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Christ Is Not the Passover Lamb: Samuel Clarke's Marcionite Memorialism

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Abstract

In his refutation of Marcion, Tertullian argued that Marcion failed to appreciate that Christ, as figured, is present in the Old Testament. Marcion may have similarly denied the presence of Christ, as figured, in the Eucharist. This outcome is expressed in the eucharistic theology of the great eighteenth-century Anglican theologian, Samuel Clarke. Clarke is a harbinger of modern Marcionism because his Old Testament denigration is the product of his specifically Marcionite impulse to excise Christ from the Old Testament. And as he consistently applies this impulse to his eucharistic theology, his memorialism becomes another venue for him to transmit Marcionism to modernity.

Keywords: Eucharist, Figuration, Marcion, Old Testament, Samuel Clarke, Passover

The conviction that hermeneutics and eucharistic theology are intimately linked finds an important scriptural foundation in Luke 24. In Luke 24, Jesus expounds the Scriptures of the Old Testament so as to reveal to his disciples his presence there; and when he sits down with them over bread and wine he is found by them in the breaking of bread. In the West, the bond between the Old Testament and the Eucharist was secured by Augustine's conviction that semiotics is the primary tool Christians should employ as they explore the mystery of eucharistic presence. Augustine used the term *sacramentum* to refer to Old Testament texts because he believed Old Testament words were pregnant with this mystery.² Before Augustine, Tertullian employed the term *figura* in a similar manner. Tertullian's critique of Marcion of Sinope's (85–160) Old Testament hermeneutic and eucharistic theology suggests that he believes a faulty understanding of figure underlies Marcion's twofold error. For Tertullian, a properly Christian understanding of figure recognizes that what is figured is, as signified, given in the figure. Tertullian's use of the term figure opens up

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²See Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017), p. 2.

the intriguing possibility of applying the epithet 'Marcionite' not only to Old Testament hermeneutics, but also eucharistic theologies.

This essay considers the viability of a twofold application through the study of the Old Testament hermeneutic and eucharistic theology of the great eighteenth-century philosopher and Anglican divine Samuel Clarke (1675–1729). Clarke was the leading philosopher in England in the years following the death of John Locke (1632–1704). Clarke was also one of the leading divines of the Church of England. As rector of London's most fashionable parish, St James Piccadilly, he was situated at the center of English religious and cultural life, and he probably would have become the Archbishop of Canterbury had he not been so intent on publicizing his Antitrinitarian views.³ Clarke's subordinationist Christology has been regarded by many as scandalously heretical. It has been easy for interpreters to ignore other important aspects of his theological system given this controversy. Among these is Clarke's rabid supersessionism, which rears its head in his denigration of the Old Testament. Clarke was one of the first modern theologians to regard the Old Testament as less than Christian Scripture, and attaching the epithet Marcionite to Clarke on this account is straightforward enough. But I am proposing that this application can be extended to a second overlooked loci of Clarke's system. I am calling Clarke's eucharistic theology Marcionite. This twofold appellation is possible because Clarke's Old Testament hermeneutic and his eucharistic theology are both generated by his approach to figuration.

Marcionite Figuration

In contemporary Christian discourse, the epithet Marcionite is applied to Christians who are perceived to have disregarded the Old Testament. In America, pastor Andy Stanley has recently been accused of Marcionism and in Germany, scholar Notger Slenczka has been similarly branded.⁴ In the wake of such accusations, there is a renewed impetus to engage Marcion historically and theologically. One of the perennial challenges of Marcion studies is that everything we know about Marcion comes from the pens of opponents who regarded him as a heretic. Since Harnack, this inconvenience has been regarded as an opportunity to pursue speculative historical reconstruction.⁵ Yet Justin, Irenaeus,

³Voltaire tells the story that when Queen Caroline (1683–1737) wished to confer the see of Canterbury on Clarke, Bishop Gibson 'informed her that Clarke was the wisest and most honest man in her kingdom, but that he lacked one qualification for the position: he was not a Christian!' Michael Buckley, *The Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 172; Voltaire, 'Lettre VII', in M. Beuchot (ed.), *Oeuvres de Voltaire*, vol. 22 (Paris, 1879), pp. 100–102. As late as 1727, Clarke was offered the see of Bangor, and Queen Caroline sent Prime Minister Walpole (1676–1745) to convince him to accept the post. Discussions were said to have extended well into the night, but Clarke insisted he would not accept preferment which required him to sign the Thirty-Nine Articles. James P. Ferguson, *An Eighteenth-Century Heretic: Dr. Samuel Clarke* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), p. 209.

⁴See Wesley Hill, 'Andy Stanley's Modern Marcionism', *First Things*, available at: <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2018/05/andy-stanleys-modern-marcionism>; Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, 'Marcion on the Elbe: A Defence of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture', *First Things*, available at: <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2018/12/marcion-on-the-elbe>

⁵For example, Joseph Tyson persists undeterred though he confesses that attempts to describe the text of Marcion's Luke-Acts are speculative since 'the document itself is no longer extant and our only references to it are from Marcion's opponents'. Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), p. 40.

