ISSN 2046-9071

Foundations

An International Journal of Evangelical Theology

No 77
AUTUMN 2019

Contents

affinity
gospel churches in partnership

Foundations

Foundations is an international journal of evangelical theology published in the United Kingdom. Its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical theology, church history and apologetics, and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry. Its particular focus is the theology of evangelical churches which are committed to biblical truth and evangelical ecumenism. It has been published by Affinity (formerly The British Evangelical Council) from its inception as a print journal. It became a digital journal in April 2011.

The views expressed in the articles published in Foundations do not necessarily represent the views of Affinity or its partners although all content must be within the bounds of the Affinity Doctrinal Basis.

Foundations is published twice each year online at www.affinity.org.uk

It is offered in two formats:

PDF (for citing pagination) and HTML (for greater accessibility, usability, and infiltration in search engines).

Foundations is published by
Affinity
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Bristol BS37 0DH

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Foundations 77 (November 2019): 1-5

EDITORIAL

The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

I find myself, on sabbatical for a few months, with the honour and privilege of sitting in the Editor's chair for this issue of *Foundations*. That will teach me to speak up in Affinity Council meetings about how important it is for us to continue this important ministry! A new longer-term Editor will, God willing, take over in the new year to commission and edit articles for the future. But for now you are stuck with me. As I wondered how to begin, this passage above from 2 Timothy 2 came to mind as an especially relevant text to consider as we go about our ministries, especially intellectual or theological ministries such as *Foundations*, in our day and age.

As I write, tempers are flaring up in politics, the Press, and social media as a General Election campaign hots up. The lack of civility in public life, and the often-vicious rhetoric that opposing sides in current national debates fling at each other ought to be a cause for profound concern. The issues which we in our churches and fellowships and denominations have to discuss over the next year, however, will be far more important than Brexit or the future of the National Health Service. We have matters of eternal significance in our hands. God's people, finding themselves "in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation" are meant to "shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life" (Philippians 2:15-16). However, we are often tempted to just the kind of toxic engagement which we so deplore in the secular state.

One of my favourite bits of sixteenth-century canon law speaks about how "the condition of the state is ruined when it is governed by people who are stupid, demanding, and burning with ambition". At the same time, it continues, "the church of God is struggling, since it is committed to the care of those who are totally incompetent to assume so important a task. In this respect it has fallen very far short indeed of those rules of the blessed Paul, which he prescribed to Timothy and Titus. Therefore we must find an appropriate remedy for so serious a plague on our churches."[1] If we in the churches want to critique the way that public engagement happens in our national life, we must make sure that we are living by our own professed biblical standards as we do. 2 Timothy 2 is just one text for us to reflect on as we seek to do this.

[1] Gerald Bray (ed.), *Tudor Church Reform: The Henrician Canons of 1535 and the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 280–81 (*Reformatio*, 11:1).

The Lord Jesus exemplified both zeal for the truth and a deep love for people. Christ is often held up as an example to follow, however, by people who seem to enjoy giving offence and wish to tear others down with their salty rhetoric and pejorative epithets. There is a well-known meme (a sort of online poster) which often does the rounds on Facebook and Twitter, for example, featuring a picture of Jesus clearing out the temple, with the lesson, "If someone asks 'What would Jesus do?', remind them that turning over tables and breaking out whips is a possibility." Paul's perplexed exasperation with false teachers in Galatia is also sometimes presented as a model for emulation, especially when he says, "I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!" (Galatians 5:12). This is taken, along with the prophets pronouncing woes upon people, as *carte blanche* for us, not simply to speak clearly and passionately against error, but to insult and excoriate and attack our political or ecclesiastical enemies.

It is interesting to note that there is no sense in Acts that the apostles chose Jesus's forceful cleansing of the temple as the model for their own stance towards religious opponents, even after his death at the hands of the temple establishment. In Acts, physical violence and verbal abuse are directed *against* Christian leaders, but never undertaken by them (e.g. Acts 4:3, 5:18, 7:58, 8:3, 9:1, 12:1-3, 13:50, 14:5, 14:19, 16:19, 17:5-6, 18:6, 19:29, 21:30-36, 22:22-23, and 23:12-15). I think it is likely that part of the very purpose of Luke's second volume is to exonerate the early Christians from malicious charges that they were not peaceable, showing where the violence surrounding the proclamation of the gospel actually originated. Moreover, Jesus rebuked James and John for even suggesting retribution against those who rejected him (Luke 9:51-55), and certainly did not give a deservedly harsh answer to every ridiculous thing said or done against him. Even as he was unjustly crucified it could be said of him, "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23).

In our own polemics and public engagement, we would do well to meditate more on this aspect of the Lord's example, not to mention his intense prayerfulness (e.g. Matthew 14:23, 26:36, Mark 1:35, 6:46, 9:29). I am not suggesting that we ought simply to be silent. Yet we are neither divine, all-knowing and sinless saviours, or apostles of Christ with prophetic insight and revelation. So I think we ought to be more wary of too quickly claiming to imitate Jesus and the godly authors of Scripture before we have heard their strictures on harshness, discourtesy and disproportionate argumentativeness. Let us attempt to do as they say, before we boldly permit ourselves to do as they did.

The apostle Peter also tells us not to attract negative attention from those around us because we are "meddlers" (1 Peter 4:15). The word means "one

who busies himself in the affairs of others in an unwarranted manner".[2] He is concerned that in our rejection of worldly ways and the topsy-turvy times in which we live, we Christians can sometimes come over a bit self-righteous. Paul told the Thessalonians "to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs" (1 Thessalonians 4:11), but Peter knows some who have different aspirations. As Peter Davids comments,

> it is probable that our author is concerned that Christians in their rejection of idolatry and pagan morality or their zeal for the gospel not put their noses (or worse) into situations in which they ought not to be involved and thus justly earn the censure of pagan culture for transgressing culturally approved limits. Gentle persuasion is one thing; denouncing idolatry in a temple courtyard is another, as might also be interfering in the affairs of another family, however well-meaning it might be. No Christian should disgrace Christ by being guilty of such things.[3]

J. Ramsey Michaels also writes of how Peter may have known of Christians who set themselves up as "guardians of public morality", pretending to legislate and lecture everyone on goodness and virtue.[4] This is reminiscent of the wry comment of a medieval archbishop called Theophylact of Ohrid (1050-1108), who said that, "A meddler is someone who loves to mind other people's business in order to find reasons for attacking them."[5] They are mischief makers, what in the online world is nowadays called a "troll".[6] If people don't like it when believers go around behaving like that, we are not to take comfort in the fact that we are "meddlers for Christ". That is not the sort of offence he wants us to cause. If we suffer because we are insufferable, that is not being Christian; it is being cringey. It is not the sort of reputation we ought to covet. "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name", says Peter. May we suffer the slings and arrow of outrageous opposition in a way that glorifies God and puts our opponents (and not us) to shame.

In my article below on the epistle of Jude, I outline what that pithy letter has to say about contending for the faith. He calls us to join the struggle against false teaching in defence of orthodoxy, because there is a perpetual battle raging. As Hilary of Poitiers (310-367) noted in the early church, "there is a

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[2] See Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains: Second Edition* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 88.245 on ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος.

[3] Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 169.

[4] J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (Waco: Word, 1988), 267-268.

[5] Gerald Bray, (ed.), *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 119.

[6] According to Wikipedia, "In Internet slang, a troll is a person who starts quarrels or upsets people on the Internet to distract and sow discord by posting inflammatory and digressive, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the intent of provoking readers into displaying emotional responses and normalizing tangential discussion, whether for the troll's amusement or a specific gain" (accessed 31 October 2019).

constant battle between the assertion of truth and the defence of pleasure".[7] Hilary describes how this takes hold in individuals, as our minds start to follow our fallen wills: "Enquiry after truth gives way to the search for proofs of what we wish to believe; desire is paramount over truth… But instead of trying to set up our desires as doctrines, we should let our doctrines dictate our desires." Yet people are often more zealous for the things they inwardly yearn for than they are for what sound doctrine teaches. So, in the end, they begin to cloak their more culturally-comfortable teaching in pious-sounding words even while they abandon true reverence for the faith.[8] We have seen this again and again in the last few centuries (as I expand), and we see this all around us today. Yet Jude's advice is distinctly different to what many might expect. Just as James warned his readers to avoid bitterly ambitious quarrelsomeness based on wisdom that is "earthly, unspiritual, and demonic" (James 3:15), so contending for the faith, in Jude's book, is an activity characterised by mercy, and self-awareness.

All this being said, there is at least a case for some careful use of satire in Christian communication, as Dr Tom Woolford points out in his article below on the use of that comedic device in the book of Isaiah. After studiously defining what satire is, and its various types, he exegetes certain passages in Isaiah to show how the prophet repeatedly uses not only subtle but also biting satire to make his points. Examining and unpacking the implications of this for us today, he is also wise to note that there are certain controls on the use of satire, which mean that zealous firebrands in social media groups ought to be wary about its use, and cognisant of the usual effects of it before they leap in. This is a provocative article, and those wishing to critique its conclusions will surely need to indulge in equally careful exegesis and learned exposition. (We do, of course, invite rejoinder articles of similar depth and sophistication for future issues of *Foundations*!)

One area of theology where there has been sharp debate in the past is over the so-called *Filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed. Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father alone, or from the Father *and the Son*? This question divided Eastern and Western Christendom almost a thousand years ago, and it still divides many today. In an exercise in "constructive dogmatics", Jake Eggertsen examines this question in our next article. He seeks to engage with Scripture and tradition in dialogue with theologians from the past and the present to help answer this important Trinitarian question, in a way that is irenic and thoughtful.

Next, we return to the Areopagus in Athens to look at what Paul's address to the Greek philosophers of his day can teach us about the fraught question

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[7] J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Patrologiae Tomus X. S. Hilarii Tomus Posterior* (Paris, 1845), 343: "inter veri assertionem, et placiti defensionem, pertinax pugna est". Cf. The Prologue to Peter Lombard's *Sentences.*

[8] Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, 10:1, 3. NPNF[2] 9:182.

of whether Christians and Muslims worship "the same God". Does Paul's speech on Mars' Hill about an "Unknown God" he was now making known to them justify referring to Allah as the same God as the God of the Bible, as some people think it does? In constructing his case against this recently popularised idea, Tim Dieppe interacts with sources ancient and modern, to help us in our apologetics today.

Speaking of apologetics reminds us that one of our primary tasks as Christians in our confused and confusing society is to reach out with the good news of the gospel to unbelievers. In that regard, Dr Donald John MacLean looks in depth at the question of whether Jesus standing at the door and knocking in Revelation 3:20 is an evangelistic appeal or not. Many have seen it that way, and preached it that way to great effect, but it is common today for commentators to reject such use in mass evangelism, and many are concerned with the picture often painted of a seemingly impotent Christ yearning for unbelievers to exercise their free will and open the door so he can save them. On the other hand, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many Reformed writers and preachers did actually draw stirring conversionist appeals from the picture of Jesus standing at the door, without theological qualms. As an expert in historical theology, MacLean examines why, and finds that ecclesiology matters far more than we may realise when it comes to our application of the Bible in preaching.

Ecclesiologically, our book reviewers in this issue are from a number of different backgrounds: Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian – which is after all what makes us in Affinity such a richly diverse and fascinating bunch! I am grateful to them, as I think you will be, for giving time to read, think, and write about some recent publications of note.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of *Foundations*.

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November 2019

Foundations 77 (November 2019): 6-14

CONTENDING IN THE PERPETUAL BATTLE: JUDE AND THE CONSTANT NEED TO FIGHT VALIANTLY AGAINST HERESY

*Lee Gatiss**

Jesus did not call us to an easy life. Those who come to know him by faith "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1), but the Christian life is not all tranquility and calm. That is not what he meant when he promised us "rest" (Matthew 11:28). He warned that the path to heaven would be paved with "many dangers, toils, and snares", as the hymn *Amazing Grace* puts it, and to get there we would have to deny ourselves and carry a cross (Luke 9:23).

In an important sense, Jesus did not come to bring peace to the earth but a sword, because true faith in him divides families and communities and even nations (Matthew 10:34-39). The Bible says that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:12-13). So a calling to follow Jesus is a hazardous and risky one. In the Church of England it comes with a charge when we are baptised to "fight valiantly as a disciple of Christ against sin, the world and the devil", and to continue his faithful soldiers and servants until the end of our lives, or until he comes again.[1]

A brief look at Christian history shows us that there has always been enmity against the church and discord within it. In the early days after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Christians struggled against many external foes which sought to stamp them out. This was to be expected, as Christianity presented a grave threat to the existing order of things, and Jesus had warned it would be so. There were also *internal* threats from various heresies, which felt like a betrayal of the truth and hence excited great passion. Fighting the good fight of faith will always be necessary, because new threats are constantly arising. The Apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders that even from their own number wolves would spring up to twist the truth, scatter the flock and lead people astray. Diligence and vigilance will always be required, he said (Acts 20:28-30). Wolves are attracted to sheep, so wherever there are

* Dr Lee Gatiss is the Director of Church Society and author of *Fight Valiantly! Contending for the Faith in the Bible and in the Church of England* (Lost Coin, 2019).

[1] Cf. the *Common Worship* baptism service. The *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) exhorts baptisands "manfully to fight under Christ's banner" as his faithful soldiers and servants. The language may be suggested by Hebrews 11:34 in the King James Version, which speaks of how believers "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight".

sheep, wolves will inevitably follow (however sound our church may appear to be in theory).

So what does it mean for Christians to join in this perpetual battle against the world, the flesh and the devil, especially when it sometimes involves striving against other professed believers, perhaps even within the same denomination or church? I have examined the biblical and historical answers to this in my book *Fight Valiantly! Contending for the Faith in the Bible and in the Church of England*.[2] It is not an uncontroversial question. What to some looks like contending feels to others like mere contentiousness; and while many may be engaged in effective contending in all sorts of ways, they may be accused by others of quiet compromise or acquiescence – because their understandings of what it means to contend are fundamentally different.

How *do* we stand firm and fight on in a way that pleases Christ? Truth will always need upholding and fighting for. This has always been a sometimes exhausting and often nauseating necessity, whatever our denomination might be. What does the Bible say about this contending? What is it, what is it not, and how are we meant to engage in it? In *Fight Valiantly!* I survey the key passages in the Bible on this subject. I think we can sum up the biblical doctrine by saying that contending is the vital spiritual discipline of applying and promoting the gospel lovingly in a context of opposition. Contending is not a mere worldly exercise, but an application of the gospel itself both personally and corporately. It must involve boundaries and saying no to various things, as true love always does; but this ought to be done in a way that is courteous and godly, consistent with what the gospel tells us about ourselves. All of these pillars are vital for biblical contending, and to forget any of these aspects of the task would hamstring our efforts.[3]

If we were to pick just one passage of the Bible on which to reflect further about this subject, it might well be the short epistle of Jude. Jude tells us to "contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints". He will help us to work out what this means, so we can join in, and fight valiantly behind the one "whose battle-cry is love."

Jude tells us about the call to contend, the need to contend, and the way to contend.

I. The Call to Contend

Jude 3-4 says:

> Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the

[2] London: *Lost Coin*, 2019.

[3] In *Fight Valiantly*, I unpack each of these things by way of "30 Theses on Contending", which also appeared in a recent issue of *Evangelicals Now*.

saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Rather than writing a more positive letter about our salvation, Jude decided to write an appeal instead, a vital appeal for people to contend for the faith. There is an attractive alternative translation of this verse (e.g. NRSV) which could be understood to mean that the letter we have actually is the letter he intended to write, i.e. "*Since* I'm eager to write about our common salvation, I'm writing this to urge you to contend for that faith." I think the ESV and NIV, and the majority of scholars, are right to understand that he is in fact talking about two letters: an originally intended general one, and this more focused and urgent one.[4] Jude adds that this faith was "once and for all delivered to the saints". It is not something which can change, or which can be added to. It was definitively delivered, handed over intact. So there is such a thing as "orthodoxy", a definitive body of doctrine that has been passed down to us.

The false teaching, which Jude outlines a little more in the rest of the letter, includes the idea of changing our gospel, our message. Indeed, he says certain people want to transform the grace of the gospel so it turns into a licence for immorality. They want to undermine the Lordship of Jesus as our *Master*, that is, one with rights over how we behave. So, contending here is in the context of false teaching; it is contending *for* something, positively – contending *for* the faith. It means not changing our doctrine and not changing our moral and ethical applications of it, which certain people would like us to do. It means contending for the doctrine that we do not get to decide how to live, because Jesus is our Lord and Master.

II. The Need to Contend

So that is Jude's call to contend for the unchanging faith. Second, he also tells us why there is a need to contend. Let us listen again to what he says:

… I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. **For** certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The reason there is a need for this struggle is that there are false teachers about. Jude wants his readers to understand what the false teaching is that they are meant to oppose, because he spends most of the rest of his letter describing it. He tells us how it replaces holiness of life with sensuality and immorality instead.

[4] See R. J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco: Word, 1983), 29-30 and Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 433-434 for the grammatical arguments.

Is that something startlingly new in the history of the church? I do not think it is. For starters, Jude tells us that this was prophesied long, long ago. God always knew that people would sneak into the church and try to whisper lies into the ears of his people – just as Satan sneaked into Eden, and seduced Adam and Eve to doubt God's unerring word. Verse 17 says the apostles predicted that scoffers would come, "following their own ungodly passions". Jude reminds us in verses 5-7 of those who fell in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. Paul also reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10:8-12,

> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Jude recalls Sodom and Gomorrah, in verse 7, "which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire". The last phrase there could mean homosexuality, the sin to which Sodom gives its name even today. Or in a parallel to Genesis 6, where the angels lust after beautiful human women, it could be a reference to the Sodomites' desire to have sex with the angels, who had come to rescue Lot.[5] Not that the people of Sodom knew they were angels; they called them "men" when they shouted for them to be thrown out and raped (Genesis 19:5). Whatever "unnatural desire" means, the general word for sexual immorality here (*ekporneusasai*) included all kinds of heterosexual and homosexual sins – any sex outside of heterosexual marriage, essentially. This has of course been contested,[6] but the overwhelming weight of scholarship and all the available evidence from the ancient world points firmly in this direction.

Jude says this is the kind of immorality which has often crept into the church. People who rely not on the word of God for their morality, but their own dreams (verse 8), will always "defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones". They rely on their base instincts, and go the way of Cain, Balaam and Korah in the Old Testament – they want sex, money and power in this earthly city, rather than denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Jesus to the heavenly city. As verse 16 says, they are "grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires".

In many ways it might appear that Jude was not just speaking to his own day, but particularly to us in ours. However, if you have been worshipping or ministering in the church for a few years and you have only just worked out

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[5] See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 54 who takes this view that it cannot refer to homosexual practice, where the flesh is not "different" but the same.

[6] See the debate between B. Malina and J. Jensen in *Nov.Test.* 14 (1972) and 20 (1978) on the word which is sometimes translated *fornication*.

that there are some people claiming to be Christians who are not quite sound, I want to ask: don't you know your Bible? Don't you know your church history?

In the middle ages, Thomas Aquinas talked about various heresies *he* knew of. And he said "from the beginning men have rationalized to find reasons why fornication and other sexual sins were not really sins, so that they might indulge their sinful desires without restraint".[7] Moreover, he said, "if a person were to maintain that God is not triune and one, *or* that fornication is not a sin, he would be a heretic".[8] That is why Jude says we must contend for the faith once delivered to the saints – because there are always people who deny his lordship over our sexuality. This is not a secondary issue, but a matter of truth or heresy.

In the sixteenth century it was the same, even after the Reformation. One bishop of Hereford complained particularly of his cathedral, that it was a place where "idleness… contempt and depraving of true religion, and such like occasions of the sin of sodomy do… reign and rule".[9] Then there was the pious evangelical headmaster of Eton, the Revd Nicholas Udall (1504-1556), educated at Winchester. During the Reformation, he translated and wrote many works of spirituality, but in 1541 was found to be not only an enthusiastic beater of children, but also "sexually involved" with one of his boys.[10] After a spell in prison (friends in higher places kept him from the usual more severe punishment), he became a vicar in Essex and then the Isle of Wight, before going back to be a headmaster again, at Westminster School. Jude warned us long ago that such people would creep into the church.

In the seventeenth century, John Wesley's great grandfather, John White was one of the trustees of the staunchly puritan St Antholin's lectures.[11] He published a book about one hundred of the most scandalous and malignant priests of his day in 1643.[12] Number one in John White's book was John Wilson, a vicar in Sussex. He was a practising homosexual, who seduced young men in his parish and was very open about it. He denied the doctrine of Jesus'

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[7] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (trans. F. R. Larcher and M. L. Lamb; Lander, Wyoming: The Aquinas Institute, 2012), 306 (my translation of the Latin).

[8] Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (trans. F. R. Larcher; Lander, Wyoming: The Aquinas Institute, 2012), 457 on Titus 3:10.

