Living right while righting wrong: a Biblical theology of protest
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FAITH THAT PROTESTS

Christian faith that protests is one that lives in the present but also lives toward the future and bears on the widest range of affairs. It is aware of the significance of norms, structures and historical processes and dares not only to evaluate them in the light of the Gospel but to work in and through them. Our first doctrine states that ‘Scripture constitutes the divine rule of Christian faith and practice’ 1 In order for Salvationist protest to be authentically Christian, it must be rooted in the entire tenor of Scripture and in particular the life of Jesus. This paper is structured around five themes – the divine intent of shalom for human community, inclusion of the marginalised, the purity system and its relation to holiness, imitatio Dei and the reign of God in the world. This is demonstrated through a treatment of several passages – Luke 4, Matthew 25, the cleansing of the Temple and the Acts of the Apostles, passages which taken together, make explicit how Jesus protested against the exclusive and oppressive policies and practices of the religious and political leaders of his time. The paper concludes with some practical implications regarding the Lordship of Christ and how we as Salvationists might protest injustice in our respective contexts.

SHALOM

When this Hebrew term is translated into English as ‘peace’, it is frequently understood as the opposite of war or absence of conflict. However this diminishes its scope and richness. A number of scholars acknowledge that wholeness and flourishing can be ascribed to shalom but are cautious to commit to an exact definition due to the variety of root meanings that can be applied. Despite these semantic challenges a number of theological affirmations can be made regarding shalom that contribute to this paper. Shalom is gift and originates in the heart of God for his creation. Therefore any seeking of shalom holds in tension a quality of life under God that includes the spiritual, material and relational. 2 The enemy of shalom is chaos or disorder. If chaos can be present in every dimension of life, so equally must shalom be understood to affect and involve the total person. Because shalom can be diminished or damaged by chaos, action must be taken for its restoration and this God has done by giving humanity responsibility to act in his name. Such restoration speaks to the necessity of justice as shalom cannot exist without the presence of just relationships. 3 To use theological language,
restoration includes healing, a new identity and regeneration of body, soul and mind – in a word, redemption.

From the first pages of Genesis, we see a God whose quest is to forge a faithful human community characterised by shalom. According to Genesis 3, shalom was dramatically broken – between God and humanity, and humanity and creation. No longer normative, shalom became the telos of Israel in search of God’s peace and justice. The Exodus narrative sees God acting decisively to free an oppressed people and against those who perpetrate oppression. These experiences teach Israel about God’s character and the kind of community they are to become - grounded in God’s compassion and extended to those who are most vulnerable. Deuteronomy provides the framework for how power, resources and influences are to be distributed and where individual rights never outweigh communal duties. As a commitment to holiness, Israel is to evidence deep concern for its neighbours as well as its own citizens and never replicate their Egyptian oppression.

In the book of Judges the Spirit descends on particular individuals who lead people out of chaos and re-establish a clear identity for God’s people. After Israel is given a king, we see the Spirit working through leaders who are fallible, Saul and Samson being clear examples. God builds practices of mercy and justice into the law and holds priests responsible to implement them. The intention is to have people living in reconciled relationship to himself and their neighbours. God’s justice is a social form of God’s and is inclusive, embracing the integrity of human personhood. The quest for a just and inclusive society becomes a preoccupation of the eighth century prophets deploy a dyad of justice and righteousness, mishpat and sdaqah to insist that all are entitled to a full and secure place in the life of the community. Hence the repetitive references to the ‘trinity’ of orphans, widows and sojourners. It is out of this prophetic tradition of crying the pain of the oppressed and mediating the presence of the divine that Jesus will protest against the wayward leaders of the people. Like Amos he will deliver sharp oracles to the powerful. Similar to Jeremiah he embodies his message with symbolic action. Faithful to ‘Second Isaiah’, he experiences the cost of speaking truth and calling people to account, ‘despised and rejected, a man of sorrows’ (Isa 53:3). In his humanity Jesus stands in the long line of prophets who live and die to be bearers of the Kingdom of God, losing life in order to save life.

EMBODIED WORD

To human thinking it was inconceivable that the divine would ever become human. God was to remain God in the image humanity created God to be – powerful, violent and judgmental - as well as in locale – God lived above the heavens, distant and powerful. The idea that God could be recognisable, visible, ‘born’ into poverty in an obscure town into a refugee family, demonstrate a life of active love and sacrificial service for others and bring indictment upon the rich and powerful was inconceivable in first century Judea. The incarnation then defies expectation of how God is seen, understood and experienced. And so in becoming human, God protests the division between human and divine and invites the world to imagine him ‘upfront and personal’ in human form as a child refugee and displaced person.

