

Erweckung zur Umkehr: A Theology of Awakening

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ABSTRACT

Developing a theology of awakening is a challenging task. In terms of biblical theology, awakening is strictly not a biblical term. Thus, we must look at biblical passages closely related to this topic. As for systematic theology, awakening is considered a dogmatic topic only in a few representations of recent Protestant dogmatics. Church history is the discipline of Christian theology that usually discusses awakening or revival movements. This paper tries to engage with a theology of awakening from all three perspectives of biblical, historical, and systematic theology. While the biblical perspective will include primarily the four Gospels, Acts, and Pauline writings, the historical perspective will be limited to the Reformed theological tradition. Finally, a systematic-theology perspective that draws on Wacker, Barth, and Welker will round off the paper.

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Awakening in biblical-theological perspective

Although the term *awakening* is not strictly biblical, we can look at biblical passages closely related to this topic. We start with the synoptic gospels. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we find the motif of sleeping (cf. Matt. 25:5). The parable is placed in Matthew's eschatological discourse. Caution should be exercised when we relate this passage to spiritual awakening. All the ten virgins fell asleep (25:5). Moreover, all of them also rose (25:7). Thus, awakening in this context should be understood as watching despite the delay of the Parousia. What distinguishes the wise from the foolish virgins, or the true disciples from the pseudodisciples (cf. Matt. 7:21–23), is

preparedness or readiness in waiting for the coming of Jesus, the bridegroom (France, 2007, p. 947). The parable warns of the danger of spiritual sleep, not in the sense that the disciples should not fall asleep, but in the sense of unpreparedness for the coming of the kingdom.

A comparable story, though less developed and with different details, about being prepared for the coming of the “master” can be found in Luke 12:35–38. Instead of virgins who wait for the bridegroom, the relationship in Luke is between servants and their masters. Here, we find the word “awake” in v. 37. Like Matthew, Luke wrote this passage in an eschatological context. The delay of the Parousia is also reckoned in Luke when he wrote about the master who “comes in the second

watch, or in the third, and finds them awake” (12:38), and later in v. 45, “My master is delayed in coming.” If the master’s return (read: Parousia) is very late, then the preparedness of the servants is even more laudable (Liefeld, 1984, p. 966). Being found awake means being ready for the coming of the Son of Man (cf. 12:40).

We find a message closer to the meaning of *awakening* in Peter’s sermon at Pentecost. Peter first connects Pentecost with Joel’s prophecy (cf. Acts 2:17–21). Pentecost is the long-awaited fulfilment of this prophecy. After witnessing to Jesus, Peter rebukes his audience concerning their sin of lawlessness in crucifying Jesus. Another Old Testament prophecy (by David) follows, after which Peter proclaims God’s vindication of Jesus the righteous while again rebuking the sin of the audience: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).

The response of the audience is conviction of their sin: “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37). This gives Peter the opportunity to present the gospel to his audience, inviting them to repent (cf. Acts 2:38). Spiritual awakening by the Holy Spirit is thus an experience of conviction of sin, which leads to true repentance and conversion. One important mark of the awakening at Pentecost is its honesty: “The call to repentance must be coupled with the rediscovery of truth” (Beeke, 2010, p. 45). When the Spirit revives, he will bring convicted persons to be converted. Without heartfelt repentance, there is no true spiritual awakening. Yet it is not a human repentance that brings awakening; rather, the Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin (cf. John 16:8) and bestows true comfort on those whom He wills.

The movement from conviction of sin to comfort is a movement in God’s self. It is not the product of human merit or initiative. Thus, in Isaiah, God’s anger was turned away and replaced by comfort (cf. Is. 12:1). Motyer (1993, p. 128) comments, “Reconciliation is not our willingness

to have God but God’s willingness to have us.” The turning from divine anger to comfort can be found in Isaiah’s vision. After Isaiah was convicted of his sin, God took away his guilt and sin (cf. Is. 6:5–7). Isaiah was comforted. As true spiritual awakening takes place, the Holy Spirit will bring his people to the knowledge of their sin and then comfort them with the gospel of forgiveness.