[9] See Ian Atherton, "An Apology of the Church of England's Cathedrals" in Angela Ranson, André A. Gazal, and Sarah Bastow (eds.), *Defending of the Faith: John Jewel and the Elizabethan Church* (University Park, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 99 quoting Bishop John Scory of Hereford.

[10] See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (London: Penguin, 2003), 626.

[11] John Wesley's grandfather, Samuel Annesley, was married to John White's daughter Mary. See Newton E. Key, 'Annesley, Samuel (bap. 1620, d. 1696)', in ODNB. White was a "long-term critic of Arminianism" according to Jacqueline Eales, 'White, John (1590-1645)', in ODNB.

[12] See *The First Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests* (London, 1643).

virgin birth and the doctrine of original sin, and had a Catholic view of the sacraments and images in churches. This Liberal Catholic "hath openly affirmed", said John White, "that Buggery is no sinne".[13] There are ninety-nine other stories after this, of vicars and senior clergy who followed their own ungodly passions in many and various ways – gambling, drinking, sleeping around; lost in superstition and often out clubbing, or prowling the streets. Jude told us it would be so "in the last time".

In the 18th century, the Baptist preacher, Benjamin Keach, complained thus in 1701:

> Was ever sodomy so common in a Christian nation, or so notoriously and frequently committed, as by too palpable evidences it appears to be, in and about this city, notwithstanding the clear light of the gospel which shines therein, and the great pains taken to reform the abominable profaneness that abounds? Is it not a wonder the patience of God hath not consumed us in his wrath, before this time? Was ever swearing, blasphemy, whoring, drunkenness, gluttony, self-love, and covetousness, at such a height, as at this time here?[14]

People followed their own sinful desires, even senior churchmen! Jude alerted us to the fact that it would always be so.

So none of this is new. When Jude says certain people will pervert the grace of God into a licence for immorality, we must believe him. Furthermore, we must not panic when he turns out to be telling the truth, as if something strange and unusual was happening to us in our generation, that has never happened before. The present is never exactly like the past – there may be new combinations of heresy in our day, and it may be more virulent in some places – but what Jude says applies *throughout* the last days, until Jesus comes again.

In such a situation, believers need to stand firm and *do something* in the face of that threat to a right understanding of God's grace to us as sinners. So Jude moves from the call to contend, and the need to contend, to tell us – finally – the way to contend.

III. The Way to Contend

What is that something that we need to do? How are we meant to contend for the faith when there are false and deceitful workers operating in God's vineyard?

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[13] See also Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 388 and his *Reformation*, 623 on the word to "bugger" which he says is derived from "Bulgarian" and reflects the common misconception (he calls it a canard of mainstream Christians) that "heresy by its unnatural character leads to deviant sexuality". This is, however, a biblical connection, not least in Jude, and one evidenced in every century. Though there are also many examples of people with perfectly orthodox theology whose lives are far from godly.

[14] Benjamin Keach, *Gospel Mysteries Unveiled* (1701 ed.; repr. London: L. I. Higham, 1817), *Volume III*, page 310.

It is some kind of struggle against difficulty. That is what the word to "contend" means – a strenuous, agonising, battle. But what? Violent resistance? Execution of heretics? Public denouncements? Dank memes on social media? Jude actually applies his own teaching himself at the end of his letter, so we can see what *he* thinks it means. He says, in verses 17-23:

> But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Here, he defines ways of contending for the faith, in days when the church is divided. It is the false teachers, he says in verse 19, who cause the divisions. They are worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But what should *we* be like? Verses 20-23 are "the climax of the letter to which all the rest leads up" as Bauckham says.[15] They tell us what to do in answer to Jude's exhortation to contend for the faith:

1. *Build ourselves up in our most holy faith*

Note this interesting description: it is a *holy* faith, a truth which leads to *godliness*. We are to build ourselves up in this. So the immediate focus is not on something we do towards others, the heretics. Jude wants us to look to ourselves in this situation, and edify one another with the truth.

2. Pray in the Holy Spirit

We can pray in the Spirit, unlike those devoid of the Spirit (see the previous verse) whose prayers are not in accordance with the will of God the *Holy* Spirit. But all things we do should be suffused with prayer, rather than trusting to our own strategies and strengths.

3. Keep ourselves in the love of God

Jesus defines love, within boundaries. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" he said (John 14:15). So keep yourself in that love, and live in a way that is pleasing to God. Again, this is something we must do with

[15] Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 154. D. F. Watson calls this the *peroratio* of the letter, the emotional appeal for the action encouraged in the *exordium* of verse 3. See D. F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 77-78 for an outline of the letter using Greek rhetorical categories.

respect to ourselves in order to be contending, rather than something focused directly on our opponents. We contend for the faith by keeping *ourselves* in the love of God.

4. Wait for the mercy of the Lord to eternal life

The way out of the struggle, will come when Jesus returns, or when he decides to act, to mercifully deal with the opposition.

I agree with the interpretation of Tom Schreiner,[16] that technically the only imperative here is "keep yourself in the love of God". The other verbs are participles telling us how to do that (building ourselves up, praying, waiting). Each of these also, however, virtually functions as an imperative and is an application of verse 3. So there are four components here to contending for the faith, all of them focused on our own personal and corporate spiritual responsibility – focused on ourselves, keeping watch over ourselves. Then, and only then, does Jude say how we should behave towards the false teachers or, more accurately, those affected by them. Jude's strategy for contending for the faith is very different to worldly methods of fighting for what you want. His approach is characterised by mercy:

i) Have mercy on those who doubt
Not harshness, but be merciful. People faced with persuasive, passionate and powerful false teaching are often fooled. And they often doubt. They do not know what to think. The way we contend for the true faith must be merciful to those people, and attract them to the true faith rather than putting them off it. Waverers can be reclaimed.

ii) Save others by snatching them out of the fire
That sounds like vigorous action which helps individuals avoid plunging wholeheartedly into the heresy. Do we even think about snatching such people from the fire of hell, as part of our contending? Maybe we think of it as evangelism. But even those who seem to be heading to perdition can be saved, by the way we mercifully contend for the truth. Does this motive come through in the way we speak about things? Are we loving in our motives and our attitudes?

iii) Show mercy with fear to those tainted by the sins promoted by the heretics
Again, we show love and kindness to people caught up in false teaching and living. I think "mercy mixed with fear" is about making sure that as we do work with such people, we do not get caught up in sin ourselves, the sort of entangling sin being promoted by the false teachers which is not easy to

[16] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 481.

escape. We may think we are clear and sound, but it is all too easy, if we are focusing on other people's sins all the time, not to notice our own fallenness in the same areas – or to proudly assume we are immune to temptation, and become ensnared.

Interestingly, Jude goes straight to a doxology after that, in which the attention is shifted away from others, back to God and ourselves. So part of our contending is about looking to God to keep us from stumbling (verse 24). The danger of not contending is great. But contending and then falling or stumbling into sin and error ourselves is also a huge danger. So we need to be looking to God, who can present us blameless – giving glory to him for this, not patting ourselves on the back for being so orthodox and sound and godly.

The Fall has left none of us entirely straight; we are all bent towards sin. That means orthodoxy in the faith is a gift from God and not a human work in which we can boast. Its long-term persistence must be something which requires not only our thoughtful and careful effort but the aid of the Spirit of God himself. No matter how good our confessional formulas and church structures might be, we will always need the ongoing grace of God.[17] Indeed, God alone can keep us from stumbling. To God alone be the glory.

Perhaps it is fitting then, to end with a prayer:

Almighty God,
who gives victory to his faithful people
not by might, nor by power, but by your Holy Spirit:
Grant in your mercy that we may not be ashamed
to confess the faith of Christ crucified,
and to fight valiantly against sin, the world, and the devil
contending for the gospel as his faithful soldiers and servants
until the end of our lives;
for we ask in the name of Jesus,
who conquered the powers of darkness
and gave himself up, to rescue us from this present evil age.
Amen.

[17] See Lee Gatiss (ed.), *Foundations of Faith: Reflections on the Thirty-nine Articles* (London: Lost Coin, 2018), 12.

Foundations 77 (November 2019): 15-29

THE USE OF SATIRE IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH AND IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

*Tom Woolford**

I. Introduction

As I write, it is being reported that *Spitting Image*, the brutal puppet-based political satire, synonymous with late-80s topical comedy, is coming back to British terrestrial television after a 23-year hiatus. The programme is to be resurrected, its co-creator Roger Law avers, as a "public service satire" necessitated by the "chaotic" state of political culture in these Trumpian, Brexity times. One of the new iteration's producers claims a return is suited because, "today's world does seem to have an especially large number of evil goofballs who deserve taking down".[1] Earlier in the year, Steve Coogan reprised his character Alan Partridge for a television series for the first time in seventeen years, also for reasons of particular cultural moment.[2] In Britain today the time is ripe, it seems, for satire.

Sometime in the mid-eighth century BC in the Kingdom of Judah, the prophet Isaiah likewise discerned that the times were ripe for satire. In this paper, I will briefly rehearse what satire is, catalogue and categorise some twenty likely instances of satire in Isaiah, and make some observations about the significance of this for interpreting and preaching the book. Finally, I will draw some conclusions about the legitimacy and utility of the satiric form in Christian discourse.

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[1] Quotations from Spitting Image creators from Esther Addley, "Look who's back: Spitting Image returns for our chaotic times", *The Guardian*, 28 September 2019, n.p. [cited 10 October 2019]. Online: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/sep/28/spitting-image-returns-chaotic-times-trump-putin-zuckerberg.

[2] See Kate Abbott, "Part David Cameron, part Piers Morgan – Alan Partridge returns in time for Brexit", *The Guardian*, 14 February 2019, n.p. [cited 10 October 2019]. Online: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/feb/14/alan-partridge-bbc-brexit-steve-coogan

II. What is satire?

Broadly conceived, as Ryken *et al.* summarise, "satire is the exposure of human vice or folly through rebuke or ridicule".[3] Formally, satire is commonly held to consist of four identifiable elements:

i. *Object of attack* – normally a historical particular.

ii. *Satiric vehicle* – the literary form; narrative, pen-portrait, single metaphor or direct vituperation.

iii. *Satiric tone* – one of two types named after their pre-eminent Latin practitioners:

- *a.* Horatian ("light, urbane and subtle", aiming to "*laugh* vice or folly out of existence")
- *b.* Juvenalian ("biting, bitter and angry", aiming to "*lash* [vice or folly] out of existence").

iv. *Norm* – the "stated or implied standard by which the criticism is being conducted".[4]

This basic paradigm is embellished and nuanced by a range of further descriptors, and there is no absolute demarcation between satire on the one hand and taunt, wit, irony and sarcasm on the other.[5] Stylistically, satire has a propensity to exaggeration, oversimplification, the grotesque and absurd.[6] Popularly, of course, satire is associated with humour. It indeed does often involve "an aggressive laughter" that is inherently adversarial and necessarily offensive, but can be distinguished from "comedy" proper by the latter's containing within itself the redemptive hope of a "happy ending".[7]

Wayne C. Booth explains that a designation of satire is appropriate when a reader (or hearer) (i) is confronted by a seeming *incongruity* presented by a literal reading of the text, (ii) satisfies themselves that the author is aware of, and shares their perspective on, this incongruity; and therefore, (iii) locates a new meaning to the text behind its face value which they believe they share with the author. In so doing, "satire establishes both a 'them' and an 'us'; 'them' mocked as ridiculous and stupid, 'us' drawn into a self-congratulatory frame of mind arising from the delight in having caught the speaker's satire."[8]

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[3] Leland Ryken et al. (eds.), "Satire," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 762.

[4] Ryken et al., "Satire," 762. Emphases in original.

[5] Richard D. Patterson, "Prophetic satire as a vehicle for ethical instruction," in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, 1 (2007): 54–55.

[6] Thomas Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 87.

[7] Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 12, 67-68.

[8] Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), 10-13; cited in Reed Lessing, "Satire in Isaiah's Tyre Oracle", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28, 1 (2003): 94.

III. Satire in Isaiah

There are two problems that confront the exegete who wishes to identify satirical passages in the book of Isaiah. First, it is not easy to *prove* that a text is satirical: satire depends in part upon reading a text with a certain "knowing" or sarcastic tone. The overt presence of such a *norm*, however, that a "straight" reading of a given text is incongruous, will often strongly suggest, if not demand, the identification of a satiric tone.

More problematic, however, is the charge of anachronism. As Thomas Jemielty writes, "The scholarly consensus [is] that the Romans invented satire in the first century BC."[9] This consensus is fracturing: Richard Patterson has shown that "satire was not unknown in the ancient Near East", providing examples from ancient Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, the Hittite Kingdom and in Urgaritic (Levantine) literature,[10] while David Baker finds cause to compare an Eighteenth Dynasty (C13-16 BCE) Egyptian "Satire of the Trades" to Isaiah 44.[11] Isaiah's satire is surely, therefore, no anachronism, but part of the historicised mode of God's revelation,[12] particularly suited to the "shame cultures" of the ancient near east.[13]

Satire is widely held to permeate the Old Testament – in isolated pericopes in narrative, satirical speeches (such as Elijah's taunt of Baal in 1 Kings 18), proverbs and songs,[14] and even whole books (Amos, Jonah). The prophetic corpus is held to contain the most frequent and best examples of satire. Patterson supplies examples of satire from each of the sixteen writing prophets in the canon.[15] Jemielity's monograph is devoted to demonstrating the substantial organic overlap between prophecy and satire; cataloguing their common aim, vision, targets, imagery and tenor as well as the strikingly similar projected *personae* of prophet and satirist. The linguistic arsenal of satire and prophecy are so similar, writes Jemielty, because "the wierd, grotesque, misshapen, half-shapen, parodied, borrowed, altered, and abused

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[9] Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 24.

[10] Patterson, "Prophetic satire as a vehicle for ethical instruction", 49.

[11] David W. Baker, *Isaiah* (ed. John H. Walton; ePub edition.; Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary 4; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 5501.

[12] "It should come as no surprise, then, that as those who interacted with the cultures of those around them, the Hebrews would utilize elements of satire, whether stated or implied. And such they did." (Patterson, "Prophetic satire as a vehicle for ethical instruction", 53).

[13] "In a shame culture, wrongdoing leads to criticism, humiliation, and rejection. In such a culture, 'one of the most powerful forms of public disapproval is ridicule'" (Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 26).

[14] For a list of several satirical proverbs, see Douglas Wilson, *A Serrated Edge: A Brief Defense of Biblical Satire and Trinitarian Skylarking* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2003), 49. For a defence of Moses' taunt in Exodus 15 as satire, see Patterson, "Prophetic satire as a vehicle for ethical instruction", 53.

[15] Patterson, "Prophetic satire as a vehicle for ethical instruction", 58–61.

forms used by the prophets and the satirists embody the formless, anarchic, moral dysentery each chastises and exposes."[16]

Isaiah specifically is commonly believed to be the most satirical of the prophets.[17] R. P. Carroll claims that "satire and kaleidoscopic irony" are "the dominant thrusts of the book," while Reed Lessing notes the so-called "sarcastic imperative" is one of the prophet's favourite literary devices. [18] What is debated, therefore, tends not to be the *presence* of satire in Isaiah (every commentator describes at least two or three passages as satirical), but the *extent*.

Below, I provide a summary of twenty possible instances of satire in the book of Isaiah. In light of the discussion above, I will provide brief notes that identify the *object*, *vehicle*, *tone* and *norm* as well as the *incongruity* that I believe demands a satiric tone.

Isaiah 2:6-11

The object of Isaiah's first satiric expression is the proudly syncretistic, idol-worshipping Judahites. First, as Alec Motyer detected, there is an amusing and pregnant silence in verse 8.[19] Twice in verse 7, Isaiah describes how "their land is filled with…" (silver and gold, horses respectively), with the bicolon completed with "and there is no end to their…" (treasures, chariots respectively). Verse 8, in contrast, describes a land filled with *idols* (cf. 7aα and 7bα), but then the line abruptly breaks off. The bicolon is left (incongruously) incomplete and a new begins: the preponderance of idols is of *no beneficial effect*. Isaiah next mocks the idolaters through a wordplay (vv8-9 – those who *prostrate themselves* [יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ] to the idols they have made will *be prostrated* [וַיִּשַּׁח] to the earth in judgment), before a pair of Juvenalian sarcastic imperatives (to hide from the LORD in the rock and the dust, v10). The incongruity of the latter consists in the futility of seeking to hide from the omnipresent LORD's certain coming judgment. Gary Smith detects a further irony in the image of the hapless proud digging into the rock and earth to hide themselves from a visitation of God's wrath: by such an action they would, in fact, be expediting judgment by digging their own graves.[20]

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[16] Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, chaps. 1, 5. Quotation from p. 54.

[17] "The greatest satirist among them [Israel's prophets] was undoubtedly the prophet Isaiah" (A. Preminger and E. L. Greenstein, *The Hebrew Bible in Literary Criticism* (New York: Unger, 1986), 79; cited in Lessing, Reed, "Satire in Isaiah's Tyre Oracle", 90).

[18] R. P. Carroll, "Is Humour also Among the Prophets?", in A. Brenner and Y. T. Radday (eds). *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 92; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 182-83; Lessing, Reed, "Satire in Isaiah's Tyre Oracle", 105.

[19] Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 56.

[20] Gary Smith, *Isaiah 1-39* (vol. 15A; The New American Commentary; Nashville, TN: Holman, 2007), 139.

Isaiah 3:14-4:1

In Isaiah 3:14-4:1, the satiric object is the Jerusalemite women, bedecked in idolatrous finery amid the oppressed poor, standing representatively for the princes of the people. The vehicle is one of sardonic description, with the women suffering ironic reversals, delivered with a Juvenalian tone of mockery. The norm against which standard the criticism is measured is the imperative to care for the poor (explicit, 3:13-15) and to carry oneself with fitting deportment (implied). There is an incongruity in the *impossibly* over-ornamented women. Allan Harman prosaically flattens the satirical nature of this image by "resolving" the incongruity instead of indulging it: "Clearly not all this jewellery and clothing were worn at the same time."[21] The women's jewellery is typological of their judgment: their sashes become ropes; their fine clothing, sackcloth.

Isaiah 5:18-23

Isaiah applies language of celebrated, vanquishing military conquerors incongruously to describe presumptuous sinners (v18) and corrupt drunks (v22). The norm of the LORD's justice, holiness, and righteousness hangs over these satiric, sarcastic inversions from verse 16. The object is the morally dissolute covenant people.

Isaiah 7:20-22

Those trusting in alliances with foreign nations, through first a crude and then a subtle image, are ridiculed for their failure to trust in the LORD for deliverance and provision. The razor that was "hired" by Judah for protection is actually "hired" by God for Judah's humiliation (the shaving of the head and of the genital region). Those under judgment will *eat like kings* (v22) – not because they are blessed, but because there will be so few survivors relative to the cattle.

Isaiah 10:15

Proverbial, pithy, rhetorical questions are the vehicle for Isaiah's sarcastic, satirical takedown of the proud king of Assyria (10:12). The LORD alone is sovereign with authority and power to judge. The proverbs themselves are deliberately absurd: inanimate instruments cannot wield themselves against their user – nor can the king of Assyria be proud when he is used as the LORD's instrument of judgment.

[21] Allan Harman, *Isaiah: A Covenant to be Kept for the Sake of the Church* (Focus on the Bible; Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2005), 64.

Isaiah 14:4-21

The hubris of the king of Babylon is the object of this Juvenalian mocking satire, delivered through the vehicle of a taunt song, replete with cartoonish imagery and ironic reversals. The norm is the LORD's providential *control* of history – it is he alone who lays nations low. The incongruity consists in the king of Babylon being received with the pomp and ceremony of a "state reception" – but to the realm of the mocking dead (vv9-11). Addressed in flighty terms as the "Morning star, son of the dawn" (v12), he is actually despised. The one who felled the cedars of Lebanon (v8) is himself discarded like a rotten branch (v19).

Isaiah 23:1-18

Proud, complacent and licentious Tyre is addressed through this gleeful mock-lament, replete with ironic imperatives and sarcastic epithets. A ruined pagan city is "celebrated" for her indulgence and pretentions to power (vv7-8); an infamous, insatiable prostitute (v17) ridiculed as a "virgin daughter" (v12). The norm appears at the end of the chapter: those dwelling "before the LORD" find their wealth in him (v18).

Isaiah 28:1-13

The drunken, corrupt and impious priests and prophets of Israel are lampooned in what Jemielity calls a "scandal scene", paradigmatic of satire.[22] The incongruity is in drunken "prophets" apparently "seeing visions" and uttering "divine pronouncements" that are actually nothing but gibberish (v10). Those who swallow up wine are in fact swallowed up *by* wine (v7). A leader who dispenses judgment with strength and a spirit of justice (v6) norms the crude, acerbic description and ironic reversals.

