

Repentance in Christian Theology

Mark J. Boda
and
Gordon T. Smith
Editors



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Preface

There are many whom we want to thank for their assistance in bringing this volume to press. We are grateful to the sixteen writing participants for their eager engagement in the project from its inception. In addition, there were many other scholars who attended the sessions and enriched the conversation with comments and questions. We are thankful for those who helped us capture the oral reflection around the table and put it into written form. There are some inherent challenges to working with such a large group, but the final results have exceeded our expectations and whetted rather than dulled our appetite for further collaboration.

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The chapters of this book were first presented in draft form and discussed at two colloquia held in 2003 (Atlanta) and 2004 (San Antonio) at the joint American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature National Meetings. We are grateful to these two scholarly organizations for providing a venue to foster critical dialogue which has enhanced the quality of the present volume. We are thankful for the support of our own institutions (McMaster Divinity College and reSource Leadership International), who have supported us in this venture by offering

administrative assistance as well as funds to attend the conferences and complete the manuscript.

Finally, we are grateful for the opportunity that this project has afforded us to work together—to bring together our mutual passion for scholarship in the service of the Christian community and any others who might want to understand better this particular dimension of the Christian tradition. It has been an example for us of how a collaborative working project can deepen a friendship.

Mark J. Boda and Gordon T. Smith, Lent 2006

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BSLK	<i>Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche, herausgegeben im Gedenkjahr der Augsbургischen Konfession 1930</i> (repr. Göttingen, 1976)
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica, New Testament Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament Series
CRINT	Compendium Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CS	Cistercian Studies
CTM	<i>Current in Theology and Mission</i>
CWS	Classics of Western Spirituality
ER	Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., <i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation</i> , 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>

<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
Int	Interpretation
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>J ECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JPSTC</i>	<i>Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary</i>
<i>JSOR</i>	<i>Journal of the Society of Oriental Research</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>LThK</i>	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works, American Edition, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1955–)</i>
n.s.	new series
<i>NCB</i>	<i>New Century Bible</i>
<i>NICOT</i>	<i>New International Commentary, Old Testament</i>
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>NSBT</i>	<i>New Studies in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>OBT</i>	<i>Overtures to Biblical Theology</i>
<i>OrChrAn</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
<i>OTL</i>	<i>Old Testament Library</i>
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>ParOr</i>	<i>Parole de l'Orient</i>
<i>PETSE</i>	<i>Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Patrologia Syriaca</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>SBEC</i>	<i>Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity</i>
<i>SBLAB</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</i>
<i>SBLEJL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature, Early Judaism and its Literature</i>
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
<i>SBT</i>	<i>Studies in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>SBTS</i>	<i>Sources for Biblical and Theological Study</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>

ScC	<i>La scuola cattolica</i>
SEAug	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
Sehling	Emil Sehling, ed., <i>Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI Jahrhunderts</i> , Vols. I–V (Leipzig: O. R. Riesland, 1902–1913), vols VI–VII, XI–XV (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1955–1963)
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SP	Sacra Pagina
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STL	Studia Theologica Lundensia
StPatr	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
TB	Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> , 127 vols. (to date) (Weimar, 1883–)
WBC	Word Bible Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WW	<i>Word and World</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZKT	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Introduction

Creating Space for a Theological Conversation

↔ *Mark J. Boda** ↔

From the moment of Johann Philipp G bler’s proverbial shot across the theological bow in the late eighteenth century, seeking to create some *Lebensraum* for the investigation of the Bible as a historically rooted and conditioned document, if not long before, the relationship between the theological disciplines has been one of creative tension. On one level this is natural, for those engaged in the study of the particular, which is often called exegetical theology, will always have opportunity to call into question the results of those engaged in the study of the general, which is systematic theology, and also vice versa. However, when such tension results in relational disintegration, or worse yet, disregard, the conversation is indeed the poorer.

Most scholars engaged in the study of theology (in its broadest sense) could probably cite anecdotal evidence of such disregard. A conversation I had with one of my professors during my doctoral studies made this clear. Studying the literature of the early Persian period and the sociological fracture of the Jewish community during this era (itself already

* An earlier and slightly different form of this chapter appeared as part of my contribution to “Penitence in Christian Tradition,” *Canadian Evangelical Review* 29 (2005) 45–54.

an indication of the ample *Lebensraum* “enjoyed” in that department), I asked about the current work of a particular Old Testament scholar whose research had dominated an earlier decade. The response was simply that he had moved out of biblical studies and of late was involved in “theology.”

This incident highlights the uneasy relationship between biblical and systematic theology since the time of the Enlightenment. Those involved in biblical studies focussed their agenda on the recovery of the meaning of the biblical texts within their original context and were suspicious of the imposition of theological traditions onto the biblical corpus. Freed from these “oppressive” theological constraints many within the biblical guild adopted a largely historical strategy with lessened interest in the theological content of the biblical texts. As already noted, this historical and particularistic agenda was laid out by J. P. Gäbler as early as 1787 as he sketched out the difference between biblical and dogmatic theology.¹ The former was an analytical task describing the thought of the biblical writers, while the latter was a constructive task of interpretation tracing how the church had appropriated the Bible. By the end of the nineteenth century this analytical agenda had led most biblical scholars to the writing of *Religionsgeschichte* (history of religions) rather than biblical theology.

During the twentieth century, although diachronic aspects (*Religionsgeschichte*) were never completely abandoned, there was a return to theological reflection within the biblical guild. In particular during the period from 1930 to 1970 the writing of biblical theology was resurrected among biblical scholars.² This move toward the “theological” was encouraged by

¹ John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gäbler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of his Originality,” *SJT* 33 (1980) 133–58; Ben C. Ollenburger, Elmer A. Martens, and Gerhard F. Hasel, eds., *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology: A Reader in Twentieth-Century Old Testament Theology, 1930–1990*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1991); Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Johann Philipp Gäbler and the Delineation of Biblical Theology,” *SJT* 52 (1999) 139–55.

² The evidence cited will focus largely on this phenomenon from an Old Testament perspective (for obvious reasons): Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962); Theodor Ch. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1970); Walther Zimmerli,

a shift in broader literary studies to more synchronic approaches (New Criticism, Structuralism) in the latter half of the past century. Many biblical scholars strove for a more integrative approach to biblical studies, one that illuminated final literary forms in the Hebrew and Christian Bibles rather than tracing the history of religions alone.³ This shift provided an avenue for biblical scholars to again speak theologically rather than merely historically, as Brevard Childs encouraged the guild “to avoid dogmatism on the right and historicism on the left.”⁴

With the rise of postmodern epistemologies has come a plethora of new approaches to biblical texts and subsequently a shift from biblical theology to biblical theologies that are expressive of particular interpretive communities (defined by tradition, ethnicity, gender, etc.).⁵ This new awareness that biblical theology is not merely a “descriptive,” but rather a “constructive” enterprise has opened up a new opportunity for dialogue between the biblical and theological guilds, a dialogue that has been showcased over the past decade and a half in various collections of essays⁶ as well as individual works.⁷

Old Testament Theology in Outline (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978); cf. Robert C. Dentan, *Preface to Old Testament Theology* (rev. ed. New York: Seabury, 1963); Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (4th ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

³ E.g., Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); John Sailhamer, *An Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

⁴ Childs, *Theology*, 9.

⁵ E.g., Phyllis Trible, “Overture for a Feminist Biblical Theology,” in Ben C. Ollenburger, E. A. Martens, and Gerhard F. Hasel, eds., *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology: A Reader in Twentieth-Century Old Testament Theology, 1930–1990*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992) 448–64.