DECLARATION OF JUBILEE – LUKE 4

It is Luke who records Jesus’ proclamation of the coming of the prophetic, political vision of a reign of justice in the synagogue at Nazareth.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good
news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour[...today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Lk 4:17-19,21).]

In what is termed ‘likely the most important passage in Luke-Acts’, compassion for the disadvantaged is placed at the centre of Luke’s Gospel. The phrase ‘the year of the Lord’s favour’ refers to the year of Jubilee and its attendant ideas of forgiveness of debts, repatriation of property and release of slaves and would have been a favourite passage of the listeners who no doubt viewed themselves as the referents for whom deliverance was promised. Who are the poor and the captive? Those robbed of the ability to make choices for themselves and declared persona non grata.

**WOMEN**

Feminist theology has critically noted that women within the Jewish population were accorded secondary status by their very nature as women and as causes of ritual pollution through the sexual functions of childbirth and menstruation. Rabbinical interpretation of Deuteronomy 5:21 reasoned that all objects of a person’s coveting are the possessions of a person’s neighbour, including wives. Behind it was the attitude that every Jewish male recite each morning, thanking God that ‘he did not make me a Gentile [...] a woman [...] a boor’.

It is against the backdrop of silencing women as agents (1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah) that Luke portrays Elizabeth, Mary and Anna as prominent prophetic figures. Despite minimal social status, they are depicted as instruments through which the Spirit speaks (Lk 1:28, 41; 2:38). Women are prominent among those whom Jesus heals and exorcises – the bent woman in the synagogue, the woman with the haemorrhage (8:43-48) and the daughter of Jairus whom Jesus raises from death (8:40-42, 49-56). But not only are women recipients of healing – they are welcomed members of Jesus’ circle (Lk 7-8).

**CHILDREN**

If women were regarded as incomplete humans and therefore not to be taken seriously, then children were considered even less significant. In every respect they represented the ‘poor among you’ as they made demands on the wealthy and powerful for their very existence. Yet the gospels reveal a divine conviction that childhood experiences are significant to God in contrast to humanity’s attitude. The story of the twelve year old Jesus in the temple, asking questions and providing answers that astonish reveals an understanding of the prophetic call – God’s spirit can and does work among the
young. Jesus proposes that the way a child is received is in fact the measure of receiving himself and challenges listeners that there is no better test of living by Kingdom values than to receive those who are always needy, always dependent, and never able to repay (Lk 6:30-36). When the disciples rebuke people bringing children to him Jesus declares ‘Let the children come to me and do not prevent them. For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these[…]’ (Lk 18:16-17). The significance of this counter protest is not that people must become like children in receiving the kingdom, but rather that children embody the poor just as Jesus teaches the poor ‘yours is the Kingdom of God’ (Lk 6:20).

NEIGHBOUR

Jesus’ protests also contest practices regarding foreigners and Gentiles. Israel understood holiness as a matter of separation, however Jesus appeals to Elijah and Elisha whose work embraced those beyond the Jewish borders, evident in the Gentile centurion who requests Jesus to heal his slave (Lk 7:5) and Jesus’ contrast of this significant act of faith with a less than commendable Capernaum. He intentionally engages with a Samaritan woman who brings many to faith (John 4) and refuses the disciple’s repeated requests to call down fire on Samaritan villages. He elevates the status of a Samaritan who proves himself to be more of a neighbour to an injured traveller than a priest and Levite, challenges them to ‘go and do likewise’ (Lk 20:29-36). In the estimation of Jesus, to be a neighbour was not to have rights that put others under obligation to oneself, but rather to be conscious of one’s duty to another. This protest against lack of compassion was not a claim that all are physiologically equal. Jesus recognised the lame and the halt (John 5:1-9). Nor are all mentally equal. The parable of the talents establishes that reality (Mt 25:13-30). Nor does he teach that because men are to be brothers they are therefore twins. According to the new social standard of Jesus, two individuals are equal, not because they have equal claims upon each other, but because they owe equal duties to one another.23