Isaiah 28:14-19

The second half of the same chapter employs a different satiric vehicle: a derisive boast song, with a cutting Juvenalian tone. This time, "scoffers" who claim to have secured deliverance by alliances are the object; the incongruity is the "boasts" to have made a covenant with *death* and to have taken refuge in *lies* and *falsehood* (v15). The LORD's laying a "precious cornerstone", tried and sure (v16), is the norm against which the scoffers' absurd pride is measured.

[22] Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 65.

Isaiah 30:7

Egypt's title, "Rahab-the-Do-Nothing" (NIV), incongruously combines the image of a raging chaos monster with inertia and inaction. This oxymoron serves to pour scorn on those autonomously considering an Egyptian alliance, when the LORD alone should be the seat of their counsel and trust (vv1-2).

Isaiah 34:11-17

Edom is ridiculed through this angry, vitriolic image. The LORD, the sovereign judge of all the nations (34:1-2, 5), apportions the land by measure and lot to wild birds and creatures as an eternal inheritance – parodying how the land was assigned to the tribes of Israel in Joshua.

Isaiah 37:21-29

A Juvenalian-toned taunt song, punctuated with rhetorical questions, targets the king of Assyria for his blasphemous ridiculing of and raging against the LORD; who is, of course, the only true God. Sennacherib had "lifted [his] eyes in pride" (v23) and claimed to have ascended to the heights (v24) but the LORD has to cast down a hook to fish for this lowly worm (v29). Patterson adds that "the nations so criticized are also denounced in accordance with a satiric norm based on accepted international protocol".[23]

Isaiah 40:18-25

This satire directed against idolaters through a description of their work is of a wittier, subtler, Horatian kind. The norm is the truth that the true God fashions and establishes the earth (v21). In contrast, idol-makers have carefully to select a hard wood for the base of an idol so that that in which they are trusting will not topple! Smith notices a further irony: "the person wanting a god has to 'choose' the wood used to make the god, a clear reversal of the biblical pattern where God 'chose' Israel to be his own people."[24]

Isaiah 41:5-10

Gentiles trying to resist God's anointed by fashioning idols (41:2) are the object of another amusing, Horatian satire. Normed by the truth that it is the LORD who *fashions* a people for himself; it is *he* who stabilises and strengthens

[23] Patterson, "Prophetic satire as a vehicle for ethical instruction", 68.

[24] Gary Smith, *Isaiah 40-66* (vol. 15B; The New American Commentary; Nashville, TN: Holman, 2009), 33.

them (vv8-10), this description of idol-smiths at work is dripping with scorn and pathos: trembling under the threat of judgment (v5), idolaters place their confidence in something that needs to be *nailed down* so that it does not fall over (v7)!

Isaiah 44:9-20

This extended prose satire is another Horatian example – subtle, amusing, pathetic – albeit bookended with Juvenalian direct, bitter assaults (vv9, 18-20). Once again, those who make and trust in idols are the object; the LORD's being the only God and proper repository of trust the norm. The incongruity consists in the very fashioning of something designed to provide strength and stability causing its maker faintness (v12), and the same material "used for burning" being worshipped and invoked for salvation (vv15-17).

Isaiah 46:1-7

It is a description of idols being transported that is sent up in this satire against idolaters. There are elements of both Horatian subtlety (vv1-4) and Juvenalian scorn (vv5-7). The norm is that the LORD is God, and there is no other (v9). He carries his people (vv3-4) and brings his salvation. Against this is set the absurd image of "gods" falling off carts into the dust (vv1-2). Those which are meant to rescue, burden (v1); those meant to bring salvation are brought into foreign captivity (v1, cf. vv11-13). There are further ironies: the same gold used to pay metalworkers is then worshipped (v6). A god carried to a place of honour can itself not move; a god whose worshippers cry out to it cannot speak (v7). Smith also notes that one of the gods so mocked, Nebo, was believed to possess the "Tablets of Destiny" that foretold the coming year: "Ironically, in this message God announces that he himself will determine the destiny of these two gods."[25]

Isaiah 47:1-15

Isaiah returns to biting, angry, Juvenalian sarcasm in this taunt song for Babylon. Babylon's hubris, decadence and complacency (vv8-10) are ridiculed through incongruous images of a "Virginal" "queen city" being described in terms fitting for a common whore (vv1-2) and through sarcastic imperatives to indulge in magic and astrology for future success and deliverance (vv12-13). The LORD's true claim to be the "I am", with none beside him is the norm assumed and implied by Babylon's blasphemous boasts (v8).

[25] Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 206.

Isaiah 56:9-12

Israel's depraved leaders (v10) are jeered at through this extended metaphor, conveyed through language Motyer describes as "savagery", "harshness" and "irony".[26] There are incongruities in those who are *watchmen* being *blind*; *guard dogs* that *cannot bark* (v10); and in sarcastic imperative for the beasts of the field to come and devour the flock (v9). There is also the disingenuous claim that getting drunk will lead to a better tomorrow (v12). The command of the LORD in verse 1 to "keep justice and do righteousness" is the norm that hangs over this image later in the chapter.

Isaiah 58:5

Seemingly pious behaviour (fasting, bowing down) is ruthlessly scorned in this short, metaphorical, rhetorical question that derides religious insincerity. Brevard Childs summarises how "the prophet satirizes with utter disdain the pious bowing of the head like a weed".[27] The norm of true worship involves fighting injustice (vv6-7).

IV. Observations

A number of summary observations can be made:

1) *Satire pervades the entire book*

The examples given above demonstrate that a highly satirical tone is weaved throughout Isaiah, featuring prominently – and consistently – in both "First" (chs. 1-39) and "Second" Isaiah (chs. 40-66), suggesting another potential avenue for exploring and defending the literary and authorial unity of the book.

2) A Juvenalian tone dominates

Although the satire in a few passages could fairly be described as urbane and subtle, where the criticism is implied rather than explicit, the vast majority of the passages are Juvenalian (stark, biting, sarcastic) in tone.

3) Satire corresponds to Isaiah's commission

Isaiah was called to harden hard hearts and close blind eyes with a message

[26] Motyer, *Isaiah*, 467.

[27] Brevard Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000) 478.

that would be heard but not understood (6:9-10). Curiously, there is a remarkable synergy with satire at precisely this point. Satire has a power, more than any other style of discourse, to widen the gulf between two parties. Those subject to ridicule on the one hand, and those "in" on the satiric joke at their expense on the other, are polarised by their reaction to the mockery: indignation, or mirthful scorn.[28] Satire, therefore, is well-suited to Isaiah's commission to call out a faithful remnant from an increasingly hardened, idolatrous Judah.

4) The predominant satiric norm and object accord with the overall message of the book

Although other things are satirised in Isaiah (such as social injustice and debauchery), the majority of the clear examples of satire orbit around the issue of *misplaced trust* – either in idol (e.g. 44:12-20) or alliance (e.g. 28:14-19), and thereby proceed from (and aim at) the *norm* of trusting in the LORD – the only true God, the Holy One of Israel. The satire in Isaiah, then, is fully integrated into the overall theological and ethical thrust of the whole book.

5) *Detecting satire is vital for understanding Isaiah*

A failure to appreciate when satire is being employed leads to a fundamental misapprehension of the nature of the prophet's argument. Archie Lee castigates Isaiah's description of idol worship as a "misunderstanding of the religious sentiment expressed in the practice of bowing down in homage and reverence before an idol".[29] Lee has made a category mistake: engaged in *satire*, Isaiah seeks precisely by means of caricature and affected naivety to uncover the sheer folly of idolatry underneath its pious bluster. His attack on idolatry is based on what Christopher Wright describes as "penetrating insight" into idolaters' sophisticated theology,[30] but aims squarely at what Jemielity eloquently describes as, "the shattering effect of 'But mamma, the King is naked.'"[31]

6) *Detecting the satirical in Isaiah affects how we preach it*

Closely related to the point above, deciding whether a given passage is satirical or not will affect the content and tone of our own preaching. It is vital,

[28] See Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 81.

[29] Archie C. C. Lee, "Naming the divine in religious pluralism: the challenge of sharing hope in a new world", *CTC Bulletin* 23, 1 (2007): 3.

[30] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006), 150–51.

[31] Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 194.

therefore, that we are not predisposed against Juvenalian satire on the basis of our own taste when trying to discern authorial intent. Gary Smith argues against a satirical reading of the laments in chapter 14 on the basis, it seems, of a prejudice against satire as an appropriate and effective means of communication:

> If he wanted his audience in Judah to rejoice, why use a lament about death? Why would he not use a salvation oracle? Where in this poem is the call for the Israelites to rejoice? A hymn of thanksgiving and praise would express this attitude more fully.[32]

Why use a lament about death? Why would he not use a salvation oracle? A perfectly valid (and likely) reason is because Isaiah enjoyed *satire*, and used it to communicate his message.

V. Satire in Christian ministry

Despite its prominence in Isaiah and the other prophets, satire is rare in contemporary Christian discourse. The ascent to some prominence (within conservative Christian anglophone circles) of online satirical news site, *The Babylon Bee*, is a notable exception, but the controversy that often attends it both within and without the church shows how instinctively uneasy we are with the notion of Christians employing satire.

Christian dis-ease with satire is attributed to a number of factors: fear in a politically-correct climate of causing offence,[33] surrender to false notions of "neutrality" in academic discourse and debate,[34] and, perhaps most regrettably of all, loss of belief in the *power of words* to curse and bless.[35] Some argue, however, that the renouncing of satire is demanded by Christian principle. Williams and Williams, in a piece ostensibly calling for the recovery of humour in Christian discourse, identify modern political satire as the prime example of the *post-lapsarian perversion* of the created good of humour: it lacks compassion, love and humility; caricatures, and is "cynical and devastating at heart". Christians, they aver, should aim at humour that is "redemptive in

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[32] This constitutes part of Smith's argument against chapter 14 being satirical. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 309.

[33] "We have become so hypercautious that our sermons at best offend no one and at worst merely bore." Craig A. Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 12.

[34] "Academic discourse on the part of evangelicals in the realm of basic theological debates is actually a manifestation of spiritual surrender. The assumption that collegiality is owed in *all* debates is an assumption based on widespread by false notions of neutrality" (Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*, 19).

[35] Jemielity writes, "As long as the efficacy of words commands belief, the prompting of the curse must always be punitive and persuasive, reassuring for some but challenging for others. When belief in the efficacy of the curse dies, prophets disappear and satirists put down their pens" (Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 83).

orientation, part of the comic family and full of hope".[36] Zack Eswine similarly argues that Christian humour must be of a very different kind to political satire: "Do not ridicule people", he appeals. "Our humor must differ… from the political banter between differing parties. We are ambassadors for Jesus. Let humor arise from what is human and self-effacing."[37] He further bemoans preachers who "make sweeping judgments where nuance and discernment is required."[38]

Although *some* satire is proud and hate-filled, many of the criticisms the Williamses and Eswine make of the political satire they deplore would, on the face of it, apply equally to Isaiah's. He, too, ridicules, caricatures and aims precisely to be "devastating at heart." Neither Williams' paradigm of "good" Christian humour ("of course richer than mockery")[39] nor Eswine's (self-effacing, nuanced and composed) seems to have a place for the jeering satirical laments of Isaiah, let alone the "straw men" and gross generalisations of Jesus (in, for example, Matthew 7:1-6).

Had the New Testament employed no satirical forms then Meredith Kline's thesis that the imprecations in the Psalms are "intruded" from the eschatological judgment as an inspired "divine abrogation, limited and in advance, of the ethical requirements normally in force during the course of Common Grace" might be applied similarly to the prophet's use of satire.[40] The prevalence of satire on the lips of Jesus (of even a Juvenalian kind, Matthew 23:23-28) and the pens of his apostles (e.g. 1 Corinthians 4:8), however, precludes this avenue for objecting to Christian deployment of satire.[41]

Plenary verbal revelation requires that biblical *style*, as well as content, is inspired. Scripture's inclusion of satire surely vindicates its *prima facie* legitimacy in Christian discourse. Moreover, as Doug Wilson argues, a scripturally-*derived* standard of modes of discourse will surely precipitate a scripturally-*reflective* range of speaking and writing, including – therefore – a proportion of the Juvenalian-satirical "verbal pummelings" attested in Isaiah.[42] Ruling satire out of court on the grounds of taste limits the potential mode of our speaking and writing, contributing to the phenomenon of, in Chris Green's

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[36] James Williams and Kate Williams, "'Two guys go into the temple. One says to God...' - Humour, Scripture and Christian Discourse", *Cambridge Papers* 14, 4 (December 2005): 1–4 (3-4).

[37] Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 86.

[38] *Ibid*., 121.

[39] Williams and Williams, "Humour, Scripture and Christian Discourse", 4.

[40] Meredith Kline, 'The Intrusion and the Decalogue', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 16:1 (1953), 14. I am grateful to Dan Strange for alerting me to this argument.

[41] "Jesus was a master of wordplay, irony and satire, often with an element of humor intermixed" (Ryken et al., "Humor", 410). Doug Wilson provides whole chapters on the satire of Jesus and of Paul: chapters 3 ("The satire of Jesus", pp. 29-46), and 5 ("The Language of Paul", pp. 61-67) in Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*).

[42] Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*, 18, 59.

memorable phrase, "sermon soup" where despite the rich variety of literary textures that go in (from Scripture) to our exegesis, it seems all too often to come out of the "blender" of our preparation in the same homiletic consistency.[43]

The argument, moreover, that while Juvenalian, caustic satire may be allowable for the inspired authors of Scripture but is forbidden of contemporary preachers on account of their being *unqualified* by their sin to imitate the prophets' and apostles' insulting, acerbic discourse cannot stand. Our imitation in *every area* will be imperfect, yet we are still allowed (commanded!) to imitate. Doug Wilson sarcastically writes,

> We will be imperfect as we imitate love, grace, forgiveness, kindness, rebuke, sarcasm, gentleness, and so on. Therefore we ought not to strive to be godly at all. We must remain in our ungodliness for fear that an attempt to be godly may result in ungodly failure.[44]

Beyond its attestation in Scripture, the legitimacy of biblical, and therefore Christian, satire stems from the convictions that God and those who stand on his word owe sinners *nothing* – least of all "a fair fight", that sometimes the "central point" in religious controversy "is to give offense" [45] and that a satirical *reductio ad absurdum* is no logical fallacy: sin *is* absurd!

What delegitimises some forms of satire but legitimises others is not, in the final analysis, *tone*, *vehicle*, nor even – necessarily – *object* of attack, but *norm*. If *Have I Got News For You* is, as the Williamses argue, an expression of *sinful* humour (and I am not convinced that it is), it will not be because of the reasons of vehicle and tone that the Williamses give – but because the *norm* against which the object of satirical attack is measured is out of step with the Bible. If, however, our norm is firmly and faithfully established as *Scripture* – the inerrantly and perspicuously revealed will of God – then the full range of satiric object, vehicle and tone attested therein is surely fair game.

Beyond defending its mere *legitimacy*, there are a number of positive reasons to *commend* satire's employment:

1) Satire punctures pride

Satire is particularly suited to exposing the silliness of sin – especially the pomposity of pride and the self-deceit of hypocrisy.[46] For Wilson, satire is the God-given "needle" to pierce the "overextended latex" of our puffed-up faux-piety.[47]

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[43] Chris Green, "Avoiding sermon soup in preaching", *Ministry Nuts and Bolts*, 2 April 2015, n.p [cited 11 October 2019]. Online: https://ministrynutsandbolts.com/2015/02/04/avoiding-sermon-soup/.

[44] Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*, 94.

[45] *Ibid*., 104.

[46] Williams and Williams, "Humour, Scripture and Christian Discourse", 2.

[47] Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*, 75.

2) Satire suits our creatureliness

Humour in general, and satire in particular, corresponds to the contours of humanity's *created nature* – as those made uniquely in the image of a God with a sense of humour,[48] and as those composites of dust-and-ashes who have a propensity to take themselves too seriously.

3) Satire engages, teaches and persuades

Satire is, as Christian satirical cartoonist (and founder of *The Babylon Bee*) Adam Ford writes, "a powerful medium of communication… to articulate a worldview and contend for its legitimacy".[49] Satire is punchy and memorable, vigorous and fresh. Moreover, biblical pedagogy is as much about refuting the wrong as it is commending the right. The men behind the vlog *Lutheran Satire* justify their approach in precisely these terms:

> Lutheran Satire is a project intended to teach the faith through silly videos... By holding false doctrine up to ridicule, we reveal the rock solid foundation of the Lutheran confession of faith.[50]

Satire is best placed to commend God's truth and wisdom precisely by exposing the absurdity of satanic lies and human folly. Andrew Wilson's blog post, "The Case for Idolatry: Why Evangelical Christians Can Worship Idols", is an excellent example of this – an hilarious and merciless parody of the "affirming evangelical" line on sexual ethics.[51]

There is cause for caution, however, concerning the propriety of satire in *apologetics*. Although satire certainly promises a fresh way to make a spiritually deaf generation at least notice our message, and may chime with and subvert the postmodern *penchant* for image and story, we are instructed to give our Christian *apologia* with "gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:16). Isaiah's satires (and, it can be argued, Jesus' too), do not afford the same precedent here: although their object was often *ostensibly* those outside the covenant community (though most often the real target was syncretists *within*), his *audience* was invariably those who at least claimed to be God's

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[48] Conrad Hyers observes that "seriousness we share with the animals; in laughter we laugh alone" (quoted in Williams and Williams, "Humour, Scripture and Christian Discourse", 2). For a philosophical defence of the notion of God having a sense of humour on the basis of humanity's being made in the *imago Dei*, see Rik Peels, "Does God have a sense of humor?", *Faith and Philosophy* 32, 3 (2015): 290.

[49] Email to the author, 29 January 2016.

[50] Hans Fiene and Carver, Matt, "Lutheran Satire", *Lutheran Satire*, n.p. [cited 9 March 2016]. Online: http://lutheransatire.org/. My emphasis.

[51] Andrew Wilson, "The Case for Idolatry: Why Evangelical Christians Can Worship Idols", *Think*, 12 November 2014, n.p. [cited 9 March 2016]. Online: http://thinktheology.co.uk/blog/article/the_case_for_idolatry_why_evangelical_christians_can_worship_idols).

people and gave lip-service to the validity of the satiric norm. Wilson's observation that satire "turns off" a certain kind of unbeliever but attracts another is just that – an observation – and does not provide biblical warrant for a satirical mode of apologetics.[52]

4) *Satire delineates and builds community*

Lessing writes, "satire draws in a wider circle of assenting auditors than a non-satiric statement".[53] Its very nature, as mentioned above, serves to identify and distance an "in" group and "out" group. This power (like every other mode of communication) can certainly be abused; but it has a legitimate *use* – to strengthen bonds in the covenant community and clarify the boundaries of belief and conduct that the antithesis necessitates but compromise clouds. Wilson argues that the antithesis means ridicule is inevitable:

> It is not *whether* we will ridicule a group, it is *which* group we will ridicule… Everyone in the world receives the protections of a certain society or group. That group defends itself, necessarily, by means of ridicule, satire, and so forth, defining itself over against the other groups by these means.[54]

A refusal to deride in strong and offensive terms, therefore, might not be godly humility, but gutless assimilation.

In the end, of course, the deployment of satire in Christian discourse is a wisdom issue: it is the question of whether or not it is wise to answer a fool according to his folly (Proverbs 26:4-5).[55] In posing this question, however, we must be prepared to accept that there *are* seasons in which it is not only *legitimate*, but *wise* to use satire.

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[52] Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*, 116.

[53] Lessing, Reed, "Satire in Isaiah's Tyre Oracle", 110.

[54] Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*, 20.

[55] Doug Wilson suggests a pair of controls: (i) satire should be done by mature, seasoned pastors; not by "novices, firebrands, and zealots" who feel "a *need* to cut others", (ii) sharp satirical rebukes "should follow only after the rejection of a soft word of reproach" (Wilson, *A Serrated Edge*, 109).

Foundations 77 (November 2019): 30-44

IS THE FILIOQUE CLAUSE BIBLICAL?

Jake Eggertsen∗

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son…"

Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father *and the Son* as Western versions of the Nicene Creed say? Why does it even matter? This article argues that the *Filioque* clause is not just part of our creedal heritage, but a biblical concept arising out of theological reflection on the relationship between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity. It should therefore play an essential role in our contemplation and worship of God, the Holy Trinity. Methodologically, this article is an exercise in constructive dogmatics, examining the key exegetical and theological decisions needed to construct a case for the double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father *and the Son*.[1] As part of this, a central matter to address is the extent to which the economy of the Spirit's mission reveals immanent, eternal, and triune processions.