Unlike many modern churches that proclaim a loving god with no holiness, the God of the Bible is a holy God who does not tolerate sin at the expense of his attributes. There is always the danger of presenting either a god of love without holiness or a holy god without love and mercy. The first tends to antinomianism, the second to legalism. The antidote to legalism is “the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God,” which Luther (n.d.) called “the true treasure of the church.” The antidote to antinomianism is the preaching of the law that presents the vision of God’s holiness, which then leads to a deep conviction of sin as the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:8).

New Testament scholars debate the meaning of the verb “convict” (*elenchō*). In classical Greek, the range of meanings includes “putting to shame, treating with contempt, cross-examining, accusing, bringing to the test, proving, refuting” (Carson, 1991, p. 534). Even the translation “to convict” can be interpreted by some scholars so as to view the Spirit as a prosecuting attorney in the courtroom. Carson notices a problematic reading here because in this sense, the Spirit would then be proving the world’s guilt to *the judge* instead of convicting *the world* concerning its guilt (Carson, 1991, p. 535). Carson proposes that the convicting work of the Spirit is graciously designed to lead human beings to recognise their guilt and their need for Jesus (Carson, 1991, p. 537). In other words, the Spirit’s convicting work is *both* to bring sinners to realise their sin *and* to lead them to Christ’s saving work. In spiritual awakening, there will be preaching of the law and preaching of the gospel. The first humbles human



beings in their sinfulness before God; the latter gives them true comfort in Christ's forgiveness.

In the Pauline corpus, some biblical verses are worthy of discussion for a theology of awakening. The first is 1 Thess. 5:6. Here, Paul relates the Christian identity as children of light (5:5) to keeping awake and being sober. An intimate relationship between new Christian existence and new moral life fundamentally affects Christian ethics (Green, 2002, p. 237). Sleeping and getting drunk belong to the night (5:7). Paul understood being sober as "having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (5:8). Here, Paul used military metaphors, the source of which is Isa. 59:17, where God himself is portrayed as a soldier who "put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head" (Green, 2002, p. 237). Whereas in Isa. 59:17, God put on "righteousness as a breastplate," in 1 Thess. 5:6 it is the "breastplate of faith and love." God bestows his righteousness and human beings receive this righteousness by faith working through love. When God awakens, he will awaken human beings to faith that receives his righteousness. God's righteousness in Christ is also the hope of our salvation (cf. 1 Thess. 5:8).

Another Pauline verse that touches on awakening is Romans 13:11. In this verse, awakening is closely related to strong eschatological hope: "For salvation is nearer to us now than we first believed." There are similarities with 1 Thess. 5 in that Paul wrote about the eschatological hope of salvation here and about "moral urgency in light of the eschaton" (Schreiner, 2018, p. 676). Also here, the night is understood as the realm of darkness that already belonged to the past while the (eschatological) day is approaching. This is not to say that the day is totally still in the future (*not yet*) so that Christians can only walk properly *as if* in the daytime, but rather that they are *already* in the day, for this eschatological reality breaks through

the here and now (Green, 2002, p. 260). In 1 Thess. 5:8, Christians are to put on the breastplate of faith and love; in Romans 13:11, they are to put on "the Lord Jesus Christ." To be spiritually awakened means to partake in and to have fellowship with the life of Jesus, which has the negative implication of casting off the works of darkness or the desires of the flesh.

The contrast between taking part in the works of darkness and spiritual awakening is also addressed in Ephesians 5:11–14. As in Romans 13, the metaphor of light is used to describe spiritual awakening. In the New Testament, images of darkness and light often appear associated with conversion (Lincoln, 1990, p. 326).¹ In Ephesians, the conversion is from darkness, which represents ignorance (4:18), to light, which represents truth (5:9), walking wisely (5:15), and understanding the will of God (5:17). In the Old Testament, the image of light is used to describe the Lord's salvation for his people (Lincoln, 1990, p. 332).² According to Eph. 5:14, spiritual awakening begins in the first place with God's call, which broke in upon sleepers; it is then followed by a demand to respond and arise from sleep and death; in that response, Christ will shine graciously and powerfully on them. Spiritual awakening is thus both an irresistible divine initiative and a human response that consists of conversion from darkness to light, sleep to waking up, and death to life.

