

fancia/, epifai/nw, and euse/beia language based on the contingent nature of each letter.

Wieland notes several implications of his study. In particular, his study adds more evidence against Dibelius-Conzelmann's *christliche Bürgerlichkeit* (or 'Christian Citizenship') view. The PE are not only concerned with present moral life and the institutionalisation of the church, but they also contain a fully already/not yet eschatology, whose soteriology is based consummatively in the future. Wieland also argues that the cult and the power of cultic leaders do not play the central role that Donelson has asserted and that the PE do not present a 'Paulology' as Läger maintains. Finally, Wieland contends that the salvation language shows particular affinity to the Pauline already/not yet schema and that when analysed individually, the PE are not as theologically distinct from the *Hauptbriefe* as is often asserted.

Understanding the three letters as written within the larger context of Hellenistic Judaism, Wieland asserts that the PE present a salvation historical theology of God and salvation based on the OT. However, the author also has 'a concern to translate aspects of the Christian faith that had their origin with Judaism into terms intelligible to a Hellenistic thought world' (p. 234). This 'translation' is most evident in Titus. With this strong emphasis on the salvation historical basis of the PE theology, Wieland only briefly mentions the potential relation of soteriological language to the Imperial cult (p. 22). Later, when discussing Titus 3.1-8 Wieland writes: 'Even if the title swth/r may have invited comparison with other Graeco-Roman benefactors, however, the content of the saving in vv. 5-7 is distinctive, drawn from the religious traditions of Judaism and early Christianity' (p. 220). I agree with his analysis but the prevalence of the Imperial cult debate in current studies invites a more extended discussion to justify his position, especially since soteriological language plays a central role in the debate. In addition, a central presupposition as this could lead Wieland to fall into the same problem of privileging 'certain strands of evidence over others,' of which he accuses others (p. 11).

Overall, his study achieves a good balance between larger issues (such as human agency and universalism) and exegetical detail. Though his summaries are helpful, his exegesis of specific passages provide a resource for specific insights. In addition, his focus upon the contingent nature of the three letters helps the reader to see distinctive aspects within these letters while also showing their overall agreement on key soteriological points. One cannot be too dogmatic about distinctives with a relatively small sample size within three contingent letters, but Wieland strikes a careful balance between noting continuities and discontinuities.

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Stricken by God?

Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ

Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, eds.

Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007,
527pp., £17.95, pb, ISBN 978-0-8028-6287-7

SUMMARY

In recent years, a wave of publications has appeared on the relationship between violence and the doctrine of atonement. *Stricken by God?*, edited by Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, is a wide-ranging contribution to the ongoing discussions similar to Maret Trelstad's *Cross Examinations* (Fortress, 2006). The twenty collected essays are categorized under six subheadings related to the significance of the cross event: the historical Jesus, sacrifice, forgiveness, justice, nonviolent victory, rebirth and deification. By drawing together a diverse array of contributors the issues and questions orbiting around nonviolent atonement are explored from various angles, perspectives, and traditions with a panorama of alternative outlooks offered to the penal substitution theory. Though readers will not find an entirely unified formulation of nonviolent atonement, some common threads are found running throughout: bountiful use of Girardian mimetic theory, reappropriation of Irenaeus' recapitulation model, and frequent appraisal and critique of Hans Boersma's *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross* (Eerdmans, 2004) which often stands in for sacrificial ideology in general.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die letzten Jahre haben eine Welle von Veröffentlichungen zur Beziehung zwischen Gewalt und der Lehre von der Sühne gesehen. *Stricken by God?*, herausgegeben von Brad Jersak und Michael Hardin, ist ein umfassender Beitrag zur laufenden Diskussion, vergleichbar mit Maret Trelstads *Cross Examinations* (Fortress, 2006). Die 20 Essays werden unter sechs Kategorien eingeordnet, die sich auf die Bedeutung des Kreuzesereignisses beziehen: der historische Jesus, Opfer, Vergebung, Gerechtigkeit, gewaltloser Sieg, Neugeburt und Vergöttlichung. Durch die Beiträge einer großen Bandbreite an Autoren werden die Fragen um die gewaltlose Sühne aus unterschiedlichen Blickwinkeln, Perspektiven und Traditionen untersucht und ein Panorama alternativer Ansätze zur Theorie der stellvertretenden Sühne angeboten. Auch wenn die Leser keine ganz einheitliche Formulierung der gewaltlosen Sühne finden, gibt es doch einige gemeinsame Stränge, die sich durch die Beiträge ziehen: es wird großzügig von der mimetischen Theorie René Girards Gebrauch gemacht, das Rekapitulationsmodell des Irenäus findet neu Verwendung und Hans Boersmas *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross* (Eerdmans, 2004) wird mehrfach gepriesen und auch kritisiert, ein Buch, das oft für eine allgemeine Opferideologie einsteht.

