of men from their congregations and ministry. As Father Michael Giffin writes, in a forthcoming *Quadrant* article, "Watching Global Anglicanism Fall Apart":

> there is the perversity of confusing Biblical faith with the gender and identity zeitgeist which has deranged the Anglosphere since the sexual revolution. An unfortunate consequence of this zeitgeist has been the "Great Feminisation" of the Church, elevating women to its highest offices while simultaneously adopting a managerial model of ministry in which the primary goal is not preaching the Gospel but creating nesting opportunities for self-actualising women and practising homosexuals.

The Relentless War on Masculinity, in which Maywald commendably urges "men and women of goodwill" to "choose understanding over outrage, and collaboration instead of combat", is repetitive at times: the point about the numbers of female students surpassing males at universities is made on several occasions and he is not as compelling as he might be when simplistically lauding the model of the traditional family, which certainly has been under attack and needs its champions. But those of us who, unlike Mr Maywald, lived through the last period—the 1950s—in which the nuclear family was the unchallenged and dominant social unit of Western societies and the patriarchy was taken for granted (*Father Knows Best* was a very popular television situation comedy through that decade), knew that, quite often, the reality failed to live up to the ideal. Subtlety is one of the first casualties of warfare, and Maywald is engaged in a war, but some more nuancing of this aspect of his argument, would, in fact, have strengthened his already very strong case.

So what are the prospects for the future? Maybe a decade ago, many wiseacres were saying that the crazed culture of wokery (of which feminisation and the demonisation of men are key elements) was just a passing phase. People would wake up to woke soon enough, and all would be well. The ever-silent majority, reportedly, hold to this conviction, but as former Prime Minister Tony Abbott has rightly observed, they will not be the majority for much longer, so long as they are silent. Silence is complicity.

There is another and deeper problem and challenge. Half a century ago, the barbarians were at the gates of the society's institutions—such as the now-broken universities. Within a generation they were inside, and for a generation now they have been in charge. These are the elites—once a term of praise and admiration, decidedly not so now. And that is the problem that is hardest to address and correct. Being in power (though they are the first to spout the jargon of "speaking the truth to power"—but power other than their own, that is), they are ensuring that those who comply with their worldview are securely placed to succeed them.

Barry Spurr is ***Quadrant****'s Literary Editor. His latest book,* ***Language in the Liturgy: Past, Present, Future****, with a chapter on "Feminisation and Infantilisation" in contemporary churches' liturgies, is available online through Quadrant Books.*

Michael Giffin

The Trinity and the Reformation

Defending the Trinity in the Reformed Palatinate: The Elohistae
by Benjamin R. Merkle
Oxford University Press, 2015, 185 pages, £117.15

More important than challenging the authority of Rome, the reformers had to defend the authority of doctrine. The Trinity had to be defended because the appeal to *sola scriptura* provided radicals with a means of attacking doctrinal questions that "the reformers themselves considered to be entirely settled". For among their ranks were anti-Trinitarians who—seeing themselves as "the only ones to take *sola scriptura* seriously"—held that the (grammatical and theological) terms needed to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity did not exist in the Hebrew scriptures (and thus were non-Biblical artefacts of philosophy).

Benjamin Merkle begins his book with the scandal of Adam Neuser, an anti-Trinitarian reformer who converted to Arianism—a heresy which holds that Christ is created rather than coeternal—then became Muslim, fled to Turkey, and served the Sultan of Constantinople. This scandal "placed a unique pressure on the Reformed church, by essentially daring her to embrace the radicals' caricature of *sola scriptura*". In approaching how the reformers negotiated this threat to their nascent orthodoxy, Merkle describes how Giralomo Zanchi's *De Tribus Elohim* (1572) diverged from Calvin's exegetical principles to counter the anti-Trinitarian belief that the Trinity is non-Biblical:

> Zanchi's interpretation of the divine name *Elohim*, though in contradiction to Calvin's treatment of the word, subsequently received the support of a number of his Reformed colleagues, later to be dubbed the *Elohistae*, who further developed Zanchi's arguments.

The emergence of the *Elohistae* shows Reformed exegesis occurring along a spectrum where:

> the Hebrew text, the Hebrew divine names *Jehovah* and *Elohim* and the question of their Trinitarian significance became a focus of heated debate. In particular, the name *Elohim* and the question of what exactly its plural ending was intended to communicate when interpreted *proprie* took centre stage.

The word *Elohim* became a shibboleth for a host of ideas—orthodox and heterodox—about the Hebrew Scriptures.

The reformers were familiar with Scholastic arguments for the plurality of persons in the godhead in the Hebrew texts and accepted them as true. From the unity of the godhead declared by the *Shmah*—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one"—twelfth-century Scholastics Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard "continued to demonstrate" that "the plurality of the divine persons within this unity was also evident". In the fourteenth century, Nicholas Lyranus went further, explaining the plurality of *Elohim* as a linguistic artefact: that "the word appeared to be treated as if it was grammatically singular testified to the fact that the divine essence was truly singular". While Martin Luther rejected allegorical or typological attempts to demonstrate the Trinity in Old Testament texts, he did favour Hebrew texts where the Trinity is revealed through a close, literal reading of their plain sense. Hebrew texts are simultaneously theological *and* grammatical.

John Calvin found the rush to demonstrate certain Christian theological propositions hidden in Hebrew texts "overly ambitious attempts prove a point that was, although theologically true and orthodox on its own, nevertheless not the point of the verse at hand". His preference for a grammatical reading was not simply a preference for a literal over a spiritual sense: "Instead, he sought to distil the text's 'simple and natural' meaning … which would have been obvious to the text's original audience as the clear and intended meaning of the original author." As Christian exegetes were exerting themselves to find Christian meanings in Hebrew texts:

> Calvin frequently found himself more in agreement with the interpretations of medieval Jewish grammarians than he did with his late medieval and early Reformation Christian colleagues. These medieval rabbis … oftentimes came closest to Calvin's ideal of lucid brevity and laying open the mind of the author.

