that is remembered and recounted every time we 'eat this bread and drink this cup'. It is for this story that we give thanks. And it is this story that we sing and pray. Here there is an interesting parallel with such Old Testament passages as Psalm 78:3 – 4, where the psalmist sings of,

> what we have heard and known,
> what our fathers have told us.
>
> We will not hide them from our children;
> we will tell the next generation
>
> the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD
> his power, and the wonders he has done

This (and other examples such as Psalm 126) is the precedent for great narrative hymns like, 'When I survey the wondrous cross', where we both

[6] On this see further C.M. LaCugna and K. McDonnell, 'Returning from "The Far Country": Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41/2 (1988): 191-216.

pour our eucharist into song and respond to the song in eucharist. It is the *story* as such that we sing to one another as our hearts make music to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

THE *LOGOS* OF THE CROSS

But alongside the diachronic accounts we also have the synchronic, giving us not the story but the meaning of Calvary. Here the cross is seen as one single, completed event, but one which does not become good news unless it is interpreted. Indeed, in itself the cross is far from good news. How, after all, can the execution of an innocent man be good news, especially when that man was the Son of God, who was 'delivered up' by his own Father and abandoned by him in his hour of need?

What the synchronic account offers is what Paul called the *logos* (doctrine) of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18): the divine logic which lies behind Calvary. We have to remember, however, that the two accounts, the diachronic and the synchronic, are not independent of each other. It is obvious enough that the doctrine presupposes the narrative, but it is no less true that the narrative presupposes the doctrine. Indeed the story of the Passion would never have been written were it not that the death of Jesus was from the very beginning seen as an atoning sacrifice.

This is why it would be a mistake to assume that while the gospels give us the external details it is the epistles that give us the inner, theological meaning. Some of the profoundest statements of the divine significance of the cross are to be found in the gospels, and we can be sure that it was in the light of these statements that they were written. In Mark 10:45, for example, we hear Jesus's own 'word of the cross': 'even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' This already brings out the underlying reason for the death of Christ. He died in our place, as the preposition *anti* strongly suggests; and the object of his death was to secure our redemption. We can be sure that it was in the light of such statements as these that Mark wrote his gospel, and we can be equally sure that when John wrote his he did so in the light of the greatest synchronic statement of all, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' (Jn. 3:16). Here, Calvary is clearly an expression of the Father's love: a love which exists before the cross, but also a love which exists before our faith. Our faith is not what wins the love of God. On the contrary, his love is what our faith responds to and believes in. But the greatest wonder of all is how that love expressed itself: God 'gave' his Son. He was no detached observer of Calvary, but an active participant: the priest who sacrificed his own Son. Every doctrine

of the atonement has to wrestle with this fact. It is relatively easy to see the cross as an expression of the love of Jesus, the Son? But how was it an expression of the love of the Father?

Such passages both intimidate and fascinate the preacher. The one thing we may not do is ignore them. 'The whole counsel of God' cannot exclude John 3:16, although a remarkable number of preachers admit (often with some pride) that they've never preached on it. Nor can it exclude the great passages in the epistles which bring out the many-faceted glory of the cross: passages which focus particularly on what the cross achieved. It expiated sin; it propitiated God, reconciled him to us, and satisfied him that it would be right to forgive us; it redeemed sinners; it secured God's victory over the powers of darkness.

These are the great concepts (biblical concepts, after all) which preachers are called upon to explain. To omit to do so is a calamitous dereliction of duty; and it is a dereliction of duty because the power of the gospel lies not simply in the narrative of the cross, but in the divine logic which lies behind it: what St Paul, as we have seen, calls the 'word' of the cross. Without such a word the cross is meaningless, or worse. We cannot find peace on the slender basis that in some way or other some Christ or other saved us from some sin or other. The preacher as ambassador not only pleads with men and women to be reconciled to God. He has to declare the basis of God's plea and explain how it is possible for him not to count our sins against us (2 Cor. 5:19). That explanation lies in the *logos* of reconciliation: the extraordinary message that what really happened at Calvary was that there 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us' (2 Cor. 5:21). Yes, we have to go on bended knee in God's name and plead with men to accept his peace (2 Cor. 5:20). But the persuasiveness doesn't lie in the earnestness of our pleading. It lies in the message itself: in the fact that the cross was God's act; that there Christ was 'for us', suffering in our place; and, most remarkable of all, that in him sinful men and women can become as righteous as God himself. This is the light that fills the dungeon; and only then do the chains fall off and the heart become free.

