

Olevianus and the Old Perspective on Paul: A Preliminary Report

By R. Scott Clark, D.Phil.

A STARTLING ADMISSION OR A MODERN EVANGELICAL PATTERN?

N. T. Wright makes a startlingly frank admission, and apparently without embarrassment, when he says, “Like many New Testament scholars, I am largely ignorant of the Pauline exegesis of all but a few of the fathers and reformers. The Middle Ages, and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had plenty to say about Paul, but I have not read it.”¹ This admission is all the more remarkable since, in large measure, the Reformation was a re-interpretation of the Apostle Paul and especially a re-interpretation of Romans. If we do not know or if we no longer care to know how the medieval church read Romans how shall we evaluate the Reformation re-reading of Romans? Luther’s lectures on Romans and Galatians were essential to his Protestant development. Calvin’s work on Romans was essential to his theological development.

Nevertheless, a survey of several modern commentators on Romans suggests that Wright is not alone in his neglect of the history of interpretation of Romans. For example, like most modern commentators, Adolph Schlatter (1935), John Murray (1959–65), and Leon Morris (1988) interacted with Calvin and Luther on Romans but most of their dialogue partners were modern writers.² Ernst Käsemann interacts only with Calvin and Luther among sixteenth-century writers.³ Peter Stuhlmacher cites only Luther and ignores Calvin altogether.⁴ Thomas Schreiner mentions Luther and Calvin briefly in his introduction before jumping to Barth’s *Römerbrief*.⁵ Douglas Moo cites a small number of pre-modern writers including Chrysostom, Theodoret, Calvin, and Luther.⁶

Those modern commentaries that actually engage seriously the history of the interpretation of Romans stand out as exceptional. In the nineteenth century, Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer showed some awareness of the history of commentary on Romans.⁷ Though

not usually reckoned an exegetical theologian, Charles Hodge interacted with a wide range of Patristic, Reformation, and Post-Reformation commentators on Romans.⁸ More recently, C. E. B. Cranfield provided a useful survey of the commentary on Romans, relying on T. H. L. Parker’s masterful work.⁹ Joseph Fitzmyer’s

THE AUTHOR: Dr. R. Scott Clark is Associate Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary California, and is also Associate Pastor of the Oceanside United Reformed Church (URCNA). He is the author of many articles and books, and has written previously for *The Confessional Presbyterian*. See “Baptism and the Benefits of Christ: The Double Mode of Communion in the Covenant of Grace,” *CPJ* 1 (2006) 3–19.

1. N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2006) 13.

2. Adolph Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. Seigfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody, Maine: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995). John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959). Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

3. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

4. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. Scott Hafemann (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

5. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998) 1–2.

6. Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

7. Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle To the Romans*, trans. John C. Moore, et al. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884).

8. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, New Edition (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1909). On this work see Mark Noll, “Charles Hodge,” in *Reading Romans Through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman, and Timothy Larsen (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).

9. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975). T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans 1532–1542* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986).

magisterial work is not only valuable for its exegetical work but for its amazing breadth of learning and reading in the history of the study of Romans.¹⁰ Of all the major modern commentaries on Romans, Fitzmyer's may be the most valuable for its interaction with the history of exegesis.

RESOURCES FOR RENEWAL

There are a number of resources for remedying these omissions.¹¹ We might start with David Steinmetz' brilliant 1980 essay, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," and follow him as he has turned his back on the modernist-critical approach to Scripture in favor of more traditional approaches. Richard Muller and John Thompson accept the invitation to recover and appropriate the pre-modern exegetical tradition. As they note, the term "pre-critical" was coined by modernists who used it derisively as a synonym for uncritical.¹² Nothing could be further from the truth. They had a different method, different standards of evaluation, and a different stance toward the Bible. In describing the difference between the critical and pre-modern handling of Isaiah 7:14, what often separates critical from pre-critical biblical exegesis is not over

critical method, but over critical presuppositions, indeed over the matter of the community of interpretation and

10. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1992). Fitzmyer (185) is one of a very few modern commentators even to list Olevianus' commentary on Romans.

11. Much of the material in this section of the paper is drawn from my forthcoming volume, *Recovering the Reformed Confession* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2008). I am grateful to my colleague Joel Kim for pointing me to several important studies in the history of the exegesis of Romans.

12. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson, "The Significance of Precritical Exegesis: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 335.

13. John L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible With the Dead: What You Can Learn From the History of Exegesis That You Can't Learn From Exegesis Alone* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

14. Gerald Bray, ed. *Romans*, vol. 6, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998).

15. Jeffrey P. Greenman, and Timothy Larsen, eds. *Reading Romans Through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).

16. Mark Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

what comprises its ethos. For the 'precritical' exegetes, a truly critical understanding must include a scrutiny of the text in the light of the broader scope of Isaiah's prophecy and of the relationship of the Old Testament to the New ("Significance of Precritical Exegesis," 339).

Unlike many modern Bible readers, "Christian exegetes traditionally have assumed that a divine purpose and divine authorship unite the text of the entire canon" (Ibid., 340). Pre-critical exegesis offers great help in recovering the notion that Bible interpretation is a "churchly exercise that must take place in such a way that particular texts are understood ... in their immediate context and in their canonical relationships" (Ibid., 345).

Most recently John Thompson has advanced the project of reading Scripture with the church by considering a series of difficult biblical texts (e.g., the stories of Hagar, Jephthah's daughter, and Gomer) as they have been interpreted and applied by a series of pre-modern interpreters from the patristic period through the Reformation.¹³ Thomas Oden and Gerald Bray have made it almost too easy for biblical scholars to gain access to the Patristic and early medieval reading of Romans in their volume on Romans in the Ancient Christian Commentary series.¹⁴

With respect to Romans particularly, the collection of essays edited by Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen, *Reading Romans Through the Centuries: From the Early Church to Karl Barth* is an excellent step toward putting the reading of Romans in a broader historical context by considering a series of major interpreters of Romans.¹⁵ Mark Reasoner's *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation* is also helpful in this regard by offering a survey of notable interpretations of various passages in the epistle.¹⁶

Finally, to conclude this brief survey, Ward Holder has edited a collection of essays for Brill, to appear next year, titled *Paul in the Reformation* featuring some outstanding contributions by Irena Backus, Ward Holder, and others, which should contribute to our understanding of how the Reformation received Paul. Evangelicals should have a particular interest in the Reformation and Post-Reformation reading of Paul since that is a major strand of the evangelical heritage.

RELEVANCE OF THE POST-REFORMATION FOR READING ROMANS

Even with these improvements, however, rarely does the Reformed orthodox reading of Romans receive any

attention. More than that, virtually no other sixteenth-century Protestant writer on Romans, beyond Calvin and Luther, receives any attention. This is striking in light of the fact that not only did Philipp Melancthon and Martin Bucer publish important commentaries on Romans—Bucer's commentary was so unwieldy that it provoked Calvin to take the opposite approach: lucid brevity (*perspicua brevitate*)—but so did a number of other significant sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars.¹⁷

After Calvin and Bucer, the Reformed continued publishing biblical commentaries. Because of the importance of the Pauline epistles to the Reformation, Olevianus' exposition of Paul is particularly important, especially since, though Girolamo Zanchi published a commentary on Ephesians in Neustadt (1594), none of the Heidelberg Calvinists published as many commentaries on the Pauline corpus as Olevianus.

