

# The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research

---

---

Vol. 10, No. 1

May 2015

## CONTENTS

<i>David Starling</i>	1
Introduction—Atonement, Justice and Peace: A Baptist-Anabaptist Conversation	
<i>Graeme Chatfield</i>	3
Penal Substitutionary Atonement in the Early Church Fathers, the Creeds, and Trinitarian Theology	
<i>Anthony R. Petterson</i>	11
Atonement, Justice and Peace in the Old Testament (especially Leviticus and Isaiah 53): Response to Darrin Snyder Belousker's <i>Atonement, Justice, and Peace</i>	
<i>Matthew Anslow</i>	17
Jesus' Understanding of His Own Death: Reflections on Chapter 9 of Darrin Snyder Belousek's <i>Atonement, Justice, and Peace</i>	
<i>David Starling</i>	23
Atonement, Justice and Peace in Romans 1-6: Some Thoughts in Response to Darrin Snyder Belousek's <i>Atonement, Justice, and Peace</i>	
<i>Darrin W. Snyder Belousek</i>	29
Continuing the Conversation: Rejoinder to Respondents from the Morling Conference on Atonement Theology	
Reviews	39

---

---

# The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research

ISSN 1177-0228

## *Editor*

Dr Myk Habets  
Carey Baptist College,  
PO Box 12149,  
Auckland, New Zealand  
[myk.habets@carey.ac.nz](mailto:myk.habets@carey.ac.nz)

## *Associate Editors*

Rev Andrew Picard  
Dr John Tucker

## *Book Reviews Editor*

Dr Sarah Harris  
Carey Baptist College,  
PO Box 12149,  
Auckland, New Zealand  
[sarah.harris@carey.ac.nz](mailto:sarah.harris@carey.ac.nz)

## *Editorial Board*

Prof Paul Fiddes  
*Regent's Park College*

Dr Steve Harmon  
*Gardner-Webb University*

Dr Steve Holmes  
*St. Andrews*

Dr Donald Morcom  
*Malyon College*

Dr Michael O'Neil  
*Vose Seminary*

Dr Frank Rees  
*Whitley College*

Dr Jason Sexton  
*University of SoCal*

Dr David Starling  
*Morling College*

Dr Martin Sutherland  
*Laidlaw College*

Dr Brian Talbot  
*Dundee, Scotland*

## *Contributing Institutions*

*Carey Baptist College (Auckland, New Zealand)*  
*Malyon College (Brisbane, Australia)*  
*Whitley College (Melbourne, Australia)*

*Morling College (Sydney, Australia)*  
*Vose Seminary (Perth, Australia)*

*The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research (PJBR)* is an open-access online journal which aims to provide an international vehicle for scholarly research and debate in the Baptist tradition, with a special focus on the Pacific region. However, topics are not limited to the Pacific region, and all subject matter potentially of significance for Baptist/Anabaptist communities will be considered. *PJBR* is especially interested in theological and historical themes, and preference will be given to articles on those themes. *PJBR* is published twice-yearly in May and November. Articles are fully peer-reviewed, with submissions sent to international scholars in the appropriate fields for critical review before being accepted for publication. The editor will provide a style guide on enquiry. All manuscript submissions should be addressed to the Senior Editor: [myk.habets@carey.ac.nz](mailto:myk.habets@carey.ac.nz).

URL: <http://www.baptistresearch.org.nz/the-pacific-journal-of-baptist-research.html>

All business communications

Dr John Tucker

Carey Baptist College

PO BOX 12149

Auckland

New Zealand

Fax: +64 9 525 4096

Email: [john.tucker@carey.ac.nz](mailto:john.tucker@carey.ac.nz)

*The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* is sponsored by the N.Z. Baptist Research and Historical Society and the R.J. Thompson Centre for Theological Studies at Carey Baptist College.  
© *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research*, All Rights Reserved, Auckland, New Zealand



# INTRODUCTION

## ATONEMENT, JUSTICE, AND PEACE: A BAPTIST-ANABAPTIST CONVERSATION

DAVID STARLING

Morling College

Sydney, Australia

[davids@morling.edu.au](mailto:davids@morling.edu.au)

The articles in this issue of *PJBR* all derive from a symposium at Morling College, Sydney, in May 2014, organized by the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand. The principal speaker on the day was the North American Anabaptist philosopher, Darrin Snyder Belousek, who presented lectures based on the argument in his book, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church*. Short responses to Belousek's lectures were offered by local Baptist and Anabaptist scholars and their papers (revised and edited in light of the conversations on the day) make up four of the five articles that follow.

Graeme Chatfield's article is a revised version of the paper that he offered at the symposium in response to Belousek's lecture on "Jesus' Death and Christian Tradition: Ancient Creeds and Trinitarian Theology." In it, he explores the relationship between Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) theory and the teachings of the early church, concluding that the writings of the fathers and the language of the creeds *anticipate* the themes of PSA but do not *require* it as the only possible theory consistent with Christian orthodoxy: new cultural contexts may occasion the formulation of new theories. In the formulation of such theories, Chatfield argues, the contemporary cultural antipathy toward hierarchical institutions lends itself to a congregational hermeneutic along the lines of that argued for in the early writings of Balthasar Hubmaier.

Anthony Petterson's article responds to Belousek's lecture on "Jesus' Death and the Old Testament: Atoning Sacrifice and the Suffering Servant," focusing on Belousek's interpretation of the atonement language of Leviticus and the sufferings of the Servant in Isaiah 53, and his claims about the relationship between sin, wrath and punishment within the Old Testament. Within both Leviticus and Isaiah, Petterson argues, the surrounding literary context strongly supports an interpretation of the guilt offering and atonement language that relate them to the plight of divine wrath aroused by human sin.

Matt Anslow's article is a response to Belousek's lecture on "Jesus' Death and the Synoptic Gospels: New Exodus and New Covenant," with particular focus on the "ransom saying" in Mark 10:45 and the interpretation of his death given by Jesus in the context of the Last Supper. In both instances, Anslow's evaluation of Belousek's overall case is largely positive, though he poses a number of critical questions on matters of interpretive detail and method, e.g. whether Belousek is convincing in his

argument for excluding an intertextual reference to Isa 53 in the ransom saying of Mark 10:45, and whether he pays sufficient attention to the arguments of scholars who find a substitutionary meaning in the ransom saying without relying on the assumption of an Isaian echo.

David Starling's article responds to Belousek's lecture on "Jesus' Death and the Pauline Epistles: 'Mercy Seat' and Place-Taking," and takes Rom 1–6 as a case study in how Paul describes the relationship between atonement, justice and peace. Starling finds common ground with Belousek on a number of key points: God's justice is not one-dimensionally retributive, his saving righteousness does not terminate at justification, and the peace announced in the gospel demands visible social embodiment, not merely the inward tranquillity of the soul. Nevertheless, Starling insists, the frame within which Paul expounds the saving work of Christ in Rom 3:21–26 offers strong support for a reading that interprets Paul's depiction of Christ as a *hilasterion* against the backdrop of divine, judicial wrath, and suggests no good reason for taking this as inconsistent with these other, complementary, Pauline emphases.

The final article, by Darrin Snyder Belousek, offers brief rejoinders to each of the four papers, dealing first with the two that offer a more favourable assessment of his argument and second with the two that respond more sceptically. The total conversation represented in the articles and rejoinders, like the face-to-face conversation at the symposium, adds up to a valuable exercise in careful, gracious, and critical engagement on a set of issues that are of the utmost importance for Baptist and Anabaptist theology and practice.

# PENAL SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT IN THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS, THE CREEDS, AND TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

GRAEME CHATFIELD<sup>1</sup>

Australian College of Theology

Sydney, Australia

[gchatfield@actheology.edu.au](mailto:gchatfield@actheology.edu.au)

In July 2005 London School of Theology jointly hosted with the Evangelical Alliance (EA) a symposium on the Theology of the Atonement. The EA had hosted a discussion on the same topic in October 2004, and the 2005 event was organised to allow for differences of opinion within the EA on this topic to be more fully canvassed. For Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, who perhaps inadvertently sparked the EA 2004 meeting, a significant motivation for their challenge to the dominant penal substitution interpretation of the atonement (PSA) was how to communicate the message of the cross in a cultural context in which it is questioned whether it is possible to reconcile a God of love and justice with a God of violence and anger, as they claim God is popularly depicted in evangelical preaching of penal substitutionary.<sup>2</sup> Responses to Chalke and Mann ranged from the more irenic response of I. Howard Marshall who prayed for “an understanding of it [PSA] that can command general assent and form the basis for our evangelism,”<sup>3</sup> to that of Joel Green’s plea that interpretations of penal substitution are not used to “distinguish Christian believer from non-believer or even evangelical from non-evangelical,”<sup>4</sup> to Garry Williams who concludes, “I cannot see how those who disagree [with PSA as he defines it] can remain allied [to the EA] without placing unity above truths which are undeniably central to the Christian faith.”<sup>5</sup>

In 2012 Darrin Belousek published his contribution to the atonement debate. His motivation was to provide a theological bridge between the mission of the church to proclaim salvation through the cross of Christ and Christian action for justice and peace.<sup>6</sup> In his view, the present teaching of PSA does not

---

<sup>1</sup> Graeme Chatfield is Associate Dean of the Australian College of Theology. He previously taught Church History at Morling College, and is an adjunct faculty member of TCMI, where he teaches Historical Theology at the Austrian campus and other locations in Eastern Europe. He can be contacted by email: [gchatfield@actheology.edu.au](mailto:gchatfield@actheology.edu.au)

<sup>2</sup> S. Chalke, “The Redemption of the Cross,” in *The Atonement Debate: Papers form the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 35.

<sup>3</sup> I. Howard Marshall, “The Theology of Atonement,” in *The Atonement Debate: Papers form the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 63.

<sup>4</sup> Joel B. Green, “Must we imagine the atonement in penal substitutionary terms? Questions, caveats and a plea,” in *The Atonement Debate: Papers form the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 167.

<sup>5</sup> G. Williams, “Penal Substitution: a response to recent criticism,” in *The Atonement Debate: Papers form the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 188.

<sup>6</sup> D. W. S. Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 5.

provide such a bridge. He takes issue with the claims of PSA proponents such as Mark Dever<sup>7</sup> who states, “At stake is nothing less than the essence of Christianity”; while Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey and Andrew Sach assert “differences over penal substitution ultimately lead us to worship a different God and to believe a different gospel.”<sup>8</sup> In his book on atonement Belousek the philosopher tests these claims.

In May 2014 the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) invited Belousek to Australia and New Zealand for a series of fora to discuss his work on the atonement, justice and peace. As a Church Historian with a research interest in 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptism I was invited to respond to Belousek’s presentation of two sections of his work: chapter 6 “The Apostolic Faith Taught by the Early Church,” and chapter 16 “‘God was in Christ’: Propitiation, Reconciliation, and Trinitarian Theology.”

At the May 2014 conversation Belousek explored the claims of Dever, and Jeffery, Ovey and Sach by exploring two questions: “Is penal substitution the faith of the Apostles and bishops of the early church, taught in the ancient creeds of the church catholic?” and “Is penal substitution compatible with the orthodox doctrine of Trinitarian theology?” He refined this second question by exploring two additional questions: “Does PSA represent God divided against Himself, and God alienated from Himself?” He rejected Dever’s claim that PSA was the faith of the Apostles. While he initially conceded that that PSA may be compatible with the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the creeds of the church, he later concluded that PSA does in fact represent “a Trinity comprising not only distinct but separable, even conflicting, persons—quite contrary to the ecumenical creedal affirmations of Nicaea and Constantinople.”<sup>9</sup>

#### ATONEMENT IN THE FAITH OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS AND CREEDS

I agree with Belousek that PSA was not the faith of the Apostles and early church fathers and taught in the ancient creeds of the church catholic. While Jeffery, Ovey and Sach claim PSA has been affirmed from the earliest days of the Christian church, and that it was “central to the Christian faith and a foundational element of God’s plan for the world”<sup>10</sup> in Athanasius theology, a person represented as the defender of the orthodox faith of the early Christian church, they also recognize that PSA was not the only understanding of the atonement held by the early church fathers. More tellingly, Belousek rightly challenges Jeffery, Ovey and Sach about reading back into Athanasius’ theology of the atonement an Augustinian view of sin, death and punishment.<sup>11</sup>

I am persuaded by the arguments of Frances Young that PSA is only anticipated in the work of the patristic theologians. She writes: “scholars telling the history of the doctrine of the atonement have always been able to find anticipations of later doctrines in the patristic material. The classic histories were written

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 14, 100.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>10</sup> S. Jeffery, M. Ovey and A. Sach, *Pierced for our Transgressions: Rediscovering the glory of penal substitution* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007), 203.

<sup>11</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, fn. 10, 365.

at the beginning of this century, and they were shaped by the current conflict between so-called liberals and conservatives both catholic and evangelical. The latter asserted that the traditional doctrine of the atonement, as enunciated by Anselm in the Middle Ages and anticipated in the early material, was in terms of “penal substitution.”<sup>12</sup>

Young and Belousek alert us to a key problem when interpreting historical data; identifying the same word in documents from different periods and investing the older word with the meaning from the more recent context. Historical explorations of atonement often fall into this trap. Interpretations of Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* illustrate this problem. Key to the debate is the term “satisfaction.” Belousek objects to proponents of PSA “conflating” Anselm’s idea of “satisfaction” with Calvin’s “penal substitution,” and favourably cites Paul Fiddes in support of his view.<sup>13</sup> However, Fiddes continues to locate Anselm in a feudal setting, contrasting the feudal setting with the revival of Roman Law during the period of the Reformation. Fiddes summarizes Anselm’s argument: “Christ is not punished in our place, but releases us *from* punishment *through* satisfaction,” whereas Calvin from his context builds on Anselm’s premise that where honour is offended, satisfaction needs to be made, but understands the honour of God to be linked to the divine law to which only punishment can provide satisfaction.<sup>14</sup> While I agree with Fiddes’ premise that historical context greatly influences theological development, more recent study on the nature of feudalism, and the probable historical context in which Anselm lived and worked, would question whether it is legitimate to understand Anselm’s understanding of “satisfaction” in terms of a feudal worldview.<sup>15</sup>

There have been a series of key words used by theologians when writing about the atonement such as, but not limited to, salvation, satisfaction, sacrifice, sin, justice, wrath, expiation, propitiation, forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, obedience, honour, order. Across the centuries, these words have been invested with meaning drawn from their specific context. Subsequent theologians have used the same words, demonstrating a kind of continuity with those who have preceded them, but amended the previous meaning by drawing on the worldview of their own context. For example, Cyprian’s writings (c. 249-258) use many of the terms and phrases found in the writings of proponents of PSA. Cyprian, in his controversy about re-admission of the lapsed, attributes the persecution engulfing the church at that time to be the result of empowering Satan with authority to punish believers because they do not obey “the

---

<sup>12</sup> F. Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 89.

<sup>13</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 101-102.

<sup>14</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman and Tood, 1989), 97-98.

<sup>15</sup> For a convincing case for a non-feudal setting for Anselm see David L. Whidden III, “The Alleged Feudalism of Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* and the Benedictine Concepts of Obedience, Honor, and Order,” *Nova et Vetera* English Edition, Vol. 9, No. 4, (2011): 1060-1068. However the argument that the Rule of St Benedict provides the interpretive framework for *Cur Deus Homo* does not convince me entirely. While Anselm as an Abbot lived with the Rule as a daily framework, he also lived in a world that saw order beyond the walls of the monastery, a world where Popes, Emperors, Kings, Princes, Lords, and Knights vied to assert their authority over people within their territories on the basis of God’s revealed order for the world, a revelation open to varied interpretations.



commandments of the Lord, while we do not keep the salutary ordinances of the law that He has given.”<sup>16</sup> He challenges his fellow priests to follow the example of Christ to pray so that satisfaction can be made to the Father: “But if for us and for our sins He both laboured and watched and prayed, how much more ought we to be instant in prayers; and, first of all, to pray and to entreat the Lord Himself, and then through Him, to make satisfaction to God the Father!”<sup>17</sup> To the lapsed who seek the peace of the church he notes that it is by “divine law” that only bishops hold the power to forgive sins, and the lapsed should be “submissive and quiet and modest, as those who ought to appease God, in remembrance of their sins.”<sup>18</sup> In a telling outburst he contrasts the schismatics with the lapsed. “This is a worse crime than that which the lapsed seem to have fallen into, who nevertheless, standing as penitents for their crime, beseech God with full satisfactions. In this case, the Church is sought after and entreated; in that case, the Church is resisted.”<sup>19</sup>

However, when Cyprian explains how Christ is able to restore the relationship of people with God, he echoes Irenaeus’ focus on the incarnation rather than the cross:

Therefore of this mercy and grace the Word and Son of God is sent as the dispenser and master, who by all the prophets of old was announced as the enlightener and teacher of the human race. He is the power of God, He is the reason, He is His wisdom and glory; He enters into a virgin; being the holy Spirit, He is endued with flesh; God is mingled with man. This is our God, this is Christ, who, as the mediator of the two, puts on man that He may lead them to the Father. What man is, Christ was willing to be, that man also may be what Christ is.<sup>20</sup>

This concept of Christ becoming man so that man may be what Christ is does not appear as a dominant theme in proponents of PSA. Similarly, Cyprian’s idea of salvation being initiated in baptism, and guaranteed only when the baptized remain in obedient relationship to the bishops who represent the Church catholic,<sup>21</sup> would not resonate with proponents of PSA who identify continuity not through a line of bishops but through the gospel as revealed in Christ in the Scriptures. Cyprian puts in place the ideas that will develop into the medieval penitential system, of an order within society where clergy and laity were divided, and salvation for the laity depended upon them staying in right relationship with the clergy through obedience to complete the penance required of them by the Church representatives, the clergy. However, the understanding of salvation and atonement enunciated by Cyprian was based on a pre-

---

<sup>16</sup> “Epistle VII. To the Clergy, Concerning Prayer to God,” in *Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix* (vol. 5 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; revised Cleveland Coxe; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 286.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> “Epistle XXVI: Cyprian to the Lapsed”, vol. 5 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 305.

<sup>19</sup> “On the Unity of the Catholic Church”, vol. 5 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 427.

<sup>20</sup> “Treaties VI: On the Vanity of Idols,” vol. 5 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 468.

