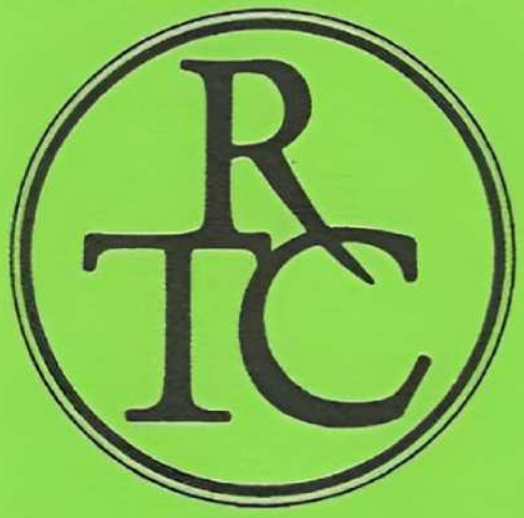

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THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGY OF THOMAS HOUSTON

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The doctrine of Christ's intercession for his people is one that the Church dare not neglect if she is to fulfil her calling in the world to the glory of the Lord. In the Reformed tradition several important studies of the subject have been produced, including Hugh Martin's *The Atonement in its Relations to the Covenant, the Priesthood, the Intercession of our Lord* and *William Symington's On the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ.* One study which has been undeservedly neglected, however, is that by the Irish Covenanter theologian and pastor Thomas Houston (1803-82). His short book The Intercession of Christ well repays careful study and will provide the basis for this study.

The Intercession of Christ was published in 1882, just after Houston's death, by James Gemmell of Edinburgh, and all quotations are taken from this edition.

The Offices of Christ

By way of introduction to Christ's intercessory work, Houston considers a theme that is foundational to everything else that he will say, namely the nature of Christ's task as Mediator.

Houston's treatment of Christ's mediatorial work follows the well-established lines of Reformed theology. The only hope that sinful men and women could have of being saved from sin lies in the grace of God. Salvation, as Houston shows, is rooted in the Covenant of Grace established in eternity within the Trinity, whereby the Son of God undertook to fulfil the roles of Mediator and Surety for those people given to him by the Father. As Houston says,

> the work which He undertook to accomplish was that of mediation - to bring sinners to God, and to be the perpetual medium of all intercourse and blessing between God and them (p.1).

The plan of salvation, as Houston rightly shows, is thoroughly God-centred. It is his prerogative to allow satisfaction to be offered for sinners' breaking of his law, as it is to provide his Son as the one to pay the required ransom. The appointed Mediator is fully God, and thus has all power, and also fully man, and thus is "susceptible of all sympathy and compassion" (p.2). Through such a Mediator, God has made glorious provision for the complete salvation of his people.

Houston first considers Christ's mediation in relation to God. "Christ is the Mediator of reconciliation of sinners to God by His sacrifice and intercession" (pp.2-3). It would not be sufficient for the sinner's salvation if Christ simply interceded for him in heaven. Foundational for his intercession is his sacrificial death which renders to God adequate satisfaction for the sinner's breaking of the divine law. The propitiatory death of Christ the Substitute opens the way for his work in heaven as Intercessor for those whose sins have been dealt with by the shedding of his blood. As we might expect, Houston supports this view with quotations from the book of Hebrews, such as Hebrews 9:12 "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

The intercessory work of Christ is a dimension of the priestly aspect of his mediatorial office. In dealing with the threefold nature of Christ's mediation, as Prophet, Priest and King, Houston helpfully stresses the underlying unity of his work.

> These offices are not only combined in His matchless person and in His undertaking and work for His people, but in their exercise they are ever inseparable (p.9).

Thus, for example, Christ's death was the act of our high priest, the most impressive teaching of the Prophet of the Covenant and, in triumphing over principalities and powers, the greatest manifestation of his authority and glory as King. Houston's treatment of the subject provides a healthy corrective to any tendency to separate the elements of the mediatorial work of Christ.

The Priesthood of Christ

Houston next focuses attention on Christ's work as Priest, which he defines thus:

> Christ Jesus, as Mediator, and as a priest appointed, brings sinners nigh to God; transacts with God on their behalf, and is the medium to them of all gracious communications (p.14).

Houston is at pains to stress that the priesthood of Christ is real and not

figurative, the latter being a view held by Socinians and others. At stake is the reality of the salvation which Christ has provided: if he did not really offer a sacrifice for sins, then redemption has not been accomplished.

Houston states his view of Christ's priestly work in these terms:

> He was the real Substitute provided, and a true and proper surety found to pay the debt which His people owed to God's justice and violated law, and to suffer the penalty in the room of transgressors (p.16).

He supports this by appealing to the wealth of evidence for the reality of Christ's priesthood in both Old and New Testaments, and concludes that,

> Christ Jesus is not figuratively, but Himself the way to the Father ... and through Him sin is actually removed, and for ever purged away (p.18).

Under the heading "Obedience and Sufferings of Christ", Houston then provides a concise survey of the main elements in a Reformed understanding of the atonement. Obedience is crucial to the atonement. The whole life of the Saviour on earth was one of obedience, culminating in his suffering as the sin-bearer on the cross. Christ is to be thought of as Substitute and Surety, taking the place of his people in relation to the law of God, engaging to pay their debt and suffering the penalty due to their transgression. Put in covenantal terms, as a result of Adam's breaking of the first covenant (in Eden), the lives of all are forfeit: Christ the Second Adam engages in the Covenant of Grace to restore to his people that which they had lost in the fall.

This Christ accomplished by the sacrifice of himself, shedding his blood for the guilty. The Old Testament sacrificial system, Houston says, set out clearly this principle of substitution, the innocent in the place of the guilty. The guilt and burden of his people was transferred to Christ and thus, in the words of II Corinthians 5:21, God "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

This high priest, who shared our very nature, rendered perfect and spotless obedience to the Father and, as Houston constantly underlines, it was vicarious obedience, offered by the Substitute in the place of his people. Only he could fulfil that role, the priest, the victim and the altar, and in so doing he experienced to the full, in a way that no-one else could, the wrath of God. As Houston says, his death was in the fullest sense voluntary, it was accepted by God, it was infinitely meritorious and expiatory (see pp.28-29). Of great importance for his intercession is also the fact that his sacrifice "had, in the purpose and plan of human redemption, a definite object, and its benefits were designed for a definite number" (p.29). Houston unashamedly holds to the doctrine of "limited atonement" or, more accurately, "definite atonement". The death of Christ rendered certain the salvation of all for whom he died, and it is

for them that he now intercedes in heaven.

Houston concludes his overview of Christ's priestly work by considering its "ends and results". In relation to God, he says, the atonement "illustrates His character, and displays and vindicates the principle of His moral government" (p.31). At the cross the moral attributes of God, his holiness, justice, grace, mercy, love and truth, are displayed in the clearest possible way, as are his wisdom and power. Closely linked to this assertion is Houston's second point, namely that in the atonement there is a unique manifestation of the harmony and beauty of all the divine perfections. There is shown to be no conflict between any of God's perfections, and God is seen to be both just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus, alluding to Romans 3:26. The third result of the atonement follows inevitably from all that Houston has said: it "presents a true and full satisfaction for sin, and so provides reconciliation to God for the sinner" (p.33). The stage is thus set for a detailed consideration of Christ's intercession for those he reconciles.

Christ the Intercessor

The fact that Christ intercedes for his people is not a piece of abstract theological speculation, but is rather a biblical truth of great practical spiritual value. As Houston says,

> [C]orrect and full views of it will be found eminently conducive to the edification and comfort of the Church, the hopes of the saints, and the progress and triumph of the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth (p.35).

By any reckoning this is a vital truth.

It is important to see that there is a necessary link between Christ's sacrificial death and his intercession. Both are embraced in the Covenant of Redemption which established Christ as Mediator. According to the purpose of God, the covenant provided not only for the purchase of a people by the shedding of Christ's blood, but also for the application of the redemption he had secured to his people.

> This could only be done by Him to whom the whole dispensation of covenant-blessings is entrusted; and this is effected directly and perpetually by His all-powerful intercession (p.36).

All the blessings of salvation that we receive are conveyed by Christ's intercessory work:

> by His priestly work in heaven, He carries into effect and application all the designs of His love and mercy to ransomed sinners, and puts them into possession of all the benefits which were obtained for them by His death (p.36).

Houston goes so far as to suggest that the intercession of Christ "occupies in some respects a more conspicuous place than any other of His priestly acts" (p36). He bases this assertion on the fact that Christ was engaged in the task of Advocate and Intercessor even before his incarnation, in addition to his work during his earthly ministry and subsequent to the resurrection, in heaven. In Houston's view the intercession of Christ is to be regarded as eternal, as his fellowship with the Father before whom he intercedes for the good of his people, is eternal. On this basis Houston identifies three stages in Christ's intercessory work:

(i) Before his incarnation. Immediately upon the fall of man into sin, God put into effect the Covenant of Grace which would rescue sinners from their plight, through the sacrifice of the promised Seed. As sacrifices for sin were offered, according to God's appointment, the offerers received blessing through the intercession of "the priest of the covenant". Throughout the Old Testament period, it was through Christ that believers offered their prayers and received all the blessings they required.

(ii) While on earth. His intercessory work relates particularly to his prayerfulness during his earthly ministry. Every stage of that ministry was characterised by prayer, right up to the prayers uttered on the cross. As Houston sums it up,

> [Christ] offered prayers fervent, importunate, and continual in behalf of those who were given Him to be redeemed, and for covenant-support and success in His undertaking (p.41).

(iii) In heaven. Having accomplished redemption, Christ "ever lives to make intercession" (Hebrews 7:25). He does not plead like a servant, but with divine authority as the Son of God he claims for his people all the blessings that his blood has secured. As a priest on the throne, his intercession cannot fail.

The Nature of Christ's Intercession

In dealing in a general way with Christ's intercession in heaven, his ongoing glorious ministry, Houston makes a number of points:

1. Christ's work is his appearing in the presence of God for us. Houston cites Hebrews 9:24 which draws a comparison between the high priest of the Mosaic economy entering the most holy place of the tabernacle and Christ the Mediator's entrance into heaven. Christ has gone, not into an earthly sanctuary, but into heaven itself to minister perpetually in the eternal temple. The types and shadows of the old system have been replaced by what is real and substantial. Unlike priests in the earthly

sanctuary, Christ never leaves the heavenly sanctuary but conducts his intercession in "a perpetual now!" (p.46).

Christ appears as the Representative of those purchased by his blood, bearing them, as it were, with him. His people are united to him and thus he is "our eternally present offering before God" (p.47). As Houston emphasises, this is a doctrine full of comfort for us.

2. In interceding in heaven Christ presents continually the memorials of his finished atonement. Citing Revelation 5:6 ("a Lamb as it had been slain"), Houston states,

> He is still in our nature, as the victim that on earth bled and died in the room of His people; and the marks of His sufferings are still visible upon Him (p.48).

According to Houston, this presentation of the memorials of his suffering and sacrifice "is like a constant renewal of the one perfect offering whereby God is propitiated, and sinners reconciled" (p.49). It is important to stress that in no sense is this a repetition or continuation of his sacrifice, which is complete, "once for all" in the language of Hebrews. Reminiscent of the rainbow, it is a reminder of God's covenant promises and presents "the most powerful and prevailing appeals to [God's] character and infinite perfections to grant whatever the Intercessor asks" (p.49). Thus Christ receives all needed blessings for us.

3. In interceding, Christ intimates his will that the blessings he purchased should, according to the stipulations of the covenant, be conferred on his saints. According to the covenant, Christ's perfect obedience receives a reward: not only glory for himself, but all the blessings of salvation for the redeemed. No charge can be brought against his people, since all the sins have been dealt with by his sacrifice, and with divine authority he prays for their preservation and sanctification, culminating in their presence with him for ever (John 17:24).
4. In his priestly work in heaven Christ continually acts as his people's Advocate. This is the terminology of I John 2:1, where the title Paracletos is applied to Christ. As Houston indicates, the root meaning of the term is "one called upon for help", although he does not mention that it is one "called alongside". In a legal context, it refers to the advocate who answers accusations against his client and seeks to procure his acquittal.

Since the same title is applied to the Holy Spirit in John 14:16, Houston seeks to distinguish between the Spirit as Intercessor in us on earth and Christ as our sole Advocate in the court of heaven. The distinction is not easy to maintain since Christ also indwells his people and "paraclete" has a wider reference than just the legal sphere. What is clear is that, having paid the penalty for our sins, the Advocate is sure of our acquittal.

5. An aspect of Christ's intercession is the "oblation" of his people's persons and services for acceptance with God. Because of Christ's redemptive work, those who were polluted by sin are presented to God as "a sweet savour unto God" (p.54) and their works are acceptable in God's sight. God sees his people as they are in Christ, cleansed of all sins, and blesses them accordingly. As with each of the points Houston enumerates, this is a source of praise and thanksgiving for all the people of God.

A Fully-Qualified Intercessor

Houston seeks to encourage the Lord's people to put full confidence in the intercession of Christ by reminding them that he is fully equipped and qualified to fulfil this ministry. In particular Houston notes:

(i) The uniqueness of Christ the Intercessor and Advocate, citing I Timothy 2:5 regarding the "one Mediator between God and men". No other being, human or angelic, could perform this intercessory work. The Holy Spirit intercedes on earth within believers, Houston again asserts, but Christ alone intercedes in heaven.

(ii) Christ the Intercessor and Advocate is pure and spotless. As the one bringing a pure offering into the holiest place in heaven, he must be free from all sin. This is of course true of the spotless Lamb of God who had no sin of his own for which to atone.

(iii) He is wise, skilful and faithful as Intercessor. He knows everything about the needs and circumstances of his people, and with infinite wisdom knows how best to meet their requirements. Whatever is suitable to supply the needs of his people will be provided.

(iv) He is endowed with all authority in heaven and earth. "He demands as His proper right what He asks", says Houston (p.60). He has been promised by the Father a universal dominion which is the divine answer to all his "asking" as Intercessor. Having been commissioned by the Father to discharge the duties of this office, he obtains for his people everything they need.

(v) He is full of compassion. Since he shares our nature, "He has the tenderest sympathy with all our weaknesses, of whatever sort, as he has an ever active disposition to help and relieve them" (p.61). Texts such as Hebrews 2:17 are crucial for this assertion. As Houston says, all that Christ endured on earth tends to make him all the more compassionate towards his people.

(vi) He is ever ready and diligent and most earnest in his intercession. He is constantly interceding, never tiring, receiving his people at any time. Again Houston stresses the authority with which Christ intercedes, because of the dominion which he has received.

(vii) He is an acceptable Advocate and his intercession is well-

pleasing to the Father. As the beloved Son, Christ enjoys the full favour of the Father. "He is acceptable to the sovereign Judge in His person, in His perpetual office, and in the suit which He presents" (p.65). His unworthy people are thus rendered acceptable on the basis of their union with him.

The Beneficiaries of Christ's Intercession

Houston stresses that Christ's intercession is for those described as "transgressors", as "elect", and as "saints", indicating that his intercession is limited in extent, not universal. Indeed even Arminians, who hold to a universal atonement, do not (generally) teach a universal intercession. Houston notes several aspects of this limited intercession.

1. In a sense he intercedes for some who are not his people. By this Houston means that Christ, in the exercise of his dominion, may be thought of

> as asking for the world's preservation, for the employment and success of the means for its conversion, for the control and restraint of evil persons and influences, and the ultimate subjugation of all things to His sceptre of righteousness (p.68).

Thus, for example, communities are spared God's judgment so that elect sinners within them may be brought to salvation. Houston includes under this heading Christ's own intercession for the elect who have not yet been born. He is careful to emphasise that all of Christ's intercession is for the purpose of bringing the blessings of the covenant to the elect.

2. In the strict sense, it is only for those given to him in the covenant that Christ intercedes. Thus in John 17:9 the Lord says "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are thine". Having purchased them by the shedding of his blood, he ensures the supply of all that is needed for their enjoyment of salvation, including their entry into final glory.
3. He intercedes first of all for his ministers and all those who will believe in him through their preaching of the gospel. Houston seeks to base this on Christ's praying in John 17 for his apostles, which he extrapolates (without any argument or support) to include "all His future ministers" (p.71). Houston speaks of the great honour of the ministry and the certainty of the attainment of its goals on account of Christ's intercession.
4. Christ is the Advocate for all believers. This Houston bases on John 17:20ff, as Jesus prays for those who will believe the gospel message. By such belief they are constituted the "peculiar people" for whom Christ intercedes perpetually.

5. Not only does Christ intercede for the universal Church, he intercedes for each individual believer. "They are referred to singly, and are mentioned by name", says Houston (p.74). This section of Houston's work is full of comfort for believers who are conscious of their frailties, but who know that their Advocate in heaven will prevail.

> He thus pleads for every saint, on every occasion and circumstance - when weak and tempted, when wandering and falling, in all work and conflict, in life and death (p.74).

Nothing is better suited to lift the flagging spirits of the Lord's people.

The Content of Christ's Intercession

Houston sets out the comprehensive content of Christ's intercessory work under a number of headings.

(i) Christ intercedes for the whole Church and "His intercession is as extensive as His atoning death for them" (p.79). As he often does, Houston draws on the work of the high priest under the Mosaic system going into the most holy place with sacrificial blood and with the names of the tribes engraved on his breastplate. By his sacrificial death Christ has merited all the blessings of salvation for his people, and by his intercession he ensures the bestowal of those blessings.

(ii) Chiefly, Christ intercedes for the Holy Spirit to apply the redemption he has purchased. This is the role undertaken by the Spirit in the Covenant of Grace. On the basis of Jesus' discourse in the Upper Room, Houston shows how it is through the Spirit that all blessings are conferred. As he puts it,

> As the Spirit is the sum and substance of all good things which our heavenly Father knows to give to them who ask Him, the intercession of Christ, which procures this precious gift, is the great and inexhaustible source to them of all benefit and blessing (p.83).

(iii) In particular, Christ's advocacy includes the communication to his people of "all saving grace...in their regeneration and justification" (p.84), and their "continuance in a gracious state" (p.87). In other words, salvation from beginning to end is embraced in Christ's intercession. The result of the mighty working of the Spirit, who is poured out as a result of the Saviour's intercession, is the giving of life to those dead in sin but elect in Christ. Those so regenerated are justified on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice. In spite of their sins, they are defended from Satan's accusations by the Advocate in heaven. As Houston puts it,

> In justification we obtain a legal acquittal, which is pleadable in the court of heaven, and which can never be reversed; but because of manifold provocations

we need fatherly pardon and in our hearts the sense of forgiving mercy (p.87).

(iv) Christ's intercession furthermore protects his people from the accusations of adversaries and "furnishes strength and victory against temptations" (p.88). Expanding on what he has already said, Houston reaffirms Satan's hatred of God's people and his efforts to harm them, for example through the rebukes of their own consciences and through "perverted public opinion" (p.88). False accusations our Advocate sweeps aside. To some accusations he responds that we are indeed guilty but that he has satisfied the demands of divine justice. Christ secures all the support we need in the spiritual battle.

(v) Christ also secures the "acceptance of our persons and services" (p.91) by God. As Isaiah 64:6 states, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags": only through Christ's advocacy can we and our works be accepted by a holy God. Drawing on the ritual of the Old Testament, Houston says that he mixes the incense of his mediation with the prayers and works of his people. "Their prayers as well as services are accepted in the Beloved" (p.92). Such a truth promotes both humility and confidence in believers.

(vi) Houston completes the picture by saying that Christ's intercession "secures the full sanctification, perseverance, victory at death, and final salvation of the redeemed" (p.92). From beginning to end, the intercession of Christ is essential for the salvation of each saint. Apart from him not one would persevere and enter into glory. In him all his elect will persevere and triumph. Indeed even the saints' continuance in glory and "the perpetual increase of their heavenly felicity" rest on Christ's intercession (pp.98-101).

Perpetual and Effective

(a) Perpetuity: For the encouragement of the Lord's people Houston reminds them that Christ's intercession "is uninterrupted and will be carried on for ever" (p.102). Christ will never cease to appear in heaven on our behalf and so, for example, John speaks in the present tense when he says, "We have an Advocate" (I John 2:1). Among the reasons which Houston cites in support of the perpetuity of Christ's intercession are the eternal redemption secured by his atoning death, the dignity and dominion given to Christ which rests on his intercession and the diversity and number of the cases of his people which require his attention. Thus Christ cannot look upon his own glory without remembering the reason for his exaltation, namely his purchasing a people for himself, and thus "redoubling His solicitations on behalf of His people" (p.105, quoting Stephen Charnock). As long as his people need grace, he will intercede for them.

(b) Efficacy: As Houston says, "The prevalence or efficacy of the Saviour's intercession is matter of the strongest trust and most animating hope

to God's people" (p.106). In every case the intercession of Christ will be successful: it can never fail. Houston adduces many lines of evidence to support his view. He mentions the "types and prophecies" of the Old Testament, among which he includes the high priest sprinkling blood on the mercy seat and Jacob's wrestling with God. Significant too are Jesus' prayers offered while on earth and his certainty of the Father's response (e.g. John 11: 41-42). Only his petition for himself, namely that the "cup" of suffering pass from him, was ever denied.

A number of other truths should strengthen believers' confidence in the efficacy of Christ's intercession. Houston mentions Christ's deity, and hence his unity with the Father, the closeness of the loving bond between Father and Son, Christ's completion of the work assigned by the Father for him to do on earth, the fact of the loving election of those for whom he intercedes, and the character of the pleas which our Advocate presents in heaven. On this last point Houston says, "Our Advocate is 'Jesus Christ the righteous'. His intercession is holy, as is His nature" (p.113). Our impure prayers are accepted by God on account of the purity of the Intercessor. A survey of the results of Christ's intercession, both before and after his Incarnation, will, according to Houston, confirm our confidence that all our needs will be supplied.

The intercession of the saints?

Houston devotes an entire chapter of his study to refuting comprehensively Roman Catholic notions of intercession in heaven by Mary and the saints. He is clearly familiar with Roman Catholic statements of the doctrine in a variety of sources - dogmatic works, encyclicals and liturgical texts, among others. He has no difficulty showing the falsity of the Roman Catholic distinction of *latreia* (due to God alone) from *hyperdouleia* (due to Mary) and *douleia* (due to the saints), and Rome's ascription to Mary in particular honours that are due to God alone. Since Rome can claim no biblical sanction for prayers to the saints, those who are committed to the sufficiency of Scripture, as Houston is, have no difficulty in rejecting prayers to the saints as without support "either from Scripture or enlightened reason" (p.129). It is noteworthy that the trend towards greater veneration of Mary, which Houston discerned in his day, has only increased in recent years with some Roman Catholics seeking to have Mary officially designated as "Co-Redemptrix" with Christ.

Covenantal promises

Houston rightly sees a close link between the intercessory work of Christ as high priest and his role as surety in the Covenant of Redemption. (Houston appears to use this term as a synonym for Covenant of Grace). It is that

covenant which provides for the salvation of the elect and ensures that they will all certainly enjoy all the blessings Christ has secured. Quoting an unnamed author, Houston describes the covenant as a "Charter of free promises of grace and glory" (p.130). He stresses strongly the unconditional nature of the covenant as far as the elect are concerned, with conditions applying only to Christ as Surety. Many other Reformed theologians have seen a place for speaking of repentance and faith as "conditions" of the Covenant of Grace which the elect fulfil by God's gracious enabling, but that is not Houston's approach. In his view, "It is all promise from beginning to end" (p.131).

Houston argues that the covenant achieves its ends of glorifying God, honouring Christ and saving sinners, only when all its promises are fulfilled. Since Christ has fulfilled all the conditions of the covenant on behalf of his people, the Father in perfect justice will grant the fulfilment of the promises. There are, says Houston, two aspects of the promises given to Christ: there were promises made to him as Mediator, guaranteeing all he needed to complete his redeeming work, and there are promises given to him as Head of the elect which involve the latter in their fulfilment. It is on this second group of promises that Houston concentrates attention.

The covenantal perspective on these promises is summed up in Houston's statement that,

> The promises of the covenant to the elect were first given to Christ as the Head, and made good to Him in His obedience and sufferings, and His exaltation to glory; and then they come to believers through Him (p.133).

In other words, the blessings secured by Christ flow to believers by virtue of their saving union with him. As earlier parts of Houston's study have emphasised, the promised blessings conveyed by Christ's intercession are comprehensive: "all things that pertain to life and godliness", to use the language of II Peter 1:3. There is no possibility that the promises will fail: they are "all yea and amen in [Christ]" (II Corinthians 1:20).

All blessings, temporal and spiritual, are included in the promised covenantal inheritance of the Lord's people. From the risen Christ flow new life and all the attendant blessings of salvation. It is noteworthy that Houston includes temporal blessings: protection from harm, provision for all temporal necessities and conveyance into glory through death "unstinged and conquered" (p.138).

It was the glorious promises of the covenant that sustained the Saviour during his ministry on earth, especially in his final agony. In this context Houston cites Hebrews 12:2 ("for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God"). There he pleads the promises of the covenant "for the advancement and triumph of His cause on the earth, and the salvation of His redeemed people"

(p138). These same promises also provide the foundation for believers' praying. In Houston's words, "Here, too, is the prevailing plea of faith in the prayers of the saints, and their joyful confidence of hope" (p139). Houston draws on a range of scriptures to paint a powerful picture of the Redeemer's worldwide dominion. None of these promises can fail.

> The language of joyful appropriation and exultant praise is that of the Mediator pleading and rejoicing; and is, at the same time, the heartfelt expression of the saint taking hold of God's covenant (p.142).

The web of doctrine

No doctrine of Scripture stands alone. Every truth is related, often at many points, to every other truth. Biblical truth is a seamless unity. Houston recognises this when he considers some of the other doctrines that are confirmed by the Bible's teaching about the intercession of Christ. Out of the many that he might have mentioned, he selects the following:

1. The deity of Christ. The dignity of his person ensures not only the efficacy of his atoning death but also the effectiveness of his intercession. All he does is dependent on his deity.
2. The love of God. God's provision of Christ as Advocate to complete the work of redemption displays the same love that was demonstrated in the sending of the Son to die for the elect. Under this heading is included *the love of Christ* for his people. Not only did he redeem them with his blood, but he continually pleads their cause in heaven. "With His whole heart He pleads their cause with a love that exceeds all finite dimensions, and surpasses knowledge" (p.158). Significantly, Houston also refers to *the love of the Spirit* in this connection. His intercession in believers is an echo of that of Christ in heaven, and his indwelling and sanctifying believers demonstrate his love for them.
3. The perfection of the atonement. The continuing of Christ's priestly work in his heavenly intercession assures believers that their full debt has been discharged and will never again be demanded of them. The ground of Christ's intercession, as Houston has shown, is the perfection of his sacrifice and its acceptance by the Father.
4. The safety and perpetuity of the Church. Since Christ "ever lives to make intercession", there will always be for those for whom he intercedes. No assault can prevail against the Church which Christ purchased with his blood and whose welfare he seeks in heaven. He keeps his Church from falling and will present it perfect at the last day.
5. The sin of dishonouring Christ's intercession.

> Those dishonour the work of the heavenly Advocate who overlook and neglect it - who restrain prayer before God, or trust to other intercessors - when they live in sin, or when they give way to unbelieving doubts and fears (p.163).

Practical Application

All through his study of Christ's ministry of intercession Houston seeks to make practical applications of the truths which he expounds, to encourage and stir up believers. In his final chapter application becomes the focus of his attention. Four areas of application ("uses") are highlighted:

(i) "Seek a personal interest in Christ's intercession" (p.165). Houston emphasises the surpassing value of Christ's intercession compared to even the best that human intercessors can provide. In order to benefit from that intercession, it is necessary to believe in him since, as Hebrews 7:25 indicates, it is only "those who come unto God by him" who are represented in heaven. Holiness of life is then required of believers since "we must walk in all holy obedience, that our services as well as persons may be presented for acceptance before God" (p.167). As Houston says,

> To have this interest is to be assured of all blessing; and to know that we have it, is the seal and earnest of full deliverance and of future glorious felicity (p.167).

(ii) "Our hearts should be with our Advocate and His work in heaven" (p167). Houston here draws on Colossians 3:2 regarding setting our affections on things above, and says,

> There is every thing in the Person and work of the glorious Advocate to engage the frequent loftiest thoughts, fervent desires, and most ardent affections of believers (p.167).

In view of all that Christ has done and continues to do for his people, he should be the focus of every part of life.

(iii) "The intercession of Christ lays us under obligation to be ever prayerful, and to seek to realise continually the blessed fruits of prayer" (p.169). An awareness of our need and of God's provision in Christ should ensure that believers are people of prayer. "If Christ's life in heaven is employed in continual intercession, ours on earth should be one of praying always without fainting" (p.170). Our prayers are assured of an answer and should form an integral part of our Christian life and service.

(iv) "The intercession of Christ is a source of comfort and encouragement to the saints" (p.171). Knowledge of his intercession should dispel fears and doubts, replacing them with fulness of joy and peace. Contemplating the characteristics of his work, in particular its earnestness, entire devotedness and perpetuity, should increase our comfort and joy. Christ

never leaves off pleading for his people and his intercession always prevails. Appropriately Houston concludes by saying "Hence, finally, flow all comfort and joy to God's saints in prayer, and in their hopes in affliction and death" (p174). The Lord will bring all his people safely to glory and they "can never forget that they owe all they are and possess to sovereign mercy and redeeming love" (p175). Such knowledge will "thrill their hearts with ecstatic joy, and enliven their rapturous praises, as they sing the new song – 'Salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.'" (p.175). Thus they will praise and serve their glorious Advocate for ever.

HEARING THE VOICE OF DAVID IN THE PSALMS OF CHRIST

Some Reflections on Preaching the Psalms

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Introduction

For over 200 years the Psalter has been badly neglected. Today we are seeing a renaissance of messianic interpretation. Many advocate a return to God's Common Prayerbook. Though the Psalter is difficult in parts, its sheer spiritual value to pastor and sheep are reasons enough to ask how we might soundly, spiritually and persuasively better preach Christ in the Psalms. If, by God's grace, Emmaus-type 'heartburn' results, the author will be pleased he has fulfilled his remit. I propose briefly to survey, with examples, the terrain of typological, exemplary, prophetic and choral methods of Psalm hermeneutics. May God grant us a glimpse of his Son that we might study, see, show and spread the fame of the King of the Psalter with wisdom and boldness.