Olevianus' son-in-law, Johannes Piscator (1546–1625), famous for his turn to chiliasm and his rejection of the doctrine of double imputation (i.e., the imputation to believers of Christ's active obedience) published a *Logical Analysis of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*.¹⁸ Two years later, he published lectures on Romans again, with his lectures on 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, with lectures and observations on doctrinal topics.¹⁹ Other orthodox Reformed theologians were equally hard at work commenting on Paul. The Lutheran turned Reformed theologian, Johann Jakob Grynaeus (1540–1617), published a *Brief Chronology of Gospel History: A logical declaration arrangement of the Apostle Paul's Epistle to Romans*.²⁰ Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) not only commented on Romans, but also wrote a *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* (1567).²¹ The lectures of Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563) on Romans were published in 1600.²² Robert Rollock, famous for importing to Scotland, the federal theology he learned in Heidelberg, published his lectures on Romans in 1595.²³

By the turn of the seventeenth century, Roman Catholic commentaries on Romans were emerging in defense of the Tridentine soteriology and Reformed theologians and Bible scholars responded. For example, David Paraeus (1548–1622), most famous for editing and publishing Ursinus' lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism, published a commentary on Romans promising to controvert textual and theological claims of the Jesuit theologian Robert Bellarmine as well as sundry other heretics.²⁴ One of the heretics at whom Paraeus aimed was the Italian rationalist Faustus Socinus (1539–1604), whose disputations on Romans were published in 1618.²⁵

Not only did the Reformed orthodox now face renewed theological and exegetical challenges from Roman Catholic and Lutheran opponents, but also from within their own movement. Arminius' *Dissertation on the True and Genuine Sense of Romans 7* appeared in 1612.²⁶ The lectures of the Remonstrant leader, Simon Episcopius (1583–1643) were published posthumously.²⁷ Even more challenging to the Reformed confessionals, Moïse Amyraut published his *Thoughts on Chapter 7 of Paul's Epistle to the Romans* in 1648 and his Amyraldian colleague Louis Cappel also published on Romans a few years later in 1655.²⁸ To end our survey, it is fitting to note the commentary by Johannes Cocceius (1603–69) on Romans, published in 1665, just a little more than a century after Calvin's death.²⁹

Though the divines of the Westminster Assembly are most famous for the Confession of Faith, several of them

17. T. H. L. Parker, ed. *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli Ad Romanos*, vol. XIII, Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia. Series II: Ioannis Calvini Opera Exegetica (Geneva: Droz, 1999) 1.

18. Johannes Piscator, *Analysis logica epistolae Pauli ad Romanos* ... (Herborn, 1589).

19. Johannes Piscator, *Analysis logica epistolae Pauli ad Romanos, Corinthios, Galatas, Ephesos, Phillipenses, Colossenses, Thessalonenses, una cum scholis et observationes locorum doctrinae* (London, 1591). In 1594, these lectures were augmented with commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews.

20. Johann J. Grynaeus, *Chronologia brevis evangelicae historiae: logicque artificii in epistola apostoli Pauli ad Romanos, declaratio* (Basle, 1580).

21. Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In selectissimam S. Pauli priorem ad Corinth. Epistolam D. Petri Martyris ... commentarii doctissimi* (Zürich, 1567).

22. Wolfgang Musculus, *In epistolam D. apostoli Pauli ad Romanos commentarii* (Basle, 1600).

23. Robert Rollock, *In epistolam S. Pauli apostoli ad Romanos* ... (Geneva, 1595).

24. David Paraeus, *Ad Romanos s. pauli apostoli epistolam commentarius. Quo praeter accuratam textuum sacri analysisin atque interpretationem de quaestionibus controversis dubia CLXXIX, explicantur: et antiqua Romanorum fides adversus nunc Romanistarum opiniones, praecipue Roberti Bellarmini jesuitae argutias, et thomae stapletoni antidota; nec no socini, eniedini et ostrodii haereticorum samosatenianorum blasphemias vindicatur* (Frankfurt, 1608).

25. Faustus Socinus, *Fausti socini senensis defensio disputationis suae de loco septimi captis epistolae ad romanos sub nomine prosperi Dysidae ... ante 12 annos ab se editae* (Racow, 1618).

26. Jacob Arminius, *J. Arminii ... de vero et genuino sensu cap. vii epistolae ad romanos dissertatio* (Leiden, 1612).

27. Simon Episcopius, *Paraphrasis et observationes in caput vii, ix, x et xi epistolae S. Pauli ad romanos* (Amsterdam, 1644).

28. Moïse Amyraut, *Mosis Amyraldi considerationes in caput vii epistolae pauli apostoli ad romanos* (Saumur, 1648); Louis Cappel, *Lud. Cappeli chronologia sacra: a condita mundo ad eundem reconditum per dominum nostram I. Christum* (Paris, 1655).

29. Johannes Cocceius, *S. Pauli apostoli epistola ad romanos cum commentario* (Leiden, 1656).

also produced the *Annotations Upon All the Books of the Old and New Testament* (1645), following in the tradition of the *Geneva Bible* and the Dutch *Statenvertaling* (Annotations) published in the wake of the Synod of Dort, “an exegesis of the entire Bible, in two volumes, over twenty-four hundred folio pages in length in the final edition.”³⁰

This paper seeks to contribute to and augment the recovery of older readings of Romans by introducing and surveying Caspar Olevianus’ massive (760 octavo pages) 1579 Commentary on Romans giving special attention to his orientation to Romans, his hermeneutic, and the significance of the only major commentary on Romans to be published by the Heidelberg Calvinists in the late 16th century.³¹ The significance of Olevianus’ commentary on Romans lies not so much in its biblical exegesis, which is uneven—sometimes insightful and sometimes tendentious—but rather in its witness to the

vital way early Reformed orthodoxy read Romans as the paradigm for Protestant theology, piety, and practice.

THE BACKGROUND AND RECEPTION OF OLEVIANUS’ ROMANS COMMENTARY

Considered generally, Olevianus exerted considerable influence on the shape of Reformed theology. As a teacher and pastor in Heidelberg and Herborn he taught hundreds of students who transmitted his ideas across Europe and Britain. His major work on covenant theology, *On the Substance of the Covenant of Grace Between God and the Elect* (1585) is one of the most influential works in the history of Reformed theology. Because of its influence, among academic writers from the 17th century to the present Olevianus has been pigeonholed as a “covenant” or “federal” theologian.³² He has been cited mainly in general terms or in reference to his covenant theology or his alleged views on active obedience.³³ Judging, however, by the effort expended by Theodore Beza (1519–1605) on his behalf in editing and publishing them, Olevianus’ Pauline commentaries seem to have been reasonably well-regarded by his contemporaries. He described Olevianus’ notes on Romans as “not unprofitable” (*non inutilis*) and “more than a little learned” (*eruditus non paucis*).³⁴