Awakening in (Reformed) historical perspective

The association between awakening and the Reformed theological tradition is complex. On one hand, the Reformed tradition teaches that Pentecost is once and for all (Kuyper, 1956, p. 127), so that awakening is thus "something which is of the permanent essence of the New Testament age" (Murray, 1979, p. 20; Lloyd-Jones, 1987, p. 368). On the other hand, the inclination to expect larger measures of the Spirit is encouraged

¹ See Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 6:4; 10:32.

² See Deut. 33:2; Ps. 50:2; 80:1–3, 7, 19.



in Reformed confessions and catechisms. Thus, in question 182, the Westminster Larger Catechism states that while the Spirit works by quickening the hearts of the believers, yet it is “not in all persons, nor at all times, in the same measure.” In other words, the Catechism leaves room for believers to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a greater measure than usual.

To secure a place for awakening in its dogmatics, Reformed theology needs to free itself from the static, inadequate notion of classifying someone as already or not yet a believer, though such differentiation might help in a certain case, and to discern the working of the Spirit in lesser or greater measure in different persons at different times and places. It is inadequate to operate only with the notion of the Spirit’s omnipresence, though this might help in certain cases. Rather, we need to understand what Welker calls the context-sensitive presence of the Spirit, precisely because the Spirit can be quenched and grieved (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30; Welker, 1994, p. 281). The opposite of quenching and grieving the Spirit is seeking a greater outpouring of the Spirit—an urgent prayer for spiritual awakening.

Prayer for spiritual awakening, however, is not always encouraged. Kathryn Teresa Long explains that the apparent loss of the revival instinct among Presbyterians after Edwards was due to the increasing discontinuance of the habit of praying for the Spirit’s outpourings in successive revivals (Long, 1998, pp. 26, 42; Smart, 2016, p. 157). The outpouring of the Spirit was understood as a one-time historical event at Pentecost with no repetition. But Presbyterian theologians who supported revivals, such as Robert Fleming and John Howe, emphasised the “eschatological hope of successive outpourings of the Spirit,” which had great effect on Presbyterians even before Edwards (Crawford, 1991; Smart, n.d. p. 137). This is consistent with the “already but not yet” concept in Reformed eschatology. The Spirit has *already* been poured out at Pentecost, but Christians still have to pray for the Spirit’s outpourings (plural!). In a certain sense, spiritual

awakening is a repetition of the Spirit’s work at Pentecost.

This is why in terms of systematic theology, awakening is related not only to pneumatology but also to eschatology. The already-initiated coming of the kingdom on earth does not negate the eschatological hope of its future coming in its full glory. From an Edwardsean perspective, the Spirit can revive his church repeatedly throughout redemptive history. The hope for coming revivals connects with the understanding of the Millennium. To quote Long:

The concept of increasing cycles or “waves” of revivals that would mysteriously spread throughout the land was not new. Such Calvinist apologists for revivals as Jonathan Edwards in the eighteenth century and Presbyterian William B. Sprague in the early nineteenth suggested the idea as a part of their historical analyses, particularly in connection with millennial thought. (Long, 1998, p. 16)

Edwards himself was a postmillennialist, i.e., he believed that revivals were central in redemptive history.

