



Transfigured
Hermeneutics

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Introduction

The Transfiguration holds great significance within the narratives of the Synoptic gospels and considerable promise for Christian theological reflection more generally. Yet it receives relatively little attention in many quarters, its importance lying underappreciated and unexplored. This neglect may arise in part from the apparently irruptive character of the event; to many, the glory of Christ witnessed at the Transfiguration may seem akin to an actor who has mistaken his cue and prematurely burst onto the stage. Much as the special musical episode of a TV series, the Transfiguration accounts appear to many as if detached from—or, at the least, uncertainly related to—the gospels’ narrative progression, its dramatic revelation of Jesus’ glory incongruous with the veiling of that glory in the accounts that surround it.

The purpose of this ten part series of posts is to establish the importance of the event of the Transfiguration and explore its theological potential. In my opening posts I will begin by examining the event within its immediate literary context in the gospels, gradually expanding the horizon of my enquiry to situate the event within the large sweep of redemptive history,

before devoting close attention to the Transfiguration's fruitfulness for our theological reflection and Scriptural reading.

1: Baptism and Transfiguration

A more adequate appreciation of the Transfiguration will probably need to begin by demonstrating ways in which the event relates to the larger sweep of the gospel and to the Scriptures as a whole. The Transfiguration occurs at a pivotal moment in the gospel narratives, immediately after Jesus' first teaching concerning his death and Peter's confession. From this point onwards, Jesus' face is set towards Jerusalem.

Jesus' baptism and his transfiguration are correlated in a number of respects. If Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan was the revelation of his identity that initiated the first stage of his ministry, the Transfiguration is the revelation of his glory associated with the second stage of his ministry, leading up to the crucifixion.

The two events have a number of parallels and relationships that emerge within the literary structure of the narrative. Both are preceded by clear testimony to Jesus' Messiahship, against the backdrop of the crowd's speculations (e.g. Luke 3:15-17; 9:7-9, 18-20). Prior to Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist bears witness to him as the coming One; prior to the Transfiguration, Peter declares Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. John the Baptist's death shortly precedes the

Transfiguration, bringing the chapter of the gospels framed by his ministry to a close. Herod and the crowds are speculating whether Jesus is John redivivus (9:7-9) and it is at this point that the true nature of John's mission was revealed and both its preparatory relationship to and similarity with Jesus' own highlighted:

And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.¹

John the Baptist, the Elijah that was to come, has gone first and been put to death. Now the time has come for Jesus to make his way towards his own death (the speculations about John the Baptist's resurrection, mentioned in Luke 9:7, may also represent an interesting parallel with Jesus' own resurrection). John's work was a preparation of the building site, a felling of trees and a purging of the threshing floor (Matthew

¹ Matthew 17:10-13

3:10-12²); just before the Transfiguration, Jesus announces the start of the great building project (Matthew 16:17–19). Both the Baptism and the Transfiguration are followed by a showdown with Satan and his demons—Jesus overcomes the tempter in the wilderness following his baptism and casts out the unclean spirit in the child after descending from the Mount of Transfiguration. He then passes through Galilee to stay in Capernaum (Matthew 4:12-13; 17:22–24).

The events of the Baptism and Transfiguration themselves are similar in some noteworthy respects. When he was baptized, the Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and the Father’s voice declared Jesus to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. At the Transfiguration, the Spirit descends in the form of the bright glory cloud³ and the voice of the Father announces that Jesus is the Chosen Son, and that the disciples should hear him. Understood in such a manner, both the Baptism and the Transfiguration are overtly *Trinitarian* theophanies. In Luke’s gospel, there is also a characteristic emphasis upon prayer common to both accounts: both of the events occur while Jesus is praying (3:21–22; 9:29). Such associations between the Baptism and the Transfiguration—great

² Solomon’s Temple was built on a threshing floor (2 Chronicles 3:1) and John the Baptist alludes to a prophecy about purifying Temple worship in his statement about purging the threshing floor (Malachi 3:1-3).

³ See Meredith Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* [second edition] (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 201–202 on the connection between the Spirit and the glory cloud.

disclosures of Christ's glory and mission that initiate successive stages of his earthly ministry—are indications, far from being an anomalous event within the larger plot, the Transfiguration may be structurally integral to the progression of the gospel narratives.

2: Transfiguration and Exodus

This is the second of a ten part series of posts on the Transfiguration. In my previous post, I introduced my exploration of the significance of the event of the Transfiguration. I began by observing the prominence of the event within the narrative structure of the gospels and its various parallels with the event of Jesus' Baptism. In addition to the parallels and interrelations between Baptism and Transfiguration, the gospel accounts of the Transfiguration also echo events at Sinai in the book of Exodus, escalating and developing some of its themes. Within this post, I will explore some of these parallels, preparing the ground for a discussion of the mutually illuminating character of the events that occurred on the two mountains.

Luke's account of the Transfiguration is situated within a broader Exodus pattern in chapter 9. Signs and wonders are performed by Jesus and the Twelve, leading the Pharaoh-like Herod—who, like Joseph's Pharaoh in Genesis 40:20–22, had just celebrated his birthday with an execution (Matthew 14:1–12)—to seek to see Jesus for himself. Jesus then goes out into the wilderness, where he is followed by a multitude (Luke 9:10–11—John 6:1 refers to Jesus crossing a sea to do so).

The feeding of the five thousand in the wilderness is a food miracle with similarities to God's provision of manna for the children of Israel during the Exodus. While within the gospel of Luke the connection is established chiefly by literary framing and echoes, John's gospel makes the connection more apparent within the bread from heaven discourse that follows the miracle. Jesus' delegation of the ordering of the multitude to his disciples is reminiscent of Moses' delegation of the rule of the multitude of the Israelites to the elders in Exodus 18. In Mark 6:40, the people are described as sitting down in ranks, in fifties and hundreds, as if in military array. The numbering of the males and the division of the 5,000 into groups of 50 might also recall the numbering of the people in the wilderness (Numbers 1 and 26) and the departure from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land in companies of fifty (see the Hebrew of Exodus 13:18 and Joshua 1:14).

