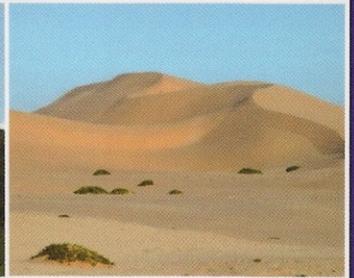
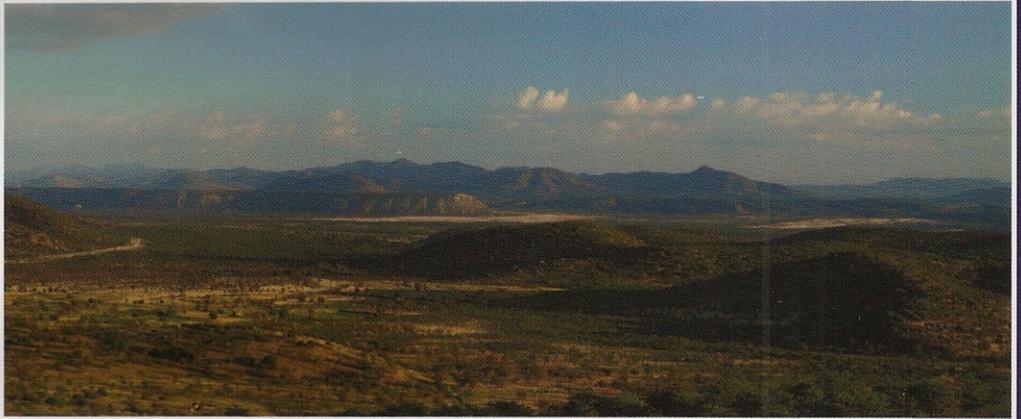


HADDINGTON HOUSE JOURNAL

An International Theological Journal



VOLUME 17

2015

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1. The journal will seek to provide an annual publication reflective of the theological basis and ethos of the Trust for students, laity, ministers, and lecturers to develop their minds and souls through in-depth articles and reviews.
2. The journal will seek to keep readers informed about new books or other publications and thus will strive to be a means of encouraging stewardship of time and money.
3. The selection of articles and works for review in each journal will usually reflect the fourfold division of the departments in the theological curriculum: biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology and applied theology, thereby providing balance as to the content of the journal but also providing harmony for the readers to see the unity of the curriculum. It will not be a journal devoted to one department of the theological curriculum.
4. The journal will endeavour to highlight, by way of articles and reviews, works to assist students and others in their ongoing studies and training.
5. The journal will encourage the cultivation of writing and provide an avenue for publication and exchange of knowledge.
6. The journal will include one article or review devoted to the theme of theological education.
7. The journal will also endeavour to include some news about the wider international, evangelical community of churches and their efforts in mission or theological work.
8. Prior to publication, all articles and reviews will be read by select individuals who uphold the theological basis and ethos of the Trust. It will be their task to comment, proof and ensure the quality of the journal.

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Editor's Preface

Welcome to the 2015 *Haddington House Journal*. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the contents of this year's journal.

First we begin with our General Articles. This year we have changed a little what we have done with the traditional lead sermon. Instead we have provided three preaching or Bible study resources. From Psalms we have Dr. Allan Harman's sermon preparation notes for Psalm 72. I think this will be very helpful for a preacher to study and to learn from Dr. Harman's outline of this psalm. Then we turn to Proverbs and three sample, topically-arranged studies by Rev. Reuben Ihlenfeldt. Again, Proverbs demands that we think about how to preach through it, and here are some creative ideas one might consider and use for preaching or teaching. The third preaching resource is a sermon on Galatians 1:6-10 from Rev. Thaddeus James, Jr. which brings into contemporary context the issue of "Gospel Malpractice", a challenge today as it was when Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians. I trust these resources will stimulate good Scripture study and exposition. Following these in General Articles are two popular general articles related to African missions history – one about an early missionary to Southern Africa and the other by Jonathan Emanuelson giving us some fine background on Zionism.

The second section of the journal is the Book Reviews, arranged into four divisions. You will notice this year the large number of new Bible commentaries which have been reviewed. This is probably the largest number of Bible commentaries we have ever reviewed in a single volume. It may also reflect a recent publishing concentration. Offerings for reviews in systematic theology, historical theology, and applied theology should also alert readers to many new works in these areas as well.

Following naturally along from this are the Book Briefs, which are very concise presentations. Here I would particularly draw your attention to those in the category of missions or missiology, as this is an especially strong focus of this section this year along with the longer reviews in the Applied Theology section. In total you will find over fifty books reviewed in our 2015 *Haddington House Journal*. We are most encouraged by this number and believe it makes a most helpful contribution.

The final section, Academic Articles, contains three articles which I believe will prove very useful in the classroom and for Christian educators. Dr. Thorsten Prill's article is very clear and thought-provoking on the gospel and modern challenges to the gospel – relevant to the whole Christian community regardless of country. Dr. Carl Mosser's article, written at my request, addresses the rise of Mormonism on the African continent. Dr. Mosher is someone who has studied much on Mormonism, and we are delighted that he

was willing to make this helpful contribution. Finally, we endeavour each year or as able to include an article to help Christian educators. Nancy Whytock has provided us with an article on plagiarism from a very wholistic perspective, very much in the tradition of the Westminster Larger Catechism, presenting the negative aspect of the command and then the underlying positive application. Perhaps this will be useful as an in-service training discussion for Christian educators.

Our cover for 2015 focuses upon Namibia in Africa. The reason for this focus is that Namibia is the home of one of our article writers and there is also mention of an early missionary there in another article. We have appreciated your warm comments about our covers from recent years, particularly the many positive comments we received about our Malawian-themed cover last year.

Thank you to all our writers, once again, for your ministry through writing and also to our technical support and photographers. Past volumes of our journal are available at the Haddington House website (www.haddingtonhouse.org), both as a whole and as individual articles. Also, past volumes are available at the UK website: <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles.php>. May the Lord bless you as you take up and read.

Jack C. Whytock
Editor

Sermon Preparation on Psalm 72 'The Coming King'

Allan M. Harman *

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1. Introductory Considerations

a. This psalm is one of the one hundred and fifty that make up the full book of Psalms in the Old Testament. As such, it is an important part of ancient, God-inspired literature that constitutes almost three quarters of our Bible. The book of Psalms is unique in that it deals so extensively with personal religious faith and experience. Translation from Hebrew into English is not always easy, as the two languages are very different. In translating it we can make some changes to give a flowing text, but we have to respect the period from which it came and the form in which it was given by God. We cannot make ancient literature such as the Old Testament modern, for that would mean distorting the very text we acknowledge as God-breathed. It is not just the thoughts of the Bible that are inspired but the words too. This means that we need translations that are essentially literal. Another way to express this is to say we need a transparent translation of the Bible that conveys as much as possible of what was said, and how it was said, into the target language. Many of the older translations achieved this better than quite a few of the more modern translations.

b. The language in this particular psalm, as in all the psalms, is poetic, and it differs from what we are used to in descriptive or narrative passages of the Bible. We must not despise poetry, or think that it is telling an entirely different story from prose. Comparison of the narrative account of the Exodus (Exod. 14:21-31) with the poetic account in the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:1-18) shows us how one complements the other. They speak in different ways and use different patterns of speech.

c. Poetry paints pictures that help us grasp the teaching it contains. It makes extensive use of similes (e.g., 'like/as . . .') and metaphors (e.g., God is a fortress). It uses words that do not occur often in narrative, and contains a

larger percentage of older words. We see this phenomenon even in modern English hymns and songs, e.g., ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God’. Hebrew poetry has its own special features, and it has few words that convey abstract ideas, such as those that follow the pattern of English words like ‘falsehood’ and ‘friendship’.

d. This psalm has a title, a concluding doxology, and a postscript. The title can mean either ‘by Solomon’ or ‘for Solomon’. The doxology in vss. 18-20 appears to be intended both as the conclusion of the psalm as well as the conclusion of the second book of the Psalter. It is an ascription of praise to the redeeming God Who alone does miraculous deeds, and a desire for His glory to extend to all the earth. All the other four ‘books’ that comprise the Psalter have similar doxologies (see 41:13; 89:52; 106:48; 150:1-6). The postscript (‘The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended’) appears to have been appended to an earlier collection of psalms that was later incorporated into the whole book of Psalms.

e. There are not a great number of unusual words or expressions in this psalm that need comment, but here are a few:

- ‘Judge’ (vs. 2) does not mean ‘condemn’ but rather ‘adjudicate’.
- In vs. 5 the NIV marginal note is to be preferred. It suggests ‘you will be feared’ should be the translation rather than ‘they will endure’ (the Heb. text is literally, ‘they will fear you’).
- ‘Prosperity’ (vs. 7) is literally ‘abundance of peace’.
- The word ‘River’ in vs. 8 is the translation of the Hebrew word *perat* that is the distinctive word for the Euphrates River, not the general word for any river.
- In vs. 16 NIV’s ‘let it thrive’ is questionable as a rendering of ‘from a city’ (compare the ESV’s ‘blossom in the cities’).

f. One feature of the language of this psalm is the number of word repetitions that occur, or different words that come from the same Hebrew root. These are not always brought out clearly in translations such as the NIV. It helps to read the psalm in translations such as the NASB or NKJV as they tend to be more consistent in the choice of words connected with the same root idea in Hebrew. These words include:

- ‘justice’ (vs. 1), ‘justice’ and ‘he will judge’ (vs. 2);
- ‘your righteousness’ (vs. 1), ‘in righteousness’ (vs. 2), ‘the righteous’ (vs. 7);
- ‘Solomon’ (in the title, from the root from which the Hebrew word ‘peace’ comes, vs. 1), ‘peace’, vss. 3 and 7 (NIV ‘prosperity, but literally, ‘abundance of peace’);
- ‘and bless him’, vs. 15, ‘be blessed’, vs. 17, ‘blessed be (NIV ‘praise be’), vs. 19;
- ‘his name’, twice in vs. 17;
- ‘Sheba’, vss. 10 and 15.

These repetitions are part of poetic usage and point to some of the major themes of the psalm that have to be taken into consideration.

2. A Prayer for the King (vss.1-7, 12-14)

The language in these verses is depicting an ideal situation. No real king in Israel or Judah can be in view, because the description goes far beyond what any human king could do. While the office of the king was appointed by God, yet we recognise that not every Davidic king came up to this ideal. They were sinners, but the office they occupied was the important thing. The picture here is of a king who is going to rule in complete righteousness. He will care for all the most oppressed people in the land, and prosperity will last forever. His rule is not bound by limits of months and years, but rather it is eternal.

Kingship was always God's intention for Israel. The thought here depends on two other Old Testament passages, Deuteronomy 17:14-20 and 2 Samuel 7:1-29. In the first of these, Moses spells out for Israel what was going eventually to happen when the people reached Canaan. God was going to ensure that they would have someone from within Israel to be their king who would rule in God's stead. He would be God's vice-regent.

Israel had to learn by hard experience what kingship meant for them. The people had experienced many different leaders during the time of the judges. They were raised up by God to deliver the people, but there was no hereditary kingship. The recurring phrase used near the end of the book of Judges is: 'In those days Israel had no king: everyone did as he saw fit' (Judges 21:25). This meant that those looking back on this period of Israel's history realised that the absence of a king meant chaos within the land. Or, to put it another way, Israel had too many kings, for every man did what he thought best for himself!

The second bitter experience that Israel had in preparation for true kingship was the period of Saul. There was nothing wrong with the people asking for a king (1 Sam. 8:4-5) as God had planned for kingship. What was wrong was the timing of the request, and the spirit in which it was made. The people wanted a king so that they would be like the surrounding nations. And so God gave them what they wanted, and they received Saul as their first king. He failed, thinking that he could take the place of the priest and offer sacrifices (1 Sam. 13:7-10), only to find that Samuel pronounced the doom of his kingdom: 'Your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command' (1 Sam. 13:14).

After unsatisfactory episodes of rulers who did not establish dynasties (the period of the judges) and the kingship of Saul, David was chosen as the man after God's heart. When he established his authority on the land, he wanted to build a house for God (the temple), God instead promised to build him a house (a family). The Hebrew word for house (*bayit*) can have both

meanings. God thus entered into a covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:1-29; 1 Chron. 17:1-27), promising him an enduring kingdom, and one that was to have implications for mankind as a whole, a charter for mankind (2 Sam. 7:18-19; see the poetic expansion on this covenant in Psalms 89 and 132). Though David failed in many ways, yet his kingship became the one extolled throughout the rest of the Old Testament. The Davidic kingship and the choice of Zion were concepts that went together and stimulated the thinking and the hopes in Israel. The Scripture teaches that the line of Davidic kings continued until in the fullness of time the Lord Jesus came, by human nature 'a descendant of David', and 'declared with power to be the Son of God' (Rom. 1:3).

Here in Psalm 72 the enduring nature of the kingdom being spoken about reflects the covenant with David. This is expressed in vs. 5 by comparing it to enduring as long as the sun and moon. Other Old Testament passages reinforce this promise (see Pss. 89:28-29; 132:11-12; Isa. 9:7). It is not surprising that the promise regarding an enduring dynasty of Davidic rule was re-echoed in the words of Gabriel to Mary, as he announced the impending birth of Jesus (Lk. 1:31-33).

When we come to Old Testament passages like this we can find out how the Jews, even before the time of Jesus, understood them. This is so, partly, because we have the early Greek translation of the Old Testament from about 250 BC, called the Septuagint. It is not only a translation, but in effect, by its choice of words, it is a commentary on the text. We also have early translations of the Old Testament into Aramaic that are called Targums. These were most probably oral at first, but later appeared in written form. In vs. 1 of Psalm 72, the Jewish Targum adds after the words 'Endow the king', the words 'the messiah'. Clearly Jewish scholars realised that the description could not fit any ordinary descendant of David, but had to point to a future messianic ruler.

What else does the psalmist say about this coming king? He tells us that the king will rule with justice, adjudicating with righteousness, and dealing with his afflicted ones with justice (vs. 2). These expressions in this verse are typically parallel ones, as occur so often in Old Testament poetry. 'Your people' and 'your afflicted ones' are describing the same people. God often spoke about Israel as His people, and they claimed that privilege for themselves. But how does 'your people' equate with 'your afflicted ones'? When we look at how the word 'afflicted' is used here, we might think that its opposite will perhaps be something like 'rich'. However, in the Psalms the opposite of 'afflicted' is not 'rich' but 'wicked', and so the term clearly refers to the godly believers. Further, it is noted that He will see that the poor and oppressed are helped (vs. 4).

3. A Universal Kingdom (vss. 8-11)

The promises that God made to Abraham are basic for all that follows in Scripture. He was promised a large family, a land to live in, and that his de-

scendants would become a blessing to the nations. On each of these points Abraham was tested.

He didn't have any children, and both he and his wife Sarah were past the normal age for having children. The New Testament comments on this fact both in Romans 4 and Hebrews 11. 'He faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a hundred years old – and that Sarah's womb was also dead' (Rom. 4:19). The writer to the Hebrews adds that 'from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants, as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the sea-shore' (Heb. 11:12).

Abraham also was stateless, in that he had no land. In the early Greek translation already mentioned, the Septuagint, Abraham is called 'the migrant', the wanderer. That's a fair comment, for he had come from Ur to Haran, then went down into Canaan, before moving further south to Egypt. Then he came back up into Canaan, but he did not have a right to that territory. When Sarah his wife died, he had to buy a burying plot for her from the Hittites (Gen. 23:1-20). But God told him about a country He was going to give him, and the Old Testament repeats in several passages the general area that it would cover – from Lebanon in to the north to the river of Egypt in the south, and from the Mediterranean in the west to the river Euphrates in the north-east.

The third great promise that God gave him related to blessing, and I'll mention that a little later as it has relevance for the final verses of this psalm.

In verses 8-11 the focus is on the land, but something very significant is said about the extent of this king's territory. In passages such as Genesis 15:18-21, Exodus 23:31, and Joshua 1:3-4, the boundaries of the land God swore to give Abraham are stated. However, here there is a dramatic change. It is not the narrow confines of Canaan that are described, but a territory that stretches outwards from the River, the Euphrates, to the ends of the earth. Messiah's rule is going to be from the River Euphrates outward!

The messianic import of this is made plain in the parallel passage in Zechariah 9:9-10, for the identical promise occurs there as well. Zechariah's prophecy is of the coming king, 'righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey'. We know this ninth verse well, because it is incorporated in the narrative relating to Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:5). However, in Zechariah the prophecy continues: 'I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth' (Zech. 9:10). That passage, and its quotation in Matthew, confirms the conviction that Psalm 72:8 is speaking of the messianic kingdom and its extent. It will not be constricted to the small territory that made up the promised land, but will be world-wide in scope.

The words that follow it describe subservience to the messiah. 'The desert

tribes will bow before him, and his enemies will lick the dust' (vs. 9). 'Desert tribes' seems to be a general expression to denote remote areas. To 'bow before' and to 'lick the dust' are biblical expressions for submission (see Isa. 49:23). That this is the correct interpretation is confirmed by vss. 10-11 that speak of Tarshish, Sheba and Seba. Tarshish is mentioned several times in the Old Testament without precise geographical descriptions of its location. It is linked with the sea, but it is unclear whether this means the Mediterranean or the Red Sea. Sheba was probably located in south-eastern Arabia, and Seba could be near it. Another possibility is that it is another variant of the name 'Sheba', with the conjunction 'and' between them being equal to 'that is' (for other examples of this usage, see Exod. 24:7, 'that is, we will obey'; 2 Sam. 14:5, 'that is, I am a widow'). If this is so, it could be understood as 'Sheba, that is, Seba'. Not only will the kings from far-off Tarshish, the coastlands, and Sheba and Seba bring gifts, but all kings and all nations will be in joyous servitude to him (vss. 10-11).

4. Universal Blessing (vss. 15-17)

The prayer for blessing is put in terms of the normal salutation of a new king – 'Long may he live!' A good illustration from a different context is the greeting to Solomon when Zadok the priest anointed him: 'Long live King Solomon!' (1 Kings 1:39; for other ones see 1 Sam. 10:24; 2 Sam. 16:16; 1 Kings 1:25). Just as the Queen of Sheba brought gifts to Solomon (1 Kings 10:10), so the psalmist pictures further tribute being presented to the Davidic king. Prayer too is offered for his welfare, and praise given for the prosperity he brings. The blessings of the messianic reign are spoken about in material terms – abundance of grain, fruit of Lebanon, vigorous population in the cities. The blessings of God's covenant with Israel included the promise of abundant crops and herds (Deut. 28:3-6). This again is part of the art of poetry in using picture language to describe the glories of the coming kingdom. Future glory is described in terms of present experience of earthly realities.

Verse 17 is crucial for understanding the message of the psalm as a whole. The certainty of the rule of this king and the consequent blessings that he will bring are given in terms of the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). While it may have seemed early in the kingship of David and Solomon that the promises to Abraham were going to be realised in the history of Israel, it became clear that their fulfilment was to be beyond the limitations of a kingdom in the narrow confines of Canaan. By the time of the exile, the people were few in the land, the majority were in exile away from Palestine, and poor Israel, far from being a blessing, needed God's blessing to survive the exilic experience. The psalmist looked far beyond his own day and experience to a time when the nations of the world would be blessed. The Hebrew expression here is identical to that in Genesis 22:18. The nations will 'bless themselves', that is, they will ask for a blessing on themselves, perhaps praying, 'May we be blessed just as Abraham was blessed!' The New Testament tells us that the promises to Abraham were fulfilled in Jesus, as the songs of

Mary and Zechariah make plain (Lk. 1:54-55; 69-75), while Paul gives the definitive explanation in Galatians 3:13-14. Christ death was as a redeemer who became a curse for us, 'so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith'.

5. Concluding Doxology (vss. 18-19)

The concluding doxology is praise to the only true God. He alone does 'marvellous deeds'. The expression is one that is used in the Old Testament exclusively of things that only God can do. The reference is to the great actions of God like the miraculous signs in Egypt, or His provision for Israel in the wilderness. He is worthy of all praise because of what He has done in redeeming and preserving His people. The desire for the whole earth to be filled with His glory echoes the language of Numbers 14:21. Moses had interceded for the people after they rebelled against the Lord, and in responding to his prayer He solemnly declared: 'But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord'.

Almost three hundred years ago, Isaac Watts paraphrased this psalm, and started it in this way:

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Did Isaac Watts get it right by inserting the name 'Jesus' in place of 'the king'? Of course he did, because he rightly grasped the significance of Psalm 72 in the light of biblical teaching. How we listen to biblical passages is most important. As with music, we must listen to it in the correct key, and here in this psalm it is in the key that depicts the ultimate revelation of God in His glory. To put it in theological language, we must listen to it in the eschatological key. The psalm far transcends any of the achievements of Solomon or any other successor of David. It looks to the kingdom of Jesus that will be universal, when all His enemies are subdued before Him.

When Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) took his troops eastwards towards India, he often asked what lay to the north or south of them. His generals often replied that there were inhospitable mountains or waterless deserts. When they finally reached the Indus River, he asked them what lay beyond, and they described that there were swamps and other features that would impede any further advance. And Alexander wept, because he thought there were no more empires to conquer!

How different is the picture given in Psalm 72. It is describing a Davidic king who is going to reign to the ends of the earth. No longer is the kingdom restricted to the small land of Israel, but the Messiah will at the last be Lord

over all. He will reign till He subdues all kingdoms and delivers them over to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-25). The new song that will be sung in heaven will be in praise of Him who has 'ransomed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation', making them 'a kingdom and priests to our God' (Rev. 5:9-10). Psalm 72 points to that glorious fulfilment. The Lord Jesus will not be disappointed for ultimately He will be king of the nations (Rev. 15:3).

Divine Truths for Daily Living from Proverbs Three Sermon Outlines

Reuben Ihlenfeldt *

* *Pastor Reuben Ihlenfeldt is the pastor of Bethany-Emmanuel Baptist Church in King William's Town, South Africa and a former president of the Baptist Union of South Africa.*

Editor's Introduction: Outlines for Proverbs

The book of Proverbs should not be neglected in a regular diet of preaching and teaching in the local church. Yet it often presents difficulties for the Christian preacher and teacher. There are two difficulties in particular: how to organise a message from Proverbs and how to avoid pure moralistic preaching or teaching which promotes works righteousness.

There are many different ways to organise messages based upon Proverbs, and there are good tools to help in this regard. Certain commentaries which are expository-based will be very helpful in organising Proverbs for teaching purposes. For example, David Hubbard's commentary, originally part of the Word Communicator's Commentary series, now in the Mastering the Old Testament series, is very useful in this regard.¹ But there are others. Many can be downloaded for free, yet the reader is cautioned to use discernment. In that regard, anyone who wants to wrestle with the nature of properly interpreting Proverbs should refer to the article by Greg Parson's, "Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming the Book of Proverbs", which can be downloaded from the internet for free.² Parson helps us to see the rules we must follow in interpreting this Old Testament book for teaching purposes.

In an effort to help preachers and student preachers think about how to organise and make outlines for preaching from Proverbs, we have included three sample sermon outlines from Pastor Reuben Ihlenfeldt of Bethany-Emmanuel Baptist Church in King William's Town, South Africa. Think about his sermon outlines or skeletons and note how he has organised Proverbs by theme. Perhaps you can use these outlines in your preaching or in teaching a Bible class somewhere. As you do so, keep asking, "How does

¹ David Hubbard, *Proverbs*. Word Communicator's Commentary series, gen ed. Lloyd Ogilvie. (Dallas: Word, 1989). Reprinted in the Mastering the Old Testament series, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

² Greg Parson, "Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming the Book of Proverbs", *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1993, <https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/tedhildebrandt/otresources/20-proverbs/text/articles/parsons-provguidelines-bs.pdf>.

this relate to being in Christ?” and “What is distinctive here about the Christian’s spiritual life?”

On a personal note, I have attempted through the years to preach from Proverbs each January and to also read a chapter from Proverbs with my family each day in January (for the 31 days equal the 31 chapters). There is an old English proverb that says, “Solomon made a Book of Proverbs but a Book of Proverbs won’t make a Solomon”. Reading Proverbs is no guarantee of blessing; we need the blessing and ministry of the Holy Spirit as we engage with this book.

Each reference in Pastor Reuben Ihlenfeldt’s sermon outlines which does not include the name of the book of the Bible (only the chapter number and verse number) is from Proverbs. All other books of Scripture are identified by name. May the Lord bless you as you preach and teach from Proverbs.

Prayer:

“Thank you, our Father, for this very practical book and for the admonition it gives our hearts to remember that life can never be understood, can never be handled, can never make sense until we approach it with trust in you and remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We thank you in Christ’s name. Amen.

- Ray C. Stedman

#1. Family Matters

I. Why Raising Godly Children Is Important

1. Parental Pride and Joy!!

- Wise son, glad father; stupid son, sad mother. (10:1 MSG)
- Sensible children bring joy to their father; foolish children despise their mother. (15:20 NLT)
- To have a fool for a son brings grief; there is no joy for the father of a fool. (17:21 NIV)
- A surly, stupid child is sheer pain to a father, a bitter pill for a mother to swallow. (17:25 MSG)
- Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged; parents are the pride of their children. (17:6 NLT)
- A foolish child is a calamity to a father; a nagging wife annoys like a constant dripping. (19:13 NLT)
- Dear child, if you become wise, I'll be one happy parent. (23:15 MSG)

2. Stable Society

- Children who mistreat their father or chase away their mother are a public disgrace and an embarrassment. (19:26 NLT)
- My child, how happy I will be if you turn out to be wise! Then I will be able to answer my critics. (27:11 NLT)
- The father of godly children has cause for joy. What a pleasure it is to have wise children. (23:24 NLT)

II. Attributes of Godly Children

1. Hard Working

- A wise youth works hard all summer; a youth who sleeps away the hour of opportunity brings shame. (10:5 NLT)

2. Obedience

- Intelligent children listen to their parents; foolish children do their own thing. (13:1 MSG)
- He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father. (28:7 NIV)

3. Right Conduct

- Even children are known by the way they act, whether their conduct is pure and right. (20:11 NLT)

III. Benefits of Having Godly Parents

1. Freedom with Boundaries

- You can be sure that evil people will be punished, but the children of the godly will go free. (11:21 NLT)
- The wicked perish and are gone, but the children of the godly stand firm. (12:7 NLT)

2. A Godly Inheritance

- A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous. (13:22 NIV)
- God-loyal people, living honest lives, make it much easier for their children. (20:7 MSG)

IV. Developing Godly Children

1. Discipline

- If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them. (13:24 NLT)
- Discipline your children while you still have the chance; indulging them destroys them. (19:18 MSG)
- Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him. (22:15 NIV)
- Don't fail to correct your children. They won't die if you spank them. (23:13 NLT)
- The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. (29:15 NIV)
- Discipline your children; you'll be glad you did-- they'll turn out delightful to live with. (29:17 MSG)

2. Direction

- Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path. (23:19 NIV)
- Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it. (22:6 NLT)
- If you stop listening to instruction, my child, you have turned your back on knowledge. (19:27 NLT)
- A wise servant takes charge of an unruly child and is honored as one of the family. (17:2 MSG)
- Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste. (24:13 NIV)

3. Discipleship

- The Fear-of-GOD builds up confidence, and makes a world safe for your children. (14:26 MSG)
- My son, fear Jehovah and the king; and do not fellowship with those who are given to change. (24:21 MKJV)

4. Doing

- Dear child, I want your full attention; please do what I show you. (23:26 MSG)

Conclusion: (Jesus) The Son That Made All The Difference

The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the prophecy: The man spoke to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal, saying, Surely I am more like an animal than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor the knowledge of the holy. Who has gone up to Heaven and has come down? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in His garments? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name? Surely you know. Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. (30:1-5 MKJV)

#2. The Kind of Person that Makes God “Mad”**Proverbs 6:12-19**

- ¹² *A scoundrel and a villain,
who goes about with a corrupt mouth,*
- ¹³ *who winks with his eye,
signals with his feet
and motions with his fingers,*
- ¹⁴ *who plots evil with deceit in his heart –
he always stirs up dissension.*
- ¹⁵ *Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant;
he will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy.*
- ¹⁶ *There are six things the LORD hates,
seven that are detestable to him:*

- ¹⁷ *haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,*
- ¹⁸ *a heart that devises wicked schemes,
feet that are quick to rush into evil,*
- ¹⁹ *a false witness who pours out lies
and a man who stirs up dissension.*

(Note below the parallels in the New Testament Gospels.)

I. The Person with a “Holier Than Thou” Look

- Haughty eyes – Matt. 7:1-6

II. The Person Whose Word Cannot Be Trusted

- Their talk is cheap – Matt. 5:33-37

III. The Person Who Does Not Care Who They Crush on Their Way to the Top

- Hands that shed innocent blood – Matt. 5:21-26

IV. The Person Who Plots Evil

- A heart that devises wicked schemes – Matt. 7:13-27.

V. The Person Who Runs After the Person Who Plots Evil

- Feet that are quick to rush into evil – Matt. 7:13-27

VI. The Premeditated Liar

- A false witness who pours out lies – Matt. 5:33-37

VII. The Stirrer

- A Man who stirs up dissension among brothers – Matt. 5:25-32, 43-48

Conclusion: Just Like Judas

- #1 Matt 26:13-16
- #2 Matt. 26:25
- #3 Matt. 26:47
- #4 John 13:26
- #5 John 13:27
- #6 Luke 22:4
- #7 John 12:4-6

#3. How to Stop Making a Fool of Yourself

I. The Characteristics of the Fool

1. Immoral

- The words of the godly are like sterling silver; the heart of a fool is worthless. (10:20 NLT)

2. Insatiable

- Sensible people keep their eyes glued on wisdom, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth. (24:7 NLT)

3. Idiotic

- A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. (18:2 NIV)
- Wisdom is too much for a fool. When the leaders gather, the fool has nothing to say. (24:7 NLT)

II. The Actions of the Fool

1. Bad Talk

- Wise people treasure knowledge, but the babbling of a fool invites trouble. (10:14 NLT)
- He who hides hatred with lying lips, and he who speaks a slander, is a fool. (10:18 MKJV)
- The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. (15:2 NIV)
- A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul. (18:7 NIV)

2. Bad Walk

- Doing wrong is fun for a fool, while wise conduct is a pleasure to the wise. (10:23 NLT)
- A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence. (15:5 NIV)

III. How to Treat a Fool

1. Don't Get into an Argument

- A quiet rebuke to a person of good sense does more than a whack on the head of a fool. (17:10 MSG)
- It is safer to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than to confront a fool caught in folly. (17:12 NLT)

- The words of a fool start fights; do him a favour and gag him. (18:6 MSG)
- Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, lest you also be like him. (26:4 MKJV)
- Answer a fool in simple terms so he doesn't get a swelled head. (26:5 MSG)

2. Don't Try to Change a Fool

- It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a fool who has no heart for wisdom. (17:16 NLT)
- Putting a fool in a place of honour is like setting a mud brick on a marble column. (26:8 MSG)
- Pound on a fool all you like-- you can't pound out foolishness. (27:22 MSG)

3. Don't Hire a Fool

- Do not speak in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words. (23:9 MKJV)
- Hire a fool or a drunk and you shoot yourself in the foot. (26:10 MSG)
- Trusting a fool to convey a message is as foolish as cutting off one's feet or drinking poison! (26:6 NLT)

IV. Avoiding Foolish Ways

1. Be Willing to Learn from Others

- The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin. (10:8 NIV)
- The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who listens to advice is wise. (12:15 MKJV)
- A wise person is hungry for truth, while the fool feeds on trash. (15:14 NLT)

2. Control Your Temper

- A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted. (12:16 NLT)
- A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hot-headed and reckless. (14:16 NIV)

3. Learn from Your Mistakes

- As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. (26:11 NIV)

Conclusion: People Worse Than a Fool

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?

There is more hope for a fool than for him. (26:12 NIV)

*He who trusts in himself is a fool,
but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe. (28:26 NIV)*

Sermon: “Practitioners of Gospel Malpractice” Galatians 1:6-10

Thaddeus James, Jr.*

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Greetings fellow ministers of the Gospel, brothers, and sisters in Christ.

The pastor’s current series is “God’s prescription for blessings is obedience” – faithful obedience to the revealed Word of God. God in His infinite wisdom, in His omniscience has truly done great things for us.

To lead us, to guide us, and to direct us in this obedience, God has given us His Living Word in Jesus Christ and His Written Word in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. Together, these sixty-six books, written by over forty authors under the inspiration (*Theopneustos*) of the Holy Spirit is the prescription for blessings. He has done great things for me, for us.

Where is our struggle? Dr. Robertson McQuilken in his book *Understanding and Applying the Bible* says:

We do not believe the Bible to be true.

Or, we do not believe that all parts of it are true.

We are unwilling to obey God’s Word.

We are unwilling to work hard to search out the meaning.

In 1742 Pastor John Albert Bengel observed:

Scripture is the foundation of the Church: the Church is the guardian of Scripture. When the Church is in strong health, the light of Scripture shines bright; when the Church is sick, Scripture is corroded by neglect; and thus happens, that the outward form of Scripture and that of the Church usually seem to exhibit simultaneously either health or else sickness; and as a rule the way in which Scripture is being treated is in exact correspondence with the condition of the Church.

God's prescription for blessing is obedience to His Revealed Word. Turn with me, if you will to the book of Galatians. Recall that,

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Now, Galatians chapter 1, verses 6-10 (ESV).

⁶ *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel –*
⁷ *not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.* ⁸ *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.* ⁹ *As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

¹⁰ *For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

We will work from the theme of “Practitioners of Gospel Malpractice.”

The book of Galatians after the book of James is the one of the earliest writings of the New Testament. We see the understanding and the worldview that the early church had of Jesus: they saw Him as Lord, as the Pre-existent One sent by the Father and as the Changer of the current world structure. However, there were still men causing confusion, Paul was writing to the churches in Galatia to continue in the true gospel and to reject the non-gospels. This one true gospel is for all people through faith in Jesus Christ, which will deliver us from the power of sin through the illuminating presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 6:

Paul is amazed, astonished, he marvels, he is shocked and surprised by the lack of endurance for truth, by how quickly, how easily people were deserting the truth. This apostasy, this turning away, this rejection of God and the grace of Jesus Christ was an unbelievable action.

The fickleness of the people, who were called by God. By the grace of Christ, *charis* – unearned and unmerited favor, this grace, this gift, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

We who were dead in our trespasses, living in total depravity, God-haters; we were brought back from the dead and given eternal life.

Verse 7:

Jesus voluntarily gave Himself. It is finished (vs. 4). In this evil age and world we must appropriate Romans 12:2 – "then you will be able *to test*" Philippians 2:15, crooked and perverse generation.

These practitioners of gospel malpractice, these false teachers were presenting a different, a perverted gospel. Paul is upset, his words, amazed at how quickly look here at 2 Corinthians 11:4, these are parallel passages, Scripture supports Scripture. Different (*heterous*) in another form, another kind, a rival Jesus.

Paul is not the only one to warn us about the practitioners of gospel malpractice who distorting the message of Jesus.

- Matthew 7:15 – "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."
- Matthew 24:11 – "For many false prophets will arise and will mislead you."
- Matthew 24:24 – "For false Christ and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." (Whom God called)
- John 10:10 – "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."

I will give you one more reference here. I can go on and on from the God's Word warning us about these practitioners. This is what Peter says in 2 Peter 2:1-3. These practitioners of gospel malpractice come in many ways:

- Heretics: those who openly defy the truth with their own philosophies (cults).
- Apostates: those who know truth, who have been brought up in the truth, but they reject the truth (TV Practitioners).
- Deceivers: those who will not acknowledge their deception, their falseness, their fraud. Their purpose is to hoodwink and bamboozle; they are proud, pompous and presumptuous; they seek to be popular; they seek power and prestige, lovers of self and filthy lucre.

These practitioners of gospel malpractice do not speak of a narrow road, but point to a wide road, damning people to hell. (Give examples: Jesus not God, Mormons as Christians, whatever counsel God had, Jesus did not come to bring Christianity, God will not send anyone to hell, etc.) These messages of health, wealth and prosperity, name it and claim it, illness is a lack of faith, these teachings of second blessings, or second baptisms of the Holy Spirit and teachings on certain signs and manifestations.

As Paul said, how quickly we desert the truth for a different gospel; how easily we are tossed to and fro by every wave of doctrine.

Proverbs tells us, "There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is death." See also 2 John 7-8. Count the cost – spiritual effects.

Verse 8

Know God's Word for yourself, be able to distinguish fact from fiction, truth from lies, meditate on God's Word day and night, eat the scroll, hide the Word in your heart, let God's Word be a lamp unto your feet, Study to show yourself approved unto God, as a workman who does not need to be unashamed, rightly dividing, correctly or accurately handling the word of truth.

No matter what the credentials of the person, pastor, minister, elder, deacon, bishop, apostle or priest, no matter how many letters behind someone's name, the gospel message is still the same: 1 Corinthians 15:3, "Christ died for our sins, was buried and on the third day He rose again." The Good News.

Paul said it twice for emphasis, If anyone is preaching to you another gospel he is to be accursed – anathema. These practitioners of gospel malpractice are under God's eternal judgment; by preaching an insufficient Christ, they are confusing God's people and many people are in danger of being eternally lost.

Paul tells us in the letter to the Corinthians that these practitioners are corrupting and peddling the Word of God. Listen to what they say and what they do not say. They do not speak of repentance, of a broken and contrite heart; there is no doctrine, there is no theology, yet Christians are quickly deserting and flocking to these practitioners of gospel malpractice.

Verse 10

Remember last week in reference to King Saul for disobeying God and seeking to please people. This call to ministry is not from man but from God; this call to ministry is not a call of popularity but of faithfulness to God. Jesus said not my will but thy will be done. In verse 1 Paul called himself a bondservant, a slave of Christ, as one who is in a permanent relationship of servitude to another. Whom do you serve?

As I close, again there is only one gospel message, only one Jesus Christ, the Living Word, who sits at the right hand of the Father, who suffered for my sins for your sins, was beaten, scourged and crucified for my sins, for your sins but on the third day He rose again, He conquered death. What Adam destroyed, Jesus made right. Very simply Jesus is a liar, a lunatic or He is Lord.

Truly may the practitioners of gospel malpractice be accursed.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father but through Him.

William Threlfall (1799-1825) **Wesleyan Methodist Missionary to Southern Africa**

Jack C. Whytock*

** Note: It can be difficult teaching and researching about missions history in Africa for several reasons, one of which is the immense size of Africa and second the diversity of mission societies, churches, and organizations which have been involved in missions in Africa. Last year we included Todd Stat-ham's "Survey of Surveys" to help lecturers and students alike know about the chief survey books on African church and missions history. Another helpful resource is the online Dictionary of African Christian Biography. This resource can help one learn much about African church and mission history through biographical vignettes and stories. As able, I try to write entries which are missing for this online dictionary. Last year I contributed an article on Gutsche, a German Baptist missionary; this year one on William Threlfall. See, the Dictionary of African Christian Biography (DACB) at <http://www.dacb.org/index.html>.*

The development of early Wesleyan Methodism in a diversity of regions in southern Africa is associated with the missionary William Threlfall, despite the fact that he was only in southern Africa for the last four years of his short life. A review of his life reveals much about early 19th-century Methodism in England and its expansion in Africa.

Threlfall in England

William Threlfall was born at Hollowforth, Lancashire, England near Woodplumpton, Preston on 6 June, 1799. His father, Richard, had left the Church of England and identified openly with Methodism thereby making the family home a centre for local Methodist activity. The family was one of stable financial resources. Consequently, William received a good early education and can be considered very much a gentleman even though he did not attend Oxford or Cambridge. William was converted when sixteen while hearing a local Methodist preacher speaking on the Parable of the Prodigal Son:



When the preacher came to speak of the compassion of his father, against whom he had sinned – seeing him a great way off, – I could hold no more from weeping; my hardness gave way, and my soul was dissolved in penitential tenderness. While he spoke of the love of God to poor sinners, and His willingness to save all them who come unto Him (may I never forget it!...), He set my soul at liberty... Now I could praise God from a conviction of His mercy, and knew He was my Friend....

This conversion testimony clearly is in line with the then contemporary Methodist theology of conversion. There is also a hint here of Threlfall's future heart that desired others to know this reality.

At age eighteen Threlfall became a local preacher for the Methodists in Lancashire and with noted blessings as people were converted under his preaching. By October, 1817 he felt called to become a missionary to Madagascar. It appears that Threlfall had been reading extensive accounts of the work of the London Missionary Society on the island of Madagascar, and it was through this reading that his call focused upon this African island. This desire to minister on Madagascar was to stay with him the remainder of his life.

Threlfall's call to missions was first confirmed in a private meeting with the noted Methodist missionary Joshua Marsden of the West Indies, who interrogated Threlfall about his call. Marsden confirmed him in the call and urged him to read the lives of David Brainerd, Francis Xavier, John Eliot, and Henry Martyn. Following this reading, Threlfall was proposed as a candidate for the ministry by the Quarterly Meeting of the Garstang Circuit, Lancashire in March, 1820. This was followed by him being accepted at the District Meeting in Liverpool in May, 1820 when Dr. Adam Clarke was present. At that District Meeting, Threlfall's name was recommended to the Missionary Committee which was to meet in September, 1820 in London. Threlfall was accepted at that Committee meeting, which convened under the chairmanship of Jabez Bunting. The decision of the Committee was to determine the fitness of the candidate for missions. They did not rule out Madagascar but that was not their central concern.