Typological Interpretation

Typology (the study of types) holds that God, the changeless ruler of history, directs his redemptive project towards its destined goal, and, through inspired Scriptures, in ways consonant with his character, makes this plan known in repeatable patterns: he does this through earlier persons, events and institutions (types), which correspond to later persons, events and institutions (antitypes), by way of escalation (which means here redemptive historical progress). Thus the Old Testament generally, and the Psalter particularly, are historical predictions and patterns for the New.[1] This is clear from types embedded within the Old Testament itself, confirmed by New Testament verses which make types explicit (Romans 5.14; Hebrews 8.5; Hebrews 9.8), and certain, since typology was the apostolic method of choice for explaining how Hebrew text relates to Jesus. So "far from being..fanciful..it is historically based, originates in the Bible, and is still valid today."[2]

In light of this definition it is understandable, therefore, why those who deny sovereignty, query inerrancy, confuse typology with allegory, or insist on

literal fulfilment only distrust typology.[3] While we share the fear of recent liberal versions of typology, it is harder to explain evangelical slowness to validate apostolic exegesis.[4] Happily there is a growing appetite "to rediscover, redevelop and refine" balanced typology of an earlier era.[5]

Fairburn's five-fold bridle should tame excesses.[6] Remember most God-intended models are good not evil (but antithetical types like Saul-Paul and contrast types like Adam-Christ are allowed); refuse to be cramped by human author intent, for no prophet knew fully what God finally intended; reject superficial resemblances, like Rahab's cord or Massah's wood, in favour of substantial principles extracted by painstaking grammatico-historical exegesis; recognise that one original principle may have multiple later correspondences (Israel can typify the antitypes Christ, Church militant and Church triumphant); realise that types and antitypes often differ in essence between earthly and heaven (vertical), and physical and spiritual (horizontal).

If this does not provide an exhaustive list of types or watertight method, we must not restrict types to those cited by apostles (if obscure Jonah is a type, so is obvious Joseph too). If we remind ourselves that all Scripture is christocentric it will broaden our search: types will be found of the person, work, creation and kingdom of Messiah. Since type-detection is a not merely an intellectual but illumined exercise, pray for heavenly light on types. Remember finally that a type, through chronologically less advanced, may be qualitatively greater that its antitype for "Jesus" is "the supreme example".[7]

Certainly "the history of the Jews was not only a preparation for the coming of Christ; it was a deliberate pre-enactment of him and his work."[8] It will help us greatly if we realise many Psalms originate in the personal, official, history of David and his kingdom, which formed a prototypical parable of what Messiah must do and be. We will not be shocked to find that the person, work, offices, experiences and realm of Christ are previewed in David's prayers, praises, pains and power.

Psalm 46 and 48

In Psalm 46 the 'God of the City' is a type of the eternal security of Messiah's Church and Kingdom. The emphatic word order of v1[2], and proximity of God and us, is a reinforced expression of divine covenant fidelity towards, and inextricable linkage with, his people.

> God Himself is for us a refuge and strength, a help(er) in straits he is found exceedingly

Three nouns, "hide-out", "strength" and "helper", raised to the power of exceeding, stress the impregnability Zion, in all dire straits, if the plural is intensive. In fact in v1[2]a, the two nouns "refuge" and "strength" united by

waw-conjunction, form a single idea (nominal hendiadys), meaning "strong fortress". The parallel, v1[2]b, elucidates v1[2]a, thus God displays his mighty fortress quality by being found a help in trouble. Three words of v1[2]b form a mini-chiastic structure, the two bookend terms, "exceeding help", encasing central elements "in straits He is found."

In v2-3[3-4] the calamitous nature of potential disasters is reinforced by coupling pictorial resonance in change, roar, foam, totter and quake, with verbal assonance. Thus the tighter the spot, the mightier the fortress, if the City cries out with its back against the wall.

In v4-7[5-8], Zion under siege, is secure and serene, for God Most High has pitched his tent inside the Holy city: with water supply intact, assailed all through the night, the battlements won't totter, but daybreak help will come. One word from God then kingdoms roar and totter, landslides occur, to affirm that Immanuel, Covenant LORD and God (two brackets of a chiasmus v7[8]), is Salem's perennial safe-house (the central strategic defence component), with his promises inviolable.

In light of rout v8[9], singers/readers are called to survey v9[10], and sign-up to v10[11], Yhwh's global disarmament policy. This is not a call to monastic contemplation, but rather a rebel ultimatum to lay down arms before the planet's ruler. The double imperfect coupled to nations and earth is self-reinforcing: thus "I will be exalted in the nations of the earth", whose self-exultation points beyond to Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1.20-23, Philippians 2.9-11), which connects with Psalms 2, 8 and 110, previewed in Psalm 45 as the answer to Psalm 44 (which Paul links with Psalm 46 in Romans 8.31,36).

This embattled history of God's defence-offense prowess both invites the Church of latter days to take refuge and rejoice in covenanted security pledged in Christ's blood, and commands nations to repent and submit to Heavenly Zion's King. In the face of a contemporary onslaught of militant pluralistic secularism, the Church should take courage and find comfort in Jesus. Psalm 46 is a model of Church militant and triumphant, got-at in Acts, glorified in Apocalypse.

Similarly Psalm 48 shows Zion's undamaged beauty after repulsed enemy blitzkriegs. God gets glory for idyllic praise exalted palaces perched on the God of the Covenant's holy Zion v1-3[2-4]. His refuge reputation v4[5], in words reminiscent of Psalm 2.2, was earned by kings that came and went v5[6], gripped by labour pains v6[7], dashed on rocks by storms v7[8], while spectator-like citizens let Yahweh fight their war v8[9]. Now moved to contemplate his loving-kindness within the midst v9[10], divine fame for might-is-right is praised around the globe v10[11], and by city and hamlets of Judah v11[12]. Townsfolk now count and catalogue, on a pedestrian tour of wall-towers, to pass on to progeny, the on-going Covenant promise of power, protection, provision and presence of God v12-14(13-15). What preachers

must not do is omit battle references that ground the psalm in history, or allegorise rampart details into a list of present-day citadels. Before we get to bulwarks we must skip incidentals and suck out marrow principles, to see how Messiah defends his Church and gives victory down the ages, before moving on to apostolic teaching on current divine security system up-grades. We will want to close the sermon not just with John's apocalyptic vision of Revelation 21:1-22:5 but also the bookend inclusion of v2 and 15 which shows the chief aim of this Psalm is not to rely on the Church but lean on our impregnable Saviour, who has us tight in his fist (John 10.27-30), and must have all the glory.

Great is Yahweh and One to be praised exceedingly
In the City of our God, His holy mountain
For this God is our God forever and ever
He Himself will guide us continually over (above or upon) death

Psalm 84

Unarguably the focus is the tented dwellings of God. The psalmist celebrates and craves his beauty for in the tabernacle man meets God v1-2 [2-3], through blood-dripping altars, where sin is atoned for, and the meanest may loiter v3-4[4-5]. No wonder pilgrims resolve to make thrice-annual festal treks, in order to glimpse God face-to-face v5-6[7-8]. One single day to stay, is to court a blest life, from Yahweh who must be trusted v10-12[11-13]. This worship-for-life man is Christ typified, who after eighth day circumcision burned with zeal for the house, cleansing, learning, feasting (Luke 2:22-28, 2:41-47), and teaching (John 7:10-15, 7:28, 37-39). The Temple itself also a type of Messiah in whom sinners meet God, in whom his fulness dwelt (John 1.14) for reconciliation (Colossians 1:19-20), to which slaughter-house altars pointed. The key is v9[10], a prayer of saints for their anointed representative who mediates God's blessing, either King or Priest for the people v10:

Our very shield, see, O God
And consider the face of your messiah (anointed one)

The "shield" is not the dustbin-like shield used for mobile combat but half-razor-fish-shell-shaped whole-body armour that, when anointed with oil, is well-nigh impenetrable. Saul fell on Gilboa when he forgot to oil the shield, 1 Samuel 1:21, an ironic metaphor, maybe, for withdrawal of the Spirit. The shield is Yahweh himself, Abram's full metal jacket (Genesis 15:1), which throughout the Psalter is the object of Israel's trust[9]. The link with Son and Shield is explicit in v11[12]:

For a sun and shield is God; grace and favour Yahweh will continually give

Here, at very least, Yahweh and "little shield, co-regent" Messiah are equated.[10] The messiah whom Yahweh is asked to consider, that he might maintain gifts of grace and glory (v12b explains v12a), if protection is in mind, maybe the High Priest, sinners' tabernacle refuge, thus "Christ is all the Antitype."[11] Alternatively, if military connotations are to the fore, it would be the King, for whose blessing the people pray, as they stand before God, in their federal representative. Either way, as King or Priest, since this "kingdom was merely a shadow...of something more illustrious...the object which he aspired after was, to obtain divine favour through the intervention of the Mediator of whom he was a type."[12]

In expounding texts like this, preachers may keep the best wine to last, and illustrate first with reference to David or Aaron, through feasts, shrine and rites, before making for Jesus. This should also urge them on to deeper weekly worship and daily fellowship through the crimson Cross of the incarnate Son of God, in whom the face of God is seen, and benediction seized. Beatific vision is a good place to close for "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God," Revelation 21:3. Why will Jesus dry "every tear" Revelation 21:4? "For its temple is the LORD God the Almighty and the Lamb," Revelation 22:22. Avoid at all costs materialising the text to rebuild on top of the Mosque on the Mount.

Psalm 6

Lack of hyperbolic or universal content is cause enough to give this prayer to David. If Isaiah 38:18 suggests Hezekiah could have used it, and the tear-soaked couch of v6 makes literal fulfilment by Jesus improbable, this anguished lamenting over sin is the first penitential psalm.[13] Yet behind the sense of sin v1[2], troubled bones v2[3], tormented soul v3[4], defeated foes v8[9], we see the horror and alarm of the dregs of Messiah's cup (Matthew 26:38), his loud cries and tears at the sight of our sins, and a plea to God who would raise him from death (Hebrews 6:7). How it will humble our hearers as they marvel as the wrath and burning Jesus suffered escalated to exhaustion, as bones are terror-stricken and filled with anxious foreboding (Genesis 45:3; Isaiah 13:8; Exodus 15.15). Trials of David under persecution or rebellion are a very pale shadow of the crucified Man of Sorrows.[14]

Exemplary Interpretation

That the Psalter is a book of instructive examples assumes a number of things: firstly that author and audience have humanity and faith in common; secondly that psalmists therefore have much to teach us about true piety, prayer

and praise; thirdly that God still speaks through the Psalter today; fourthly that believers have common joys and trials.

The Psalter itself employs a Psalm as a template for another (e.g. Psalms 40 and 70). David furnished a Psalter for regular recitation. Psalm 100:1 summons worshippers to "Make a joyful noise to the LORD." Thus we see Psalms are intended for imitation. Small wonder New Testament writers cite Old Testament exemplars (1 Corinthians 10:13), but also quote Psalms to regulate faith: Hebrews 13:6 cites Psalm 118 so "we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'"; Hebrews 3:15 quotes Psalm 95 for "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."; while Romans 15:11 repeats Psalm 117's summons "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." There is good biblical warrant for the exemplary approach.

There are distinct benefits to this approach to Psalms. The life and words of psalmists are full of God-centred devotion, penitent prayer and wholehearted thanks; we find desperate cries in dark valleys and jubilant songs on bright peaks that show us how pray, sing, cry to God, hope in and wait for the LORD. The Psalter breeds a balanced worldview, keeps a humble mind, commits our foes to him, tells good news abroad, seeks glory for his Name. Thus the Psalter sets before us Spirit-given praises and prayers (Psalm 72:20) to copy David's pits and peaks. If the perfect soul, Jesus, had these songs in home, head and hands, many times each day, we will find no better liturgy to follow than his model, the narrow way model, which goes from cross to crown, by way of pain then joy, in the Psalms laments and hymns. Psalter piety floods vibrancy into weary threadbare piety and revives devotions so apt to wax and wane. Psalms add steel girders to spineless storm-tossed faith, instilling heavenly wisdom and know-how to live. A few caveats will help dispel error from imitation.

First when apostles cite Psalms, the gospel is assumed: what apostles imply by quoting David is that he was only able to act as a type, because first, by faith, David was joined to Christ, who provides the grace we need for motive, method and might. It is grace that saves examples from powerless legal failure, self-sufficient pride or hypocritical formality. The highs and lows of David remind us to come to Christ for pardon when David falls short, or to cry for power when David overcomes.

Second never forget that the pious man of the Psalter is not adulterer David, nor true of any other, save the Son of David (Psalms 1, 15, 24), who suffered for our sin (Psalm 22), who if in some faint way we must imitate, we must first admire and recognize he is all we could never be "who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2). Our straying from the stream, stuttering daily devotions, and often barren lives box us not as wheat but chaff

(Psalm 1:3-4). It is not us but he "who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart" (Psalm 15:2-5), and matriculates to Zion. It is Messiah who fits the bill, brings the glory in, fresh from victory beyond its gates (Psalm 24:3-10). If we accept these provisos, the Psalms billows flame-like faith.

Third, since imprecatory psalms, dismissed as vengeful pique, cause many to walk away from the Psalter, we must remind hearers that David speaks officially, not with petty gripes, but with zeal for God's Gospel Glory. We must urge them to bite lips, when angry with tormentors, if in quiet trust we pray and commit our case to him. Good guides are a fine place to start unravelling these knots.[15] Since blunt, unsubtle approaches repel, retrieving David's prayer-book requires a delicate, skilful, gracious tip-toeing through an imprecatory minefield. Few surpass Calvin in his skilful use of examples.

Calvin

The charge that Calvin sundered the christological tradition of exegesis and Judaized the Psalter has been recently exhumed. He was propelled, it is said, by his training in humanism, whose methods prioritised literal sense, authorial intention and historical context. Calvin is also blamed with seeking common ground with Jewry by adopting rabbinic methods. He chiefly aimed at using David as a model for persecuted Protestant piety and purity of worship in the cause of Reformation. Further it is alleged that Calvin played fast and loose with apostolic exegesis. All was to curb what he viewed as fanciful prophetic exegesis "which does violence to the text." For if "the life of David renders a meaning sufficient and powerful for the Church...when the simple sense...already gives a profoundly edifying reading, why need one 'twist' the passage to refer it to Christ?"[16]

It is hard to see how this claim is entirely fair. We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to Calvin for his peerless "character-imitation" legacy. His simple sense is perspicuous, his use of Hebrew humbling, his exegesis perceptive, and his application rich. His exhaustive analysis of the original sense is a model to all pastors who labour with the text. If he aimed to maximise piety and edify believers, the Reformer of Geneva excelled in his task. If any unintended, latent, Law-Gospel imbalance emerges, in redressing it we must remember that union of Christ with David underpins all his comment. For application please refer to expert Calvin; to expand exegetical horizons consult other guides!

His relationship with Jewry was, most likely, governed by several factors. He was not hidebound to rabbis nor did he make concessions to win debate. In his comments on Psalm 22:16 he says Jews "in controversy are in the highest degree obstinate and opinionative,"[17] and their refusal to see Messiah in Psalm 110 he brands as "entirely frivolous."[18] It seems that Calvin aims for readings

that are cogent and sound, to explain correct textual meaning, and shore up defences against Jews who "perplex Christians."[19] When messianic triggers are present, he not only nods to tradition, but forages for Christ in new crannies those before him had ignored.[20]

Calvin, however, does not escape entirely unscathed. If he always tows the line of valid apostolic application,[21] at times he tends to undermine their exegesis by explaining it away. In the end Calvin finds himself, on occasion, at odds with plain biblical statements. While he does not exactly make David a short-sighted seer, yet even in Psalm 110, which he gives with one hand to Jesus, with the other hand he squeezes in David "to some extent."[22] By attributing "freedoms" to apostles who retain the substance, Calvin denies the author of Hebrews angle on Psalm 8 is to be copied.[23] Psalm 16:9-10 for Calvin does not mean that David saw a vision of the resurrection of Christ but that David "is not afraid of death" and must "by the Spirit of prophecy...so raise his mind above the common lot" as to be sure that Messiah would rise from the dead.[24] Similarly in Psalm 40:7, David speaks of "what belongs to all the children of God...it was necessary that he should refer us to Christ the Head." This is at best opaque, and at worst precludes messianic foresight.[25] He almost sounds torn when it comes to Psalm 2, for David is a type who calls rebels to lay down arms, yet since 2:7 "cannot apply to David's tiny Kingdom" the psalm is also prophetic of "the future Kingdom of Christ;"[26] Psalm 22 clearly refers to David's metaphorical agony yet also to Jesus who will be "abased in marvellous and unusual ways." It is hard to evade the impression that Calvin overdoes typology, and at times, therefore, without sufficient grounds, unnecessarily explains away the apostles, leaving his readers hunting high and low for Christ. In view of literal fulfilment, crucifixion, quotation, universal evangelisation, it would have been preferable to usher David off-stage in Psalm 22 and shine the spotlight on Messiah, to adore his agony, the ask for help from Jesus, rather than swap distressing dumbed-down stories with fellow struggler David.

Had Calvin made union with Christ more explicit it would have brought more pastoral comfort, motive and power to those thus reminded why it is they suffer, like David yes, but like, with, and in Christ alone, who supplies enduring grace through faith alone. Further the tendency of Calvin to pussy-foot around literal prophecy effectively pinpricks the balloon of apostolic persuasion which won over far more Jews both at Pentecost and Emmaus than Calvinian types and exemplars. Still more troublesome, the reluctance to concede that apostles explained the text in context has the unwitting logical consequence (rarely followed through), of undermining biblical inerrancy by making apostles leper-exegetes. I suggest Calvin was inhibited by the principles of humanism, for if we have to choose, what God meant should trump what commentators suppose was authorial intent.[27]

Accusing Calvin of Judaizing may overstate the case, yet for all his pastoral genius, and exegetical finesse, Calvin counteracts christological excess with typological obsession. As Binnie, quoted by Batzig, noted, "as often happens, the great Reformer, having got hold of a valuable principle, went to an extreme in the application of it. In no psalm except the Hundred and Tenth did he find Christ set forth without some intervening type ...and in this he has been followed by many commentators of the highest standing. But the interpretation" of Psalms 2 and 45 says Binnie, "is destitute of solid foundation."[28] Does this help explain why some of his heirs eschewed christological reading and become dumb dogs and blind guides when it comes to preaching Psalms? If the unintended result is a crippled Psalm Christology, the urgent need to win Jews,[29] the call to preach Christ, mandates a relative advance to Christ and retreat from David, seeing more prophecy and citing fewer examples.

Prophetic Interpretation

2 Samuel 7:12-13 furnishes adequate reason to anticipate that David, as a prophet, might speak of his coming descendent. It was Nathan who predicted, "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body...and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Subsequent to that pledge, 2 Samuel 23:1-3 indicates that David was filled with the Spirit and saw and spoke concerning these matters in the oracular mode:

> "The oracle of David...the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: 'The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.'"

On all but 2 out of 360 occurrences, the noun "oracle" occurs in prophetic contexts "as a formula declaring the divine origin and authority of the message." A solemn oath is implicit (Genesis 22:16), will surely be fulfilled (Numbers 14:28), for an oracle is God's Word (2 Kings 9:26). What use, then, did David make of this prophet gift? Chiefly psalm composition, liturgical oversight and posthumous direction of Temple worship, according to 2 Chronicles 29:25,30, a text which suggests all present acted as seers. The Psalter backs this up with the 'Father-Son' oracle of Psalm 110, the 'wicked' oracle in Psalm 36:1 [2] and oracular inspiration elements in Psalm 45:1[2], for evidently prophecy was a matter of the heart:

The gift of David, taught Jesus, went beyond vague mention to event predictions of Messiah's pains and joys, Luke 24:44-48, for "Everything written about me in the ..Psalms must be fulfilled...Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations."[30]

At risk of unwittingly undermining inerrancy, some still cast shadows over the sure-footedness of apostolic exegesis,[31] though not one case is found where context is ignored or Jewish influence proved.[32]. The Emmaus "master class" was no mere "interesting footnote" but the "substance" of Christ's teaching prior to Ascension, and therefore Christ's own key as to how to read Scripture properly.[33] The Old Testament tour of Jesus with Cleopas and companion exposed "their woefully inadequate knowledge" yet "the disciples' response was not to be amazed at His cleverness in uncovering references to Himself...Rather they were astonished as their own dullness." In the matter of prophecy, and Old Testament hermeneutics, as with all of saving faith, the key grace, as Augustine taught and Mary showed, is sitting in humility to learn at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42) who still speaks through his apostles (Luke 24:48; Acts 1.1-3).

Peter's Pentecost sermon agrees that David prophesied not only typologically but directly of Messiah. Acts 2:30-32 cuts through verbosity and ought to settle the matter, for David was a prophet "and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ." Kistemaker is forced to concede that "David received a revelation from God and prophesied about the Messiah."[34] It should help, therefore, to recall that prophets originally were Spirit-filled visionaries, hence the name 'Seer' (1 Samuel 9:9; 2 Chronicles 9:29). While "gazing into the future" does not exhaust their gift, it is fair to suppose that Isaiah's Temple Vision (Isaiah 6:1-5; John 1:41) and Oracles of Balaam may provide an insight into how David sometimes, at least, if not on every occasion, saw Christ, in Numbers 24:3-4, 15-16, another messianic prophecy:

> "The oracle of Balaam ..the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God ..and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered."

David was neither a clueless mouthpiece, who grasped nothing of what he saw and reported, as some would contend, nor was he an omniscient oracle who spoke only to his audience but never thought of the Anointed. As 1 Peter 1:10-12 shows, when prophets predicted gospel grace, they "inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and His subsequent glories." Most agree on the basis of grammar and context that the translation "what person or time" is misleading and that this emphatic tautology deals "only with the time factor."[35] Others argue that it refers to both "person and time" of Messiah. It seems to me that grammar will not settle the matter either way. Even if we accept the weaker, in my view, latter translation, it shows that prophets had quite a bit of insight into messianic prophecy but did knew neither on one hand

that Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth, nor at what time Zion's sought-for Redeemer (Psalms 130:8, 89:46-52[47-53]) would appear and the celebration begin (Psalms 148:13-14, 149-50).36. Thus while relevant to their own day, their prophesy was prospectively focused on the last days from the outset:[37] this intense research was motivated by an "assurance"[38] that they had seen the Christ. Therefore we confess that if Micah saw His birthplace, Daniel saw His throne, Isaiah saw His glory, Zechariah saw Him pierced, it is but a small step to accept that David saw Messiah. Dynastic trappings are one thing, divine intention is another. When oracle is present, David is not in the wings but sitting in the audience with Messiah centre-stage.

Psalm 110

Certain elements in v1-3 could apply to David, such as Zion enthronement, enemy subjugation (2 Samuel 22:1, 38-39, 44-45, 48-49), rule extension and popular assent (2 Samuel 5:1-10). We concur that in Genesis 14:18-20 history, Mechizedek is a type (v4). We dispute the claim however that David and his sons were ordained to a 'Melchizedekite Order': that sons were priests in a context makes them part of the civil service, not sacrificial priests, in 2 Samuel 8:15-18. Even if we concede that at times David and Solomon had priest-like functions, like ephod-wearing, benediction-pronouncing, sacrifice-slaying, and liturgical oversight (deposing ungodly priests or organising public worship), in the days of the kings, the Levites remained, and this is substantiated by three irrefutable facts: for crossing the Levite-only line Uzziah was struck down "drawing near" to the altar; the fusion of the offices of priest and king is yet in the future in the post-exilic times of Zechariah 6:13, for he previews latter days when "there shall be a priest on his throne"; finally not one syllable is murmured of Melchizedekite ordination, thus too much rests on a few ambiguous texts. Fatal also are the statements of Jesus and Peter than this psalm cannot speak of David for David is the speaker who speaks of a heavenly king, whom the prophet calls Lord. The Jews long before agreed this text was messianic. It was not just some *ad hominem* argument but intended to correct rabbinic error which denied that Messiah was divine. His exegesis was so plain and simple that it silenced all dispute, for the titular Hebrew of v1 is really definitive and clear-cut.[39]

Of David. A Psalm. An oracle of Yahweh to my Master: Sit at my right hand.

As already pointed out, the word 'oracle' signifies prophecy and is only used of God. The New Testament states the obvious, that David is the author, who spoke as a prophet, of an oath made in heaven, between Yahweh and his Master, so David is precluded (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts

2:34; Hebrews 1: 13). Jesus' question is still pertinent for sceptics today. "If then David calls him Lord, how can he be His son?" That Psalm 110 speaks of the coronation, kingdom, ordination, and eschatological judgment of Messiah Jesus is subsequently confirmed by the worldwide scale and carnage of v5-7, which is an enactment of the threat to 'G8' rulers in Psalm 2:8-12.

> "He will judge the nations, He will fill corpses, He will smite a great head on earth"

David's parochial rule, Solomon's peaceful borders (1 Kings 4), Rehoboam's schismatic downsize, and global dimensions of later wrath v5-7, cannot squeeze this infinite Priest-King frame into the baby-seat of David, or that of later dynastic descendants. Israelite palace spotters are familiar with the terms, but the mitre, sceptre and throne belong to Christ who reigns forever. He needs no escalation for his 'Cinderella Moment' at Ascension. All that awaits is a day for Jesus to pile up corpses and bring Messiah-lovers home.

Psalm 8

Superficially this lingo looks originally Adamic (Genesis 1:26-28), whose created lordship David now enjoys through enemy subjugation. Since a prolonged analysis is beyond the scope of this article, I will restrict myself to some road-signs that divert our gaze to our destination. Last Adam. Pure hymnic top and tails Psalm 8 seems out of kilter with the self-evident fallen state as outwitted avenger hostility indicates:[40] if only Adam had been intended, lament would be more in keeping, for if creative care stirs up joy it is also stilled by sin (Psalm 104:1-30,35), and erasure then remaking turns up the volume on post-flood choirs Psalm 29:10, the conflict Psalm 2:1, the lament sequence in Psalms 3-13, and pessimism about Adam's sons in Psalm 14:2, make hymn incongruous with David's current canonical context.[41] Since after enemy subjugation, David slew Goliath and bear-knuckled beasts, 1 Samuel 17:34-37, yet sharks and scorpions remained an issue, it is not to creation or coronation but to Christ's super-exaltation (which the pre-Christian LXX indicates by the preposition hyperano)[42] and consummation to which Psalm 8 points. The One who calmed down waves, and stroked wild beasts after tests, currently reigns in glory and will soon set creation free. The heavenly Name setting 8:1[2]b (when used of Yahweh signifies covenant promised fulfilment), and celestial crowning glory v5[6] (where man shares by grace what belongs to God by nature) suggest that Hebrews 2:5-9 came close to the mark. If some think envisioned Lordship is earthly not eternal, Calvin may be correct to take v7-9[8-10] as a particular example, of a general principle of cosmic rule which v6[7] predicts:[43] Verses 1 and 8 [2 and 9] suggest, then, that the saving Name

of Yahweh, glorified and exalted, is hyper-exalted in the Person of Messiah: it may well be that the Spirit had in mind the "under his/your feet" of Psalms 8 and 110 when Paul applied the Psalter to the Lordship of Jesus (Ephesians 1.21, Romans 14.10-12, 1 Corinthians 15.24-28, 48-49, Philippians 2.8-12) which is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."[44]

If our logic is correct then ecology is misdirected. Stewards we are certainly in Genesis 1:28, but in Psalm 8 the theme is not plastic recycling but cosmic regeneration. The hope previewed here, through Lord Last Adam of Calvary, is not plastic recycling but personal redemption through the preaching of the Faith once-for-all delivered to the saints, which unites believers to Lord Jesus, their Hyper-exalted Head. Preachers must beware of drifting to this earthly green gospel of climate change and carbon footprints, but rather cling tenaciously and vocally to the anchor that has gone beyond the curtain.

Psalm 45

If Solomon's royal wedding was the backdrop for this song, it goes far beyond to the final Messianic Banquet. We cannot dwell here on the oracular inspiration of v1, on startling spiritual and personal qualities of Mr Valiant-for-truth v2-4, on Kidner's "Man of War" who shoots down and subdues, on spatial and chronological dimensions or transcendent fame envisaged v16-17. Solomon was sage and scholar but certainly no soldier (1 Kings 4:24-34). His friendly foreign policy won admirers, trade and allies not enemies. Pagan altars (1 Kings 11:1-8), endless fun (Ecclesiastes 1:1, 12-2.11), were sinful not saintly (1 Kings 11:4-6). There is no moral basis for putting Solomon on this throne.

The *crux interpretum* confirms this is a song of Messiah. There is a tripartite ascription in Psalm 45:6, which can neither be glossed over as an ideal king fallen short, nor reworded to dodge the simple sense of divinity. The first attribute is eternality.

> "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever."

Either member of this two-noun combination generally means perpetuity, everlasting, eternity or forever when found alone; when welded together it always means minimally "to the end of the world" but regularly maximally "eternity's farthest reaches"[45] Look for example at Psalm 9:7 [8]:

> And Yahweh forever will continue to reign,
> He has established for justice His throne.

Because God is eternal he is fit to reign on his throne, guide through death, and make an inviolable dynastic promise that cannot cease in the cemetery, Psalm 21:4 [20.5]:

Life itself he asked from You and you have given it even to Him,
Length of days for ever and in perpetuity.

Psalm 45:6 restates what was spoken of through Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 (recalled in Psalm 89:37 [38]) for "He is the One who will build a house for my Name, And I will establish the throne of his kingdom unto forever. And your house and your kingdom will be established unto forever (eternity) before you, Your own very throne will be established unto forever (eternity)."

The second attribute is divinity. "The royal compliments suddenly blossom into divine honours."[46] Though conceivably *elohim* could denote angels, deities, or God-ordained potentates (c.f. Psalm 138:1), on overwhelming grounds of grammar, syntax, context, covenant, ancient versions and New Testament, conservative consensus suggests that alternative translations "have sidestepped the plain sense...but the Hebrew resists any softening here." This supra-angelic vocative "O God" is only true of Christ, who is seen and spoken to in messianic vision.[47] Messiah-denial is myopic strabismus.[48]

The third aspect, co-equality, helps us see why Hebrews overhears the Father addressing his Son. As in Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, this co-regent is transparently God-Man. This is further confirmed by the mini-chiastic structure, which makes the meat in the sandwich "divinity", the middle element "anointing", based on the outer element "impeccability". The Hebrew is structured as follows:

A. You have loved righteousness and you have hated wickedness therefore
  B. To anoint
    C. God
    c. Your God
  b. Oil
a. Above your companions

When due consideration is given to sequence in the Psalter, this verse is really a preview, of what is announced in Psalm 2, hymned in Psalm 8 and fulfilled in Psalm 110.1. David was a prophet, who did not ascend to heaven, but heard God speak to God, whose reign will never end. If "the wisdom of Solomon" is proverbial only Messiah's Name is be famed *in memoriam,* Psalm 45:17.