Tertullian, Origen, Ephrem, and Epiphanius will not willingly be enlisted for this project. Their primary concern is not to resurrect Marcion but to lay him to rest by exposing that which makes him a threat to the Church. From this standpoint it is possible to observe Tertullian employing *figura* to overcome both Marcion's approach to the Old Testament and his approach to the Eucharist.

In his important 1938 essay, *Figura*, the great Jewish literary theorist Erich Auerbach claimed that the Latin term *figura* was brought into the Christian world in the second century by Tertullian. Tertullian deploys the term a number of times in his longest work, *Contra Marcion*. In Book III he calls Joshua a figure of Jesus, and for Auerbach, this pairing confirms that '*figura* is something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical. The relation between the two events is revealed by an accord or similarity'.⁶ The aim of figurative interpretation for Tertullian, according to Auerbach, was to demonstrate that 'the persons and events of the Old Testament were prefigurations of the New Testament and its history of salvation'.⁷

Auerbach notes that in *Contra Marcion* Tertullian also employs the term *figura* in his discussion of the Eucharist. Tertullian does so in order to discredit Marcion's docetist inclinations.⁸ Tertullian interprets Jesus' words, 'This is my body' to mean 'This is the figure of my body'.⁹ For Tertullian, eucharistic elements can only be said to be figures of the body of Jesus if Jesus had a human body. Auerbach rightly observes that Tertullian's eucharistic use of *figura* functions in the same manner as his Old Testament deployment: it extends signification into the realm of ontology. *Figura*, for Auerbach, affirms the historical veracity of both figure, the bread and wine, and figured, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In this *figura* protects against ontological identification: as figured, the human body of Christ and the eucharistic elements are both real, but they are not identical.

Auerbach does not consider whether Tertullian's twofold use of *figura* suggests that the incarnate Christ is somehow ontologically tied by means of scriptural signification to the Old Testament text or the eucharistic elements. Yet there are at least three good reasons to believe that Tertullian marshals the term *figura* with reference to the Old Testament and the Eucharist not only to confirm the historical veracity of both figure and figured but to signal their ontological participation. First, as Auerbach notes, Tertullian's use of *figura* emanates from the classical prosopological understanding of the term.¹⁰ This understanding was a product of the Platonic

⁶Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Theory and History of Literature, 9; Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 29.

⁷Auerbach, *Scenes*, p. 30.

⁸Wilhite highlights inconsistencies in Tertullian's approach in order to call into question his claim that Marcion was a docetist. David E. Wilhite, 'Was Marcion a Docetist? The Body of Evidence vs. Tertullian's Argument', *Vigiliae Christianae* 71.1 (2017), pp. 1-36.

⁹Stewart-Sykes maintains that Tertullian and Marcion would have shared the conviction that the bread and wine were figures of the body and blood of Christ. Seen in this light, Tertullian is appealing to Marcion to bring his theology into line with liturgical practice. Alistair Stewart-Sykes, 'Bread and Fish, Water and Wine: The Marcionite Menu and the Maintenance of Purity', in Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat (eds.), *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung/Marcion and his Impact on Church History* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 207-20 (209-11).

¹⁰Stewart-Sykes, 'Bread and Fish', pp. 12-27.

framework which took for granted the ontological participation of copies and their generative forms. Second, Tertullian elsewhere describes the Eucharist as the ‘Body and Blood of Our Lord’, which grants Christians participation in his sacrifice.¹¹ Such participation could in no way be established by mere bread and wine, but depends upon the presence of Christ at the eucharistic feast. For Tertullian, the participation of the body of Christ with the eucharistic elements depends upon a divine creative act. Christ does not merely say that the bread and wine are his body and blood, he makes them his body and blood through this appellation.¹² Tertullian is thus able to say that the goal of baptism and chrismation is eucharistic participation: ‘while the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ’ at the Eucharist, ‘the soul likewise may fatten on its God’.¹³ Third, there is reason to believe that the term *figura* implies participation given that Tertullian’s view of the Eucharist is grounded in his figural exegesis of the Old Testament, which is itself deeply participatory in orientation.

Contra Marcion is saturated with figural readings of the Old Testament.¹⁴ Tertullian tends to speak of the passages from Isaiah and other prophets which he exposts as predictive in orientation, yet the Old Testament does not, for Tertullian, merely refer extrinsically to the Incarnation. Tertullian’s antidote to Marcion’s Old Testament degradation is to insist that Christ is present in the letter of the Old Testament text. He speaks of the twenty-first Psalm (our Psalm 22) as a prediction of the Lord’s cross, but he also insists that it contains ‘the entire passion of Christ’.¹⁵ Tertullian’s approach is aptly summarized by his gloss upon 1 Cor. 2.6-7. The wisdom of God, now revealed in Christ, ‘once lay hidden in things that were foolish, weak, and lacking in honour; once also was latent under figures, allegories and enigmatical types; but it was afterwards to be revealed in Christ’.¹⁶ Tertullian boldly declares that, ‘the whole Mosaic system was a figure of Christ’.¹⁷ As figured, Christ is present, though hidden, within it.