While John's gospel situates the feeding of the five thousand upon a mountain (John 6:3), Luke speaks only of a deserted place (Luke 9:12). The 'mountain' comes later in Luke 9, in the account of the Transfiguration. In verse 28, Jesus ascends the mountain, accompanied by Peter, John, and James. In Exodus 24, Moses takes Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and seventy elders with him up Mount Sinai. Like those who accompanied Moses, the disciples see a divine theophany on the mountain (Luke 9:29; cf. Exodus 24:10-11).

After descending from the mountain, Jesus encounters a multitude (v.37), much as Moses encountered the multitude of Israel when he descended Sinai in Exodus 32. Both Jesus and Moses face representatives who have proved faithless in their task during the period of their absence on the mountain. Here the disciples are like Aaron and the demon-possessed child like the people of Israel. Aaron could not restrain the Israelites and the disciples could not restrain the demon. Indeed, although it is not attributed to it, the behaviour of the Israelites in Exodus 32:25 is described in a manner that bears some resemblance to demon possession. The impression is given in both accounts of a rebellion expressed in a violent physical manner.

The demon throws the boy down (v.42) and ‘shatters’ him (v.39). The same verb is used in the LXX to describe the shattering of the tablets when Moses casts them to the ground at the foot of Sinai (Exodus 32:19). Jesus’ response is surprisingly accusatory: ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?’ The clearest echoes are of the statements of YHWH and Moses concerning the children of Israel in the wilderness (cf. Exodus 16:28; Numbers 14:11, 27). In particular, one is reminded of Deuteronomy 32:20, where Israel is described as a ‘perverse generation, children in whom is no faith’.

Although such literary parallels may initially appear no more than decorative, one of their effects is to frame the Mount of Transfiguration and the events that occurred there as a new Sinai, placing in sharper relief the relationship between the two. Among other things, three key events occurred at Mount Sinai: the LORD's glory was revealed to Moses, the plans for the tabernacle were laid out, and the Law was given. On the Mount of Transfiguration, we see analogies to each of these. Within the next post, I will begin to discuss them.

3: Transfiguration as Theophony

This is the third of a ten part series of posts on the subject of the Transfiguration and its significance for Christian theology and biblical reflection. Within the first couple of posts I explored the literary presentation of the event of the Transfiguration, chiefly as it appears in Luke's gospel. I argued that the Transfiguration is paralleled to the Baptism of Christ and is also framed by an Exodus pattern. Within this Exodus pattern, the analogies between the Transfiguration and Sinai are cast in bolder relief, enabling us to see the mutually illuminating character of the events that occur on the two mountains. It is to this that we will now turn.

In Exodus 33:17-18, Moses asked the LORD to show him his glory. The LORD descended in the cloud, stood with Moses, and then passed before him in 34:5-9, declaring his covenant name. As Meredith Kline has observed, there is both a close interrelationship and a distinction in the Old Testament between the Angel of the LORD and the Spirit-Presence.⁴ The Angel (or Messenger) of the LORD is identified with God and is spoken of as a divine figure, but can also be distinguished

⁴ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 70-75.

from God ‘as one who is sent by God on a mission or who himself refers to the Lord in the third person.’⁵ The Angel is the divine archetypal prophetic figure—a form of God’s self-manifestation—declaring the LORD’s will and representing his authority to his people. The Spirit-Presence (or Glory) is the LORD’s own majesty and splendour.

There are many accounts of theophanies in the Old Testament. It is important, however, to observe their differing characters. In some theophanies, as in the LORD’s appearance to Abraham at Mamre (Genesis 18) or the Man who wrestles with Jacob at Peniel (Genesis 32:22–32), the appearance is of the Angel of the LORD, with apparently no accompanying Glory phenomena. In other cases, such as the pillar of cloud and fire that led the children of Israel out of Egypt and the theophany witnessed by the nation at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 and 20, it is the phenomena of dreadful and awe-inspiring Glory-Presence that is most prominent, a burning radiance shrouded in thick cloud and darkness. Kline writes:

During the earlier period when the kingdom offered in the Abrahamic promises was still abeyant, God appeared as the Angel, apart from the Glory phenomena. But the advent of the age that was prototypal of final judgment and kingdom consummation witnessed a form of the-

⁵ *Ibid.* 71

ophany appropriate to an age of eschatological fulfillment. God's self-revelation to Israel in this age of exodus triumph and kingdom founding was still a revelation through the Angel, but now the Angel appeared in union with the Spirit-Presence, in the more public and continuous and awesome epiphany of the Glory-cloud.⁶

When the Angel is accompanied by the Glory, it is the Glory-Face of the LORD that is seen. Moses' theophany upon Mount Sinai is of a distinct character from previous theophanies. While the Angel of the LORD laid aside his Glory in previous theophanies, Moses witnessed the Angel in his Glory-form. As Moses saw the Glory-Face of the LORD he was transformed by the sight, his own face bearing a reflected glory so dazzling that the Israelites could not bear to look upon it. To spare the Israelites from the sight, Moses covered his face with a veil, only removing it when he went into the Glory-Presence of the LORD to speak with the LORD again (Exodus 34:29-35).

As I have observed, Luke narrates the Transfiguration of Christ in a manner that accents Exodus themes. The relationship between the Transfiguration and Sinai is found primarily in the theophany, although the contrasts here are as important as the similarities. The most significant of these contrasts is that, while Moses' face is changed as he reflects the

⁶ *Ibid.* 72-73

LORD's Glory-Face, Jesus' Transfiguration isn't a *reflection*, but is an unveiling of God's own Glory-Face. This is a point of no small significance: in his Transfiguration, Jesus is implicitly disclosed as the Messenger of the LORD, the archetypal divine prophet, the radiant Image or Face of God, the one witnessed by the people of God in the Old Testament.