PURE AND IMPURE

Perhaps the most startling protests are when Jesus defies purity customs by engaging and sharing fellowship with those considered unclean and impure - ‘sinners’. The historic definition of ‘sinner’ does not appear entirely clear but the term included all who did not know the Torah, did not keep it or could not keep it.24 It was believed that certain trades placed people in a constant state of impurity or temptation to immorality – soldiers, tanners, doctors, shepherds, and especially tax collectors.25 Beyond these occupations, a definitive sign was sexual promiscuity. In contrast, Old Testament principles taught that God had created all people and was no respecter of persons. These truths emerge clearly in the three kingdom parables – the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son (Luke 15). In the story of the Lost Sheep, Jesus states that God actively seeks the overlooked and excluded. In the Lost Coin, he challenges hearers to imagine thinking and acting as a woman (they who thanked God daily that they were not) in order to understand what God is like. The story of the Lost Son points out it is not what people deserve or whether they are wealthy that mattered, but God’s obsession to find people and bring them back to his love and care.26

HOLINESS

Fundamental to understanding Jesus’ protests is the opposition between Jesus’ concept of a man’s approach to God determined by ‘holiness of heart and life’ – and one that focuses on a highly interpreted Mosaic law.27 For Pharisees the law was always the means of approach to God’s favour. In contrast, Jesus counters that right relationship with the Father is demonstrated in treating other people’s needs as holy. He not only protests against the perceived need of professional interpreters but declares that the Law is fulfilled by his own presence and is to be possessed by the poorest as well
as the learned. He condemns any limitation set on divine forgiveness and accuses any who do to be misrepresenting God. The account of Zacchaeus records Jesus’ insistence of fellowship despite the exploitive relationship Zacchaeus has with citizens of Jericho. Jesus’ further commendation of a gift of expensive oil used by a marginalised woman to anoint his feet, his forgiveness of a paralytic’s sin and the plucking of grain by his disciples on the Sabbath all draw criticism from the Pharisees. Jesus’ counter protest declares that the holiness of God and the holiness people are called to live out is not about isolation but rather a transformative power - contagious and inclusive - Jesus stretches out his hand and touches a leper commanding him to ‘be clean’ (Mark 1), the healing of the woman with a discharge (Mark 5) and a number of exorcism accounts which portray Jesus in triumphant conflict with spirits who identify him as ‘the holy one’ (Mk 1:23-27; 7:24-30; 9:14-27). Jesus, ‘Immanuel – God with us’, far from needing protection, overcomes that which is considered unclean. His presence is a protest, a visible embodied reminder that God’s kingdom is one of inclusion not exclusion. God’s holiness cannot be contaminated nor confined.

QUESTION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

To discern a call that explicitly describes and ‘recommends’ civil disobedience (the intentional breaking of an unjust law in order to bring it into question), one only has to turn to several examples in the Gospels. In Mark 2 Jesus and the disciples break the Sabbath proscription against working by gathering corn (the Law allowed the poor to scavenge after harvest). The issue is not one of theft but of work on the Sabbath, a law oppressing the poor who do not have the luxury of choosing which day to search for food and are by their actions made ritually unclean as well as materially poor. The law here serves to impose a divine consequence to their poverty, forcing into their poverty an additional separation from God and another layer of division between them and their social and religious superiors (those who have the luxury of keeping the law). By Jesus’ choice not to deny the charge, it is possible that he authorises the collection of food knowing full well they are being watched by the Pharisees. To the charge of disobedience to the Law, Jesus cites the precedent set by David who broke the law surrounding ritual food when he and his companions were in need (1 Sam 21:1-6; Lk 6:3). The protest might have had minimal impact had it been made conjecturally. However, the protest was made public in order to draw attention that the law ought not to bind people – it must serve humanity, not enslave. Immediately after Jesus enters the synagogue (itself a protest as he is now ritually unclean by breaking the Sabbath prohibition to work) and proceeds to heal a man with a withered hand. In this act Jesus points to human duty to the supreme law of mercy commanded by God, loyalty to which required the violation of the Sabbath law in its unjust application. But perhaps what is also implied here is the admonition that not acting is sometimes itself an act. Choosing to not do something is in fact doing something. Jesus demonstrates that perpetuating an unjust status quo by inaction is just as much an act of injustice as performing an injustice directly. Note again the public nature and pointed questions that Jesus asks as he acts. By making others whole in public and ‘breaking’ Sabbath law, Jesus denounces the corrupt nature of Jewish law, its unwillingness to serve people, and its complicity in keeping people ill and poor. In overturning the authority of purity and debt codes, he reveals himself not only as ‘lord of the Sabbath’ but ‘lord of the entire house itself’ (Mk 13:35).28

The coming of the Kingdom of God is to be understood in terms of both its Christology and pneumatology. Jesus never ‘merely’ heals a hand, casts out demons or restores sight and speech. On a fundamental level, these are socio-political acts of protest – restoring order where there has been chaos and incapacity. The man healed of the shrivelled hand lives with a fully functioning body. The demon-possessed individual lives without the debilitating effects of this power in his life. There is a sense in which Jesus brings justice by being compassionate toward the unattractive, and by fanning the spark of the human spirit that has been nearly smothered by shame, and abuse. He does this by...
transforming the material aspects of people’s lives and by advocating for both the spiritual and social well-being of individuals.