Extending Tertullian’s understanding of figure consistently to the Eucharist entails that Christ is present, though hidden under the appearance of bread and wine. Such an application, however, is more than simply a matter of logical consistency. For Tertullian, it is a matter of following Old Testament precedent. Christ was

¹¹Tertullian, ‘On Prayer’, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), III, pp. 681-92 (687).

¹²Tertullian, ‘The Five Books Against Marcion’, in Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III, pp. 269-476 (418).

¹³Tertullian, ‘A Treatise on the Soul’, in Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III, pp. 181-235 (230). Tertullian’s participatory view of the Eucharist should come as no surprise given that patristic theology was already oriented in this direction. For example, Ignatius sees the bread and wine as the flesh of Christ which grants immortality, and Irenaeus speaks of Christ being present at the Eucharist in power. For a helpful treatment of these and other early Christian writers, see Bryan D. Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: The Eucharist from the Early Church to the Present Day* (London: SCM, 2013), pp. 30-51.

¹⁴Tertullian uses Old Testament figures throughout the five books of his work, but he focuses on them in a concerted way as his primary means of rescuing the Old Testament from Marcion’s grasp in Book III. Tertullian, ‘The Five Books Against Marcion’, pp. 321-44.

¹⁵Tertullian, ‘The Five Books Against Marcion’, p. 337.

¹⁶Tertullian, ‘Against Marcion’, p. 440.

¹⁷Tertullian, ‘Against Marcion’, p. 453.

given license to declare that the eucharistic elements are his body and blood by the Old Testament witness. When Christ declared in the New Testament that the Passover was his feast he was articulating that which had been figured in the Law and the Prophets, for it 'would have been unworthy of God to desire to partake of what was not His own'.¹⁸ For Tertullian, Christ is present in the Old Testament figurally as the one who speaks the following words through his prophet Jeremiah: 'I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter, and I knew not that they devised a device against me, saying, Let us cast the tree upon His bread' (Jer. 11.19). Tertullian comments that this tree and this bread are 'of course' the cross and the body of our Lord.¹⁹ Christ's presence, as figured, in Jeremiah as the Passover Lamb establishes his presence, as figured, as the bread of the eucharistic meal. This eucharistic interpretation of Jeremiah is a single instance of Tertullian's consistently figural approach to the Old Testament. Tertullian's eucharistic theology is the extension of his figural interpretation of the Old Testament. Tertullian does not articulate a precise doctrine of real presence since his focus is upon scriptural signification. For Tertullian, it is enough to say that the words of Scripture, interpreted figurally, unveil the presence of Christ.

There is reason to believe that Marcion's eucharistic theology was equally bound to his reading of the Old Testament. Scholars have wondered whether they might distinguish Marcionite from Catholic on the basis of eucharistic practice. Yet Harnack's claim a hundred years ago that 'the Marcionite service of worship and sacral actions cannot have been essentially different from those of the great church' continues to be received today.²⁰ McGowan argues that Marcionism pursued an ascetic interpretation of the Eucharist which favored bread and water rather than bread and wine.²¹ This was the practice of some other early Christian groups, and thus would probably not have been, as Ephrem the Syrian suspected, an expression of the Marcionite denigration of creation.²² If Marcionites did use water rather than wine, this may have been an attempt to render the Eucharist 'bloodless' as the complement of the practice of rejecting meat in favor of fish at eucharistic feasts to distinguish Christian worship from Old Testament sacrifice.²³ Stewart-Sykes denies Marcion condemned the use of wine, affirms that he rejected meat, and reaches a similar conclusion about Marcion's approach to the Old Testament.²⁴ In distinguishing Marcionite from Catholic eucharistic rites, we can say little with confidence except that he refused to speak of the blood of the *new* covenant.²⁵ The Marcionite

¹⁸Tertullian, 'The Five Books Against Marcion', p. 418.

¹⁹Tertullian, 'The Five Books Against Marcion', p. 418. Tertullian insists that though this mystery was not fully disclosed until Christ unveiled it for his disciples in the gospels, it is nonetheless present in Jeremiah's text.

²⁰Adolph Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of an Alien God* (ed. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1990), p. 94.

²¹See Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), pp. 164-67.

²²McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, pp. 98-100.

²³McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, pp. 99, 166.

²⁴Stewart-Sykes, 'Bread and Fish', pp. 212-13, 214. Stewart-Sykes argues that while Ephrem regards Marcion's view of Eucharistic presence to be underdeveloped, Marcion was probably representative of second-century Christians in this regard.

²⁵Stewart-Sykes, 'Bread and Fish', p. 213.

cup was the blood of *the* covenant, since the old covenant, as superseded, was to be excised from Christian faith and practice. This is consistent with Origen's observation in *Peri Archon* 2.5.2 that Marcion interpreted the Old Testament literally to discredit it and thus separate the Christian covenant from the covenant of the Jews. While Marcion's Eucharist must have been 'figurative' with reference to Christ, its figurative reach was probably restricted to the New Testament. Tertullian's emphasis upon Old Testament eucharistic figuration can thus credibly be regarded as part of his larger attempt to expose Marcion's approach to the Old Testament as less than Christian.