Within the next post, I will continue to explore the theme of Christ as divine theophany, focusing upon the treatment of the subject in the gospel of John.

4: Jesus as God's Glory Face in John's Gospel

This is the fourth of a ten part discussion of the importance of the event of the Transfiguration for Christian theology and biblical reflection. In my first three posts, I argued for the significance accorded to the Transfiguration by its location within the narrative structure of the gospel, I explored the manner in which it is cast in relation with the events of Sinai, and I argued that it implicitly presents Christ as the divine glory theophany that was partially witnessed in the old covenant. Within this post I will turn to the gospel of John which, despite not recording the event of the Transfiguration, manifests a robust appreciation of Jesus as divine glory theophany.

John 1:14–18 is another instance where the Exodus theophany to Moses on the mountain is alluded to within the gospels.⁷ Jesus is the glorious only begotten of the Father, 'full of grace and truth,' the Word that has become flesh and 'tabernacled' among us. God's presence in the world in Jesus Christ is comparable to his presence in the midst of his people in the Sinai tabernacle. In verse 32 of the chapter, John the

⁷ Peter J. Leithart, "Jesus, Moses, Sinai, John," firstthings.com (January 3, 2013).

Baptist bears witness to the Spirit descending and remaining upon Jesus, much as the Glory cloud descended and remained upon Sinai and the tabernacle (cf. Exodus 33:9; 34:5).

Within the biblical resonance chamber provided by the Exodus theophany to Moses, John identifies Jesus as the Glory-face of God. No one has seen God at any time (v.18, cf. Exodus 33:20), yet in Jesus Christ we behold the glory of God. While Moses saw the ‘back’ of God’s glory presence, the Son is in the very ‘bosom’ of the Father. The Word made flesh is ‘full of grace and truth’ (v.14b), an expression deeply redolent of Exodus 34:6, where God describes himself as ‘abounding in goodness and truth.’ By such literary parallels, John reveals that the Glory-face of God is made known in Jesus Christ.

Moses, having witnessed the Glory-presence of God, was the mediator through whom the Law was delivered. Moses and the Law gave testimony to this glory, but neither of them were this glory. While the Law came through Moses, ‘grace and truth’—the very theophanic presence of God—comes through Jesus Christ. Moses and the Law testified to the glory of God: Christ *is* that glory. In seeing Christ, we become like Moses, witnessing the very glory of God.

The claim in John 1:18—‘no one has seen God at any time’—is a statement that needs to be qualified (cf. Exodus 24:10–11, which explicitly says that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel ‘saw’ the God of Isra-

el). Exodus 33:20 helps us to clear up what might be meant here. No one can see God's 'face' and live, while Moses could see God's back. Ezekiel saw the figure of a 'likeness with the appearance of a man' (the accumulation of phenomenological terms is important here, serving as linguistic veils at points beyond which direct expression dare not tread) in Ezekiel 1:26–28. However, while the body is described both above and below the waist, no description of the face is given. Moses saw the pre-existent Son, but not as we see him. The face is the focal point of the person's identity—their *countenance*. By contrast with the theophanies of the OT, Jesus' face is central at the Transfiguration (this is also the case in Revelation 1, which shares with Matthew 17:2 the description of Jesus' face shining like the sun in its glory). In Jesus, God's face is finally seen.

This theme of Jesus as the Glory-face of God, the ultimate theophanic revelation, continues throughout the gospel of John. 1:14-18 present Jesus as the glorious revelation of God that Moses witnessed upon Mount Sinai. In 1:32–34, John the Baptist has a theophanic revelation of Jesus' identity as the Spirit descends and remains upon him. In 1:51, Jesus presents himself as Jacob's Ladder (cf. Genesis 28:12), the connection between heaven and earth. Perhaps we can see a progression here: the first theophany is of the descending Word; the second theophany is of the descending Spirit upon the descended Word; the third theophany is of the angels of God ascend-

ing and descending upon the descended Word upon whom the Spirit rests. In Jesus Christ, heaven is taking up residence on earth.

John's implicit identification of Christ as both the agent and glorious fulfilment of the great theophanies of the history of Israel establishes Christ's pre-existence and discloses the deep unity of covenant history. The glory that Jesus will be raised to is the glory that he enjoyed with the Father before the world was (17:5), the eschatological glory anticipated by the patriarch (8:58), the theophanic Glory-face of the Lord witnessed by the prophets (12:41). Christ is not a new actor in Israel's history, but the once veiled One who has been active all the time and has now, in the fullness of time, made himself known.

For a time this Glory is concealed. As Meredith Kline observes, the pattern of concealment followed by glorious revelation that we see within the Old Testament itself 'has its anti-typical parallel in the successive states of humiliation and exaltation in the history of the incarnate Son, whose triumphant exodus entrance into the heavenly kingdom is marked by his investiture in the clouds of glory as the glorified Spirit-Lord.'⁸ The pattern of concealment followed by manifest glory is both recapitulated and escalated within the New Testament, so that, even with the dramatic displays of glory of the Exodus

⁸ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 73

and Sinai succeeding the concealment of the patriarchal theophanies, the Old Testament represents, relative to the New, a period of concealment. While John may not record the event of the Transfiguration, he shares the Synoptics' concern to show forth Jesus as the temporarily veiled but now revealed Glory-face of God.

Within the next post, I will turn to explore the theme of priesthood and tabernacle in the context of the Transfiguration, discussing some further respects in which it parallels the events on Mount Sinai.

5: The High Priest and the New Temple

This is the fifth of a ten part discussion of the importance of the event of the Transfiguration for Christian theology and biblical reflection. I have argued for illuminating parallels between the events of Sinai and that of the Transfiguration. My previous two posts explored the gospels' presentation of Christ as God's glory theophany. Within this post I will turn to the themes of priesthood and sanctuary, which the gospel accounts of the Transfiguration also share with the events of Sinai recorded in Exodus.

If Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan was, as Peter Leithart has argued, an initiation into priesthood, his Transfiguration declares his great high priesthood as the Son over God's house:

Other details of the transfiguration have priestly connotations: The event occurs on the "eighth day," which was the beginning of Aaron's ministry (Lev. 9:1; Luke 9:28); Jesus' clothing is transformed into garments of flashing glory like those worn by the High Priest (Luke 9:29); glory

surrounds Jesus (Luke 9:31, 32); Peter wants to build “tabernacles” (Luke 9:33); and Moses and Elijah disappear after a cloud overshadows the mountain (Luke 9:34; cf. Exod. 40:34–38). Shortly after, Jesus begins His march to Jerusalem, where He will cleanse the temple, begin to teach, and eventually offer His once-for-all sacrifice (Luke 9:51; cf. v. 31). The transfiguration publishes the truth of the baptism: Jesus has been, and will be, glorified as High Priest over the house.⁹

In light of Jesus’ revelation as the great and glorious High Priest, the sacrificial character of his death becomes more apparent. As Jesus sets his face towards his death in Jerusalem, he unveils himself as the archetypal High Priest and Son over the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus is not overtaken by events nor cornered by the political machinations and conspiracies of his enemies: he goes to the cross with the power and determination of the heavenly High Priest who will accomplish his sacrifice.

In Matthew’s account of the Transfiguration, temple-building themes are present in the near vicinity. In 16:17–19, in response to Peter’s confession, Christ declares that he will build his Church—his assembly—upon the rock of Peter. As

⁹ Peter Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003) 119–120.

Leithart observes, there is a mixture of imagery here.¹⁰ The architectural language of building would suggest Temple-construction, as would the context, where Peter has just identified Jesus as the Christ, the figure who would establish the true Temple. However, the specific term used for the Church is not the term for a building, but for a human assembly, an assembly that can carry military connotations (connotations that are live in Matthew 16, where conflict with the gates of Hades is prominent). This fusion of imagery is suggestive: the ‘building’ of the new Temple is not a physical building made with hands, but an assembly of people that God would indwell.

These themes of building resurface in a surprising way within the narrative of the Transfiguration, where Peter suggests that they build three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Elijah, and one for Moses. Peter’s proposal, especially as it features within Luke’s gospel—where it is uttered as Elijah and Moses were parting from Jesus—seems to be an attempt to get them to stay.

Many commentators have seen in the word ‘tabernacles’ a possible allusion to the Exodus Tabernacle or, alternatively, to the Feast of Tabernacles (a feast commemorating the Exodus from Egypt, Leviticus 23:39-43). Whether this is reading too much into the term or not, God takes Peter’s mundane proposal and responds in a manner charged with theological

¹⁰ Peter J. Leithart, “Building the Church,” biblicalhorizons.com (June, 1990).

meaning, implying that Peter unwittingly said more than he knew (v.33b).

We should recognize the cloud that descends as the Glory cloud—the Shekinah—that came upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16), the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34–38), and the Temple (1 Kings 8:10–13). Peter had suggested that they build ‘tabernacles’, so that they might continue to enjoy the presence of Moses and Elijah. God responds by removing Elijah and Moses, but causing the Shekinah to descend upon Jesus and his disciples. Peter’s desire that Moses and Elijah tarry with them in temporary ‘tabernacles’ is answered by God’s enacted declaration that Jesus is the Tabernacle of his personal dwelling, the glorious Son who must eclipse all lesser reflective lights.

Peter believed that it would be good to delay the departure of Moses and Elijah. However, Moses and Elijah must decrease so that Christ can increase. They are witnesses that must step back when the One they foretold arrives. The Law and the Prophets are passing and temporary: Christ is lasting and permanent. Peter and the disciples would be called to build something. However, it wouldn’t be a temporary tabernacle, but an eternally enduring Temple.

Just as God gave Moses the plans for the Tabernacle on Mount Sinai in Exodus and revealed the plans for a new prophetic temple to Ezekiel on a high mountain in Ezekiel 40, so God reveals his new Temple on the mount of Transfiguration.

The Temple is Christ himself, in whom all of the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and the assembly of his people. Peter, James, and John are fellow cornerstones of the new Temple, with Christ himself the chief. Christ is both the glorious High Priest and the new Temple.

Within my next post, I will conclude my discussion of the parallels between the Transfiguration and the events of Sinai.

6: The Climactic Word

This is the sixth of a ten part treatment of the significance of the Transfiguration for Christian theology and biblical reflection. I am currently exploring the way in which the Transfiguration draws upon associations with the events of the Exodus and Mount Sinai and upon broader Old Testament themes.

At Sinai, the Law of God was given to Israel on tablets of stone. At the Transfiguration, God declares that Jesus is his Son and his Word to the world: ‘This is my beloved Son. Hear Him!’ Jesus is God’s climactic word, the Word that all of the other words anticipated. Although Jesus’ identity as God’s Son and Word given to the world is the fundamental implication of the gospels and the New Testament in their entirety, it is here, at the Transfiguration, that God’s gift of his Son as his revelation to the world is declared in a direct and unmediated word from God himself.

Jesus is joined by Moses and Elijah, both persons who had spectacular yet fleeting visions of God’s glory at Mount Sinai and both persons who had experienced a form of transfiguration by the Glory of God themselves (Moses’ shining face and Elijah’s ascent in the divine throne chariot in 2 Kings 2). Moses was the one through whom God gave the Law; Elijah was the

one through whom God established a remnant prophetic movement. Between them they are the two greatest OT witnesses: some have seen Moses as representing the Law, and Elijah the prophets. They stand for all of the revelation that had come beforehand, revelation that witnesses to and is exceeded by God's gift of his Son.

Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus concerning what he is about to fulfil. Jesus' superiority to them is apparent, especially as they are removed from the scene and God testifies to his Son. Even the most important prophets and mediators of revelation in the Old Testament are surpassed by Jesus.