For Jaroslav Pelikan, the early *Filioque* debates were marked by a failure to sufficiently distinguish between "immanent" proceeding and "economic" sending.[2] However, this was far from the only cause. For a variety of reasons, this centuries-old debate has been the subject, source and symbol of considerable conflict between the Church East and West.[3] One key issue is legitimacy. Did the Church have the authority to alter the received Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed when it inserted the *Filioque* into the text? Many appeal to Canon 7 from Ephesus I (431), which forbids changes to the Spirit-

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[1] "Constructive Dogmatics" is not identical with systematic theology, historical theology or theological retrieval. With Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, I take it that it is a task that seeks to "engage with Scripture and the tradition, dialoguing with interlocutors dead and alive, in an attempt to provide constructive resources for contemporary systematic theology". See the introduction to Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds., *Christology: Ancient & Modern Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 13-14.

[2] See, e.g. the example of Marcellus of Ancyra in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100 - 600*, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 1 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 212.

[3] Vladimir Lossky pronounced that the *Filioque* was "the sole dogmatic grounds for the separation of East and West. All the other divergences, which, historically, accompanied or followed the first dogmatic controversy about the *Filioque*, in the measure in which they too had some dogmatic importance, are more or less dependent upon that original issue." See Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwook, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 71-72.

inspired Creed of Nicaea, to suggest it did not.[4] Despite this, though it was not officially adopted at Rome until the eleventh century, there is proof of its formal use as early as Toledo III in 589.[5] Another reason for the *Filioque's* considerable influence was its capacity and utilisation as a weapon for power.[6] However, although these historical and ecclesiological dimensions are integral aspects of the doctrine's development, this is not what I intend to discuss here.

It is my contention that the doctrine of the double procession of the Spirit is *biblical*. Yet, in terms of method, one cannot simply appeal to exegesis alone to resolve the question. Constructing a case for the *Filioque* involves arguments, concepts, language and categories that go beyond individual texts. In other words, it requires Dogmatic Theology, helpfully defined by Fred Sanders as, "conceptual representation of scriptural teaching about God and all things in relation to God."[7] That is not to suggest this reflection is outside of biblical revelation. Rather, it is what Glenn Butner calls, "*second order reflection* that draws on philosophy to provide conceptual clarity concerning who God must be or what God must have done, given scriptural teaching."[8] One might add that proper theological enquiry also requires reflection upon the canon as a whole.[9] Accordingly, the ambition of part I of this article is to move between dogmatic considerations and the biblical text, bringing one into conversation with the other, guided by the classical faith in the tradition of Augustine and Aquinas. Part II provides several further implications of the *Filioque* clause for constructing trinitarian theology and the life of faith, before forming a brief conclusion.

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[4] For historical examples, see A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

[5] There is some debate about when the *Filioque* clause first appeared in creedal form. Yet, Toledo III is the most recognised early use of the term as part of the Western version of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. See, Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 68. However, Gerald Bray has highlighted earlier examples of the concept in Epiphanius (writing about 374), expressed in almost identical ways to the final form of the *Filioque* clause: "I dare to say that… (nobody knows) the Spirit except the Father and the Son, from whom he proceeds and from whom he receives. And (nobody knows) the Father and the Son, except the Holy Spirit who is from (παρά) the Father and from (ἐκ) the Son." See Gerald Bray, "The Filioque Clause in History and Theology", *TynBul* 34, (1983): 107.

[6] Siecienski cites the exchange between Cardinal Humbert and Patriarch Michael Cerularius in 1054 as a clear example of this, in Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 5.

[7] Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 15.

[8] D. Glenn Butner Jr., *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case Against the Eternal Submission of the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 9. Emphasis mine.

[9] Cf. Michael Allen, "Knowledge of God", in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 26.

I. "Like begets like"[10] – Missions, processions and The Filioque

A crucial step in establishing a case for the double procession of the Spirit is recognising the relationship between *communicative missions* and *processions*.[11] This is not a straightforward exercise. The route taken here involves many steps. First, I will outline a definition and description of communicative missions. After that, by way of a brief excursus, it is necessary to discuss the implications of the "analogical interval" for our knowledge of God. Only then can we determine what may be said of God in terms of reading the missions back into the internal processions. Finally, having established some principles, a case will be made for the *Filioque* as a biblical concept.

1) Communicative Missions

The term *Communicative missions* refers to the visible and verbal revelation of the divine life of God in the economy of salvation, most noticeably in the incarnation and Pentecost. However, as Thomas Aquinas notes, these two events cannot be conflated. For, unlike the Son's incarnation, the Spirit does not take on a hypostatic union with the corporeal signs, for example doves or tongues of fire, that signify his presence.[12] Neither should these missions be seen as solo performances of the Son and Spirit respectively. Rather, the persons work inseparably in the activity of the economy. In the patristic era, this was commonly described using the analogy of light, drawn from Psalm 36:9: "For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light."[13] Alluding to that verse, Gregory of Nazianzus writes:

> The Father was the True light which lightens every man coming into the world. The Son was the True light which lightens every man coming into the world. The Other Comforter was the True Light which lightens every man coming into the world.[14]

The point is, whilst the person of the Son might be "hypostatically visible" in the incarnation, all three persons nevertheless work without division.[15] We

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[10] Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 98.

[11] "Communicative Missions" is a term appropriated from Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, 69. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia.43.

[12] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia.43.7 ad 2.

[13] See Stephen R. Holmes, "Trinitarian Action and Inseparable Operations: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections", in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 64.

[14] Gregory of Nazianzen, "The Fifth Theological Oration", ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, NPNF (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), Oration XXXI.iii (NPNF 7:318).

[15] Michael Allen, *Grounded in Heaven: Recentering Christian Hope and Life on God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 82.

see this vividly expressed in the harmony of Matt 3:16-17. The incarnate Jesus is the focal point of the narrative as he ascends out of the water at baptism. Yet, in that moment, the Spirit alights on him, anointing him with power, and the Father's love and will is revealed in the "voice from heaven". Thus, following Augustine, the incarnation is not just a Christological but a Triune act.[16]

What is more, the missions are not simply actions or events executed *by* God but are in themselves a real revelation *of* the Triune God. As Fred Sanders affirms: "God put himself into the gospel",[17] and the missions are the "image of the immanent Trinity".[18] In other words, missions are visible extensions of the invisible inner divine life. That said, Sanders' use of the word "image" does not imply a strictly identical relationship between economic and immanent, which, depending on one's interpretation of it, is the essence of Rahner's rule.[19] Contra Rahner, what Sanders in fact proposes is both an indelible link *and* a distinction between the *ad extra* and the *ad intra* life of God. The link safeguards participation in the real.[20] Channelling Hans Boersma (himself drawing on Augustine), there are "eternal realities" truly present in the earthly, visible things.[21] From the creature's perspective, God is knowable by these signs.[22] Yet, the distinction is also vital because it wards off constructing a doctrine of the Trinity from certain conditions and accommodations in the economy, which are designed to stay in the economy.[23]

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[16] Augustine writes: "…the will of the Father and the Son is one, and their works indivisible. In like manner, then, let him understand the incarnation and nativity of the Virgin, wherein the Son is understood as sent, to have been wrought by one and the same operation of the Father and the Son indivisibly; the Holy Spirit certainly not being thence excluded, of whom it is expressly said, 'she was found with child by the Holy Ghost'." In Augustine, *On The Holy Trinity*, ed. Philip Schaff, NPNF (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), II.v.9 (NPNF 3:41). Cf. Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, 78.

[17] Fred Sanders, "What Trinitarian Theology Is for: Placing the Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology and Life", in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 27.

[18] Fred Sanders, *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, Issues in Systematic Theology 12 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005), 38. Italics mine.

[19] "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity." See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel, Milestones in Catholic Theology (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1997), 22.

[20] There is not sufficient scope in this article to develop Thomas' concept of *mixed relations*. However, following him, we should clarify the word "real" here involves "no real relation in God to the creature; whereas in creatures there is a real relation to God; because creatures are contained under the divine order, and their very nature entails dependence on God". Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia.28 ad 1.

[21] Hans Boersma deems this "sacramental ontology", in *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 12. Cf. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw, NPNF (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), II.i–ii.1–3 (NPNF 2:535–536).

[22] Sanders calls it an "economy of divine self-revelation", in *The Triune God*, 72.

[23] For instance, says Sanders, the fact that Jesus had, say, brown eyes does not indicate a "before the foundation of the world" feature. See Sanders, "What Trinitarian Theology Is For", 30.

2) Knowledge of God's Being

Before moving to consider God's internal processions, it is necessary to explore the foundational reason for the economic-immanent distinction. It is an ontological one: God's being and our being are not univocal. Indeed, God is (perfect) being itself.[24] He is pure actuality (*actus purus*). This means that God does not have or possess perfections, he *is* his perfections.[25] On the other hand, human beings are created, complex, changeable. The connection between our being and God's being is therefore only by analogy (*analogia entis*). By analogy I mean "linguistically mediated correspondence",[26] and not, as Colin Gunton argues in favour of, any sense of univocal correspondence between God and creatures.[27]

A common objection to this type of description of God's perfect being is that it leans too heavily on Greek philosophy rather than Scripture to build a dogmatic account of the Trinity.[28] Yet, that is to commit the genetic fallacy.[29] "Classical Theism",[30] which encapsulates the metaphysical commitments of Aquinas *et al*, has unashamedly utilised concepts from Plato and Aristotle. Yet it has adopted them as servants, not masters, in the task of second-order reflection upon, and disciplined by, God's revelatory word. Moreover, as many have ably shown, every theologian has metaphysical assumptions that guide and shape their interpretation of reality and the Christian faith.[31] The key question is, are they honest and suitable ones? Classical Theism is not immune to critique or reform by Scripture. Yet, I would argue, it simply provides a

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[24] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia.3 ad 4.

[25] See Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology*, Reason and Religion (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 14.

[26] R. Michael Allen, *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 115.

[27] Colin E. Gunton, *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 69-71.

[28] See, e.g. Moltmann, who writes: "Aristotle's God cannot love; he can only be loved by all non-divine beings by virtue of his perfection and beauty, and in this way draw them to him. The 'unmoved Mover' is a 'loveless Beloved'." Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM, 1974), 222.

[29] "Those who use the genetic fallacy attempt to reduce the significance of an idea, person, practice, or institution merely to an account of its origins or genesis, thereby overlooking the development, regression, or difference to be found in it in the present situation." See T. Edward Damer, *Attacking Faulty Reasoning: A Practical Guide to Fallacy-Free Arguments* (Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning, 2009), 93.

[30] James Dolezal characterises Classical Theism as "deeply devoted to the absoluteness of God with respect to His existence, essence, and activity. Nothing in God's being is derived or caused to be. There is nothing behind him or outside Him that could increase, alter, or augment His infinite fullness of being and felicity." In James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 10.

[31] See, e.g. Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 62.

theocentric, sanctified way of framing and speaking about God's transcendent nature from the perspective of creatures. In fact, Aquinas himself provides a virtuous example of honest "theological metaphysics".[32] Matthew Levering writes: "Aquinas deployed metaphysical (theocentric) analysis to raise or *convert* the mind to the self-revealing God who is triune spiritual substance and uncaused cause of all things."[33]

Employed in this way, perfect being theology has important implications for our knowledge of God *ad intra*. Whereas God's mode of knowledge is identical with his perfect being, human knowledge is discursive and dianoetic.[34] Put more plainly, because God is simple and absolute, dwelling in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:15-16), so his knowledge is undivided and simultaneous: "the single and simple vision of everything".[35] Moreover, because God is "holy, holy, holy" and utterly transcendent (Isa 6), he is not at all dependent on creation for knowledge. All of these attributes (and more) describing God's fullness and perfection of being necessarily make God incomprehensible to human-beings: "his greatness no-one can fathom" (Psalm 145:3). In contrast, as creatures, human beings are limited and confined in space and time, completely contingent. In fact, the possibility and actuality of creaturely theology wholly rests on God knowing himself and all things.[36] Though we can know God truly and actually, our knowledge is entirely accommodated and never total, for it is an accidental, not essential, property of our being.

In a nutshell, there exists an "analogical interval" between God and creatures:[37] his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways (Isa 55:8). This necessitates a right sense of mystery in our suppositions regarding God's very nature. Our theology is both contingent on God's external revelation and provisional in its conclusions because we cannot contain the infinite God in our knowledge of him (1 Kings 8:27).[38] Consequently, as Thomas Weinandy fittingly puts it, our "growth is in coming to know what the

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[32] "Theological metaphysics" is a term from Carter in *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 63. He defines it as: "the account of the ontological nature of reality that emerges from the theological descriptions of God and the world found in the Bible".

[33] Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 36. Emphasis original.

[34] Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger; 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992), III.xii.2 (Giger 1:207).

[35] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia.1.3 ad 1.

[36] This is John Webster's argument in "Principles of Systematic Theology", *IJST* 11, no. 1 (2009): 59.

[37] For a summary of the *analogia entis*, see David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 242.

[38] Webster writes how the "construction of theological system is an activity with this unfinished history" and therefore cannot be exhaustively deduced by creatures who are not present to all reality. See Webster, "Principles of Systematic Theology", 67.

mystery of God is and not the comprehension of the mystery".[39] However, far from consigning us to silence, the fact that our greatest thoughts of God never exceed his greatness ought to inspire worship, contemplation and further theological reflection.

3) Processions

Building on all that has been said, the term *procession* signifies internal origination from one person to another in the Trinity. Contra Arianism, procession is not necessarily a temporal, creaturely activity. Instead, as Karl Barth argues, the language of proceeding is first meant to act as a negation to suggest a non-creaturely communication of the divine essence.[40] He writes: "what proceeds from God can only be God once again".[41] Indeed, procession denotes "eternal communication… of the same (divine) essence", [42] the forthcoming of God from God. So, the Son who is begotten, says Gregory of Nazianzus, is *from* the Father (the Father is the "cause"), but he is not *after* him.[43] Likewise, the Spirit proceeds *from* the Father and the Son, not *after* them. That *from*-not-*after* distinction is crucial because it preserves the differentiation of the three persons, distinguishing them according to their relations. It also serves to uphold the equality and oneness of the Godhead because divine persons are consubstantial, subsisting in the same nature.

A key passage often cited in relation to this is John 5:24-29, where Jesus himself conveys the communication of essence from Father to Son: "as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (John 5:26). Given the distinct Danielic overtones, in conjunction with the concepts of "life" and "eternal life" generally in John's gospel, Jesus unmistakably uses ontological categories to make his point.[44] That is, because both the Father and Son possess the quality of having "life *in himself*", Jesus has the divine authority to carry out the work of the Father. Together with the *given/granted* language in both Daniel and John 5, the passage strongly supports the doctrine of the Son's eternal generation from the Father.[45] Contra

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[39] Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2000), 33.

[40] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), §12.2, (I.1:473).

[41] *Ibid.,* §12.2, (I.1:473).

[42] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend; 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:313.

[43] Gregory of Nazianzen, "The Third Theological Oration", Oration XXIX.iii (NPNF 7:302).

[44] For a valuable discussion on the term "eternal life" (ζωὴν αἰώνιον), which only appears in the same form as John 5 in Dan 12:2 (LXX), see Stefanos Mihalios, *The Danielic Eschatological Hour in the Johannine Literature*, LNTS 436 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 95, 109.

[45] For a helpful discussion about divine *receiving* as opposed to creaturely *receiving,* see Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, 95–96.

Robert Reymond who denies the doctrine altogether, arguing that John 5:26 merely refers to "an aspect of the *incarnate* Son's messianic investiture",[46] John 5:26 in fact provides the ontological basis for the Son of Man's function and mission in Dan 7 and 12. By reading canonically, we come to see how the Son's incarnate role prefigured in Daniel is illuminated and magnified by the eternal relations made explicit in John. It is therefore entirely valid and appropriate to use John 5:26 in support of Thomas' principle that "communication must be the same as what is communicated".[47] For, though published in the economy, this passage nevertheless draws our attention to the *res*:[48] what is true of the Father is also true of the Son, except for his paternity.

4) The Filioque in Scripture

At this point we might rightly ask: what of the Holy Spirit in this dynamic?[49] Where are the texts related to his procession from the Father *and the Son*? There is no doubt that such texts are limited. For Thomas, they do not even exist, at least *per verba* (by words). But that is incidental; constructive dogmatics is not an exercise in counting proof-texts. More significant is that the rule and principle established in the biblical case for the eternal generation still applies. Put differently, the *Filioque* is the natural and implicit corollary of the Son's procession from the Father. So, whilst texts about the Spirit's double procession are sparse, the concept (*per sensum*) of indivisible unity in God's substance remains. Through that, we can at least affirm that whatever we say about one person must apply to the others except for relational opposition.[50] However, by that we should not conclude that the Holy Spirit is simply another Son. Nor do we need to endorse Thomas Weinandy's anti-sequentialism.[51]

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[46] Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 325.

[47] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21*, ed. Daniel A. Keating and Matthew Levering, trans. Fabian R. Larcher and James A. Weisheipl (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), §2115, 146.

[48] The Latin term *res* means the "actual" or "real" thing. See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 264.

[49] Cf. Gregory W. Lee, "The Spirit's Self Testimony: Pneumatology in Basil of Caesarea and Augustine of Hippo", in *Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith*, ed. Jeffrey W. Barbeau and Beth Felker Jones, Wheaton Theology Conference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 39.

[50] See Anselm, "On the Procession of the Holy Spirit", 393.

[51] Weinandy writes: "A proper understanding of the Trinity can only be obtained if all three persons, logically and ontologically, spring forth in one simultaneous, nonsequential, eternal act in which each person of the Trinity subsistently defines, and equally is subsistently defined by, the other persons." Accordingly, "it is by the Spirit that the Father substantiates or 'persons' himself as Father because it is by the Spirit that he begets the Son." See Thomas Weinandy *The*

Instead, what we need to ask is: what exactly do the missions in the economy reveal, if anything, of eternal, immanent causality, and in particular, the double processions of Spirit from the Father and the Son?

Thomas' route for endorsing the *Filioque* begins with and largely depends on the Son's eternal generation. If "all that belongs to the Father" also belongs to the Son (John 16:15) that necessarily includes the spiration of the Holy Spirit.[52] However, Anselm anticipates a problem here: why should the Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son and not the Son from the Father and the Spirit?[53] For him, this puzzle is solved by distinguishing generation from "procession" (by which he means spiration) – in a causal sense, one is prior to the other. Additionally, Anselm points out that the name "Holy Spirit," as a relational designation, implies that he is the Spirit *of* someone. So, it cannot be that Son proceeded from the Holy Spirit because that would make him "the Spirit of the same Holy Spirit".[54]

More substantially, Aquinas helps to define the nature and outline the logic of the distinction between generation (filiation) and spiration using the language of "intellect" and "will". "The concept of intellect", writes Aquinas, "is a likeness of the object conceived, and exists in the same nature, because in God the act of understanding and His existence are the same."[55] Hence, since God is pure act, intellectual proceeding results in the Son's generation, who is identical to the Father in all ways except for paternity. However, the Spirit's origin in eternity is not in an act of the intellect (as per the Son's generation) but an act of "will", also known as the "procession of love".[56] Using Augustine's language, the Spirit proceeds from the "mutual love of Father and Son" and the "consubstantial bond which unites them".[57] Aquinas adds even more weight to this argumentation by examining the economic relationship between the Son and the Spirit.[58] The fact that the Son *sends* and *gives* the Spirit,[59] that the Holy Spirit is said to be the Spirit *of* the Son,[60] and that the Spirit glorifies the

Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 14-15, 73. For a comprehensive critique of Weinandy's approach, see Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 16-22.

[52] Likewise, Anselm reasons that because God has no parts, the "whole God is from the whole God, in Anselm, "On the Procession of the Holy Spirit," 396.

[53] Anselm, "On the Procession of the Holy Spirit," 396.

[54] *Ibid*., 398.

[55] See generally Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* Ia.28.

[56] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* Ia.28 ad 4.

[57] Augustine, as quoted in, J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: A&C Black, 1985), 275.

[58] See generally Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a.36.2.

[59] E.g. John 16:7; 20:22.

[60] E.g. Gal 4:6, Rom 8:9.

Son,[61] implies a logical sequence of relational origination in eternity: "for everything which is from another manifests that from which it is."[62]

Some see Isa 48:16 as a difficult text in this regard, taking it to refer to the Spirit sending Christ, reading *ruach* as the subject rather than the object.[63] Even assuming it is the correct interpretation grammatically – this is "unlikely" according to John Oswalt[64] – does it undermine the argument that double procession is reflected in the biblical language of the sending of the Spirit by the Father and the Son? I would argue not. For, as has already been established, the economic sending of the Son is always the "joint work of Father, Son, and Spirit."[65] Moreover, illuminated by the gospels, we see how the Spirit anoints and bestows grace upon the incarnate Christ's human life and ministry. In that respect, it is entirely right to affirm that the man Jesus was, from one aspect, *sent* by the Spirit. Nevertheless, the order of the Son and Spirit's distinctive missions (incarnation then Pentecost), revealed in Scripture as central moments in the unfolding gospel economy, must be given priority as reflections of the divine *taxis* in eternity. The Spirit's activity in the economy prior to his mission at Pentecost need not undermine this principle.

