

Book Review of Hinlicky Wilson, Sarah. *Seven Ways of Looking at the Transfiguration*. Unabridged. S.l.: Thornbush Press, 2024, 129 pp. 979-8-9899141-2-8

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In this publication for preachers and ordinary believers, Sarah Hinlicky Wilson addresses a discrepancy that she observes. She points at the emphasis of mainline churches' liturgical calendars on the day of transfiguration, on the one hand, and the lack of such emphasis among contemporary preachers and believers, on the other hand. The author aims to bridge this gap by examining the depth and richness of the transfiguration from seven distinct angles. She draws on biblical insights from both the Old and the New Testament and provides her own translations, displaying the meanings, structures, and emphases of Mark 9:10, Matt 16:28 – 17:9, Luke 9:27–36, and 2 Pet 1: 16–18.

After some helpful remarks for readers not acquainted with academic expertise on, e.g., gospels and original languages of the Bible (pp. 4– 5), the publication starts with the gospel of Mark from where the author develops two distinct perspectives, one being Jesus' "metamorphosis", the other being "eschatology." The first emphasises the change that occurs in Jesus during the transfiguration, specifically the sudden, outstanding whiteness of Jesus' clothes. Concerning Luke and Matthew, but especially imagery of

Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, the author holds that this transformation is not a purification process, neither from dirt nor from sin. It is also “not a preview of the Resurrection.” (p. 18) It is rather apocalyptic divine presence shining from Jesus. This is affirmed when “suddenly two of the all-stars of Israel’s history appear for a tête-à-tête with him.” (p. 19) These are Moses and Elijah, who represent the apocalyptic dimension.

The third perspective on the transfiguration ties in with Matthew and is entitled “exodus.” This term, however, stems from Luke 9:31 and the author’s translation of what others term “departure.” The author’s point here is not the entire exodus story but the revelation of divine glory. The glory of Jesus, as the author holds, is not based on victorious greatness, but on suffering and the cross (p. 41). From there, the eschatological transformation of all believers, envisioned by Paul in 2 Cor 3:18, is not self-achievement, but the receiving of God’s grace. Thus, the author criticises an abundance of “books, meditations, or prayers on the Transfiguration, [where] you’ll find a lot about you, not so much about Christ.” (p. 41)

The fourth approach towards transfiguration focuses on the merrymaking feast of Sukkot that includes the erection of tabernacles or tents (Lev 23). By building three of them, like in Sukkot, Peter wants to make this moment endure, according to all three synoptic gospels. But Jesus refuses. “They’re not yet at Sukkot, but right in the middle of Passover.” (p. 50) The author points out, furthermore, that Jesus’ reluctance has a slightly different meaning in Luke.

There, transfiguration occurs on the eighth day, which resembles the last, i.e., the eighth, day of the Sukkot celebration (Lev 23:36). Thus, in Luke, transfiguration is a foretaste of the eschatological Parousia of Christ (p. 54).

Perspective no. five (pp. 62–78), for the first time in this book, substantially dwells in the reference to transfiguration in 2 Pet 1:16–18. From there, the author narrates extensively about the eyewitnesses Peter and his companions, James and John (pp. 74–75). Far from being outstanding heroes, they appear as failing and misunderstanding both within the transfiguration narrative, and in its surrounding literary context. At the transfiguration, the “bright light left the eyewitnesses in the dark.” (p. 78)

The sixth way of looking at the transfiguration brings the cloud to the centre of attention. It is a symbol of God's presence not only during Jesus' metamorphosis, but throughout the entire history of Israel, especially during the Exodus. In this regard, the author refers to Moses' transfiguration after his descent from the mountain (Exod 34:29–30). The author expands her Old Testament reflections to even seeing the ambivalences of the sign of the cloud. It can represent Baal, the rain god, or refer to God's wrath (e.g., Nah 1:2–5). Nevertheless, when the cloud “overshadows” Jesus and his companions, the Lord is present as He reveals Jesus as “a holy and beloved son, son of Mary, Son of God.” (p. 86)

The seventh and last perspective on the transfiguration is introduced with a question. “But when Jesus is raised from the dead, there is no light, no glory, no

cloud, no voice, no naming. Why not?” (p. 96) To answer this, the author explores the meaning of Christ's Parousia (p. 113) and appears to formulate a conclusive thesis of the entire publication. For Hinlicky Wilson, transfiguration is a premature inbreak of Christ's Parousia. It is not his cross, Resurrection, or Pentecost. Because of this, 2 Pet, which extensively deals with the question of (the delayed) Christ's second coming, does not refer to Jesus' resurrection, but to his transfiguration.

At the end of this review, I may conclude: Whoever rejoices in fresh, associative, and entertaining language and does not need definite conclusions will enjoy this book. It is a pleasure, e.g., on pp. 39–44, to learn about etymological connections of Greek terms like *morphe* and *metamorpheomai* (Rom 8:29–30, 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:21) not by dry dictionary instructions, but with ease and humour. The author decided to include a bibliography at the end of her book, but does not explicitly engage with any academic exegetical discourse. This maintains a smooth flow of words but weakens the weight of argumentation. Overall, this publication will inform and inspire academically and/or homiletically interested readers. Hinlicky Wilson interweaves various threads running through Scripture with creativity and rich biblical knowledge. Passages from the Old Testament and the New Testament, whether from the Gospels or the Epistles, become part of an exciting collage of seven perspectives on the transfiguration story.