The words of God's declaration concerning his Son in verse 35 resonate deeply within the world of the Old Testament. Richard Hays observes the presence of Genesis 22 and Isaiah 42:1—'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights'—in the background of God's declaration at Jesus' Baptism. The Isaiah echo is more prominent in Luke 9, where it is 'amplified into a more explicit allusion' as Jesus is referred to as the 'chosen one'.¹¹ This designation as the Isaianic Servant presents Jesus as the True Israel, and as God's faithful covenant partner.

In contrast to the divine voice at Jesus' Baptism, the voice here is directed to the disciples, not to Jesus himself. The dis-

¹¹ Richard Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014) 60.

ciples are instructed to ‘hear’ Jesus, a probable allusion to Deuteronomy 18:15–19. The promised Prophet like Moses is one that the people must ‘hear’ (cf. Acts 3:22). Jesus is the One for whom Elijah was preparing the way and he is the great Prophet like Moses that was foretold. His word comes with a glorious finality in the history of redemption, the revelation that will not be surpassed. ‘God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son . . . the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.’¹²

In Malachi 4:4–6, the final verses of the Old Testament prophets, the coming Day of the LORD is announced and the people are told to remember the ‘Law of Moses,’ God’s servant. It is also promised that ‘Elijah’ will appear ‘before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.’ This prophecy is prominent in the context of the Transfiguration account, where Matthew’s account records Jesus referring the prophecy concerning Elijah to John the Baptist (Matthew 17:10–13). As Moses and Elijah are the great witnesses and the ones who will prepare the way for the climactic coming of the LORD himself, their appearance with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration is very fitting.

Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus about his departure—literally his ‘Exodus’ (ἐξοδος)—that he was about to ‘fulfil’ in

¹² Hebrews 1:1–2

Jerusalem. The use of such a resonant term at this juncture is worthy of attention: Moses and Elijah are not merely referring to Jesus' coming death as an event about to befall him, but to his purposeful and powerful outworking of a new Exodus, in which all previous and anticipatory 'exoduses' will be fulfilled and all the promises of God realized. Jesus' departure—his 'Exodus'—is more than merely his death: it is also his resurrection, ascension, and his deliverance of a great multitude of captives. By his death and resurrection Christ tears open the sea of Death and Hell, allowing all of his people to pass through unscathed, while drowning all of their pursuers behind them.

The literary purpose of the overarching Exodus motif in this passage in Luke, to which I drew attention earlier, should become more apparent now. Luke's use of a mini-exodus pattern in this passage is akin to the composer of the film score who allows the hero's theme to surface in the background, readying the audience for its full expression as the hero achieves his magnificent victory. Luke wants our minds to be on Exodus, so we will understand both what is taking place on the mountain and what Jesus is about to go to Jerusalem to achieve. Jesus' Exodus will be the culmination of redemptive history, the decisive, definitive, and dreadful statement of fundamental themes that had been hitherto only quietly, yet pervasively, intimated.

Within the next post, I will discuss the relationship between the Transfiguration and the *parousia*.

7: The Bright Morning Star

This is the seventh of a ten part exploration of the meaning of the Transfiguration and its significance for Christian theology and scriptural reading. Within previous posts, I discussed the relationship between the Transfiguration and the events at Mount Sinai. In the post preceding this one, I argued that, at the Transfiguration, Jesus is presented as God's great and climactic Word to humanity. Within this post, I will turn to explore the relationship between the Transfiguration and the *parousia*.

Each of the accounts of the Transfiguration is preceded by a statement that some of those hearing Jesus' words will not taste death before they see the kingdom ('see the kingdom of God'—Luke 9:27; 'see the kingdom of God present with power'—Mark 9:1; 'see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom'—Matthew 16:28). What is meant by the 'kingdom' is presumably to be appreciated in light of the verse that precedes it: it is the coming of the Son of Man in his own and the Father's glory. These statements are connected to the Transfiguration accounts that follow by the time reference with which those accounts begin.

A connection between the Transfiguration and the *parousia*—the glorious final appearing of our Lord—is a natural one. Meredith Kline writes:

When Christ's *parousia* is spoken of as a revelation in glory, as it is repeatedly, what is in view is the specific idea that Jesus is the embodiment of the theophanic Glory of God revealed in the Old Testament. Jesus so identifies his *parousia*-Glory when he says the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father (Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Of the same import is the fact that the major features of the Old Testament Glory-cloud phenomenon reappear in the delineation of the glory of Jesus' *parousia*. It is an advent-presence amid clouds and accompanied by the heavenly army of angels.¹³

At the Transfiguration, Jesus is present and manifest in this dazzling royal splendour, unveiling his Glory-face before which the world will stand in judgment, appearing in his Father's glory. The connection between Transfiguration and *parousia* is most striking in Peter's account of the event in his second epistle:

¹³ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 121-122.

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts . . .¹⁴

Here Peter explicitly and expressly connects Transfiguration with *parousia*. The Transfiguration is the unveiling of Christ as the majestic king, and of his kingdom rule in his Father’s glory (echoes of Psalm 2, as a fulfilled prophecy, should probably be heard in the Transfiguration account). The Transfiguration, Harink argues, is a proleptic apocalypse, much as that experienced by John on Patmos, or Saul on the road to Damascus.¹⁵ ‘Because the apostles . . . at the transfiguration have, for a moment, *already seen and heard* Jesus Christ enthroned at the end of the ages in his divine majesty and glory, they are now also *already certain* . . . that he will in fact come to judge the

¹⁴ 2 Peter 1:16-19

¹⁵ Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter* [Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible] (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 155

earth and its inhabitants and set up his eternal reign over all things and all peoples.’¹⁶ The Transfiguration is a guarantee of the coming realization of all of the prophetic promises—‘the prophetic word made more sure.’