John 15:26 is integral text to consider more positively and specifically. On the surface, there appears to be only direct reference to the Spirit's procession from the Father ("the Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father"). Yet, as Richard Muller shows, the Reformed exegetes consistently used the verse to demonstrate the procession of the Spirit from the Son.[66] How? By the Divine Son's affirmation that *he* will authoritatively send the Spirit from the Father. John Calvin writes that Christ "mentions the Father in order to raise our eyes to the contemplation of *his* Divinity."[67] In other words, the verse denotes an inseparability in action between the Father and Son, which is indicative of an eternal reality. Moreover, the reference to the Spirit going out from the Father is not an exclusive statement of singular spiration. Rather, it simply acts to affirm the authority and divinity of the Spirit. So, according to Calvin, to deny

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[61] E.g. John 16:14-15.

[62] Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21*, §2105, 144.

[63] Lee Gatiss highlights the examples of Lombard in *Sentences* 1.15.3. Lombard himself attributes this to Ambrose and Augustine. Similarly, Gatiss explores how this use of Isa 48:16 was employed by John Gill and Augustus Toplady in arguments about the Spirit's role in the *pactum salutis*. See, Lee Gatiss, *The True Profession of the Gospel* (The Latimer Trust, 2010), 71, fn. 103.

[64] John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, Chapters 40-66, 2 vols., NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 274.

[65] See Lombard, Sentences 1.15.3.

[66] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725*; 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2003), 4.373-76.

[67] John Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John 11-21 and The First Epistle of John*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1972), 110. Emphasis mine.

the Spirit's procession from the Son by this verse is "idle" and lacking in subtlety.[68]

Arguments for the double procession of the Spirit need not just be drawn from the NT. Christopher Seitz insightfully shows how this is the same pattern as the Spirit's mission in the OT. He argues that the agency of the Spirit, who "spake by the prophets", is to be deferential, constantly pointing away from himself. He is the "hand of God", whose "vocation is to place Israel's and the Church's hand in the hand of their Lord".[69] This is bolstered by the numerous OT passages which refer to the Holy Spirit as "given".[70] Taken in correspondence with the account of the Spirit's mission in John's Gospel (and the NT generally), this aids our comprehension of how the hidden, immanent Trinity is manifested in the economic Trinity: the missions appear characteristic of the order (*taxis*) of procession.[71] The Spirit can only be sent by the Father and the Son in the economy *because* the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in eternity.[72]

For the sake of clarity, none of this implies two principles of spiration, one from the Father and one from the Son.[73] Rather, because of their equality of nature and Aquinas' principle of "subsistent relations", [74] we can say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as one cause. The Father and Son relate to the Spirit in an identical way. However, this is not an "impersonal amalgam".[75] First, it is not impersonal because, as Levering states, "the Son spirates precisely as one begotten by the Father".[76] Incidentally, this also preserves the monarchy of the Father; he remains the sole principle of origin.

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[68] Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 110.

[69] Christopher Seitz, "The Trinity in the Old Testament", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37-38.

[70] E.g. Neh 9:20, Isa 42:1, Ezek 36:27.

[71] Augustine, "Answer to Maximus the Arian", in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Roland J. Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1990), II.xiv (280-287).

[72] Köstenberger and Swain put it like this: "One can be sent in time only by someone from whom one eternally proceeds." In Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, NSBT 24 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 180.

[73] An accusation made by Sergius Bulgakov, in *The Comforter*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 124-127. He argues that the spiration of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son by the so-called *one principle* (*una spiratione*) actually distorts the Trinity in favour of two dyads: the Father – Son dyad, and the Father-and-Son – Holy Spirit dyad. For him, this contradicts the godhead because the *Filioque* forces "two principles" into the act of spiration, undermining the person of the Holy Spirit, who appears passive, and abrogating the monarchy of the Father.

[74] That is, "relation in God is not as an accident in a subject, but is the divine essence itself; and so it is subsistent, for the divine essence is subsistence […] a divine person signifies a relation as subsisting… And this is to signify relation by way of a substance, which is hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature." See Aquinas, *Summa theologia*, Ia.29 ad 4.

[75] See Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 155.

[76] Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 155.

Second, neither is it an amalgam because, although there are two spirating persons, the spiration is "one act that the Father and Son truly share, due to the Father's communication of spirative power to the Son".[77]

In conclusion, the doctrine of the double procession of the Spirit rests upon certain key principles, and not simply isolated verses.[78] Most integral is the way in which the economic Trinity, as *image*, truly but not exhaustively communicates the Immanent Trinity to finite creatures. In the economic activity of the Son and Spirit, the Triune God operates characteristically according to his nature. The missions are, as John Webster beautifully puts it, simply "the overflow of God's wholly realized life as Father, Son, and Spirit."[79]

II. Implications and conclusion

Following this theological and exegetical undertaking, a key question remains. Namely, does it really matter that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*? What does the *Filioque*, and the constructive dogmatic task used to defend it, actually contribute towards our Doctrine of God and the life of faith? There are at least three implications we can derive from this study.

First, theologically, the *Filioque* preserves the unity of substance in the Trinity. Herman Bavinck contends convincingly that "the confession of the Trinity is the heartbeat of the Christian religion. All error is traceable to a departure from this doctrine." [80] By maintaining the doctrines of eternal communication, consubstantiality and relations of origination by opposition, the *Filioque* clause provides significant weight against imbalanced versions of the One and the Three, the Three and the One.[81]

One such contemporary form of divergence from the classical model lies in so-called *social trinitarianism*. Associated with the likes of John Zizioulas,[82] Jürgen Moltmann, [83] Miroslav Volf, [84] Colin Gunton, [85] and Wolfhart

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[77] Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 161.

[78] There is nevertheless what Michael Allen calls a "sequence" to Christian Theology, which is in line with biblical revelation. He argues that systematic theology follows the order of the Canon. See Michael Allen, "Knowledge of God", 26.

[79] Webster, "Principles of Systematic Theology", 66.

[80] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:258.

[81] Historically, Bavinck traces denials of the unity in order to preserve Threeness to Arianism, and formulations of unity that fail to maintain threeness to Sabellianism. See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:258.

[82] See generally Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 27-65.

[83] See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1981), 198-199.

[84] See especially Miroslav Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement", in *The Doctrine of God and Theological Ethics*, ed. Alan Torrance and Michael Banner (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 105-24.

[85] See generally Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991).

Pannenberg,[86] social trinitarianism is characterised by a relational ontology, an articulation of God's being in terms of love, community and divine *perichoresis*. In reaction to what they see as an over-emphasised Augustinian sense of *oneness* in God, social trinitarians take the *three* as their starting point.[87] Essentially, the persons in communion constitute the being of God.[88] Thus, Moltmann writes of "the most perfect and intense empathy" between the persons.[89] And this, says Karen Kilby, has become the "new orthodoxy."[90] The problem, following Kilby, is the social trinitarian notion of *personhood*. She rightly argues that social trinitarian theologians are often "projectionist" – explaining the divine unity from a particular form of personalism drawn from human relationships, which ultimately assumes that each person is "an isolated being over against all others".[91] At its best, such an approach results in advocating three personal principles, or wills, in God.[92] At its worst, this amounts to tritheism. What the *Filioque* offers in response is a strong affirmation of the pro-Nicene concepts of *homoousios*, co-equality, and a distinction of the Triune persons.

Second, hermeneutically, the *Filioque* aids our approach in reading Scripture aright. This relates to the danger of projection highlighted above. Drawing on Charles Taylor's contention that the *immanent frame*, common to all in the modern West, can "slough off the transcendent",[93] the hermeneutical steps required to construct the doctrine of the double procession of the Spirit preserves God's otherness. Because of the *analogical interval*, which arises out of divine attributes as expressed in the classical tradition, we must deny the identical correspondence between missions and processions *a la* Rahner. Though it may be close, it is nevertheless a differentiated relationship.[94] Our danger, if we so focus on the economic to the exclusion of the immanent, is that we undermine God's holiness. As a consequence, we might skew ontological descriptions of God's nature in Scripture. Furthermore, James K.

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[86] See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. G. W. Bromiley; 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 1:319-327.

[87] Modern proponents of the Social model of the Trinity frequently cite the Cappadocian Fathers as the source of their relational ontology. Yet Stephen Holmes has convincingly shown that their readings of the Cappadocians is dubious to say the least. See generally Stephen R. Holmes, "Three Versus One? Some Problems of Social Trinitarianism", *JRT* 3 (2009): 77-89.

[88] See Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 170.

[89] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 174-175.

[90] Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity", *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 956 (2000): 433.

[91] *Ibid*., 441.

[92] See, e.g. Pannenberg who writes of "living realizations of separate centers of action" among Father, Son, and Spirit, in *Systematic Theology*, 1:319.

[93] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 543.

[94] See Drayton C. Benner, "Augustine and Karl Rahner on the Relationship between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity", *IJST* 9, no. 1 (2007): 30.

A. Smith (among others) rightly stresses how we conform ourselves, including our theology, to what we love.[95] While some have raised important questions about Thomist metaphysics, anthropocentric conceptions of love and relationships risk making God into our own image.

Third, spiritually, this undertaking of constructive dogmatics, shaped by the classical tradition, cultivates theocentric contemplation of God. This attempt at building a biblical account of the double procession of the Spirit has clear limitations, not least because we are ascribing to God that which we cannot see and know absolutely. God is invisible and incomprehensible. Yet, the limitations of dogmatic theology do not prohibit its practice. In fact, they encourage it. For in them we are re-orientated and, paradoxically, moved to contemplate the promised, eschatological vision of God. Thus, the very task of constructing a dogmatic account of the *Filioque* is beneficial in and of itself. Since, through the exercise, we are moved towards one of the central promises and pledges of the gospel: "they will see his face" (Rev 22:4).[96]

Conclusion

Within our current historical location, it is not difficult to see why the classical model of the Trinity is unattractive to many. Muller is no doubt correct to suggest that there is a great deal of critique of scholasticism without much familiarity with the scholastic material.[97] A more significant reason flows from Charles Taylor's assessment of the West. In his language, our immanent frame in this increasingly libertarian, individualistic climate makes us naturally attracted towards univocal thinking about God. For many, especially those persuaded by a social model of the Trinity, Aristotelean-Thomistic metaphysical categories therefore seem cold and unloving. Yet, what we have seen in this constructive dogmatic case for the *Filioque* is that the classical theistic assumption that God is perfect being and ontologically *other* actually means that he is maximally and supremely good. Far from a creaturely projection of

[95] See especially James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), 1-26; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 46-47.

[96] Allen writes of the glory of the gospel – "central to its promise… is the pledge that the invisible God makes himself visible to us", in *Grounded in Heaven*, 87. The particular nature of this *sight* is not within the bounds of this article.

[97] Muller writes: "The doctrine of God found in Reformed thought during the era of orthodoxy (ca. 1565-1725) has occupied a central place in the criticism of post-Reformation theology and has, typically, distinguished from the doctrine of the Reformers on the basis of its scholastic and Aristotelean content. Despite this reasonably prominent critique, the doctrine itself has been little studied… [and the critiques] have judged the views of the older dogmaticians on the basis of twentieth-century dogmatic constructs, and have resorted to rather vague claims: the doctrine of the orthodox writers was "rigid", "arid", "abstract", characterised by "scholasticism", and "Aristotelianism". In Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:21.

personal relations, God, in the unity and "reciprocity of paternity, filiation and spiration",[98] is infinite and full. Thus, the fact that the inner details of the Triune life are inaccessible to us is a good thing; it merely declares the ineffability and majesty of God in himself. This ought to stimulate worship. And the *Filioque* clause provides us with some of the grammar for that.

[98] John Webster, "Life in and of Himself: Reflections on God's Aseity", in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 117.

Foundations 77 (November 2019): 45-52

THE SAME GOD: DID PAUL CLAIM THE ATHENIANS WORSHIPPED YAHWEH?

Tim Dieppe[*]

I. The same God controversy

Back in 2015, a controversy arose over whether Christians and Muslims worship the same God. Dr. Larycia Hawkins, then a professor at Wheaton College in the US, posted a photo of herself wearing a hijab on Facebook with a comment in which she wrote:

> I stand in human solidarity with my Muslim neighbour because we are formed of the same primordial clay, descendants of the same cradle of humankind… I stand in religious solidarity with Muslims because they, like me, a Christian, are people of the book. And as Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God.[1]

Hawkins was initially suspended by Wheaton College and later, after protracted discussions on both sides, a confidential agreement was reached which included a parting of ways. Along the way there was huge media interest in the issue and whether Muslims and Christians should be described as worshipping the same God.

II. Does Paul's Areopagus address justify referring to Allah as the same God?

The "same God controversy" has many aspects to it, and too many to discuss in one article.[2] Here I want to focus on one particular aspect: the use of Paul's Areopagus address in Acts 17 to defend the view that Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

A special issue of the *Occasional Bulletin of the Evangelical Missiological Society* was devoted to the same God controversy.[3] Robert Priest guest edited

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[1] The full post is displayed on Larycia Hawkins' website: http://www.laryciahawkins.com/ (8 November 2018).

[2] There are several book-length discussions of some of the issues involved. Particularly important are: Sam Solomon, *Not the Same God: Is the Qur'anic Allah the Lord God of the Bible?* (London: Wilberforce Publications, 2016); Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012).

[3] "Special Edition: Wheaton and the Controversy Over Whether Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God", *Occasional Bulletin of the Evangelical Missiological Society* (2016)

the issue as a past president of the American Society of Missiology and then president of the Evangelical Missiological Society. Priest wrote the introductory article in which he expressed sympathy for Hawkins' statements, arguing that "many American evangelical missionaries and missiologists, and perhaps the Apostle Paul himself would be in danger of dismissal if they taught at Wheaton College". He continued:

> It is worth noting that Hawkins was using the word "worship" in the same way the Apostle Paul used the term in Acts 17:23, where Paul referenced an Athenian altar to an unknown god who he said the Athenians "worship", and then proceeded to treat this god as the same referent that he wished to tell them about.[4]

The question is to what extent does Paul's Areopagus address justify referring to Allah as the same as the God of the Bible? The key verse here which Priest highlights is Acts 17:23. Here Paul is standing in the Areopagus in Athens and says:

> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

The argument being made is that Paul clearly states that the god the Athenians worship is the same as the God of Israel, the God of the Bible. There is a *prima facie* case here which requires further investigation. I should note that this passage is one of my favourites and the one I wrote my MA dissertation about.[5] My comments here draw extensively on that work.

III. The arguments of the Areopagus address

First, it is important to recognise that Paul stood accused of preaching about foreign gods (Acts 17:18-20). This is the very charge that Socrates faced in Athens, and which famously resulted in the death penalty.[6] The parallels of this story with that of Socrates are very strong, and the story of Socrates was well known so that it is likely that Luke is deliberately setting up Paul as a philosopher to be compared with the great philosopher.[7] The point here is

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https://www.emsweb.org/images/occasional-bulletin/special-editions/OB_SpecialEdition_2016.pdf This collates a range of perspectives on the "same God controversy".

[4] Robert J. Priest, "Wheaton and the Controversy Over Whether Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God", *Occasional Bulletin of the Evangelical Missiological Society,* Special Edition (2016): 1-3, 31.

[5] Tim Dieppe, "Paul vs. the Pagans: The Apologetic Approach of the Areopagus Address" (Dissertation, Westminster Theological Centre, 2016) Available on www.academia.edu.

[6] Plato, *Apology,* 24b-c; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 1.1.1.

[7] Karl Olav Sandnes, "Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul's Areopagus Speech", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 50 (1993), 13-26.

that Paul is on trial for this dangerous charge of introducing a different god to the ones already acknowledged by the Athenians. His listeners do not believe he worships any already recognised god or one that they worship. Nor do they believe that this is what Paul is claiming. Paul's starting point for his discussion with the Athenians was therefore certainly not a claim to be worshipping the same god. Paul's initial approach therefore stands in sharp contrast to that of those contemporary missiologists who want to emphasise sameness. Paul started by emphasising what is different, even though he knew this risked him being put on trial for committing what could be a capital offence.

Second, we should note the obvious fact that the inscription on the idol admits ignorance of this god. This is the opening that Paul uses to proclaim the biblical God. This is quite different from going to a Muslim who is confident about the nature of Allah and saying that we worship the same god. Paul's use of the "unknown god" here is part of his defence against the charge of preaching a new god.

Third, there is no definite article in the Greek so, although the ESV translates "To the unknown God", it would more naturally be translated "To an unknown god."[8] The Athenian polytheistic mind-set makes it likely that "an unknown god" is the intended meaning of the inscription. Paul is therefore taking a polytheistic inscription and reinterpreting it monotheistically. He uses their admitted ignorance of a god in this inscription as a rhetorical device to proclaim the one true God.

Fourth, Paul takes the masculine "god" (θεὸς) and makes it neuter with the phrase "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you."[9] Paul thus de-personalises the idol: "What you worship" not "Whom you worship". Paul later personalises his God, creating a further distinction between his personal God and the impersonal gods worshipped by the Athenians.

Fifth, the Greek construction emphasises their ignorance, not their reverence. Conrad Gempf explains: "Paul in effect says, '…what I proclaim to you is only that which you yourselves, while openly admitting your ignorance, claim to revere.'"[10] Paul is thus agreeing with their ignorance of their object of reverence, which also implies ignorance as to how to worship. What is more, this "unknown" (Ἀγνώστῳ) clearly expresses uncertainty as to what god they are worshipping. Calvin perceptively comments that: "Whosoever doth

[8] As RSV, NRSV, NIV, NASB. Bruce comments that "the lapidary style would in any case dispense with the article. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1992), 335 n57.

[9] C. K. Barrett, *Acts 15-28*, International Critical Commentary (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 838. As he points out, some texts read with a masculine pronoun, but it is likely that the neuter is original since there was both a grammatical and a theological reason to make the change.

[10] Conrad Gempf, "Paul at Athens", in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, eds. G. F. Hawthorne, et al. (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 52.

worship God without any certainty, he worships his own inventions instead of God."[11] In other words, it makes no sense to worship something without having clarity on what it is that you are worshipping. Their worship is necessarily deficient because of their ignorance. Paul is thus clearly not saying that they are unknowingly worshipping the same god as him.

Sixth, Paul claims later in the speech (v30) that their ignorance is culpable. The Athenians need to repent. The one point of agreement that Paul can find with polytheistic idolatry is an admission of ignorance. He then assumes authority to proclaim the true nature of God to them. This makes it very clear that Paul does not see this worship of an "unknown god" as worship of Yahweh.

Seventh, the word for "worship" (εὐσεβεῖτε) or "revere", is not the usual word for "worship" in the NT and, as Pardigon points out, "it is never used in relation to Yahweh in either LXX or NT."[12] Jobes notes that this word was used by Philo of pagan sacrificing of children,[13] and suggests that the word had "become tainted by association with pagan religious ritual"[14] so that the NT writers avoided its use for worship of God. Worship of Yahweh is therefore in no way being equated with idolatrous, ignorant, polytheistic worship in this verse.[15] Paul carefully avoids using the term that he would use for worship of Yahweh.

Eighth, Paul is very keen in his speech to explain how the key characteristics of his God contrast with the Athenian idols. Paul's biblical God:

1) Is the single transcendent creator of the universe: "The God who made the world and everything in it."
2) Is the ruler of all creation: "…Lord of heaven and earth".
3) Does not dwell in temples: "…does not live in temples made by man".
4) Is self-sufficient: "…nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything".
5) Is life-giving: "…since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."

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[11] John Calvin, *Commentary on Acts*, trans. H. Beveridge; vol. 2; (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 155.

[12] Flavien O. C. Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols: A Contextual Reading of the Areopagus Speech* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 138-39 n55. There are a few exceptions in 4 Maccabees.

[13] Philo, *The Special Laws*, 1.312.

[14] Karen H. Jobes, "Distinguishing the Meaning of Greek Verbs in the Semantic Domain for Worship", in *Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, ed. M. Silva (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 208.

[15] Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 137.

6) Rules all the nations: "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place."

7) Is to be sought by everyone: "…that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him."

8) Is omnipresent: "…yet he is actually not far from each one of us."

9) Is the source of all life: "For, 'In him we live and move and have our being'."

10) Is the father of all: "…for we are indeed his offspring."

11) Is not representable by an image or idol: "Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man."

12) Commands repentance of all people: "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."

13) Will judge the whole world: "Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed."

14) Raised an appointed man from the dead: "…and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

This God that Paul is proclaiming is the single, transcendent judge of all peoples and radically different from the gods of the Athenians.

IV. Paul's use of pagan quotations

Points 9 and 10 above are based on quotations from pagan authors that do recognise some similar characteristics between Yahweh and their pagan conceptions of god, and which contribute to Paul's defence against the charge of preaching foreign gods.

The first quote from verse 28, I argue, is from Epimenides.[16] The Cretan philosopher (c.600BC) was well known in the ancient world, and we know that Paul was familiar with his work since Paul quotes him in Titus 1:12, referring to him as a prophet.[17] Epimenides was famously called to Athens to

[16] Dieppe, "Paul vs. The Pagans", Appendix 2.