Channel Islands

The Committee assigned Threlfall to proceed to labour in the Channel Islands before going to Africa. The purpose of this was to afford the young missionary candidate a month to assist and no doubt be mentored by John Brown (the former missionary to St. Domingo who was now on Jersey). Threlfall ended up serving almost one year in Jersey and Guernsey in the Channel Islands (October, 1820-September, 1821). It was a very full year of preaching, conducting class meetings and love feasts, visitation, and the study of French.

After leaving the Channel Islands, Threlfall returned to London, where he was ordained on 25 October, 1821 along with one other Methodist missionary – Threlfall for Africa and the other for the West Indies.

Cape Colony, Albany District (South Africa)

The Methodist Missionary Committee decided to send Threlfall to South Africa to work amongst the Xhosa with William Shaw in the Albany District. He was not sent to Madagascar at this time because the Wesleyan Missionary Society lacked funds to commence work there. Threlfall accepted their decision and so sailed for the Cape Colony in early January, 1822. He arrived into Cape Town in April, 1822 and stayed there with Rev. Barnabas Shaw, the general secretary of the Methodist Mission in the Cape Colony. Barnabas Shaw was one of the two preeminent founders of Methodist missions in South Africa – west and east. Threlfall's life was to be intertwined with Barnabas Shaw in many ways. Threlfall was then sent on to work with William Shaw, who had come to the Albany District in 1820 to work with the newly arrived settlers and to also do missions work. Preaching began in Salem and from there Threlfall itinerated. His trips took him to Somerset East and his time in Albany District included his preaching at the dedication of the new Methodist chapel in Grahamstown (10 November, 1822) as well as at the opening also of the new chapel in Salem (31 December, 1822). While in the District he travelled as far north-west as Graaff-Reinet. He had gone to Graaff-Reinet to encourage Rev. William Broadbent who had to leave Griquatown for medical assistance. While there, Threlfall met Dominee A. Faure of the Dutch Reformed Church, who gladly welcomed the two Methodist missionaries. It was here that Threlfall had some tutelage in Dutch from Rev. Broadbent.

William's Shaw's strategy was the formation of a chain of Methodist mission stations from Port Natal to the west of Salem. He wanted to see the settlers ministered to but also the development of indigenous missions. While there Threlfall was mainly ministering to the settlers and not to the indigenous Xhosas further into "Kafferland". He wanted to do more pioneering missions and longed for work in Madagascar. Threlfall was sent back in May, 1823 to work under Barnabas Shaw's direction with the free Coloured community and slaves in Cape Town after about only nine months in the Albany District. Threlfall had hardly arrived back to Cape Town when he was offered free passage by the captain of the *Lieven* as a missionary to Delagoa Bay (southern Mozambique). Barnabas Shaw and others concurred that Threlfall was the one to go in order to undertake the start of a Methodist Mission Station at Delagoa Bay. On the 22nd of July, 1823 Threlfall arrived at Delagoa Bay – the first Methodist missionary to attempt a mission station there.

Delagoa Bay (southern Mozambique)

Threlfall was granted a hut to use in the village of Stengelly by Majetta the Chief of the Kingdom of Temby. Here he began to study the local language by learning vocabulary and constructing sentences through practicing with the villagers. He also travelled further inland to other villages. However, in less than ten weeks (30 September, 1823), the first signs of fever (malaria) began. He recovered and proceeded with more visits into the interior plus a fourteen-mile trip up the coast to meet the Governor at the Portuguese Fort. However, the fever returned. It appears when he inquired about returning to the Cape he was refused passage by English sea captains, so he remained at the fort on the Portuguese side of Delagoa Bay and lived with a native from Goa named Tiexero. His time amongst the Portuguese appears to have been well spent in peace making in particular. Full recovery did not come so he hired two native boys to help him board a whaling ship, the *Nereid*, which had stopped at Delagoa Bay for fresh water and vegetables. The captain agreed to put him ashore at an inhabited port which would have either been Port Natal or St. Augustine's Bay. However, this did not happen as a fever epidemic broke out on the ship and the captain changed course from Madagascar to Cape Town. The source of the fever was from the fresh water taken on at Delagoa Bay. Threlfall wrote to his parents later that he had read the funeral service for thirteen of the crew and that he also had to help to "manage the ship". When the ship reached Cape Town, it was quarantined in Table Bay. The Methodist missionary James Whitworth obtained permission to board the ship and cleanse it and care for the sick and dying with the aid of the two native boys from Delagoa Bay.

Leliefontein, Little Namaqualand (South Africa)

Threlfall's recovery in Cape Town was slow, so Barnabas Shaw who was stationed at Leliefontein (Lilyfountain) in Little Namaqualand proposed that Threlfall come there to recover and labour as able. Thus, Threlfall is found at the Leliefontein Mission Station in the Kamiesberg on 24 October, 1824. Here recovery did happen and Threlfall quickly became very involved with life and ministry on the station: gardening, teaching in the school, preaching, visiting, and assisting in building a new mission house for the Shaws. Threlfall wrote home with much adulation about his experience working with the Namaquas at the station:

Probably the Namaquas as a tribe have the finest voices and best ears in the world, especially the females. They know nothing of Music as a science, but after getting the air of a tune, they, as if by a sort of instinct, find various chords for every note and so modify their voices that a stranger who could not see them would take their full strains for a fine-tuned Organ under the hand of a skilful musician, but soft and pure, and smooth, and flowing and easy and sim-

ple that one hymn tune sung by them is more gratifying to my ear than all the oratorios I have ever heard.

(22 December, 1824)

In the letter he went on to tell how the hymn tune *Calcutta* was popular at the Station with the Namaquas, and he encouraged them to learn the tune at Hollowforth in Lancashire, even including the staff music to aid them.

The Shaws ended up going to Cape Town for several months and Threlfall was left in charge of the Station. Upon Barnabas Shaw's return, it was decided to recommence a Methodist mission in Great Namaqualand near Warmbad. An earlier attempt in 1817 met with little success due to unrest at the time.

Great Namaqualand (Namibia)

The Namaqua peoples are a branch of the Khoikhoi and are distinct from the Bushmen in this region. The mission to Great Namaqualand that was resumed was by a party of three: William Threlfall and two Namaqua Christians, Johannes Jager and Jacob Links. Links was the first aboriginal from southern Africa to be accepted into the Methodist ministry in 1822.

These three men left Leliefontein in late June, 1825 and proceeded north with the hope of reaching the Fish River. They first crossed the Orange River and travelled northwest to Warmbad. Reaching Warmbad, they restocked and headed northward but had to return to Warmbad for unconfirmed reasons. Before setting out again, they obtained a guide for the northward journey: Naugauap, a Bushman. Evidently as they started north, two more Bushmen joined the party; these men were known to the guide. This development created some controversy as Threlfall opposed their joining them.

A few nights later the three missionaries were asleep when the two Namaqua Christians were murdered. Threlfall awoke and called out but he too was then struck and murdered. The guide and his assistants removed their clothing, took all articles from the men, left their bodies there and departed. There were weeks of speculation as to whether or not the three were alive or not.

It is likely that the murders of the three missionaries took place about the middle of August, 1825, perhaps August 11th. Details about their murders came out eventually in the trial which followed. The one accomplice was flogged and Naugauap was executed.

Tilman Dederling states that the murders occurred at what was latterly called Dakakabis. The remains of the three missionaries were buried in 1835 by the Wesleyan missionary, Edward Cook. Their remains were discovered again in 1986 and a memorial was erected on a farm, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Windhoek, Namibia on 14 September, 1987.

It would appear that the attempt by the Wesleyan Methodists to resuscitate the mission into Great Namaqualand ended in failure. However, the

death of Threlfall particularly moved Josiah Nisbett to encourage the Methodists to enter Great Namaqualand once again and to assist with finances. In 1834 a Wesleyan missionary, Edward Cook, was sent and at Warmbad a mission station was established for the Methodists. The work slowly advanced in Great Namaqualand by the Methodists who, due to financial constraints, officially turned over their stations there to the Rhenish Missionary Society in 1867.

Summary Conclusion

William Threlfall's life ended at age twenty-six. He did not leave any organized mission stations, churches, or educational centres which he could claim to have founded. Thus some may be inclined to see such a missionary as a failure. Not all missionaries leave a legacy of a string of new stations or churches. Rather Threlfall belongs to a long list of those who pioneered work for others to follow and establish.

In assessing Threlfall's life one must emphasise the evident impact of his preaching with effect in Lancashire; the way he was greatly beloved after one year in the Channel Islands such that those to whom he ministered had his portrait painted so that he could be remembered when he left for Africa, surely a sign of affection; the testimony of William Shaw about Threlfall's one year in the Albany District and his involvement particularly with the settler chapels at their beginning phase; the short term at Delagoa Bay that in due time led to the Wesleyan Methodists establishing their mission work there (interestingly enough Threlfall was not forgotten as the name of the mission was the Threlfall Mission); and the testimony of Barnabas Shaw concerning Threlfall which speaks of his spiritual worth:

To all that has been stated respecting him, – Mr. Threlfall—I can bear testimony; but yet the one-half has not been told. For spirituality of mind and earnestness in prayer, for affection to the natives, and a longing desire by all means to win them to Christ; for deadness to the world and zeal for the glory of the Redeemer in the extension of the gospel, I never saw his equal.

Dederling recently wrote about Threlfall as having “a religious zeal that borders on fanaticism”. This assessment runs contrary to Barnabas Shaw's assessment. It is further contrary to all of the evidence also from Threlfall's contemporaries in the Wesleyan Methodist Society: for all of them it was a matter of life and death to take the gospel to the world (the three stated, “they have faithfully warned us, but being disposed to proceed in what we all think to be our duty to God and fellow men...”). Two interpretations emerge, but this may be the case for many in Christian mission work. Threlfall and the other two missionaries who were murdered were going into a region, Great Namaqualand, which was highly unstable at the time, but they saw the gospel as a calling regardless of the cost.

Threlfall's murder certainly impacted Wesleyan Methodist work in the United Kingdom. His example and life and death – martyrdom – became an inspiration to many to take up the work of foreign missions. Some testified that his example inspired them into missionary service. James Montgomery, the noted hymnist, wrote a popular poem to Threlfall's memory.

Finally, Threlfall's involvement with the Wesleyan Methodist Society in southern Africa connects him to two of the founding Wesleyan missionaries, Barnabas Shaw and William Shaw, and the first indigenous Wesleyan minister. Threlfall's work in Africa also falls into the period of the next wave of new societies entering southern Africa to explore and to commence new stations across a vast region. Thus, Threlfall represents that new grouping of pioneering missionaries who were to enter southern Africa in the critical years of the 1820s as the new societies began to flourish.



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The Story of Zion in Africa

Jonathan Emanuelson*

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After studying church history, it is evident that there have been times when the church drifted from the teachings of the Bible. However, it is also evident that at such times God raised up dynamic Christian movements in order to bring the church back to the truth of His word. The Zion movement was one of those movements.

In the late 1800s, a Scottish minister in a Congregational church in Australia by the name of John Alexander Dowie¹ felt deeply burdened by what he saw happening in the church. He felt that Christians were not living in full obedience to Jesus Christ because of false teachings, their lack of faith in the reliability of Scripture, and their desire to fit in with the ways of the world. He believed that many Christians were falling asleep spiritually. Therefore, he started a Christian movement that wholeheartedly embraced Scripture as reliable and authoritative and emphasized the need for God’s people to live holy lives.

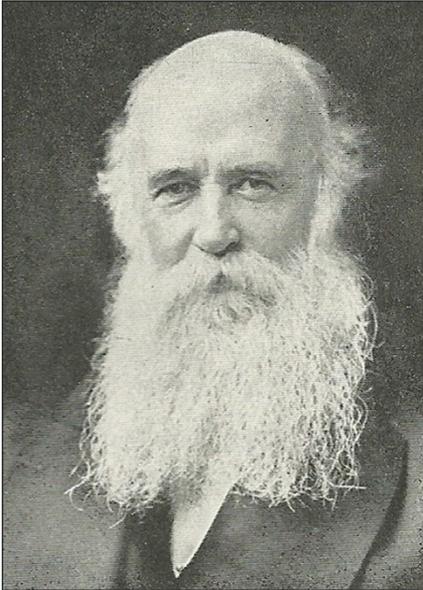
Another distinctive of the movement was the practice of praying for those in the church who were physically ill. This emphasis developed in the movement largely due to a terrible plague that swept through Australia at that time. To this movement he gave the name “Zion” since the Bible teaches in the book of Hebrews that believers in Christ are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and, therefore, should live like they belong there. So the name “Zion” was used because the goal of the movement was to encourage Christians to set their minds on their true and eternal home, the city where God will forever dwell with His people.

¹ For a brief overview on Dowie, see D. W. Faupel, “Dowie, John Alexander”, in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, org. ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 256.

It is important to point out that the Zion movement was not alone in its effort to awaken churches from their spiritual apathy at that time. For example, there was a dynamic movement happening within the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. This movement was being led by a minister named Andrew Murray, who was also well known for his emphasis on holiness and divine healing.

The Formation of the Christian Catholic Church in Zion

After the Zion movement became well known in Australia, Dowie decided to go on a missionary tour, which would begin with the United States of America (USA). In the early 1890s, Dowie arrived with his family in Chicago and felt that it should become his ministry headquarters. God opened a great door for preaching the gospel there, though it was accompanied by much persecution.



Rev. John Alexander Dowie

While in Chicago, Dowie started what he called “healing homes”. Christians who were sick came to stay in these homes to receive prayer and Christian teaching until they recovered. This drew a lot of attention and was an attractive feature of the movement to many.

Along with many people converting to Christianity through the Zion movement, many who were already Christians wanted to join it as well. However, sometimes their churches did not welcome them back after they began adhering to the teachings of the Zion movement, leaving them without a church home. As a result, Dowie felt that it was necessary to organize a church within the Zion movement so that they would have a place to fellowship. This church was founded in Chicago with five hundred charter members on February 22, 1896, and was called the “Christian Catholic Church in Zion”. The name Catholic, meaning “universal”, was used in the name because the Zion message emphasized the point that the good news about Jesus is for all people. News about the formation of this church spread quickly, even around the world, with the help of a weekly publication of the Zion movement called the *Leaves of Healing*.

The Arrival of the Zion Movement to South Africa

One country in particular that warmly welcomed this news through the *Leaves of Healing* was South Africa. The first main contact there for the Christian Catholic Church in Zion was a Congregational pastor living in Jo-

Johannesburg named Johannes Buchler. He began reading the *Leaves of Healing* and wanted his church to be affiliated with the Zion church in Chicago. After contacting Dowie, Buchler became the first South African pastor for the Christian Catholic Church in Zion in 1898. Buchler proved to be a significant person for the spread of this Christian movement in South Africa primarily because he influenced two other key ministers living in South Africa to join it as well. Those two ministers would shortly thereafter deliver the Zion message to many Africans, beginning with the Zulus and Sothos.

The first of these two ministers was Buchler's brother-in-law, Edger Mahon. Mahon was already an effective minister to the Zulus for the Salvation Army at that time. In the early 1900s, Mahon became deathly ill from tuberculosis and was told that he only had a few weeks to live. Upon hearing of this, Buchler sent a letter of encouragement to Mahon telling him not to give up hope and then travelled from Johannesburg to pray for him. The Lord answered his prayer by restoring Mahon's health. As a result, Mahon became a missionary for the Zion movement, and many of the Zulu people he had been ministering to through the Salvation Army also energetically embraced Zion's name and teachings about Christ. Along with ministering to the Zulus, a great door was opened for him to bring the gospel to the Sothos as well.

The other key minister that Johannes Buchler was responsible for bringing into the Zion church movement was a man named Petrus Louis Le Roux. Le Roux was also already an effective missionary to the Zulus through the Dutch Reformed Church. Le Roux had been a student of Andrew Murray and saw him as a mentor even after completing his formal education. After learning about the Zion movement from Buchler, Le Roux joined it in 1903. Like Mahon, he was accompanied by many of the Zulu people to whom he had been ministering. As a result of the labours of these three ministers (Buchler, Mahon, and LeRoux) joining the Zion work, the first members of the Zion movement in South Africa consisted of believers primarily from the following ethnicities: Afrikaans, British, Zulu, and Sotho.

At that time, there arose a great need for the Christian Catholic Church in Zion to be organized in South Africa. Due to this, Dowie decided to send Rev. Daniel Bryant and his wife, Emma. A church deacon and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Rideout, also accompanied them. Much of their time was spent in Johannesburg as Rev. Bryant was pastoring a congregation there.

As the church work went forward in South Africa under the banner of Zion, rapid growth was happening especially among the Zulus and Sothos. This eventually spread to many other African people groups as well. It is important to note some of the reasons the Zion movement began to grow so quickly among the African people. One reason was that the issue of taking care of everyone in the community was of great interest to them. Therefore, the teaching about praying for the sick in the church naturally resonated with that value. In addition, the fact that the Zion message emphasized the importance of all nationalities to God brought a sense of dignity that many were

hungering for. Furthermore, the timing of the arrival of the Zion movement coincided with the Anglo-Boer war. This created an extraordinary hunger for the gospel message, which the Zion movement was powerfully delivering.



Daniel Bryant visiting Mr. and Mrs. Le Roux and Early Zulu Zionists at Wakkerstroom, 1904

Some of the first African Zionists

At this point in explaining the story of Zion in Africa, it is crucial to take time to look at the lives of some of the African Zionists during the early 1900s. It was a marvelous work that God was doing in the lives of many. For example, there were remarkable African ministers like Timothy Mabuza, a former Methodist Evangelist from Natal, who joined the work after hearing Mahon preach. Mabuza travelled extensively and was responsible for bringing hundreds of drunkards, witch doctors, and others to repentance and faith in Christ. On one occasion, a man named Nongqai Mazibuko travelled fifty miles with his wife and dying daughter to meet Mabuza because he heard that Mabuza worked with Mahon and that sick people were healed through their prayers. When they arrived, Mabuza first explained the way of salvation to them through faith in Christ Jesus. However, the husband and wife were not interested in that but only came to seek healing for their daughter. Mabuza explained to them that God would not heal their child if they were going to continue living in their sin. So Mabuza prayed fervently for the salvation of this couple. After some time the couple began to understand their need to be forgiven, and they happily accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Mazibuko was so excited about this new life in Christ that he invited Mabuza to come to his village and share the good news about Jesus with all of his old friends.

Along with mentioning ministers like Timothy Mabuza, it is worth noting the significant role that choirs played in the early Zion ministry. When writing about a visit to Le Roux's ministry headquarters in Wakkerstroom, Bryant testified about an all-night church service, which included singing until morning. Likewise, Mahon trained a gospel choir which was known to have some remarkable voices. They even wrote some of their own hymns. It is said that their singing continually melted hard hearts to repent and believe the good news about Jesus.

Another remarkable characteristic of many of the first African Zionists was their courageous stance for Christian holiness. When Daniel and Emma Bryant visited Le Roux in Wakkerstroom, they were encouraged by the growing maturity of the converts that Le Roux had been teaching. For example, the converts had given up the practices of drinking beer and the use of tobacco. They had also given up all forms of witchcraft in which they had formerly trusted. Now, they were trusting in God alone and seeking to live lives that were pleasing to Him. While visiting there, Rev. Daniel Bryant baptized 141 believers in Christ. It was noted that the baptism that day was the most beautiful and quiet service they had ever witnessed.



Rev. Daniel Bryant baptizing 141 Christians at Wakkerstroom, South Africa, May, 1904

Just as in Chicago, converting to Christ in Africa often resulted in severe persecution from the worldly. A case in point was a woman who was converted through the preaching of Zachariah Zulu, who partnered in ministry with Timothy Mabuza. When she refused to make beer due to her Christian convictions, her husband was so angry that he thrust a spear through her chest. After seizing the weapon she managed to call for help. Through the prayers of many believers, God spared her life. Her husband was then arrested and put into prison. After recovering, she began to visit her husband in prison, bringing him food. Her Christian kindness eventually won him to Christ and upon his release he joined the church and became a local preacher.

There is no way to include all of the stories that are worth telling about the early Zionists and those who were affected by their ministry. The ones mentioned here are just examples to describe what the early Zion movement was like when it arrived and began to grow in southern Africa.

A sad turn towards syncretism

Unfortunately, although there were capable leaders among the African Zionists and devoted members in the churches, their connection with the Christian Catholic Church in Zion in the USA was lost at a critical time. Out of the four couples that played such a key role in starting the Zion movement in South Africa, only the Mahons continued in the work.² They did their best to influence as many as possible, but the fact is that many of the early Zionists were left without enough spiritual oversight and encouragement. The Zion movement continued to spread but was quickly becoming syncretistic as many began trying to combine Biblical teachings with traditional African beliefs. This happened due to the influence of another movement that was pressuring African churches to hold on to their traditional beliefs.

Today, Zionists make up a third of the African population in South Africa. In the neighboring country of Swaziland, half of the population considers themselves to be Zionists. It is estimated that there could be around fifteen to eighteen million Zionists in southern Africa, making it the fastest growing new religious movement in the world. Sadly, the message of the gospel was lost in the Zion churches due to the syncretism that set in.

Evidence of an awakening among the Zionists in Africa

Though it is very disheartening that the Zion movement in Africa drifted away from its original biblical teachings, something amazing has been happening in the last few decades. Many Zionists in Africa are asking for an explanation of their spiritual heritage and are once again expressing a deep hunger for pure biblical teachings. Hundreds of requests for help are being sent out on behalf of the Zionists in southern Africa.

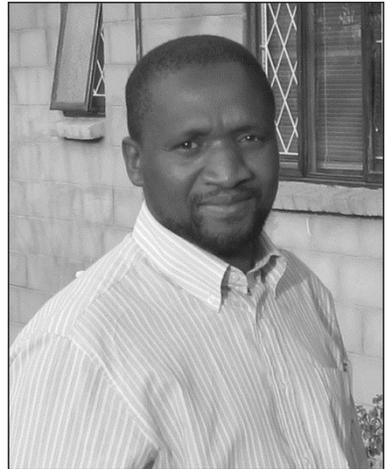
In the 1970s, the Christian Catholic Church in the USA was informed about the status of the Zionists in Africa. At that time, under the direction of Reverend R. Ottersen, strong efforts began to re-establish contact with the Zionists in southern Africa. In 1985, the Christian Catholic Church sent out Rev. and Mrs. Kuehl, the first missionaries to work among the Zionists in Africa since the Bryants. This was of great historical importance because they teamed up with the Mahon Mission, a work in South Africa that continued on from Edger Mahon's ministry. Together, the Christian Catholic

² The Bryants returned to the USA in 1908. Rev. Daniel Bryant then became the first pastor at a church known today as Grace Missionary Church (GMC). GMC partnered with the Mahons through prayer and financial support. In 1908, the Reoux withdrew from the Zion church work and joined the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM). Rev. Le Roux's efforts of bringing Zionists to AFM proved unsuccessful.

Church and the Mahon Mission began the large endeavor of reaching the millions of lost Zionists. To signify this, the Mahon Mission changed its name to the Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa (ZEMA). Since then, other significant mission organizations such as The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) and Serving In Missions (SIM) have begun partnering with ZEMA in this worthy work. The effort to reconnect the African Zionists with their historical Christian roots continues to this day and is steadily growing in missionary personnel.

In the past three decades, much progress has been made through the missionary endeavors. One significant tool for evangelism has been a course called “This We Believe”. This course explains the Evangelical Protestant roots of the Zion movement and the beliefs of the Christian Catholic Church. Along with this, a four-year Bible School program called “Zion Evangelical Bible School” (ZEBS) has been developed for the training of Zion leaders and has been growing steadily. Today, there are over forty locations in southern Africa (including in South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe) where ZEBS are being offered. The result of this work is that leaders with a passion for preaching the good news about Jesus Christ are once again being raised up among the Zionists.

One such example is a Zion minister named Robert Thunywashe. He received Christ as his Lord and Saviour at the age of twelve and then was greatly encouraged in the Lord by his grandmother. Later, he was encouraged to study at Union



Rev. Robert Thunywahe

Bible Institute in Pietermaritzburg, where he received a Diploma in Biblical Studies in 1997. In 1998, a ZEMA missionary named Richard Akers invited him to help with teaching and interpreting at the Zion Evangelical Bible School in Mtata. Today, Thunywashe, who has a sincere heart for winning fellow Zionists to Christ, is responsible for teaching about 120 students at six ZEBS in the Eastern Cape province.

An exemplary Zionist from the Kwa-Zulu Natal province is a minister named Khuba Mpungose. His mother was a witchdoctor and as a young person he was told that he was also expected to become one. However, after coming to faith in Christ alone for salvation, he told his family that as a Christian he was not allowed to do those things. Mpungose completed the ZEBS program as well as additional biblical studies in Durban and is now teaching at several ZEBS. He even had the privilege of influencing his own mother to put her faith in Christ.

In the Gauteng province of South Africa, there is a very influential ZEBS instructor named Godfrey Maseko. Soon after the Kuehls arrived to South Africa, they were welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Maseko and have been friends with them ever since. Soon after that time, Maseko gave his life to Christ. Later on, he completed the ZEBS program. However, after that, the Lord was putting it on his heart to study further. After being accepted to study at the International College of Bible and Missions in Roodeport, he immediately resigned from his job as a trainer for a printing company so that he could give his full time to biblical studies. Amazingly, the Lord provided all the funds necessary through a Christian friend and missionary. He completed the degree in 2004 and went on to complete an honors program in 2006. In 2004 he also began teaching at ZEBS. Now he is teaching at six locations in the Gauteng province. Recently, he and Tim Kuehl started a school in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. At the first class they had seventy-six Zionists students who were delighted to begin the program. At least one student travelled as far as four hundred kilometers to attend. It is truly amazing what God is doing once again among many such Zionists in southern Africa.

The aim of all this work is to assist in bringing the Zion church movement back to its faith in, and obedience to, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is so much more that could be said about the marvelous work that the Lord is doing among the Zionists in Africa. However, the information above is just meant to be a snapshot of what this ministry looks like. Again, the evidence suggests that an awakening is taking place among the Zionists in southern Africa, but only time will tell how the story will finish. May the Lord guide the movement back to Himself. If you are a believer in Christ, you are invited to pray for the Zionists in southern Africa. In fact, perhaps the Lord is calling you to join this work.

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Book Reviews
and
Book Briefs

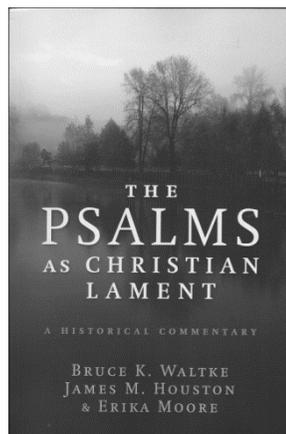
Book Reviews

The *Journal* uses the standard abbreviation ‘hc’ to denote hard cover. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) has been included with all books when available. We begin this section with “**Book Reviews**”, organized according to the four divisions of theology.

Biblical Theology

***The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary.* Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014, 328 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-6809-1**

The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary is a new follow-up to the 2010 title *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* by the same authors.¹ Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke brings to the table over six decades of Hebrew exegetical expertise. Combined with James Houston’s specialties of spiritual and historical theology, this distinctive commentary provides the best of current exegesis with the often-ignored voices of the Church’s ancient heritage. Erika Moore contributed the exegetical content of one chapter and also did overall editing. Whereas the first volume treats the Psalms as they are used in Christian tradition generally, this latest companion (half the length of the former) concentrates on that particular genre in the Psalter that outnumbers the rest: Psalms of lament, “which reflect upon the limitations, sufferings, fears, protestations, aspirations, as well as confession and penitence of the worshiper before God” (p. 7).



¹ For *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary*, see Jack Whytock’s review, *Haddington House Journal* 15 (2013): 39-41.

For years, much of evangelical worship has notably lacked the element of lament, confession, or penitence in its public liturgies. Compare this to ecclesiastical traditions in which formal confession and lament – albeit scripted – are fundamental features of corporate and private worship. Could it be that many Protestants, in reaction to what they consider the vain repetitions of empty ritual, have swung the pendulum the other way and now neglect this vital expression of communing with God? Churches who take a more cavalier approach to worship, or who strive for a more seeker-sensitive or “positive thinking” attitude in their services, would find public lament to be awkward at best, and offensive at worst. Yes, it is true that “Joy is the last word” for the Christian, “but lament may fill much of a Christian’s earthly sufferings” (p. 5).

Complaining to God, especially when driven by honest emotion, has been generally considered inappropriate by those who hold to a high view of the sovereignty of God over circumstances. Yet authors Waltke, Houston, and Moore attempt to disabuse readers of the notion that this genre of prayer was only suitable for the biblical psalmists, and they do so by laboring to develop a “theology of lament” (p. xv).

The book is structured with an introductory chapter followed by ten chapters of commentary on Psalms 5, 6, 7, 32, 38, 39, 44, 102, 130, and 143 respectively. Chapter 1 orients the reader to the nature of biblical lament and discusses its decline in Western society and its distortions in the modern era. The authors outline the Old Testament context for lament by offering a helpful summary of the psalmists’ worldview, and argue that the mere volume of lament in Scripture (one-third of the Psalter) tells us that the struggles and confusion that a believer suffers are not peripheral or abnormal in the life of faith, but central (p. 1). I feel this crucial point is what makes the book so relevant. *Psalms as Christian Lament* serves as a wake-up call to comfortable Christians, especially Westerners, who are becoming more and more aware of Christian suffering around the world due to innovations in media: displacements, kidnappings, or beheadings of brothers and sisters by Islamic terrorists and fascist regimes. Add to that the steady decline of religious freedoms they once enjoyed in Judeo-Christian societies and believers struggle to process the overwhelming challenges of our day. But of course even non-Christians also experience deep distress, and so because “depression is becoming a pandemic condition, which along with stress-related diseases is promoting much lament,” then “it is time we began to make more use of lament as a renewed focus for hope” (p. 2). A key theological distinction is made, however, between cultural causes that may give rise to lament and the primary causes of biblical lament:

Lament is a corollary of right-relatedness, since “to lament” is to express impaired or disrupted relationships. Its intensity is greatest when it is “before” and “about” God. In this sense a secular culture cannot “lament,” for when truth is relative, contingent, meaning-

less, and “anything goes,” then there is no basis for “biblical lament.” Rather righteousness/order and lament are set antithetically, as are light and darkness. (p. 5)

Rather than overlooking Psalms of lament as useful in devotional life, the Christian ought to have a robust theology of lament. After all, our Lord Jesus Himself cried out prayers and supplications to God in the school of suffering (Heb. 5:7ff), and we know He was well versed in these psalms (p. 14).

The ten chapters of commentary follow the same structure of four distinct parts. Part I is the “Voice of the Church”, which surveys the history of the particular psalm’s interpretation through one or more theologians of the past and how the text related to the personal context of the saint in question. This feature of the commentary is what makes it a unique volume. The authors tie the personal context of the historic figure into his study and literary output on the psalm to show the devotional, pastoral, and/or practical influence of the psalm. There are well-known and lesser-known characters in play, including Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Augustine, Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, Erasmus, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, and others.

Part II, the “Voice of the Psalmist: Translation”, presents a fresh translation of the psalm together with comprehensive footnotes dealing with technical text critical, grammatical, and syntactical issues. Part III is the authors’ commentary on the psalm, thoroughly treating all facets: literary context, form and rhetorical criticism, structure, exegesis, and message. Part IV, the conclusion, neatly wraps up the psalm’s overarching theological theme and is always Christ-centred, demonstrating how the message and petitions of the psalm are ultimately fulfilled by the glories of the gospel.

Regarding the audience, some of the analytic prose is dense and awkward, and much of the technical comments are for those with an academic background. The text-critical and grammatical discussions (not to mention the untransliterated Hebrew terms) are helpful only to those with intermediate training in Hebrew exegesis. Of course, any faithful expositor would be careful to pay attention to these matters while preparing to preach the text. Lay teachers would certainly benefit from this volume, although much of the material would be challenging to navigate through. Other commentaries on Psalms would be more accessible to a broader audience. Serious expositors should consider adding *The Psalms as Christian Lament* to their collection, as it embodies the most up-to-date biblical scholarship by world-class specialists from an evangelical, devotional perspective. The quality of the binding is sturdy and the typeface is very legible.

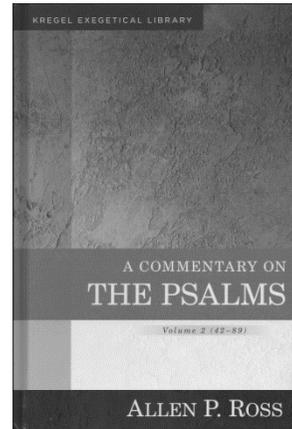
Reviewed by Andrew Belli, the assistant pastor at Redeemer Fellowship Church in Metro Boston. Andrew is a graduate of Crandall University and Gordon-Conwell Seminary.



***A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 2 (42-89)*. Allen P. Ross. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013, 841 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8254-2563-9**

Allan P. Ross is professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School. He is author of *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* and has authored other commentaries on the Old Testament including *Creation and Blessing: A Study and Exposition of Genesis* and *A Commentary on the Psalms, Volume 1*, in which he covers Psalms 1-41. The first volume was reviewed for this journal in 2013 and for a fuller review you can refer to that issue, pages 44-47.

This second volume is characterised by the same attention to scholarly exposition, Christ-centred discovery, and practical application. According to Ross, “My purpose in writing this commentary was to focus on the chief aim of exegesis, the exposition of the text” (p. 11). Ross claims, and rightly so, that too often lines are taken out of a psalm’s greater context. He wants readers to see that each line, each verse is to be seen in relation to the entire psalm and to the body of all of Psalms.



Ross divides his commentary along the following lines for each psalm:

– **Text and Textual Variants.** The author supplies his own translation of the text, explores other possible translations and the textual variants that have also been a part of the history of the psalm’s interpretation.

– **Composition and Context.** This is a very helpful section. Here Ross draws our attention to the possible authors and tries (based on the evidence of the heading, internal evidence, or how the psalm is quoted elsewhere) to determine the historical context of the psalm.

– **Exegetical Analysis.** Here he outlines the psalm into main headings and sub-headings as he sees them emerge in order to give preachers a better framework for delivering the psalm.

– **Commentary in Expository Form.** In this section Ross draws attention to words or phrases that enable us to bring out the meaning of the passage more clearly.

– **Message and Application.** The author focuses here on the main point of the psalm, how it applies in the life of the believer, and any Christological applications that can be drawn in order that believers can be called to put their trust in the One to whom all Scripture points.

Ross has a helpful reminder in the section on Message and Application: a one sentence summary of the psalm (or psalm segment) is useful for maintaining the focus of your message and points can be extracted to serve that main, summary statement. For example, one possible summary given for Psalm 45 and the application to Christ and His church is, “Because the royal

bridegroom is majestic, powerful and righteous, the bride must take every care to please Him so that their union will be glorious” (p. 79).

Students of the Psalms will notice the many references to Jerusalem or Zion as the dwelling place of God. Ross does not bring any unhelpful divisions between the church and Israel; rather he is content to draw on the timeless principle that the people of God is His dwelling place. This allows Ross to make application with the Psalms that take us from the tabernacle to the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation.

This is another of its great strengths. It is unashamedly Christo-centric. Each psalm under the heading “Message and Application” draws the reader’s attention to the ultimate meaning of the Scriptures – that being God’s redemptive work through Christ, whom the Psalms clearly set forth as prophet, priest, and king. In commenting on Psalm 45, which highlights the messianic King and His bride, Ross writes, “John clearly asserts that the bride was instructed to clothe herself with white linens, which are the righteous acts of the saints. The mention of the royal bridegroom draws on biblical imagery begun in Psalm 45” (p. 80).

As with the previous volume, this commentary is just technical enough without being over whelming. Allen Ross has heavily footnoted his work, which is a further witness to his competency and years of working with this book of the Bible.

It is encouraging to see this second step toward completing this set on the Psalms. When a commentary makes you eager to get into a book and start to preach it, it has accomplished a good work. Ross has done a service in providing students of Psalms a rich entrance into a book so heavily laden with gospel truth. I believe the price of the book will be repaid back in manifold ways.

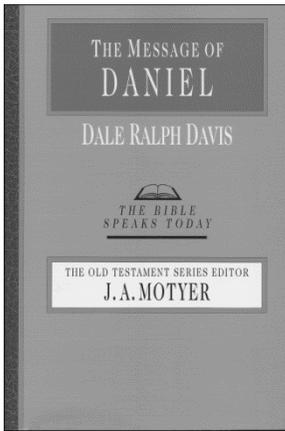
Reviewed by Kent I. Compton, the minister of the Western Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island and a trustee of Haddington House.



***The Message of Daniel.* Dale Ralph Davis. *The Bible Speaks Today*, gen. ed. J. A. Motyer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013, 169 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-2438-0**

Dale Ralph Davis is known to many of us as one who has proved an invaluable guide through the historical world of the Old Testament including a study of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel [*1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* and *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity – Focus on the Bible*], and 1 and 2 Kings [*1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly* and *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury – Focus on the Bible*] His refreshing approach, solid grasp of the biblical text, and his Christ-centred applications have made him an indispensable compan-

ion in that genre. Davis is former pastor of Woodland Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson.



Though a very different genre, the prophetic literature of Daniel is also a place where Davis feels comfortable while retaining many of the characteristics which made his other works so appealing.

This work is the latest offering in the much loved *The Bible Speaks Today* series of commentaries from IVP. According to the general preface in the commentary, the purpose of the series is threefold: to expound the biblical text with accuracy, to relate it to contemporary life, and to be readable (p. 7).

Textual and dating issues which have proved such an area of controversy in Daniel are dealt with adequately, hitting on all the traditional centres of debate. Davis defends an early dating of Daniel in part because of the Aramaic used in the latter half of the prophesy, to which liberal scholars point to prove a late date. He says that “nine-tenths of the Aramaic vocabulary used in Daniel is attested in the other texts of the fifth century and before” (p. 16). Furthermore, suggests Davis, “...the Aramaic of Daniel...is simply part of an Imperial Aramaic that could fall anywhere from the 600-330 B.C. range” (p. 17).

Davis in his introductory essay helpfully breaks the book up into three major divisions. The first he entitles “The Place Where Faithfulness is Lived”, consisting of chapter 1. Chapters 2-7 he entitles “The God to Whom the Kingdom Belongs”. Lastly, chapters 8-12 “The People to Whom the Kingdom is Given”. For preachers, it is this sort of content arrangement that provides a helpful starting point as we swoop down into the finer details.

One cannot review Davis without mentioning how he intersperses his humour to drive home his points. He compares the Spirit-given resolve of Daniel in the midst of an otherwise overpowering regime with the kings whose foundations seem to be crumbling around him. While Daniel and his friends were enabled by God’s grace to exercise great self-control and faithfulness, Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of the mightiest empire of the day, when disturbed by a dream from God responds otherwise. “He’s king of Babylon and he’s shaking as he unbuttons his PJs in the morning” (p. 39). Who else could get away with prefacing his remarks on the seventy weeks with a reference to a Peanuts cartoon. Yet, he makes it work!

You won’t find Davis using a heavy hand on the finer points of the prophesy. There is no question that Davis, despite his assurances of not being a prophetic scholar, has done his homework – from the broad discussions on eschatological view points to the finer linguistic nuances that could sway a passage either this way or that in your interpretation. However, he asserts

that while he has his opinions, yet he reserves his strongest assertions for the broader principles that arise out of Daniel, especially the apocalyptic sections (chapters 7-12). To me, this is not a cop-out but simply acknowledging that faithful scholars have differed widely on the details of Daniel's prophesy, but broader agreement and application can be realized in the clearer principles which present themselves more readily.

Daniel 7, says Davis, "provides us with a kind of overview of history" (p. 94). For example, Davis in explaining the fourth beast in Daniel 7 can say that the Roman Empire is the most natural identification, yet more broadly it speaks of the last great human expression of human evil and rebellion (pp. 95-96). From there he highlights some of the more vicious expressions of human evil down through the ages, concluding that Daniel's "vision is telling us that history is beastly; it is scary. He wants us to hold a clear realism about life in this world" (p. 97).

Davis says, "Seeing this secret behind history may not keep God's people from pain but should keep them from panic: we may still be fearful but should not be frantic" (p. 101).

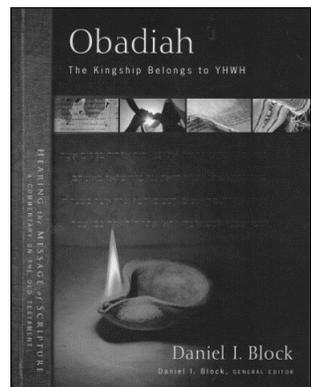
This is a commentary that serves both the laity and preachers. Davis doesn't load the text with too many technical points but allows for a good flow for reading. He retains the technical elements but keeps them in the footnotes. It definitely serves as a wonderful entry point into the book of Daniel.

Reviewed by Kent I. Compton

***Obadiah: The Kingship Belongs to YHWH.* Daniel I. Block. Hearing the Message of Scripture, gen. ed. Daniel I. Block. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 128 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-94240-5**

Obadiah is the first commentary in the series Hearing the Message of Scripture. Daniel Block, a trusted name in evangelical scholarship, is Gunther H. Knoedler Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and also serves as the series general editor. His other commentaries include Judges, Deuteronomy, and Ezekiel.