Clarke's Old Testament Hermeneutic

Marcion of Sinope seems to have had in mind a particular, though restricted, role for the Old Testament which is predicated upon his *Antitheses*; the antithesis of law and gospel; the antithesis of physical and spiritual; and the antithesis of flesh and spirit. Tertullian maintains that Marcion's antitheses are aimed at 'committing the gospel to a variance with the law'.²⁶ These antitheses were taken for granted by Samuel Clarke, and directed towards the same end. A number of scholars have noted that the status of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture was increasingly called into question at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Clarke was at the forefront of this development.²⁷

Clarke regularly dismisses the Old Testament as the 'Jewish law' or the 'Jewish dispensation'. In his essay on the rite of Confirmation, Clarke states that Paul's epistle to the Romans is about God's supersession of the Jewish dispensation because it had 'proved insufficient to make Men truly holy'. The setting up of a new religion, Clarke says, necessarily implies the abolishing of the old: 'it follows that Christianity was not to be added to *Judaism*, but that *Judaism* was to be changed into Christianity, i.e. that the *Jewish* Religion was from thence forward to cease, and the Christian to succeed in its Room'.²⁸ Clarke believes that while the Jewish law calls for 'positive and carnal Ordinances', the New Testament makes plain the 'great duties of the moral and eternal law of God'.²⁹

²⁶Tertullian, 'The Five Books Against Marcion', p. 285. For a helpful summary of Marcion's theological logic, see Winrich Löhr, 'Did Marcion Distinguish between a Just God and a Good God?' in Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat (eds.), *Marcion un seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung/Marcion and his Impact on Church History* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 131-46.

²⁷See Gerard Reedy, *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 113-17; Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 411-12; Adam Sucliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 32-41; Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 23; Diego Lucci, *Scripture and Deism: The Biblical Criticism of the Eighteenth-century British Deists* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 187-209; Guy Stromsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 78-103.

²⁸Samuel Clarke, 'Three Practical Essays, on Baptism, Confirmation, and Repentance', in Benjamin Hoadly (ed.), *The Works of Samuel Clarke, D.D., Late Rector of St. James's Westminster* (London, 1738), III, pp. 567-620 (595).

²⁹Samuel Clarke, 'The Character of the Messiah', in *The Sermons of Samuel Clarke, D.D.*, (London, 1742), I, pp. 438-42 (441).

The Duties of the Christian Religion are almost wholly moral and Spiritual, respecting the inward Disposition of the Heart and Mind; whereas on the contrary, the Ceremonies of the *Jewish Law* were for the most part external, and as the Apostle to the *Hebrew* stiles them, carnal ordinances, respecting chiefly the outward purification of the Body; therefore the Apostle calls the Christian Religion *Spirit*, and the Jewish Religion *Flesh*.³⁰

Clarke condemns Judaizers as false apostles ‘who in a contentious manner endeavored to oblige all Christians to observe the Ceremonies of the Law of Moses’.³¹ Here Clarke has Roman Catholics in mind. As Christians Protestants rightly appreciate that God requires true, spiritual worship, but as Jews Roman Catholics are held captive by entrenched idolatrous rituals and as Judaizers they ensnare others as well. There is reason to believe that for Clarke the fundamental problem is the Law rather than those who follow and promote it, for the established duty of the Law is the ‘anxious observance of the burdensome ceremonies’ which placed the Jewish people in ‘bondage to the elements of the world’.³² Clarke wants to hold on to his inherited belief that God originally spoke through Moses to the people of Israel. Yet his extremely negative valuation of the Law means that the Old Testament can have no constructive formative role for either Jews or Christians.

While Clarke regards the Old Testament as impotent for moral formation, he also regards it as useless for constructive theology. This second impotence is articulated in Clarke’s 1712 work, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, which ignited a firestorm of controversy because it denied the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father and proposed an alternative subordinationist Christology.³³ I note two representative examples of the opposition it provoked. In the preface to *The Scripture-Doctrine*, Clarke had boasted that he had ‘examined thoroughly’ the nature of the Trinity ‘by a serious study of the Whole Scripture’.³⁴ In his *Essay towards an impartial account of the Trinity, and the deity of our Saviour, as contained in the Old Testament*, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University Edward Wells countered that Clarke had only been able to credibly endorse a subordinationist Christology because he had ignored the Old Testament.³⁵ In his response to Wells, Clarke conceded that while the Old Testament contains certain predictive prophecies which

³⁰Samuel Clarke, ‘The End and Design of the Jewish Law’, in Benjamin Hoadly (ed.), *The Works of Samuel Clarke, D.D., Late Rector of St. James’s Westminster* (London, 1738), II, pp. 307-16 (312).

³¹Samuel Clarke, ‘The Difference betwixt Living after the Flesh and after the Spirit’, in John Clarke (ed.), *Sermons on Several Subjects by Samuel Clarke, D.D.* (London, 1738), II, pp. 49-53 (51).