⁶ E.g., Ben C. Ollenburger, ed., *So Wide a Sea: Essays on Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1991); *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996); *Biblical Interpretation* 6 (1998); Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller, and Robin Parry, eds., *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

⁷ E.g., Ben C. Ollenburger, “Biblical Theology: Situating the Discipline,” in James T. Butler, Edgar W. Conrad, and Ben C. Ollenburger, eds., *Understanding the Word: Essays in Honor of Bernhard W. Anderson*, JSOTSup 37 (Sheffield: JSOT,

This does not mean, however, that postmodern sensibilities have made biblical and theological studies identical disciplines. The results are often different because of the primary focus of energy and starting point of each discipline. The biblical guild still focuses more attention and energy on the interpretation of the text rooted in its context (historical and/or literary), while the theological guild expends more energy on the history and interpretation of the faith community. Neither, however, can operate in isolation, as text and community are partners in the production of meaning and significance (if they can be distinguished). This hermeneutical shift has brought a new opportunity within religious and theological studies to create avenues for dialogue.

The literature cited in the preceding footnotes highlights clarion calls to the theological disciplines and traditions to enter into a deeper and broader conversation for the mutual benefit of church, academy, and society. Such calls have prepared the ground hermeneutically, but now it appears to be time to allow this hermeneutical reflection to bear fruit and to engage in the conversation proper. It is for this reason that three years ago the editors of this volume spearheaded a project designed to assemble biblical scholars, systematic theologians, and church historians around a common "table" at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings (2003, 2004) to research a common theological theme. The theme that was chosen, "Repentance/Penitence," was first of all (to be honest), one of enduring interest for the editors as individual scholars⁸ as well as a point of contact for our own conver-

1985) 37–62; Brian D. Ingrassia, *Postmodern Theory and Biblical Theology: Vanquishing God's Shadow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Francis Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); J. G. McConville, "Biblical Theology: Canon and Plain Sense," Finlayson Memorial Lecture 2001, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 19 (2001) 129–33.

⁸ Mark J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9*, BZAW 277 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999); Mark J. Boda, "From Complaint to Contrition: Peering Through the Liturgical Window of Jer 14,1–15,4," ZAW 113 (2001) 186–97; Mark J. Boda, "Zechariah: Master Mason or Penitential Prophet?" in Bob Becking and Rainer Albertz, eds., *Yahwism After the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era*, STAR 5 (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003) 49–69; Mark J. Boda, "The Priceless Gain of Penitence: From Communal Lament

sations across the theological disciplines.⁹ It is this second aspect that convinced us that this theme was one shared by the various theological disciplines: biblical, historical, systematic, practical, and thus would be useful to showcase the interdisciplinary conversation. Additionally, it was a theme that was closely related to the life and rhythms of the church as a community of grace. How a community deals with “sin” in its midst can be easily described while at the same time it offers insights into a whole constellation of theological themes.

In this project, therefore, we sought to showcase the wealth of theological resources within the Christian tradition for reflection on the theological theme and practice of repentance and penitence. Seven biblical scholars were invited to the table, each focussing her or his attention on a particular corpus within the Christian canon: Mark Boda (Torah), Terence Fretheim (Former Prophets), Carol Dempsey (Latter Prophets), Richard Bautch (Writings), Guy Nave (Synoptic Gospels/Acts), Edith Humphrey (Johannine tradition), and Stanley Porter (Pauline, Petrine, and General Epistles). Seven theologians were invited also, each rooted in a particular tradition within the Christian global and historical community: Michael Battle (South African/African American traditions), John Chryssavgis (Eastern Orthodox traditions), Ralph Del Colle (Roman Catholic traditions), Cheryl Bridges Johns (Pentecostal traditions), Andrew Purves (Reformation traditions), Gordon Smith (Evangelical traditions), and Wafik Wahba (Middle Eastern traditions). Two church historians were invited to offer perspectives from two eras within Christian history that were key to the development and diversity of penitential theology within the church: Cornelia Horn (Early Church period) and Ronald Rittgers (Reformation period). Finally, two scholars were invited to offer their reflections on the process and results of the project. Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann was to offer his insight from a life of biblical study with theological sensibilities, while liturgical theologian Marva Dawn

to Penitential Prayer in the ‘Exilic’ Liturgy of Israel,” *HBT* 25 (2003) 51–75; Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Gordon T. Smith, *On the Way* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001).

⁹ See now Mark J. Boda and Gordon T. Smith, “The Recovery of Confession,” *Faith Today* 22 (2004) 32–34; Gordon T. Smith and Mark J. Boda, “Confession as Essential Practice: An Evangelical Perspective,” *Conversations* 3 (2005) 43–48.

was to offer her thoughts drawn from a life spent studying the worship of the church.

Each of these scholars offered extensive scholarly presentations based on their expertise and made these available to the various participants prior to our meetings. The reason for this was that the project was designed to enter into a conversation that would mutually enhance our own reading within our academic disciplines and Christian traditions. One goal was to show the potential of a conversation across and among the theological disciplines to enhance a biblical scholars' reading of the biblical text. Biblical scholars can gain insights into their own section of the canon by listening to reflection on other sections. Furthermore, viewing this theme from the vantage point of past and present communities of faith can highlight certain streams in the biblical text that are otherwise missed. Another goal was to see how such a conversation can also enhance a theologian's reading of a particular tradition, that is, as one listens afresh to the canonical witness, are there streams in the biblical text that provide a basis for the practice of theology within a particular theological community or that challenge such practice within that community? Finally, our goal was also hermeneutical, reflecting on the conversation itself and discerning how reading together across disciplines and traditions enhances and enriches our reading of the Christian narrative, whether that is the biblical text, the historical experience, the theological creeds, or the contemporary life and practice of the church. While Walter Brueggemann was charged with the duty of an elongated hermeneutical reflection, each member of the project was required to produce a one-thousand-word reflection on how the project shaped his or her own perspective on penitence and the way she or he now approaches her or his discipline.

The hope was first and foremost that the volume you now hold in your hand would be a resource for the interpretation, theology, and practice of penitence within the Christian tradition. As will become obvious in the volume, the church is in desperate need today of reengagement with this rhythm so foundational to all Christian traditions.

It is hoped, second, that the shape of the volume and the hermeneutical insights expressed will also be a catalyst for more interdisciplinary and ecumenical conversation. This is essential because on a practical level the church has always been sustained by the various resources represented abstractly by the "disciplines" of the theological guild. Those engaged in pastoral ministry (in all its forms) live as "interdisciplinary-ians," drawing on biblical, systematic, and historical resources as they

seek answers to the pressing questions that confront them in culture today. In addition, those engaged in pastoral ministry are learning increasingly how to communicate across traditional boundaries, entering ecumenical conversations and sustaining interdenominational friendships with Christians in their local ministry contexts.

What is true on the practical level in the church is increasingly true in the academy (and happily so). The past climate of animosity between disciplines can hardly be sustained in most contexts in which biblical, theological, and religious studies are taught. In universities, colleges, and seminaries those who teach these disciplines are often isolated from colleagues within their limited fields and thus must build relationships across the classic disciplinary divisions. What was true on the practical level, however, has now become hermeneutically necessary in the integrative climate of twenty-first-century culture.

Members of the theological guild thus carry several identities as they approach the vocation of “theologian” (used in the generic sense). Obvious at first is that each represents one of the classic theological disciplines: exegetical theology, biblical theology, historical theology, church history, systematic theology, practical theology, spiritual theology, liturgical theology, ethics, apologetics, missiology, etc.¹⁰ It is true that some even live increasingly and legitimately among and between these disciplines, but for most the key foundation for any career (that is, “job”) in the academy was the mastery of a classic discipline. But there is more. Scholars represent a diversity of theological traditions, including Christianity within the mainline Protestant, mainstream evangelical, charismatic, Catholic, Orthodox traditions, and beyond. Furthermore, there is an increasingly global character to this guild, reflecting the multicultural richness of a global village. Finally, scholars represent a diversity of reflective purposes, ranging from interest in the practices of particular Christian communities to the hermeneutical implications of theology within broader ecumenical and cultural contexts.

In light of these various identities it strikes me as odd how often academics come to the academic table sporting only the identity of their theological discipline. Indeed, there is security in wearing this identity alone, but it appears that it is time for new approaches and practices.