Block says that the series is driven by the reality of the divine inspiration of the Bible and therefore the need to provide commentaries that draw attention to the "rhetorical agendas of the authors". He further states: "The commentators in this series recognize that too little attention has been paid to biblical authors as rhetoricians, to their larger rhetorical and theological agendas" (p. 9). This rhetorical accent is due to the fact, he says, that few Hebrews had access



to the physical text. The message would then have been written in such a way as to be heard; and if heard, then the message was constructed to maximize rhetorical effect upon the hearers (p. 9).

Block summarises the intent of the series in the following ways. Attention is drawn principally to 1) The main points the writers are making, 2) How they makes these points, and 3) How the text fits within the book and whole of scripture (p. 10).

The six mains areas covered in each chapter are as follows:

- 1) **The Main Idea of the Passage.** This involves a summary of one or two sentences.
- 2) **Literary Context.** Here the text is seen in context of the book and Bible as whole.
- 3) **Translation and Exegetical Outline.** The author provides a fresh translation and outline of the book.
- 4) **Structure and Literary Form.** An introductory section to the passage is provided to highlight the rhetorical style of the author in communicating the message.
- 5) **Explanation of the Text.** This section includes a more comprehensive look at the text, the message involved, and the various tools used by the author to communicate his message. Here the emphasis is on the Hebrew in an attempt to draw out the various rhetorical nuances used by the original author in an effort to communicate more effectively.
- 6) **Canonical and Practical Significance.** Here the author draws attention to how the message is applicable to us, how it is seen in the broader context of biblical theology, especially as these themes are applied by the New Testament writers.

In this commentary in particular, Block proposes six dating theories regarding its composition and discusses each at length. He seems to favour the mid-6th century theory, the time when it seems that Obadiah ministered in Jerusalem at the time of its demise. (p. 23)

The thrust of the prophesy he states is as follows:

First, divine justice will prevail with respect to Israel's kinsmen the Edomites, who had gloated over Judah's fall. Second, divine fidelity will prevail with respect to the descendants of Jacob themselves, presently dispersed among the nations and divorced from their homeland. (p. 35)

Block guides students into identifying a rhetorical structure to the prophets. He (and presumably those that follow in this series) draws readers' attention to word choices that more sharply define the tone of the text. "Perhaps we do best to classify its style as a heightened form of rhetoric-impassioned speech that attempts to transform the minds and hearts of the audience, replacing cynicism and doubt with confidence and hope" (p. 37). For example: "Obadiah's preference for the name Esau reflects his rhetorical style...to him

Edom is a person, the brother of Jacob, who shares a common ancestry in the first two patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, but whose history of violence against his brother will finally be answered.” (p.51-52) Along with this, Block emphasises the rhetorical tools of repetition by Obadiah to drive home his point. In verses 12-14 he speaks of “the day of his misfortune...the day of their ruin...the day of distress... the day of their doom” (p. 74). Block emphasises the intentionality of the author in these devices; this is something hopefully any good commentator would identify.

How does one apply in a contemporary context a book which seems to be frozen in an historical context? Here again Block does a lot of footwork for us. He shows how Obadiah drew heavily upon the other prophets such as Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, that Edom is representative of all nations, and that how God deals with Edom is similar to how He deals with other nations. Block states, “As in Isaiah, to Obadiah Edom represents all who stand in opposition to YHWH and who abuse His people and the picture he paints of Edom’s demise is paradigmatic of YHWH’s ultimate vindication of his people and triumph over all those who oppose him” (p. 108).

Block includes many sidebar comparisons between Obadiah and the other prophets, demonstrating how heavily he leaned upon them, but also underscoring the significant continuity with the prophets as a whole. This allows readers to develop a line of thinking in areas which Obadiah doesn’t explicitly state but is clearly elucidated in other books, books which continue to extend those lines forward to Christ.

In concluding the commentary, Block writes,

In Christ, not only the prophesy of Obadiah, but all of God’s promises to Israel are fulfilled. In Christ, Gentile believers are grafted into the vine and made heirs of those promises (Rom 11:17-24). In Christ the high and mighty are cast down and the humble are exalted. In Christ God vanquishes the kingdom of darkness and all who stand in opposition to him and his people (Col 2:15). In Christ those who like Israel deserve judgement for their rebellion are reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:19). The dominion belongs to YHWH in Jesus Christ. (p. 116)

Block’s broader and more detailed outlines of the book provide wonderful access points for approaching and preaching this neglected prophet. For the shortest book of the Bible, containing no more than twenty-one verses, this is in my view a very substantial and exhaustive work on Obadiah. Combining technical proficiency, biblical theology, and practical Christ-centred application, this commentary on Obadiah ought to be a confident resource for any student of Scripture.

Reviewed by Kent I. Compton

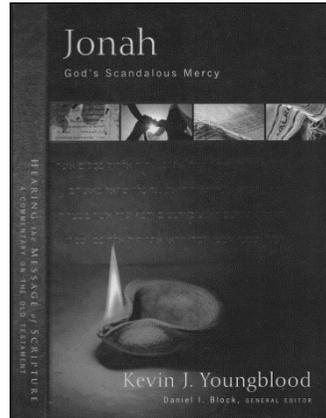
***Jonah: God's Scandalous Mercy.* Kevin J. Youngblood. Hearing the Message of Scripture, gen. ed. Daniel I. Block. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 186 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-28299-0**

Jonah: God's Scandalous Mercy is one of two new commentaries in the Hearing the Message of Scripture series published by Zondervan. Kevin Youngblood, its author, is associate professor of Biblical Studies at Harding University. (For a more developed treatment of some of the distinctive of this commentary series see the review on Obadiah, p. 51.)

Youngblood states that the book explores various questions, but chief among them (in his words) are: “1) How do divine mercy and divine justice interact without cancelling each other out? 2) How do God’s universal sovereignty and particular covenant with Israel interact without cancelling each other out?” (pp. 28-29).

Because the series is called Hearing the Message of Scripture, Youngblood looks at five elements Jonah uses to accentuate the word not simply as read but heard. First, there is the use of parallelism. Here we can think of the two parallel passages where God calls Jonah in 1:1 and 3:1. Second, there is the use of alternating scenes. Youngblood points out how the scenes in Jonah alternate between Jonah’s interaction with God and then with people. Third, Youngblood points out a symbolic use of geography and climate, drawing attention to the symbolic significance of the dry land and tempestuous sea – long seen as a place of judgment. Fourth, there is the use of intertextuality, which is simply a fancy word to draw out attention to allusions Jonah makes to other parts of the Bible which the author is aware of and draws upon. Finally, there is the use of textual information gaps whereby the inspired author withholds information that is explained later, such as the reason for Jonah fleeing in the first place (pp. 38-42). These five elements contribute to Youngblood’s overall purpose of showing the rhetorical value in the book, and he does so persuasively. In fact, this is perhaps the greatest distinctive of this series.

Concerning Christology, Youngblood underscores the strong thematic elements that, as he says, mirror “all of the elements crucial to the mission Jesus came to launch: a journey from death to back to life, an acknowledgment of the potential offensiveness of divine mercy and a focus on YHWH’s concern for the nation”. Youngblood further expands those themes by tracing them throughout the New Testament to Paul’s mission to the Gentiles, which was ultimately used to stir up the Jews. These are very helpful jumping off



points in showing the book of Jonah's broader application and how such a relatively short book "punches above its weight" among the prophets.

One stumbling block for many concerning the book of Jonah has obviously been the plausibility of a man surviving in the belly of a great fish for so long and living to tell the tale. Yet Youngblood gives no attention to it. Dale Ralph Davis spends a great deal of time on the dating of Daniel in his commentary because as he says "others have made such a big deal of it". (*The Message of Daniel*, p. 15) One has to wonder why Youngblood has not addressed this question, even in some small measure.

This is a substantial commentary in every way. It can compete at a technical level with the best scholarly commentaries, and yet it richly communicates in a plain style the redemptive message culminating in Christ. The technical and explanatory sections are clearly marked off for those who choose this commentary for one or the other category, which helps you to identify the section you want quite easily. It is attractively laid out with informative sidebars comparing the book with other books along with helpful outlines.

If however you are dissatisfied with Youngblood's take on Jonah, he does provide quite an extensive bibliography at the beginning of the commentary.

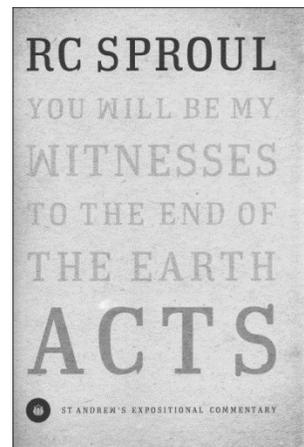
I warmly recommend this commentary and new series.

Reviewed by Kent I. Compton

***Acts: You Will Be My Witnesses to the End of the Earth.* R. C. Sproul. St. Andrew's Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010, 440 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4335-2273-4**

This volume was my first to read in the St. Andrew's Expository Commentary series, and I do not think it will be the last. I have found it to reflect a maturity in Sproul's writing, and it appears to have had good editing and care taken over its production.

The series title is clear, as is the series preface (pp. 13-14), that this is not a technical commentary – though built upon this foundation – but is an edited transcription of Sproul's expositions at St. Andrew's Chapel, Florida. His approach is to focus "on the key themes and ideas that comprised the 'big picture' of each passage" (p. 14). The book contains sixty-two chapters, an average of about two chapters per each chapter from Acts. Each chapter begins with the text for that particular study from *The New King James Version*. The



chapter titles are generally descriptive of the text rather than “punchie” sermon titles, so one can quickly see what the passage’s content is about. The page layout includes Scripture text in bold in the expositional section and bold sub-headings. There are no endnotes, footnotes, or bibliography, so it makes for a very clean text. I think some suggestions might have been made somewhere as to works for further study for the serious reader wanting more. This could have been limited to one page at the end before the index of names. In this regard I prefer the apparatus at the end of R. Kent Hughes’ *Acts*¹ in the Preaching the Word series with a very helpful set of notes, Scripture index, general index, and index of sermon illustrations. Also, I personally like seeing a map or maps when I am studying through Acts. I think one or more should have been included in the commentary. However, that being said, it is the main text of the book which is still the most important. Sproul does very well here and is a great blessing to the reader. He is not verbose. Acts offers many challenges, and the author generally deals with these head-on but in a clear and gracious manner – for example on Pentecostalism, neo-Pentecostalism, or the Charismatic movement.

This book would be a fine resource for teachers in Bible classes or Bible study groups. It would also be an excellent personal devotional series to follow daily over two months. I heartily recommend it and look forward to more in this series.

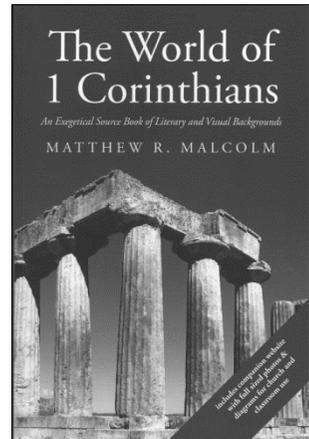
Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***The World of 1 Corinthians: An Exegetical Source Book of Literary and Visual Backgrounds.* Matthew R. Malcolm. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013, 169 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62032-983-2**

This commentary by Dr. Malcolm, lecturer in New Testament at Trinity Theological College, Perth, Australia, is to my knowledge, the first of its kind. It is not intended to be a stand-alone exegetical commentary, but instead is intended to enhance standard commentaries by focusing on the ancient literary and visual backgrounds of 1 Corinthians. In fact, its value as such extends beyond that of 1 Corinthians, because the insights gained from the ancient literature of the period have application to most New Testament writings. The book is well organized and easy to read, though it does not flow like a conventional commentary where the focus on interpretation rather than on gathering relevant information moves the reader forward.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Aflame*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996). See also Gordon J. Keddie, *You Are My Witnesses: The Message of the Acts of the Apostles*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1993).

The introduction includes extensive annotated lists of the locations, artifacts, literary and rhetorical features, customs and rituals, and concepts and beliefs that occur in 1 Corinthians so that the identification and discussion of any of these features may easily be located within the body of the commentary. Dr. Malcolm also helpfully reviews the recent history of scholarly debate concerning the overall arrangement of 1 Corinthians and concludes that it is unified by the theological pattern of the cross versus human wisdom (chapters 1-4), the cross applied to individual morality of bodies (5-7), the cross applied to relations within the body of Christ (8-14), and finally, the reversal of the cross in resurrection (15). In another preliminary chapter, the author adds significant value to this resource by supplying brief annotated biographies of each of more than sixty ancient authors whose works are featured in the commentary.



The main commentary section is consistently arranged to follow the text of 1 Corinthians according to the detailed structure presented at the end of the introduction. For each thought unit the author includes his own translation of the text, highlights notable words or phrases, and then comments on the Old Testament and ancient literary backgrounds with relevant citations. He also frequently inserts photographs and illuminates their significance for understanding the passages. Over three hundred footnotes add brief explanations of the contexts from which each quotation of the ancient literature has been extracted.

All of the above make this a valuable book for any minister, theological student, or serious Bible teacher. However, to my mind, the most stimulating and insightful sections of the entire book are the excursions on the Jewish motif of reversal (chapters 1-4 and chapter 15) and on the flow of Pauline ethics (chapters 5-14). Firstly, Dr. Malcolm provides convincing evidence that “the dual motif of the condemned boaster and the vindicated sufferer ... is well attested in the Old Testament and Jewish literature, and essential for early Christian reception of Jesus” (p. 6). Thus, Dr. Malcolm suggests that “the whole of 1 Corinthians is intentionally structured by this common pattern of reversal, in order to summon the Corinthians to trustingly follow the path of the presently-scorned but ultimately-vindicated Messiah, rather than the values of the presently-powerful but ultimately-condemned Roman elite” (p. 132). Secondly, Dr. Malcolm provides evidence that 1 Corinthians follows a general pattern of Pauline ethics, moving from issues of sexual immorality, greed, and impurity of bodies to interactional issues of rights and freedoms within the body of Christ (cf. pp. xxiii, 47) which is consistent with the broad ethical arrangement found in ancient Jewish and other relevant works

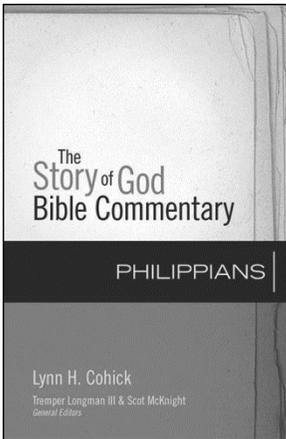
of the Hellenistic-Roman period (cf. pp. 47, 60).

Thus, I commend this book as a worthy read and a worthy addition to the Bible scholar's library.

Reviewed by Dr. Greg Phillips, a Zimbabwean who is lecturer in Bible and Theology at Dumisani Theological Institute, King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa.



Philippians. Lynn H. Cohick. **The Story of God Bible Commentary**, gen. eds. Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 283 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-32724-0.



This commentary by Lynn Cohick, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School, is one of the first volumes in the new “The Story of God Bible Commentary Series” from Zondervan. As more and more commentary series appear, the question always arises as to the distinct benefits of another series. Cohick is one of the associate New Testament editors of the series, and so her contribution should give a good indication of the editorial intention of the series.

The contributors to the series (who are listed in in the front material) generally belong to a new generation of evangelical scholarship, although a few senior scholars such as Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight also contribute. Contributors represent a number of ecclesiastical traditions and confessional positions, as is typical in most recent evangelical commentary series. The NT series editor, Scot McKnight, states,

We wanted the authors to be exceptional scholars, faithful Christians, committed evangelicals, and theologically diverse, and we wanted this series to represent the changing face of both American and world evangelicalism: ethnic and gender diversity. I believe this series has a wider diversity of authors than any commentary series in evangelical history. (p. xiii)

McKnight also explains the title and intention of the series:

We want to explain each passage of the Bible's grand Story. ... In brief, we see the narrative built around the following biblical themes: creation and fall, covenant and redemption, law and prophets, and especially God's charge to humans as his image-bearers to rule under God. The theme of God as King and God's kingdom

guides us to see the importance of Israel's kings as they come to fulfilment in Jesus, Lord and King over all, and the direction of history toward the new heavens and new earth, where God will be all in all. (p. xiii)

This emphasis on biblical theology is a commendable goal and should have benefits for preaching and teaching ministries.

To give a good flavour of the commentary, I will focus on chapter 7 on Philippians 2:6-11. The format of this chapter reflects that found throughout the book. The chapter begins with a section entitled "Listen to the Story", which reproduces the text of the passage from the NIV (2011) edition. In this case, the translation incorporates the widely accepted translation of the Greek term *harpagmos* in verse 6, namely, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage". This is one of a number of notable instances where the new edition of the NIV makes a real step forward in a translation decision. In addition to the *pericope*, there is a selection of references to other texts listed below with the description, "Listening to the text in the Story". These readings (some quite lengthy, such as Genesis 1-3 and Isaiah 40-55) are intended to place the specific passage in the wider canonical context of God's purposes as revealed. A few brief comments summarise the significance of the passage.

The next section is entitled, "Explain the Story". Here Cohick sets the interpretation of the passage in the context of wider theological questions and emphasises the importance of "union with Christ" for understanding the text. Cohick also draws in the question of whether the text reflects rhetorical opposition to the empire. There then follows a more traditional exegetical section which is well-informed and engages with important literature helpfully in coming to conclusions. Some of the discussion is quite detailed (for example, the discussion of the appropriate translation of *harpagmos*) and suggests that it is expected that most readers will have some grounding in academic theological discussion. However, all references to the biblical languages are transliterated so competence in Greek and Hebrew is not essential in order to be able to use the commentary effectively. Cohick helpfully outlines various interpretive options before explaining her view. There is also a helpful emphasis on the relevance of OT texts. This section closes with some brief comments of the implications of the passage for today.

The next section is "Live the Story". This is not really an "application" section. Rather it attempts to address some bigger issues surrounding the reading of the text, which may include, but is not limited to, application. In this case, Cohick discusses the relationship between exegesis and doctrine in the interpretation of Philippians 2:6-11, the relevance of "Lady Wisdom" (Proverbs 8) for understanding the passage in Philippians, and also what Christian humility/humiliation means in modern life. On this latter point, Cohick comments,

Christ's lesson to us, demonstrated in the hymn, is that no job is below our pay grade, no task is 'beneath us,' and no service is so outstanding that it is worthy of God's special praise. ... The point is that cleaning up after a baby or an elderly parent is exactly who we are in Christ, even if we also run a company or are senior pastor of a church. (p. 130)

This commentary is well presented and written in readable prose throughout. There are numerous references to life experience and illustrations which help to keep the reader's interest and demonstrate the relevance of the biblical text to modern Christians, while the discussion of the text and wider theological questions is done carefully and effectively without sacrificing readability. It could easily be read from cover to cover as well as used as a reference work.

This commentary is a promising start to this new series. It bears some comparison with the NIV Application Commentary series and shares many of the strengths of that series. Pastors and preachers should find this volume and the series particularly useful, although general readers will also benefit from it.

Reviewed by Dr. Alistair I. Wilson, principal of Dumisani Theological Institute, King William's Town, and extraordinary professor of NT at North-West University, South Africa.



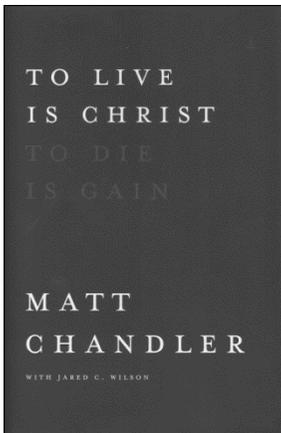
***To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain.* Matt Chandler and Jared C. Wilson. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2013, 222 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4347-0685-0**

To Live Is Christ, To Die is Gain appears to be a collection of sermons on Philippians from Matt Chandler that have been edited and condensed with the help of Jared Wilson. It is a very accessible and easy read for anyone who wishes to better understand the short letter from Paul to the church in Philippi, though the author's intended audience seems to be the casual or nominal Christian (i.e. someone who considers Christianity to be merely about conversion rather than discipleship). Considering that this is a collection of edited sermons, the most prudent way to proceed in reviewing a book like this will be to consider the three elements of what makes a good sermon: illustration, exposition, and application.

When it comes to the first element of a good sermon, Chandler is a master-illustrator. This is demonstrated before the reader gets past the introduction, as the author begins by reflecting on the growth of one his daughters. His point, which he argues is the primary purpose of the book, is that as a father wants his children to grow, so too "God wants us to grow from being infants in Christ to being mature in Christ" (p. 11). He uses several other il-

illustrations, primarily from his own life-experience (e.g. growing up in Texas and his first interactions with church as a teenager) but also from the life-experiences of others (e.g. members of his church who are living for Christ). As usual, Chandler's illustrations are exciting and enjoyable to read, but more importantly they are timely and help the reader understand and apply the biblical text.

Concerning exposition, due to the length of this very short book, many will consider this area lacking. That being the case, it is definitely evident



that Chandler wants to assist his reader in interacting well with the text of Philippians. The emphasis of some chapters is more on what he understands to be the theme verse of a given pericope rather than a more balanced approach to the whole section of biblical text. This means that he sometimes spends a fair bit of space (i.e. several pages) treating one verse but then simply glosses over several verses with only a sentence or two of explanation. Chandler does labour well though to provide helpful context, brief word-studies, and additional Bible verses and passages which relate to the text at hand.

On the matter of application, as with illustration, Chandler does a good job. It would be difficult to set down this book without having done some serious reflection on one's own walk with Christ. While there is application all throughout the book, it seemed to get stronger nearer to the end. Whether that was intentional or just a result of one chapter building upon another is uncertain. Regardless, it is clear that the author's hope for his reader is that he or she will not arrive at the end of the book unchanged, made most clear in his closing comments: "If the gospel can transform the world and hold in its powerful reach the promise of eternal life, certainly it can transform you this very day" (p. 219).

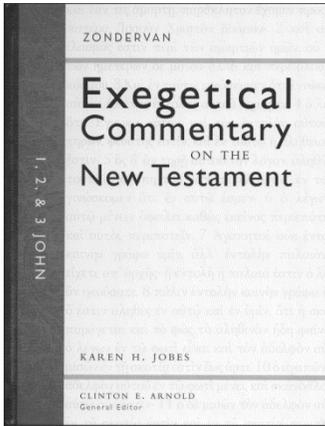
In conclusion, though the exposition could be more robust and balanced, and though it seems to be marketed and written more towards a person not growing in his or her faith, *To Live is Christ, To Die Is Gain* would be a welcomed addition to any Christian's library. With the lack of theological books coupled with the abundance of fluffy Christian living books lining Christian bookstore shelves today, a short, readable collection of expositions is a worthy and valuable addition to the market. With Chandler's unique ability to illustrate and apply the text, this will no doubt be a book which helps to strengthen and expand the kingdom of God.

Reviewed by Sean Crowe, a native of Vancouver, B.C. presently serving as Senior Pastor of Gospel Light Baptist Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia.



1, 2, & 3 John. Karen H. Jobes. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, gen. ed. Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 358 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-24416-5

The Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (ZECNT) is certainly proving to be a valuable commentary series for pastors and also as a text for college work, partly because the layout of each work in the series is uniform, highly readable, and useful. The strengths of the layout are as



follows: introductions of reasonable length; consistency of form for each exegeted pericope, meaning it starts with literary context, moves to the main idea (and does not ramble!), followed by the author's translation, then structure comment, next an exegetical outline, then the extended explanation of the text (verse-by-verse comment), an in-depth boxed section, concluding with theology in application. The double columned text with footnotes is easy to read and very clean. The footnotes are not intrusive or overwhelming but very helpful and kept to a minimum. Generally speaking, (for

those that I have seen) the bibliographies are sufficient and well divided into appropriate sections. The standard Scripture indexes are good, but the addition of an author index is even better. This index is very helpful and also highly informative at a glance for making research conclusions. All of this is general to the series; yet when applied to this specific commentary by Karen Jobes, one can quickly gain a grasp on the nature of this work and its contribution and place as a commentary for the Johannine epistles. There are no surprises from the series here in terms of the structure.

Jobes holds a Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia in Septuagint studies of Esther and presently is a professor at Wheaton College and Graduate School, Illinois and author of several books including a fine commentary on 1 Peter in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series¹. The author clearly knows her subject and writes with clarity and without ambiguity. Her skill in hermeneutics and the Greek text are obvious and not arrogant in any manner. Thus her exegetical comment is well informed and very careful. See, for example, her discussion on *anomia* and *hamartia* in 1 John 3:4 and verse 9. Her conclusions here are the same as Colin Kruse in his Pillar commentary, *The Letters of John*². Thus every sin is

¹ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

² Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans/ APOLLOS, 2000).

not anomia, and there is a clear distinction in the text of 1 John with the believer who “may sin, but if they are truly of God, they will agree with him that their sin is sin, will confess it, and turn from it” (p.148). This is good exegesis, and I would be very confident in using this as a course text at the appropriate level for teaching.

If your students know Greek, this commentary will be helpful. However, I also think that even if your students do not know Greek, they will definitely benefit from the way the commentary is written. In each explanation section the verse is given in the author’s English translation followed by the Greek. The English translation is in bold type and the Greek text is in italic. Then when the comment continues, the Greek words of reference are usually in the Greek text but also sometimes in a transliterated form. This inclusive manner makes it acceptable in a variety of class settings.

Concerning key hermeneutical issues about the epistles of John, the author presents her convictions at the beginning. I must say I really admired this and appreciated knowing where she stood on some of these critical aspects in approaching the letters of John. The author states her position that the epistles of John need to be viewed with reference to the Gospel of John. She writes: “I hold to the thesis that, while the letters must be allowed their own voice, they cannot be properly understood without reference to John’s gospel as the interpretive framework for the metaphors, images, and theology common to both” (p.14). Thus the helpful chart on pages 25-27, “Some Similarities between John’s Gospel and the Epistles of John”, will be of interest and help to readers of this commentary as well as for the classroom. Jobes likewise rejects any popular 20th-century scholarship which asserts the idea that the author of the epistles could not have been the apostle John.

I will highlight two sections that I found most helpful. One was the “In Depth” box in 3 John verses 9-11 entitled “In Depth: What was the Problem with Diotrephes?” (pp.316-319). Here Jobes carefully deals with the popular theories “concerning the reason for Diotrephes’s accusations about the elder and his associates and his refusal to extend hospitality to them” (p.316). Putting this into a shaded box makes for easier reading. This is a current trend in layout which should be followed. That said, the more fundamental question is does the author explain these theories with adequacy? I believe so. The theoretical explanations, taken together with her exegetical comment and the theology in application sections, make for a strong presentation on these four verses yet without verbosity.

The other valuable aspect of her commentary which I appreciated was her concluding short summation chapter, “The Theology of John’s Letters” (pp. 339-345). It is not an essay with footnotes but serves more as a concluding summation. Her sub-points here are: spiritual authority, eternal life, sin and atonement, remaining in Christ, and love for God and love for others. These five themes are essential to grasping what John’s epistles are about.

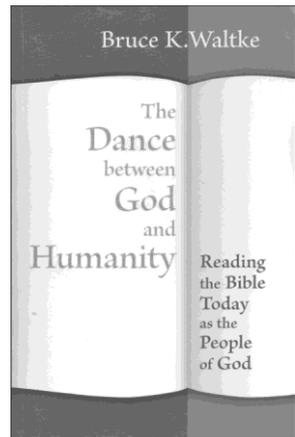
Jobes’ commentary will be of service to new or seasoned evangelical

preachers alike and to students and lecturers in Christian evangelical theological colleges or seminaries.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***The Dance between God and Humanity: Reading the Bible Today as the People of God.* Bruce K. Waltke. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013, 528 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-6736-0**

Here is testimony of God's faithfulness to a man committed to the task of welding together careful exegesis of Scripture and true spirituality for the purpose of knowing God. Bruce Waltke has doctorates from Dallas Theological Seminary and Harvard University; he has served as professor of Old Testament at Dallas, Westminster, and Reformed Theological Seminaries and Regent College; and he is currently Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Knox Theological Seminary and Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Regent College. This volume provides current biblical scholars, primarily seminary graduates, with a rich, accessible collection of over thirty of Waltke's best



articles produced during his fifty-year plus career and covers such diverse subjects as textual criticism, Psalms, Proverbs, creation, atonement, biblical authority, evangelical spirituality, hermeneutics, biblical Hebrew, human reproduction, retirement, the role of women, and land. The majority of the articles were written in the 1980s and 90s, but five are from earlier and four were written in the 2000s. In fact, it is remarkable that in his seventies Professor Waltke has written several books, notably *A Commentary on Micah* (Eerdmans, 2007), *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Zondervan, 2006), and two NICOT volumes on *The Book of Proverbs* (Eerdmans, 2004, 2005).

Space allows for only a sample of the articles to be reviewed. The foundational introduction, entitled "My Philosophy of Christian Education", is a brilliant exposé of the insufficient attention given by evangelicals generally, in practice and in textbooks, to the exegete's dependence upon the Holy Spirit if he or she is to arrive at a valid interpretation of Scripture. In particular, the grammatico-historical method "is appropriate for understanding the text, but inappropriate for the principle aim of Christian understanding of Scripture, the knowledge of God" (p. 9-10).

The article "The Aims of Old Testament Textual Criticism" shows that it is naïve to assume that all text critics work with the aim of restoring the original composition "that left the author's hand" (p. 23). Some aim at restoring

the final edited text, others the earliest attested form of the text. Some canonical critics aim only to isolate a number of accepted texts “belonging to varying communities of faith” (p. 29), and still other textual critics seek to reconstruct the final literary variants that are each seen as valid within the canon.

The articles “The First Seven Days: What Is the Creation Account Trying to Tell Us?” and “Myth or History? The Literary Genre of Genesis Chapter 1” form a complementary pair. In particular, “The First Seven Days” is a very succinct and surprisingly current (first published in 1988) presentation of the interpretive options for understanding the biblical creation account. Waltke distinguishes between the concordists, who attempt to harmonize science and Scripture, and the non-concordists, who recognize that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is not intended to be either straightforward history or science, but is best understood as an artistic-literary-theological account of creation (more fully argued in “Myth or History?”).

The essay “Evangelical Spirituality: A Biblical Scholar’s Perspective” sounds a clear call for evangelicals to aim for an authentic biblical spirituality defined as love of God and love of man. Most helpfully, against the background of “the death of God” philosophy of modern secular culture, Waltke presents the God-centred life as founded upon faith in God, fear of God, and repentance before God (p. 264).

In summary, this collection demonstrates that careful exegesis and a concern for true spirituality have enduring value. I am very pleased, therefore, to give this volume high recommendation as one that will refresh and stimulate many a biblical scholar.

Reviewed by Greg Phillips

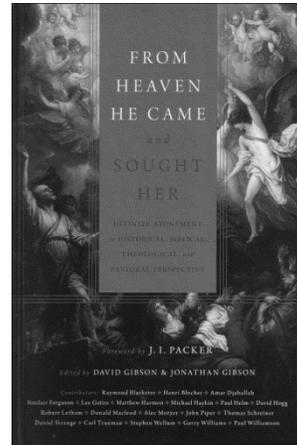
Systematic Theology

***From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective.* Eds., David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, 703 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4335-1276-6**

This volume provides a comprehensive treatment of one of the most controversial doctrines in Christian theology, namely, definite atonement. There are several reasons why it is noteworthy.

First, it is careful about terminology. As many readers will know, the familiar way to refer to this doctrine is “limited atonement” (the “L” in the famous TULIP acronym), but neither J. I. Packer in his foreword (pp. 15-16) nor the editors in their introduction are content to use the familiar term because they believe it to be misleading. While this may appear to be a cosmetic issue, words may carry significant linguistic and historical connotations, and I believe that it is helpful that the editors have highlighted the importance of getting their terminology correct from the very outset. Likewise they avoid the popular characterisation of the debate as being “Calvinism versus Arminianism” because, among other reasons, it does not take account of the long history of various aspects of the debate and so, in a memorable phrase, “simply lobotomizes history” (p. 42).

Second, it is both multi- and inter-disciplinary in its approach. It is multi-disciplinary in the sense that, as the sub-title indicates, it addresses the topic from the perspective of historical, biblical, theological, and pastoral studies. That in itself is useful in a single volume. But more than this, it is inter-disciplinary in the sense that the editors consciously seek to allow the various disciplines to inform each other. The editors describe definite atonement as a “biblico-systematic doctrine” (p. 38) and use two images for their endeavour: a web and a map. Regarding the first image, they state, “In much the same way that each strand of a spider’s web is one thing when taken on its own, but another when viewed in its relation to other strands, so the different aspects of the doctrine of the atonement can be integrated to display powerful



coherence” (p. 39). Likewise, with respect to the second image, “by showing the relation of historical, exegetical, theological, and pastoral issues to each other, this volume is a map to and through the doctrine of definite atonement” (p. 39).

Third, it is explicitly intended to be a work of irenic theology (see page 18). This is helpful in discussing a doctrine which has stirred some to use rather strong words (some historical examples are mentioned in passing on page 35). The general tone of the essays is serious/ academic and that probably helps to keep the use of language moderate, but it is good to see the editors make explicit the desire to treat firmly but with respect the views of fellow Christians who disagree with the position of the book.

The idea for this large project was conceived by the editors – two brothers who grew up in a missionary family where Christ was honoured but Reformed theology was not the framework in which their Christian faith was understood. The breadth of the discussion in the various essays and the calibre of the authors whom they recruited is a testimony to their industry and also to their conviction that this doctrine matters greatly to the wellbeing of the Christian Church. (For the first part of an interview with the Gibson brothers, and a link to the second part, see <http://booksataglance.com/author-interviews/david-and-jonathan-gibson-editors-of-from-heaven-he-came-and-sought-her>.) The book is composed of twenty-three essays (including the editors’ introduction). There are seven essays in the historical perspective section (which is deliberately placed first to recognise that all our engagement with the biblical text necessarily comes in historical context); six essays in the biblical perspective section; six essays in the theological perspective section; and three essays in the pastoral perspective section. Many of the contributors will be well known to those familiar with theological literature, while a few will be less so. All, however, are well-qualified to tackle their subjects.

It is impossible to review each essay and the volume is so wide-ranging that individual readers will inevitably find some essays with which they disagree at points. However, the authors provide support for their views in terms of citations from both original sources and secondary literature, so even where the reader disagrees with a position taken, they should still benefit from the presentation of evidence, the arguments gathered, and the references to relevant bibliography.

The essays in this volume are serious works of scholarship and so demand a significant degree of theological understanding. While they are generally clearly written, they are not easy reading. Several essays include regular reference to the Hebrew and Greek language of the biblical texts and the original script of these languages is used in such cases. The Hebrew and Greek are not transliterated, but an English translation is usually provided (at least for the first reference to a term).

It is highly unlikely that everyone who reads this volume will be persuad-

ed either of the overall validity of the general position on particular redemption which is presented in this book or of the validity of each exegetical, historical, theological, and pastoral argument which is found in the various essays. But this volume now provides the serious reader, whether currently convinced or unconvinced of the truth of particular redemption, with a thorough, careful, and irenic analysis of the major issues at stake.

This volume should be of particular interest and help to pastors, lecturers, and theological students. Any future writing on this topic must take the contents of this book into account.

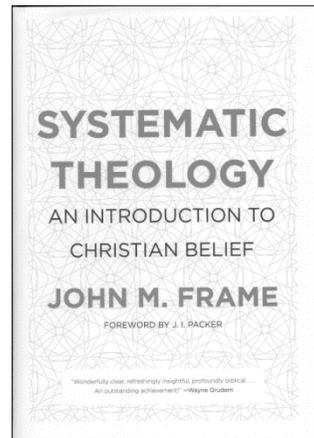
I pray that many will read this book and be persuaded, for the sake of their own faith and for the proclamation of the gospel, that “all those for whom Christ died will come to faith, and will never be plucked from his or his Father’s hand, being kept by the power (or Spirit) of God for salvation on the last day. Blessed assurance indeed – and a true cure for souls” (Sinclair B. Ferguson, p. 631).

Reviewed by Alistair I. Wilson

***Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief.* John M. Frame. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013, 1219 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-59638-217-6¹**

John Frame has managed to write a systematic theology (1219 pages). This is an extraordinary achievement when one considers that he has already written several significant volumes on certain theological *loci*. Those familiar with Frame's writings know that he has specialized in prolegomena and theology proper, with previous books on the doctrine of God (864 pages) and on the word of God (684 pages). He has also written extensively on the Christian life (1104 pages). Based on these works, and others, Frame has a significant reputation in broadly Reformed circles. This might explain the plethora of commendations (seventy – how biblical!), covering an astonishing twenty pages. With such a glowing list of theologians, the work marks a significant landmark in systematic theology. Does the work live up to the praise offered by the *septuaginta*?

The book itself is made up of twelve parts, each covering one of the major *loci* in systematic theology. There are appendices at the end, one on Frame's



¹ Reprinted with permission by the author. Accessed July 29, 2014 from: <http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/systematic-theology-an-introduction.php>.

“triads”, and a helpful glossary of theological terms. There are many positives in this book (see below), but I do have certain methodological questions that need to be raised.

Up to page 767 Frame covers his areas of expertise: prolegomena and theology proper. These five parts constitute almost 70% of the book (767 out of 1124 pages). Frame candidly admits that “in many places some text has been cut and pasted from those past books” (preface). But he also claims to have done more than summarize the big books. He has also tried to be more “biblical, clear, and cogent” (preface). Clarity and cogency have always been a hallmark of his writings; and his *Systematic Theology* is certainly biblical, perhaps even to the point of biblicism in some places. Unfortunately, the current work fails to improve in the areas he has already addressed in previous books (the footnotes in chapter two, for example, bring attention to his previous work on the topics addressed). We could more heartily welcome this approach if he made some further contributions to the other *loci* on which he has not already published. But those other *loci* do not receive the attention worthy of a thinker of Frame’s caliber. Another issue warrants discussion: Frame acknowledges that his *Systematic Theology* is less historical than other similar volumes. This method, I think, hurts Frame’s analysis of key doctrines in several places. I understand his desire not to be slavish in his dependence on others, but the great minds of the church would have been a help to Frame in key areas.

His lack of historical-theological interaction leads to a number of queries from my perspective. For example, I appreciate that he holds to the eternal covenant of redemption (pp. 58-60), but his discussion of this covenant differs slightly from the classical Reformed treatments of the topic. Consulting previous works on this covenant may have helped his discussion immensely, and perhaps Frame may have then been able to give some scriptural justification for what has been a thorny problem for Reformed theologians: “the faithful obedience of the...Spirit” (p. 60) in this eternal covenant. In addition, there are places where Frame does not simply modify classical Reformed views, but in fact goes against them. Surprisingly, he holds to the eternal subordination of the Son and the Spirit (pp. 500-502). I wonder whether over-zealous complementarians are responsible for this theological anomaly. Whatever the reason, such language needs to be jettisoned. Moreover, Frame also rejects the historic Reformed view of God’s impassibility (pp. 412-18). His reasons were not compelling, and I think his specific Christological argument to help his position is tenuous (p. 416). Denial of divine impassibility is a fairly serious error, as I see it, and others such as Bruce Ware and Rob Lister have also advanced this aberrant view in recent years. I raise these two issues in order to show that when Frame departs on significant doctrines from the theological tradition he belongs to, he should have interacted with the best from his tradition. On page 413 Frame critiques theologians who understand God’s emotions as anthropomorphisms, but we are not told who

these theologians are. Frame approvingly cites Don Carson's critique of Anselm's idea that God is "passionless". This "Greek metaphysical thought" (p.413) is not biblical, according to Frame. But one should note that the Westminster Confession likewise denies that God has passions (WCF 2.1; see also R.A. Muller, *PRRD* 3:309-11; 551ff.). The Westminster divines held to this because they held to God's immutability; and when you strike at one attribute you simply strike at them all.

It almost appears as though the "Bible-alone" approach handicaps Frame in places where he needs the Reformed tradition most. John Murray was radically biblical, but he was also vigorously exegetical and did not simply engage in proof-texting. Frame is radically biblical, but not (in this volume, at least) vigorously exegetical – something he needs to be if he is not going to engage in serious historical-theological analysis where he departs from his own tradition on important doctrines.

Where Frame does rely on previous scholarship, such as the work of Meredith Kline, he affirms that the Mosaic covenant resembles the form of a suzerain treaty (pp. 18-19). Here Frame shares much in common with Michael Horton (!) insofar as both make use of the work of Kline, who himself relied on the work of George Mendenhall. But Ancient Near Eastern scholarship has developed quite significantly since Mendenhall, and I happen to think theologians today need to show more care in their appropriation of ANE treaties and how these treaties relate to biblical covenants. Incidentally, Frame does not appear to follow through the conclusions of Suzerain treaties as Kline did (see pp. 24-25).