In each of his encounters with people, one of the tests Jesus probes for is whether a person has the same sort of attitude in relationships that God has. Followers are to be ‘perfect as their heavenly father is perfect’, possessed of sacrificial social-mindedness (Mt 5:48; Lk 6:36) and demonstrate a willingness to regard persons as ends and not means. At the heart of Jesus’ actions is the missio Dei and imitation of God. While he rightly affirms the Old Testament commandment that one is to ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength’ and adds a second ‘and[...]love your neighbour as yourself’, he is in fact saying that if God is your father, become what you are – his child. In other words, to live as a child of God is to treat your neighbour as God treats you, to imitate in your behaviour the quality and direction of God’s activity. Where Jesus identifies a lack of Kingdom values, he protests socially divisive practices regarding the marginalised – women, children, the unclean and impure, drawing attention to the alternative nature of the Kingdom where all are welcome. He confronts the social mores of his day and addresses the question of how people and groups ought to live together. With ‘his face toward Jerusalem’ (Lk 9:51), we now examine his political stance in order to highlight the collusion of religious authorities and governmental policies with regard to the Temple - the centre of Jewish life.

TEMPLE

During what some acknowledge as his misnamed ‘triumphal entry’ Jesus mocks the imperial power of the Roman officials, both defiantly and humorously by entering the city riding on a donkey (Lk 9:51). Much has been written regarding the Temple as the centre of the purity system and as a focal point of Jewish resistance to Rome, but Jesus identifies it as a centre of exploitation. In what some consider his first form of violent protest, Jesus overturns the tables and drives out the moneychangers. This protest is against the profiting from and legitimising of an exploitive sacrificial system grounded in a misguided understanding of holiness and purity. Sacrifices were to be intimate expressions of the giver but the temple system replaced this with an automated and depersonalised process. As Jesus proceeds to clean the temple, he makes an unheard of claim – he will tear it down and rebuild it in three days (Mt 26:61; Mk 14:58; Jn 2:19). Again, Jesus advocates for an alternative interpretation of the life of holiness, marking compassion as a ‘new priority, intimately linked with the action of God for his people.’ The Hebrew word translated as ‘compassion’ is the plural of the word for ‘womb’, that which gives life and nourishment. When compassion led Jesus to touch, heal and feed others, it also moved him to protest the dominant socio-political program. Such practices have been termed ‘politics of compassion’. The Temple, now purged of taxation and exclusion, becomes a place where all may meet God. Strengthening his earlier declaration as Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus now not only asserts absolute authority over Temple but pronounces himself to be Temple, the very presence of God.

KINGDOM NON-NEGOTIABLES – MATTHEW 25

Jesus’ presentation of the non-negotiable terms of the Kingdom of God is clear – neighbour love or no neighbour love and is pared down to a single question – ‘what have you done’?. Echoing the prophets, the Son of Man identifies with those who are hungry, thirsty, unclothed and imprisoned (Mt 25:45,46). This is a God who so involves himself in the lives of humanity that what happens to them, happens to him; their hunger, thirst and suffering as his own. Here Christ conditions salvation and
God’s judgment around the treatment of the ‘least of these among us’. Note the significance of the choice Jesus gives – God or the economics of wealth or oppression. This is a choice about ultimate allegiance, not a reflection of economic preference or personal convenience. Any practice of oppression and exploitation is a practical denial of God. People must choose their sovereign. What is ‘done’ with Christ is perhaps the greatest political act and it is this that humanity is judged - on their works of mercy, confirming Isaiah 58 tying acceptable worship to the work of justice.

DEATH IS LIFE

Jesus, who is the Kingdom of God in person, embodies justice and mercy yet is clearly prepared to carry human failure. Here the Old Testament insistence on wrong being atoned for by sacrifice is reversed. While the wrongs belong to humanity, God provides the sacrifice in the form of his blameless Son who breaks yet another commandment which forbids killing by laying down his life as sacrifice for sin. Jesus’ crucifixion represents perhaps the ultimate protest against and victory over exploitive power.