[17] For discussion of the attribution of this quotation see: I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 198-203; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, Texas: Word, 2000), 397-399. I am assuming here that Paul wrote Titus which is not uncontroversial. For a discussion of authorship options, see in these commentaries. Clare Rothschild points out that: "Scholars today, however, acknowledge as many connections of style and content between Luke-Acts-Titus as between either of these individual works and Paul's undisputed letters." Clare K. Rothschild, *Paul in Athens: The Popular Religious Context of Acts 17*,

help purify the city to stop a pestilence. Diogenes Laertius recounts the story of Epimenides taking some black and white sheep into the Areopagus and releasing them, ordering the people to mark where each sheep rested and to make a sacrifice there to the local god.[18] Ramsay explains that the Athenians believed themselves to be racked by guilt from the massacre of the adherents of Cylon in 612BC.[19] Each local god may have been known or unknown.[20] Diogenes then narrates: "Hence even to this day altars may be found in different parts of Attica with no name inscribed upon them, which are memorials of this atonement."[21]

It is likely that the altar "to an unknown god" which Paul references is a deliberate allusion to the Epimenides story and that this would be recognised by the Athenians.[22] Paul builds on this by quoting from him in his speech. Paul may be hinting that the god who answered the prayers of Epimenides, whom they do not know and are not worshipping properly, is actually the God he is proclaiming. This is another way for him to refute the charge of introducing foreign gods to Athens.

In any case, Paul is following Jewish practice, later adopted by the Church Fathers, of appropriating a Stoic quotation without in any way endorsing its original meaning.[23] Stoic theology was pantheistic, whereas Jewish theology sees God as transcendent, but also omnipresent. Paul can state that, "we live and move in him" and mean it in a Jewish sense. It is obvious by now that Paul's concept of God is clearly different from Stoic ideas.

The second quote, that "we are his offspring" is reckoned to be "one of the most commonly quoted Stoic lines in antiquity".[24] It may be taken from Aratus or Cleathes, and a related saying is attributed to Epimenides.[25] It was a common Greek idea that God or Zeus was the father of humanity.[26] This idea

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WUNT, vol. 341 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 22. Rothschild then argues that this makes the Epimenides connection more plausible.

[18] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers,* 1.10.110. Don Richardson narrates the whole story in an entertaining way with some embellishments: Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984), 9-25.

[19] Sir William M. Ramsay, "Epimenides", in *Asianic Elements in Greek Civilization: The Gifford Lectures in the University of Edinburgh, 1915-16* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927) http://www.giffordlectures.org/books/asianic-elements-greek-civilisation/chapter-iii-epimenides (4 October 2018).

[20] Ramsay, "Epimenides".

[21] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers,* 1.10.110 (ὅθεν ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἔστιν εὑρεῖν κατὰ τοὺς δήμους τῶν Ἀθηναίωι βωμοὺς ἀνωνύμους, ὑπόμνημα τῆς τότε γενομένης ἐξιλάσεως).

[22] On the historicity of such an altar see Dieppe, "Paul vs. The Pagans", Appendix 3.

[23] Bertil Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, ASNU; trans. C. H. King; vol. 21; C.W.K. Gleerup (Uppsala, 1955), 167, 193-95.

[24] Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 3:15:1-23:35* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014), 2660.

[25] Rothschild, *Paul in Athens*, 69-70.

[26] Keener, *Acts 15:1-23:35*, 2661-63.

is also present in Jewish writings.[27] In his speech, Paul attributes this quote to "some of your own poets". In this way he is again arguing against the charge of introducing a foreign god. He claims that some of their conceptions of God are correct: It is true that we are God's offspring. But as he goes on to say, this logically means that this God cannot be represented by idols formed by humans (v29). This true God ought not to be worshipped through idols. So, whilst commending the truth of some statements of their philosophers about the nature of God, he uses these same truths to criticise their means of worship.

Some stoic philosophers criticised idolatry, but the wider population took idol worship very seriously.[28] Paul's rejection of idolatry is far more decisive and distinctively Jewish than that of the philosophers.[29] Paul sees idolatry as insulting to God and requiring repentance. Note that Paul includes himself in the injunction with "we ought not", rather than "you ought not", thus identifying himself with their position rather than antagonistically wagging his finger.[30]

These quotations were originally referring to Zeus, the king of the Greek gods. Paul takes them as true statements about the true creator God. By this time, it is very clear that Paul is not advocating worship of Zeus, nor is he claiming that worship of Zeus is equivalent to worship of the true God. He is using these quotations to show that his conception of God is not entirely different from their conception, whilst at the same time arguing that there are essential differences requiring repentance on their part.

Paul is not basing his main argument on these quotations; they are merely used to support his points.[31] Paul was not claiming that these pagan authors were divinely inspired in a similar manner to the Jewish scriptures, and neither would the Athenians have understood this, since they did not believe the philosophers had this kind of inspiration.[32] Paul effectively reinterprets these quotations by redefining God for the Athenians and appropriating them to his God rather than to Zeus.[33] Paul's citations demonstrate a partial recognition of significant truths by these poets, and thus by his audience. It is true that we live and move and have our being in God, or by means of God, but

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[27] Keener, *Acts 15:1-23:35*, 2663.

[28] C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Greco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35.

[29] Keener, *Acts 15:1-23:35*, 2666. See the multiple OT injunctions against idolatry. E.g. Ps 115:1-8; Is 40:18-20; 44:9-20; 46:5-6. Note especially the reference to "gold and silver" in Ps 115:4 (cf. Is 40:19).

[30] John Span, "The Aeropagus: A study in Continuity and Discontinuity", *St Francis Magazine* 6, no. 3 (2010), 568.

[31] Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Areopagus Address*, The Tyndale New Testament Lecture (Cambridge: Tyndale, 1949), 29.

[32] Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 198.

[33] Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 40.

not in quite the way that the Stoics or even Epimenides intended. It is also true that we are God's offspring, but again not in the way that the Stoics thought.

I suggest that the use Paul makes of pagan citations legitimises Christians using quotations from the Qur'an in discussions with Muslims. We can point out things that the Qur'an says that Christians would agree with, without in any way attributing inspiration or authority to the Qur'an. Christians will also want to point out where statements in the Qur'an contradict Christian doctrine to clearly demonstrate that we do not agree with the teaching of the Qur'an and do not view it as inspired.

V. Conclusion

Paul did not start his discussions in Athens with a claim to be worshipping the same god. Rather, as a result of his preaching he stood accused of introducing foreign gods to Athens. Nor did he end his speech by claiming they were worshipping the same god after all. He claimed that his transcendent God commanded their repentance. What Paul did do is agree with an admission of ignorance about the nature of God in Athenian culture and proclaim that he is there to explain what this God, whom they are ignorantly attempting to worship, is really like. This is a long way from a claim that the Athenians worship the same god as he does.

There are many other aspects of "the same God" controversy to discuss. Here I have focussed on the use of Paul's speech in Athens. I argue that Paul's Areopagus address cannot reasonably be used to justify claiming that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. There may be other reasons to sometimes justify this claim, but Paul's statements in Acts 17 do not support this approach.

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KNOCKING ON SINNERS' DOORS? REVELATION 3:20, ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE GOSPEL OFFER IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PURITANISM

Donald John MacLean *

An image from the recent, though faded, history of evangelism might come to mind at the mention of Revelation 3:20,[1] perhaps a vision of a mass crusade of fifty years or so ago. The preacher is in full stride, pulling at the heart strings of the assembled crowds and comes, in a grand finale, to present an image of a sobbing, weeping Christ standing impotent outside of the hearts of those gathered. Jesus is knocking, begging admittance, if only those who are gathered are open to him.

However, while it may have been common, such an approach to Rev 3:20 has not been without its critics. The populariser of Reformed theology, R. C. Sproul has stated:

> We have all heard evangelists quote from Revelation: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." (Rev 3:20). Usually the evangelist applies this text as an appeal to the unconverted, saying: "Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart. If you open the door, then He will come in." In the original saying, however, Jesus directed His remarks to the church. It was not an evangelistic appeal.[2]

Here, a conversionist use of Rev 3:20 is criticised because it pays insufficient attention to the original recipients, a church. To apply "behold I stand at the door and knock" evangelistically, for Sproul, fails the test of ecclesiology.

A further example of criticism is taken up by Greg Beale and David Campbell in their commentary on Revelation. They state that Rev 3:20 "is an invitation, not for the readers to be converted, but to renew themselves in a relationship with Christ which had already begun."[3] Soteriological implic-

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[1] "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." (ESV)

[2] R. C. Sproul, "Are You Seeking After God?" n.p. [cited 12 October 2019]. Online: http://www.ligonier.org/blog/are-you-seeking-after-god.

[3] G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 93.

ations are also highlighted in relation to verse 19.[4] As this verse states that the rebukes of the letter to Laodicea are evidences of Christ's *love* this provides evidence that Rev 3:20 only refers to believers, as only believers are the subjects of God's love.

The response of Sproul and Beale and Campbell to the use of Rev 3:20 represents, perhaps, the common modern Reformed reading of that text over against its use in recent "mass-evangelism". However, when the exegesis of Rev 3:20 around the time of the Westminster Assembly is examined, a markedly different approach emerges. A significant number of seventeenth century theologians and preachers committed to Reformed theology handle Rev 3:20 in such a way as to draw stirring conversionist appeals from it – appeals that would almost match the emotional intensity of any mass evangelist.

This raises the question of what led the English Puritans and their Scottish contemporaries to generally take a conversionist reading of "Behold I stand at the door and knock"? Evidently Rev 3:20 is an appeal addressed to a church and, equally plainly, if taken as a conversionist overture, it can seem to question the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in predestination. There is therefore something of an initial conundrum in their reading of Rev 3:20.

But the Puritans, and their contemporaries in Scotland, had their reasons for a conversionist reading of the text. They will be shown as consideration is now given, first to a foundational figure in English Puritanism, William Perkins. This is followed by examining the leading seventeenth-century Scottish theologian, Samuel Rutherford. Following this, the England Puritans John Flavel and John Owen will be considered. Of these figures, only John Owen did not habitually use Rev. 3:20 as a conversionist text. Some conclusions will then be drawn.

I. William Perkins (1558-1602)

William Perkins is a significant figure in the history of Reformed theology in the English-speaking world.[5] He is perhaps the first English Reformed theologian of international repute, and spent the productive theological years of his life in Cambridge.[6] He was preacher in the church of Great St. Andrews from the age of 26 until his death at the age of 44 in 1602, as well as a fellow in Christ's College for some of that time.[7]

[4] "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." (ESV)

[5] A recent helpful treatment of Perkins is, W. B. Patterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[6] For a summary of some assessments of Perkins' importance, see Jonathan Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 28.

[7] Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity on Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 461.

Perkins was a much-respected figure in later Puritanism.[8] Whether he himself should be classed as a Puritan is a debated point, much like the term Puritanism itself.[9] What can be said is that Perkins as a theologian was committed to experimental piety and a strongly predestinarian theology.[10] Indeed, he was one of the foremost proponents of a supralapsarian order of the decrees, that is, he viewed the object of the decree of election and reprobation not as fallen humanity, but as humanity as creatable and liable to fall (*homo creabilis et labilis*).[11] Perkins' formulation of Reformed theology is therefore particularly stark. If ever someone was liable to object to the image of Christ knocking on the doors of sinners' hearts desiring admittance, it is Perkins.

It is important to note, however, that Perkins' robust predestinarian theology did not lead him to deny that the message of the gospel is for all. He stated, for example, that

> the calling of God [in the gospel] is twofold. The first is generall, when God calles a whole Nation, kingdome, and countrie, that is when hee offers them salvation in the meanes; as when hee sends his word amongst them… by these meanes the Lord generally calleth men, offering, but often not giving grace offered.[12]

This general calling and "offer" was in distinction from "special" calling where "grace is not only offered, but given also".[13] Perkins was clear that even to the reprobate, in "the preaching of the word, God proffereth salvation to them, and

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[8] Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 461.

[9] E.g. Patterson, *William Perkins*, 218; Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 494.

[10] E.g. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 30-46.

[11] Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 36-38.

[12] William Perkins, *A Godlie and Learned Exposition Upon the Epistle of Jude* in *The Workes of that famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, Mr William Perkins* (3 vols.; London: John Legatt, 1626-1631), 3:482. It has been suggested that Perkins knows "no conditional gospel promise" (Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 54). However, Perkins' writings do contain references to conditional covenant promises. For instance, "in baptisme… the *covenant of grace* between God and the party baptized, is solemnly confirmed and sealed". In this covenant "God promise[s] to the party baptized… Christ with all the blessings that come by him". However, this "promise" is suspended on the "condition" to which the "party baptized [is] bound", namely, "to receive Christ, & to repent his sin". ("Six Principles" in Perkins, *Works*, 1:7.) Perkins is abundantly clear that this conditional promise is to those who ultimately are reprobate, and for them "damnation shall bee the greater, because he breaketh his vow made to God". ("Six Principles" in Perkins, *Works*, 1:8.) Indeed, Perkins said of the Jews who crucified Christ that "the covenant and the promises still belonged unto them". ("An Exposition of the Creed" in Perkins, *Works*, 1:307.) In sum, *pace* Moore, "Threats and promises are to be understood with their conditions. Those are to bee conceived with the condition of faith and repentance." ("The Art of Prophesying" in Perkins, *Works*, 2:657.) Woolsey's general comments on Perkins and covenant conditions are helpful. (Woolsey *Unity and Continuity*, 484-5).

[13] Perkins, "Jude" in *Works*, 3:483. Perkins also stated regarding the "means of salvation" that "he offereth them to many, and they are sufficient to save all mankinde, but all shall not bee saved thereby, because by faith they will not receive them". "Six Principles" in Perkins, *Works*, 1:5.

calls them".[14] He also stated that "reprobates have some prerogatives from God; and that he is patient towards them: that before he will destroy them, he useth many means to winne them."[15] In addition to holding that the gospel speaks to all, Perkins also held that it was God's revealed will that all who receive the gospel offer should accept it.[16] He stated that God "wills the conversion of Jerusalem, in that he approoves it as a good thing in itselfe: in that he commands it, and exhorts men to it: in that he gives them all outward meanes of their conversion".[17]

In the first citation above, Perkins sees God dealing with "a whole Nation, kingdome, and countrie". There is a universality to the nature of the church as, under Perkins' definition here, it is coterminous with the nation.[18] The church is not defined practically as a gathered, exclusive group of believers.[19] As such, when Perkins comes to define the various classes of people who are in the church, to whom he preaches, he lists: ignorant and unteachable unbelievers, ignorant but teachable unbelievers, knowledgeable but un-humbled unbelievers, humbled unbelievers, believers, backsliders in faith or lifestyle. Perkins then believes, on principle, that he is preaching to mixed congregations of believers and unbelievers, and this is how the church is.[20] How might this impact Perkins' understanding of Rev 3:20? He does not intuitively equate the church with those who are regenerate. The wheat and the tares grow together in the visible church until the day of judgment.

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[14] William Perkins, "A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation, or in the estate of grace" in *Works*, 1:356. Perkins cited as evidence, Matt. 22:4, Luke 13:24, Prov. 1:24, John 9:41 and Luke 14:6.

[15] Perkins, "The estate of damnation or grace" in *Works*, 1:360. Perkins is clear that this gospel which "commandeth us… to Beleeve and repent" is one of the "sea of mercies the Lord doth pour upon man". This mercy is one that relates to "all men" rather than belonging only to "his children". Perkins, "A Treatise of Christian Equity" in *Works*, 2:449-50.

[16] Perkins explicitly endorses the "distinction in the schooles" between the "signifying will" and the "will of God's good-pleasure". ("The Art of Prophesying" in Perkins, *Works*, 2:657.) Compare Woolsey *Unity and Continuity*, 489 with Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 68.

[17] However, God also (and ultimately) "wills it not, in that he did not decree effectually to worke their conversion". William Perkins, A Treatise of God's Free Grace, And Man's Free Will (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legat, printer to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1601), 44-45. Perkins also states that God "who willeth not all things alike in all, doth will conversion in some only in respect of approbation, exhortation, and meanes; in others he willeth it also as touching the decree of working it. Here is no disagreement in the wils [*sic*], but sundry degrees of willing in regard of us, according to which God is said both to will and to nill." Perkins, "A Treatise of Predestination" in *Works*, 2:609.

[18] Thus, the Church of England is a true church, not because of a gathered regenerate membership, but because it offers to the nation the "means of calling to the faith by the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles". Perkins, "Jude" in *Works*, 3:482.

[19] It is a group of those who "professe the Gospel outwardly" but this is not to be confounded with each member professing genuine regeneration, for "a particular church is a mixt company of true professors and dissemblers". "Commentary on Revelation" in Perkins, *Works*, 3:278.

[20] See, http://9marks.org/review/book-review-the-art-of-prophesying-by-william-perkins/ [cited 12 October 2019].

Stark advocate of predestination though he was, Perkins' ecclesiology leads him therefore to an understanding of Rev 3:20 where he states that this verse teaches Christ has "a hearty desire of their conversion, which hee earnestly seeketh".[21] Rev 3:20 is a conversionist appeal. Further, this appeal expressing Christ's "desire" was capable of being rejected. Perkins referred to "the Jews [of Christ's day]… regarded not when God sent his owne Sonne from his bosome to knocke at the doore of their hearts". Christ, for Perkins, as he knocks on the hearts of the hearers in the gospel, gives to all in the visible church a "conditional promise" that any who came to him would receive "mutual communion and fellowship with Christ".[22]

This, if you will, is the foundational "Puritan" exegesis of Rev 3:20. Clothed in a doctrine of the church which equates it broadly with the nation, Christ's appeal to Laodicea is taken as expressing "a hearty desire of their conversion, which hee earnestly seeketh".

We will now take our detour into Scotland.

II. Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661)

Samuel Rutherford is perhaps the most significant Scottish theologian of his generation and, like Perkins, was a theologian of international standing.[23] Thomas Torrance declares that Rutherford "was undoubtedly one of the greatest and most influential theologians in the Calvinist and Presbyterian tradition of the Post-Reformation Kirk".[24]

Rutherford was ordained to the parish of Anworth in 1627, having previously served (prior to his dismissal for misconduct) as Professor of Humanities at Edinburgh University. Rutherford's pastorate was marked by

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[21] William Perkins, *A Godly and Leearned Exposition or Commentarie upon the three first chapters of the Revelation* (London: Printed by Adam Islip for Cuthbert Burbie, 1607), 207-211. It is wrong to argue that as the church is "the company of the elect" the "promises" and "offers" made to all in the church do not entail a "conditional gospel promise" as in the church "the polarity between elect and reprobate… knows a short respite". (Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 54.) Perkins' "A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation, or in the estate of grace" opens with a lengthy discussion of "how farre a man may goe in the profession of the gospel and yet be a wicked man and a Reprobate." (Perkins, "The estate of damnation or grace" in *Works*, 1:356-62.) Reprobation cuts through the church as well as the "lost world". Indeed, if reprobation is not relevant for the church, it is not relevant for England, as Perkins "preached to a nation in which everyone was, at least outwardly, considered a Christian, one within the compass of God's merciful calling to Christ through the preaching of the word". Paul Schafer, "Protestant 'Scholasticism' at Elizabethan Cambridge: William Perkins and a Reformed theology of the Heart", in Carl Trueman and R. Scott Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1991), 155.

[22] Perkins, *Revelation*, 207-211.

[23] A recent helpful study of Rutherford is Guy Richard, *The Supremacy of God in the Theology of Samuel Rutherford* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009).

[24] Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 93.

strident anti-Arminianism (he published *Exercitationes Apologeticae Pro Divina Gratia* in 1636). As a result, he was eventually banished to Aberdeen, but he returned to prominence in 1638 as the ecclesiastical tide turned, and was appointed Professor of Divinity at St Andrews University. He attended the Westminster Assembly as one of the Scottish commissioners, and had the longest attendance record of any Scottish divine, exercising significant influence on the Assembly's debates. He returned to his work in St Andrews and was twice (1648 and 1651) offered professorships at Dutch universities, which he turned down. With the restoration of Charles II in 1660, Rutherford once again found himself out of favour. His *Lex Rex* was publicly burnt and he was charged with treason, but died before he could answer the charge.

Rutherford, then, is a figure of significance for mid-seventeenth-century Reformed theology. Like Perkins, Rutherford was a supralapsarian. Again, he stands at the stark end of the predestinarian scale. Also, like Perkins, though in a Presbyterian rather than Episcopalian setting, Rutherford is deeply committed to the idea of a national church.