It is also important to recognize that, for Peter, the *parousia* is framed less by the times and dates for some future divine action than it is by the person of Jesus Christ: the *parousia* is the coming revelation of the glory of Christ, a glory that he already possesses and which Peter saw for himself. What we look forward to is not so much a series of eschatological events but the *revelation* of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, as Peter proceeds to argue in verses 20–21, the Transfiguration serves to validate and confirm the prophetic word of Scripture, demonstrating that it is not of human origin or will, but given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. In the Transfiguration both the unifying origin and referent of the prophetic word of Scripture is disclosed. The Scriptures find their coherence in their common Spirit-inspired witness to and revelation of the glory that is seen in Jesus Christ.

The prominence that the Transfiguration is accorded within the second epistle of Peter merits closer attention. In his commentary upon the epistle, Douglas Harink suggests that, for 2 Peter, it is the Transfiguration, rather than the cross or

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 156

resurrection, that ‘is put forward as the decisive christological event.’¹⁷ This revelation of the glory of Christ is the revelation of the ‘final truth and reality of all things.’¹⁸ The same light that first illumined the world (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4-6), the light that will dawn in the coming final day, is the light witnessed on the holy mountain. Harink remarks:

By recalling the glorious apocalyptic event of the transfiguration of our Lord, Peter directs a strong word against the theological rationalisms, reductionisms, and relativisms of his age and ours. While he offers a vigorous apologia for the truth of the gospel, he does not appeal to a foundation in universal rational first principles, available to everyone everywhere, or to an a priori universal religious sense, variously modified by historical and cultural experience—the standard post-Enlightenment modes of apologia for religious truth. Instead, Peter goes directly to his and the other apostles being *eyewitnesses of an apocalypse* of the truth of Jesus Christ. That apocalypse of the truth of all things is itself the origin and criterion of all claims about God and the beginning and end of all things.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 21

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 156

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 158

In the Transfiguration we witness the dazzling uncreated light that pierces and consumes the shadowy illusions of the darkness of the present age. Peter's vision of future judgment in 2 Peter 3 entails a sort of 'transfiguration' of the world before the light of its glorious Lord, its bright morning star, whose coming day will dawn. 'The transfiguring judgment and new creation that Peter envisages in 2 Pet. 3 amount to nothing less than God's act of dissolving all other rational or ordering principles (the *stoicheia*; 3:10, 12) of the world and recreating the world in conformity with the truth of Jesus Christ.'²⁰

In my next post, I will move to a discussion of the Apostle Paul's exploration of themes of transfiguration in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

8: Moses' Veil

This is the eighth of a ten part series on the subject of the Transfiguration of Christ. I have been exploring the significance of the event both within the New Testament and within redemptive history more generally. We will now turn to examine the Apostle Paul's discussion of themes associated with transfiguration in 2 Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6, Paul provides a deftly theological and richly intertextual defence of his apostolic credentials, which seem to have been called into question by his opponents. To any who might suggest that he needs letters of recommendation, Paul counters that the Corinthian church itself is his letter of recommendation, a letter written by Christ himself, on 'tablets of flesh', rather than on 'tablets of stone'. That an echo to the new covenant theme of God's writing on human hearts and replacing stone with flesh (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27) is intended here is supported by Paul's reference to himself and his missionary companions as 'ministers of the new covenant' of the life-giving Spirit, rather than the death-dealing Law.

Richard Hays observes: 'Paul's intertextual trope hints, in brief, that in the new covenant incarnation eclipses inscrip-

tion.²¹ The new covenant is ‘enfleshed rather than inscribed’ and its ministry ‘centers not on texts but on the Spirit-empowered transformation of human community.’²² Paul is not challenging Scripture itself here—for Paul, Scripture is a dynamically living and life-giving word—but a ministry that is merely one of a disembodied ‘written code’, without the power to effect transformation.²³

To elaborate his case, Paul turns to Exodus 34, as a passage that provides a powerful illustration of the nature of the glory of the old covenant. The old covenant and its ministry were not without glory: the face of Moses, the great mediator of the old covenant, radiated with such dazzling reflected glory that the Israelites could not bear to gaze at it. However, this reflected old covenant glory pales in comparison with the surpassing glory of the new covenant. The temporary and transitory glory of the old covenant is now being eclipsed by the enduring glory of the new. If even a ministry of condemnation displayed such glory, the ministry of new covenant righteousness should be expected to exhibit an overwhelming splendour.

Paul writes that Moses covered his countenance with a veil, ‘so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the *telos* of what was transitory.’ The term *telos* has been taken by

²¹ Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 129.

²² *Ibid.* 129-130

²³ *Ibid.* 130-131

many as referring to the ‘cessation’ of the supposedly ‘fading’ glory of Moses’ face. Hays argues that we should interpret the term as referring to the ‘goal’ or ‘purpose’ of the transitory covenant. He *précises* Paul’s argument in the passage:

The veil on Moses’ face hid from Israel the glory of God, which Moses beheld at Sinai, a glory that transfigured him. Israel could not bear looking at the transfigured person and concentrated instead on the script that he gave them. That text, too, bears witness (in a more indirect or filtered manner) to the glory, to the person transfigured in the image of God, who is the true aim of the old covenant. For those who are fixated on the text as an end in itself, however, the text remains veiled. But those who turn to the Lord are enabled to see through the text to its *telos*, its true aim. For them, the veil is removed, so that they, like Moses, are transfigured by the glory of God into the image of Jesus Christ, to whom Moses and the Law had always, in a veiled fashion, pointed.²⁴

The old covenant was a covenant of veils, hiding the glory of God—the veil of Moses, the veil of the tabernacle, and the veil upon the Law. The ministry of Moses—both the man and the text—was one of concealment, providing only glimpses of the

²⁴ *Ibid.* 137

glory it harboured. The glory was present, but not manifest. The new covenant is a covenant of the removal of veils—the removal of the veil of the temple, the removal of the veil upon the text, and the unveiling of God’s Glory-face in Jesus Christ. It is also characterized by openness; what was formerly hidden and concealed is now declared freely.

