EDITORIAL

In contrast to the previous issue, this spring sees a generous helping of book reviews, preceded by four papers. First, an essay on a still fairly lesser known part of the Hebrew Bible-Old Testament: Lamentations. Evangelical churches have learned to embrace lament better than in the past. There have been some new approaches ranging from Adele Berlin to Jamie Grant have helped. This article aims to bring the Zion tradition element into play in the discussion of Lamentations, given a canonical reading as part of the solution as well as the plight of Israel in Exile and the church, as it senses something of the same both collectively and corporately.

The second contribution is on Christology according to Bullinger's Apocalypse-commentary. To learn more about the Swiss Reformed cousins is not to enter a world of Hot Protestantism but one where humanist learning met with Augustinian theology seeking a biblical theology. Long before Scottish theology grew up, our Swiss relatives were showing the way.

There follows a piece on original sin and responsibility. Perhaps the attempt to show responsibility for something that is participated in requires a particular ontology but within those parameters carries a fair bit of sense. There is no doubt that these matters touch on the heart of our faith and that Reformed theology has attempted to introduce covenantal theology as an alternative way of parsing fall, sin and renewal.

Not totally unrelated to the previous two is the fourth article. It deals specifically with the question of who is to be worshipped whenever the Reformed think of worship, just 'where'; he is and who he is to us and to God the Father: John Calvin paid attention to these questions in the light of the Scriptural witness.

There might seem quite a Reformed emphasis to at least three of these. That's not to be apologised for, but it would be good to have a wider selection of flavours from which to choose. Let the reader not only understand, but also take action! Contributions very welcome: mark.elliott@uhi.ac.uk

As mentioned, we are delighted to have a full complement of reviews in this edition. Dialoguing means listening and learning from the research of others, which very often are attempts to give theological articulation to movements and controversies in the present church. I'd like to pay tribute to our new Reviews editor Paul Wilson, currently a PhD candidate at New College, Edinburgh and about to start lecturing at The Scottish Baptist College after some time at Tilsley Bible College. He has drawn on a fine network of scholars younger as well as older.

Mark W. Elliott, 6th May, 2025

Disfiguring Beauty: Analyzing God's Strategy Of Destruction (Lamentations 2:1-10) In The Light Of Zion's Tradition

Timothy Yap

Is Yahweh on a killing spree? Is God senselessly venting his fury through a barrage of violent deeds? Lamentations 2:1-10 is often described as one of the most graphic depictions of divine violence.[1] Within the pericope, God's anger or wrath is referenced eight times (vv. 1 (x2), 2, 3, 4, and 6).[2] God is also the subject of twenty-nine out of the thirty-one verbs,[3] where he is the one who 'throws down' (הרס), 'brings down' (הגיע), and 'cuts off' (גדע) Jerusalem's major 'architectural sites', including the city's strongholds, palaces, walls, gates, and bars. Further, the use of perfective verb forms in Hebrew throughout this section emphasizes not so much the 'past-ness' of Yahweh's actions but that the destruction is complete, such as Yahweh's goals are specific and accomplished.[4]

Though Yahweh's *Blitzkrieg* impacts human beings, the focus is on the city's landmarks. Antje LaBahn concurs when she writes, 'The primary target is architecture. Whereas ch. 1 focuses on people and their distress, ch. 2 concentrates on buildings and architectural elements'.[5] Moreover, verses 6-8 extend the onslaught to the annihilation of the cultus, a detail

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I would like to express my thanks to my brother, Terence Yap, for his feedback on this article. My appreciation also goes to my parents, Robert and Siew Hiong Yap, my relatives, Lim Sew Hong, Caroline Lim, Lim Hong Sinn, and Blessing Yap. I want to thank my friends, Paul Himes, James Coakley, Trevor Li, and Samuel Lin, and the editor of this journal, Mark Elliott for their prayers and encouragements.

1 Brittany N. Melton, *Where is God in the Megilloth? A Dialogue on the Ambiguity of Divine Presence and Absence* (Leiden, Brill, 2018), p. 113.

2 Elizabeth C. Boase, 'The Characterisation of God in Lamentations', *ABR* 56 (2008), 32-44, p. 35.

3 Gregory Goswell, 'Cultic Images of Jerusalem in Lamentations 2:1-8', *JSOT* 47 (2022), 145-160, p. 145.

4 F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, 'R(az/ais)ing Zion in Lamentations', in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts*, eds. By B. F. Batto and K. L. Roberts (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), pp. 21-68, p. 34.

5 Antje Labahn, 'Fire from Above: Metaphors and Images of God's Actions in Lamentations 2.1-9', *JSOT* 31 (2006), 239-256. pp. 250-51.

the LXX and Syriac texts choose to omit.6 Verse 8 further adds that such acts of violence are deliberate on God's part.[7]

Lamentations 2:1-10 raises an array of questions. Is there a purpose to God's offensive, or is it the mere 'product of unmitigated rage'?[8] If Yahweh is depicted as an 'enemy' (2: 4a, b; 5a), why is his antagonist (Jerusalem) identified predominantly as a daughter? If God aims to punish his people, why are the city's infrastructures and cultic system targets? Shouldn't God be directing his anger at the political and cultic leaders instead?[9] How does the destruction of these sites impact the lives of the people and the city? F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp is correct in stating that these verses portray God as a warrior and that the passage is steeped in the language from the tradition of Zion.[10] Zion theology refers to the religious and ideological significance of Zion (Jerusalem) as God's dwelling place, the centre of divine rule, and a symbol of hope, restoration, and eschatological fulfillment.[11] Or as Jon Levenson puts it, "Zion is the place where heaven and earth meet, the site of divine presence, protection, and kingship. It is both a real location and a theological symbol of God's enduring covenant with

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6 Hans Gottlieb, *A Study of the Text of Lamentations* (ACTA Jutlandica; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1978) p. 2.

7 F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* (IBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2002), p. 28. See also, Elizabeth C. Boase, *The Fulfilment of Doom: The Dialogic Interaction Between the Book of Lamentations and the Pre-Exilic/Early Exilic Prophetic Literature* (LHBOTS, 437; New York: T&T Clark, 2006) pp. 131-34.

8 Mary L. Conway, 'Daughter Zion: Metaphor and Dialogue in the Book of Lamentations', in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response*, eds. by M. J. Boda, C. J. Dempsey, and L. S. Flesher (Ancient Israel and Its Literature, 13; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012) pp. 101-126, p. 115.

9 Labahn, 'Fire from Above', p. 248.

10 Dobbs-Allsopp, 'R(az/ais)ing Zion', p. 27.

11 For more on Zion theology, see J. J. M. Roberts, 'The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability', *JBL* 82 (1963), pp. 419–426; Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985); Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (eds.), *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004); Corinna Körting, *Zion in den Psalmen* (FZAT 48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Willem Wessels, 'Zion, Beautiful City of God – Zion Theology in the Book of Jeremiah', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27 (2006), pp. 1094–1111; Antii Laato, *The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2018); Timothy Yap, 'Children of the Night: The Portrayal of Children in the Book of Lamentations', *JSOT* 48 (2023), pp. 229–242.

Israel."[12] However, how Zion theology helps us answer these queries has yet to be explored in scholarship.

Viewed through the lens of Zion theology, we want to argue that God's violent sortie against Jerusalem is not unmeditated. Instead, Yahweh's strategy is both purposeful and measured. We will accomplish this aim in three steps: first, we will examine Yahweh's strategy: what is God doing to the city and its religious system? Second, we will focus on the significance of such a crisis: why is God channelling his destruction on the buildings and the cultus? Finally, we will examine the effects of God's judgment: how has this destruction affected the city and its residents?

1. GOD'S STRATEGY IN ATTACKING JERUSALEM

1.1. Zion Theology as the Background of Understanding God's Assault

One significant clue to discerning Yahweh's strategy in his offensive against Jerusalem resides in the words 'Daughter Zion' (בת־ציון). Within the first ten verses, the personified city is named 13 times as the target of Yahweh's violence. In Kristin Wendland's estimation, the city is called 'Daughter Zion' five times (2:1, 4, 5, 8, 10).[13] Carleen Mandolfo is right to insist that no serious study of Lamentations should ignore Daughter Zion.[14] Moreover, Magne Sæbø argues that Zion and its related traditions have a strong resonance with the theology of Lamentations.[15] Therefore, before proceeding, a few statements about what we mean by 'Zion tradition' are in order. Though no one is certain about the origins of the tradition, David's introduction of the ark into the Jebusite city (such as Jerusalem) certainly raised the city's theological and eschatological importance.[16] In Josef Schreiner's opinion, the most fundamental feature

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12 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, p. 111.

13 K. J. Wendland, 'Naming Jerusalem: Poetry and the Identity of the Personified City in Lamentations 1-2', *JSOT* 46 (2021), 64-78, p. 76.

14 Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (SemeiaSt, 58; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), p. 104.

15 Magne Saebo, 'Who is "The Man" in Lamentations 3? A Fresh Approach to the Interpretation of Lamentations', in Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson, ed. by A. G. Auld (JSOTSup, 152; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) pp. 294-306 (297); see also F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, 'Lamentations from Sundry Angles: A Retrospective', in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, eds. by N. Lee and C. Mandolfo (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008) pp. 13-26 (20).

16 J. J. M. Roberts, 'The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition', *JBL* 92 (1973), pp. 329-44.

of Zion theology is the concept of election. Yahweh chooses Mt. Zion as his place of abode, and as a result, it has become the hub of the royal cult until the temple's destruction in 586 BCE.[17] Ronald Clements adds, 'The entire ideology of the Jerusalem temple centered in the belief that, as his chosen dwelling-place, Yahweh's presence was to be found in it, and from there, he will reveal his will and pour out his blessings on his people.'[18] With Yahweh residing as king in Zion, the city has also become what Hans Wildberger calls the 'pilgrimage of the nations'.[19] Zion is understood as the conduit of heavenly blessings to the other nations (Ps. 36: 7-9; 65:4; 124; Isa. 61:9, 11) and a place where the nations offer their praises to Yahweh's deeds (Ps. 47; 48; 76; 97; cf. Isa. 42:10-13).[20]

Another aspect of Zion theology that needs to be underscored is Yahweh's relationship with the city. In Psalm 87, Zion is praised as a city established and loved by Yahweh. Elsewhere, the city is personified as a daughter (Ps. 9:15 [14]; Isa. 3:16-26; Zech. 9:9).[21] Johanna Stiebert explains: 'The relationship of YHWH as a father to the daughter-city is implicit but clear. YHWH is never explicitly named as the father of Zion, but his

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17 Josef Schreiner, *Sion Jerusalem: Jahwes Königssitz: Theologie der heiligen Stadt im Alten Testament* (StANT, 7; Munich: Kösel, 1963), pp. 67-68.

18 R. E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Idea of the Divine Presence in Ancient Israel* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 1965), p. 76.

19 Hans Wildberger, *Die Bedeutung der Erwählungstraditionen für die Eschatologie der alttestamentlichen Propheten* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Heidelberg, 1956), p. 142.

20 Matthew J. Lynch, 'Zion's Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b-63:6 in Isaiah's Zion Traditions', CBQ 70 (2008), 244-63 (pp. 249-50); see also Michael Fishbane, 'The Sacred Center: The Symbolic Structure of the Bible', *Texts and Responses: Studies presented to Nahum N. Glatzer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday by His Students*, eds. by M. Fishbane and P. A. Flohr (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 23-43.

21 This is not the place to discuss the history of scholarship behind the meaning of the term behind בת־ציון. For more on this issue, see William Franklin Stinespring, 'No Daughter of Zion: A Study of the Appositional Genitive in Hebrew Grammar', *Encounter* 26 (1965),133-41; Marc Wischnowsky, *Tochter Zion: Aufnahme und Überwindung der Stadtklage in den Prophetenschriften des Alten Testaments* (WMANT, 89; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001) pp. 13-15; Michael H. Floyd, 'Welcome Back, Daughter of Zion!', *CBQ* 70 (2008), 484-504; Antje Labahn, 'Metaphor and Intertextuality: "Daughter Zion" as a test Case. Responses to Kirsten Nielsen "From Oracles to Canon' and the Role of Metaphor"', *SJOT* 17 (2003), 49-67; J. Andrew Dearman, 'Daughter Zion and Her Place in God's Household', *HBT* 31 (2009), 144-59.

fatherhood can be inferred'.[22] David Bosworth further notes that when the prefix בת ('daughter') is used metaphorically in the Hebrew Bible, it suggests parental care and concern (Ps. 45:11; Ruth 2:2, 8, 22; 3: 1, 10, 11, 16, 18; cf. 'my son' in 1 Sam. 26: 21, 25; 2 Sam. 19: 1, 5; Prov. 1: 8, 10).[23] As a corollary to Yahweh's parental care, the designation 'daughter' also suggests the city's vulnerability and dependence on Yahweh.[24] Within the context of such a tradition, let us examine Yahweh's rationale for bombarding two of the city's targets.

1.2. God's Reason for Attacking the 'Architectural Sites'

Lamentations 2:1-10 begins with these words: 'How the Lord has covered Daughter Zion….'. These words bring us back to the start of Yahweh's relationship with Israel in Ezekiel 16. Portrayed as an unwanted child, Israel is abandoned at the roadside.[25] Instead of ignoring her, Yahweh adopts her. When God sees that she has matured, he takes her to himself, washes her, covers her with clothes, and then bedecks her with jewels (Ezek. 16: 8-14). K. Lawson Younger is correct in suggesting that covering a woman with clothing is symbolic of a marriage ceremony, as it calls to mind 'the ceremonial covering of the head by her husband'.[26] (cf. Ruth 4:9). Lillian Klein concurs when she notes: 'Clothes are a symbol of appurtenance, while nakedness is a symbol of social rejection. The public investiture, whether with a veil or another garment, established the new family situation of the woman'.[27] Ezekiel 16:8 confirms this union when Yahweh 'enters into a covenant (of marriage)' with the woman.

The situation is reversed in Lamentations 2:1. Instead of covering Daughter Zion with embroidered clothing (Ezek. 18: 10, 13,18), Yahweh

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22 Johanna Stiebert, *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 188.

23 Bosworth, 'Daughter Zion', p. 226.

24 Mary Häusl, 'Lamentations: Zion's Cry in Affliction', in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. by L. Scholtroff and M. T. Wacker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 334-44, pp. 334-35.

25 Mignon R. Jacobs, 'Ezekiel 16 --- Shared Memory of YHWH's Relationship with Jerusalem: A Story of Fraught Expectations', in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response*, ed. by M. J. Boda, C. J. Dempsey, and L. S. Flesher (Ancient Israel and Its Literature, 13; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012), pp. 201-23, p. 206.

26 K. Lawson Younger, *Judges, Ruth* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), p. 118.

27 Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (BLS, 14; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), p. 26.

covers her with a cloud of his anger. Bertil Albrektson suggests that the image is chosen because the cloud is a sign of YHWH's merciful presence… as YHWH formerly descended to Zion in the cloud and filled the temple with his glory, so he now overclouds the daughter of Zion – in his anger.[28] Here, the relationship of Yahweh and Daughter Zion is ruptured. Instead of being Zion's doting father/husband, God takes on the persona of an 'enemy', a designation repeated three times (2:4a, b, 5a). Dobbs-Allsopp adds, 'The poet in Lamentations 2, by metaphorizing God as 'enemy', momentarily shifts how the human-divine relationship is perceived. It now gains a pronounced adversarial coloring to it. God may remain potent, but it is a potency that, at times, is to be actively feared, guarded against, and not trusted'.[29]

As Daughter Zion's enemy, Yahweh removes his divine protection over the city. Throughout Israel's history, Yahweh's 'right hand' (ימינו) is often viewed as a symbol of divine protection (Exod. 1:21-22; 15:6, 12; Isa. 41:10; Ps. 20:7; 44:4; 48:11; 60:7; 89:14; 98:1;118:11).[30] However, in Lamentations 2:3b, Yahweh's 'right hand' is withdrawn, leaving the city vulnerable to the attack of an invading enemy. Then, in 2:4a, God is depicted as an archer having strung his bow with his 'right hand' poised to battle with Zion.[31] In the final mention of Yahweh's 'right hand', as if to drive home the point, Yahweh reminds the readers that he 'did not withhold his right hand from destroying' (v. 8b) the city.

Besides Daughter Zion's intimate relationship with Yahweh, she is also renowned for her beauty.[32] In Ezekiel 16:13-14, the prophet exclaims: 'You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. And your fame spread among the nations because the splendour I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign Lord'.[33] Psalm 50:2 adds, 'From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth' (cf. Ezek 27:3, 4, 11; 28:12).

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28 Bertil Albrektson, *Studies in the text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations with a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text* (STL, 21; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1863), p. 86.

29 Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 84.

30 J. J. M. Roberts, 'The Hand of Yahweh', *VT* 21 (1971), 244-52, p. 246.

31 Dobbs-Allsopp, 'R(az/ais)ing Zion', p. 42.

32 Hans Wildberger, 'Die Völkwallfahrt zum Zion, Jes. II 1-5', *VT* 7 (1957), 62-81; John H. Hayes, 'The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability', *JBL* 82 (1963), 419-26; Gunther Wanke, *Die Zionstheologie der Korachiten in ihrem traditionsgeschichtlichem Zusammenhang* (BZAM, 97; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), pp. 64, 70; J. J. M. Roberts, 'The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition', *JBL* 92 (1973), 329-44.

33 For more on the beauty of Zion, see Mark J. Boda, 'The Daughter's Joy', in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response*, ed. by M. J. Boda, C. J. Dempsey,

Daughter Zion is not just beautiful but she is also close to God. Psalm 48:2, for instance, speaks of how Zion is 'beautiful in elevation; it is the joy of the earth'.[34] The beauty of Zion, as Hermann Spieckermann argues, is not in its physical height.[35] Instead, Zion's beauty comes from being God's dwelling place; for according to ancient Near Eastern temple theology, mountains are often associated with divine presence.[36] However, such privileges are removed in Lamentations 2:1, when God 'casts down from heaven to earth the beauty (תִּפְאֶרֶת) of Israel'. Stripping away her cosmic status, Daughter Zion is removed from Yahweh's presence.[37] Zion is, therefore, denied access to Yahweh's presence. As if such an indictment is not enough, God destroys all who are 'pleasing to the eye' (2:4), thus destroying the once-designated beauty.[38]

As part of the Psalmist's admiration of the beauty of Zion, he invites his readers to tour around Zion: to number her towers, to consider her ramparts, and to go through her citadels (Ps. 48:12-13). Here in Lamentations 2:1-10, Yahweh embarks on the Psalmist's tour, with an itinerary of five sites of architectural interest: (1) the dwellings of Jacob, the stronghold of daughter Judah (v. 2); (2) the palaces and stronghold (v. 5); (3) the wall of daughter Zion (v. 8); and (5) the gates and bars (v. 9), Yahweh not only visits them all, but he also them destroys them on his way out.[39] Five times in the chapter, Yahweh is said to have 'swallowed' (בלע) the various edifices of Zion (2:2, 5 [2x], 8, 16).[40] According to Nancy Lee, the term בלע is often used in the Hebrew Bible for an enemy who devours another.[41] In Jeremiah 51:34, for example, the verb בלע describes Nebuchadnezzar's consumption of Jerusalem. In Exodus 15:12, the earth is said to

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and L. S. Flesher (Ancient Israel and Its Literature, 13; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012), pp. 321-41.

34 Michael L. Barre, 'The Seven Epithets of Zion in Psalm 48:2-7', *Biblica* 69 (1988), 551-63.

35 Hermann Spieckermann, 'Zion, Jakob und Abraham: Die Psalmen 46 bis 48 in ihrem Zusammenhang', *ZAW* 132(2020), 542–557, p.546.

36 John M. Lundquist, 'The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East', *BA* 39 (1976), pp. 65–75.

37 Dobbs-Allsopp, 'R(az/ais)ing Zion', p. 40.

38 Adele Berlin, *Lamentations* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), p. 69.

39 Boase, 'Characterisation of God', p. 35.

40 Paul R. House, *Lamentations* (WBC, 23B; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), p. 399.

41 Nancy C. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities Under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo* (BIS, 60; Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 135.

have 'swallowed' Yahweh's enemies.[42] The roles are now reversed: Yahweh has become the enemy who 'swallows' the city's landmarks.

To demonstrate that Yahweh's blitz is not unmeditated, the poet utilizes the imagery of the 'measuring line' in 2:8. The poet writes, 'The Lord determined to tear down the wall around Daughter Zion. He stretched out a measuring line and did not withhold his hand from destroying'. The measuring line is prototypically the vocabulary of building,[43] However, it is also used in demolition on occasion (2 Kg. 24:13; Isa.34:11).[44] As with constructing a building, its demolition also requires careful planning.[45] There can be no denying that Yahweh's actions are invested with forethought and design. Therefore, Jerusalem's destruction is not an accident nor a lapse of judgment on Yahweh's part.

Tying our discussions together, in this section, we have examined Yahweh's reasons for destroying the built structures of Zion. In targeting the landmarks of Zion, Yahweh is reminding the readers that (1) he can reverse the relationship he has had with Zion from one of a doting father/husband to that of an enemy; (2) Zion is not inviolable, Yahweh can easily remove his protective hand from the city; and (3) he can defy Zion's beauty, vanquish her from his presence, and destroy her beautiful edifices.

1.3. God's Reason for Attacking the Cultus

Besides the landmarks of the city, God's actions also target the cultus, such as Yahweh's footstool (2:1), the tent of Daughter Zion (2:4), 'his booth' (2:6), the place of 'his appointed place' (2:6) and 'his altar and sanctuary' (2:7). The first thing to note is that the focus of Yahweh's judgment on the cultus is on the temple. Lamentations 2:1 recounts that in his anger, God 'has not remembered his footstool'. According to Sara Japhet, scholarship has often assumed – primarily because of the phrase 'who sits enthroned above the cherubim' and the interpretation of Numbers 10:35:36 – that Israel sees the ark as the throne or footstool of Yahweh.[46] However, except for 1 Chronicles 28:2 and Isaiah 66:1, 'footstool' is always understood as a synecdoche for the temple.[47] For example, Psalm 99:5 ('Extol the Lord

42 House, *Lamentations*, p. 379.

43 Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 7A; New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 99.

44 Dobbs-Allsopp, 'R(az/ais)ing Zion', p. 46.

45 Iain Provan, *Lamentations* (NCB; London: Marshall Pickering, 1991), p. 68.

46 Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), p. 62.

47 T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God's Plan for Life on Earth* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008), p. 33, n. 43.

our God; worship [or prostrating oneself] at his footstool') describes worshippers prostrating themselves at the temple, not the ark. Psalm 132:7 similarly states: 'Let us go to his dwelling; let us worship at his footstool'. Here, 'his dwelling', such as the temple, parallels 'his footstool.' Within the tradition of Zion, Yahweh's 'footstool' or temple is where the nations 'tremble' (Ps. 99:1), where Yahweh is worshipped (Ps. 132:7), and where there is peace (Ps. 110:1). By choosing to forget his footstool, Yahweh has effectively suspended such privileges for Zion.

The following cultic site mentioned is 'the tent (אֹהֶל) of Daughter Zion' (Lam. 2:4b). Two verses later, God is said to have 'poured out his wrath like fire on the tent of Daughter Zion'. Zion theology celebrates the security of 'Zion, the city of our appointed feasts' (Isa. 33:20).[48] As a result of her inviolability, the city with the temple (given the mention of the annual feasts in this verse) in mind is called an 'immovable tent'. Kim Huat Tan argues, Zion's inviolability is not because there is anything intrinsically sacred about Zion.[49] Instead, it is because God is in the city (Psalms 2:6; 74:2; Isa. 8:18). Thus, Yahweh's torching of his own 'tent' suggests that he has already left the city.

The following image of Jerusalem is that of a booth. Lamentations 2:6 states that Yahweh has broken 'his booth (שכו) like that in a garden'.[50] Within the context of Yahweh trying to make Zion forget her 'appointed festivals' (2:6), the mention of 'booth' (שכו) calls to mind Sukkot, the Feasts of the Booths.[51] If 'booth' (שכו) refers to the temporary shelters built during the festival celebration, then for God to destroy 'his booth like that in a garden' is likened to God dismantling his temple as one would of these temporary dwellings.[52]

What is significant about this destruction is that such an action has eschatological consequences. In Amos 9:11, Yahweh promises to rebuild David's fallen 'booth' (שכו) in the eschaton. As Francis Anderson and David Freedman suggest, the Booth of David is best understood as Jeru-

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48 Goswell, 'Cultic Images', p. 150.

49 Kim Huat Tan, *The Zion Traditions and the Aims of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 27.

50 As noted by Robert B. Salters (*Lamentations* [ICC; London: T&T Clark International, 2010], p.131), the preposition ב (in) has been omitted and is implied.

51 Lee, *Singers of Lamentations*, p. 141; Jason Radine, 'Amos in the Book of the Twelve', in *The Book of the Twelve: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. by J. Wöhrle, L. Tiemeyer (VTSup, 184; Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 139-50 (142).

52 Iain W. Provan, 'Feasts, Booths and Gardens (Thr 2,6a)', *ZAW* 102 (1990), 254-55, p. 254.

salem as a cultic centre.[53] This eschatological vision is also sustained by the prophet Zechariah.[54] Chapter 14 describes the Day of the Lord, where Yahweh will fight Israel's enemies, defeat them, and manifest his universal Lordship (v. 9). On that day, there will not only be unending light and the constant flow of life-giving water gushing from Zion, but all the surviving gentile nations who had formerly opposed Israel 'will also go up year after year to worship the king, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles'.[55] Therefore, by destroying God's 'booth' and making Zion 'forget her appointed festivals, Zion will be deprived of being the eschatological epicentre of life and the worship nexus of the nations.[56]

Due to the ruination of 'his appointed places', such as Jerusalem and the temple, the 'appointed feasts' and sabbaths can no longer occur.[57] God has cut off any means of cultic rapprochement, and human beings are cut off from God's presence. On top of this, Yahweh also distances himself from his people, as he scorns his altar and disowns his sanctuary (Lam. 2:7).

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TARGETING THE 'ARCHITECTURAL SITES' AND CULTIC SYSTEM

Though it is not explicitly stated why Yahweh directed his onslaught on the built structures and the cultic system, this has not prevented scholars from speculating. In considering only the destruction of the cultus, Gregory Goswell suggests that in Lamentations 2:1-8, God has disabled the entire cultic system so that all the normal channels of reconciliation are unavailable. This shows the severity of Yahweh's judgment and implies that any 'breakthrough (of communication) must come from God's side'.[58] However, Goswell's position is weak because he fails to consider 2:19, which encourages the people to 'arise, cry out in the night' and to 'lift

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53 Francis I. Anderson and David N. Freedman, *Amos* (AB, 24A; New York; Doubleday, 1989) p. 914. See Gregory Goswell, 'David in the Prophecy of Amos', *VT* 61 (2011), pp. 243-57.

54 George L. Klein, *Zechariah* (NAC; Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2008), p. 423.

55 Timothy Yap, 'The Purpose and Function of the Feast of Tabernacles', *JETS* 64 (2021), pp. 253-64, p. 59.

56 Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, 'Sukkot, Eschatology and Zechariah 14', *RB* 103 (1996), pp. 161-95, p. 165.

57 Robin A. Parry, *Lamentations* (THOTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 77.

58 Goswell, 'Cultic Images', p. 155.

up your hands to him,' signifying that despite the crisis, the people are not entirely cut off from communicating with the Lord.