Speaking of millennial thought, it should be noted that the experience of time, especially accelerated time, played a central role in the context of end-time expectations. Koselleck mentions two opposite poles regarding this acceleration of time:

For Luther the shortening of time is a visible sign of God’s will to bring about the Last Judgment, the end of this world. For Robespierre, to speed up time is the task of man, to herald the age of freedom and happiness, the golden future. (Koselleck, 2000; see also Kuhn, 2017, pp. 194-195)

Many revivalists can be positioned either next to Luther, who emphasised divine sovereignty, or to those who put more emphasis on human instigation. There is always the danger of viewing revival as conditional upon human effort and activity. In this view, revival can be regarded “as being virtually the same thing as a period of



energetic evangelistic activity” and identified “with certain phenomena that could be produced at any time through the correct use of the right means” (Murray, 1979, p. 184; Beeke, n.d. p. 37). Those who follow the Reformation view, however, always emphasise God’s sovereign work. Revival cannot be instigated by human effort, as if God always desired revival at any time but was somehow hindered by disobedient Christians.

This is not to say that obedience, repentance, or conversion is unimportant. On the contrary, true repentance and total surrender have always been crucial in the history of spiritual awakening. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691–1747), described by many as a forerunner of the Great Awakening, proclaimed divine judgment according to the law of God, the inadequacy of human good works as a soteriological criterion, the sovereignty of God’s grace, and the necessity of spiritual regeneration to produce a life of godliness (Frelinghuysen, 1938, pp. 63–64; see also Beeke, n.d., pp. 235-236). Spiritual regeneration is the prerequisite for true godliness, yet it is not a prerequisite that humans can fulfil; it depends entirely on the actions of God. Frelinghuysen used the preaching of the law to bring a sinner to recognise his sinful state until he “is driven out of himself to the sovereign grace of God in Christ for reconciliation, pardon, sanctification, and salvation” (Frelinghuysen, 2000b, p. 16). The Lutheran law-gospel dialectic was instrumental in the preaching of Frelinghuysen. His sermons were addressed to church parishioners instead of those outside the church. In this case, we see that a revivalist is first and foremost a critic of religion (*Religionskritiker*) who prods the church to self-criticism. When God sends awakening, he will first rebuke the sinfulness of the church.

Frelinghuysen also emphasised the importance of context-sensitive preaching to different listeners. He advised, “Though I would not prescribe a method of preaching to anyone, yet I believe that the application should be discriminating, adapted to the various states of all

hearers (Jude 20–21; Jeremiah 15)” (Frelinghuysen, 2000a, p. 280). His discriminatory preaching was based on Jeremiah 15 and Ezekiel 13: “The church includes all kinds of people: wicked and unconverted persons, moral persons, and Christians in appearance and profession. ... There are also converted people in the church. ... Each has desires and needs. Each must therefore be preached to and dealt with according to his condition, as Jeremiah 15:19 says. Many zealous divines have shown how dangerous general applications can be (Ezek. 13:19-20)” (Beeke, n.d., pp. 280-281). Frelinghuysen’s context-sensitive preaching greatly influenced Gilbert Tennent, whose instruction, in turn, greatly affected revivalist George Whitefield in his method of preaching (Tanis, 1967, p. 240).

Awakening in systematic-theological perspective

The term *awakening* is usually not considered a dogmatic topic in most recent representations of Protestant dogmatics, with a few notable exceptions (Deichgräber, n.d., p. 22). One is Emil Wacker, who wrote a chapter on calling and awakening in his book *Ordo Salutis*. Wacker distinguished between the calling heard externally and the calling accepted. In the latter, awakening occurs (Wacker, 1960, p. 30). Citing Eph. 5:14, Wacker explained that true revival already contains conversion but as a beginning, a seed of spiritual life (Wacker, 1960, p. 31). Though the whole person, including one’s knowledge and will, is touched in awakening, feeling is the most easily and quickly aroused side of human life (Wacker, 1960, p. 32).

Wacker carefully distinguished between true and false awakening. In false awakening, one still keeps to one’s own righteousness and wants to be righteous through oneself. In true awakening, on the contrary, a converted person has experienced the terror of conscience and the misery of sin, realising that he or she is utterly corrupted in sin and incapable of righteousness (Wacker, 1960, p.