1. The Church

Rutherford's understanding of the covenant of grace entailed that just as God made a covenant with the nation Israel in the Old Testament which granted the "word of the gospel" to everyone within Israel,[25] so "the external Church Covenant and Church right to means of grace is given to a society and made with Nations under the New Testament".[26] Within this overarching external covenant made with nations, there were two types of individuals: There were those who were only in the covenant externally, and there were those who were in the covenant internally and really, as those who had embraced Christ by faith.[27] As part of being in covenant with God externally, "the word of the Covenant is preached to you, an offer of Christ is made in the preached Gospel to you".[28] Therefore, Rutherford held that "it cannot be denyed, but *the promise is to all* the Reprobate in the Visible Church whether they believe or not, for Christ is preached and promises of the Covenant are preached to *Simon Magus*, to *Judas* and all the hypocrites *who stumble at the Word*…"[29]

[25] Samuel Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened* (Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson, 1655), 78.

[26] *Ibid*., 83. He did not, of course, believe that the gospel was restricted *per* se to covenanted nations, stating that "One that hath the Tongues may preach the Gospel to the Nation he comes unto." Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 242 [Margin].

[27] *Ibid*., 72. The reprobate within the visible church are therefore, to an extent, under the covenant of grace. See Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 94.

[28] *Ibid*., 87-88.

[29] *Ibid.*, 88. He stated that "It were nonsense to say to men under the externally proposed Covenant… *there is no promise made to you, nor to your seed and children, until first you believe*." Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 89. To say that no conditional promise was made to all would have been to "ignorantly confound *the promise*, and the thing promised; the Covenant, and

Notice, again the comprehensive nature of Rutherford's definition of the church. It is emphatically not a gathered congregation of elect believers.

2. Gospel Offers in General

We have already seen that Rutherford believes the gospel is for all who hear it. Rutherford is fulsome in the general language he uses to describe this gospel offer. He believed that Christ was "most compassionate to sinners, inviting them to come".[30] This invitation included "obtesting" (begging someone earnestly) and "praying".[31] So Rutherford says: "It is ordinary for a man to beg from God, for we are but His beggars; but it is a miracle to see God beg at man. Yet here is the Potter begging from the clay; the Saviour seeking from sinners."[32]

Rutherford also held that Christ was "most compassionate to sinners, inviting them to come" (Matt 11:28-29 and John 7:37),[33] and "wept and shed tears" at the rejection of the gospel (Matt 23:37 and Luke 19:41-2).[34] To give some further examples, Rutherford interpreted Isa 55:1 "as if the Lord were grieved, and said, Wo[e] is me, alas, that thirsty souls should die in the thirst, and will not come to the water of life, Christ, and drink gratis, freely and live".[35] God, Rutherford was clear, could say, "As I live, I delight not (so as you slanderously, and blasphemously say) in the death of a sinner; by my life, I desire you may repent and live."[36]

3. Revelation 3:20

In this general context of the kind of language Rutherford used to describe the gospel offer, and given his definition of the church, it is natural that he sees

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the benefits Covenanted." Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 90. Again, "So the Lord promiseth life and forgiveness shall be given to these who are externally in the covenant, providing they believe, but the Lord promiseth not a new heart and grace to believe, to these that are only externally in the covenant. And yet he promiseth both to the elect." Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 94. As such, he explicitly denies that passages such as Hebrews 8 say *everything* that is to be said about the new covenant. Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 347. He did hold that the "the special and principall Covenanted blessing" was promised only to the elect, and therefore on occasion he felt it was appropriate to say, "the promises of the Covenant of Grace are not *really* made to the Reprobate". Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 92.

[30] Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 358. See also Samuel Rutherford, *Fourteen Communion Sermons* (Glasgow: Charles Glass & Co., 1877), 63, 64.

[31] Samuel Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself* (repr., Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1727), 20. See also Rutherford, *Communion Sermons*, 356-8.

[32] Rutherford, *Communion Sermons*, 254.

[33] Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 358.

[34] *Ibid.,* 358. See also Rutherford, *Christ Dying*, 512.

[35] Rutherford, *Christ Dying*, 511.

[36] *Ibid.*, 515. He is explicitly paraphrasing Ezek 18:32 and 33:11. See also Rutherford, *Communion Sermons*, 356-8, where he states that God is "serious in... [calling for] the conversion of a sinner", and that "Christ has also an earnest desire that we should come".

Rev. 3:20 as speaking of "God's *outward* calling, in respect of the word and sacraments... the Lord is without knocking for admittance".[37]

Rutherford preached explicitly on Rev 3:20 on at least one occasion. In his sermon Rutherford notes that in the Letter to Laodicea "The state of men in the visible church [is] implied; though few possess Christ, high thoughts of him; and obedience to him; yet many, most of them, keep their hearts shut against him. Behold I stand without at the door."[38] Rutherford goes on to say the text speaks of "Christ's knocking or transaction with the poor creatures for opening their hearts to him". In this action we have "His standing, waiting… his earnest desire and importunity of entrance… his call and invitation[?] for where a knocking is injoyned, then must needs be a called implied." Rutherford outlines "argument[s] or motive[s]… to persuade poor creatures to let him in", one of the greatest of which is that Christ in his patience and grace has waited long for admittance: "I have stood a long time, I have been standing and waiting for you many years… you would have abhorred to have waited on the greatest man in the world as I have waited on you a worm, nay, I say still waiting for you… I stand at the door, a poor cold place. I stand despised and contemned… I am kept out, and that out of my own home."[39] That is how Rutherford preached Revelation 3:20.

4. Conclusion

Rutherford's understanding of Rev 3:20 is an example of what John Coffey has called the "intense style of extemporary conversionist preaching" common in Scotland at this time.[40] Rutherford saw no contradiction between even a supralapsarian ordering of the decrees and taking Rev 3:20 as a conversionist appeal.

At this point we will return to Puritan England and consider John Flavel and John Owen.

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[37] Rutherford, *Communion Sermons*, 70-71. See also Rutherford's unpublished manuscript sermon on Revelation 3:20 in Papers of Robert Douglas, Edinburgh University, DC.5.31, 191-4.

[38] Papers of Robert Douglas, Edinburgh University, DC.5.31, 191-4. All following references in this paragraph are to this work.

[39] A very similar point is made by the Puritan Obadiah Sedgwick: "He [Christ] hath stood at our doors more than one day or night, more than one week or two, more than one year or two, more than twenty years or two. Would he do this if he were not willing to come in and save us?" Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Riches of God's Grace Displayed, in the Offer of Salvation to Poor Sinners [Seven Sermons on Rev. iii. 20]* (London: n.p., 1658), 22.

[40] John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 39.

III. John Flavel (1627-1691)

Flavel is one of the better-known Puritan ministers.[41] He studied at University College, Oxford, and was ordained in 1650 in a Presbyterian manner. He served as minister in parishes in Devon up until his ejection under the 1662 Act of Uniformity. From 1662 he continued to preach as able. On the relaxation of restrictions on dissenters in 1687 a meeting house was built for him in Dartmouth. Flavel in his later life was active in trying to bring unity between Presbyterian and Congregationalist dissenters, acting as moderator at a meeting of dissenting ministers shortly before his death.

1. The Church

Flavel has a series of sermons in volume 4 of his works entitled, England's Duty under the Present Gospel.[42] This is a collection of eleven sermons on Rev 3:20 which "explains God's offer of Christ to sinners, the natural heart that resists that offer, and Christ's patience in persisting with the offer".[43] The occasion of this sermon series is the *de facto* abdication of the Roman Catholic James II, and installation of Protestant William III and Mary II as King and Queen. Flavel used that opportunity to address the nation; he felt that "England hath now a day of special mercy… this sweet voice is still heard in England, Behold I stand at the door and knock…"[44] And this is in the face of "all the high and horrid provocations, the atheism, profaneness, and bitter enmity against light and reformation".[45] England for Flavel is backsliding Laodicea – a church state in which many (most) members need to be converted.[46] The ecclesiology of the national church undergirds Flavel's use of Scripture.

2. Revelation 3:20

Flavel is up front about his intentions in handling the text. He says, "As to this treatise itself, thou wilt find it a persuasive to open thy heart to Christ… If thou be in an unregenerate state, then he solemnly demands in this text admission into the soul he made, by the consent of thy will…"[47] Not that Flavel deems the

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[41] A recent helpful study on Flavel is Brian H. Cosby, *John Flavel: Puritan Life and Thought in Stuart England* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2014).

[42] John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel* (6 vols.; London: W. Baynes and Son, 1820), 4:1-335.

[43] Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 252.

[44] Flavel, *Works*, 4:4.

[45] *Ibid.*, 4:4.

[46] Another Puritan, Obadiah Sedgwick, held Rev 3:20 in its context is addressed to "a company of mere hypocrites" They were "a most destitute people: not a dot of goodness, nor any one rag of grace, nor good in any one part". Sedgwick, *The Riches of Grace*, 13-14.

[47] Flavel, *Works*, 4:5.

text is silent in speaking to believers; it does that as well. But by no means is that to the exclusion of the text being a conversionist appeal.

In Rev 3:20 we have "Christ's wooing voice, full of heavenly rhetoric to win and gain the hearts of sinners to himself".[48] In the text, "Christ the first-born of mercies, and in him pardon, peace, and eternal salvation are set before you."[49] And it is God himself who offers Christ to all: "Consider who it is that makes these gracious tenders of pardon, peace, and salvation, to you; even that God whom you have so deeply wronged, whose laws you have violated, whose mercies you have spurned, and whose wrath you have justly incensed. His patience groans under the burden of your daily provocations; he loses nothing if you be damned, and receives no benefit if you be saved; yet the first motions of mercy and salvation to you freely arise out of his grace and good pleasure. God intreats you to be reconciled, 2 Cor. v. 20."[50]

And so from this verse Flavel draws the truth that,

> Christ is now come near to us in the gospel, "Behold he stands at the door and knocks": and I am here this day to demand your answer, and in his name I do solemnly demand it; what shall I return to him that sent me? What sayest thou, sinner? Wilt thou open to Christ, or wilt thou shut him out; and with him thy own pardon, peace, and salvation.[51]

Again, "Christ this day solemnly demands entrance into thy soul; he begs thee to open to him, 2 Cor. v. 20. he commands thee to open unto him, 1 John iii. 23."[52] Flavel powerfully applied this verse to his hearers, pleading with them to be saved:

> O how tenderly did Christ resent it, when Jerusalem rejected him! It is said, Luke xix. 41. "That when Jesus came nigh to the city, he wept over it." The Redeemer's tears wept over obstinate Jerusalem, spake the zeal and fervency of his affection to their salvation; how loth Christ is to give up sinners. What a mournful voice is that in John v. 40. "And you will not come unto me, that you might have life." How fain would I give you life? but you would rather die than come unto me for it. What can Christ do more to express his willingness? All the sorrows that ever touched the heart of Christ from men, were upon this account, that they would not yield to his calls and invitations."[53]

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[48] Flavel, *Works*, 4:18.

[49] *Ibid.*, 4:27.

[50] *Ibid*., 4:27. Flavel is unexceptional in seeing the offer as from God. Consider the words of Obadiah Sedgwick: "Christ is God, and because he is God he is merciful, willing to show mercy to sinners in misery, and unwilling to destroy them... God is a long suffering God, and so is Christ; He is a much-suffering Christ, and a long suffering Christ. 2 Pet. 3.9 The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is the greatest of mercy to be willing to pity or pardon sinners, and it is the greatest of goodness, to offer help unto them, And it is the greatest of patience to wait long on them." Sedgwick, *The Riches of Grace*, 49-50.

[51] Flavel, *Works*, 4:108.

[52] *Ibid.*, 4:110.

[53] *Ibid.*, 4:117. This image of a weeping Christ is not unique to Flavel. For example, Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Riches of Grace*, 44-45.

Flavel excluded no hearer from this heartfelt call to salvation in Rev 3:20:

> This expression extends the gracious offer of Christ, and brings in hope to every hearer. It is a proclamation… if any man; as if Christ should say, I will have this offer of my grace to go round to every particular person; if thou, or thou, or thou, the greatest, the vilest of sinners, of what quality or condition soever, old or young, profane or hypocritical, will hear my voice, and open to me, I will come into their souls.[54]

Flavel, like Perkins and Rutherford, sees Rev 3:20 as fundamentally a conversionist appeal based on a particular understanding of a mixed national church. We now turn to John Owen, who questioned that model of the church.

IV. John Owen (1616-1683)

The last to be considered is John Owen.[55] The "prince of the puritans", "puritanism's greatest theologian" or, as Oliver Crisp calls him, "one of the most important Reformed theologians to have written in the English language".[56]

1. The Church

What distinguishes Owen from the other theologians considered is his ecclesiology. Owen, though he began as a mild Presbyterian, became a convinced Congregationalist. Owen then defines the church as "an especial society or congregation of professed believers".[57] What Owen is arguing is that "the church consists of visible believers, voluntarily joining together in a locality to practice the ordinances and institutions of Christ".[58] The church is "a particular congregation of covenanting visible saints, meeting together to observe Christ's ordinances and keep his commands, with his guides and rulers".[59]

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[54] Flavel, *Works*, 4:143. Obadiah Sedgwick similarly comments regarding the unbelievers of Laodicea: Christ "calls to them, and offers himself to them, to all of them, to every one, he excepts not a man; but if any man will, &c." (Sedgwick, *The Riches of Grace*, 115). See also, Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant* (London: Printed by Edward Mottershed, for Adoniram Byfield, 1661), 533; Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Fountain Opened: and the Water of Life Flowing forth to thirsty sinners. Wherein is set out, Christ's earnest and gracious invitation of poor sinners to come unto the waters* (London: T. R. and E. M. for Adoniram Byfield, 1657), 315-6, 381.

[55] One recent study of Owen is, Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[56] Kelly Kapic and Mark Jones (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), dust jacket.

[57] *The Works of John Owen,* ed. W. Goold; 16 vols.; repr. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 15:262.

[58] Robert Oliver, ed., *John Owen, The Man and His Theology* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2002), 167.

[59] Richard Daniels, "A Christ-Centered Church, Chapter 16 of The Christology of John Owen," 15 [cited 12 October 2019]. Online: http://johnowen.org/media/daniels_christology_owen.pdf

2. Revelation 3:20

In contrast to, for example, Flavel's understanding of Rev 3:20 as "Christ's free and general invitation to sinners",[60] Owen applies the text to believers. He states, "In the celebration of the gospel ordinances, God in Christ proposeth himself in an intimate manner to the believing soul… So doth Christ also exhibit himself thereunto: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock…'"[61] Again he comments, "Christ will sup with believers: he refreshes himself with his own graces in 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."[62]

Now, Owen does admit that "it is questionable whether she [Laodicea] had any thing of the life and power of grace to be found in her or no."[63] He does admit that "the Church of Laodicea, having for a while enjoyed the word, [but] fell into such a tepid condition… Rev. iii. 15, 16".[64] He goes so far as to say,

> What, then, saith he of Laodicea? "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked". Oh, woful and sad disappointment! Oh, dreadful surprisal! Ah! how many Laodicean churches have we in the world! how many professors are members of these churches! not to mention the generality of men that live under the means of grace; all which have good hopes of their eternal condition, whilst they are despised and abhorred by the only Judge.[65]

Thus, "Laodicea knew much; but yet because she knew not her wants, she had almost as good have known nothing."[66]

And perhaps because of this, Owen does seem to apply Rev 3:20 as a conversionist appeal on occasion: "Behold, he stands at the door of your souls, and knocks: O reject him not, lest you seek him and find him not! … if you never come to know him, it had been better you had never been. Whilst it is called To-day, then, harden not your hearts."[67] He is also speaking "to such poor souls as, having deceived themselves, or neglected utterly their eternal condition, are not as yet really and in truth made partakers of this forgiveness."[68] Speaking to them he says, "The Judge stands at the door. Before he deal with you as a judge, he knocks with a tender of mercy."[69]

Yet at other times he explicitly limits Rev 3:20 to the elect:

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[60] Flavel, *Works*, 4:169.
[61] Owen, *Works*, 15:461. See also Owen, *Works*, 1:116, 318, 398; 7:347, 437-8.
[62] *Ibid.*, 2:40.
[63] *Ibid.*, 1:446.
[64] *Ibid.*, 8:25.
[65] *Ibid.*, 6:544. See also *Works*, 12:123.
[66] *Ibid.*, 8:37.
[67] *Ibid.*, 2:53.
[68] *Ibid.*, 6:537.
[69] *Ibid.*, 6:538.

Towards his elect not yet effectually called. Rev. iii. 20, he stands waiting at the door of their hearts and knocks for an entrance. He deals with them by all means, and yet stands and waits until "his head is filled with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night", Cant. v. 2… Often times for a long season he is by them scorned in his person, persecuted in his saints and ways, reviled in his word, whilst he stands at the door in the word of his patience, with his heart full of love towards their poor rebellious souls.[70]

Owen also explicitly criticises Arminius' use of Rev 3:20:

"All unregenerate men", saith Arminius, "have, by virtue of their free-will, a power of resisting the Holy Spirit, of rejecting the offered grace of God, of contemning the counsel of God concerning themselves, of refusing the gospel of grace, of not opening the heart to him that knocketh." What a stout idol is this, whom neither the Holy Spirit, the grace and counsel of God, the calling of the gospel, the knocking at the door of the heart, can move at all, or in the least measure prevail against him![71]

To summarise. For Owen, Rev 3:20, is taken broadly not as a conversionist text, but as an appeal to believers, or as a description of the fellowship Christ has with his people:

Observation 1. The intimacy of the Lord Jesus with his saints, and the delight he takes in them. He dwelleth with them, he dwelleth in them, – he takes them to the nearest union with himself possible… "If", saith he, "any man hear my voice, and open to me, I will come in to him." And what then? "I will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20[72]

It is a text in which,

In the celebration of gospel ordinances, God in Christ proposeth himself in an intimate manner to the believing soul as his God and reward… So doth Christ also exhibit himself thereunto: Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Faith, therefore, directed by the word to rest in God, to receive the Lord Christ in the observation of his ordinances, is excited, increased, strengthened, and that in answer unto the appointment and promises of God.[73]

Rev 3:20 then, for Owen, speaks of existing, though weak, cold faith, being "excited, increased, strengthened". It is not a conversionist appeal.

V. Conclusion

To conclude with a number of points:

1. Reformed and Puritan preachers at and around the time of the Westminster Assembly were "conversionist" preachers. In pursuing the aim of conversions, their presentations of the gospel to their congregations were expressed in terms that some who caricature Reformed theology might not expect of predestinarian theologians. For example, Obadiah Sedgewick preached,

[70] Owen, Works, 6:138-9.
[71] Owen, Works, 10:117.
[72] Owen, Works, 8:305.
[73] Owen, Works, 15:461.

…at their doors does Christ stand and knock, He begs at the doors of beggars, mercy begs to misery, happiness begs to wretchedness, riches begs to poverty... he hath stood at thy doors with promises in his mouth, and with tears in his eyes; he hath stood at thy door with heaven in his fingers, and sorrow in his soul.[74]

And yet this is simply standard preaching for the members of the Westminster Assembly, even supralapsarians. When scholarship presents such preaching as evidence of hypothetical universalism, as in the case of Jonathan Moore's study of the preaching of John Preston, it is simply incorrect, unless we wish to call the most vehement opponents of hypothetical universalism, such as Rutherford, hypothetical universalists.[75]

2. The conversionist use of Rev 3:20 outlines two practical consequences of the general seventeenth-century Reformed teaching on the gospel offer. First, it placed the responsibility for damnation on the sinner and not on God:

Of the just cause of a sinners damnation: It is of and from himself: never lay it on God's decrees, or want of means and helps. What could I have done more for my vineyard, &c? Isa. 5. So what could Christ do more? he calls, and crys, and knocks, and entreats, and waits, and weeps, and yet you will not accept of him, or salvation by him? ... I was offered Christ and grace, I felt him knocking by his Spirit but I slighted him, grieved him, rejected him, and now it is just with God to shut the door of mercy against me.[76]

Second, it removes any excuse from unbelief. As the gospel is offered to all, there is no just reason to reject it:

There is not a sinner in this place, but Jesus Christ saith unto him, if thou wilt hear and open, I will come unto thee, and be thine, I know well enough what thou hast been, and what thou hast done… yet at thy door I stand this day, and knock, I will receive thee unto mercy, I will forgive thee all these sins, I will accept, I will save thy soul, if thou wilt open thy heart this day unto me and let me in. O Brethren, for Christ his sake refuse not Christ, do not reject, nor neglect so great salvation, so ample a salvation, so every soul inviting a salvation.[77]

3. What distinguishes these presentations from the twentieth century "mass evangelism" we began with is not in seeing, or not seeing, Rev 3:20 as a conversionist appeal. Both are united in that. However, the Puritans never preached an impotent Christ. In the words of Sedgwick "It is himself [Christ] who makes the heart willing to open."[78] Or as Flavel acknowledges at the start of his sermons, "if the Lord should help you open your hearts now to Christ".[79]

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[74] Sedgwick, *The Riches of Grace,* 15, 44-45.