Six main reservations have been expressed concerning the notion of messianic prophecy. First, Longman denies that "no psalm is exclusively messianic in the narrow sense." His refutation is of a caricature of the prophetic viewpoint, and thus Longman seems here to mow down a straw-man[49] Directly messianic Psalms, like Parousia prophecy, predict the future in order to bring

challenge, hope and comfort to the audience of that day and later. Second, as concerns the debate about authorial intent, as already stated, when it comes to divine-human authorship, joint intentions must be upheld, but the former is paramount. It has also been helpfully shown, that without divine intent the original sense is distorted.[50] Third, as regards the need for contemporaneous application to the people to whom prophets first spoke, this has been met in our first point above. Fourth, as many now agree, apostolic exegesis is not a model to avoid but rather to imitate.[51] Fifth, some worry that prophecy threatens the progressiveness of revelation. While some un-nuanced versions of messianic prophecy may have that tendency, bad examples are no reason to deny sound explanations. It would seem it no more of a threat to progressive revelation than would be true of Isaianic crucifixion, Danielic resurrection, Matthean Temple destruction or Johannine New Jerusalem. Sixth does this not threaten the confessional position of a "single meaning" by postulating "double meanings or more" as Kaiser fears? If Messiah was foreseen in a vision and the original words in context point to 'him' as the sole meaning, just as another prophet's vision in Isaiah 6:5 helped convict, cleanse, comfort and commission people or prophet during Judah's national crisis, a sight of Christ enthroned has always been good medicine to cheer up the Church. Just as brides look past arrangements to a walk up the aisle, so fearful hearts of saints are raised by future prospects of marrying Messiah! Single meaning which is a good guide generally, which turns to a ball and chain when made an exegetical fetter.

Preachers, then, should feel free to preach Christ from the Psalms directly. Provided they do the work of painstaking grammatico-historical exegesis, they should not be overburdened by any of the above objections. Certainly sermons may be decorated by typical histories of Adam, Melchizedek, David and Solomon. It might also be wise, on occasion, to hold back the punch line, to keep hearers in suspense with oriental court garb, in order to ensure Messiah is the sermon's "Aha" moment. Yet it has to be wondered if too much of David in prophecy might do more harm than good. Certainly we don't wish to flatten Psalter contours, use gospel doctrine black and white only, or get caught up in petty applications, as I suggested in Psalm 8. Prophecy must not be drained either of evangelistic or apologetic impact, and man must not replace Jesus as the exemplar. It is King Messiah, exalted and glorified, who is the reservoir, and full store, of all God's hope and power, for fallen, dying men.

Choral Interpretation

Byassee has done a service in reminding us of Augustine, whose Psalm exegesis was framed by Union with Christ, Head-body, Totus Christus theology. It was axiomatic for Augustine, particularly in Psalms of suffering,

persecution and mission, that when the body sings we hear the voice of its Head, for "both Christ and the Christian are always speaking in Scripture...of debasement...assumed by Christ...of divine exaltation...granted to humans in Christ...Scripture ever speaks in both a human and divine voice."[52]

This Augustine backs up by a number of New Testament texts. Prime among them is Saul's conversion, where Jesus asks in Acts 9:3-5 "'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'...'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'" The point is not that Saul assaults merely the people of Christ but more seriously the person of Christ. When applied to the cross, Augustine sounds the depth for in 2 Corinthians 5:21 we hear that "for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." This guilt is not the crimes of the sinless Head, but the crushing, cursing, sin-load of the Church, for which the Christ the Head suffered as his body's representative.

In this contra-flow system, what is true of Christ in union with him applies retrospectively in the Psalms and prospectively in the Epistles (e.g. Psalm 2:9 cited in Revelation 2:23, 12:5, 19:15; Psalm 119:35 and 112:1 alluded to in Romans 7:2). Applied to the Psalter this means that "Christ Himself prays the psalms. Christians...cannot do other than the Head...must pray the Psalter, and must do so through Christ."[53] Augustine does not apply this hermeneutic to "every line of every psalm" but to particular verses of "every portion of the 150 Psalms."[54] Thus regarding his passion "if He took on Himself the likeness of sinful flesh, why should he not also take to Himself the likeness of a sinful voice."[55] If we don't share all Augustine's insights, or Byassee points, there are other grounds for reading Psalms this way.[56]

Firstly Jesus sang the Psalms Himself. Christ was a Jew, who worshipped, learned, taught in and cleansed the Temple, singing Psalms with family and friends, at thrice-annual feasts, weekly Sabbath worship, Passover meal, and before departure for Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30). Psalm-singing was part of the fabric of his life both public and private. His familiarity with rabbinical methods, contextualised quotation, fine-point expositions (Luke 19:46, 20:17, 20:41-43, 24:44-47), corrected during temptation (Luke 4:10-11), and prayers during his Passion make this obvious (Matthew. 27:46, Luke 23:46b, John 19:28 and 30), as he preaches (Hebrews 2:12-13) and suffers (Hebrews 10:5-7). In other words, no soul ever sorrowed, smiled and sang the Psalms so fully. "King Jesus," says Lefebvre, "is not only the next song leader of God's people...He is the king for whom the Psalms were prepared...Psalms are not just catechetical songs about Jesus; they are mediated praises in which Jesus is present singing with us,"[57] and thus are all "the Psalms of Christ in His role as Mediator."[58]

Second Jesus sings the Psalms in Us. Lesser mortals only take up the Psalter effectively and worship acceptably, in union with Christ, when his Spirit plucks our heart-strings and vibrates our vocal cords. Since understanding with

bright minds, and singing with full souls, is a Christ-led Spirit activity, requiring heavenly light and heat, it cannot be done except in union with him. Not only, as Lefebvre suggests, does Christ sing to us and through us, but noteworthily, Jesus sings in us. Each reverent thought, biblical insight, holy stirring, worshipping word, is only possible when Christ offers through us the worship God requires.[59]

Third Jesus sings Psalms as our Mediator. In Penitential psalms, as the sin of the members is confessed by our immaculate, impeccable, and innocent Great High Priest, it is here as Mediator that the Saviour sings, most loudly, the most bitter-sweet melodies the world has ever heard: soul-haunting, heart-breaking cries, stream from the sugared mouth of our load-bearing Head; sinner-pardoning comfort rains down consolation from our sympathetic Saviour-to-the-uttermost, on the basis of his blood. Here is terra firma for confession of our sins, as with weeping eye, admiring glance, and humbled heart, we spy our guilt and the scapegoat who removes it.

Some have drawn back in concern to safeguard Messiah's sinlessness.60. But this "is an approach to the Psalms that fails to grasp the significance of Jesus' mediatorial kingship. Though himself sinless, he truly does take our guilt upon himself – and he leads us in repenting for it over his sacrifice...The only way we can properly repent...is by repenting in the name and sacrifice of Jesus Christ."61. We must however not limit this use to confession. The blessings of the method are more extensive and far-reaching, which a tiny sample will illustrate.

Comfort

In Psalm 42 we here the exiled voice of Jesus in the tragic case of David. Removed from public worship v2[3], banished from festal throng v4[5]a, haunted by glory days v4[5]b, far distant in Golan v6[7], oppressive taunts of mockers v9-10[11-12], marginalised by society, forgotten by God v9[10]a, he longs and thirsts for God like a dried-up deer, as he thirsts for wadi water. We know it is for our sin, that caused him grief, that our exiled Head asks, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God for I shall again praise Him my Saviour and my God." Here is remedy and sympathy for the downcast, distained and depressed, whatever the cause of present enveloping gloom. Who can sympathise like the King consumed with zeal for God's House, or felt exiled from the nation as he crossed the Kedron brook? Where better can we find succour than in him who endured forty days of satanic tests, the denial of Peter, and taunts from troops and crooks, while pinned up outside the gates? In the darkest hour, dark exiled brethren can cry their way to light as Jesus weeps within.

Confession

In Psalm 51 Christ becomes a leper, as the Head bears the weight and wounds for his unclean, mucky, body. He explores the deep deception and darkness of sin, with hair-curling vocabulary that leaves no stone unturned: every base is covered and all sin's species classified v3-4[4-5], as the Mediator confesses in us: "According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Left to ourselves we would doubt this description, gloss over sin, delay our confession. As his Spirit sings, we are confronted face-to-face, with our inner original plague v5-6[7-8], no crime escapes notice of his recoiling humanity and omniscient deity. This infinite cup of guilt was drained by Gethsemane's confessor and dislocated Golgotha's propitiator. Our Great High Priest now he leads church choirs to confess the guilt he bore. As the Spirit stirs within, we start to smell the sewage, and scalp to sole lepers, cry 'wash, wipe, de-sin my soul, sprinkle atoning hyssop blood, pronounce this leper clean' v1-2, 7 and 8. We can use Psalm 51 to add spice to daily devotions as we come before the LORD on the basis of his crimson altar. Here in him, there is grace to repent, recreate, renew and reject sinning. Here is motivational mercy for scot-free sinners to turn others back to God.

Covenanting

Beyond the laments of Jesus there is devotion and commitment to his Father's will and Word regardless of the cost in Psalm 119. It is Christ, "the perfect worshipper"[62] in us, that is glad to reaffirm "I have stored up your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you (v11)" and craving more light "open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in your Law (v18)." Undaunted we resolve "even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes (v23)." It is his hunger for holiness that makes us plead when our flesh rises up "turn my eyes from looking at worthless things (v37)," and his eye and tear that we use to peer and weep "My eyes shed streams of tears because people do not keep your Law (v136)."

Celebrating

Was there ever a mind so moved by God's good gifts of providence and creation as his? It will come as no surprise, then, when his Psalm 104 finds wings in our glad voice: "You cause the grass to grow for livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wide to gladden the heart of man (v14-15a)" or, on occasion be in rapture: "May the glory of the LORD endure forever, may the LORD rejoice in his works v31)."

His greater joy, of course, bursts forth in Ps 98, in redemption jubilation, as Jesus chants within, "Oh sing to the LORD a new song for He has done marvellous things ..the LORD has made known His salvation...in the sight of the nations." It is as Triumphant King he bellows, "let the sea roar and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it" as he sees the gospel preached and his return as Lord and Judge. Has joy evaporated? Are we sin-sad? Has the world left us cheerless? Strike up these Psalms and sing with your Redeemer!

Crying

If the Lord's Prayer is paradigmatic then his brothers learn to pray in the Psalter as we move from entrance level prayer to graduate level pleas. If in Psalm 72.20 the prayers of David are ended, it is time that ours were started, for Jesus prayed in him. He leads us into God's presence in Psalm 5 with "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my groaning...my King and my God, for to you do I pray" v1-2(2-3), then affirms persistent, ordered petitions "O LORD in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare as sacrifice for you and watch, " v3(4). Adored moral attributes are a firm basis for an answer: "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness...you hate all evil doers, You destroy those who speak lies" v4-5(5-6). He prompts in us humility as the basis for any mercy for "I..through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house ..in fear of you" v7(8). Answer only comes, he says, when sin is forsaken: "Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness, because of my enemies, make straight your way before me" v8(9). If answer if forthcoming, for the cause and praise of God v9-10(10-11), then thanks is proper for every blessing granted for "You spread your protection over them that those who love your Name may exult in You" v11(12). This is a tiny part of the 1st year syllabus in Messiah's prayer degree. Truly the Psalter is the perfect piety programme!

Objections

Some recoil at this method for fear of lack of controls and fear of the subjectivity of Augustinian 'allegory.' Yet this "whole Christ" method is built on solid principled rock. It gets to grips with the fact that Jesus sang these songs in two natures, mighty God and sinless Man, and One Person, Redeemer of the Elect, and still sings them in us by his Spirit, as our Prophet, Priest and King. That he uttered them on the cross, and took them to himself, suggests, surely, that if we do proper exegesis, first at the textual level, this whole bible principle, with theological, apostolic and biblical controls, will guard against excess, for to refuse to pray at the cross, would be incalculable loss to the Church. This is not to claim at all other methods are precluded or this method

is to be preferred. It is simply an attempt to face the truth that all bodily activity is derivative in our Head, as John Owen teaches, in *The Glory of Christ.*

Conclusion

There are at least seven ways to preach Christ from the Psalter.63. We trust that this brief glimpse of how these four interpretative methods, typology, prophecy, liturgy and example, might be used, will be of some paradigmatic and pastoral support for preaching Christ today. While more could have been said, or a different route traversed, there is stimulus for further study, spiritual devotion and prayerful exposition. Of more immediate relevance is to bring the Psalter back. This writer pants like a deer, for personal reading and private devotion, of under-shepherds of Christ and the sheep of "his flock," to suffer severe slow-heartburn of passion for Messiah in the Psalms. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Notes

Most English Bible quotations are taken from ESV: where the text differs, this is my own translation of the Hebrew.

1. David Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament", SJT 29 (1976), pp. 137-157 in Beale, G. K., ed., *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Baker: Grand Rapids, 1994), p.321-315.
2. Ibid, p.319.
3. G. P. Hugenberger, "Introductory Notes on Typology", in Beale, pp.331-341.
4. Richard N Longenecker, "'Who is the prophet talking about?' Some reflections on the New Testament Use of the Old", *Themelios* (1987): 4-8, in Beale, pp.375-386.
5. Hugenberger, p.333-334.
6. Patrick Fairburn, *Typology of Scripture: Two Volumes in One* (Kregal: Grand Rapids, 1989), pp.141-167.
7. Baker, p.330.
8. According to Parker. Reference unknown. Pp.150-151.
9. See Ps 3.3, 7.10, 18.2 & 30, 28.7, 33.20, 59.11 & 115.9.
10. Allan Harman, *Psalms* (Mentor: Fearn, 1998), p.290.
11. Andrew. A. Bonar, *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms* (Tentmaker: Stoke, 2001), p.250.
12. J. Calvin, Psalms 3 Volumes (Baker: Grand Rapids, 2009), Vol.2, p.364.
13. So Harman p.81-82 and Kidner p.61-62.
14. Bonar, p.21.
15. James. E. Adams, *War Psalms of the Prince of Peace: Lessons from the Imprecatory Psalms* (P&R: Phillipsburg, 1993).
16. G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms* (OUP: New York, 2010), p.82.
17. Calvin, Vol.1, p.375.
18. Calvin, Vol.3, p.298.
19. Calvin, Vol.1, p.374.
20. Gregory Goswell, "Calvin's Commentary on the Psalter: Christian or Jewish?", *Pacifica* 22 (Oct 2009), pp.292-293, identifies five exegetical triggers Calvin used to identify types namely New Testament citation, worldwide references, types of David, hyperbolic language and literal fulfilment of the simple sense, in the light of the New Testament teaching, are

better viewed as markers of prophecy. Since by definition a type is a factual correspondence in history it is precisely at this point where concrete links are absent that David is not the original focus.

21. Goswell, pp.278-300 and p.296.
22. Calvin, Vol.3, pp.296-297.
23. Calvin, p.103,105.
24. Calvin, Vol.1, p.231.
25. Calvin, Vol.2, p.103.
26. Calvin, Vol.1, p.9. This exegetical tension appears as Calvin moves from David to Christ and back in pp.9-27.
27. See Philip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention" in Beale pp.70-81 and Vern Sheridan Polythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture", WTJ 48 (1986), pp.241-279, in Beale, pp.82-113 and also Walter. C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Single Intent of Scripture", Beale pp.55-69, for a more restrictive view, but which as Polythress points out is more subtle than many think, fn.7, p.84.
28. Nicholas T Batzig, "The Songs of the Son (Seeing Christ in the Psalms)": Blog, pp. 1-7. William Binnie, *The Psalms: The History, Teaching and Use* (Nelson: London, 1870) classifies Messianic Psalms into 5 categories namely Typical, Prophetic and Mystical, to which Batzig adds Confession (Trust) and Creation/New Creation.
29. Michael Rydelnik, "The Ongoing Importance of Messianic Prophecy for Jewish Evangelism in the New Millennium" in: *To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History,* pp. 261-291 (Kregel Academic: Grand Rapids, 2008).
30. Ibid, pp.262-264 for the implied Christocentricity of the entire Old Testament corpus.
31. Richard N Longenecker p.375-386 views apostolic exegesis as descriptive not normative.
33. G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question: Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method", pp.387-404.
33. Iain M Duguid, Is Jesus in the Old Testament: Basics of Faith Series (P&R: Phillipsburg, 2013), pp.6-9..
34. Simon Kistemaker, Acts (Baker: Grand Rapids, 1999), pp.98-99.
35. Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nelson: Nashville, 1998), pp.521-525.
36. Rydelnik, p.267. See also Wayne Grudem, 1 Peter (IVP: Leicester, 1995), p.67-72 and Simon Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude* (EP: Welwyn, 1987), pp.52-57.
37. Walter. C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, 2001), p.20.
38. So Louw-Nida (Bible Works for Windows), for present middle participle *promarturomenon* is set in a legal context.
39. Calvin, Book 3, p.295-296. See the valuable discussion on early Christian exegesis of Psalm 110 in Aquilla. H. I. Lee, *From Messiah to Pre-Existent Son* (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, 2009), pp.202-239.
40. Calvin, Vol.1, p.98.
41. Richard. P. Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms: Preaching Christ from all of the Psalms* (Mentor: Fearn, 2006) p.160-161.
42. I have already dealt with this point, and the link of this preposition to super-exaltation passages in the Apostolic corpus at some length in my MTh dissertation and in my recent article in the *Irish Journal of Theology.*
43. Andrew N Kerr, "Psalm 8" in IBS Vol 29: Issue 3 (2011), 116-150, pp.144-148.
44. F. Delitzsch, *Psalms* (Hendrickson, Peabody, 1996), p.96.
45. See Psa 9:6, 10:16, 21:5, 45:7, 45:18, 48:15, 52:10, 104:5, 119:44, 145:1, 145:2, 145:21.
46. Derek Kidner, *Psalms,* 2 Vols (IVP: Leicester, 1973), Vol.1, p.170.
47. Peter. C. Craigie, *Psalms* 1-50 (Word: Waco, 1983), p.337. His favoured 'enthroned' Kraus:

Psalms 1-5, (Fortress: Minneapolis, 1993), p.451452, points out.

48. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Paternoster: Carlisle, 1995), pp.127-129.
49. Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (IVP: Downers Grove, 1988), pp.67-68.
50. Polythress, pp.82-113.
51. Klyne Snodgrass, *"The Use of the Old Testament in the New"* in Beale pp. 29-51. See his helpful guidelines pp.48-49 and rubber stamping of apostolic exegesis, pp.49-50.
52. Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2007), p. 89.
53. Ibid, p.90.
54. Ibid, p.94.
55. Ibid, p.80.
56. *Ibid,* p.92.
57. Michael Lefebvre, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms* (Christian Focus: Fearn, 2010), p.63. This book is an excellent introduction to how best to sing the Psalms. While concurring with Lefebvre that Psalms are "Christ-led conversations", his "oscillating voices" on pp.68-77 are less convincing and confusing and give the impression, if I read him correctly, p.77, that it really doesn't matter if when singing you know who the speaker is.
58. Belcher, p.38.
59. John Owen, Vol.1, *The Glory of Christ* (Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 1965).
60. See for example James Montgomery Boyce, *Psalms, 3* Vols. (Baker Grand Rapids, 1994), Vol 1, p.347 and Harman, p.174 on Psalm 40.
61. Lefebvre, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms,* pp. 86-87.
62. Geoffrey Grogan, *Prayer, Praise and Prophecy: A Theology of the Psalms* (Mentor: Fearn, 2001), p.266. Note that Jesus is also the perfect object of worship.
63. See Sidney Greidanus, Preaching *Christ From The Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) and helpfully Grogan, pp.261-296.

PSALMODY, GOD'S GUIDE TO JUST SENTIMENTS

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C. S. Lewis offers the following assessment of the teachers of his day:

> They see the world around them swayed by emotional propaganda - they have learned from tradition that youth are sentimental - and they conclude that the best thing they can do is fortify the minds of young people against emotion. My own experience as a teacher tells an opposite tale. For every one pupil who needs to be guarded against a weak excess of sensibility there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold vulgarity. The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defense against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments. By starving the sensibility of our pupils we only make them easier prey to the propagandist when he comes. For famished nature will be avenged and a hard heart is no infallible protection against a soft head.[1]

Lewis talks about inculcating *just sentiments.* What are sentiments? *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1962) describes a sentiment as "a complex combination of feelings and opinions as a basis for action or judgment; general emotionalized attitude: as patriotism has been called a noble *sentiment.*" Our sentiments combine our knowledge or understanding, with our feelings or emotions, and our volitions or wills.

God instills just, good, wholesome, uplifting, enriching, gracious sentiments in us. He does so by the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). In this context, note Psalm 92:4. "For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands." God uses his Word as a primary means to instill just sentiments. Consider Psalm 119:104, "From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way." It is not inconsequential that we turn to the Psalms when we think of expressing just and godly sentiments. The Psalms of the Old Testament are a divine guide for the expression of godly emotions and sentiments. In addition, Psalmody is one of God's primary means for instilling within us just and godly sentiments and guiding us in the expression of such sentiments.

To validate this thesis, we will review the stance of the Westminster

standards regarding worship. We will see Westminster's position on both the regulative principle and Psalmody. Why Psalmody? To help us answer this question, we will examine a prooftext used by the Westminster Confession of Faith, Colossians 3:16. Even if Scripture commands Psalmody, the question remains, "Why?" This leads us to consider the so-called subjective element of the Psalter. Once we grasp the significance of this subjective element, the validity of our thesis emerges: Psalmody is one of God's primary means for instilling within us just and godly sentiments and guiding us in the expression of such sentiments.

The Westminster Standards set forth what we call the regulative principle of worship in three places: WCF 21.1, WLC 109, and WSC 51. WCF 21.1 reads as follows:

> The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good, and doeth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, *or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture* (italics added).

We are not to worship God in any way *not prescribed in Holy Scripture.* This is the regulative principle of worship. We may state it this way: In worship, whatever God does not appoint he forbids. This is the negative statement. Putting it positively we may say: In worship, whatever God appoints he permits. The alternative is the so-called normative principle. In worship, whatever God does not forbid, he permits. The normative principle is much more permissive and the default position of many Christians and churches.

The Westminster Standards, however, base their position on the second commandment.

> Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me (Exod. 20:4-5, KJV).

WLC 109 teaches in part, "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, *any religious worship not instituted by God himself....*" (italics added). WSC 51 succinctly says, "The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, *or any other way not appointed in his word* (italics added). These statements of what we call the regulative principle are

clear. The proof text the Standards use in each case is Deuteronomy 12:30-32,

> *Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them,* after that they be destroyed from before thee; and *that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.* Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt *not add* thereto, *nor diminish* from it."[2]

At this point, we should also acknowledge that we are dealing with the regulative principle of *worship. In worship*, whatever God does not appoint he forbids. This is not the regulative principle of life. The principle is not: In all of life whatever God does not appoint he forbids. All the books that could possibly be written could not contain all that God could positively command for all of life. For example, God does not command the use of cars, computers, copy machines, or commuter planes, trains, or buses. What we have before us is the regulative principle of *worship.*

WCF 21.5 relates certain Biblical elements of worship.

> The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; *singing of Psalms with grace in the heart;* as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God (italics added).

The proof texts for singing the Psalms are Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another *in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts* to the Lord" (KJV); Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making *melody in your heart to the Lord.*" (KJV); and James 5:13, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? *let him sing psalms*" (KJV).[3]

That these texts refer to the Psalms of the Old Testament was the common understanding. For example, the title page of the "Bay Psalm Book" published in 1640 reads, *"The Whole Book of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre. Whereunto is prefixed a discourse declaring not only the lawfullness, but also the necessity of the heavenly Ordinance of singing Scripture Psalmes in the Churches of God."* There then follows quotations of Colossians 3:16 and James 5:13.[4] The title page for the Sternehold-Hopkins Psalter published in England in 1562 bears two Scripture quotes: *If any be afflicted, let him pray: if any by merry, let him sing Psalms; Let the word of God dwell plenteously in you, in all wisdome teaching and exhorting one another, in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, and sing unto the Lord in your heart.*[5]

Since the Westminster Confession of Faith, based on Scripture, enjoins Psalmody, we ask: Why the Psalms? Colossians 3:16 helps us there. The text reads as follows in the *English Standard Version.* Note the word order. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, *teaching and admonishing* one another in all wisdom, *singing* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (italics added). Paul's basic command is simple, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Adverbial participles follow. They indicate how we follow the basic command. The participles are *teaching and admonishing* on one hand and *singing* on the other hand.

The *New American Standard Update* translates the text differently. Again, note the word order. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another *with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,* singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (italics added). This version links psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with teaching and admonishing. Again, noting the word order, compare the *English Standard Version.* "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,* with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (italics added). This version links psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with singing. Why the difference?

As just mentioned, the main clause in the text is an imperative, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." The two participle phrases indicate *how* we follow the command. They are present active participles indicating contemporaneous action with the main verb, "dwell". Literally the text reads: The word of Christ let dwell in you richly (1) with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another; (2) with grace singing with your hearts to God. The words *psalms, hymns, songs spiritual* fall between the two participle phrases. As a result, some versions place these words with teaching and admonishing, as do the *Authorized Version* and the *New American Standard Version.* "Our objection is," says John Eadie, "that while metrical or musical compositions are not the common vehicle of instruction or admonition, they are specially connected with sacred song."[6] Other versions therefore consider it more logical to place psalms, hymns, and songs with singing, as do the *New International Version and the English Standard Version.* Eadie suggests a similar division of the text.

> Let the Christian truth have its enduring abode "within you" - let it be no stranger or occasional guest in your hearts. Let it not be without you, as a lesson to be learned, but within you, as the source of cherished and permanent illumination...Different ideas have been formed of the best mode of dividing the following clauses of the verse...[T]he idea of wisdom is better joined to the following clause, which refers to mutual teaching - "in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another."...Our translators, too, so point the verse as to make psalms and hymns the material of instruction, whereas, it seems better, and more appropriate, to keep the clause distinct, thus - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you

> richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another: in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord."[7]

There are three other grammatical considerations in looking at the exegesis of Colossians 3:16. First, the text literally reads, "psalms, hymns, songs spiritual [*psalmois humnois ōdais pneumatikais*]." Paul packs the terms of the text together without using and. This is the figure of speech *asyndeton*, without conjunctions. It "ordinarily join[s] coordinate words or clauses.... The terseness of expression usually adds effect to the words."8. In this case, where psalms, hymns, and songs are joined as one, we have a *conjunctive asyndeton.*[9] Bullinger therefore says these three terms are synonyms.[10] They refer to the Psalms of the Old Testament.

Second, what about the modifier, *spiritual*? The adjective "'spiritual' means produced by or belonging to the Holy Spirit."[11] B. B. Warfield says,

> [O]f the twenty-five instances in which the word occurs in the New Testament, in no single case does it sink even as low in its reference as the human spirit; and in twenty-four of them is derived from [pneuma], the Holy Ghost. In this sense of *belonging to, or determined by, the Holy Spirit,* the New Testament usage is uniform....[12]

Since the modifier *spiritual* appears at the end of the figure *psalms, hymns, songs* it applies to all three terms.[13] That is, these psalms and hymns and songs of the Old Testament, all three, are spiritual because they come from the Holy Spirit; they are inspired by the Spirit. They are the Psalms of the Old Testament.

Finally, "psalms, hymns, songs spiritual" is in the dative case, *psalmois humnois ōdais pneumatikais.* Lightfoot argues that the datives describe the instruments of the teaching and admonishing.[14] Eadie counters, "The datives, without the preposition, denote the materials of song."[15] Eadie's approach and the translation of the *English Standard Version* seem preferable.

That the Westminster Confession of Faith uses Colossians 3:16 as a proof text for Psalmody, taken together with these grammatical considerations, confirms that the terms *psalms, hymns,* and *songs* used by Paul refer to the 150 Psalms of the Old Testament.

What is the significance of this understanding of Colossians 3:16? If our exegesis holds, Paul circumscribes our singing more closely than our teaching. How so? First, Paul defines "teaching and admonishing with all wisdom" as preaching. He does so in Colossians 1:28. "We proclaim Him, *admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom,* so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (italics added). Proclamation is preaching. Preaching involves teaching and admonishing. The element of teaching or preaching comes from the synagogue. The general practice there was to expound Moses through the eyes of the prophets. The objective was to apply

the teachings of Scripture to contemporary circumstances. To do so, this teaching and preaching had to be Scriptural. This seems to be the point Paul is making. He exhorts teaching Christian truth. This teaching and preaching must be rooted in Scripture. It must be Scriptural.

Second, Paul is more specific when it comes to our singing. He not only requires our singing to be Scriptural, he specifies the Scriptures we are to use in our singing; he specifies the psalms, hymns, and songs inspired by the Spirit found in the Book of Psalms. Again, the *English Standard Version* exhorts, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...singing *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,* with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (italics added). What are we to sing? We are to sing psalms, hymns, and songs spiritual. If the Westminster Standards with proof texts are correct, and we believe they are, these are the songs of the 150 Psalms of the Old Testament. In other words, Paul requires exclusive psalmody. He gives these directions to the New Testament church by the power of and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is an outworking of the regulative principle. God appoints Psalmody. In worship, whatever God does not appoint he forbids.

If, however, Scripture does appoint Psalmody, our question still remains. Why the Psalms? To grasp the genius of Psalmody, we must reorient our approach to the Psalms. Michael LeFebvre points out that we rightly read sixty-five books of the Bible as *God's word to us.* "But the Psalmbook is different: it alone is composed as a collection of *songs from men to God.* They are no less God's inspired word..., but of all the Bible's books, in the Psalms we receive an exceptional gift designed to become *our words to God"* (italics added).[16] LeFebvre adds,

> The Book of Psalms is unique. It is a hymnal. It is the only book of the Bible with God as the audience and God's people as its appointed speakers. This is an important feature of the Psalms with significance for how we should use them in the church today.
>
> The Psalms are words for God's people to sing to Him. This does not mean the Psalms are any less God's word to us than other books of the Bible. ... Like the rest of Scripture, the Psalms are fully God's word to us. But unlike the rest of Scripture, the Psalms are further designed to become our words to sing back to God.[17]

The Psalms also have a distinctive subjective element. This is the *special significance* of the Psalms as God's word given to us to sing back to him in worship. Geerhardus Vos alerts us to this important aspect of the Psalter. As God's words we sing back to him, the Psalms, says Vos, are distinguished by a "penetrating subjectiveness."[18] He clarifies this subjective element.

> The deeper fundamental character of the Psalter consists in this that it voices the subjective response to the objective doings of God for and among his people. *Subjective responsiveness is the specific quality of these songs.* As prophecy is objective, being the address of Jehovah to Israel in word and act, so the Psalter is subjective, being the answer of Israel to divine speech (italics added).[19]

As both God's inspired Word to us and our subjective response to God and his deeds, the Psalms become the divine guide for our subjective responses to him and his deeds. As we take the words of the Psalms on our lips, God guides us in responding to him both objectively, the words we sing, and subjectively, the feelings and emotions we express. Calvin puts it just this way when he too speaks of this subjective element in his Preface to the Psalms. Notice the stress Calvin places on this subjective aspect of the Psalms in giving expression to our emotions.