³²Clarke, ‘The End and Design of the Jewish Law’, p. 311.

³³See David Ney, ‘The *Sensus Literalis* and the Trinity in the English Enlightenment’, *Pro Ecclesia* 29.3 (2020), pp. 293-307.

³⁴Samuel Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* (London, 1712), Preface; Edward Wells, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Clarke* (Oxford, 1713), pp. 3-4.

³⁵*Essay towards an Impartial Account of the Trinity, and the Deity of our Saviour, as Contained in the Old Testament* (London, 1712). Wells went on to write two other refutations of Clarke in 1713. Clarke worries that reliance on Patristic testimony causes Christians to refuse to think for themselves. Clarke is happy to appeal to the Fathers when it suits him, but his biblicism inhibits him from regarding their testimony as authoritative. The authoritative work on the Anglican appeal to antiquity is Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

were fulfilled in the future coming of the Christian Messiah, it does not contain Trinitarian doctrine.³⁶ Indeed, Clarke regards such a testimony as unnecessary since the words of the New Testament settle the matter once and for all.

A second opponent, James Knight, developed Wells' argument in a work entitled *The True Scripture Doctrine of the Holy Trinity*. Knight insists that,

The Gospel was contained and published to the *Jews*, under the *Vail of the Law*: And the Bulk of that People saw not through the *Vail*, but rested in the *Letter and Ceremonies of the Law*; yet, notwithstanding this *Blindness*, the *Gospel* was there, and consequently the *Fundamental Doctrine of the Gospel Dispensation*, the *Trinity in Unity*.³⁷

Clarke, for his part, replied dismissively that while Knight could only muster 40 texts in support of his theology – and Old Testament texts at that – he had over 300 New Testament texts in favor of his.³⁸

Clarke maintained that each noun in a given language must be assigned a single referent (or in the case of plural nouns, a single class of referents). The word God, in the New Testament, must therefore refer to either God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Having placed all of the relevant New Testament texts under the microscope, Clarke concludes that almost all of the 1251 specimens in question refer to God the Father. He admits a handful of ambiguous referents that may refer to Jesus Christ, but he insists that they do so, if they do so, in an inferior and derivative sense. For Clarke, textual interpreters have only to identify the referent that corresponds to the sign in question, for each distinct referent, with its set of unique properties, determines the meaning of the sign. Clarke affirms that Jesus Christ is the Jewish Messiah who was sent by God to dispense salvation to the Gentiles. He also suspects that Jesus was an Angel of the Covenant before his earthly sojourn.³⁹ Marcion, remarkably, appears to have embraced a similar view.⁴⁰ Such a Christology depends upon the assumption that the text of Scripture does not draw Jesus the Son and God the Father together ontologically through mutual signification.

Clarke sought to demonstrate, through the full force of his enlightened rationality, the exact referent of individual biblical words. Knight attacked this presumption by insisting that Christ was present within the Law and the Prophets. Knight therefore asks his readers to read Ps. 102.25 and following, and then to observe Paul's

³⁶Samuel Clarke, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Wells, Rector of Cotesbach in Leicestershire* (London, 1714), pp. 4-7.

³⁷James Knight, *The True Scripture Doctrine of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity* (London, 1715), p. 20.

³⁸Ferguson, *An Eighteenth Century Heretic*, p. 74. This suggests that Clarke holds, not only that the process of constructive theology is simply a matter of finding proof texts, but also that the true theological definition is the definition that lines up with the most proof texts. Clarke is driven to this peculiar conclusion because his epistemology and his hermeneutic make him unable to deal constructively with the diverse voices found within Scripture.

³⁹Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 64; *An Exposition of the Church-Catechism* (Dublin, 1730), p. 38.

⁴⁰Tertullian, 'On the Flesh of Christ', in Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III, pp. 521-44 (533-34).

citation of this text in Heb. 1.10 and following.⁴¹ Knight's point is simple: New Testament authors do not adhere to Clarke's principle of singular referentiality. They apply terms that have properly been applied to God the Father in the Old Testament to Jesus Christ as God the Son, since the Father and the Son are consubstantial. This leads Knight to the same conclusion that Tertullian had reached in his refutation of Marcion: the Old Testament is to be upheld because it figures Christ not merely by pointing to him, but by signifying him as present within it. As Knight puts it, as signified, Christ 'rested in the Letter and Ceremonies of the Law'.⁴²

Clarke's Memorialism

In 1735 Benjamin Hoadly (1676–1761) published his influential *Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*.⁴³ Hoadly's Protestant audience gladly affirmed his boisterous rejection of transubstantiation, but his extreme nominalism was an affront to even modest expressions of Anglican receptionism. Hoadly was vigorously opposed by defenders of the Anglican establishment who regarded his account as inconsistent and novel. Yet Hoadly's work was far from creative. It simply applied the hermeneutical and rhetorical method of *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* to the doctrine of the Eucharist, which was something Clarke had already done in his sermons.⁴⁴ For Hoadly as for Clarke, the true Christian doctrine of the Eucharist can only be determined by isolating the precise referents of Christ's New Testament eucharistic ordinances. And while these ordinances offer figurative associations – bread and body, blood and wine – these must not be taken as the basis of metaphysical doctrines since they were intended merely to inspire Christians to reflect upon Christ's sacrifice. Figurative associations must be confined to the New Testament, for the Old Testament Passover is, in Hoadly's words, 'another sort of feast'.⁴⁵

Clarke rejects Old Testament religion and eucharistic theologies of real presence because both impose a 'burdensome system of rites and ordinances'.⁴⁶ Clarke insists

⁴¹Knight, *The True Scripture Doctrine*, p. 21.