Meanwhile, Robert Salters proposes: 'He (the poet) *was*, however, observing that Yahweh's relationship with his people did not consist of the paraphernalia of the cult, albeit dedicated to him (cf. Jer 7:22), for he had destroyed them. They were not of the essence: they had merely been the props'.[59] Ian Provan shares a similar view, thinking that the poet is seeking 'to lead Israel back to faith in a person rather than a place'.[60] Similarly, Dobbs-Allsopp sees the book as a response to the 586 BCE catastrophe where there is a deliberate move from 'geography to humanity'.[61] However, such a position is untenable for a couple of reasons: first, if the point of Lamentations 2:1-10 is to teach its readers that humanity is more important than the cultus or edifices, this would assume that humans are not harmed or killed in the crisis. Nevertheless, as we will argue in the next section, the residents of Jerusalem are also seriously implicated by Yahweh's barrage. Second, nowhere in Lamentations 2:1-10 are we told that the people value buildings or cultic elements more than God or other human beings.

Often overlooked by many scholars is Lamentations 2:14. For the first time in the book, the poet feels the need to explain why the catastrophe has occurred. Placing the blame on the shoulders of the prophets, they are accused of proffering false and fraudulent visions. Considering what has transpired in the text, the inviolability of Zion may be the doctrine that has prevented the people from facing up to their transgressions and ward off the current calamity. Moreover, by the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the inviolability of Zion has become an indisputable tenet of popular theology (Jer. 6:14;7:4; 8:11; Ezek. 8-11).[62] It became such an unquestioned assumption that this dogma became a challenge and those who attempted to refute it did so at the peril of their lives.[63] Therefore, for God to invalidate this heresy, he directs his destruction at the city's religious and secular sites, thereby proving the unsustainability of the doctrine of

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59 Italics in the original; Salters, *Lamentations*, p. 108.

60 Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 21.

61 Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, p. 90.

62 Frederik Poulsen, *Representing Zion: Judgement and Salvation in the Old Testament* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 37-40; Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), p. 30; William A. Tooman, 'Ezekiel's Radical Challenge to Inviolability', *ZAW* 121 (2009), pp. 489-514.

63 Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign Acts* (JSOTSup, 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 81.

the inviolability of Zion. The presence of the sacred temple in the city is no guarantee of God's benevolence or protection.

3. ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF GOD'S ATTACK

3.1. The Extent of the Onslaught

Thus far, we have examined the nature and reasons behind Yahweh's onslaught of Jerusalem. In this section, we want to focus on the effects of this judgment on people and on the city. When the poet says that Yahweh shows no pity in his destruction (2:1), he is not exaggerating. Yahweh's violence is nothing less than staggering. Although grammatically, Yahweh is the subject of the clauses of actions; fire is used as his instrument of destruction.[64] In 2:3, for instance, Yahweh allows a fire to 'consume everything around' the city. Twice in the pericope, we are informed of how the palaces are destroyed by fire (vv. 5 and 7). LaBahn writes, 'The devouring fire takes all it comes into contact with; it creates a suction that nothing and no one can resist. God is described as acting like a tornado, eating and destroying everything until nothing is left behind'.[65] The Babylonians are also at Yahweh's disposal, other than the use of fire. Though the Chaldeans' sack of Jerusalem is not detailed in the passage, their shouts of victory, which rival the celebrative sounds of an Israelite festival, are heard in Lamentations 2:7c.[66]

3.2. The Impact of the Onslaught on Daughter Zion

How, then, does such a devastating onslaught impact Daughter Zion? First, Zion becomes the recipient of mockery and derision. Lamentations 2:15 recalls, 'All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at Daughter Jerusalem'. Iain Provan and Johan Renkema argue that verse 15 describes the shocked reaction of those passing by, not those who mocked Jerusalem's downfall.[67] Though the verb **סָפַק** used in the expression 'they clap (their) hands against you' (**עָלַיִךְ כַּפַּיִם סָפָקוּ**) can mean 'to slap one's thigh in remorse' (Jer. 31:19; Ezek. 21:17) or 'to strike one's hands in anguish' (Num. 24:10) or 'to slap someone' (Job 34:26) or 'to strike or splash' (Jer. 48:26) or 'to mock' (Job 27:23), however, within the context of Lamentations 2, the meaning is derisive in meaning.[68] Moreover, the passers-by's other reactions, such as their 'scoff-

64 Ulrich Berges, *Klagelieder* (Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Freiburg: Herder, 2002) p. 136.

65 Labahn, 'Fire from Above', p. 251.

66 Johan Renkema, *Lamentations* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p. 290.

67 Provan, *Lamentations*, p. 74 and Renkema, *Lamentations*, p. 290.

68 House, *Lamentations*, p. 389.

ing' or 'hissing' (שרקו) and the 'shaking of heads' (ראשם וינעו) against Jerusalem, are also terms often associated with mockery.[69]

Second, Jerusalem's destruction has devastating consequences on the motherhood of Zion. In his illuminating essay 'The Fecundity of Fair Zion', Stephen Cook draws attention to the numerous passages in the Hebrew Bible dealing with the fruitfulness of Zion.[70] For example, in Isaiah 48:16, God promises Daughter Zion that her 'descendants will be like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be blotted out nor destroyed from before me'. Ezekiel 36 similarly has God assure Zion that its ideal future life will be 'fruitful and numerous' (v. 11). In short, daughter Zion is also the mother of all the peoples.[71] Thus, for Lamentations 2:20 to question, 'Should women eat their offspring?', is shocking.[72] To think that mothers would consume their children amid a famine (2:12) is the opposite of what one would expect Mother Zion to do. Othmar Keel is correct in stating that the real problem in Lamentations is not the destruction of the temple as such, but rather the humiliation of Zion as the 'mother of all peoples'.[73] The most significant failure for a mother is not her inability to protect her own children but to do the unthinkable of eating her children.

Third, the destruction of the city leads to the mass destruction of human beings. Lamentations 2:20 continues, 'Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary?' U. Berges suggests that some analogy might be presupposed between the intimacy between a mother and a child and Yahweh's close relationship with his priests and prophets.[74] However, not just the cultic leaders fall victim to Yahweh's onslaught; verse 21 reveals that the entire population has been affected. By utilizing the two merisms ('young and old' and 'young men and young women'), the poet depicts

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69 Lee, *Singers of Lamentations*, p. 153.

70 Stephen L. Cook, 'The Fecundity of Fair Zion: Beauty and Fruitfulness as Spiritual Fulfillment', in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response*, ed. by M. J. Boda, C. J. Dempsey, L. S. Flesher (Ancient Israel and Its Literature, 13; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012), pp. 77-99, p. 95.

71 Wischnowsky, *Tochter Zion*, p. 95.

72 Hendrik Jan Bosman, 'The Function of (Maternal) Cannibalism in the Book of Lamentations (2:20 & 4:10)', *Scriptura* 110 (2012), 152-65, p. 159.

73 Othmar Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und die Entstehung des Monotheismus* (Orte und Landshaften der Bibel 4/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007) II, 787-90.

74 Berges, *Klagelieder*, p. 165.

the totality of the slaughter.[75] No age group or gender of human beings in Zion can escape Yahweh's horrific punishment.[76]

Finally, the privileges often associated with Zion are forfeited.[77] The reign of peace, for instance, that results from Yahweh's presence on his holy hill (Ezek. 39:10-11; Ps. 46:10-11; 76:4-9) is now non-existent. Joy (Ps. 48:2) is replaced by 'mourning and moaning' (Lam. 2:5c). Enemies who were once turned back by Yahweh's thunderous voice (Ps. 46:7; 76: 7,9) now gloat and exalt in their strength (Lam. 2:17c). Zion's 'horn' (קרן), which is symbolic of the city's strength and authority, is cut down by Yahweh (Lam. 2:3).[78]

3.3. Is There Hope for Daughter Zion?

Despite the severity of the crisis, it is worth asking: Does the text offer any hope? Daughter Zion articulates an implied hope as she speaks for the first time in the chapter.[79] Coincidentally, Lamentations 2:20-22 is the last time we hear from Daughter Zion. Although scholars are divided in their opinions about the sincerity, attitude, and tone of Zion's epilogue,[80] she pleads that God will cease to be angry and show mercy. Indeed, by mentioning the plight of the children, the priests, and the prophets, they are designed to evoke God's compassion. Ever subtly, these noted features anticipate the hope that will be expressed in the book's centre, which describes God's character as compassionate (3:22-23).[81]

When the prophetic testimony is taken, is there a hope for Zion? Hartmut Gese contends that Zion is not merely a geographical location but a symbol of eschatological hope.[82] In the eschatological future, Zion will be the place where God's sovereignty will be exercised (Mic. 4:7;

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75 Bosman, 'Cannibalism in the Book of Lamentations', p. 160.

76 A. Van Selms, *Jeremia III & Klaagliederen* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1974), p. 126.

77 Dobbs-Allsopp, 'R(az/ais)ing Zion', p. 44.

78 Choon Leong Seow, *Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance* (HSM, 46; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), p. 197.

79 Melton, *Where is God in the Megilloth?*, pp. 98-99.

80 Miriam J. Bier, *'Perhaps There is Hope': Reading Lamentations as a Polyphony of Pain, Penitence and Protest* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 74; Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2000), pp. 98-99.

81 Goswell, 'Cultic Language', p. 157.

82 Hartmut Gese, 'Erwägungen zur Einheit der biblischen Theologie', *ZTK* 67 (1970), 417–436; reprinted in Hartmut Gese, *Vom Sinai zum Zion: Alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1974), pp. 11-30.

Pss. 95-100).[83] Zion will not only be a place of refuge for Israel. Instead, nations will also flee to Zion, receiving protection and instruction from God himself (Mic. 4:1-2; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 2:10-11; 8:1-23).[84] After the inhabitants of Zion are purified of their sins, they will become the ideal Israel (Joel 2:22-23). Mark Boda summarises, 'In this capital (Zion) holy citizens will enjoy their emperor's presence and protection. To this capital the nations will come to pay homage and from this capital justice will emanate to the nations'.[85]

When we cross over to the New Testament, the writers interpret the reign of God in Zion Christologically.[86] In texts such as Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15, Jesus is depicted as the much-anticipated king who has come to Zion to reign (cf. Zech. 9:9; Isa. 62:11). Moreover, Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6 draw upon the Zion imagery, where Christ is referred to as Zion's cornerstone, with the church is constructed around Christ. As the prophets predict a pilgrimage of people of other nations to Zion (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-3; Zech. 8:22-23), this is fulfilled at Pentecost in Acts 2:1-13. Zion's final destiny is best captured in Revelations 21:1-5 which depicts God's people (represented by Israel and other nations) living under the reign of Jesus, who sits upon his throne.[87]

4. CONCLUSION

In the preceding discussions, we have argued that despite the devastating effects of Yahweh's judgment on the city of Jerusalem and the temple, the attack was not frenzied or unmeditated. Instead, set to discredit the fraudulent doctrine that Jerusalem is inviolable, Yahweh channels his assault on the architectural as well as the cultic system of Zion. In so doing, God shows that without his presence and protective hand, the city is left vulnerable to the attack of enemies. Lamentations 2 also spells out the crippling effects the crisis has on Zion, both for the present as well as for the future. In the present, the city's ruination not only invites the

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[83] Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 159.

[84] H. A. Thomas, 'Zion', in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, ed. by M. J. Boda and J. G. McConville (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 908-914, p. 913.

[85] Mark J. Boda, 'Walking in the Light of Yahweh: Zion and the Empires in the Book of Isaiah', in *Empire in the New Testament*, ed. by S. E. Porter and C. L. Westfall (MNTS 10; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 54–89, p. 60.

[86] See for instance Kim Huat Tan, *The Zion Traditions and the Aims of Jesus* (SNTSM 91; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[87] Thomas, 'Zion', p. 913.

mockery of passers-by, but it also costs the lives of its residents, particularly the children. As the privileges that once were bestowed upon Zion are removed, the promise that the city will become an eschatological epicentre of life and worship is also rescinded.

In conclusion, Lamentations 2 reminds us that Yahweh is a just God. He is fair in the way he administers his judgments. Nothing, not even the privileged city of Zion or Israel's cultus, can shield sinners from the destructions of his judgments. As Daughter Zion pleads to God for mercy, on this side of the New Testament, we have Jesus who pleads for us. Without Christ's sacrifice and his intercession, we will likewise be decimated.

Christology In The Apocalypse: Bullinger's Sermon On Revelation 10:1-4

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I. INTRODUCTION

The sermon on Revelation 10:1-4 by the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) provides a window into his christology. In particular, Bullinger identified the "mighty angel" with Christ. The sermon is number 43 of one hundred sermons in his *In Apocalypsim Iesu Christi* (*On the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*).[1] Throughout these sermons Bullinger referred *inter alia* to key christological themes, such as to the Trinity and the *filioque*.[2] Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse reveal how he read the biblical canon from both a salvation historical and a biblical theological perspective.

Bullinger recorded in his *Diarium* that he commenced preaching on The Apocalypse (on Tuesdays) on 21 August 1554 which had followed on from successive series on Haggai and Malachi. He completed this series on 29 December 1556.[3] Bullinger had carefully read The Apocalypse when he was very young in his time at Kappell am Albis and, over the years, noted how its message corresponded with the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets and the message of the apostles so it was not surprising that he would devote an extended sermon series to the book.[4] It is not widely known that Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse became one of Bullinger's most popular publications. This was particularly so in England as it was published when the Marian exiles were in Zurich.[5] Prior

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1 Heinrich Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim Iesu Christi, revelatam quidem per angelum Domini, visam vero vel exceptam atque conscriptam a Iohanne Apostolo & Evangelista, conciones centum* (Basel: Oporinus, 1557), *HBBibl* I, #335;

2 Sermons #3, #24, #65.

3 Emil Egli (ed.), *Heinrich Bullingers Diarium* (Basel: Basler Buch und Antiquariatshandlung, 1904), pp. 46 and 50. Having published a book on Daniel (*De hebdomadis, quae quod apud Danielem sunt opusculum* (Zurich: Froschouer, 1530), *HBBibl* I, #27), Bullinger preached 66 sermons on Daniel on Tuesdays from 15 March 1563 to 15 June 1565.

4 Fritz Büsser, "Bullingers 100 Predigen über die Apocalypse," *Zwingliana*, 27 (2000), 117-131 (p. 118).

5 Richard Baukham, *Tudor Apocalypse, Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millennarianism and the English Reformation. From John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Oxford: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978); "Heinrich

to this volume on the sermons on The Apocalypse he had written on the last judgment (*Das Jüngste Gericht*) in 1555.[6] This was followed by another work on the last judgment, *De sine seculi et iudicio venturo* (*Concerning without a time frame that I will come as judge*), which focuses on Matthew 24, Daniel 7, 2 Timothy 3 and the very turbulent reigns of the popes.[7] There were two Latin editions of the sermons on The Apocalypse (1557, 1559), a German edition (1558),[8] a French edition (1558)[9], an English edition (1561)[10] and a Dutch edition (1567).[11] The English edition, which was one of a few works of Bullinger that were published in English, was widely disseminated and read in England. Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse were fitting for the age as, from about one hundred years prior, treatises on "the art of dying" (*ars moriendi*) were widely distributed and read.

The significance of Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse in his day is ably reflected in Richard Bauckham's detailed comparison of the annotations to The Apocalypse in the Geneva Bible of 1560 with Bullinger's sermons.[12] Those who read this mini tome were perhaps attracted by the major themes touched on by Bullinger. These included *inter alia* the true church of Christ, the end of the world, Christ's victory over the Antichrist,

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Bullinger, l'apocalypse et les anglais," *Etude théologiques et religieuses*, vol. 74 (no 3 1999), pp. 351-377.

6 Heinrich Bullinger, *Das Jüngste Gericht Unsers Herren Jesu Christi* (Zurich: Froschouer, 1955), *HBBibl* I, #281. This consisted of two sermons on Matthew 24 and 25. See Bruce Gordon, "«Welcher nit gloubt der ist schon verdampt»: Heinrich Bullinger and the Spirituality of the Last Judgement, *Zwingliana*, 29 (2002), pp. 29-53.

7 Heinrich Bullinger, *De sine seculi & iudicio venturo Domini nostri Iesv Christi* (Basel, 1557), *HBBibl* I, #320. For a detailed discussion of this work together with Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse as it relates to the pope as Antichrist see Christian Moser, "'Papam esse Antichristum': Grundzüge von Heinrich Bullingers' Antichristkonzeption," *Zwingliana*, 30 (2003), 65-101, pp. 84-87.

8 Heinrich Bullinger, *Die Offenbarung Jesu Christi Anfangs durch den heiligen Engel Gottes* (Müllhausen, 1558), *HBBibl* I, #327.

9 Heinrich Bullinger, *Cent sermons sur l'Apocalypse de Iesus Christ, reveleé par l'Ange du Seigneur* (Jean Crespin, 1558), *HBBibl* I, #341. This is the text used by Irena Backus in her meticulous work *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich and Wittenberg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

10 Heinrich Bullinger, *A hundred sermons upon the Apocalips of Jesu Christe reueiled in dede by Thangell of the Lorde* (1561), *HBBibl* I, #355.

11 Heinrich Bullinger, *De Openbaringhe Jesu Christi. Ten eersten door den heyligen Engel Gods* (1567), *HBBibl* I, #352.

12 Bauckham, "l'apocalypse et les anglais," pp. 367-377.

the one thousand year kingdom and the new Jerusalem. Bullinger wrote the work to encourage Protestant believers in the pressing context of wars, the plague, famine, the ever present threat of the Turks as well as severe weather events. For example, in his Diarium, Bullinger referred to a mini ice age in 1570.[13] Not only did Bullinger consider that the Apocalypse was the "bookend" of the biblical canon, but also from a pastoral perspective, he saw that its alternating themes of joy and pain before the imminent eschaton were very relevant for his generation. Throughout his sermons, Bullinger sought to encourage believers to remain faithful in view of the victory assured in Christ as they would have to face various attacks on their faith from different quarters.

This article gives an overview of Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse and looks specifically at how the themes that are highlighted in sermon # 43 represent a microcosm of the themes developed in all of the sermons.

II. THE CONTEXT OF BULLINGER'S ONE HUNDRED SERMONS ON THE APOCALYPSE

Canonicity of the books of the Bible was a major focus of the reformers. Without exception, they rejected as Scripture the Apocrypha or the Deutero-canonical books of the Old Testament that were received by Rome as Scripture. However, some of the reformers had doubts about the canonicity and authorship of The Apocalypse. In this, they were probably influenced by the *Annotations* of Erasmus (1469-1536).[14] Luther (1483-1546) wrote two prefaces on The Apocalypse (1522 and 1530) for his translation of the Bible. Both were somewhat negative although the second preface was less so. The second of these prefaces was more extensive than the first. Luther penned an analysis of the various sections of The Apocalypse in which he sought to identify the "evil angels," the "beasts" as well as other images in the book.[15] The first preface was clearly in mind when Bullinger wrote his sermons on The Apocalypse. In the preface and the first sermon Bullinger roundly defended the canonicity and the apostolicity of The Apocalypse. Without actually mentioning Luther by name, Bullinger

[13] Otto Ulbricht, "Heinrich Bullinger, sein Diarium unter der Beginn der Kleinen Eiszeit-Phase von 1570 bis 1630," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 110 (no.1 2020), 200-236. The entry is in *Heinrich Bullingers Diarium*, p. 104.

[14] See Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, pp. 3-6 for an analysis of Erasmus' view of the Apocalypse.

[15] Martin Luther, "Preface to the Revelation of St John," in E. Theodore Bachman (ed.), *Luther's Works, Volume 35: Word and Sacrament I* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 399-411.

was clearly responding to his view of The Apocalypse. The following is the relevant section from Luther's first preface:

> First and foremost, the apostles do not deal with visions, but prophesy in clear and plain words, as do Peter and Paul, and Christ in the gospel. For it befits the apostolic office to speak clearly of Christ and his deeds, without images and visions. Moreover there is no prophet in the Old Testament, to say nothing of the New, who deals so exclusively with visions and images. For myself, I think it approximates the Fourth Book of Esdras; I can in no way detect that the Holy Spirit produced it…
>
> My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. For me this is reason enough not to think highly of it: Christ is neither taught nor known in it. But to teach Christ, this is the thing which an apostle is bound above all else to do; as Christ says in Acts 1 [8], "You shall be my witnesses." Therefore I stick to the books which present Christ to me clearly and purely.[16]

Zwingli's close colleague and companion, Leo Jud (1482-1542), prepared an extended paraphrase on The Apocalypse.[17] However, in his *Sixty Seven Articles*, Zwingli (1584-1531) himself wrote somewhat dismissively of The Apocalypse in the context where he was taking issue with an argument made by Roman Catholic scholars who were citing Revelation 5:

> First of all, I want to show that the Apocalypse was not reckoned by the early church to be among the sacred books, as Jerome indicates. Secondly, it is ascribed to John who was the Bishop of Ephesus, for it does not have the manner, heart and spirit of the evangelist. For this reason I should reject the proofs presented to me.[18]

Bullinger saw many connections between The Apocalypse and the books of the Old Testament, especially Daniel and Isaiah. He considered that the plagues of Egypt described in Exodus were paralleled by the judgments outlined in The Apocalypse. In sermon # 97 he not only affirmed the authorship of The Apocalypse by the apostle John, he further underscored that it is "the last book of the canonical Scripture." In sermon # 100 Bullinger reaffirmed canonicity of The Apocalypse declaring that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, "self-authenticating" as Scrip-

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16 Martin Luther, "Preface to the Revelation of St John," *LW*, vol. 35, pp. 398-399.

17 See Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, pp. 88-93.

18 Huldrych Zwingli, *Auslegen und Gründe der Schlußreden*, Z, II, pp. 208-209; E.J. Furch (ed.), *Huldrych Zwingli Writings Volume 1: The Defense of the Reformed Faith* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1984), p. 166

ture and not dependent on a decision of a church council.[19] Moreover, Bullinger's *De omnibus sanctae scripturae libris expositio (Exposition of all the books of holy Scripture)* had already been inserted into the preface of the 1539 edition of the Zurich Latin Bible. In this work Bullinger asserted both the apostolicity and the canonicity of The Apocalypse. Throughout the sermons Bullinger repeatedly underscored the importance of proclaiming the true gospel and the true message of the canonical books.

One of Bullinger's colleagues, the linguist Theodor Bibliander (1509-1564), preached in Zurich on The Apocalypse commencing 10 December 1543. These sermons were published as the *Relatio Fidelis (Faithful Relationship)* in 1545.[20] Bullinger was clearly conversant with this work as he referred to it several times in his sermons on the Apocalypse. It appears that Calvin (1509-1564) did not write a commentary on the Apocalypse. In this regard, T.H.L. Parker explains:

> Yet I believe that a theological reason may have deterred him from attempting Revelation. For him, the Old Testament proclaimed Christ in an obscure manner, but in the New Testament Christ had appeared in complete clearness. It was the difference between twilight and noon-tide…But he may have considered that apocalyptic is foreign to the New Testament as if it involved a re-veiling of the clear and unambiguous Gospel.[21]

Thus, it needs to be noted that Bullinger's approach to The Apocalypse differed from Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. This is yet another pointer to the fact that he was not a *Nachfolger* of Zwingli who blindly and uncritically followed him. It also illustrates another subtle difference between Bullinger and Calvin.[22] Bullinger's appreciation of The Apocalypse in the biblical canon affirms his commitment to both *sola Scriptura* and *tota Scriptura*. Bullinger's overall *oeuvre* is voluminous. His strength was not

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19 Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 147v. The superscript declares that Christ himself is the author.

20 Theodor Bibliander, *Ad omnium ordinum republicae christianae principes viros populumque christianum Relatio Fidelis* (Basel: Oporinus, 1545).

21 T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (2nd edition) (Louisville: Westminster, 1971), p. 119.

22 Without mentioning the names of Luther, Zwingli and others, Bullinger made this comment about the Apocalypse: "This book has been hidden for a time, despised also by good and learned men, who however have preached what is contained and taught in it," W.P. Stephens, "Bullinger's Sermons on the Apocalypse", in Alfred Schindler and Hans Stickelberger (eds.), *Die Zürcher Reformation: Ausstrahlungen und Rückwirkungen* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 261-280, p. 262. This was Bullinger's way of underlining that the message of the Apocalypse was essentially the same as the rest of the canon.

so much innovation but that he read widely and critically and incorporated what others had written into his own conclusions based on his own careful examination of the biblical texts. Hence, Backus observes of Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse:

> Not claiming to say anything new, he sees himself as one in a long line of commentators, and, to prove this, he carefully lists his authorities: Bibliander, Arethas, Augustine, Primasius, Thaoms Aquinas, the *Glossa ordinaria*, Meyer, Lambert, Luther, Erasmus, and Valla.[23]

III. BULLINGER'S HISTORIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO THE APOCALYPSE

Influenced *inter alia* from his reading of Irenaeus, Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and Augustine's *The City of God*. Bullinger saw a dualistic focus in both the book of Daniel and The Apocalypse between two peoples and two cities. With respect to The Apocalypse, Bullinger saw throughout the book the opposition between God and the devil, Christ and Antichrist, angels and demons, the city of God and the city of the devil, Jerusalem and Babylon,[24] the woman in the desert and the great whore as well as the faithful and heretics.[25]

Bullinger rejected the chiliasm of the ante-Nicene fathers.[26] In sermon #87 Bullinger pointed out that the "keys" (understood as the preaching of the true gospel) were given by Christ to the apostles and the church and that the "chains" that bound Satan was also the preaching of the gospel. Thus, at the beginning of sermon #88 Bullinger explained that the one thousand years of Satan being bound had long passed:

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23 Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, p. 104.

24 In sermon #19 Bullinger refers to the church of the elect as both the city of God and the spiritual Jerusalem.

25 This section is dependent on the detailed analysis of Bullinger's historiographical approach to The Apocalypse of Aurelia A. Garcia Archilla in his *The Theology of History and Apologetic Historiography in Heinrich Bullinger: Truth in History* (San Fransisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), pp. 132-165. For Backus' understanding of Bullinger's structure of The Apocalypse see her *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, pp. 104-105.

26 In sermon #87 Bullinger regards Papias as one of the originators of chiliasm which he dismisses as a heresy by citing Book 3 of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History, In Apocalypsim*, p. 127r. Backus refers to Bullinger "willingly ignoring the chiliasm of the ante-Nicene Fathers," *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, p. 105.

> So, the beast and its image would shine for the one thousand years. During the one thousand years the gospel of Christ would continue to shine as Satan would be bound in chains but, nevertheless, not all would receive the gospel nor would the future be tranquil. Rather, the saints would endure the persecution of the beast on account of the truth of Christ and although many would not believe the gospel but they would rather oppose him (the beast) and perish. Yet in the meantime the devil will not have such power as he had obtained in those precise one thousand years nor would the gospel be so obscured for the thousand years as it was to be afterwards corrupted and adulterated.[27]

Basically, Bullinger regarded the one thousand years as a period when Satan was chained, though he hastened to explain that this should not be taken in a literal sense. In other words, although Satan was active opposing the church he was severely curtailed resulting in the preaching of the gospel to the then known ends of the world. Throughout this period the risen Christ continued to be with the elect through his Spirit and the first "beast" (the beast from the sea) that Bullinger identified with Rome was active.[28] With respect to the second "beast" (the beast from the earth) and its number 666, following Bibliander, Bullinger added 666 to the date on which the apostle John wrote The Apocalypse. This gives a date of 763 which he viewed as the momentous occasion when Pepin the Short submitted to the papacy. This coincided with the donation of Pepin which resulted in temporal power given to the papacy. This beast had "two horns like a lamb" which Bullinger interpreted that the papacy, from this time on, sought to hold both temporal and spiritual power. In doing so, the papacy was usurping Christ's rightful place as King and High Priest. Thus, throughout the sermons on The Apocalypse, Bullinger detested the pope calling himself the "vicar of Christ" as he wrongly assumed that Christ is not present. In reality, Christ requires no vicar as he is present spiritually.

Without being dogmatic, Bullinger suggested in sermon #87[29] three calculations for the millennium. The first was to date the commencement

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[27] Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 129r. Unless otherwise stated translations from *In Apocalypsim Iesu Christi* are those of the author.