> The varied and resplendid riches which are contained in this treasury it is no easy matter to express in words; so much so, that I well know that whatever I shall be able to say will be far from approaching the excellence of the subject. But as it is better to give to my readers some taste, however small, of the wonderful advantages they will derive from the study of this book, than to be entirely silent on the point, I may be permitted briefly to advert to a matter, the greatness of which does not admit of being fully unfolded. *I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, "An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul;" for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.* The other parts of Scripture contain the commandments which God enjoined his servants to announce to us. But here the prophets themselves, seeing they are exhibited to us as speaking to God, and laying open all their inmost thoughts and affections, call, or rather draw, each of us to the examination of himself in particulars in order that none of the many infirmities to which we are subject, and of the many vices with which we abound, may remain concealed. It is certainly a rare and singular advantage, when all lurking places are discovered, and the heart is brought into the light, purged from that most baneful infection, hypocrisy. *In short, as calling upon God is one of the principal means of securing our safety; and as a better and more unerring rule for guiding us in this exercise cannot be found elsewhere than in The Psalms, it follows, that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine.*[20]

As we sing the Psalms, the Spirit probes the anatomy of our souls. He lays bare our raw emotions. He counters our deep-seated tightly held hypocrisies. Then, when we cry out to God and vent our own emotions, the Spirit provides us an "unerring rule for guiding us in this exercise [which] cannot be found elsewhere than in The Psalms...."[21]

The subjective element of the Psalter becomes our own as we sing the Psalms. As God's word and a means of grace, the Psalms are the divine guide for the proper expression of our emotions. Through the Psalms, God bridles and trains us in the inner person. As we mimic the Spirit in his divinely given guidance, he forms Christ in us.

Ultimately, this may be the reason the apostle Paul circumscribes singing more closely than teaching. He knows the subjective element of the Psalter

from his own study, experience, and singing. His experience is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and reverberates with the emotions, heart, and soul of David. Holding this thought, listen to Colossians 3:16 and note Paul's own emphasis on the subjective element. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,* teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, *singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God"* (ESV, italics added).

Calvin's emphasis on the subjective element in the Psalter goes back to Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373). Here are excerpts from his *Letter to Marcellinus Concerning the Psalms:*

> [A]mong all the books, the Psalter has certainly a very special grace, a choiceness of quality well worthy to be pondered; for, besides the characteristics which it shares with others, it has this peculiar marvel of its own, that within it are represented and portrayed in all their great variety the movements of the human soul It is like a picture, in which you see yourself portrayed, and seeing, may understand and consequently form yourself upon the pattern given. Elsewhere in the Bible you read only that the Law commands this or that to be done, you listen to the Prophets to learn about the Savior's coming, or you turn to the historical books to learn the doings of the kings and holy men; but in the Psalter, besides all these things, you learn about yourself. You find depicted in it all the movements of your soul, all its changes, its ups and downs, its failures and recoveries. Moreover, whatever your particular need or trouble, from this same book you can select a form of words to fit it, so that you do not merely hear and then pass on, but learn the way to remedy your ill. Prohibitions of evil-doing are plentiful in Scripture, but only the Psalter tells you how to obey these orders and abstain from sin. Repentance, for example, is enjoined repeatedly; but to repent means to leave off sinning, and it is the Psalms that show you how to set about repenting and with what words your penitence may be expressed. Again, Saint Paul says, Tribulation worketh endurance, and endurance experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; but it is in the Psalms that we find written and described how afflictions should be borne, and what the afflicted ought to say, both at the time and when his troubles cease: the whole process of his testing is set forth in them and we are shown exactly with what words to voice our hope in God. Or take the commandment, In everything give thanks. The Psalms not only exhort us to be thankful, they also provide us with fitting words to say. We are told, too, by other writers that all who would live godly in Christ must suffer persecution; and here again the Psalms supply words with which both those who flee persecution and those who suffer under it may suitably address themselves to God, and it does the same for those who have been rescued from it. We are bidden elsewhere in the Bible also to bless the Lord and to acknowledge Him: here in the Psalms we are shown the way to do it, and with what sort of words His majesty may meetly be confessed. In fact, under all the circumstances of life, we shall find that these divine songs suit ourselves and meet our own souls' need at every turn.[22]

Imagine songs for worship which give you divinely inspired words to express all your longings, griefs, sorrows, and praise. Imagine a book designed and edited by God for this purpose. The Psalter is such a book. It is a marvel. Athanasius continues,

> [B]ut the marvel with the Psalter is that, barring those prophecies about the Savior and some about the Gentiles, the reader takes all its words upon his lips as though they were his own, and each one sings the Psalms as though they had been written for his special benefit, and takes them and recites them, not as though someone else were speaking or another person's feelings being described, but as himself speaking of himself, offering the words to God as his own heart's utterance, just as though he himself had made them up. Not as the words of the patriarchs or of Moses and the other prophets will he reverence these: no, he is bold to take them as his own and written for his very self. Whether he has kept the Law or whether he has broken it, it is his own doings that the Psalms describe; every one is bound to find his very self in them and, be he faithful soul or be he sinner, each reads in them descriptions of himself.
>
> It seems to me, moreover, that because the Psalms thus serve him who sings them as a mirror, wherein he sees himself and his own soul, he cannot help but render them in such a manner that their words go home with equal force to those who hear him sing, and stir them also to a like reaction...And every other Psalm is spoken and composed by the Spirit in the selfsame way: just as in a mirror, the movements of our own souls are reflected in them and the words are indeed our very own, given us to serve both as a reminder of our changes of condition and as a pattern and model for the amendment of our lives.
>
> It is possible for us, therefore, to find in the Psalter not only the reflection of our own soul's state, together with precept and example for all possible conditions, but also a fit form of words wherewith to please the Lord on each of life's occasions, words both of repentance and of thankfulness....[23]

We neglect this subjective element and abandon Psalmody to our peril. As just observed, we see the subjective element in Paul as he advocates Psalmody (early 60s AD). Athanasius carried the subjective element forward in his teaching of Psalmody (c. 350 AD). Calvin (1543) likely derived his understanding of the subjective element from Athanasius and he too advocated Psalmody. Finally, we see the subjective element in Geerhardus Vos (1902).

LeFebvre asks a question about the Psalms posed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). "How did these words which men sang to God come to be regarded as words from God to man? That is, if the Psalms were composed for worshipers to lift their thoughts (by singing) up to God, why do we study them (by reading) as thoughts from God down to us?"24. The answer to this question is crucial. We dropped the subjective element. As LeFebvre observes, "We stopped *using* the Psalms as human words to God" (italics added).[25]

For Vos, the subjective element in the Psalter comes into its own in the heart's longing for the life to come. "The Psalter bears eloquent witness to the truth that a hope of infinite perpetuation for the collective body is not enough. It requires the *assurance* of the eternity of religion *in the individual soul* to secure the permanence of religion as such" (italics added).[26] How do we come to this assurance? "The Psalmists had their faces set toward this [assurance] and through wrestlings of prayer with Jehovah won their way to the light."[27] We take the wrestlings of the Psalmists on our own hearts and lips. Their groaning, seeking, joy, and praise become our groaning, seeking, joy, and

praise. Their words from God become our words to God. Vos contrasts God-born eschatological assurance with modern humanism and skepticism. We dare not abandon God-born Psalmody-instilled eschatological assurance and compromise with this humanism or with this skepticism. "The Church by compromising and affiliating with this would sign her own death-warrant as a distinct institution."[28] To extend Vos' train of thought, we stop using the Psalms as our own words to God and we abandon the subjective element in Psalmody to our own peril.

The thread running through objections to Psalmody is the supposed insufficiency of the Psalter for New Testament praise. These objections generally view the Psalms, like the rest of Scripture, as presenting God's word to us. If there is any relevance to the Psalter as our words and our subjective response to God's acts and deeds, as presented above, it is either unknown or studiously avoided. This, of course, colors expectations when coming to the Psalter or engaging in Psalmody. We forget the God ordained purpose of the Spirit inspired Psalms. As a result, we readily put other songs in the place of Psalms in the worship of God.

When a Christian young lady with a beautiful voice announced the song she was about to sing in the special community joint worship service, she said something like this: "As David was inspired to write the Psalms, I was inspired to write the song I am going to sing for you this evening." If challenged, this young lady would have readily admitted that her song was not inspired in the same way Scripture is inspired. Yet the subtle temptation is to substitute *our* songs for his songs. The Psalms are *God* given inspired songs. We dare not forget this is the case. The coordinate truth is that God is most holy, excellent, and good. Jesus Christ goes so far as to say, "No one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19). To be truly good is to be Godlike. At the same time, we fall infinitely short of this perfection. We live in a crooked and perverse generation (Acts 2:40, Phil. 2:15). Malcolm Watts therefore says,

> Once this is understood, the question naturally arises: how can men, even with the aid of revelation, set forth in praise the wonders of a Being so illustriously great? He is surely "exalted *above* all blessing and praise" (Neh 9:5, emphasis added), and it must surely follow that our most sublime songs fall unspeakably below His transcendent majesty. The problem, of course, is further aggravated by the fact that men are fallen and therefore subject to sin and error. If the divine glory rises far above the flights of human praise, certain it is that men corrupted in all their faculties of soul, with defective understanding of spiritual things, are altogether incapable of producing material for praise. The general principle lies in the question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4; cf. 11:12, Eph. 4:18).[29]

God himself solves the dilemma. He gives his people a book of praise he inspires. He gives his people the sacrifice of praise his people may offer to him. We have the privilege of singing back to him the praise he condescends

to give to us. All of this is in keeping with the regulative principle. This position is not new, unusual, nor remarkable. Calvin goes back to Augustine to make this point:

> Now what Saint Augustine says is true, that no one is able to sing things worthy of God unless he has received them from Him. Wherefore, when we have looked thoroughly everywhere and searched high and low, we shall find no better songs nor more appropriate to the purpose than the Psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and spoke through Him.[30]

However, grasping the fact that the Psalms are songs inspired by God and are given to us to sing back to him is not enough. It is the *subjective element* of the Psalter that is the key to understanding Psalmody. Again, what is this subjective element? As already stated, "The deeper fundamental character of the Psalter consists in this that it voices the subjective response to the objective doings of God for and among his people. Subjective responsiveness is the specific quality of these songs."[31] The Psalms therefore present us a divine guide for our subjective responsiveness to God. The Psalms shape our sentiments and are a divine guide for the expression of them. To take hold of this is to grasp the import of the subjective element.

Listen to Geerhardus Vos as he begins a sermon he titles *Songs from the Soul:*

> The Psalter is of all books of the Bible that book which gives expression to the experimental side of religion...Hence the Psalter has been at all times that part of Scripture to which believers have most readily turned and upon which they have chiefly depended for the nourishment of the inner religious life of the heart...Our Lord himself, who had a perfect religious experience...found his inner life portrayed in the Psalter and in some of the highest moments of his ministry borrowed from it the language in which his soul spoke to God, thus recognizing that a more perfect language for communion with God cannot be framed.[32]

This is stunning. A language more perfect than the Psalms for communion with God cannot be framed. How can this be? It is inspired language. It is language breathed out by God. It is language given to us by the Holy Spirit. It is language given to us for the expression of our own hearts and souls. "Here the language of the Bible comes to meet the very thoughts of our hearts before these can even clothe themselves in language and we recognize that we could not have expressed them better than the Spirit has here expressed them for us."[33]

The language of the Psalms is therefore useful and suitable and functional for all peoples in all times. Vos continues,

> At first sight, this may easily seem strange to us when we remember that the Psalmists lived under the conditions of a typical and preparatory dispensation; that

> on many points they saw through a glass darkly, whereas we, who live in the full light of the complete gospel, see face to face. But for the very reason that the Psalms reflect the experimental religion of the heart, which is unvarying at all times and under all circumstances, we need not greatly wonder at this.[34]

Fallen human nature is always the same. The operations of sin within the heart are ever the same. The work of the Spirit within the human heart is ever the same. The Psalms, songs especially fit for the expression of the soul, are therefore useful and suitable and functional for all peoples in all ages. This is especially true when these songs of the soul are given for this very purpose by the Spirit in the Psalms. Grasping this subjective element is a key to understanding Psalmody.

Listen to Colossians 3:16 again. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, *teaching and admonishing* one another in all wisdom, *singing* psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (italics added). God commands, Let the word of Christ make its home in your heart through Scriptural preaching *and* let the word of Christ settle down in your heart by singing inspired Scripture, specifically the inspired psalms, hymns, and songs of the Psalter. "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the Word...and...singing of Psalms with grace in the heart;...are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God" (WCF 21.5). In worship, whatever God does not command he forbids. Why then Psalmody? Psalmody is one of God's primary means for instilling within us just and godly emotions and sentiments and guiding us in the expression of them.

Notes

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3. Ibid. Italics used in proof texts.
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THE EXODUS MOTIF IN LUKE'S GOSPEL ACCOUNT

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The weeks of secret, laborious digging were finally over. As zero hour approached and each milepost of meticulous planning was passed, the anticipation rose to ever higher levels. The hushed orders issued, men almost tumbled over themselves to obey, the whiff of freedom in their nostrils. Paul Brickhill's book *The Great Escape*[1], made famous by the film of the same name, is an enthralling true account of the attempt of a group of allied prisoners-of-war in March 1944 to flee their camp, deep in the heart of Nazi Germany. Once outside the perimeter fence, they scurried apart like rabbits, each intent on his own way across the border. Yet, as much as the book is a monument to heroism, it is also a catalogue of failed hopes. Men disguised and carrying false identities are arrested on trains; driven, unsuspecting, into traps; cornered and overwhelmed by the enemy or brought down tantalisingly close to liberty, lacking vital aviation fuel. In fact, for all their grand schemes, remarkably few make it to safety. Instead of doors mysteriously opening and bodies being spirited to safety, the enemy was found to be all too alert and menacing. What started out as a great escape degenerated into an ignominious recapture for most and even greater tragedy for fifty of them who were mercilessly rounded up and shot. From the total of seventy-six who exited the tunnel into the woods, only three managed to get all the way home.

The exodus of the children of Israel from their Egyptian prison camp is on a much grander scale. Exodus 12:37 tells us there were six hundred thousand men, not counting women and children. They didn't slip away unseen, but rather left Egypt like an army with their heads held high. We can call this **The GREAT ESCAPE**, or possibly better, **The GREAT RESCUE.** Although Winston Churchill may have rallied Britain by reassuring her that God was on her side, the Second World War was never a holy war. The plans for the great escape from the Germans were probably made without consulting God. By contrast, God's control of the exodus shows his unilateral commitment to Israel as his special people. "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and

you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD" (Exodus 6:6-8). Nonetheless, certain aspects of the exodus will bear comparison with the great escape. These words, spoken to Moses when he is at his lowest ebb, outline what Elmer Martens has called God's fourfold design.[2] Altering Martens' elements slightly, God declares here his **plan** to deliver a **people** for himself (against all odds) and to bring them to a land he has already **promised.** This promise links the exodus back to God's covenant dealings with Abraham, which themselves are a fulfilment of God's determination to save his people in Genesis 3:15, after sin corrupted his original creation. The fourth element in this design is the people's **participation** through their knowledge of God as he reveals himself to them and through their obedience to him.

A series of mostly alliterative words may serve to fill in these basic contours. Above all, the exodus is about a **powerful** God. We see that in every move he makes. He is able to overcome the so-called gods of Egypt without great difficulty. What's more, he reveals his name to Moses, a name which shows both his power and his love – the LORD, 'I AM WHO I AM'. He has always been there. He will always be there. Indeed, a major theme of the book of Exodus is the **presence** of God, with his own at all times.3. His presence, especially when Pharaoh would prefer his absence. Nothing can check him. And this is a God who has a **plan.** He unfolds this plan long before Moses steps back on to Egyptian soil. Nothing can surprise him. His plan is to save his **people.** Although, as the above quotation shows, it is chiefly to bring glory to himself, since he, alone, is the LORD. It is a great number that leaves Egypt, but God tells them that is not why he has chosen to love them and save them, "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set His love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). In world terms the children of Israel are a rather **paltry** people. However, that is not their worst fault. They are also a **perverse** people. On the night of the first Passover they have to sacrifice an unblemished lamb for each family. Otherwise the angel of death would have to strike their first-born just as he does the Egyptians'. However, in spite of their sins, God makes a **partition**, a dividing line between his people and the Egyptians. Yet even as they leave Egypt that partition is being reshaped. Many others from outside Israel come and join them on their departure (Exodus 12:38, see too v.43-51). There is already a universal flavour to the exodus. It must be recognised that several scholars see a lack of connection between the Passover and the exodus, separating each of them into distinct lines of tradition. Surely, though, the psalmist boldly affirms the unity

of the whole in his praise of God, seeing one as cause and the other as effect,

> to Him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
> for His steadfast love endures for ever;
> and brought Israel out from among them,
> for His steadfast love endures for ever;
> with a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
> for His steadfast love endures for ever (Psalm 136:10-12)

God delivers His people from slavery because of his eternal love. Suffering is linked to glory. In order to effect the exodus there will be all kinds of pain, the death of the Egyptian firstborn, the death of an unblemished lamb in every Israelite household. But this **pain** will produce a **prize,** finally the regaining of the land of promise. However, when God destroys the Egyptians by his supreme power, when the Israelites find themselves on the other side of the Red Sea they will not have reached the Promised Land straight away. Before them the wilderness stretches out and the need to trust God and to obey him throughout the journey will be essential. God's presence will accompany the people through the wilderness, in the pillar of cloud and fire, but they have to follow him. This brings in the element of **participation.** God's people must learn how to know him better and then seek to share that knowledge with others. At the foot of Mount Sinai they are gathered together in covenant relationship with their delivering God. They are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6) to spread his knowledge abroad. However, their own sin at the mountain and in the wilderness will greatly compromise their effectiveness. Sadly another slavery beckons.

Echoes of the exodus can be heard in much of the rest of the Old Testament. We will limit ourselves here to several Psalms and the latter sections of the prophecy of Isaiah.

The psalmists basically use the ideas of the exodus in three different ways. The first and most simple use is in those psalms which praise God for his deliverance. Psalm 66 is one such example, "Come and see what God has done: He is awesome in His deeds towards the children of man. He turned the sea into dry land... There did we rejoice in Him, who rules by His might for ever" (v.5-7). God's power and sovereignty are the focus of praise here. He saves those who cannot save themselves. According to this psalm, "All the earth worships You" (verse 4). He is the God of the whole world – his power is not simply limited to Israel. Psalms 47, 95 and 136 also strike the same notes.

A second category of psalms uses the exodus theme differently. In Psalm 80:9 Asaph says to God, "You brought a vine out of Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it." Again God's mighty power on behalf of the powerless is in view But in this psalm the people are in a parlous state, whether because

of their own perversity or because of oppression from outside. Here the psalmist is using the exodus to inflame the people's faith, to have them cry out passionately to God, "Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let Your face shine, that we may be saved!" (v.3, 7, 19). Thus the exodus is a springboard to deliverance in the future.

A third group of psalms, such as 78, 105 and 106, praise God for his persistent favour throughout Israel's history. However, they are also a catalogue of the people's sins from the Red Sea to the Promised Land. Throughout this whole history one alone remains faithful. That one is Moses. According to Psalm 106:23, "Moses, His chosen one, stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying them [the children of Israel]." God continues to honour his covenant with his people, because of Moses. We know, though, that Moses is a sinner himself, who will not enter the Promised Land. There must be someone behind Moses for whom God keeps his covenant. We cannot read these psalms without being humbled because of our sins of ingratitude, doubt and rebellion towards God. Nor can we read them without a profound sense of God's grace, perseverance and eternal love, in Christ, towards us who deserve no such thing.

As far as the prophecy of Isaiah is concerned, the exodus motif comes out particularly in his book of consolation, chapters 40-55. First of all we consider chapter 43. Isaiah is previewing a second period of slavery, this time in Babylon. God is announcing here that he is going to deliver them, his chastened and reduced people, again. Before, as verse 16 states, he made a way in the sea, but now he's going to do something new. Verse 19 says, "I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." In the next verse he claims that he will tame the wild animals. This sounds like a return to the pristine state of creation when first made. This new work that God is going to accomplish is on the same level as creation. And who is going to accomplish it? "I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King" (v.15). He is the Lord and beyond him there is no other Saviour. Secondly, we turn to Isaiah 51-52, where Isaiah develops this theme. Here he gives us a whole gamut of God's redeeming activity using creation imagery (51:3), referring to Abraham as the father of the nation, right through to the return from exile. Indeed authors Richard Patterson and Michael Travers comment on this section, "Often it is difficult to know whether a given text speaks of a future that is somewhat close at hand or to a far distant future or both."[4] The city of Jerusalem rises in all her renewed glory at the centre of the section (52:1-2), occupied by those whom God has liberated. In verses 9-10 of chapter 51 the prophet asks, "Was it not You [LORD] who cut Rahab [Egypt] in pieces, that pierced the dragon? Was it not You who dried up the sea... who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?" These chapters speak of the people of God, but also of the whole world. God is going to judge the peoples (v.4). The islands are

going to trust in him. Those who are delivered from Egypt are filled, mysteriously, with an everlasting joy (v.11). This vision is taking on universal and eternal dimensions. In his use of the exodus motif, Isaiah takes us back to creation and on to a new creation. How will this new creation be realised? We saw earlier the close links between Passover and exodus. The final deliverance of the people of God will only take place through sacrifice, through the pain of the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, for all those who see their need of him.

At this point it's wise to pause for a question. The great escape from that German prisoner-of-war camp was not an unqualified success. What about the great rescue from Egypt? Was it a success? God remained faithful to his promises, but throughout their history the Israelites proved disobedient, unfaithful and full of sin. The author remembers his first contact with Raymond Dillard, Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia. I heard him preach in August 1985 shortly after I arrived at Westminster. During his sermon he began to weep in the pulpit. He said that on its own the Old Testament, to which he had devoted much of his life, was a failure - because of the persistent sins of the people. Without the gospel of Jesus Christ the Old Testament is a tragedy. This is why you seldom meet a Jew who is happy. He has rejected the good news that transforms his religion from a tragedy into a triumph. However, there's a more personal application here too. Do you view your sins the same way Ray Dillard viewed the sins of Israel? Perhaps we should more often be weeping because of our own sins, so that God may astound us more by the marvels of his salvation.

After 400 years of slavery God set his people free from their prison. After 400 years of silence God is now speaking to his people again in the New Testament. They are living in the Promised Land, but they are no longer free. A Roman foot is pressing on their throat. This is where Luke begins his gospel account. His introductory four verses reveal much to us. He's addressing a Greek called Theophilus in the language and style of the Greeks. This tells us that his message is not intended merely for national Israel. Luke carried out exacting research, consulting eye- and ear-witnesses to verify what he says (Luke 1:2). He wants his readers to be sure of these things, for those who have believed have become "ministers of the word" (v.2), their whole lives taken over by it. So when he speaks of visitations of angels he wants us to believe him. These are historical events he is recounting just as Moses recounted the history of the exodus.

Before the exodus God visited Moses in the burning bush and tied in his actions to the covenant he had made with Abraham (Exodus 3:6, 15, 16). Before a second exodus an arrival, an *eisodos*, is necessary. Luke, especially among the Synoptic writers, describes the opening events of his gospel account as **The VISIT.** This is how Zechariah begins his song of praise to God when

his tongue has been loosed again, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68). He continues to celebrate the deliverance from their enemies which God has sovereignly worked, looking forward as he concludes, to a newer brighter day, "because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise [referring to Jesus] shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79). There is a moment of visitation, or indeed, illumination, as Zechariah describes it, and then a whole life devoted to following that light. In Egypt and at the Red Sea the Egyptians knew thick darkness while the Israelites had light. According to what Zechariah says, the darkness has not completely disappeared from Israel. Zechariah is not thinking about deliverance from physical slavery. His newborn son will give the Lord's people the knowledge of salvation in the forgiveness of their sins (v.77). This messenger and his new deliverer will set Israel free from an enemy in their hearts more tyrannical than Pharaoh, an enemy who has bound them low for centuries. The child to be born will not lead his people to another physical land as the first exodus did. Rather he will help his people to live as heirs of the land where they are already. We don't need to move to a new country. Instead we need to make sure that we have received new hearts.

However, in the temple Zechariah behaves more like one of the Israelites of old times who would not trust in God even though he had seen His miracles with his own eyes. But beside unbelieving Zechariah, refusing to participate in God's plan for his life, Luke presents us with Mary and her faith in hard circumstances. In words that echo with God's rhetorical question to Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:14) the angel tells Mary, "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). And Mary responds, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (v.38). Mary will play her part. This is an example of the faith that Luke wants to see in his friend Theophilus. He wants us to be filled with the same faith.

At the time of the first exodus the pillar of cloud descended on the Israelites (Exodus 13:21-22). That was effectively the beginning of the nation of Israel as the firstborn son of God (Exodus 4:22). To bring the new exodus to pass the angel informs Mary that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and that the power of the Most High will overshadow her (Luke 1:35). This is the beginning of the human life of the holy child who will be called the Son of God. As at the first exodus where God's sovereign monergism was much in evidence, so here. This is the plan of God, not the will of man. But God doesn't send his Son into the world as a fully formed adult. He puts him into the womb of a virgin betrothed to be married, innocent and vulnerable yet not unprotected. From one point of view the covenant of grace operates totally by the will and power of God. But, from another point of view, we are involved

We must participate. As Mary glorifies her Lord and Saviour in the Magnificat, a song which is full of pictures of the exodus, we hear both points of view. "He [the Mighty One] has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts" (Luke 1:51). The Pharaoh and his soldiers saw the strength of the Lord's arm for themselves. "He [the Mighty One] has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate" (v.52). What fall in the Old Testament is greater than that of Pharaoh? Unless it's the fall of Adam himself, also because of his pride! And it's through a child of slaves, a despised shepherd elevated in his time, that God leads his people through the Red Sea. In Luke's gospel account it's a young humble woman whom God raises on high. It's shepherds, living on the margins of society, whom God invites to visit the One who has come to visit them (Luke 2:8-20). As L. Deiss said in his commentary on Mary, "en Marie se réalisent à nouveau les merveilles de l'Exode."[5]

In his careful analysis of Luke, David Gooding has shown that there is a series of stories in chapters 1 and 2 intended by the author for comparison and contrast.[6] The first story in chapter 1 – Zechariah struck dumb – and the last in chapter 2 – the young Jesus in Jerusalem – are like book-ends enclosing the material in between. They both take place in the temple. However their differences are more striking than their similarities. The miracle of the birth of John the baptiser announced to Zechariah is a repeatable miracle, just like the miracle at the Red Sea which God re-enacts at the River Jordan before his people enter the land. On the other hand, the boy in the temple is unique. He tells his mother that he must be in his Father's house, occupied with his Father's plans, as she and Joseph had taught him to desire. Up until this point no-one – not Abraham nor Moses nor David – has dared to call God his unique father. This birth, this life cannot be repeated. Because God has only one Son to give to us.

The next section of Luke's Gospel we can call **The PROPHET**. This section runs from chapter 3 to chapter 9 verse 50. Isaac Newton said, "Prophecy is not given to make men prophets, but as a witness to God when it is fulfilled."[7] God sent Moses to Pharaoh to deliver his words and to see them being fulfilled, to let Pharaoh see who was God. Jesus came to earth as the final prophet, in order to be in himself the fulfilment of his words. As Jesus strides out into the desert after his baptism his journey resembles that of Moses and the Israelites. They followed the pillar of cloud and of fire. Jesus himself is filled with this powerful Spirit. He is a whole army in one man. He is the representative of his people.

His first temptation has to do with hunger. The Israelites were hungry in the wilderness. Jesus shows that he will submit to his Father's will. He is happy to be without food in the desert. At this time how does he resist the devil? By a series of spectacular miracles? Not at all. Rather by the word of

God. By the words, more precisely, that Moses wrote by God's prescription during the wilderness wanderings. We are not prophets like Moses or like Jesus. But the word of God is sufficient for us at all times, for our salvation and so that the man of God may be equipped for every good work. It has often been remarked that Luke changes the order of the temptations. He finishes on the temple in Jerusalem. This may be a stylistic device in keeping with his intentions, for in chapter 13 he will record Jesus' words, "... for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (v.33). He is a prophet like Moses, but different too. Here he previews his death. But Jesus will not allow Satan to kill him before the appointed hour, before he has delivered his people from their worst enemies. Jesus will not jump from the top of the temple, nor will he come down from the cross either at Satan's bidding, when he realises, too late, that Jesus' death is his own downfall (Lk.23:35). As a man Jesus submitted these three times to the law of his Father. As a man, but as much more than a man, he will submit to the waves of death. Early in his narrative Luke has given us a glimpse into the battle taking place in the wings of history. The hostility between the Israelites and the Egyptians is only a surface trait of this much deeper conflict.

In the synagogue in Nazareth in Luke chapter 4 Jesus reads from the prophecy of Isaiah and declares emphatically that he has come to fulfil that Scripture (v.21). What is surprising about the congregation is that they don't rise up at this audacity. What does infuriate them, however, are Jesus' words about God's choice to bless a widow and a leper beyond the borders of Israel (v.25-27). They believe that God is only going to comfort those who mourn in Zion and not elsewhere. They obviously forget that when their forefathers were leaving Egypt many pagans from outside Israel joined the company (Exodus 12:38). They were supposed to be a light to the nations. In recent days the Chief Rabbi also seems to have forgotten that, as it is difficult to explain his absence from the House of Lords at a crucial vote against the redefinition of marriage. His support could have helped those seeking to honour God's law. Truly no prophet is well received in his own homeland. These Israelites seem to prefer to toil on in Egypt. Later, in chapter 5, Jesus will say, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (v.31). These people in Nazareth do not see themselves as sick and so they will not recognise Jesus as either prophet or spiritual doctor.

In the Nazareth synagogue Jesus is announcing that a new era has arrived. It is the year of the Lord's favour. Significantly, he omits the words from Isaiah 61 that speak of judgment. This judgment is going to fall on him alone. In the passages that follow in chapters 4, 5 and 6 we meet a succession of those who are set free from what burdens them by the word of this new prophet. In chapter 4:31-44 Jesus exorcises an evil spirit and dispels a fever as he releases people from the power of Satan. A series of incidents in chapter 5:1-32 is tied

together by the common theme of Jesus releasing people from the power of sin. In 5:33-6:11 Jesus addresses fasting and an excessive Sabbatarianism as Jesus seeks to release people from the tyranny of the laws of the Pharisees. In the first exodus the people were unable to approach the mountain of God at Sinai. They addressed Moses in these words, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19). In the same spirit Peter asks Jesus to leave him (5:8), because of his sin. However, Jesus does not comply. He stays close to Peter precisely to take upon himself Peter's sin. When Jesus heals the leper in the verses following he upholds the law of Moses by sending the cleansed man to the priest (v.14). But not before he has touched the leper himself. Surely that makes Jesus ritually unclean. Yet Jesus continues to mix with people. He doesn't consider himself impure. Quite the contrary, in his polemic against the Pharisees in chapter 6 He implies that His disciples are holy, as David's men were in the incident with the shewbread, because of their contact with him. Many of the Jews do not want to change. But such a rebellion against God's final prophet, unknown to them, will be the means of bringing a new exodus to pass.