<sup>21</sup> From baptism “springs the whole origin of faith and the saving access to the hope of life eternal, and the divine condescension for purifying and quickening the servant of God.” “Epistle LXXII. To Jubaianus, Concerning the Baptism of Heretics,” vol. 5 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 382; “Thence, through the changes of time and successions, the ordering of bishops and the plan of the Church flows onwards; so that the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers.” “Epistle XXVI. Cyprian to the Lapsed,” vol. 5 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 305.

Christendom worldview. Monks had not yet become a major sub-set of the clergy, who by the time of Anselm vied with the priests in the minds of the laity as to which group could do for them what they could not do. While the sacraments of the church were necessary, the intercessory prayers of monks and nuns were also appreciated as effecting forgiveness for post-baptismal sins. By the time of Anselm the Western Church had an adequate explanation for how the work of Christ achieved atonement for sinners; the Church catholic as the representative of Christ through its priests mediated the prevenient grace of God through the sacrament of baptism, and the medicine of grace through the sacrifice of Eucharist, providing for the removal of punishment through penance, including the intercessory prayer of monks and nuns. This was received by faith as the truth revealed by God through the church.

Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* does not challenge this understanding of the atonement.<sup>22</sup> We might ask the question "Why address the question of the incarnation and atonement in 1090 when no theologian had addressed the topic for centuries?" Rather than posit a change in worldview based on the development of feudalism, there is a more pressing issue that changed Anselm's world, Islam. Not the mere existence of that faith, but the increasing interaction of Christians on pilgrimage to the Holy Land where pilgrims encountered people who argued that the Christian claim that God became man was contrary to reason.<sup>23</sup> *Cur Deus Homo* might then be seen as an early instalment of the underlying struggle between revived Aristotelianism and Platonism that played out in parallel with the rise of universities that began to rival the authority of the church as the locus of "truth," a struggle that continued to inform the context of Protestant Reformers when they located "truth" in the revelation of Christ in Scripture, focused on the cross.

I would suggest that PSA is anticipated in the writings of the early church fathers and the creeds in the sense that the language used to support PSA existed at that time and is not incompatible with the later fully developed meanings attributed to it by those who support PSA. This means that other theories of the atonement can also be anticipated in the writings of the early church and creeds. Each needed to wait till a worldview existed that would nourish its ideas and assist it to dominate the landscape. The other theories remained, remnants in isolated locations, until the cultural climate and context changed to allow them to dominate. Such is the situation today, when the Western Church's cultural context sees alternative views to PSA begin to flourish as they are better able to engage with issues raised in the present cultural context.

Fiddes helpfully notes that while history can only provide "probability" that an event did take place, there is no need to retreat from locating Jesus in history and making faith only existential encounter. Rather he would place "historical fact (that is probability) *alongside* the insights of faith," not that historical

---

<sup>22</sup> "Boso. Therefore, since I thus consider myself to hold the faith of our redemption, by the prevenient grace of God, so that, even were I unable in any way to understand what I believe, still nothing could shake my constancy." *Cur Deus Homo*, ch 2, CLLL, 186.

<sup>23</sup> "infidels are accustomed to bring up against us, ridiculing Christian simplicity as absurd ... for what necessity, in sooth, God became man, and by his own death, as we believe and affirm, restored life to the world; when he might have done this, by means of some other being, angelic or human, or merely by his will." *Cur Deus Homo*, ch. 1, 185.

fact can “prove faith; rather, belief that certain events have happened will shape and educate a faith that comes from encounter with Christ today.”<sup>24</sup>

The trajectory of this line of thought leads us to ask: Are all views of the atonement equally legitimate? Who decides which are or are not legitimate? Representatives of the Western Church prior to the Reformation identified the Church as the locus of authority: for the Conciliarist of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Church was identified as the Council of Bishops gathered together; the supporters of Papal Primacy identified the Church with the bishop of Rome. The Reformers rejected the idea that the Church was the locus of authority to validate doctrine, replacing the Church with Scripture. The Reformers argued Councils and Popes were fallible; Scripture as the revelation of God was not. Further, they rejected the notion that the Church established Scripture, insisting that it was Scripture that established the Church. To counter the accusation that this position would lead to unbridled individualism, the Reformers continued with the hierarchical model they inherited from their Roman Catholic heritage, the differentiation of clergy and laity, and investing their creeds established by their learned clergy with authority to determine which positions were valid and which were not.

There was a third view during the early Reformation which was rejected by both Roman Catholics and Magisterial Reformers, that the church as the body of Christ, that is believers (having no division between clergy and laity) when gathered together, considered the Scriptures under the leading of the Holy Spirit, taking into account the contribution of the scholars learned in the ancient languages and history of the church, determined the validity of doctrine.<sup>25</sup> Fiddes hints at the role the community of believers played in understanding the cross and the resurrection, a role the present followers of Jesus need to also undertake when understanding our present day encounters in faith with Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps today’s Western cultural context with its antipathy towards institutional authority will provide fertile soil in which congregational hermeneutics can flourish.

## GOD DIVIDED AND ALIENATED FROM HIMSELF

Belousek’s conclusion that PSA divides God and alienates God the Father from God the Son is in part based on his assessment of Christ’s cry from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>27</sup> He argues that if as John Stott, a preeminent proponent of PSA claims, this is an “actual and dreadful separation,” then it cannot be avoided that God is divided and alienated at the moment of this cry of dereliction. Where Stott sees the reality of an “actual and dreadful separation” is “balanced” by the faith statement that there can be “no separation” in God, Belousek sees “incoherence.”<sup>28</sup> Once again Belousek

---

<sup>24</sup> Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> This is a summary of Balthasar Hubmaier’s congregational hermeneutic that he initiated in Waldshut and Nicolsburg 1525-1527 but moved away. G. Chatfield, *Balthasar Hubmaier and the Clarity of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 365.

<sup>26</sup> Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 41.

<sup>27</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 301.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 302.

the philosopher demands logical clarity. He summarizes the PSA interpretation of Jesus' cry of dereliction as follows:

This separation between the Father and the Son happens ... because at the cross Jesus both bears the sins of all humanity and suffers the penalty for those sins in place of humanity, both of which are necessary in order for Jesus to satisfy divine retribution as the universal penal substitute. The Father, whose justice requires this punishment for sin but whose holiness can have nothing to do with sin, must separate himself from the sin the son bears and so must separate himself from—and, hence, “turn his back” on or “hide his face” from—the sin-bearing Son.<sup>29</sup>

Defenders of PSA have recognized the problem of alienation of Father and Son inherent in PSA, and have offered solutions other than that of Stott cited above. Jeffery, Ovey and Sach suggest the cry of dereliction is only metaphoric, but this does not support the reality of the separation between Father and Son PSA teaches. I. Howard Marshall focuses on the relational nature of sin, and the infliction of proportionate suffering by God on the sinner, being exclusion from the presence of God. Christ as our substitute on the cross not only experiences the wrath of God for our sin but also bears in himself the consequences of our sin, “eternal exclusion” from God's presence.<sup>30</sup> Belousek claims the logical conclusion of Marshall's approach is an eternal separation in the Godhead. However, as Tony Campolo put it, “It's Friday, but Sunday's coming,” the resurrection challenges the idea of eternal separation. I find the insight of Paul Fiddes helpful at this point.

If we understand the “wrath” of God to be his confirming of the natural consequences of human estrangement ... and if we see Christ as participating in the deepest human predicament, then we can speak (with Karl Barth) of God's suffering his own contradiction of sinful humanity; we need not speak of God's contradicting *himself*. ... The shock of the silence at the cross is God's exposure of his very being to non-being, as the Son is identified with those for whom the Father must, with infinite grief, confirm death as the goal of their own direction of life. This breach in God cannot be diminished, even by saying with Boff that Jesus turns his deepest despair into “trust in the Mystery.” The cry of forsakenness cannot be abridged like this; it is not resolved, at the cross, into a word of trust, but rings out in all its starkness. But it is not the last word; the resurrection tells that as God takes death into himself, he is not overcome by it. All hangs in the balance as the being of God and death strike against each other; yet God sustains his being in the face of death, and makes it serve him.<sup>31</sup>

As “God was in Christ” on the cross reconciling the world to himself, God the Father experiences relationally in himself the reality of the consequences of sin as experience by God the Son. One of those consequences is separation, a separation based on mutual consent. However, Belousek rejects the idea that

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 301.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 303.

<sup>31</sup> Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 194.

mutual consent allows for abandonment. “How, though, can one *consent* to be abandoned or forsaken by another? If I consent to your taking leave of me, then I have not been forsaken by you and you have not abandoned me—we have merely parted; I am left alone, but not derelict.”<sup>32</sup> If it could be shown that a case could be imagined where two people could by mutual consent separate so that one was left abandoned, totally forsaken to face death alone, then Belousek’s objection to the real abandonment of the Son by the Father would be brought into question. Imagine a couple, married for many years and deeply in love, driving in their car which crashes through a barrier into a lake. As the car is sinking, one is trapped, the other can escape from the car. They both face death, but by mutual consent because of their love for one another, they separate; the trapped one to die alone and abandoned, the other to experience in the separation their own suffering from abandonment. Yet, mutual love which motivated the consent, gives meaning to the act, while still not cancelling out the reality of the separation, suffering and death. If such a scenario is possible for human beings, surely it is possible for God.

While it is helpful for the philosophers to challenge the thinking of theologians, there are some areas of our faith where the limitations of human logic become evident. The creeds provided boundaries around the mystery that is the Trinity, but the Trinity remains a mystery to be accepted by faith. If this were not the case, then human reason would be sufficient to encompass God. In my view reason may support faith, but the biblical revelation allows for mystery and paradox within faith. The atonement, be it PSA interpretation or any of the other approaches must all, in the end, confront the finitude of our human reason in the face of the mystery that God should willingly choose to become human to effect the restoration of relationship with Him.

---

<sup>32</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 306.

# **ATONEMENT, JUSTICE AND PEACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (ESPECIALLY LEVITICUS AND ISAIAH 53): A RESPONSE TO DARRIN SNYDER BELOUSEK'S *ATONEMENT, JUSTICE, AND PEACE***

ANTHONY R. PETTERSON<sup>1</sup>

Morling College

Sydney, Australia

[AnthonyP@Morling.edu.au](mailto:AnthonyP@Morling.edu.au)

Darrin Snyder Belousek's book is written out of the conviction that theology shapes life, especially one's theology of Jesus' atonement. This is admirable and I appreciate the opportunity to engage with his work on the OT concerning such an important topic. While there is much with which I agree, in this limited response I want to identify three significant points of disagreement, particularly his claims about God's wrath in the OT, the nature of atonement in Leviticus, and the significance of the Servant's suffering in Isa 53.

## 1. GOD'S WRATH AGAINST SIN IS IMPLIED EVEN IN PASSAGES WHERE IT IS NOT MENTIONED

Belousek seeks to break the link between sin, God's wrath, and the necessity of punishment for sin. He says: "The personal wrath of God cannot be reduced to the middle term of a syllogism between sin and punishment, as penal substitution would have it."<sup>2</sup> Yet the evidence that is mounted to support this thesis, when examined more closely, actually supports the traditional connection between sin and God's wrath and punishment. For instance, Belousek contends that God brought about the flood in Noah's day, "not out of holy wrath against human evildoing ... but rather out of heart-felt regret and sorrow for his own having created a humankind whose heart is inclined toward evil (Gen 6:5-7; cf. 8:21)."<sup>3</sup> Hence, the flood is not an instance of God's wrath, but his "heart-felt regret and sorrow." While Belousek is correct to observe that God's wrath is not mentioned anywhere in the Genesis flood account, Isa 54:9 interprets the

---

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Petterson lectures Old Testament and Biblical Hebrew at Morling College in Sydney. His email address is: [AnthonyP@Morling.edu.au](mailto:AnthonyP@Morling.edu.au)

<sup>2</sup> D. S. Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 213.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

flood in exactly these terms: “To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again” (cf. 2 Pet 2:5-9). Significantly, in Isaiah this turning aside of God’s wrath is a result of the work of the Servant in the previous chapter, Isa 53, something that I will come to later. Isaiah 54:9 demonstrates that God’s wrath against sin is implied even in passages where it is not mentioned.<sup>4</sup>

God’s wrath and punishment are much more closely connected than Belousek allows.<sup>5</sup> Even when wrath is not explicitly mentioned in connection with punishment, there are several important passages that establish this as the theological framework through which God’s punishment for sin in the OT is to be viewed. For instance, the covenant curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28–29 provide a framework for interpreting God’s punishment in Israel’s history, to which the prophets often refer. Here the covenant curses are explicitly said to be an outworking of God’s anger (Lev 26:28; Deut 29:23-28). While the book of Judges traces the spiralling of the nation deeper into sin, it only occasionally mentions God’s anger or wrath, yet the framework established in Judg 2:6–3:6 indicates that the reader of the book is to interpret Yahweh’s punishment for sin as an outworking of his wrath (vv. 14, 20).<sup>6</sup> Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple also looks towards Israel’s subsequent history and indicates that sin arouses God’s anger and leads to the punishment of exile (1 Kgs 8:46). Similarly, the writer of Kings explains the exile of the northern kingdom in exactly these terms (2 Kgs 17:17-18).

So, my first point is: just because wrath is not mentioned, does not mean that wrath is not present. The wider OT context clearly establishes an interpretative framework that teaches us to infer that God’s wrath is a “middle term” between sin and its necessary punishment.

## 2. ATONING SACRIFICES IN LEVITICUS NOT ONLY CLEANSE BUT ALSO RANSOM

Belousek seeks to demonstrate that the atoning sacrifices in Leviticus make no sense in terms of penal substitution, but in doing so he tells only one side of the story. Belousek rightly talks about the *kipper* rites bringing cleansing, but in Leviticus the *kipper* rites not only bring cleansing, they also serve as a ransom to appease Yahweh.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Belousek seeks to demonstrate that there is no necessary link between wrath and punishment by citing the instance of Uzzah reaching out his hand to steady the ark when David was transporting the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:6-7). Belousek calls this “inadvertent contact with the holy” and that God’s wrath is “for a cause other than sin.” Yet most commentators agree that David and Uzzah sin in transporting the ark on a cart in violation of Yahweh’s earlier instruction (Num 4:15; 7:9; cf. Exod 25:12-15; 1 Chr 15:13). In transporting the ark on a cart, in the context of the books of Samuel, the Israelites are acting just like the Philistines (1 Sam 6:7-12). Moreover, it may be that David is guilty of manipulating Yahweh into his service. See for instance, R. P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (The Library of Biblical Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 232. Hence, this is not simply “inadvertent contact”—it is the climax of a series of sins for which God’s wrath and punishment are a consequence.

<sup>5</sup> A sample of passages that explicitly connect God’s wrath with his punishment of sin in the OT include: Exod 32:9-10; Lev 26:14-33; Num 12:9-15; Deut 4:25; 6:15; 7:4; 1 Kgs 8:46; 11:9; 2 Kgs 17:17-18; Ezra 9:13-14; Ps 11:5-6; Isa 10:5-6; Jer 4:4; Lam 3:42-43; Ezek 7:3, 8-9; Zech 1:12, 15.

<sup>6</sup> God’s anger at sin which is expressed in punishment is explicit in Judg 3:8; 6:39; 10:7.

<sup>7</sup> J. Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005). This is also suggested by J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1082, and R. E. Averbeck, “*kpr*,” in

It is important to note that the *kipper* rites only functioned in certain circumstances. Normally the consequence of intentional sin in the priestly literature is death, either by the hand of Yahweh directly, or by the hands of the covenant community.<sup>8</sup> The *ʾāšām* sacrifice (also referred to in Isa 53) is only for sin that may be atoned for. The *ʾāšām* or “guilt” seems to refer to some sort of general suffering that prompts the sinner to seek out the sin they have committed, or to confess the sin that they have tried to hide.<sup>9</sup> If the sin was not properly dealt with through the appropriate sacrifice, then the implication is that the person would also die.<sup>10</sup>

In determining the meaning of *kipper* it is important to study the use of the cognate noun, *kōp̄er*. It refers to the “payment” or “ransom” that in some sin contexts can appease the injured party and bring peace to a damaged relationship (e.g., Exod 21:28-32; 30:11-16; Num 35:30-34). Jay Sklar, in a recent study of atonement in Leviticus determines that a *kōp̄er* is:

...a legally or ethically legitimate payment which delivers a guilty party from a just punishment that is the right of the offended party to execute or have executed. The acceptance of this payment is entirely dependent upon the choice of the offended party, it is a lesser punishment than was originally expected, and its acceptance serves both to rescue the life of the guilty as well as to appease the offended party, thus restoring peace to the relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Sklar demonstrates from several passages that the verb *kipper* (“to make atonement”) in sin contexts, refers to the effecting of a *kōp̄er* (“ransom”) on behalf of the guilty party (as well as purification).<sup>12</sup> For instance, Lev 10:17: “Why have you not eaten the purification offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is a thing most holy, and he has given it to you in order to bear away the sin of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD.”<sup>13</sup> Note how the offended party (the LORD) has agreed to a *kōp̄er* (the “purification offering”) by which sin is removed (“to bear away”) so that the sinner no longer needs to face the consequences of their sin.<sup>14</sup>

Belousek notes that *kipper* also occurs in the context of impurity and quite naturally asks: “Why would YHWH be wrathful toward the very altar he has just ordained for the tabernacle? ... [Why] is God wrathful against a woman for having given birth or a man for having a skin lesion?”<sup>15</sup> The answer is that while it is clear that these are not sins that have aroused God’s anger, in the Levitical system, impurity endangers life. Both sin and uncleanness have a polluting effect. For instance, Lev 20:2-3: “Any Israelite

---

*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis vol. 2* (ed. W. A. VanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 689-710 (693-695).

<sup>8</sup> Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 41, notes the terms “death,” “cutting off,” and “to bear sin” are all found in the context of intentional sin and refer to the death of the sinner.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 78. *kōp̄er* is also used to refer to an ethically questionable payment which delivers a guilty party from a just punishment and is translated “bribe” (e.g. 1 Sam 12:1-5; Prov 6:34-35; Amos 5:12).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 100. Note that the means of *kipper* is not always sacrifice (cf. the scapegoat in Lev 16:21-22; a golden plate in Exod 28:38).