RÉSUMÉ

Ces dernières années, bien des publications consacrées à la question du rapport entre la violence et la doctrine

de l'expiation ont vu le jour. Le présent ouvrage collectif est une contribution au débat en cours abordant un large spectre de sujets. Ses vingt chapitres se répartissent en six thématiques ayant trait à la signification de la croix : le Jésus historique, le sacrifice, le pardon, la justice, la victoire par la non violence, la nouvelle naissance et la déification. Les travaux d'auteurs très divers étant ici rassemblés, les questions qui se posent en rapport avec le sujet d'une expiation non violente sont explorés sous différents angles et perspectives, dans le cadre de traditions diverses, et un panorama d'options autres que la théorie de la substitution pénale est offert. On ne trouvera pas dans ce livre une formulation totalement unifiée de la théorie de l'expiation non violente, mais tout de même certains fils conducteurs communs : un usage abondant de la théorie mimétique de René Girard, une réappropriation du modèle de la récapitulation repris à Irénée, et une fréquente référence critique à l'ouvrage de Hans Boersma qui apparaît souvent comme le représentant de l'idéologie sacrificielle.

* * * *

"Atonement is all about violence and how we perceive God's relation to violence" (p. 76).

In recent years, a wave of publications has appeared on the relationship between violence and the doctrine of atonement. *Stricken by God?*, edited by Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, is a wide-ranging contribution to the ongoing discussions similar to Maret Trelstad's *Cross Examinations* (Fortress, 2006). The contributors include familiar advocates for nonviolent atonement (Mark Baker, J. Denny Weaver, and Anthony Bartlett), reprinted essays from Old and New Testament scholars (James Alison, N.T. Wright, and Marcus Borg), and well-known theologians not typically associated with this discussion (Miroslav Volf and Rowan Williams). The twenty collected essays are categorized under six subheadings related to the significance of the cross event: the historical Jesus, sacrifice, forgiveness, justice, nonviolent victory, rebirth and deification.

By drawing together a diverse array of contributors the issues and questions orbiting nonviolent atonement are explored from various angles, perspectives, and traditions with a panorama of alternative outlooks offered to the penal substitution theory. Though readers will not find an entirely unified formulation of nonviolent atonement, some common threads are found running throughout: bountiful use of Girardian mimetic theory, reappropriation of Irenaeus' recapitulation model, and frequent appraisal and critique of Hans Boersma's *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross* (Eerdmans, 2004) which often stands in for sacrificial ideology in general.

When approaching a volume of collected essays one hopes it will be characterized more by its outstanding contributions than by its disappointing ones. Thankfully, this certainly is the case here. Some pieces, such as those by Brito Miko and Ronald Dart, while highly creative, appear to do little more than serve the goal of painting a wide panorama of perspectives but do little to further

the argument for nonviolent atonement. Also, instead of putting forth a convincing exegetical argument, Brad Jersak's and E. Robert Ekblad's all-too brief reinterpretations of Isaiah 53:4 only muddy the waters considerably and create further questions.

On the other hand, Michael Hardin's exploration of the hermeneutical presuppositions operative in various atonement theories may be this volume's most valuable contribution. His analysis is particularly beneficial for it teases apart the divergent *a priori* commitments working behind the scenes of competing atonement accounts and their relationship to violence, both divine and human.

Hardin divides the various theories as either "sacrificial" or "nonsacrificial" based on whether or not they read the Scriptures according to René Girard's mimetic theory or interpret them as fully inspired, or "flat" (Hardin's terminology). On his account, the later approach is both blessing and curse. It is blessing for it properly focuses attention on the intersection of Old and New Testaments as the place in which the message of the atonement is revealed. On the other hand, he contends, a hermeneutic such as this is a curse inasmuch as it "locks up a sacrificial rendering of the Biblical text" (p. 62). He argues instead, with mimetic theory, that revelation should be read as progressive in that the biblical tradition is "self-critical literature"; it is constantly "probing meaning" (p. 62). The New Testament doesn't teach a theory of sacrifice, he urges, but tears it down and "gives us a developing anti-sacrificial project" (p. 70).

The issue of God's relationship to violence, then, is determined by the approach taken to the Scriptures. For example, those who approach the Old and New Testament as fully inspired and revelatory in a "flat" sense will often pursue questions related to its redemptive use, specifically by God in the cross but not isolated to this instance only. Hans Boersma's *Violence, Hospitality and the Cross* is just one example of which Hardin is stridently critical. On the other hand, according to mimetic theory, if biblical revelation posits violence and its correlates (substitution, satisfaction, reciprocity) not as a divine but an "anthropological datum", then Jesus' death and resurrection serve a revelatory function; God doesn't use violence redemptively but is in fact anti-violent. Whether or not one consents to Hardin's reading of the Scriptures or finds mimetic theory persuasive, his contention, "How one uses the Bible is a key as to how one will understand atonement" (p. 60), is certainly correct and should be kept at the forefront among participants active in the ongoing discussions about the relationship between violence and the atonement.