[75] It is hardly appropriate to portray as "hypothetical universalist" (i.e. a denial of particular redemption) the idea that the gospel offer is "a serious command and an earnest beseeching on the part of God". Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 130. And using a conversionist reading of Rev 3:20 as evidence of the same is simply mistaken. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 137.

[76] Sedgwick, *The Riches of Grace*, 55-56.

[77] *Ibid.,*142-3.

[78] Sedgwick, *The Riches of Grace*, 178.

[79] Flavel, *Works*, 4:18.

Again he states, "Not a soul will open, with all the reasons and demonstrations in the world, till the Almighty Power of God be put forth to that end."[80] Or again, "no man's will savingly and effectually opens to receive Christ, until the spiritual quickening voice of Christ be first heard by the soul."[81] That is why Packer called the evangelistic use of Rev 3:20 by the mass evangelists of the twentieth century a "half-truth". He was much happier with the Puritan understanding as "when they applied Rev. iii. 20 evangelistically… they took the words 'Behold, I stand as the door and knock' as disclosing, not the impotence of his grace apart from man's cooperation… but rather the grace of His omnipotence in freely offering Himself to needy souls."[82] In preaching the gospel invitation from Rev 3:20, the Puritans did not disguise or fail to disclose the need for the accompanying sovereign work of God.

4. Ecclesiology matters more than we often realise. The nature of the church is involved in the exegesis of Rev 3:20. As figures like Owen move to a more "gathered church" model, then it becomes a natural option to understand Rev 3:20 as a text that applies to believers. Conversely, in a "mixed church" ecclesiology, it much more easily becomes a conversionist appeal. Rev 3:20 is not automatically limited to believers by a congregational ecclesiology. David Clarkson, Owen's successor, would be one counter example.[83] Jonathan Edwards would be another.[84] However, as some scholars have suggested, when ecclesiology changes from an Anglican or a Presbyterian state church ecclesiology to a gathered-church type congregationalism, more changes than simply a view of church government. Inevitably other things change too. Ryan Kelly has commented on the Savoy declaration:

> …the changes made to the WCF in the SDF are not merely those which touch upon church polity. In addition to the obvious changes on the church… there are some fairly significant doctrinal differences on repentance, assurance, gospel/justification, the covenants, eschatology, etc. Some of the Savoy's alterations may be considered merely an elaboration or a sophistication of the WCF. But others may represent common deeper theological and hermeneutical differences between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in those days.[85]

John Owen's exegesis of Revelation 3:20 may be one further evidence of this difference.[86]

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[80] *Ibid.*, 4:42-43.

[81] *Ibid.*, 4:170.

[82] J.I. Packer, "The Puritan View of Preaching the Gospel," How Shall they Hear? (Puritan & Reformed Studies Conference, 1959), 18.

[83] David Clarkson, *The Works of David Clarkson,* 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988), 2:36-37.

[84] See, e.g., his sermon on Rev 3:20. Jonathan Edwards, "318. Rev. 3:20(a)," n.p. [cited 12 October 2019]. Online: http://edwards.yale.edu/research/sermon-index/canonical?chapter=3&book=66.

[85] Kapic and Jones, *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*, 15.

[86] These differences should not, of course, be overplayed with the resultant damage to Christian unity and fellowship.

Foundations 77 (November 2019): 68-76

BOOK REVIEWS

The History of Scottish Theology Volume 1, From Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy
David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott (Editors), Oxford University Press, 2019, 416pp, £95

This first of a three-volume set on the history of Scottish theology is timely. It has been too long since the last reliable systematic account of theological developments in Scotland, John MacLeod's *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974). However, while advancing the understanding of Scottish theology in many ways, in other respects this volume falls short of the usefulness of works like MacLeod's.

To begin with the negatives, the introduction paints a depressing (but realistic) portrait of the editor's vision for Scottish theology, no longer proclaiming and advancing the truths of Scripture codified in the long Scottish Reformation, but uncertain and adrift in a pluralistic and secularising world. The volume is also academic, which brings the benefits of rigour (mostly) and a certain detachment but which leaves no real space for evaluation. As a multi-author work the chapters are inevitably uneven in their interest and quality. A chapter which should be a highlight, "Federal Theology from the Reformation to c.1677" is a particular disappointment in its lack of understanding of the federal theology it seeks to articulate.

However, with these caveats, the volume is successful in its aims. While each reader will no doubt have wanted more in certain sections (for myself, ecclesiology and the Westminster Confession needed more space) there is a broad coverage of the pre-Reformation, Reformation and post-Reformation church. It is impossible to discuss every chapter that merits attention, but there are a few that stand out for their significance.

Richard Cross on Duns Scotus is magisterial. To capture simply and accurately the dense and convoluted thought of Scotus is no small achievement. Of particular note is how Cross outline his views on Divine simplicity, drawing out in the process differences with Aquinas. In short, Scotus has a less rigid view of simplicity than Aquinas which reminds us that "classical theism", while an appropriate term, is variegated rather than monolithic.

Euan Cameron on "John Knox and Andrew Melville" provides a faithful view of these men in context. It is correct to conclude that "these men were in fact theologians of stark, simple principle, too often at sea in the foreign environment of courts and politics". Ian Hazlett's "Reformed Theology in Confessions and Catechism to c.1620" is a wonderful, punchy chapter. Not all

of its suggestions should be accepted, but it does capture the vibrancy of early Reformed theology.

The stand out chapter is Guy M. Richard's "The Covenant Idea in Mid-Seventeenth Century Scotland". Richard outlines the common terminology of the covenants of grace, works and redemption which were used at the time in Scotland. Particularly helpful is the discussion of the covenant of grace. Richard guides readers carefully through the flexibility of language used to describe the covenant of grace in terms of external and internal participation. Speaking externally, the covenant was between "God and men", "God and the visible church", "God and sinners". Speaking internally and savingly, the covenant was between "God and the redeemed", "God… [and] The Mediator Christ, and the children that the Lord gave him". Thus, Richard notes "the covenant… had a universal aspect corresponding to the free offer of the gospel". But additionally, "God actually fulfils the conditions of the covenant on behalf of the elect". As such, the covenant of grace is "bilateral in its presentation to humankind but unilateral in its administration on behalf of the elect". For anyone wanting to understand Reformed (not just Scottish) covenant theology, this chapter is a must read.

This links to another chapter in the volume which deals with covenant theology, this time in the context of the early eighteenth century "Marrow controversy" which touched on legalism, antinomianism, the free offer of the gospel and may other vital topics. At the end of his chapter Stephen Myers rightly concludes that supporters of the Marrow proposed "from within a robustly Westminsterian system, a federal theology structurally resistant to the legalising tendencies so often alleged against federal thought" and that their "evangelical federalism is warmly evangelistic not in spite of, but because of, its adherence to a thoroughly Westminsterian federalism". However, the chapter as a whole is deeply disappointing. Its fundamental thesis is that while supporters of the Marrow were "orthodox", so were their opponents. As such there was no "legalism" present in the Scottish church, just two differing outworkings of tensions inherent in earlier Scottish covenant theology. But Haddow's covenant theology, as (rightly) presented here, is not the covenant theology of Rutherford, Gillespie, Durham and Dickson.

Guy Richard's chapter shows how easily seventeenth-century theology viewed the covenant of grace as being "with sinners" but for Haddow in "the Covenant of Grace… the indefinite category of 'sinner' had already given way, logically, to the categories of 'elect sinners' and 'reprobate sinners'". That is also why Haddow's doctrine of the gospel offer is different to that of Rutherford et al. He has fundamentally altered the outward administration of the covenant of grace. James Durham (1622-58), for one, unlike Haddow, was very comfortable with the idea of the gospel as a gift. Every one of the leading federal theologians of the mid-seventeenth century would have objected to the summary of Haddow's teaching that "the Gospel was to be offered not to

sinners indefinitely, but to sinners who, by their divinely-enabled obedience to the gospel commands to repent and believe, had manifested their identity among the definite group of the elect". Sinclair Ferguson's recent treatment of this controversy in *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance-Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016) is much, much better.

For those with an interest in Scottish church history this set will prove invaluable. For others, the prohibitive price is not worth the investment. But certain chapters are definitely worth reading, whatever your interests, if you come across the volume in a library.

Donald John MacLean
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On the Road with Saint Augustine: A Real-World Spirituality for Restless Hearts
James K. A. Smith (Brazos Press, 2019), 240pp, £16.99

Smith should need no introduction, though if you have not come across him, then this book is a good place to start. *On the Road* is a fascinating blend of biography, theology and spritiuality, and Smith writes beautifully. Rather than repeating biography, of which there is much on Augustine – with Rowan Williams having most recently written an accessible but thorough introduction – Smith focuses on him as "the patron saint of restless heart". Tracing through both Augustine's life and work the theme of understanding the self, this is both a guide to reading Augustine and a framework for understanding ourselves

Smith notes throughout that there is much in Augustine that makes him amusingly contemporary to readers like me, Westerners in the twenty-first century, in a way that is a surprise without the common language of the gospel. What ties us together, of course, is the eschatological reality that we find ourselves in the same time, the time between the times. Smith writes that "The graced soul gifted with freedom is still on the way, still sighing after an ultimate release from the parts of myself I hate and hide. This longing, for Augustine, is eschatological, a kingdom-come hunger", echoing the great Pauline paradox of Romans 6-8.

One particular highlight, very relevant to our contemporary culture, is Smith's chapter on ambition, which he names as "a many-splendored, much-maligned thing". Smith shows us that for Augustine, one way of understanding it is as idolatry, which existentially speaking is "an exercise in futility… which is why it creates restless hearts. In idolatry we are enjoying what we are

supposed to be using. We are treating as ultimate what is only penultimate… we are settling on some aspect of the creation rather than being referred by it to its creator". Smith, although it could be Augustine, asks the question "what is our aim in life? What are we aiming for when we aim our lives at some aspiration?" In this, Smith demonstrates the benefits of a conversation around ambition for meaningful evangelism and discipleship in our culture. Ultimately, the solution is in recognising the truth of being in Christ, "When you've been found, you're free to fail".

The obligatory chapter on sex is less about rehabilitating Augustine's influence, and more about naked honesty. This is a chapter that faces the complex reality of human sexuality, and does so beautifully, answering the deeper question behind all conversation around sex: "What do we want when we want to have sex?" As Smith writes, "The problem isn't sex, it's what I expect from sex". Expecting the goodness of the creator from the inadequacy of created things is a reality with great resonance! Smith goes on, noting that "an ancient celibate bishop might have insight that speaks directly to our #MeToo moment, as the systemic monstrosities of male sexual desire are uncovered and named for what they are". Smith closes this chapter in a way that offers a helpful corrective to both churchly concerns and cultural obsession: "Every saint has been born of lovemaking. It's when we stop idolizing sex that we can finally sanctify it." Amen!

Another thread woven throughout the whole book is that of the importance and reality of relationships. Whether it is the short but sweet chapter on Augustine and his mother Monica, or the similarly short chapter on fathers, Smith's reflections on friendship and other ways of relating are sweet and rich. In the chapter on friendship Smith continues to draw in key voices from philosophical and theological conversations that are inspired by or antagonistic to Augustine, yet in a way that makes the book work well. Alongside interactions with thinkers such as Heidegger and Charles Taylor, however, Smith is also relentlessly realistic and practical: "The Augustinian embrace of community and friendship is not utopian or idealistic. It is unstintingly clear-eyed about the realities of being-with, identifying the sorts of grievances and annoyances that still infect even our best friendships."

Throughout *On The Road*, Smith deploys pop culture references and good humour to keep things engaging, to relate this ancient monk to our strange new world. One major piece of overlap is the question of truth – something our society clearly struggles with (for more, see Mark Meynell's *A Wilderness of Mirrors*, or Kristi Mair's *MORE: Truth*). Smith channels Augustine in a way that is timeless, if bitingly close to being aimed at Oprah and similar voices: "If the actual truth disrupts my enjoyment, I resent the truth all the more. What I love in this case is *my* truth, not *the* truth." In this, Smith rightly notes the complexity of coming to believe things, and that our claims to objectivity are

as false as anyone else's – we are not just brains in jars, but complex beings. For example, "it was Ambrose's hospitality that prompted Augustine to reconsider the faith he'd rejected as unenlightened". This resonates with the picture of Jesus we have in the Gospels: alongside clear teaching and masterful engagement with the ideas of his day, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds" (Matt. 11:19).

One unexpected takeaway from *On the Road* was the humility of Augustine, or at least the intellectual and spiritual humility he aspired to and can teach us. In this humility, perhaps most famously seen in the "warts-and-all" reputation of his *Confessions*, is ultimately Augustine's search for identity, within which we share. Smith observes that "Our longing for an identity is bound up with finding a story", and "The book that would finally arrest this search for a story was the Bible". A key aspect of this story is justice, and Smith's treatment of this topic in/and Augustine is very helpful. Interestingly, Smith notes that "There isn't really an 'answer' for evil, according to Augustine; there is a response, a divine action-plan rooted in solidarity and compassion. That action, first and fundamentally, is *grace*." And herein we come back to the start, and an alternative title for this book: this is all of grace.

This book is steeped in the stories of Scripture. Chief among these is the parable of the prodigal. Smith's closing words give a real taste of the book, and sketch a vision of a community in the way of Jesus, "a pilgrim people who will walk alongside you, listen, and share their stories of the God who doesn't just send a raft but climbs on to the cross that brings us back". Amen! This is a beautifully written book that wears its author's deep learning lightly, is a pleasure to read, and demonstrates the relevance of Augustine for our contemporary problems. I would commend it warmly to those in pastoral ministry, as being filled with grace and engaging in all sorts of complex conversations for which those who serve God's people must constantly be equipped.

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Matthew Henry: Pastoral Liturgy in Challenging Times
Jong Hun Joo (Pickwick Publications, 2017), 207pp, £23.00 (Amazon)

Although not an easy read this book is certainly a valuable one. I believe that it would prove useful, in whole or in part, to three different groups of people: the scholar, the minister and the head of the family. Jong Hun Joo has done a

great service by shining new light on Matthew Henry and his thought beyond just the commentaries with which most of us would engage.

The covering of the history of nonconformist liturgy was most enlightening and provides a useful contribution to intra-Reformed debates about the validity and place of liturgy in the wider Reformed tradition. It also demonstrated the complex practical and theological reasons behind its wider abandonment by the time of Matthew Henry. Meanwhile the section on family worship was both challenging – because I doubt any of us manage such a thorough family devotional life! – and useful. Any family hoping to take seriously Bible study and prayer together would benefit from this section, even if the rigorous schedule of the Henry family is not followed to the letter.

The extensive work on Matthew Henry's understanding of the Sacraments was deep and thoughtful, though at times rather dense. The use of the phrase "improvement of baptism" was not adequately explained and was rather awkward due to this. On the other hand, the thoughts of Henry on preparation for, and reception of, Holy Communion were most timely and well laid out.

Much of the book is dedicated to the structure of the services led by Matthew Henry. This, and how it evolved from what came before in terms of Calvin, Knox, Baxter and the Westminster Directory was well laid out and clearly explained. It could, however, have benefitted from a comparison to the Book of Common Prayer, given the influence that book had not only on Baxter in particular but the entire milieu of religious services throughout England.

Ultimately, this is a real gem of a book with a wide number of uses. Perhaps the greatest problem is the academic nature of its style. This is not an "easy" book or a real page-turner and I fear that those without a higher education will struggle to engage with it. Often the paragraphs are so large they take up almost an entire page in a single block of text, something which could easily have been remedied. Given the academic background and origin of Jong Hun Joo's work it is perhaps unfair to expect this book to be more accessible – it is just unfortunate, when its content is so good and relevant for our times.

Adam Young
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Lewis on the Christian Life: Becoming Truly Human in the Presence of God
Joe Rigney (Crossway, 2018), 310pp, £16 (paperback)

"The best way to learn about 'Lewis on the Christian life' would be a book club." If Rigney had his way, people who are interested in Lewis' thoughts on the life of faith would simply read an awful lot of Lewis! However, this book

club is not to be, and so what follows in the next seventeen chapters is Rigney's categorising (and analysis) of Lewis' thoughts on various different topics relating to the Christian life, ranging from the gospel itself, to pride and humility, to introspection, to election and much more. Each chapter helpfully draws together Lewis' writings on that subject (e.g. heaven) from his various books, letters and addresses and presents a well-rounded summary and explanation of his take on it. Rigney adds his own comments and analysis along the way, which makes for an interesting and informative dialogue between the two men as the reader moves through the book.

Although Rigney is a self-confessed huge fan of Lewis' work, he does not shy away from disagreeing with, or giving honest feedback to, some of his ideas that might receive less sympathy from certain wings of the church. He is concerned that readers who disagree with Lewis in such areas are not put off from reading the rest of his work, and thus miss so much wisdom and poetry. For example, Rigney acknowledges Lewis' "dismissive attitude toward penal substitution" and spends the next few pages in conversation with Lewis before finally asserting that the essence of penal substitution may be found in Lewis' work, even if he doesn't phrase it exactly that way. This is helpful to those, like me, who have not read all of Lewis and so cannot bring together his thoughts in this way!

I found this to be a very helpful book, not just in understanding more about Lewis' position on the Christian faith, but in showing how to engage respectfully and faithfully with someone who brought so much helpful material to the table, yet was in no way perfect in his understanding in various areas, just like the rest of us.

Ian Chidlow
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Plugged In: Connecting your faith with everything you watch, read and play
Dan Strange (Good Book Company, 2019), 160pp, £6.46 (Amazon)

Dr Daniel Strange, the Director of Oak Hill College, has written a compelling and accessible book urging evangelical Christians to engage with culture in order to communicate the gospel more effectively. *Plugged In* takes Paul's discourse to the Athenian Areopagus in Acts 17 as a paradigmatic template for gospel proclamation, as "subversive fulfilment", which connects with culture and yet confronts its idolatry. Reading this book will certainly help Christians to understand their context and open their eyes to see the possibilities for gospel engagement all around them, thus liberating them from bland and overly-simplistic evangelistic presentations. It will help pastors and preachers

sharpen their analysis and application, and ordinary readers to communicate more effectively with their colleague, friends, family and neighbours.

The book is part theological defence of cultural engagement and part training manual, outlining the techniques for effective "subversive fulfilment" and providing some worked examples from a range of fields, including adult colouring books, birdwatching, zombie movies and Japanese domestic toilets. The strength of the book is that is never becomes purely abstract or merely intellectually interested in culture but always seeks to show how this cashes out in practical evangelism.

The book reflects a presuppositional apologetic methodology. Sin is understood as misdirected worship that is manifested in idolatry. It advocates an appropriate balance between the need to connect with the culture, affirming what is good, and to confront it. "Subversive fulfilment" is not a means of evangelism without cost.

The theological framework helps to dispel the misunderstandings many Christians may have about cultural engagement and demystifies the technical and impenetrable language that is often used by those who favour a presuppositional approach to apologetics. "Culture" is defined as everything that human beings make, which rightfully guards against cultural engagement being an elitist exercise. It is as much about soap operas as opera, and pop culture as high culture. "Texts" are not just writing, but the message conveyed by everything that humans make, encoding or proclaiming an underlying worldview. Whilst acknowledging the great breadth of "culture", the primary focus of the book concerns engagement with films and television programmes, which is appropriate as this is the means by which most readers will be able to engage their friends and colleagues.

The book does not avoid the important and controversial question of whether Christians should watch films and movies that contain material which is explicitly sexual or violent. Dan notes the heated debate between Christians in this regard, which can be crystallised by the question of whether it is ever legitimate for Christians to watch "Game of Thrones". Naturally, a book advocating cultural engagement will want to defend watching such cultural texts with caution, but Dan does so with careful balance.

Rather than laying down simplistic rules, he applies the five solas of the Reformation to provide a helpful framework for personal discernment. Not everything that is permissible is beneficial. Whilst this approach encourages potential viewers ask good and searching questions, it might have been helpful to spend more time considering whether there is a difference between watching films and movies for the purpose of undertaking cultural engagement as opposed to for personal entertainment. How determinative is the motive for our consumption? The argument in favour of watching might also have been strengthened by noting that the Bible itself is a text that contains much material that is explicit or violent in content. Christians can

sometimes be more sensitive than the Bible itself about facing the realities of life in a fallen world!

No one could fail to profit from reading *Plugged In*, and many will be inspired and encouraged to make the most of every opportunity to share the good news of Christ, who alone can meet the desires of our hearts. "Subversive fulfilment" is not the only legitimate evangelistic methodology, but in our post-Christian and post-modern context, marked by increasing biblical illiteracy, it is an essential tool in our armoury. Our contemporary context is overwhelmingly Athens rather than Jerusalem.

Tim Keller warmly commends this book, saying that there is nothing else quite like it on the market. He is right. It makes cultural engagement exciting and possible for every Christian. Its midrange level, relative brevity and engaging and humorous style make it easy to read. It would be ideal for small group discussion in our churches, or as the basis for an evangelistic training course in the local church.

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