When we arrive at chapter 9, the climax of this section of Luke's account, the question of the identity of this prophet has assumed much greater importance. Herod, the king of the Jews, asks the question because of his conscience troubled with the murder of Jesus' relative, John (v.9). Jesus himself asks the same question quite overtly, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" (v.18). The reported answers of the crowds' understanding of Jesus attach him to the past. The crowds are not yet ready for the new wine (Lk.5:37-39). Before the end of chapter 9 the disciples will have a definitive expression of who Jesus is, not just from man, but from God himself. They will need this understanding as they begin their journey together to Jerusalem, for there they will confront waves more ferocious than those that drowned the Egyptians.

Michael Wilcock divides the first 36 verses of chapter 9 into six parts, with the odd-numbered sections focussing on the slowly emerging new people of God whom Jesus is to deliver. As if in response, sections 2, 4 and 6 concentrate specifically on the deliverer himself.[8] In this configuration the transfiguration of Jesus is seen as the culminating point. David Gooding develops a broader analysis of the first 50 verses, where he discerns chiastic parallelism with a double centre on Peter's confession and Jesus' transfiguration.[9] Peter's confession itself is full of meaning. Up until this point Jesus has received different titles, for example "Son of God" (Luke 1:35; 4:3, 9, 41); "Holy One of God" (4:34); "Lord" (5:8, 12) and "Master" (5:5; 8:24, 45). In chapter 9:20 this is the first time that he has been called 'the Christ of God'. By this title Peter means that Jesus is not just some throwback to the past. Instead, he is the fulfilment of all the hopes of Israel in one person. The Messiah, the final prophet, the great high priest and the King of kings.

Before they can celebrate Peter's accurate formulation, Jesus explains with crystal clarity what being Messiah will actually mean for him (Luke 9:22). Dreadful, practically unmentionable sufferings at the hands of the most respected among his own people, ahead of a ray of hope which the disciples probably don't even take in. Not just for him, but for all who will follow him. This is a note which is sadly missing from much of the evangelical world today. It is only through such sufferings that the kingdom of God can appear, implies Jesus. We find the same feature here as we noted in the book of Exodus. There is a close relationship between suffering and glory. Without pain there can be no prize. You cannot be delivered from the waters of judgment unless it is through the death of the Passover lamb.

The transfiguration itself brings the Old Testament and the New Testament together. As David Moessner has outlined it[10], four ideas can help us with these comparisons. The first of these is **the word of God.** Moses mediates the words of God to Pharaoh and to the people. He physically brings the words of God to him on top of the mountain down to the people at its base. He is also the people's mediator to God. When Matthew and Mark describe the transfiguration they begin like this, "And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them" (Mark 9:2). Compare how Luke opens his description, "Now about eight days after these sayings He [Jesus] took with Him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as He was praying..." He was transfigured (Luke 9:28-29). Luke puts the accent on prayer. This is a form of mediation which Jesus exercises between heaven and earth. Each time Luke shows us Jesus in prayer his life is raised to the next level. He prays before His baptism (3:21). He prays before choosing the twelve apostles (6:12) and he will pray in Gethsemane as he contemplates the cup of his Father's anger against sin (22:40-46). As he prays, as he considers what he must endure for his own, the skin of his face changes in appearance. The skin of Moses' face was also changed to reflect the glory of God (Ex.34:29-33), but the transformation with Jesus seems to happen from the inside out, until even his clothes have caught the glory. It is as if a veil has been removed so that the three can see the real Jesus, as he is now (see Revelation 1:12-16). Jesus stands between God and men. Those whom God calls to be pastors of his church occupy the same position. When we pray to God for those he has given us, when we stand before them with the words of God it is a position of great privilege. God may well transform us too!

The second concept which ties together the first and second exodus is the perversity of the people. Matthew and Mark both mention this fault, but Luke emphasises it. Many are the sins of the Israelites, which they are already committing the very day God opens the Red Sea for them (Ex.14:11-12) and which they continue to commit throughout their wilderness wanderings, even

as Moses comes back down the mountain with the writing of God. Equally, at the foot of the mount of transfiguration Jesus has to exclaim, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?" (Luke 9:41). However, the sin and lack of comprehension are not limited to the crowds. The disciples are also included. Jesus climbs the mountain to pray, but what are his three closest friends doing? They are "heavy with sleep" (9:32). It is night, but, just as will be the case in Gethsemane, Jesus wants his disciples to join him in prayer. A week previously he has been underlining to them what he must suffer and he is coveting their company. He is a real man. All the same, he finds himself alone. God the Father, though, has other ideas. So Moses and Elijah, from two different time periods, from a world that exists beyond our own, arrive to encourage him. When the three disciples suddenly wake up they continue to sin, to show their ignorance. They haven't heard the discussion between Jesus and the two august figures from their own past, but Peter blurts out, "Master... let us make three tents, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (9:33). Luke adds kindly, "not knowing what he said" (idem). In fact these two are the two most important people from the Old Testament, representing both the law and the prophets. But eight days earlier hasn't Peter recognised Jesus as sole Messiah? He will not share his glory with another. Even the voice of God which establishes Jesus' identity once and for all is a reproach to the disciples, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (9:35), with the implication that they're not doing so. At least as they come down from the mountain Luke tells us that they keep silent about what they have seen and heard. They have to think more deeply about who Jesus really is. They have to consider how far short they fall of their Master's standards. They must reflect on how much their deliverance is going to cost. We may find ourselves in the same situation. Do we underestimate our Saviour because we fail to realise just how serious our own sins are?

That brings us naturally to the heart of the transfiguration, to **the suffering of the Saviour.** Again Luke stresses this more than the other Synoptists. The way to glory leads through suffering. Luke alone tells us that the three disciples see the glory of Jesus (9:32). As Jesus prays he confronts head on the waves of the sins of others washing over him. In order to confirm that this is indeed the plan of God, the Father reveals Jesus as he is. Two giants of the faith are suddenly with him. For Moses, seeing the Promised Land from afar (Deuteronomy 34:1-4), this is the first time his feet touch that land. What is the subject of their discussion together? The Pharaoh's anger or the false prophets on Mount Carmel? Not at all. "[They] spoke of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (verse 31). In some English versions the Greek word *exodos* is rendered by the word "decease". But "exodus" is much more than that. The exodus of the Old Testament includes the ideas of substitutionary death, deliverance and journey to freedom. Luke

tells us that Jesus is going to 'accomplish' his departure. That carries the authority more of an airline pilot preparing to taxi down the runway, or even of a NASA commander preparing to "blast off" than it does of someone at the mercy of an enemy he can't control. Jesus will give his life voluntarily and then he will take it up again. Moses and Elijah set out on this work, but they did not accomplish it. Moses died outside the Promised Land and Elijah went to heaven in a chariot of fire. Others had to continue what they had begun. Jesus alone will accomplish all that the Old Testament contains. Indeed, His Greek name (*Iesous*, Saviour) is the equivalent of the Hebrew names of Joshua ("the Lord saves") and Elisha ("God saves"), those who followed on from Moses and Elijah. In verse 34 with the cloud approaching the mountain the judgment of God draws near (God's judgment is referred to as a "day of clouds" in e.g. Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:15). Yet, instead of thunder and lightning we hear the Father praising his Son, because he is going to take to himself all the judgment that every believer in the world deserves. No-one could begin to shoulder such a burden if he were not more than just a prophet. If he were not the Christ of God, the Son of Man and God himself in one person. Can we even begin to comprehend what Jesus suffered for us the day his Father brought hell to Calvary?

The last category of comparison between the days of Moses and Jesus takes **the shape of a child.** Because of their lack of faith and spiritual prostitution, the Israelites who left Egypt were not able to complete the exodus. They died outside the land. At the foot of the mountain the disciples of Jesus are trying faithlessly to cast out an evil spirit. Jesus has to place a little child among them. He is involved in establishing a new people. He has chosen new leaders and has given them a new law. To carry through this new exodus they cannot continue to be the people they were. In order to enter the kingdom of God we must become like little children. As Peter says elsewhere, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you" (1 Peter 5:6). This prophet greater than Moses still has much to impart to his followers as he sets his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.

After the transfiguration Matthew and Mark only take one or two chapters until Jesus and his disciples have arrived in the capital city. For Luke, however, it's a different matter. The disciple band still seems far from Jerusalem and Jesus still has much to teach them. Up to this point most of Luke's gospel account has been taken up with the actions of Jesus. During the next section he will concentrate more on his words. This is how Luke sums up his first volume when he's addressing Theophilus at the beginning of the book of Acts, "In the first book... I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). So let us listen to Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem. For this section he title of **The JOURNEY** is to be preferred. There are correspondences

between the journey of the Israelites towards the Promised Land, as Moses recounts it in the book of Deuteronomy, and this journey of Jesus to his nation's capital.

Each incident which happens to the Israelites does not have its mirror image in the journey to Jerusalem. Nevertheless there are links between those leading each journey and also between those who are following. Before examining these chapters more closely, it is necessary to ask if the idea of a journey really does exist in this section. Howard Marshall is somewhat dubious, "The contents of this section [from 9:51-19:44] are very varied, mostly from non-Marcan material, and it cannot be said that the motif of a journey is present in many of them."[11] There are two lines of response we can make. First, Jerusalem is not the final goal Jesus has in mind. It is rather a springboard from which he will ascend into heaven in order fully to bring the new exodus to pass. In other words, it is a journey on a much grander scale. In the second place, Jerusalem is not the centre of the kingdom of God. It is rather the centre of Satan's operations base. As Jesus draws closer to Jerusalem it looks more like a return to Egypt than a march of triumph with those he has saved. It is a journey of a different kind, to set people spiritually free. During the last year the actor Daniel Day-Lewis has been awarded with his third Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's autobiography, entitled *My Journey from a Log Cabin to the White House* is helpful to grasp the nature of the journey motif in Luke. There is no straight road linking these two places, but every action that Lincoln takes and every speech he makes brings him nearer the White House. It's the same with Jesus. In these chapters he is on a metaphorical journey to Jerusalem, as well as a physical one. Let us return to the same headings we used with the transfiguration to organise the material in these chapters.[12]

Our first heading is **the word of God** and its mediation. It's clear that Moses makes God's voice known everywhere in the Book of Deuteronomy.[13] For example, in chapter 4:5 he says to the people, "See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them". Moses frequently reminds the people that the voice they heard from Sinai is their life. They must obey this voice. Further down the chapter Moses continues, "And He [the LORD] declared to you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, that is the Ten Commandments, and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (v.13). If they do not obey his commandments they will lose their inheritance in the Promised Land. In a keynote chapter on the blessings and curses of the covenant, Moses relays God's severe words, "if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all His commandments and His statutes... then all these curses shall come upon you" (28:15). From the curses we read, "And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other

gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known" (28:64). God makes his covenant unilaterally with those he chooses. He alone passes between the pieces of the animals cut in two in the covenant ratification ceremony in Genesis chapter 15. Yet the covenant carries conditions too. The true believer must participate.

In parallel, the words of Jesus in this journey section carry a powerful punch. Back in chapter 4 he had already declared his basic aim, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). This sense of being driven, this "I must" is Jesus's food and drink – to fulfil his Father's plans for him. Whether someone joins the disciples as they spread out round the country preaching and separating people, depends chiefly on the words and on the person of Jesus. He says starkly, "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (12:8-9). Inheriting the land, the kingdom of God, devolves solely upon our estimate of and relationship with the Son of God. Moses communicated the will of God and the voice of God to the people. Jesus Himself is the voice of God, the word of God. In his parables in this section, parables which themselves separate the hearers into two groups, Jesus speaks with the authority of God. He forcefully transmits the voice of God to the rich fool in his parable – the one admired by so many of his neighbours is going to lose his life that very night (12:20). On the other hand the tax collectors and sinners, so despised by the best Jews, may hear from his lips the promise of the angels singing over them, if they repent (15:7, 10).

Two further examples point up the divine power in Jesus' words, one from near the beginning and the other from near the end of the section, as if Luke has put them there deliberately. Firstly, let us consider the parable of the Good Samaritan, often misinterpreted by moralistic preachers who would have us copy the Samaritan. This parable springs from a lawyer's testy question, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). This question reveals some confusion in the lawyer's head. On the one hand, he believes he can obtain eternal life by *doing* something. Jesus will show him how extreme are the demands of the law, if he chooses that path. On the other hand, the lawyer seems to think that *inheriting* is the way to receive eternal life. Here he is closer to the truth. However, he doesn't understand that Jesus himself is the Samaritan in his own story, despised and rejected by the people, even though he is one of them, while at the same time bringing pardon and healing by losing his own life. Eternal life in the New Testament is the equivalent of inheriting the land in the Old. Jesus wants to show us that we simply cannot love our neighbours on our own. Nor can we keep the law perfectly on our own. Therefore we are excluded from the Promised Land. Our sins have be[illegible] us

up on the journey and left us wounded and bleeding at the roadside. That is why we need Jesus, the Samaritan. It is only when he pours his new life into us that we can begin to love as we should.

The other example is found in chapter 18 as the rich young ruler approaches Jesus. This incident begins with the same question as the previous one, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (v.18). Again the question is about how the land may be entered. Jesus pulls the young man up short on his use of language. If he is calling Jesus "good" does he really believe that Jesus is God? When he refuses to sell his possessions he shows he has no room for God in his life. He says he has kept all the commandments from his youth, but he won't listen when Jesus puts his finger on his sin and shows him his rebellious heart. This episode, preceded by the humility of the little children coming to Jesus (18:15-17), and followed by a reiteration of the enormous price of salvation in Luke 18:31-34, underlines how the deliverance that leads to eternal life must be nothing else but the work of God. If it were the work of man, it would never come to pass. Happily the angel's words to Mary as she contemplates the impossibility of what is going on inside her are repeated here, "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (v.27). It is not only possible. It has really happened!

Jesus speaks from God, to a much higher degree than Moses. His words determine either blessing or curse. A second strand which permeates both accounts is the sinful reaction to both leaders. Again we confront the **perversity of the people.** When we meet the Israelites under Moses the words "stubborn", "rebellious", "wicked", "crooked" and "perverse" crop up with monotonous regularity (e.g. Deuteronomy 9:6, 7, 27; 32:5, 20). Moses complains to the people themselves about how awkward they are, "How can I bear by myself the weight and burden of you and your strife?" (Deuteronomy 1:12). We have already referred to Jesus' similar sentiments of frustration at a generation He calls "faithless and twisted" (Luke 9:41). When Jesus predicts his death in Matthew's and Mark's accounts either Satan, disguised as Peter, rebukes him, or else the disciples are filled with anguish, which shows that they understand him, to a certain degree at least. Luke alone shows a constant inability among the disciples to grasp what Jesus means. Near the end of this section he describes the disciples like this, "But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them" (18:34).

In these chapters Jesus also takes the crowds to task, since they call themselves Israelites. He holds them responsible for the blood of all the prophets. That begins to show us the dimensions of the price that will be necessary to save them. He almost seems deliberately to provoke his own people against him. The parables of the invited guests who make excuse (Luke 14:15-24), of the lost sheep the lost silver and the lost son (Luke 15) and of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) are calculated to arouse

animosity. His most crushing condemnation is spoken in chapter 17 where the rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees will bring down a judgment comparable to the flood or to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (v.27, 28-29). The question he poses to believing Jews in chapter 18 is caustic indeed, "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" (v.8). We hear much in the outside world these days, in schools and other places of learning, and in the church too, about the need to preserve and even raise our self-esteem. Surely, in the light of what Jesus says here, we should turn our backs on much of this and consider our sins more closely. Do we really believe all that the prophets, all that Jesus has said? How much we have need of him! For we cannot save ourselves. But we need to show by our obedience to his word that we have been saved.

In the third place there are **the sufferings of the respective Saviours.** There are connections between the sufferings of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy and the sufferings of Jesus in Luke. Because Moses struck the rock a second time, against God's express instructions, he was forbidden from entering the land God had promised to Abraham (Numbers 20:10-13; Deuteronomy 32:48-52). It is a moment of high pathos, comparable to David's being forbidden to build the temple or to the able but seriously flawed Richard Nixon flying into self-imposed exile after resigning his presidency. In the early chapters of Deuteronomy we are furnished with one major, different, reason for God to cut Moses short – the constant bad behaviour of the nation, "Even with me the LORD was angry on your account and said, 'You also shall not go in there'" (Deuteronomy 1:37). To show that this is not just a moment of pique a couple of chapters later Moses says the same thing, "But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me" (3:26). Indeed, in chapter 4 Moses is standing on the bank of the River Jordan as he announces, "For I must die in this land; I must not go over the Jordan. But you shall go over and take possession of that good land" (4:22). The land cannot be won until Moses dies and a new deliverer takes his place. In this way we can say that the death of Moses is necessary for the people to enter the land.

If the death of Moses is evident from the beginning of Deuteronomy, then the death of Jesus becomes an ever more insistent chord from this section of Luke on. All that he says and does seems to imply that he is at the centre of a rising storm – the householder versus the thief (Luke 12:39); not peace but division (12:51-53); the narrow door versus the evildoers outside (13:22-30); the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31); the persistent widow versus the unjust judge (18:1-8); the Pharisee versus the tax collector (18:9-14); the rich young ruler contrasted with the little children, the blind beggar and the short man (18:15-19:10). In each case Jesus takes one side and the religious leaders, whether consciously or unconsciously, are portrayed in opposition to him. In chapter 12 Jesus' words become literally incendiary, "I came to cast fire on the

animosity. His most crushing condemnation is spoken in chapter 17 where the rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees will bring down a judgment comparable to the flood or to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (v.27, 28-29). The question he poses to believing Jews in chapter 18 is caustic indeed, "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" (v.8). We hear much in the outside world these days, in schools and other places of learning, and in the church too, about the need to preserve and even raise our self-esteem. Surely, in the light of what Jesus says here, we should turn our backs on much of this and consider our sins more closely. Do we really believe all that the prophets, all that Jesus has said? How much we have need of him! For we cannot save ourselves. But we need to show by our obedience to his word that we have been saved.

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earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how great is My distress until it is accomplished!" (v.49-50). Again, as at the transfiguration, we have the language of accomplishment. Jesus is following a particular path, chosen for him. The baptism of which he speaks is a little obscure. John the baptiser announced that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Lk.3:16). He had not understood that such baptism would not take place at Jesus' first coming. That coming is more about Jesus diverting the fire of judgment away from his people and on to himself, in order to guarantee a people behind him on the road to the new promised land. In brilliantly clear terms Jesus puts it all together like this, "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation" (Luke 17:24-25). It is the rejection of Jesus and his death that will advance his people to the promised land.

The fourth and final strand of comparison between Moses' and Jesus' economy centres on **the place of the child.** As punishment for their continued stubbornness God only allowed the children of those who had left Egypt to enter their new inheritance (Deuteronomy 1:39). Their parents, like Moses, must die in the wilderness. For his part Jesus wants to welcome the sick (Luke 14:1-6), the sinners (15:1-2) and the estranged (13:29; 14:23; 17:11-19), those generally beyond the purview of the religious leaders. These under-privileged ones receive Jesus like little children. Two examples from these journey chapters of Luke demonstrate the character of this new nation of God. In a synagogue Jesus heals a sick woman on the Sabbath and reproaches the self-satisfied Jews for their hypocrisy (Lk.13:10-17). They ought not to have prevented her from worshipping there. Michael Wilcock aptly summarises what the Sabbath has become under Judaism, "so fossilised and encrusted with traditions that it had become practically lifeless."[14] Jesus unerringly divides between those whose religion is nothing but leaves and those who bring forth real fruit. He calls this woman "a daughter of Abraham" (v.16) and declares that she is worthy of the kingdom of God. The other example is that of Zacchæus. Treated like a pagan and avoided by the Jews of note, Zacchæus nearly falls out of his tree when Jesus calls him by name and opens his heart to him (Luke 19:5). In his turn Zacchæus opens his home to Jesus, and his former life. Again Jesus declares that this man, with his new-found faith and forgiveness, is "a son of Abraham" (v.9). We cannot say of those whom God has purified that they are common or unclean.

So, as Jesus' mission brings him ever nearer Jerusalem he is treading the same familiar steps that Moses trod, dealing with a truculent, difficult people; favouring in particular the children of the faith; bringing the voice of God to bear on their lives and, on behalf of those he has chosen, riding on into the face of suffering. For the most part Moses' was a physical journey, while that of

Jesus is much more spiritual in nature. Jesus' instructions resound with radical, revolutionary cadences which are hard on proud Jewish ears, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk.14:11; 18:14). "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (14:27). The time would come when he would show beyond all doubt that he knew whereof he spoke. By eating with Zacchæus he has shared in his sin, so that Zacchæus might share in his righteousness.[15] That already is the shape of Calvary, to which we now turn.

The gospel according to Luke reaches **The CLIMAX** in the closing chapters. We shall simply examine some of the incidents in the last week of the prophet like Moses. Many of the connections in this section are more conceptual than verbal, but we do hope that there is still a case to be made. As the section begins, part way through chapter 19, Jesus approaches the Holy City where his exodus is going to take place. His disciples and the crowds filling the streets for Passover begin to praise God, just as the angels did on the night of Jesus' birth, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38). But Jesus is not of the party. Tears flow down his cheeks as he sobs, barely articulately, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes" (v.42). Instead of a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, as God called his people at Mount Sinai, the streets of Jerusalem are infested with sin. Truly the people, by and large, have returned to spiritual slavery in Egypt. In order to set them free, to bring them peace towards God, this new Moses is not going to take the throne. Instead, he must suffer. And if they do not accept his death on their behalf they will be destroyed, and their Holy City. As Jesus says, "they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (v.44), using the language of Zechariah in the Benedictus. Such is the value of the One who is going to die.

The exodus from Egypt, at least on a human level was far from a resounding success. The final plague which forced Pharaoh's hand and freed the Israelites came together with the Passover meal. What spiritual Israel now needs for a new exodus to be effected is a new Passover. In chapter 22 Luke links the Last Supper closely with the Passover, which he mentions five times in nine verses. At the burning bush God laid out his whole plan for the deliverance of his people. It's the same with Jesus. He establishes a connection between the Passover and what is to follow, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). As the host at the Passover meal he was supposed to say, "This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt." The apostles must have opened their eyes wide when they heard him say instead, "This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me" (v.19). They are not meant to look back to the exodus

from Egypt any longer. Instead they are to remember Jesus and their relationship with Him.

He also speaks of the new covenant in his blood (v.20) – this will be the cup of blessing for his disciples, at the price of his draining the other cup he contemplates shortly afterwards in the Garden, the cup of his Father's wrath against sin (v.42). Even the anticipation of what that will mean the following day makes him sweat drops of blood (v.44). For Moses, the price of the first exodus was not much more than the stretching out of his arm over the Red Sea (although there were forty years of confused, dispiriting wandering after that). For each family, the cost of the exodus was only the life of an unblemished lamb. For Jesus to effect the second exodus cost far, far more. He had to be submerged under the breakers of his Father's judgment. As the innocent Lamb of God, he had to pour out his own blood. He had to drink to the dregs the wrath his Father held out to him against the sins of others. Other sacrifices and deaths only served to cover over sin. Jesus' death alone pardons it. What depths of suffering he experienced alone for us! Isaiah chapters 51 and 52 describe the way for the redeemed to walk and the joy of Jerusalem, but they lead to chapter 53 where the great price of these good tidings is revealed. The appearance of the servant of the LORD alone, never mind all he would suffer, was so marred that he no longer looked like a human being (Isaiah 52:14).

Luke takes more time in the Upper Room than either Matthew or Mark in order to show us how undeserving the apostles are. Jesus has reshaped their Passover feast by putting himself at the centre, pointing surely to his death, and they respond by arguing among themselves about which of them is the greatest (Luke 22:24-28). Some minutes later Peter boasts of his courage and Jesus has to silence him. Their offer of two swords to Jesus (v.38) shows us on what level their minds are working. Like the crowds several days previously, they're also expecting a physical kingdom to arrive. Luke omits the singing of a psalm before they leave the Upper Room, possibly because he doesn't think them worthy of singing about the altar and the sacrifice of Psalm 118. All of this helps us to see how apposite the words Jesus quotes from Isaiah 53 really are, "this Scripture must be fulfilled in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors'" (v.37). He is truly surrounded by such men. The future of Israel falls squarely on one righteous man. As for the apostles, Satan has asked to sift them and they'll be scattered (v.31), to show just how weak they are when cut off from their head.

In Gethsemane Jesus addresses the whole Jewish crowd that has come out against him, "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). Light and darkness were significant in the first exodus. God visited a plague of darkness that could be felt on the Egyptians (Exodus 10:21-23), but all the people of Israel had light where they lived (v.23b). On the stroke of midnight the Lord struck down every first-born Egyptian (12:29) and he also drove the

Red Sea back during the night so that his people could cross on dry ground (14:21). So when a troop of cowardly men arrives under cover of darkness to take Jesus prisoner we should not be afraid. God is still at work here. We must remember that when the sun forgets to shine at mid-day the following day. Or when we find ourselves surrounded by the enemies of God.

In the Garden of Eden a serpent sidled up to a woman and earth rose up against heaven. In the Garden of Gethsemane Judas sidles up to Jesus in order to humiliate him once and for all. However, without knowing it, he is instrumental in bringing about the reconciliation between earth and heaven. Satan, who has already taken hold of Judas (Luke 22:3), overreaches himself, to his own destruction. Events are not out of control, but rather all form part of the plan of a holy and merciful God. The arrest of Jesus is similar to the arrival of the Israelites at the Red Sea with the pursuing Egyptians coming up behind – it serves in the end to bring glory to God. As for Peter, during these hours he is acting like faithless Israel. He vacillates between pride and fear. In the Upper Room he boasts of his loyalty to his master (Luke 22:33) – pride – but once in the Garden he falls asleep out of unutterable sorrow (v.45) instead of praying for his master and for himself, as Jesus wants him to (v.40) – fear. Then, at the approach of Judas and his cohorts, he offers some physical violence, which Jesus must stop (v.50-51) – pride again. And finally, where he should never be, he denies his master to a servant girl, among others (v.54-62) – fear again. Just like Aaron and the Israelites at the foot of Sinai. When we are in charge of our own lives those are the only two options open to us – pride and fear. We need someone else to be in charge.

Many commentators believe that Luke sees no atoning value in his account of the crucifixion. They think Luke tells it more as how one should die as a martyr. Let Jindrich Mánek speak for others when he says, "The descent into the waves of the Red Sea was not an act of salvation in the Old Testament Exodus. Therefore Jesus' cross also has no character of redemption in the third Gospel or in the Book of Acts of the Apostles."[16] In response to this strident claim, we have seen that, in a sense, Moses, although a sinner himself, takes the place of the Israelites and is excluded from the promised land so that they might enter. In equally subtle, but sure ways Luke presents us with the goal of the death of Jesus. This is an exodus which he is determined to fulfil. At the beginning of chapter 23 the Jewish leaders, having found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, begin to accuse him before the Roman governor Pilate. In brief he is charged with leading a rebellion against Cæsar and with the arrogance of declaring himself Christ, a king (Luke 23:2). We know that Jesus is innocent of these charges. He specifically advised his own people to pay what taxes were due to Caesar (Lk.20:25). He chose not to use the title "Christ" because of its political associations, preferring the designation Son of Man (see even where Peter calls him the Christ and his next words in Lk.9:20 and 22). But,

like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, Jesus does not open his mouth. Rather he accepts the charges as if he is guilty of them. Ironically, these are the very sins which will condemn the Jewish nation forty years later when the Romans come to destroy the city of Jerusalem. By these carefully crafted verses Luke is telling us that Jesus dies the death, unjustly, that guilty Israel deserves to die. Jesus is no rebel. Barabbas is the rebel in this scene, an insurrectionist and a possible murderer (Lk.23:19). He deserves to die, while Jesus is innocent. Pilate himself says so three times in this chapter (vvs.4, 14, 22). But Pilate releases the murderer and condemns the innocent Jesus to death in his place (v.25). Who cannot perceive the theme of substitution here?[17]

On the cross itself the same motif continues. There are three different calls for Jesus to save himself, from the people, from the Roman soldiers and from one of those nailed up beside him (Luke 23:35, 37, 39). However, in order to save others he cannot save himself. As the Father said on the mountain, Jesus is his chosen Son. The leaders of the people repeat this title without realising what they're saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God, His Chosen One!" (v.35). God chose a people, the Jews, to go into the world and to preach the message of salvation, to share their Saviour with others. The first exodus was so that Israel might redeem and remake the world. That is the essence of the promise to Abram in Genesis 12, that the sin of Adam might be reversed. But God's chosen people preferred not to. They became turned in on themselves and ignored that part of God's covenant with Abram, to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3). Jesus was chosen, before the creation of the world, precisely to die on the cross, in order that he might save his people, not from Pharaoh but from their sin and selfishness and ingratitude; from their mortal enemy, Satan; and from eternal death itself. He saved them so that they might spread the news. Yet, as in Egypt, when a great division was made, not everyone will be saved. The division continues. God opens the eyes of one criminal, so that he can see who Jesus really is, believe on him and be saved through death (Luke 23:40-43). The other criminal, like most of the Egyptians who continue in their spiritual darkness, turns a hard face against Jesus and dies a sinner (v.39).

Moses was ready to stand in the breach before the LORD (Psalm 106:23). But, because of his own sins, he was not able to take away the sins of others. Jesus alone among men is able to do that. Pilate declares him innocent. For the first time Herod Antipas is in agreement with him (Lk.23:12, 15). Jesus describes himself as the green wood, hard to burn because of his innocence (v.31) and a criminal suddenly recognises that he has done nothing wrong (v.41). Finally the centurion adds his voice, that this is an innocent man (v.47), that, effectively, they were wrong to execute him. If he is not dying for his own sins and if he is following a very carefully worked out programme there is only one other conclusion - he is dying, deliberately, for the sins of others, in order to let

them into his kingdom. In order to admit even this pagan centurion. We can see his salvation in his declaration of Jesus' innocence, because little less than that would make him contradict his own governor who ordered Jesus' death.

This is an almost immediate fulfilment of Jesus' prayer for pardon in Luke 23:34. Jesus is the greatest prophet in his declarations about himself and about the future centred on him. He is the final high priest who offers himself as a sacrifice to satisfy God's justice. The darkness of the anger of his Father, the outer darkness of hell, falls on him for three hours on the cross so that those who trust in him may know the light of his presence always. These most dreadful waves cannot consume him, because he is also God, the King of all kings (recognised as such by several significant people in this climactic chapter, Luke 23:3, 38, 42, 51). He doesn't lose a battle even when he gives up His own life. He does not die like any other man. We cannot avoid our death, unless Jesus returns first. But Jesus chooses to die. Luke tells us that, after that thickest darkness of the abandonment of his Father has dissipated, Jesus calls out with a loud voice (v.46). A crucified man died by slow strangulation. So the last thing he would be able to do at the end would be to cry out forcefully. Jesus, however, is full of life, in spite of all the nameless depths of suffering he has endured. He decides the moment when he will offer up his life. It is not wrenched from him. This is his exodus, which he is accomplishing, for every one of his people. In this way the obedient King of the Jews is opening up the way to the Promised Land. He takes the sins of spiritual Israel on to himself and thus reconstitutes his people. They have each fallen by the way, but Jesus has died for them, and he will pray for them so that when their faith has returned they may strengthen their brothers (Luke 22:32).