If in the incarnation God became ‘larger than life’, for the first time God is now known as larger than death. The one who protested against the power of the priestly establishment and Rome, who decreed the freedom of God and exposed oppression was supposed to be silenced. Suddenly he is unassailably present. The women’s journey to the tomb where they receive the angel’s matter-of-fact message that Jesus is risen and to be found among the poor where he began his mission, the simple act of hospitality of Cleopas and another disciple sharing a meal with a (so they thought) stranger they met on the Road to Emmaeus, (Lk 24:1-35), Jesus’ invitation to Thomas to touch his hands and side - every encounter is a demonstration of the risen Christ’s power over death and establishment of his Lordship over space and time (Jn 20:26-28). Thomas’ response to the risen Jesus becomes the proclamation of the early church. ‘My Lord and my God’ are not simply words of worship but signal a distinct change of allegiance in service from the emperor to the King of Kings. When Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that he is returning to the Father, the promise is to send the Spirit as ‘advocate’ (Jn 14:16-26). The same Spirit that led Jesus through his earthly life would lead the church in its service to the world.

In the Acts of the Apostles (which some scholars have termed ‘Acts of the Spirit’) there is a complete absence of any retraction or separation. Instead, the church extends and deepens Jesus’ advocacy of the marginalised ‘in the name of Jesus’, demonstrating the power of the crucified and exalted Messiah is also ‘with them’. Because of their boldness, opponents recognise that the disciples have been with Jesus and his power now works through them (Acts 5:12-16). But there is a price to be paid. In the exercising of the authority given to them by Jesus to proclaim the new kingdom and confront oppressive powers, they also experience suffering in continuity to Jesus (Phil 3:10).

SUMMARY

A number of teachable threads are now perhaps evident. First, God does not advocate from a distance but comes near in the person of Christ, revealing authentic human nature. Advocacy and the protesting of injustices on behalf of others demands a faithfulness to our own humanity, which must always be defined by Christ’s own example. Jesus dwelled with the poor, sat with ‘sinners’, intentionally connected with those on the margins of society, met publically with tax collectors and held a ‘private’ meeting to gently rebuke Pilate regarding the real state of power (Jn 19:10-11). From this we learn that authentic protest not only engages the powers at the institutional level but also at the grass roots, where injustice, and marginalisation seem most plentiful. Location matters. Second, throughout Scripture the persons in the Trinity redefine power, choosing to express it in generosity.
and sacrifice for the ‘other’. In a world where competing power contends for people’s identity, the powerless suffer from the actions of others and are made to feel less than human. An African proverb states ‘where two elephants fight, the grass suffers’. In other words, in a world of power those without power or voice suffer and are often neither seen or heard. Jesus, the ‘mystic with the open eyes’, exemplifies a new kind of power that takes its essence from God’s moral ontology. Third, protesting injustice is more than words (powerful though they might be). It is a form of embodied wisdom. Jesus defends the adulterer, sits with sinners and elevates the outcast. Jesus’ advocacy is not an idle one, encased in sterile language but flows out of relationship with the Father and Spirit into the lives of others. Like Jesus, there is a necessity not only to challenge the visible structures of our time but also the underlying symbols and narratives that influence the structures and systems. To bring about this kind of change requires hard, disciplined and often behind-the-scenes work. Deep cultural change requires countless small changes wrought by those on the ‘inside’. It is easy to forget that Jesus protested injustice as he found it - within daily life - and chose to address it not by using the coercive power of those he opposed. Fourth, is the importance of allowing God to define the term ‘protest’ and not limit one’s understanding to any predetermined, specific cultural readings that might exist. If in Jesus’ life, his poverty displays the good news to the poor yet protests the dominant assumption that wealth equalled worth, then the same demand is placed on those who bear his name. If his prayer life opens him to the guidance of the Spirit yet protests the world’s premise that honour from humans rather than the truth before God is important, then those who call themselves disciples must be marked by prayer and sensitivity to the same Spirit. If his itinerancy demonstrates the freedom that follows from obedience to the Spirit’s promptings yet protests the conventional wisdom that security comes through control, then those who name him Lord must similarly be obedient to the Spirit’s direction and work in the world no matter what the price.