[28] In sermon #32 Bullinger mentions the persecutions under Nero, Domitian and Trajan with reference to both Tacitus and Pliny. In sermon #61 Bullinger identifies the second beast with the rise of the Carolingans. By adding 666 to the date of the Apocalypse (97) yields the year 763 the approximate date of the donation of Pepin the Short to Pope Paul I.

[29] The superscript for sermon #87 is "Concerning the illustrious evangelical truth which the work of the apostles spread throughout the whole world for a thousand years," Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 126r.

of the millennium from the ascension of Christ (34) to the election of Pope Benedict IX in 1034. Benedict IX was accused of using black magic and selling the papacy to Gregory VI. The second was to date the commencement from Paul's imprisonment in Rome (60) to the papacy of Nicholas II (1060). The third was to date from the destruction of Jerusalem (73) to the papacy of Gergory VII in 1073. Gregory's papacy was likened to the devil reigning. The point that Bullinger sought to make was that from the apostolic age until about the middle of the 11th century the true gospel had a measure of freedom to be proclaimed but that from the middle of the 11th century onwards Satan used the Church of Rome to suppress the truth and persecute true believers.[30] Poignantly, the middle of the 11th century was when Berengar of Tours (died 1088) was forced to make a recantation concerning the elements of the eucharist.

In parallel to this interpretation of the one thousand years, Bullinger saw three periods of restitution of the chosen people of God. The first period of restitution was from Cyrus to Pompey the Great. The second period of restitution was from the advent of Christ to the Antichrist. The third period of restitution is from the restitution of the gospel until the *eschaton*.[31] Bullinger regarded that this third period of the restitution, taking place in his time, as commencing with the fall of Rome in 1527.[32]

This extended quotation from Archilla is a helpful analysis of Bullinger's historical approach vis-à-vis the Apocalypse and sets the context for sermon #43:

> …For Bullinger truth is Jesus Christ, promised by God to us for the remission of sins. This is the **logos** of history. Therefore the truth of history emerges from outside of history to impinge within it: the preaching of the Gospel of salvation is that constant inbreaking of Christ's truth into the world, an inbreaking which we saw most clearly in the incarnation, and which will become definitive judgment in his Second Coming. Here again is present the contact with the ancient Neoplatonist concept of **aletheia**: the truth comes from a higher sphere and is reflected into this world. Thus historical truth, the Middle Ages and the rise of the Papacy cannot be interpreted in any other way but as a function of the effects of that supra-historical truth upon humanity, in particular its effects through the preaching of the Gospel. Thus

30 Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, 127v. The dates cited are those given by Bullinger himself.

31 Archilla, *The Theology of History*, pp. 145-146.

32 Ibid., pp. 146-147. Archilla points out that this schema is similar to Melchior Hofmann's (German Anabaptist, 1495-1543) threefold pattern in terms of church history *viz* (i) apostolic times to the reign of the popes, (ii) the period of the unlimited power of the popes and (iii) the period of the Spirit commencing with Jan Hus (1369-1415). See Ibid., p. 151, fn 43.

> we can understand too Bullinger's appeal to the reader in both commentaries (ie Daniel and the Apocalypse) to correlate the Word of God in the prophecy with contemporary history. Objectivity and intra-historical truth are always a function of the Word of God: the **logos** of history making sense, and giving sense, to history through the proclamation of the Word.[33]

Bullinger's understanding of the millennium was in stark contrast to the Anabaptists' concept of a golden millennium prior to the end of the world. A few years after his sermons on The Apocalypse, Bullinger directly refuted the Anabaptists' view in his *Adversus Anabaptistas (Against the Anabaptists)* where he directly referred readers to these sermons:

> But the Anabaptists in this matter convince themselves that all the ungodly will be abolished before the final judgment and that in these lands there will be a new kingdom of Christ and a golden age. We have refuted above in chapter two of book 1 what they adduce from the Apocalypse of John for establishing this attractive opinion of theirs. We expounded them in the sermons on the Apocalypse of John which we have published.[34]

IV. CONTOURS OF BULLINGER'S CHRISTOLOGY IN HIS SERMONS ON THE APOCALYPSE[35]

In comparing Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse with Bibliander's *Relatio fidelis*, Backus assessed that the sermons "are correspondingly much more Christocentric. To Bullinger, The Apocalypse is an account of Christ himself, who is sitting at God's right hand, of all the misfortunes that the church will have to endure from the Ascension until the Last Judgment."[36] Bullinger presented Christ in many of the sermons in a manner of direct opposition to Antichrist. As the sermons focus on the true gospel as opposed to the false gospel of Rome and on truth as opposed to heresies that have sought to undermine the church, Bullinger referred to several christological heresies, *inter alia*, the Ebionites, the Manicheans, the Arians, the Pelagians and the Monothelites. Many of the christological truths affirmed by the councils of the church are mentioned by Bullinger in the sermons. These include, the deity of Christ and that he is homoousios with the Father (sermons #6, #28, #97, #100),

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33 Ibid., pp. 143-144, fn 31.

34 Heinrich Bullinger, *Adversus Anabaptistas Libri VI* (Zurich: Froschouer, 1560), 62; *HBBibl*, I, #396.

35 For a helpful overview, see Stephens, "Bullinger's Sermons on the Apocalypse," pp. 261-280.

36 Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, p. 103.

the Trinity (sermons #3, #24), the virgin birth (sermon #24), the *filioque* (sermons #3, #24), the two natures in Christ (sermons #12, #19, #27), that Christ reverses the Fall (sermon #20) and against the ubiquity of Christ's resurrected body (sermon #5).

In the very last sermon (sermon #101) Antichrist is described as the "ape" (*simia*) of our Lord Christ.[37] Because Antichrist in every generation has been and is successful in deceiving many, the elect need to be certain that they know who the true Christ is. This explains the heightened focus of Christ as King, High Priest and Saviour throughout all the sermons.

Bullinger wrote against Antichrist beginning with his earliest works.[38] In his time at the monastery at Kappel am Albis he had already identified Antichrist with the "man of lawlessness" of 2 Thessalonians 2:3[39] in his lectures on Thessalonians (1526). This was to be further developed in his commentary on Thessalonians (1536) which came after his work on *Concerning the Weeks of Daniel* (1530).[40] His earlier work on Daniel indicates that he did not shy from the apocalyptic material in the canon but, rather, sought to interpret it historically. In his commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5 Bullinger has a detailed and extensive discussion and analysis on the civil leaders (from the Romans, the Carolingans and beyond) vis-à-vis the papacy and the various manifestations and guises of the Antichrist.[41] By the time of his Thessalonians commentary Bullinger had begun to identify the rise of Islam as another Antichrist besides the papacy. Bullinger appeared to oscillate between focusing on the Roman papacy as the Antichrist and on Islam as the Antichrist.[42]

Some five years after Bullinger's commentary on Thessalonians, Melchior Ambach, a pastor in Frankfurt, translated a work of Bullinger's into

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37 Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 149r.

38 For a detailed study of this with extensive bibliography see Christian Moser, "Papam esse Antichristum."

39 Instead of the Vulgate's *homo peccati* (man of sin) Bullinger chose the Latin translation *homo ille scelerosus* (that criminal man) from the Zurich Bible.

40 Heinrich Bullinger, *De hebdomadis quae apud Danielem sunt opusculum* (Zurich, Froschouer, 1530), *HBBibl*, I, #27. Bullinger was later to produce his *Sermons on Daniel* (1565) a few years after his sermons on The Apocalypse (Heinrich Bullinger, *Conciones in Danielem* (Zurich: Froschouer, 1564), *HBBibl*, I, #428).

41 Luca Baschera and Christian Moser (eds.), *Heinrich Bullinger Werke Band 8: Kommentare zu den neutestamentlichen Briefen 1-2Thess – 1-2Tim – Tit -Phlm* (Zurich: Theologische Verlag Zurich, 2015), pp. 61-87. A detailed analysis of this may be found in Moser, "Pappam esse Antichristum," pp. 67-79.

42 Ibid., pp. 73-75.

German with the title *Concerning Antichrist and his kingdom* (1541).[43] Most of the material in this work is to be found in his 2 Thessalonians commentary and repeated in his sermons on The Apocalypse. What is significant is the explanation that "Antichrist" is not limited to one particular person. Moreover, Bullinger also alternated in his understanding of the Antichrist as a particular individual or as a power of the age as he concluded: "It is thus inevitable that the small horn, that is, the Antichrist, be read as the figure of an empire, and not of a man: it should be understood as the universal whole which fights against Christ, His laws, principles, moral teaching and followers. The horns obviously mean disorder and chaos.[44]

Furthermore, there is much emphasis in *Concerning Antichrist and his kingdom* on the rising threat of Islam to the gospel. As Antichrist seeks to usurp Christ's rightful place so Bullinger regarded both Muhammed and the pope as seeking to take the place of God (*Gott gleich*). As might be expected, this work also has an unmistakable focus on the donation of Pepin to Gregory VII which took place some 124 years after the death of Muhammed.

It is beyond doubt that Bullinger was quite knowledgeable about Muhammed and Islam early on, which is why he was alert to see Islam as a major threat to the elect. In his treatise on the covenant in 1534 (*De testamento*), written in his early period as Antistes in Zurich,[45] he had already referred to Muhammed side by side with the papacy as threats to the true church. Bullinger sought to warn the elect that Muhammed blasphemed the truth while the papacy obscured the precepts of Christ.[46] Then, in a work in his later years, *Antwort auf Sieben Klagerartikel* (*Answer to seven*

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43 *Vom Antichrist unnd seinem Reich, wahrhafftige unnd Schrifftliche erweisung Der Ander Capitel, der Andern Epistel S. Pauli zu den Thessalonichen. Mit eyner schönen außlegung/Henrychi Bullingeri* (Frankfurt: Cyriaco Jacobi zum Bart, 1541).

44 Sándor Őze, *Apocalypticism in Early Reformation Hungary* (1526-1566) (Budapest-Leipzig: Magyar Napló, 2015), p. 203.

45 This is only five years after the Muslim armies had reached the gates of Vienna.

46 Heinrich Bullinger, *De testamento seu foedere Dei unico et aeterno* (Zurich: Froschouer, 1534), p. 48r, *HBBibl*, I, # 54. For a summary of how Bullinger viewed Islam as an insidious threat because of its false betrayal of Christ as "The Koran was put together with the help of a heretical monk and the advice of perverted Jews and false Christians, corrupted by heretics such as Arians, Macedonians and Nestorians" see W. Peter Stephens, "Understanding Islam – in Light of Bullinger and Wesley," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 81 (no. 1, 2009), 23-27.

charges, 1574),[47] Bullinger made repeated references to the Qur'an. This confirms that Bullinger was well read with respect to Islam, with respect to its origin, its teachings and its practices. Indeed, Bullinger had access to the specialised knowledge of his Zurich colleague Theodore Bibliander who was a noted Hebraist and Arabist. In 1543 Bibliander edited the translation of the Qur'an by Robert of Ketten (1110-1160). Almost certainly, Bullinger read the Qur'an himself. His two major works that deal with the Turks or Islam are *The Turk*[48] and a communication (*Sendschrift*) to the Hungarian churches.[49] The communication to the Hungarian pastors was very timely as Hungary had been overrun by the Turkish armies in 1529. The attack of Islam on Zurich was a threat but it was a reality for the Hungarian church. *The Turk* contains much detailed historical background concerning the rise of Islam. Its main overarching emphasis is that Muhammed is a false prophet vis-à-vis Christ who is the true prophet.[50]

V. SERMON #43

Sermon #43 expounds The Apocalypse 10:1-4 using the text of the Zurich Bible (1531).

The superscript to the sermon

For each one of the sermons, Bullinger has a superscript. The superscript for sermon #43 is: "Christ the strong angel is set against Antichrist and he is splendidly described, and shining in the darkness of the church with comfort."[51] Key themes of all the sermons on The Apocalypse are referred to in this superscript. Christ is set in direct opposition to Antichrist. He is a shining light as opposed to the spiritual darkness in the church caused by Antichrist. Christ is present to give strength and comfort to the church of the elect in the days leading up to the Final Judgment.

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47 *HBBibl* I, # 584.

48 Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Türgg: Von Anfang und Ursprung des Türggischen Glaubens* (Zurich: Froschouer, 1567), *HBBibl*, I, #557.

49 Heinrich Bullinger, *Epistola ad ecclesias Hungaricas earumque pastores scripta* (1559), *HBBibl*, I, pp. 383-385. Bullinger's writings and ecclesiastical statements on Islam are listed in Emidio Campi, "Early Reformed Attitudes towards Islam," *Theological Review of the Near East School of Theology*, 31 (2010), p. 143, fn26.

50 See Daniël Timmerman, "Bullinger on Islam: Theory and Practice," *Unio cum Christo*, 3 (no 2, 2017), 119-135 for a lucid discussion on this.

51 Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 60v.

The description of Christ

Bullinger considered the exalted description of Christ in these verses is not matched elsewhere in Scripture except in Isaiah and the Gospels (especially John). The "strong angel" is interpreted as referring to Christ in a similar way that he interpreted some of the references to "the angel of the LORD" in the Old Testament as references to the pre-incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity.[52] In other sermons, Bullinger does explain why he interprets the word "angel" the way that he does in those contexts.[53] In referring to Hebrews 1 and 2 Bullinger points out that Christ is "much greater than angels as he is the Lord of angels."[54] In fact, he is the angel of the heavenly council of God and the ambassador of the Father sent to the elect.[55] Bullinger's identification of the "strong angel" becomes clearer when he outlines the differences apparent in these verses between Christ and Antichrist. The point that Bullinger is emphasizing is that, despite the doubts and fears of the elect, Christ is indeed present nonetheless with the church. However, he is present spiritually and not corporally. His presence and his activity must be seen though the eyes of faith.

Christ is present according to Bullinger, despite the threats of Antichrist in its varied guises. As the ever-present king and bishop, Christ empowers the ministers of the word and animates his faithful with his Spirit and his word. With reference to Isaiah 45 and 60 Bullinger views that the fact that Christ is wrapped with a cloud indicates his deity. Moreover, the rainbow on Christ's head is understood as Christ's crown pointing to him as the king of peace who reconciles all things to God. Not only is the rainbow Christ's crown, it is also a sign of God's covenant and bond with the elect. As might be expected, Bullinger saw the sun-like radiance of Christ's face in terms of the transfiguration of Christ recorded

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52 Amongst modern commentators, G.K. Beale in his *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 522-530 also identifies this strong angel with Christ with an extended and detailed discussion remarkably similar to that of Bullinger.

53 The beginning of sermon #87 is one such example where "angel" is taken to be a messenger or preacher such as Paul was. In sermon #43 he uses the term "angel" in a qualified sense (*In Apocalypsim*, 61r) which is made clear in the French translation – "Il est vray qu'il n'est point Ange, de nature ou de dignité" (*Cent sermons sur l'Apocalypse de Iesus Christ* (Geneva: Iean Bonnefoy, 1565), p. 186r) "it is true that he is not an angel by nature or dignity." Bullinger also distinguishes this "strong angel" from the strong angels mentioned in The Apocalypse 5:2 and 18:21.

54 Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 61r. Bullinger apparently identified the archangel Michael with Christ.

55 Ibid., p. 61r.

in Matthew 17.[56] In referring to 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 and gazing upon the face of God unveiled, Bullinger sought to encourage believers to keep on looking to Christ as they face the deep darkness of opposition to the truth while waiting faithfully and obediently for the final judgment. The fact that one foot of Christ is on the sea (*super mare*) and one on the land (*super terram*) indicates that, as king, both are his possession and both are subject to him.

The description of Antichrist

Bullinger described Antichrist by means of antithesis to Christ. Antichrist is the black angel who ascends from the bottomless pit, Christ is the shining angel who descends from heaven. Antichrist is clothed and wrapped with the dark smoke of the bottomless pit in seeking to present himself as a deity, Christ is robed in a cloud which unmistakeably points to his true deity. Antichrist has a crown which he has stolen by devious means and which he tenaciously holds on to by his craft, Christ has a rainbow as his crown. Antichrist brings woe, desperation, anguish and sore affliction to the elect, Christ brings consolation and peace of the conscience. Antichrist has tails of scorpions full of poison, Christ has feet that are pillars of fire. Antichrist wants to have the book of the gospel shut and closed and darkened, Christ holds an open book in his hands which cannot be shut by Antichrist.[57] With the Antichrist is associated the noise of chariots in his wings, with Christ who roars like a lion there is the theophanic sound of thunder. To achieve his purposes Antichrist uses all his power, might and deception, Christ's force, on the other hand, is demonstrated in the faithful ministry of the Word by his ministers. As king and high priest, Christ animates all his faithful with his spirit and word.

Bullinger commences sermon #43 by referring to the fifth and sixth trumpets and the happiness and glee of the wicked at what the elect have been, are and will be suffering because of the papacy and the forces of Islam. Up to this particular sermon Bullinger had often put the papacy and Islam in apposition. In sermon #43 he referred to "the servitude or bondage of Muhammed, a tyranny of the pope or Antichrist."[58] Elsewhere in the sermon he referred to "in the most dangerous battle of Antichrist

[56] Matthew 17:5 is printed on the title page of all of Bullinger's works.

[57] In this sermon Bullinger refers to the fact that John is commanded to eat the scroll, which means he is to proclaim its message which will strengthen the elect against Antichrist. John is to proclaim that Christ shall return unto the church with great glory and power.

[58] Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 6ov – *cum servitus Mahomedica et papae vel Antichristi tyrannis* (the French version has "ces deux Antechrists," *Cent sermons*, p. 184v.

and Muhammed and, finally, of all the heretical adversaries."[59] Bullinger left no doubt that he considered Islam as a type of Antichrist.

Bullinger's exhortation to the elect

Throughout his extensive *oeuvre* Bullinger often referred to the elect as the "faithful" (*fideles*).[60] He constantly emphasized the true church or the true people of God in both Old Testament and New Testament times. In his sermons on The Apocalypse, he underlined the true gospel as opposed to the false gospel, the true prophet as opposed to the false prophets, the true Christ as opposed to Antichrist. In view of the fact that it appeared that Antichrist and his cohorts were victorious time after time, the elect needed to look to Christ and to call upon him in the midst of the grievous perils and afflictions they faced. That is why there is such an exalted and glorious description of Christ in this pericope.

The elect were urged to be patient because God, in his time, would keep his promises to reward the righteous and punish the evil. Just as the Exile only lasted seventy years, there would be a definite end to the current afflictions. They were not to lose heart wrongly thinking that the papacy would reign for ever and that Islam would continue to conquer unabated with the result that the elect would be miserable for ever. Indeed, they were to distance themselves from the attitude of Asaph to affliction as expressed in Psalm 73. Moreover, they were warned not to give in to the temptation to cleave to the papists, the Turks or any other enemies of the true gospel. On the contrary, they were to fight against Antichrist with spiritual weapons. Christ would empower the ministers of his word. Indeed, when the gospel is preached against Antichrist correctly and with authority it will be to the terror of God's enemies. Bullinger made a point to underscore the sufficiency of Scripture for the maintenance of true religion against ungodliness. He saw the reference to the "seven thunders" as a reference to the Holy Spirit. As the open scroll signified the word of God, Bullinger thus saw the fundamental importance of the ministry of the word and Spirit.

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59 Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim*, p. 61r. The French has "contre l'Antechrist, le Pape, Mahomet, les heretiques, bref contre tous leur adversaires," *Cent sermons*, p. 186v. Other places where Bullinger places Muhammed in apposition with the Antichrist are "the catholic and Christian truth shall…do battle against the Antichrist and the Muhammedical doctrine…the persecutions of Antichrist and Muhammed…Antichrist, the pope and Muhammed are strong in the fifth and sixth trumpets," *In Apocalypsim*, p. 61r.

60 *Electos* appears in the superscript for the very next sermon, sermon #44.

CONCLUSION

Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse were first published a year before the demise of Mary Tudor. The sermons were thus a source of comfort for Protestants in England and for the Marian exiles. The sermons were published between the Second Session of the Council of Trent (1551-1552) and the Third Session (1562-1563). This was just after the Augsburg Peace (1555) and after Charles V's abdication in favour of his brother Ferdinand I (1556). A major focus of Ferdinand's reign was conflict with the Ottomans. Furthermore, he was a supporter of the Counter Reformation. Thus, these sermons were aptly directed to European Protestants facing many challenges, opposition and afflictions in the emergence of early modern Europe.

In sermon #43 are underscored themes that are repeated throughout all of Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse. There is a glorified description of Christ, his deity, his absolute power and the assurance that God will keep his promises as he is the God of the covenant. The Antichrist, in its various guises, is indeed powerful but not to be feared. He can be opposed and defeated by the faithful ministry of the true gospel. Until the *eschaton* there will be alternating phases of joy and affliction for the elect. The elect are urged to remain faithful and not to be deceived or bullied by the schemes of the Antichrist. Rather, they are to trust in God's promises and to believe that the course of history is in God's hands and that it is headed to his set end point. There may not have been much that was innovative in Bullinger's sermons on The Apocalypse. Nonetheless, they were a timely source of comfort and reassurance for his readers.

Personal Responsibility and Contrition for Sin

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ABSTRACT

A biblical understanding of responsibility and contrition for sin are important to systematic theology, pastoral work, public life, and personal piety. Misunderstanding sin and responding inappropriately to personal sin can be damaging to physical and spiritual health. Hence, this paper reviews the doctrines of original and actual sin and identifies responsible personal reactions to sin. The traducian and imputation theories of the transmission of sin are outlined and the orthodoxy of personal responsibility for original sin is asserted. Several biblical examples of confrontation with actual personal sins are analysed to determine what elements constitute a responsible reaction to personal sin, and the ways in which a person may mis-react to sin. The responsible reaction to personal sin is repentance. Calvin locates contrition in the apologetic element of repentance, Berkhof in the emotional element.

INTRODUCTION

A considered doctrine of responsibility and contrition is important not only to systematic theological development but also to pastoral ministry and counselling, personal piety, and societal participation. How do pastors and counsellors provide effective and biblical support to trials and crises, which may be partly self-induced, in the life of a congregant or client? To what extent should we reproach ourselves for our sins, and express this self-reproach to others? What does it mean to live as a responsible Christian in the world?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sin as "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God".[1] God's law is summarized in the Decalogue but is not limited to it; divine precepts and prohibitions are found throughout the Bible in Old and New Testaments. Divine law was given to man even before its formal arrangement at Sinai:[2] we see the need to obey God (Gen. 2:16-17, 3), and refrain from murder (Gen. 4:1-16) and Sabbath-breaking (Exod. 16:4-30). This distribution of law throughout the Bible is to be expected: God's law is a revelation of his attributes in their various manifestations through scripture. Man displays the image of God when in obedience to God's law. Christ, who is without sin (2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, etc.) and perfectly obedient to the law (Rom. 5:16-21), is – as a man – the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4).[3] Hence, Christ's morality shows us whom God is. By extension, man displays ugliness and ignorance of God when sinning against God's law. Sin is therefore a want of morality and a defacing of the divine image. Attempts in the twentieth century to recast Christian morality, for example, by making agape love the singular driving moral principle of the Christian life,[4] have not gained much traction in the confessional reformed world. Having established the biblical basis of sin, and starting from the confessional position that the Bible is the word of God, this paper does not significantly engage with the philosophical denial of the concept of sin. There does not appear to be any work that denies that the Bible contains a concept of sin. A rejection of the concept of sin altogether is a philosophical position and a departure from Christian theology.

The essay proceeds as follows. Firstly, personal responsibility for original sin is examined as this, historically, was the centre of the debate. Secondly, the orthodoxy of contrition and personal responsibility for actual sin is demonstrated by comparing the textbook doctrines of Calvin and Berkhof with David's penitential expressions in Psalm 51. Thirdly, two contemporary problems with contrition and personal responsibility are highlighted to show the importance of a sense of proportionality of sin and balance with other biblical expressions.

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1 *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, 1647, Q/A 14.

2 Robert C. Harbach, 'Dispensationalism and The Law Before Sinai', *Standard Bearer*, 43.18 (1967).

3 John M. Brentnall, 'The Image of God in Man', *Banner of Truth Magazine*, 68 (1969), pp. 21–26.

4 Joseph F. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1966).

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORIGINAL SIN

Responsibility and the Fall

The first chapters of Genesis introduce the theological and psychological concept of responsibility. The Garden of Eden was an idyll designed by God for man's habitation (Gen. 2:8-17). Order prevailed: man was given woman to help (2:18-25) in his responsibilities of tending the garden (2:15) and exercising dominion over the creatures (1:26-31). Adam disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit (3:1-7). When questioned by God, Adam answers, "the woman whom thou [God] gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (3:12). In doing so, he obviates responsibility by placing it – immediately – on the woman, and – proximately – on God himself.[5] The consequence of Adam's actions is that God ejects and debars mankind from the orderly perfection of Eden and causes them instead to live in a chaotic and toilsome world that God has cursed. Adam's neglect of his limited and pleasant initial responsibilities introduces his family into a world of chaos in which he is no longer able to fully discharge his responsibilities, and in which his responsibilities are now multiplied and laborious. The concept of responsibility is thus critical to the doctrine of the fall and the concept of original sin.

It is proper to observe, in passing, that his neglect of his responsibilities is only one part of Adam's original sin. It includes unbelief in God's word, pride, an implicit desire to usurp God, an unholy satisfaction in eating the forbidden fruit, a hatred of God's rule, of providence, and of predestination.[6] One can indeed demonstrate that the original sin included sins against all the categories of the Decalogue.[7] Yet at its core was revolt against God,[8] and therefore revolt against the Divine is the anthropomorphic orientation that leads to the neglect of responsibility. By contrast, a right standing before God involves the maintenance of one's responsibilities.

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5 Jordan B. Peterson, 'Lecture IV: Adam and Eve: Self-Consciousness, Evil, and Death Transcript', in *The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories*, 2017 <https://www.jordanbpeterson.com/transcripts/biblical-series-iv/> [accessed 12 June 2023].

6 Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Banner of Truth, 1963), pp. 222–23.

7 For example, by following Satan and Eve in opposition to God, Adam placed them and his own desires foremost and failed to have God as his God and ruler: a sin against the First Commandment.

8 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 222; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. by Henry Beveridge (Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 2.1.4.

The Transmission of Original Sin

Orthodox theology understands that the effects of Adam's original sin are transmitted to his posterity. In the patristic era, Pelagius affirmed that a child is born without original sin and baptismal grace resistibly inclines the child to spiritual good.[9] Commenting on Romans 5:12, he argues that the propagation of sin and death from Adam to the rest of humanity is by example and, citing Luke 20:38, explains that death did not pass to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor others who did not sin in the same way as Adam.[10] Writing contemporaneously against Pelagius, Augustine argued that man, since the fall, is inclined to sin because the whole human race was in Adam and so he transmitted his sinfulness to his posterity. He argues from Romans 5:16, "for the judgement was by one unto condemnation, but the grace is of many offences unto justification", that Paul is contrasting the one original sin that brought condemnation with the many sins that are overcome by the grace of justification.[11] This must be distinguished from the Gnostic heresy that human nature is intrinsically sinful.[12] "God made man upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). The God-Man Christ is truly man (John 1:14, 19:30; Phil. 2:6-8), sharing the same human nature as Adam and us today, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). For Augustine, humanity is not intrinsically sinful, but humanity since the fall possesses original sin. He leaves hazy the precise relational causality of sin between Adam and humanity,[13] but clearly affirms that humans deriving from Adam are sinful because of Adam's original sin. In Augustine's system, God is not responsible for the propagation of original sin in man because original sin affects man's will so that it is now inclined to sin rather than to God: as man's choice of sin is simply consistent with the inclination of his fallen will, God cannot be blamed. The controversy between Augustinian and Pelagian views was debated in several church

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9 Pier Franco Beatrice, 'The Pelagian Critique of the Doctrine of Original Sin', in *The Transmission of Sin: Augustine and the Pre-Augustinian Sources*, trans. by Adam Kamesar (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 14–37, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199751419.001.0001.