Disappointingly, the relationship between divine and human action, an issue that also underlies and influences the theological moves and commitments being made by participants in this discussion, was only scarcely discussed in this collection. As we continue to wrestle with the issues and questions associated with God and his relation to violence, one hopes future work on the doctrine of the atonement will engage vigorously with

the doctrine that has historically sought to articulate this relationship: the doctrine of Providence.

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*Hear, O Lord:
A Spirituality of the Psalms*

David G. Firth

Calver, Derbyshire: Cliff College Publishing, 2005, viii
+ 134 pp., £9.99, pb, ISBN 1-898362-37-8

SUMMARY

In order to understand how the psalms apply to the lives of God's people, one should always remember that they convey particular spirituality. This review highlights the method employed in Firth's book as he examines this spirituality. Adopting Brueggemann's methodology as set forth in *The Message of the Psalms*, Firth investigates how the psalms aid the believer in interpreting life in a fallen world. By additionally emphasising the eschatological nature of the Psalter, he furthers his purpose in the book, which is to help other believers interpret, apply and pray the psalms for themselves.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Will man verstehen, wie die Psalmen auf das Leben des Gottesvolks anzuwenden sind, sollte man sich immer daran erinnern, dass sie eine besondere Spiritualität vermitteln. Diese Rezension widmet sich besonders der Methode, die Firth in seiner Untersuchung dieser Spiritualität anwendet. Unter Benutzung der Methode Brueggemanns aus *The Message of the Psalms* untersucht Firth, wie die Psalmen den Gläubigen anleiten, das Leben in einer gefallen Welt zu interpretieren. Durch die zusätzliche Betonung des eschatologischen Wesens des Psalters unterstützt er die Absicht seines Buches, die darin besteht, anderen Gläubigen zu helfen, die Psalmen selbst zu interpretieren, auf sich anzuwenden und zu beten.

RÉSUMÉ

Pour comprendre comment les Psaumes s'appliquent à la vie du peuple de Dieu, il faut se souvenir qu'ils véhiculent une spiritualité particulière. Cette recension s'intéresse à la méthode employée par Firth pour étudier cette spiritualité. Adoptant la méthodologie exposée par Brueggemann dans son commentaire sur les Psaumes, Firth montre comment les Psaumes aident le croyant à comprendre la vie dans un monde déchu. En soulignant en outre la nature eschatologique du psautier, il aide encore le croyant à interpréter les Psaumes, à se les approprier et à les prier pour lui-même.

* * * *

While there are various approaches in psalms studies that add insight to our reading and understanding of the Psalter as religious literature, it must always be remembered that this collection of Hebrew poetry was intended to convey a spiritual message about living as God's people.

The wide range of prayers within the Psalter (intentionally) reflects the holistic manner of life for the faithful, and consequently, conveys a coherent spiritual perspective that should not be overlooked in the overall study of the psalms. On this note, in *Hear, O Lord: A Spirituality of the Psalms*, David G. Firth examines this spirituality and illustrates how it is significant for the modern day Christian.

To do this, Firth adopts the general approach offered by Brueggemann in *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) of categorising of psalms in three groups: psalms of orientation, disorientation and new orientation. Using this grid, Firth examines how the psalms paint an understanding of the ordered world, disordered world and reordered world. Simply put, psalms of an ordered world tell us that God has made a basic order for life and creation. They lead us to organise our lives in accordance to God's ways, as well as trust and praise him in view of his character. Psalms of a disordered world, however, remind us of the reality in which we live. Though there is general order, the presence of sin and evil has brought about the presence of disorder, and these psalms help us to grasp the reality of pain in this life. Subsequently, psalms of a reordered world lead us from order and disorder to a place of restoration and deliverance. In these ways, the psalms as a whole bring us through the experience of faith as we discover the reality of God's reign over life in this fallen world.

While Firth employs much of Brueggemann's method, he notes that 'his anti-royalist tendencies have tended to see him diminishing the role of the so-called "Royal Psalms", those explicitly associated with the king. As a result, the theme of the reign of God, and the tension with which this exists alongside our human experience and the eschatological expectations of the Psalter, is underplayed' (11). Thus, in contrast to Brueggemann, Firth emphasises the importance of seeing the 'eschatological edge to the final message of the Psalter' (125). He does so by examining the 'hope beyond order' that the Psalter conveys and thereby shows that the psalms anticipate something yet to come, which is particularly applicable for the believer.

Overall, this book achieves the purpose for which it was written. It is both profitable for understanding the spirituality of the Psalter, and practical for considering how New Testament believers in the twenty-first century can (and should) pray these ancient prayers in their own life-experience. For anyone seeking to better understand and apply the psalms in their own spiritual pilgrimage, Firth's work will prove helpful.

Michael G. McKelvey, Dingwall, Scotland