For Jesus his death is not the end. It is more like the entry of Moses between the two walls of water at the Red Sea. Moses emerged on the other side of the Sea, and Jesus does too. For his disciples both the death and the resurrection of their Master took them by surprise. Jesus had warned them, but they had not been listening. The note regarding the plan of God sounds out insistently from Luke's last chapter, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26). The Israelites saw the dead bodies of the Egyptians on the sea-shore and they feared the LORD and believed in him (Exodus 14:30-31). The women, especially, saw Jesus die on the cross (Luke 23:49) when most of His male followers were in hiding. They also saw where he was buried (v.55). So they are the natural ones first to see Jesus risen again and to believe (24:1-8). However, Jesus rebukes Cleopas and his friend for their unbelief before they are able to recognise who he is (v.25). Evidently the new redeemed community is to walk by faith and not by sight. Soon the disciples of Jesus will have a new Person to live within them, One the believers in the Old Testament saw only indistinctly. This new Person will enable them to explore the dimensions of the

new Promised Land. As we have learned, the premium for the second exodus came much higher than that for the first. A pig was once said to survey a breakfast of fried eggs and crisp bacon. He turned to the hen standing beside him and remarked, "To prepare a breakfast like that you would have to be involved – but I would have to be totally committed!"

To break the stranglehold of sin, Jesus had to destroy death, by his unique death, as the innocent king of his people. If he is still dead in Palestine somewhere, then he did not deal with sin. To turn that the right way up, if he rose from those waters of judgment then forgiveness of sins is not only possible, but it has already been obtained for those whom He has chosen. The first exodus could only point to the resurrection from a distance. The journey to Emmaus is of short duration, but it explains the journey of the whole Christian life. The two disciples begin in confusion (Luke 24:17-24), but Jesus leads them into the instruction of his word (v.25-27) until they know the illumination of the Spirit in their hearts (vvs.31-32), which causes instant celebration (v.33-35). How does Jesus open their minds and warm their hearts? By new words of his own? No, through the words of Moses and all the prophets (v.27). Jesus can be seen in each chapter of the Old Testament. We follow this risen Saviour across the world all the way to the land he has gone to prepare. It's all about him.

Before we close a few words need to be said about Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles Jesus chose.[18] In pursuing our exodus theme, we can call this **The PROMISED LAND.** In Acts chapter 6, even in Luke's use of language, there are echoes in the complaints of the Greek-speaking widows of the murmurings of the Israelites in the wilderness. The deliverance of Peter from prison connected with the sudden destruction of King Herod in chapter 12 parallels closely the deliverance of the slaves from Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh in Exodus. The first verse of Acts helps us to understand exactly what Luke is doing here, "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach". One could be forgiven for thinking that Jesus had left the scene with his work unfinished, like Moses and Elijah before him. But according to Luke's expression here at the very start of his second volume, that is not the case. Acts is also the work Jesus himself carries on, through the agency of his Spirit, the Comforter, who fills his people permanently now. It is the same country, but because of the salvation Jesus has provided, it is now part of the land God has promised to his people. Where Jesus is, where the Spirit is, that is the Promised Land. The Jews and their leaders, the Gentiles and their governor, and even the disciples themselves were against him, but he has won through single-handed. At the end of Acts the gospel reaches Rome, the heart of the empire, from where, like blood being pumped from the heart, it can reach the whole world. His people now stretch right round the globe.

To establish the decisive nature of the two events we have been considering we have only to turn to Revelation 15. There the chaos waters of the Red Sea and the torrents allowed to submerge our Saviour have been harnessed to become a sea of glass. The beast has roared his last and the victorious notes of the triumph song resound in double cadence – the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed" (Revelation 15:3-4). Jesus' deliverance of his people through his life, death and resurrection is both more intimate and personal and also deeper, fuller, greater and more all-embracing than what Moses only reluctantly chose to undertake. In closing, the author should like to add some words spoken to him several months ago by a wise and godly pastor, "We may have thoughts of high-flown theology but the important thing is to follow the Saviour modestly, constantly, every day, through highs and lows, to the journey's end." That will count in the Promised Land here and hereafter, for that mirrors the life of Jesus himself, our Leader, our Saviour and our King.

Notes

1. Brickhill, Paul, *The Great Escape*, Amereon Limited, 1950.
2. Martens, Elmer, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1981, pp.18-19.
3. This note was mentioned in conversation with Rev. Dr. John Watterson, and is borne out in his series of sermons on Exodus at bailiesmills.rpc.org/sermons/exodus-god-dwells-among-his-people/.
4. Patterson, Richard D., and Travers, Michael, "Contours of the Exodus Motif in Jesus' Earthly Ministry" in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 66 (2004), p.34.
5. Deiss, L., *Marie, Fille de Sion*, Paris, DDB, 1959.
6. Gooding, David, *According to Luke. A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*, Leicester & Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press & Eerdmans, 1987, pp.30-31.
7. Newton, Isaac, quoted in John Blanchard's *Gathered Gold*, vol.1, p.253, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, Evangelical Press, 1984.
8. Wilcock, Michael, *The Saviour of the World*, The Bible Speaks Today series, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979, p.105.
9. Gooding, op. cit., p.156.
10. Moessner, David, "Luke 9:1-50: Luke's Review of the Journey of the Prophet like Moses of Deuteronomy" in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (1983), pp.575-576.
11. Marshall, I. Howard, Luke, *Historian and Theologian*, Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1970, p.149.
12. Again David Moessner's earlier article is helpful in arranging the comparisons between Moses and Jesus, "Jesus and the Wilderness Generation: Death of the Prophet like Moses according to Luke" in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, 1982, pp.319-40.
13. On a trip to France at Easter to put forward some of these ideas I heard that certain Christians don't read the book of Deuteronomy. They're missing a genuine treasure!

14. Wilcock, op. cit., p.139.
15. Thought first suggested in one of a series of talks on Luke 19-24 given by Tom Wright to the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, Lent term 1980, tape BR2.
16. Mánek, Jindrich, "The New Exodus in the Books of Luke" in *Novum Testamentum* 2 (1957), p.16.
17. In a sermon preached on this passage in First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina entitled "The Innocent and the Guilty" in March 2011, Sinclair Ferguson pointed out that Barabbas was also guilty of blasphemy and treason, the charges Jesus is arraigned on. He also went on to show that we are all guilty of blasphemy – making ourselves the centre of our universe – and treason – conspiring against and refusing to bow to the One who is really the centre of the universe.
18. Nicholas Batzig opens this up in a fruitful way in an online article at feedingonchrist.com/the-exodus-motif-in-luke-acts.

JOHN OWEN: COMMUNION WITH GOD[1]

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The day before John Owen departed to be with Christ (23 August, 1683), he dictated his last letter to a friend: "I am going to him whom my soul has loved, or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love, - which is the whole ground of my consolation." The following day William Payne brought him news that his *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ,* was now ready for printing. Owen replied, "I am glad to hear it; but, O brother Payne! the long wished-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing, in this world". These death-bed expressions of Owen's piety confirm a truth that was, in effect, the pulsebeat of Puritan piety in general - communion with God was "the very heart of Puritan theology and religion." Whatever else Puritanism was, its animating heart was cultivated fellowship with the Triune God.

No subject more exposes the poverty of our lives before God than communion with God. We feel, or we should feel, totally out of our depth. However highly other Christians might esteem you, you know only too well how weakly, how inconstantly, how poorly, how coldly your heart engages in communion with God. Like Paul you desire "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10), but O how often that desire is weakened by the sluggishness of the flesh, the diversions of the devil, and the enticements of a dying world. And yet, is not the believer's truest longing for communion with his Saviour? Even as regenerate men and women, we are spiritual enigmas!

I would like us to reflect a little on the biblical teaching that defines for us the fact, the shape, and the nature of the believer's communion with God. Fellowship with God, living, personal, mind-engaging, heart-affecting fellowship, is held out to us as the consummating fruit of the gospel. Our Lord Jesus defined eternal life as knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he had sent (John 17:3), a knowing that is intimate as well as intellectual, personal as well as cerebral, profoundly spiritual as well as deeply theological. It is this fellowship or communion that John is referring to in 1 John 1:3. There are a number of things we should consider briefly in this verse:

First, there is such a thing as fellowship with God. It is not an "enthusiastic fancy". It is not something reserved for the especially

enlightened. It is the birthright of every believer. The gospel initiates every believer, by the new birth, into "fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ". This was a prospect the Lord Jesus promised to his disciples. In John 14:23, he speaks of his Father and himself coming, by the Spirit's new covenant presence, to make their home in the lives of his people. It is this intimate, homely picture that is mirrored in the risen Lord's words to the church in Laodicea: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Owen comments on this verse in his treatise on *Communion With God:*

> Certainly this is fellowship, or I know not what is. Christ will sup with believers: he refreshes himself with his won graces to them, by his Spirit bestowed on them. The Lord Christ is exceedingly delighted in tasting of the sweet fruits of the Spirit in the saints.[2]

It is striking, as well as deeply humbling, to hear Owen again and again highlight the Saviour's delight in his communion with his people. We are so accustomed in this shallow, man-centred age to start with ourselves as we contemplate communion with our holy and gracious God. If we are truly to savour communion with God, we must learn that the initiative in this grace lies with God. As in all true theology, "from him and through him and to him are all things, to him be the glory" (Romans 11:36).

Second, What is this fellowship or communion with God? John Owen gives us this definition:

> Our communion.... with God consisteth in his *communication of himself unto us, with our returnal unto him* of that which he requireth and accepteth, flowing from that union which In Jesus Christ we have with him.[3]

The basis and foundation of communion with God is union with Christ. By God's grace, believers have been vitally united to the Saviour, married to him who is the Lover of our souls, our covenant King. As in all unions, there is a "mutual communication", a "giving and a receiving, after a most holy and spiritual manner."[4] In communion, God gives himself to his people, and they give to him what he requires and accepts - our love, trust, obedience and faithfulness. In this most glorious of all unions, where our Maker is our Husband, he looks for and longs for the returns of love.

It is striking that in classical Greek, *koinōnia,* was used to describe the marriage relationship, the most intimate of all human relationships. How profoundly appropriate then that believers, Christ's Body and Bride, should have *koinōnia* with their Saviour. *Koinōnia* essentially means to participate in, to share with. John is here highlighting the omega point of Christian

experience in this world. Owen picks up this thought of marital union and writes,

> Now, Christ delights exceedingly in his saints: 'As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee', Isa.lxii.5....His heart is glad in us without sorrow. And every day whilst we live is his *wedding day*...thoughts of communion with the saints were the joy of his heart from eternity.[5]

These are deeply moving words. Who can take them in? Above all they remind us that all our thinking about communion with God must start with God and not with ourselves; the initiative is God's, and God's alone! Perhaps the greatest defect in modern evangelicalism is its tendency (to say no more) to think "subjectively and anthropocentrically", where the Scriptures would have us think first "objectively and theocentrically". J.I.Packer reminds us that this theocentricity was one of the hallmarks of biblical Puritanism; grace was always to the fore and

> Thus they were saved from the peril of false mysticism, which has polluted much would-be Christian devotion in recent times. The context and cause of our experienced communion with God, said the Puritans, is God's effective life-giving communion with us; the former is always to be thought of as a consequence and, indeed, an aspect of the latter.[6]

Third, fellowship with the living God is held out to us as the consummating fruit and blessing of the gospel cf.v4. David Clarkson wrote, "He that hath communion with God is in heaven while he is on earth...this is the gate of paradise and puts us into the suburbs of heaven." This is surely one of the principal truths explicated in the Song of Songs cf.2:3-4; 5:10-16. When the pope tempted the Marquis of Vico, with gold and estates, to leave Calvin's Geneva, he replied, "Let his money perish with him who prefers all the riches in the world before one day's communion with Jesus Christ." Is this not what the Lord impressed on his wayward, self-obsessed people through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 9:23-24)?

Fourth, this fellowship or communion is entered into via the apostolic gospel: "We proclaim to you...so that you may have..." The communion which Christians enjoy with God is grounded in and sustained by the apostolic gospel. To claim to have fellowship with God, while disbelieving the eye-witness, Spirit-inspired testimony of the apostles, is to be self-deceived, as much deceived as those who say they "have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness" (1 John 1:6, cf.2:4). This is why we must never allow any disjunction to separate piety from theology. True piety is grounded in God's infallible self-revelation in his Word, and has communion with the One who therein reveals himself - not with an imagined God, but with the God of Scripture!

We should not miss here that the "communion of the saints" is not only deeply personal and experiential, it is also demarcated by the apostolic gospel, the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Visible unity has indeed at its heart a common communion with God; but no less does it have a common submission to the gospel of God!

Fifth, not only is communion with God founded upon and shaped by the apostolic gospel, it is appropriated by faith. This is clearly implied in what John writes. Faith "is, in fact, the fellowship itself in essence; in germ, embryo, or seed. For if I grasp Christ, or rather if he grasps me, in a close indissoluble union, I am to the Father, in a manner, what he is; and the Father is to me what he is to him."[7] Robert Candlish's point is not simply that faith is the door to communion, which of course it is. More than that, our communion with God is carried on in faith; faith is the appropriating means of communion with God. This is the truth so vividly symbolised for us in the Lord`s Supper cf.1Corinthians 10:16 : faith "sees" the Saviour; faith "loves" the Saviour"; faith "feeds" on the Saviour.

Sixth, this fellowship is experienced supremely in corporate, covenant fellowship with the Church: "We proclaim...with us. And our fellowship..." This does not mean that communion with God is not deeply personal, even individual. It absolutely and undeniably is. But our communion with God transcends the individual and reaches its ordained heights as the church, together, draws near to the Lord on his Day, through his Son, under his Word, and by his Spirit. This is not saying that communion with God is reserved for the Lord's Day. It is saying that, contrary to the atomistic, incipiently selfish mind-set that has seeped its way into the church in the last 300 years, communion with God is at its richest and most profound when it is engaged in "with all the saints". This, in part at least, is what Paul is telling us in Ephesians 3:18-19: it is only "together with all the saints (that we) grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ..." In other words, communion with God is a corporate and covenantal communion. This is what Paul impresses on the Corinthians (cf.1Corinthians 10:16-17). Many in the church in Corinth had become infected with a self-willed spirit that was causing great hurt in the church. Paul is really saying, "Do you not know that the church is "one body?" This is surely one of the great purposes of the Lord`s Day, the Christian Sabbath, to give visible expression to that corporate, covenantal communion which is the Church. The kind of piety that reserves its best energies for "closet communion", and sees Lord's Day worship as a "top-up" to that communion, will never rise to the choicest communion that God has ordained for his people.

Seventh, communion with God, and this is one of John Owen`s most insightful emphases, is communion with each Person of the Trinity, individually if not exclusively. John says as much in our text. Paul writes of

"the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship (communion) of the Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 13:14), and in 1 Corinthians 1:9 he tells us that God has called us "into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". Owen is quick to explain himself. He is well aware of the theological axiom *opera ad extra trinitatis indivisa sunt* (that the external works of the Trinity cannot be divided), so he says,

> When I assign any thing as *peculiar* wherein we distinctly hold communion with any person, I do not exclude the other persons from communion with the soul in the very same thing. Only this, I say, *principally,* immediately, and by the way of eminency, we have, in such a thing, or in such a way, communion with some one person; and therein with the others secondarily, and by the way of consequence on that foundation...[8]

Owen proceeds to show in what way supremely the believer has communion with the Persons of the Godhead. It is striking that Owen devotes 23 pages to communion with the Father, 182 pages to communion with Jesus Christ the Son, and 52 pages to communion with the Holy Ghost. This balance (or imbalance) reflects Owen's concern to highlight the centrality of Christ's mediatorial, saving significance in the economy of God.

First, Communion with the Father is supremely in love cf.1 John 4:8; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Romans 5:5. In all these and other texts, it is the Father's love that is highlighted: so Owen writes,

> Eye the Father as love; look not on him as an always lowering father, but as one most kind and tender. Let us look on him by faith, as one that hath had thoughts of kindness towards us from everlasting.[9]

Christians must therefore meditate on this distinguishing, free, unchangeable love. For Owen communion with the Father in love required two things: that we "receive" his love and that we "make suitable returns unto him".[10] The Father's love is received "By faith", through Christ. "The soul being thus, by faith through Christ, and by him brought into the bosom of God, into a comfortable persuasion and spiritual perception and sense of his love, there reposes and rests itself."[11] But there is more. "God loves, that he may be beloved."[12] So, we are to make "returns" of love to the Father.

Because he never ceased to think and feel as a pastor, Owen anticipates a query: "I cannot find my heart making returns of love unto God. Could I find my soul set upon him, I could then believe that his soul delighted in me."[13] To this Owen responds,

> This is the most *preposterous* course that possibly thy thoughts can pitch upon...'Herein is love', saith the Holy Ghost, 'not that we loved God, but that he loved us' first, 1John iv.10,11. Now thou wouldst invert this order, and say, 'herein is love, not that God loved me, but that I loved him first'...This is a course of flesh's finding out that will never bring glory to God, nor peace to thy own soul

> Lay down then, *thy reasonings;* take up the love of the Father upon a *pure act of believing,* and that will open thy soul to let it out unto the Lord in the communion of love.[14]

Owen was deeply concerned that many Christians failed to grasp the grace of the Father's love in Christ:

> How few of the saints are experimentally acquainted with this privilege of holding immediate communion with the Father in love! With what anxious, doubtful thoughts do they look upon him! What fears, what questionings are there, of his good-will and kindness! At the best, many think there is no sweetness at all in him towards us, but what is purchased at the high price of the blood of Jesus.[15]

Owen never wearies of impressing on us that the Father's love 'ought to be looked on as the fountain from whence all other sweetnesses flow'.[16]

It might surprise many faithful ministers of the gospel to discover how many of their congregations think just like this. We need the greatest care not to suggest in our preaching that the cross in any way merited the Father's love for sinners. It was because the Father "so loved the world" that he gave his one and only Son!

Second, communion with the Son is supremely in grace. We have communion with Christ as "Mediator"[17], and as Mediator he meets us "in GRACE".[18] Owen highlights a number of biblical texts to make his point: John.1:14,16,17; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 13;14; 2 Thessalonians 3;17-18; Canticles 5:10. So he writes, "This, then, is that which we are peculiarly to eye in the Lord Jesus, to receive it from him, even grace, gospel-grace..."[19]

Owen considers communion with Christ to focus on his "personal grace" and his "purchased grace".

a) Christ's personal grace. For Owen, Christ's personal grace is nowhere better described than in the Song of Songs. Owen's exposition is deeply, even exclusively, Christological.[20] Christ is the believer's husband, so responding to this personal grace involves,

> The liking of Christ for his *excellency,* grace and suitableness, far above all other beloveds whatever, preferring him in the judgment and mind above them all," and "*accepting* Christ by the *will,* as its only husband, Lord and Saviour. This is called 'receiving' of Christ, John.1, 12 ; and is not intended only for that solemn act whereby at first entrance we close with him, but also for the constant frame of the soul in abiding with him and owning him as such.[21]

So Owen characteristically continues,

> Let believers exercise their hearts abundantly unto this thing. This is choice communion with the Son Jesus Christ. Let us receive him in all his excellencies, as he bestows himself upon us; - be frequent in thoughts of faith, comparing him with other beloveds, sin, world, legal righteousness; and preferring him before them, counting them all loss and dung in comparison of him...Let us tell him that

> we will be for him, and not for another: let him know it from us; he delights to hear it, yea he says, "Sweet is our voice, and our countenance is comely"; and we shall not fail in the issue of sweet refreshment with him.[22]

b) Christ's purchased grace.[23] Owen explains what he means by "purchased grace":

> By purchased grace, I understand all that righteousness and grace which Christ hath procured, or wrought out for us, or doth by any means make us partakers of, or bestows on us for our benefit, by anything that he hath done or suffered, or by any thing he continueth to do as mediator.[24]

How are we to enjoy communion with our Saviour in this grace?[25]

First, we do so by approving and embracing the divine way of salvation. In the gospel we see our utter depravity, spiritual poverty and just condemnation; but we also see, by God's grace, that Christ is our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption". So, in the gospel we find peace for our souls and glory to Christ.

Secondly, the Christian enjoys fellowship with Christ in holiness.[26]. On Christ's part this involves interceding with his Father "by virtue of his oblation...that he would bestow his Holy Spirit on them." The Spirit comes as the Spirit of holiness, who is "the efficient cause of all holiness and sanctification, - quickening, enlightening, purifying the souls of his saints".[27] Thus, because of our union with Christ, we receive Christ's own holiness. On our part, the believer receives by faith, the gracious blessings of Christ, who "as the great Joseph...hath the disposal of all the granaries of the kingdom of heaven committed unto him..."[28]

Thirdly, we have communion with Christ in "the grace of privilege before God", the highest of which is adoption.[29] Says Owen,

> The privileges we enjoy by Christ are great and innumerable; to insist on them in particular were the work for a man's whole life, not a design to be wrapped up in a few sheets. I shall take a view of them only in the head, the spring and fountain whence they all arise and flow - this is *our adoption*.[30]

Third, communion with the Holy Spirit is supremely in comfort. It is the special ministry of the Spirit to bring to us the great and gracious promises and blessings of the gospel, to shed abroad God's love in our hearts and to glorify Christ. Says Owen, "The soul is never more raised with the love of God than when by the Spirit taken into intimate communion with him in the discharge of this duty."[31] He continues, the Spirit's ministry as the Comforter focuses on

> his bringing the promises of Christ to remembrance, glorifying him in our hearts, shedding abroad the love of God in us, witnessing with us as to our spiritual estate and condition, sealing us to the day of redemption...confirming our adoption, and

> being present with us in our supplications. Here is the wisdom of faith, - to find out and meet with the Comforter in all these things; not to lose their sweetness, by lying in the dark [as] to their author, nor coming short of the returns which are required of us.[32]

What should our response then be to this "communion of the Spirit"? Owen tells us first that we must not "grieve him, in respect to his person dwelling in us" (cf. Ephesians 4:30); secondly, we must not "quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19); thirdly, we must not be like the Jews who "resisted the Holy Ghost" in the ministry of Stephen (Acts 7:51-52). "Now, the Holy Ghost is said to be resisted in the contempt of the preaching of the word, because the gift of preaching of it is from him".[33] More positively, we are to respond to the communion of the Spirit in "faith" - "faith closeth with him in the truth revealed...worships him, serves him, waits for him, prayeth to him, praiseth him".[34] Owen urges every Christian who knows the comfort of the Spirit to say,

> This is from the Holy Ghost, he is the Comforter, the God of all consolation...that he might give me this consolation, he hath willingly condescended to this office of a comforter...he is sent by the Father and Son for that end and purpose...What price now, shall I set upon his love! how shall I value the mercy that I have received![35]

Unceasing praise to the Spirit should be the hallmark of the believer's communion with him.

Eighth, communion with God is experienced in a special way in the Lord's Supper.[36] In his *Sacramental Discourses,* Owen wrote that there is,

> in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, an especial and peculiar communion with Christ, in his body and blood, to be obtained....We have this special communion upon the account of the special object that faith is exercised upon in this ordinance, and the special acts that it puts forth in reference to that or those objects...[37]

The special and peculiar object of faith that Owen is referring to is "The *human nature of Christ*, as the subject wherein mediation and redemption was wrought."[38] Owen, in keeping with almost all the Puritans, and particularly Calvin, did not see the Supper as purely commemorative. It was commemorative, but it was also "eucharistical" and "federal", "in that God confirms his covenant (he has no need to renew it) and believers renew themselves in covenant obligations."[39] What then is the communion the believer enjoys, supremely with Christ, in the Supper?

> [It] becomes a matter of acknowledging his presence in the power of his reconciling sacrifice and of observing the ordinance with reverent confidence that in it Christ comes to pledge his saving love to each one personally, so that we sit down at God's table as those who are the Lord's friends...there being now no difference [contention] between him and us.[40]

So, in our sacramental communion with Christ, we come to the Supper in a spirit of meditation, self-examination, supplication and expectation,[41] that God will surely "meet us according to the desire of our hearts. We should look to meet God, because he hath promised to meet us there, and we go upon his promise of grace...He hath placed his name upon his ordinances, and there he is"[42].

Ninth, communion with God brings you into conformity to the likeness of our Saviour Jesus Christ, cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18. At its heart, fellowship/communion is participation. The fellowship which believers enjoy with God is a fellowship of union. God's purpose in bringing us into his fellowship is to conform us and transform us into the likeness of his dear Son, that he might be "the first born among many brothers". Peter unfathomably speaks of believers "participating, communing in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4)! Calvin remarkably comments here, "it is the purpose of the gospel to make us sooner or later like God; indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification". He is not saying we become God; we are, and always will be, God's creatures. But, breathtakingly, through union and communion, we become "partakers of the divine nature", we become like God, his creaturely analogues, his restored and renewed image. Alexander Nisbet, one of Scotland's Puritan divines, explains Peter thus:

> The receiving of these promises by faith makes a wonderful change upon sinners: for so soon as a sinner gets grace to believe and apply the free promises of the Covenant, as soon does the Lord begin to make out upon his heart the things promised, so stamping it with His own image, that the sinner receiving these promises begins presently to look like God His Father, and in some weak measure to resemble Him in heavenly wisdom, holiness, uprightness, and other of His communicable properties, especially in humility, self-denial, love and pity toward other miserable sinners, zeal for the Lord's honour, and such other perfections as were eminent in the man Christ; and this is *to partake of the divine nature*.[43]

This is why communion with God cannot be separated from the means of grace. It is as we embrace the ordained means of grace, and especially the ministry of the Word, and by faith feed upon God's "exceeding great and precious promises", that our souls receive our covenant King's grace and love, and respond with "returns of love".

Such, in brief, is the believer's communion with God. It is, as it has often been said, "better felt than telt"! Let Thomas Goodwin have the last word. In vol.7 of his *Collected Works*, Goodwin considers the love of Christ, who died to make us his friends, though "he could have created new ones cheaper".[44] He continues,

> Mutual communion is the soul of all true friendship...(and) friendship is most maintained and kept up by visits; and these, the more free and less occasioned by

> urgent business...the more friendly they are...we use to check our friends with his upbraiding, You still come when you have some business, but when will you come to see me?...The very sight of a friend rejoiceth a man...Personal communion with God is the end of our graces...And as for duties, the journey's end of them is fellowship with God.[45]

May the Lord bring us all into a truer, deeper, more heart-engaging communion with him, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Notes

1. These addresses were originally given to the students of the Reformed Theological College in Belfast. I have intentionally kept the oral style of the addresses to preserve the informality of the occasion.
2. *The Works of John Owen* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), Vol.2, p.40.
3. Owen, pp.8-9.
4. Owen, p.9.
5. Owen, p.118
6. J.I.Packer, *Among G.od's Giants* (Kingsway, 1991), p.267.
7. Robert Candlish, *1 John* (Banner of Truth Trust ed. 1973), p.13.
8. Owen, p.18.
9. Owen, p.32.
10. Owen, p.22.
11. Owen, p.23.
12. Owen, p.24.
13. Owen, p.37.
14. Owen, p.37.
15. Owen, p.32.
16. Owen, p.22.
17. Owen, p.40.
18. Owen, p.47.
19. Owen, p.47. See the most helpful exposition of this in S.B.Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Banner of Truth, 1987), pp.77ff.
20. You do not need to agree with Owen's exclusively Christological exposition of The Song to appreciate the great biblical truths he finds in the text. The modern (though it is actually not so modern) interpretation of The Song as a prose-poem exclusively celebrating the creation ordinance of marriage, fails to take account of the NT's linking of the marriage relationship to the relationship of Christ with his Church (Eph.5:25ff) and the distinct echoes of The Song's evocative language in such passages as Rev.3:20.
21. Ibid, p.58.
22. Ibid, p.59.
23. See Ferguson, pp.86ff.
24. Owen, p.154.
25. See Ferguson, pp.88ff.
26. Owen, pp.197ff.
27. Owen, p.199.
28. Owen, p.203.
29. Owen, p.207.
30. Owen, p.207.
31. Owen, p.249.

32. Quoted in Packer, pp.271-272.
33. Owen, p.267.
34. Owen, p.270.
35. Owen, p.271.
36. See again Sinclair Ferguson's excellent summary of Owen's teaching, pp.220ff.
37. Owen, p.523.
38. Owen, Vol.9, p.524.
39. Ferguson, p.221.
40. Quoted in Packer, p.281.
41. Owen, Vol.2, pp.558-563.
42. Owen, Vol.2, p.562.
43. Alexander Nisbet, An Exposition of *1 & 2 Peter* (Banner of Truth, ist. ed. 1658, this ed. 1982), pp225-226.
44. Thomas Goodwin, *Works* (James Nicol, 1863), 7.193 , quoted in Packer, p.273.
45. Thomas Goodwin, *Works* (James Nicol, 1863), 7, 197ff.

PHILIP HENRY (1631-1696): A PARTIAL CONFORMIST

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The relationship between the non-conformists and conformists in England after the Great Ejection of 1662 is important. That event was a watershed in English ecclesiastical history. Around 2000 ministers were shut out of the Church of England for conscience sake, as they refused to submit to an act of the English parliament compelling 'assent and consent' to the Book of Common Prayer and, for some at least, demanding their re-ordination by a bishop. The terms 'conformist' and 'non-conformist' refer to either their acceptance of the conditions laid down by parliament, or their rejection of them.

The republication of so much material from the non-conformists (often called 'the puritans') may suggest that they were the sole preservers of evangelical and reformed teaching. Clearly that was not the case, and there were men in the Church of England who upheld reformed teaching and contended with those of Arminian persuasion.[1] Also, the persisting relationships between non-conformists and conformists show how brethren, divided over the issue of conformity, yet could maintain warm relationships and profit from the spoken and written ministries of those on opposite sides of the ecclesiastical fence.

Many readers of the modern reprints of puritan works from the 17th century are unaware of the historical context of these writings. Some of puritan persuasion managed to stay within the establishment without any alteration to their worship practices, while many others, still holding to the Thirty Nine Articles, conformed according to the 1662 Act. The strongest separatists did not go to any Anglican services, but worshipped in homes until later there was a degree of toleration and public assemblies were allowed to function. Many Presbyterians, like Philip Henry, went to Anglican services while maintaining small services in their homes.[2] At first, there were very few ordinations of Presbyterian pastors, with no great numbers taking place prior to 1672, ten years after the Great Ejection.[3] However, as I will point out later, by the time of Philip Henry's death in 1696, the position had been reached that non-conformists had become dissenters, and though some like Philip Henry's son, Matthew, as late as 1705, still prayed for accommodation in the national

church, the reality was that the separate existence of the dissenters was irrevocable. The very terminology used, 'dissenters' rather than 'non-conformists', was an outward indication of the gradual movement away from the national church. By that time too, less of the nobility were active in dissenting circles, and hence there was a sociological change in the composition of congregations.