¹⁰ James I. Packer, “The Preacher as Theologian,” in Chris Green and David Jackman, eds., *When God’s Voice is Heard: The Power of Preaching* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1995) 79–95.

In light of this and in closing let me advance the words of two scholars, representing Old and New Testament studies, as well as those of a systematic theologian, wisdom that encourages us to the grand task of theology across the disciplines:

The genuine theological task can be carried on successfully only when it begins from within an explicit framework of faith. Only from this starting point can there be carried on the exegetical task which has as its goal the penetration of the theological dimension of the Old Testament. Approaches which start from a neutral ground never can do full justice to the theological substance because there is no way to build a bridge from the neutral, descriptive content to the theological reality.¹¹

. . . that biblical interpretation should concern itself primarily with the theological issues raised by the biblical texts within our contemporary ecclesial, cultural and socio-political contexts . . . biblical interpretation should no longer neglect its theological responsibilities . . .¹²

As presented here, biblical theology is that approach which describes the “world views” and literary shapes of the Bible, and especially that “thick” description of the canon as a divine communicative act. Biblical theology is a description of the biblical texts on levels that display their theological significance. Accordingly, biblical theology is nothing less than a theological hermeneutic: an interpretative approach to the Bible informed by Christian doctrine. The biblical theologian reads for the theological message communicated by the texts taken individually and as a whole collection.¹³

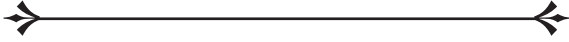
¹¹ Brevard S. Childs, “Interpretation in Faith,” *Interpretation* 18 (1964) 259–71.

¹² Watson, *Text, Church, and World*, vii.

¹³ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” in T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000) 63.

Section One

Canonical Texts



One

Renewal in Heart, Word, and Deed: Repentance in the Torah

Mark J. Boda

Although only five books in length, the Torah has exerted inordinate influence on theological reflection within its reading communities. In light of this it is an important source for reflection on the theme of repentance and penitence in Christian theology. Not only does the Torah examine the fundamental cause and universal extent of human sinfulness, it reveals the foundational phases of the redemptive story of Israel, a story that is placed within the broader narrative of the world (Genesis 1–11).

1. Text

a. Penitence and Repentance

(1) Genesis–Exodus

Interestingly, however, repentance does not play a dominant role in the books of Genesis and Exodus. Sin is accentuated in stories from Adam and Eve through Cain and Abel, Sodom and Gomorrah, to the Nadab-Abihu incident. In each of these cases, however, repentance does not play a role, although there are warnings and treatments of the shame and consequences of sin, all highlighting the crisis of the human condition

and the need for avenues of renewal for the relationship between God, humanity, and creation.¹

Three incidents in the first two books of the Torah, however, are worthy of mention.² First of all, the Joseph Novella concludes with the powerful scene of remorse by Joseph's brothers after the death of their father (Gen 50:15-21). There are legitimate reasons for questioning the authenticity of the brothers' remorse (based on their fear of Joseph repaying them for their earlier abuse; 50:15), as well as the authenticity of their quotation of the instructions of their father (50:16-17).³ Although appearing to highlight the importance of confession for receiving forgiveness for sin, the narrator places the accent on the grace of the offended party.

The second incident is found in the book of Exodus and again on the lips of a character whose genuineness in confession is explicitly questioned in the narrative itself. In Exodus 9:27-30, after the plague of hail, Pharaoh summons Moses and admits: "I have sinned," that is, "the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong" (9:27). The Pharaoh declares his willingness to let the people go (9:28), even though Moses denies that the Pharaoh and his court fear $\Upsilon\eta\omega\eta$ (9:30). Here we see an admission of culpability by Pharaoh, suggesting a rhythm that is key to the restoration of relationship with an offended party, but discover that this is not always equated with true renewal.

¹ This point has been noted succinctly in Jacob Milgrom, "Excursus: Repentance in the Torah and the Prophets," *Numbers*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990) 397, who writes: "wherever repentance occurs in the early narratives, it is a human virtue. God does not call upon man to repent or upon his prophet to rouse him to repentance" (cf. Exod 32:11-13, 31-34; 34:9; Num 12:11-13; 14:13-19; Deut 9:16-29); "other intercessors turn to God for pardon but do not urge man to repent" (cf. Gen 18:23-33; 1 Sam 7:5-9; 12:25; 1 Kgs 17:17-23; 2 Kgs 4:33; 6:15-20; Job 42:7-9).

² None of these passages is linked to either the Priestly or Deuteronomic traditions in the Torah; see Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

³ The narrator could have provided the appropriate citation in his account of the death of Jacob in Gen 49:29-33 to back up the brothers' story, but does not do this. Their lack of sincerity is evident in the words of Judah to Joseph in 44:20 and, according to Coats, is a regular motif in the Joseph Novella (cf. 37:31-32; 43:3-5); George W. Coats, *Genesis With an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, FOTL 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 291, 312; cf. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2004) 294.

The third incident occurs in the quintessential passage on sin and forgiveness in the Torah, the great Golden Calf complex in Exodus 32–34. The people, facilitated by Aaron, participate in idolatry as Moses is on Mount Sinai receiving the Torah from YHWH. YHWH initially judges the people through the Levites who slay three thousand. Moses returns to YHWH to implore his mercy, but YHWH promises to reject the guilty. In Exodus 33:4 the people “began to mourn” when God said he would not go with them. The narrative makes it clear that it is not the penitence of the people that causes God to relent, but rather, first of all, the mediator who pleases him (33:17, although see 32:30–34) and, second, YHWH’s character (34:5–7).

The lasting legacy of this narrative is clearly its presentation of the “name” of YHWH (Exod 34:6–7): “YHWH, YHWH, God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in covenant loyalty and faithfulness, who keeps covenant loyalty until the thousandth generation, who forgives guilt, rebellion and sin, who surely does not leave unpunished, who visits the guilt of the parents upon the children and upon the children’s children, upon the third and the fourth (generation).” This creedal statement, which Katharine Doob Sakenfeld calls “the Exodus 34 liturgical formula,” is echoed throughout the literature of the Old Testament (cf. Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3; cf. Ps 111:4; 2 Chr 30:9).⁴ It demonstrates the priority of grace in the character of YHWH, while at the same time reminding us of the seriousness of sin. First of all, the declaration that YHWH is one who “forgives guilt, rebellion and sin” (*nōšē’ āwōn wāpeša’ wēḥaṭṭa’ā*) is based on the fact that he is “YHWH, YHWH, God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in covenant loyalty and faithfulness, who keeps covenant loyalty until the thousandth generation” (*YHWH YHWH ’ēl raḥûm wēḥannûn ’ārēk ’appayîm wērab-ḥesed wē’emet nōšēr ḥesed lā’ālapîm*). It is instructive that when this ancient creedal statement is echoed elsewhere in the Old Testament it usually occurs in contexts related to sin, and that the quotation is

⁴ Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, TBü (Munich: Kaiser, 1958) 9–86; von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966) 1–78; G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts*, SBT 1/8 (London: SCM, 1952) 85 n2; Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective*, OBT 16 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) 49; Mark J. Boda, *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9*, BZAW 277 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999) 50–51; Boda, “The Priceless Gain of Penitence: From Communal Lament to Penitential Prayer in the ‘Exilic’ Liturgy of Israel,” *HBT* 25 (2003) 51–75.

restricted to the first few characteristics (merciful, *rahûm*; gracious, *ḥannûn*, slow to anger, *ʾarêk ʾappayîm*; abounding in covenant loyalty, *rab-ḥesed*).