The other issue I raise concerns the lack of substance in his chapters on theological *loci* that move beyond prolegomena and theology proper. For example, in the area of Christology, Frame spends twenty pages on the person of Christ. Again, he does not really interact with the best from our tradition on key topics, such as the relation between the two natures (pp. 889-92). As a consequence, his thinking is a little muddled on the communication of attributes. He argues – correctly, I might add – that, "We should never say that 'Jesus' human nature did this or that'... Jesus himself was the actor" (p. 891). But on the very next page he makes the error he warned against in a few places, such as the following: "We may say, certainly, that Jesus' human nature constantly pleased God..." (p. 892). Jesus pleased God; his human nature did not please God. There are a host of other Christological issues that remain unsolved in this volume, including Frame's idea that Christ's miracles are "presumably...proper to his divine nature" (p. 891). The Scriptures are quite clear that Christ performed miracles in the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28). The whole point of the Reformed *communicatio*, as understood by John Owen (see *Works*, 3:160ff), for example, was to explain how the Holy Spirit could have any meaningful role in the life of the God-man. I'm not sure how Frame could explain the pervasive role of the Spirit in the life of Christ based on his understanding of the relationship between the two natures.

Only nineteen pages are devoted to the work of Christ – half a page to Christ’s intercession (p. 907). And his treatment of Christ’s offices is too basic (see pp. 900-10). His handling of the states of Christ simply contains lengthy quotations from the Westminster Larger Catechism (pp. 910-13). Furthermore, chapter 39 on the Holy Spirit is a mere ten pages (pp. 923-32).

There are some notable high points in the book, especially his treatments of God’s Word and epistemology. I deeply appreciated his discussion of whether believers are totally depraved (pp. 865-71). His triadic structures are occasionally helpful (p. 58), but often perplexing and strained (see p. 233). Nonetheless, he has a remarkable gift for clarity. He makes theology practical from beginning to end, with a final chapter on how Christians ought to live. No one can ever accuse Frame of not loving his Bible and making it pre-eminent in his theological discourse. For that I am grateful. No wonder his writings have been hugely beneficial to the Reformed, evangelical world. This work has, as its crown jewel, much of Frame’s thought in one volume. Students new to theology will find this to be one of the very best systematic theologies ever written for accessible Reformed theology, and they need not be intimidated by its size.

However, for the more experienced theologian, Frame’s *Systematic Theology* is too uneven. There are sections that do not do justice to the stature and brilliance of Frame’s thinking. Could Frame revise and substantiate this otherwise good volume? I think so. Indeed, I would like to think that is a possibility.

Reviewed by Dr. Mark Jones, Pastor at Faith Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, British Columbia and Research Associate at the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein).



***Antinomianism: Reformed Theology’s Unwelcome Guest.* Mark Jones. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013, 145 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-59638-815-4**

Mark Jones has provided an analysis of the 17th-century antinomian debate because the gospel proclaiming a freer free grace as the true antidote to moralism and legalism has resurfaced in present-day Reformed circles. He writes, “I have been dismayed at some of the theology that passes as Reformed, when in fact it has corollaries to seventeenth-century antinomianism” (p. xv). In recounting the history of the debate, he is primarily concerned to provide a biblical evaluation of the issues debated that will not only alert readers, particularly pastors, to antinomian tenets and tendencies in the contemporary scene, but also to provide a framework for a biblical response.

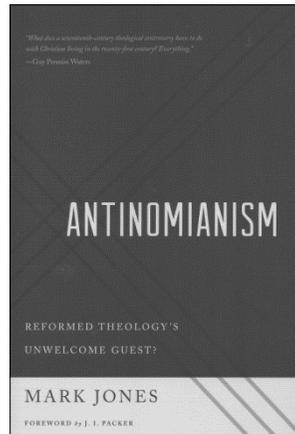
Jones begins with an overview of antinomian debates in the Reformation (Luther and Lutherans), Puritan England (1630s to 1650s), New England (1630s), NonConforming England (1690s) and Scotland (the Marrow Controversy, early 1700s). He entitles his survey “Lessons from History”, concluding that antinomianism is subtle and complex involving more than just a negative assessment of the law. Coming to an accurate understanding of the tenets of antinomianism requires asking the right questions. It is not only a matter of what is denied but often what is neglected.

For Jones, the history of antinomianism also reveals that it flows out of a faulty Christology, and he is concerned to make that point as he addresses the various issues that the antinomian debate raises. Antinomianism is fundamentally a Christological problem not only in terms of the work of Christ but also the person of Christ. He writes, “A Reformed view of Christ’s person is as important as a Reformed view of his work in this whole issue” (p. 17). Jones will conclude his book by helpfully demonstrating that “the solution to antinomianism must be to understand and love the person and work of Christ” (p. 128).

Drawing from such antinomians as John Eaton, Robert Towne, John Saltmarsh, Tobias Crisp, and from a wide range of orthodox Reformed scholars including the usual stalwarts John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Samuel Rutherford, Anthony Burgess, Jones analyzes and evaluates six issues that characterized the 17th-century antinomian debate. He not only assesses the theology of the debate, but also spends a chapter reflecting on the rhetoric of the debate and the light it sheds on contemporary gospel preaching and teaching. He demonstrates the subtlety and complexity of the way in which antinomian teaching was presented and argued, making it difficult to pinpoint antinomian errors or someone as an antinomian. He goes on to argue the same difficulty continues in assessing some contemporary Reformed preaching and teaching.

Jones summarizes his analysis and evaluation of the antinomian debate by outlining the characteristics of antinomian theology in contrast to orthodox Reformed theology. Antinomianism tended to blur the distinction between justification and sanctification and much of the dispute focused on matters related to the believer’s sanctification. He outlines the following six characteristics of antinomian theology.

Antinomians “tended not only to ridicule the idea that we must attempt to conform our lives to the pattern of Christ, but also to suggest that any work we perform is not our work but Christ’s” (p. 125). Orthodox Reformed divines considered imitating Christ an essential aspect of the believer’s life,



and argued that the believer's obedience is both Spirit empowered and truly his own.

Antinomians, as the name suggests, allowed no role for the law in the believer's sanctification, whereas orthodox Reformed divines taught "the law accompanied by the Spirit is a true means of sanctification" (p. 125).

Antinomians and orthodox Reformed theologians crossed swords over the nature of the gospel and its relation to the law as they function in the life of the believer. Antinomians argued for a sharp distinction between law and gospel, rejecting the orthodox Reformed formulation that they "sweetly comply", i.e., work together as friends. Antinomians limited the gospel to promising, rejecting their opponents understanding of the gospel as also including threatenings and commands to obedience.

Antinomians rejected the Reformed insistence that good works done by faith and empowered by the Spirit are necessary for salvation, and that such works, although imperfect, are genuinely good. They also rejected any appeal to rewards as a motivation for good works, considering such an appeal as leading to a servile and unfitting obedience.

Antinomians rejected the Reformed distinction between God's benevolent love and His love of complacency. In the antinomian scheme of things "God does not love us any more or any less on the basis of our obedience or lack thereof" (p. 127). Where Reformed divines argued "God and Christ really are pleased and displeased with Christians" (p.127), Antinomians declared God sees no sin in the believer, and thus God does not get angry with His people.

Antinomians rejected the Reformed teaching that the evidence of sanctification is a ground of assurance. For antinomian theologians there is only one ground of assurance, i.e., faith in Christ.

Jones' "aim is to help readers, particularly pastors, understand certain tenets of antinomianism, which will allow them to connect the dots, so to speak, in the contemporary scene" (p. xv). He refrains from naming names, but he makes an exception when he pinpoints one example of contemporary antinomian theology, namely, Tullian Tchividjian's *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*. He describes this book as "one lengthy antinomian diatribe, and it bears a striking resemblance to the content and rhetoric of various 17th-century antinomian writings" (p. 91).

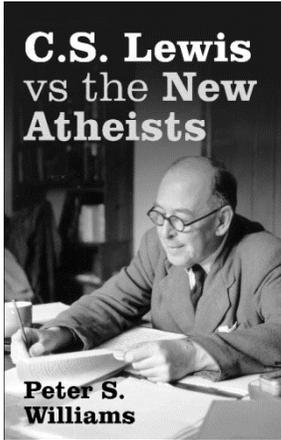
As a scholar who has focused on post-Reformation theology, Jones is well-equipped for the task he has undertaken. He makes a complex debate accessible and relevant.

Mark Jones' *Antinomianism* is essential reading for anyone concerned for faithful gospel ministry.

Reviewed by Howard M. McPhee, the former pastor of the Springdale Christian Reformed Church, Bradford, Ontario, where he served for seventeen years.



C. S. Lewis vs the New Atheists. Peter S. Williams. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2013, 276 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-84227-770-6



Shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center, a group of self-proclaimed intellectuals abandoned their passive efforts for global acceptance of atheism and turned toward an aggressive campaign of public relations to rid the world of, as they claimed, the destructive influences of religion. This new aggressive movement was championed by four prominent scientists and writers (Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris), who came to be known as the four horsemen of new atheism. While the tone of the writings emanating from these four are filled with previously unseen ridicule and vitriol towards

religion, and Christianity in particular, their arguments are essentially replays of ideas from the 19th and early 20th centuries, dressed up in new clothes.

C.S. Lewis vs the New Atheists is the latest work written by philosopher and apologist Peter S. Williams, Assistant Professor in Communication and Worldviews at Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication in Norway, to counter the new atheist movement. In this work, Williams asks how C.S. Lewis, the greatest Christian apologist of the 20th century, might respond to 21st-century atheism. Williams explores how Lewis' journey from unbelief to Christianity illuminates and undercuts the objections of the new atheists. Through this excellent contribution to the field of apologetics, Williams assembles arguments made by C.S. Lewis more than fifty years ago to show that there is nothing new in new atheism.

In the opening chapter, entitled "Old-Time Atheism", Williams sets the stage for his work. He presents quotes from the 19th and early 20th centuries, like those of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the *Economist Magazine*, and 21st-century new atheists all claiming "God is dead." In the midst of this, Williams introduces C.S. Lewis' actual words and arranges them as if Lewis were in an actual face-to-face debate. Having established the framework of his work, Williams goes on to present five objections C.S. Lewis' had with atheism.

In the first objection, Williams shows that Lewis is critical of "scientism," which is the raising of science to the level of a philosophy with the claim that science can explain all questions, and anything it can't explain is meaningless. Lewis points out that the scientism of the four horsemen of new atheism claims too much for science and intentionally misrepresents religion by using the worst cases it can find.

For the second objection, Williams demonstrates that Lewis' book *Surprised by Joy* proves that the human mind longs for meaning, something the natural world cannot offer. At the core, Lewis argues that people feel life is meaningless without God, something contemporary atheists ignore.

The third objection is the most philosophical in Williams' book. He presents Lewis' argument that if natural processes alone are responsible for the human mind, and evolution favors genes that increase survival and reproduction, then how can we have any confidence that mere thoughts are true?

For the fourth objection, Williams outlines Lewis' view that the new atheists' worldview has no basis for establishing moral judgments because moral judgments cannot be scientifically verified.

The final argument Lewis had against atheism is his well-known discourse that when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, He was either a deceiver, or deceived, or truly divine. Lewis demonstrates that there is no middle ground to faith; believing Jesus was a great moral teacher but not the Son of God is impossible, as the reliability of Scripture leaves one with no other conclusion than that Jesus is the Messiah.

All told, Williams' work would be a fine addition to any apologetic library. Having taught apologetics myself, I can attest to the fact that the questions C.S. Lewis addressed in his life remain relevant today. Additionally, pastors and teachers will find that Williams' book presents a readable, yet detailed treatment of the apologetic answers to questions that people often ask regarding Christianity and faith. This reason and the outstanding assemblage of how C.S. Lewis would combat new atheism make this book a valuable resource for all Christians, providing ammunition for addressing old attacks dressed up in new clothes.

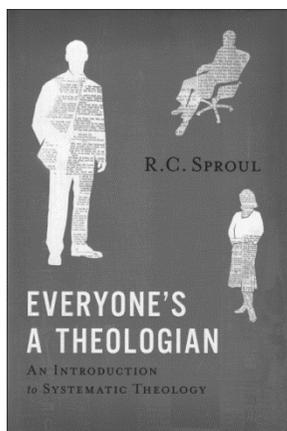
Reviewed by Steve Adamson, the Executive Director for the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries Commission on Accreditation. His Ph.D. is in historical apologetics.



***Everyone's A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology.* R. C. Sproul. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2014, 357 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-56769-365-2**

There have been several new texts written in systematic theology in recent years, with R. C. Sproul's *Everyone's A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* being but one of these. Just in this volume of the *Haddington House Journal* alone we are reviewing three such new texts. I recall that in past years we had no such reviews, so the publishing of these has certainly undergone some kind of a renaissance. Thus, with all these new publications, comparisons will be made and also the suitability of these for various teaching levels will be concluded.

Everyone's A Theologian has a good main title. The point is well made, and Sproul rightly goes on in his first chapter to make the point about this (p. 12). This main title would also endeavor to popularize the reading of systematic theology and does tell us that this is not going to be the definitive tome on systematic theology but "an introduction to the Bible's major teachings" (jacket).



The book is arranged into eight parts – all quite classical and familiar – introduction (theology, revelation), theology proper (God), anthropology and creation, Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Then each part is subdivided into short chapters averaging five pages each for a total of sixty chapters. The book is virtually free of any footnotes – there are only seventeen, and eleven of these are references to other Sproul books. There is no bibliography,

but the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Calcedon) conclude the book, followed by subject and Scripture indices. So the book has been stripped down to be as plain and non-academic as possible in its overall presentation, which will no doubt broaden its appeal and overall usefulness. In saying this, it does not mean though that this book lacks solid and substantive doctrinal meat – no, that is all most definitely there.

As I read *Everyone's A Theologian*, I went back to look at Sproul's 1992 book *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*.¹ There are many similarities in terms of content and approach. *Everyone's A Theologian* certainly has a better style about the writing, but one feature I liked about *Essentials* was its side-bar in every chapter with a list of "Biblical passages for reflection". As a teaching tool this was most helpful. Again, *Everyone's A Theologian* builds upon Sproul's three volume "guide"/commentary on the Westminster Con-

¹ R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992).

fession of Faith.² I say “builds” because many of the same *loci* of theology are commented upon in both *Truths We Confess* and *Everyone’s A Theologian*, and taken as a whole the author has been busy over decades studying, writing, and teaching these truths. Thus we come now to his more formal and mature form. I found *Everyone’s A Theologian* much more concise than *Truths We Confess*, which in sections was very verbose, and I have heard this from students repeatedly. So I do believe in *Everyone’s a Theologian* we see Sproul as a mature teacher and writer who has endeavoured for years to take theology to the people and not just to a college or seminary lecture hall, although he has done both.

Many will then ask about how *Everyone’s A Theologian* compares with the works of other conservative theologians. I believe its closest rival is J. I. Packer’s *Concise Theology*,³ though with acknowledged differences. There has been a great tradition of such basic, overview, introductory texts in systematic theology being well-used for years. Some of the best in this tradition have been Louis Berkhof’s *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (1938),⁴ T. C. Hammond’s *In Understanding Be Men: A Handbook on Christian Doctrine for Non-Theological Students* (orig. 1936, 4th ed. 1951),⁵ Bruce Milne’s *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (1982),⁶ John Frame’s *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (2006),⁷ and the shorter versions of the respective systematic theologies of Wayne Grudem⁸ and Michael Horton⁹. (“Short” here may still not be short!) There is clearly a need for these shorter works, and they have great usefulness for laity, for Bible college instruction, and for adult classes and study groups. Each lecturer will have to decide amongst these weighing their strengths and evaluating their own context for reading levels, background of students, and course goals/outcomes. A helpful exercise is to select a particular doctrine in

² R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess: A Layman’s Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006).

³ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993).

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine: For Senior Classes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938).

⁵ T. C. Hammond, *In Understanding Be Men: A Handbook on Christian Doctrine for Non-Theological Students*, 4th ed. (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982).

⁶ Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982).

⁷ John Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006).

⁸ Two different works here: Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) and Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

⁹ Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

theology, such as sanctification, and read it through in Sproul, Packer, Milne, Frame, etc. and evaluate it in light of your context to see which will work best.

Everyone's A Theologian fits into a very familiar classical presentation of the material. I personally wish more Scripture references had been given in each chapter. The length of each chapter is excellent – just right for most readers. The page typeset has been done well, which is a real consideration as dense typeset is difficult for many. I hear complaints about the systematic theology overview at the back of the *ESV Study Bible*, many finding it hard-reading.¹⁰ The language in Sproul's book can at times be stretching – some will wish there were fewer Latin terms. The work also does not always enter into the realities of the global church today, unlike a much larger introductory work like Gerald Bray's *God Is Love*.¹¹

Everyone's A Theologian should be seen as a solid, meaty, primer on classical evangelical and Reformed systematic theology. It is an excellent place to begin, and one can branch out from there once the basics have been covered well. My perception is that this book would appeal to an interdenominational college context as well. It does not say the last word on each point, but it was not meant to be such a tome – that would be more of a one thousand plus page work. Take it as a meaty primer for systematic theology coming in the line of Sproul's earlier works and being added to a growing list of such introductory texts now available that are reliable, trustworthy, and engaging.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

¹⁰ See Wayne Grudem, "Biblical Doctrine: An Overview", in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2505-2534.

¹¹ Gerald Bray, *God Is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

Historical Theology

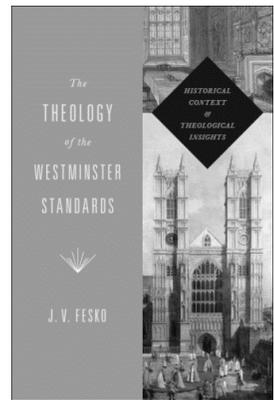
***The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights.* J. V. Fesko. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, paper, 441 pp. ISBN (trade paperback) 978-1-4335-3311-2**

As we draw close to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (1517-2017), we can expect many new works to appear related to the Reformation and the theological children of the Reformation. Thus, it was not a surprise to see on the back cover of this book the logo for Refo500 next to Crossway's logo. Herman Selderhuis, the director of Refo500, is also one of the book endorsers, stating on the back cover, "This book is a sourcebook par excellence."

That descriptive word by Selderhuis, "sourcebook", is most helpful because this is not a commentary on one or more documents of the Westminster Assembly. The author, John Fesko, makes this very clear at the outset and tells us he will explore "key subjects of the standards in an illustrative fashion" but starting first "with an overview of the historical, religious, and political context in which the Westminster Standards originated" (p. 30). So if you are looking for an exhaustive commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith, this is not the book to purchase. However, if you want to learn about aspects of the context of the Westminster Assembly documents and some key *loci* of theology through related primary works, then this is the book for you. However, be aware it is not always an easy go – more on that later.

Fesko selects ten *loci* to focus upon (some of these are combined, double topics) and organises the work around ten chapters as an introductory study in historical theology of Westminster, namely: the doctrine of scripture, God and the decree, covenant and creation, the doctrine of Christ, justification, sanctification, the law of God and the Christian life, the church, worship, and eschatology.

Before he looks at these ten points, Fesko provides a helpful chapter entitled, "The Historical and Theological Context" (pp. 33-63). Here he deals with the sub-points of "Politics and Religion", "Wars and Rumors of Wars", "Encroaching Threats and the Formation of the Assembly", "Theological



Chaos”, and “The Work and Influences of the Assembly”. This chapter is a good overview and well organised. The chart of names cited in the assembly’s minutes is most helpful to explore the discussion of influences. A chart on the kings and queens from Henry VIII to Charles I with a brief descriptor of relevance would have been helpful as a tool for many readers whose British history may not be very clear.

One omission in this chapter which I found odd was there was virtually no discussion about the diversity of the members of the Assembly by their “parties” to develop the context more fully by briefly explaining labels such as “English Presbyterian” or “Independent”. The author had stated earlier some readers will be disappointed that matters of polity as a *locus* were omitted, but he hoped others would do such. However, in an historical-context chapter, I do not believe this can be omitted as it looms very large not just at the Assembly but also for the context and understanding of Puritanism. Also, somewhat curiously, the word “Puritan” appears to be muted as to its usage. I am still pondering this and wondering why. The author speaks of “early Modern Reformed” many times, but I am curious about the infrequent use of the terminology “Puritan” or “Puritanism”. It makes me think the author was deliberately trying to avoid the term in his work as much as possible except in source titles in the footnotes.

Fesko writes to challenge caricature thinking and to show nuances of the theological positions and arguments associated with the Westminster divines and the complexity of the historical context. He states, “History is messy, and the times are often complex. The more I study the historical context of the Westminster Standards, the more I am struck by the complexity and messiness of it all” (p.13). Fesko may unsettle some readers by certain of his assertions. For example, on some of the vagueness of the language in the Westminster documents: “At many points the Confession is very specific in terms of what it rejects or teaches, but at others points it is brilliantly ambiguous or vague, thus allowing various theologians to assent to the document even though it might not advocate each theologian’s precise view on a particular subject” (p.28). Likewise, Fesko asserts that the Westminster divines were “Reformed Catholics”:

In our own day many Reformed theologians would never positively cite Patristic, medieval, Lutheran, or pagan sources, but this is precisely what numerous early modern Reformed theologians did...Unlike our own day, when Reformed theologians are content to labour for their entire ministries in theologically sectarian-like settings where orthodoxy is measured by a very narrow set of criteria, the Westminster divines had a very different index by which they measured orthodoxy.... (p. 29)

Of the ten *loci* chapters, the three I enjoyed most were the chapters on the doctrine of scripture, sanctification, and the law of God and the Christian life. The chapter on scripture was superbly written with excellent analysis of key

points in chapter one of the Westminster Confession of Faith and comparisons to many primary sources to properly expose historical continuities and contemporary influences, developments, and consistencies or inconsistencies of stress and nuance. I believe this chapter would be very helpful in senior-level courses. I cannot say the same about the chapters on God and the decree and covenant and creation. These chapters seem to over-contextualise the historical theology without making the subjects clear and concise. The discussion on “contingency” needed to be condensed and I believe would be a “hard-go” for many readers. No doubt many will relish it, but I suspect these will be professors, not the average theology student.

North American readers who are up-to-date on the two kingdom issue will find this topic surfacing at several different junctures in the book by way of background development. Whether all will be convinced of the author’s viewpoint, I am not certain. Also, it is doubtful this will be relevant outside North America as some theological skirmishes are regional. Further, I did wonder if the concept of the establishment principle was really adequately considered whereby nations are called upon to advance the Kingdom of the Lord.

I appreciated the discussion on baptism in the chapter on the church. It was good to see the author’s analysis of the matter of baptismal regeneration and whether Westminster did teach such, as David Wright not that long ago argued. Fesko is very helpful here.

Obviously Fesko usually focuses on the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith, but he also appropriately draws upon the two catechisms and the Directory for Public Worship. The latter is highlighted, rightly-so, in the chapter on worship.

The work ends with a very helpful select annotated bibliography – much more helpful than an exhaustive non-annotated one. Fesko’s comments here are good and guide the reader wisely. There are three indices: a general index, a scripture index, and an index of the Westminster Standards. The last is unique and also allows the reader to find something quickly in the text from within the Confession, the Larger Catechism, or the Shorter Catechism.

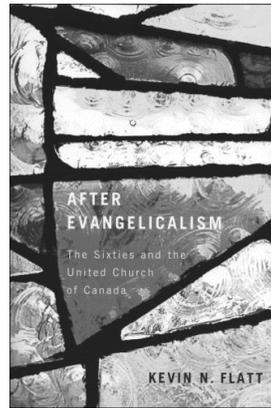
The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights is a good “sourcebook”, to quote Selderhuis again. It certainly opens up an incredible gold-mine of historical theological material through related primary source material and helps the reader to gain many new insights into the world of the theology of the Westminster Standards. It will be a good resource for all who teach on these Standards and should be in many theological libraries. Teachers will need to discern the level they are teaching before making it a textbook. A few typographical errors are in the text but these are not factual and maybe they are not in the paper-trade edition; I was provided an electronic copy to review. It is certainly an exciting time to be studying and teaching the Westminster Standards as there is a whole new world of materials flowering in the field. John Fesko is to be

commended, and through this new book he well represents Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, the institution where he teaches and serves as academic dean.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada.* Kevin N. Flatt. Kingston and Montreal, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. 349 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-7735-4124-5**

Next year marks the ninetieth anniversary of the establishment of what was intended to be Canada's national Protestant church. As so-called "continuing" Presbyterians we have always had an ambivalent attitude toward our cousin as unwanted stepchildren, spoilers as it were, of that grand experiment in national redemption. The United Church of Canada was intended to have a national, Christianizing effect on a Dominion, destined to be God's dominion from shore to shore, *A Mari Usque Ad Mare*. Canada's national motto, adopted four years before church union, came from Psalm 72.



Now McGill-Queens University Press has published in its Studies in the History of Religion series an examination of how that vision developed. Kevin Flatt, a professor at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, has provided a well-researched analysis of Canada's national Protestant church, which at its peak in 1965 had over a million members, more than five per cent of the total population of the country. The subject is of wider interest than for academics: it helps to explain the present-day plight of the mainline churches in contemporary Canada and why the mid-sixties was the high-water mark of establishment Protestantism and what led to its decline, and, some would say, its present parlous state and uncertain future.

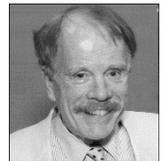
As Flatt points out, in spite of its inadequacies and its theological contradictions, the Basis of Union of 1925 was primarily an evangelical document. The strands of Methodist praxis and Presbyterian piety (which owed much to its roots in the Free Church of Scotland) could be traced. The United Church in the 1930s emphasized teetotalism, the need for "conversion" (often unspecified), and evangelism. It was in the early 1940s that a new breed of leadership in Toronto developed, without experience in either of the founding denominations. Flatt calls this a "quiet modernism" that mouthed the old vocabulary but subtly changed the meaning.

As with the rest of Canadian mainline Protestantism, the 1950s was its finest hour. But soon the suburban captivity of the church was to be challenged by the introduction in United Church Sunday Schools across Canada of the 1964 New Curriculum. A firestorm of reaction and opposition emerged, usually dismissed cavalierly by the establishment. In Flatt's analysis the New Curriculum, as it was developed over the previous decade and longer, simply made the "quiet modernism", already espoused by leadership, public, visible, and explicit. The impressive "Christian Education facilities" of the 1950s were soon emptied. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Harvey Cox, John A. T. Robinson, and Pierre Berton exercised a profound influence with their critique of the church, further inflamed by a 1968 United Church publication *Why the Sea Is Boiling Hot*.

There were other straws in the wind. Flatt traces the framing of a new creed for the United Church through its various stages and revisions, the conflicted reaction to the 1964 Billy Graham crusades, and particularly the 1963 departure on retirement of J. R. Mutchmor, with his Methodist social agenda, and his replacement by J. R. Hord ("the only thing we have in common are our initials," Mutchmor sniffed). By 1971 the old United Church Board of Evangelism and Social Service that both J.R.'s had headed was no more.

Flatt's book is a welcome contribution to our understanding of the development of mainline Protestantism at a crucial point in its life. While one may disagree with some of his generalizations, particularly the use of the words "evangelical" and "modernist" which seem too all-inclusive and, in the case of modernism somewhat wrongly dated, the book sheds light on what has happened to Canada's Christian heritage. It provides a useful and instructive antidote to purely cultural and sociological explanations of the 1960s. That decade was indeed a time of cataclysmic change: the tragedy, as Flatt makes abundantly clear, is that instead of trying to steady the ship through the shoals and storms, there was a jettisoning of the cargo. This only made the church more vulnerable and directly contributed to what we see on every main street in Canada: empty hulking edifices that speak of a bygone age. If you want to know why, this is the book to read.

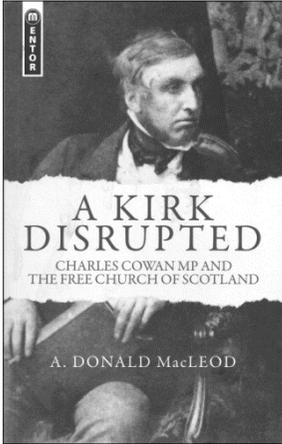
Reviewed by Dr. A. Donald MacLeod, research professor of Church History at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto. He is a widely published writer and biographer.



***A Kirk Disrupted: Charles Cowan MP and the Free Church of Scotland.* A. Donald MacLeod. Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2013, 363 pp., paper. ISBN: 978-1-78191-269-0**

Amongst the many key dates that have shaped Scottish church history, the disruption of 1843 certainly stands as one of them. On May 18, 1843, 474

ministers out of 1,203 clergy walked away from the rights and privileges of the established national church so as to preserve the spiritual independence of the church from state affairs. The result of this event was the formation of a new denomination, which eventually came to be known as the Free Church of Scotland.



Several books have been written on this time period. More recently, Sandy Finlayson's *Unity & Diversity* has provided a biographical sketch of the life and ministry of several of the key figures in the formation of the denomination. MacLeod's book, however, is unique in that it provides a thoroughly researched account of the life of a lesser-known figure by the name of Charles Cowan.

Although unknown to many today, Cowan was an influential figure in the 19th century. As a paper-manufacturer, he was a successful businessman. As a Scottish Member of Parliament, Cowan spoke for the rising Scottish middle class in the House of Commons. As an elder and commissioner in the Free Church of Scotland for forty years, Cowan was a loyal supporter of the Sustenation Fund (pp. 17, 243).¹

As with other biography books, there is much that can be appreciated in reflecting on someone else's life. The book gives equal attention to Cowan as a businessman, parliamentarian, and elder in the church. The net result is that the reader gets to see how the Christian faith relates to every aspect of life. The book also seeks to be faithful in its presentation of the man. It highlights Cowan's exemplary usage of the wealth that the Lord had entrusted to him (pp. 253-54, 260, 263). But it also highlights that Cowan was a real person who wrestled with real issues.

The book shows how, like the church in Ephesus, Cowan's life seems to reflect a man who lost his first love. Early in life, Cowan was characterized by a deep piety. He would spend four hours each day reading his Bible and was meticulous in writing in his diary the text of every sermon he heard in the 1830s (pp. 102, 311). But his experience in politics and the climate of intellectual pride sweeping through the Free Church would have its effect on Cowan (pp. 158, 199, 252). Although strongly influenced by Thomas Chalmers (p. 254), Cowan would abandon the establishment principle² held

¹ The Sustenation Fund was a new principle of clergy compensation in which all inducted ministers received the same amount from a common pool.

² Donald Macleod writes, "Historically, the Establishment Principle has meant (1) official state recognition of Christianity as the national religion (2) endowment of the church by the state and (3) civil government having a clearly defined responsibility with regard to religious matters. This responsibility extended to promoting the peace and unity of the church, ensuring the due observance of gospel ordinances and even

by Chalmers and the rest of the Free Church of Scotland and become open to the Voluntaryist³ position (pp. 152, 249, 252).

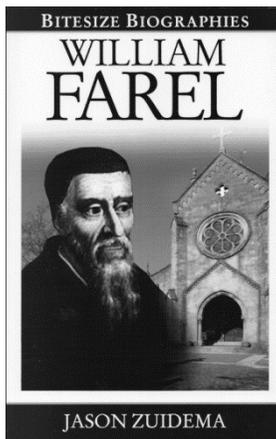
His intellectual curiosity would also cause him to side with and ultimately seek to defend Professor William Robertson Smith, who was a professor at the Aberdeen College of the Free Church. Professor Smith had embraced the teachings of German higher criticism and had written articles undermining the historicity and credibility of the Scriptures (p. 309).

The book is thoroughly researched but probably could have been abbreviated in some of the details in order to appeal to a wider audience. The reader will also notice a few typos throughout the book (pp. 93, 113, 159, 239). Nevertheless, this would be an ideal book for anyone who enjoys reading biographies and especially those interested in Scottish history. A. Donald MacLeod of Brighton, Ontario has written other noteworthy biographies on W. Stanford Reid, George Murray, and C. Stacey Woods.

Peter K. Aiken serves as an elder in the Birchwood Church in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. He is married to Michelle and they have four children.



William Farel. Jason Zuidema. Bitesize Biographies, gen. ed. Michael Haykin. Darlington, England: EP Books, 2014, 126 pp., paper. ISBN 978-085234-954-0



Jason Zuidema's biography of William Farel is part of an ever-growing series of "Bitesize Biographies" edited by Dr. Michael Haykin. Like the others I have seen in the series, *William Farel* is both a brief (126 pages) and insightful look at Farel's life, thought, and significance to the French Reformation.

The first seven chapters of the book are given to the chronological story of Farel's life, from his birth in 1489 in Gap, France to his death in 1565 in Neuchatel, Switzerland. The last chapter is an analysis of Farel's thought and his legacy.

Farel grew up in a pious Catholic home. While studying under Lefevre in his early twenties, he gradually became disenchanted with medieval piety and came to faith in

the suppression of blasphemy and heresy". Donald Macleod, "The Establishment Principle Today", <http://www.donaldmacleod.org/?p=398> [accessed June 21, 2014].

³ The Voluntaryist position holds that the church should be separate and independent of the state and supported by voluntary contributions.

Christ alone. He tells us, “Little by little the papacy fell from my heart.” He became a passionate preacher of reform, but experienced much early rejection and failure. That his preaching was fierce in its condemnation of Catholic abuses is evident from Basel Reformer Oecolampadius’ counsel to tone down his “lion-like” style and be a “doctor, not an executioner”. Not surprisingly, his passion for reform often provoked passionate reactions in others, whether positive or negative.

I found it especially interesting to read of Farel’s relationships with other French-speaking Reformers such as Capito, Bucer, Oecolampadius, Viret, and Calvin. Farel was a significant part of a larger network. Perhaps simplistically, I have always thought of Farel in relation to Calvin. Calvin’s own account of how Farel recruited him to work in Geneva is well-known: “... William Farel detained me at Geneva, not so much by counsel and exhortation, as by a dreadful imprecation, which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me.” Farel’s fiery personality as a Reformer is also often contrasted with Calvin’s, with Farel seen as a “destroyer” and Calvin as a “builder”. Zuidema gives a broader view, placing Farel in context of all the French-speaking Reformers and other elements involved in the French Reformation. The author reminds us that Farel had an important role in building the church by calling many leading French Reformers to their posts in Switzerland in the 1520s and 1530s. He also was one of the first Reformers to see the need for Reformation literature in French. He himself wrote not only several books, but Scripture-based liturgies for the French-speaking church.

“For better or for worse, Farel’s whole career was characterized by the continual, verbal, passionate, personal call to put faith in Jesus Christ’s merits and no other, as taught clearly in Scripture” (p. 116). I appreciate Zuidema’s desire to clarify who Farel really was: a human being, with human failings, and yet extraordinarily used by God in the Reformation. I highly recommend this book, not only as an introduction to William Farel himself, but as an introduction to the wider picture of the French Reformation.

Reviewed by Nelleke Plouffe. Nelleke and her husband, Stephen, are the parents of three young sons. They live in Donagh, Prince Edward Island.



***Calvin on the Christian Life: Glorifying and Enjoying God Forever.* Michael Horton. Theologians on the Christian Life, eds. Stephen J. Nichols, Justin Taylor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 272 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3956-5.**

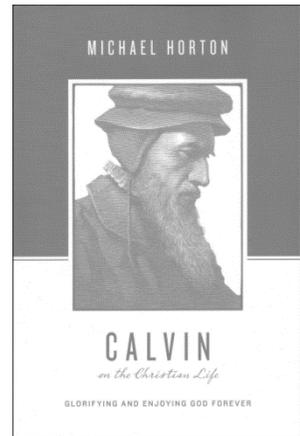
This is the fifth book in the Crossway series, *Theologians on the Christian Life*. In the preface the editors indicate that the purpose of the series is to listen to the voices of Christian leaders from the past to encourage Christians today in their daily walk with Christ.

This account by Michael Horton is an excellent presentation of Calvin's view of piety [*pietas*], his term for Christian faith and practice. Although many in the Reformed tradition read Calvin's *Institutes* and his other theological works primarily for theological insight and his commentaries for exegetical insight, Calvin, the pastor and teacher, always viewed doctrine, and biblical knowledge, as the basis and servant for Christian living. Horton notes that there is no division between theology and discipleship in Calvin's thought.

Horton's account allows Calvin to speak for himself by drawing extensively on Calvin's own writings: the *Institutes* and theological treatises, his commentaries, and his letters. He also makes use of many secondary sources – older and more contemporary – to unfold the key themes in Calvin, relating them to his context and indicating their impact on his theological heirs. The outline in the book presents two chapters of introductory material on Calvin's thought and historical context. This is followed by four main sections, in which Horton draws together various features of the Christian life for Calvin under the headings: Living before God, Living in God, Living in the Body, and Living in the World.

The introductory chapters give an account of Calvin, the reluctant reformer and pastor, who dedicated his life to the Word of God and the glory of God. Horton dismisses the usual caricature of Calvin as the Genevan dictator by explaining his actual ministry as the servant-pastor of Geneva, cooperating with other pastors for the salvation and spiritual life of the city. He was committed to the catholicity of the church, the centrality of biblical doctrine, the certainty of the gospel, and the biblical and church-centred nature of piety.

In Part 1, "Living before God", Horton deals with two themes: our knowledge of God and ourselves, and the divine drama of salvation in which believers are called to participate. In the former, Calvin's focus is on *covenantal* knowledge, that is, knowledge of God in terms of His acts in history –



not His essence – and how this should move us to a wholistic relational devotion to Him. Christ is central to both themes, for Calvin notes that “God is comprehended in Christ alone” (p. 54). Our knowledge of the divine drama of salvation is known only through Scripture with the gospel of Christ as its focus. The Spirit is tied to Scripture, both as the Author of the inspired books and as the One who opens humans’ hearts to accept, understand, and apply the gospel to all of life. Only if Christians embrace the reality of sin, the wonder of grace, and the fruit of faith and love can they take part in God’s redemptive drama in history.

In Part 2, “Living in God”, Horton expands upon the centrality of Christ for the Christian life. While the object of faith is the triune God, He is revealed in Christ. For Calvin, “A saving union with God occurs only through union with Christ, who is God *with us* and also *us with God*” (p. 84). Horton unfolds Calvin’s understanding of the person and work of Christ in terms of His threefold office of prophet, priest and king. Horton maintains that Calvin is guided in this exposition by the Chalcedonian maxim, “distinction without separation”, a theme which is found throughout Calvin’s theology. Only a proper – Chalcedonian – understanding of Christ ensures salvation for those who are united to Him through faith. This is followed in chapter 6 by an exposition of the “Gifts of Union with Christ”, which is essentially a discussion of the main themes in Calvin’s *ordo salutis*. (We note that Horton presents union with Christ as the basis of justification for Calvin, not vice versa.) This includes a careful exposition of the biblical teaching on justification and sanctification, again following the maxim of distinction without separation. Horton also gives a concise exposition of Calvin’s location of election *in* Christ. For Calvin election is properly recognized as a pastoral matter for the comfort and assurance of believers.

Part 3, “Living in the Body”, deals with Calvin’s understanding of the work of the Spirit in applying to us the benefits of Christ. The Spirit not only unites us to Christ by working faith in us, but He also unites us to the church as the body of Christ. This is because the Spirit works through the faithful practices of the church – particularly through the means of grace – to draw people to Christ and to conform them progressively to His image. In this section Horton presents an extensive exposition of the three means of grace: the preaching of the word of God, the biblical administration of the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord’s Supper as signs and seals of the gospel (where Calvin’s view is contrasted with those of the medieval church and the Anabaptists), and prayer (“the chief exercise of faith”). There are also chapters explaining Calvin’s views on proper public worship as a “celestial theatre” of God’s grace, law (especially the third use), liberty in the Christian life, and the nature of the church as the new community in Christ. Horton notes Calvin’s views on the biblical roles of pastors, elders, and deacons offices established for the church to enable her to accomplish effectively her mission.

Part 4 presents Calvin’s views on “Living in the World”. Horton unfolds the relation of church and state, vocation, and living by hope in the future

glory. Church and state are guided by Calvin's maxim, "distinction without separation", with special revelation guiding the church and general revelation guiding the state. Neither one is to meddle in the affairs of the other. The chapter on vocation unfolds Calvin's views on all callings as stations where God has placed Christians to serve God and their neighbours. No matter what our impact on the areas in which we labour, we are called to "faithful presence" in our worldly callings. Horton notes that Calvin himself shaped a (Reformed) tradition which had a great impact, not only on the doctrine, liturgy, preaching, and pastoral care in the church, but also on the social, cultural, educational, political, economic, and artistic spheres of life.

Horton's commitment to the (Westminster Seminary West) "Two Kingdoms" perspective is evident in his comments on Calvin's views in Part 4. This leads Horton to make some peculiar claims. First, he rejects the claim that Calvin exhorted believers to transform the world. Yet, Horton observes that wherever Calvin's notions of vocation are embodied by believers they have a transforming effect on their society and culture. This is precisely what the Kuyperian emphasis entails. Second, Horton rejects any notion in Calvin of "working for God" in our vocations. Rather, Horton argues that Calvin's emphasis is on loving service to our neighbours for their good (p. 228). Not only does this ignore biblical themes of serving Christ in our callings (see Calvin's commentaries on 1 Cor. 10:31 and Eph. 5:22-6:9), but it gives a very secular character to Calvin's notion of vocational calling. A better reading of Calvin is to note that he views all callings to be done in service to, and for the glory of, God.

The final chapter in this section, and in the book, notes the importance of the theme, "meditation on the future life" in Calvin's thought. Living with the hope of the return of Christ, and the renewal of all things – including the full redemption of believers – at the end of this age, should encourage Christians to persevere in this age with faith and love. This should not lead to triumphalism but to a life of self-denial and bearing the cross. Our union with Christ enables us to give ourselves to our efforts in this world even as we long for our resurrection and glorification, and the restoration of the world. Horton shows how Calvin's own life and death is a true, albeit imperfect, illustration of living with this hope.