Here is the great foundation of justification. We are justified by faith, indeed. But our faith is not in our faith. Our faith is in what Christ did for us, culminating in his self-offering on the cross. This is the great challenge to our faith: to believe that the one single factor relevant to our relationship with God is that at Calvary Christ answered for our sins: he loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

THE CROSS AND SANCTIFICATION

This link between the cross and justification has been well explored in Protestant theology. But what of the link between the cross and sanctification? This has received much less attention. Yet the New Testament makes absolutely clear that the purpose of the cross was not only to expiate sin and put us in the right with God. In a way that was only a mid-point. Beyond it lay God's ultimate purpose: our complete transformation, including our physical transformation in the glory of the resurrection, but focusing particularly on making us utterly and totally holy. This lay at the heart of what Julian of Norwich called 'the prescient eternal counsel of all the blessed Trinity'.[7] In that counsel, God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29); it was in pursuance of this purpose that Christ died; and he died, quite literally, to make us holy, as Paul makes plain in Ephesians 5:25: 'Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her *to make her holy … and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*.' This is what was agreed in the eternal covenant between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is what 'the blood' secured. This is what Christ intercedes for (Jn. 17:17). This is why he sends his Spirit. Indeed, there is a direct and explicit link between the sufferings of Christ and the work of the Spirit. He was made a curse for us not only to redeem us from the curse of the law, but to secure the ministry of the sanctifying Spirit in every believing heart (Gal. 3:13-14).

What all this means is that holiness is a blood-bought privilege, secured for us by the death of Christ

But then we discover that there is another death which also bears directly on our sanctification: the death of the believer herself. This is the great theme that Paul develops in Romans 6. Part of what the death of Christ secured is that we would be spiritually united to him. That union takes effect the moment we believe in Christ, and in that union (the moment of our faith and baptism) the 'old man' dies. There is a splendid paradox here. The man who was dead ('in sins', Eph. 2:1) died. The man who was the slave of sin died. That old unregenerate self who hated God and hated his law and hated holiness and was incapable of faith and love and repentance no longer exists. He died and was buried the moment we became members of the body of Christ.

But not only has there been a death. There has also been a resurrection. We are united with Christ in his rising as well as in his dying. The point is made categorically in Colossians 3:1, where the whole ensuing

[7] Quoted in John R. Tyson (ed.), *Invitation to Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 194.

argument rests on the premise, 'Since, then, you have been raised with Christ.' This doesn't mean that we can reduce the resurrection to something merely spiritual (like those Corinthians who had come to believe that the resurrection is past already, 1 Cor. 15:12). The whole foundation of Paul's argument is the bodily resurrection of Christ; and, based on this, he entertains the sure and certain hope that the *body* which is sown in weakness will one day be raised in power (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

But for Paul there has also been, already, a spiritual resurrection. The point is not merely that the resurrection of Jesus offers an analogy to the change which has taken place in the believer. It is that through our union with a risen Saviour we have already risen from spiritual death. We are now new men and women. Once we were dead, now we are alive. Once we were blind to the glory of God, now we see it. Once we were deaf to his promises, now we hear them. Once we ignored his threatenings, now they cause us to tremble. Once we were utterly indifferent to higher things, now our minds seek them and dream of them (Col. 3:2). Once we were bound in the shackles of spiritual impotence, now we are free for a new obedience. Once we were powerless, now we are empowered by the Spirit in the inner man. We have risen to a new kind of life, its source hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). His life is our life, mysterious, inviolable, inexhaustible.

Do these two ideas, the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new, point us, then, in the direction of sinless perfection? That is certainly the goal of redemption, and one day we shall attain it. But can we bring it forward into this life and argue that here, on this side of glory, it is possible for the believer to live without sinning and to be consistently victorious over every temptation? And must we abandon as utterly unworthy of a Christian the idea that in this life we have to struggle, sometimes be defeated and often have to cry, 'O wretched man that I am!' (Rom. 7:24).

If only! Paul makes absolutely clear that the new man still has much to do. He puts it most graphically in Colossians 3:5. There is, he says, much killing to be done: 'Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature'. He could hardly have put it more strongly. Despite all that happened in the moment of our union with Christ, the new man still has undesirable 'members': sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed. They must be shown no mercy. 'Kill them!' says the apostle, and he returns to the theme a few moments later, though with a change of metaphor. We are to 'put away' such things as anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language (Col. 3:8).

There is no room in Paul's thinking for the idea that holiness is something we 'receive', without a struggle, as a definitive, post-conversion second-blessing. Nor does he ever hint that we should simply 'believe for

sanctification' as we 'believed for justification': a doctrine that seems to verge very close to the idea, 'Believe that you are sanctified, and you *are* sanctified.' Instead, it is precisely the one who delight in the law of God (Rom. 7:22) who confesses, 'I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.' (Rom. 7:18); just as it is the man who lives by the Spirit who knows at the same time that his soul is a battleground where the flesh and the Spirit are locked in mortal combat (Gal. 5:17). In the last analysis, it is the Spirit (the Spirit of Christ) who sanctifies us, but he does not do it in an instant, or in an experience in which we are completely passive. On the contrary, he sanctifies us through our own struggles and strivings: a point Paul highlights in Romans 8:13, where he writes, 'if by the Spirit *you* put to death the misdeeds of the body'.

But as we engage in this struggle there are certain great gospel facts that spur us on. We have to bear in mind, for example, that God has been committed from eternity to conforming us to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29). We have to bear in mind that Christ secured holiness for us on the cross of Calvary (Eph. 5:25-27). And we have to bear in mind, above all, that we engage in this struggle as people already united to Christ: people for whom it would be absurd to keep living the life of the old man, because we have already buried him and now have a new life in which each believer is provided with everything she needs for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

But perhaps the greatest motivator of all is what we can infer from Romans 6:6, where Paul declares that the body of sin has been destroyed. The verb here (*katargeō*) is the same as the one used in Hebrews 2:14 of the destruction of the devil. This cannot mean that Satan has been annihilated. But he has been disempowered by the death of Christ, and that death has had the same impact on the body of sin in the believer as it has had on Satan's reign in the world. It has destroyed it. Yet (to use Oscar Cullmann's familiar analogy), D-Day, though decisive, is not yet Victory Day.[8] That will come only in the moment of our translation to glory.