Although the creedal statement is focused on the grace of God, one cannot avoid the fact that it does warn that God does not leave guilt unpunished and that the stain of such guilt has ramifications for the “third and fourth generations.” The relationship between this punishment and the immediately preceding statement that God is one who forgives guilt, rebellion, and sin has been a matter of debate. One may say that it is claiming that although God does forgive the guilt, rebellion, and sin of a particular generation, this sin does have implications for future generations, an aspect that we will discuss more fully below. Another option is that there is a difference between those forgiven of guilt, rebellion, and sin and those who will not be cleared of guilt. This latter approach can be discerned in one stream of later Jewish tradition as seen in *Yoma* 61a, which “interprets the sentence to mean ‘He remits punishment for the penitent, but not for the impenitent.’”⁵ However, as we have seen, there is nothing in this context that suggests a motivation for forgiveness linked to human response. Furthermore, in the foreshadowing of the declaration of the name in Exod 33:19 the mercy is rooted entirely in the mysterious character of YHWH: “I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”⁶

The Golden Calf incident offers the reader an important theological foundation for the theology of penitence in the Torah. Sin’s seriousness is rooted in God’s careful attention to justice; God will not let the guilty go unpunished. At the same time, the only hope for a sinful people is the gracious character of YHWH and the participation of his mediatorial figure. Noteworthy is that, after YHWH’s self-revelation in Exod 34:5-7, Moses highlights his role as mediator and then implores God’s forgiveness for the people (“forgive our wickedness and our sin,” 34:8-9). That YHWH has heard is evident from his response: “I am making a covenant with you . . .” (34:10). Terence Fretheim has noted that no human penitential act is highlighted as the motivation for divine forgiveness, but only God’s unilateral initiative of grace secured through the mediatorial

⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus-Shemot*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 216.

⁶ Although it is possible that this is actually not filling out the proclamation of the Name (33:19a), but rather the fact that Moses will be able to survive this divine encounter where the name is proclaimed (33:20).

work of Moses.⁷ Furthermore, he notes the contrast between the original Sinai covenant in Exodus 20–24 (especially 20:6 and 24:3) and this renewal of covenant in Exodus 34, where the conditional clause “those who love me and keep my commands” is now absent (see 34:6-7) and no response from the people is narrated, as it is in 24:3.⁸

These three initial passages in some ways fail to create great expectations for the human side of a penitential theology. The first two cases highlight the unreliability of expressions of human remorse and culpability, and the third illustrates the lack of divine response to human remorse. Instead, in all three cases the accent is placed on the grace of the offended party (whether human or divine), and in the last case on the importance of the mediator for securing a gracious response.

(2) *Deuteronomy*

The book of Deuteronomy has long been recognized as the key locus for penitential theology in the Torah. It was Wolff who expressed this long ago when he concluded that “the theme of ‘return’ appears at important highpoints of the Deuteronomic presentation of history, and it thereby demonstrates through different examples what Israel should hear and do under judgment in the exile.”⁹ This theme he identified not only in the Former Prophets (Judg 2:1; 1 Sam 7:3; 2 Sam 12; 1 Kgs 8:46-53; 2 Kgs 17:13, 15; 23:25) but also in the book of Deuteronomy itself at 4:29-31 and 30:1-10. Wolff’s conclusion was that the close affinities between these two passages suggest that they were part of an editor’s strategy to mesh Deuteronomy together with the Deuteronomic History by repeating the call to return both before and after the incorporation of Deuteronomy into the narrative.¹⁰

⁷ Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Int (Louisville: John Knox, 1991) 308; see also 304.

⁸ However, Fretheim does not explain adequately the fact that there is an enduring warning of punishment on future generations, simply stating that this is evidence of “a continuing recognition of the moral order” (ibid. 302).

⁹ Hans Walter Wolff, “The Kerygma of the Deuteronomic Historical Work,” in Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff, eds., *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 83–100, at 90; originally published in German as Hans Walter Wolff, “Das Kerygma des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk,” *ZAW* 73 (1961) 171–86.

¹⁰ Wolff, “Kerygma,” 83–100, at 96–97. See, however, Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, AB 5 (New York:

Wolff was wise to highlight the key role these passages play in the book of Deuteronomy as a whole. The opening narrative in chapters 1–3 consistently reminds the people of the serious nature of rebellion against their God. The failed venture at Kadesh Barnea showcased this, for there God disciplined the wilderness generation, refusing their entry into the land. Even when they declared words of remorse (“we have sinned against YHWH”) in 1:41, there was no change in the divine plan, something made clear in 1:45: “You returned and wept before YHWH, but he did not pay attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you.” Similarly, even the great mediator himself, Moses, is refused a divine change in plan, as he is denied entrance into the land (3:21–29).

This theme of God’s disciplinary immutability comes to a climax in chapter 4 as the speech looks to the day when the people will violate the very core of the covenant relationship by worshiping idols. Such an action will lead, according to 4:26–27, to the people’s expulsion from the land and dispersion among the nations, divine discipline linked to the description of YHWH in 4:24: “for the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” Ironically, it is here that the Deuteronomic tradition presents the first sign of hope, shaping the people’s response “from there” (4:29), that is, from their position “among the peoples . . . among the nations” (4:27).¹¹

The exilic response in these “later days” is identified clearly in 4:29–30: to “seek (*bāqas*^{pi}) YHWH your God,” a seeking (*dāraš*) that involves “all your heart” and “all your soul.” Such seeking involves a full engagement of the inner affections of the penitential community, as Tigay says of this collocation: “To do something with all the heart and soul means to do it with the totality of one’s thoughts, feelings, intentions and desires.”¹² Such depth of seeking is defined in v. 30 with the vocabulary of repentance: “return (*šûb*) to YHWH your God and obey (*šāma*^c + *bēqôl*) him.”¹³

Doubleday, 1991) 217–21, who traces the ancient roots and ubiquitous influence of the penitential theology found in Deuteronomy 4 and 30.

¹¹ It is this that has led many to distinguish Deuteronomy 4 from the preceding three chapters, which for many represent the introduction to the Deuteronomic History as a whole. However, as we shall soon see, repentance is only envisioned after expulsion from the land.

¹² Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996) 77.

¹³ Rodney A. Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution*, SBLEJL 13 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998) 12–18, calls these

Such “turning” is explicitly stated as a returning “to” (‘ad) God, without any explicit mention of turning “from” unfaithful covenant relationship, an aspect that is restricted to passages outside the Torah.¹⁴ Such “turning” is an example of Holladay’s “covenantal” *šûb*: “expressing a change of loyalty on the part of Israel or God, each for the other.”¹⁵ Such “turning” must involve obedience (*šāmaʿ + bēqôl*), that is, this seeking and turning is expressed in changed action.

The subject of these verbs is always “you,” that is, the humbled community in exile. The mood of the verbs, however, is indicative, stating what will happen within the exilic community. Indeed, there is a conditional nuance in the phrase: *kî tidrēšennû bēkôl-lēbābkā ubēkol-napšekā* (“when/because/if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul”), showing that such repentance will not be mere lip service. However, the Deuteronomic vision is for a future day of repentance among God’s people that will usher in the restoration. Such a response is made possible because “a God of mercy (*raḥûm*) is YHWH your God” who “will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant which he swore to your forefathers” (Deut 4:31), a declaration that contrasts with the earlier description of YHWH in 4:24.¹⁶ One needs to look to the end of the book of Deuteronomy to discover the role this God of mercy will play in the production of such a day of repentance.

stages of repentance (self-examination, repentance, and pledge of obedience), but they appear to be various nuances of the same penitential act. The last stage or nuance, however, seems to be more than just a pledge, but actual proof in action that obedience is being practiced.

¹⁴ William Lee Holladay, *The Root ŠÛBH in the Old Testament: With Particular Reference to its Usages in Covenantal Contexts* (Leiden: Brill, 1958) 78–80, lists instances of “turning to” (using the prepositions *ʔel* (25x), *ʔad* (13x), *ʔal* (2x), and *lē* (1x). Deuteronomy 4:30 and 30:2 use *ʔad*, while 30:10 uses *ʔel*. One may conclude that “turning from” is implicit in a context that has been preceded by covenant infidelity.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 2. Although he sees this as covenantal, Holladay concludes that the “idea [of repentance] never seems to come into focus” (p. 156). This fails on two fronts. First, it appears to inappropriately limit “idea” to “vocabulary.” Second, it presupposes a definition of repentance rather than allowing the biblical vocabulary and texts to shape that definition.