Some of his Pauline commentaries went through more than one edition and they were to be found in Libraries in Europe and England. In 1579 his greatest biblical commentary and arguably the most significant work of his career, his massive 760-page commentary appeared.³⁵ It found an international audience and demand for it required two editions in the first year of publication.³⁶ Reformed writers after Olevianus cited his Pauline commentaries occasionally. Johannes Piscator (1546–1625), Olevianus’ son-in-law, and an influential German Reformed theologian of the late 16th and early 17th century, appealed to his father-in-law’s 1579 commentary on Romans in support of his views.³⁷ He also claimed that, in denying the imputation of the active obedience of Christ, he was only following his father-in-law.³⁸ The Cambridge theologian Anthony Tuckney (1599–1670) and Westminster Divine, probably referring to Olevianus’ Pauline commentaries, cited his authority for his doctrine of justification.³⁹ There is evidence of occasional interest in Olevianus from the early 17th century until the middle of the 19th century. Most of the nineteenth-century interest in Olevianus was either biographical in nature or related to ecumenical questions in Germany, and there is little evidence of interest in Olevianus as a biblical commentator.⁴⁰ Karl Barth

30. See Richard A. Muller, “Scripture and the Westminster Confession,” in Richard A. Muller, and Rowland S. Ward, *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation and the Directory for Public Worship*, The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007) 9. See also *ibid.*, 11–29.

31. Caspar Olevianus, *In Epistolam Ad Romanos Notae, Ex Gasparis Oleviani Concionibus Excerptae* (Geneva: 1579).

32. Johannes Cocceius (1603–69) cited him as an influence. See Johannes Cocceius, *Opera theologica*, 8 vols. (Amsterdam, 1673) 6:4. See also Willem J. Van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)*, ed. Robert J. Bast, trans. Raymond J. Blacketer, Studies in the History of Christian Thought (Leiden, 2001) 331; 340.

33. E.g. Matthias Martini, *Methodus s.s. theologiae, in quatuor libellos divisa* (Herborn, 1603) 472. Following Piscator, Peter van Mastricht classed Olevianus with Piscator and Karg as one who denied the imputation of active obedience. See Peter Van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia* (Utrecht, 1699) 711.

34. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 9.

35. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*. At 77 pages, the notes on chapter one alone are longer than either his commentary on Colossians or Philippians.

36. The publisher included a Latin translation of the German sentences used within it as a selling point. This feature was also included in his commentary on Ephesians.

37. Johannes Piscator, *Analysis logica epistolae Pauli ad Romanos; una cum scholiis et observationibus locorum doctrinae* (Herborn, 1595) 20, 71, 173.

38. For more on this see R. Scott Clark, “Do This and Live: Christ’s Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification,” in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry: Essays by the Faculty of Westminster Seminary California*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, N.J., 2006) 232–236. See also Clark, *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant*, 168–170, 185–187.

39. Anthony Tuckney, *Praelectiones theologicae, nec non determinationes quaestionum variarum insignium in scholis academicis cantabrigiensibus habitae* (Amsterdam, 1679) 175, 187.

40. J. H. Steubing, *Caspar Olevian; Johannes Piscator* (Leipzig, 1841); Jacob Marx, *Caspar Olevian, oder, der Calvinismus in Trier*

renewed interest in Olevianus as a covenant theologian in the early 20th century. In his Göttingen Lectures he interpreted Olevianus' covenant theology (via Heppé's *Reformierte Dogmatik*) as a forerunner of his own.⁴¹

Lyle D. Bierma's 1980 study of Olevianus' covenant theology was the first significant attention to Olevianus' biblical commentaries in the modern period,⁴² but Bierma's initial research was completed before the contemporary renewal of interest in the history of exegesis.⁴³ It was, in part, to remedy this neglect that I used Olevianus' Pauline commentaries as a gateway into various aspects of his theology, notably his Christology and soteriology in my 1998 doctoral work.⁴⁴

The focus on Olevianus as a covenant theologian, though understandable, is somewhat misplaced since it ignores his biblical commentaries where, though he always assumed his covenant theology, it played a relatively subdued role. As important as his covenant theology was for Olevianus, it was only a redemptive-historical way to account for the same doctrine he taught in his systematic and catechetical works. He did not assume, as many have since, that covenant theology was a remedy for or alternative to systematic theology. His systematic or catechetical accounts of the faith were covenantal and his covenantal accounts of the faith were systematic.⁴⁵ In focusing on the *form* of Olevianus' covenant theology, scholars have often overlooked the *substance* of his theology, which he was at pains to teach.

OLEVIANUS ON ROMANS (1579)

In several places Olevianus' own context becomes more evident. Romans 11:1 says (from Beza's Latin NT), "For I desire to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift in order that you might be strengthened." Olevianus said, "Observe that God wills to be efficacious through the ministry, to give heavenly gifts to men."⁴⁶ On v. 12 he noted that Paul's ministry to the Romans in this epistle is like the "minister comforting the sick..."⁴⁷ On the phrase in v. 16, "the power of God to the salvation of all who believe" he added, "men are saved through the ministry of the gospel" which is the "means and instrument through which God gives faith to the elect."⁴⁸ These comments reflect Olevianus' pastoral work vocation and his work as a seminary professor in Heidelberg (1561–76).

In four of the five Pauline commentaries one finds something like Calvin's model of exegesis: a lucid and brief account of each passage. In Romans, however, he became considerably more expansive and his model seems to have shifted from Calvin to Bucer. Where

Calvin used only about 8200 words to explain Romans chapter 1, Olevianus used about 18,000 words.⁴⁹ His interests were theological, polemical, and pastoral. He was interested in harvesting doctrine from the epistles, but like the English Puritans, he was not shy about making practical applications of doctrine. Where Calvin sequestered most of his theological conclusions in the *Institutes* and other theological treatises, Olevianus was quite willing to engage in lengthy doctrinal excurses. For example, in commenting on Paul's desire to visit

im jahre 1559: Ein beitrag zur geschichte der reformation in Deutschland (Mainz, 1846); G. Baum and K. R. Hagenbach, *Leben und ausgewählte schriften der väter und begründer der Reformirten Kirche* (Elberfeld, 1857); Friedrich W. Cuno, *Caspar Olevianus, Pfälzische Reformatoren*; No. 3 (Weßheim, 1881); idem, *Blätter der erinnerung an Dr. Kaspar Olevianus, Hrsq. zu dessen 300jähr. Todestage* (15. März. 1887) (Barmen, 1887). One exception from this trend was Karl Sudhoff, *C. Olevianus und Z. Ursinus. Leben und ausgewählte schriften. Nach handschriftlichen und gleichzeitigen quellen* (Elberfeld, 1857). Examples of ecumenical interest in Olevianus include, Heinrich Heppé, *Die Dogmatik der Evangelisch-Reformierten Kirche* (Elberfeld, 1861), Alexander Schweizer, *Die glaubenslehre der Evangelisch-Reformierten Kirche*, 2 vols. (Zürich, 1844). On the nineteenth-century use of Olevianus see Lyle D. Bierma, "Federal Theology in the 16th Century: Two Traditions?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983) 304–21.

41. Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Faith*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1991) 303. See also idem, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 13 vols. (Edinburgh, 1936–1969) 4/1.59.

42. Lyle D. Bierma, "The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevian" (Duke University, 1980). His PhD. dissertation was published as Lyle D. Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids, 1996).