33). Not only did Wacker apply the Lutheran law-gospel dialectic, but he also followed Luther's concept of *simul iustus et peccator* when he wrote, "There is no truly awakened person who does not still have his sinful corruption hidden in many respects and in whom, unconsciously, there is still much self-righteousness" (Wacker, 1960, p. 34). The good news lies in the consolation that it can be regarded as essentially overcome whenever it emerges.

Self-righteousness is the crucial point addressed by true awakening. If it is not struck to the heart, it will burst forth immediately and settle again where it can (Wacker, 1960, p. 35). Wacker noticed the absence of true spiritual rest in a false awakening. Mere feelings which one does not get beyond are very different from true rest in Jesus, which calms the terror of the conscience (Wacker, 1960, p. 36). Individual symptoms of false awakening can be recognised. One of them is indifference to Christian teaching and to Scripture, which is made only superficially the guideline for teaching and life (Wacker, 1960, p. 36).

Wacker also calls the false state of awakening "emotional Christianity." Although the work of the Spirit can be detected in the beginning, such emotional Christianity involves hypocrisy and touches upon other kinds of emotional religion, in which there is much less sense of the work of the Spirit (Wacker, 1960, p. 39). Thus, in false awakening, we deal with syncretism between Christianity and other religions or ideological movements, which can successfully arouse or create emotional awakening. At the end of his chapter on calling and awakening, Wacker warns sharply, "Where there is no longer any trace of the effects of the calling, be it general or specific, the souls sit in darkness and the shadow of death. ... The dead sea of unbelief is sweeping over this area" (Wacker, 1960, p. 40).³

³ Wacker's next (third) chapter deals with illumination, the second stage of the order of salvation, to which true awakening should lead.

Another exceptional instance of a Protestant theologian who dealt with the term *awakening* in detail is Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* (Barth, 2009, p. 553). Barth's discusses "the awakening to conversion" after a chapter on "the call to discipleship"; it is discussed within the larger topic of "the sanctification of man." Systematic-theologically, Barth thus develops the idea of spiritual awakening within the framework of his soteriology (doctrine of reconciliation). As Barth understands conversion within "sanctification," awakening as he understands it is meant also for Christian believers.

Due to their slothful nature, human beings are dragged downward, so only the Spirit can miraculously give them the strength to lift themselves up to look to God (Barth, 2009, p. 553). This spiritual lifting up characterises genuine sanctification because it takes place in fellowship with the life of Jesus (Barth, 2009, p. 553). For Barth, the life of Jesus assures genuine sanctification more than the reality that sanctification takes place in time and on earth. This is not to say that sanctification may not occur here on earth. Historicity of sanctification is not denied but relativised by one's fellowship with Christ. This fellowship causes Christians to wake up. Yet they wake up not because of their own strength but because the Spirit first awakens them. Spiritual awakening provides "the counter-movement to the downward drag of their sinfully slothful being" (Barth, 2009, p. 554). Almost in the language of the Canons of Dort, Barth understands spiritual awakening as God's effective and irresistible working (Barth, 2009, p. 553).

However, spiritual awakening is needed not only by unbelievers but also by Christians, "who constantly require reawakening and who depend upon the fact that they are continually reawakened" (Barth, 2009, p. 555). It is unfruitful to categorise Christians as awake while non-



Christians are sleeping. Christians also struggle with the persistent downward movement resulting from their sloth. Like Luther with his insistence on *simul iustus et peccator*, Barth too describes an anthropological realism concerning the universal need for spiritual awakening. Spiritual regeneration is the first awakening; however, this first awakening will not be the last one in the lives of Christians. Barth quotes several biblical verses (1 Thess. 5:6; Rom. 13:11; Eph. 5:14; Mark 14:40; Matt. 25:5; Luke 12:37) to assert that there is such a thing as a sleeping Christianity, a Christianity which conforms to the world (Barth, 2009, pp. 554–555).