But as the battle continues we know that our victory was secured at Calvary; and in the meantime God is working in us both the willing and the doing (Phil. 2:13).

This is the substance of a talk given as part of the Ministers' In-Service Training Week at the Free Church College, January 2014.

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[8] Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (1951. Revised edition, London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 84.

Reviews

Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture. By R.W.L. Moberly. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8010-4885-2. xiv + 333 pp. £17.99.

Looks can be deceiving. At first glance a reader might well imagine that this book is *An* Old Testament Theology. And this is further implied by the accompanying publicity, which claims that 'it discusses most of the major topics of Old Testament theology'. Yet, this is not *An Old Testament Theology*, but rather, as Moberly himself admits, a book that is based upon an 'arbitrary' selection of Old Testament passages, to which the author has been drawn 'by their theological and existential import and by the interpretive challenges they pose' (p. 279). As such, the book is composed of chapters that concentrate chiefly on the following passages: Deuteronomy 6:4-5; 7:1-8; Exodus 16; Isaiah 2:2-22; Jeremiah 18:1-12; Jonah 4:1-3; Psalms 44, 89; Job 1:1-2:10; 28:1-28. Moberly hopes these passages are '*representative*' (p. 1) and so provide an opportunity to explore topics germane to Old Testament theology: God, monotheism, idolatry, election, covenant, torah, prophecy, psalms and wisdom. However, the end result is disappointing for Old Testament theology includes considerably more than this limited list of topics. Nothing of substance is said, for example, on the issues of sacrificial atonement or holiness; only two verses of Leviticus are mentioned briefly (19:17-18). The book appears to be a valiant attempt to bring together essays that were originally composed independently of each other. One suspects that had Moberly created the book *ab initio* the selection of biblical passages would have been somewhat different.

Moberly's approach to the Old Testament is perhaps already well-known in the light of his many publications and this volume does not break the mould. His essays are at times insightful, but at other times, from the perspective of someone who holds to the trustworthiness of Scripture, irksome. His treatment of the theme of 'exaltation and abasement' in Isaiah (pp. 162-179) is both informative and challenging pastorally. Yet, elsewhere his ready acceptance of critical views on the composition of Old Testament books leaves questions unanswered: what is a reader to think when the main text introduces the quotation of Deuteronomy 7:6-8 with the words, 'Moses ... said to Israel,' but a related footnote implies this passage was composed in the seventh or sixth century BC (see p. 43)? Although Moberly argues that the book of Jonah was never intended by its author to be understood as a factual account, he fails to

explain why the testimony of pre-critical scholars unanimously supports a reading of the book that understands it as a record of actual events. Were all of these earlier scholars blind to what Moberly claims is immediately obvious? Perhaps it is Moberly who misreads the text, for his main argument that the story is larger-than-life is not especially compelling; strikingly, the miraculous in the book of Jonah is presented with a minimum of exaggeration.

We should not be surprised by Moberly's willingness to dismiss the longstanding historical-reading of Jonah. As he himself acknowledges, his overall approach to Old Testament theology gives little weight to what he calls 'the world behind the text'; rather he focuses 'primarily upon the world within the text in relation to the world in front of the text (that is, its contemporary message)' (p. 283). Yet, even Moberly recognises that decisions regarding the 'world behind the text' impact how we view the 'world within the text'. Those who interpret the historical setting of the text differently to Moberly are very likely to disagree with his reading of the 'world within the text'. Although Moberly desires to distance Old Testament theology from historical issues, the manner in which the Old Testament portrays God's nature demands that we take seriously the 'world behind the text'.

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Reading the Bible with Martin Luther: An Introductory Guide. By Timothy J. Wengert. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4917-0. ix + 134 pp. £10.99.

In this short book Timothy Wengert provides a look at the approach to scripture used by Martin Luther in reading the Bible. Combining academic rigour with pastoral application this makes a very useful guide. The structure of the book looks at Luther's view of authority (chapter one), method (chapter two), interpretation (chapter three), and ethics (chapter four). It closes with an example of how Luther applied these in his commentaries on Galatians 3:6-14.

In chapter one Wengert examines how Luther viewed authority when it came to reading the Bible. He starts with an analysis of Luther's well known views on the book of James, but suggests that the common understanding of this incident does not do justice to what actually happened. Luther moved the book of James to an appendix not because of disagreement over justification by faith, but because the book failed to 'emphasize' or 'push' Christ (p. 5). For Luther what pushes Christ became a key for understanding authority, whatever didn't push Christ was of a lesser authority. Wengert goes on to suggest that Luther didn't hold to a view of

sola scriptura but viewed reason and experience as important factors in deciding authority.