43. See e.g. David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37 (1980). Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson, eds., *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Grand Rapids, 1996).

44. Robert Scott Clark, *Duplex Beneficium: Caspar Olevian's Trinitarian, Protestant, Calvinist, Federal Theology* (University of Oxford, 1998). This work was revised and published as Clark, *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant*. See esp. pp. 110–114, 141–148, 162–170.

45. Caspar Olevianus, *Veßer grund* (Heidelberg, 1567); Caspar Olevianus, *Expositio Symboli Apostolici, sive articuloꝝ fidei in qua summa gratuiꝝ foederis aeterni inter Deum et fideles breuiter et perspicue tractatur* (Frankfurt, 1584); Caspar Olevian, *De substantia foederis gratuiꝝ inter Deum et electos: Itemque de mediis, quibus ea ipsa substantia nobis communicatur, libri duo* (Geneva, 1585).

46. *Ibid.*, 18. "Obserua quòd Deus per ministerium velit esse efficax, et dare dona coelestia hominibus."

47. *Ibid.* "Quemadmodum minister aegrotum consolaturus..."

48. *Ibid.*, 23. "Magnum est quod servantur homines per ministerium, nempe quatenus medium et instrumentum est, quo Deus fidem dat electis."

49. Parker, ed. *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli Ad Romanos*, vol. XIII, Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia. Series II: Ioannis Calvini Opera Exegetica.

the Roman congregation (Rom 1:10) Olevianus wrote ten pages on the Reformed doctrine of providence, illustrated extensively from Paul's life as recorded in the book of Acts and on its moral implications or the "fructus" of the doctrine (Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 8–18). This doctrinal excursus is longer than most found in his more overtly systematic works such as *De substantia*. These rabbit trails also witness to the origins of this work as a series of lectures.

Though he made occasional references to Robert Stephanus' Greek text, he used Beza's Latin translation of the New Testament as his foundational text.⁵⁰ In the grammatical portions of his exposition, he always began with the *sensus literalis*, but he usually moved quickly to the doctrinal sense of the text, reducing large portions of the text to one or two theological propositions that he then set out to demonstrate. For example, he regarded the first three chapters of Romans as being composed of a minor and a major proposition.⁵¹ He also demonstrated sensitivity to typology and eschatology and to what today is called Biblical theology.⁵² Though he did not invoke the quadriga explicitly, at different times, one finds attention in his commentaries to all four senses of the text, literal, doctrinal, eschatological, and moral.⁵³

50. Theodore Beza, ed., *Iesu Christi D. N. Novum Testamentum sive Novum Foedus* (Geneva, 1565).

51. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 189–190. "Haecenus probavit minorem demonstrationis constitutae capite tertio, v. 21 et sequentibus. Maior haec fuerat: necesse est eam esse veram iustitiam quae coram Deo consistat..." (ibid., p.189). On Olevianus' "regulae argumentandi" for distinguishing the major and minor propositions and his use of biblical examples see his *De inventione dilacticae* (Geneva, 1585) 142–153.

52. See e.g. Olevianus, *In Ad Galatas*, 61–76, 106–107.

53. Though widely misunderstood today, the intent of the quadriga was to ask a passage two questions. The first question was, "What is the literal sense?" In theory, the literal was the baseline sense of any passage. Second, the interpreter asked, "What does this passage teach about the three theological virtues of 1 Corinthians 13, i.e. faith, hope, and love?" The allegorical was the doctrinal (faith), the analogical was the eschatological (hope), and the tropological was the moral (love). I am not suggesting that Olevianus intentionally used the quadriga. Rather, I am suggesting that, despite Protestant rhetoric against the quadriga, he, like most other Reformed theologians (Calvin included) continued to employ the fundamental distinction between the literal and the figurative senses. Further it is clear that Olevianus and most of the Reformed Bible interpreters continued to ask about the teaching of a given passage about faith, hope, and love.

54. "quae mandatum haberet à patre..." Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 5. On this see Clark, *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant*, 177–180.

55. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 5. "Christus non est factus filius Dei, sed ab aeterno ex substantia Patris genitus."

MAJOR THEMES IN ROMANS CHAPTER ONE

Olevianus was a Reformed preacher and all good Reformed sermons have three points and as Olevianus read the first chapter of Romans he found three great themes to which he returned repeatedly and which he wove together in the tapestry of his commentary on chapter 1: the unique authority of Scripture as the Word of God, the law as the condemning Word of God, and the gospel as the liberating Word of God. There are two other recurring themes that served as a sort of prolegomenon and coda to his exposition: his explanation of the Protestant hermeneutic and the nature of the place of sanctity in the life of the Christian.

This is not to suggest that he addressed no other themes in Romans 1, far from it. As part of his wide-ranging lectures, he moved from a defense of the antiquity of the gospel to the eternal generation of the Son and thence to the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son should have a *mandatum* from the Father to "renew the human race" ("*instauraret genus humanum*").⁵⁴ Olevianus moved fluidly between the eternal *pactum salutis* and redemptive history and Christology. God the Son did not "become" the Son. Rather he is "eternally begotten of the Father."⁵⁵ For Olevianus, when Paul says that Christ was declared the Son in power, it refers to the manifestation of Christ's office not to an absolute beginning. Against his Lutheran opponents, he was careful to maintain that Paul assigns attributes to each nature properly and so that the two natures are joined hypostatically, not ontologically. The divinity does not transform Christ's humanity but "vivifies" it as it vivifies us when we are united to him (Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 6).

THE AUTHORITY, RELIABILITY, AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Already in the late sixteenth century, Olevianus perceived that the authority of Scripture was being undermined. So he was at pains to emphasize the divine origin of Paul's teaching, emphasizing that it was not given "that it should fade away but that it should be efficacious to the end of the world and that it might retain its authority." As he continued, he revealed a little more about what motivated his concern.

But why should it be today that there is so much contempt for doctrine among so many and even

hesitation among good men when they see that contempt? Because they do not know that it is God who speaks in the Scriptures.⁵⁶

These words likely refer to Olevianus' frustration not so much with his current students but with some of those who should have been supporting the Reformation but were not.⁵⁷

In his lectures on Romans, one also receives the clear impression that, in the late 16th century, Olevianus was conscious that the credibility of Protestant doctrine was at stake. He argued that one of Paul's chief points in the beginning of the epistle was to establish that his doctrine was not originally his, but God's.⁵⁸ He was responding to the Roman question: Where was your church before Luther? His response was that "there is one promise of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life from all times written in the beginning with these words: 'The seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.'⁵⁹ The doctrine of the gospel is not new, but ancient.⁶⁰ In other words, the catholicity of the church is not organizational but theological. Considered in the light of redemptive history, it was not Protestants who had invented a new doctrine, but "those such as the Monks," who "imagine another way" than faith alone in Christ alone. "Therefore they are called robbers and bandits by the mouth of God . . ."⁶¹ Neither is the law new. "Indeed, there was one moral law from all times written on the hearts of men, and then consigned to letters."⁶² All humans have had since "*ab Adamo*" a natural knowledge of the difference between "honest and dishonest dealings" ("*honestarum et turpium*").⁶³