Paul’s use of Moses in this passage is a phenomenally dextrous deployment of biblical metaphor, a scintillating juxtaposition of similarity and dissimilarity to considerable illuminative effect. While drawing a sharp contrast between old and new covenant and their respective ministries, the brilliance of Paul’s argument is seen in the way that he discloses the deep affinity between Moses and the new covenant, presenting Moses as a witness to the glory of Christ, anticipating the unveiling to come. As Paul’s argument unfolds, the ‘dialectical crosscurrents’ that Paul’s use of Moses as a dissimile introduces begin to become apparent.²⁵ While Moses may be a symbol of veiling, more fundamentally he is a symbol of *unveiling*, a point that surfaces in verse 16: ‘Moses’ act of entering God’s presence and removing the veil becomes paradigmatic for the experience of Christian believers (“we all”) who “with unveiled face, looking upon the reflected glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory.”²⁶

²⁵ *Ibid.* 142

²⁶ *Ibid.* 143

However, what was intermittently experienced by Moses in the old covenant, is fundamentally and enduringly characteristic of the new.

When Moses turned to the Lord (an allusion to Exodus 34:34–35), he removed the veil from his face. While the precise reference of ‘the Lord’ might seem to be ambivalent, without clear Christological meaning, in light of Paul’s descriptions of Christ in the verses that follow—‘the glory of Christ, who is the image of God’; ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’—I believe it is not inappropriate to give it full Christological weight. Paul’s use of Exodus 34 is not just a clever allegorical repurposing of the Old Testament text to illustrate a theological point, but is justified by the deep reality shared by Moses and new covenant believers. The glory that Moses saw was the Glory-face of the Son, the Glory-face that has now been disclosed in Jesus Christ.

I will continue my discussion of 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 in my next post.

9: With Unveiled Faces

This is the ninth of a ten part series on the Transfiguration and its significance for Christian theology and the reading of Scripture. In my previous post I began to discuss Paul's development of themes associated with transfiguration in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4. I argued, following Richard Hays, that Paul presents Moses both as the representative of the old covenant, but also as anticipatory of the new.

As with Moses, those who turn to Christ—in repentance and faith—are transfigured by the sight of his glory, with the effect of renewing them into his image. Kline writes:

Glory is again to the fore when the Scriptures speak of man's recreation in God's image. The renewal of the divine image in men is an impartation to them of the likeness of the archetypal glory of Christ . . . The mode of the impartation of Christ's glory in image renewal is described according to various figurative models appropriate to Christ's identity either as Spirit-Lord or as second Adam. Man's reception of the divine image from Christ, the Glory-Presence, is depicted as a transforming vision of the Glory and as an investiture with the Glory. Moses is

the Old Testament model for the former and Aaron for the latter. Beholding the Sinai revelation of the Glory-Face transformed the face of Moses so that he reflectively radiated the divine Glory. So we, beholding the glory of the Spirit-Lord, are transformed into the same image (II Cor. 3:7-18; 4:4-6).²⁷

The end—the *telos*—of the old covenant was the glorious renewal and transfiguration of humanity in the image and likeness of God. Moses manifested this glory, but had to veil it for a people who weren't ready for it. In Christ we see both transfigured humanity and the Glory-face of God himself—the *telos* of all previous revelation.

Paul's discussion in 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6 helps us better to appreciate the centrality and import of the themes of the Transfiguration. The Transfiguration declares that the glory of God, formerly only briefly glimpsed by Moses and a few prophets, is now openly proclaimed to all in the gospel of God's Son. The Transfiguration also unveils the true *telos* of revelation—the transfiguration of humanity—so that we are renewed and glorified in the image and likeness of our Creator. Christ is the archetypal Image of God and Glory-face of God: as we gaze upon him, we are transformed into his likeness.

²⁷ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 28-29

There is a pivotal move in Paul's argument in verse 14:

In verse 13 Moses is the prophet and lawgiver who veils his own face; in verse 15, Moses is the sacred text read in the synagogue. The single intervening transitional sentence tells us that the veil over the minds of the readers is "the same veil" (*to auto kalymma*) that Moses put on his face. How can that be so? Because Moses the metaphor is both man and text, and the narrative of the man's self-veiling is at the same time a story about the veiling of the text.²⁸

A crucial implication of this is that the (veiled) glory of Moses is not just the glory of Moses the man, but also the glory of the Old Testament Scriptures that he stands for. Although Paul's earlier contrast between inscription and incarnation may have led readers to expect that he was about to associate Scripture with the veil concealing the transfigured humanity, he makes the critical move of associating the Scripture, not with the veil, but with the glorious face of Moses that lay beneath it.

Having carefully developed the multi-layered metaphor of the veiled Moses, Paul's stage is now set for the dramatic unveiling. Hays remarks:

²⁸ Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 145

The rhetorical effect of 2 Cor. 3:16 is exquisite because it enacts an unveiling commensurate with the unveiling of which it speaks. The text performs its trope in the reader no less than in the story. And—the final elegant touch—the trope is performed precisely through a citation of Moses. Moses' words are taken out of Exod. 34:34, unveiled, and released into a new semantic world where immediately they shine and speak on several metaphorical levels at once. Thus, rather than merely stating a hermeneutical theory about the role of Scripture in the new covenant, 2 Cor. 3:12-18 enacts and exemplifies the transfigured reading that is the result of reading with the aid of the Spirit.²⁹

Paul's argument, which has been steadily building throughout the chapter, now erupts into a magnificent crescendo. The face of Moses—the face of the *Torah*—is no longer veiled when he turns—when *we* turn—to the Spirit-Lord, the giver of liberty. For those who turn to Christ in repentance and faith, the Scripture is now seen to be the mirror in which we perceive the glory of the Lord. Through gazing steadfastly at the glory revealed in that mirror, we ourselves are transformed into the likeness of the One revealed there by the Spirit of Christ, from glory to glory.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 147

As our reading of Scripture is transformed in this new covenant manner, we ourselves are transformed by our reading, to bear the same image—of the glory of Christ—that we perceive within its mirror. The *telos* of the Scripture, the transformation of humanity, is thereby achieved in us as the veil is removed from our hearts, enabling us to perceive the glory of our Lord that fills it. The figural and Christological reading of Scripture that Paul exemplifies here involves a sort of ‘transfiguration’ of the text, as the glory of the Lord is encountered within it. What had formerly been veiled is disclosed and opened up in Christ, revealing his radiance throughout its pages.