Chapter two explores what Luther's method was like. Wengert focuses on the important Lutheran distinction between law and gospel. Law, for Luther, is that in God's Word which is to remind us that we are sinners who deserve death; gospel is that which offers to us the free gift of God: life. There is not a clear divide between the writings before Christ, and those after Christ. The relationship between the Old and New Testaments is more fluid. Luther did not attach greater significance to the writings he labelled as Gospel, but believed that all of Scripture was to point us to Christ.

In chapter three Wengert focuses on how Luther interpreted Scripture. For Luther, as with Melanchthon, the centre of Scripture is found in weakness. The revelation of God, of which Scripture is a part, appears under opposites; for example, the power of God is made visible in the death of Jesus. So too when interpreting Scripture it is in its weakness that we can see the divine.

In chapter four Wengert offers a look at what ethical principles Luther used and explores the way he used them in different contexts. As a theologian Luther based much of his ethics on biblical principles, which he learned from studying the Scriptures. These ethics centre on fairness, conscience, and faith; they were highly contextualised in application.

In the final chapter Wengert provides a sort of guided tour of how Luther applied these different tools to exegesis by looking at Galatians 3:4-14. Galatians is a particularly good example as Luther left four different sources between his lectures and commentaries. These date from 1516 to 1535, and from them we can trace the development of his thought and application of this passage.

Wengert's work is very helpful in unpacking Luther. Like Luther, he is able to bring his experiences as both a pastor, serving in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and an academic to assist those who study and teach the Bible. He is thereby especially able to help students engage with Luther. Writing from within the Lutheran tradition this guide raises some issues that others from different traditions may disagree with. Regardless it will be of help in understanding Luther's commentaries, lectures, and sermons so that we can learn and remember the important lessons the reformer taught.

John S. Kennedy, University of St Andrews

Union with Christ in the New Testament. By Grant Macaskill. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-19-968429-8. 353 pp. £75.00.

Grant Macaskill is Senior Lecturer in New Testament Studies at the University of St Andrews and an expert on the Pseudepigrapha. In the same year in which he provided a critical edition of *The Slavonic Texts of 2 Enoch* (Brill, 2013), he showed his academic breadth (and his evangelical heart) with this biblical and theological treatment of union with Christ. The underlying thesis throughout is that union with Christ is essentially covenantal, to be understood within a covenant framework and enjoyed within a covenant relationship.

This is an exercise in the theological interpretation of Scripture. Much written under that banner has been merely hermeneutical and has had little engagement with actual texts. It is as frustrating as having your restaurant waiter deliver a philosophical lecture on the possibility of eating without giving you any food. Macaskill is a chef who knows his job is to ensure there is rich fare on the table.

The first section, chapters 1-5, offers 'foregrounds and backgrounds'. There are three foregrounding chapters: after reviewing key studies of union with Christ in modern New Testament scholarship, we move to *theosis* as a theme in the Greek Fathers and as a doctrine in modern Orthodox theology, and then to Luther, Calvin (plus later Calvinism) and Barth as readers of the New Testament and theologians of union. The fourth chapter turns to look at backgrounds in the Hebrew Bible and in various Jewish literatures, including mystical texts. Its exploration of covenant, glory/presence, sin and Messiah, and the relationship of these themes to each other, is foundational for the later discussion. Chapter 5 critiques putative Adamic backgrounds in Second Temple Judaism. Attempts at explaining Christology or union through assumptions about Adamic glory misread the Jewish evidence and miss the *divine* glory essential to Jesus and experienced by believers.

The second section, chapters 6-11, is devoted to participation in the New Testament. Chapters 6 and 7 examine the widespread use of the temple image, first in Paul, Peter, Acts and the Synoptics, and then in John's Gospel, Hebrews and Revelation. The discussion includes the pairing of temple and body imagery, the fulfilment of the new covenant promise of the Spirit, the ontology of the incarnation, the high priesthood of Jesus, and the place of faith. Chapter 8 deals with the sacraments, seen as covenantal rites which identify the participants with a covenant representative. They go back to the earliest period and are seen as playing a significant role in shaping the New Testament's theology of union. Chap-

ters 9-11 identify other participatory elements, in the Pauline corpus, the Johannine literature and the rest of the New Testament. These three chapters explore a fascinating range of texts and topics, but the role of the Holy Spirit as the agent of union is a recurring theme and one nuanced by each writer.

The range of issues and debates touched on would be bewildering, were it not that every chapter ends with a clear summary of its findings and its contribution to the overall discussion. Finally, the closely packed twelfth chapter offers a synthesis of the conclusions reached.

There is so much going on here that the book deserves a review article or two from scholars. It is a bold, fresh and creative contribution to the burgeoning literature on union and hopefully will appear in paperback before too long. It sometimes takes us through places we might not have expected to visit, but Macaskill is a sure-footed guide through the varied terrain, the scenic route is always interesting in itself, and the journey is worth it for the view.

Alasdair I. Macleod, Isle of Lewis

Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons. By Sidney Greidanus. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8028-6787-2. xv + 440 pp. £22.99.