¹⁶ So also A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, NCB (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1979) 157; Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 68.

The same motifs found in Deuteronomy 4 reappear near the end of the book in chapter 30.¹⁷ Deuteronomy 27 and 28 focus attention on the blessings and curses that attend the Torah covenant. Chapter 29 begins a literary complex that will extend into the following chapter in which Moses is cast as an agent of covenant renewal.¹⁸ In this renewal he reminds them again of the dire consequences of idolatry, a sin that will lead to their expulsion from the land (Deut 29:25-29). As in Deuteronomy 4, this introduces a discussion of penitence.

Penitence begins, according to Deuteronomy 30, with deep reflection. The collocation used, *šûb^{hi} + ʿel + lēb/lēbab*, usually appears without a direct object. On the one occasion in which it does have an object (Lam 3:21), the accusative is that upon which the person is to reflect. On another occasion this object of reflection is introduced by the word *kî* (Deut 4:39). In most cases, however, the object is omitted, but appears to be implied in the surrounding context: in Isaiah 44:19 what is reflected on is the folly of bowing down to an idol made from wood used for other mundane purposes (cf. Isa 46:8) while in 1 Kgs 8:47//2 Chr 6:37 what is reflected on is the discipline of God that resulted from their sin. So in Deut 30:1 what is reflected on appears to be not only the circumstances that have befallen them, but in particular the divinely promised blessing and curse.¹⁹ Thus deep reflection is demanded at the outset of the

¹⁷ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, WBC 6A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991) 95, notes the close relationship between Deuteronomy 4:29-31 and 30:1-10 and further that they introduce and conclude the two brackets around the inner frame of the book (chs. 4–11 and 27–30). It is interesting that the term *šûb* is only used in these two passages in its religious sense. This evidence has led, for example, Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 156, 367–69, to link these chapters to later deuteronomistic editing rather than to the preexilic Deuteronomic editor; see also idem, “Deuteronomy 4 and the Literary Criticism of Deuteronomy,” *JBL* 100 (1981) 23–51; Norbert Lohfink, “Recent Discussion on 2 Kings 22–23,” in Duane L. Christensen, ed., *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*, SBTS 3 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993) 36–61, at 48 n57.

¹⁸ Many see ch. 29 as a later insertion separating chs. 27–28 from their continuation in ch. 30; cf. Wolff, “Kerygma,” 83–100, at 94–95; Alexander Rofé, “The Covenant in the Land of Moab (Deuteronomy 28:69–30:20): Historico-Literary, Comparative, and Formcritical Considerations,” *A Song of Power*, 269–80, at 272; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 348.

¹⁹ See also Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 348, who links this reflection to the blessings and curses; contra Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 363, who translates this as “return to your senses.”

Deuteronomic penitential response according to Deut 30:1, and this deep reflection is to fix the penitent community on the promises of both blessing and curse that are essential to the covenant arrangement. Here one can discern an echo of the quality of seeking that is encouraged in Deuteronomy 4, a seeking with all one's inner affections, but this seeking is now defined more carefully as a reflection on the grace and discipline of God exemplified in the covenant agreement and known in the community's experience.

Such depth of reflection is linked in Deut 30:2 to turning (*šûb*) and obeying (*šāma^c + bēqôl*), echoing chapter 4, an echo confirmed with the use of the same declaration that began the treatment in Deuteronomy 4: *bēkôl-lēbābkā ubēkôl-napšekā* ("with all your heart and soul"). These latter two phases are repeated again in 30:8-10, arranged in chiasmic fashion: *šûb . . . šāma^c + bēqôl . . . šāma^c + bēqôl . . . šûb* ("turn . . . obey . . . obey . . . turn") and again ending with *bēkôl-lēbābkā ubēkôl-napšekā* ("with all your heart and soul"). This shows that they lie at the core of the Deuteronomic theology of penitence.²⁰

Clearly one can discern echoes of the penitential rhythms and vocabulary of Deuteronomy 4, but Deuteronomy 30 is not identical. First, in both 30:8 and 10 obedience is defined specifically as doing (*ʿāśah*) and keeping (*šāmar*) commands (*mišwôt*) linked to the direct revelation of YHWH (v. 8) now encased in the book of the Law (v. 10). This aspect is not completely absent from Deuteronomy 4, but it is not emphasized in the immediate context of the description of repentance and obedience (cf. 4:30).²¹

Second, while Deuteronomy 4 expressed a future hope that the exilic community would repent, focusing on the necessity of seeking with all one's affections, Deuteronomy 30 brings greater focus on divine activity. This is seen initially in the fact that the human penitential response, at the core of which is the term *šûb*, will be met with the reciprocal divine action of *šûb* as YHWH restores (*šûb*) them (30:3)²² and returns (*šûb^{hi}*) them

²⁰ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 347, notes two interlaced concentric structures in Deut 30:1-10, one based on *šûb* (return/turn) and the other on *bēkôl-lēbābkā ubēkôl-napšekā* (with all your heart and with all your soul). See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 216, who emphasizes the continuity between the two passages.

²¹ So also Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History 1 (New York: Seabury, 1980) 70.

²² On the idiom here, *šûb + ʿet-šēbût*, see Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 284, 399 n3, who notes the link of this collocation to *šûb + qadmâ* (former state) in Ezekiel 16:53, 55; cf. also the review of the problem and versional evidence in Holladay, *ŠŪBH*, 110-15.

to the land (30:5).²³ To return to God opens the way to one's return to the Promised Land lost through disobedience. This divine activity also is seen in the greater emphasis in Deuteronomy 30 on the role played by YHWH in the penitential process.²⁴ Whereas in Deut 10:16 the people of Israel are called to circumcise their hearts, in Deuteronomy 30 it is YHWH who will perform this on the people and their descendants.²⁵ This image is a metaphor for "radical, interior renewal that makes love and obedience fully possible."²⁶ In Deuteronomy 30 we thus see an important development in the penitential theology of Deuteronomy. The future penitential response of the people described in Deuteronomy 4 is based on a work initiated and facilitated by YHWH. The Deuteronomistic stream within the Torah thus envisions repentance as something that follows serious disciplinary action of a jealous YHWH in response to idolatry and results in exile. What should not be missed, however, is that penitence is not seen as a regular rhythm within the life of the community, but rather as an important phase in the history of salvation, a phase that will bring an end to the exile of the community.²⁷

²³ Rofé, "Covenant," 269–80, at 270. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 348 notes the progression of 30:1-10 beyond 4:29-31 in this vision of restoration. See further on *šûb* as leitmotif in Deut 30:1-10 in Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 368.

²⁴ See especially M. Z. Brettler, "Predestination in Deuteronomy 30:1-10," in Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, JSOTSup 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 171–88, and J. G. Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*, NSBT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 174–76, although Brettler takes it too far when he says of 30:1-10: "this passage, which looks Dtr, is really pseudo-Deuteronomistic, while being anti-Dtr" (at 185–86). A major plank of Brettler's argument is that vv. 1b and 2 and 10 need not be taken as conditional clauses (although he does admit they can be taken as such). However, even if they are not, they do set out an agenda of repentance that is an essential component of the transition from exile to restoration, even if YHWH enables such.

²⁵ See Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 364 for this key contrast.

²⁶ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 348–49, who also notes the similarity to Jer 31:31-34 and 32:37-41.

²⁷ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 54, notes the distinction between the visions of repentance in Torah, as opposed to the Prophets, in this way: "In the Torah [repentance] is mentioned only as something that occurs after punishment has taken place: if the people take their punishment to heart and return to God, He will terminate their punishment . . . [the prophets] called upon people to repent before it was too late, and to thereby avert punishment altogether." This claim by Tigay needs to be carefully nuanced. The description of Torah relates to the Deuteronomistic

This repentance, based on the merciful character of YHWH and ultimately enabled by this merciful God, begins with sincere reflection on God's gracious promises and stern warnings, followed by turning back to God in obedient covenant relationship, displayed through observance of Torah.