10 Pelagius, *Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*, ed. by J. Armitage Robinson (Cambridge University Press, 1931), p. 45.

11 'On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5*, ed. by Philip Schaff (Hendrickson, 1995), 1.11-1.17.

12 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (C. Scribner, 1889), II, pp. 449–57.

13 Jesse Couenhoven, 'St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin', *Augustinian Studies*, 36.2 (2005), pp. 359–96 (p. 368), doi:10.5840/augstudies200536221.

councils of the early fifth century and Pelagianism was declared heretical at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.[14]

The method of the transmission of original sin is important to the matter of personal responsibility for original sin and is closely connected with the doctrine of the origin of the human soul. Classical creationism argues that each soul is created by God and infused with the body at the point of conception; traducianism argues that souls are propagated from generation to generation from God's original creative work, either biologically in semen, or by the soul of the father physically or metaphysically propagating the soul of the son.[15] A majority of Western church and, later, reformed theologians have adopted a creationist view, whilst a majority of Lutherans take traducian positions, but with significant minorities sitting outside these general alignments.[16] Traducianists typically align with the realistic theory of the transmission of original sin, whilst creationists typically align with the imputation theory.[17] The details of each theory differ slightly between theologians but the main features can be sketched; our purpose here is not to provide a systematic critique of each theory but they are outlined so that their impact on the question of personal responsibility for original sin can be understood. The realistic theory holds that each person descended from Adam shares in Adam's generic human nature and, as the human nature was corrupted by Adam, so each person shares in the corruption of original sin. The imputation theory relies more strongly on the federal headship of Adam as representative of all mankind (Christ excluded);[18] because Adam failed his probation, the punitive effects extend to all those for whom he acted as federal representative.[19]

Moral Issues of the Transmission of Original Sin

Both theories of the transmission of original sin – realism and imputation – have objections levelled against them about the moral acceptability of holding progeny responsible for original sin. The arguments around

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14 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (C. Scribner, 1889), III, pp. 797–802.

15 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. by John Bolt, trans. by John Vriend (Baker Academic, 2004), II, pp. 580–88.

16 Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, II, p. 580.

17 Gordon H. Clark, 'Traducianism', *The Trinity Review*, July-August (1982), pp. 1–7; Oliver D. Crisp, 'Pulling Traducianism out of the Shedd', *Ars Disputandi*, 6.1 (2006), pp. 265–87, doi:10.1080/15665399.2006.10819933.

18 Federal theology is not unique to the creation-imputation position, but it is relied on more heavily to explain the transmission of sin.

19 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 242–43.

why God decrees suffering are valid against realism. Why does God allow the children of Adam to suffer the effects of original sin? This inherited species guilt is suggested by Vorster to make sin an ontological reality as part of God's creation and, by extension, comes close to making God the author of sin,[20] and cites Bavinck's suggestion that sin is a defective moral condition rather than a substance. There are indeed ontological metaphors for sin.[21] Furthermore, sin affects even amoral agents. The ground of the earth is cursed because of original sin (Gen. 3:17). The nature of this curse is not only that the physical creation suffers as humanity fails to undertake its stewardship responsibilities, but also that God causes the physical creation to give poor crop yields and raise harmful plants (3:18-19). There is therefore an amoral physical, material effect of sin. Yet the question of whether sin is material or immaterial does not strike at the heart of the moral issue. Whether God decreed a defective condition or ontological status in mankind, it is nonetheless God who decreed. He is sovereignly free to accomplish his will and, unlike us, does not change in response to external conditions over which he has no control because there are no such things in relation to him:[22] he is omnipotent (Job 42:1-2, Ps. 115:3, Isa. 14:27, 43:13) and omnipresent (Ps. 139, John 8:58, Rev. 22:13). This confronts the theologian with the difficult question of reconciling – on the one hand – the biblical record concerning God's decree of the election and reprobation of individuals (John 6;37, Acts 13:48, Rom. 8:28, 9:18-23, Eph. 1:4, 2:8), and of the fall and other adverse providence (Eph. 1:11, 1 Sam. 2:6-7, Amos 3:6), with – on the other hand – the biblical record concerning the goodness, grace, and mercy of God,[23] and the free (Isa. 55:1, Rom. 5:15, 6:23, Ephesians 2:8) and indiscriminate (Isa. 55:1, Dan. 7:14, Luke 14:23, John 3:16, Rev. 5:9, 7:9) offer of salvation. These are compatible and uncontradictory parts of divine revelation,[24] but it is beyond this paper to explain their harmony. Calvin explains that God is not the proximate or second cause of sin,[25] which is to say that an individual sins willingly and is not compelled against their will to sin, but God's

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20 Nico Vorster, 'Guilt Concepts in Reformed Doctrines on Original Sin', *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 16.3 (2022), pp. 246–68 (p. 258), doi:10.1163/15697312-bja10034.

21 C. Owiredu, 'Sin Is a Person: Some Ontological Metaphors in the Bible', *Acta Theologica*, 41.1 (2021), doi:10.18820/23099089/actat.v41i1.6.

22 Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Baker, 1999).

23 Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Baker, 1996).

24 Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Baker, 1999); J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press, 2012).

25 John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. by J. K. S. Reid (James Clarke, 1961), pp. 100–101, 123, 160.

"secret predestination" is the remote or first cause of all things.[26] Hence, God ordained the Fall without being the "author" of sin.[27] Commenting on Genesis 45:8, Calvin says:

> God is the ruler, and, by his secret rein, directs [man's] motions withersoever he pleases. At the same time, however, it must also be maintained, that God acts so far distinctly from them, that no vice can attach itself to his providence, and that his decrees have no affinity with the crimes of men.[28]

He comments that the story of Joseph illustrates this doctrine: Joseph's brethren proposed to destroy him, but God ordained this in order to provide Jacob's family with food during a time of famine. Whilst commending its motive of preserving God's goodness, Calvin strongly repudiates the introduction of the false dichotomy that God only permits but does not ordain the evils of men;[29] at the same time, he strongly asserts that the evils of men are only ordained by God for ultimate good.[30] Men are judged according to their failure from duty or contravention of God's commandment and the fact that God brings their wickedness to an ultimately good issue does not exempt from guilt.[31] Furthermore, whilst the details and terminology vary slightly, the basic argument – that God is the first-cause of all things but not the second-cause moral agent "author" of sin – has been the explanation of the standard works of reformed systematics since Calvin.[32] The Westminster Confession states that the decree of God is the

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26 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. by John Owen (Calvin Translation Society, 1849), p. 376; *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*.

27 Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*.

28 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, trans. by John King (Eerdmans, 1948), II, p. 379.

29 Although Calvin uses the terms "decree", "ordain", "counsel", and "will" interchangeably in his commentary on Genesis 45:8, I have chosen "ordain" for clarity of argument. Modern systematic theology does make semantic distinctions between these terms, but it is not necessary to explore them here.

30 Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, II, p. 378.

31 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, trans. by John King (Eerdmans, 1948), II, p. 379.

32 Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. by James T. Dennison, trans. by George Musgrave Giger (P&R Publishing, 1992), I, 6.5-6.8; Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, trans. by William Crookshank (T. Tegg, 1837), 8.15-8.29; Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd edn (Presbyterian Publishing Company, 1878); Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1.6.C.

first cause by which all providence comes to pass, yet the outworking of providence is by second causes such that God is not the author of sin.[33]

Thus, the argument that traducian personal responsibility for original sin ultimately makes God, as creator, also the author of sin, is misleading because it defines "author" differently from its historical definition as the second-cause moral agent or "doer" of sin. Certainly, God ordained all that comes to pass in creation and providence. Sin did not exist prior to creation and does not have an existence independent of God: if sin were self-existent, it would itself be a god, which is a blasphemous denial of the uniqueness of God, so God must be the logical first cause of sin. Yet he is so with intrinsic holiness, and never with a malevolent motive but only for his own glory and the ultimate good.

Moral objections to the creation-imputation theory of the transmission of sin are more numerous. Reformation-era Socinianism taught the moral impossibility that one person's merit or demerit should be transferred to another.[34] Particularly in their sights was the justifying imputation of Christ's righteousness, but the impossibility of others receiving the guilt of Adam's sin was argued too. Placeus argued that man inherits a sinful disposition, rather than sin, from Adam, and it is the inheritance of a sinful disposition that renders man liable to divine punishment.[35] The emergent federal theology of the seventeenth century taught that man is condemned both for imputed original sin and the actual sins he commits; the Placean mediate imputation theory gained traction in some quarters of the reformed world that were uncomfortable with what they perceived as an excessive emphasis in federal theology on the condemnation of imputed original sin. Hodge, a creation-imputationist, acknowledges that the main objection to immediate imputation is the moral problem of God's transferring personal responsibility for enduring the punishment of sin committed by another.[36] Vorster echoes this, arguing that "the most basic condition of justice, namely, that guilt is nontransferable" is violated.[37] Interestingly, Vorster's 2022 position that guilt is nontransferable appears to be a departure from his statements of 2015:

> God's omnipotence entails that he is indeed capable to establish the contingency of second causes in order to preserve the integrity of creaturely real-

[33] *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1647, 5.2.

[34] Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Studies in Theology* (Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 305–6.

[35] Warfield, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 306–9.

[36] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, 1940), II, 2.8.9.

[37] Vorster, 'Guilt Concepts in Reformed Doctrines on Original Sin', p. 256.

> ity. Calvin's explanation of the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility is complex but intelligible.[38]

One solution offered to this problem is to detach the doctrine of original sin from a literal understanding of the Fall in Genesis 3, which allows the doctrine of original sin to be recast as conceptualizing a universal responsibility of sin and enabling action against injustice. [39] However, although Baard states a sympathy with the Heidelberg Catechism, she also writes as one speaking "the liberation theology language of structural sin". The highly contextual hermeneutics of liberation theology, in which the Bible is only one source of knowledge and to be interpreted in the light of experience, [40] is incompatible with the redemptive-historical hermeneutics of confessional reformed theology in which the Bible is the only inspired, infallible, and inerrant source of knowledge, and to which other sources are secondary.[41] These fundamentally different starting points with respect to the use of the Bible make it difficult to find common ground. The solution offered by Baard works within the presuppositions of liberation theology but is not compatible with confessional reformed theology.

Vorster states that "the biblical credentials of original guilt seem to be weak" but, arguing that only Romans 5:12-21 comes close to teaching this doctrine, reviews only this text in evaluating the biblical credentials of original guilt.[42] This argument does not discriminate between realist and imputationist theories of the transmission of original sin, but simply questions the biblical proof for original guilt. It is, however, disingenuous. Along with Romans 5, Calvin argues that David's confession in Psalm 51:5 is unambiguous: "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me".[43] Calvin goes on to argue from Job 14:4 that a clean thing cannot be brought from an unclean so, as Adam is unclean, so must we be. This inheritance of original sin explains how fallen men are "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3).[44] Edwards supplies Genesis 8:21,

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38 Nico Vorster, 'Assessing the Consistency of John Calvin's Doctrine on Human Sinfulness', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 71.3 (2015), doi:10.4102/hts.v71i3.2886.

39 R.S. Baard, 'The Heidelberg Catechism on Human Sin and Misery', *Acta Theologica*, 20.1 (2016), p. 86, doi:10.4314/actat.v20i1.6S.

40 Gustavo Gutierrez, 'The Task and Content of Liberation Theology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, trans. by Judith Condor (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 8.

41 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chap. 1.

42 Vorster, 'Guilt Concepts in Reformed Doctrines on Original Sin', p. 256.

43 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.1.5.

44 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.1.6.

"the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" and observes that the Hebrew root נָעוּר means a youth beginning at infancy.[45] Similarly, "the wicked are estranged from the womb" (Ps. 58:3).[46] In-utero children are incapable of actual sin, so the estrangement must be due to another form of wickedness: original sin. Calvin and Hodge offer 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" as further support for original guilt.[47] There is therefore sufficient evidence to conclude that the Bible unequivocally teaches that mankind is responsible for original sin. Hodge, recognizing the objection that one should be punished for another's sin, says that it is nonetheless "vain […] to deny the fact", but it is done according to God's goodness and to sustain the authority of his law as a display of righteousness.[48]

However, truth is not always sufficient cause to engender appreciation of a doctrine. Even if the Bible does teach that we bear the guilt of original sin, does it not violate the principle of the nontransferability of guilt? Two answers may be offered. Firstly, the argument of divine simplicity, that God is himself the definition of his attributes,[49] means that our understanding of justice must be derived from him.[50] He reveals his own goodness and justice in the Bible[51] and, as the source and fountain of all truth, cannot be defined by concepts of these things outside his biblical self-revelation.[52] Ergo, the doctrine of man's responsibility for original sin can be said to be good and just because it is the will of God who is intrinsically good and just. This line of argument returns us to the earlier discussion on divine causality in providence. Secondly, the transference of guilt is fundamental to orthodox Protestant soteriology. Christ bore the sins of his people (Matt. 8:17, 1 Pet. 2:24), which is to say that sin and, therefore, guilt were transferred from his people to Christ. His atoning death pays the judicial penalty for these sins and so his people are rendered not guilty. Furthermore, his perfectly obedient life is imputed to them so that God

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45 Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (C. and G. Carvill, 1828), p. 142.

46 Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, p. 144.

47 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.1.6; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 2.8.9.

48 Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 2.8.9.

49 Steven J Duby, 'Divine Simplicity, Divine Freedom, and the Contingency of Creation: Dogmatic Responses to Some Analytic Questions', *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 6.2 (2012), pp. 115–42, doi:10.1163/15697312-12341234.

50 Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, ed. by Lucius Garvin (Riverside Press, 1957), pp. 208–10.

51 John Owen, 'An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews', in *The Works of John Owen*, Vol. 19 (T&T Clark, 1862), pp. 90–91.

52 Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, pp. 254–55.

views them not only as guiltless but as positively righteous (Rom. 5:17-19), as if they had personally obeyed in the way that Christ obeyed. In other words, without transference there is no atonement, so the divine ordination of transference should be a cause for jubilation, not consternation!

Original Sin and Contrition

In the Bible, expressions of contrition or repentance for original sin are limited. In Psalm 51, David pleads for the Lord's washing and forgiveness of his sins and for the restoration of a right relationship between him and God. In this context, David acknowledges "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). This is language of lamentation for original sin and, in the sense that David is reproaching his own condition, is self-reproach, but it is not a strong statement of repentant ownership of original sin in the way that many of his other petitions in the same Psalm are with respect to actual sin.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTUAL SIN

The Knowledge of Actual Sins

Unlike with original sin, in which our temporal distance and lack of personal agency in Adam's sin can encourage more philosophical reflection in abstraction from the Bible,[53] theological questions of personal morality confront us daily and have significant practical implications. Perhaps because humans are so intimately acquainted with their own failings and those of others, even if they repudiate the implicit reference to the divine in the terminology of "sin",[54] theologians and philosophers are generally readier to acknowledge something approaching the actual sin concepts of personal and corporate (collective) moral failure.

The light of nature, or natural revelation, teaches us about God's glory and how to relate to him (Rom. 1:20),[55] including the teaching of personal responsibility. Solomon tells us to examine the way of the ant, who eschews sloth, and is diligent (Prov. 6:6-8). In the sensorimotor stage of cognitive development, children learn physical responsibility by interacting with their environment.[56] Principally though, as we have seen, it is by

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53 Philip L. Quinn, 'In Adam's Fall, We Sinned All', *Philosophical Topics*, 16.2 (1988), pp. 89–118 (pp. 89–90), doi:https://www.jstor.org/stable/43154029.

54 S. Richard Bellrock, 'Sin Does Not Exist: And Believing That It Does Is Ruining Us', *Sunstone*, 2019 <https://sunstone.org/sin-does-not-exist/> [accessed 18 July 2023].

55 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.1.

56 Bärbel Inhelder, 'The Sensorimotor Origins of Knowledge', in *Piaget and His School: A Reader in Developmental Psychology*, ed. by Bärbel Inhelder, Harold

looking at oneself through the lens of the precepts and proscriptions of the Bible, that is to say through the law, that a person becomes aware of their status as a sinner and of specific sins.[57]

Irresponsible Reactions to Sin

It provides some examples of people failing to take proper responsibility for their sin. The example of Adam is already given above: rather than taking responsibility, he blames his wife, and God. Sinners confronted with their sins can harden their hearts. Pharaoh oppressed the Hebrew people (Exod. 5) and, although God sent plagues to warn him to turn from his sin (Exod. 7-12), he only hardened his heart against them – and was eventually destroyed (Exod. 14). Paul writes soberly to the Romans that those who continue persistently in a course of known sin, "with a high hand" (Numbers 15:30), are given over to reprobacy (Rom. 1:20-32). Sinners can also respond at the other extreme: to despair when confronted with their sins. Ahithophel was a gifted counsellor of David who, later in life, rebelled against David in the insurrection of his son, Absalom. God outworked providence such that Ahithophel's advice was not followed, so he returned home, set his house in order, and hung himself (1 Sam. 7:23). Ahithophel's story shows that the irresponsible use, or misuse, of gifts is itself sin, alongside showing his irresponsible response to his sin. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Luke 22) but "was seized with remorse" such that he returned the silver and hanged himself (Matt. 27:1-10). These examples of suicide are extreme, but they show that a person may be irresponsible for their sins by mis-reacting as well as under-reacting.

Repentance: The Responsible Reaction to Sin

The responsible reaction to sin is repentance. David sinned grievously by committing adultery with Bathsheba and then sending her husband, Uriah the Hittite, to his death on the battlefield (2 Sam. 11:1-17); for a time thereafter, he appears unconcerned. But when Nathan confronts him, David recognizes his sin (12:13). Nathan warns David that God shall cause the death of the child as judgement against the sin (12:14) and, whilst David cries and prays for him to be spared (12:16-17), he accepts God's judgement as righteous (12:20-23). The title of Psalm 51 tells that it was written by David when confronted by Nathan after his sin with Bathsheba. In the Psalm, David does not give excuses for his sins but

H. Chipman, and Charles Zwingmann (Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 1976), pp. 150–65, doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-46323-5.

57 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.6.

acknowledges them (Ps. 51:3-4, 6). He pleads repeatedly for cleansing from his sins (vv. 2, 7, 9-10), and for God to blot out the judicial aspect of his transgressions (vv.1, 3, 14). He prays for renewed obedience (v. 10) by the upholding of the Spirit (v. 12). David understands that other works, or worship, that he has done cannot cancel out his sin:

> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Ps. 51:17).

The word translated "contrite" has the root דָּכָה meaning "to crush".[58] The image given of repentance here is that it proceeds from a genuine internal sorrow for the sin committed such that the person's heart is said to be broken on account of it. However, David does not pray to be kept in this crushed state, but to have the joy of his salvation returned to him (v. 12).

Calvin identifies three elements in repentance. Firstly, a spiritual transformation of the soul is required.[59] Secondly, it results from a sincere fear of God.[60] Thirdly, it will result in mortification of the flesh and quickening of the spirit.[61] Calvin proceeds to dissect repentance into seven parts.[62] Carefulness, such that the person pays more attention in the future to avoid becoming again entangled by sin. Apology, not excusing the sin, but acknowledging guilt and pleading and trusting in God's mercy. Indignation, in which the person is offended with himself for his sin. Fear, from considering the sin, the deserved punishment, and God's wrath against sin. Desire, or a diligence to do good. Zeal, for gospel grace. Finally, revenge, to gain the ultimate victory over sin despite the setback. Berkhof gives a simpler threefold division of the anatomy of repentance.[63] The intellectual element involves the recognition of sin as including personal guilt, defilement, and the need for grace. The emotional element involves a sorrow for sin committed against a just and holy God. The volitional element involves a change of will or purpose so that the person turns from sin, seeking pardon, cleansing, and obedience. Hence both Calvin and Berkhof locate concepts approximating contrition in their definitions of repentance. With Calvin, it is in the element of apology; with Berkhof, in the emotional element.

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58 William S. Plumer, *Studies in the Book of Psalms* (J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), p. 560.

59 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.6.

60 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.7.

61 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.8.

62 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.15.

63 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 486.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES WITH PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTRITION

Two contemporary issues highlight the importance of a biblically-balanced understanding of personal responsibility and contrition. Firstly, a growing philosophical movement denies contrition and responsibility, in part or altogether, which impacts how counselling is performed. Secondly, I argue that some in the reformed world are imbalanced in their expression of contrition to the neglect of other aspects of Christian piety such as assurance and joy.

Firstly, there is a growing body of thought that argues against responsibility and morality altogether. Responsibility, as a basic and indivisible concept, is argued to be created based on untenable assumptions about the world; if responsibility does not exist, then there cannot be any morality to which it is oriented.[64] Morality fitted the pre-scientific era "among gods and miracles and mysteries".[65] This position readily acknowledges practical problems in terms of the maintenance of an ordered society without the concept of responsibility;[66] however, as has been shown, it is incompatible with the Bible. Others do not reject responsibility outright but identify problematic aspects to it. Shapiro distinguishes between moral and psychological responsibility. [67] Moral responsibility leads to self-reproach, which is not only a corrective expression of regret but also has punitive and morally denunciatory elements. The argument continues that "the premise of self-reproach is that one not only should have, but also might have, chosen to do otherwise". I suggest that this is logically incoherent: a person never chooses to do otherwise than their choice. Nonetheless, it is argued, if a person's choice was inevitable, they should not reproach themselves for it, but should see it through the therapeutically-advantageous lens of being an expression of will rather than an anomaly of will.[68] There is much in this argument with which the Christian can agree. The biblical doctrine of providence does lead, logically, to a Christian determinism in which God has foreordained all that comes to pass; yet men are not created as automatons but as self-

64 Stephen Kershnar, *Total Collapse: The Case Against Responsibility and Morality* (Springer International Publishing, 2018), doi:10.1007/978-3-319-76950-9.

65 Bruce N. Waller, *Against Moral Responsibility* (MIT Press, 2011), p. vii.

66 Kershnar, *Total Collapse: The Case Against Responsibility and Morality*; Waller, *Against Moral Responsibility*.

67 David Shapiro, 'Self–Reproach and Personal Responsibility', *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 69.1 (2006), pp. 21–25, doi:10.1521/psyc.2006.69.1.21.

68 Shapiro, 'Self–Reproach and Personal Responsibility'.

aware creatures conscious of setting their will to a course of action. The absence of alternative possibilities is not a conclusive argument against moral responsibility.[69] Also, a person's choices are indeed an expression of their will. The doctrines of original sin and total depravity teaches us that the unregenerate man's will is depraved by its corruption by sin whilst, in contrast, the doctrine of sanctification teaches that the regenerate man's will is dominantly influenced by the Spirit inclining it towards holiness. Yet the argument fails with the basic premise that punitive and morally denunciatory elements of self-reproach are problematic. A recognition of the justice of punishment for sin, and of the heinousness of sin, are well-established classical elements of Christian repentance. Intellectual and experiential knowledge of these elements are not problematic but God-given aides to enable sinners, recalling the pain of sin, to avoid it in the future. Undermining this is dangerous to Christian counselling and psychotherapy.

However, secondly, expression of contrition can be imbalanced. Confession of personal and corporate sin is a part of Christian piety rightly associated with personal responsibility. In some circles of the reformed churches, the phenomenon can be found of professing Christian men, engaged in public prayer, expressing such a sense of their sin that they are not only praying in contrition for repentance but indeed for regeneration. Also, in some continental reformed circles, men lead public prayer who are not professing to know Christ. Both practices are unsound. A person's prayers are ineffectual unless Christ conveys those prayers to God as their High Priestly intercessor (Rom. 8:34). Christ does not exercise this High Priestly office for everyone without exception but only for his people (John 17:9). Therefore, a person praying for regeneration is either praying for something they already possess but do not know that they possess, which logically means that their public profession is unsound: by their ecclesiastical profession they say they are born-again Christians, but by their prayers they say they are not. Or, they may be indeed be unregenerate people leading public prayer, and the unregenerate man does not truly desire regeneration (Rom. 3:10-12); a sincere desire for salvation is evidence of the saving operation of the Spirit in the soul. Whilst these are logical conclusions, I do not believe they tell the full story. I hypothesize that pietistical issues underpin this practice. Could it be that the prayers of such men are (poorly-worded) expressions of self-reproach for sin stemming from a genuine faith and repentance towards God? In other words, do such prayers indicate one who genuinely believes that he needs

[69] John Martin Fischer, 'Recent Work on Moral Responsibility', *Ethics*, 110.1 (1999), pp. 93–139, doi:10.1086/233206.

to be regenerated (and is therefore presently unsaved), or do they indicate one who already believes himself to be regenerated but, due to inadequate theological reflection giving rise to erroneous petitions, coupled with a deep sense of personal responsibility for sin, is praying for repentance and restoration? I suggest that the latter is more probable, and the antidote is for precision in prayer to be encouraged.[70] As we have seen, penitential prayer is a fundamental part of contrition and thus a correct and vital response to sin. Penitential prayer is edifying to a congregation: instructive of repentance and free grace. Yet a congregation that dines too largely on a diet of penitential prayers is missing out on the many other aspects of Christian experience and is neglecting the variety of matters for which we are taught to pray throughout the Bible and patterned in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). Hosea, instructing Israel to repent, indeed commands contrition when he says,

> O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips (Hos. 14:1-2).

Nonetheless, the Preacher in Ecclesiastes gives the wisdom of precision in prayer:

> Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few (Eccles. 5:2).

CONCLUSION

Humanity is guilty in Adam and under the curse of original sin. Questions of the transmission of sin, whilst legitimate, do not affect the start and end points of the argument: God is sovereign to dispose of his creation as he wills, and he has ordained man to be responsible for original sin. Furthermore, biblical obedience requires that man repents of his sin, which involves taking personal responsibility for it, and exercising contrition over it. In contemporary thought, there is a growing movement away from responsibility and a scepticism about the utility of contrition. There can indeed be a biblically-unbalanced focus on negative sinful experi-

[70] C. Matthew McMahon, 'Where Oh Where Has the Precisionist Gone?', *A Puritan's Mind* <https://www.apuritansmind.com/pastors-study/where-oh-where-has-the-precisionist-gone-by-dr-c-matthew-mcmahon/> [accessed 27 October 2023].

ence in some contexts, but the antidote to this is the recovery of biblical doctrine on the proportionality of sin and the vast range of subjects over which to pray.

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Biblical worship and the Ascended Christ

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE CHALLENGE OF NEW CATHOLIC APPROACHES

According to recent Catholic liturgical theology, lacing scriptural reading squarely in the context of liturgy allows the signs of scripture and the history of salvation to be interpreted through the seven sacraments and their symbols, on their way to being referred up to Christ as the Lord of glory.[1] Worship is thus a workshop where Scripture can find its way to Christ, leading the participants with it by the hand. One might see here in this species of Catholic theology a principle of *sursum corda* that, when combined with the mystagogy borrowed from Maximus the Confessor, transcends the usual focus on the material and sensible presence of Christ among believers. In this new-ish perspective there is a sense of believers being encouraged to living *up to* as well as *in* Christ, since the meaning of cultic participation *to be meaningful* has to be metaphorical, designating a more 'spiritual' sense, even as one is inserted into Christ. Taking part in the giving and taking of bread and wine has to relate us to a higher reality, one of self-offering, receiving and renewed self-offering. Liturgical theology can thus help prevent theology and its symbols from becoming a set of abstract ideas or a description of ritualised religion as role play. Philip Caldwell calls 'liturgy as a continuation and activation of the perfect worship that Christ offered to the Father in his humanity; liturgy is the action of Christ in the church.'[2] This is a fulfilling of revelation, or at least a making present of revelation. Caldwell owns here his debt to Odo Casel, author of *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (1932). Inspiration can also be found in Romano Guardini's *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (1930), a seminal text for the liturgical theology of Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI).[3] The eucharist makes the church but the church also makes the eucharist, as

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1 So, Salvatore Marsili, *I Segni del Misterio di Cristo*, C.L.V.-Edizioni liturgiche, 1987, as related by Philip Caldwell, *Liturgy as Revelation* (Renewal: Conversation in Catholic Theology), Fortress, 2014, p. 289.