<sup>13</sup> Following the translation of *ibid.*, 94.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>15</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 176-177.



or any foreigner residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death. The members of the community are to stone him. I myself will set my face against him and will cut him off from his people; for by sacrificing his children to Molek, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name.”<sup>16</sup> Those who suffer from a major impurity also defile the sanctuary, even if they do not come in direct contact with it. This is seen in Lev 15:31: “You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.”<sup>17</sup>

While impurity and sin have different starting points, they both end at the same place: they both defile (requiring cleansing) and they both endanger (requiring ransom).<sup>18</sup> This is why the *kipper* rites must not only cleanse and remove pollution, they must also ransom and appease. The life of the offerer is ransomed by means of the life of the animal, its blood (cf. Lev 17:11), which is payment that the offended party (Yahweh) has agreed to and provided.<sup>19</sup> Hence atonement (*kipper*) sacrifices not only cleanse, they also ransom. The life of the animal substitutes the penalty of death for those who are defiled by uncleanness or sin.

### 3. THE SUFFERING SERVANT DEALS WITH GOD’S WRATH

Belousek claims that in Isa 53: “There is not so much as a single allusion to, much less mention of, God’s wrath in the entire Song, no suggestion that God is angry and needs to be appeased.”<sup>20</sup> While it is true that the fourth Servant Song does not mention God’s wrath, the claim that God’s wrath is nowhere in view is mistaken when the Song is read in the context of the book. Isaiah 1 sets up the frame for understanding the book as a whole and central to Israel’s problem is God’s wrath at their sin (1:24-26; cf. 1:9, 18-20).<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in Isa 40–66, a variety of vocabulary is used to refer to Yahweh’s anger/wrath: *’ap̄* (42:24-25; 48:9; 63:6; 66:15); *qeseṣp̄* (47:6; 54:8-9; 57:16-17; 60:10; 64:5, 9); *hēmâ* (42:25; 51:17, 20, 22; 59:18; 63:3, 5, 6; 66:15).

God’s wrath is the presenting issue in Isa 53. For instance: Isa 51:17, 19 “Awake, awake! Rise up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath ... These double calamities have come upon you—who can comfort you?” The question posed from the wider and immediate context is—how can the cup of God’s wrath be removed so that God’s people can be restored? The answer is that it is the Servant who effects salvation and turns aside God’s wrath. Isaiah 49–52 anticipates this salvation and in 54–55, the people are invited to participate. As noted earlier, on the other side of the Song, Yahweh states: “In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but

<sup>16</sup> The polluting effect of sin is seen also in Lev 16:30 and 18:24-25a.

<sup>17</sup> Num 6:9-11 shows that the inadvertent defiling of something that has been sanctified is considered sinful—if someone dies in the presence of a Nazirite, the Nazirite is considered to have sinned. In the priestly literature, defiling the sacred is a serious sin itself.

<sup>18</sup> Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 159.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

<sup>20</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 226.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 70: “The oracles contained in this chapter summarize the main themes and message of the book.”

with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,' says the LORD your Redeemer. 'To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again'" (54:8-9). Isaiah 53 is the turning point where the "arm of the LORD" (v. 1) will bring salvation through the Servant, just as it had in the Exodus (cf. 51:9).<sup>22</sup> The salvation is salvation from Yahweh's wrath, like the days of Noah.

The language of this Servant Song resonates with the priestly world of sacrifice, which links the function of the Servant with the substitutionary sacrificial motif.<sup>23</sup> Given the context of exile, which is explicitly connected with God's wrath elsewhere in the OT (see my first point), and the way that the wider context of Isaiah understands God's wrath as the presenting problem, the wider context demands that Isaiah 53 be understood as the solution to God's wrath at sin.

While Belousek is correct to note that Isa. 53:5a should be translated "He was wounded 'because of' or 'by' our transgressions" rather than "for our transgressions," this is not the most compelling reason for reading the Servant Song in terms of penal substitution. There are other more substantial reasons. Verse 4 indicates that the Servant's suffering is related to the people's "pain" and "suffering."<sup>24</sup> Verses 11-12 then indicate that the "pain" and "suffering" are the consequence of sin. The statement of v. 4, "surely he took up (*nāsā*) our pain" uses the same Hebrew verb as v. 12, "he bore (*nāsā*) the sin of many." Similarly, "he bore (*sābal*) our suffering" in v. 4, uses the same verb as v. 11, "he will bear (*sābal*) their iniquities." Using the same verbs, the terms for suffering early in the Song are replaced with terms for sin at the end. The Servant does more than just share in the suffering of the people—there is a transfer of suffering and sin to the Servant.

The verb "bear, lift up" (*nāsā*), is used in connection with "sin" (*ḥēt*) in eight other passages in the OT. Four times it means "incur guilt" (by a person's own wrong actions) (Lev 19:17; 22:17; 22:9; Num 18:22, 32) and in the four other instances it means "experience punishment" (for a person's own wrong actions) (Lev 20:20; 24:15; Num 9:13; Ezek 23:49). In all eight instances, the person incurs guilt or experiences punishment for their own wrongdoing.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, here the Servant incurs guilt/experiences punishment not for his own sins, but for the "sins of many" (v. 12). There is clearly a transfer of penalty from "us" to the Servant, a transfer that in the context of the Song brings salvation—the "punishment that brought us peace" (v. 5). This transfer is traditionally captured in the phrase "penal substitution" (cf. 1 Pet 2:24).

Furthermore, since in Leviticus the *ʿāšām* sacrifice both cleanses and ransoms, it seems defensible to read these ideas from Leviticus into the sacrifice of the Servant (v. 10) as the way that God's wrath is

<sup>22</sup> J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 385: "Yes, Israel had suffered temporal results for its sins, but that did not mean that it was automatically restored to fellowship with God. For that to happen, for Israel to be enabled to be the servants of God, atonement was necessary."

<sup>23</sup> M. J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 209. For instance, "sprinkle" (52:15); "bear" (53:6); "guilt offering" (53:10).

<sup>24</sup> The following summarises R. B. Chisholm Jr., "Forgiveness and Salvation in Isaiah 53," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53* (ed. D. L. Bock and M. Glaser; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 191-210 (199).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

dealt with. Of course the sacrifice of the Servant here is unique, which is expected given the sacrificial system was not designed to cover the kind of sin the people had committed.<sup>26</sup>

Belousek contends that the Servant intercedes for the people by “standing in the breach,” as Moses did in the aftermath of the sin with the Golden Calf (Exod 32). Yet while Moses’ intercession mitigates God’s anger and punishment, it does not remove it completely.<sup>27</sup> God only relents from his earlier intention to destroy the nation (v. 14), he still punishes them—the Levites strap swords to their side and kill three thousand of the people (v. 28). Significantly, after this punishment Moses offers to substitute his own life as atonement for sin (32:30-32). Yahweh rejects Moses’ offer and declares he will punish the people for their sin, striking them with a plague (32:34-35). Moses’ intercession mitigates God’s punishment (he will not destroy the nation), it does not remove it—the people suffer. Indeed, the whole sacrificial system of Leviticus must be understood in the narrative flow of the Pentateuch as instituted by God to deal with his wrath at sin.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, perhaps it is this instance in Exodus which provides the background for the Servant.<sup>29</sup> While Moses offered to substitute his own life as atonement for sin and was rejected, God will provide a Servant whose obedience to death will bring atonement.

Admittedly, there are aspects of Isa 53 which are difficult to interpret. Yet, when the theological framework of the OT is taken into account (which connects the exiles of Israel and Judah directly with God’s wrath and punishment for sin), and the context of Isa 53 is acknowledged (which looks to a solution to the problem of God’s wrath amongst other things), and the sacrificial language from Leviticus is fully appreciated (where the *ʿāšām* sacrifice is shown to include cleansing and ransom), then it becomes clear that the work of the Servant in dying to bear the sin of many is what finally brings atonement, deals with God’s wrath, and restores fellowship with God. Yet this is not the end-point in Isaiah’s vision. Yahweh’s salvation through the work of his Servant is a work of justice that not only brings about restoration for the nation, it also brings about a new community who are agents of God’s justice and righteousness in the world—people who have experienced Yahweh’s justice and so are to bring justice and righteousness to the nations as part of the transformation of all creation, for the display of his splendour (e.g., Isa 51:1-8; 55:13; 58:6-14; 60:21).<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 209.

<sup>27</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 212, uses the Golden Calf incident to argue that God’s wrath sometimes “is turned away by human actions, including prophetic or priestly intercession (Exod 32:7-14; Num 11:1-3; Num 14; Deut 9:15-21; Ps 106:32).”

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 49: “[Leviticus] contains the legislation that will make possible the enduring presence of Yahweh in the camp (Exodus 40) and nurture the covenant relationship established with Yahweh in Exodus 19–24.”

<sup>29</sup> Suggested by G. P. Hugenberger, “The Servant of the Lord in the ‘Servant Songs’ of Isaiah,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (ed. P. E. Satterthwaite, R. S. Hess and G. J. Wenham; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 105-140 (137). While Moses provides the background for the idea of a human substitute for the nation, I would contend that for Isaiah the Servant is a Davidic figure. Also G. V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66* (NAC 15B; Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 448.

<sup>30</sup> On the relationship between Yahweh’s justice in the atonement and justice, righteousness, and peace among God’s people see A. Sloane, “Justice and the Atonement in the Book of Isaiah,” *Trinity Journal* 34 (2013): 3-16. E. A. Martens, “Yahweh, Justice, and Religious Pluralism in the Old Testament,” in *The Old Testament in the Life of God’s People: Essays in Honor of Elmer A. Martens* (ed. J. Isaak; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 126, notes how in the OT, “Justice has both a retributive and a compassionate edge.”

# **JESUS' UNDERSTANDING OF HIS OWN DEATH: REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 9 OF DARRIN SNYDER BELOUSEK'S *ATONEMENT, JUSTICE, AND PEACE***

MATTHEW ANSLOW

Educator, TEAR Australia

PhD Candidate, Charles Sturt University

[matt.c.anslow@gmail.com](mailto:matt.c.anslow@gmail.com)

I begin my reflections by expressing my gratitude to Dr. Belousek. I am deeply appreciative of his service to the church by way of his monumental work on the subject of the atonement. It is crucial that we be willing to thoroughly and critically engage the Scriptures and the history of Christian theology in order to refine our understanding(s) of the central event of Christian belief—indeed, the central event of history itself—the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Equally important is our ongoing reflection on the implications of this event for our discipleship; the mission to which we are called must of course be understood in light of Christ's person and work. Belousek does both in an impressive fashion.

## OVERALL REFLECTIONS

Before moving to discussion of the chapter in question (“Jesus’ Understanding of His Own Death”), I offer some overall reflections on *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*. As one who shares in Belousek’s commitment to Anabaptism, I am well aware of the tension between, say, the teaching of Jesus regarding love of enemies and biblical images of violence. How we interpret the cross is, in some ways, an indication of our wider hermeneutical commitments. For those committed to Jesus’ teaching regarding peace, questions around penal substitution have been pervasive in recent times given the obvious implications for Christian discipleship of propitiatory sacrifice as a descriptive attribute of God.

Belousek’s book is important in regard to such ongoing debates, not least because of the approach it represents. While it is nowadays common for Christians to cast doubt over doctrines such as penal substitution, I cannot help but wonder whether such doubt is often motivated by a feeling of discomfort, a subjective sense of dis-ease. Such feelings may be somewhat valid, but they hardly constitute a meaningful refutation of the doctrine in question. Belousek’s work stands against such an approach by committing to engage with the Scriptures in a robust and (I would say) orthodox fashion. In fact, anecdotally, some people have commented to me regarding the conservative nature of Belousek’s exegetical approach. I take this as a strength, since it means people from all stripes can engage with his work (not always the case with critiques of PSA).

Related to this is that I am impressed with Belousek's commitment to an inductive approach on the question of atonement. This involves his insistence on sifting through the textual evidence rather than moving from a general theory of sin, sacrifice or justice toward more narrow conclusions. In this sense Belousek's approach is quite distinct from, say, the increasingly fashionable espousal of Girardian sociological and anthropological theories for interpreting the atonement. This is not to say that Girardianism or similar frameworks are without value—on the contrary, I think there is much value in Girard's work—but just that such theories are unconvincing to those who do not share their basic presuppositions. Belousek's work, focusing as it does on scriptural evidence as the starting point for a larger theory, centres debate on the biblical text itself rather than on the theories that only potentially form the basis of engagement with the text. This provides a methodologically suitable approach for people from a wide range of theological and philosophical backgrounds.

Not that Belousek is blind to the necessity of presuppositions in biblical interpretation—indeed he spends some time addressing the retributive paradigm as a commitment that exists *prior* to the act of reading. Where, perhaps, Belousek's book could be strengthened is in the exposition of his own philosophical commitments as they relate to the act of biblical interpretation, although I acknowledge this could easily be a tome in itself.

I also make note of the scope of Belousek's work. While his treatment of penal substitution will no doubt be a point of interest for enthusiasts and critics alike (hence this issue of PJBR), this is by no means the sole aim of *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, nor is a general treatment of atonement in an abstract sense. Rather, Belousek's work takes seriously the ethical implications for any atonement doctrine, noting from the beginning that the retributive paradigm, particularly as reflected in certain approaches to Christian doctrine, manifests itself very concretely in human society, including public policy. It is fitting, then, that he sets out to explore the mission of the Church in terms of justice and peace as an expression of a cruciform worldview.

## JESUS' UNDERSTANDING OF HIS OWN DEATH

From here we move to discuss the content of the book chapter in focus, "Jesus' Understanding of His Own Death." Though in this chapter he will eventually move to analyse three key passages for his overall case—two that are often used in support of PSA—Belousek begins with a methodological consideration regarding the question of the historical Jesus. This allows him to set out his commitment to the historical authenticity of the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' sayings about his own death. Such is in contrast to the scepticism of some historical Jesus scholars who give primacy to their own historical presuppositions over the evidence of Scripture. This may turn off some progressive readers, but they are probably not the target audience since they are more likely to have already rejected PSA. Such readers would, however, benefit from familiarising themselves with Belousek's critiques of some of the recent attempts to formulate a nonviolent atonement.

Belousek then discusses the Lukan Transfiguration account, concluding that Luke understands Jesus' death as fitting the pattern of the rejected prophets, and as a New Exodus. Again, this is somewhat uncontroversial, though the implications are not minor. I imagine some exploration of the Matthean and Markan accounts of the Transfiguration may have been helpful since they also picture Jesus as fitting the pattern of a prophet, but with particular focus on the relationship with Elijah/John the Baptist, though I am sympathetic to the sole choice of Luke's account for the sake of brevity.

#### The "Ransom Saying" (Mark 10:45)

Where the chapter moves into more challenging and controversial territory is in the section dealing with the so-called "ransom saying" in Mark 10:45, and indeed this is the section most requiring attention. The ransom saying is one of the most difficult and debated verses in the NT. Belousek is critical of John Stott's insistence that this verse is connected with the Suffering Servant of Isa 53, preferring instead to connect it to the Son of Man reference in Dan 7. Despite the towering influence of Stott, particularly his *The Cross of Christ*, I am left wondering why Belousek makes him his primary conversation partner at the outset of this section. There have been more scholarly treatments of this passage in subsequent decades,<sup>1</sup> including by those who concur with Stott's insistence that Mark 10:45 should be connected to Isa 53. Belousek does refer at some points to significant studies on the topic—including those of Hooker, McKnight and Kaminouchi—but these are not primary. Moreover, given Belousek's eventual dealing with Isa 53,<sup>2</sup> whereby he interprets the Suffering Servant poem as not supporting PSA, it is not clear why separating Mark 10:45 from Isa 53 is critical to his overall case. In fact, in light of Belousek's enlightening discussion of the Suffering Servant in a later chapter of his book, an intertextual discussion of these texts would have proved interesting, if nothing else. It may be that Belousek is too stringent, and in principle I do not see why an echo of both Isa 53 and Dan 7 cannot exist concurrently in Mark 10:45.<sup>3</sup> It may also have been a strengthening factor for Belousek's book to have engaged with more Markan commentators on this question, since many of them associate Mark 10:45 with Isa 53.<sup>4</sup> To be fair, Belousek does

<sup>1</sup> See especially the discussion by well-known scholars in William H. Bellinger, Jr. and William R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1998), esp. Morna Hooker, "Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?" 88–103; Rikki E. Watts, "Jesus' Death, Isaiah 53, and Mark 10:45: A Crux Revisited," 125–51; and N. T. Wright, "The Servant and Jesus: The Relevance of the Colloquy for the Current Quest for Jesus," 281–97. See also G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1986), 273–83; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark's Interpretation of the Death of Jesus," *JBL* 128/3 (2009): 545–54; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34b; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 109–25; Peter Stuhlmacher, "Vicariously Giving His Life for Many, Mark 10:45 (Matt 20:28)," in *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 16–29; Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997), 270–87; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 579–91. For seminal examples prior to Stott's work see C. K. Barrett, "The Background of Mark 10:45," in *New Testament Essays* (ed. A. J. B. Higgins; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 1–18; Morna Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1959).

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 13 of *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*.

<sup>3</sup> For an example of seeing echoes of both passages see Brant Pitre, "The 'Ransom for Many,' The New Exodus, and the End of the Exile: Redemption as the Restoration of All Israel (Mark 10:35–45)," *Letter & Spirit* 1 (2005): 41–68.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 419–21; Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 288–89; R. Alan Cole, *The Gospel*

acknowledge that even if one sees a textual link between Mark 10:45 and Isa 53, this is not sufficient grounds for equating ransom with penal substitute—a point with which I agree—and so he does make space for his argument even if his conclusion about the link between Mark 10:45 and Isa 53 were to be incorrect.

In any case, Belousek is correct to note that any interpretation of the ransom saying should begin not with Isa 53, another external passage, or any presupposition about Jesus, but with Mark 10:45 itself. Belousek notes some basic literary-critical observations, and I think incontrovertible his suggestion that the ransom saying is an elaboration of the entire pericope found in Mark 10:35–45 dealing with greatness and servanthood. However, when Belousek draws an intertextual comparison between Mark's ransom saying and Luke 19:10 ("the Son of Man came ... to serve ... to give his life") he opens himself to the criticism of conflating two distinct narratives, even if he has already stated a hermeneutic of trust regarding the historicity of the accounts of Jesus' statements in the Gospels. I am not necessarily opposed to such a connection, but the point that he makes—that Jesus' serving is a reference to his whole life and not just his death—need not rely on Luke 19 since it can be inferred from Mark 10's insistence that the disciples are to serve in the same way Jesus serves. Such service cannot refer solely to Jesus' atoning death since the disciples cannot emulate it. Belousek's conclusion that Jesus' service involves his whole life, and not merely his death, helps overcome the problem of reducing Jesus' life and ministry to a mere prelude to the crucifixion.