Eight years of pastoral ministry and decades of seminary teaching (p. x) inform this contribution by Greidanus, Professor Emeritus of Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary. This study builds upon his earlier books, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Eerdmans, 1988) and *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1999). Whereas the present volume applies his methodology to the apocalyptic genre, other genres receive treatment in the sister volumes: *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (Eerdmans, 2007), *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes* (Eerdmans, 2010), and *Preaching Christ from Psalms* (forthcoming).

Each literary (preaching) unit in Daniel merits a chapter in Greidanus' book. The subheadings for the chapters progress in a pattern that guides the readers from exegesis to exposition: 'Text and Context,' 'Literary Features,' 'Theocentric Interpretation,' 'Textual Theme and Goal,' 'Ways to Preach Christ,' and a sample 'Sermon Exposition.' He skillfully analyses the narrative structure by scenes and traces the narrative plotlines. Visuals include one map, two timelines, two diagrams of the seventy weeks, a dozen diagrams of the book's narrative plots, and charts that summarize the author's interpretations.

The back materials include four appendices: 'Ten Steps from Text to Sermon'; 'An Expository Sermon Model'; 'Resolved: A Sermon on Daniel 1' by Greidanus' former student, Ryan Faber; and, 'Seventy "Sevens" Are Decreed: A Sermon on Daniel 9' also by Faber. Notably the 'Select Bibliography' omits leading evangelical works by the three *W's*: Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel* (repr., Baker, 1972); Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Zondervan, 1973); and John Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Everyman's Bible Commentary, Moody, 1985).

Regarding the author's homiletical philosophy, God-honouring exposition happens 'by preaching the message intended by the inspired author as understood in the context of the whole Bible' (p. 24). With fervour Greidanus decries the egregious practice of moralizing, citing manifold examples (pp. 24, 31, 55-56, 84, 113-14, 145-46, 174, 321, 414). Instead he proposes that 'The sermon theme and goal should be based on the textual theme and goal' (p. 129). He lists sixteen succinct tips for effective oral communication (p. 28).

Preachers with Daniel on the docket could deliver a sermon series consisting of either four sermons (chapters. 1, 2, 7, 9) or eleven sermons—six on the narratives and five on the visions (p. 23). A twenty-five minute sermon (p. 203) should encompass a complete narrative unit comprising an entire chapter (pp. 31, 69, 85, 320).

Not every OT text predicts Christ, but 'there are more ways to preach Christ than promise-fulfillment' (p. 27). The author elucidates seven ways to preach Christ from the OT: redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, NT references, and contrast (pp. 27-28).

As for the interpretation of the book of Daniel, Greidanus arrives at reasonable conclusions. A few examples will suffice. Using good argumentation, the author determines that Daniel 2 and 7 depict four sequential pagan world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (pp. 5, 54n1, 79, 216). He treats the little horn of chapter 7 and the king of 11:36 as the Antichrist (pp. 219, 358, 384). The One like a Son of Man in 7:13 refers to the Son of God (p. 221), and the holy ones in verse 18 are saints (p. 224). On target, Greidanus believes that God's prophets could forecast the future in detail (p. 9).

On the other hand, some points of disagreement and areas of weakness come to the fore. Appearing to question the text's accuracy, Greidanus asserts that Daniel's 'narratives should not be read as objective historical reports… but as God's kerygma' (p. 17). Biblical types of Christ include the following persons: Daniel in chapters 1 (pp. 40-41), 2 (p. 66), 6 (pp. 186-87), and 10-12 (p. 365); the stone cut without hands in 2:34

(p. 66); the messenger in the furnace in 3:28 (pp. 95-96); the prince of the hosts in 8:11 (p. 268); and Ezra in 9:25 (p. 303).

Greidanus gravitates toward the symbolic treatment of numbers and time periods. Examples include the seven periods of time in Daniel 4:16 (pp. 135 n. 66, 137 n. 74); the ten kings in 7:7 and 24 (pp. 218, 238, 245-6); the 'time, times, and half a time' in 7:25 and 12:7 (pp. 246, 402); the 2,300 evening-mornings in 8:14 (pp. 263, 278); the weeks or sevens in 9:24-27 (pp. 298, 300, 330-2); the 1,290 days and 1,335 days in 12:11-12 (pp. 346, 406); and, the one-thousand years in Revelation 20:2-3 (pp. 248, 407).

Concerning the character identifications, Greidanus claims that Daniel 8:23-25 pertains to Antiochus IV (pp. 255-6, 267-8, 280). He identifies Darius as Cyrus (p. 169 n. 79) without considering Cyrus' subordinate, Gubaru (John Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 64). In 11:40 he takes the king of the north as the Antichrist (p. 360). Certain appellations refer to a created being: the messenger from God in Exodus 14:19 (pp. 95, 109), the messenger in the furnace in Daniel 3:28 (pp. 95, 97, 107), and the messenger in the lions' pit in 6:22 (pp. 175-6).