2 Ibid, p. 305.

3 See D. Vincent Twomey, *The Dynamics of the Liturgy: Joseph Ratzinger's Theology of Liturgy*, (Ignatius Press, 2022).

per the Vatican II peritus (theological adviser) Henri de Luba.[4] This is a theology that accompanies and encourages the *sursum corda*, the lifting up of hearts.

With this in mind, and as a prompt, even an inspiration, it will be instructive to look at the resources of the *Reformed* tradition for an Ascension Christology that can be illuminated by the light of a liturgical theology, which is supremely a theology of the Eucharist.

2. STARTING WITH CALVIN

As Calvin traced the second article of the Apostles' Creed through Book II of the *Institutes*, he inveighed against a roster of Protestant challengers and for once was not afraid to name them. Against Osiander, Calvin repeated that the fellowship believers have with God is one of righteousness, not of essence as beloved of the mystics. Believers are close to Him who has always been Head, not just when Incarnate, for he has been head of all things from the beginning, and since in his risen Headship he is exalted above the body that implies a need for the body to look upwards in spiritual mediation or communication. Likewise, against Servetus, Calvin insists that Christ was Son of God well 'before' he became Man and accordingly did not require incarnation to be 'Son' (versus Servetus). In worshipping Christ who is above one is worshipping him in his proper place and as who he is, creator not creature. To be specific, as Calvin spells out at *Institutes* II,14.3:

> Until he comes forth as judge of the world Christ will therefore reign, joining us to the Father as the measure of our weakness permits. But, when as partakers in heavenly glory we shall see God as He is, Christ, having discharged the office of the Mediator, will cease to be the ambassador of his Father, and will be satisfied with that glory which he enjoyed before the creation of the world. Then also God shall cease to be the Head of Christ, for Christ's own deity will shine by itself.'

Hence the meaning of 'his kingdom shall have no end' is that, even when Christ will stop mediating, once the heavenly state is set up, and so stop being priest, he will still be king, along with the Father, both enjoying the worship of the saints that is no longer mediated through Christ's passing. *En passant* Calvin (at Inst II, xvi, 4) makes it clear that God never hated what he made, as though such hatred had to be reversed by atonement: 'For he hated us for what we were that he had not made.' Our sinfulness

[4] See Paul McPartland, *The Eucharist makes the Church*, 2nd edn., (Eastern Christian Publications, 2006).

is what needed atoning. It is important to hang on to this distinctive of Reformed theology, that God unconditionally loves what and whom he has made, and hates our 'unmaking'.

Tarrying a little longer with Calvin, he had more to say about this by him a year after the final edition of the *Institutes*, in 1560. The Mantuan Stancaro, influential in the Reformed communities in Poland, presented himself as the scourge of the Arians, claiming that to speak of the Son of God as 'mediator' is to subordinate Him to the Father. Calvin replies that this is an over-reaction to Servetus: the Son's mediatorship *does* pertain to his pre-incarnate state, and he is mediator towards the angels and creation (Col 1:15), but that does not affect his essence at all as fully divine. For mediation is not in the first place about doing something that deals with sin, but allowing a gap between Creator and creatures to be bridged. Only in a secondary sense is the Son a 'priest' who must deal with human weakness and sin's consequences: to be 'high priest forever' is meant only in the sense that the Father had always so willed the incarnation, and is distinct from His being mediator. Yet it seems that even the mediatorship can cease, because scripture nowhere says 'mediator for ever'; and what it means to be high priest forever has been explained in the sense of the Father's will. Mediator is more primary to who Christ is than priest is, but even it is not foundational. It is part of a subordination for the sake of a creation which will no longer be required once heavenly glory becomes all that there is.

Part of the issue with an overemphasis on 'in Christ', as in Todd Billings' account of sanctification according to Calvin[5] (or some sort of metaphysical 'ascent' in the case of Julie Canliss)[6] is that if one that does not spell out more precisely what the Genevan might have meant, he ends up looking rather like Osiander, whose position he took great pains to oppose. Furthermore, it makes Christ a functionary, in order to facilitate an elevation in 'our' status. For it all becomes about our being ontologically raised rather than being known and knowing in proportion to the transformation of ourselves, according to a measure or analogy of faith, as Paul cryptically put it in Romans 12:3,6. One might use the motto for the 'participative' soteriology: 'up close and impersonal' for the life with Christ. The metaphor of seeing is important here: the focus is not sharp; even with scripture as one's eye-glasses (once more to borrow from Calvin), the believer cannot see God face to face, yet in Christ there is mediation which pertains to his divine nature's being refracted, and in a sense translated or de-coded and rec-coded through his humanity. Yet

5 *Calvin, participation and the gift*, (OUP, 2007).

6 *Calvin's Ladder*, (Eerdmans, 2010).

a sufficient distance (of a from earth to heaven quality), such a reservation does not seem inappropriate for a faith as *fiducia* or a spirituality *in via*. There is a mediation of that Mediator who is the person of the Son in his divinity, even while it speaks of Christ's atoning agency through his earthly ministry (mediation 2) as priest by his obedience. One should note that Christ in his humanity is not conceived 'instrumentally', say in terms of a *hilasterion*. *Institutes* II.xvi.6 does mention that he gave his life as an *asham* (*satisfactoriam hostiam*), an offering for sin, when the Son of God took upon shame and reproach of our iniquities in order to return to clothe us with purity, as per 2 Corinthians 5:211 and Romans 8:3. However that humanity is never 'allowed' to be wholly passive in this operation. More weight is given to the life of learned obedience as the context of his work of repairing mediation. And the emphasis in his response to Stancaro (who had enjoyed a reputation since 1552 of being a Nestorian of sorts) is on the unified work of the Son, who is distinct from the Father for the sake of the economy. Calvin rejoices that the Church Fathers are right behind him in this. The Son of God is the agent through and through, or more than that is Person, even as he partakes in human nature, and it is his Person who is to be glimpsed in the scriptural recounting, but also in his exalted state.

In Calvin's first reply to Stancaro, we can see that the same applies to the priesthood,

> …which Christ could not undertake without entering into the heavenly sanctuary. Wherefore, the apostle, to prove that he is the lawful priest, adduces the testimony: "You are my Son, today I have begotten You" (Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Ps. 2:7), by which he clearly shows no one is equal to or suitable for this office without divinity. The conclusion, then, is certain: if Christ is a priest, it is because he is the only begotten Son of God, and on the other hand, he is not the Son of God without considering his divinity—this divinity is a necessary requisite of the office of priesthood. And so, because Adam was estranged from God by sin, Christ was pre-ordained priest to effect a reconciliation, that through him an approach to God may be opened for the ancients. Hence, he is called a priest forever, not because he was simply taken from among men, but because by the Father's decree he took on human form to atone for sin. [7]

[7] J . N. Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 7 (1973), pp. 5-16, 14; (cf. idem, "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973), pp. 131–57; idem, 'The Calvin-Westphal exchange: the genesis of Calvin's treatises against Westphal', *Calvin Theological Journal* 9 (1974), pp. 182-209.

So it is the decree that gives Christ's priesthood its distinctive sempiternity. He continues:

> Finally, unless Christ were designated Son of God in power (Rom. 1:4) he would not be regarded the mediator. Now, if these elements adhere together by an invisible bond, that the Son of God is the mediator, then it is outside of controversy that Christ is the Son of God in respect to both natures, and hence it follows that he is mediator no less by reason of his divinity than by his human nature. Furthermore, no sane man will deny that Christ sits at the Father's right hand, insofar as he is God revealed in the flesh, [340] and this is affirmed of the whole person. But the prophet intimately joins these together (Ps. 110:1), that the Lord who sits at the Father's right is made king and appointed priest over the church. Nor should we omit in this matter the saying of Peter, that the holy prophets once spoke by the spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1:10), because here it is not only a question of the eternal Word, but of the office of mediator; if he governed the prophets by his spirit when he was not yet clothed.[8]

As Jacob Tylenda observed, Calvin's response appeared in February 1562 as an appendix to his treatise "On the True Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper", published versus Heshusius, one of the last of the Protestants to plague him.[9] It is arguably no coincidence that Calvin's teaching on the mediatorship of Christ and his interpretation of the Eucharist are to be found published together.

In an ambitious article Christopher B. Kaiser contends:

> In order to stress the importance of the eucharistic ascent, Calvin sometimes stated that the bodily presence of Christ was to be sought only in heaven. Did this polemical stance exclude the presence of the risen Christ with us and for us at the table? Not according to the texts reviewed here. While it would be futile to try to make Calvin appear entirely consistent, especially in his more polemical moods, he did repeatedly affirm the real, bodily presence of Christ in the eucharistic feast. [10]

Kaiser argues that with help from the fathers Calvin came to see Christ in the eucharist as a ladder reaching up to a spiritual heaven, and that meant a secure fixing on the ground. Unfortunately there is little evidence of this adduced from Calvin itself. Instead we read:

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8 Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator', p. 14.

9 Ibid., p. 11.

10 Christopher Kaiser, 'Climbing Jacob's ladder: John Calvin and the early church on our eucharistic ascent to heaven', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003), pp. 247-267, 265.

> Although Calvin emphasized the location of Christ's body in heaven, particularly in later polemical contexts, he also believed in the substantial presence of Christ's body in the sacrament itself.

This is misleading, for Christ's presence by activity does not entail a real, local presence; as though Calvin had to compromise with Lutherans on the matter, as Kaiser suggests he was doing.

Actually in the passage that Kaiser quotes from the 1540 edition of the Institutes there is no mention of any *overcoming* of distance:

> But, if we are lifted up to heaven with our eyes and minds to seek Christ there in the glory of his Kingdom, so under the symbol of bread we shall be fed by his body, [and] under the symbol of wine we shall separately drink his blood, to enjoy him at last in his wholeness. For though he has taken his flesh away from us, and in the body has ascended into heaven, yet he sits at the right hand of the Father – that is, he reigns in the Father's power and majesty and glory. This Kingdom is neither bounded by location in space nor circumscribed by any limits.[11]

In the 1559 edition Calvin then added the words, 'as the symbols invite us to him in his wholeness' (*quemadmodum symbola nos ad eum integrum invitant*; OS 5:364) That is Christ, the one who is ascended bodily but is now to be approached in a spiritual manner, possibly signifying Christ's composite hypostasis.[12]

Kaiser comments that Calvin write this 'in order to stress the fact that the wholeness of Christ can only be found in heaven, not in the physically separate elements on the table.' Indeed, that is the point: although Christ as human is to be located in heaven, there are no spatial co-ordinates in the kingdom where he reigns on earth. Distance is overcome in the kingdom in the sense that there are no spatial dimensions to it. That there is a distance from where his humanity is located in heaven, as a full humanity having spatial dimensions (Inst IV, 17.19), to where believers are on earth, but which reach down via 'his kingdom' (or rule: *regnum*), making distance irrelevant If that is the case, then to talk of ascent in any literal sense, that Kaiser wants to call 'cosmological' seems strained. There isn't much 'ascent' of believers; rather the word is 'enjoying him'. The 'betweenness' of 'him and us' is not spatial in any sense. He is not 'far away up there', and the lifting up of our minds is a spiritual one.

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11 Inst. 4.17.18 (ed. McNeill, 2:1381).

12 Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), Chapter 3: The Extra' offers a close reading of Calvin's Christology. Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, (Cambridge UP, 2004), remains a valuable guide.

Now what Kaiser gives us in terms of food for thought is useful, not least Calvin's commentary on the Geneva-Zurich accord on the Supper, the *Consensus Tigurinus* of 1549:

> 'Christ then is absent from us in respect of his body, but, dwelling in us by his Spirit, he raises us to heaven to himself, transfusing into us the vivifying vigor of his flesh, just as the rays of the sun invigorate us by his vital warmth.' (CO 9:72)

In brief, Christ 'raises us up' spiritually and feeds us with the energy of his human flesh. Divinisation allows 'like' to come closer to 'Like'. There is no 'active' participation; there is instead active in-dwelling, transfusing energy into believers. What is important is that union with Christ is a religious, dynamic reality, not a metaphysical one. Climbing to heaven does not mean literally getting higher in the cosmos, or being closer to the source of Being, but it is something that goes on in the heart as a spiritual movement of God. If one is to consider the *Last Admonition to Westphal* (1557), where Calvin states that 'the sacraments are a kind of ladder by which believers may embark upwards to heaven',[13] the metaphorical and spiritual tenor of the discourse should be clear, as should be the sacramental context: this is no mystical elevation. It is clear that the sacraments are 'ladders' by which one finds Christ, but in an earlier passage in the same work:

> But if faith must intervene, no man of sense will deny that the same God who helps our infirmity by these aids, also gives faith, which, elevated by proper ladders, may climb to Christ and obtain his grace. And it ought to be beyond controversy, that as it would not be enough for the sun to shine, and send down its rays from the sky, were not eyes previously given us to enjoy its light, so it were in vain for the Lord to give us the light of external signs, if he did not make us capable of discerning them. [14]

So for Calvin, the language of distance and ascent is metaphorical since as he said there are no measurements in the kingdom of God. One is to look up to the Ascended Christ rather than look downwards at the earth for his ubiquitous 'presence'.. There is a repeated note in Calvin's theology of the Supper on the Spirit effecting the active presence of Christ where the

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[13] *Tracts of John Calvin*, ed H. Beveridge, (T&T Clark, 1849), 2:404: 'sacramenta esse scalarum instar fidelibus, per quas sursum coelos conscendant' (CO 9:213–14).

[14] 'The Consenus Tigurinus: Exposition of the Heads of Agreement', ibid., p. 218.

believers are on earth. The mediator Son takes the priestly achievement of his human career and applies it for now, during the lives of believers and as long as the church militant lasts. The Church looks 'up' as Christ in his reigning works 'down'.

3. HEBREWS AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

On the face of it, Hebrews teaches (and Thomas Aquinas affirms) that the 'foreverness' of Christ's High Priesthood is an eschatological one, one which stretches way on into the experience of heaven? For on this matter Aquinas comments: 'Again, he continues a priest forever (Heb 7:4), because the thing of which it is a figure, namely, the priesthood of Christ, remains forever.'[15] That Christ's priesthood possesses perpetuity is confirmed in his comment on 7:28, Vulgate: *lex enim homines constituit sacerdotes infirmitatem habentes sermo autem iuris iurandi qui post legem est Filium in aeternum perfectum* ' the Son… is completely perfected evermore, namely, to remain a priest forever.'[16]

And while John Owen on Hebrews 6:20 avoids the subject, being far more interested in Christ as forerunner, by Hebrews 7:28 the phrase 'made perfect forever' now suggests to the English Puritan that the perfection achieved by the end of Christ's life through obedience endures forever. This becomes more clear if one looks at Owen's more extended comment on Hebrews 7:16-17:

> Wherefore the *zoe akatalutos*, the indissoluble life here intended, is the life of Christ himself. Hereunto belonged, or from hence did proceed that *dynamis*, or power, whereby he was made a priest. And both the office itself, and the execution or discharge of it, are here intended. And as to the office itself, this eternal or endless life of Christ is his life as the Son of God. Hereon depends his own mediatory life for ever, and his conferring of eternal life on us, John v. 26, 27. And to be a priest by virtue of, or according unto this power, stands in direct opposition unto the law of a carnal commandment. It must therefore be inquired, how the Lord Christ was made a priest according unto this power. And I say it was, because thereby alone he was rendered meet to discharge that office, wherein God was to redeem his church with his own blood. Acts xx. 28. By ' power,' therefore, here, both meetness and ability are intended. And both these the Lord Christ had from his divine nature, and his endless life therein.
>
> Or it may be the life of Christ in his human nature is intended, in opposition unto those priests, who being made so by the law of a carnal commandment,

[15] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, tr. Chrysostom Baur, (St. Augustine's Press, 2006), p. 144.

[16] Ibid., p. 161.

> did not continue in the discharge of their office by reason of death, as our apostle observes afterwards. But it will be said, that this natural life of Christ, the life of the human nature, was not endless, but had an end put unto it in the dissolution of his soul and body on the cross. I say therefore, this life of Christ was not absolutely the life of the human nature, considered separately from his divine; but it was the life of the person of the Son of God, of Christ as God and man in one person. And so his life was endless.[17]

Thus Owen is happy to say that Christ's priest is forever, but also that the priesthood is a 'life' which the Son of God has lived, even when the human nature died, and goes on living, indefinitely. That is the foundation of any 'priesthood' which in turn confers life on the believer. Owen follows Aquinas, even while deepening his account.

Calvin thinks somewhat differently. For the record, it should be noted that Calvin in his commentary on Hebrews is silent as to whether Christ's *priesthood* was forever. However the idea that ascended Christ will give believers a 'hand-up', as it were, but that thereafter there will be no more 'mediation' by him.

On Hebrews 6:20 Calvin wrote:

> that all the external and ancient figures and shadows were to be passed over, in order that faith might be fixed on Christ alone. And carefully ought this reasoning to be observed, — that as Christ has entered into heaven, so faith ought to be directed there also: for we are hence taught that faith should look nowhere else. And doubtless it is in vain for man to seek God in his own majesty, for it is too far removed from them; but Christ stretches forth his hand to us, that he may lead us to heaven.[18]

For, on Hebrews 7:25 Calvin commented:

> It belongs to a priest to intercede for the people, that they may obtain favor with God. This is what Christ is ever doing, for it was for this purpose that he rose again from the dead. Then of right, for his continual intercession, he claims for himself the office of the priesthood.[19]

Christ's priesthood continues until the end of the world, but not beyond. It is not 'forever'. For 'after' the resurrection day, all believers will see God directly.

While on Hebrews 7:27, in turn:

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[17] John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1684), (Banner of Truth 1982), Vol. 5, pp. 542-43.

[18] https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom44/calcom44.xii.v.html ad loc.

[19] https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom44/calcom44.xiii.v.html ad loc.

> "for Christ was made a priest, being not of the common order of men, but the Son of God, subject to no defect, but adorned and endowed with the highest perfection." He again reminds us, that the *oath* was posterior to the law, in order to show that God, being not satisfied with the priesthood of the law, designed to constitute a better priesthood…It is his sacrifice which is sufficient *to the end of the world*. [20] (my italics.)

According to Calvin, Christ has ascended to do this work of mediation, but not for ever, only *to the end of the world*. For Christ's human high priesthood (for sins past and future) gives way to the cosmic mediation by the Word, although, as we have already seen, that too will be withdrawn.

Calvin observes how Christ's office as Priest means he is one who works within the souls of believers.

> Thus Christ, in his human nature, is to be considered as our priest, who expiated our sins by the one sacrifice of his death, put away all our transgressions by his obedience, provided a perfect righteousness for us, and now intercedes for us, that we may have access to God. He is to be considered as a repairer, who, by the agency of his Spirit, reforms whatever is vicious in us, that we may cease to live to the word, and the flesh, and God himself may live in us. [21]

It would seem that the Priesthood of Christ for Calvin is something for the souls of believers in this world and this life.

The constructive point of all this is that the Son of God has of course a key role in the economy and works even now as the Great High Priest, but that his proper and eternal place is with God the Father and the Spirit. As the one who saves and yet is also the proper agent of creation and conservation, he is to receive especial thanks. And yet, beyond thanks there is awe as befits an eternal king who deserves worship as such. And Christ is to be worshipped as being in his proper place, beyond the realm of being a priest for us, for doing something for us. His kingly majesty invites self-surrender and adoration. This is the religious feeling that Calvin would want inculcated. This is why his main work is called *Institute(s) of the Christian Religion*. The Church is called to worship Christ as he is (king), not just for what he has done for us (priest).

4. THE SUBJECTIVE RESPONSE TO THE OBJECTIVE 'GIVEN'

Many modern Church theologians can relate to the 'religious-practice' matrix for theology. As Brian Gerrish has observed, Schleiermacher was

[20] https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom44/calcom44.xii.v.html ad loc

[21] 'The Consenus Tigurinus: the Heads of Agreement', ibid., p. 201.

self-consciously one with Calvin in feeling the need to give an account of theology that was not one of shuffling concepts across some metaphysical board.[22] His too was theology as instruction in religion. Given his views on the inexpressibility of religious feeling, Schleiermacher thus understands articulate worship as, at best, an approximation to the feelings of the participants. The language of worship, whether in poetry or prose, can never fully contain the affections of the worshipers, which will overflow in ideal circumstances from each worshiper to the others.'[23] Van der Wilt defends Schleiermacher for the honest down to earth quality of the religion where God can speak through the human emotions expressed, rather than over against them (as per Barth). 'Schleiermacher's conviction that specific acts of worship reflect and continue the mission and ministry of Christ is an integral extension of his view that worship is "incarnational"…'. [24] On this account, Christ is the inspiration for but not the object of worship. It is largely about love and the communication of feelings. Hence note of receiving instruction in Calvin (and possibly implicit in Schleiermacher elsewhere) as to the proper method and right content of worship seems missing in this account.

The side of Schleiermacher that Van der Wilt plays up, a wanting to run with the best of human aspiration towards God in doing theology is not all that far away from the heart of James K. Smith's *Desiring the kingdom*[25], which is Romantic, possibly in the best sense of the Neo-Calvinist tradition. My sense is that there is a desire to be integrative in post-neo-Calvinist theologies of culture, which want to use generic human desire as a motor to drive the spiritual life: how much happier Christianity is when it's what each of us wants deep down. However is that not doggedly anthropocentric?

Now there is something of this emphasis on subjectivity going on in the fact that the Reformed tradition valued the Psalms for what they could do for the Church. In early modern Reformed controversies, Moses Amyraut insisted that a Church that read the Psalms together, stayed together. Yet the Reformed Church could not simply allow the Psalms to have a liturgical purpose without using them as a resource for theology, for beginning and ending with *God*, and this from the time of Bucer and Calvin onwards. One does not find much to argue about in the sense of

[22] Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought*, (Univ of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 230.

[23] Jeffrey Van der Wilt, ' "Why worship?": Schleiermacher speaks to the question', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003): pp. 286-307, 290.

[24] Ibid, p. 297.

[25] James K. Smith, *Desiring the kingdom : worship, worldview, and cultural formation*, (Baker Academic, 2009).

interpretations of the Psalms running along confessional lines. Of course there are different views of what the Kingdom is, and how Jewish the Messiah figure was. Sujin Pak has observed some of this[26], as Calvin was eventually accused of 'Judaizing' by the Lutheran Hunnius.[27] Yet Calvin was not alone in finding doctrine in the Psalter. Theological and polemical quarrying of the Psalms began with Martin Bucer, in contrast to Bugenhagen's non-theological interpretation. The hallmark of the interpretation of the Psalms by the 'Rhenish School', with which Bucer was associated,[28] was that of the kingdom as a public, visible entity, gradually making itself known as God guided history. Hence Robert Bellarmine SJ's commentary on the Psalms, which is completely non-controversial, rarely given to doctrinal expositions, and which speaks of Christ as the reality in which believers are to find spiritual protection, is in that way closer to Bugenhagen's.

Yet the Bernese Reformer Wolfgang Musculus' approach combines the best of these, as can be seen in his comment on Psalm 45:4&5, where a large heading intrudes into the commentary, namely: *De Christo Rege Populi Dei*. This is written as though the reader should be aware that the following section doubles as both commentary and theological 'common place' or excursus.

> The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, that is, it is not shaped to the form of earthly kingdoms, for it is not of the earth but of heaven, not carnal but spiritual, not labile, but constant and firm. The sword that Christ bears is a sword from his mouth. That is the almighty word, to beat down enemies, to which he speaks in his wrath. And this kind is with us, armed with his heavenly and all-powerful sword until the end of the world. What then can the enemy power of Satan do, with all his satellites: sin, the world and death? Although the life with Christ who is 'our' life is hidden, still the spiritual eye can see this kingdom of Christ having advanced. [29]

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[26] Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms*, (Oxford U.P., 2009).

[27] See David Puckett. *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, (WJK Press, 2004).

[28] Gerald Hobbs, 'How Firm a Foundation: Martin Bucer's Historical Exegesis of the Psalms', *Church History* 53 (1984), pp. 477-91. Bernard Roussel, 'De Strasbourg à Bâle et Zurich: une école rhénane d'exégèse (ca 1525-ca 1540),' *Revue D'Histoire Et de Philosophie Religieuses* 68 (1988), pp. 19-39.

[29] W. Musculus, *In Sacrosanctum Dauidis Psalterium Commentarii*, Basel: Hervagius, 1551, ad loc.: For a sample translation (of his commentary on Psalm 15 see 'Wolfgang Musculus, Scholia. "Commentary on Psalm 15 (1551)" translated by Todd M. Rester & Jordan Ballor, *Journal of Markets & Morality* 11 (2008), pp. 349–460.

One can hear the echo of Luther's *Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott* (Psalm 46). Yet Musculus adds here that David declared to Christ that he (Christ) is a king who reigns in the middle of his enemies, even in their hearts (*in corda inimicorum regis*), which is an interesting conception of providence. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of the spirit whose administration is spiritual and which is located firstly in the minds of the pious who are defended by Christ. (*Est enim regnum Christi, regnum spiritus, cuius administratio spiritalis est, & in animis piorum sita, qui a Christo defenduntur.*) Yet also in the hearts of the impious. The idea seems to be that of turning one's enemies into heart-felt friends and worshippers can be done by the Word of truth. Desire is not merely affirmed, it is challenged and channelled and aimed towards Christ the king.

There is indeed 'subjectivity' in that Christ's perfect soul is foreshadowed by that of the Psalmist.[30] This really means the narrated life of the Psalmist, one which foretells the story of Jesus Christ; from this we can move 'up' in spiritual, non-spatial terms to contemplate God himself. Behind and beyond the mediating, priestly offering of a life there is the Son who is King above being Priest. Reformed theology acknowledges the importance of the Logos who can both capture the citadel of an individual heart even while running the universe in his *asarkos* state. 'Jesus is my Lord' is no less an affirmation of value than 'Jesus is Lord'.

5. CONCLUSION: CHRISTOCENTRIC DISCIPLINE IN WORSHIP

Recently the conversation has turned to 'Christ with us, among us and we in Him', However the concept of 'participation' rather puts the spotlight on the Church and can be impassive in operation, lending itself to a metaphysical objectivity and security that might be a false one. Is our faith in Christ or is our faith in our being in Christ? There is a sort of resting in a security, there is a 'givenness' of a habitual grace in the ether, rather than a calling to a vocation of person and a being ruled by his Lordship in the present. Surely here needs to be all these three in play. We may like what 'participation' means with its emphasis on the communal; in the church, one is in Christ, who in turn is in the Father, like a set of Russian dolls. Yet ironically the metaphysical mysticism might just de-personalise and lead to abstraction. If 'our' deification becomes a matter of faith, that does sound at one level encouraging, but it also shifts ecclesiology too much into the centre. Much better, I submit, to view Christ as far off ahead, yet coming from the future and coming with power towards his church: the called-for '*sursum corda*' allows the church to glimpse him, just as one

[30] As with Athanasius, *Ad Marcellinum*, §14.

sees a further horizon from a high vantage point. Like the Groom of the Song of Songs he goes away, in order to come close spontaneously.

Along with the popular theme of 'participation' goes a theology of 'presence', of divine presence, of being with, of being there. This is fine as far as it goes. It accords well with theologies of pilgrimage, of sojourning, of being on the road together. People complain about the early Barth's dialectical theology as being 'contrary', not affirming what needs affirmed in already neo-Gnostic times. Why unsettle us more? Well, first, because the idea of shaking up the categories of creation is to realise that our notion of God can be tied tightly to no part of creation. The danger then is one of making God up according to our liberal desires, of reading Christ as we might prefer, of worshipping 'Jesus the revolutionary'. Second, in the shaking and re-purposing of creation it is still good creation that is the object. Its boundaries are stretched, yet they are strengthened by the exercise, even as they are called to serve God's ultimate purposes.