Spiritual awakening, as a miraculous act of God, is to be distinguished from any other awakening. Human beings can awaken themselves from the sleep of errors or falsehoods, perhaps by an accident or by an extraordinary event, but “from the sleep of covenant-breaking humanity” there can be no awakening either by impulses, movements, or reflections, except by a “direct act of God Himself” (Barth, 2009, pp. 555–556). Barth cites several biblical passages (Luke 15:32; Eph. 2:1f; 5:14; John 5:24; 1 John 3:14) to state that the sleep from which one needs to be awakened is the state of death (Barth, 2009, p. 556). The analogy is to no less than Christ’s resurrection from the dead. This again is in line with the teaching of the Canons of Dordt, which understood spiritual regeneration as “the raising from the dead, ... an entirely supernatural work, ... not less than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead” (Canons of Dordt, n.d., p. 12).

Using almost Chalcedonian Christological language, Barth (2009, p. 557) insists that spiritual awakening “is both wholly creaturely and wholly divine.” However, one must understand the co-ordination or co-operation (synergism) between the two carefully: the initiative comes from the divine so that the divine always has absolute primacy over the creaturely. Does this mean that creatureliness is impaired? Barth emphatically answers no, arguing that awakening takes place

within human historicity and involves the total co-operation of the whole heart, soul, and mind (Barth, 2009, p. 556). Far from being impaired, human creatureliness is even enhanced and given a special character as an instrument of the divine. Since God himself is both its origin and goal, spiritual awakening remains “a mystery and a miracle” (Barth, 2009, p. 557). In this regard, Barth’s view on awakening agrees with what Iain Murray (n.d., p. 20) calls the “old-school view,” which views awakening as a special work of the Spirit with great need for supernatural intervention (see also Beeke, n.d., p. 38).

In line with Chalcedonian Christology, which stresses the unity of the person of Christ, Barth also emphasises the unity of spiritual awakening. We are not called to look first at God’s gift and work on one level, then separately at the human task and action on the other; rather, spiritual awakening “is one event with one meaning and content” (Barth, 2009, p. 557). Moreover, according to Barth, spiritual awakening is not a possibility but an actuality (Barth, 2009, p. 558). What is required of us is faith in God who actualises this awakening. In the language of Luther, Barth (2009, p. 558) can even say that “the reality of God stands or falls with the reality of this event.” Belief in God is tightly united with belief in spiritual awakening: if we truly believe in God, then we also believe in the possibility of awakening to conversion, and conversely, we can believe in awakening only if we believe in God.

After demonstrating the inseparable relation between spiritual awakening and theology proper, Barth then refers to the relation between awakening and ecclesiology. The church is called to count on awakening as the Scriptures also count on it. The church’s people should become witnesses of and constituted by this divine awakening, for the awakening is a reality among the church. However, the reality of awakening determines human existence positively or negatively because God’s speech and action are both judicial and gracious (Barth, 2009, p. 559).



Despite its occasional failure, the church can never ignore or forget the hope of awakening.

The passage closest to spiritual awakening in Welker's pneumatology can be found in his discussion of "the forgiveness of sins and life reborn based on God's righteousness" (Welker, 1994, pp. 315–325). Whereas Wacker warned of the absence of the effects of one's calling, Welker similarly names "the creation of righteousness and of peace" as "the criteria for the action of the Spirit" (Welker, 1994, p. 319). Welker emphasises the passivity of those who take part of this divine action. They cannot make the Spirit's action happen or manage it. On the contrary, they are "not only bearers, but ... borne ... not only mediators, but also receivers" (Welker, 1994, p. 319).

The passivity of the receivers is closely related to the uncontrollability of the Spirit's action. The Spirit resists all human attempts to assert the power of "making it happen." The biblical tradition calls this awakening process and experience "rebirth" (cf. Ezek. 36:26; John 3:5; Tit. 3:5). Dialectically, rebirth leads to both discontinuity and continuity with the life lived before it. It leads to a discontinuity with one's past life, because rebirth gives a new beginning to life and a new identity; at the same time, rebirth also leads to a continuity because it restores one's previous life and identity (Welker, 1994, p. 320). Another dialectic of the Spirit's action can be inferred from the fact that it is both characterised by the pouring out of the Spirit and defined by the complete selflessness and self-denying acts of a public person (Welker, 1994, pp. 320-321). On one hand, a process of mutual empowerment arises from the Spirit's outpouring; on the other hand, sinners can entrust themselves to this spiritual renewal.