Another fact of which many modern readers seem unaware, is that the non-conformists, like Philip Henry, were actively persecuted. The events of 1662 did not lead immediately to non-conforming congregations being established and operating alongside the parish churches in a peaceful environment. Many pastors were imprisoned or forced to pay considerable fines. It should be noted, though, that the type of imprisonment imposed could also vary considerably from place to place, with John Bunyan, for example, being allowed out to go to London while still a prisoner. Assemblies were dispersed and the dissenting academies that were developing as training places for dissenting ministers were forced to relocate or disband altogether. Life was not easy for non-conforming ministers, and many lived in poverty, or were forced to take up a trade to secure a living. In some areas local magistrates were more sympathetic to the non-conformists, or at least turned a blind eye to the existence of their assemblies. Some upper class families also helped by monetary gifts or providing employment for ejected ministers. It is hard to explain all the reasons why for some years, especially in the 1670s, life was easier for the non-conformists, but in the 1680s renewed persecution was widespread.

The cases of Philip Henry (1631-1696), and his son Matthew (1662-1714), give us illustrations of father and son, both of whom suffered because of the Great Ejection, while remaining unembittered towards those who differed from them in church polity. My concentration in this article is on Philip Henry, who was brought up in London, attended Anglican churches, but also heard the preaching of the Westminster divines. He was educated at the Westminster School, and not only gained there a fine education, but was also introduced to what became non-conformist views. Many years later his old teacher, Dr Richard Busby, met him and asked, 'Prythee [I pray you], child, what made thee a non-conformist?' His answer was, 'Truly, you made me one; for you taught me those things that hindered me from conforming'.[4] Before he left London he had come through a spiritual experience that led him to faith in Christ.

After his schooling he went to Oxford in 1648, and while there studied under men such as Dr John Owen and Dr Thomas Manton. He came into bad company and spent much time on recreation, but God was pleased to lay his hand on him a second time and from then on there was no doubting where his interests lay. He was a brand plucked from the burning, as he himself described

his experience. In 1653 he left Oxford, having obtained a tutor's position in the family of Judge and Lady Puleston at Worthenbury in Flintshire. Worthenbury is situated in the north-west of England right on the Welsh border. In 1657 he was nominated as the minister of the local parish church, and was duly ordained in September 1657 by a presbytery that ordained another five candidates at the same meeting. The form of ordination used was that of the Westminster Assembly. Worthenbury was his first and only parish, and he carried out a wide-ranging ministry among his people, and towards many who travelled considerable distances to hear his preaching. The local people were mainly poor tenant farmers, and the number of communicants (about forty) never increased over his eight years there.[5]

Philip Henry was well-aware of, and very much a participant in, the discussions leading up to the Great Ejection of 1662. His parish was under Bangor, and he tried to keep on friendly terms with Dr Henry Bridgman who had become the rector there. Bridgman assured him that he would never remove him from this parish until the law did. At this time he wrote to Dr Bridgman and said:

> I think I am none of those who are in the extremes; nevertheless, my resolution is, if these things be indispensably imposed which I cannot practise without sinning against my conscience, I shall choose rather to lose all, yet not violating, by my good will, the publick peace of the church.[6]

The great question was whether to accept re-ordination by a bishop and to give unfeigned 'assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the Book of Common Prayer'. This would also involve conformity to the specific liturgical practices that were projected through the legislation that became the Act of Uniformity. He read widely on the question and went to Oxford and spoke with Dr John Fell, afterwards Bishop of Oxford. In Chester he spoke with the Dean and the Chancellor, but their main argument for him staying in the Church of England was the loss of income he was going to face.

His moderation on the issues was apparent in his work in his own parish. For example, along with several of his ministerial friends, he decided in 1660 to preach on Christmas Day. He used 1 John 3.8 as his text, reminding his congregation that it is a double dishonour to the Lord Jesus to practise the works of the devil when a feast was being kept in memory of his birth. Likewise in regard to the posture for taking communion he did not take a totally restrictive position. He himself always sat to receive it, but if communicants knelt, he would still administer communion to them. For a long time he remained unsure what action to take in regard to conformity. On August 22, 1661, he recorded in his diary, 'Mr. St[eel] came to see us. Wee are in doubt what to doe in poynt of conformity, Lord, say unto us, this or that is the way, & wee will walk in it'.[7]

In October 1661 his remuneration was withheld, this being an annuity of £100 per annum from the Emeral estate. Friends advised him to take legal action which he did initiate. He was not 'over solicitous' about success, for, he wrote, 'though it be my due, (Luke x.7) yet it was not that which I preached for; and, God knows, I would much rather preach for nothing, than not at all'.[8] However, the whole matter was complicated by a dispute over tithes of corn and hay to be paid to the bishop. In the end, the matter was settled and Philip Henry was not only financially disadvantaged, not receiving the annuity, but part of the settlement involved the bishop dismissing him and agreeing not thereafter to re-admit him to ministry in the Church of England. So, on October 24, 1661, Dr Bridgman came to Worthenbury 'and before a Rabble there again repeated & read over my discharge', he wrote.[9]

On the following Sunday, October 27, he preached his last sermon at Worthenbury. A successor, Rev. Richard Hilton, was appointed, and Henry regularly attended public worship under his ministry. The Lord's Supper was only administered a few times a year, and on one occasion he was allowed to take communion. Various other parish pulpits were open to him, and so he continued this ministry until Bartholomew's Day, 24 August, 1662, when the Act of Uniformity came into effect. It was called Bartholomew's Day because a massacre of thousands of Protestants took place in France in 1572, starting on the evening of 23 August and continuing on 24 August. The printing and distribution of the new Book of Common Prayer was delayed, so that it was only the ministers in London who had managed to get a sight of it, much less the opportunity to study it. Henry's friend, Richard Steel, of Hanmer, was turned out of his parish for not giving his assent and consent to a book he had never seen!

The Act of Uniformity came into effect on Philip Henry's birthday, 24 August. In his diary he usually made some comment both about his birthday and the ejection. One year afterwards he wrote,

> This day thirty two yeares I was born, this day twelve-month I dyed, that fatal day to y^e^ Godly painful [archaic word, diligent] faithful Minist^rs^ of England amongst whom I am not worthy to bee numbred - we mourn'd and pray'd before the lord at W. Ben[et]'s House, if so bee there may bee hope.[10]

Usually he revised his will on his birthday, doing this for the last time on 24 August 1695. At the end of the will he wrote,

> Witness my hand and seal this twenty-fourth day of August, 1695, being the day of the year in which I was born, 1631, and also the day of the year in which by law I died, as did also near two thousand other faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, 1662.[11]

It should be pointed out that Philip Henry was a young man at the time of

the Great Ejection, being thirty-one years of age. He was married, with one son, and his wife expecting their second child. However, despite his age, Philip Henry was soon recognised as one of the ablest of the non-conformists, and in the north-west of England he was a natural leader. His ability was put to good use as he took the lead in discussions with Anglican dignitaries, as well as showing his gifts in guiding many of the same persuasion as himself. He also developed skills in legal matters as he was faced with actions against himself and others.

The Henry family moved to Broad Oak, the family property of his wife Katherine, which was near Whitchurch. While in later years he was comparatively well off, in the early years that was not so. He had to borrow money at times, and then records how, for income, he started to sell grain that had been grown on the property. Both Philip and his wife Katherine were extremely generous to others, so much so that when Katherine died in 1707, his son Matthew recorded this in his diary:

> I find with the profits and rents of this current year, that there will be little more than to discharge my dear mother's funeral and legacies; but no debts at all. She lived with comfort; bore her testimony to the goodness of God's providence, which she had experienced all her days; did not increase what she had; nor coveted to lay up; but did good with it, and left a blessing behind her.[12]

On Sundays Philip Henry and his family went to the nearby Whitewell Anglican Chapel, a practice he kept up for almost thirty years. Not only did he attend, but he took the preacher to his home for dinner. After it a psalm was sung, he repeated the morning sermon, and then prayed. If there was no preacher, they went to Tylstock or Whitchurch. Often they heard sermons that he described as bread, but not the finest of the wheat. At times he had to say to his children, 'That is a poor sermon indeed, out of which no good lesson may be learned'. When Matthew was born, he was baptised at Whitewell Chapel, though the minister refused Henry's request to omit the sign of the cross. Later he thought over this, and hearing that Richard Steel had baptised one of his own children, he regretted that he had not baptised his own son. This is what he said on this occasion,

> Mr. Steel baptiz'd a child of his hims[el]f named Salomon, notwithst.[anding] the Interdict; it was more than I durst venture to doe, when Matthew was born, but the truth is, I was surpris'd, & if it were to doe again, I think I should venture far, rather then suffer the cross [making the sign of the cross], thought I then judg'd, twas no sin of mine, I being Passive in it, & besides I was loth to have it done in private y^e^ if I could have had it done without ye Cross.[13]

Some of the sermons he approved of and received spiritual blessing from them. For example, on 14 June 1663, he heard Dr Fowler preaching in Whitchurch. His comment in his diary was: 'at Whitch. where preacht Dr

Fowler well - Lord keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins'. Shortly after the Great Ejection some ministers were still maintaining ministry in the same manner as they had practised previously. Nearby Tylstock was one such parish, and if there was no local preaching, Henry went there to worship. He recorded about one such visit: 'no preaching at the chapel, I went to Tilstock, where Mr. Thomas is still preserved in his liberty blessed bee God and the place is a little Sanctuary to us; the lord continue it so'.[14]

On the other hand, he had to listen to much poor preaching. On 7 June 1663, he heard Mr Bridge in the chapel, with the text being 1 John 2:15. His comment was: 'a plain text a lac't Sermon the matter scarce visible for words; lord write y^e^ Text in my heart & weed out all inordinate love of y^e^ world & and all th.[ings] in y^e^ world'.[15] The following month he heard a sermon by Mr Bridge Jnr. on which he commented: 'two empty, frothy, flashy unprofitable sermons, I am asham'd to give such Epithites [epithets] to sermons, but truly such they were, lord pity preacher & hearers'.[16] Even when the appointed preacher did not turn up for the service, there was little expectation on Henry's part that he could preach to the people. Once at Whitewell Chapel on such an occasion he spoke a few words, standing in his place, which was his normal posture throughout worship. He thought that he would hear more about this later, but said that he had chosen to do so, 'my heart is fixed, trusting in the lord'.

The attitude of some in the non-conformist camp led to two different approaches to conformity. The Corporation and Test Acts of 1661 and 1673 required local government officials and holders of Crown appointments to adhere to the Church of England. This led some non-conformists taking communion in an Anglican church as infrequently as once a year so they could continue to hold office. This was the practice of 'occasional conformity'. Philip Henry and quite a few others were more regular in attendance at Anglican worship and they can be referred to as 'partial conformists'.[17] Presbyterians, more so than other dissenters, favoured occasional conformity, and leading figures such as Richard Baxter, Williams Bates and Thomas Manton all practised it.

From two separate sources, provocations were directed against Philip Henry. These were civil and ecclesiastical, though at times it is hard to distinguish between the two. On the civil side he was brought to court twice before the Act of Uniformity came into effect. First, in September 1660 Philip Henry and two ministerial colleagues (Robert Fogg and Richard Steel) were taken to court at the Flint Assizes for not reading the Book of Common Prayer, even though the law compelling it was not yet in force.

The King's Declaration of 1660 gave some hope to dissenters, but in the following spring Philip Henry and Richard Steel were again brought to court. In October 1663 he and Richard Steel were imprisoned in Hanmer on suspicion

that they were involved in some plot against the government, and also accused of attending conventicles, but after a few days were released.

Several events took place in 1665 that affected Philip Henry. A different method of intimidation was used, when he was appointed a sub-collector of taxes. This was clearly to disparage him as a minister of the gospel. He got others to do the necessary work, and merely served as the overseer of the task. More significantly the Five Miles Act came into force. This was intended to ensure that ejected ministers did not come within five miles of their former parishes. Philip Henry had the distance from the nearest part of his old parish and his home measured and it was just over five miles - five miles and sixty yards! Lest his opponents make an issue of this, he went and lived, first with friends, and then moved his family into Whitchurch for over a year. Another factor was involved in that move, in that this gave him the opportunity to send his children to a school there. In September of the same year he and Mr Steel were again in prison, this time to face the accusation that they were holding private meetings. Philip Henry denied this charge, except to say that since he knew the plague was raging in London where many of his relatives lived, he sought to gather people in prayer for them. Another accusation at the same time was that he had dispensed the Lord's Supper, but he denied ever doing so since the Act of Uniformity had come into force.

Along with attention to the Anglican services, Philip Henry had several other avenues for spiritual nourishment. He held family worship twice a day with his own household. Also, he preached for his own family in the Sunday evenings, with sometimes a few others being in attendance. The passing of the Conventicle Act of 1669 brought fresh pressure on the non-conformists, with its provision for drastic penalties for those attending non-conformist meetings. Philip Henry was careful not to venture too far away from home so as not to antagonise the authorities. He did not like the way some dissenters, when they gathered, told how they circumvented the law. He thought they were more concerned with the circumstances of their meetings than the substance of the preaching. In his diary he notes occasions when he and others met at private homes for conversation and prayer.

In 1671 he paid a visit to London, and was present at the home of the Countess of Exeter at a gathering to mark the Great Ejection. It was a solemn fast 'with some measure of holy meltings and enlargements'. While in London he preached both for Dr Thomas Doolittle and for his friend Richard Steel, who had moved to the metropolis. He also attended the funeral of a fellow non-conformist, Mr Burghess from the west country, but he was grieved that of the 120 or so ministers present, part stayed for the Anglican burial service while the other part went out.[14] On this visit at Kensington he met with Dr Hodges, the Dean of Hereford, who tried to persuade Henry to conform, but he would not on the existing terms. Later, in 1681, along with Rev. Jonathan Roberts and

Rev. James Owen, he met with Bishop William Lloyd (Bishop of St Asaph) and Mr Henry Dodwell. The subject was the ordination by presbyters without a diocesan bishop participating. The discussion was held in the town hall, Oswestry, and continued from about 2 to 3 pm till 7 or 8 at night. Henry wanted to be excused from further discussion because he belonged to a different diocese, but Bishop Lloyd insisted that it was 'the common cause of religion' and that Henry had to be concerned with it. Notes of this discussion have survived.[19] The Bishop followed the meeting up with a letter asking for another one at Wrexham that was no more satisfactory in convincing one another of their positions. Three months later the bishop sent for Philip Henry to come and see him in Chester. He did so, taking his son Matthew with him. The conversation went on for several hours in a pleasant spirit, but at the end Philip Henry was 'not persuaded to be reordained and to conform'.[20]

The relationship with Bishop Lloyd continued. Henry decided to write to him about some who were being imprisoned for failing to pay their church dues. He argued that putting them in jail would be their ruin and that of their families, and so pled for leniency to be shown to them. The bishop seemed to have a high regard for him and if he was travelling nearby he called at his house, or else sent word for him to meet with him in Whitchurch.

In 1672 a change came that enabled Philip Henry and others to minister more widely. Some non-conformist ministers had a meeting with the King in November 1671, and they were encouraged when he said that 'he would not willingly be persecuted himself for his own religion, so neither did he like to persecute others for their's'. Dissenting services had been set up in London and these were not suppressed, and the King's declaration of March 1672 countenanced such meetings. The numbers of licensed preachers is significant. Of 1339 ministers licensed that year, 923 were Presbyterian, 416 Congregational, and about 200 Baptist. The figures for Cheshire for a little later show how strong the Presbyterians were in that area of England, and at that period, how weak the Baptist cause was. Unexpectedly Philip Henry, some weeks after March 1672, received a licence to preach in his own house. He knew nothing about the application for this licence, but some friends in London obtained it for him. Now he could open the doors of his own home and welcome others to the services. When there was preaching at Whitewell Chapel he and his family worshipped there, and then at night he preached in his own home. If there was no service at the chapel, he preached morning and evening at home. He received no payment for these services, neither did he receive any when preaching elsewhere.

This period also saw Philip Henry ministering in many other places as well. He did not know what the future would bring, but was determined to use the liberty for the sake of the gospel. In Shropshire, Cheshire and Denbighshire he preached extensively and saw people converted. Those who had been

careless and worldly were, under his ministry, changed to become concerned about their souls. In performing this ministry he was not despising the Anglican ministers, but rather viewing himself as their assistant. He specifically prayed for the local parish minister when in a locality, asking for blessing on his work, and visited him as well.[21]

From 1672 onwards a group of people met regularly for worship at Broad Oak, though Philip Henry regarded his main task to be ministering to his family. If others came to the house, they were not turned away, for, he said, he could no more turn them away than reject a hungry man who came seeking aid. Not having dispensed the Lord's Supper since he was prevented from preaching at Worthenbury in 1661, he commenced to administer the sacrament once a month. Much of his preaching was in continuous series - the prodigal son, the Ten Commandments, faith and repentance, the duties of hearing the word and prayer, and the Lord's Prayer.

At times in his diary he reflected on the continuing church issues. Late in December 1678 he suddenly commented on conformity:

> I doe not conform to the liturgy &c. as a Min[iste]r to read it that I may bear testimony ag[ain]st Prelacy.
>
> I doe conform to y^e^ liturgy as a private person to hear it in public Assembly that I may bear my Testimony ag[ain]st Independency...
> Three things I doe not like in the Independent way.
>
> 1. That they unchurch the nation.
> 2. That they pluck up the hedge of the Parish order.
> 3. That they throw the Ministry common & allow persons to preach who are unordained.
>
> In 2 things they are to be commended - 1. That they keep discipline among them.
> 2. that they love, & correspond with one another.[22]

The lull in persecution did not last. In 1681, while Philip Henry was preaching at Weston on Prees for Thomas Millington in his own home, two justices of the peace burst into the service and took the names of those present, about 150 of them. Henry noted that the justices had come from the ale-house at Prees Heath (about two miles away) and returned there afterwards. The outcome was that Millington was fined £25, and everyone present was fined 5s. Mr Edward Bury, who only prayed but did not preach, was fined £20. He could only pay £7, and, in lieu of the remaining £13, his bed and bedding and other items were taken.

However, Philip Henry was regarded as the greatest criminal of them all and fined £40. This was partly because a justice of the peace had met him coming from a conventicle two years before and recorded a fine against his name but he was never notified of this. Now he was dealt with as a second

offender. Henry decided not to pay the fine, as doing so would only encourage other justices to act in similar ways and also be a reward for informers. Court officials came and carried off thirty-three cart loads of goods that were outside - corn, hay, and coals. His son Matthew wrote that he did not boast of his sufferings, and often said, 'Alas, this is nothing to what others suffer, nor to what we ourselves may suffer before we die!'[23]

After the trouble at Weston, Henry decided that it would be best to take a low profile for a time and hence did not encourage others to come to Broad Oak for services. By 1682 things had again eased somewhat and crowds went to worship there. The neighbouring magistrates, being kindly disposed to him, did not intervene in any way. The following year meetings were suppressed all over England and again he confined himself to ministering to family and friends. Whitewell Chapel was the usual place of attendance for the Henry family, though they had to endure ministry that was not at all edifying. One Sabbath a curate preached bitterly against the dissenters. People wondered whether Philip Henry would go to the afternoon service. His response was, 'But if he do not know his duty, I know mine; and, I bless God, I can find honey in a carcase'.[24] The threat of persecution forced him to stay largely at home in this period, though preaching constantly there. It was a time he described as throwing the plough under the hedge.

Aspects of the difficulties being endured by the dissenters in the 1680s are apparent in connection with Philip Henry's son Matthew's residence in London. He had gone there earlier to study at Dr Doolittle's academy, but illness struck himself and his cousin Robert Bosier, resulting in the latter's death. After some years at home, benefiting from his father's instruction, he went to London to study law. While there he attended the preaching of prominent Anglicans - Dr Edward Stillingfleet at St Andrew, Holborn, and Dr John Tillotson at St Lawrence Jewry (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury). Both of these men were sympathetic to the Presbyterians, Tillotson having come from a puritan family himself. However, Matthew Henry did maintain contact with dissenters, and visited Rev. Richard Baxter after he was imprisoned in 1685. The charge against Baxter was that he published seditious matter reflecting on bishops in his 'Paraphrase of the New Testament'. He was fined 500 marks that he could not pay, and was sentenced to gaol until it was paid. Persecution was so severe that Rev. John Howe, a prominent dissenting pastor in London, fled secretly to the Netherlands without telling his congregation in order to escape serious persecution. Just how tense the times were is reflected in some of the warnings that Philip Henry gave in letters to his son. In mid-November 1685 he wrote to his son and the last sentence is as follows: 'Your letter escaped opening, write, but bee cautious what & how'.[25]

In 1685 the Duke of Monmouth, an illegitimate son of King Charles II, landed in Dorset with a small force in an attempt to wrest the throne from his

uncle, King James II. His troops were beaten, he was captured, and beheaded in London in July of that year. Because the Duke was Protestant, all non-conformist ministers were suspected of siding with him. Henry and others, including ministers from Lancashire, were imprisoned in Chester Castle for three weeks. He did not regard this as onerous, but rather looked back on it with thankfulness. For one thing, in very unsettled times he was in a place of safety, for many of those participating in the rebellion were executed. Philip Henry and his fellow ministers were able to read the Scriptures, pray together, and talk about Christian subjects for their edification. Visitors were able to come and see them, bringing with them gifts of food. Some visitors expected great things from the Duke of Monmouth, to which Philip Henry replied with much wisdom,

> I would not have you to flatter yourselves with such hopes, for God will not do his work for us in these nations by that man; but our deliverances and salvation will arise some other way.[26]

The mid to late 1680s were very difficult years for the dissenters but also for many within the Church of England, as King James sought to silence all who preached and taught against Roman Catholicism. Near the end of 1685, Philip Henry was again in touch with Dr William Lloyd. He expressed the view that it would be good if King James gave the dissenters the same sort of indulgence granted by King Charles in 1672. Dr Lloyd replied, 'Never expect any such thing from him; for, take my word for it, he hates the non-conformists in his heart'. To that Philip Henry replied, 'Truly I believe it, and I think he doth not love you of the Church of England neither'.[27] Shortly afterwards Philip Henry was proved right when Dr Lloyd and six other bishops were imprisoned for a time in the tower of London.[28] It was a surprise to almost everyone when, in April 1687, King James did grant an indulgence to dissenters, but that of course meant Roman Catholics as well. While quite a few thought that this was going to be a snare for the dissenters, Philip Henry came to the conclusion, 'Duty is ours, and the events are God's'. He had the opportunity of preaching on June 14, 1687 at Weston in Shropshire, where he had been interrupted when preaching seven years before to the day, finishing the sermon he had started then. Matthew Henry's comment on this was, 'This seventh year of their silence and restraint, proved, through God's wonderful good providence, the year of release'.[29] Philip Henry was also encouraged with the settlement of his son in Chester as pastor over a dissenting Presbyterian congregation.

A few months later King James, in making a tour to ingratiate himself with the population, came to Whitchurch, and Philip Henry joined with others (eight in all, two being ministers) in presenting an address to him, thanking him for the liberty now granted them and promising to use it quietly. The King

asked if they were of the congregational way, to which Philip Henry replied they were not, but rather for 'a moderate presbytery'. The King then wished to know whether all in that area were so, to which the answer was given, 'There are a few dissenters, if any, hereabouts, that differ from us in that matter'.[30]

A while later commissioners were sent throughout the country to make enquiries concerning the troubles that the dissenters had undergone because of the laws against them. They wanted an account from Philip Henry, but he declined to give it. He replied that he had indeed been fined for taking part in a conventicle and had possessions taken away. However, he refused to give any more information as he had forgiven those responsible long before and had made up his mind never to talk about it again.

The coming of William of Orange in 1688 confirmed the position of tolerance to the dissenters, but that did not mean all persecution ceased, or opposition from Anglican clergy abated. For two years after King James signed the indulgence, Philip Henry and family continued to attend Whitewell Chapel whenever there was preaching there, holding an evening service in his own home. If there was no service in the chapel he also held a morning service at his home. For continuing this practice of attendance he received considerable opposition from strict dissenters, so that he was criticised from two sides. The one side, the dissenters, blamed him for drawing people *to* the Anglican church, while the other, the churchmen, blamed him for drawing people *from* the church.

He was coming to a point where his attendance at the Whitewell Chapel ceased. In June, 1689, the Toleration Act was passed that not only tolerated dissenting services but brought them under government protection. He was still looking for some accommodation so that he and others could return to the established church. A document survived in his hand-writing setting out the basic matters for which he and others were contending. They wanted freedom to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments without episcopal ordination, and freedom in regard to the liturgy. They did not want any law relating to certain matters of practice (such as wearing the surplice, bowing to the east, or observing Lent), but rather it be left to the conscience of every minister.[31]

Not only were there Lord's Days when no preacher came to Whitewell Chapel, but often he and his people had to listen to sermons attacking the dissenters. One preacher set out to prove that the dissenters were schismatics and in a state of damnation. Going straight to his own house he began his sermon by saying, 'Perhaps some of you may expect now that I should say something in answer to what we have heard, by which we have been so severely charged; but truly I have something else to do'. Without any further comment he went on to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.[32]

This meant that after twenty-seven years of partial conformity Philip Henry had reached the position where he was going to preach twice each Lord's

Day at his own home. He had moved to being a dissenter. Occasionally he still went to an Anglican service, but essentially he had his own congregation who gathered from far and near to attend his preaching. Another minister in Lancashire expressed Philip Henry's position,: 'That he had been for twenty-seven years striving to please a generation of men, who, after all, would not be pleased; and therefore, he would no longer endeavour it as he had done'.[33]

For the last seven years of his life Philip Henry was pastor of his own congregation meeting in his own home. Little evidence survives as to the way in which the congregation was organised. No mention is made of any elders to help him, though a deacon was involved in distributing the collection for the poor. At no time did Philip Henry receive any money from the services he conducted. He administered the sacraments, baptising both children and adults. Young attenders who showed signs of a living faith were prepared by him for becoming communicants, and then catechised in front of the whole congregation. Discipline was also exercised by him, reproving in private, though if scandal was evident he suspended the person from the Lord's Supper. His son Matthew Henry, recognised how anomalous this situation was and wrote, 'However, I see not but the end was effectually attained by the methods he took, though there wanted the formality of officers and church-meetings for the purpose'.[34]

After a short illness Philip Henry died on 24 June 1696. For some time he had been saying that he was perpetually tired, though he continued to ride to preaching engagements elsewhere, as well as maintaining his own meeting at Broad Oak. Prior to the burial on 27 June, his close friend and fellow-pastor, Rev. Francis Tallents of Shrewsbury, preached at the home, before the interment took place within the Church of England in nearby Whitchurch. This is itself is noteworthy, that such a prominent non-conformist pastor should be buried within the walls of an Anglican church. A very large company of mourners gathered, including many from Chester, Shrewsbury, and other towns in the neighbourhood. Some said, 'He was a man that nobody did or could speak evil of, except for his non-conformity'.[35]

It does not seem that Philip Henry's worshippers ever constituted a formal congregation. There is no mention of membership records or account books. In his funeral sermon, Francis Tallents urged the people to take action to get another pastor, reflecting on their situation in having a pastor who did not receive any salary:

> Seek out for a supply; do not mourn and sit still, but be up and doing in your places. You have had a cheap gospel hitherto. God sent you one that could preach freely, and which is more, than would do so too; one that sought not your's, but you; and now God will see what you will do for yourselves, that now the Shepherd is smitten, the sheep may not be scattered. Pray to God to raise up others like him, and graciously give you one.

> Take heed of liking no preacher, now he is gone. This is a usual fault among many that have had excellent preachers; nobody can please them. But God may bless weaker means, and make your souls live, and thrive under them.[36]

The Broad Oak meeting did not survive as a non-conformist congregation. This was partly due to the liberty that had become available for the dissenters, for those who had travelled considerable distances to worship there could then find nearer congregations with which to associate.

Philip Henry had been for twenty-seven years a partial conformist, and for seven years a virtual non-conformist. He was a reluctant dissenter, who to the end hoped for such change as would allow him and other moderate dissenters to return to the Anglican fold to practise again the 'presbyterianism' they had known before the Act of Uniformity. He held the parish system highly, and when the offer of indulgence was given he cautioned fellow Presbyterians against accepting 'lest the allowance of separate places help overthrow our parish order'.

Why did Philip Henry after twenty-seven years become a reluctant dissenter? Various factors clearly influenced his decision. Persecution and discrimination had helped cement in many minds and hearts the need for organised church life outside the Anglican establishment. He and others realised that despite their hopes and longings, separation had taken too strong a hold on many of the non-conformists. Persecution had one positive effect in that it brought about a realisation that diverse groups were sharing in common-suffering.[37] Moreover, despite good relationships between himself and Anglican leaders, he could not see that any real change was going to come that would accommodate men like himself. The gulf between Anglicans and non-conformists was not going to be bridged. The differences between those like himself who had hoped for reunion and those who had not desired any such relationship was now almost gone. Separatists of all persuasions - Baptists, Quakers, Independents, and Presbyterians - were now dissenters from the established church. Other factors came into play as well. If regular worship services could have been maintained at Whitewell Chapel, with acceptable preaching, he and his family would have continued to attend. In many places in England lack of regular services pushed people towards the dissenting congregations. Also, the preaching in many Anglican pulpits continued to be so provocative for the non-conformists. They went for worship only to find that preachers would repeatedly take the opportunity to attack and denounce them.

Two aspects of Philip Henry's churchmanship at the closing stages of his life call for comment. One was the situation in his own meeting at Broad Oak. He had no elders working with him, only a deacon to collect and distribute the money for the poor. Admittedly, this was seemingly the situation when he ministered at Worthenbury before the Great Ejection, and hence one with which

he was well accustomed. He was arguing for eldership in the discussions he had with episcopalian leaders, but yet did not have fellow elders working alongside him in his own meeting. The other feature of life among the 'presbyterian' meetings that were operating in England near the end of the seventeenth century, was the lack of distinct presbyterial organisation. There was none of the full Presbyterianism being practised in Scotland in the same period, with presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies. English Presbyterianism displayed features that distinguished it quite sharply from its counterpart over the border.[38] While Philip Henry knew of many similar congregations in the north-west to his own, and ministered on his itinerant tours to many of them, yet no fully organised system of presbyteries was in existence. That was a serious lack at the time for the Presbyterians, and also later, especially when issues of doctrinal commitment became so pressing.[39]

By the time Philip Henry died, theological changes were coming among the dissenters. Differences among the Baptists had already caused division, with some adhering to a Calvinistic position, while others adopted an Arminian one. The seeds of later decay were becoming apparent, as Arminianism was to give way to Socinianism and later Unitarianism. By 1716 a Presbyterian ordination took place when no credal subscription was demanded. While the number of Presbyterian congregations was early on much greater than Baptist ones, they were starting to diminish in size and number.