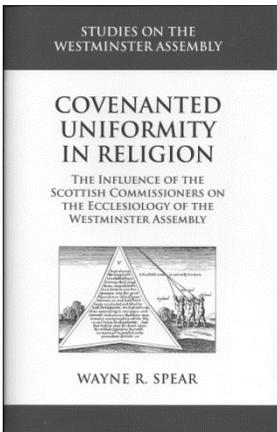
The value of this book is found in the thorough exposition by Horton of the various biblical themes in Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life that have been, and continue to be, important emphases for faithful Christian living. Throughout the book Horton indicates how Calvin's views chart a reliable course that steers clear of distorted and unbalanced presentations of Christian living. He himself saw clearly enough to break with many of the medieval themes – later confirmed as required Roman Catholic doctrine by the Council of Trent – that had deformed the biblical teaching on the Christian life. Calvin also resisted the over-reactions characteristic of the teachings of his contemporary Anabaptist theologians. Furthermore, because of Calvin's thor-

oughly biblical perspective, his teachings also provide guidance for Christians today to resist Christian teachings that are either influenced by modern (secular) notions of human nature and human flourishing, or that simply (over-)react to them. Calvin shows us what it means to live with obedience and faithfulness to God's revelation in the midst of influences and pressures that would lead us astray. For these reasons, I heartily recommend this book to all who are interested in learning from a (Reformed) forefather of the faith what it means to live a Christian life deeply shaped by God's word and missionally effective in the context in which God has placed us.

Reviewed by Dr. Guenther ("Gene") H. Haas, Professor of Religion and Theology, Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario.



***Covenanted Uniformity in Religion: The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners on the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly.* Wayne R. Spear. Studies on the Westminster Assembly. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2013, 236 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-60178-244-1**



Up until last year, access to Wayne Spear's 1976 Ph.D. thesis was limited to bound photocopies of the typed dissertation. Now, thirty-seven years after it was submitted and eight years after his retirement from the Chair of Systematic Theology at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Spear's research is at last in print and might have the audience which it deserves.

The subtitle, *The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners on the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly*, describes what the book is about. After the preface and introduction, there is

the first part of the book which has three chapters. Chapter one sets out the historical background of the Westminster Assembly. Chapter two describes the way that the Assembly conducted business, with an emphasis on the structure of the committees. Chapter three deals with the Scottish Commissioners and their work.

The second part has four chapters which treat the church and its officers, the local church, governmental assemblies, and ordination. The pattern followed by Spear is to state the final formulation at which the Assembly arrived; to describe how, through the work of the committees, the formulation was developed; and to pick up on issues which were of particular interest to

the Scots by describing the existing Scottish practice and noting the extent to which the Scottish Commissioners were able to either persuade the English Divines to adopt the Scottish way or to safeguard its continuation in the Church of Scotland. While doing this, Spear also notes the differences between the Scots and the English over which elements of church government were considered to be mandated by the Word or which were agreeable to the Word.

Drawing from his research, Wayne Spear concludes by describing what use was made of the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government* composed by the Westminster Assembly in England and Scotland, reviewing the aims of the Scots at the Assembly, and analysing the degree of Scottish success.

Perhaps the first question to ask is: Why publish a dissertation completed in 1976 now? The answer is that until Chad Van Dixhoorn's edition of the minutes of the Westminster Assembly arrived in 2012, access to this primary source of material was rather limited. Now, with this increased access comes increased interest in, and opportunity to interact with, studies which have relied on this source. Spear's work is one such study.

A second question might be: Where does *Covenanted Uniformity in Religion* fit in the historiography of the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government*?

In 1969, J. R. De Witt's *Jus Divinum* was published which in many ways supported the 19th-century consensus that the majority of the Westminster Divines were *jus divinum* Presbyterians who were debating with an Independent minority over the form of government which the Assembly would advise the English Parliament to institute in the Church of England. Robert S. Paul, writing in 1985, countered that the majority of the Westminster Divines were pragmatic Presbyterians who would have preferred something along the lines of Ussher's Primitive Episcopacy. In a 1993 essay, De Witt conceded that his original description of the Presbyterian party at the Assembly required nuance. Two years later, in the introduction to a reprint of one of the most important written works to come out of the debates, *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici*, David W. Hall states that that 1646 book reflects the original intent of the majority of the Westminster Divines on the subject of church government.

Spear's study shows that R. S. Paul is more or less correct; that De Witt was wise to revise his thesis; and that all that the existence of *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici* proves is that there were English Presbyterians who were in close agreement with the Scots and who fared as well or as badly as the Scots in the Assembly's debates and final formulations.

Of the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government*, Spear concludes that if instituted, it would have established a Presbyterian government in England based on general biblical principles, while allowing the Scots to continue as they were. The Scottish Commissioners were unable to get essential parts of their system established on the basis of divine institution, but were able to

stop any of those essential parts being excluded from the final formulations. He also concludes that if *jus divinum* is an essential part of the definition of Presbyterianism, then the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government* is sub-Presbyterian.

A third question might be: Do I need this book? If you have an interest in Presbyterianism, whether as an academic study or as the form of government to which you adhere, then the answer is yes. This book is an introduction to, summary of, and bibliography for historic Scottish Presbyterian Principles. A grasp of these principles is required to understand the background and context of all subsequent discussions. You have to know your Gillespie before you can interact meaningfully with Thornwell and Hodge.

Reviewed by D. Douglas Gebbie, who is the minister at the Presbyterian Reformed Church, Chesley, Ontario, and a regular reviewer for this journal.



Applied Theology

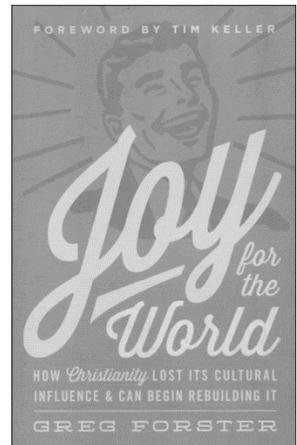
***Joy for the World: How Christianity Lost Its Cultural Influence & Can Begin Rebuilding It.* Greg Forster. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 313 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3800-1**

Joy for the World is a joy to read. Encouraging, visionary, imaginative, and God-centred are words that describe Forster's book.

First, it is a joy to read because of its main thesis. Forster lucidly describes how Christianity has lost its cultural influence and then gives the answer as to how Christians can begin to influence culture for the Lord again. His answer is the joy of God. Forster maintains that real Spirit-given Christian joy is the essential tool by which to engage culture and bring change to culture. By the joy of God Forster means, "The state of flourishing in mind, heart, and life that Christians experience by the Holy Spirit" (p. 23). It is this joy that will influence and transform our society to and for God.

Secondly, it is a joy to read because of Forster's presupposition. His presupposition is that he believes in the renewing grace of the gospel and the transformative power of the Spirit. He rightly asserts that God the Spirit will actually use God's people to bring godly change to our world. His assertion does not flow out of an over-realized eschatology; Forster is too realistic for that. Rather, he simply believes the biblical doctrine of ongoing transformation. If Christians are changed and being changed by the Spirit's power, they can bring change. This is the presupposition. Very refreshing.

Thirdly, it is a joy to read because of Forster's large vision. His concern is not merely the individual Christian's "heart", or church, or family. Forster maintains Christians can bring the joy of God into civilization and influence it for Jesus. He writes, "I can bring the joy of God with me into American civilization – because I bring the Holy Spirit with me, who creates the joy of God in me" (p. 77). He goes on, "The Spirit changes me, therefore, he changes how I engage in relationships. So the relationships themselves



change. That means the institutions of civilization change, too” (p. 78). Thus a family, a factory, a business, and so on, all experience the joy of God. Forster is thinking of individual Christians and society. His desire is to connect the two so that the transformational power of the gospel and the Spirit will be tasted in society.

Fourthly, it is a joy to read because it actually gives us tools to help us bring the joy of God back into society. The three-part structure of the book lends itself to this. Forster first describes why the Christian influence in America is obstructed. He rightly asserts that in the early 20th century Enlightenment Modernism combatted with Christian orthodoxy to destroy it. This rocked the evangelical church to its core. The response, however, was fragmented and narrow. Different evangelical camps used various strategies, “levers” as Forster calls them, to win the church and American society back to evangelical orthodoxy. These strategies, however, were divisive and counterproductive; so much so that Christianity lost its influence. Forster says today’s church should learn from this. He maintains the church has to give up “cultural lever-pulling” (p. 61) and instead live the joy of God in culture so culture will see, taste, and experience this joy. Forster then encourages believers to do this in the remaining freedom of religion Christians still have.

Then in chapters 2 through 5 Forster describes how organizational Christianity is essential to individual believers, both in being disciplined in the joy of God and also in bringing that joy to society. Because the church is the body of Christ on earth, she is to incarnate the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ. This means the organizational church is to teach and preach Christ’s doctrines. His chapter on preaching and teaching is very helpful. It also means the church is to be a place of worship corresponding to the priestly work of Christ. Lastly, it means the church must teach people faithful stewardship to live out the cultural mandate and great commission. Forster maintains that as the church gets the doctrine, worship, and stewardship right, she nurtures God’s people with God’s joy, thus enabling them to live God’s joy in the world.

Lastly, from chapters 6 through 8 the book deals with organic Christianity. By organic Forster means the social interplay of all the ways Christian’s relate to one another and the world around them. Forster superbly connects individual believers to their social surroundings. He tackles the human relationships of sex and family, work and the economy, and citizenship and community, and connects them to Christianity. He gives us four principles to help Christians bring Spirit-filled joy and dignity into these relationships and consequently into society. Principle one: affirm the good in society. Principle two: have the joy of God personally. Principle three: be entrepreneurial and imaginative in how you can bring God’s love and truth into relationships. Principle four: be faithful in church life. Worship and receive God’s joyful ministry every week. Worship maintains the believer’s focus.

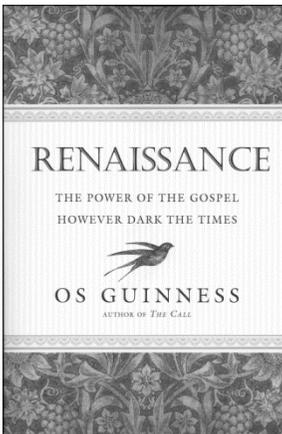
I do think this is an important book. Forster could have been stronger in asserting the present ascension and reign of Christ. A discussion on the

Kingdom of God and the New Covenant promises in regards to renewal would have strengthened his argument biblically. Despite these weaknesses, this book is a strong help to the church.

Reviewed by Henry Bartsch, minister of Trinity Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Chatham Ontario. Henry is married to Tammy and they have five children.



***Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times.* Os Guinness. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, , 187 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3671-0**



Former American Federal Bank Chairman Alan Greenspan entitled his 2007 memoir *The Age of Turbulence*; and while Greenspan's book focused on the economic uncertainties and turmoil of our time, the title equally applies in a social, political, and religious context. We live in a period of world history defined by turbulence and ferment; but put another way, we live in a time of great transition. Os Guinness, in his latest book, *Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times*, assesses the current position and role of the church in the context of this great historical transition.

Guinness begins by declaring that Western Christianity is once again facing an "Augustinian moment". He explains that just like the great church father St. Augustine, who witnessed the collapse of the Roman Empire and the ensuing uncertainties and terrors that followed, Christianity today is experiencing the effects of Western decline. In his own words, "[W]e are living in the twilight of five hundred years of western dominance of the world" (p. 22). This "twilight" of Western dominance is intimately connected to the decline of the Western church as a result of the church's cultural captivity. A somewhat ironic situation, points out Guinness: "The Western church was the single strongest source of ideas that shaped the rise of the modern world"; it has now become "culturally captive to the world to which it gave rise" (p. 37). While Guinness could have concluded his analysis here, as many have, he proceeds to suggest a series of tasks that the global church must undertake. This global focus is important and reminds us that the church is much bigger than the West and rather a single part of the wider body. The problems of the Western church are the problems of the global church, and not just because we are to act as a unified body. With the forces of globalization unleashed, many of the challenges facing the West will soon be problems for the developing world and the Global South. There-

fore, the global church faces three major tasks in the 21st century: prepare the Global South, win back the Western world, and contribute to the human future.

An integral component in following out these tasks is understanding the relationship between the church and culture. How does the church engage with and influence culture while remaining set apart? The church has struggled with finding the balance of being “in the world” but “not of the world” and has often oscillated between the two extremes. When the church does strike the balance though, it is here that it finds its culture-shaping power. In Guinness’s words, “For the intellectual and social tension of being ‘in’ but ‘not of’ the world provides the engagement-with-critical-distance that is the source of the church’s culture-shaping power” (p. 84). But how does this look and work in practice for the church? Guinness makes three recommendations. First, the church is called to engage as the Lord commanded. Secondly, the church is called to be culturally and spiritually discerning. And thirdly, the church is called to refuse anything that does not comply or conform with Christ’s kingdom.

Lest the reader begin to think that it is the church alone that will revive itself and transform culture, Guinness proceeds to focus next on the relationship between human agency and God’s will. Guinness is very clear that the decisive power in history is always God’s, through His Word and Spirit.

In his concluding chapter, Guinness introduces the historical paradox that the church always goes forward best by going back first. To be clear, Guinness is not calling for a return to the past, nor is he nostalgic for the Christian West’s former power and glory. “We are talking about a return to God, not an era. We are talking of going back to a person and not a period, to God and not a golden age” (p. 134).

In conclusion, Guinness has written an eminently readable book with nuanced criticism and observations on the times that we are living in and how we as a church can best work as a body in living out our Christian mandate of being salt of the earth and light of the world. Recognizing the corporate nature of this mandate, Guinness has thoughtfully concluded each chapter with thought-provoking and engaging questions for those who take up the book in a group study.

Reviewed by Ian A. Whytock, who recently completed his M.A. thesis in political history at the University of Stellenbosch, S.A. and now lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.



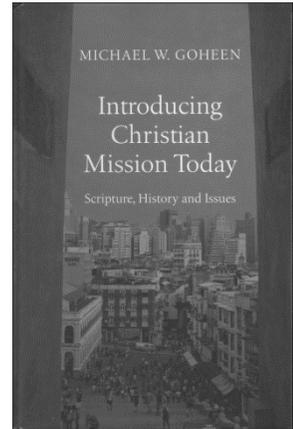
***Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues.* Michael W. Goheen. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, 444 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8308-4047-2**

Michael Goheen's book will be added to my list of recommended books. Part one gives a biblical and theological reflection on mission. Part two hands the reader a historical and contemporary reflection on mission. Part three tackles current issues on mission today. These chapters are more than mere reflections; they also contain gospel-centred recommendations to move the worldwide church forward. Goheen is too ecumenical to only deal with the church in the West. To be sure, he deals with the challenges facing the church and mission in the West, but his focus is global.

The author helps the church of Christ specifically in four areas. First, he opens the church's eyes to the global realities facing the church in the 21st century. In the introduction and in chapters 3-5 the author honestly and insightfully tells the church the nine global realities that affect its mission today. The collapse of colonialism, globalization, urbanization, economic and social problems, a soaring population, the resurgence of religion, religious pluralism, Pentecostalism, and massive culture shifts in the West are realities facing Christ's church. Can the church do mission in this situation? Goheen answers yes because of God's purpose of redemption. This book is a road map to help the church keep doing mission in the face of the above realities.

Secondly, Goheen teaches the church God's mission. For the church to be faithful in the current global situation, she must return to the Bible to get her bearings. She must read the Bible in a way that takes seriously a "missional hermeneutic" (p. 37). The missional hermeneutic understands missions as God's mission. *God's mission is to restore the whole world and God's people through Jesus.* "Thus, the Bible tells us the story of God's long historical journey to liberate his world from the destructive power of sin" (p. 39). With a clear handle on Old and New Testament biblical theology, Goheen lucidly summarizes the history of redemption, showing that God's work in history was and is to bring God's good news to this broken world. Biblically speaking, God's redemptive work is missional. He then asserts and shows how this missional theology should be applied to all *loci* of theology. Goheen's biblical presupposition is that "mission is first of all the work of God; it is *God's mission*" (p. 82).

Goheen helps the church, thirdly, as he tells the account of mission in the church's past so today's church can be even more faithful to God's mission. He does this in chapters 3, 4, and 5. He first describes the mission paradigms



of the past with a view to show the need for a gospel-centred paradigm today. The gospel of the Lord has not changed, but the global realities have; so the church must contextualize to present the gospel to sinners. Secondly, Goheen recounts how the church began to realize this about the middle of the 20th century. As a consequence new ecumenical mission paradigms emerged. Chapter 4 describes these movements in detail. He particularly explains the paradigm set out by the Lausanne Movement begun in 1974. Its catch phrase is, “The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world” (p. 169). Goheen is ecumenical so he describes the current mission focuses and strategies of the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy; both explanations are helpful. Pentecostalism as a movement with a mission paradigm is also described. Actually, Goheen throughout his entire book helps the church come to grips with the phenomenal worldwide growth of Pentecostalism. Thirdly, Goheen describes the current situation of the global church, particularly noting the great size of Pentecostalism in the South American, African, and Asian continents. He also reminds the reader of the dearth of Christianity in the West.

All of these descriptions point out weaknesses, strengths, and errors of certain movements. Goheen clearly makes biblical authority the benchmark, so if a movement has strayed from Scripture he explains the changes that need to occur. As noted above, Goheen’s intent in giving this historical information is that the present church might know the issues she faces and recognize where change is needed.

Last of all, Goheen helps the church by giving answers to the current issues facing mission today. In chapter 2, he defined God’s mission, but he also went on to explain the nature of the church. The church does not just “do” mission; it “is” missional. In her worship and ministries she is commissioned to worship God and send God out as God sends Himself out to bring salvation (p.78). Thus, when the church is being the church, she will firstly seek to engage in and give out the whole gospel. Goheen’s solutions to the tension between word and deed are excellent. Secondly, he pleads that churches practice faithful contextualization and gives five key principles to do so. Thirdly, the West and its decline are dealt with. Pulling no punches he declares the church in the West has to come back to the biblical gospel and recognize she will be a minority “contrast” community. Fourthly, he gives practical support in helping the church face world religions. This chapter alone is worth the cost of the book. His explanation of the foundations of non-Christian religions and his critique of religious pluralism help the church understand today’s people. Lastly, his chapter on urban mission, although not as rounded as Tim Keller’s work, is helpful, particularly in describing the various characteristics of city churches.

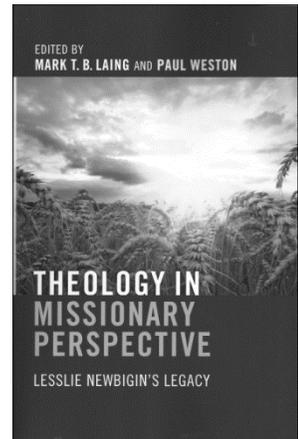
In *Introducing Christian Mission Today* readers are encouraged in God’s mission mandate, instructed in the challenges and successes of the churches missionary work in history, and given wise instruction in how to persevere in God’s calling in the challenging milieu of the world today. Goheen aptly

shows, “The day of missions is not over” (p. 434). This book gives the church guidance and hope to continually be involved in God’s mission.

Reviewed by Henry Bartsch

***Theology in Missionary Perspective: Lesslie Newbigin’s Legacy.* Eds., Mark T. B. Laing and Paul Weston. Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012, 320 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-61097-574-2**

Editors Mark Laing and Paul Weston have presented a wonderful collection of essays concerning the life and work of Lesslie Newbigin, a significant missionary, missiologist, ecumenist, and theologian of the 20th century. A man referred to by Andrew Walls as “a Christian giant”. For example, Paul Weston’s chapter on “His Writings in Context” provides the reader with the biographical detail needed to better understand concerning Lesslie Newbigin’s (1926-1998) legacy. For instance, at the age of fifty-two, Newbigin became the first director of the World Council of Churches’ division of World Mission and Evangelism and simultaneously became an assistant general secretary of the WCC itself. This shows the calibre of the man as leader and also the complexity for many as Newbigin is not easy to categorise. The essays contain numerous other accolades and goals which Newbigin achieved.



The book, dedicated to the memory of David Kettle (1947-2011), is divided into three main sections: A Way of Doing Theology, Theology in Western Context, and Theology in Global Context. The first section reveals Newbigin’s approach to theology, and the writers of these essays make reference to Lesslie Newbigin’s experience as a missionary in India, having gone there in 1936 with his wife Helen as Church of Scotland missionaries. His experience in the field largely shaped his theology, particularly in the areas of ecclesiology and eschatology. More is mentioned below. The second section of the book deals mainly with his concern over modernity and how it has influenced the theology of the West. Murray Rae presents Newbigin’s view that “the church in the West had become assimilated to a culture that was no longer Christian” (p.189). The third and final section contains essays which centre on religious pluralism and how to present the gospel on the global stage.

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Four notable features of this essay collection by Laing and Weston increase the value of it. First, they provide an introduction of each contributing writer. Further than that, the presentation is made more effective by the fact

that the contributors have worked closely with Newbigin and his work or that they knew him on a more personal level. Second, a brief explanation of what the reader can expect is given in each of the three sections. Third, numerous footnotes are supplied as explanation, and supporting material is listed in a bibliography at the end of each essay. With this in mind and given the variety of contributors – sixteen in total – the reader is assured of a fairly accurate and objective portrayal of Newbigin’s legacy. Fourth, many of the writers of these essays encourage the reader to read on, beyond what is contained in this volume. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, for example, subtitles the final paragraph of his essay: “In Lieu of Conclusion: Seed-thoughts for Further Reflection”. In the same vein, Kenneth Gordon urges readers to search the Newbigin website (<http://www.newbigin.net>) for more.

In all the essays the concurrence between the writers is clearly tangible, and numerous quotations and references from Newbigin paint the same picture of his theology in missionary perspective. Furthermore, it is clear from his life and work that Lesslie Newbigin also placed a great deal of emphasis on Jesus Christ as the reality to understanding the world and its existence – Jürgen Schuster’s chapter on “The Clue to History” and Ian Barns’ “Re-imagining the Gospel as Public Truth” certainly portray this – he emphasized what John Flett calls “his trinitarian framing for mission”, and Newbigin’s view that the church is the hermeneutic of the gospel also received much attention. These themes also reflect Lesslie Newbigin’s theology in missionary perspective.

If one has a heart for the gospel and a passion for God’s mission, then this collection of essays is worth reading. In this regard, Paul Weston, in his chapter that focuses on Lesslie Newbigin’s understanding of the missionary church, quotes Newbigin’s classic statement that “the church lives in the midst of history as a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the reign of God” (p.79). Newbigin undoubtedly had a close walk with the Master, and even through his writings lives were changed. Jenny Taylor writes: “I came to a new intellectually credible faith after reading Newbigin and found a reason to live” (p.204). Taylor, a journalist and one who spent much time with Newbigin, even being at his bedside until his death, brings the story to life. Her essay entitled “Confessions of a Journalist” will certainly inspire many a reader.

Seemingly many have not taken full cognizance of Newbigin’s contribution to theology and, in David Kettle’s words, he has always been “a marginal figure”. We need to read more of this great legend. To get a taste of this, the editors include in an appendix a list of no less than twelve leading scholars and thinkers from around the world who wrote tributes to Lesslie Newbigin’s great legacy. After reading these essays, I am certainly challenged to read Newbigin’s *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* and *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*, to name but two.

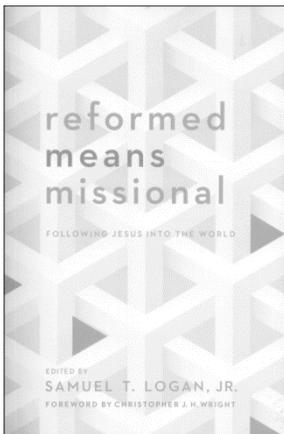
I would not hesitate to encourage pastors, theologians, missiologists, and similar scholars to read the works contained in this collection. Lesslie Newbigin's life and work are still making an impact today especially in missional discussions. Read some of his works and then you will be the judge. No doubt a book review only begins to scratch the surface of any work and much more can be said. Therefore, like these essay writers, I also encourage you to read further, because, in the words of Geoffrey Wainwright:

Lesslie Newbigin was a towering figure in twentieth-century ecumenism, active and influential in his own time, and who had moreover a prophetic gift of anticipating the future which not only proved itself while he was yet alive but also stretched beyond in ways relevant to succeeding generations. (p. 207)

Reviewed by Wayne Grätz, marketing and recruitment manager and junior lecturer at Dumisani Theological Institute, King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa.



Reformed Means Missional: Following Jesus into the World. Ed., Samuel T. Logan, Jr. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2013, 274 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-938267-75-8



The origins of this book began with the World Reformed Fellowship's (WRF) General Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2010, where the theme was "Continuing the Reformation: A Missional Theology for the 21st-Century Global Church". From this, several of the addresses at that Assembly have now made their way into this book, and hence the thematic continuity is evident. Also from that Edinburgh Assembly emerged the WRF Statement of Faith, an effort "to provide an outward perspective within historic Reformed orthodoxy" and also to reflect the reality that "the world has changed since those documents [the historic Reformed Confessions and Catechisms] were written" (p. 6). Hence *Reformed Means Missional* very much reflects this outward looking perspective within the evangelical Reformed community and certainly is relevant to today's global realities confronting the Christian community. This is not a book which simply restates 16th-century church debates.

The book's foreword, by missiologist Chris Wright, consists of a very brief discussion entitled "What Do We Mean by 'Missional'?" (pp. ix-xiii).

This bridges us to Lausanne III in Cape Town in 2010. The introduction is by Sam Logan, the international director of WRF. Here he builds upon Wright's quoting of The Cape Town Commitment, which says, "All our mission must therefore reflect the integration of evangelism and committed engagement in the world, both being ordered and driven by the whole biblical revelation of the gospel of God" (p. xiii), to form part of the working definition of being missional. Thus holism is stressed in the book as a guiding missiological principle. The book assumes this and does not enter into the debates and nuances of this subject. If readers want such a critique or an understanding of the differences, they will need to look elsewhere.¹ Thus this book should be regarded more as the practitioner's guide than the theoretician's text.

Hence, section 1, "Laying the Foundation", is quite small (three chapters) in comparison to section 2, "The Church Reaches the World" (ten chapters). The first of the three chapters in section 1 is Martin Allen's very clear and straightforward presentation describing a missional church, basically his answer to the question, "What are the marks of a truly *missional* Christian church?" (p. 11). The second chapter by Samuel Logan uses Jonathan Edwards to tackle the subject of orthodox belief and moral behaviour, or orthodoxy and "living out" theology (p. 23), which in former generations was the antinomian controversy. This chapter highlights the relevance of historical theology for today. The final chapter of the section is by Thomas Schirrmacher based on the book of Romans showing how theology and mission go together. This surely would warrant a good class lesson and discussion.

Then comes the majority of the book developing specific applications, generally with singular holistic themes. Flip Buys from South Africa leads these off with the subject of responding to poverty and social injustice. This is a subject that is very rarely tackled in conservative Reformed circles. In fact, the same could be said about many of the chapters in section 2: Diane Langberg's chapter on a missional response to global violence against women, Basyle Tchividjian's response to child sexual abuse, and John Freeman's chapter on a missional response to "homosexual strugglers". All of these are challenging, thought provoking, and demanding of careful reflection. Another "applicatory" chapter is Timothy Keller's on global urban missions, for which Keller is well-known. A related chapter to Keller's by Susan Post follows on the health of the city – perhaps a helpful discussion to copy and give to one's Christian friends in nursing. There is always a danger in choosing certain themes and missing others. The "city theme" is very extensive in mission at present. However, what about the "rural theme"? Should this also be developed? The remaining thematic chapters cover the subjects of migrant churches, secularity in Europe, and the challenge of Islam and hidden believers – all very relevant and stimulating chapters.

¹ The range of literature on these two subjects is vast. A recent, extensive, three-part review article critiques this missiological perspective of Chris Wright. See A. J. de Visser, "The Mission of God by C. J. H. Wright" (1, 2, 3), *Lux Mundi* (32:3; 32:4; 33:1), 2013-2014, 82-83; 88-89; 8-10.

The book ends with a conclusion by Andrew McGowan on “Crafting an Evangelical, Reformed, and Missional Theology for the Twenty-First Century” and an afterword by Frank A. James, III entitled “Missional Is Mission Critical”. McGowan’s essay is a great introduction to the WRF Statement of Faith, not so much as a text to introduce that Statement’s content but more to provide a brilliant introduction to how to proceed in “doing” our theology. This chapter is strongly recommended to be read by many.

Finally, readers should be aware that the paperback version of this book, which is the basis of this review, is 274 pages. However, there is also an e-book version which runs to 465 pages and has eight additional chapters. These eight chapters constitute section 3, “Building the Church”. This is perhaps reflective of an emerging trend in publishing where the hard text is not identical to the e-book. This is now the second book I have reviewed in the last year which was like this. I cannot make comment on these eight additional chapters.

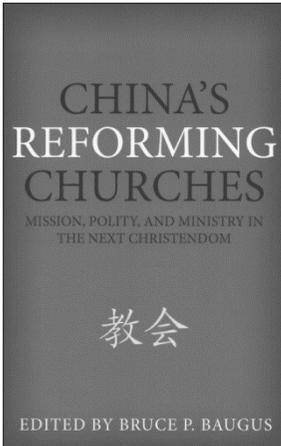
Overall this is a helpful collection. It could serve well in senior missiology courses in colleges or seminaries. It would give teachers and students an opportunity to engage very widely and generally in a very trusted and helpful way. It will not be the place to turn if one wants some of the philosophical debate – for that one would need to look elsewhere. This could also be a very helpful work to provide for select missionary candidates in certain ministries. Like most collections or anthologies, not everything is covered, but it certainly has merit and value. WRF needs to be commended for making this work available to a wide readership.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***China’s Reforming Churches: Mission, Polity, and Ministry in the Next Christendom.* Ed., Bruce P. Baugus. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014, 336 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-60178-317-2**

Many readers of a certain generation have had their thoughts about the Church in China coloured by stories of martyrdom like that of John and Betty Stam or the horrific persecutions of the Cultural Revolution. Names like Watchman Nee and Wang Ming-Dao are the reference points for our thinking about Chinese Christianity. This book is a helpful challenge to outdated thinking about China and shows how in the forty-or-so years since Mao’s failed Cultural Revolution the churches of China have matured and been faced with perhaps more difficult challenges.

The compilation of conference presentations¹ into book form often leaves the reader with the “you had to be there” feeling, but this book’s thoughtful organization and careful editing enable it to avoid that snare. There is some new material included in the book which did not form part of the original conference. A helpful preface and introduction set the stage and whet the appetite for the articles that follow.



The essays are grouped into four parts: 1. The History of Presbyterianism in China, 2. Presbyterianism in China Today, 3. Challenges and Opportunities for Presbyterianism in China, and 4. Appropriating a Tradition. Each section prepares the reader for the chapters to come, and often the reader will find himself flipping back a section to re-read a paragraph that contains information that will clarify something another author assumes some knowledge of. There are also a couple of helpful appendices which contain historical documents which also give further insight into the subject matter at hand. One of these is the translated document of Robert Morrison’s 1811 Catechism.

In total, eleven different contributors have prepared the chapters of this book: Bruce Baugus, G. Wright Doyle, Brent Fulton, Luke Lu, Michael M., A. Donald MacLeod, Sung-Il Park, Phil Remmers, David VanDrunen, Guy Prentiss Waters, and Paul Wang. It would appear that not all of the original presenters at the conference have included their material in this book.

As the titles of the four sections indicate, the book is unapologetically Presbyterian in its approach to the subject matter both in the historical review and in prescribing a pattern for the best approach to the spread and the nurture of the Church in China. As the first three chapters point out, no doubt one reason for this is that much of the early Protestant mission to China was Presbyterian and Reformed. Scots, Dutch Reformed, American, and Korean Presbyterians made up a significant portion of the early missionary labourers in China, and their work in areas such as linguistics and education bore fruit well after Western missionaries were expelled from China in the mid-20th century.

The chapters dealing with the current challenges in China are also very helpful to the Western Christian because they help to explain the very complex political and social situation within which Chinese Christianity functions. Christians in the West have tended to see the Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches as only a tool of the Communist Party and the House church movement as the true church, and this understanding is shown to be simplistic and at times harmful to forward movement.

¹ The conference was entitled “China’s Reforming Churches” and was held in January 2013 at Wallace Presbyterian Church, Maryland and was a “closed-door” conference

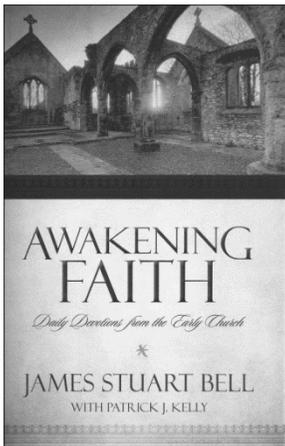
The Church in China has had to deal with many of the same issues and cultural struggles as the Western Church; the difference is that they have had to do so in a highly compressed time frame. Challenges of training for pastors and elders, opportunities for legal Christian publishing, and the indigenization of biblical and Presbyterian orthodoxy are all addressed in the final chapters.

I commend this book to those who are interested in what has always been a major mission field for the Western Church. Scholars, pastors, and laymen will find that it will challenge stereotypes and enable far more intelligent prayer for our Chinese Presbyterian brothers and sisters. Dr. Albert Mohler in a recent radio interview said, “The Lord has told us that He will always have a Church on the earth; what we need to realize is that it might not be centred here in the West.” One suspects that Baugus and his co-contributors would utter a hearty “Amen” to that sentiment.

Reviewed by Jeff Kingswood, pastor at Grace Presbyterian, Woodstock, Ontario and past moderator of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.



***Awakening Faith: Daily Devotions from the Early Church.* James Stuart Bell with Patrick J. Kelly. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 400 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-51487-9**



Awakening Faith: Daily Devotions from the Early Church contains 366 daily devotional readings from the early Church Fathers. There have been several such devotionals in recent years selecting daily readings for meditation from a variety of historical Christian figures, whether it be Calvin, the Puritans, or hymn writers. The value of such is that it is a user-friendly approach to making some readings more popular, digestible, and with small bites to engage a greater range of readers. Also, in most of these the language has been modernized or updated, so *Awakening Faith* very much fits this mold. As I have said with some of these others, there is not always a direct

link between the Scripture at the top of each page and the “quotation” on the rest of the page. One must not necessarily see each of these in *Awakening Faith* thus as “commentary” or “exposition”, as one will then often be disappointed – they are not contextual analysis or exposition of that text. So with this clear caveat in view, one can approach this collection as with many other similar ones and still be edified and simply see this as an edited collection.

There are several attractive features of this work: the lovely bookmarker, the attractive book jacket with colouration very appropriate for the subject, hardback for durability, for all 366 days, and a good updating of the language (“gently updated” to quote the inside jacket). Also, the biographical sketches at the end of the book are well done to tell the reader concisely a few facts about the sixty plus entrants in the book. One will quickly see that the top contributors are Ambrose, Augustine, Cyprian of Carthage, Gregory the Great, and John Chrysostom – which were not surprises. Many of the other entries are by much less known contributors such as Gregory Thaumaturgus, and these “lesser knowns” often only have an entry for one or two days. The value of this is clearly that it does help us to learn about other “church fathers”, using the term broadly.

This is a warmly written work with a non-technical introduction. It will help one to think more about many of the church’s leaders from centuries past. This will demand a meditative spirit to gain most from these readings. It is a helpful way of entering into the Church Fathers. I suspect some will be disappointed because it is very generalist, non-controversial, that is, really not dealing with some of the polemical matters, for example on the sacraments. The inside front jacket cover said it well – “a collection of warm-hearted exhortations” – that is what has generally been selected. The book could be used personally or perhaps even by some lecturers as a devotional exercise to start a church history class. It will not likely be a book for family devotions, and that was probably not its intended readership. Its niche market will be more for individuals interested in the early church in an introductory manner.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

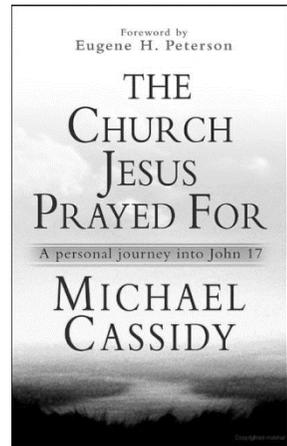
The Church Jesus Prayed For: A Personal Journey into John 17.
Michael Cassidy. Oxford/Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2013,
415 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-85721-330-3, e-ISBN 978-0-85721-
380-8

Cassidy’s book came into my hands as I was re-entering pastoral ministry after an eleven year hiatus of study and teaching in a Bible Institute. As I began to pray for my new congregation, the thought came that I should pray according to what Jesus had prayed in His prayer of John 17. Therefore, to receive a copy of Michael Cassidy’s book by that very title was most encouraging. Prior to his exposition the author gives some suggestions how his book could be used with benefit in small groups (pp. 21-22), and in his postlude (pp. 395-96) how one can best absorb what his journey through Christ’s Prayer reveals. I think his ideas contain good advice. This reviewer used this book as part of his spiritual disciplines and benefited by it.

Cassidy's approach to Jesus' prayer is straightforward. He begins by briefly sharing his personal journey – how he began to interact with, and be interacted upon, by Christ's prayer. He gives a clear exegetical outline of the flow, main ideas, and context of the prayer. This was very helpful in giving his readers an overview of its contents. His two chapters on Jesus's world-view distracted me initially because I thought it was too philosophical. However, as Cassidy points out, grasping our Lord's worldview is critical because if he is right in the way he sees things, then we imperil ourselves if we do not embrace Christ's view of reality. We will not be able to keep in step with His understanding of what is truth in our postmodern times (p. 74). The bulk of Cassidy's book is an unpacking of qualities that he identified as the "Ten Marks of the Church Jesus Prayed For". The ten marks that Jesus wants present in His Church at this critical time are Truth, Holiness, Joy, Protection, Mission, Prayer, Unity, Love, Power, and Glory (p. 104). Cassidy's exposition of each mark is rich biblically in that he dealt with each theme within its immediate context but also within the full range of the canon. He poured Scripture into each exposition so the reader was confronted with the truth from all of God's Word. He generally dealt with each mark in one chapter, but his explorations of Mission, Unity, and Glory merited two chapters each.

Cassidy's writing style is clear and direct; he is easy to follow. His expositions have a sermonic feel to them with many helpful illustrations from his reading and ministry experiences among ecumenical and evangelical circles within the context of Africa, especially South Africa. That was helpful in both understanding the truth and feeling its application to our lives individually as well as congregationally. His style at times irked me as it seemed too casual or personal, but then I saw again the book's subtitle, *A Personal Journey into John 17*, and realized he was reflecting his personal passion for more local churches to manifest the ten qualities for which Jesus prayed just prior to His crucifixion. I was struck by the urgency of what Cassidy was saying about pursuing these ten marks, yet I was also greatly encouraged by the vision he was casting of the possibility that through prayer, the Word, and personal devotion we could see these ten marks, in some measure, at work within our local congregations at such a time as this. If Jesus prayed passionately for His church (and not the world) that we would manifest these ten marks, then surely they should be the focus of our passion in prayer and ministry within our churches. Cassidy concluded his study with this observation:

Our Lord has prayed for His church. In doing so He uttered the most extraordinary, earth-shattering, and universe-jolting words our



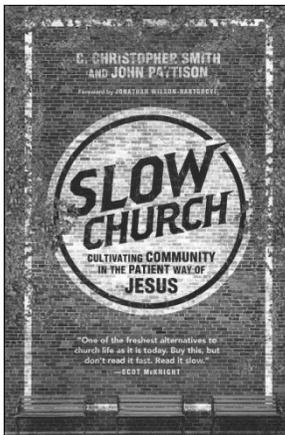
planet and cosmos have ever heard . . . He prayed that His church would be marked by truth, holiness, joy, protection, mission prayerfulness, unity, love and power – with glory as the crowning mark . . . so that the radiant character and moral beauty of God shine through. (p. 393)

Cassidy calls us to follow him as he follows Christ in praying and working for the beauty of these ten marks to be manifest in our lives so the world will know that God has sent Jesus into the world and believe our message about him. To do so is to seek the revival of God's people.

Reviewed by Warren Charlton, pastor of Two Hills Fellowship Chapel, Two Hills, Alberta and formerly chair of the Pastoral Studies Department at Peace River Bible Institute.



***Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus.* C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, 246 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-4114-1**



The reading and reviewing of books is a subjective endeavor. When it comes to treatises about the church, some books are real page turners and meet you right where you are, and you can't devour them fast enough. C. John Miller's *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* was like that to me. It really scratched where I itched. Harry Reeder's *From Embers to a Flame* was almost like that. The seminal book that gave me inspiration for pastoral leadership, however, was Bill Hull's *The Disciple Making Pastor*. I was given vision, inspiration, and the desire to come to Canada as a mission developer after reading it. I even came up with the motto of our church from that book, "Making Disciples That Make a Difference."