⁴²Knight, *The True Scripture Doctrine*, p. 20.

⁴³Benjamin Hoadly, *A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (London, 2nd edn, 1735), p. 121. On Hoadly, see William Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly, 1676–1761* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2004).

⁴⁴For a brief discussion of Clarke's influence upon Hoadly and subsequent Anglican tradition see Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, pp. 341–42. Clarke's departure point in his sacramental theology is the notion that sacraments are outward and visible signs which must be performed publicly in the hope that such obedience will help to produce inward and spiritual graces. See also Clarke, *An Exposition of the Church-Catechism*, p. 286.

⁴⁵Benjamin Hoadly, *An Abridgement of A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (London, 1751), p. 45.

⁴⁶Clarke, 'Three Practical Essays', p. 588. As a rector in the Church of England, Clarke was naturally concerned with liturgical form. Pages 415–80 of his *Scripture-Doctrine* highlight many things that he finds offensive about the liturgy. In 1718 he edited a collection of psalms which omitted Trinitarian doxologies, and his personal prayer book, which was housed in the British Library after his death, had all of the Trinitarian renderings in the liturgy slashed through with violent strokes of the pen. Clarke's prayer book was later to become the basis of Theophilus Lindsey's *The Book of Common Prayer Reformed According to the Plan of the Late Dr. Samuel Clarke* (London, 1774). See David Ney, 'The Genesis of the Unitarian Church and the Book of Common Prayer', *Anglican and Episcopal History* 90.2 (2021), pp. 134–61.

in one of several sermons on the phrase 'Do This in Remembrance of Me', that the doctrine of Transubstantiation is the extension of the 'yoke of ceremonious performances' into the Christian era.⁴⁷ Roman Catholics are obliged to perform the Mass by their Judaic assumption that sacrificial performance is a prerequisite for divine visitation. They fail to note that Christian eucharistic remembrance is performed only to demonstrate and excite the 'religious affections of our minds'.⁴⁸ For Clarke, the antidote to the Judaizing doctrine of Transubstantiation is to recognize that remembrance is a cognitive devotional act Christians perform for personal edification.

Clarke insists that Christian and Jewish remembrance are not the same. In the Jewish dispensation, Jews were asked to commemorate the Passover. But on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus brought this commemoration to an end. Clarke paraphrases Jesus' words of institution from Mt. 26.26-29 as follows:

Take and eat this. For as the eating of the Passover, was a perpetual Commemoration of the Deliverance of the Children of Israel out of Egypt; so from henceforward your eating this Sacramental Bread, shall be a Commemoration or Remembrance of my Death, and of my Body being broken for you. 27 & 28. In like manner taking a Cup of Wine in his Hand, he gave thanks, and gave it to his Disciples, saying, Drink ye all of this. For from henceforth your Drinking this Sacramental Wine, shall be a Commemoration of my Blood being shed for the Remission of Their Sins who Believe and obey the Gospel, and a perpetual Confirmation of this new Covenant. 29. And I will have the Jewish Passover Commemoration no longer continued; But the things of which these were Figures, shall now be fulfilled and accomplished in the Kingdom of the Messiah.⁴⁹

For Clarke, those eager to avoid the scourge of Judaism must purge their minds from all thoughts concerning the Jewish dispensation: the Eucharist establishes a new covenant which demands that Christians turn their attention away from the Law and unto Christ.

Clarke's paraphrase relies upon the same hermeneutic he employed in the *Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*. The interpretation of the word 'remembrance', like other biblical words such as 'God', requires the identification of a single referent. As Clarke would have it, the term 'remembrance' in the Jewish dispensation refers to the Passover, and in the Christian dispensation, to the Passion. This distinction depends upon Clarke's understanding of figuration. For Clarke, figures are linguistic

⁴⁷Samuel Clarke, 'The Nature, End and Design of the Holy Communion', *The Sermons of Samuel Clarke*, D.D. (London, 5th edn, 1742), I, pp. 344-55 (344).

⁴⁸Clarke, 'The Nature, End and Design', p. 345.