In the next part of Belousek's argument he argues that "ransom" (*lytron*) refers neither to sacrifice nor punishment but to the price of the liberation of a slave.<sup>5</sup> In this way, Jesus' way of servanthood becomes the ransom, the way of liberation. This conclusion regarding this verse is of course not novel; it was reached by Ched Myers over 25 years ago in his *Binding the Strong Man*.<sup>6</sup> Others have offered various versions of this interpretation.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless it is necessary to repeat it; Mark 10:45 is one of those passages that arises regularly for those that seek to explore alternatives to penal substitutionary atonement, and the sole reason is this word "ransom." Indeed, John Phillips calls 10:45 the "key verse in Mark's gospel," before associating it directly with the *lex talionis*.<sup>8</sup> Belousek goes to some lengths to define *lytron* in a way that is consistent with the Hebrew OT (*kōpher*)/LXX, thus freeing this passage from the imposition of an external substitutionary paradigm. Moreover, his demonstration of the logical problems of seeing ransom as substitution is also helpful in clarifying what precisely is meant by the relevant terms

---

*According to Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (INTC; Leicester: IVP, 1989), 244–45; John R. Donahue & Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 313–15.

<sup>5</sup> A contested claim, no doubt. See especially Collins, "Mark's Interpretation," 545–49.

<sup>6</sup> Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 279.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Sharyn Dowd & Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Significance of Jesus' Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience," *JBL* 125/2 (2006): 271–97; Alberto De Mingo Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So Among You: Echoes of Power in Mark 10:32–45* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 88–156; also those works referenced in Belousek's chapter.

<sup>8</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2004), 227–28.

“substitution,” “exchange,” “ransom,” and “life.” Too often references are made to substitution—whether for or against the idea—without a firm understanding of what substitution logically entails.<sup>9</sup>

One issue with Belousek’s work is in his critique and response to the “penal substitution view.” As stated above, Belousek summarises the PSA view of Mark 10:45 as being in agreement with Stott’s association of the verse with Isa 53. But this is an incomplete summary. For example, Collins, though affirming the connection between Mark 10:45 and Isa 53, bases her affirmation of the synonymous relationship between *lytron* in Mark 10:45 and *hilasterion* not on any Isaian connection, but rather on a combination of a lexical study of *lytron* in OT and Greek literature and literary-critical considerations in Mark.<sup>10</sup> It would have been helpful for Belousek to engage with such a perspective, or others like it that do not rely on Isa 53 to hold to a substitutionary reading of Mark 10:45, since they conflict with the chapter being discussed without being directly addressed in it.<sup>11</sup>

Another issue worth mentioning is Belousek’s insistence, following Leon Morris, that the ransom of Mark 10:45 is not literally paid to anyone, that the ransom is not an “exact description of the whole process of salvation.”<sup>12</sup> I am sympathetic to this perspective, though I do wonder if rejecting the need for a literal explanation of the mechanism of ransom is hermeneutically problematic in light of Belousek’s very literal rendering and critique of the notion of “substitution” vis-à-vis “exchange.” If we are able to take the concept of ransom as a “useful metaphor”<sup>13</sup> in which certain details are not exact (to whom the price paid), why can we not, in principle, do the same with other concepts embedded in the metaphor (“exchange”)? This concern cascades into another regarding the persuasiveness of Belousek’s argument for his intended evangelical audience. Specifically, will those who subscribe to an alternative and exact explanation of the mechanism of ransom within the framework of PSA be convinced by Belousek’s argument here? Of course, this last point is not a criticism of Belousek’s position, since even if he is correct, he will not be convincing to all readers.

## The Last Supper

Belousek moves finally to discuss the Last Supper accounts. He rectifies the PSA insistence on associating the “cup of Jesus’ blood” with the Levitical sacrifices by pointing out that, narratively speaking, the Last Supper is actually associated with the Passover. Here Belousek must be careful not to create a false dichotomy, as if the Last Supper cannot reference more than one narrative of the past. Belousek does defend the exclusion of a reference to Levitical sacrifice by pointing out Jesus’ bypassing of the temple system, but there is still the possibility that Jesus intends his act at the Last Supper to reference and *subvert*

<sup>9</sup> See Collins, “Mark’s Interpretation,” 547 for an example of blurring the distinction between “substitution” and (in Belousek’s language) “exchange.”

<sup>10</sup> Collins, “Mark’s Interpretation,” 545–49. See also Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Signification of Mark 10:45 among Gentile Christians,” *HTR* 90/4 (1997): 371–82.

<sup>11</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 149–56.

<sup>12</sup> Belousek (quoting Leon Morris), *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 156.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



this system. Jesus' forgiveness of sins, and thus his assumption of the atoning function of the temple cult, prior to the Last Supper, however, suggests Belousek is probably correct on this point.

The remainder of Belousek's discussion of the Last Supper is fairly detailed, and I am not able to do justice to it in this context. His acumen in deconstructing the logical problems of seeing Jesus the Passover Lamb as a penal substitute is clear and formidable. The same is the case with his treatment of the blood of the covenant as seal of relationship rather than instrument of remission of sins. By portraying Jesus' death as the moment of a New Exodus and the restoration of covenant, Belousek puts forward an aspect of the atonement that includes liberation from slavery to sin and death, the renewal of relationship with God, the forgiveness of sins, return from exile, the healing of disease, and the coming of God's kingdom, all without giving up anything of crucial importance within the penal substitutionary model. It does this without the need for a retributive approach to justice and peace but with a profound appreciation for the details of the biblical story.

## CONCLUSION

I conclude by noting that among Belousek's most sage pieces of advice is his reminder to us that, "When interpreting Jesus' death, we must be careful neither to collapse its manifold of meaning into a singularity, nor to superimpose the view of Jesus' followers onto Jesus himself."<sup>14</sup> This does not entail accepting every proposed meaning for Jesus' atonement (indeed Belousek clearly does not), but it does mean being attentive to the varied aspects of the scriptural witness. May the ongoing discussions of Belousek's work be open to more than just our favourite texts. Furthermore, may these discussions approach the subject of the meaning of the atonement with the necessary patience to sit with the whole story of God's restorative action in the world and to attempt to be faithful to it in its fullness. I thank Dr. Belousek for his magisterial attempt to do such things.

---

<sup>14</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 159.

**ATONEMENT, JUSTICE AND PEACE IN ROMANS 1-6:  
SOME THOUGHTS IN RESPONSE TO DARRIN  
SNYDER BELOUSEK'S *ATONEMENT, JUSTICE, AND  
PEACE***

DAVID STARLING

Morling College

Sydney, Australia

[davids@morling.edu.au](mailto:davids@morling.edu.au)

The first words I want to offer in response to Belousek's book are words of warm appreciation. As a non-philosopher I'm grateful for his efforts to help us be aware of and explicit about the paradigms and presuppositions that we bring to Scripture; as a New Testament lecturer, I'm encouraged to see the lengths Belousek has gone to in attempting to do justice to the details and particulars of Scripture, including those that are not necessarily congenial to his case, and to read them in relation to the Bible's over-arching narrative structures and their climax in the death and resurrection of Jesus; as a pastor and teacher of pastors, I appreciate the way in which Belousek's book, from start to finish, keeps open the question of how the church's theology relates to the life of discipleship and the mission that we are called to as followers of Jesus; as an evangelical, I'm thankful for the way in which Belousek attempts to address the "double audience" that he speaks about in the opening pages of the book, and doesn't simply surrender to the necessity of a permanent schism between people who care about the gospel and people who care about peace and justice; and as a lecturer on Paul's epistles, I'm glad that he isn't content with the stereotype of Paul and his gospel as abstract, theoretical, and ethically and politically barren. There is much in this book and in what it is attempting to do that I am glad of and thankful for.

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, JUDICIAL WRATH AND PENAL SUBSTITUTION IN ROMANS 1-6

There are, however, some points of significant disagreement that I have with Belousek's reading of Scripture, on matters that are closely connected to the heart of his thesis. In this paper I want to outline several of those points of disagreement, taking as a test-case his reading of Rom 1-6, then offer some suggestions for what I think is a better way of relating atonement, peace and justice, following Paul's lead in those chapters.

The majority of my criticisms relate to Belousek's claim—crucial to his reading of Paul—that "Paul frames the cross, not by the problem of God's wrath, but by the demonstration of God's

righteousness/justice through covenant faithfulness.”<sup>1</sup> My main problem with that claim, if I understand it correctly, is that it implies a false dichotomy. I would want to ask in response: why can the cross not be **both** a demonstration of God’s righteousness and justice in fulfilment of his covenant promises **and** a resolution of the problem that is posed for us by God’s wrath and judgement? Showing that the cross fulfils God’s promises and manifests his righteousness does not amount to a disproof of the notion that the cross takes place against the background of God’s threatened judgement and as a resolution of its demands.

Underneath that unnecessary dichotomy built into Belousek’s thesis is a series of additional dichotomies that are constructed as arguments in support of it. The first and most obvious is the assumption that the cross must be the solution **either** to the problem of God’s wrath **or** to the problem of human sin, but not to both. Certainly, in Rom 3:21–26, the passage that Belousek lays out in ch. 8 as an elaborate chiasm in support of his thesis,<sup>2</sup> the explicit references are to “sin,” not to “wrath,” as the plight that is addressed by the redemption accomplished in Christ. But in the picture Paul has painted across the preceding chapters, sin and wrath are tightly bound together in a single package—as they are, for that matter, across the whole of the Old Testament, including such structurally prominent places as the covenant curses of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (e.g. Lev 26:14–45; Deut 29:22–28). To be a sinner and a slave to sin is to be under wrath, and the salvation Paul announces in the gospel addresses all of the dimensions of that plight.

Of course, Belousek does not simply ignore the question of God’s wrath altogether. But his reading of how Paul speaks about it in Rom 1 and 2, as he sets up the frame for the revelation of God’s righteousness in Rom 3, is weakened significantly by two more unwarranted dichotomies that he imposes on the text. The first is the dichotomy between **wrath against sin** and **wrath against sinners**. According to Belousek, “the object of God’s wrath [in Rom 1:18] is not human beings themselves, but their wicked ways and evil deeds.”<sup>3</sup> Once again, as was the case in Rom 3:21–26, there is a certain surface-level correctness to Belousek’s claim. But the fact that Paul talks in Rom 1:18 in terms of the wrath of God being revealed against “wickedness” and “godlessness” does not mean that Paul imagines those behaviours as neatly separable from the people who are the subject of them. There is a difference, of course, between how Paul depicts God’s stance toward sin and his stance toward sinners—it was, after all, while we were still sinners that Christ died for us, demonstrating God’s love for sinners and enemies. But there is still a sense in which, according to Rom 1–3, the wrath of God stands over against us ourselves, as sinners—on the day of wrath, there will be wrath for *us* if we do not receive God’s kindness as an invitation to repentance (2:5); the wrath of God that is revealed in the present as being against evil and self-seekingness and falsehood will be visited on the final day not just upon *practices* but upon *persons*—

<sup>1</sup> Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 129: “Penal substitution ... frames the cross of Christ by this question of the wrath of God, so that the divine-wrath-propitiating cross of Christ is the logical answer to this question: How can sinful humanity under divine wrath be saved? By contrast, Paul frames the cross, not by the problem of God’s wrath, but by the demonstration of God’s righteousness/justice through covenant faithfulness.”

<sup>2</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 129–30.

<sup>3</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 214.

upon “those who are self-seeking and reject the truth and follow evil” (2:8). The wrath against sin described in Rom 1 implies the wrath against sinners described in Rom 2.

The second false dichotomy in Belousek’s reading of how Paul describes the wrath of God is the dichotomy that he implies between **suffering as a divine penalty imposed on sin** and **suffering as the consequence of forces and actions within the natural order**. According to Belousek, if the wrath of God is to be understood as penal, it needs to be described by the biblical writers as “something external to the cause-effect order of creation, a judicial penalty imposed directly by divine intervention in the world”.<sup>4</sup> But the biblical writers know no such assumption. When God “hands people over” to judgement—whether the judgement eventuates through natural processes like plague and famine, or through the outworking of the consequences of their own sin, or through the hostile actions of others—the *meaning* of the language is still penal, regardless of whether the *means* that God employs involve direct divine intervention.

Thus, for example, in Ps 106 (the psalm that Paul alludes to in Rom 1:25), when God delivers Israel over into the hands of the nations, there is no suggestion of any direct, supernatural divine intervention—the point, if anything, is that God does *not* intervene to prevent the conquest and oppression of his people taking place—but the event is still depicted as an expression of God’s judgement and wrath.<sup>5</sup> The same language of “handing over” is also used, crucially, in Rom 8:32 to describe the death of Jesus himself, when God gave up his Son for us, delivering him over to death on a cross.<sup>6</sup> There is no divine intervention implied, but the providential purpose of God is still unmistakably at work. Even within history, the revelation of God’s wrath as Paul describes it in Rom 1 has a penal meaning, in which the escalating consequences of sin are simultaneously an expression of its judgement under the decree of God.

If the wrath of God that Paul describes in Rom 1 as being manifested within history is implicitly penal, the depiction that Paul gives in Rom 2 of the wrath of God at the end of history is explicitly and emphatically penal and retributive. In Rom 2:1 Paul turns to the person who is complacently assenting to the previous chapter’s description of pagan humanity under the wrath God and warns of the coming day of judgement, when—according to verse 6—God will “repay each person according to what they have done.” The kind of retribution that Paul has in mind here is not an iron law of strict mathematical correspondence between the visible, outward crime and the punishment that equals it; God’s final judgement, Paul insists, will involve a searching of the secret thoughts and motives of the heart, not just the wooden application of a fixed, statutory penalty. But the basic shape of the judgement that he describes within this chapter is still unmistakably retributive, paying back to the evildoer trouble and distress as a deserved punishment for the wrong that they have done.

At this point there is an important correspondence worth noting between the justice of God made known in the gospel and the broader human understanding of what justice means, including the classical

---

<sup>4</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 214.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the similar language in 1 Kgs 8:46; 2 Chr 6:36; 2 Kgs 21:14; 2 Chr 36:17; Ps 78:60-61; LXX Isa 64:6; Isa 65:12; Jer 21:20; 22:25).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Belousek’s brief comment in Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 113.

Graeco-Roman accounts. Belousek is right to argue that, since the life, death, and resurrection are the culminating revelation of God's peace and justice, "we cannot assume beforehand that the life-ministry and cross of Jesus Christ will conform to our prior, natural human thinking about justice and peace."<sup>7</sup> The redemptive righteousness of God that is made known in the gospel is certainly presented by Paul as something that could never have been anticipated by the pagan cults or the speculative philosophers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–31), and the just and peaceable way of life to be followed by Christ's people involves sharp contradictions with "the pattern of this world" (cf. Rom 12:1–21). But at the level of the fundamental retributive assumption that wrongdoing is liable to punishment, Paul's argument in Rom 1–3 assumes a basic coherence between "[what] the law says" (Rom 3:19), "[what] my gospel declares" (Rom 2:16) and what Paul depicts in Rom 1:32 as a universal, intuitive, human awareness of "God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death."

There is therefore an ample basis for the traditional reading of Rom 3:21–26, in which the depiction of Christ as a *hilasterion*, a mercy-seat, through the shedding of his blood, is understood against the backdrop of not just our sin but also the divine, judicial wrath that stood against us because of our sin. According to the vision that Paul presents in Rom 1–3, there is good reason to speak of us as being saved through Christ *from God's wrath*—as indeed Paul does in Rom 5:9—and to understand that wrath as personal, universal, eschatological, and penal.

#### JUSTICE BEYOND RETRIBUTION, RIGHTEOUSNESS BEYOND JUSTIFICATION, PEACE BEYOND THE SOUL

But that is not the only way in which Rom 1–6 describes our salvation; nor does Paul depict the sin-bearing death of Jesus and the verdict of present justification spoken over those who believe in him as if those things were the end of the story and the sum total of the revelation of God's righteousness. And here, I think, is the place at which it makes sense to speak about a number of important points of agreement that I have with Belousek, and to suggest what I think is a better way to establish some of the claims that he wants to make.

##### (i) Justice Beyond Retribution

The first and most basic point of agreement between us is on the meaning of the biblical language about the righteousness and justice of God. Whilst Belousek and I differ on whether God's justice includes within it an irreducible element of retribution, we agree emphatically that the justice of God is not limited to a *merely* retributive settling of scores. When Paul speaks in Rom 1:16–17 about the gospel as "the power of God that brings salvation" and asserts that "in it the righteousness of God is revealed," the language he uses carries multiple echoes of Ps 98:2: "The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his

---

<sup>7</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 20.

righteousness to the nations.” Here and elsewhere in the Old Testament, as Belousek rightly emphasizes, the manifestation of God’s righteousness on earth is depicted as a glorious future hope, cosmic in scope and restorative in content.<sup>8</sup> In the language of the biblical writers, justice, righteousness, salvation and peace keep company together, and the revealing of God’s righteousness is cause for the rivers to clap their hands and the mountains to sing for joy. Paul’s own vision of the saving righteousness of God is no less expansive. The effect of God’s saving work in Christ, according to Paul, is to end the dominion of death over the world, and to bring in a day when “grace . . . reign[s] through righteousness” in the life of the age to come (Rom 5:21). As he goes on to say in Rom 8, the whole creation groans, waiting for that day, when it will be “liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21).

#### (ii) Righteousness Beyond Justification

This has important ramifications for the way in which we are to understand Paul’s language about the righteousness of believers. “Justification,” for Paul, is a fundamentally forensic metaphor, referring to a declarative event.<sup>9</sup> But “righteousness” language, as Paul employs it, can refer to realities that take place before, during and after the metaphorical law court in which the verdict of justification is pronounced. And for Paul, the righteousness of the life that is transformed by obedient faith and participates in the manifestation of God’s righteousness on earth is not just the *evidence* of our salvation but the *purpose* of it, or at least a crucial dimension of that purpose. Our salvation is not only from wrath (Rom 5:9) but also from sin (Rom 6:22), and the purpose of that salvation was “in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom 6:4)—a life in which we are summoned to offer every part of ourselves to God as “instruments [or ‘weapons’] of righteousness” (Rom 6:13).<sup>10</sup>

#### (iii) Peace Beyond the Soul

As for righteousness, so for peace. While the “peace” and “reconciliation” that Paul speaks of in Rom 5:1–11 are, as Belousek grants, references to the vertical reality of peace with God,<sup>11</sup> Paul’s depiction of the plight of unreconciled humanity in the preceding chapters repeatedly refers to horizontal dysfunctions: “They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice” (1:29); “their mouths are full of cursing and

<sup>8</sup> See especially *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 59-67.