The Reformed Palatinate suffered frequent outbreaks of anti-Trinitarianism in its centres of learning: "Catholics, Lutherans, and even the anti-Trinitarians themselves found it easy to pin the blame on … the principles of exegesis promulgated by Reformed preachers (Calvin in particular)." The broader context here was early Protestantism establishing its influence, the transition from Lutheranism to Calvinism, and fierce competition from Renaissance Humanism. The prevailing academic hegemony of Scholasticism was deplored by those who saw it as death to the polished writing (*bonae literae*) of Classical learning. The Humanists believed Aquinas and Scotus may be useful to the Franciscans and Dominicans, but "the university should focus on teaching the prophets, psalms, Paul's epistles, and the early Church Fathers". They encouraged a return to Greek and Hebrew; Greek as fitting for doctrine, Hebrew as an aid to understanding Scripture. Calvin reasoned in Scholastic categories that were increasingly regarded as anti-Humanistic.

Trinitarian and anti-Trinitarian tensions, like those of Scholasticism and Renaissance Humanism, were part of a struggle to establish Calvinism in the Palatinate. Neuser had once scrawled in the margins of a letter: "No one in our time (that I know of) has become an Arian, who was not first a Calvinist … Therefore, he who fears falling into Arianism, let him beware of Calvinism." In a later report, Neuser's theological migration from Calvinism to Islam was explained:

> Neuser had explicitly pointed to his own rejection of the Lutheran explanation of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine as the first step on a journey that had led inevitably to a rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity and, eventually, to the embracing of Islam.

As Neuser testified to Elector Frederick IV himself: "Had I not been a Calvinist, I would not have reached that point."

Because Neuser could trace a natural progression from Calvinism to Arianism to Islam, theologians at Heidelberg University were under

pressure to produce a coherent and compelling "defence of the doctrine of the Trinity … consistent with the hermeneutic and theology" of the emergent Palatinate Church. Zanchi, the university's new Professor of Theology, aimed to exonerate the Palatinate Church from charges of having pushed Neuser into anti-Trinitarianism. In achieving this, his *De Tribus Elohim* relied heavily on the same collection of Hebrew texts that:

> while having been already embraced by Luther and the early Reformed, had recently been called into question by Calvin. Thus the defence Zanchi produced relied on the very arguments Calvin had rejected.

Zanchi focused on *sola scriptura* while meditating what Luther means by a close, literal reading of the Hebrew text's plain sense, and what Calvin means by the lucid brevity of its simple, natural meaning.

Zanchi's defence of the Trinity revolves around the grammatical/theological character of the *Shmah*—as the focus of Hebrew worship—and on the simultaneous singularity and plurality of the divine name. Believing the Hebrew language to be *antiquissima* and *excellentissima*, he used "the twofold Paduan method of *resolution* and *composition*" to analyse a text where "every element of the morphology and the syntax … could be expected to reveal deeper insights into the nature of God":

> Emboldened by this confidence in the Hebrew vocabulary, Zanchi turned to the combination of the Hebrew words *Jehovah* [Lord] and *Elohim* [God], two divine names of the first order, expecting that a thorough and systematic unpacking of this phrase would provide a concise and orthodox defence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Through a detailed analysis of the morphology and syntax of God's creative activity—including the *Ruah* of Genesis 1 and the *Logos* of John 1—Zanchi describes the divine names *Jehovah* and *Elohim* in confessional terms, as the Son and Holy Spirit, the second and third persons of the Trinity.

Of course, the larger question here is whether *sola scriptura* is sufficient to address the metaphysical aspects of orthodox doctrine, or whether metaphysical answers must be found outside the Bible. That question drove the entire Reformation program, as well as responses to it.

Merkle concludes with an observation:

> Rather than producing a standardized, confessional response from within the Reformed ranks, the anti-Trinitarians revealed a division within the Reformed church between the *Elohistae* and the more grammatical exegetes and, in so doing, launched the *Elohim* controversy. The mere existence of this controversy … underscores both the variety of Reformed exegetical methods at the end of the sixteenth century and a certain amount of tolerance for exegetical variety within the Reformed church at that time. Just what implications this variety had for future generations of Christian exegetes is a question worthy of further study.

If this further study were conducted today, it needs to consider developments in the grammar versus theology debate to include what is now called "worldview thinking".

As Daniel Boyarin demonstrates in *The Jewish Gospels* (2012), the question is not whether Jesus is the Messiah, because that is a matter of Christian faith; it is whether the Messiah can be divine. In exploring this possibility, he retrieves the Binitarian aspects of Jewish belief in the Second Temple Period which prefigure the Trinitarian aspects of Christian belief. As Michael Heiser demonstrates in *The Unseen Realm* (2015), the Medieval Rabbis were fully aware of the Binitarian (and possibly Trinitarian) implications of the *Shmah*, which is why they declared "two powers in heaven" to be heretical, anathema to Rabbinic Judaism.

Michael Giffin is a retired Anglican priest in the Diocese of Sydney. He wrote on Thomas Hardy's ***Jude the Obscure*** *in the December issue.*

Geoff Page

Growing Out of the Ground

Poems in Retrospect: A Selection
by Stephen Oliver
Greywacke Press, 2025, 353 pages, $35.99

Seang (Hungering)
by Anne Casey
Salmon Poetry, 2025, 155 pages, $26.70

One of the fringe benefits of reviewing these two important collections is to be able to begin with a famous quote from Auden: "A poet's hope: to be, / like some valley cheese, / local, but prized