While connecting Danielic passages to Christ, the book expresses the following viewpoints regarding redemptive history: Abel's murder initiates redemptive history (p. 265, cf. Ephesians 1:4). 'Satan managed to have Jesus killed' (pp. 127, 143, cf. Luke 4:5-7, John 10:18). Since Jesus' resurrection, the devil's chain severally limits his power, until he is released and wreaks havoc on the church (pp. 127, 143, 248). 'Jesus will not restore the earthly city of Jerusalem' (p. 339). The abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15-16) and the great tribulation (vv. 21-22) received a partial fulfilment in AD 70 (pp. 363-4). Jesus brought the first stage of God's kingdom to earth at his first coming (pp. 65, 69, 82, 144, 215, 227, 247, 301). And Jesus assures the church of limited persecution by the antichrist (269; cf. 249, 386-87).

The most controversial chapter of the book is 'Chapter 9: Daniel's Prayer and God's Response of Seventy Weeks' (pp. 285-340). In addition to the symbolic treatment of numbers, the author identifies Messiah the Prince (9:25) as Ezra (pp. 303, 332), the coming prince (vv. 26-27) as Titus Vespasianus (pp. 305, 309, 334, 336), and the most holy one and the one who makes a firm covenant (vv. 24, 27) as Jesus (pp. 307, 311, 337).

Bible expositors can glean much from this volume, regardless of any hermeneutical or exegetical discrepancies. Given the OT's messianic import (Luke 24:25-27; Acts 26:22-23; 1 Peter 1:10-12), we ought to preach and teach Christ from all the Scriptures—including Daniel.

Mark A. Hassler, The Master's Seminary, USA

Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically. By Beth Felker Jones. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. ISBN: 978-0801049330. ix + 244 pp. £17.99.

American evangelical theologian Beth Felker Jones has written one of the most concise, reader-friendly, and innovative introductions to theology in recent scholarship. In *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, Jones seeks to provide a robust and engaging introductory theology text with an emphasis on how doctrine impacts Christian identity and church life. Jones' goal, she writes, is to "rehabilitate" the word *doctrine* in order to demonstrate how Christian theology enables and empowers Christians to grow in the life of faith and bear fruit.

In *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, Jones explores the foundational doctrines of the Triune God, Christology, Scripture, creation, revelation, soteriology, pneumatology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Much of the content and structure within the book is what a theological student or scholar would come to expect in any boilerplate introductory theological text. Jones' theological position falls well within the parameters of historic orthodoxy, but operates from a distinct evangelical framework. Throughout the book, Jones describes theological perspectives of the global church, drawing attention to the theological reflection practiced in a myriad of contexts outside of North America and Europe. At two points in the book, she quotes the work of Peruvian liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who relates Christology to the plight of African women—just two of the many references Felker Jones includes that one may not come across in any other evangelical introduction to theology.

The author is attentive to the traditional debates that still exist in contemporary circles, such as atonement theory, free will and predestination, and the Holy Spirit's role in the contemporary church. Jones describes these theological positions quite well, and even takes positions at times (such as on the gender of the Holy Spirit and charismatic gifts). She rarely diverts into speculation and instead directs the reader back to theological issues of primary importance. Additionally, she lays out ancient heresies in a comprehendible way, thoroughly demonstrating the nuances between unorthodox beliefs and orthodox positions. Helpful sidebars reference theologically rich hymns, key passages of Scripture, and brief forays into theological debate. She closes her chapters with a word on how doctrines can be practiced in the life of the church, and ends her book with a benediction.

Jones' book succeeds on numerous levels. She offers the church a well-rounded, engaging, and highly informative introduction to theology.

Among theological introductions on the market today, this is perhaps one of the most slim, engaging, and reader-friendly. Jones establishes herself as a first-rate evangelical theologian who actively incorporates ecumenical and global perspectives into a robust and informative systematic theology.

While the book's title suggests that its content focuses heavily on how theology forms Christian identity and impacts the life of the church, Jones reduces her section on the practice of Christian doctrine to a one- or two-paragraph addendum at the end of each chapter. Her suggestions for Christian practice are vague and explicated in abstract terms, leaving little direction for theological students or pastors searching for serious guidance in the practice of doctrine. This is disappointing, considering the matter of practicing doctrine is of high interest to theologically reflective pastors and church leaders.

Weakness aside, Jones breathes new life into an old genre and this reviewer highly recommends it. This book will be of benefit to students of theology, pastors seeking a theological refresher, laypeople interested in attaining a basic but thorough understanding of Christian doctrine, and professors of theology searching for a new introductory text for their students.

Benjamin D. Espinoza, Covenant Church, Bowling Green, Ohio, USA

Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why it Matters Today. By Joseph H. Hellerman. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8254-4264-3. 313 pp. £11.99.

Joseph H. Hellerman has written this helpful volume out of pastoral concern regarding 'the regrettable phenomenon of authority abuse in our churches.' (p. 290) Through his interactions with congregants, students, and colleagues, Hellerman encountered a number of stories about such abuse. Troubled, he returned to his past academic research on Paul's epistle to the Philippians, drawing from that work in order to present a solution for a broader audience. The solution is two-fold: (1) to reclaim a robust view of Christ-like servant leadership, and (2) to realise the church's organisation as a 'family' of believers at the local church level.

The book is divided into three parts, each featuring a trio of chapters. The first part deals with the social stratification of ancient Roman society, with special emphasis placed upon the Roman lifelong pursuit of personal *honour* above all else (p. 56). Hellerman argues this honour-driven, divisive culture was particularly prevalent in Philippi, and that Paul's epistle to that city was especially concerned with subverting this culture.