There is also a tendency to want to bring what believers or humans have to the table, as it were, as part of what God is doing in the 'return' of his own movement of grace to himself, according to a Neoplatonic. In a reaction against a so-called 'Zwinglian', ice-cold 'memorialism' of Baptists and other Evangelicals, there has been an emphasis in some recent books on Worship on our being raised together with Christ, caught up in a movement of God's energies, so that Christ and his body ('us') occupy the same space, at the same level. One might take for instance John Jefferson Davis, *Worship and the reality of God*.[31] This idea of presence seems to enable worship as that which channels our resources of feeling into some self-offering enveloped by 'divine presence', rather than see God the Son as the one who is worthy of worship, and whose adoration is the point of Christian worship. Then there are the practical approaches to worship that would seek to make theology more about faith in terms of disposition, and less about reason and argument.[32] Yet again by dividing affect and mind we might the more easily be conquered. It takes a mind to recognise the continuous otherness of God and perceive him in relationship with 'us'.

Now, granted, a liturgical theology that embraces a warm contemplation is to be appreciated. For it values God for who he is, in the way that the Psalms have parts where there are hymns of praise, elevating God beyond our thinking and its value-systems. And yet there needs to

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31 John Jefferson Davis, *Worship and the reality of God : an evangelical theology of real presence*, (IVP Academic, 2010).

32 Cf. Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community*, (IVP, 2006).

be the discipline to our imagined negative theology that the Scriptures provide: actually if contemplation focuses too much on the *via negativa* then the danger is one of filling the gaps of ignorance with enthusiastic and imaginative discourse, rather than with sober adoration as we just manage to glimpse the form of God. As is often mentioned, Calvin (and I would extend this to the Reformed tradition at its best) was happier when observing who and what God is towards creation and humanity, in his economy. 'Who God is in himself' can of course be extrapolated from that to a certain degree, but perhaps we do better to think that contemplation is something better left to the world to come, with only glimpses for now. Hence our *doctrine* of God will remain largely partial, as Christians for now find their place in the rightful hierarchy, under the great Mediator-Priest.

REVIEWS

On Classical Trinitarianism: Retrieving the Nicene Doctrine of the Triune God. Edited by Matthew Barrett. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-5140-0034-2. xxxiv + 798pp. £59.99.

Controversy in the Church is always uncomfortable. From the false teachers in the New Testament, right through to the online arguments of the present day, the Christian Church has faced periods of theological confusion and conflict. But the pain of such moments also has a positive impact, for the discomfort of controversy has often led to the declaration of clear and consolidated truth. Such was certainly the case in the fourth century; controversy raged, but ever since the Church has benefitted from the Creed that such upheaval prompted. Seventeen hundred years later, *On Classical Trinitarianism*, edited by Matthew Barrett and incorporating a wide range of authors from Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern perspectives, offers a vast and fascinating collection of studies, each of which aims to retrieve the Nicene doctrine of the Triune God. Such retrieval is necessary, for many of the Trinitarian challenges of the Early Church have reappeared. Back then the Council of Nicaea sought to *find* clarity; today there is a need to *retrieve* clarity.

The book is in three parts. Part One, entitled 'Retrieving Nicene Trinitarianism', offers eleven essays taking the reader from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, through the remaining Early Church period, into the Middle Ages, eventually reaching the English Particular Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The opening chapters ground the reader in the developments and controversies leading up to the Creed's formulation, the remaining chapters examine its reception and impact. The reader is led through a fast-moving yet detailed analysis of theological giants; Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary, Maximos, John Damascene, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas are all examined. The result is a rigorous introduction to the pro-Nicene contemplations and contributions of each. Moreover, alongside examining the work of renowned theologians in turn, the essays collectively orient the reader in the underlying metaphysical commitments of Nicene Trinitarianism. But although rooted in the fascinating contexts of the Patristic, Medieval, and Reformed eras, the chapters also engage with recent challenges to, and divergences from, Classical Trinitarianism. Thus, each chapter diagnoses the need for retrieval and the authors engage with recent drifts towards subordinationism, mutability, and Social Trinitarianism. Concepts, contexts, and controversies are all explained with clarity, yet at the same time

the reader is consistently encouraged to embrace the majestic mystery of all that Nicaea seeks to describe.

Part Two examines 'Trinitarian Hermeneutics and Dogmatics'. The emphasis falls mainly on the latter and the majority of chapters focus on a core attribute of Theology Proper, or upon an aspect of orthodox Christology and Pneumatology. Divine Simplicity, Aseity, Immutability, Impassibility, Incomprehensibility and Love are all explored, along with three chapters on Eternal Generation, two on the Spirit's Procession, and a repeated emphasis throughout of the need to maintain a clear distinction between the Creator and His creation, and between who God is in Himself (*theologia*) and His works of creation, providence and salvation (*oikonomia*). Notable contributions include Charles Lee Irons' rich and stimulating scriptural defence of Eternal Generation and discussion of the translation of *monogenes* as 'only begotten'. This is ably complemented by Fred Sanders' examination of the Doctrinal Functions of Eternal Generation. Exploring Eternal Generation no doubt stretches the mind, but these contributions help the reader to reach further into the fullness and beauty of our Saviour's Sonship. Furthermore, the procession of the Spirit is given fascinating examinations by Christopher Holmes and Adonis Vidu, each of which reaffirms the connection between Pneumatology, Christology and Nicaea's Doctrine of the Trinity. Like Part One, these chapters frequently draw on the insights of theological giants, particularly Aquinas, while at the same time engaging with more recent claims such as Rahner's Rule and the Eternal Functional Subordination of the Son.

Finally, Part Three focuses more directly on recent developments under the heading 'The Renewal of Nicene Fidelity Today'. Attention is given to the problems of Social Trinitarianism, both as directed towards Theology Proper and as applied to issues of politics, family and church leadership. As Blair Smith wisely notes in his chapter, such social and ethical concerns are legitimate and appropriate, but they must be met as they are addressed by Scripture, not by adopting a trinitarian theology that risks departing from orthodoxy. This advice is reinforced by the contribution of Carl Trueman, which offers a persuasive case for retaining the metaphysical categories employed by the Nicene theologians. Several chapters again take aim at Eternal Functional Subordination, which may at times risk feeling repetitive, but each analysis is nevertheless informative and helpful.

The scope of this book is vast and impressive and Barrett is to be commended for presenting such a robust volume that explores Historical Theology with humility, and tackles recent controversies with courage. From a Scottish perspective, a more detailed focus on Covenant Theology would have been a welcome addition, particularly given its value in

guarding against Eternal Functional Subordination of the Son. Moreover, the covenantal paradigms set out in Scripture make a key contribution to Trinitarian theology, and there is wisdom in maintaining fine distinctions between these and other, more Platonic, concepts.

Overall, the book is a remarkable accomplishment. In the year that marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, *On Classical Trinitarianism* provides a rich, rigorous and relevant retrieval of the Trinitarian orthodoxy. Such a resource is immensely valuable and highly recommended.

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Scottish Missions to China: Commemorating the Legacy of James Legge (1815-1897). Edited by Alexander Chow. Leiden: Brill, 2023. ISBN: 978-90-04-50963-4. 264pp. £47.50.

At a time when China's influence in world affairs is inescapable, and when Chinese Christianity could become the missionary story of the twenty-first century, this academic study into the legacy of James Legge and the wider Scottish missionary enterprise in 18th century China is very welcome. It began life as an international conference in 2015, organised by the Centre for the Study of World Christianity and the Scottish Centre for Chinese Studies. It marked the bicentenary of the birth of James Legge (as well as that of that of his Scottish colleagues in Chinese missions William Chalmers Burns, Alexander Wylie, and William Milne), and the full conference included sixteen presentations and two public lectures, as well as a personal reflection from Legge's great grandson.

For the published volume, eleven of these papers have been included. Brian Stanley has added an afterword on 'James Legge and the Missionary Tradition in British Sinology'. The book is divided into four parts. The volume is organised into four parts. The first, 'The Man James Legge,' considers his engagement with four notable Chinese persons (Pfister), the psychological roots of his resilience (Bowman), and his experience in Oxford, where he was the first Professor of Chinese (Jasper). The second part, 'Scottish Missions to China,' includes William Chalmers Burns in China (Reimer), the contribution of female missionaries (Baradziej), and the Anglo-Chinese College as a bridge between East and West (Zhiqing). The third section, 'Translators and Translations,' comprises studies of the translator's identity and its paradox (Huilin), Legge's hermeneutical methodology as revealed in his translation of the Daxue (Shushing), Legge's concept of the 'people' in the Book of Documents, and 'Finding God's Chinese Name' (Chow). The volume concludes with 'Legge and His

Legacy,' which includes Stanley's afterword and Christopher Legge's 'Personal Reflection'.

James Legge's academic significance is evident in his translation of the Chinese Classics into English, in which he gave positive philosophical and religious value to the works of Confucianism and Taoism, and pioneered a missionary role in interpreting China to the Western world.

Several of the papers provide important contributions to the debates about the complexities of translation from Chinese to English. However their full value is limited to those who can understand the nuances of the Chinese language. For the missiologist, Chow's paper on 'Finding God's Chinese Name' is of particular interest, as it shows Legge changing his mind on this 'term issue', concluding that the *Shangdi* of the Confucian classics was the Christian God.

The fact that this was an academic symposium is significant, as it shows that these matters of missionary engagement with Chinese thinking and culture are not limited to Christian circles. However, the general Christian reader is not neglected in this book. Marilyn Bowman, whose biography *James Legge and the Chinese Classics* (Friesen Press, 2016) is now the main secondary work on his life, presents a picture of a remarkable man whose faith, work ethic, and wisdom enabled him to cope with numerous challenges and tragedies without being diverted from his calling, and David Jasper shows that although Legge was honoured with the Chair of Chinese at Oxford University, he never fitted into life in that bastion of the Anglican establishment.

This book gives Legge a place in the forefront of Scottish missionary history. He is not as well known as William Chalmers Burns (1815-68) and James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) but his significance, both in Scottish missions, and in the wider Christian mission in China, is huge. He was criticised by missionaries for his pro-Chinese approach, which led to his constructive engagement with Confucianism, and to his opposition to European policies regarding China. Instead of translating English books into Chinese (Burns translated Pilgrim's Progress, while Alexander Wylie produced Chinese versions of western scientific texts), Legge embarked on the massive project of translating the Chinese Classics into English, and after leaving China in 1873, in 1876 was appointed first Professor of Chinese at Oxford University. His translations remain important today, and were significant in the nineteenth century, both for enabling Europeans to understand Chinese thought, as well as for showing that Chinese Christianity was built on an indigenous foundation of beliefs and practice.

One aspect of Legge's formation that is not developed is his upbringing in the independent 'Missionar Church' in Huntly. The principles of

independency held by his family led him to refuse to join the established Church of Scotland, which could have led to his becoming Professor of Humanities (Classics) at King's College, Aberdeen. Instead, he remained true to his dissenting principles for the rest of his life. These beliefs caused him to embrace radical politics and oppose the British trade in Opium, which caused so much devastation in China, to engage in deep friendships with Chinese people, and ultimately prevented his second wife Mary being buried in a parish churchyard in Oxford.

The 'Missionar Church' itself has a worthy place in the history of Scottish Christianity, as it produced several other missionaries for the London Missionary Society, namely Dr William Milne (1775-1822), Bible translator and joint founder of the Anglo-Chinese College, his son William Charles Milne (1815-63), a school friend of Legge who sailed with him to China in 1839 and worked in Bible translation, plus George Cran and James Dawson, who served in South India between 1804 and 1832. It also produced several significant Congregationalist ministers, including George Macdonald, whose fantasy literature inspired the writing of C.S. Lewis.

Although the name of Andrew Walls (1928-2021) is not mentioned in the book, his shadow lies over the whole event. In his youth, Walls aspired to serve as a missionary in China, but events put paid to that. In 2008 he wrote, 'It is impossible to predict what part Chinese Christianity will play in the new global configuration of church and world, but it is unlikely to be peripheral.' He died in 2021, and this Legge conference at the centre he established in Edinburgh bears the marks of his vision.

Rev Malcolm Duff, Finzean, Aberdeenshire

The Broken Body: Israel, Christ and Fragmentation. By Sarah Coakley. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-4051-8923-1. 294pp. $39.95.

Writing a 'good' theological essay is no small task, and that is even before one tries to grasp the difficult nettle that is theological taste. Despite the sheer number and teeming diversity of essay collections now available, it remains a dying art. This decline is not only due to shifts in academic theology and publishing but, I suggest, to a certain faint-heartedness. If this sounds like a bold and deliberately provocative claim to make in a review, so be it: to essay quite literally means 'to attempt'. A 'good' theological essay does not simply explore ideas or critically collate existing work; it takes risks in attempting to push theology forward. It is one in which the author ventures into the awkward and thankless vocation of being a theologian. Theology is a risky enterprise.

That so many 'good' theological essays—those which offer courageous and innovative ways not only of looking at old questions but of asking fresh questions and bringing exciting perspectives to theology—should come from a single pen, that of Sarah Coakley, is a sign, in contradistinction to many others, of the flourishing of the art form. Coakley is a formidable and courageous thinker who is willing to do this risky work on the page.

The essays in this book were originally offered in different contexts and are here revised, a prologue and additional chapter attached, and collected around three prescient themes, each of which corresponds to distinct, though overlapping and loosely connected, sections of the book. These themes include lively explorations of issues in historical and contemporary Christology (divine kenosis features heavily, as well as the reconception of the Chalcedonian Definition through an apophatic lens); nuanced considerations of the network of relations between Judaism and Christianity. Here, we see the themes of forgiveness and gender explored through careful readings of material from rabbinic and Pauline traditions. In particular, Coakley makes imaginative and largely convincing use of biblical references and illustrations. She also offers constructive insights into eucharistic-sacramental concerns (sacrifice, gift, and gender, all with a distinctly Anglican flavour and broad import, receive particular attention).

Coakley engages with both the relatively novel and the familiar, rendering the latter new by current events. Both of these areas are presented with a solid underpinning of thoughtful research and reflection. While some of the material could be further developed—Coakley notes that this is 'a book of essays that should be read as prolegomena to any future Christology, rather than as a full and substantial Christology per se' (p. 15)—and might benefit from continued consideration and light revision, the coherence of the thinking and the grasp of the subject matter are never in question.

Essays are living things. They grow and support each other. However rich a particular collection becomes, it will always interact with other essays, journal material, and the expanding wealth of resources now available in digital form. Essays are both our bread and butter in the discipline and evidence that we are developing special interests. Coakley is an essayist of incomparably 'catholic' tastes—she appears interested and well-read in a broad range of topics.

What emerges is an impressively integrated piece of work, with much potential for building incrementally and systematically on a well-explained foundation. There are very few instances in the entire piece of writing where I have felt any need at all to seek clarification. It is an excel-

lent study in interdisciplinarity. As the footnotes testify, the command of complex subject matter is considerable. Coakley is well known for her skill in constructing theological arguments though both her own wide and resourceful reading and her active participation in ongoing conversations. She has read a formidable array of material, organised it according to a clearly explained scheme, and presented it accessibly without oversimplification.

Perhaps this is unsurprising: the necessity of Anglicanism and forms of reformed Protestantism outside of Calvinism (until perhaps the recent charismatic turn) to constantly return to the sources of Catholic Christianity in their identity formation is well known. This means that Anglican/English-speaking scholarship, especially post-Oxford Movement, is adept at the very sources to which other traditions were returning in the mid-twentieth century, alongside much closer working relationships post-war and as a result of the ecumenical movement, both in terms of conferences and in shared access to each other's learning outside of some of the more denominationally confined structures. There is potentially a similar move at work today as Christianity in the West comes to terms with the loss of Christendom and numerical decline, provoking a reaction on one end and a parallel search for what unites the various denominations and understandings of Christianity in response to this decline in power in different ways. Coakley's voice provides much grist to the mill here, as ever.

In *The Broken Body*, we have a unique and provocative collection of prolegomena to future theological developments—a significant attempt to essay, to break up and open traditional themes and offer new insights. As is characteristic of Coakley, the Holy Spirit is crucial for understanding how the Church and the world participate in the broken up and open life of Christ, and the need for an understanding of this work in its proper Trinitarian context is clearly shown. It is thus, in the end, a reason to hope. Coakley ventures the risk of being a theologian and inspires others to join her.

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When Christians Disagree: Lessons from the Fractured Relationship of John Owen and Richard Baxter. By Tim Cooper. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-4335-9295-9. $18.99.

Tim Cooper, professor of Church History in the University of Otago, New Zealand, has taken the advice of a friend and turned what was a technical, academic work, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of*

Nonconformity (Ashgate, 2011) into this more accessible (and affordable) work. This reviewer is glad that the advice was acted upon, because this book—better than any other popular-level work on the Puritans in recent memory—moves the reader beyond the usual accolades to explore what might be called Puritanism's 'gritty' side: the fact of rivalry and personality clashes. As he does so, Cooper provides the reader with an important introduction to current authorities and literature in Puritan studies. Both of these emphases: candour about and currency in Puritan study are sorely needed at this time. We have, after all, been awash in Puritan reprints since the 1960's. To a considerable extent, this spate has not taken us far beyond Puritan 'fandom'. So insightful an observer as Gerald Bray has noted that the resurgence of interest in Puritanism has proved to be part of an 'evangelical theological recessional' (*History of Christianity in Great Britain and Ireland*, IVP, 2019, p. 581).

Cooper offers us a skilful portrait of two contemporaries, each of whom sought the further reformation of the Church of England. But they clearly differed as to social background, access to higher education, and geographic location (particularly as this related to England's Civil War). Owen had the advantages of a comfortable upbringing, an Oxford education, and important social connections which opened numerous doors for advancement. His pastoral ministry was exercised away from scenes of battle. There was an accompanying haughtiness. By contrast, Baxter experienced a difficult childhood, gained no access to higher education, and lived and served in a region of England devastated by Civil War. Baxter had the tendency, shared by other autodidacts, towards outspokenness.

The literary jousting of Owen and Baxter in the Civil War and Commonwealth periods was something painful to observe (and for us to read about). Cooper is right: they had need of a peace-maker or intermediary (p. 121). Owen's bold high Calvinism stoked fears in Baxter (who was also a predestinarian) of the antinomianism which he had witnessed at first hand within the Parliamentary Army. Yet Owen was not the Antinomian that Baxter feared him to be.

Cooper insightfully reflects on how the literary sparring which went on between Owen and Baxter too easily replicates itself in the internet world of our time (p. 24). Face to face communication brings with it needed constraints and the possibility of better understanding.

But with these plaudits, there are also reasons to demure. There are strands of the story that need to be emphasised more fully than Cooper has done in this admitted popularisation of his longer work. While both Baxter and Owen are clearly classifiable as Puritans, i.e. preachers associated with 'the godly', they were of dissimilar outlook as to the desirability of a national church. Baxter, because he sought the success of a revived

national church, persevered with church schemes that would have comprehended all Protestants in the land (pp.23,26, 90); he sought inclusion (on stout Protestant terms) in the Church of England right up to the time of the 1662 Ejection. He was personally familiar with King Charles II. One would need to reckon him a *conforming* Puritan up to the point in time when this became impossible. Owen, by contrast, needs to be seen even more clearly than Cooper portrays him, as one who had rejected the national church idea and who aimed to gather separated churches that rivalled the parish system. These were not simply personal differences of emphasis, but rival expressions of Puritanism.

In addition, one would never know (according to *When Christians Disagree*) that the Civil War period was also the era when, in addition to the military alliance brought into existence between English and Scottish parliamentary forces, there were serious attempts made at achieving a cross-border theological convergence through the labours of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. (One finds only a passing reference to that Assembly on a timeline at p.133). This strikes the reviewer as odd; there *is* clear reference made (pp. 94-95) to Owen's involvement in theological consultations under Cromwell (aimed at setting the boundaries of religious toleration for the1650s). But this was the era when the agreed-upon Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms along with the Directory for Public Worship had been commended for nation-wide use. Owen, with Cromwell, was working to counter this. While reference is made to Owen's activity in Ireland as a military chaplain under Cromwell, only the slightest reference is made to Owen's similar activity in the Cromwellian invasion of Scotland (see p.44). During that invasion of Scotland, Owen took the opportunity to preach against the Presbyterian form of government, causing great consternation.

A similar constriction occurs in connection with the introduction of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, failure to comply with which led the exclusion of some 2,000 ministers from the Church of England and Wales. The statement is made (p.25) that 'no sincere Puritan could easily pledge to utilise the *Book of Common Prayer* as required.' The recent research of Stephen Hampton (*Anti-Arminians: the Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I*, OUP, 2008) and Jake Griesel (*Retaining the Old Episcopal Divinity: John Edwards of Cambridge*, OUP 2022) have shown how unsafe this generalisation is. The recurring issue here is whether the complex relationship between Owen and Baxter has been adequately placed in its wider setting. Not only were they dis-similar Puritans, but Puritanism had not been eradicated from the National Church, though each of them stood outside it.

Tim Cooper's *When Christians Disagree* is a wonderful doorway into the world of mid-seventeenth century English Puritanism. The interpersonal relationships of two notables who were too often at odds serves as the portal. Having utilised this entryway, let the reader go on to examine Cooper's weightier volume, which offers fuller details.

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Evangelicals and Abortion: Historical, Theological, Practical Perspectives. By J. Cameron Fraser. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-6667-8451-0. 220pp. $23.00.

Abortion is an immensely important, highly controversial, and deeply sensitive subject. And because it is all these things, we are often very hesitant to talk about it. In the USA, it has been a very prominent topic for years, but here in Britain, most people gravitate away from almost all difficult conversations, thus leaving the church reluctant to speak about an issue that deep down we know is of the utmost seriousness. For this reason, *Evangelicals and Abortion* by J Cameron Fraser is a very welcome and helpful publication. Written by a Scot, living in Canada, with very close ties to the USA and vast pastoral experience of the issues raised in the book, *Evangelicals and Abortion* focuses much on the controversies around abortion in the USA, but does so from the perspective of a highly informed onlooker. In doing so, Fraser offers a work that is balanced, thorough and informative, providing an immensely helpful resource for evangelicals in both the US and worldwide.

The book is divided into three parts; the first explores the historical developments around abortion and evangelicalism, the second examines theological issues, and the third draws practical implications. Fraser's opening chapter sets out the main thesis of the book; that abortion is first and foremost a religious issue, rather than a question of politics, science, or women's rights. The latter are by no means unimportant, but the issue of abortion centres on questions of the nature and value of the life in the womb. These, Fraser points out, 'are deeply religious questions.' In this historical section of the book, Fraser's aim is to examine how evangelicals have, and should, approach these questions.

Chapter Two traces recent developments in regard to evangelicals and abortion. Fraser offers a very helpful definition of evangelicalism and then focuses particularly on American Evangelicalism and how abortion has become an immensely prominent topic, deeply intertwined with American politics. But, as Fraser helpfully demonstrates, the situation is

much more nuanced than any simplistic 'pro-life means you are Republican' assumptions.

The reader is taken further back into history in Chapter Three. Here Fraser provides a very helpful study of how abortion has been approached from the Early Church, Middle Ages, through the Reformation, and up to the present day. The chapter touches on Graeco-Roman views, Jewish debates, and Early Church writings. Regarding the question of the soul's origin in the unborn child, the reader hears the views of Augustine, Chrysostom, and Aquinas. Moving through the centuries, the opinions of Calvin, Luther, Owen, Barth, and Bonhoeffer are all consulted.

Chapter Four then explores developing evangelical views in the twentieth century, particularly in light of the legalisation of abortion in the latter half of that century. Among evangelicals, there is consensus that life begins before birth, but no consensus on when exactly that happens, or on whether there are situations where abortion may be permissible. Interestingly, Fraser also includes examples of prominent evangelicals, such as Bruce Waltke and John Stott, whose viewpoints appear to have changed over time.

Part Two then focuses on the theological issues related to abortion. First, Chapter Five traces developments in the interpretation of Exodus 21:22-25, a key passage relating to the life of the unborn child. Fraser highlights that discussions over this passage have led to stronger agreement that human life begins at conception. The consequential question then asks what it means for an unborn human life to be made in the image of God. This is the focus of Chapters Six and Seven.

Fraser explores the doctrine of the image of God in relation to the unborn child and notes that care needs to be taken in attaching too close a connection between image-bearing and the exercise of capabilities. Fraser wisely highlights that such ties risk implying that those unborn and yet to develop these capacities, and indeed those born but who are for some reason incapacitated, do not qualify as image bearers. A more helpful approach suggested by Fraser, is that image-bearing should be grounded more in terms of sonship, rather than capabilities. Then in Chapter Seven he explores some related implications of the unborn child being made in the image of God. Topics such as contraception, IVF, miscarriage, stem cell research, vaccinations, and capital punishment are all discussed, with many stimulating observations offered.

Part Three then explores some practical implications of the ongoing issue of abortion for evangelicals. To begin with, Chapter Eight examines the suggestion that adoption is the appropriate alternative to abortion. Fraser, writing as a parent with an adopted child, offers a balanced and careful discussion, highlighting the value and benefit of adoption yet also

recognising that the slogan 'adoption, not abortion' may fail to adequately recognise the complexities and hardships that can often arise for all parties.

Chapter Nine takes up the recent decision of the US Supreme Court to reverse *Roe v. Wade*. Fraser traces some of the key arguments, statistics, and controversies that this decision has prompted both politically and in the church. The analysis initially focuses on the US, but there follows a wider examination of developments in abortion laws in other countries. He also includes a very helpful analysis of how the support given by pro-life organisations to pregnant women has often been unfairly portrayed in the media.

Finally, Chapter Ten raises the crucial point that the power of the law is often defeated by the power of public opinion. Thus, imposing abortion bans may seem like a positive step to the pro-life movement, but if public opinion still remains heavily polarised on the issue, decisions such as the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* simply fuel a backlash of counter measures from those who remain in favour of abortion. Lasting change comes through persuasion rather than imposition, and such persuasion can only come through the life-changing message of the gospel. Abortion, ultimately, is a religious question.

Fraser writes from an unambiguous pro-life position. Yet he does so with great care, compassion, and diligence. The book is not afraid to highlight unwise steps taken by the pro-life movement and he rightly highlights the importance of 'greater humility, realism, and Christlikeness in pro-life advocacy.' Some readers may feel that the book focuses too much on the situation the USA. However, this is without doubt the arena where abortion issues have been most publicly prominent. Moreover, the book provides the non-American reader with very helpful insights and explanations of the developments that have taken place there. And even more importantly, Fraser offers rich and edifying theological insights into the life and value of the unborn child. As always, Fraser writes with clarity, care, and compassion, and the result is a volume that is to be highly recommended.

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Romans: A Commentary. By Beverly Roberts Gaventa. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2024. ISBN: 978-0-664-22100-3. x + 552pp. £57.25.

I first encountered Beverly Roberts Gaventa's engagement with Romans in a series of special lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary nearly fifteen years ago. Throughout the week, Dr. Gaventa spoke about the epis-

tle with the passion, insight, and aplomb that have characterised her academic career. Whether or not this commentary was in view back then, it certainly flows from many years of dedicated, in-depth study and reflection.

Gaventa dedicates this volume to Phoebe of Cenchrae, whom she believes read the epistle aloud to the Romans when it was first delivered, with gratitude for her and 'the host of other women whose contributions to understanding the letters of Paul have been lost, discounted, or neglected' (xii). This dedication not only sets the perspective of this Romans commentary apart from its predecessors, it also foreshadows what is to follow. This is a book that sets out to explore the nooks and crannies of its subject in search of meaning, looking behind and beneath Paul's language to understand and elucidate the Christological argument and the ecclesiological context of Romans for contemporary readers.

Her main purpose, set forth in the preface, is to offer 'a coherent account of Romans' rather than report or seek to settle scholarly debates associated with the letter. In that vein, footnotes and direct engagement with academic literature are kept to a minimum. Make no mistake, however; Gaventa has done her homework. The substantial thirty-seven-page bibliography at the front of the volume attests to the depth and breadth of her research. This minimisation of professorial discussions is a deliberate choice on her part. She starts with and remains focused on the words of Paul.