LAW AND GOSPEL

For Olevianus, the central message of Romans was not predestination. Though he was a Calvinist and a strong predestinarian, he did not deduce his theology from the doctrine of predestination or from any other alleged central dogma, for that matter. Rather, in certain respects, he read the book of Romans in a way that one might have expected an orthodox Lutheran to read it. Olevianus was a man seized by the Protestant understanding of the gospel of justification and that commitment was evident from the beginning of his commentary. The gospel is the message of "the remission of sins and eternal life" given "freely to believers on account of the Son."⁶⁴ Indeed, in proper Protestant fashion, at the outset of his commentary he endeavored to make clear to his readers that, in order to understand

Romans, one must understand "the distinction between law and gospel."⁶⁵

As is evident in the discussion that follows, Olevianus was speaking in hermeneutical, not merely historical, categories as in Old Testament and New Testament. Rather, for Olevianus "law" and "gospel" were two distinct categories of divine revelation found throughout Scripture. The law is God's demand for perfect and perpetual conformity to the law. The gospel is the announcement of the free justification of sinners by faith alone in Christ alone. In this Olevianus agreed completely with Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Bucer and all the leading Reformed orthodox theologians of the seventeenth century.⁶⁶

Olevianus devoted about one half of his commentary

56. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 2. "Iam doctrina illa non est data ut evanesceret, sed ut ad finem usque mundi esset efficax, auctoritatēque suam retineret. Qui fit autem quod hodie apud plerosque tantus est contemptus doctrinae, et in viris etiam bonis, cum contemptum illum vident, tanta haesitatio? Quia non cogitant Deum esse qui loquitur in scripturis."

57. He may have been referring obliquely to nobility who wavered in their support of the Reformation due to peer pressure. See Clark, *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant*, 35–38.

58. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 2. "Principiō asserit doctrinam non esse suam, sed ipsius Dei. . ."

59. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 3. "Respondeo, Una est promissio remissionis peccatorum et vitae aeternae omnium temporum edita initio his verbis: Semen mulieris conculcabit caput serpentis."

60. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 4. "Mundus clamat doctrinam novam afferri. At Evangelium novum non est, Etenim Spiritus Sanctus per Paulum constanter affirmat, doctrinam hanc Evangelii de remissione peccatorum, et vita aeterna gratis donanda credentibus propter filium, nequaquam novam esse: Sed Christum cum suo Evangelio promissum fuisse ab exordio mundi." Ibid. "Qui aliam viam commonstrarunt, ii novam doctrinam finxerunt, ut Monachi, ideō que ore Dei vocantur fures et latrones, cuius vocis efficaciam aliquando sentient. Iam habemus quomodo Paulus constanter affirmet, doctrinam Evangelii novam non esse, sed antiquam."

61. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 4. "Qui aliam viam commonstrarunt, ii novam doctrinam finxerunt, ut Monachi, ideō que ore Dei vocantur fures et latrones. . ."

62. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 3. "Una quidem fuit lex moralis omnium temporum cordibus hominum inscripta, et deinde literis consignata."

63. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 3.

64. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 2. "Paulum constanter affirmat, doctrinam hanc Evangelii de remissione peccatorum, et vita aeterna gratis donanda credentibus propter filium. . ."

65. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 2–3. "Hoc ut intelligatur cogitandum est discrimen legis et Evangelii."

66. On this see R. Scott Clark, "Letter and Spirit: Law and Gospel in Reformed Preaching," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry: Essays By the Faculty of Westminster Seminary California*, 331–363. See also idem. R. Scott Clark, "Iustitia Imputata Christi: Alien Or Proper to Luther's Doctrine of Justification?," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70 (2006): 269–310.

on Romans 1, from vv. 18–32, to an exposition of what he categorized as the law. “There is, “ he argued, “one moral law from all times written on the hearts of men, and then consigned to letters.”⁶⁷ The Jews have the law written in the Decalogue and Gentiles have “the law of nature.”⁶⁸ It is the same law in substance. This was, of course, the standard confessional Protestant view of natural law, which Olevianus inherited from Luther, Melancthon, Bucer, and Calvin.⁶⁹ By virtue of creation, every person knows “the distinction between honest and dishonest dealings.” For Olevian, universal knowledge of the law, however, did not imply universal ability to fulfill it: “on account of the corruption of nature” no one except Christ has ever satisfied the law.⁷⁰ As image-bearers, we all know what we ought to do but “there is no one since Adam who, of all the Patriarchs,

Prophets, and others, who receives the remission of sins and salvation on account of his works, which the law demands.”⁷¹ No one but Christ has performed this righteous obedience because of “the corruption of our nature” (*propter corruptionem naturae*).⁷² According to Olevianus, the demands of law are relentless. The effect of sin is fatal.

Whoever would stand before God, it is necessary that he be righteous, either by a proper righteousness, i.e., a righteousness of proper strength, of which sort the law of God itself either written or unwritten, by right of creation requires from us, or an alien righteousness, i.e., of God imputed to the believer.

This interpretation of 1:18 was a direct assault on the sixth session of the Council of Trent which taught explicitly the opposite doctrine, that it is not sinners who are justified by the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness, but rather it is the sanctified who are recognized to be righteous on the basis of their intrinsic sanctity.⁷³

For Olevian, it was essential to understand properly the nature of the relations that obtain between humanity and the law. As has already been suggested, for Olevianus there was only one moral, universal law. This fact was essential to his conception of the law. All humans are obligated to it because they all know it and they all know the same law, whether by nature or by special revelation in the Decalogue.⁷⁴ The function of the law, in this context, is primarily privative. It makes humans culpable and deprives them of excuse before God. It is the law’s creational nature that makes it universal. This line of argumentation, of course, places him directly at odds with the Barthian and theonomic rejection of natural law.⁷⁵

One sub-theme that emerges in this section of the commentary is his concern to argue and defend a clear distinction between the Creator and the creature. The way he did this, however, might be surprising. He did not argue his case for what Cornelius Van Til called the “Creator/Creature distinction” in the abstract. Rather, he argued first from the natural knowledge of the law of God engraved (*insculpsit*) on the human heart and then from the natural knowledge of God “implanted” (*insita*) into the human mind, and from the evidence extant and sensibly perceptible in the created world which he describes as a “*speculum*.”⁷⁶ Humans have an inescapable religious impulse, but because of sin it is always warped into idolatry. People think that they are serving God but they are no more serving God by their idolatry than a king is served by being depicted as a monkey with a scepter and crown (Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 32). Thus the god worshiped by

67. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 3. See note 62 above.

68. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 27. “Dividit enim mundum in duas partes, Gentes, et Iudaeos, id est, eos qui solam legem naturae, et eos qui legem scriptam, sive decalogum habebant.”