<sup>9</sup> I am not persuaded by Belousek’s assertion that “full justification, in Paul’s view, is both a status of right standing before God by faith in Christ and a life of right acting by walking faithfully in the way of God through the Spirit of the risen Christ.” *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 121. Cf. N. T. Wright’s critical observations on the similar formulation proposed by Michael Gorman, in N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 913-14, 957.

<sup>10</sup> See further in David I. Starling, “Covenants and Courtrooms, Imputation and Imitation: Righteousness and Justification in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*,” *JSP* 4 (2014): 1-12, and “Meditations on a Slippery Citation: Paul’s Use of Psalm 112:9 in 2 Corinthians 9:9,” *JTI* 6 (2012): 241-55.

<sup>11</sup> Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 512-13.

bitterness” (3:14); “their feet are swift to shed blood” (3:15); “the way of peace they do not know” (3:17). This should come as no surprise, given the fact that Paul’s outline and defence of his gospel in chapters 1–4 is intended to prepare the way for a string of exhortations in chapters 12–16, urging the readers to live at peace with one another and with their enemies, within and beyond the Christian community.<sup>12</sup> There is undoubtedly a sense of inward tranquility that is part of the good fruit Paul sees the gospel of Jesus as bearing in the lives of those who believe it, but the peace of the gospel cannot be contained within the confines of the individual soul; it cries out for visible, concrete, social embodiment.

## CONCLUSION

There is, therefore, an important claim at the heart of *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, which needs to be heard and taken seriously by those who, like myself, are committed to the centrality of the gospel events in God’s saving economy, and to penal substitution as a crucial dimension of the meaning of the atonement. God’s justice involves more than the punishment of sins and the settling of scores; God’s saving righteousness has implications for the individual believer that involve more than the verdict of justification; God’s peace, announced and established in the gospel, offers and accomplishes more than the inward tranquillity of the soul.

But these realities, as Paul depicts them in Rom 1–6, are not alternatives to penal substitution or short-cuts past the costly integrity of retributive justice. They sit alongside and beyond the penal and retributive dimensions of Paul’s gospel, as part of the great “in order that” with which Paul accounts for the bloody necessity of the cross and summons us to live in the light of it. If we are to be faithful to the whole of Paul’s theological vision, we need not and must not choose between them.

---

<sup>12</sup> See especially S. Gathercole, “Romans 1-5 and the ‘Weak’ and the ‘Strong’: Pauline Theology, Pastoral Rhetoric, and the Purpose of Romans,” *RevExp* 100 (2003): 35-51.

# CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION: REJOINDER TO RESPONDENTS FROM THE MORLING CONFERENCE ON ATONEMENT THEOLOGY

DARRIN W. SNYDER BELOUSEK

Ohio Northern University and Bluffton University  
Ohio, USA

The Morling Conference in May 2014 comprised four lectures by me encompassing a range of topics and texts, based on my book *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church*, followed by responses to each lecture: “Jesus’ Death and Christian Tradition: Ancient Creeds and Trinitarian Theology” (Graeme Chatfield responding); “Jesus’ Death and the Old Testament: Atoning Sacrifice and the Suffering Servant” (Anthony Petterson responding); “Jesus’ Death and the Synoptic Gospels: New Exodus and New Covenant” (Matthew Anslow responding); and “Jesus’ Death and the Pauline Epistles: ‘Mercy Seat’ and Place-Taking” (David Starling responding). I thank each of my interlocutors for their respective contributions to the conversation. As readers will have discovered, two of the respondents were more favorable, and two were more sceptical, toward the Anabaptist perspective and particular arguments presented in my book. I will present my rejoinder in that order.

## REJOINDER TO GRAEME CHATFIELD AND MATTHEW ANSLOW

Graeme Chatfield adds some helpful historical background and nuance to the question of the relationship of the penal substitution theory of atonement (PSA) to Christian tradition. In addition to Cyprian, whose view he nicely details, one could consider Tertullian and Augustine as Western-Latin writers articulating views of atonement that could, in retrospect, be read as “anticipating” later developments of atonement ideas in Anselm and Calvin. Yet, as Chatfield appropriately cautions us, the historical and cultural distances between these respective writers prevents easy identification of such terms as “satisfaction” that depend on context and thus shift in meaning over the centuries. Furthermore, I would add, while Athanasius is not to be read as an ancient anticipation of Calvin, even reading Anselm as a medieval anticipation of Calvin obscures the way in which Anselm’s apologetic not only explicitly addresses the same question as Athanasius—“Why the incarnation?”—but also effectively aligns with Athanasius both by viewing the whole incarnation—Jesus’ obedience in life and death—as having redemptive value and by understanding (in differing terms, to be sure) Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection as integral to God’s purpose in the divine economy to restore creation.

In general, I concur with Chatfield’s conclusion: “I would suggest that PSA is anticipated in the writings of the early church fathers and the creeds in the sense that the language used to support PSA



existed at that time and is not incompatible with the later fully developed meanings attributed to it by those who support PSA. This means that other theories of the atonement can also be anticipated in the writings of the early church and creeds.” In stating that God the Son became human “for (*dia*) us and for (*dia*) our salvation” and that Christ “was crucified for (*hyper*) us,” the Nicene Creed affirms in generic terms the saving purpose of the divine incarnation and the vicarious function of Jesus’ death. Whereas the creedal tradition, I think, does place broad constraints on theological construction, these statements themselves do not specify any theory of atonement; the generic language is compatible with many possible theories. While any atonement theory could look back to the Nicene Creed as precedent for its preferred explanation of Jesus’ death, it is an exercise in special pleading to argue that the creedal language privileges one theory over others.

One general constraint on atonement theories derived from the creedal tradition is that Father and Son are related as both one (qua “substance”) and distinct (qua “persons”) and that this relationship of unity-in-distinction is maintained continuously throughout the divine economy. I am not the first critic to question whether PSA transgresses that boundary by (implicitly, at least) pitting Father against Son or dividing Son from Father at the cross. Chatfield challenges my critique of John Stott on this point and defends (a la Paul Fiddes) the idea of “a separation based on mutual consent” between Father and Son at the cross as a consequence of the reality of sin as experienced by the Son, a separation of “real abandonment” expressed in Jesus’ cry of God-forsakenness. He illustrates this idea with a story of a final, consensual separation between husband and wife that leaves one partner to die “alone and abandoned.”

I agree with Chatfield that faith accepts mysteries beyond reason and thus that theology is not reducible to logic. My concern here is not merely logical, that our language not contradict itself, nor only systematic, that our language not contradict the creed, but in the first place biblical, that our language not contradict the testimony of Scripture. While I think that there is a subtle slide in meaning from “alone” to “abandoned,” to avoid further squabbles over words let’s focus simply on “alone” and consider one text from John’s Gospel.<sup>1</sup> On the night before his death, during his final discourse to his disciples, Jesus issued a warning: “The hour ... has come” when they would scatter in fear and “leave me alone” as he faced his death. “Yet,” Jesus immediately affirmed, “I am *not alone* because the Father is with me” (John 16:32, emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> Jesus went on, praying: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you ... I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed” (John 17:1, 4–5). As to what this final “hour” of his glorification would be, Jesus had already given testimony in anticipation of his death: “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say, ‘Father save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour” (John 12:27; cf. vv. 32–33). To say that Jesus died “alone,” in the absence even of the Father, is at odds with Jesus’ testimony that the Father’s “own presence” would glorify Jesus in “the hour” of his death with the same glory that Jesus had known in the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 303–305.

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture quotations, unless indicated otherwise, are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

Father's presence from all eternity. Whatever one's interpretation of Jesus' cry at the cross, therefore, it cannot lead to the conclusion that Jesus died "absolutely alone," bereft even of the Father's presence (as Stott claimed). Perhaps I overplay the philosopher here, but I would suggest that any atonement theory that contradicts Jesus has, at best, missed the mark.

Matthew Anslow asks some warranted questions concerning my methodology, both hermeneutical (how I read Scripture and why) and rhetorical (who I engage with and why). First, Anslow accentuates the "conservative nature" of my exegetical approach, assessing it as a virtue of the book. This approach is both convictional and tactical. While informed by critical scholarship, my interpretive habits reflect my faith commitment concerning Scripture as primary authority for Christian doctrine: Scripture is "the Rule that rules" against which every candidate for Christian doctrine must be measured. Accordingly, I would test any atonement theory against careful exegesis of the biblical text; and that is the measure by which I have sought to judge PSA in the book. My approach to Scripture also respects readers inclined to favour PSA, whose own theological convictions are likely to be based on what they believe "Scripture says." To retain the sceptical reader, much less have any chance of persuading him or her to seriously consider an alternative perspective, I must adhere closely to, and persuade primarily on, Scripture.

Second, Anslow wonders why I picked John Stott as primary interlocutor for discussion of the "Ransom" text, rather than more recent biblical scholars and commentators. Picking Stott follows my deliberate strategy to engage directly with prominent proponents of PSA and address their arguments on their own terms and texts rather than rely on arbitrary reconstructions or, worse, distorted caricatures of PSA. Throughout the first half of the book, which develops a comprehensive critique of PSA, I engage with such recognized and respected scholars as Charles Hodge, Roger Nicole, Leon Morris, I. Howard Marshall, J.I. Packer, Thomas Schreiner, and Daniel Wallace in addition to John Stott. Accordingly, I begin the discussion in each of the thirteen chapters dealing with PSA by engaging with the views of one or more PSA proponents before involving other scholars, precisely to avoid prejudicing the discussion against PSA. I picked Stott for initiating discussion of the "Ransom" text because I thought he provided the best standard representation of the PSA viewpoint on that text from among the major proponents of PSA.

Now, a couple of comments on fine points about specific texts: Regarding the "Ransom" saying in Mark 10:45, Anslow states that I seek to disconnect this text from the "Suffering Servant" of Isa 53 and instead connect it to the "Son of Man" of Dan 7. I don't think that this accurately reflects what I've argued in the book. I do not actually try to connect Mark 10:45 to Dan 7, but only suggest that in Jesus' self-reference as "Son of Man" in Mark 10:45 one might hear an echo of the "Son of Man" of Dan 7 rather than an allusion to the "Suffering Servant" of Isa 53. The question at stake is not whether the Gospel writers depict the ministry of Jesus according to the pattern of the Servant of the Lord in Isa 40–55—they clearly do so. The question, rather, is whether by his "Ransom" saying Jesus meant to self-identify with the "Suffering Servant" of Isa 53, as is often claimed; and I find the inter-textual evidence for

that specific connection to be insufficient to draw the inference with confidence.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, even if we cannot pin Jesus' "Ransom" saying precisely on Isa 53, I do affirm that Isa 40–55 is the appropriate canonical reference of the "Ransom" saying. I thus go on in the book to interpret Mark 10:45 against the background of the broader theme of "ransom/redemption" in Isa 40–55. In doing so, I give emphasis to the first and second Servant songs in Isa 42 and Isa 49, which are often neglected in atonement discussions in favour of the third Servant song in Isa 53 but which, I would argue, are just as relevant for understanding Jesus' ministry as fulfilling the pattern set forth in the prophets.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the Last Supper, Anslow warns against unnecessarily narrowing the Gospel narrative to a single canonical reference. I agree. While arguing that the Levitical cult is not the appropriate canonical reference for interpreting the Last Supper (an argument with which Anslow is sympathetic),<sup>5</sup> at the same time I do not interpret the Last Supper by reference to a single canonical narrative. Rather, I elaborate Jesus' understanding of the saving significance of his death and resurrection as symbolized in the Last Supper in terms of two inter-connected canonical narratives, the Exodus from Egypt that was remembered at the Passover meal and the covenant at Sinai that Jesus referenced by his "cup" saying.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it is precisely by seeing both of these canonical narratives as converging in the Last Supper that I am able to draw the connections between Jesus' death and resurrection and liberation ("ransom") from sin and death, renewal of covenant, and forgiveness of sin without resort to the presuppositions and categories of PSA.

#### REJOINDER TO ANTHONY PETTERSON AND DAVID STARLING

Anthony Petterson and David Starling have offered detailed responses to specific arguments in the book as well as biblical interpretations from their own perspectives. Together they present substantive contentions that merit serious consideration, but to which the limited space of this venue does not allow a point-by-point response. Rather, I will respond by tracing out a common thread of logic that runs through their respective contributions.

Petterson offers a rebuttal to my argument in the book that challenges the PSA premise of a necessary linkage between sin, wrath, and punishment as sin's consequence to satisfy God's wrath. He observes that there are many texts in the Old Testament that do exhibit sin, wrath, and punishment linked in this way. Lest the reader be confused, we need to clarify the question. The question is not whether God is disposed against sin or whether God's opposition to sin is expressed by wrath; there is, of course, ample biblical evidence that such is the case. Nor is the question whether there are various texts in the Old Testament that exhibit sin, wrath, and punishment in a sequence that links (a) sin to (b) God's wrath and to (c) punishment of sin as the satisfaction of God's wrath: yes, there are such texts. To this extent, there

---

<sup>3</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 146–48.

<sup>4</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 153–55; cf. 369–71.

<sup>5</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 156–59.

<sup>6</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 159–63 (concerning the Passover context) and 164–67 (concerning the covenant connection).

is no dispute; in fact, I catalogue various such texts in the book.<sup>7</sup> The question, rather, is whether the sin-wrath-punishment sequence, having been observed in certain texts, thereby establishes a general pattern that (and this is the crucial point) then warrants us to *infer* (b) God's wrath and (c) punishment of sin to satisfy God's wrath in *other* texts where (a) sin *is* mentioned but (b) wrath and (c) punishment are *not* mentioned. Petterson claims that there is a general pattern, such that "God's wrath against sin is implied even in passages where it is not mentioned." In Petterson's view, there is no need for the text before us to explicitly reference God's wrath, or even explicitly link God's wrath against sin to punishment of sin to satisfy God's wrath; the general pattern establishes an implicit linkage such that where sin is mentioned we can then infer God's wrath and punishment of sin to satisfy God's wrath.

The necessary linkage of sin-wrath-punishment for which Petterson argues is essential to PSA.<sup>8</sup> The PSA rationale for the *necessity* of Jesus' death *as* sin's punishment to satisfy God's wrath is premised on the presupposition of a *necessary* linkage between sin, wrath, and punishment, such that: (1) wrath is God's *necessary* response to sin; and (2) punishment for sin is the *necessary* remedy to satisfy God's wrath against sin. If the latter necessities (1) and (2) are lacking—that is, if wrath is *not* God's necessary response to sin *or* if punishment for sin is *not* necessary to satisfy God's wrath against sin—then the former necessity of Jesus' death *as* sin's punishment to satisfy God's wrath is also lacking. Petterson's argument thus calls for careful scrutiny.

Let's consider the logical form of Petterson's argument. That logic goes like this:

Text A exhibits sequence sin-wrath-punishment.

Text B exhibits sequence sin-wrath-punishment.

Text C exhibits sequence sin-wrath-punishment.

Text D mentions sin; therefore it implies wrath and punishment.

This argument form will be recognized as an inductive inference (all the crows observed thus far are black, therefore all crows are black). Now, an inductive inference of a general pattern is confounded by a single counterexample (the observation of one white crow disproves the inference that all crows are black). And, in fact, Scripture exhibits two classes of "white crows"—counterexamples to the sin-wrath-punishment sequence—that undercut the twin necessities (1) and (2), respectively. One class of counterexample comprises those texts that depict God's response to Israel's sin, not as the wrath of a punishing disciplinarian, but as the sadness or sorrow of a disappointed parent or spurned lover (Isa 1:2-4; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 3:19-22; Hos 11:1-9). Another class of counterexample comprises those texts that depict God responding in wrath to sin but where God's wrath is turned away by other than punishment: by acts of humility (2 Chr 32:24-26; Zeph 2:1-3) or petition/confession (Pss 6 and 32) or repentance (2 Chr 7:13-14; Jer 4:1-4) on the part of the sinner; and, frequently, by acts of God, either on account of sheer mercy or for the sake of God's name (Isa 12:1; 48:9-11; 57:16-18; Jer 3:12-14; Ezek 20:7-9, 13-14, 21-22; Hos 14:4).<sup>9</sup> Psalm 78, which recounts God's leading Israel through the wilderness, exhibits both classes of

<sup>7</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 211-12.

<sup>8</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 210.

<sup>9</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 212-13, 401.