One strength of her approach to the vast secondary literature on Romans is that she makes a point to broaden her scope beyond the most recent theories and interpretations. The observations of Origen, Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, and other ancient commentators make appearances in her dialogue with the text not only because they contain 'gems' of insight but they also offer a grounded/ing perspective beyond the modern and postmodern study of Romans. These ancient voices remind us that Paul has equally inspired and exasperated serious readers for centuries.

Another strength, in line with her previous commentary work (e.g. her 2003 volume on Acts) is Gaventa's refusal to cordon off theological considerations from literary and historical questions pertaining to the text. Romans is, after all, a letter 'about God and God's doings in the world' (p. 1). Everything in the epistle is theological to one degree or another. Treating the historical and literary aspects of the epistle separately employs an artificial compartmentalisation foreign to Paul's perspective and purpose(s). If we hope to understand Paul – in Romans as well as in his other writings – Gaventa rightly contends we must never set aside the inherently theological nature of his rhetoric. That does not mean defining the 'theology' of Romans is easy. Paul is not endeavouring to set

systematic doctrine for the church, and Gaventa does not attempt to help him do so.. Rather she remains focused on the fact that Paul is proclaiming and wrestling with the advent of Jesus Christ, a divine 'intrusion' that, for him, leaves no aspect of life or the world untouched (p. 5).

A third strength of this commentary is Gaventa's choice to read Paul with 'a hermeneutic of generosity' (p. 3). This is not a methodology to ignore or minimise the painful, tragic ways in which Paul (and Romans in particular) has been used to justify abusive behaviour and coercive systems of control. Gaventa acknowledges this reality and recognises that the study of Romans is challenging for a number of people. Her caveat may not be foregrounded or explicit enough to satisfy some readers. Those looking for expressions of righteous indignation in the textual analysis itself will have to look elsewhere. But by giving Paul the benefit of the doubt, endeavouring to read as she would want to be read, Gaventa is able to treat challenging and controversial stretches of Romans with an informed, sober, and astute nuance that may very well help wounded and/or cynical readers find their way through the letter.

The fruits of this approach are on full display in her treatment of the 'list of vices' at the end of chapter 1 (pp. 63-76) and the first seven verses that begin chapter 13 (pp. 355-69). Gaventa emphasises the rhetorical strategy of this introductory section, with the twist at the beginning of chapter 2 being where Paul lays his emphasis. If we linger in the itemised 'dishonourable desires,' we miss or misunderstand Paul's point: no one is excused, no one is favoured (p. 72). Gaventa's translation of *o anthrope* as 'you, there!' rather than 'O, man' is particularly effective at capturing Paul's confrontation of the Romans' presumed self-righteousness. Likewise, at the beginning of chapter 13, Gaventa pauses to review 'the long struggle' to interpret this passage, reaching all the way back to Polycarp, before exploring the intratextual challenges presented by this text within Romans as well as the broader (undisputed) Pauline corpus. She then suggests a way forward through the lens of chapter 12. Because Paul's concern is strengthening and protecting the communities of faith, 13:1-7 can be read as discouraging foolish resistance – specifically not paying one's taxes – rather than elevating rulers beyond reproach. They, like everything and everyone, are subjects of God's will not necessarily agents of it.

The one drawback to this commentary is the formatting. It can be challenging to find specific points of analysis within Gaventa's extensive exegesis. Rather than individual verses, the work is organised into sections which are not subdivided into smaller units. As a result, one must wade out into Gaventa's explorations of the text. In its depths there is much treasure to be found; but finding it entails going for a swim rather than strolling along the shore. Thus, this is not the only Romans commentary

you will ever need, but it will most assuredly enhance your understanding of the epistle in ways other commentaries cannot.

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Strange Religion: How the First Christians Were Weird, Dangerous, and Compelling. By Nijay K. Gupta. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-58743-517-1. x + 240pp. $18.99.

With the passage of several thousand years, it can be difficult to appreciate the ways in which the early Christians went against the grain of other ancient religions. Without careful consideration, we might assume that Christian distinctives have remained the same over time. In *Strange Religion*, Nijay Gupta shows that the early church was indeed strange among first-century worshippers, but not according to modern categories. What made the first Christians a nuisance, Gupta argues, was how they disrupted the Roman *pax deorum* ('peace with the gods,' p. 23). He unpacks this disturbance throughout the book.

Part 1 explains Graeco-Roman religious practice and its broader aims. The goal of Roman religion was not communion with a deity but community prosperity. This was achieved through following prescribed rituals, which moved the gods to dispense domestic tranquillity. Whether you believed in the gods you sacrificed to was irrelevant. So, when Christians insisted on personal faith that made such rituals irrelevant, they were seen as disturbers of the *pax deorum*. The new Christians lacked historicity and a unique ethnicity, which also raised suspicions. Average Romans would not have been aware of Christianity's historical ties to Judaism. The multiethnic demographics of the church also made it impossible to trace their heritage back to a particular people.

Part 2 describes what beliefs of the new faith challenged Graeco-Roman religion. Adding another god to the religious marketplace would not have been disruptive, but Christians proclaimed a crucified Jew as unrivalled supreme Lord, which disrupted everything. Christian belief in God's Spirit dwelling within them explained why they did not meet in temples, and they trusted in Jesus' final sacrifice instead of giving burnt offerings. All of this amounted to a 'religious-technical revolution' (p. 90) which further disrupted the *pax deorum*. While Roman literature foresaw only an inevitable decline, Christians believed the time of God's fullness had only just begun (Mark 1:15; Gal. 4:4-5).

Gupta moves to Christian worship in Part 3. He describes the well-known charges of secrecy and incest against the church. These accusations arose because Christians met in private homes and affectionately greeted each other as brother and sister. They did not meet in a public

temple with trained priests who knew how to placate a distant god, but in homes, with no priests, as a family (p. 145). In Part 4, Gupta explores the strangeness of Christian behaviour. Roman religion made no ethical demands on worshippers, but Christians sought to imitate Jesus. Instead of jostling for a high position in the hierarchy of the gods, the Son of God descended to the lowest position, died the most shameful death, and expects his followers to emulate his humble example (Phil. 2:5-11). Lest he mischaracterise the first Christians as perfect, Gupta closes by describing the divisions, complicity with Roman slavery, and antisemitism that haunted the early church.

There is much to praise in Gupta's presentation. He is concise, getting the work done in less than 250 pages. He provides support for his arguments from a wide variety of ancient Graeco-Roman texts but gives enough context to help those unfamiliar with classical sources. He also provides helpful metaphors (the city culture of Portland, coconut water, hotspots, eyewear) that illustrate his points. Gupta takes readers back to first century religion and successfully shows just how 'weird' this new faith was and how refreshing it can be.

Just a few changes would make the book even better. Ancient religion and its modern counterpart are not exact parallels. Roman religion did not concern itself with personal morality. Ethics fell into ancient philosophy's domain. Gupta does not clarify this until chapter 3. Because ethics takes up so much space in current religious discussions, this distinction should probably be made earlier in his presentation. Evangelical readers may take issue with how Gupta reads complicity with slavery (1 Cor. 7:21-23; Eph. 6:5-6; Col. 3:22) and antisemitic attitudes in inspired texts (1 Thess. 2:14-16). Gupta could perhaps give more weight to Paul's good faith attempts in promoting freedom for slaves (1 Cor. 7:21) and consider evidence that demonstrates Paul's genuine affection for his Jewish brothers and sisters (e.g. Rom. 9:1-5).

In all, this is an excellent book. It is especially helpful for those seeking to understand why the average pagan worshipper would perceive the Christians to be such a threat. The book is a refreshing reminder of the raw ingredients that made up the early church, and a plea for believers today to be 'weird' in ways true to the ancient faith.

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Sola: Christ, Grace, Faith, and Scripture Alone in Martin Luther's Theology. By Volker Leppin. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-5064-9188-2. 228pp. $36.00.

In this dense but readable collection of essays, Leppin continues his wider experiment to situate Luther as a medieval theologian rather than someone characterised by a radical break from the thinking that 'went before' him. This book builds on Leppin's profound Luther scholarship and, thanks to the careful translation by Brandt, is made available to the general English reader.

Sola brings together essays presented at various conferences and seminars during the 2017 Reformation Jubilee celebrations. With minimal changes to the original texts, Leppin weaves together the seven essays to demonstrate that Luther's theology was firmly grounded in his medieval heritage, and that the '*solas*' of the Protestant tradition are not as exclusive to Protestantism as might first be thought.

A thread of ecumenical thought runs through this book. Whereas Protestant Luther research, especially in Germany, has mainly taken place within a confessional, binary context in which the Protestant and Roman Catholic arguments have tended to be put into conflict, Leppin looks for the points of unity in Luther's inherited traditions.

In chapter one, Leppin explores the late-medieval critique of indulgences and highlights that such a critique was not unique to Luther or the Protestants but was already established in Roman Catholic theology. In chapter two, Luther's debt to his Abbot and confessor, John of Staupitz, is centred, particularly in relation to the tension between interior and exterior spirituality. Leppin challenges the idea that salvation was entirely dependent on Christ only emerged in the Reformation. Instead, he points to the broader medieval commitment to the passion of Christ, especially within the monastic-mystical tradition, as influencing Luther's thinking. In chapter three, Luther's reading of Augustine and Meister Eckhart's pupil John Tauler is highlighted as the influence behind Luther's turn to the centrality of grace. Leppin emphasises that Augustine and the scholastic tradition provide the language and theology of salvation by grace alone.

Chapter four highlights the tension between continuity and innovation within Luther's reformation thought. Leppin argues that rather than breaking with the medieval tradition, Luther preserved and reframed scholastic and monastic-mystical motifs in a new mode and with a fresh emphasis. In Chapter five, Leppin shows that the questions around issues of authority, particularly the authority of scripture, need to be understood against the backdrop of the Leipzig Disputations. The question of author-

ity was already a live debate within the medieval theological world, which was sharpened for Luther as a result of Leipzig. The medieval church never challenged the supremacy of scripture. The key question was the authority of the interpretation of scripture. In chapter six, Leppin argues that Luther's approach to scripture, particularly the role of scripture in explaining scripture and the reliance upon conscience and the Holy Spirit, emerges from the monastic-mystical tradition Luther inherited. The chapter also raises an important reminder that Luther did not read the Bible in the same historical-critical manner that is more common for theologians today.

Then in chapter seven, Leppin provides an interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3:6 in the mode that Luther utilised and engages with Luther's thought. This highlights the importance of understanding the tension between the Spirit and the Letter of scripture in Biblical interpretation for Luther in his medieval context. The chapter concludes by providing an example of how Luther developed and continued the underlying methods of the medieval tradition whilst diverging from their presentation and application.

Leppin argues that the *solas* are not pitted against medieval theology. Instead, they emerged from a slow and gradual development process over many years culminating in Luther's theology. By making close use of source texts, combined with his experience in this field, Leppin makes a persuasive argument to re-read Luther, especially the *solas*, within a medieval context and not as the result of a radical break from a previous tradition.

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The Old Testament as Literature: Foundations for Christian Interpretation. By Tremper Longman III. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6131-0. 304pp. $34.99.

The Old Testament as Literature by Tremper Longman is a readable and lucid analysis of the literary qualities and character of the Old Testament (OT). In the first of a tri-partite series he sets out to provide a theoretically robust analysis of the OT as literature and provides key concepts, categories, and points of departure for anyone interested in taking the OT seriously as a literary document. Building on over four decades of serious scholarly labour and inquiry Longman can distil in 250 pages a wealth of previously published research along with newer formulations and insights. He is not naïve about the complications of the task which arise in discussing ideas such as 'The Old Testament', Literature, Genre,

Intertextuality, Narrative Prose, and Poetry each of which could easily receive chubby footnotes. Simply put the book discusses both *theory* and *practice* (p. 15). In what is part intellectual history, part theory, and part thought-provoking exegetical information the student and scholar both, will find material that will be useful for their own edification. The book is broken up into three parts: *Literary Theory and the Conventions of Biblical Narrative and Poetry*, *The Analysis of Illustrative Prose-Narrative Texts*, and *The Analysis of Illustrative Poetic Texts*.

In chapter 1, he sets out to answer the preliminary, and not so obvious question of: where is meaning found? He defends a 'nuanced authorial-intention approach to interpretation' (p. 19). The schema sketched here is one that runs: Author → Text → Reader. When he speaks of intentions, he admits that he is not privy to the minds of ancient people, thus readers must 'discern the author's intention through the text itself' (p. 21). In chapter 2, he gives an intellectual biography of the literary study of the OT highlighting key moments and figures along the way (pp. 30-54). Firmly putting his finger on the deep *historical* impulse found in biblical scholarship since the Enlightenment, he notes that until at least the 1970's historical-critical questions dominated the topography of scholarship (31). This all changed with a watershed SBL presidential address given by James Muilenberg in 1968 (though there were of course antecedents!). One needed to move beyond the task of excavation endorsed by historical-criticism and form-criticism, to see the OT as it stands, having its own literary integrity and proclivities. This 'literary turn' as scholars have catalogued it (in retrospect) reached a zenith with the publication of Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* in 1981. A work that still influences literary approaches to this day, and especially his own, as Longman styles himself a card carrying '*Alterian*' (p. 32). In the succeeding decades to the current moment a medley of approaches—from deconstructionist readings to feminist and post-colonial ones—show themselves alive, well and here to stay (pp. 33-46).

In the following chapter in contrast to the sampling of various literary theories and their applications to OT studies he gives his own presentation of *genre theory* and how it shapes reading strategies. For Longman, genre is admittedly modern (though with Platonic and Aristotelian roots) and can broadly be defined as '…a group of texts that share common features. These features might be formal, linguistic, thematic, content-related, or a variety of other similarities.' (p. 55). Rather than 'genre' being pure and fixed in all cases (contra Gunkel) he states, 'Genre categories…are not rigid, watertight compartments. Rather, they are classifications with fuzzy edges or boundaries' (p. 58). That is, a given text can participate in more than one genre at a time (p. 59), sit at the fringes or periphery of a

genre, or can begin to participate in a different genre *over time*. An excellent example given in the book is Psalm 2 initially a kingship hymn, it comes to be read as one ripe with *eschatological messianic* expectation (cf. Ps. Sol. 17, 4Q174, 1 En. 48, Acts 4:25 *et al*.). The discussion here regarding genre is crucial as the concept forms the skeletal substructure of the book and is arguably his big idea.

The next two chapters of the section are a surgically precise explication of the two basic genres that are constitutive of the OT: Narrative Prose and Poetry (pp. 67-152). Drawing on the work of narratologists, Longman shows interdisciplinary prowess as he applies the same methods used in literary studies to analyse OT literature (see excurses on pp. 69-71). In his discussion of characterisation for example, he makes the important point that whatever may lay *behind* the textual depictions, the characters (from Adam to Moses to Ezra and so on) are *literary constructs* and this even applies to the main character: *God* (p. 91)! Because this is so, their names, their referentiality, and their physical descriptions must be studied. A classic text here is 1 Sam. 17 where Goliath gets a lengthy and robust physical description contra David the mere shepherd boy (p. 93). Even amid much precision to be commended here one wonders how he'd classify the legal material in the Torah (Ex. 21-23, Deut. 12-26, Lev. 17-26 etc.), and even more interestingly according to what kind of, (if any!) organisational/literary principles do they adhere? Moving to the poetry section, he shows a nuanced and up to date engagement of the structure and function of Hebrew Poetry building on the work of premier scholars like Kugel (pp. 110-121). While the treatment of parallelism is a *sine qua non* for a discussion of poetry, simile, metaphor and metonymy receive their just due too.

Last in line in the bulky section is a chapter on 'intertextuality'. He is right to see it as a 'literary phenomenon' (p. 154). He also demonstrates awareness of the crucial distinction between more diachronic versus synchronic oriented approaches (p. 155). He even provides a few examples of instances he would classify as having intertextual relationships (e.g. Job 7:17-21 and Psalm 8). Though I don't find this portion of the discussion unhelpful I do see this see it to be in many respects inadequate. One wishes that there could have been a more in-depth and nuanced engagement with the obsession the Bible has with itself, as its persistent self-referentiality shines bright as a characteristic of the literature. Many a scholar in the last three decades has advanced the study of precisely this feature of the OT (see Levinson, Sommer, Tooman, Lyons, Teeter, Mastnjak, Stromberg, Kynes, *et al*.). The pioneer, of course, was and is Michael Fishbane, whose *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* paved the way for many stated above (along with the current reviewer) to illu-

minate the reuse and interpretation of scripture *in* scripture. However, he only receives a brief mention under the rubble of many footnotes (p. 159 f.n. 10). The depths of literary interpretation that are opened once one grasps how the OT is already referencing, revising, reusing with wordplay, rewriting, alluding, expanding, analogising and so on, within the parameters of the corpus unlocks another dimension for the reader.

In Part 2, Longman finally takes the theory unearthed in the previous section and applies it in a more sustained fashion to both the Torah and Prophets (pp.172-196). To kick things off, he looks at the garden expulsion story of the primeval humans found in Genesis 3 (pp. 172-78). Longman helpfully and uncontroversially sets the passage in it in its wider literary context of Gen. 1-11 (p. 172). And further (more controversially) makes the preliminary call that the first 11 chapters of Genesis present 'a figurative depiction of a historical event' (p. 172). This deeply informs his analysis. As is typical of prose narratives the perspective is that of the third person omniscient narrator (p. 175). The narrative moves forward based on the dialogue of the four main characters (serpent, man, woman, and God) (p. 175). He then proceeds scene by scene making note of and unpacking the meaning of the story along the way and concludes with what seems too close to theological moreso than literary conclusions (p. 178).

The reading here could in my view, have been enhanced by attention to other demonstrable textual features such as: etiologies, which Gen. 1-11 as a whole is at pains to present (why humans die, why work is toilsome, why birthing is laborious, why snakes move how they do and so on); eponyms (*'adam* and *chavah*) 'human' and 'life' Adam as the eponymous ancestor who all humans descend from and Eve likewise represents where all of life comes from; and lastly intertextualities, there are many features of this text that set the pattern and precedent for what follows. For example, the question given in Gen. 3:13 closely reflects what is stated in 4:10 and later with Pharoah and Abram in Gen. 12:17. Or the repetition of humans being moved further and further 'east" Gen. 3:24, 4:16, and culminating in Gen. 11:2. Not to mention the expulsion of the primordial couple here and it's parallel of the people of Israel exiled to the east (to Babylon) in defiance of God's command like the couple. Or the boundaries that are crossed in the near context of Gen. 1-11. In Gen. 3 humans seek to transgress the boundary between them and the gods (upward). In Gen. 6 gods come down and mate with human women (downward). And in Gen. 11 the nations seek to go up to storm the heavens (upward), each all follow the boundary + punishment pattern. This transgressive boundary crossing is set in motion in the primeval expulsion story (among many other things!).

In the final section we are given various readings of the Hebrew poetic texts from the psalms, sapiential literature, and prophets (pp. 198-246). Most insightful here is the discussion Longman gives of Qohelet a book he knows remarkably well as demonstrated in his NICOT commentary of the same text and its parallels with his doctoral work on Akkadian Autobiographies. He accentuates the prominence of *voice* and how it is key to interpreting the book. Recognising the interplay of the frame narrator's evaluation of the words of Qohelet within the book is key in making sense of the text *qua* literature (p. 229).

In conclusion, Longman gives a helpful introduction to the literary features of the OT and how to take them into account in the reading process. Most impressive is his discussion and theorising of genre and its necessity for any literary reading. I also deeply appreciated a thread of 'complexity' that runs throughout. The fact of the matter is that the process on offer here is not as straightforward as Longman makes it look. He says so at multiple turns just how complicated the task is (already on p. 19!). This is because of: the nature of our data/sources and the deep distance that stands between the modern interpreter and the ancient text. *How does one talk about authorial intention when the authors are anonymous? How do we talk about 'The Old Testament' when different Christian traditions have different Old Testaments? How can we talk about genre in a specific time-period when these texts are longue durée, that is likely composed over a long period of time by multiple hands? How do we speak of 'diachronic' intertextual readings when most scholars do not agree on the date of any given two compositions, or if they can be dated at all?* These difficulties (and many others) make our task much taller than many may assume based on the finesse with which Longman can move across the corpus. The good thing is *The Old Testament as Literature provides helpful ways of managing and approaching the issues*. A close and careful reading of Longman aids in equipping the interpreter with the necessary skills and categories to do a close and careful reading of the OT as the ancient, artistic, and sophisticated literature that it is.

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Fully Alive: Tending to the Soul in Turbulent Times. By Elizabeth Oldfield. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-3998-1076-0. 272pp. £18.99.

In her thoughtful work, *Fully Alive: Tending to the Soul in Turbulent Times*, Elizabeth Oldfield offers a profound reflection on how to navigate the challenges of modern life while tending to the soul. With a deep

understanding of the spiritual struggles many face, Oldfield invites readers to embrace practices that not only sustain them but also help them flourish in a world characterised by rapid change, uncertainty, and often, disconnection. Combining theological insight with personal reflection, Oldfield's book calls readers to a more intentional, spiritually rooted life amidst the chaos of contemporary culture.

Fully Alive is both personal and theological, offering a blend of storytelling, introspective commentary, and biblical wisdom that is both engaging and deeply reflective. The book acknowledges the overwhelming speed of life today, with its technological demands, societal pressures, and the challenge of sustaining meaningful relationships in an increasingly fragmented world. Despite these challenges, Oldfield emphasises that the soul can not only survive but thrive when we engage in practices that anchor us to God and his purpose for our lives.

The overarching theme of *Fully Alive* is human flourishing—understood not as mere survival, but as living fully in the presence of God and embracing the abundant life Christ offers. Oldfield expertly blends theological reflection with real-life application, making the book accessible not only to scholars and theologians but also to those in the pews seeking practical advice on spiritual formation. The book is organised into four major sections that address key components of spiritual life in today's world: the importance of attention to the inner life, the role of spiritual practices, the power of tradition, and the relevance of grace.

A significant portion of Oldfield's focus is on the value of slowing down and cultivating attentiveness to God. In a world constantly demanding more of our time and energy, she argues that cultivating a mindful awareness of God's presence is key to flourishing. Practices such as prayer, meditation, and sabbath rest are shown to be essential not only for spiritual health but for sustaining a sense of peace and well-being. Oldfield calls her readers to embrace these practices with humility and commitment, not as a means to achieve success or perfection but as a way to stay grounded in the present moment and open to God's transformative work.

While the book is deeply theological, Oldfield avoids the temptation to dive into complex jargon or abstract theories. Instead, she focuses on creating a pastoral, practical guide that helps readers see the immediate relevance of spirituality in their daily lives. Her reflections on faith are grounded in real-world experience, and she challenges readers to live in a way that aligns their hearts with the loving presence of God. This makes *Fully Alive* appealing to both academic audiences and everyday readers looking for ways to integrate their faith more deeply into their lives.

At the heart of *Fully Alive* lies a robust theology of human flourishing. Oldfield draws from the rich tradition of Christian thought, emphasising that true flourishing is found not in personal achievement or worldly success but in living according to God's design for human beings. She explores the biblical concept of shalom—God's vision for peace, wholeness, and well-being—and shows how this extends beyond mere physical or material well-being to encompass emotional, relational, and spiritual health.

Oldfield's theology is deeply incarnational, underscoring that God's presence in the world is not distant or abstract but tangible and close. She draws heavily from the teachings of Jesus and the Christian tradition to make clear that flourishing is about learning to live in relationship with God, others, and creation. One of the book's most compelling theological points is its emphasis on the sufficiency of God's grace to sustain us, even when we are exhausted, overwhelmed, or disillusioned. Oldfield reminds her readers that it is in these moments of weakness that God's grace shines the brightest, inviting us to trust in his provision rather than relying on our own strength.

While *Fully Alive* offers deep and enriching insights into spiritual growth, some readers might find that the book occasionally drifts into a tone of repetition. Some of the theological concepts are reintroduced throughout the book, which may be off-putting for readers looking for new or fresh perspectives. However, the strength of the book lies in its pastoral tone and the practical application of spiritual practices, which may outweigh these occasional repetitions for many readers. The gentleness and accessibility of Oldfield's writing make it more of a resource for sustained spiritual growth rather than a one-time read.

Fully Alive is an invaluable resource for anyone seeking to cultivate a deeper, more vibrant spiritual life. Elizabeth Oldfield's reflections on grace, community, and spiritual practices offer a much-needed antidote to the frenetic pace of modern life. The book serves as a guide for navigating the complexities of contemporary existence by embracing the soul-nourishing practices that have always been central to the Christian faith. For readers who are weary and in need of spiritual refreshment, *Fully Alive* is both an invitation and a balm—reminding us that flourishing is not found in striving but in receiving the grace that God offers.

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Jesus and Divine Christology. By Brant Pitre. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7512-9. 416pp. $39.99.

The notion that Jesus never claimed to be divine was popularized by the quest for the historical Jesus beginning in the 18th century and has been the majority view of critical scholars ever since. Brant Pitre directly confronts this idea in his new book, as he argues that Jesus did speak and act as if he were divine during his ministry. Pitre traces the development of this topic from both early and modern historical Jesus scholars and calls for a re-evaluation of the theory that Jesus never claimed to be divine. From the outset of the book, Pitre builds a foundation on the high Christology of the early church. Since early Christians undeniably viewed Jesus as divine, Pitre argues that the most logical reason for this is because Jesus did claim to be divine during his ministry. He bases his argument on several key factors, including the context of Second Temple Judaism in which Jesus' teaching was situated as well as the methodology used to determine which of Jesus' statements in the Gospels are deemed authentic. These two factors run as consistent themes throughout the book, and many of the arguments that Pitre makes tie back to these themes.

One of the first ways that Pitre supports his argument that Jesus spoke and acted as if he were divine during his lifetime is by examining Jesus' reputation as a miracle worker. Pitre argues that it is not simply that Jesus had the reputation of being a miracle worker, but it was the *kinds* of miracles that Jesus was purported to have performed that point to the understanding of his deity. Pitre labels these miracles that reveal Jesus' divine identity as 'epiphany' miracles. Pitre examines the setting of some of these miracles to draw comparisons between what Jesus did in his ministry and what God did in the Old Testament. This includes instances such as Jesus calming the storm by speaking to it, Jesus walking on water, and Jesus' glory being revealed at the transfiguration. All these miracles contain accounts of Jesus himself possessing the authority to do things that, against the backdrop of the Old Testament and Second Temple period, only God is understood to have done. In this, Pitre does an excellent job of tracing the thread of how Jews living in the Second Temple period would have viewed Jesus' actions and claims with even more seriousness and would have caught more subtle references to his divinity that modern audiences might miss.

As the book progresses, Pitre continues to trace this thread through Jesus' parables and his apocalyptic teaching. Pitre argues that Jesus' parables not only concealed the truth of his teaching from his opponents but also concealed his identity from them while simultaneously revealing his divine identity to his genuine followers. He then examines

Jesus' parabolic statements, such as his higher demand for love than a person's own father or mother or his response, 'No one is good but God alone' after being called 'good teacher' as examples of his divinity being subtly revealed. Pitre argues that statements like this would have been more clearly understood in the Second Temple context by those willing to accept them. Regarding Jesus' apocalyptic teaching, Pitre traces this thread through Jesus' claims to be Daniel's 'Son of Man' and the Davidic Messiah who has the authority to usher in the end of the age, arguing that Jesus' contemporaries would have viewed someone who made such claims to clearly be more than human.