69. On the Reformed doctrine of natural law see R. Scott Clark, “Calvin and the Lex Naturalis,” *Stulos Theological Journal* 6 (1998): 1–22, David van Druenen, “Natural Law in Early Calvinist Resistance Theory” *Journal of Law and Religion* 21, no. 1 (2005–06): 143–167, idem, “Medieval Natural Law and the Reformation: A Comparison of Aquinas and Calvin,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 80, no.1 (2006): 77–98, idem, “The Two Kingdoms: A Reassessment of the Transformationist Calvin,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 40 (2005): 248–266, idem, “The Context of Natural Law: John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms” *Journal of Church and State* 46 (Summer 2004): 503–525, idem, “Natural Law, Custom, and Common Law in the Theology of Aquinas and Calvin,” *University of British Columbia Law Review*, vol. 33, no. 3 (2000): 699–717, idem, “The Role of Natural Law in the Westminster Confession and Early Reformed Orthodoxy,” in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, vol. 3, ed. J. Ligon Duncan (forthcoming, Mentor).

70. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 3 “...quia nullus eorum propter corruptionem naturae, legi potuit satisfacere.”

71. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 3. “hoc est, inde ab Adamo sciverunt homines quales esse, quae mala vitare, contra quae bona facere debuerint, et idem scient homines usque ad extremum iudicium: discrimen scilicet rerum honestarum et turpium: sed ne unus quidem iam inde ab Adamo, ex omnibus Patriarchis, Prophetis, aut aliis, unquam propter opera sua, quae lex exigit, accipit remissionem peccatorum et salutem.”

72. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 3.

73. Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 30th edition (Freiburg: Herder, 1955), 284–299.

74. So Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 30.

75. *Ibid.*, 30. “Impietas autem eo probatur, quod Deus in creatione iis se patefecerit, et tamen Deum non glorificarint...”

76. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 31. “Quia cordi insculpsit esse Deum. 2. Totum mundum tanquam speculum eis proposuit Deus in quo contemplarentur ipsius divinam potentiam, sapientiam, bonitatem. Primum enim Dei veritatem vocat naturales notitias de Deo à Deo ipso mentibus insitas. Deinde ait: Ea quae in Deo sunt invisibilia, inde à mundo condito, dum ex rebus conditis mente percipiuntur...”

Turks (the Muslims) is not God at all but the Devil, any more than the gods to whom Paul refers in 1 Cor 10:19 are really God. His most pointed arguments, however, move from creation and natural revelation to redemption and special revelation. The Roman cultus is also an example of the corruption of worship under “the Antichrist” (*sub Antichristo*).⁷⁷ Transubstantiation and the adoration of the transubstantiated host is substituting the Creator for the creature. It makes the priest into a creator and it is not done on the basis of Scripture but pontifical authority.⁷⁸

Olevianus understood that the doctrine of justification he was propounding in these lectures would not be regarded as “wise” by some critics, whom he calls “the wise men of Rome” (*sapientibus Romae*).⁷⁹ Though he was speaking about Paul’s context, his own sixteenth-century context and experience of Reformation was never far below the surface. According to Olevianus, Paul’s opponents charged him with novelty, which is a charge made against Olevianus and the Reformers in Trier and later in Heidelberg. Paul, however, was not ashamed of the gospel (because it is the power of God unto salvation) and neither should we be ashamed of it. The gospel, by which he gives faith to the elect, is “the powerful instrument of God for leading whoever believes unto salvation,”⁸⁰ and “they who, by this instrument of the power of God, are believers should walk by this faith freely justified before God with which saving righteousness is conjoined.”⁸¹ A moment later he repeated that the gospel is the “powerful and efficacious instrument” by which “God works powerfully and efficaciously leading men to faith.”⁸²

In explaining vv.17–21 he said,

It is to be observed that it most possible to distinguish between the law and the gospel. The righteousness of God is to be sought in the gospel. For that is perfection of the sort of sanctity which is able to stand before God and it is called the righteousness of God not only because it is freely given by God and on account of the Son but also because it is alone able to bear the rigor of the divine judgment.⁸³

He turned to Philippians 3:9, “not having a righteousness of my own, which is of the law but that which is from God” and cited 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He who knew no sin was made sin for us, in order that we might become the righteousness of God.” The first thing to be seen in the Gospel is that Jesus is the “righteous servant” of Isaiah 53 (Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 29). When Paul says, in Romans 1:19, “For the wrath of God is plainly ...” Olevianus interpreted him as beginning “to

make the case that we are saved only through faith” because “for outside the Gospel all men manifest the knowledge of damnation.”⁸⁴

How can one be saved? He responded, “there is one promise of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life from all times written in the beginning with these words: ‘The seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.’”⁸⁵ Because this promised salvation is the unifying thread of redemptive history, from Adam until now, “there is only one way to eternal life ... by faith in the Mediator, whom the promise of the gospel reveals, and in whom salvation is offered freely. Acts 10. To this all the prophets bear testimony, all who believe in him receive forgiveness and sins.”⁸⁶ He reiterated this doctrine of justification in his comments on verse 17, where he distinguished between “*iustitia propria*” and “*aliena*” (Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 27). Proper righteousness is that which belongs to God, but our righteousness is not proper. In fact we have no righteousness but only sin.⁸⁷ That is why it is revealed in the gospel. He made the same point again commenting on v. 18: “we are saved only through faith in the gospel. For outside of the gospel offered, all men are damned...”

77. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 33.

78. Ibid., 33. “Transsubstantiatum est, in quiunt, panis in corpus Christi, et consequentiam ratiocinamur, transsubstantiatum esse in Deum, ideo que adorandum. Ratio cinando autem eo impudentia ultra gentes progressi sunt, ut in Pontificiorum libris non privata autoritate editis, sed quo in cultu divino sacerdotes utuntur, Lutetiae excuso, haec legantur in rubrica de Dignitate sacerdotum. *Sacerdos est creator sui creatoris*: Item, *Qui creavit me sine me, iam creatur mediante me.*”

79. Ibid., 20.

80. Ibid., 23. “quo Deus fidem dat electis...”

81. Ibid., 21–22. “Evangelium potens organum esse, quo Deus unicum ad salutem medium, nempe iustitiam suam revelet ex fide in fidem... qui potenti hoc organo Dei fiunt credentes, fide hac gratis iustificentur coram Deo, cum qua iustitia salus coniuncta est.”

82. Ibid., 22. “Quod potens et efficax instrumentum sit... sed potenter et efficaciter per id operatur Deus adducendo homines ad fidem.”

83. Ibid., 28–29. “Observandum quid potissimum in Evangelio sit quaerendum: et quod discrimen legis et Evangelii. Iustitia Dei quaerenda in Evangelio: ea autem est eiusmodi perfectio sanctitatis, quae coram Deo possit consistere, vocaturque Dei iustitia: non modò quia gratis à Deo donatur per et propter filium: sed etiam quia sola potest ferre rigorem divini iudicii.”

84. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 30. “*Palam enim est ira Dei.* Incipit causam agere nos per solam fidem Evangelii salvari. Nam extra Evangelii cognitionem omnes homines damnatos ostendit.”

85. Ibid., 3. “Una est promissio remissionis peccatorum et vitae aeternae omnium temporum edita initio his verbis: Semen mulieris conculcabit caput serpentis:”

86. Ibid., 3–4. “Quamobrem unica tantum via est ad vitam aeternam: sive uno et eodem modo omnes sancti, inde ab initio, acceperunt remissionem peccatorum, nimirum fide, id est, fiducia Mediatoris, quem promissio Evangelii monstrat, et plenam salutem in eo gratis offert.”