The second part delves into the ways in which Paul accomplished this subversion. One way was via Christology: the Son of God humbled himself and took the form of a slave (Phil. 2:3-11). That famous passage is not primarily about ontology, but rather 'power and status,' argues Hellerman (p. 143). The other way was via ecclesiology: the church is a familial sort of community, made up of 'brothers and sisters.' It was improper in ancient Roman society to compete with one's own family members for honour. Accordingly, such divisive competition is also improper in the church family.

Hellerman suggests that 'none of Paul's congregations had a solitary (or "senior") pastor figure. All were led by a plurality of overseers' (p. 193). This New Testament model of 'shared ministry', grounded in the brotherly relationships of church leaders, helps to create an ecclesial environment in which the temptations of power and competition wither away. The third part of the book explains some practical ways in which this sort of shared ministry works, particularly in the context of Hellerman's own local church. The leaders of that church have invested a great deal of time in cultivating deep relationships within the congregation. 'It is really quite amazing what happens when decision-making arises organically from a relational soil of mutual trust, respect, and admiration' (p. 267). The church is not a business corporation but a community of love.

The decision to include personal accounts of pastoral abuse in the third part is at times a bit disorienting. As the biblical principles of church relationships and leaderships are discussed in the first two parts, this organisation seems to place the solution before the problem.

Hellerman keeps the text flowing, engaging, and focused, but perhaps at times overly limits the scope of the discussion. Is Philippians 2:3-11 really only (or primarily) to be understood in light of ancient Roman honour-seeking culture? Do the theological themes of humiliation and exaltation not reach much further back than this culture? Is the image of the church as family the only New Testament ecclesial image relevant to this particular problem?

These minor points aside, Hellerman is to be commended for this valuable book, which addresses a common problem and is recommended for elders, pastors, and leaders who wish to deepen their understanding of biblical leadership.

Albert L. Shepherd V, University of Aberdeen

Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scriptures for Contemporary Theological Reflection. By Miroslav Volf. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8028-6590-8. 180 pp. £13.99.

In this short book Volf enters into the ongoing discussion of reading Scripture theologically, which he says is 'the most significant theological development in the last two decades' (p. 14). The first chapter was written for this book whereas the other five are a compilation of slightly updated essays written over the last sixteen years. Chapter one is crucial for understanding Volf's approach despite his claim to be 'against "method,"' in the sense that theological readings 'are much more an art requiring wisdom than an exact science' (p. 4). Systematic theology cannot and should not avoid Scripture since it is 'the primary site of God's self-revelation' (p. 6) and 'none can ultimately bypass Scripture in coming to Jesus Christ' (p. 12). The theologian, therefore, should embrace reading Scripture theologically. Guiding Volf's interpretation are six factors: the Bible should be read as 'a narration of happenings' (p. 16); it is a sacred text and 'a book for today' (p. 18); it is 'not merely a witness . . . but also a medium' of God's action (p. 20); readers must honour Scripture's unity and diversity; they must admit a multiplicity of meanings; finally, following his work in *Exclusion and Embrace* (Abingdon Press, 1996), readers should operate with a hermeneutic of respect as opposed to suspicion.

Chapter two looks at Paul's way of doing theology and concludes that although theology is intellectual, it must also provide a persuasive 'way of life.' Beliefs and practices cannot be separated since beliefs ground practices. Chapter three focuses on 1 Peter's metaphor of aliens and sojourners in relation to Christian identity. Christian identity includes eschatological and ecclesiological differences and, instead of rejecting the world because of these differences, we discover a call to transformation rather than separation. In chapter four, dualism and contemporary pluralism become the focal points in relation to John's Gospel. John is not inherently dualistic, but makes use of dualistic tensions (e.g., creation and its Creator). These dualities 'are much more open to inner differentiation, and therefore to plurality' (p. 116), leading Volf to translate John's insights into contemporary debates on pluralism. Chapter five builds on *A Common Word* (Eerdmans, 2009), placing 1 John 4 ('God is love') in conversation with Islam. God's love is '*completely unconditional*,' '*universal*,' and '*indiscriminately forgiving* of every person and for every deed' (pp. 142-43, emphasis in original). He then controversially concludes, with the help of Augustine, that the 'elevation of deeds above beliefs is the consequence of the claim that God is love' (p. 147). Chapter six ends the book by looking

at Ecclesiastes and argues for the vanity of human striving for progress and materialism in relation to the economy.

Volf's work is true to his statement that, 'the most important thing about the Bible . . . [is] that it is the Word of God addressed to people of all times and places' (p. 32 n. 70), and this work is a solid example of this approach. The book lacks sufficient engagement with contemporary theological interpreters, but this is because Volf's priority is to connect Scripture, theology, and culture. The book is an unfortunate mixture of accessible writing and consistent use of German texts along with a number of unpublished and therefore inaccessible manuscripts, making the work also inaccessible for the interested reader (it also lacks an index and bibliography). His interpretation of Augustine in chapter five is highly questionable, and it is arguable that neither Augustine nor Scripture ever elevates Christian acts above beliefs. On the contrary, faith without 'deeds' is dead, but our deeds express our beliefs and are their basis. Readers who have kept up with most of Volf's writings will benefit most from chapter one.