This mirror of God’s glory precedes a greater revelation yet to come, when we see Christ face-to-face (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12). The transformation we currently experience is a partial one produced by a mediated encounter; it will be surpassed by the direct vision which it anticipates and promises. Once again, the self-forgetful vision of Christ will be the means of our transformation—‘when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is’ (1 John 3:2). The shadowy and fleeting glimpses and intimations that we have of transfiguration in our encounters with ‘transcendent’ natural or artistic beauty—as cynicism, fear, and distrust wash away from countenances that light up with joy, awe, wonder, hope, and love and the world and its peoples are bathed in a glorious ra-

diance—may give us the faintest of apprehensions of the great transfiguration that awaits humanity and the creation in the age to come.

In my next and concluding post I will reflect upon what it means to read Scripture in the light of the Transfiguration.

10: Transfigural Interpretations

This is the final part of a ten part series of posts upon the Transfiguration. Within the series, I have argued for the immense significance of the event of the Transfiguration within redemptive history. I have maintained that the Transfiguration has far-reaching implications for the way that we read and relate to Scripture.

Kevin Vanhoozer writes:

The transfiguration is a mini-summa that recalls God's presence in the history of Israel and anticipates the consummation of the covenant: the glory of God's presence in his people and all creation. As such, it provides program notes as it were for understanding the whole narrative sweep of Scripture.³⁰

The glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration discloses the identity of Christ and thereby the character of his mission. This is the glorious Saviour that came to earth in the incarnation. This is the glorious Son that was declared in the vision

³⁰ Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (eds.), *Heaven on Earth? Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2013) 220.

associated with his baptism. This is the glorious suffering Servant that went to the death of the cross. This is the glorious Lord that rose from the grave and ascended into the cloud that received him from his disciples' sight. This is the glorious King that will come again to judge the living and the dead. It is in this glory that we will be caught up to dwell with him forever.

The Transfiguration is an apocalypse (an 'uncovering') and *parousia* (a 'presence' or 'coming') of the Lord Jesus Christ, anticipating his future return in that same glory, with all of the holy angels, to judge the living and the dead. All of God's promises concerning the future kingdom are made more sure to us on account of the apostles' witnessing of Christ's royal majesty.

Not only does the Transfiguration manifest Christ's identity in his earthly mission and guarantee the promises of his future appearing, it is also an event that stands as a key to the Scriptures and all of God's earlier work in history. It is from this point that all of the threads of meaning can be tied together. The Law and the Prophets—Moses and Elijah—all witness to the glory of Christ. All of the Old Testament looks forward to, prefigures, anticipates, and foretells the 'Exodus' that Jesus would accomplish and fulfil in Jerusalem. This era of Law and Prophets was passing, but Jesus' glory endures forever. The Transfiguration declares Christ to be God's very Word, the One whom we must 'hear'.

The Transfiguration is the unveiling of the identity of the great Actor in Israel's history. The Son is the archetypal Prophet, the heavenly High Priest, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Angel of the LORD. It was the Son who visited Abraham at Mamre. It was the Son that Moses saw on Mount Sinai. It was the Son that Isaiah saw in his vision in the temple. All of God's appearances to his people in the Old Testament were glimpses that culminate in the great unveiling of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. John speaks of 'glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Paul speaks of 'the glory of the Lord' and 'the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.'

The Transfiguration reveals that the glory of Christ is the beating heart of Scripture, its great Referent, its final *telos*.

In unveiling the glory of the Lord, the Transfiguration establishes a different way of approaching Scripture. The *telos* of the text of the Old Testament is now disclosed to us as it is uncovered as a mirror of the surpassing glory of Christ. The prophets speak of and anticipate this revelation of glory. The Scriptures are now seen to refer to Christ in a way we never formerly knew: he is the unknown Stranger who has accompanied the people of God to this point on our journey. We now know the *point* of Scripture, what it ultimately refers to. Vanhoozer proposes a model of 'transfigural' interpretation:

This “Spirited” referent (for this is how we should now think of the spiritual sense) is the “glory” of the literal sense: the *divinely* intended meaning. Typology is less a matter of *sensus plenior* than of *sensus splendidior*—the “how much more” glorious referent that the letter signifies when seen in the radiant light of the event of Jesus Christ. As the transfiguration displays the glory of the Son in and through his flesh, so “transfigural” interpretation discovers the glory of the prophetic word in the “body” of its text. De Lubac has it right: “the Old Testament lives on, transfigured, in the New.”³¹

As the veil is removed from the text and our hearts as we turn to our new covenant Lord the whole body of the Old Testament is transfigured, exposing his glory, a glory which was hidden there all along. Beholding this glory, we are similarly changed, conformed to the glorious image of the Son. In such a manner, we are brought into its narrative in a new way ourselves:

We have been transferred into the story of Jesus Christ, emplotted into his narrative, drafted into the drama of redemption. We too, the divine addressees of Scripture, are being transfigured, transcending history not in the

³¹ *Ibid.* 222

sense of leaving it behind but of participating in the mystery—the glorious theodrama—in its midst.³²

As those who reflect the glory and bear the image of Jesus Christ, the Glory-face of God, the glory the Scriptures declare is a glory that is ours too: ‘We too “figure” in the story.’³³ We are becoming the transfigured humanity that is the text’s *telos*. As we perceive the glory of the Lord in the mirror of Scripture, the Spirit of the Lord ‘inscribes’ the Word upon our hearts. By the work of the Spirit, we are now epistles of Christ, embodied proclamations of the enduring glory of his new covenant.

³² *Ibid.* 223

³³ *Ibid.*