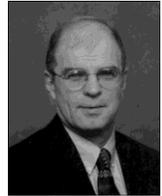
Slow Church, though, is not like that. It's a slow read, plodding almost, and the name is a bit of a misnomer. Yes, it's slow, but to say that it's a book about the church is a stretch. The authors, who are not pastors but professional writers and editors, unpack their world view and then peripherally show how the church integrates into that. Slowness has its origin in the patience of God, which bears fruit in a people who are patient in worship and evangelism. (The Church Growth movement is really taken to task here.) The book is structured like a formal dinner: the first course being Ethics, the second course Ecology, and the third course Economy. If the books I mentioned at the beginning are inspiration and a call to immediate action, this book is

more like ruminating, savoring, coming back to taste again, and slowly, very slowly making changes in areas in which you assumed you knew all the answers.

What I did appreciate about the various subjects that the authors explore is the interdependent nature of the disciplines. For example, in the section on Ethics we are encouraged to put down deep roots in our geographical location, our community, and in the lives of people. This thread is woven into the section on Ecology as we contemplate Wholeness, Work, and Sabbath. A person sacrifices wholeness when he constantly uproots himself and when his work is not meaningful. (E.g., when Henry Ford introduced the assembly line in 1913, the company had to hire 963 people for every 100 empty positions. Why? Workers just walked out. The work was meaningless, and so people did not put down roots.) The Sabbath also is a time to put down deep roots into community and family as we slow down and learn to trust God for our provision and our pleasure.

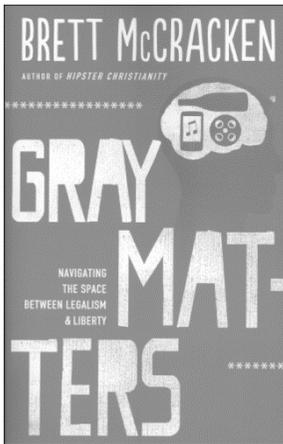
It took me a while to work through *Slow Church*. That is, I suppose, as the authors intended. I would read for a few moments and then put the book down to think about what they were saying; maybe disagree at first and write in the margins, but then come back and begin to see things differently. But I'm glad I read it. Change is slow, and we need to read books like this if we want God to continue to change us.

Reviewed by Rick Barnes, pastor of Grace Fellowship Church, Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia. Rick is married to Sharon and they have six children.



***Gray Matters: Navigating the Space Between Legalism and Liberty.* Brett McCracken. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013, 269 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-1474-1**

Brett McCracken has followed up his initial book on culture (*Hipster Christianity*) with this reflection on four hot topic issues within the Christian sphere. In his book, *Gray Matters*, McCracken seeks to give direction on how God's people should respond to and "consume" the culture. McCracken focusses on four issues: food, music, movies, and alcoholic drinks. He focuses on these four because there is a wide diversity of responses to these among Christians today. The extremes of rejection or complete acceptance are what he seeks to battle against (p. 69). In this book, McCracken argues for a more mature way of "consuming" culture by engaging and discerning what may be good in it.



McCracken writes in a provocative way. Throughout the book, he introduces a subject and then seems to throw the door wide open. After initially presenting the idea that Christians should see and do almost everything, he slowly steps back to a more moderate position. Just how are we to engage culture in the world today? Being in the world but not of it, of course, necessitates some contact with the world's culture. For example, almost everyone listens to some music and dines out from time to time. He asserts that what you listen to and where you eat will be a reflection of your stance on culture. When it comes to our use and participation in these areas, are we dealing with

“gray matters” or are there standards of right and wrong that need to be considered?

There are parts of this book that I found helpful. Throughout the book you will find short essays that address a host of related issues that Christians might face. One specific item I appreciated in this book was his focus on history. For each of the four subjects, McCracken begins by outlining how Christians have viewed the specific subject in the past. McCracken rightly states that we need to understand culture (p. 21). But does understanding equal participating in and embracing? McCracken also outlines various principles to help Christians discern how to participate in culture. These principles are a useful guide. But does McCracken consistently apply these principles to the four specific areas he has chosen to address? One of the principles McCracken calls for is discernment (p. 22). Discernment means knowing the good from the bad or having a proper judgment. Does McCracken consistently show the reader how to discern the good from the bad in culture?

Although there is some to appreciate in this book, I found it difficult to accept how McCracken applied his stated principles. Not only does he seem to be targeting conservative evangelicals, he also pushes a more inclusive and tolerant view of culture and society. On page 100, McCracken briefly discusses what I believe is the central issue in our relationship to the society and culture in which we live. Understanding the relationship between common grace and the antithesis is crucial. McCracken says, “In the midst of this upsurge in appreciating common grace, there is a real danger that we’ll get too carried away in finding God in places where he just isn’t there” (p. 100). This point hits on my main disagreement with his conclusions. In our world today, Christians are far more likely to embrace everything that society dishes out than to be critical and discerning. I understand the fact that McCracken is trying to encourage critical thinking when it comes to consuming culture, but he misses the mark when it comes to Christian discernment. When we take into account that his target audience is likely those who are college age, he ends up encouraging license without restraint. My objection to his argu-

ment boils down to this – do we need to consume rotten food in order to know that it is bad? Should we sin boldly because there might be some good in it, or should we err on the side of caution? Did Adam and Eve need to eat the forbidden fruit to know that it was bad for them? There are many things in culture and society that are detrimental and harmful for Christians. McCracken is seeking to encourage consumption where Christian discernment will lead to a rejection of what our culture embraces.

To prove this point, I want to focus on how McCracken deals with the concept of movie watching. Throughout the chapter on movies, McCracken argues that Christians should view many different types of movies, including those which are filled with sex and cursing, because they may teach you something about goodness. He states that all truth is God’s truth; therefore if a movie has something truthful to say it must be good. I know this critique is overly simplistic, but my problem with his coverage of movies leaves the reader thinking they should watch more risqué movies because otherwise they might be missing something that McCracken would call beautiful. The list of movie titles he approves of and the examples he gives pushes the envelope to the extreme. He makes it sound like viewing naked images of people, listening to them swear and curse the Lord’s name is no big deal except for a few abnormal people who are very weak. The fact is, there are movies that Christians should not watch, no matter how “artistically beautiful” they may be.

It is very clear that culture is McCracken’s area of expertise. He reflects a standard, Kuyperian understanding of our responsibility to “redeem the culture”. However, under the guise of engaging culture many have been led astray and even shipwrecked their faith. I wish McCracken would have spent more time answering the question, “Is the world our friend or our enemy?” An underestimation of the evil one has led to great chaos and injury within the church. When God’s people spend too much time learning from the world and trying to redeem what is opposed to Christ, the church is thrown into chaos and cultural relevance is substituted for the truth of the Word. Although a few biblical passages are sprinkled here and there in this book, it is missing a real wrestling with what Scripture has to say concerning our engagement with culture. Because this book fails to provide a godly perspective and appropriate guidance in how Christians are to engage the world’s culture, I cannot recommend this book. There are much better books available on how Christians should relate to the culture, such as *Delighting in the Law of the Lord* by J. Barrs. (See review p. 112.)

Reviewed by Nick Alons, originally from Iowa and a graduate of Dort College and Mid-America Seminary, is presently pastor of the United Reformed Church of Prince Edward Island.

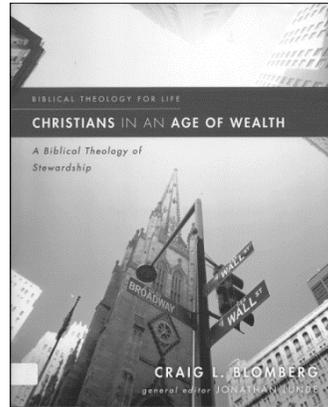


***Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship.* Craig L. Blomberg. Biblical Theology for Life, gen. ed. Jonathan Lunde. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 271 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-310-31898-9**

The Biblical Theology for Life series attempts to ask the important questions about various biblical topics, such as, what does the Bible say about that and “so what”. Contributors are asked to draw out and describe the Bible’s teaching on a certain subject and then “contextualize” it to contemporary situations and issues. The primary goal is to figure out how to live biblically in today’s world.¹

Craig Blomberg’s contribution to the series, *Christians in an Age of Wealth*, addresses the biblical theology of stewardship, which is a pretty vague topic when you think about it. As Blomberg states, “There is no single, dominate word in the Hebrew or Greek of the Bible for ‘stewardship’ or its cognates, as we tend to define them in English” (p. 33). Normally we think of stewardship as “the responsible management of something in our care” whether it be our money, our time, the environment, our joy, or, if you are a pastor or a parent, people. We often refer to how we are stewards of all these things. But the Bible speaks of stewardship in economic terms; therefore, to begin, *Christians in an Age of Wealth* needs to be understood as a book about money and material possessions (pp. 32, 33).

“No one can serve two masters”, Jesus said, “for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24).² So the real question becomes: Your money? Or your life? Can you do both God’s way?³ The simple answer, and the one Jesus implied in the Sermon on the Mount, is, no, you can’t do both God’s way. Ultimately as Christ-followers it is our responsibility to use our wealth and money for God’s purposes (pp. 35, 244).⁴ To quote Blomberg:



“No one can serve two masters”, Jesus said, “for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24).² So the real question becomes: Your money? Or your life? Can you do both God’s way?³ The simple answer, and the one Jesus implied in the Sermon on the Mount, is, no, you can’t do both God’s way. Ultimately as Christ-followers it is our responsibility to use our wealth and money for God’s purposes (pp. 35, 244).⁴ To quote Blomberg:

¹ Jonathan Lunde, series preface, 15-16.

² Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV). *The ESV Study Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001).

³ Russell Corben with Brian Smith, *Your Money or Your Life: Can You Do Both God’s Way?* (Winnipeg: Word Alive Inc., 2007).

⁴ Corben, *Your Money or Your Life*, pp. 118 ff; 141. Also see 2 Corinthians 9:6-13; cf. Matthew 6:19-21.

...believers have the resources to alleviate enormous amounts of human suffering apart from relying on the secular business world or the government. If the church had the will to do so, it could make a huge difference and make it clear to the world that its ministry was in Jesus' name. (pp. 26-27)

No doubt if we lived up to this one responsibility we would make a huge difference for the gospel's sake.

While money can facilitate a lot of good, it needs to be remembered that good can also be purchased without it. Blomberg is aware that "few topics elicit charges of 'motivation through guilt' more quickly than teaching about biblical stewardship" (a.k.a. giving and money) (p. 247). Therefore it is important to recognize that God calls each of us to a personal and unique financial situation. For some, responsible biblical money-stewardship might include having appropriate insurance and savings for retirement; for others these things might not be as important. The Bible says, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart" (2 Cor. 9:7). Blomberg says, "There is no one-size-fits-all-stewardship" (p. 244). The important thing to remember, regardless of our financial circumstance, is that we need to be generous with our possessions. As North Americans we are far richer than we typically realize, and therefore we can do far more to fund the advancement of God's cause than we let ourselves to believe.

Anyone familiar with John White's book, *The Golden Cow*, will identify "idolatry of material goods" as one of the main pickles of the modern Church. They will also recognize John White's influence on Blomberg's *Christians in an Age of Wealth* whether real or imagined. Both authors share similar conclusions, especially with respect to how the Western Church overspends on personal goods and services, church buildings, fancy literature, and marketing campaigns while the mission field lacks proper resources and pastors fall short of a proper standard of living (pp. 176 ff; 181 ff).⁵

The Golden Cow might read like it was meant for a different generation but recall some of the headlines from 1979: Russia invades a foreign country, rising cost of fuel, high or rising interest rates, major conflict in the Middle East.⁶ It sounds so familiar. Perhaps it is time we revisited the topic of materialism in the Western Church, and perhaps that is why Blomberg's *Christians in an Age of Wealth* is such a fitting book for us today.

The media and industry have pretty much forgotten about the financial crisis of 2008. Stock markets are back to pre-2008 levels or higher, however

⁵ John White, *The Golden Cow: Materialism in the Twentieth-Century Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1979), 37-39, 84-90.

⁶ <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005252.html> [accessed Sept. 5, 2014]; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979_energy_crisis [accessed Sept. 5, 2014]; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979> [accessed Sept. 5, 2014].

working families continue to struggle.⁷ The effects of personal and government debt and the widening gap between the cost of living and income have yet to be fully realized. By extension many churches are struggling financially in today's marketplace as well. It is not hard to imagine that many churches do well to keep their doors open let alone maintain their buildings and make much needed investments in ministry.⁸ The Church has a responsibility to teach and model proper biblical money-stewardship, not only for its own financial health and survival, but as a ministry to its congregation and an outreach to its wider community. And as always the best place to start with such an endeavour is with the Bible.

Blomberg's, *A Biblical Theology of Stewardship*, is a comprehensive investigation of what the Bible says about money matters. He takes various aspects of the subject – (i) the goodness of wealth, (ii) wealth as a seduction to sin, (iii) giving, (iv) tithes and taxes, and (v) what he calls “how much is at stake”, which could best be described as “lordship” – corresponds them to chapter titles, and then explores what the Bible says about each in a somewhat chronological order. He does so often looking at the Torah, the Historical Books, the Wisdom Literature, the Prophets, the Gospels, the Letters, et. al. Then by design he devotes the remaining third of the book to the subject's relevance. He designs insight for: (a) the individual as steward, (b) government and business as steward, and (c) the Church as steward. Two unique features Blomberg utilizes in the latter portion of the book to help “apply the theology” are “case studies” and “frequently asked questions”.

At best Blomberg is only able to offer a quick overview of what the Bible teaches on the subject. All the same, the reader should be able to identify the over-arching principles on the matter (p. 37). 1. It is neither best to have too much nor too little (p. 69). 2. Both extremes can lead to sin (p. 76). 3. Possessions, or the lack thereof, will either master us and make us slaves to them or we will master them and use them to glorify God (p. 85). 4. Transparency is important (pp. 88-92). 5. We must be generous and give and express Christian charity and love (see chapter 4). 6. We are not called to equal giving but to equal sacrifice (p. 108). 7. Proper biblical money-stewardship is foundational to broader Christian living (pp. 151-157).

If you are looking for a solid, biblically-based book on best money management practices – how can I best steward or care or manage wealth – in order to ease your own financial burden or to minister to families in financial need, this is not the book for you. It is highly unlikely you will ever find such a book. Don't get me wrong, there are books out there that use the Bible to

⁷ “Credit monitoring agency TransUnion has predicted the average consumer's total non-mortgage debt will hit an all-time high of \$28,853 by the end of 2014.” www.ctvnews.ca [accessed Jan. 10, 2014].

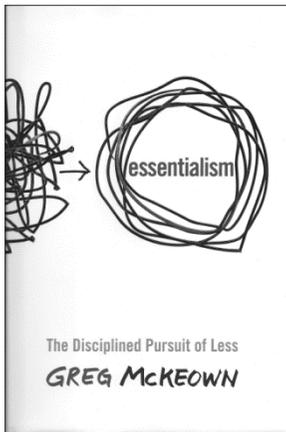
⁸ Many church buildings in rural PEI are being re-purposed for secular use. For example Annie's Table in New London, Bite's Café in Hampton, Harmony House in Hunter River, and the Farmer's Market in Stanley Bridge are all former church buildings.

teach about best money management practices, even good ones, but the thing to remember about the Bible is: it is high on principles and low on the “how to”. Blomberg’s *Christians in an Age of Wealth* is an excellent resource for your library. It’s one of the most comprehensive books I’ve seen on describing and illustrating the principles of biblical money-stewardship. And once you’ve got the main principles down – mainly, contentment and generosity – you’ll have an excellent foundation for building your financial success God’s way regardless of the best money management vehicles and tools that are at your disposal.

Reviewed by Darren Stretch, currently the Chair of the Board at Bedeque Baptist Church, PEI. He works part-time as a Representative for Primerica Financial Services.



***Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less.* Greg McKeown. New York: Crown Business, 2014, 260 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8041-3738-6**



Greg McKeown has offered significant insight for the Christian as well as the secular world in his recent book, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*. While not written from a Christian worldview or with the glory of God as the end in mind, many of the principles McKeown outlines and guidelines he gives for implementing them may prove helpful to the Christian if read with discernment. Thinking through what is of ultimate value and worth, devoting oneself to that, simplifying thought and life to enable meaningful contribution – all this and much more echoes biblical truth.

So what is “essentialism”? In three words, McKeown defines it as “less is better” (p. 5). Again he says, “Essentialism... is about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at our highest point of contribution by doing only what is essential” (p. 5). It is not a time-management system or technique; it is a way of life. It is “a disciplined, systematic approach for determining where our highest point of contribution lies, then making the execution of those things almost effortless” (p. 7).

The author clearly outlines and orders his material by dividing it into four parts: Part I: Essence - What is the core mind-set of an Essentialist?; Part II: Explore – How can we discern the trivial many from the vital few?; Part III: Eliminate – How can we cut out the trivial many?; and Part IV: Execute –

How can we make doing the vital few things almost effortless? Each part then contains four or five chapters. He follows Part IV with a short appendix helpfully applying the principles of the essentialist to business leadership.

The author promises:

This book will show you how to live life true to yourself, not the life others expect from you. It will teach you a method for being more efficient, productive, and effective in both personal and professional realm. It will teach you a systematic way to discern what is important, eliminate what is not and make doing the essential as effortless as possible. (p. 19-20)

McKeown starts with the mind or thinking change required, similar to the Lord's admonition for change: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." He points to three required basic changes in thinking: from "I don't have a choice" to celebrating and exercising choice, from "It's all important; I just need to work harder" to realizing that very few things are exceptionally valuable or vital and distinguishing those, and from we can have it all/do it all to which problem do I want to solve/where can I make the most difference.

Having laid out the core thinking change required, the author then begins in Part II to delve into the application, the "how". The first step perhaps seems counter-intuitive; but since the goal is to pursue less, not more, it becomes incumbent upon the essentialist to explore more possibilities thoroughly before deciding which few to embrace. One must spend time exploring, debating, listening, questioning, and thinking (p. 61). He develops "Part II: Explore" in five chapters – Escape, Look, Play, Sleep, and Select. The essentialist gets away in order to have time to think and evaluate, to gain perspective in order to discern the essential few from the trivial many. Interestingly, one method he suggests for taking time to think and gain perspective is to spend the first twenty minutes of the day reading inspirational literature; and, yes, he lists the Bible as one option in a long list. I also found interesting his insistence on the importance of both play and sleep to liberate creativity, to improve the brain's ability to prioritize, delegate, and analyze, and to maximize productivity.

He goes on in "Part III – Eliminate" to discuss how clarity of purpose simplifies decision-making – clarity about what is essential fuels us with the strength to say no to the non-essential – and how liberating boundaries are. In this section, he also devotes a whole chapter to how to say "no" graciously – and without actually saying "no" – most helpful advice to the many who find this so difficult!

Finally, in "Part IV: Execute" he gives guidance for making essentialism one's way of life, almost effortless. A chapter each is devoted to: *creating buffer time* in scheduling rather than forcing execution to fulfill a best-case scenario, *removing obstacles* to increase productivity rather than pressing to do more, *starting small* and rewarding small wins to gain great progress, *es-*

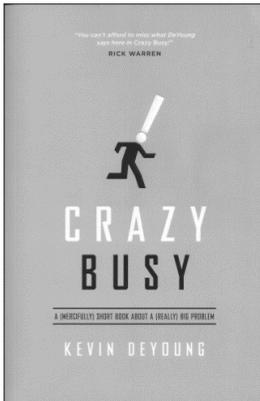
tablishing routines concentrating on the essential/making habit your friend, *focusing* on the present – on what is most essential now - and enjoying the moment, and finally *being* an essentialist. “The life of an Essentialist is a life of meaning. It is a life that really matters” (p. 236).

McKeown uses an engaging writing style with many illustrations, offering a book that would be found of value by a wide audience and truly helpful for people in many walks of life.

Reviewed by Christina Lehmann. Christina serves as administrative assistant at Haddington House.



***Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem.* Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, 124 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3338-9**



Kevin DeYoung, senior pastor at University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan, after successfully articulating and tackling a generational problem in *Just Do Something*¹, turns his attention to a societal problem in his latest book *Crazy Busy: A (mercifully) Short Book about a (really) Big Problem*. It's a book in which DeYoung aims at a Western audience's obsession with time, though for better or worse it is a world that many cultures are heading towards. Almost all of us feel busy, many of us crazy busy. Does DeYoung's description of our time fit you?

We are here and there and everywhere. We are distracted. We are preoccupied. We can't focus on the task in front of us. We don't follow through. We don't keep our commitments. We are so busy with a million pursuits that we don't even notice the most important things slipping away. (p. 20)

Busyness is not new, but the modern world we live in has more opportunities and thus more complexities than any period in history. DeYoung's approach to tackling this massive problem is straightforward and simple. Chapter 2 examines the three dangers of busyness. Chapters 3-9 consider seven diagnoses of busyness, which makes up the bulk of the book. And chapter 10

¹ Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2009).

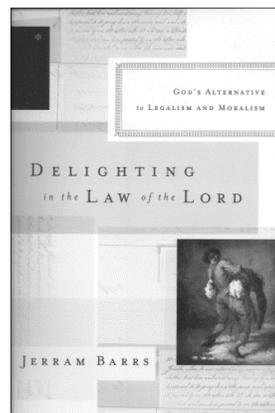
is on the one thing we must do. Diagnoses #5 in chapter 7, on the relationship between technology or the “screen” and our busyness, is particularly pointed and challenging. What separates this chapter from time management books which also identify the dangers of technology addiction is that DeYoung sees it not just as a time problem but as a potential spiritual impediment to growth. DeYoung offers practical suggestions for taking control of technology instead of it controlling us, but more powerfully he calls for us to bear our Christian theology on the dangers of the digital age saying, “Our deepest problems can be helped only with the deepest truths.”

Being busy isn’t always bad though. God created us to be busy here on earth; it’s just that too often we become busy with the wrong things. It’s not a new problem. DeYoung points out the story of Martha and Mary from Luke 10, where Martha became “distracted with much serving”. Serving is good, but it consumed Martha and distracted her from what was really important – learning at the feet of Jesus, like Mary. Until we recognize our chief calling as disciples of Christ, we will continue to succumb to the busyness of busyness. DeYoung keeps the focus on Christ in his conclusion saying, “We won’t say no to more craziness until we can say yes to more Jesus. We will keep choosing dinner rolls over the bread of life. We will choose the fanfare of the world over the feet of Jesus. We will choose busyness over blessings” (p. 118). At 118 pages, *Crazy Busy*, is easily digested and well worth the time for those seeking to serve out their Christian calling in a crazy busy world.

Reviewed by Ian A. Whytock.

***Delighting in the Law of the Lord: God’s Alternative to Legalism and Moralism.* Jerram Barrs. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, 352 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3713-4**

Having recently reviewed the book *Gray Matter* (see review p. 103), I have had the use of the Law on my mind of late. Throughout history, the use of the Laws of God have been accepted and viewed in various ways. In our current culture, we find an ever decreasing role of the Ten Commandments – they are removed from public buildings and washed from the minds of students in the public schools. Into this void, Barrs steps in with a most helpful treatise on the appropriate use of the Law. *Delighting in the Law of the Lord* is set before the reader as the God-given appropriate alternative to legalism and moralism. The book is divided into twenty-four chapters that are surprisingly diverse and broad in scope. When Barrs uses the term



“Law of God”, he is referring to all the laws recorded in Scripture. The intent of this book is not to discuss the various uses of the word “Law”. Rather, Barrs uses the word “Law” to refer to all of God’s commands regardless if they were recorded by Moses or spoken by Jesus.

Barrs begins chapter 1 with a helpful outline of our culture and how the world views morality. The point he makes is that our world is morally bankrupt. As Barrs states on page 23, “The overall result is an increasing skepticism about any kind of truth claim.” A world that seeks to establish a set of ethics apart from the norm of the Law will be eventually led into chaos. Without a set rule or standard, how can any society function? Barrs continues to build upon the concept of cultural chaos by exposing the lack of foundation for any truth claim if one rejects the Lord and His Law. By the end of chapter 2, Barrs has contrasted the Christian or traditional view with the postmodern or relativist view. He concludes by saying on page 40, “We all resonate with the idea that law restricts liberty and that everything should be a matter of personal choice. Yet at the same time, we all feel that much that is legal is an offense against common decency and good sense.” In response to this dilemma, Barrs uses the remaining chapters to build a biblical framework in which the Law has its proper function and place.

One particularly helpful chapter is the one on legalism (chapter 15). In the previous chapters, Barrs emphasized the tendency of humans to create their own laws. These laws can quickly morph into a works righteousness (legalism) which Jesus soundly condemned. In fact, Jesus reserved his harshest criticism for the Scribes and Pharisees, who had reduced obedience to external action. Barrs expresses great concern for what he says is pervasive among Christians today – the morality or Christianity that is content with “outward measures of inward obedience” (p. 204). I was convicted and challenged to identify my own false standards and pride. Barrs also critiqued the churches for imposing all sorts of unscriptural demands – making our human laws carry more weight than the Law of the Lord. Throughout this chapter, I kept asking myself if Barrs saw the need for the church and parents to have any rules beyond Scripture at all? Much to my relief, Barrs answers these questions in the next chapter (chapter 16). Basically, Barrs wants to preserve the weight and authority of the Law of God and guard against legalism found within the home and the church. A helpful device he uses is to ask us, the readers, if we would be more offended if our house rules were broken than if the Law of God was broken. An example he uses is the coloring of hair or body piercing. Would you as a parent be angrier if your child came home with a nose ring (house rule) or if your child was caught lying (God’s Law)? Barrs point is that parents need to ground their rules in the Law of the Lord. House rules can be adjusted and even removed by the parents without undermining the Law of the Lord. Children need to be taught to have an increasing understanding of the Lord’s Law with an eye towards applying that Law to their own hearts by the Spirit as they mature. Obedience to parents is

part of a child's obedience to the Lord.

Does Barrs succeed in his stated purpose? Indeed he does! Throughout the book, Barrs provides the reader with the necessary framework for interpreting and applying the Law to daily life. In addition, he gives helpful illustrations of how the Law can be applied directly. Barrs has a good grasp of the difficulties facing society, and he equips believers with a proper understanding of how the Law should function today. He has a convicting way of pointing to the pitfalls of legalism and moralism.

This book is a very helpful tool for equipping Christians to face the onslaught of relativism. One area that I thought could have been better was the ordering of the chapters. All of the chapters did not necessarily follow in a logical order. There was a sense of chaos when it came to the topic of a few chapters. Although I appreciated the scope of the book, I found the lack of structure distracting. For instance, chapter 12 on the healing that we can expect in this life when the Law is obeyed is followed by a chapter on how various traditions have understood the Law. In my opinion, chapter 13 on the various views of the Law should have been at the beginning of the book (perhaps in the position of chapter 3). I found it strange that Barrs would wait until page 180 to discuss the three uses of the Law. This would have been better towards the beginning of the book. This book makes good use of Scripture, showing how the Bible should be the foundation of all morality. Instead of simply proof-texting, Barrs shows a heart for and love of the Word.

Not only would this book be a helpful addition to a church library, it would also be a helpful tool for pastors. Each chapter concludes with a list of discussion questions that are, in the main, helpful. The questions enable the book to be used as a part of a congregational study, although the length of the book does take some serious commitment. I heartily recommend!

Reviewed by Nick Alons.

***Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power.* Andy Crouch. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013, 288 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8308-3765-6**

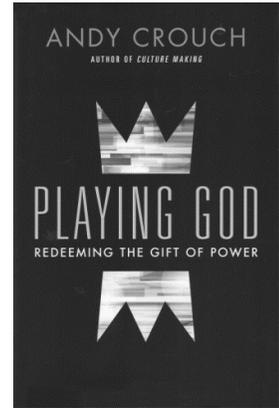
Andy Crouch is a professor, author, and public speaker from the Midwestern region of the USA. He currently holds the position of executive editor for the magazine *Christianity Today*. His highly acclaimed book *Culture Making* takes aim at the Christian's biblical mandate to use unique creative gifts towards the creation of a redemptive culture in the world. In his most recent work, *Playing God*, he takes this thought in a new direction by focusing on the idea of power as a means of witness in the world rather than a corrupted vehicle.

If one stopped to survey the general attitude towards institutions which hold power and the individuals who operate them, it is likely that the majority of people would hold a similar opinion. Within us all there seems to be at least a slight mistrust of power coupled at the same time with a desire for it. We fear oppression and long for control simultaneously.

Travelling down the avenue of the humanities, which has historically harboured a wariness towards power structures in the likes of philosophers such as Michel Foucault, author Andy Crouch ventures into the mistrust of power that has infused itself somewhat ironically into the church – the body of believers following the omnipotent God. These fears are not to be dismissed, but it may be that they are misguided. His thesis is simple: power is a gift from our powerful God. Not only that, it is inescapable. This is not to be taken in the Foucaultian sense, whereby power is both normative and destructive, but rather with a redemptive view that sees power as existing in a normative state *with the potential* to be either good or evil.

His exposition pushes back against our reluctance to accept the possibility of great justice enacted by those in authority and the institutions which they guide. This fear of oppression, he says, stems from many tragic uses of power in human history which we have come to count as synonymous with power itself. Crouch realizes that while half the battle of his argument is to make his reader see that power is not necessarily bad, the uphill half of the battle is to display the inherent goodness of power as it comes from God. Many Christians would hesitate to say that it is precisely the power of a position which allows one to have an impact for the Kingdom, but this is exactly his point. Relying heavily on Paul's letters to the seven churches and his own experiences with Christians in places of power, Crouch sets out to provide a renewed vision of that which has been corrupted by household names like Stalin, Hitler, Nero, and many others as far back as Pharaoh. His goal is to uncover a biblical vision for human flourishing which will set Christians free to take up the cultural mandate in whatever locale they are found without feeling that there can be no true humility apart from impotent faith.

Crouch affirms the gospel truth that power is real but finite except for the absolute power of our God. As he says, "That is why we can face even our own death, and the death of those we love, with hope – because the creative power of God raised Jesus from the grave" (p. 274). Our God has overcome the world in the ultimate act of power. *Playing God* is certainly a healthy challenge to the spiritual-power paradigm by which many of us may be operating without even knowing it. For anyone interested in a firmly theological yet brilliantly practical discussion on our place as God's children on this earth, *Playing God* is most certainly a great place to begin. Any leader who

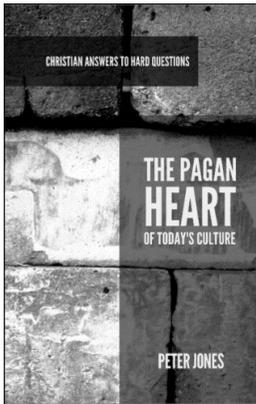


fears an inability to use their power well should pick up this book and take comfort from its stories.

Reviewed by Andrew M. Whytock. Andrew has a B.A. in creative writing from Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



***The Pagan Heart of Today's Culture.* Peter Jones. Christian Answers to Hard Questions. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014, 44 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-087-7**



When asked what's going on today, "a resurgence of ancient polytheism and gnosticism fueled by postmodernism" would probably not be the answer on most Christians' lips. However, this is the answer Peter Jones gives in *The Pagan Heart of Today's Culture*. The book frames contemporary Western intellectual and cultural trends in terms of these three seemingly disparate isms or worldviews. Together, they form the pagan worldview sometimes known as the New Spirituality (p. 5). Jones argues for the underlying interconnectedness of these three isms. Along the way, he contrasts them with the alternative

these worldviews seek to supplant: orthodox Christianity.

Jones starts by sketching how the epistemic certainty of the Enlightenment gave way to the skepticism and epistemic pluralities of postmodernism. While the Enlightenment sought to elevate reason and to close the door to irrational superstition (Christianity included), postmodernism re-opened the door to the spiritual. In a postmodern age, truth resides not in an authoritative text but in the subjective appropriation of the individual. And this appropriation includes the possibility of mystical and transcendent knowledge.

The door having been re-opened, polytheism, by which Jones means God and nature are essentially the same, and gnosticism, by which he means tapping into knowledge of the divine via personal mysticism, rush in. Together, these three isms share a common antipathy to the Christian worldview of an objective, transcendent God. As Jones puts it, Logos in our culture gives way to mythos (p. 9). Jones uses the terms Twoism (Christianity) and Oneism (beliefs rooted in polytheism) to contrast these competing worldviews (p. 26).

The first half of Jones' concise book (44 pages including end-notes) establishes the three isms while noting some overlapping themes. The second half seeks to show how they are becoming intertwined into an integrated system of thought (p. 25). He provides pop-culture references along the way. Jones even manages to show the compatibility of atheism and paganism: "... atheism and rationalistic humanism... like their spiritual cousins, make no

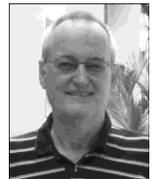
place for a transcendent, personal Creator, and so share at the deepest level the same view of reality as very spiritual but Oneist systems” (p. 28).

Jones concludes by declaring that Oneism’s pervasion into all areas of life – “philosophical, religious, political, and sexual” – will pose a “massive apologetic challenge” to the church in the days ahead (p. 34).

Even though the book is short, readers should plan on spending some time with it; it cannot be rushed. I offer three minor criticisms. First, it is not obvious that materialistic atheists, such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, would agree they share the “same view of reality at the deepest level” as those who believe in a divine force accessible via mysticism. Is a shared antipathy to Christianity enough? Second, Jones suggests that current views on homosexuality and human sexuality in general are explained by this pagan resurgence (pp. 24-25, 30). One could argue they have as much or more to do with the acidic effects of materialistic darwinism, an ism held by moderns and postmoderns alike. (However, it could also be argued his treatment of atheism implicitly covers darwinism.) Finally, Jones juxtaposes Christianity (Twoism) against all other world religions (Oneism) (p. 26). Where do Judaism and Islam fit into this? Neither of them believes God is co-extensive with the created order. Jones appears to conflate theism with orthodox Christianity.

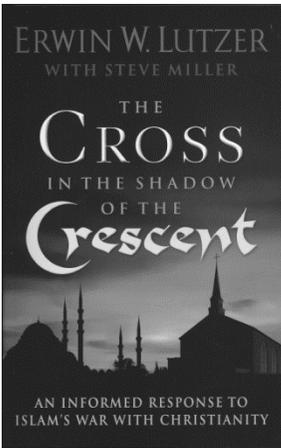
Jones’ book succeeds in that it helps us understand and articulate what is going on in our culture. It helps equip us in the apologetic task of defending the faith while offering to the world the bountiful reconciliation made available through Jesus Christ.

Reviewed by Richard Ball of Toronto, Ontario and Charlottetown, PEI. Dr. Ball has taught apologetics for several years in Zambia and is also involved in the global IT world.



***The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent: An Informed Response to Islam’s War with Christianity.* Erwin W. Lutzer. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013, 253 pp., paper. ISBN: 978-0-7369-5132-6**

Unlike other Christian books that have been written on Islam, the purpose of this book is not primarily concerned with teaching Christians on how to reach Muslims with the gospel. Rather, as Lutzer himself explains, it is written to serve as a wake-up call to the American church concerning the agenda and strategies of militant Islam (pp. 37, 38). This wake-up call is supported by over three hundred endnotes, which include eighty-five dealing with what is happening in America now.



The bulk of the book considers seven lessons for today's churches. In this section, Lutzer draws from the letters written to the seven churches in Asia Minor in Revelation 2 and 3. He points out that a thousand years ago, Asia Minor, or modern day Turkey, had a strong Christian presence, but today 99% of Turkey claims Muslim loyalty (p. 53). Lutzer draws the following seven lessons: 1) the church in America cannot take her continued existence of the church for granted; 2) faithfulness to Christ requires an acceptance of persecution; 3) even when a church is in the Devil's hands, it is still in God's hands; 4) the crescent cannot destroy the cross; 5) compromise weakens the church; 6) the church must walk by faith and not by sight; and 7) the remnant will triumph.

The final section, though somewhat brief, focuses on a right response to these "attacks against Christianity and the American way of life" (p. 17). Lutzer warns that the greatest mistake the church can make is considering all Muslims the same (pp. 29-30, 176, 199). He argues there is a need to distinguish between Islamists and moderates. He defines an Islamist as someone who holds to an ideology of the world being ruled by Islam and therefore seeks to bring shariah law to the West. Moderate Muslims, on the other hand, are content living peacefully in Western society (pp. 30, 176). Lutzer is quick to add though that militant Islam remains a threat despite where the majority of American Muslims stand (p. 33).

One of the most helpful aspects of the book is its treatment of blasphemy laws and hate-speech.¹ The book highlights the problematic nature of hate-speech laws in that all that is needed to trigger an accusation under these laws is for a Muslim to claim that he was offended or hurt by something said, even if the statement was absolutely truthful (p. 74). The result is that many people are reluctant to speak out against Islam in any shape or form. But Lutzer advises that Christians must submit to God rather than to governmental pressures (Dan. 3:17-18; Acts 14:19-20; 5:29).

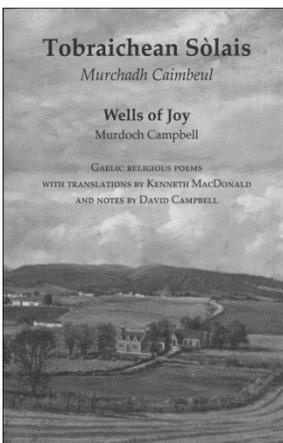
One of the main drawbacks of the book relates to the focus of the book, which feels somewhat incomplete. Although Lutzer does caution that his intention is not to stir up fear of Islam (pp. 19, 207, 218), it seems that there is not enough attention given to replacing this fear with compassion for Muslims. To be fair, Lutzer does mention the need for compassion, but even there it is not really developed at length (p. 217).

¹ Blasphemy law is a law that limits the freedom of speech and expression with respect to religious beliefs.

This book would be useful for anyone who is unconvinced of the threat of shariah law to Western society. It would also be useful to Christian leaders as they prepare their flocks to stand for Christ without fear.

Reviewed by Peter K. Aiken.

***Tobraichean Sòlais (Wells of Joy): Gaelic Religious Poems with Translations.* Murdoch Campbell. Trans., Kenneth MacDonald. Kilkerran, Scotland: Covenanters Press, 2013, 103 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-905022-32-8**



The Celtic peoples have always maintained a strong tradition of folklore through ballads and storytelling, presented most times in the rhythms of poetic metre. These poems function on a deeply spiritual paradigm but many of them are never translated into the English language. Often this is simply because there is no one to do the work, though in many cases it is believed that translated poetry loses something of its original power. While this is no doubt true, it is also true that translation yields some benefit to a work. It engenders the words with a whole new realm of interpretive possibilities for people of another tongue. Translation casts the poem in a new light, even if such a light gives readers only a shadow of something they would otherwise have been excluded from all together due to the language barrier.

The translation of Rev. Murdoch Campbell's (1901-1974) collection of poetry, "Wells of Joy", presents us with poems crafted in such a tradition. The difference is that, unlike the typical pagan spirituality of the ancient Celtic peoples, Campbell writes his poetry with a distinctively and intentionally Christian message. Channeling the cultural tradition of verse that he was surrounded by in his youth, Campbell proclaims his Saviour to the world and implores his God in much the same way the Psalmist pleads with the Lord for mercy.

The late Rev. Campbell's son David Campbell headed up the task of assembling these poems and editing them into one manuscript. To present both the English and Gaelic versions, he employed the skills of translator Kenneth MacDonald, a bi-lingual Scottish scholar who has also worked on large editing projects for several Gaelic dictionaries including *The Historical Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic*.

The late Reverend Campbell was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland for most of his life, but he always used poetry as an outlet for his praise.

Indeed, his absolute trust in the gospel is evident in the poems, which at times ponder the possibility of despair in this world but always turn back to the hope found in Jesus. As the preface to the book notes, Rev. Campbell published many poems, most of which were actually written in English, but he chose to return to his native Gaelic for this collection. The title “Wells of Joy” accurately sums up the theme of the poems, which reflect upon the unending comfort to be found in Christ.

For those in an ecclesial strain that harkens back to Scotland, Campbell’s work is of particular interest as he merges his spiritual and national heritage in an act of praise. For readers who should happen to know Gaelic, the book is complete with the originals, which are printed alongside their English counterparts. This is a work which displays the unique paring of citizenships within the human identity as the author reworks his national (earthly) milieu to frame his primary identity as a child of the kingdom “not of this world”. Like much good poetry, meaning is found in the place where those realms collide.

Reviewed by Andrew M. Whytock.

Book Briefs

In this section we acknowledge new books we have received over the last year for which we have not provided full book reviews. We have organized these into topical categories to help readers become aware of new books in specific areas. Unsigned book briefs are by the editor.

Biblical

***The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Week of the Most Important Person Who Ever Lived.* Andreas J. Köstenberger and Justin Taylor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, pp. 217, paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3510-9**

Here is a sound work for anyone preparing services or meditations for the week from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday. Knowing the popularity of such services in many of the Christian communities of the majority world, I think this book could prove very useful. It is not written with extensive scholarly footnotes – there are a few footnotes but usually to add further scriptural reference, citation, or clarification. Thus this is not meant as an academic text for New Testament scholars. It has a real ring of popularity about it, and there is a real need for this level of writing from a solid evangelical standpoint.

The chapters are simply entitled, Sunday through Sunday, following the days of the week, and each contains clear sub-headings, again something which could be very helpful as a lay-preaching resource. There is a chart (p. 156) on the Seven Last Sayings of Jesus, which is helpful, but then in the text there is no corresponding commentary. This was my one disappointment with the book; I believe this should have been included. The charts throughout the text are good as are the high-gloss, colour plates between pages 160 and 161. The book includes a graduated “Suggestions for Further Reading” and a most helpful “Glossary and Reference Guide”. A good book to buy and give away.