⁴⁹Samuel Clarke, 'A Paraphrase on the Gospel of St. Matthew', *A Paraphrase on the Four Evangelists* (London, 5th edn, 1729), I, pp. 1-211 (187-88). Clarke puts this sentiment succinctly in his exposition of the catechism of the Book of Common Prayer: 'As the *Paschal Lamb* was a Solemn *Remembrance* of the Deliverance out of Egypt, so the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a Thankful *Commemoration* of the great Redemption purchased by *Christ*.' Clarke, *An Exposition of the Church-Catechism*, p. 303.

ornaments which correlate distinct entities within a nominalist framework.⁵⁰ They are mental projections which speakers create in order to teach and entertain, but they are problematic from a philosophical standpoint since they draw attention away from the properties of objects in favor of hypostatized conceptualities which these objects supposedly share. Thus, for Clarke, to say that the Passover is a figure of the Eucharist is to say that they can be verbally linked for rhetorical purposes. In his discussion of Christ's sacrifice, Clarke remarks that 'the deliverance of the People out of Egypt and their passage through the Red Sea was but a Type and a Figure' of the true and lasting vindication of God through Christ's sacrifice, and yet God insisted that 'this Shadow was to be so solemnly commemorated by the Passover'. This realization spurs Christians to forsake Passover commemoration and celebrate Christ's sacrifice. 'How much more,' Clarke insists, 'does the Substance itself of this eternal Blessing, deserve to be perpetually kept in mind with the highest veneration.'⁵¹

For Clarke, to say that the Passover is a figure of the Passion is to highlight just how little they have in common. The Passover highlights the excellency of the coming dispensation of the Gospel. But even in this capacity it is to be regarded with suspicion. Christians who latch onto figural associations between Passover and Passion are in danger of reverting back to the carnal ordinances of the Law. They must therefore fix their eyes away from the Passover and upon Jesus. It is here that we witness the extent of Clarke's departure from the Tradition. As Ephraim Radner observes, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us' is a central Christian figural claim.⁵² For Tertullian and the Tradition, it is precisely in fixing their eyes upon the Passover that Christians fix them upon Jesus. It is thus that Origen can say, 'The Passover still takes place today . . . those who sacrifice Christ come up out of Egypt, cross the Red Sea, and will see Pharaoh engulfed.'⁵³

For Tertullian and the Tradition, the Eucharist figures the Passion of the Christ *and* the deliverance from Egypt. For Clarke, it figures only the Passion. Clarke

⁵⁰Clarke's belief that figures are ornamental is an ancient one. Although Clarke embraced it thanks to the guidance of his associate, John Locke, Locke had picked it up from Aristotle. Stefan Forrester, 'Theories of Metaphor in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy', *Literature Compass* 7.8 (2011), pp. 610-25 (611). In his famous *Essay on Human Understanding*, Locke had suggested that achieving precision of reference meant letting go of the terms allegory, typology, and figure in favor of the term metaphor. For Locke, the term metaphor is to be preferred because it signals that comparisons between distinct entities are linguistic ornaments. Locke concedes that in discourses 'where we seek rather pleasure and delight, than information and improvement, such ornaments . . . can scarce pass for faults'. Yet for Locke, even with such a recognition the danger isn't entirely abated, for speakers, in their carnality, are inclined to depart from proper ornamental use, failing to grasp that 'if we would speak of things as they are we must allow, that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement, and so, indeed, are perfect cheats'. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 5th edn, 1706), Book 3, p. 372. Hans Frei suggests that Locke's scriptural hermeneutic cuts the cord between ontology and signification. Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 101.

⁵¹Clarke, 'The Nature, End and Design', p. 348.

⁵²Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), p. 54.

⁵³Origen, *Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and his Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul* (ed. Wakter J. Burghard et al.; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 28.

maintains that the species of bread and wine allow the remembrance of Christ's Passion to be fixed and imprinted on minds 'with a more lasting and permanent impression'. The breaking of the bread is the occasion for Christians to 'declare publicly, and keep up amongst men the memory of his Death, and of the inestimable benefits purchased for us thereby'.⁵⁴ Following the example of Christ, the priest calls the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ to stir his people to a more universal obedience.⁵⁵ But for Clarke, the abiding danger that accompanies eucharistic remembrance is that it opens the door to the 'Judaizing' doctrine of Transubstantiation. Those that see the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ easily fall under the Judaic yoke of 'ceremonious performances'.⁵⁶ Such Christians fail to appreciate that God only mandated rites for the Jews 'in condescension to their infirmity, and considering the hardness of their hearts'. Clarke imagines that the Jewish Law was a divine accommodation, 'adapted by God in great condescension to the weak apprehensions of that people'.⁵⁷ The precepts he gave them 'Had not in themselves any real or intrinsic worth; but their obligation depended wholly upon their being positively commanded'.⁵⁸

Clarke's problem is that Jesus seems to have continued the Judaic dispensation by instituting Baptism and Eucharist. Clarke concedes that these divine commissions, like the carnal ordinances of the Old Testament, were generated by a spirit of divine condescension, God's awareness that 'we are confined to these earthly bodies and so our minds are assisted by outward acts of religion'.⁵⁹ Clarke insists that Jesus warned his disciples that the Lord's Supper should be understood as a figure of the Passover meal only in an ornamental sense. Yet the carnal human tendency to interpret figural relations as ontologically significant suggests that the bread and wine should be put on the shelf so that individuals can focus upon what matters, dedicating themselves anew to a life of obedience. As Clarke puts it, all 'positive institutions', including the Eucharist, have 'the nature only of *means to an end*, and therefore they are never to be compared with Moral Virtue'.⁶⁰ Christians might find that receiving the Eucharist is helpful. But more likely they will find that it ensnares them in the Judaic trap. It thus comes as no surprise that Clarke's understudy and defender Ashley Arthur Sykes (1684–1756) insisted, in defending Clarke, that there is nothing in Scripture which suggests that the Lord's Supper 'unites us to Christ, or has a life-giving virtue annexed to it, or supplies the defects of moral virtue'.⁶¹ As

⁵⁴Clarke, 'The Nature, End and Design', p. 354.