87. Ibid., 27.

How did he understand the nature of faith? In 1:17 he took “*ex fide, in fidem*” to mean “growing faith is created in us day by day.”⁸⁸ “*Iustus autem ex fide vivet*” — the proof of the righteousness of faith is from Habakkuk 2 and it means “1. The believer is called just. 2. It promises life and freedom. 3. It promises not to any merits, but of faith. 4. ‘*vivet*’ signifies perpetual and constant life in the future. From this place in the prophet he concludes, ‘We are justified by faith alone.’” Faith “is not bare knowledge ... but it is knowledge and faith in the heart, by which the promised grace of the Gospel, which offers to us perfect righteousness and life in Christ, whoever embraces and acquiesces to them or by which the same are sealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁹ This was a distinctively Protestant reading of this passage as distinct from the general patristic and from the universal medieval reading of faith as a virtue.⁹⁰ His conclusions agree with Calvin’s 1540 commentary, and his method of argumentation overlaps with Calvin’s (Parker, Calvin *Ad*

Romanos, 27–29), but perhaps resembles Melancthon’s (1532/1540) commentary even more closely.⁹¹

Olevianus read Romans to teach the doctrines of particular redemption and election, but he also understood it to teach a sort of universalism. In his exposition of the last phrase of 1:16 he cautioned:

A universal particle is to be noted: “*To all who believe.*” Thus, “Come to me all who labor and who are burdened, I will restore you.” The promise of salvation is not to certain Prophets or Apostles neither does it concern only the Jews, but to all who believe. Thus Christ: “Whoever believes and is baptized, will be saved, whoever does not believe shall be damned.” He gives ample promise with his apostles he sends the preached Gospel.⁹²

Olevianus’ universalism was not soteriological in the sense that he thought Christ died for all or that all would be saved but rather that the gospel is to be offered to all since it is that through which God has ordained to give life and create faith.

SANCTIFICATION

Olevianus was a Calvinist. The justification of sinners is not an end in itself. On v. 16 he wrote the “purpose” (*de fine*) for which “God instituted the ministry of the Gospel” is that through it, he might he might lead powerfully the believers to salvation, sealing to their hearts the gracious remission of their sins and renovating the heart to the image and beginning in them eternal life.⁹³ This language reflects the great unifying theme of Olevianus’ theology, the *duplex beneficium Christi*: justification and sanctification. We are justified in order that we might be sanctified. The justified and saved are not so *because* they are sanctified, but having been justified receive the “gift of the Spirit.”⁹⁴ Thus, he was careful to clarify that when Paul speaks of the “obedience of faith,” he does not mean, as the defenders of Trent would have it, our cooperation with grace. Rather, the obedience of faith “contains two parts,” the first of which is believing and trusting that all our sins are forgiven only for the sake of Christ’s righteousness, and second, which he considered a logical consequence of justification, “sanctification, or inchoate obedience, which few consider.”⁹⁵

As in his more systematic works, Olevianus’ reading of Romans was Trinitarian. As he appealed to the example of Lydia in Acts 16 to illustrate the way the Spirit operates through the preaching of the gospel,⁹⁶ he appealed to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and Ephesians 1:3 to illustrate his argument that it is the Spirit that

88. Ibid., 29. “*Ex fide in fidem.*) id est creando in nobis fidem in dies augescentem: ibi se exerit potentia Dei...”

89. Ibid., 29–30. “*Iustus autem ex fide vivet.*) Probatio Iustitiae fidei ex Abacuc 2. 1. Credentem vocat iustum 2. Promittit vitam et liberationem. 3. promittit non meritis ullis, sed fidei. 4. *Vivet* in futuro, perpetuam et constantem vitam significat. Ex hoc loco Prophetiae concludit, Nos sola fide iustificari. Atque ita in praecedentibus continetur totius disputationis praecipua quaestio. Est autem fides non tantum nuda cognitio, vera esse, quae in Evangelio omnique verbo Dei sunt scripta: nam et Diaboli id credunt et contremiscunt: sed cognitio et fiducia in corde, qua promissionem gratuitam Evangelii, quae offert nobis iustitiam perfectam et vitam in Christo quisque amplectitur in eaque acquiescit: sive qua ea ipsa per Spiritum sanctum obsignatur cordibus.”

90. On the patristic reading see Gerald Bray, ed. *Romans*, vol. 6, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press) 30–33.

91. Philipp Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Fred Kramer (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992).

92. Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 25. “Notanda est universalis particula: *Omni credenti*. Sic, Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, ego reficiam vos. Promissio salutis non ad certos Prophetas vel Apostolos: neque ad Iudaeos tantum pertinet, sed ad omnes credentes. Sic Christus Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit, salvus erit, qui non crediderit damnabitur. Amplam promissionem dat cum suos Apostolos mittit praedicatum.”

93. Ibid., 23. “Dicamus de fine in quem Deus instituit ministerium Evangelii. Finis est, ut Dominus potenter ad salutem ad ducat credentes: obsignans eorum cordibus remissionem peccatorum gratuitam et renovans corda ad sui imaginem...”

94. See e.g., 6–7. “Docet non esse relictum nobis liberum, ut credamus, vel non credamus, sed iure, quo obedientiam Deo debes, obligatus es, ut promissionem gratuita remissionis peccatorum, et donationis Spiritus Sancti.”

95. Ibid., 6–7. “Obedientia fidei duas partes continet, Una, ut abnegata omni sapientia carnis, credamus et confidamus, remissa nobis esse peccata propter sacrificium filii.” Altera pars est sanctificatio, sive inchoata obedientia, quam pauci considerant.”

96. Ibid., 23.

“renews the heart to eternal life through the preaching of the Gospel.”⁹⁷ In the midst of expositing Romans he began lecturing from John 5 to augment his argument that the Spirit “by the voice of the gospel” (*voce Evangelii*) raises the elect to life (Olevianus, *Ad Romanos*, 24).

His doctrine of progressive sanctification is also embedded in an interesting phrase that, so far as I know, does not occur often in his catechetical and dogmatic writing. The expression “from faith unto faith” (*ex fide in fidem*) means that “the gospel is the powerful instrument” and “the only means” to salvation. This is the way God “reveals himself” in order that “he should open gifts to us and likewise he should give to us increasing faith day by day.”⁹⁸

He says that Paul’s quotation of Habakkuk 2 teaches “the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel and apprehended by faith growing day by day.”⁹⁹ Faith does not justify because it is growing, but because it is “fides apprehensa.” It is interesting, however, to notice how he described the faith that apprehends Christ’s righteousness. It is growing daily. Again, on the same pericope he wrote that when Isaiah 53 says that “by his knowledge my servant shall justify many” and when Paul says “from faith unto faith” it means that the same Spirit who gives the grace of faith through gospel preaching is also “creating in us increasing faith day by day.” There he reveals the power of God. For, to give faith and to convert the heart is as a “second work of creation.”¹⁰⁰

In each instance Olevianus was explicit about both his commitment to the Protestant doctrine of justification *sola gratia, sola fide* and the Calvinist doctrine of progressive sanctification as the second benefit of the gospel.