In an era of confused churchmanship Philip Henry stood out as holding consistently to his non-conformist position that he has adopted prior to 1662. He showed no bitterness to those conformists who treated him so inconsiderably, nor resentment towards extreme dissenters for their criticism of him and his views. Towards his fellow 'outed' ministers he extended generous financial assistance, as he did to all poor. Despite all he and others did, the lack of fuller presbyterial polity, both congregational and presbyterial, weakened the Presbyterian cause and made it so much easier for the shift from Reformed theology to take place. It was not surprising that anti-Arminianism was stronger in conformist Anglican circles than among the dissenters. Just over thirty years after Philip Henry's death another major change was going to occur among the descendants of the English puritans, when the evangelical revival 'rudely shouldered aside' the dissent that had itself originated from puritanism.[40]

Notes

1. See particularly, Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).
2. I will use the term 'Presbyterian' to denote the English non-conformists like Philip Henry of this period, though there were some marked differences between the Scottish Presbyterians and their English counterparts. The Presbyterian Church of England only came into existence in 1836, mainly composed of Scottish immigrants.
3. It has often been said that ordination of Presbyterians only took place after 1672. This is incorrect, as some at least took place earlier. See the reference to the ordination of George Trosse in Exeter in 1666 in C. Gordon Bolam *et al, The English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1968), p.86.
4. Matthew Henry, *The Life of Rev. Philip Henry, A.M.* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974 reprint), p.11.
5. I have given more detail about his early life in *Matthew Henry: His Life and Influence* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2012), pp.17-27.
6. *The Life of the Rev. Philip Henry*, p. 88.
7. *Dairies and Letters of Philip Henry, M.A. of Broad Oak, Flintshire A.D.* 1631-1696 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1882), p.93.
8. *The Life of the Rev. Philip Henry*, p.98.
9. *Diaries*, p.93.
10. Ibid., p.145.
11. Ibid., p.389.
12. J. B. Williams, *Life of Matthew Henry* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974 reprint), p.92.
13. *Diaries*, p.132.
14 Ibid., p.129.
15 Ibid., pp.138-39.
16. Ibid., p.142.
17. For discussion of these terms see John D. Ramsbottom, 'Presbyterians and "Partial Conformity" in the Restoration Church of England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol.43,2 (1992), pp.249-70; and Christopher Hill, 'Occasional Conformity', in R. Buick Knox, ed., *Reformation Conformity and Dissent: Essays in honour of Geoffrey Nuttall* (London: Epworth Press, 1977), pp.199-220.
18. *Diaries*, p.242.
19. *Life of Philip Henry*, pp.380-93.
20. *Diaries*, p.311.
21. *Life of Philip Henry*, p.132.
22. *Diaries*, p.277.
23. *Life of Philip Henry*, p.150.
24. Ibid., p.157.
25. *Diaries*, p.343.
26. *Life of Philip Henry*, p.160.
27. Ibid., p.169.
28. The cause of their trial and imprisonment related to their refusal to have a declaration read in their churches concerning freedom of public worship for Roman Catholics and dissenters. They knew, as did the leading ministers among the dissenters, that this indulgence was meant to favour the Roman Catholics. See the excellent account of this period and the imprisonment of the bishops in J. C. Ryle, 'James II and the Seven Bishops', in *Light from Old Times, or, Protestant Facts and Men: With an Introduction for Our Own Days* (London: William Hunt & Company, 1891), pp.410-56.
29. *Life of Philip Henry*, p.174.

30. Quoted in a letter from Philip Henry to Sir Henry Ashurst, *Life of Philip Henry*, p.182.
31. The document is given as Appendix XVIII, *Life of Philip Henry*, pp.394-397.
32. Ibid., p.187.
33. Ibid., p.189.
34. Ibid., p.196.
35. Ibid., p.225.
36. Ibid., p.227.
37. For a discussion of types of persecution and their effects, see John Spurr, 'From Puritanism to Dissent, 1660-1700', in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism*, 1560-1700 (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), pp.247-52.
38. See the discussion by Jeremy Goring in C. Gordon Bolam et al, *The English Presbyterians: From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitariansim*, pp.19-21.
39. See the comments of A. Harold Wood, *Church Unity Without Uniformity: A Study of 17th-Century Church Movements and of Richard Baxter's Proposals for a Comprehensive Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), p.286: '...there was no Presbyterian ecclesiastical organization in England. This made it easier for Presbyterian chapels and ministers to become unorthodox in doctrine'.
40. The phrase is that of John Spurr, 'From Puritanism to Dissent, 1660-1700', p.265.

BOOK REVIEWS

Dangerous Calling - The Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry, Paul David Tripp, Inter-Varsity Press, 2012, pbk, 227 pages, £11.99

During Lisburn RP congregation's 'GO Week' the elders are leading a Bible Study each morning on the 'Life of Gideon'. If you know anything about Gideon (Judges cpts.6-8) you will be aware that he began well but finished badly. Sadly all too often that can be the case with those who serve Christ in the pastoral ministry. It is because of all the pitfalls and snares that can waylay a minister that Paul Tripp was led to write this book.

The author begins by explaining how the Lord dealt with him and brought him to realise that over the years he had gradually adopted a detached and professional approach to ministry. His biblical and theological knowledge were masking the reality of a heart that was becoming more and more detached from Christ and less and less dependent on his grace.

Tripp believes that the culture of many theological colleges is detrimental to the spiritual health of their students. Detached as many of them are from their local congregations, students can tend to be in a spiritual no-man's land. At this crucial time in their lives there are no elders 'keeping a watch over their souls'. They are not being made accountable with respect to their daily walk with Christ in his Word; their love for and devotion to their wives; their training and nurturing of their children for God. Sadly, from his conference ministry, Paul Tripp is all too well aware that bad spiritual habits which began in seminary often become ingrained and shape pastoral ministry.

This first section of the book ends with a challenge to the staff in theological colleges to ensure that courses are taught, not merely to fill the students' minds with theological facts, but to nurture the soul with love for Christ and submission to his Word.

Another major part of the book deals with what Tripp calls, 'the war for your heart'. He believes that pastoral ministry is always shaped by the war between the kingdom of self and the kingdom of God and that war is being fought in the field of the pastor's heart. So subtle and deceptive is the sin of selfishness that slowly, and often imperceptibly, a man's ministry can, over time, degenerate into the promotion and exaltation of self. For example, he writes:

> Things like appreciation, reputation, success, power, comfort and control become all too important. Because they are too important to me, they begin to shape the way I think about ministry, the things I want out of my ministry, and the things I do in ministry.

The remedy proposed by Tripp is to recognise that we are complete in Christ. If we have him as our treasure then our motives in ministry will be to

exalt him and promote the spiritual growth of his people. In order for this focus to be maintained over the long haul, Tripp advocates that preachers must preach the gospel to themselves. For example, he points out: 'My experience with hundreds of pastors is that many sadly function in a regular state of *gospel amnesia*. They forget to preach privately to themselves the gospel that they declare publicly to others.'

In an age when ministerial burnout is all too common, Tripp believes that part of the problem is that ministers take themselves too seriously. In other words they consider themselves 'way too essential' to what God is doing in the congregation. When this happens, ministers rather than resting on the person and work of Christ 'begin to load the burden of the individual and collective growth of God's people on to their own shoulders.' As well as overburdening themselves this means that they are devaluating the importance of the gifts and ministry of others.

As well as overwork, over confidence is another snare that can endanger the spiritual effectiveness of ministers. In a very powerful and convicting paragraph Tripp crystallises the problem and the consequences:

> A confidence shift begins to take place from the treasure of humble confidence in the power of rescuing, forgiving, transforming, and delivering grace, to rest in my own knowledge, abilities, gifts, and experience. Because of this, I don't grieve enough, I don't pray enough, I don't prepare enough, I don't confess enough, and I don't listen to others enough. I have begun to assign to myself capabilities I don't have, and because I do, I don't minister out of my own sense of need for Christ's grace, and I don't seek out the help of others.

In Tripp's analysis of preaching in 21st century North American churches, and which no doubt is also true in the UK, too many ministers have succumbed to the pitfall of mediocrity in their preaching. Reminding preachers of their calling Tripp addresses them directly:

> You have been called to give glorious motivation to those who have given up. You have been called to shine the light of the glory of God into hearts that have been made dark by looking for life in all the wrong places. You have been called to offer the ... glories of grace to those who are empty and malnourished. You have been called to present a glorious King, who alone is able to rescue, heal, redeem, transform, forgive, deliver, and satisfy. You have been called.

In providing this volume for the Christian church in general and for ministers in particular Paul Tripp has given us an invaluable resource. It is already required reading for the Pastoral Theology course at the Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

Every theological college and seminary should have this book on its reading list. As a refresher course for those already serving Christ in the

ministry I know of nothing better, other than the Word of God itself. In the opinion of this reviewer this book by Paul Tripp bears favourable comparison with The Reformed Pastor by Richard Baxter. If you are prepared to be challenged and convicted as well as encouraged and refreshed, buy a copy, read it and inspire others to read it too.

Robert McCollum

We Proclaim the Word of Life. Preaching the New Testament today, edited by Ian Paul and David Wenham, Inter-varsity Press, 2013, pbk., 263 pages, £16.99

This collection of essays has been written by preachers who are New Testament scholars to help other preachers, especially in bridging the gap between the first century text and the twenty-first century hearer. The first 172 pages deal with the various genres of the New Testament in canonical order, one chapter per section. Each author seeks to give guidelines on how to approach the task of preaching the various parts of the New Testament. The chapters are too short to be much more than an introduction to the various genres of the New Testament, designed to whet the reader's appetite for more and to give some guidance as to where to find more help. After reading each chapter, the preacher may find himself resolving to immediately begin a series of sermons on the part of the New Testament just treated, so thought-provoking are the essays. They prime the pump of the preacher's mind with suggestive discussions of interpretation and application.

D.A. Carson gives seven extremely helpful guidelines for preaching the Gospels in general. The late R.T. France deals with the infancy narratives and shows how to tune out centuries of both scholarly scepticism and sentimental accretions and to listen sensitively to the message Matthew and Luke intended to proclaim in their accounts: 'In their different ways both evangelists present us...with an extended demonstration that the child born in Bethlehem is the Messiah of OT expectation.' (p.40).

Klyne Snodgrass gives 11 useful principles for interpreting and preaching the parables. Snodgrass laments how so many parables are preached in abstract terms, but, ironically, his essay explains how to preach them in largely abstract terms which would have been helped by more concrete examples.

Stephen Wright treats the miracles of Jesus, with an overview of the significance of miracles in Jesus' day, followed by a discussion of what they mean for the present. We would take issue with the inadequate dismissal of the Reformed cessationist position, especially since the position he argues for need not be incompatible with cessationism in any case He finishes by offering three stimulating homiletical approaches to preaching the miracle stories.

David Wenham spends most of his time showing the inadequacy of a legalistic reading of the Sermon on the Mount, emphasising the grace that suffuses it and the positive, practical beauty of the life it commends. He gives several very fruitful ideas for applying its principles to the 21st century.

One of the major issues for the preacher of Acts, says Christoph Stenschke, is knowing what is normative in narrative where there is little authorial comment. Stenschke has good counsel to guide the preacher, and offers several principles for preaching Acts drawn from the book itself.

Justin K. Hardin and Jason Maston give an excellent and concise overview of how to preach Paul's letters, first laying out some principles and then illustrating them from 1 Corinthians 1-4.

The chapter on the Pastoral Epistles by I. Howard Marshall was disappointing to this reviewer, raising questions as to their authorship, the legitimacy of women preaching, and whether the atonement was limited in its effect or not.

Charles A. Anderson examined Hebrews as an example of Scripture expounding and applying Scripture and drew lessons for our own preaching from this study. His insights on the relationship between exposition and exhortation will be especially valuable for the preacher.

The constraints of the chapter length were particularly obvious in Mariam J. Kamell's essay on the general epistles, where very little space could be given to each of the letters. This essay felt more like it was geared towards special introduction than preaching.

Ian Paul's essay on Revelation brought the tour of the canon to a close, dealing first with the usual technical matters facing the preacher of Revelation, but then suggesting three methods of handling these issues in preaching.

The remainder of the book addresses more general topics relevant to the preacher of the New Testament: archaeology and history, ethics, hope and judgment, hermeneutics, the 'New Homiletic' and preaching the gospel from the Gospels.

For a preacher about to embark on a study of any of these loci of the New Testament, this volume will be a good place to begin to orientate himself.

Warren Peel.

The Message of Malachi, Peter Adam, Inter–Varsity Press, 2013, pbk., 124 pages, £8.99

'The Bible Speaks Today' (OT Series), under the stalwart editorial oversight of Alex Motyer, has proved to be a blessing to the Church, especially to ministers committed to Biblical inerrancy and expositional preaching. The

original aim of the series was to expound the biblical text with accuracy, to relate the text to contemporary life, and to be readable. Thus the series does not set out to be a 'commentary' in the narrow sense (i.e. a work of reference that seeks to elucidate the text rather than illustrating and applying it). On the other hand it is not so 'sermonic' in the sense of being so readable and contemporary that it does not take detailed exposition of Scripture seriously enough. Thus the series (as the present reviewer can personally testify) is an ideal tool to be brought to bear on the text after the initial groundwork of translating, understanding, structuring and outlining the passage is complete. The busy pastor will find in it much spiritual food for his own soul. Indeed this reviewer would recommend it to be used as a devotional aid.

The present writer, Peter Adam, an author of valuable books on the doctrine of Scripture and how to preach it, served as Principal of Ridley College Melbourne from 2002 to 2012. As well as academic gifts he brings a wealth of pastoral experience to the task, being Vicar Emeritus of St. Jude's, Carlton, and Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, in Melbourne. In the preface he professes a love for the Book of Malachi which he has 'taught and preached many times'.

After an excellent Introduction in which he summarises how to preach the Old Testament generally, before moving to consider the structure, setting and contemporary relevance of the Book of Malachi for to-day, the exposition is divided into eight chapters, each one dealing with vital biblical themes. The first is effectively an exposition of the doctrine of Scripture based on Malachi 1: 1. The second chapter treats the doctrine of election as set out in 1:2–5. The third chapter, the longest, is a deeply challenging exposition of 1:6–14; how God's name was despised by the careless professors of Malachi's day and application of this to to-day. There follows the challenge to church leaders to honour God's Name in 2:1–9 and his Sanctuary (2:11–12), before a detailed and sensitive study on marriage and divorce in 2:11–16. Then comes a section on the cynicism that can at times get into the hearts of God's professed people, and the antidote to it (2:17 – 3:5). The famous section on 'robbing God' follows (3:6–12) before the 'Final Words' of 3:13 – 4:6 when the prophet points us forward to the coming Day of the Lord, the breaking – in of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and his reign, the consummation which we await.

Thoroughly faithful to the text in the whole context of Scripture, this is careful exposition and illustration at its best. It brings out and applies the challenge of God's Word to the Church to-day and comes thoroughly recommended.

Norris Wilson

The Creedal Imperative, Carl R. Trueman, Crossway, 2012, pbk., 205 pages £8.99

The premise underlying this book by Carl Trueman, Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, is deceptively simple. The author's contention is that every branch of Christ's Church on earth should subscribe to a written confession of faith. This apparently simple proposition will meet with a ready approval within Reformed Churches. The later classical Reformed confessions are shown to rest on the creeds which emerged from the doctrinal struggles in the early church, and yet the author rightly comments that the church or individual holding to a written confession is swimming against the tide of modern thought. Among other things, it is assumed today that the new is better than the old and that precision in language, of the sort used in a confession, should give way to either mysticism or pragmatism.

The author's case for confessions goes back beyond the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and even beyond the early Church. He shows that there is biblical warrant for the use of confessions in the Church and draws on examples from the brief, summary statements, 'the form of sound words', which are found in some of Paul's letters.

Trueman carefully exposes the error of those who argue against the use of creeds and confessions by claiming to have 'no creed but the Bible'. The difference, he says, is not that some churches have confessions while others do not. It is that some have a written, publicly available confession while others keep their confession hidden in the recesses of their own minds. The weaknesses and dangers of this latter position are well described.

Having established the case for clear confessional statements Trueman helpfully points to their usefulness in the life of the church and indeed, of the individual Christian. This is a particularly relevant section of the book and ought to give encouragement to the members and the ordained overseers within confessional churches. It is good, for example, to be reminded that one of the great benefits of a written confession is that it helps to guard 'the stable transmission of the gospel from one generation to another'.

This timely book will challenge us at several points to think what it means to belong to a confessional denomination. Office bearers in the Church are certainly to subscribe wholeheartedly to its written confession, but how closely are members to hold to it? How can the confession be used pedagogically in the local congregation? What place, if any, does the recitation of the creed have in the Church's worship? What leeway is there in the ordained leadership for disagreement with any of the statements in the church's adopted confession?

The book leaves us with a great sense of gratitude for the way in which God has taught and strengthened his people down the ages. It ought also to

deepen our awareness of the great privileges we enjoy at this point in the history of the Church and fill us with a humble recognition that we are 'standing on the shoulders of giants.'

Highly recommended.

Knox Hyndman

After Jonathan Edwards. The Courses of the New England Theology, edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney, Oxford University Press, 2012, pbk., 339 pages, £22.50

Few would dispute that Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) was one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Christian Church. He made significant contributions to both philosophy and theology, and wrestled fruitfully with issues such as the nature of religious experience, the marks of genuine revival, the freedom of the will, and many other matters. Even during his lifetime others sought to appropriate his insights and to develop them further. In his later years and especially after his death this trend grew rapidly and spawned what came to be known as 'the New Divinity' and later as 'the New England theology'. How accurately some of those claiming to be followers of Jonathan Edwards have represented his views, however, is a matter that has exercised theologians and church historians considerably ever since. Given the great volume of publications on Edwards that has appeared since the pioneering (and controversial) work of Perry Miller, it is natural that Edwards' theological legacy should also receive renewed attention. Just as it has been asked whether John Calvin was a 'Calvinist', so it may be asked whether Jonathan Edwards was an 'Edwardsian'.

This volume of essays considering the theme 'After Jonathan Edwards' brings together many of the most eminent experts in this period of American church history. In the course of its seventeen chapters the legacy of Edwards is examined from a variety of perspectives. Not only are his immediate disciples and successors such as Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins considered, but the impact of Edwards' thought through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and on into the twentieth century is also examined.

The first part of the book, entitled 'New Light in the New World', considers the early development of 'the New England Theology' in the context of the wider theological and cultural context of eighteenth century New England. Mark Valeri, for example, in an essay entitled 'Jonathan Edwards, the New Divinity and Cosmopolitan Calvinism', looks at how Bellamy and Hopkins sought to remain faithful to Edwards' Calvinism, whilst at the same time formulating his thought in logical and precise terms that appealed to the contemporary standards of scholarship. Valeri argues that their formulations of

Edwards' thought reflected the mid-eighteenth century sensibilities of the Anglo-American Enlightenment which highly valued politeness and reasonableness.

Kenneth Minkema in his essay on 'Jonathan Edwards on Education and His Educational Legacy' notes that, perhaps contrary to expectations, Edwards preferred what he termed a 'familiar' method of education which was primarily dialogical and not merely a matter of rote learning. Alan Guelzo considers Edwards' doctrines of original sin and the freedom of the will, showing how Edwards rejected the faculty psychology common to his Puritan predecessors, in effect absorbing the will into the intellect. Guelzo also considers Edwards' efforts to maintain human moral accountability and examines how Bellamy and Hopkins developed Edwards' position into a full-blown governmental theory of the atonement. Oliver Crisp in his essay examines Bellamy's view of the atonement in detail and notes Edwards' surprisingly positive view of Bellamy's position in light of the fact that it diverged significantly from Edwards' own penal substitutionary formulation. The final essay in this section is by Paul Helm and is entitled 'A Different Kind of Calvinism? Edwardsianism Compared with Older Forms of Reformed Thought'. In it Helm notes some of the significant differences between Edwards and the views of Calvin and mainstream Puritans which resulted in some of Edwards' most distinctive contributions to theology and to philosophy, not least his idealist metaphysic and his occasionalism.

The second part of the book, entitled 'Carrying the Torch', traces responses to Edwards' thought through to the nineteenth century, embracing some who stayed close to the source and others who diverged dramatically. Among those considered are Samuel Hopkins, Nathanael Emmons, Edward Dorr Griffin, Asahel Nettleton, Nathaniel Taylor and Edwards Amasa Park. The final part, 'Edwardsian Light Refracted', widens the scope of the book to look at responses to Edwards among, for example Presbyterians and Baptists, in Britain, France and Germany, and among contemporary Evangelicals.

The range of essays is impressive and all offer useful insights into Edwards and the ways in which his legacy developed. Some assume more prior knowledge than others, but in general they are accessible and stimulating. Debate as to the degree to which Edwards' theological descendants were faithful to their mentor, and indeed to what extent they ought to have been, will continue unabated, but this volume should help to ensure that the debate is informed and fruitful.

David McKay

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David McKay

BOOK NOTICES

Silent Witnesses, Garry J. Williams, Banner of Truth Trust, 2013, hbk., 240 pages, £14.50

History is the record of the unfolding of God's providence in the world and from it we may learn valuable lessons, especially from the people and events of church history. In *Silent Witnesses* Garry Williams, Director of the John Owen Institute at London Theological Seminary, provides fourteen studies, along with an Epilogue ('making the Case for Christian History'), which range from the early Church period up to the twentieth century. Through an examination of figures such as John Calvin, William Tyndale, Jonathan Edwards and Martin Luther, along with two considerations of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), Williams aims to provide lessons, as the subtitle states, 'on theology, life and the church'. The first section considers matters of doctrine, including Scripture, the person and work of Christ, justification and grace. The second examines related to Christian living, including love for God, trust in trials and work (an unusual study of industrialist John Laing). The final section, 'Primarily for Pastors and Elders', examines matters related to priorities, preaching and the sacraments. The studies are well written and offer a wealth of sound guidance from the 'greats' of the past. Especially useful are Williams' warnings that we must not idealise such Christians and so become discouraged, or even depressed, and that we are not called by God to replicate the life of any of them. We must each be faithful to God's unique calling to us in our own day. Wise advice that is not always heard from those who try to draw lessons from church history.

Pilgrim Theology. Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples, Michael Horton, Zondervan, 2011, hbk., 506 pages, $34.99

Michael Horton of Westminster Theological Seminary in California has written a number of significant books on various aspects of theology, not least his weighty textbook *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (2011). The present book is aimed at a wider audience than *The Christian Faith,* although it too covers the whole spread of topics in systematic theology. Although based on the larger work, *Pilgrim Theology* is not a mere abridgment of it, and indeed seeks to make a distinctive contribution to the understanding of theology. The coverage is comprehensive, beginning with revelation and Scripture and continuing through the doctrines of God, man, the person and work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the Church, the

sacraments and 'the last things'. The Reformed faith is shown to be soundly rooted in the Scriptures, which are cited extensively, and the historical development of the various doctrines is also examined as appropriate. The layout of the presentation is attractive and efforts are made to explain technical theological vocabulary when it is used. One of the distinctive elements in Horton's treatment of theology is his use of the imagery of God's people as pilgrims, asa disciples on a journey. As this journey of a deepening relationship with the Triune God develops, Horton offers four 'coordinates' to guide pilgrims and also to frame his presentation of a biblical theology: Drama (the historical unfolding of God's redemptive purpose), Doctrine (the truths that God has revealed about himself, about man, salvation and Christian living), Doxology (the praise and worship elicited by drama and doctrine) and Discipleship (the way of life of disciples in the world). A separate 78 page Study and Discussion Guide is also available. Pilgrim Theology should prove to be of great help to a wide range of readers who are seriously interested in knowing more of God and his truth and in living faithfully for him as his disciples.

Matthew. St Andrew's Expositional Commentary, R C Sproul, Crossway, 2013, hbk., 830 pages, $54.99

Although he is best known as a theologian, R C Sproul has since 1997 preached weekly at St. Andrew's church in Sanford, Florida. The St. Andrew's Expositional Commentaries, of which this is the most recent example, are expositions based in that weekly preaching. Sproul is an excellent communicator and the style of the expositions is clear, direct and quite conversational at times. The Gospel is divided into 129 sections and each exposition is short, usually about six pages. This inevitably means that the book is not a detailed textual commentary, but it is not designed to be, and there are comments on most of the verses and on any particularly significant issues. The book could be read regularly in personal devotions and, used alongside more exegetical commentaries, it will provide the preacher on Matthew's Gospel with help and stimulation.

The Theology of Augustine. An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works, Matthew Levering, Baker Academic, 2013, pbk., 204 pages, $24.99

Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, is indisputably one of the greatest theological minds in the history of the Christian Church. He made a massive

contribution to many aspects of theology and different elements of his thought have been claimed by Reformers such as Calvin (his theology of grace, for example) and also by exponents of traditional Roman Catholic theology (his theology of the sacraments, for example). A man who exercises such influence and, in some cases, who is subject to widely differing interpretations, demands attention. As an entry point for understanding some of Augustine's fundamental ideas Matthew Levering's *The Theology of Augustine* has much to recommend it. Levering selects seven key works of Augustine for consideration: *On Christian Doctrine, Answer to Faustus, a Manichean, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, On the Predestination of the Saints, Confessions, City of God and On the Trinity.* Together these provide a helpful overview of the great themes which occupied Augustine's attention during his writing career: biblical interpretation, the relationship of the Old to the New testament, the unity of the Church, God's nature, grace and predestination, conversion, the meaning of history, the 'two cities', the cross and resurrection of Jesus and the Trinity. Levering's presentation of his material is clear and thorough, and he has succeeded in providing an introduction to Augustine in all his richness and diversity which ought to send readers back to the original texts hungry to learn more.

Global Voices. Reading the Bible in the Majority World, edited by Craig Keener and M. Carroll R, Hendrickson Publishers/Alban Books, 2013, pbk., 126 pages, $17.95

White Europeans and North Americans have for some time been a minority in the Christian Church worldwide, but coming to terms with that fact has been a slow process. There is often still the assumption that European theologians and institutions have the necessary understanding of the truth which they then offer to less educated 'foreigners' for the benefit of the latter. Only gradually is it coming to be realised that Christians from many countries have a role to play in understanding and living out the revelation of God in the Bible. Indeed western white Christians have a great deal to learn from brothers and sisters in the 'majority (non-white) world', where cultures can often be much closer to the biblical world than is the case in the West. The chapters in this book bring together contributors from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Nigerian, Guatemalan, Sinhalese, Indian, Canadian, American, Japanese-American and Chinese-American. Ten papers are offered, in pairs, with the second being a response to the first in each pair. Subjects covered include how to read the Bible from a Hispanic perspective, applying Galatians in the context of Sri Lanka, lessons from Daniel, spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6, and African uses of the Psalms. There is much here t stimulate thought, both in agreement

and in disagreement, but there can be no doubt that Christian voices from the majority world have much to say and need to be given attention and respect.

The Kuyper Center Review. Volume Three: Calvinism and Culture, edited by Gordon Graham, William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013, pbk., 184 pages, £17.99

The thought of Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper continues to offer rich resources for those committed to the application of the Reformed Faith to all of life. The latest edition of *The Kuyper Center Review* deals with the relevance of Calvinism to the arts, an area in which Reformed thinkers have often been weak. The papers in this volume offer historical, theological and practical studies of culture in general and also of specific areas of the arts, including architecture, literature, music and painting. Both 'high' art and popular entertainment are included. Given that the issue of 'cultural transformation' is presently a controversial issue, especially with attempts to renew a Reformed appropriation of natural law and a commitment to a 'two kingdoms' view of our Christian calling, it is particularly helpful to have some of these authors wrestle with the controversy from a Kuyperian ('neo-Calvinist') point of view. The first paper, by Neal DeRoo ('Culture regained? On the Impossibility and Meaninglessness of Culture in (Some) Calvinist Thought'), and the last, by James Eglinton ('To Transcend and to Transform: The Neo-Calvinist Relationship of Church and Cultural Transformation'), are especially relevant. Anyone interested in wrestling with the application of theology to the arts will find ample food for thought here.

Jonathan Edwards and Justification by Faith, Michael McClenahan, Ashgate, 2012, hbk., 218 pages, £55.00

Studies of different aspects of the theology of Jonathan Edwards cater to many levels of interest. This volume is aimed at the serious student of the great theologian and philosopher, being the fruit of doctoral study at the University of Oxford by Michael McClenahan, now a Presbyterian minister in Northern Ireland. Given that the doctrine of justification is presently a storm-centre of theological debate, it is particularly gratifying to have this important piece of scholarship available. McClenahan notes at the outset that a number of scholars have sought to portray Edwards as in a variety of ways diverging from the accepted Reformed understanding of justification by faith alone. After examining some of these views, McClenahan in a thorough manner demonstrates comprehensively that in fact Edwards stood in the mainstream of

Reformed thought on the subject of justification. As with almost every subject he considered, Edwards made distinctive contributions to the discussion within and beyond the Reformed tradition, but there is nothing in his examination of justification that questions that tradition. In particular McClenahan takes into account the full spread of Edwards' work, especially the sermons which too many have neglected, thus providing a richer and more accurate account of Edwards' views. He also argues that Edwards' 1738 discourse *Justification by Faith Alone* was not written as a comprehensive statement of his position but was rather written with the specific intent of refuting the Arminian theology of justification which flourished in England after the Restoration and which made its way to New England through the published sermons of Archbishop John Tillotson. There is much here to stimulate further thought. Michael McClenahan has produced a fine piece of scholarship which is of great value in understanding Jonathan Edwards and also the vital doctrine of justification itself.

Reading Revelation. A Thematic Approach, W Gordon Campbell, James Clarke and Co., 2012, pbk., 430 pages, £30.50

The Book of Revelation has been subject to almost every conceivable kind of interpretation over the centuries, many of which have reduced it to a kind of puzzle beyond the comprehension of most readers. In *Reading Revelation* Gordon Campbell, Professor of New Testament at Union Theological College, Belfast, aims to offer a sounder route to understanding Revelation. The book is the fruit of doctoral work undertaken in France and published in French in 2007. Campbell's approach is to seek an understanding of Revelation from within the text itself, rooted as it is in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, rather than looking mainly to outside sources for enlightenment, for example the historical situation in first century Asia Minor. Campbell's approach is therefore primarily literary, drawing on the insights of structural and narrative methodologies. He discerns a number of themes running through Revelation which bind the book into a coherent literary work rather than a collection of disparate elements or a detailed prophecy of the future. Revelation, on this reading, dramatizes the story of the covenant which, renewed and perfected by Christ, the slain Lamb, finally facilitates communion between God and people drawn from all nations. This approach offers many valuable insights into Revelation, particularly in its grasp of the covenantal unity of the book. It is a quite demanding volume, as its origins in doctoral study would suggest, but it will repay careful consideration with the text of Revelation necessarily close at hand.

David McKay