⁵⁵Clarke, 'The Nature, End and Design', p. 350.

⁵⁶They failed to note that the Christian religion 'Now consists not in such outward and ceremonial parts of Worship, whose observance was difficult and their signification oft-times obscure', and thereby fail to appreciate that God is a Spirit and that 'they that will worship him acceptably, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth'. Clarke, 'The Nature, End and Design', p. 345.

⁵⁷Clarke, 'Three Practical Essays', p. 596.

⁵⁸Clarke, 'The End and Design of the Jewish Law', p. 313.

⁵⁹Clarke, 'The End and Design of the Jewish Law', p. 345.

⁶⁰Samuel Clarke, 'Of the Nature of Moral and Positive Duties', *The Sermons of Samuel Clarke, D.D.* (London, 5th edn, 1742), I, pp. 704-709 (708-709). See Daniel Waterland, 'Remarks upon Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Church Catechism', in William Van Mildert (ed.), *The Works of Daniel Waterland, D.D.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1823), V, pp. 371-430 (424).

⁶¹William Van Mildert, 'Review of the Author's Life and Writings', in Van Mildert (ed.), *The Works of Daniel Waterland, I*, Part 1, pp. 1-348 (191).

Clarke's great adversary Daniel Waterland (1683–1740) complained, for Clarke, scriptural institutions such as the Eucharist 'are treated as mere nothings, as things not *required* at all, compared with moral virtues'.⁶² In the end for Clarke the Eucharist is as dispensable as the Law of Moses. Clarke has successfully liberated Christians from reliance upon all such carnal encumbrances.⁶³

Conclusion

Samuel Clarke's eucharistic theology is generated by his ornamental understanding of Old Testament figuration. For Clarke, the Old Testament figures Christ only in the limited sense that it provides linguistic correspondences between messianic prophecies and the Messiah that subsequently fulfilled them. The lack of Christ's presence in the Old Testament inclines Clarke to follow Marcion in dismissing it as the superseded Jewish dispensation. The lack of Christ's presence in the Old Testament, as figured, also fuels Clarke's belief that Christ is not present at the Eucharist. As memorials, the bread and the wine are subject to a utilitarian calculus. They may or may not inspire communicants to greater obedience and are accordingly dispensable. We know too little about Marcion's eucharistic theology to hold with confidence that it is replicated by Clarke. But we can say with some confidence that Clarke's memorialism is Marcionite because it severs the Eucharist from the Old Testament witness. And what is more, we can call Clarke's memorialism Marcionite in the precise sense that it is derived from a view of Old Testament figuration which they seem to share. According to this view, the shared vocabulary of the testaments is a nuisance that obscures the distinction between Old and New. Clarke is a harbinger of modern Marcionism not merely because his valuation of the Old Testament is the product of his specifically Marcionite impulse to excise Christ from the Old Testament. As he consistently applies this impulse to his eucharistic theology, his memorialism becomes a venue for him to transmit his Marcionism to modernity.

The basis of this proposal is not merely a particular integrative rendering of Clarke's Old Testament hermeneutic and his eucharistic theology. It is, rather, the scriptural text itself. In the Scriptures, the figural claim 'Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed' (1 Cor. 5.7) is the basis of the ecclesial institution of the Eucharist. This claim marries Old Testament hermeneutics and eucharistic theology by including them both within a single figural pairing: to say that Christ is a figure of the Eucharist is to say, at the same time, that he is a figure of the Passover lamb. If Christ, as figured, is somehow present at the celebration of the Eucharist, it can only be because he was already present in the Old Testament as the Passover Lamb of the Jews. If, on the other hand, Christ, as figured, is referred to in the

⁶²Daniel Waterland, 'The Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy of the Christian Sacraments Considered', in Van Mildert (ed.), *The Works of Daniel Waterland*, V, pp. 431–96 (451).

⁶³For a still compelling treatment of the relationship between the rise of spiritualism and the denigration of the Old Testament see Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*. Ephraim Radner, *A Profound Ignorance: Modern Pneumatology and its Anti-Modern Redemption* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019) incisively narrates the distinctly pneumatological aspect of this early modern shift.

Eucharist only by way of ornamental metaphor, then it follows that he came, at first, to the Gentiles. Thus the basis of my claim that Clarke's memorialism is Marcionite is the scriptural claim that Christ came first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles (Rom. 1.16).