Pitre's final arguments have to do with the charges of blasphemy that were levied against Jesus during his ministry. Pitre develops the argument that, while others in the Second Temple period claimed the status of being the Messiah, the charges brought against Jesus through his trial and crucifixion were more severe and unique than others at this time. Through this, Pitre argues that there must have been more to Jesus' claims than simply being the human Messiah, and those who charged him with blasphemy would have understood this. This was the case at Jesus' trial and ultimate crucifixion, but also in the claims during his ministry where he is charged with blasphemy. This was a convincing, strong case to close out Pitre's overall argument and is a solid contribution to this question and field of study.

This book's biggest strength lies in the immense amount of research that clearly took place to support each argument that Pitre makes. Pitre is meticulous in his quoting and extensive footnoting, leaving no stone unturned for each point that he argues. He begins each chapter and key point with quotes from a variety of scholars, ranging from more critical and liberal to more conservative. He does not avoid arguments or build strawmen but addresses the strongest arguments for or against each point that he makes. Another strength of the book is that it does not just address surface-level proof-texts as some others that address this subject do. He does not just examine the content of Jesus' statements but explores how Jesus' words would have been understood in the context of Second Temple Judaism and compares them to contemporary issues at that time. This adds much depth to his arguments and provides a fresh perspective on this topic at the same time. Because of this, however, the book's audience is somewhat limited to an audience that has some working understanding of the culture of Second Temple Judaism, as Pitre does not spend much time explaining more basic components of this culture. As long as the reader has some working knowledge of this period or is willing to read other sources alongside this one, this book is an extremely helpful contribution to this subject.

Overall, this is an exceptional work on the topic of how Jesus presented his divinity in his teaching and actions. Anyone interested in the topic of Jesus' divinity will gain from reading this book, not only from Pitre's own arguments, but also from the extensive list of sources that he interacts with and cites.

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Cultural Sanctification: Engaging the World Like the Early Church. By Stephen O. Presley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7854-0. 230pp. £18.99.

A common criticism of many Protestants, especially in the twentieth century, is their ambivalence towards church history before the Reformation. This attitude stands in sharp contrast with the Reformers themselves and Protestant scholars who followed them, who read and admired many of the medieval scholastics and ancient church fathers. For those interested in Patristics, the multi-volume works edited by Philip Schaff (1819-93) – himself a Reformed Protestant – and the volumes of the Ante-Nicene Fathers have served readers well for over a century. These volumes are now joined by new critical editions from OUP (Oxford Early Christian Texts) and reader editions in the Popular Patristics series from St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. Alongside these developments is a renewed appreciation and retrieval amongst Protestants of the Church Fathers, which this book by Stephen Presley is just the latest example.

Presley's book is not a history book *per se* but more a work of cultural analysis or apologetics using the writings of the Church Fathers as a lens to view and critique our present moment. His main argument is that Christians in the US (and by implication, in other Western countries) are now in a similar situation to second-century Christians; that is, we dwell in a culture where Christianity is increasingly in the minority and where more and more people are hostile to Christian beliefs and practices. In this, Presley builds on the work of (amongst others) Charles Taylor and his concept of 'social imaginaries' and Carl Trueman's critique of expressive individualism. Although we would term our cultural moment 'Secularism', instead, Presley argues that it is more akin to ancient Paganism.

This context of post-Christianity poses a challenge to the Church that it has not had to face for over a thousand years. Presley identifies and critiques two common reactions: that of isolation, as exemplified by Rod Dreher's *The Benedict Option* (Prentice Hall Press, 2017) – or confrontation, before presenting his preferred option, cultural sanctification. Presley defines cultural sanctification as:

> …recogniz[ing] that Christians are necessarily embedded within their culture and must seek sanctification (both personal and corporate) in a way that draws upon the forms and features of their environment to transform them by pursuing virtue. This Christian performance of sanctification involves defending the faith, sharing the good news of salvation found in Christ, and visibly embodying all the virtues of the Christian spirituality in ways that persuade others (p. 57).

Those readers familiar with Tim Keller's work will see affinities here with Keller's 'Third Way' approach to cultural engagement, itself indebted to the neo-Calvinism of Kuyper and Bavinck or, using the categories of Reinhold Niebuhr, 'Christ *transforms* culture'.

In five chapters, Presley goes on to elaborate on how the early church worked out cultural sanctification that eventually transformed the Graeco-Roman world. In chapter one, he discusses how early Christians defined themselves through catechesis and worship or belief and practice (such as baptism). In chapter two, Presley looks at the political dimension of the ancient world, especially how the early Christians lived under a government that was, at best, ambivalent towards them. Chapter three examines how the early church defended and promoted itself amongst the other philosophies and worldviews that vied for people's attention. Chapter four looks at the public life of ordinary people and how early Christians' distinctive way of living earned them a voice in the public square. And finally, chapter five presents the unique eschatological hope that enabled the early church to endure and thrive under great trials.

Presley is a great writer with the ability to bring the ancient world to life. For example, in his introduction, Presley recounts his experience of the baptistry in St. John the Lateran in Rome with vividness and immediacy, as if the reader were standing alongside him. Presley is also able to summarise clearly and concisely the thoughts and arguments of the Early Church Fathers, which makes this book an easy read for the uninitiated. It is also clear that Presley is well-read and conversant with many of the patristic writers and their works, which he references. In the opinion of this reviewer, Presley makes a good case for his thesis and backs up his argument well.

However, this reviewer does have a few caveats. First, as this book is a popular introduction to some of the first Christian writings, Presley's broad approach can give the impression that the writers he engages with all spoke with the same voice. There is little sense of the multiple perspectives represented in the Early Church. Second, Presley does not give specifics on how precisely the reader can apply the teachings of the Early Church Fathers to their context and the current cultural issues. For exam-

ple, in chapter one, Presley claims that the early church built its identity on catechesis and patterns of worship. But what might this look like in the twenty-first century? Here, the reader will need the help of other resources, such as Carl Trueman's *Crisis of Confidence* (Crossway, 2024; previously published as *The Creedal Imperative*, 2012). This reviewer believes it would be helpful to have included similar suggestions for further reading. Third, although Presley acknowledges the differences between the second century and the twenty-first (pp.18-20), this point gets lost. For example, whereas in the first five centuries, Christianity was the new kid on the block, challenging the existing order, in the twenty-first century, Christianity is the belief system being challenged. We are no longer speaking truth to power; we *are* the power! This reviewer would have preferred more time spent reflecting on these differences and whether this changes how we read and appropriate patristic thought today.

Even with these caveats in mind, this is still an excellent book, and if it encourages more Protestant Christians to read historical theology, especially the primary texts, then it will have succeeded admirably.

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Mission of God and the Witness of the Church. Edited by Justin A. Schell, Dane Ortlund, and Miles V. Van Pelt. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-4335-8158-8. 144pp. £12.99.

With a background in both biblical theology and mission studies, Justin A. Schell was the ideal author to take on the great challenge of interpreting the mission of God in the Bible in a succinct yet thought-provoking manner.

In a time when *missio dei* is treated as a given missiological framework, and little is written to constructively critique the 'missional hermeneutic' movement from a biblical-theological perspective, this short book is a breath of fresh air. Schell gives a broad yet practical definition of mission in his introduction; a definition that focuses on God's self-revelation rather than human neediness, and on divine-human relationship rather than the specific idea of 'sending'. In the first chapter, examining the God of mission adds additional foundations to the argument that God's mission is graciously revelatory and intrinsically relational. Such a clear explanation at the beginning of the book enables the author to later go on to argue that 'mission' existed pre-Fall, indeed before the very creation of time and space.

The Mission of God and the Witness of the Church overtly (and somewhat proudly) utilises a redemptive-historical approach. Schell proposes this as a theocentric alternative to contemporary missional hermeneutical

approaches, which he claims are in danger of becoming overly anthropocentric and/or cosmocentric. From Chapter Two onwards, the reader is taken on a whistle-stop, but not haphazard, chronological tour of the Bible, with the objective of demonstrating the common 'missional' thread of revelation and relationship, both running through and cutting across the Old and New Testaments.

We begin in the Garden of Eden, where a relational mandate, rather than the more commonly presented 'cultural mandate', is revealed to humanity (Chapter Two). Following the breaking of the divine-human relationship due to sin, the survey of the rest of the Old Testament emphasises God's self-disclosure, from the delivery of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to the 'I am' statements of Isaiah (Chapters Three and Four). Not only does God reveal himself to Israel, but he also provides the means for his people to be a witness to surrounding nations. The reader is briefly shown how Yahweh provides law, temple, and kingdom for his people in the Old Testament to give the opportunity for foreigners outside Israel to see God's glory and power through the witness of his people (Chapter Five).

Schell presents these events of the Old Testament as types pointing forward to God's ultimate self-disclosure through his own son Jesus Christ, who offers everlasting relationship with God the Father. There is, therefore, simultaneously continuity and discontinuity from the Old into the New Testament. In keeping with the redemptive-historical focus, Schell interprets the Great Commission not as a supplementary command, but rather as a summary of the whole Gospel of Matthew as it reveals Jesus and his inaugurated kingdom (Chapter Six).

Chapter Seven logically moves on to Luke-Acts and the activities of the church following Pentecost, continually pointing back to Old Testament ideas which are fulfilled in Christ and embodied by his church as reunified witnesses to the ends of the earth. As the book draws to a close, it opts for an overview of the concluding books of the Bible. Despite the lack of a standard conclusion, the eighth and final chapter is still able to highlight several key themes from the preceding chapters, such as the context of humanity in creation, restored relationships and the global nature of the church.

Throughout the book, key terms from biblical theology and missiology are defined clearly and in context, making the writing easy to read, but the content not overly simplified. In a rare occurrence, this work's accessibility to the layperson does not hamper the refreshment it offers to the mission theologian. Schell's presentation of proclamation in mission as special revelation (which is required for salvation) and works of mercy and justice in mission as general revelation (which ultimately does not

save in and of itself), is a fresh and particularly helpful contribution to the contemporary discussion of the mission of the church. The book would, however, have benefitted from acknowledging the recentness of the development of the *missio dei* interpretation as it is understood in mission theology today. The concept of *missio dei* is ubiquitous in missiology, but it is important to remember that it is interpreted and used in different ways in the field.

While containing little practical application for the local church, which is unsurprising given the biblical theological rather than missiological framework of the book, *The Mission of God and the Witness of the Church* can operate as a springboard for the biblical theologian to engage in further reading in the area of mission studies. I would recommend J. H. Bavinck's work on general revelation for additional and stimulating reading on the role of revelation and relationship in the mission of God and his church.

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T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul. Edited by Ryan S. Schellenberg and Heidi Wendt. London; New York: T&T Clark, 2022. ISBN: 978-0-5676-9196-5 (hardback), 978-0-5677-0765-9 (paperback). xvi + 490pp. Hardback $171.00; Paperback $54.95.

The *T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul*, edited by Ryan S. Schellenberg and Heidi Wendt, is a distinctive collection of essays 'attempting to shed what has been the governing paradigm' in historical Paul studies (p. 4). Aimed at scholars and researchers engaged in historical Paul studies, this work features a diverse group of contributors with expertise in Pauline studies and Greco-Roman history, philology, culture, and literature. While the editors are upfront about some of the differing views amongst the authors, there is a unifying purpose throughout the essays. There is a clear emphasis on redefining historical methodologies pertaining to Paul and what appears to be a reimagining of sorts of the socio-historical approach (what the editors refer to as social and cultural contextualisation). Schellenberg and Wendt describe the goal of the work as 'a thoroughgoing redescription, one that redraws the boundaries of what counts as evidence for the historical Paul with all dimensions of that person subject to scrutiny and revision' (p. 4). They view the preoccupation of previous historical Paul studies as constrained by rigid boundaries. The precedent of studying Paul for the content of his thought rather than the historical person has, in their view, produced a 'conventional image of Paul' detached from his cultural milieu (p. 2). What makes this

work unique is the desire to break free from conventional boundaries and reevaluate Paul 'as a contextually plausible social actor' (p. 3). To achieve this, the editors organise the contributions into three primary sections: (1) Sources and Methodology, (2) Biographical Problems, and (3) Epistolary Micro-Biographies. The handbook's breadth and depth are extensive, so I will focus my comments primarily on one essay from each section.

Part 1 ('Sources and Methodology') pursues issues related to 'relevant sources and the history of their transmission and interpretation' (p. 4). Contributors in this section grapple afresh with the challenge of determining the Pauline corpus. The outlier in this section is Eve-Marie Becker's survey of the discussion of Paul's personhood and notion of self as it relates to the history of religions school, philosophical and sociological paradigms, and the heuristics of modern biography. Leif Vaage's essay, 'The Corpus Paulinum', stands out as an innovative and intriguing proposal. Vaage argues for a 'new historiographical approach to Pauline biography' (p. 53), which is comprised of four steps: (1) exclude Acts, (2) utilize Papyrus 46, (3) exclude the notion of 'discursive authenticity,' (i.e. meaning the exclusion of the idea that ancient texts correspond directly to the living human being), and (4) establish the 'matter of facts' (based upon scholarly consensus) (pp. 15-17). Vaage also makes the thought-provoking claim that the idea of human embodiment necessitates the historical task of biography, albeit a task that will produce varying iterations of the historical Paul.

Part 2 ('Biographical Problems') discusses several topics such as Paul's travel and homelessness, manual labour and sustenance, beatings and imprisonments, appearance and health, singleness and celibacy, Jewish titles (Ioudaios, Pharisee, Zealot), literacy and education, mythmaking and exegesis, divination and miracles, religious experience, death, and chronology. The eleven essays in this section comprise the bulk of the book, offering fresh perspectives on topics often overlooked and underresearched in Pauline studies. Timothy Marquis's essay on Paul's travel and homelessness probes questions of Paul's motivations for travel. It raises the issue of how Paul's travel throughout the Roman world '…problematises our attempts to isolate certain human phenomena from others, or from their larger sociohistorical contexts' (p. 88).

Marquis shifts the focus away from the Acts account of Paul's 'so-called' missionary journeys to the broader idea that Paul's travel was essential to his ministry, serving as a tool for his apostolic authority and a vehicle for his rhetorical messaging. Marquis claims, 'In narrating his travels, Paul found an opportunity to reframe his self-image' (p. 101).

Finally, Part 3 ('Epistolary Micro-Biographies') assesses Paul's canonical letters or sets of letters to establish 'a clarity of focus seldom seen

in biographical treatments of Paul' (p. 4). These letters include Romans, The Corinthian correspondence, Galatians, Philippians and Philemon, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians, and the pastoral epistles. Kathy Ehrensperger's essay on Romans highlights some key biographical features of Paul, such as his self-perception as a δοῦλος (slave) and ἀπόστολος (messenger), his distinctly Jewish identity as well as his travel plans tied to the purpose of collecting an offering. Ehrensperger also underscores the importance of Paul's relationship with Phoebe through an acknowledgment that she is a 'leader in the Christian movement' (p. 303). She argues that Paul's self-portrait in Romans is more revealing than some of his other letters. Ehrensperger emphasizes that Paul was 'part of a movement, a significant network, a team, all sustained by enthusiastic collaborators', highlighting his embeddedness in a collective effort rather than a solitary endeavour (p. 305).

In summary, *T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul* operates within the philosophical framework that 'ideas have no life in the world apart from the individual and social bodies in which they dwell, and that, consequently, to study them unmindful of these bodies is necessarily to distort their historical significance' (p. 5). This volume successfully achieves its original aims, expanding the historical boundaries and social dimensions of historical Paul studies. With the wide-ranging essays, there is little to critique. However, the inclusion of a chapter exploring the historical Paul's relationship to Jewish apocalyptic literature and the social dimensions of early Jewish interpretive methodology might have enriched the collection. Additionally, a chapter on Paul and spatiality would have complemented the emphasis in several essays on Paul's self-perception and the mapping of his world through rhetorical messages and physical travel. Overall, this handbook serves as a valuable and welcome partner for contemporary engagement with historical Paul studies.

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The Transfiguration of Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Reading. By Patrick Schreiner. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6596-7. 208pp. $26.99.

New Testament scholars may be familiar with Patrick Schreiner as a prominent contributor to contemporary biblical scholarship. A recurring theme in Schreiner's works is the glorification of Christ in New Testament and biblical theological studies. In this book, Schreiner explores the glorification of Christ through his dual sonship at the transfiguration. He argues that the transfiguration, often overlooked in scholarly discourse, not only anticipates an eschatological future but also offers a retrospective

view of the primordial Christ. Schreiner contends that modern scholarship typically interprets the transfiguration as a preview of the ultimate messianic reality, depicting the worship of Jesus solely in relation to his risen and exalted identity, while neglecting his pre-existent nature. For Schreiner, however, the transfiguration preserves both Jesus' earthly mission and divine nature, presenting a crucial intersection between *ad intra* and *ad extra*—between who the Son is and who he will be (p. 22).

Beyond exegetical insight, Schreiner's work addresses methodological concerns at the intersection of several theological disciplines. This book operates within three primary fields—New Testament studies, biblical theology, and systematics—advocating for greater integration among them. In the following chapters, Schreiner interprets the transfiguration through three distinct frameworks: traditional, trinitarian, and christological. This project marks a significant step towards addressing the one-dimensional reading of Scripture that has emerged from rigid disciplinary divisions.

Schreiner's approach begins with the traditional rules of exegesis and then traces the themes of the transfiguration intertextually *throughout* the story of Scripture to uncover its full theological meaning. Chapter two situates this traditional exegetical approach within the *quadriga*, or fourfold senses of Scripture. Schreiner examines the transfiguration through four levels of meaning: the literal (historical), spiritual (typological), tropological (moral), and anagogical (eschatological). Here, readers see Schreiner's commitment to Christian dogmatics, influenced by the patristic and early Christian interpreters. However, he limits the use of the fourfold senses to the second chapter, which addresses the narrative setting of the transfiguration, arguing that extending it further would make the rest of the book too repetitive. By providing a formal introduction to the fourfold senses in chapter two, Schreiner likely feels a sense of freedom to adopt a more organic exegetical approach in chapters three and four, allowing him to bring dogmatic sensibilities to the forefront.

In chapters three and four, Schreiner attends to the mystical and symbolic dimensions of the transfiguration. Chapter three, *The Glorious Signs*, focuses on a trinitarian 'grammar', while chapter four, *The Glorious Sayings*, interprets the various discourses spoken at the transfiguration through a christological 'grammar'. He concludes his analysis by shifting from Jesus' dual sonship to interpreting the transfiguration in relation to other christological events, thereby expanding its meaning within the broader narrative.

While Schreiner intends for all three interpretive frameworks or 'grammars' to be utilized together for a multidimensional reading of Scripture, his decision to treat the different components of the transfiguration—

setting, signs, and sayings—separately raises the question of whether he successfully integrates systematic and biblical theology as seamlessly as intended. One could argue that the *quadriga* could sufficiently satisfy the dogmatic grammar, with the tropological and anagogical senses encompassing the theological aspects Schreiner seeks to integrate.

Nevertheless, Schreiner successfully highlights the importance of the transfiguration within the biblical narrative, correcting the misconception that the event is out of place. For scholars, the event stands in stark contrast to what is otherwise perceived as a smooth narrative. However, this book presents the transfiguration as a key element in the larger redemptive narrative, proclaiming both the cosmic and eschatological Jesus.

This book is a valuable resource for both seminaries and churches, engaging with high-level theological and biblical discourse. Schreiner's introductions effectively frame the chapter's purpose, engaging readers with personal anecdotes and tangible illustrations, making the content easily accessible for those unfamiliar with New Testament discourse and beneficial for both pastors and theologians alike. Written for an American context, Schreiner seeks to challenge the assumptions of his Western Protestant Evangelical audience. As he notes, "It [the transfiguration] was generative for how the earliest Christians spoke about the gospel, Christ, and God himself…" (p. 34). Compared to the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox church, Western traditions have oversimplified the profundities embedded in the unassumed event of the transfiguration. Consequently, this has had detrimental effects on Christology, as seen in the Western reticence to engage with *theosis* in the same manner as the Eastern Orthodox churches. It is worth considering whether the simplification of the transfiguration and its subsequent effects on christology are equally pronounced in Western non-evangelical contexts, such as Anglicanism or Catholicism.

Regardless, Schreiner's focus on the transfiguration provides a fresh approach that challenges traditional interpretations, particularly in Evangelical contexts. By examining this pivotal event through multiple theological lenses, Schreiner offers a more nuanced understanding of Christ's identity, taking His glory seriously and providing valuable insights for scholarship. This book challenges its audience to engage more deeply with the transfiguration, allowing the mystery of Christ to transcend narrative and instead rest within a symbolic grammar that points to the trinitarian and christological depths.

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Acts 1–9:42. Volume 37A, Word Biblical Commentary. By Steve Walton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2025. ISBN: 978-0-310-59938-8. 697pp. £57.00.

Since the early 1980s, the Word Biblical Commentary (WBC) series has set the high watermark for academic biblical commentary in the (broadly and historically understood) evangelical tradition. A noticeable gap in the series has been the Book of Acts, especially given that John Nolland's three volumes on Luke have sat in libraries for over three decades. Steve Walton's commentary on Acts has been greatly anticipated and moves the WBC one step closer to completion.

There is no anticlimax here, Walton's commentary proves to be more than worth the wait. If anything, the publication of the commentary is timely, arriving during exciting juncture in Acts scholarship. The past two decades have seen a significant reassessment of issues like such as eschatology, narrative craft, genre, authorship, and relationship to Judaism (to name only a few). Walton is conversant with these developments, but the commentary is focused on the Acts itself, rather than offering a commentary on other commentaries or this history of interpretation. The detailed, though not distractingly excessive, footnotes point the interested reader to further studies (footnotes are a welcome recent development in the WBC, since Zondervan started publishing the series). The first volume finishes at Acts 9:42, with the Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria narratives coming to a close. Peter lodging with Simon the Tanner, for Walton, marks a transition in the text's geographical narrative purview.

The commentary opens with an introduction about how to use the commentary and describes its unique theocentric approach. In the introductory material, Walton provides a fantastic introduction to the notoriously knotty textual issues of Luke-Acts, manuscript tradition. The commentary, for the most part, follows the NA28/UBS5, but judiciously considers other textual witnesses when relevant. This chapter provides one of the clearest introductions on the matter that I have encountered; it will be appreciated by teachers and students alike.

Those who have used a WBC volume before will already be familiar with its format. After introductory material (normally critical issues related to date, author, and audience), each section of commentary beings with bibliography, then a translation, translation notes, comment on form/structure/setting, a detailed verse-by-verse commentary on the text, and finally an explanation that brings the preceding strands of insights together. The format is logical, but it may feel cumbersome for those unfamiliar with the WBC. Aware of this, Walton suggests that readers start at the final explanation section because it 'pulls the threads of the discussion

together to offer an interpretation of the whole pericope. I often say to students and pastors that this is the section of the Word Biblical Commentary to read first' (p. 87). After understanding the bigger picture, the detail makes more sense. This good advice, not only for this volume, but serves as a primer on getting the most out of any WBC volume. It will help the uninitiated navigate the commentary and avoid falling into a rabbit warren of text-critical issues and translation notes at the outset.

Although the sections of the commentary may appeal to different readers, they do not read as disparate sections. An example of this Walton's discussion of Acts 2:46. Rather than grammar and syntax being a sideshow, Walton shows how grammar is significant to our understanding of wider text. Walton argues that the repetition of the conjunctions in Acts 2:46 (τε… τε) means that 'both participle clauses are dependent on… "they shared food"' (p. 227). The implication is that, rather than happening in private homes, these early meals took place publicly *within* the Temple complex, with an evangelistic intent. Walton finds continuity with Jesus' public meals, as described in the first volume, Luke. Walton follows this thread into the explanation section, where inclusive meals are activity of Christian witness. Walton's exegesis helps us to see the activity of the early church in a new light and, in this reviewer's opinion, has relevance to the ongoing discussion on the 'partings of the ways' between Judaism and Christianity.

Walton's translations offer a clear, but not clunky, rendering of the Greek. A good example is his translation of Acts 6:1. Instead of glossing Ελληνιστῶν and Ἑβραίους as 'Hellenists' and 'Hebrews' (as glossed in the NRSVus and ESV), Walton opts for 'Greek speakers' and 'Hebrew speakers'. The significance of this is teased out with reference to parallel uses in Jewish and Graeco-Roman literature and sensitivity to the wider socio-cultural context, showing that this is deeper than mere linguistic difference. In keeping with his integrative approach, Walton draws out the implications of his translation. The neglect of the Greek speaking widows means that the 'credibility of the believing community is here at stake' (p. 421). Despite the technicality of the discussion that leads up to this point, Walton is eminently readable and has a knack for a memorable turn of phrase, 'The communal solution to this communal issue leads to communal growth' (p. 423). While Walton's translation and interpretation helpfully parses the social dynamics in Acts 6, the figure of Paul could complicate matters. From Tarsus (Acts 21:39) Paul would presumably fit into the category of 'Greek speaker' and their synagogal networks (Acts 6:9), but Luke also describes him as fluent in Aramaic (Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). This translation decision makes it especially interesting how

Walton will gloss Ἑλληνιστάς in Acts 11:20 and approach its textual variants in the forthcoming volume.

A noteworthy aspect of this commentary is Walton's strong exegetical case for Luke's high Christology. Walton argues that in Luke's use of Joel 3:1,2 (LXX) Jesus is given the role normally given to Yahweh with the pouring out of the Spirit. This makes sense of the Christian worship of Jesus because, 'Jesus properly deserves the worship that Israel's God alone should receive (e.g., 7:59; cf. Luke 23:42)' (p. 199). This is not a one off. Walton later demonstrates, via the LXX and Second Temple literature, that the description of Jesus as the 'holy and righteous one of god' (p. 264) in Acts 3:14 means that 'Jesus exhibits key characteristics of YHWH' (p. 286). Taken together, these arguments underscore Walton's broader claim that Luke intentionally portrays Jesus with the identity and prerogatives of Israel's God, making a contribution to ongoing discussions of early high Christology.

The release of another multi-volume commentary on Acts will no doubt invite comparison with Craig Keener's landmark, meticulously referenced, four-volume commentary (Baker Academic, 2012–2015). Some might even ask: is another multi-volume study of Acts even necessary? Despite their broad scope, the two commentaries differ significantly. In many ways, Keener's commentary serves as a comprehensive reference volume which cites nearly all scholarship on Acts up to 2015. The first volume is a collection of essays on the major critical issues, and the commentary on the text is broken up by numerous and lengthy excursuses on key topics. Walton's commentary, however, is an different beast. As Walton explicitly states in the introduction, 'The text is the focus of our discussion, not the scholars and their opinions' (p. 86). Both commentaries make an essential contribution, but differ markedly in method, focus, and scope.

Walton made a conscious decision to defer the normal introductory material about authorship, audience, and date until his third and final volume. While respecting this decision, it still would be helpful to have summary statements of underlying assumptions on major critical matters. There are hints within the commentary, such as where Walton describes Luke's audience as 'predominantly gentile' (p. 397). Although it does not alter Walton's conclusions, it would be interesting to know if statements like 'Access to God will now be through Jesus, not the temple and its ceremonies' (p. 128) applied not only to the characters within the narrative, but Luke's intended audience. If the text was written (as most scholars now argue) after the Jewish War and the destruction of the Temple, why would Luke make this case to a majority Gentile audience? Such lingering

questions are only provisional because readers can look forward to these questions being resolved in the forthcoming third volume. For readers who are interested in Walton's 'big picture' ideas will appreciate his collection of essays in *Reading Acts Theologically* (T. & T. Clark, 2022), which makes a useful companion volume to this commentary.

This excellent commentary is not only a welcome addition to the WBC series, but also a touchstone publication in Acts scholarship. The commentary will become a staple resource for pastors, students, and scholars alike. Walton is also to be praised for the clarity and candour of his prose. He writes about Luke's often complicated grammar with a deft pedagogical touch, not only providing and explanation, but showing how grammar and syntax are relevant to interpretation. The commentary is not only an essential resource for future studies on Acts but also an exemplary model of generous scholarly engagement, theologically informed exegesis, and quality writing that is clear, accessible, and never needlessly complicated.

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