Jordan Barrett, Wheaton College, USA

Reformed Means Missional: Following Jesus into the World. Edited by Samuel T. Logan, Jr. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-938267-75-8. xiii + 274 pp. £12.99.

Samuel Logan is the International Director of the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) and has assembled this collection of essays from various pastors, theologians and Christian workers. The purpose is to show that mission belongs to the identity of the reformed church. In the foreword, Christopher Wright says the church's mission is God's mission. Therefore the church's view of mission needs addressed, 'It is not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world; rather, God has a church for his mission in the world' (p. ix).

Various Christian audiences will find this book of interest. It provides useful information and instruction for reformed theologians and pastors. It provides a response to any who might view the reformed church as non-missional. Thirdly it will appeal to a wider Christian audience, for there is much insight in these essays concerning the nature of the church's mission in the world today.

Section One, entitled 'Laying the Foundation,' states the theological basis for Christian mission. Martin Allen's essay is especially important to read for those engaged in pastoral ministry. He highlights the christological nature of church mission under the following subheadings: (1) The mission is essentially *the work of Christ*; (2) The mission involves *witness*

to Christ; (3) This mission requires *a warrant from Christ*; and (4) The mission *embraces the world for Christ*.

In the second chapter Samuel Logan draws from the theology of Jonathan Edwards and reminds us that we cannot lose sight of God. Who he is and our attitude towards him is of primary significance. Edwards's concern was for authentic religion—one that Satan is unable to counterfeit. Love for God is crucial for true religion, as Satan can never counterfeit this. Hence the WRF holds as its first theological affirmation, 'The essence of true religion (and of Reformed theology) is adoration and worship of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (p. 37). This also seems to be the proper setting for understanding the mission of the church in theology, and on the whole is reflected throughout the book.

Thomas Schirrmacher takes up the subject of 'The Book of Romans and the Missional Mandate'. He observes that the opening and closing chapters of this letter are very much concerned with church missions. The theology of the letter must be understood in this context—a good point to remember for all who preach and teach this epistle. He argues that the Great Commission is the fulfilment of the Old Testament (see pp. 52-6) and a diagram on p. 59 highlights 'The Mission of the Church' as motivating and determining factors in theology. But a more prosperous route for theology would be found in Christ's person and work as a whole, rather than singling out one particular aspect of his work. An adjustment in emphasis here would aid the church's motivation for mission, precisely because it is Christ's mission.

Section Two, 'The Church Reaches the World,' shows the breadth of God's mission. These chapters provide an excellent introduction to many of the issues which the church faces today. Flip Buys addresses the subject of poverty and social injustice with reference to his home country, South Africa. He recalls the Christian convictions of F. W. de Klerk, which had a pivotal role in the end of the apartheid. His chapter is an exemplary account of a reformed understanding of church mission with respect to the doctrine of God.

Two essays address the matter of abuse against women and children. The darkness of the world and its need for the light of the gospel is made plain. Diane Langberg says the levels of domestic violence are such that, 'Statistically, it is far more dangerous for women to go home than to walk city streets alone at night' (p. 132). Basyle Tchividjian, a former child-abuse prosecutor, who teaches on the subject at Liberty University law school, identifies the increase in mutilation, murder and abandonment of new-born girls and likens the church's task to that of the first century, 'the first-century church, [travelled] outside the gates to the garbage heaps of those days to rescue baby girls… The missional call that was answered by

our first-century brethren is not unlike the call before us in the twenty-first century church and community' (p. 145).

There are also essays in the second section on urban mission, Christian health care, homosexuality, immigration and secularism. John Leonard and John Nicholls provide helpful accounts regarding the rise of Islam, the recent response of the Insider Movement and highlight some of the difficulties that are found here.

In the book's conclusion Andrew McGowan rightfully points out that in theology we must both be looking back and forward. We must look back to understand our own tradition, and forward as the church seeks to make Christ known to the world (pp. 240-2). A chapter tracing the historical importance of mission in the reformed church would have been useful in this regard. This would help secure the argument that mission belongs to the identity of the reformed church.

Those who are thinking of purchasing this title may wish to consider the e-book version which has an additional third section, and eight further essays. David Zadok's essay regarding Christian mission to the Jews is added to Section Two while the other seven are found in the third section, 'Building the Church'. This consists of essays by Henry Luke Orombi (on the subject of church faithfulness), Matthew Ebenezer (theological education), Ron Scates (denominational structures), Robert M. Norris (leaving a denomination), John H. Armstrong (Christian unity), Mark Johnston (Christ's prayer in John 17) and Craig R. Higgins (word and deed in worship and ministry). The e-book includes a copy of the WRF Statement of Faith in the appendix. This Statement is also available to read on the WRF website.

Paperback or e-book, *Reformed Means Missional* is a thoroughly enjoyable read. It echoes Christ's call to the church to live in step with the gospel and provides inspiration for all in church ministry to 'go therefore and make disciples of all the nations'.

John C. A. Ferguson, Kingsview Christian Centre, Inverness

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