“white crows.” Although God has liberated the people from slavery and supplied them with drink in the desert, the people sin against God by ingratitude and complaint (vv. 9–20). Israel’s lack of faith offends God, arousing God’s anger; yet, God’s first response to Israel’s sin is not to pour out wrath to punish them but rather to rain down manna to feed them (vv. 21–29). Despite God’s gracious response to their sins, Israel continues sinning, provoking God further to anger; and in wrath God does dispense punishment on Israel (vv. 30–37). But then God restrains wrath, suspends punishment, and forgives sin—not because God has been satisfied by punishment, nor even because the people have appeased God by repentance, but simply because God is “compassionate” and remembers that “they were but flesh” (vv. 38–39).<sup>10</sup>

From these counterexamples, we can draw two conclusions. First, Scripture testifies that wrath is not God’s *necessary*—not God’s *only*—response to sin; God can respond to sin in ways other than wrath. And, second, Scripture testifies that even when God does respond in wrath to sin, punishment is not the *necessary*—not the *only*—means by which God’s wrath is turned away; God’s wrath can be turned away by means other than punishment. Not only *can* God deal with sin otherwise than by punishment to satisfy wrath, moreover, but the Torah, Prophets, and Psalms bear repeated witness that God actually *does* deal with Israel’s sins in a manner that transcends the sin-wrath-punishment sequence—and thus that God, in characteristic love and faithfulness, is free to break the sin-wrath-punishment linkage. Even when Israel persists in sinning to the point of provoking God and receiving punishment, neither is wrath God’s first response to, nor is punishment God’s final word concerning, Israel’s sins: YHWH is “slow to anger” (Exod 34:6–7; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8), “ready to relent from punishing” (Jonah 4:1–2; Joel 2:13) and “ready to forgive” (Neh 9:17). God’s just dealings with Israel’s sins, framed within God’s covenant, display a “redemptive tension” between wrath and mercy held together by God’s characteristic love and faithfulness—which always holds out promise of, and thus grounds Israel’s hope for, redemption beyond retribution.<sup>11</sup>

What is the upshot of all this? The scriptural testimony of the Old Testament pulls the logical rug from under the PSA rationale for the *necessity* of understanding Jesus’ death *as* sin’s punishment to satisfy God’s wrath: because God can (and does) respond to sin other than in wrath, and because God can (and

---

<sup>10</sup> Petterson disputes my reading of the Uzzah story (2 Sam 6:1–11) as illustrating God’s wrath against transgression of the holy (i.e., God’s wrath on account of some cause other than sin). He contends that Uzzah suffered the penalty of death to satisfy the wrath of God aroused by the sin of mistreating the ark of covenant. He is correct, of course, that the treatment of the ark in this incident is contrary to God’s intentions and instructions and is displeasing to God. Petterson’s reading of the story entails a conundrum, however. The military campaign to retrieve the ark and enshrine it at the recently conquered Jerusalem was planned and led by King David; and he did this to consolidate his power in “the city of David” rather than to honour God’s glory (2 Sam 6:16–19). If there is guilt to be punished here, then the greatest guilt—and the first punishment—should fall on David. Moreover, if one thinks the guilt should fall on all participating, then the punishment also should be shared by all. Both Uzzah and his brother Ahio were transporting the ark on the ox cart; both brothers should thus have suffered the same fate for the same sin. But neither David nor Ahio die, only Uzzah dies. Therefore, if Uzzah dies by God’s wrath *as* punishment for the sin of mistreating the ark, then God’s retribution appears arbitrary in selecting Uzzah for death. To avoid this implication of Petterson’s interpretation, I have concluded that the cause of God’s wrath and Uzzah’s death lies in some factor peculiar to Uzzah: he is the only one to touch the ark and thus the only one to die; for improperly touching the holy things of God is deadly (Num 4:15).

<sup>11</sup> *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 396–433. Unfortunately, Petterson’s response is unaware of my extensive discussion of divine judgement in a covenant framework.

does) deal with sin other than by punishment, it is *not necessary* that we understand Jesus' death "for our sins" *in terms of* PSA, as punishment of sin to satisfy God's wrath.

The reader may wonder at this point whether being taxed by this exercise in logic is itself necessary or beneficial. That such careful scrutiny is needed and helpful is evident when we turn to two central texts in atonement theology—Isa 53 and Rom 3:21–26—and consider how Petterson and Starling, respectively, read those texts. Petterson acknowledges that "the fourth Servant Song does not mention God's wrath." That fact notwithstanding, Petterson argues that we should still read Isaiah 53 as depicting the penal satisfaction of God's wrath by means of the Servant's suffering because God's wrath is "the frame for understanding the book as a whole." Accordingly, Petterson catalogues various references to God's wrath throughout Isaiah, including references in chapters near Isa 53; this textual milieu of divine wrath, in effect, carries over into Isa 53, such that God's wrath is the main point of that text as well. In Petterson's reading, Isa 53 is "the turning point" of the book, in which the Servant's suffering resolves Israel's problem of God's wrath: before this point, YHWH is declaring wrath and inflicting punishment; after this point, YHWH is announcing compassion and bringing salvation.

Petterson's reading, however, does not successfully correlate all the textual evidence. If Isa 53 is "the turning point" that resolves Israel's problem of God's wrath, with wrath coming before and compassion following after, then we may ask: (a) Why does God announce "comfort" to the people and "speak tenderly" to Jerusalem, assuring the city that "her penalty is paid" (Isa 40:1–2) *before* the prophet reveals the Lord's Servant to Israel (Isa 42:1)? The text here would seem to indicate that, prior to the Servant's commissioning, God's wrath and Israel's punishment have already come to an end and God's compassionate salvation is already underway (Isa 40:3–11)—and, thus, that the Servant's suffering was unnecessary to resolve Israel's problem. (b) Why does the prophet petition God to "not be exceedingly angry ... not remember iniquity forever," to not "punish us so severely" (Isa 64:8–12) *after* the Servant's suffering? The text here would seem to imply that, despite the Servant's suffering, God's wrath is not yet satisfied, God's punishment has not yet relented, Israel's sins are not yet forgiven—and, thus, that the Servant's suffering was insufficient to resolve Israel's problem.

There is, moreover, a significant anomaly in the textual evidence for the "wrath" reading of the Servant's suffering. The mention of God's wrath immediately preceding Isaiah 53 is found in Isaiah 51:17–23, which comes between the third and fourth Servant songs. The prophet proclaims that, whereas the people of Jerusalem "have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath" (v. 17), now YHWH announces: "See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath" (v. 22). YHWH's wrath *against Jerusalem* has ended, says the prophet; yet YHWH's wrath is not ended—the "cup" is to be transferred to another to drink. To whom does YHWH transfer the "cup of wrath"? On the "wrath" reading of the Servant's suffering, we would expect YHWH to hand the "cup" to the Servant, who would then "drink to the dregs" and exhaust God's wrath in the people's place. However, YHWH says: "And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors" (v. 23). According to the prophet, therefore, YHWH transfers the "cup of wrath" from Jerusalem, not to the Servant, but to the

nations, who will now be judged because they have oppressed God's people and despised God's name (52:3–6).

While one could try to work out an interpretive fix to resolve these anomalies in the “wrath” reading of Isaiah 53, we might just as well seek a different reading by taking different texts as the “frame” for Isa 53. The four Servant songs, of which Isa 53 is the last, all fall within the section of Isaiah that is sometimes called “the book of consolation” (Isa 40–55). That section begins with God announcing “comfort,” not wrath, for Israel (Isa 40:1–2). Accordingly, we observe, none of the four Servant songs (Isa 42:1–7; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12) makes any mention of, or allusion to, God's wrath. Suppose, then, that we take Isa 40:1–2 as projecting the horizon for interpreting the Servant's mission; and suppose, further, that we interpret the fourth Servant song in line with the thematic trajectory of the first three Servant songs. We might thus interpret the Servant's mission and suffering in relation to God's work of redemption in a mode other than as penal satisfaction of God's wrath. Consider this alternative reading: God announces “comfort” to Israel, that Jerusalem's “penalty is paid”—wrath is ended, punishment is finished, forgiveness has begun (Isa 40:1–2). The prophet envisions God returning in glory to the ruins of Jerusalem and gathering the scattered flock with tender care—exile is ending, return is commencing, peace is renewing (Isa 40:3–11). God then calls the Servant to facilitate God's work of redemption and restoration: the Servant's mission is to teach God's justice to the nations (Isa 42:1–4), liberate prisoners from captivity (Isa 42:4–7), gather Israel back to God and return the people to the land (Isa 49:1–13), and repair the streets of the city (cf. Isa 61:1–4). When the Servant, willingly obedient to God's cause, encounters accusation and abuse from the very people to whom he is sent, God comes to the Servant's defense (Isa 50:4–11). And when the people finally turn in hostility against the Servant, taking him away to trial by injustice and putting him to death by iniquity, God lets the people strike down the Servant in their rebellion.<sup>12</sup> But then God not only vindicates the Servant but also—by a surprising act of sheer grace—turns the Servant's unjust punishment at the people's hands to the people's peace by making the Servant's life an offering to heal the people's guilt (Isa 52:13–53:12). Reading the mission and suffering of the Servant in this way, we might easily see why the Gospel writers depict the mission and passion of Jesus as fulfilling the pattern of the Lord's Servant.

---

<sup>12</sup> It is crucial to how we interpret the Servant's suffering that we get the translation of the text correct. Most English translations read like the NRSV: “he was wounded *for* our transgressions, he was crushed *for* our iniquities” (Isa 53:5a). This rendering is usually interpreted in terms of penal substitution: God punished the Servant instead of the people to pay the penalty for the people's sins and so satisfy God's wrath. But this translation is simply incorrect; it is not what the Hebrew or Greek text actually says. The Hebrew preposition *min* carries the sense of “from” or “by” (not “for”) and the Greek preposition *dia* carries the sense of “on account of” or “because of” (not “instead of”). The translation should read: “he was wounded *from* our rebellion, he was crushed *by* our sins.” The same preposition appears a few verses later in the same vein of thought: “By (*min*) oppression and by (*min*) judgement he was taken away ... stricken from (*min*) the rebellion of my people” (Isa 53:8, my translation). Thus, the prophet reveals that the Servant suffers, not from having been “stricken” by the hand of God as the people had wrongly supposed (Isa 53:4), but from the rebellion of the people: the Servant suffers because the people have, by their own unjust acts, killed him! Nonetheless, by means of the Servant's endurance of the unjust punishment inflicted upon him by the people, God brings forth healing and peace for the people: “upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” (Isa 53:5b). See my detailed discussion of this text in *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 224–43.

Next we turn to Starling's response and Rom 3:21–26, a key Pauline text concerning “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). Like Petterson, Starling acknowledges that this text makes no mention of God's wrath against sinners much less of Jesus' death as satisfaction of God's wrath: “Certainly, in Rom 3:21–26 ... the explicit references are to “sin,” not to “wrath,” as the plight that is addressed by the redemption accomplished in Christ.” Nonetheless, Starling observes, the textual milieu of Rom 3 is itself framed by the problem of God's wrath and retribution against sinners (cf. Rom 1:18–32; 2:5–10; 5:9). Therefore, Starling concludes, the rest of Romans establishes an interpretive framework centered on God's wrath and retribution such that we should interpret this text, and thus God's work of redemption in Christ, in terms of resolving the problem of God's wrath and retribution: “There is therefore an ample basis for the traditional reading of Rom 3:21–26, in which the depiction of Christ as a *hilasterion*, a mercy-seat, through the shedding of his blood, is understood against the backdrop of not just our sin but also the divine, judicial wrath that stood against us because of our sin.”<sup>13</sup>

There is no disagreement that, according to Paul, sinners live under God's wrath and, by persisting in their alienation from God, receive the deserved end of their disobedient choices, death (Rom 1:18–32; 6:20–23). Indeed, Paul says that all those who choose disobedience against God and live according to the “desires of flesh” are “children of wrath” and are already “dead” in the life of sin they now lead (Eph 2:1–3). There is also no disagreement that Paul understands God to hold the prerogative of retribution (cf. Rom 12:19) and thus envisions a final judgement when God will “repay according to each one's deeds,” such that those who are unrepentant and persistent in their sinful ways will receive the “wrath” that they have “stor[ed] up for [themselves]” (Rom 2:5–10). The question here is how Paul understands the redemptive work of Christ in relation to both sin and judgement. Again, as with Isa 53, key to this question is which text we are to take as our cue for interpreting the cross when Paul introduces it at Rom 3:21–26. Petterson interprets the cross in Rom 3 as the logical conclusion to the premises of sin and of God's wrath against sinners set forth in Rom 1 and Rom 2: the cross of Christ satisfies the wrath of God.

Suppose, however, that we take a different cue for reading the text. I would suggest that, at the very point in his argument where he introduces the cross, Paul deliberately signals a decisive break from the logic of sin-wrath-punishment with an emphatic declaration: “But now ... ” (*Nuni de*). Up until “now,” in the old era, the law of sin-wrath-punishment had reigned: humanity, having denied the truth about God evident in creation, had exchanged the worship of the Creator for the worship of creatures; God, revealing “wrath” against such “impiety” and “injustice,” thus “gave up” humanity to their “lusts” and “passions” with the decree that those who chose to sin as a way of life would be destined for the end of death that their sins deserved (Rom 1:18–32). Since “all ... are under the power of sin,” all were also “under the law,” such that no one was exempt from the judgement of sin and thus no one could escape the end of

---

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, Starling's response ignores my detailed examination of the Old Testament background and the New Testament usage of the noun *hilasterion* (along with the related verb *hilaskomai* and noun *hilasmos*), which is crucial to interpreting Rom 3:21–26. The textual evidence demonstrates clearly that *hilasterion* (which referred originally to the lid of the ark of covenant) does not signify propitiation of God—and thus, I think, warrants the conclusion that Paul, by saying that God presented Jesus as *hilasterion* through the cross (Rom 3:25), did not intend to depict Jesus' death as satisfying God's wrath. See *Atonement, Justice, and Peace*, 244–64.



death (Rom 3:9–20, 23). “But now” God has acted in Christ with justice that transcends the law of sin-wrath-punishment: “But now, *apart from law*, the justice of God has been disclosed ... through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (Rom 3:21–22, my translation, emphasis added). God’s law-transcending justice-doing has provided a way of “redemption in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24) and thus has opened a new era for humanity, such that those who had been “slaves of sin” under the “dominion of death” in the old era (“in Adam”) are now freed from “the power of sin” in order to live for righteousness in the new era (“in Christ”) (cf. Rom 5:12–6:23). What “justice of God” is this that has been disclosed by the faithfulness of Jesus and by which God has redeemed sinners through the cross of Christ? God has “justified [sinners] by his grace as a gift” (Rom 3:24; cf. 5:15–17). God’s justice has redeemed us “by his grace as a gift”—not justice by punishment to satisfy the personal wrath of God (per PSA) but rather justice rooted in the personal generosity and abundant grace of God.<sup>14</sup> The “redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” one could thus read this text, is not the logical conclusion to the law of sin-wrath-punishment but rather the faithful outworking of God’s law-surpassing, grace-giving justice: God’s justice through the cross of Christ transcends retribution for the sake of redemption.

Although God’s wrath cannot be *found* in Isa 53 or Rom 3:21–26, Petterson and Starling contend that God’s wrath can be *inferred* in these texts; and God’s wrath, once inferred, becomes the gravitational center and interpretive axis around which revolves their readings of these texts. This hermeneutic principle—that God’s wrath is implied by, and thus may be inferred in, texts where God’s wrath is not mentioned—prompts various questions. (1) What is the textual criterion for inferring God’s wrath in a text where it is not mentioned? Is the mere mention of sin sufficient or is some further textual cue necessary? (2) Insofar as the milieu of wrath may carry over from one text where wrath is mentioned to another text where wrath is not mentioned, how close to the present text must be the nearest mention of wrath to warrant making an inference of wrath in the present text? (3) What is the canonical scope of this hermeneutic principle? Is God’s wrath the frame for understanding the Bible as a whole? Are there any salvation texts that *cannot* be read as implicitly about God’s wrath? Making a reasonable defense of this hermeneutic principle, I think, requires giving plausible answers to these questions; otherwise, it seems to me, invoking this mode of interpretation is an exercise in begging the question.

Petterson and Starling read Isa 53 and Rom 3:21–26 in a manner that is par for the PSA course. No doubt, one *can* read those texts to revolve around the interpretive axis of God’s wrath. The question, rather, is whether these texts *must* be read in that manner—and, if not, *why* those of us who do *not* share a prior disposition toward PSA should read those texts in that manner. Were we to remove PSA as the assumed lens for reading Scripture, then interpreting those texts in terms of God’s wrath and punishment, despite the fact that the texts make no mention of such, is not at all obvious much less necessary.

---

<sup>14</sup> Starling might respond at this point by charging me as guilty of making a “false dichotomy.” Can we not, he might ask, understand God’s “grace as a gift through the redemption in Christ Jesus” to be the penal satisfaction of God’s wrath by Jesus’ death? The “false dichotomy” charge begs the question, I think, because it implies that any attempt to interpret the text in terms other than PSA (wrath and retribution) is guilty of a “false dichotomy.” Of course, it is logically possible to stipulate that “grace = penal satisfaction of God’s wrath by Jesus’ death” but why, other than having a prior bias in favor of PSA, should we adopt that theological equation?

## Reviews

STEVEN FINAMORE AND JOHN WEAVER, EDS. *WISDOM, SCIENCE AND THE SCRIPTURES: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF ERNEST LUCAS*. OXFORD: REGENTS PARK COLLEGE, 2012. xvi + 264 PP. [ISBN 978-1-907600-13-5].

Csilla Saysell,

Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

This book is a labour of love by friends, former colleagues and students of Ernest Lucas on the occasion of his retirement. The collection of essays reflects Lucas' fields of interest as a specialist in OT wisdom literature (Part One: Wisdom in the Bible), as a biochemist with a keen interest in science and apologetics (Part Two: Science and Christian Faith) and as a biblical theologian with a clear Christian faith perspective (Part Three: The Scriptures). Echoing this explicit Christian commitment of Lucas' each contribution is followed by a prayer that reflects something of the thoughts set out in that essay. The final piece connects with Lucas' love of sport; especially cricket (Part Four: ...and Cricket). The majority of contributors are involved in theological education with background in pastoral ministry (mainly Baptist).

The first essay, "Creation in the Psalms" by Gordon Wenham, explores creation theology primarily through an examination of three Psalms (pp. 8, 33, 104) and their connection with their surrounding context (psalms on either side of them). Wenham highlights the Psalms' emphasis on the theme of God's steadfast love and benevolent care for all his creation that is juxtaposed in the Psalter with God's involvement in human history through the vindication of the righteous and the divine guidance and forgiveness of the penitent sinner. Although this essay uses some Hebrew it is all transliterated and words are given an English equivalent, so the discussion is accessible to the non-specialist and illuminating in the way it highlights the connections between creation and salvation history.

The second piece by John Bimson, "Fierce Beasts and Free Processes: a Proposed Reading of God's Speeches in the Book of Job" is a provocative and thoughtful essay. It explores the second divine speech at the end of Job and argues that through the mythological creatures of Behemoth and Leviathan who personify primordial chaos, the speech challenges Job to make space in his thinking for chaos as part of God's creation. He argues that this perspective, though unique in the Old Testament, does provide a kind of theodicy to Job's question even though it gives no answer to Job's personal suffering. Bimson finds parallels in this interpretation with the free-process defence of scientist-theologians that maintain that a certain amount of chaos, randomness and chance are built into natural processes.