The spread of spiritual renewal is universal and connected to justice, mercy, and knowledge of God (Welker, 1994, p. 321). Barth also writes about "the fruit of righteousness, justice and mercy which grows out of the heart and soul and mind of a man who has been filled by the Holy Spirit" as the understanding of *vivificatio* (Barth,

2009, p. 575). Barth borrows the term from Calvin, who traditionally described repentance as *mortificatio* and *vivificatio* (Calvin, 1536/2011). Vivification of the Spirit is never without the spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God, because these are "the weightier matters of the law" that cannot be neglected (cf. Matt. 23:23). However, these weightier matters of the law can be disregarded or even misused by the power of sin. The law can increase evil (cf. Rom. 5:20) and can be misused based on selective perception, which in turn will lead to self-righteousness and works-righteousness (Welker, 1994, p. 255).

Against this helpless and hopeless yet realistic situation, the only hope for the effective spread of justice, mercy, and knowledge of God is to be found in recognising the power of the Spirit, sent by "the God of love and peace" (2 Cor. 13:11), who "presses to realise the intentions of the law" and works toward their fulfilment (Welker, 1994, p. 256).

Conclusion

Although developing a theology of awakening is difficult, we can draw from the rich biblical traditions that touch on this topic. In the Synoptic Gospels, spiritual awakening is placed in an eschatological context, with the range of meanings of preparedness and readiness for the coming of Christ. In the Gospel of John, the Spirit's work in convicting the world concerning its sin can be related to spiritual awakening, which includes preaching of the law that humbles human beings in their guilt, and preaching of the Gospel that bestows true comfort through forgiveness in Christ. The book of Acts understands the work of the Spirit in convicting sin as an awakening to repentance and conversion. Finally, in the Pauline corpus, spiritual awakening is an awakening to faith that receives God's righteousness, to fellowship with the life of Jesus, and to repentant response to the irresistible divine initiative.

From the historical perspective, we can also observe the close connection between spiritual



awakening and eschatological awareness, between the hope for revival and the understanding of the Millennium. In the end-time expectations, the experience of accelerated time played a central role. Conviction of sin, which leads to true repentance or conversion, has always been emphasised in the history of spiritual awakening. The law-gospel dialectic was instrumental in preaching during awakenings. The Spirit works through the preaching of the law, by convicting the world concerning sin, and through preaching the gospel, by bestowing true comfort in Christ.

From a systematic-theological perspective, awakening occurs soteriologically either in effective calling (Wacker), as a prerequisite for true conversion (Barth), or in rebirth on the basis of God's righteousness (Welker). Self-righteousness is the crucial sin that is struck to the heart in true spiritual awakening. The Spirit convicts sinners concerning the sin of self-righteousness and leads them to receive Christ's righteousness. This action of the Spirit is irresistible (Barth) or uncontrollable (Welker). The uncontrollability is closely related to the passivity

of the human receivers. In his efficacious work, the Spirit enables awakened persons to enter into fellowship with the life of Christ.

Concerning Christology, spiritual awakening is also truly divine and truly human. The initiative of the Spirit involves the total co-operation of the whole human heart, soul, and mind (Barth), characterised by the pouring out of the Spirit and defined by complete human selflessness and self-denying acts (Welker). Negatively, the criterion for true awakening is the destruction of self-righteousness (Wacker); positively, the criterion is the creation of righteousness (Welker). Besides the spread of righteousness, true awakening is also accompanied by the spread of mercy and knowledge of God, for justice, mercy, and faithfulness are "the weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23). The law can be misused by the power of sin; on the contrary, by the power of the Spirit, the law and its true intentions will be realised. When the Spirit works, he will awaken human beings to true conversion (*Erweckung zur Umkehr*)—to a life blessed and satiated with true righteousness, mercy, and true knowledge of God.



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