***Galatians for You.* Timothy Keller. God's Word for You. n.pl. [USA]: The Good Book Company, 2013, 199 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1909559776**

This is the first book in the new series, God's Word for You, by The Good Book Company and was published in conjunction with the Gospel Coalition International Outreach initiative. (This particular version is not for resale.) It is a most welcome resource and will be a real ministry tool and a means for much personal edification in the global church community. The book is very well divided into thirteen chapters, and each is internally well laid out with very clear, bold subheadings. Every chapter ends with thoughtful questions. Thus the book will prove a good resource for a pastor, a class leader, or Bible study group leader. A fine glossary is at the back of the book, making it helpful for many levels of readers. (I could see it being a great text for some junior certificate level teaching programmes.) The book of Galatians was a good choice for such a new resource series, as it presents the clarity of the gospel with such fervour. Readers can go to the four websites of The Good Book Company to learn more, or to the website of The Gospel Coalition in particular at: www.thegospelcoalition.org/io.

***The Messiah: The Texts Behind Handel's Masterpiece, 8 Studies for Individuals or Groups.* Douglas Connelly. A LifeGuide Bible Study. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, 63 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3132-6**

A brilliant idea – to make eight Bible studies on biblical texts from George Frederick Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*! I was delighted to see this creative approach combining the well-known oratorio with small group or adult class Bible studies. In the past I have preached through Handel's *Messiah* using the biblical texts; now here is another way to incorporate Handel's outline. Even if folks are not familiar with Handel's work, this study guide could still be used as a class or group guide. The booklet "explore[s] some of the key passages in the Old Testament about the Messiah and their completion in the life and saving work of Jesus" (p. 5). The eight studies are: Messiah's character, birth, miracles, death, sacrifice, resurrection, exaltation, and return. This will prove to be an excellent resource for an eight-part study. Imagine coming to the study and hearing that section playing on the CD, and then you all listen to it. Well done, Douglas Connelly, who is a seasoned craftsman of Bible study guides.

Spiritual Formation

***Holiness as a Liberal Art.* Ed., Daniel Castelo. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012, 122 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-60899-505-9**

I started this book thinking it was going to explore a Wesleyan understanding of holiness (sanctification) and its relationship to Christian higher education. Written by twelve of the faculty members at Seattle Pacific University, a large Christian Wesleyan university on the West Coast of the United States, some of the eleven chapters do this. However, I must confess that either I “misread” the title or failed to connect this to all the chapters. The first chapter by Daniel Castelo, “Cultivating a Sanctified Way of Life: Introducing Holiness as a Liberal Art” (pp. 1-11), is clearly foundational to this book. The chapters which follow then explore more the dimensions of holiness as a “way of life”, all commendable, but which I did not think kept the thread clear for me on higher education. There are occasional moments of something I want to quote for the future, but as a collection I will not likely use this as a whole for teaching. I was disappointed that a couple of the chapters appeared to be more “agenda driven” than anything else. Although the faculty who contributed to the volume are to be commended for discussing a needed topic today in much of higher education, my recommendation would be rather to read Kevin DeYoung’s *The Hole in Our Holiness* (reviewed in Book Briefs, *Haddington House Journal* vol. 16, 2014, pp. 115-116).

Doctrine/Christian Life

***Now That I’m a Christian: What It Means to Follow Jesus.* C. Michael Patton. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 172 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3804-9**

Here is a book which deserves serious consideration as a textbook in introductory Bible college or Bible institute training and teaching courses in the basics of the faith. It is divided into two main divisions – orthodoxy and orthopraxy – each with five chapters. The author clearly and realistically defines and explains these two terms in his introduction (pp. 11-14). Under orthodoxy he deals with Bible, Man, God, Christ, and Faith; and under orthopraxy he deals with Prayer, Study, Church, Suffering, and Mission. If students are carefully guided through Patton’s five topics on orthodoxy, they will receive solid doctrinal meat which is well explained and is presented in a very gracious manner. His writing style is not jarring in any way. Some of the topics under orthopraxy could fit well within a course on spiritual for-

mation while some belong more properly in a doctrine course.

This book is not Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* or his summary of doctrine in the smaller volume. Rather, *Now That I'm a Christian* is an introductory primer, and as such it is a most valuable textbook or group study book. The author is involved with the Credo House of Theology in Oklahoma and well-qualified to author this book. I agree with Sam Storms, "This is a gem!"

***I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference.* Thom S. Rainer. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2013, 79 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4336-7973-5**

This short work by Thom Rainer addresses just what the subtitle indicates – a biblical attitude to church membership. In the introduction, Rainer invites the reader: "Join me in this journey of discovering or rediscovering the privilege and the joy of church membership" (p. 6). Following a short introduction, Rainer addresses six aspects/attitudes/practices of godly church membership, clearly articulated in the six chapter titles: "I Will Be a Functioning Church Member", "I Will Be a Unifying Church Member", "I Will Not Let My Church Be about My Preferences and Desires", "I Will Pray for My Church Leaders", "I Will Lead My Family to Be Healthy Church Members", and "I Will Treasure Church Membership as a Gift". He grounds each point in the Scriptures and illustrates each well with examples and stories. At the end of each chapter, the reader is invited to take a pledge of commitment related to the material in the chapter and follows that with "Questions for Study". The author only deals very briefly with the question of why one should become a member of a local church at the very end of the little book. Warm, devotional, practical, this would be a great resource for personal growth in Christ-likeness or for use in a small group or membership class.

Christina Lehmann

Biographical

***The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield.* Steven J. Lawson. A Long Line of Godly Men Profiles. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013, 154 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-56769-363-8**

This book was well-timed for the 300th anniversary year of George Whitefield's birth. It is both a popular biographical sketch and a short thematic study of George Whitefield's evangelistic work. It is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is a twenty-eight page overview of the life of Whitefield. It is quite well summarized, given the length, and generally quite accurate (one error on a year on page 19). Then chapters 2 to 6 explore thematically White-

field's spirituality: chapter 2 – "A Life of Singular Devotion"; chapter 3 – his theology, "A Theology of Sovereign Grace"; chapter 4 – "A Gospel Without Compromise"; chapter 5 – Whitefield's evangelistic zeal, "A Passion That Consumed"; and chapter 6 – an interpretive chapter on Whitefield's evangelistic mandate, "A Mandate from the Lord". This is not like Dallimore's two-volume biography for sure, nor Kidd's new biographical study. It is a fast-paced, easy-to-read book. The author does pepper quotations throughout the thematic chapters. This is not a book which addresses critical issues or defects in Whitefield; readers will need to go elsewhere for such. This is an inspiring book and very much motivates one to seek the Lord's face in prayer for the work of evangelism.

Christian History

***Sermons by Jonathan Edwards on the Matthean Parables, Volume II: Divine Husbandman (On the Parable of the Sower and the Seed).* Eds., Kenneth P. Minkema and Adriaan C. Neele. Eugene, OR: Cascade/The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 2012, 130 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-61097-715-9**

Here are six sermons, previously unpublished, which Jonathan Edwards preached from Matthew 13:3-7 in 1740 following the visit of George Whitefield to Northampton, Massachusetts. We read in the preface: "Not only does this series have a historical significance for its place in The Great Awakening, but it contains important pronouncements on the preacher's craft and the hearer's responsibilities" (p. ix). This small book contains a helpful essay, "Introduction: Edwards the Preacher" (pp. 1-13), adapted from a longer essay from 1990, "Jonathan Edwards' Art of Prophesying" by Wilson Kimnach. This is followed by an excellent essay by Minkema and Neele, the editors, "Introduction: Historical Context" (pp. 14-31). Then follows Edward's six sermons, pages 32-113. The book ends with an epilogue on Edwards and Whitefield and their exchanges, then a sermon by Whitefield (1739), "Directions How to Hear Sermons" (pp. 119-127). This is the perfect book to use as a textbook for teaching about The Great Awakening in theological colleges – it brings together the two preachers, Edwards and Whitefield, provides primary sources, and gives sufficient introductory secondary material to combine for a balanced textbook. Well done!

Missiology

***Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles.* Richard Dowden. New York: Public Affairs (Perseus Books Group), 2009, 576 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-58648-753-9**

This is not last year's book but still very recent at 2009, nor is it specifically a Christian book from a Christian publisher. However, it is a most helpful collection of "essays" by Richard Dowden, the director of the Royal African Society; and anyone working in Christian mission in Africa will certainly benefit from this work. It is a wide-ranging overview of the continent of Africa, presenting the complexities which are there, often through personal narratives but always with perceptive analysis, which is the value of the book. Those considering work in Africa should read this book and discuss it with seasoned workers and African leaders. The author's prose style is totally engaging to read. The book does not have footnotes or endnotes, so do not expect the traditionally "academic essay" style. It is closer in style to a journalistic essay – narrative with analysis. The writer of the foreword, Chinua Achebe, is correct that Dowden "tackles Africa's problems without fear, sentimentality or condescension" (p. xiii).

***Brazilian Evangelical Missions in the Arab World: History, Culture, Practice, and Theology.* Edward L. Smither. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012, 272 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-61097-804-0**

This is a must read for anyone concerned or interested in current trends in mission sending evangelical churches. For too long Brazilian missionaries overseas have not been seen as part of the global-sending missional church. This statement by Mark Noll, "Today more Christian workers from Brazil are active in cross-cultural ministry outside their homelands than from Britain or Canada" (p. 62 in Smither), is an awakening call to understand missions work today.

Smither's first chapter, "From a Mission Field to a Mission-Sending Base", is worth the price of the book. He surveys evangelical missions to Brazil, establishing well the context, then introduces us to a quick survey of outgoing missions work. Then the author takes up a little-explored theme of Brazilian workers in Arab cultures. Smither, who was associate professor of intercultural studies and church history at Liberty University, Virginia when he wrote the book and is now at Columbia International University, is an excellent writer with fine organizational skills and clearly knows this field. Those teaching both the history and the practice of missions need to incorporate this book into their recommended reading lists. Highly commended!

***Korean Diaspora and Christian Mission.* Eds., S. Hun Kim and Won-suk Ma. Regnum Studies in Mission. Oxford: Regnum, 2011, 301 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-870345-89-7**

This is definitely one of the best single volumes that I have seen on the whole topic of the Korean diaspora and Christian missions. The twenty-one contributors to this collection represent an invaluable work of research to help us understand the phenomena of the various contexts and ministries where Korean people live as a diaspora people. The words of dedication, “In honour of the many millions who have been scattered as strangers and yet live with a calling to the Kingdom” (p. iv), summarize well what this book is all about. If you want to grow in your understanding of diaspora missiology, evaluating Korean missionary work, and read some case studies here is the one book you need. Every theological college teaching missiology must have this book in their library, because it fills a real gap in missiology today concerning Korean diaspora Christian missions. I hesitate to single out any chapters, as they are all very important and contribute much to this neglected field of study and reflection, but I will say at the very least all must read Enoch Wan’s “Korean Diaspora: From Hermit Kingdom to Kingdom Ministry”, Min-young Jung’s “Diaspora and Timely Hit: Towards a Diaspora Missiology”, and Steve Sang-cheol Moon’s “The Korean Diaspora Models of a Missional Church”, all three of which are in part one of the book, “Foundations”, of the three parts of this well-assembled collection.

***Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience.* Brian M. Howell. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012, 256 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3973-5**

The reality is that short-term mission (STM) is one of the most significant developments in missions in the last two generations. Thus it is good for all interested in mission or missiology to study the new books beginning to be written on STM from a variety of disciplines. This particular one is written by an associate professor in anthropology at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. Howell writes to specifically explore the “narrative” of STM, that is, how the STM participant speaks or writes about their experience in short-term mission. He deals with common themes in these narratives and also includes his own case study, having been heavily involved in a STM to the Dominican Republic and also with the sending congregation, to which he gives the pseudonym “Central Wheaton Church”. This last point is important because it centres much of the content in the North American context. The author is realistic to acknowledge the critiques and praises of STM, and he then attempts to explore more deeply just what are the impacts of STM

through the eyes of anthropology and ethnographic study – in other words, using the social sciences to offer us insights into STM. He offers his evaluations, which he hopes will improve STM. A helpful book for youth group and Christian college leaders of STM.

Academic Articles

The Gospel on the Mission Field

Thorsten Prill*

** Dr. Thorsten Prill is a Crosslinks mission partner lecturing in missiology, practical theology and systematic theology at Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary (NETS). Before coming to Namibia in 2008, he was pastor of two churches in the UK and International Chaplain at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of three books, *Migrants, Strangers and the Church in Southern Africa* (2013), *German Protestantism and the Spirit of God* (2010), and *Global Mission on our Doorstep* (2008). He has also edited several other books and published articles in various theological journals. Thorsten Prill is a minister of the Rhenish Church of Namibia (Rynse Kerk).*



When we read our English Bibles we come across the word *gospel* quite often. The English word ‘gospel’ is the translation of the Greek word *eu-angelion*, which means ‘an announcement of good news’. Instead of gospel we can simply speak of ‘good news’. But what is this good news about? And to whom is it good news? Well, missionaries and church leaders in sub-Saharan African countries are confronted with many different answers by people who call themselves Christians.

The Prosperity Gospel

For some, the Christian gospel is the good news that God wants to give us power, success, wealth and health. Various versions of the prosperity gospel are promoted not only by African preachers but also through the books and TV programmes of well-known (often American) mega church leaders. The Namibian theologian Basilius Kasera distinguishes between two dominant forms of the prosperity gospel: the militant and the diffused form.¹ At the heart of the militant prosperity gospel lie radical, blatant claims, such as ‘God’s will for you is wealth’ or ‘God’s will for you is healing’.² One principle promoted by the advocates of the militant prosperity gospel is the principle of a hundredfold return: *The more money you give to God the more mon-*

¹ B.M. Kasera, ‘The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and its Impact among the Poor in Namibia’ (Unpublished MTh thesis, Pretoria, South African Theological Seminary, 2012), 24.

² Kasera, ‘The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and its Impact among the Poor in Namibia’, 25.

ey you will receive from God in return.³ Jones and Woodbridge comment: ‘The prosperity gospel’s doctrine of giving is built on faulty motives. Whereas Jesus taught His disciples to “lend, expecting nothing in return” (Luke 6:35), prosperity theologians teach their disciples to give because they will get a great return.’⁴

In contrast to the militant version, the diffused version of the prosperity gospel is much more subtle. It stresses that successful living is possible in a world without suffering, in a world with ‘limitless possibilities and victories’.⁵ Kasera writes:

Basically the path to successful living is to ignore all external symptoms of sickness, problems, bankruptcy, pain etc. Instead of thinking about the problems, one should concentrate on the opposite of any challenge. The idea is that positive thoughts coupled with faith, hope and right actions are guaranteed to always bring forth the desired outcome in every situation.⁶

The Gospel of Liberation

While the prosperity gospel is very popular in sub-Saharan Africa, we can find also those who argue that the gospel is first and foremost to be understood in socio-political terms. They define it as the good news that God wants to make this world a more humane, just and stable place, and that He does so by helping people to liberate themselves from all kinds of political and social oppressions.⁷ The idea of personal sin, i.e. rebellion against God, from which people need to be saved, and the need of repentance are more or less missing. Zephania Kameeta, the former bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, for example, writes: ‘The Church of Christ is sent into this world to proclaim the Good News to those who until today do not believe that they as human beings are not inferior, but equal to anybody. This cannot only be done by word, but concurrent with a continuous process of empowering.’⁸

³ Kasera, ‘The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and its Impact among the Poor in Namibia’, 26.

⁴ D.W. Jones & R.S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 102.

⁵ Kasera, ‘The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and its Impact among the Poor in Namibia’, 30.

⁶ Kasera, ‘The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology and its Impact among the Poor in Namibia’, 30.

⁷ E.g. P.J. Isaak, ‘The Story of the Rich Christian and Poor Lazarus: Christianity, Poverty and Wealth in the 21st Century’, in *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia*, vol. 2, 2000, 72-94.

⁸ Z. Kameeta, *Towards Liberation: Crossing Boundaries between Church and Politics* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2006), 83.

For African liberation theologians Jesus is not only the Saviour but also the Victor and Liberator.⁹ Consequently, Christians are seen as ‘minor liberators engaged in securing provisional and relative yet joyful victories of establishing healing and reconciling communities that are a reflection of God’s reign here on earth’¹⁰.

The Feminist Gospel

Closely related to the gospel of liberation is the feminist gospel. As a matter of fact it may be considered a variant of the former. For advocates of the feminist gospel, the good news is that women ‘have the right to name themselves’¹¹. By this feminists mean the right of women to determine their roles in all areas of life including the Church. They hold that there are no differences between men and women as far as intellect, psyche, and emotions are concerned.¹² Any differences between the two sexes are a result ‘of cultural conditioning rather than biological fact’¹³, or as Chimwemwe Harawa-Katumbi from Malawi puts it: ‘[G]ender is not physiologically determined but socially constructed.’¹⁴ In other words, women have been ‘wrongly named by men’¹⁵. This misconception, it is argued, needs to be corrected.

The correction of this misconception also applies to the Church. Consequently Christian feminists seek to de-differentiate ‘between the roles of men and women in the Church’¹⁶. In order to achieve that many Christian feminists have set out to liberate what they consider is a male-biased Bible ‘from the human fetters of misogyny’ that has shackled the Scriptures.¹⁷ Some argue that a new hermeneutical approach is necessary in order to use the Bible

⁹ Cf. P.J. Isaak, ‘The Contribution of Missiological Theology to the Theological Education in Africa’, in P.J. Isaak, *The Story of Paulinum Seminary in Namibia* (Windhoek: Namibia Publishing House, 2013), 139.

¹⁰ P.J. Isaak, ‘The Contribution of Missiological Theology to the Theological Education in Africa’, 139.

¹¹ M.A. Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1992), 30.

¹² Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*, 31

¹³ Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*, 31.

¹⁴ C. Harava-Katumbi, ‘The Bible, Gender Equality and Teaching Theology in Malawi’, in J. Hendriks, E. Mouton, L. Hansen & E. le Roux, *Men in the Pulpit, Women in the Pew? Addressing Gender Inequality in Africa* (Stellenbosch: SUN Press, 2012), 105.

¹⁵ Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*, 31.

¹⁶ Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*, 33.

¹⁷ Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*, 136.

in the teaching of gender and gender equality. Thus, the Kenyan theologian Hazel Ayanga, for example, calls ‘for an interdisciplinary approach to the interpretation of texts related to gender’¹⁸. Others argue that particular Bible passages are either culturally conditioned or that the authors were simply mistaken. Some do not even shy away from adding to the biblical texts in order to make them fit their agenda. An example for such an approach is Wilhemina Shikomba, a Namibian Lutheran theologian:

Furthermore, the ordained ministry of women should be read in the light of the Pentecost story. When the Holy Spirit filled the people, they were changed spiritually and all of them started to speak, women and men alike. At that moment, at the start of the Christian Church, both women and men were given the gift of preaching by the Holy Spirit. At that morning, on the day of the Pentecost, women and men had been equally empowered to be ministers of the Word of God and entrusted with the twofold ministry: to preach and to administer the Holy Sacraments... Women and men are capable of being used in God’s service. Jesus loves women, as illustrated in the New Testament, and there is no discrimination between Jesus Christ and women. In Pauline theology, there might be some mistakes in some of his utterances, but at the same time, Saint Paul forcefully and brilliantly emphasised the equality of all people in Galatians 3:28-29...¹⁹

It is noteworthy that while liberation theologians emphasize structural sin some feminist theologians have totally redefined the concept of sin. The sin of women is no longer to be understood as rebellion against God, i.e. egocentric behaviour or selfish attitudes, such as pride. Female sin is seen as ‘*too much sacrificial love and not enough pride in themselves*’²⁰.

The Postmodern Gospel

Another understanding of the Christian gospel which is gaining popularity especially among tertiary educated people in Southern Africa is the postmodern gospel.²¹ The postmodern gospel makes no exclusive claims and allows

¹⁸ H. Ayanga, ‘Inspired and Gendered. The Hermeneutical Challenge of Teaching Gender in Kenya’, in J. Hendriks, E. Mouton, L. Hansen and E. le Roux, *Men in the Pulpit, Women in the Pew? Addressing Gender Inequality in Africa* (Stellenbosch: SUN Press, 2012), 90.

¹⁹ W. Shikomba, ‘Lutheran Theological Education from the Perspective of One of the First Namibian Female Theologians’, in P.J. Isaak *The Story of Paulinum Seminary* (Windhoek: Namibia Publishing House, 2013), 90-91.

²⁰ Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*, 32.

²¹ V. Light, *Transforming the Church in Africa: A New Contextually Relevant Discipleship Model* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2012), 543.

for subjective experience and insights: Jesus is only one way towards a more fulfilling and happy life. The rejection of absolute truth, the uniqueness of Christ and the Bible as the authoritative written revelation of God, has of course consequences. Johan Malan mentions one of these consequences when he writes:

The people of Africa are also free to either practise ancestor worship from the premodern period or one other version of Christianity, or any of the non-Christian religions. They can also try to mix the various traditions. No pressure should be exerted on any person to conform exclusively to the principles of one system of one or other system of faith.²²

In other words, the postmodern gospel allows Africans to maintain all their traditions, including those which are not reconcilable with orthodox Christianity.²³ Another reason why this gospel is increasingly appealing to many Africans is the wide spread 'trust in subjective revelation stemming from belief in and experience of the spirit world'²⁴. Finally, just like the gospel of liberation, the postmodern gospel hardly mentions sin. However, if it is mentioned it is no longer seen as an offence against a holy God but in terms of the damage it causes to human beings.

The Syncretised Gospel

In some way related to the postmodern gospel is the syncretised gospel. In most Southern African countries, African Initiated Churches (AICs), which are pre-Christendom in their theologies and pre-enlightenment in their worldviews,²⁵ are very successful in reaching out to their country men and women. They take traditional African worldviews seriously and avoid the mistakes of many early missionaries who imposed Western culture onto the indigenous population. However, it has to be said that in some of these churches we can find a blend of Christianity and traditional beliefs. As a result Jesus is no longer at the centre of the gospel. His sacrifice on the cross competes with the sacrificing of goats and sheep which are slaughtered in order to remove a curse or to improve one's chances on the job market. Jesus

²² J. Malan, 'The Dangers of Postmodernism', <http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engarticles/Postmodernism.htm>, access: 16.03.2014.

²³ V. Light, *Transforming the Church in Africa: A New Contextually Relevant Discipleship Model*, 53.

²⁴ Light, *Transforming the Church in Africa: A New Contextually Relevant Discipleship Model*, 53.

²⁵ J.J. Bonk, 'Africa and the Future of Christianity: Pre-Christendom Faith in a Post-Christendom World', McClure-Lectures-Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 2013, 3. <http://www.pts.edu/userfiles/file/pdfs/mcclure%201%20africa%20and%20the%20future%20of%20christianity.pdf> access: 17.03.2014.

who said ‘Come to me, all you who are wearied and burdened, and I will give you rest’²⁶ is facing stiff competition from traditional witchdoctors and independent prophets who practice ancestor worship and offer solutions to all kinds of life problems.

Such practical syncretism, however, can also be found among members of mainstream churches. When facing a personal crisis, members of Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, or Methodist churches consult the local witchdoctor but not their pastors. Tite Tienou not only identifies the reason for this phenomenon but also suggests a remedy:

[S]yncretism is practiced by many Christians in our churches because they have not been given clear scriptural teaching which has grappled with the realities of everyday living in Africa. Missionaries and pastors need to have a right attitude towards culture and a sympathetic understanding of it, if they are to help Christians out of this devastatingly syncretistic way of living. Practical syncretism will weaken Christianity even if our official theology remains orthodox.²⁷

The Gospel of Universalism

There are also those to whom the gospel is the good news that there are many ways that lead to God. God, they argue, loves all people whatever religion they have and as a result they will all enjoy eternal life in His kingdom. Personal faith in Jesus Christ is not needed for salvation. Klaus Nürnberger, a South Africa Lutheran theologian, for example, writes:

[T]hose who have practically lived a life that was in line with God’s redemptive intentions, or those who would have wanted to be part of it, if they had only encountered it in a clear and credible form, have consciously or unconsciously identified themselves with it and will most certainly not be cast out, even if they had not managed to go very far with it in their lives.²⁸

Another prominent advocate of this view is the former archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu. In his book *Made for Goodness* he states:

Perhaps we too, are shaken by the thought that our enemies will not burn in Hades throughout eternity. But, ultimately, the reality of heaven cannot tolerate the existence of hell. Even our worst ene-

²⁶ Matthew 11:28.

²⁷ T. Tienou, *The Theological Task of the Church in Africa* (Achimota: Africa Christian Press, 1990), 22.

²⁸ K. Nürnberger, *The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the Ancestors in a Changing Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, SA: Cluster Publications, 2007), 84.

mies are God's beloved children...If we believe in the good God, we must believe that we are all made to inhabit heaven.²⁹

The Gospel of Holism and Transformation

Finally, an increasing number of missionaries and church leaders in sub-Saharan Africa hold that the gospel is holistic and transformational in nature. In recent years their understanding of mission has broadened significantly and so has their understanding of the Christian gospel.³⁰ Verbal communication of the gospel is no longer seen as the heartbeat of mission.³¹ Evangelism, church planting, and leadership training are considered to be merely some of many dimensions of mission which are equally important. Mission has become multidimensional.³² Among these other dimensions are, for example, development, political advocacy, and nature conservation work.³³ Consequently, the gospel is much more than the message of salvation from sin, death, and the power of the devil. As a matter of fact, the gospel of holism and transformation shows many similarities to the gospel of liberation.

For Tobias Faix, extraordinary professor of missiology at the University of South Africa and a prominent member of the emerging church movement, the gospel is the good news that through Jesus' death and resurrection people can be liberated from all their broken relationships: human being and God (John 3:16), human being and self (Matthew 22:36-40), human being and neighbour (Matthew 5:38-48), and human being and nature (John 3:17; John 12:47).³⁴ Faix writes that at the cross Jesus practises solidarity with all suffering and marginalised people.³⁵ At the same time the perpetrators are granted reconciliation. In the same way as the oppressed need to be liberated from their sufferings, the oppressors need to be liberated from the injustice which they have caused. The cross means reconciliation for sin, injustice, and vio-

²⁹ D. Tutu (together with M. Tutu), *Made for Goodness: And Why this Makes All the Difference* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 134.

³⁰ Cf. T. Prill, 'Theological Controversies on the Mission Field in Southern Africa: Reasons, Implications and Responses', in T. Prill, *Mission Namibia: Challenges and Opportunities for the Church in the 21st Century* (München: Grin, 2012), 89.

³¹ Prill, 'Theological Controversies on the Mission Field in Southern Africa: Reasons, Implications and Responses', 89-90.

³² E.M. Conradie, 'Creation at the Heart of Mission?', in *Missionalia* vol. 38, no. 3, 385.

³³ E.g. A. Balog, *Toward an Evangelical Missiology of Humanitarian Aid Ministry* (Osijek: Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2007); C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006).

³⁴ T. Faix, 'Exodus, Jubeljahr, Kreuz und die Gemeinde heute: Biblische Aspekte der Befreiung, Erlösung und Transformation', in T. Faix & T. Kunkler, *Die verändernde Kraft des Evangeliums: Beiträge zu den Marburger Transformationsstudien* (Marburg: Francke, 2012), 82-83.

³⁵ Faix, 'Exodus, Jubeljahr, Kreuz und die Gemeinde heute: Biblische Aspekte der Befreiung, Erlösung und Transformation', 83.

lence on this earth. Faix goes on to say that from the cross flows a power which can redeem, liberate, and transform political, social, economic, cultural, ethical, ethnic, ecological, emancipatory, and spiritual aspects of human life.³⁶

In sum, people hold that the gospel is good news for those who are willing to give away their money, it is good news only for the poor, oppressed, and marginalized, or it is good news for all people regardless of their religious beliefs. But are these gospels of prosperity, liberation, feminism, post-modernism, universalism, and transformation identical to the good news that we can find in the Bible? The answer to that question has to be ‘No!’ So what is meant by the word gospel that is mentioned in the New Testament seventy-six times?

Life without the Gospel

If we want to understand the meaning of the gospel, we will first need to ‘understand how bad our situation is without it’³⁷. The Bible tells us that every human being is by default a sinner. We have ‘all sinned and fall short of the glory of God’³⁸. We ‘have all gone astray’³⁹. The truth is that ‘there is no one who does not sin’⁴⁰. We are by nature sinners; we are ‘by nature children of wrath’⁴¹. As such we lead lives that are not pleasing to God. We lead rebellious lives. We rebel against God who created not only us but the whole universe. We try to keep our Creator out of our lives or let Him play only a minor role. We may still call ourselves Christians, we may go to church on Sundays, sing the familiar hymns and songs, say our prayers, and pay our membership fees, but we give other things, activities, or people the central position in our lives that only God deserves. These things, activities, and people are not necessarily morally wrong, but we sin against God by worshipping them. Instead of trusting in God who has provided us with all good things, we trust in our own abilities, in the power of money, the power of wealth, the power of sex, the power of alcohol, the power of drugs, the power of fame, or the power of power. We worship ourselves and all kinds of things but not the one and true God who deserves all our worship. We separate ourselves from God. Because of that sin the Bible calls us not only ‘God’s enemies’⁴² but also people who are spiritually dead. The apostle Paul puts it this way: ‘As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of

³⁶ Faix, ‘Exodus, Jubeljahr, Kreuz und die Gemeinde heute: Biblische Aspekte der Befreiung, Erlösung und Transformation, 83-85.

³⁷ A.L. Barry, ‘What about the Gospel?’ (Kirkwood, Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, undated), 1, lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1080 access: 05.03.2014.

³⁸ Romans 3:23.

³⁹ Psalm 14:3.

⁴⁰ 1 Kings 8:46.

⁴¹ Ephesians 2:3.

⁴² Romans 5:10.

the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.⁴³

As sinners, our lives are not driven by God and His moral standards but by Satan and our own human standards. As sinners, we disobey God and His moral law that we find summarised in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). The result is lives that are characterised by greed, hate, envy, deception, gossip, quarrelling, pride, boasting, unfaithfulness, adultery, murder etc.⁴⁴

In Namibia we can see this kind of rebellion against God in many different areas of life. We can see it in men who think they are good men because they only have one mistress and not two or three like their friends. We can see it in young students who think that drugs and alcohol are the solution to all their problems. We can see it in male managers and supervisors who ask their female employees to sleep with them so that they can keep their jobs. We can see it in fathers who abuse their children and young mothers who dump their newborns. We can see it in terrible traffic accidents caused by reckless driving. We can see it in business people and government employees who offer or take bribes. We can see it in students who steal exam papers. We can see it in families where people fight over money, land, or cattle and do not even refrain from bewitching one another. We can see it in the income gap between rich and poor (which is the highest in the world). We can see it in the divisions that still exist between different ethnic groups in this country. Yes, we can even see it in churches, where so called 'pastors' fight for power and influence instead of tending the flock.

The Bible tells us that such sinful lives have consequences. These consequences are rooted in the character of God. God has created us to be in a close and everlasting relationship to Him, but as sinners we fail to stay in that relationship; we break relationship with Him. God has created us to be holy and pure but as sinners we are frequently unholy and unclean. God, however, holds us accountable for the way we live the lives He has given us.⁴⁵ And since He is a just and righteous God who hates sin,⁴⁶ the punishment of sin is unavoidable. It is God's righteousness that demands such punishment. We are told in the Bible what the punishment for sin, what the punishment for our rebellion against God, is. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans writes that 'the wages of sin is death'⁴⁷. Death here refers to three realities. Firstly, it refers to physical death. All sinners die, no matter what their age, gender, education, ethnic background, or status in society is. Secondly, it refers to spiritual death. Sinners have broken relationship with God, they are

⁴³ Ephesians 2:1-2.

⁴⁴ Cf. Romans 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 2 Timothy 3:2-3.

⁴⁵ Cf. Romans 3:19.

⁴⁶ Cf. Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 45:7.

⁴⁷ Romans 26:23.

therefore spiritually dead. Thirdly, it refers to the ‘second death’⁴⁸, i.e. everlasting banishment from God and punishment in hell. Jesus himself often spoke about it. He described hell as a place of bondage, darkness, weeping and torment.⁴⁹

Without God and His mercy we are in a hopeless situation. Without the gospel we are in a mess and we cannot pull ourselves out of it. It does not matter how hard we try. It does not matter how much money we give to the Church or how much charitable work we do. It does not matter how much we help others in need. It does not matter how hard we try to live a morally good life. We will never be able to meet God’s standards. We will stay what we are: sinners who deserve God’s punishment. That is why we need the gospel desperately!

The Gospel of Salvation

God, however, is not only a just God who hates sin, He is also a God of love and grace who has started the greatest of all missions to save us from spiritual death, our bondage to sin, and everlasting destruction. Even before the creation of the world God decided that Jesus should fulfil the function of a Saviour for sinful human beings.⁵⁰ When the first human beings, Adam and Eve, rebelled against God by doubting His word and eating from the tree they brought sin into the world.⁵¹ But even at this early stage God promised a Saviour who would crush Satan and His power.⁵² As a matter of fact the whole of the Old Testament points us to this Saviour. The prophet Isaiah, for example, wrote about Him: ‘But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.’⁵³ The same Saviour is mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah:

The days are coming declares the LORD, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.⁵⁴

And when the time was right God sent this Saviour whom He had promised and to whom the whole of the Old Testament is pointing. Jesus Christ, the Son of God came into our world as a human being. He was born to a virgin called Mary and He grew up in a 1st-century Jewish family. He was a

⁴⁸ Revelation 2:11.

⁴⁹ Cf. Matthew 22:13; Luke 16:23.

⁵⁰ Cf. 1 Peter 1:20.

⁵¹ Cf. Genesis 3:1-5.

⁵² Cf. Genesis 3:15.

⁵³ Isaiah 53:5.

⁵⁴ Jeremiah 23:5-6.

human being like you and me. However, He was also the Son of God who lived a perfect life and never committed a single sin.⁵⁵ He was God's Son who had been sent on a mission – a mission to save sinners like you and me. The whole Bible testifies about this, but it is in the New Testament that Jesus' mission is described most clearly. When at the beginning of His earthly ministry Jesus came to be baptised by John the Baptist, he said about Jesus: 'Look the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'⁵⁶ Later Jesus said about Himself: 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.'⁵⁷ And after His death and resurrection the apostles whom Jesus had appointed to be His messengers also testified about Jesus' mission of salvation. The Apostle Paul wrote that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst'⁵⁸, while the Apostle Peter assured his Christian readers that through Jesus Christ they were receiving the goal of their faith, the salvation of their souls⁵⁹.

But how did Jesus achieve His mission of salvation? Well, since death is the punishment for sin Jesus had to die. He died on the cross in order to save sinners like you and me. The cross of Calvary is the climax of the divine mission of salvation. On the cross Jesus died as a sacrifice for us. He died in our place, paying the penalty of death which we deserved because of our sins.⁶⁰ On the cross Jesus died to remove us from the wrath of God which we deserved as sinners. He died to satisfy the justice of God.⁶¹ On the cross Jesus died to reconcile sinful human beings with God and bring us back into fellowship with Him.⁶² On the cross Jesus died to redeem us from our bondage to sin and to Satan.⁶³ Only Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, could do that. Only God Himself could deal with the horror of human sin. Only Jesus could die our death, suffer the punishment for our sins, satisfy the justice of God, reconcile us with God, and free us from the slavery of sin and the power of Satan. Only He could take our sins and give us His righteousness.

However, this is only part of the good news. God did more than giving His Son to die for us. On the third day God raised Jesus to life again. The Apostle Paul writes about the importance of Jesus' bodily resurrection: '...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins'⁶⁴. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead then His death would have no value to us at all. However, Paul continues:

⁵⁵ Cf. Hebrews 4:15.

⁵⁶ John 1:29.

⁵⁷ Luke 19:10.

⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 1:15.

⁵⁹ 1 Peter 1:9.

⁶⁰ Cf. Hebrews 9:36.

⁶¹ Cf. Romans 3:25.

⁶² Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

⁶³ Cf. Ephesians 1:7.

⁶⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.⁶⁵

Jesus' resurrection is the guarantee that all people will be raised from the dead. When Jesus Christ returns He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. All unbelievers who have lived their lives without Him will be handed over to eternal punishment.⁶⁶ But all those who through faith belong to Christ, who have trusted in God's forgiveness offered in Jesus' name, who have trusted Him as their Lord and Saviour during their earthly life, will enjoy eternal life. The evangelist John writes: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'⁶⁷ To summarise one can say that the gospel is the good news about what God has done in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the good news about Jesus' death and resurrection, or as John Calvin puts it:

Finally, God took pity upon this unfortunate and thoroughly unhappy man. Although the sentence which he passed upon him was correct, he nevertheless gave his only and much-loved Son as a sacrificial victim for such sins. By reason of this amazing and unexpected mercy..., God commended his love towards us more greatly than if he had rescinded this sentence. Therefore Christ, the Son of God, was both conceived through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin. He was finally raised up on the cross, and through his own death delivered the human race from eternal death.⁶⁸

Only One Gospel of Salvation

Greg Gilbert points out that the New Testament uses the word gospel in two ways: a broader way and a narrower way. He writes:

Broadly, ..., it refers to all the promises made to us through the work of Jesus – not only forgiveness of sins, but also resurrection, reconciliation with both God and others, sanctification, glorification, coming kingdom, new heavens and new earth and so forth. You might say that in those cases, “gospel” refers to the whole complex of God's promises secured through the life and work of Christ. We might call this broader sense the “gospel of the kingdom”. In the narrow sense,...,“gospel” refers specifically to the

⁶⁵ 2 Corinthians 15:20-22.

⁶⁶ Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.

⁶⁷ John 3:16.

⁶⁸ J. Calvin, 'Letter of Advice', quoted in A.E. McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 187.

atonement death and resurrection of Jesus and the call to all people to repent and believe in him. We might call this narrower sense the “gospel of the cross”.⁶⁹

Gilbert’s observation is certainly true. When we look at the use of the word gospel in the Bible, we can see that the New Testament actually speaks about the ‘gospel of Jesus Christ’⁷⁰ and the ‘gospel of the kingdom’⁷¹. However, it would be wrong to conclude that there are two kinds of gospels. The New Testament writers leave us with no doubt that the gospel of the Kingdom is centred on Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God finds its expression in Jesus’ deeds⁷², in Jesus’ teaching⁷³, and ultimately in the person of Jesus^{74,75}. Gilbert recognises this when he writes that the broad use of the term gospel includes the narrow use.⁷⁶ He goes on to explain how the two relate to each other:

[T]he gospel of the cross is the gateway, the fountainhead, even the seed, so to speak, of the gospel of the kingdom. Read the whole New Testament, and you quickly realize that its univocal message is that a person cannot get to those broad blessings of the kingdom except by being forgiven of sin through the death of Christ. That is the fountain from which all the rest springs.⁷⁷

In other words, to receive or enter the Kingdom of God requires faith in the gospel of Jesus.⁷⁸ That the person of Jesus is actually the gospel is also at the centre of the Apostle Paul’s letters. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Paul defines the essence of the gospel message by listing five gospel truths. First, Jesus is the Christ (verse 3). Secondly, He died for our sins, was buried and was raised to life again (verses 3-4). Thirdly, we can know this through the Scriptures (verses 4-8), i.e. the Old Testament, and the reports of many witnesses, including the apostles. In other words: we can find the gospel in the whole Bible. Fourthly, we need to respond to the gospel message by ‘holding firm

⁶⁹ G. Gilbert, ‘Addendum: What is the Gospel?’, in M. Dever, J.L. Duncan, R.A. Mohler & CJ Mahaney, *Proclaiming a Cross-centered Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 126.

⁷⁰ E.g. Mark 1:1.

⁷¹ E.g. Matthew 4:23.

⁷² Cf. Luke 1:20.

⁷³ Cf. Matthew 18:3-4.

⁷⁴ Cf. Luke 17:20-21.

⁷⁵ See also M. Tinker, *Evangelical Concerns: Rediscovering the Christian Mind on Issues Facing the Church Today* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2001), 68-70.

⁷⁶ Gilbert, ‘Addendum: What is the Gospel?’, 126.

⁷⁷ Gilbert, ‘Addendum: What is the Gospel?’, 127-128.

⁷⁸ Cf. Mark 10:17-31.

to it', i.e. by faith (verse 2). Fifthly, if we do so, we will receive salvation (verse 2).

Receiving the Gospel of Salvation

Here we have it: the gospel, the good news! What wonderful news, indeed! The one, true, eternal, all-gracious, all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving God, the creator of the universe, came into our world to live, suffer, die and rise to life again for sinful people like us. We, who are rebellious, unclean and unholy, can receive the forgiveness of all our sins, the perfect righteousness of Christ our Saviour, and the promise of eternal life as a free gift. We are declared saved and right with God by God Himself. We do not deserve our salvation and we cannot contribute anything to it. It is entirely God's work, or as the Apostle Paul puts it: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast.'⁷⁹

We can only receive this good news. We can only embrace this good news of reconciliation to a gracious God through Christ. Christians are saved by God's grace alone, through faith in Christ alone. This faith which saves is more than simply knowledge about Jesus or intellectual agreement with what the Bible teaches. Saving faith is simple trust in Jesus. It is simply dependence on Jesus' sacrifice He made on the cross.⁸⁰ We can find an example of this simple trust in Jesus in the words of Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer, who wrote almost 500 years ago:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.⁸¹

It is such simple faith through which we personally receive the forgiveness Jesus Christ won on the cross almost 2,000 years ago. But how do we get such faith? Well, it is a gift of our gracious God. It is given to us by the Holy Spirit through the gospel.⁸² God's Holy Spirit works through the

⁷⁹ Ephesians 2:8-9.

