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BOOK REVIEW

Jeremy R. Treat. *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 284 pp. + indexes. Pbk. ISBN: 978-0-310-51674-3.

We cannot have the kingdom of God without the cross nor can we focus on penitential, cruciform piety without seeking God's kingdom here on earth. So argues Jeremy Treat in *The Crucified King*, a book that began as his PhD dissertation, written under the supervision of Kevin Vanhoozer at Wheaton College.

The central thesis of the book is that the atonement and the kingdom of God belong together. The specific aim is to offer a constructive integration of the two, which brings together the fruits of biblical and systematic theology to demonstrate why and how cross and kingdom are intrinsically related. Treat seeks to correct a tendency in contemporary theology to separate them (or even pit one against the other), which he attributes to post-Enlightenment thinking (*not*, he stresses, to the creeds or to the Reformation).

Part One (biblical theology) traces the relationship between the cross and the kingdom in Scripture.

In chapter 1, Treat surveys the Old Testament and identifies a recurring pattern in the narrative of suffering and victory, humiliation and exaltation, evident in individual persons, corporate Israel, institutions, and offices. Chapter 2 focuses on Isaiah, in which the aforementioned themes converge and their relation to one another is clarified: the *royal victory* will come through the *atoning sacrifice* of the suffering servant (who is also the Davidic king). Chapter 3 explicates the theme of the crucified king in the Gospel of Mark, as the fulfilment of Isaiah's new exodus. Jesus is anointed king at his baptism and is enthroned as king at the cross. Christ does not become king at the resurrection, as is

often argued; rather, Christ *who is king* dies on the cross. Chapter 4 surveys several other New Testament texts that provide evidence for the author's thesis. In Col 1:15–20, Christ's victory over the powers (kingdom) comes by means of the cross. In Rev 5:5–10, the lion (king) is revealed to be none other than the lamb (the one who suffered and died), who creates for himself a kingdom of priests who will conquer "by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony." Chapter 5 summarizes the argument thus far and draws out significant connections and implications.

Part Two (systematic theology) examines and analyzes the logic connecting the cross and the kingdom, in light of Scripture and in conversation with tradition and contemporary theology.

In chapter 6, Treat seeks to correct a tendency in systematic theology to relegate the atoning death of Jesus to his state of humiliation and to his priestly office. Instead, Christ is exalted precisely *in* and *through* his humiliation and he dies not just as priest but also as prophet and king. Chapter 7 offers a critique of reductionism and relativism. Reductionism fails to account for all of the biblical atonement metaphors, either privileging certain ones over others or forcing them into a schema that oversimplifies their complexity and interrelationships (e.g., Aulén's three categories). Relativism is the failure to see the atonement as a coherent, unified whole. Various metaphors are treated merely as alternative options to be chosen according to context when evangelizing or preaching the gospel (e.g., Joel Green's 'kaleidoscope' view). In contrast, Treat argues that it is the theologian's task to include all atonement metaphors and to demonstrate their logical relations (the theological tasks of integration, order, and rank). He calls this approach "expansive particularity." In chapter 8, Treat seeks to reconcile *Christus victor* and penal substitution, which are often regarded as mutually exclusive. He argues that both are necessary, as each has a different function in explaining the significance of the cross. Penal substitution explains the *means* of Christ's victory (the how), while *Christus victor* explains the *effects* of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross. Controversially, Treat argues that penal substitution is primary (rank) and the key to relating (order) the atonement

metaphors (integration). In chapter 9, in critical and constructive conversation with Luther and Moltmann, Treat articulates his vision of the cruciform reign of God. In a concluding chapter, "Crown of Thorns," he summarizes the book's argument and draws together its significant conclusions and implications.

Treat succeeds in convincingly demonstrating his central thesis that the kingdom and the cross belong together and are mutually informing realities. His contention that Christ the King suffered and died a substitutionary death on the cross in order to inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth (one that is hidden and cruciform, yet perceived in faith to be the power and wisdom of God) is both refreshing and compelling. He presents strong evidence from Scripture and tradition to support his position.

However, Treat's secondary argument concerning the logical relations between atonement metaphors, and especially his insistence on the primacy of penal substitution, is far less convincing. His view may turn out to be true, but his argument does not sufficiently demonstrate it. Treat provides two reasons for the primacy of penal substitution. First, it is primary because of its superior explanatory power, specifically its unique capacity to explain *how* the atonement works to deal with sin and usher in the kingdom of God. Second, it is primary because it more directly addresses the root problem of the human condition (human guilt and God's wrath), whereas other atonement metaphors address derivative problems.

On the first point, I am not convinced after reading Treat that any of the atonement metaphors are *primarily* concerned with explaining *how* the cross works. They all seem to break down when we push the *how* question too far (which, perhaps, is what we should expect from metaphors). For example, the *Christus victor* view does not explain in a literal or scientific way precisely how Christ's death achieves victory, the ransom view does not explain precisely how the payment works (is the ransom paid to God or to Satan?), and the healing from sin-as-disease view does not explain precisely how it is that "by his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53). Treat repeatedly states that the penal substitution view explains the "how" of the cross, but I think that when treated this way it raises more problems than it solves. For

example, how does it serve the cause of justice to torture and kill an innocent man in place of guilty others? Is God's wrath something that needs to be appeased without discrimination or specificity? Treat does not deal with these kinds of questions.

Moreover, the biblical support that Treat finds for the primacy of penal substitution is exaggerated and sometimes questionable (I do not doubt that the seeds for the doctrine are scriptural). In many cases, Treat simply equates penal substitution with other concepts. He conflates penal language with sacrificial concepts in Heb 2:5–8, with ransom notions in Col 2:13–15, with forensic language in Revelation 9–11, and with substitutionary and Passover concepts in 1 John 3:4–9. The problem is that penal substitution goes beyond all of these, because it specifically carries with it the necessity of *punishment* (retributive, not just restorative; penal, not just substitutionary or satisfaction). Perhaps this penal dimension is in Scripture, but it is not in all of these passages.

Treat's second point rests on assumptions that he does not prove. One of these is that the root problem that atonement addresses is human guilt and God's corresponding wrath. Justice, then, is the primary issue (one sees this as well in Charles Hodge, who also makes penal substitution central). I wonder too whether his approach to the inner logic of the atonement resonates more with a certain Calvinistic view (i.e., limited atonement or particular redemption) than with other views of the atonement. His citation of Packer's influential article ("What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution") suggests that it might. If so, those connections should be made explicit.

Despite these critical comments, I highly recommend *The Crucified King* to all who wish to engage atonement theology and kingdom theology seriously. Treat's overarching thesis that we must hold the cross and the kingdom together is convincing and important. His careful attention to both Scripture (read as a canonical whole) and tradition immerses the reader in a rich biblical-theological approach that avoids the dichotomies, dualisms, generalizations, and reductionisms that too often characterize modern discussions. Moreover, Treat's writing is clear, his logic is easy to follow, and his constructive ideas are both

creative and helpful. His book will edify theological students, pastors, and thoughtful lay readers.

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