(3) *Leviticus–Numbers*

While the Deuteronomistic stream within Torah has drawn the attention of those interested in penitential theology, the Priestly stream has been largely ignored. This may be related to the dominant Christian view of the sacrificial system: that it became a means by which Israel avoided obedience, opting instead to cover their misdeeds by sacrifice. While this view may be justified in light of certain abuses of the sacrificial system in Israel's history highlighted by the prophetic stream in Israel (1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:10-17; Jer 7:21-26; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; cf. Pss 40:6-8; 51:16-17), it does not do justice to several aspects of the sacrificial system. Key for the consideration at hand is that at least some sacrifice was to be accompanied by a penitential disposition, a point that was not lost on the ancient rabbis and that has been recovered in more recent considerations of the sacrificial system.

While the vocabulary of penitence in Deuteronomy is anchored by the key verb *šûb* ("return/turn"), in the Priestly tradition this central role is played by the verb *ʾāšam*.²⁸ Milgrom has argued cogently that this verb when used without a personal object should be translated not as (traditionally) "be guilty," but rather as "feel guilty," that is, "the self-punishment of conscience, the torment of guilt."²⁹ This verbal form then

stream within Torah for, as we will see, the Priestly tradition does speak of penitence as a regular rhythm in life as well as something needful to avert exile. In relation to the prophets it must also be pointed out that there are cases among the prophets, especially as represented in the book of Jeremiah (under Deuteronomistic influence), in which opportunity for repentance has clearly passed; cf. Mark J. Boda, "From Complaint to Contrition: Peering Through the Liturgical Window of Jer 14,1–15,4," *ZAW* 113 (2001) 186–97.

²⁸ Holladay, *ŠŪBH*, 78–81, 127; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 334–35. However, we are careful to note with Holladay (pp. 126–27) the presence of the Priestly idiom, *šûb + mēʾalḥrê* (turn away from; Num 14:43; 32:15; 22:16, 18, 23, 29; 1 Sam 15:11). This, however, is an idiom of apostasy, not of repentance.

²⁹ Jacob Milgrom, *Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance*, *SJLA* 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1976) 11; see idem, "Further on the Expiatory

highlights the internal dimension of the sacrificial system, even if it is clear in the Priestly tradition that sacrifice remained mandatory.³⁰

Milgrom also demonstrated the intimate link between the *ʾāšām* of offering and the word *maʿal*, a term denoting sins against deity. Such sins belong to two categories: inappropriate physical contact with the holy (Lev 5:14-19; 14:10-14, 21-25; 22:14-16; Num 6:12; Jer 2:3; Ezra 10:19) and violation of God's name sworn on oath (Lev 5:20-26; Num 5:6-8). It is this second category and in particular the introduction of the term *hitwaddāh* (to confess) into Numbers 5 that leads Milgrom to the conclusion that for "involuntary sin, *ʾšm* or remorse alone suffices; it renders confession superfluous. But for deliberate sin there is the added requirement that remorse be verbalized; the sin must be articulated and responsibility assumed."³¹ Such remorse (*ʾāšām*) and confession (*hitwaddāh*) have the

Sacrifices," *JBL* 115 (1996) 511-14, and idem, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 2001) 2446-52, as he meets the challenge of Adrian Schenker, "Interprétations récentes et dimensions spécifiques du sacrifice *ḥaṭṭāt*," *Bib* 75 (1994) 59-70. He notes especially that the "distinction between intentional and presumptuous sins is nonexistent. All deliberate sins are presumed presumptuous unless they are tempered by subsequent acts of repentance" (Milgrom, "Further on the Expiatory Sacrifices," 514). Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature: Its Meaning and Function*, JSOTSup 56 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987) 31-34, challenges Milgrom's position, concluding in the end that *ʾāšām* has both objective and subjective aspects. He proposes "realize guilt" rather than "feel guilt"; see Milgrom's response in Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 338.

³⁰ So Milgrom, "Excursus: Repentance," 396-98, who contrasts the prophetic tradition, where repentance was identified as sufficient.

³¹ Milgrom, *Cult*, 109-10. This contradicts a longstanding interpretation of Num 15:30b, that there was no forgiveness for those who brazenly violated God's law: "A more correct understanding of this Priestly postulate would be that sacrificial atonement is barred to the *unrepentant* sinner, to the one who 'acts defiantly (*byd rmh*: TO *bryš gly*, 'publicly'; *byd rmh ʾw brmyh*, 'brazenly or deceitfully', 1QS8:23), reviles (*mgdp*) the Lord . . .' (Num 15:30), but not to the deliberate sinner who has mitigated his offense by his repentance"; see further Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPSTC 34, who claims there that actually God compromises his justice. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 28, takes the focus entirely off the confession: "The requirement of making confession is not the main thrust of this statement. The verb *hitwaddah*, 'to confess' is more likely indicative rather than subjunctive; it

effect of reducing “intentional sin” to “an inadvertence” and so render it “eligible for sacrificial expiation.”³² As Samuel Balentine, in his affirmation of Milgrom’s work, has so aptly written:

Confession is the cotter pin that joins contrition to reparation and reparation to a public commitment to change. Without confession, sin seeks the camouflage of secrecy, the status remains quo, and brokenness continues to diminish the “very good” world God has created.³³

This understanding of the key role that confession plays in Priestly treatment of deliberate sin brings clarity to the other two appearances of the term *hitwaddāh* (to confess) in the Priestly corpus: Lev 16:21; 26:40. The first case relates to the event on the Day of Atonement when the high priest confesses unrepented intentional sins among the community that threaten the sanctity of the sanctuary.³⁴ In this we see the Priestly practice of penitence on the communal level as the people enter into the experience by “denying themselves” (16:21), even as the priest sacrifices and confesses on their behalf.

The final case of *hitwaddāh* (to confess) in the Priestly stream, Lev 26:40, looks to a people living in the wake of the exilic punishment precipitated by Israel’s deliberate idolatrous violation of their covenant

is conveying a fact rather than expressing a statement.” The reason why confession is introduced at this point is that it is “material to the judicial process,” for here “we are dealing with private acts and the failure to act, which might never have come to light had the offender himself not come forth to confess.” Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 100, characterizes the sins in Lev 5:1-6 as sins of omission, those that slipped one’s memory: “In each case, when conscience smites the forgetful person, he must confess his sin and bring a purification offering” (p. 93).

³² Jacob Milgrom, “Priestly Doctrine of Repentance,” *RB* 82 (1975) 117. Milgrom (pp. 119–20) makes an interesting note that repentance in these early narratives is not the same as repentance in the prophets: it is ineffectual prior to judgment. It can mitigate or postpone it, and in the case of exile it can only terminate the punishment, but not prevent its onset; also, repentance is a human virtue, not a divine imperative, that is, people interceded for others (like Moses) to annul judgment, but not once are they expected to bring their people to repentance; against this backdrop one can see the innovation of P.

³³ Samuel E. Balentine, *Leviticus*, Int (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 57.

³⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1034, 1042–44; idem, *Cult*, 109 n406.

oath (Lev 26:27-30).³⁵ As in Leviticus 16, confession is operative on the communal rather than individual level. In this passage the key turning point that moves the people from a state of discipline (vv. 28-39) to one of grace (v. 42) is a confession both of their own sins and of the sins of their ancestors (see further below), an act that is linked to the humbling of their hearts (*kāna*^{c Ni} + *lēbab*). Each part of the long list of covenant curses in Leviticus 26 is introduced by the conditional particle *ʾim* (26:15, 16, 18, 21, 23, 27), highlighting that throughout the history of their rebellion Israel would be given the opportunity and would be expected to respond to God in repentance. Thus this emphasizes the importance of penitence to covenant relationship. However, we should not miss that after v. 27 there is a long string of verb constructions (*waw*-relative + verbs in the suffix conjugation) that describe the future of the people in exile and beyond. The ultimate turn is not seen as conditional, but a promise from God. That this truly involved the human participants is evident, but how it will be accomplished is not clarified as it is in Deuteronomy 30.