CONCLUSIONS

The significance of Olevianus’ commentary on Romans lies not so much in its biblical exegesis, which is uneven—sometimes insightful and sometimes tendentious—but rather in its witness to the vital way early Reformed orthodoxy read Romans as the paradigm for Protestant theology, piety, and practice. There are four main points to notice about his commentary on Romans chapter one:

First, it was nothing if not theological. He was capable of and sometimes willing to pay close attention to particular passages. The running commentary offers comments on virtually every clause of the epistle, but in some instances it seems clear that he was more interested in Romans as sort of a mini-system than as an epistle in a particular context. There is no introduction whatever. The lectures seem to dive into the theology of Romans without so much as a nod to Paul’s own context.

He took it for granted that Paul and the Reformation were addressing essentially the same dangers. It seems clear that Olevianus identified himself and the Reformation with Paul and Paul’s theology and he was not ashamed to identify Paul’s opponents with his own Roman opponents. If Michael Horton’s recent criticisms of the New Perspective on Paul are correct, that the theology of Second Temple Judaism is not best described as Pelagian, but rather as semi-Pelagian, then the Reformation identification of Paul’s opponents with their own medieval and sixteenth-century opponents may have more merit than some writers seem to think.¹⁰¹

Second, there is a great debate stirring over the relations between the Reformed and the Lutherans. Of course, Lutheran orthodoxy has regarded the Reformed churches as crypto-fanatics since at least the publication of the Book of Concord. The Reformed, however, have not so regarded the orthodox Lutheran Churches and theology. Some writers, however, such as Peter Lillback and Mark Garcia have argued that the Reformed consciously departed from what Garcia calls the “pan-Protestant” doctrine of justification, arguing for a distinctly “Reformed” doctrine of justification.¹⁰² If Olevianus’ commentary on Romans is any indicator

97. Ibid., 24. “Quod innovet corda ad vitam aeternam idem Spiritus per praedicationem Evangelii, quae verè divina est Potentia, docet Christus dum ait, Ioh. 5. Amen dico vobis veniet hora et iam venit, quia mortui audient vocem Filii hominis, et qui audient vivent.”

98. Ibid., 21. “Evangelium potens organum esse, quo Deus unicum ad salutem medium, nempe iustitiam suam revelet ex fide in fidem, hoc est, ut à se nobis donatam patefaciat, et nobis quoque fidem largiatur in dies augescentem: Altera, Quòd ii qui potenti hoc organo Dei fiunt credentes, fide hac gratis iustificentur coram Deo...”

99. Ibid., 27. “Ergo iustitia Dei in Evangelio revelata et fide in dies augescente apprehensa.”

100. Ibid., 29. “Haec est spectanda in primis in Evangelio: servus meus iustus cognitione sui iustificabit multos Isa. 53. Ierem. 33. *Ex fide in fidem.*) id est creando in nobis fidem in dies augescentem: ibi se exerit potentia Dei. Nam dare fidem et convertere corda opus est secundae veluti creationis.”

101. Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

102. See Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin’s Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*. Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids and Carlisle: Baker Book House and Paternoster, 2001). See also Mark Garcia, “Review Article: No Reformed Theology of Justification?” in *Ordained Servant* October 2007. http://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=66 [Accessed 22 April, 2008] and the response by W. Robert Godfrey and David VanDrunen, “Response to Mark Garcia’s Review of Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry” in *Ordained Servant* December (2007) http://www.opc.org/os.html?issue_id=26 [accessed 22 April 2008] and Garcia’s rejoinder in the same issue. See also Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin’s Theology* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2008).

of how the Reformed viewed this question—remember that Beza edited and endorsed this volume and that it was published and re-printed in Geneva—the Lillback/Garcia thesis does not explain this work or many others just like it. There are significant sections of this work that are virtually indistinguishable from Lutheran orthodoxy on hermeneutics (the law/gospel distinction) and the doctrine of justification and even on the logical and moral necessity of sanctification as a consequence of justification.

Olevianus was conscious of genuine differences with Lutheran orthodoxy as it had developed after Luther. He was conscious of genuine differences over the nature of predestination (double versus single), over Christology, and over the nature of the Lord's Supper, and concerning the doctrine of the church. When it came to justification, the law/gospel hermeneutic, and the Christian life, however, Olevianus thought of himself, Beza, who had explicitly propounded the same view, his teacher Calvin, and Luther as fellow evangelicals.

Third, as Richard Muller, Carl Trueman, Mark Dever, and a host of others have shown, the “Calvin versus the

Calvinists” paradigm does not explain adequately the theology of Reformed orthodoxy in any of its stages of development, so too, Olevianus' commentary on Romans shows that, when doing biblical exegesis, Reformed orthodoxy was not slavishly bound to Calvin's model of biblical exegesis. The Reformed tradition is broader than Calvin and, despite the role he has played in Reformed theology since Barth re-discovered him in the early twentieth century, for most of the time between his death and the early twentieth century he was, at most, *primus inter pares*.

Finally, this is a churchly commentary inasmuch as the doctrine of the church, worship, and sacraments were never far from Olevianus' mind as he lectured on Romans. He always read Paul as writing to a particular congregation but also as writing to all true congregations in all times and places. In that sense, and in others, Olevianus was a catholic expositor. He understood that theology must result in doxology but that doxology is not fundamentally a private act. It is first of all a public act before God, with his people, *in communio sanctorum*, centered on Word and sacrament ministry. ■

In Brief: Olevianus on Law and Gospel

It is to be observed that it is most possible to distinguish between the law and the gospel. The righteousness of God is to be sought in the gospel. For that is perfection of the sort of sanctity which is able to stand before God and it is called the righteousness of God not only because it is freely given by God and on account of the Son but also because it is alone able to bear the rigor of the divine judgment (28).

Thus Phil 3. “Not having my own righteousness which is of the law but that which is from God” and 2 Cor 5... From faith into faith. That is, by creating in us increasing faith day by day: There he reveals the power of God. For to give faith and to convert the heart is as a second work of creation... “It is revealed” therefore “that righteousness of God is from faith unto faith,” i.e., it is offered in the gospel, it is perceived by faith increasing day by day. There is a similar expression in Ps 84. “They go from strength to strength” i.e., they will not tire by walking into the temple (29).

The just shall live from faith.) The proof of the righteousness of faith is from Habakkuk 2. 1. The believer is called just. 2. It promises life and freedom. 3.

It promises not to any merits, but of faith. 4. “Shall live” signifies perpetual and constant life in the future.

From this place in the prophet he concludes, “We are justified by faith alone.” Faith “is not bare knowledge, to be sure, of that which is in the gospel and in all that are written in the Word of God—For the Devils also believe the same and they tremble—but it is knowledge and faith in the heart, by which the promised grace of the Gospel, which offers to us perfect righteousness and life in Christ (29), whoever embraces and acquiesces to them or by which the same are sealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit (30).

For this reason the distinction between law and Gospel is retained. The law does not promise freely, but under the condition that you keep it completely. And if someone should transgress it once, the law or legal covenant does not have the promise of the remission of sins. On the other hand, the Gospel promises freely the remission of sins and life, not if we keep the law, but for the sake of the Son of God, through faith (148).

Caspar Olevianus, *Ad Romanos Notae* (Geneva, 1579).

Translated by R. Scott Clark. ■