This part of the book concludes with two essays on aspects of Proverbs. Hillary Nyika in "The Traditional Israelite Legal Settings: Social Contexts in Proverbs?" argues for the probable use of proverbs in the judicial processes whether "at the gate" or in the royal court. Knut Heim in "Personified Wisdom in Early Judaism" traces the development of personified wisdom in Prov 8 in Second Temple/Early Jewish

literature in order to shed light on the traditions that early Christians applied and adapted in their understanding of Jesus Christ.

Paul Fiddes' fascinating study of "Ancient and Modern Wisdom: The Intersection of Clinical and Theological Understanding of Health" opens Part Two of the book engaging with questions of theology and science. Fiddes explores how ancient Israelite wisdom may speak into the debate in the medical field between evidence-based medicine and the wisdom represented in the clinical judgment of a medical practitioner. He argues that these two echo the two aspects of ancient Israelite wisdom: observation evidenced in the collection of wisdom sayings and an attitude of being attuned to Lady Wisdom's guidance through life. Moreover, these two should not be pitted against each other as object and subject but are to be seen as two aspects of the same reality, which are connected by participation. In the contemporary example, doctors need to engage, dialogue and empathise with their patients to make wise decisions using their accumulated experience and the information obtained. This is a relational understanding of how wise decisions come about that is modelled on a Trinitarian perspective of constant engagement within the triune God. Fiddes suggests further that this triune God also makes room for creation to participate in the divine life so that when the creation attunes itself to "the rhythm of life," it will be in line with divine wisdom. This is a demanding read, but well worth engaging with for its insights and thoughtful exposition.

Brian Haymes in "The Way of Practical Modesty" compares epistemology in science and theology particularly against the claims of the New Atheists that religious belief is irrational and delusional.

Two essays follow on climate change. Elaine Storkey's "The Environment and the Developing World" examines the present situation of climate change and the humanitarian crisis of the developing world as well as some responses made to these and calls Christians to acknowledge human responsibility of stewardship over the world that God created. John Weaver's "Hopeful Disciples in a Time of Climate Change" focuses more specifically on Christian responses necessary in light of biblical texts from both testaments.

Finally, this second part closes with Robert White's "Take Ten: Scientists and Their Religious Beliefs" in which he examines the religious beliefs of ten scientists from 350 years chosen by the Royal Society (UK) for their major impact on science and commemorated by a set of stamps. He finds that the percentage of these ten with religious beliefs, spiritual ones and with a secularist stance correspond closely to a recent survey of scientists at leading US universities. White argues that most scientists do not see science and religion in conflict and many explicitly claim that the two cohere. While I agree with his conclusion, his methodology for arriving there is not entirely convincing (e.g. unequal proportions of ten scientists from three and a half centuries compared to a couple of thousand from our era; the need for defining terms like spiritual beliefs compared to religious ones, etc.).

Part Three opens with Simon Woodman's "The Evolving Agenda of Biblical Studies," which follows the developments in the recent history of interpretation from the emphasis on "the original context" of historical criticism through Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* (history of effects/influence) to

reception history and reader-response theory. He suggests that the work of Lucas, as biblical scholar, scientist and practising Christian, resonates with an emerging methodology that allows the text's original context to impact interpretation even as the reader engages with it from a contemporary context. This essay sets up the third part of the book well in its focus on the integration of perspectives and contexts from which readers do interpretation.

Mike Pears' essay "Moving Towards a Theological Perspective on 'Place' by Using Cresswell's Notion of Doxa and Deviance as a Hermeneutical Tool for Place-based Readings of Mark's Gospel" follows next. He argues that place is not simply a backdrop to Mark (and the other gospels) but reflect ideological, hierarchical powers embedded in topography and suggests that Jesus begins the transformation of place by creating new space defined by his presence, which, however, will only be fully established in the eschaton. This essay would greatly benefit from some concrete examples from Mark to anchor the discussion for the non-specialist.

Stephen Finamore's "'Not Made with Hands': the Heavenly Temple in Hebrews and Revelation" explores the meaning of the heavenly/eschatological temple in these books. In the latter the temple represents all of creation and is the goal of creation, while in the former, body typology has a stronger emphasis. In particular, Hebrews seems to draw on Second Temple Jewish ideas echoed also elsewhere in the NT that the temple is symbolic of the human body and both are purified by sacrifice of some sort.

Finally, Robert Ellis' essay "'Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game!' Cricket and Our Place in the World" concludes the volume with a theological reflection on cricket highlighting principles that can also be applied more broadly to sport in general.

This collection of essays is laudable in its aim of integrating different aspects of Lucas' interests and so in some sense, crossing disciplines to engage with the world and with Scripture. The first two parts cohere particularly well with part three linking with them perhaps more loosely. The volume's strength is this broad spectrum although few will share an interest in or be knowledgeable about all aspects of the book. The depth and expertise required varies among the essays. Some make for easier reading and are accessible to a wider, lay readership while others engage with Hebrew and Greek and/or are more technical and so will primarily be useful for Bible college/seminary students. Overall, this is a rich and interesting volume engaging with a broad range of issues and a worthy tribute to the work of Ernest Lucas.

EDWARD ADAMS, *THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN MEETING PLACES: ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY HOUSES?* LIBRARY OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES 450. LONDON: T & T CLARK, 2013. 263 PP + XIV. [ISBN 978-0-56728-257-6 (HB). 978-0-56715-732-4 (ePDF)].

Sarah Harris

Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

In this monograph Edward Adams challenges the long-held idea that in the pre-Constantine period, Christians met almost exclusively in house churches. While others have previously noted various locations for church gatherings in the biblical text, this is the first comprehensive survey of the primary and secondary data available, making the material invaluable to the current conversations about the life of earliest Christians. Of particular note is the attention to archaeological data and primary source material, which not only secures the book's academic usefulness, but also brings this conversation to life for any informed reader.

Adams clearly shows how scholars have fallen into the trap of taking a few very clear passages about Christians gathering in houses (such as the Pauline formula ἡ κατ' οἶκόν ἐκκλησία in 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3-5; Col 4:15; Philem 2) and then reading any reference to a "house" or "gathering" and assuming the physical location of a home. As with any biblical conversation where evidence is reasonably laconic, it becomes a matter of which information you privilege and therefore what you then assume *must* have happened. Adams' book is likely to stem the tide in this debate and so help sharpen our thinking about early church practices. It will almost certainly be the death-knell to the common term: "house churches."

The book is divided into two sections; chapters one to five outline the biblical and archaeological evidence; and chapters six to eight provide evidence and new possibilities for non-house settings for church gatherings. The book ends with two short but useful appendices addressing the setting of the Corinthian communal meal and figures and photos of a range of dwellings.

Adams turns first to the Epistles (Pauline, Deutero-Pauline, General) to establish what the text actually says and open up the field for other possible locations for church gatherings. He is quick to confirm that houses were used for meeting places, but makes clear that other references may not, in fact, allude to homes. Rome is one city where it is well known that there were multiple groups of Christians that gathered together; often we hear that there were four or five "house churches." However, while Priscilla and Aquila may have met in their house (or more likely at their tent-making workshop where they may also have lived), the other groups listed do not imply a domestic location; "those who belong to Aristobulus" (16:10) and "those who belong to Narcissus" (16:11) are defined by a person (perhaps an employer or master as Paul does not personally greet them); and the two other lists of low socio-economic names (16:14, 15) have no implied location. Therefore, while Roman "house churches" is a term referred to in today's textbooks, it is likely that this term is quite inaccurate and misleading.

The Gospels and Acts are addressed in chapter two where Adams considers Jesus and the early church who are frequently in meeting in homes. However, as the Greek terminology of οἶκος and οἰκία can mean any kind of dwelling and not simply a house, and as archaeology has shown a number of dwelling-types in Palestine in the Roman period, not all uses of these words may be domestic structures. There are times the house *was* a place of gathering and mission; one particularly interesting text is Luke 10 as scholars are confident this tradition does go back to the historical Jesus and furthermore, Luke foregrounds this in his travel narrative. I appreciate that Adams' task is an historical one, and this is the first task which needs to be undertaken, yet his work now "begs" some synthesis with a narrative reading

which is especially appropriate when reading Luke (1:1). How does Luke view the "house"? What literary role does it play? Notably the house is a liminal space where women have considerably more freedom to exercise leadership, something we see in Lydia for example (Acts 16:11–40); it is also a place that children inhabit and are visible. While Adams gives considerable attention to Acts with its many references to gatherings in houses, there is less attention to the companion Gospel; what about the women who accompanied Jesus on the road (Luke 8:1–3), how can they be viewed with respect to the household mission? And what of the woman who sweeps her house to find the lost coin (15:8–10)? As she is a female picture for God who is engaged in domestic duties, what might this mean for a Lukan understanding of "church?" I admit these are outside Adams' parameters for an historical engagement, but they are questions that must now be asked. The household mission for Luke must be seen as (1) a movement away from the formal structures of Jerusalem and the temple which are hierarchical and restrict access to God, and (2) a place where the new (non–nuclear) family of God is evident. This reader would have welcomed some acknowledgement and attention to Lukan *narrative* readings and some attention to the theological questions this data raises; at least Adams could have tipped his hat in this direction.

Chapters three and four attend to further literary and archaeological evidence. Adams shows that there is only explicit literary evidence for the use of unaltered houses as gathering places in the Apocryphal Acts while other places are also specified. The thinking that houses were altered for church use is very thin both in literary and archaeological evidence; the house did not ultimately become the church building. Comparative literature, which is surveyed in chapter five, does however, show the domestic cult used the home (which makes sense!) while this cannot be said necessarily of synagogues; Jews and God–fearers favoured the use of an open air space (such as we see in Acts 16:13).

The final three chapters deal with other possible spaces which literature and archaeology point to: retail, industrial and storage spaces; commercial hospitality and leisure spaces; outdoor spaces and burial places respectively. This data will prove to be a fruitful smorgasbord of alternatives for the exegete other than simply assuming Christian gatherings were mainly in houses. As a result, this book should become a necessary addition to any theological library and for any serious scholar of biblical studies and ecclesiology; the implications of this study could stand to be quite significant. Further, the discussion arising from this book will also be important for ecclesiology as there has been an over emphasis and linking of metaphors such as the household of God, terms such as master, and father, and the various *Haustafeln* to the church gathering; some see houses and the *paterfamilias* model as normative (and so ordained by God). Adams' book will help inform this important conversation.

TONY CUPIT, ROS GOODEN & KEN MANELY (EDS). *FROM FIVE BARLEY LOAVES: AUSTRALIAN BAPTISTS IN GLOBAL MISSION 1864–2010*. PRESTON: MOSAIC PRESS, 2013. 600 PP. [ISBN 9781743241004].

Laurie Guy

Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

This is an ambitious book — with a size to match its ambition: over 600 pages! It spans 150 years of Australian Baptist missionary endeavour (with a number of seconded Kiwis and other nationalities thrown into the mix as well). That outreach includes a number of global areas: the Indian subcontinent, Papua New Guinea and West Papua in Indonesia, Africa (especially Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Thailand, along with lesser forays into China, the Philippines, Singapore, Hungary, Nicaragua, parts of Indonesia, Cambodia, Kazakhstan and Lebanon.

The story begins with Baptists in South Australia in the 1860s, catalysed particularly by the missionary enthusiasm of Silas Mead, pastor of the Flinders Street Baptist Church in Adelaide. This soon led to the formation of the South Australian Baptist Missionary Society in 1864.

Several things can be noted about this event. First, it was a state organisation, with a national body not coming into existence for another half century (1913). Secondly, when its first missionaries were sent out in the 1880s (quite a lag from the founding of the society), they were initially all women — the focus was reaching high-caste, largely house-bound Indian women ('zenana' mission). This contribution of women at the beginning is important to highlight, for there was a subsequent period when the status of married women missionaries was uncertain — often regarded as wives of missionaries, not missionaries in their own right. However, of the first 70 missionaries sent out prior to the national organisation being formed in 1913, 38 were single women, with only 17 men in the missionary mix (p. 12). The book honours the contribution of women to Australian Baptist cross-cultural mission in its title, *From Five Barley Loaves*. This is a double reference, both to the multiplication of loaves by Jesus and to five of the early *zenana* missionaries, known as the five barley loaves because of a sermon by Silas Mead referring to the barley-loaf miracle at the commissioning of these five women. A third point to note with the founding of the mission in 1864 was its subconscious focus on British India — a natural focus with the South Australian colonists being first-generation arrivals from Britain and with the mother church (the English Baptists) having already established major missionary work in that part of the world.

When the national mission began it was named the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission, later being renamed the Australian Baptist Missionary Society (ABMS, 1959) and more latterly Global Interaction (from 2002). As well as narrating the missionary story the book includes three chapters focusing on three periods of mission policy and leadership at home. These periods largely coincide with the three names of the mission. They highlight a shifting (though often overlapping) focus: initially largely evangelistic, then church strengthening with a view to a fully indigenous and independent church, and then much more broadly holistic and often more short-term in nature.

Nearly one-third of the book is devoted to mission in the Indian sub-continent. Initially this was a response to the mission pull of the English Baptists — hence a location in East Bengal, with oversight being provided initially by the (English) Baptist Missionary Society. The missionaries in the political

upheavals, particularly the independence of India in 1947, and its division into two countries, later to become three, with civil war in East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, faced major difficulty. These events were linked with the diversification of fields of service, both within the Indian subcontinent and further afield. Evangelistic success amongst Muslims and Hindus in what is now Bangladesh was meagre. Interestingly though, at a time when the number of missionaries was significantly reducing, both through government restrictions on the number of missionaries from 1981 (p. 129) and increasing localisation of leadership and institutions, the church in Bangladesh linked with the Australian Baptist Missionary Society (ABMS) grew from 16 congregations and 986 members in 1973 to 478 congregations with 9014 members in 2012. This was linked with an increased focus on winning people groups and of winning decision-makers within those groups (p. 134). However, the greatest success was the winning of tribal Garos in Bangladesh (p. 176), along with support for the already strong Assam Baptist churches from 1947 to 1970.

A second major section of the book focuses on ABMS moves into what became Papua New Guinea and into what became West Papua in Indonesia. Response there was enormously greater than in East Bengal, though it was several years before the first baptisms occurred (pp. 213ff). However, mass movements soon occurred, with hundreds being baptised at Tekin in 1965 (p. 229) and 6,000 across the border amongst the Dani people in 1980 (p. 321). Along with that was the fervour of occasional revival movements (pp. 253ff, 321).

Other ABMS missionary outreach was on a lesser scale and commonly much less pioneering in nature. ABMS stepped into the breach when the South African Missionary Society was less welcome in other parts of Africa, sending missionaries for a time to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. Interestingly, from its beginnings, ABMS saw its role in Zambia as being for only a decade or two, with the last missionary leaving in line with that policy in 1998.

From around the beginnings of the twenty-first century ABMS missionaries have been sent to a number of countries, sometimes for evangelism, sometimes for church strengthening and sometimes for community development. This reflects the changing nature of church life in recipient countries (there are fewer accessible unreached major people groups), political realities (some countries are closed to missionaries and others have major visa restrictions) and a greater focus towards holistic mission.

Major questions regarding institutional books of this type hinge around questions such as ‘What is the purpose of the book?’ and ‘Who is it for?’ Institutional histories usually celebrate the institution being written about; so it is not surprising that the book has a major celebratory tone, noting major conversion/church growth in many places, and recognising the breadth of mission both in earlier educational and medical endeavours and in later development projects. As well as celebration the book also notes sacrifice and difficulty, including loss of life. It also touches on in inter-missionary relationship difficulties (pp. 35, 211, 298, 414, 434) — not surprising when lots of strong-minded missionary personnel are thrown together in pressuring situations.



As an institutional history the book is very well done. However, as an ex-missionary I would like it also to have more deeply explored theological and missiological issues thrown up by its narrative. Is conversion essentially individual or is it often a group phenomenon? Is it fundamentally a crisis or is it also very significantly a process (noting John Calvin's comment that we are converted little by little and in stages, and noting sad examples of post-conversion lapse (pp. 9, 329)). Is revival essentially a movement of the Spirit, or does culture play a part, and human nature (noting John Wesley's phrase 'nature mixed with grace'). And how should development projects start and is it essential that they be genuinely birthed first in the hearts of the recipient people — noting the digging of 80 wells in Zambia, followed by the lingering question: will the locals maintain them afterwards (p. 368)?

My questions are those of an outsider. But for insiders this is a *magnum opus*, a very fine work telling the story of Australian Baptist global mission work (including some amongst Australian Aboriginals) and providing some levels of reflection on an evolving world and evolving mission policy.

LIS GODDARD ET AL. *AWESOME VOICES: GOD WORKING THROUGH ORDAINED WOMEN TODAY*. MALTON: GILEAD BOOKS, 2013. 185 PP.

[ISBN – 13: 978-0-9926713-0-3].

Sarah Harris

Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

This small book is a collection of women's voices from the Church of England who tell of their journey to ordination. *What relevance has that for Baptist men and women in the Pacific?* you might ask. Certainly the Church of England landscape spoken of in this book is not the experience of NZ ordained Anglican women who have considerable scope for employment and engagement in the church of Aotearoa, NZ, but their voices nonetheless resonate with those in the wider church. From an Australasian Baptist church perspective, this is an extremely helpful and appropriate book if you want to hear about the journey of women into a largely male world.

Lis Goddard begins the book with the history of the AWESOME network: Anglican Women Evangelicals: Supporting our Ordained Ministries. The network began after the NEAC4 (Fourth National Evangelical Anglican Congress) where Women Bishops was the presenting issue. Women, who began networking over the washbasins in the ladies toilet, felt "marginalized, voiceless and unsupported" (p. 13). They recognized that the discussion happening in Blackpool that year was symptomatic of a "wider malaise" in the church that needed to be taken seriously. They began sharing something of their stories:

They were told that by definition, because of their gender and calling, they could not be fully evangelical. There were dreadful stories of being slow-handclapped by male colleagues, of female curates or associates being marginalized. Alternatively, evangelical women just could not find jobs

in evangelical churches and found themselves going to jobs outside their churchmanship...it was taken as proof that...the women were indeed not really evangelical (pp. 12-13).