The Priestly stream within Torah has a place for penitence; however, such expression is not cast in terms of obedient behavior, but rather in terms of internal remorse and humility (*ʾāšam*; *kāna*^{c Ni} + *lēbab*) as well as verbal confession (*hitwaddāh*), on the individual as well as communal levels. Such expression will play a role not only, as the book of Deuteronomy notes, in the ending of exile and inauguration of restoration, but also in the regular rhythm of life in a fallen world. As in the Deuteronomic tradition, this exilic experience is not cast in the conditional mood (“if”), but rather is described as an expected future event.

b. Sin and Solidarity in Torah

(1) Priestly Sin and Solidarity

One aspect of the Priestly doctrine of repentance that must be considered more closely is that of the intergenerational character of sin, especially because it shapes the particular expression of penitence in the Torah. We have seen that on two occasions the term *hitwaddāh* is used in corporate contexts. First, the description of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 stipulates that the high priest will confess the sins of the entire community even as they participate through rites of “denial.” In this we see what is understood by many to be the theology of *intragenerational* culpability, the belief that sins committed among the community have

³⁵ See further Boda, *Praying*, 47–55; idem, “Complaint,” 186–97.

implications for the community as a whole. Second, Lev 26:39 declares that the remnant left in exile will “waste away” in the lands of their enemies both because of their sins and also because of the sins of previous generations. This informs, then, the type of penitential confession that is demanded of a generation hopeful to see an end to the exilic experience: “they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers” (26:40). In this we see what is often articulated as the theology of *intergenerational* culpability, the belief that sins committed by one generation have implications for future generations. Such expressions of culpability and penitence are based on the doctrine of collective responsibility, an ideology that Milgrom has shown to be “a cardinal plank in the structure of Priestly theology.”³⁶

Many have noted that the root of the theology of intergenerational culpability is ancient in Israel, expressed in the Decalogue (Exod 20:5-6 / Deut 5:9-10) and in the Character Creed (Exod 34:6-7), where the sins of the fathers will be visited upon the children. Tigay highlights a slight difference, however, between these two ancient passages, distinguishing between what he calls “cross-generation retribution,” which involves the transfer of an ancestor’s sins (Exod 34:7b), and compound retribution, which involves the addition of an ancestor’s sins to the children’s sins (Decalogue).³⁷ Leviticus 26:39-40 represents this latter compound form of retribution theology, noting that the exilic community suffers for its own sins as well as the ancestors’ sins, and that its members will confess their sins as well as their ancestors’ sins.³⁸

Thus the Priestly stream contains evidence of corporate solidarity in its doctrine of sin. This ideology has in turn shaped penitential expressions.

³⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2331.

³⁷ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 436–37.

³⁸ In this I depart from Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2327, who sees in Leviticus 26 nothing that “implies the cancellation of vertical retribution if the children are virtuous.” Leviticus 26 states that the remnant lives in exile because of the sins of the ancestors as well as their own sins, and safe return will mean confession of their ancestors’ sins and their own sins. This is a clear example of compound ideology. See further Mark J. Boda, “Confession as Theological Expression: Ideological Origins of Penitential Prayer,” in Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline, eds., *Seeking the Favor of God: The Origin, Development and Impact of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, SBLEJL (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).

(2) Deuteronomic Sin and Solidarity

The picture is more complicated, however, in the Deuteronomic stream. Both Jacob Milgrom and Joel Kaminsky have argued cogently that Deuteronomy does incorporate the Decalogue with its intergenerational theology of collective responsibility (Deut 5:9-10).³⁹ In addition, however, Deuteronomy also develops a retributive principle that restricts punishment and culpability to the offending generation only (Deut 24:16; cf. 7:9-10).⁴⁰ While some have sought to explain the presence of these two theological streams in Deuteronomy on evolutionary grounds, Kaminsky sees this as oversimplifying the relationship between the two ideas (individual versus corporate), encouraging us to read the two conceptions as “complementary” rather than “contradictory.”⁴¹ What is interesting about the penitential passages we have considered in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:29-31; 30:1-3), is that they place little emphasis on distinctions between former and present generations. The “you” who is addressed

³⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2328; Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 196 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); cf. idem, “Joshua 7: A Reassessment of Israelite Conceptions of Corporate Punishment,” in Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy, eds., *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 315–46; idem, “The Sins of the Fathers: A Theological Investigation of the Biblical Tension between Corporate and Individualized Retribution,” *Judaism* 46 (1997) 319–32; Baruch Halpern, “Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability,” in Baruch Halpern and Deborah W. Hobson, eds., *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, JSOTSup 124 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 11–107, traces this transition from corporate to individual ideology to the social forces set in motion by the renewals under Hezekiah and Josiah, monarchs who sought to break clan social power by creating individual links to the crown.

⁴⁰ Milgrom also notes the presence of this same diversity in the DtrH (cp. 2 Kgs 14:5-6 with 21:10-15; 23:26-27; 24:2-4) and Jeremiah (cp. Jer 15:4; 32:18-19, 30-31 with 18:1-12; 31:29-31). Only with Ezekiel does one find individual generational retribution alone (Ezekiel 18, 33); see also Halpern, “Lineages,” 12.

⁴¹ Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 178. Contra Gordon Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse*, SBLDS 126 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990) especially 145–46. See also Halpern, “Lineages,” 12, who is careful to note that, at least for Torah material, views of corporate responsibility were never universal but existed alongside legal material that “stipulat[ed] individual punishments for infractions.” However, Halpern does echo the classic view for Jeremiah and Ezekiel (pp. 14–15).

in exile is not distinguished from the “you” upon whom the punishment of God has fallen. It is this rhetorical technique that may explain the presence of both ideologies within the same tradition stream. The focus of attention does not appear to be on issues of culpability, but rather on the opportunity for the exilic generation to respond to YHWH and begin anew, unshackled by sinful patterns of previous generations.

c. Summary

The Torah thus contains several key sources for penitential theology in the Old Testament.⁴² At the outset we saw how the books of Genesis and Exodus do not place much hope on the ability of the offending party to initiate or secure forgiveness through penitence. The accent is clearly placed on the grace of the offended party alongside a role that may be played by a mediatorial figure.

In the remainder of the Torah we find two key streams of penitential theology, the Priestly and the Deuteronomic. On the one side we find the penitential theology of the Priestly tradition, which identifies the key role repentance will play to bring an end to exile (Lev 26). In the Holiness Code this priestly ideology is connected to the most serious form of *maʿal* (idolatry), which led to the exile. Ultimately a penitential confession would be necessary to restore covenant relationship and bring about a return to the land. The Priestly tradition also creates space for penitence in the rhythms of ritual law, whether that was in the regular sacrifices (Lev 5:5; Num 5:7) or the yearly rhythm of *Yom Kippur* (Lev 16:21). Expressions of penitence in the Priestly tradition have also been influenced by an underlying view of sin and culpability that extended beyond the individual. The Priestly stream highlights contrition that expresses the sorrow of the entire community over sins committed within its midst (Leviticus 16, intragenerational) as well as sins committed in generations past (Leviticus 26, intergenerational).