Craig Keen reminds us that Jesus was not raised on the last day of the week but rather on a new day that exceeded the old seven day cycle. First days do not stand in competition with the old order but instead fold it into the new. The Salvation Army as part of the universal church is sent to embody Christ in this new time – the eighth day of creation. Finally, by entering into His-tory, we are given a sanctified imagination to improvise in ever new circumstances, faithful to the narrative of Scripture and relevant to contemporary settings.

To be like Jesus, this hope possesses me
In every thought and deed, this is my aim, my creed
To be like Jesus, this hope possesses me
His Spirit helping me, like him I’ll be.

Here we stand – we can do no other.
ENDNOTES

4 In Jewish teaching the struggle to restore God’s shalom is referred to as tikun olam, the healing and repairing of the world. Paul Marshall, Thine is the Kingdom: A Biblical Perspective on the Nature of Government and Politics Today (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).p.6.
7 While Old Testament writers are not explicit, there is something fractured about an unjust society where the most vulnerable do not enjoy conditions of flourishing. An unjust society is one whose shalom is partial and thus incapable of reflecting God's holiness. Wolterstorff, Until Justice and Peace Embrace, pp.120-121.
10 Taxation, the abuse of credit and debit bondage, over-driving of workers on estates, the corruption of justice for gain are all condemned.
11 For the biblical prophets, the gates of heaven could never be closed to the gates of the city. God tells Jeremiah to 'stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim 'you that enter these gates to worship the Lord…amend your ways and your doings and let me dwell with you in this place[…]if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan and the widow[…] then I will dwell with you' (Jer 7:2-7).
14 Themes of poverty, liberation and blindness mentioned here are noted earlier in the songs of Mary and Zechariah (1:52-53,71,79).
17 It is a mistake to think of Luke as politically complaisant – see for example Lk 13:31-35 and 18:7-8 which foreshadows the fall of the old kingdom and the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus’ followers as a kingdom of a new sort: the rule of those who serve where the greatest is the servant of all.
20 While the traditional interpretation is one of praise for the widow who offers her livelihood, in light of the preceding section in Mark and Luke 20 it is highly probable that Jesus was protesting the injustice of a widow believing she must lose her entire livelihood. Grateful to Geoff Webb, Salvation Army officer, Australia South Territory for this insight.
30 Public mockery of power was considered as threat by the Roman Empire and exposed its desire for power.
32 Using ‘violence’ as physical force resulting in injury or destruction of property, the Exodus, central to salvation history, is bathed in violence, God himself perpetuating it in defence of his people. The cleansing of the temple is then also a violent act but in contrast shows Jesus as an agent of redemption. George Cornell, Behold the Man: People, Politics and Events Surrounding the Life of Jesus (Waco, TX: Word, 1974), pp.120-121.
33 Oliver Davies, A Theology of Compassion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp.179-180.
35 In this act, Jesus strikes at the centre of the doctrine of election traceable in the Zion tradition at least as far back as Isaiah. Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2001), p.87.
36 Apart from Jesus’ own statement, the text suggests the popular response to Jesus’ action: witnesses to the event treat Jesus as though he were the new temple ‘the blind and the lame came up to him in the temple and he healed them’ (Mt 21:14).
37 All four gospels connect the cleansing of the temple with a debate on the nature of Jesus’ authority. Lohmeyer, Lord of the Temple, p.34.
38 Storkey, Jesus and Politics: Confronting the Powers, p.260.
39 NRSV correctly translates this verse ‘to me’ echoing the personal reference of Jesus to Paul on the road to Damascus ‘why are you persecuting me?’ Obery Jr Henricks, The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus’ Teaching and How They Have Been Corrupted (New York: DoubleDay, 2006), p.107.
40 The accounts of the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus both demonstrate this.
43 Jesus had one later disciple who kept substantial political faith with him. Perhaps no stronger critique of Rome can be found than in the prophecy of John in Revelation. John’s reference to Jesus’ praxis is brief: he gave ‘faithful witness’ against Rome that cost him his life (Rev 1:5; 5:9).
44 Metz names Jesus a ‘mystic of open eyes’. In common with the prayers of Job and the Hebrew prophets, Jesus’ prayers show unceasing concern and protest over others’ suffering. Sarah Katherine Pinnock, “Solidarity and Resistance: Johann Baptist Metz’s Theodicy-Sensitive Response to Suffering,” in Beyond Theodicy: Jewish and Christian Continental Thinkers Respond to the Holocaust (New York: State University of New York, 2002), p.95.


ENDNOTES