This was beginning of the AWESOME network. A key strength of this group is that it holds together voices who disagree on the context for women to minister and the nature of their ordination; some are "permanent deacons" and follow a headship principle of being "under" a male leader. This is an admirable quality of the group where listening and dialogue is central; they support one another regardless of their theological views. The facts in the UK Church of England are stark; women fill only 18% of stipends and there are only a couple of women who work in a "larger church" (over 350). While these numbers are not reflected in NZ Anglicans, the numbers of women pastors in NZ Baptist churches is equally small (perhaps smaller). If God calls women, why are they not employed, and when they are employed, does their job reflect their calling and capability? NZ Baptists need to ask some very hard questions — men and women together. This is not a "women's issue" it is "men's issue" too for it is about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The following six chapters are individual stories of women. They are varied as each person's calling and gifting is unique. Jane Plackett and Suse McBay's stories are interwoven in chapter two; they are both currently undertaking their training at a residential college; one is heading toward urban parish ministry and one into theological teaching. Their chapter centers on their "calling" making it a helpful chapter for those considering their own call to ministry, particularly because their contexts for ordained ministry is clearly different; not everyone who will be ordained will be a standard vicar (stipended senior or sole pastor). The chapter, like the rest of the book, is written in informal prose that is simple and honest. At first this was a little irritating but I came to appreciate the style for I heard something of the person behind the words which is very important for this type of book; if you're after a theological consideration, this is not the book to read. If, on the other hand, men want to listen to what it is really like for a women leader to journey in the church, or if women want to find out about some honest highs and lows of life as an evangelical minister, it is worth a read. I read it in a couple of hours.

Sally Hitchiner talks of her training at Oxford as a 25 year old, her subsequent ministry as a university chaplain at Oxford and her role with TV and radio, which she fell into by default. She is clearly a woman who can think on her feet and communicate well and she has seen evangelistic spins offs with non-Christians eager to attend an Alpha course with a BBC presenter. Sally makes an interesting comment about young girls and church; she writes,

I come into contact with so many young girls and women who feel that the church is not for them. Young women are one of the fastest rising groups to drop out of church attendance in the UK and the least likely to put themselves forward for ordination. As someone who has worked with youth, students and young professionals for over 10 years I feel strongly that one of the contributing factors to this is the lack of role models (p. 90).

This is food for thought for men who often hold the ability to give a woman an opportunity (or not); where are the female role models in our NZ churches? These comments alone make her chapter worth a read.

This review cannot include a comment on each chapter (as much as I would like), but I will end with thoughts on two more chapters which widen the scope of the book; Clare Hendry's chapter on being called as a "permanent deacon," and Kate Wharton's on being a single Priest-in-Charge.

Clare's theology is complementarian and her call was unexpected. She was about to start a two-year Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Mississippi, when God spoke to her about working in the Church of England. When she applied, she was rejected and instead began teaching Pastoral Counselling at Oak Hill Theological College where she trained other ordinands. For Clare her journey to ordination took many years; this is not an uncommon story for women or men. In each step she has sensed "God had the place" for her. She now works as an honorary assistant minister (yet another unpaid woman) in a church plant on the edge of Muswell Hill.

Kate Wharton is an inspirational young woman who talks openly about the reality of life as a single women minister. When she was aged 14, the vote was passed in favour of women priests; "*how could there be any other view*" she mused, "*but [the vote] didn't have much bearing on my day to day life*" (p. 164). How wrong we can be! As Kate continues with her story she is clearly a women who thrives on the challenges of pastoral ministry and who takes being young, single and a women in her stride. "In the first week of my curacy," Kate writes, "I was greeted cheerily with, 'Morning Father!' People often ask 'so what do we call you then love?' to which I tend to reply 'well I'll answer to most things, but Kate will do for a start!'" (p. 174). Kate has gone on to speak about singleness in large gatherings (she had planned to say no!) and later to write a book, *Single Minded*, and is now an Area Dean in Liverpool. Her story is one where there was little angst around her gender and so maybe as the final chapter, is one which leaves increased hope for what may lie ahead for women in the church and a good place to end this book.

I think there is also hope for women evangelicals in NZ, but I want to leave this review with a plea: Getting to know and appreciate the challenges for women is critical for men; we need to think about what we say and how we say it; we need to think theologically and relationally; have you begun this journey? This book may be a start for you but it will not be all you need. It is a light read, and it offers no answers, but it might make both men and women think more deeply. The church is in desperate need of women's voices in key leadership roles; how can we image God with only one gender doing most of the thinking and planning, let alone all the pastoral caring, payer and teaching. Women and men notice different things in the biblical text, we "see" different opportunities and viewpoints. Together these give a wider, deeper, richer picture of God. Together.

DONALD P. MOFFAT. *EZRA'S SOCIAL DRAMA: IDENTITY, MARRIAGE AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN EZRA 9 AND 10*. LIBRARY OF HEBREW BIBLE/OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES 579. NEW YORK: BLOOMSBURY, 2013. xiii + 218 PP. [ISBN 978-0-567-60912-0].

Csilla Saysell,  
Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

In recent years a host of studies have appeared on the post-exilic period and more specifically on the intermarriage crisis in Ezra 9–10. Moffat adds his perspective to this using the anthropologist Victor Turner’s “social drama” model to interpret the events. To Turner’s four stages (breach, mounting crisis, redress/reconciliation and reintegration/schism) he adds Cottle’s fifth stage of ebbing/revivification where the memory of the social drama ebbs and revives in the public consciousness. Moffat states his aim as twofold (p. 3): to understand the meaning that writer(s) and readers of Ezra 9–10 may have derived from the story and to recover something of the historical situation behind the narrative that can contribute to a historical reconstruction of Persian Yehud.

After setting out his agenda and some methodological matters regarding the possibilities and limits of social science methods in the first chapter, Chapter 2 paints the larger picture of the Persian province, Yehud. Moffat describes its geography, population size, and political situation in order to illuminate social processes at work in the mixed marriage crisis. He concludes that Yehud was run on authoritarian lines both in terms of the Persian administration and in the local communities. Thus he convincingly questions scholarly views that imagine the resolution to the mixed marriage crisis as a democratic process with individual freedom to dissent from the community’s decision.

Chapter 3 argues for the compositional unity of Ezra 9–10 with sufficient linguistic connections and unified narrative flow to be treated together. Moffat also agrees with a number of other scholars that Neh 8 (the public reading of the law) is chronologically prior to Ezra 9–10. This is particularly significant for him because it becomes the foundation for his later argument that Ezra in his teaching role is central to the crisis even though the narrative downplays him.

Chapter 4 begins the textual study proper with the acknowledged focus being on the cultural and religious aspects of the narrative. Perhaps the title could have reflected this, as its present name (“Ezra 9–10”) does not reveal much of the content one could expect. Moffat explores how the community defined itself, the “foreigners”, the sin of intermarriage and how the crisis developed and was resolved. Moffat sums up the emphasis of the text on the sin of the community as a “transgression of cultic purity”, which I find puzzling (p. 71). Does he mean ritual impurity? Although it does not disturb his larger argument, his use of “cultic” here and elsewhere is, in my view, confusing. On the one hand, he uses cultic in the standard sense relating to the people (“cultic staff” p. 71) and practices around the temple (p. 83). On the other, he applies it more broadly to describe worship of and faithfulness to Yahweh, which he calls “cultic loyalty” as opposed to idolatry and apostasy (p. 181). In Deuteronomy, he calls the major sin “cultic pollution” (p. 72) when he means the worship of other gods (he cites Deut 11:17; 29:23–27). This is especially problematic when Deuteronomy does not associate sin with pollution (unlike the priestly

material) and faithfulness to YHWH in obedience to his commandments is much more broadly defined in the book than the cult and its practices.

Nevertheless, this chapter has some good observations and a convincing argument for Ezra's central role in forcing the issue in the crisis through the use of ritual (a tool whose centrality Turner highlights). Moffat makes the case that given the directive nature of the Persian administration and Ezra's high status, his public act of self-humiliation could not be ignored by the community leadership. He also understands Ezra to have been influential in providing the teaching on the law that led to the breach, and the solution suggested by Shecaniah. This is plausible if one accepts Neh 8's priority before the events in Ezra 9–10 and given the reference to Ezra's advice in the matter (10:3).

Chapter 5 comes to the heart of the matter. Moffat concentrates on three aspects: root paradigms, symbols (key aspects of Turner's theory) and the stages of the social drama. He identifies the exodus as the root metaphor for restoration. Although exodus motifs have long been noted in the book of Ezra, Moffat argues that the exodus paradigm forms a key aspect of the exiles' worldview, which shapes their understanding of the mixed marriage crisis. He sees two particular stories from the exodus period which inform the issues in Ezra 9–10 along with Deut 7 (the ban on intermarriage with Canaanites). One is the story of Achan's unfaithfulness (*ma'ul*) in taking dedicated things (*herem*) in Josh 7, which shares key language with Ezra 9–10. The other recounts Israel's sin at Baal-Peor in Num 25. This latter connection is not alluded to in Ezra 9–10 though Moffat points out that Ezra's genealogy included Phinehas (7:5) whose descendants are also mentioned among the people who returned with Ezra (8:2). It is plausible, as Moffat claims, that the incident at Baal-Peor was part of a pool of stories used in penitential prayers (e.g. Ps 106:28-31) and other literature (e.g. Deut 4:3) in the post-exilic period and so will have shaped the larger background of post-exilic thinking.

Moffat identifies foreign women as major symbols in the crisis that cause the breach but also become the means of redressive action and reintegration for the community (through divorce as part of the reparation needed alongside a guilt offering). He sees here again a link with the exodus paradigm and especially Num 25. The "foreign" label attached to the women builds on Deuteronomic ideas of foreignness defined as not conforming to Israel's worship and the practice of abominations, a description routinely applied to pre-conquest inhabitants of Canaan. Moffat also notes some similarities with the "strange woman" in Prov 1–9, though he posits no direct connection. Rather, he sees in these texts a testimony to a social discourse that conceives some women as foreign and dangerous. Drawing on priestly ideas Ezra 9 also associates these foreign women with a highly contagious pollution that is compared to the impurity of menstruation. There is some uncertainty how Moffat understands this impurity: as metaphorical-symbolic or ritual. Whatever the exact meaning he clearly shows that this cluster of ideas make the symbol of foreign women a powerful motivator for action.

Finally, the chapter walks the reader through Ezra 9–10 as social drama identifying Turner's four stages in the narrative. Moffat reiterates and expands on a number of points already mentioned in Chapter

4 particularly highlighting the importance of Ezra's ritual action in turning the breach into a social crisis, which demands a response from the community.

Chapter 6 then concludes with some explorations regarding the relationship between the narrative and historical events and examining the residual memory of the crisis in later literature. Moffat covers here a variety of issues, which give weight to the claim of many that the intermarriage crisis in Ezra 9–10 is not literary fiction. Rather, its many details correspond to recognisable features of the post-exilic period with an internal logic discernible in the story that is rooted in historic reality. So, for instance, he notes the recurrent motif of the exodus in postexilic literature, which demonstrates that the paradigm was deeply embedded in the consciousness of the period. He takes issue with Grabbe, who sees several Ezras reflected in the narrative and who considers Ezra's action weak and inappropriate to a man of his high status. Moffat discusses the economic and political explanations frequently given as to why marriages with "foreign" women were feared, but concludes that notwithstanding these subsidiary considerations the primary reason was the ideological emphasis on purity. He argues against Janzen's witch-hunt theory that places the blame on the women and instead suggests that the text holds the men responsible and requires reparation from them. He also critiques Blenkinsopp's suggestion that not all may have complied with the community's decision on divorce. Moffat thinks this unlikely based on his explorations into the social dynamics of postexilic society. Finally, he examines the residual effect of the crisis comparing the localised and slightly differently presented issue in Neh 13. He concludes that the recurrence of the intermarriage crisis does not mean that the process was ineffective in Ezra 9–10. He wonders if the differences he notes in Neh 13 reflect a shift in the community's understanding of holiness (purity language recedes in connection to lay people). He also speculates about the effects of the social stigma on those whose names were recorded in the earlier crisis in Ezra 9–10.

While Moffat mentions some biblical books that are more accepting of cross-cultural marriages (Esther, Ruth), he does not explore other Second Temple writings (e.g. 4QMMT, *Jubilees*, the Book of Judith, *The Testament of Levi*), which condemn mixed marriages and echo ideas of pollution present in Ezra 9–10. The fact that later rabbinic teaching finally regularised practices around intermarriage and condemned the approaches of zealotry evident in many of these non-biblical sources suggests that the issue continued to be a live one for several centuries and the earlier solutions offered were, in the final analysis, not entirely satisfactory.

Overall, Moffat's book is an interesting and valuable contribution to the study of the postexilic period and the story of Ezra 9–10. His discussion of the exodus as root paradigm, the foreign women as symbol and key motivators for action, as well as his exploration of Ezra's role as catalyst in the crisis through the power of ritual, are particular highlights. This is a worthwhile piece of work that gives added weight to arguments already raised by other scholars and fills in details in the text and its historic background not covered by others. As a revised dissertation this is primarily of benefit for those in biblical studies interested in the postexilic period or in social science approaches of biblical texts.

SUSAN MATHEW, *WOMEN IN THE GREETINGS OF ROMANS 16:1-16: A STUDY OF MUTUALITY AND WOMEN'S MINISTRY IN THE LETTER OF ROMANS*. LIBRARY OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES 471. LONDON: T & T CLARK, 2013. 206 PP + xv. [ISBN 978-0-567-42944-5.]

Sarah Harris

Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

Austen begins *Pride and Prejudice* with this statement: It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a fortune *must* be in want of a wife; then she goes on to discuss relationships and marriage, challenging the class structure and cultural norms. Her opening words reflect a cultural assumption, and if we are honest, assumptions inform our daily life more than we often want to acknowledge. I want to suggest to you that it is also (unfortunately) true that a biblical reader in favour of the theological view is often in search of a text with which to support it. Biblical readers also have assumptions, our blind spots from personal and cultural prejudice, even sheer ignorance, when we come to the sacred text. When readers think of Paul's views on women, may go straight to a couple of isolated passages—1 Cor 14:34–35, 1 Tim 2:11–12 – and yet this is to overlook other texts where women are clearly engaged in the mission of God alongside Paul and others. Paul talks of women reasonably often but many of these occasions are in lesser-known passages such as Romans 16, which is the *raison d'être* of Susan Mathew's excellent book.

The letter to the Romans is a significant piece of writing and for many it is the bedrock of Paul's theology. As a result, there have been quite literally thousands of books exploring his theology and ethics in chapters 1–15. In comparison, there are relatively few that engage well or extensively with chapter 16, the coda of the letter. Some might wonder — *Does it really matter? What can we really learn from a list of greetings?* Mathew, alongside a growing body of scholars, believes we have much to learn from this chapter. Weima says, "A Pauline letter closing...is a carefully constructed unit, shaped and adapted in such a way as to relate it directly to the major concerns of the letter as a whole" (Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 11). In this monograph Mathew proposes, "a balanced mutual ethic [which] is engendered by the *basileia* of God" (p. 13) and suggests Paul presents "relationships of reciprocity...whose purpose is mutual promotion" (p. 15). This kingdom of God she claims is divorced from gender; indeed for Mathew it is gender blind for it is centered "in the Lord." She notes the sixteen occurrences of the second person plural aorist imperative *aspasasthe*, which binds the ending into a refrain of "love-mutualism:" *You (plural) greet one another!* With probably five church groups mentioned from varying social strata and with men and women actively involved (16:3–5, 10, 11, 14, 15), the potentiality for cross-fertilization and mutual understanding and respect is considerable. Mathew makes an excellent point; sixteen occurrences can only be considered to

be deliberate on the part of the author, and that Paul is building on the earlier themes of accommodation and love, cannot be denied as powerful rhetoric.

In chapter two Mathew deals with the form of imperative showing how this third party greeting is designed to strengthen the bonds amongst the Christians. She also demonstrates that Paul had both men and women as his associates. This exegetical consideration is solid and succinct.

Chapter three considers women in the Roman Empire showing that women were not a monochrome group of submissive maids in the kitchen but many were engaged in the public sphere of life. Mathew upholds the "new women" described by Bruce Winter (*Roman Wives, Roman Widows*), and gives epigraphic evidence for women in courts, politics, magistracy, patronage, priesthood and Jewish synagogues. I too am not ready to disregard Winter's work as Lynn Cohick has done in her book *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009, 72-75). This was clearly a period of history when women were emerging onto the public stage of Roman society, otherwise Augustus would not have legislated on marriage to try and stabilize trends he saw as threatening to the Empire, and poets and writers would not have presented them so consistently and prominently in their writings (see Ovid, Catullus, Tibullus and Cicero). An historical chapter such as this is increasingly what I am after in biblical discussions for it provides the tools for better informed exegetical discussion; without new information it is too easy to simply to take the well-worn path which cannot lead anywhere other to the terrain we have already visited. The historical world *is* the landscape which sets the parameters for any biblical conversation; so in this reader's opinion anyway, we need more history rather than less — a point which Mathew seems to understand. This chapter is likely to make it onto a reading list when I teach Romans or Pauline theology.

Against this backdrop of women's involvement in society, Mathew then engages in a reasonably lengthy discussion of the women from Romans 16. Mathew, having effectively dismissed the assumptions that women were not leaders in chapter two, looks at roles they may have played. She also stresses Paul's public appreciation for their work through her exegetical discussion. This work is not new (while the need for it never seems to go away), but the call for collective mutuality within the church groups is her unique contribution.

In chapters five and six Mathew sets her thesis within the wider argument of Rom 12–13 and 14–15 respectively, demonstrating that this is an integrated idea and part of Paul's wider rhetoric in the letter; it is not really a coda at all; it has theological and rhetorical value. She then concludes with the challenge of Paul's "love–mutualism" to the community. His ethic is "initiated by grace, mediated by love, and sustained by the Spirit" (p. 165) and it avoids extremes of both individualism and collectivism; Paul's ethic is theological not anthropological and it is concerned with processes not states — a "dynamic process of equalization" (p. 166).

This book supports an egalitarian theology, while challenging a complementation view. If the biblical text is what challenges theological truth, then Paul's *Lietwort* (which is a command not a suggestion) to greet one another must inform our discussion with regards to women as leaders. Literary



theorists rightly claims that a "lead-word" is one of the strongest of all techniques for making meaning (see Buber, Amit, Bar-Efrat, Alter, Fokkelman, Freedman), and so the challenge is given by Mathew to consider Paul's use of *aspasastbe* in the task of reading Romans and to apply it to Christian community praxis. This book will inform and open up the ever-present discussion on women in leadership, while her conclusions seem sound to this reader.