On the other side we find the penitential theology of the Deuteronomic tradition with its concern for a return to the observance of Torah as covenant document, which fosters the eternal relationship between God and his people. Key to this tradition is the reorientation of the affections of the community toward God and Torah. Repentance in Deuteronomy, however, is not presented as a human response to avoid judgment, but rather as a human response to bring an end to judgment, that is, the exile. Based

⁴² See further Boda, “Confession,” forthcoming.

firmly on the mercy of God, ultimately this repentance is only possible through internal divine work. While the Priestly doctrine of repentance emphasizes the external component of verbal confession flowing from an internal disposition of remorse, the Deuteronomic doctrine of repentance emphasizes the external component of active obedience flowing from an internal disposition of self-examination. The Deuteronomic tradition assuredly shared with the Priestly tradition a similar underlying view of sin and culpability that extended beyond the individual. Such theology, however, was not to be used as a way of avoiding one's own culpability in the present circumstances, an abuse that is confronted by key texts beginning in the book of Deuteronomy and further developed in the Deuteronomic History and prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Clearly the accent in these two key Torah traditions of penitence is not placed on human response as much as on divine grace expressed both through God's acceptance of penitential expressions and God's enablement of such expressions. It is this emphasis on the grace of God that brings us full circle to the initial passages we considered in Genesis and Exodus. There hope was placed on the potential of the grace of the offended party and in particular the grace of YHWH as revealed at Sinai, rather than on the potential of human penitential expressions.

2. Implications

How, then, does the Torah contribute to a Christian theology of penitence? Here we do not have time to develop the broader hermeneutic for the relationship between the Old and New Testaments in general and the Torah and the New Testament in particular.⁴³ It is sufficient to say that the New Testament draws on the Torah (both narrative and legal materials) as relevant to Christian faith and witness, relevant to foreshadow New Testament themes, to point to the need for Christ, as well as to shape our response to God.

A. Redemptive History: Penitence is presented in the Torah as a signal of the end of exile, something that provides theological orientation for the importance of penitence to the rest of the Old Testament, in particular those texts that struggle with the exile and hope for restoration (Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel). It also has significance for our understanding of the

⁴³ See the introduction to Mark J. Boda, *Haggai/Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

New Testament witness, as has been highlighted by individuals like N. T. Wright. The preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the early church, especially in their calls to repentance, must be understood first and foremost as a sign of the inauguration of the restoration of God's people.

B. Spiritual Theology: Indeed, penitential expressions signaled the beginning of a new era of redemption, but they were also to become normative for the message of the gospel throughout the ages as each new generation encountered the story of Christ. Such is true not only for what is often called initial repentance, but also for the rhythms of penitence that would characterize Christian experience. Such rhythms were nourished in the Priestly tradition, which describes penitence as a regular component of covenant faithfulness. This may help us to understand why confession and penitential rites endured in the experience of the church from its earliest era until today.

C. Character of God: The Torah consistently bases penitence on the grace and mercy of God. This trend is continued into the New Testament witness as Romans 2:4 reminds us that it is "the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience" that lead us to repentance, and 1 John 1:9 assures us that confession of sin will lead to pardon because "God is faithful and just." Both passages echo the Character Creed of Israel, so important for the forgiveness of Israel's sin. In many Christian theological traditions, especially those within holiness or revivalistic streams, penitence has been linked almost exclusively to the theology of God's justice and wrath. Interestingly, however, the Torah places the emphasis on the theology of grace and love when speaking of repentance. This has implications not only for how we proclaim the gospel, but also how we explain the life of discipleship.

D. Pneumatology: The Torah presents penitence as accomplished through a circumcision of the heart by God. The influence of this tradition can be discerned in the promise of Jer 31:31-34 that in the new covenant God would put his law on the people's minds and write it on their hearts. Ezekiel echoes and advances this theology in declaring that after the exile God would cleanse his people and give them a new heart and spirit, placing his Spirit within them in order that they might obey his laws (Ezek 36:24-28; cf. 37:14). Such divine work is clearly linked in Ezekiel to the work of the Holy Spirit, a theological theme that is developed significantly in the New Testament (e.g., Rom 8; 2 Cor 3; Gal 5; Eph 3:14-19). This theological emphasis reminds us of our utter need for the Holy Spirit for repentance to become a reality in our lives.

E. Community: Although not univocal in expression, the Torah is a catalyst for reflection on the corporate dimension of penitence, both intra- and inter-generationally. It reminds us that we are deeply connected to one another within the community of faith, but also within our broader familial and cultural communities. The Western church in particular has become adept at focusing on individual confession of sins committed in secret. The communal dimension of sin and of confession found in Torah challenges us to consider ways we have offended God's values as members of communities and ways we can confess and confront such sinful patterns.

3. Futher Reading

- Boda, Mark J. "Confession as Theological Expression: Ideological Origins of Penitential Prayer." In Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline, eds., *Seeking the Favor of God: The Origin, Development and Impact of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*. SBLEJL. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.
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4. Hermeneutical Response

It was a statement that Walter Brueggemann somehow slipped into an interchange between Terry Fretheim and me over the Deuteronomic tradition in one of our sessions that awakened me to what was going on: "Well, of course . . . he's a Lutheran." He reminded me what Terry brought to the text from his Lutheran tradition, especially related to the Deuteronomic tradition in which we overlapped in our presentations, and what I brought to the text from my Holiness tradition. This is what I heard Yale's Nicholas Wolterstorff once call (in an oral lecture at my university) "Privileged Cognitive Access," that is, an ability shaped by our ideology, theology, and experience to see things in a text that are indiscernible to others. Of course, I had my concerns that appeals to grace were merely cover for the oft-cited Lutheran declaration: "Go and sin boldly," an aspect of the Protestant church that the Holiness tradition sought to rectify in its call to the deeper Christian life empowered by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, you will see the impact of that Lutheran Fretheim on my essay as I returned to the text to discover the lack of imperative language when it came to the theology of penitence in Deuteronomy and the accent on future expectation. Maybe it was my Holiness tradition that emphasized the need for a deep change in our lives, or the fact that when my parents said "you will do this or that . . ." this was code for "Do this or that," but I found that I did impose this faulty "deep structure" onto Deuteronomy. In the end, however, I didn't completely throw out my Holiness sensibilities. Although shifting the accent more strongly onto divine grace in Torah, deemphasizing human ability, I did find that there is in some way an expectation that divine grace does produce real human penitential remorse and change on a deep affective level. This is in keeping with the later uses of this Torah penitential tradition in the early Persian period Jewish community and exemplified in the powerful prayers of penitence now recorded in Ezra 9, Nehemiah 1, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9 (see Richard Bautch's essay). Such a conclusion leads me back to Paul's call to "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil 2:12-13), a call that addresses the tension between Lutheran and Holiness traditions by encouraging us to embrace both.

One (among many) unresolved aspect of our conversation is related to what I think is one of the most powerful contributions of the Torah to the present day and age. Ron Rittgers' essay on private confession

as well as several of the essays on the Western Protestant traditions reminded me of the highly individualistic approach to penitence within the West. However, it was comments by both Michael Battle and Guy Nave around the table in both years that resonated with the intra- and intergenerational character of penitence within (especially) the Torah traditions and in some ways emboldened me to affirm even more strongly the contribution the Torah had to offer a Christian theology of penitence. What does it mean to repent and confess as a community of faith, a theological tradition, a religion, or even a nation? In what way is our repentance and confession linked to the sins of former generations? How does this then relate to contemporary situations related to historically abused groups, for example in South Africa, Australia, the United States, and Canada? How does it relate to global abuse by dominant nations and groups of people? In all of this, however, I think it is important to consider the ways in which this relates to the New Testament theology of justification. There is obvious room for a deep dialogue between the Torah, Paul, and the contemporary context.

After the sessions of our second year were over, and just outside the book room at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature meetings, I overheard comments of an individual who was not a contributor to the Penitence study group, but did come to the sessions to listen and interact. He was expressing his frustration over the inability of our group of theologians to truly answer the searching question he had raised in one of the sessions about the relevance of repentance to a key contemporary issue. It is this frustration that I also shared as we came to the end of our deliberations. It reminded me that the dream we had in bringing this study group together could never be realized in such a short period of time and in the particular venue of a scholarly conference. It would take a diverse community of conversation willing to struggle with the wealth of Christian tradition and experience over an extended period of time to discover theological and practical solutions to the kinds of issues we face in our world today. This experience, however, has not dulled my appetite or dimmed my vision for such conversations, but rather increased my vision and heightened my desire to create spaces for such conversation in the future.