⁸⁰ E. Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 26.

⁸¹ M. Luther, 'The Small Catechism', in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, <http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php>, access: 15.03.2014.

⁸² Cf. Ephesians 3:16-17.

message of the gospel to create and sustain faith in our hearts.⁸³ Jesus Christ is not only the Saviour of the world, but also our Saviour too. There is, however, as Veith points out, a prelude to the gospel: the law of God. One function of God's law is 'to cut through our layers of self-deception so that we realize how lost we really are'⁸⁴ or as the apostle puts it: 'Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.'⁸⁵ Veith writes:

Those broken by the Law are convinced of their need and of their inability to save themselves. Then the message that God does it all comes as an astounding relief, as good news. Those who despair of achieving perfection by themselves can hear the message of the cross – that they can find totally free forgiveness through the work of Jesus Christ – and cling to it, desperately with every fibre of their being. Then they become open to God's life-changing gifts. When they do so they are justified by faith. Christ's righteousness is counted as their own. The Law's demands for moral perfection are thus satisfied, vicariously but effectively. Christ's death counts for any punishment they deserve. They are utterly forgiven, released from fear, filled with gratitude for the sheer grace of God.⁸⁶

The Bible, the word of God, is filled with both God's law and the good news of Jesus Christ. Through this Spirit-filled word God is calling us back to Him and calling us to lead a life in communion with Him. And when the day comes that we are confronted with our own death, we know that no one can give us certainty of eternal life except Jesus Christ. Only Jesus has truly defeated death, our final enemy. The Apostle Paul writes: 'The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'⁸⁷ He gives us that gift so that we can trust Him alone as our Lord and Saviour.

If you feel that God's Holy Spirit is calling you today through the good news of Jesus Christ, do not hesitate. If you want to be forgiven by God, enjoy His presence in your life, and receive the gift of eternal life, do not wait with your response. Turn to the One who said: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'⁸⁸

⁸³ Barry, 'What about the Gospel?', 1.

⁸⁴ Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals*, 25.

⁸⁵ Romans 3:20.

⁸⁶ Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals*, 25-26.

⁸⁷ Romans 3:23.

⁸⁸ Matthew 11:28-30.

Sharing the Gospel of Salvation

It is essential for every Christian to know the gospel and to trust in it. However, it is also essential that we proclaim it to others. Michael Horton comments: ‘Since the gospel is a report to be believed rather than a task for us to fulfil, it needs heralds, ambassadors and witnesses.’⁸⁹ To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is to share it with others, is not only the responsibility of evangelists and pastors. In his first letter, the Apostle Peter reminds us that every Christian must be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have.⁹⁰ Peter also tells us what attitude we should have: ‘But do this with gentleness and respect.’⁹¹ John Stott speaks of a responsibility that Christians have towards the world: evangelism.⁹² He continues:

To “evangelize” means literally to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. There are still millions of people who are ignorant of him and his salvation, in every part of the world. For centuries the church seems to have been half asleep. The challenge is for us to be Christians who are wide awake and active in seeking to win the world for Christ. It may be that he has a special task for you to do as an ordained minister of the gospel or a missionary... Although not every Christian is called to be a minister or a missionary, God does intend each of us as Christians to be a witness to Jesus Christ. In our own homes, among our friends and with our colleagues, we carry the solemn responsibility to live a consistent, loving, humble, honest, Christ-like life, and to seek to win other people for him.⁹³

When we share the gospel with others it is important to remember that it is not our power that moves people to believe in Jesus, but the gospel which we find in the inspired word of God. The Apostle Paul defines the gospel as ‘the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes’⁹⁴. This knowledge prevents us from becoming proud when people respond by putting their trust in Jesus. It also takes away any guilt that one might feel if people reject the gospel. Finally, we must remember that the gospel is good news for all nations.⁹⁵ Consequently, we must not hide the gospel from people because they belong to another ethnic group or social class. Instead, we must share it whenever we have the opportunity to do so.

⁸⁹ M. Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 195.

⁹⁰ 1 Peter 3:15.

⁹¹ 1 Peter 3:15.

⁹² J. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008), 166.

⁹³ Stott, *Basic Christianity*, 166-167.

⁹⁴ Romans 1:16.

⁹⁵ Cf. Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47.

Living According to the Truth of the Gospel of Salvation

The gospel is the good news about what God has done for us in Jesus. However, the gospel also demands something of us. It demands repentance, obedience, and faith from us. We are called to live a life in line with the gospel and its truth. In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul puts it this way: ‘Whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.’⁹⁶ As Christians who believe in the good news of Jesus we are not only called to share the gospel of salvation with others but also to share in Christ’s sufferings. Again it is the Apostle Paul who writes: ‘So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel.’⁹⁷ It also means that God’s good news needs to shape our lives, not only on Sundays but every day of the week. It calls us to love God and our neighbours as we love ourselves. It calls us to bear good fruit. It calls us to serve God, our fellow believers, and others. It calls us to make sacrifices. If we do not live according to the truth of the gospel we become hypocrites.⁹⁸ However, if we do we will see that it has the power to transform our lives and the lives of others into the likeness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: ‘For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.’⁹⁹

Yes, the Christian faith is a personal faith but it is certainly not a private faith. For followers of Christ involvement in a local congregation is not optional. Mark Dever comments:

According to the Bible, our participation in the local congregation normally validates or falsifies our claim that we are savingly trusting in Christ and his gospel. What gospel allows you to think you have accepted it, if you don’t, in a committed and Christlike way, love your brother? What does saving faith look like? Does the gospel merely save me and lead me to God? Or does it normally bring me to God through the fellowship of the local church? Paul says “we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). God means us to serve him not only, of course, but fundamentally through the local church, where we are served by each other as we administer God’s grace to each other by using the gifts God has given us in serving each other (1 Pet. 4:10).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Philippians 1:27.

⁹⁷ 2 Timothy 1:8.

⁹⁸ Cf. Galatians 2:14.

⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:18.

¹⁰⁰ M. Dever, ‘Improving the Gospel: Exercises in Unbiblical Theology (or)

Conclusion

What is the true gospel? Well, it is certainly not the gospel of liberation or feminism. The advocates of these gospels seem to ignore the fact that '[w]hile New Testament Christianity respects human dignity and calls for justice, liberation in terms of what Christ came to do must be understood as meaning liberation primarily from man's fundamental dilemma, which is sin'¹⁰¹.

The same can be said of the prosperity gospel. The core problem of the prosperity gospel is its view of the relationship between human beings and their Creator: 'Simply put, if the prosperity gospel is correct, grace becomes obsolete, God becomes irrelevant, and "man is the measure of all things".'¹⁰²

The problem of the gospel of holism and transformation is that it makes the gospel larger than it really is. As Dever has pointed out it requires us 'to include what we take to be implications of the gospel as part of the gospel itself'¹⁰³. This however 'can too easily confuse our message and cause us to lose the radical and gracious sufficiency of faith in Christ alone'¹⁰⁴. Of course the Bible speaks about transformation, but as Carson writes it is 'God who gathers and transforms his people'¹⁰⁵. People who are reconciled to God can no 'longer live as the Gentiles do'¹⁰⁶, they must be changed. A change of heart and life needs to take place. Carson comments:

The change of heart has come about such that we want to please the Lord, and we are eager to find out what pleases him. Biblical transformational Christianity gathers men and women together in the church, these people who have been called out – Jew or Gentile, it doesn't matter – and under the lordship of Christ they look back to the cross and look forward to what is still ahead. By the power of the Spirit and because of the change in their lives, they want to find out what pleases the Lord.¹⁰⁷

Questioning Five Common Deceits', in M. Dever, J.L. Duncan, R.A. Mohler & C.J. Mahaney, *Proclaiming a Cross-centered Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 113.

¹⁰¹ B.H. Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (Achimota: Africa Christian Press, 1985), 51.

¹⁰² D.W. Jones & R.S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?*, 102.

¹⁰³ M. Dever, 'Improving the Gospel: Exercises in Unbiblical Theology (or) Questioning Five Common Deceits', 109.

¹⁰⁴ M. Dever, 'Improving the Gospel: Exercises in Unbiblical Theology (or) Questioning Five Common Deceits', 109.

¹⁰⁵ D.A. Carson, *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 200.

¹⁰⁶ Ephesians 4:17.

¹⁰⁷ D.A. Carson, *The God Who is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story*, 196.

Neither are the postmodern gospel, the syncretised gospel, nor the gospel of universalism true expressions of the biblical gospel, as they all deny the uniqueness of Christ and His work, as well as the absolute necessity of personal faith in Him who said ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me’¹⁰⁸. It is the claim to uniqueness which lies at the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁹ The postmodern gospel, the syncretised gospel, and the gospel of universalism are an attempt to make the gospel of Jesus look more attractive or more relevant and thus more acceptable. However, instead of trying to improve the gospel ‘[w]e must’, as Dever¹¹⁰ writes ‘preach the gospel we have received’.

What then is the gospel we have received? *In A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels* Martin Luther gives the following answer:

For at its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, and that he has been established as Lord over all things. This much St. Paul takes in hand and spins out in his epistles. He bypasses all the miracles and incidents (in Christ’s ministry) which are set forth in the four Gospels, yet he includes the whole gospel adequately and abundantly. This may be seen clearly and well in his greeting to the Romans, where he says what the gospel is, and then declares: “Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” etc. There you have it. The gospel is a story about Christ, God’s and David’s Son, who died and was raised, and is established as Lord. This is the gospel in a nutshell.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ John 14:6.

¹⁰⁹ P.G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 2000), 221.

¹¹⁰ M. Dever, ‘Improving the Gospel: Exercises in Unbiblical Theology (or) Questioning Five Common Deceits’, 119.

¹¹¹ M. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35, edited by J. Pelikan & H.T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), 118.

Mormonism in Africa

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Introduction

Generalizations about the Latter-day Saints (LDS) and their faith are frequently based on observations of Mormonism in the United States, especially in the state of Utah. This is understandable. Mormonism is often described as the quintessentially American faith, and in many ways that is true. Until the mid-twentieth century the LDS Church was largely confined to the Mountain West. But it is easy to see why generalizing from this sample creates incomplete and inaccurate portraits. As of October 2014, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reported a worldwide membership of 15,082,028.¹ Within the United States, 69% of Mormons live outside Utah. More significantly, 57.6% of all Mormons live outside the United States. Thus, Utah accounted for only 13.1% of total Church membership. Mormonism is now an international faith. In most countries the LDS Church has lower retention rates than the U.S., so it may still be the case that a majority of those attending LDS chapels on any given Sunday are Americans. However, even with lower retention rates, continued growth abroad will ensure that this soon changes. It is, therefore, important for those who study Mormonism to pay increasing attention to its international manifestations. This essay will provide a brief sketch of Mormon growth in Africa and describe some of the factors that facilitate and impede that growth.

¹ <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/>. Accessed 2 October 2014.

Historical Sketch

The story of Mormonism in Africa is, as E. Dale LeBaron observes, “one of the most unusual chapters in the history of the Mormon Church.”² Mormonism has been established on the continent for more than 160 years. Yet, it is also a latecomer in the missionary scramble for Africa. This paradoxical situation is due to the LDS Church’s racial policies between 1852 and 1978.

Official African Mormonism Before 1978

The first Mormon missionaries to the African continent arrived in Cape Town on April 18, 1853. They baptized their first convert in June and organized the first branch congregation in mid-August. Three weeks later a second branch was organized, and a third the following February. Unlike Catholics and Protestants, LDS missionaries preached only to whites. People of Malay descent were seen as potential converts, but no special efforts were made to proselytize them. Indigenous black and mixed race populations were deliberately avoided because they had “too much of the blood of Cain in them, for the Gospel to have much effect on their dark spirits.”³ Nonetheless, several blacks were baptized in the 1850s.⁴ LDS missionary policy in the nineteenth century encouraged converts to “gather in Zion” with the main body of Saints (cf. D&C 29:7-8; 110:11). Between 1855 and 1865 some 278 converts from South Africa emigrated to Utah, including at least four blacks.⁵ In 1865 the South African Mission was closed, not to reopen again until 1903 (shortly after the Boer War). Around this time the Church stopped supporting emigration to the United States. Converts were instead urged to build up the Church in their homelands.

At the beginning of 1978 there were no more than 7,848 members of the LDS Church on the African continent.⁶ All but 136 or so lived within the jurisdiction of the South African Mission (South Africa and what are now Namibia and Zimbabwe). The vast majority were whites of British descent and a sizeable minority of Afrikaners. There were a handful of members classi-

² E.D. LeBaron, “Mormonism in Black Africa,” in D. Davies, ed., *Mormon Identities in Transition* (London: Cassell, 1996), 83.

³ *Latter Day Saints Millennial Star* (Liverpool, England), 7 June 1856 as quoted in N.G. Bringham, “Mormonism in Black Africa: Changing Attitudes and Practices 1830-1981,” *Sunstone* 6 (1981): 17.

⁴ Bringham, “Mormonism in Black Africa,” 21, n. 14.

⁵ Bringham, “Mormonism in Black Africa,” 17.

⁶ The commonly cited membership figure for that year is 7,712, but a few sources report lower numbers. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the usually cited statistic includes 136 members who lived in countries outside the South African Mission in 1977. The latter number is reported in C.K. Jacobson, T.B. Heaton, E.D. LeBaron, and T. Hope, “Black Mormon Converts in the United States and Africa: Social Characteristics and Perceived Acceptance,” in M. Cornwall, T.B. Heaton, and L.A. Young, eds., *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 327.

fied as ‘Colored’ under the apartheid system. The 136 members outside the South African Mission were dispersed across several countries. Some were white North Americans and Europeans whose work brought them to Africa. Others were black Africans who joined the Church while studying or working abroad. However, there were no congregations with non-white leadership nor was there even a sizable proportion of non-white membership. Missionary activity was deliberately confined to whites within the South African sphere of influence. Coloreds were avoided because of difficulties created by the apartheid system. Blacks were avoided both because of apartheid and because they were not permitted to receive the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods which most Mormon men hold.

In theory Mormon missionaries could have proselytized among native African peoples despite the priesthood ban. According to the Book of Mormon, the Lord “commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation” (2 Nephi 26:24). Moreover, “all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (26:28). The racial, social, and gender implications of this principle are stated explicitly: “he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (26:33).⁷ Consistent with this, race never prevented membership in the LDS Church. Elijah Abel, a former slave, was baptized in 1832 – a mere two years after the Church’s formal founding. Prior to the Civil War, the Church adopted a policy not to baptize slaves without their owner’s permission, but free blacks and former slaves were welcome to join and some did.

If something like the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi* were applied to early Mormonism, then LDS hymnody provided warrant for why missionaries *should* have proselytized in black Africa. The LDS Church’s first hymnbook was published in 1835. The hymns were selected by Emma Smith, Joseph Smith’s wife. In light of Christ’s imminent return, Hymn 35 encouraged Mormons to take their message around the globe, including Africa:

Go pass throughout Europe, and Asia’s dark regions,
To China’s far shores, and to Afric’s black legions,
And proclaim to all people, as you’re passing by,

⁷ According to Joseph Smith’s claims for the Book of Mormon and its internal chronology, Nephi would have spoken these words sometime between 559–545 B.C. However, 2 Nephi 26:33 was written by somebody clearly familiar with Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Colossians (see Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). It also adapts Paul’s universalist statements to reflect the racial composition of antebellum America (white, black, and ‘heathen’, i.e. Native American). This kind of anachronism pervades the Book of Mormon.

The fig-trees are leaving—the summer is nigh.⁸

Missionaries were not sent to Africa during Joseph Smith's lifetime, but doing so was obviously envisioned in this hymn.

During Smith's lifetime some black members were given the priesthood. Joseph Smith ordained Elijah Abel as an elder in early 1836; later he was ordained as a Seventy.⁹ However, texts "translated" by Smith lent themselves to interpretations that could supply warrant for racially exclusionary policies (2 Nephi 5:21; Moses 7:8, 22; Abraham 1:24, 26-27). Brigham Young, Smith's successor, implemented the policy withholding the priesthood from men of African descent.¹⁰ In 1852, in his role as governor of Utah Territory, Young also approved laws permitting and regulating slavery.¹¹ A few Southern converts brought slaves with them to Utah, but the practice was never widespread.¹² According to census figures, which may not be accurate, a slight majority of blacks in the territory were free.¹³ The priesthood policy

⁸ E. Smith, ed., *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, Ohio: F.G. Williams & Co., 1835), 47. Photographs of the original can be seen on The Joseph Smith Papers Project website (<http://josephsmithpapers.org/>).

⁹ An "elder" is someone ordained to the higher of Mormonism's two orders of priesthood, the Melchizedek priesthood. The lower order is the Aaronic priesthood. Males who hold the Aaronic but not the Melchizedek priesthood are referred to as "priests." A Seventy is a General Authority of the Church ranked beneath the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

¹⁰ Racist beliefs obviously lie at the root of this policy, but the external and internal factors that contributed to its origination and enforcement are more complex than critics usually admit. For a concise and balanced overview, see A.L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 212-17.

¹¹ Most Mormons in Utah came from Northern states and Great Britain. They had little desire to see slavery implemented. Armand Mauss plausibly suggests that these laws were motivated more by political expediency than intent to develop a slave economy. The congressional compromises of 1820 and 1850 required states entering the union alternate between slave and free. California entered in 1850 as a free state; if Utah were to enter next, it would have to do so as a slave state, at least on paper. Statehood would have given Utah greater autonomy than territorial status did, something much desired by Mormons given their turbulent history in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. See Mauss, "From Galatia to Ghana: The Racial Dynamic in Mormon History," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 6 (2013): 57-58.

¹² James B. Christensen, "Negro Slavery in the Utah Territory," *The Phylon Quarterly* 18/3 (1957): 298-305; Dennis L. Lythgoe, "Negro Slavery in Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39/1 (1971): 40-54.

¹³ The 1850 census recorded twenty-six black slaves supposedly "on their way to California" and twenty-four free blacks. Ten years later the census reported fifty-nine blacks in the territory, twenty-nine slaves and thirty free. However, the number of blacks who are known to have immigrated or been brought to Utah between 1847 and 1850 is 100-119 (there is some confusion because of ambiguous records). Thir-

did not take away the priesthood from free blacks who already held it. They continued to receive callings within the Church and serve missions. In at least a couple instances exceptions to the priesthood ban were made for their descendants.¹⁴ But race-based exclusion from the priesthood was the norm.

Popular theological and “scientific” explanations of the priesthood policy removed whatever motivation there had been previously to proselytize in black communities. Nonetheless, the Church continued to attract and receive some black converts in the United States. In the early 1970s efforts began to make black members feel more comfortable in the Church – efforts which continue to this day.¹⁵ By the mid-1970s it is estimated that the LDS Church had somewhere around 2000 members of African descent. Most of them seem to have been drawn to the LDS Church through contact with white Mormons in the workplace or during military service.¹⁶ Black Mormons resided in various parts of the United States as a minority within their local congregation. Their membership posed no special logistical problems for the Church because there were no predominantly black wards.¹⁷ Men eligible for the priesthood could be readily found in any ward. The prospect of successfully proselytizing in black Africa, however, did pose a challenge.

Members of the LDS Church who do not have the priesthood are ineligible to preach the gospel, baptize, confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, bless the sacrament, or participate in certain Temple ceremonies. Priesthood authority is essential for various callings necessary for the functioning of an LDS congregation. If missionary success in Africa led to the establishment of exclusively or even predominantly black congregations, this would have necessi-

ty-two were free and the rest slaves. See N.G. Bringham, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1981), 218-28.

¹⁴ Abel remained a Seventy after he moved to Utah Territory, but Brigham Young denied his request to receive the endowment. (Today the endowment is prerequisite for the Melchizedek priesthood and, therefore, for serving as a Seventy. The endowment had not yet been invented when Abel was ordained an elder and Seventy.) Nonetheless, Abel served as a missionary as late as 1883. In 1900 his son Elijah was ordained an elder. His grandson Elijah was ordained a priest in 1934 and elder in 1935.

¹⁵ For a summary description, see A.L. Mauss, “Mormonism and Race,” in C. Mosser and R. Sherlock, eds., *The Mormon World* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

¹⁶ Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 242. Mauss reports this figure from ‘informed Utah journalist’ Heidi S. Swinton’s article “Without Regard to Race,” *This People* 9/2 (1988): 19-23. I suspect this number reflects only U.S. membership, but I have been unable to secure a copy of the article to confirm. During that time the LDS Church experienced rapid growth in Brazil and many converts had mixed racial ancestry.

¹⁷ A ward is a geographically defined local congregation, much like a parish in Catholic and Anglican denominations. Wards are organized into stakes, a larger geographical unit similar to a diocese.

tated that the Church send men from other ethnic backgrounds (not necessarily white Europeans) to fulfill those callings. Furthermore, bishops, stake presidents, and all others who serve in leadership roles at the ward and stake level are unpaid volunteers who are typically employed full time in secular occupations. Most missionaries are young men who save money during high school to cover the expense of their two-year mission. Black congregations would have necessitated that the Church continue to send missionaries to places in which it was already established, diverting them from new fields. Moreover, though the Melchizedek priesthood technically qualifies male missionaries to fulfill any calling, practically speaking it is preferable for some positions to be filled by individuals with more maturity and life experience. Mormon couples sometimes serve missions together after retirement, but it is questionable whether there would have been enough mature missionaries to support the needs of a black African Mormonism under the priesthood ban.

Everything changed on 8 June 1978. That day the First Presidency unexpectedly released a letter announcing a revelation that opened the priesthood to all worthy men (Official Declaration 2 in D&C). Within a few months LDS missionaries began arriving in West Africa. As the year 1980 began, there were at least 8,606 people in Africa on Church membership rolls, representing an increase in membership of over 10% in a year and a half period.¹⁸ African membership now stands at 421,892, approximately 2.8% of the Church's total. The Church is established in 30 African nations (see chart). If current growth and retention trends hold, in twenty years there could easily be two million or more African Mormons, accounting for 15-20% of the LDS Church's total membership. At the beginning of 1978 all but a handful of African Mormons had predominantly European ancestry. Today at least 90% come from predominantly indigenous sub-Saharan ancestry. The non-black minority includes growing numbers of people from Indian, Malay, Chinese, and other non-European ethnic backgrounds.

These figures are impressive when one considers the fact that blacks were denied the priesthood from 1852-1978 and there were no efforts to proselytize them during this period. What is more significant than the numbers, however, is the way Mormonism gained a foothold among black Africans and the factors that affect continued growth among them.

Unofficial Black African Mormonism Emerges

Beginning in 1946 and increasing through the 1950s, the LDS Church began receiving letters from black Africans, mostly in Nigeria and Ghana.

¹⁸ This figure comes from the "Summary of Church Membership," *Deseret News Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, 1981), 229-32 as reported in Bringham, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 212. The number of baptisms sometimes reported for Nigeria and Ghana through November 1979 is sometimes listed at 1700 or more. If accurate, that would necessitate a higher total African membership than recorded in the *Church Almanac*.

Many requested literature or visits from missionaries. Inquirers had learned about the LDS Church through friends, pamphlets, a story in the *Reader's Digest*, and in other sundry ways.¹⁹ Some people said they were already convinced of the Church's claims about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and its status as "the one true church" on earth. They identified themselves as Mormons and wanted to formally become members. Most surprising were letters informing leaders in Salt Lake City about several self-identified Mormon or Latter-day Saint congregations and study groups. It is estimated that in the 1960s there were more than sixty such groups in Nigeria and Ghana. Most of these groups were unaware of the others and none of their participants were officially baptized members of the LDS Church. These unofficial Mormon groups desired to merge with the official Church and come under its oversight.

Without the knowledge of the LDS Church, Mormonism, of a sort, spontaneously emerged in West Africa, the most unlikely of locations. That created a theological, moral, and logistical conundrum for the Church's leadership. For more than ten years Church leaders debated how to respond to the persistent requests from African "Mormons." Initially there was concern about the motives of these individuals. Did they wish to identify with the Church to legitimize their activities with local officials or add the prestige of being associated with an American denomination? Were they hoping the Church would send money to support their activities? Responses to their letters made it clear that if the LDS Church sent missionaries and was officially established in their countries, black members would not be permitted to hold the priesthood. Convinced that Joseph Smith was a prophet and the Book of Mormon authentic scripture, they were unfazed. Letter writers persisted in their request for the Church to send missionaries with priesthood authority who could baptize and instruct them further about the faith. They were also informed that anyone currently serving as a minister would no longer be permitted to receive financial support. Mormonism has an entirely lay clergy that serves on a volunteer basis. The Africans said they would gladly comply with Church policy once missionaries were sent. No matter what obstacles were presented in the Church's replies, African inquirers were undeterred. They were convinced that Mormonism is true and insisted the Church fulfill its mandate to take the restored Gospel to all nations and peoples, including black Africa. Nigerians were especially insistent.

In a meeting on 22 June 1962, David O. McKay, then President of the LDS Church, expressed his feeling that the Church had an obligation to permit the baptism of worthy Nigerians who wanted to convert. The logistical hurdles this presented were discussed in a meeting eight days later. McKay was willing to respond to the pleading of Africa's would-be Saints despite

¹⁹ These fascinating stories are recounted in detail by J.B. Allen, "Would-Be Saints: West Africa Before the 1978 Priesthood Revelation," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 207-47.

the considerable problems it would cause in order to “give them whatever blessings the Church could provide, short of the priesthood.”²⁰ Two months later the decision was made to send LaMar Williams and a young missionary to Africa in order to “unofficially” (but at the Church’s expense) investigate the situation on the ground. Williams was an employee of the Missionary Department who served as chief correspondent with African inquirers. Williams reported his findings to the First Presidency and other Church leaders. Three months later he was informed by President McKay that missionary work would commence in Nigeria and the Church’s auxiliary organizations established among existing groups.²¹ The decision was publicly announced in the 11 January 1963 edition of the *Deseret News*.

The announcement that missionary work would begin in Nigeria proved premature. In early 1963 a Nigerian student named Ambrose Chukwa attending college in San Louis Obispo, California visited the local LDS Institute of Religion.²² He was invited to a Sunday service and in the course of conversation learned about the priesthood policy. In an attempt to address his concern, somebody apparently gave Chukwa a copy of John J. Stewart’s booklet *Mormonism and the Negro*. Angered by the explanation Stewart gave for the priesthood ban, Chukwa sent a long letter to the *Nigerian Outlook* denouncing Mormonism as a “religion of race hate and race superiority and discrimination.”²³ Chukwa insisted that the LDS Church should not be allowed into the country. Other Nigerian students began a letter-writing campaign to university and government officials throughout Nigeria urging the same thing. The letters were effective and the Nigerian government denied the LDS Church permission to begin work in the country. Despite the efforts of LaMar Williams and others, the government would not be persuaded to change its position as long as the priesthood policy remained in place. Unofficial black Mormon groups would continue to operate in Nigeria and Ghana without assistance or oversight from Salt Lake City until 1978.

Mormonism in Africa Today

Hard demographic data on African Mormons is hard to come by. However, the available evidence suggests that Mormonism appeals most to high-status subgroups and is associated with upward mobility and high socioeconomic expectations.²⁴ African Mormons appear to have much higher educational attainment than the general populations of their countries. Converts in North America often respond to distinctive LDS doctrines about preexistence

²⁰ Allen, “Would-Be Saints,” 216.

²¹ Allen, “Would-Be Saints,” 227.

²² Institutes are typically located near college or university campuses. They provide religious instruction for Mormon students pursuing degrees at non-LDS institutions. Non-members are welcome to take classes as well.

²³ As quoted in Allen, “Would-Be Saints,” 230.

²⁴ Jacobson, *et al.*, “Black Mormon Converts,” 333.

and the nature of the family by having larger than average families. In Africa Mormon families tend to be somewhat smaller than local averages.²⁵

In most parts of the world LDS Church's rapid growth is accompanied by low rates of retention and participation. Africa is different. Rick Phillips observes:

Africa is an anomalous case. LDS growth in Africa is brisk, and African Mormons have high levels of religious participation. In addition, the church's ability to staff lay clergy callings in African congregations is enhanced by the fact that male converts outnumber females in this region. These participation rates and sex ratios are correlates of convert retention. Hence, Africa may countermand the rule that rapid LDS growth attends low retention rates.²⁶

Weekly church attendance of members varies between 20-30% in Southern Africa and 50-55% in West Africa.²⁷

LDS chapels are consistently well-maintained and attractive. Services are orderly, consisting of hymn singing, prayers, the sacrament (i.e. communion),²⁸ and two or three assigned speakers. Before and after the sacrament meeting there are a variety of Sunday school classes and other meetings for LDS men, women, and youth. The full block of Sunday meetings lasts around three hours. Numerous individuals actively participate in conducting the service and teaching classes.

Most Christian denominations in Africa accommodate local customs, musical styles, and other culturally adapted expressions of faith. Mormon churches do not. Hymns and teaching materials are standardized or "correlated" at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. Each week African Mormons discuss the exact same topics and scriptures as Mormons everywhere else. In the broad context of religious development in Africa, Philip Jenkins, observes, the LDS Church is "extraordinarily unusual, and probably unique." Why? "It is one of the very last churches of Western origin that still enforces Euro-American norms so strictly and that refuses to make any accommodation to local customs. Missionaries have resolutely refused to draw on the

²⁵ Jacobson, *et al.*, "Black Mormon Converts," 334-35.

²⁶ R. Phillips, "Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism," *Nova Religio* 10/1 (2006): 59-60.

²⁷ S.L. Bryant, H. Gooren, R. Phillips, and D. G. Stewart, Jr., "Conversion and Retention in Mormonism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. L.R. Rambo and C.E. Farhadian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 768.

²⁸ An unusual feature of the Mormon sacrament is that it is served with water instead of wine or grape juice.

historical lessons offered by any other church.”²⁹ Ironically, given Mormonism’s history, refusal to accommodate local culture extends to polygamy. Polygamous men who wish to be baptized are required to divorce all but one wife.

Given Mormonism’s refusal to accommodate local customs, what is its appeal to Africans? To begin, the Book of Mormon has always set the LDS message apart from competing Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and indigenous churches wherever it has gone. Early converts saw the very existence of the Book of Mormon as prophetic proof that the final dispensation had arrived.³⁰ What was most significant was its ‘artifactual reality’ rather than its theological or historical content.³¹ Terryl Givens explains:

The Book of Mormon has had a tremendous role to play in the establishment of the Latter-day Saint church, a role grounded largely in its obtrusiveness as miraculous artifact, portent of the last days, and sign of prophetic power. This role appears to have little or nothing to do with particular doctrines that are explicitly taught in the revealed record.³²

The Book of Mormon continues to function this way wherever Mormon missionaries take their message. Potential converts are given copies and asked to pray about whether it is in fact from God. This gives them a tangible reason to consider the Church’s claims.

The existence of the Book of Mormon is presented as evidence that God continues to work through living prophets and apostles just as he did in the Bible. The Mormon message is peppered by stories about visions of God, visitations from angels, and miracles. Various charismatic groups make these sorts of claims, too, of course. But Mormonism is distinctive in that its stories have the patina of age while current prophets and apostles can trace their offices back to predecessors in the early nineteenth century who claimed to have been visited and ordained by John the Baptist and the apostles Peter, James, and John (D&C 13; 27:12; 128:20; Joseph Smith – History 1:68-70). New revelations have become rare (the last one was the 1978 priesthood revelation) and General Authorities are generally conservative. Because of this, affirming continuing revelation poses little risk that radical innovations will be introduced. Mormonism simultaneously presents charismatic evidence

²⁹ P. Jenkins, “Letting Go: Understanding Mormon Growth in Africa,” *Journal of Mormon History* 35/2 (2009): 23. Responsibility for this should be assigned to Church leaders in Salt Lake City rather than missionaries. Unlike their Protestant and Catholic counterparts, Mormon missionaries have no discretion in such matters.

³⁰ T.L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67.

³¹ *By the Hand of Mormon*, 12, 80.

³² *By the Hand of Mormon*, 196.

that God is active in the world and offers the comforts of stability and predictability.

Mormonism's fundamental truth claim is that it is a restoration of earliest Christianity. It alone possesses priesthood authority to act in God's name. Other churches have truth in various degrees, but only the LDS Church possesses the fullness of the gospel. In the religious marketplace churches make numerous contradictory claims for which they claim perspicuous biblical support. How is the typical layperson to adjudicate these claims? Furthermore, many churches are led by men and women who seem more concerned with financial gain and personal fame than serving God. Mormon missionaries offer an alternative solution to Christianity's chaos. Potential converts are encouraged to pray and ask God which is the only true church led by prophets authorized by God and whose congregations have no paid clergy. All of this can be very attractive to people looking for assurance and certainty. The LDS Church claims authority that can settle doctrinal disputes and converts don't need to fear that they are being targeted by charlatan preachers who hope to enrich themselves.

Finally, among other things that could be mentioned, Mormon teachings about family and ancestors seem to be especially attractive. Stable family life is actively encouraged and practically promoted by Church activities and the Family Home Evening program. Many indigenous African societies have religious rites in which ancestors are venerated or customs designed to provide for their needs in the afterlife. Catholic and Orthodox prayers for the departed excepted, traditional forms of Christianity have little room to accommodate concern for dead ancestors. Furthermore, Christian teaching about the necessity of faith in Christ for salvation and the traditional doctrine of hell raise worries about the fate of relatives who died without an opportunity to hear the gospel. According to Mormon teaching, however, the dead can be redeemed. In a postmortal spirit world everyone is given opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. Baptism is not possible in a disembodied state, so the living must be baptized by proxy on behalf of the dead. This teaching motivates Mormons to conduct genealogical research and submit themselves to proxy baptism in a Temple and thereby facilitate the salvation of their dead relatives.

Some of the theological beliefs that attract African converts also help to explain their relatively high retention rates. More mundane considerations can also be mentioned. At the sociological level, there seems to be some prestige associated with being a Latter-day Saint that appeals to upwardly mobile individuals. These same converts tend to appreciate the orderliness of services and the Church's clear hierarchy. Mormons are expected to follow the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89) which prohibits alcohol, hot drinks, and tobacco. Many converts appreciate the social and health benefits that accrue to their families from this. The Church Welfare Plan provides food and sometimes financial assistance to members facing difficult times while promoting

self-reliance. The Perpetual Education Fund provides a means for African students to pursue university education who may not otherwise afford to do so. Not only does this help with convert retention, it ensures that there will continue to be many well-educated African Mormons capable of filling leadership positions. Finally, if someone stops attending the sacrament meeting, somebody will be sent to visit to make sure the person is okay and encourage him or her to be in church the following Sunday.

Mormonism's Challenge to Traditional Christianity in Africa

Currently Mormons account for a little less than .04% of the continent's population. From a purely statistical perspective, African Mormonism is insignificant. Philip Jenkins predicts that over the next quarter century the African share of the LDS Church's worldwide membership will rise to perhaps 15%, likely more.³³ However, even with high growth rates, he sees "no likelihood that Mormons will account for as much as 1 percent of the continental population, at least in the next century."³⁴ He may be right about this; time will tell. Regardless, orthodox Christian educators and church leaders in Africa should not dismiss Mormonism as insignificant.

Every academic article on the history or sociology of Mormonism in Africa observes that the vast majority of converts come from Christian churches. For example, Allen states,

the fact that Christianity was a major religious tradition was essential to the ultimate success of the Latter-day Saints in black Africa.... [P]ractically all the new converts already worshipped Christ and saw in Mormonism the greater fullness of the gospel they already knew and loved.³⁵

Mormonism's ability to gain a foothold in Africa also depended on the prior work of Protestant and Catholic missionaries who engaged in the meticulous work of translating the Bible into indigenous languages. The fact is, Mormonism's restorationist message simply doesn't make much sense or hold much appeal to people coming from non-Christian religious backgrounds. It can only gain a foothold in places where it is preceded by orthodox forms of Christianity. Mormon growth then comes primarily at the expense of traditional Christian churches.

Mormon teaching about the nature of God, the universe, Christ, humanity, and salvation significantly diverges from all forms of orthodox Christianity. Without awareness of these differences, Mormonism can easily be mistaken for a somewhat idiosyncratic Protestant or even evangelical denomination. The need to make clear distinctions is perhaps greatest in countries where Islam has a significant presence. For example, "In a society like Nigeria, the

³³ Jenkins, "Letting Go," 2.

³⁴ Jenkins, "Letting Go," 18.

³⁵ Allen, "Would-Be Saints," 210.

issue is not whether one is an Anglican or a Catholic or a Mormon, but whether one is a Muslim or a Christian.”³⁶ In the face of Islam, denominational identities are insignificant compared with basic Christian identity. This can be a very good thing when it promotes cooperation among orthodox Christian bodies. It is problematic when differences are minimized so much that heterodoxy is tolerated with respect to fundamental doctrinal issues.

Christian universities, theological institutes, and churches in areas where Mormonism is present would be prudent to periodically teach about the significant worldview differences that exist between Mormonism and all forms of orthodox Christianity. However, this should be done by people who have charitably studied Mormon history and theology for the sake of understanding its appeal and internal logic. Too often Christian critics present caricatured versions of Mormon doctrine and highlight the most salacious elements of the movement’s history. Presentations designed to shock may inoculate some people from converting to Mormonism, but through omission or commission, they can also bear false witness against their theological neighbor.

One apparently popular approach to educating people about Mormonism in an African context focuses on the Church’s past racial policies. For example, a tract produced by the Africa Center for Apologetics Research titled “The Mormon Church and the African”³⁷ consists almost entirely of quotations from LDS General Authorities that predate the 1978 revelation. These quotations attempt to explain why the priesthood was withheld from men of African ancestry or otherwise express racist sentiments. These quotations are undoubtedly shocking to many black Africans who are considering joining or have joined the LDS Church. Mormonism’s history on racial issues is certainly something potential converts should consider. However, it is inappropriate to quote these statements without frankly acknowledging that the sentiments they express have been roundly repudiated. For example, two months after the 1978 revelation Bruce R. McConkie, a prominent member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, gave a speech at Brigham Young University making this point.

It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year, 1978. It is a new day and a new arrangement, and the Lord has now given the revelation that sheds light out into the world on this sub-

³⁶ Jenkins, “Letting Go,” 7.

³⁷ Available online at <http://www.acfar.org/pdflibrary/ACFAR-Mormon-Church-African.pdf>.

ject. As to any slivers of light or any particles of darkness of the past, we forget about them.³⁸

Prior to 1978 McConkie himself had offered explanations of the priesthood ban that would strike anyone of African ancestry as demeaning and even racist. After June 1978, however, McConkie distanced himself from those explanations³⁹. Today the LDS Church's position is unambiguous:

[The] Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else. Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form.⁴⁰

Approaches like the one represented in the tract mentioned above highlight the fact that theories disavowed in this statement were uttered by Mormon prophets and apostles. The idea seems to be that these statements somehow prove these men could not have been genuine prophets and apostles. Perhaps. But Mormonism does not claim infallibility for its prophets or apostles. So, from an LDS perspective, racist statements by past leaders can be dismissed for what they are without undermining their calling as prophets and apostles.

Over the last year the LDS Church has begun publishing statements about controversial issues on its website designed to counter expose-style criticism by presenting the relevant information itself. These statements sometimes minimize or sidestep issues, but they are also refreshing for the degree to which they acknowledge the Church's history and mistakes. Reviewing a statement about the Church's past practice of polygamy, dissident Gary James Bergera observes that the statement leaves something to be desired but "the essays' candor is sometimes jarring, like a splash of ice-cold water. Clearly, the authors believe that 'hard facts' are a more effective palliative

³⁸ "All Are Alike Unto God," Church Education System Religious Educators Symposium, Brigham Young University, 18 August 1978. Online: <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1570>.

³⁹ The 1966 revision of McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, [orig. 1958]) said "negroes" were denied the priesthood in this life because they were "less valiant" in the preexistence and were "not equal to other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned" (s.v. *Negroes*). This was removed after 1978 and replaced with an explanation of the 1978 revelation and the full text of the First Presidency's letter. However, until it went out of print in 2010, *Mormon Doctrine* continued to state that negroes are descendants of the cursed line of Cain and Ham, that black skin is a mark of this curse, and that other races should not intermarry with them (s.v. *Cain, Egyptus, Ham, Caste System*).

⁴⁰ Statement on Race and the Priesthood, online at <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>.

than spin.”⁴¹ Bergera’s assessment could be applied to the statement on Race and the Priesthood from which I quoted above.

The expose approach also fails to reckon with the fact that there have always been black Mormons who have been able to reconcile their faith with the priesthood ban and, prior to 1978, explanations justifying it. The ways in which black Mormons in the United States negotiated their identity prior to 1978 makes for a fascinating study. Here I will simply report three findings from Jessie L. Embry’s research.⁴²

- 1) They had a high level of tolerance of ambiguity, manifest as a willingness to suspend demands for explanation on racial matters.
- 2) They placed an emphasis on meeting spiritual needs, rather than social needs, through engagement with Mormonism.
- 3) They had a sense of personal peace that, however phrased, derives from faith that God has guided them to Mormonism and approves their individual choice to remain Mormon. This final reason is by far the most important.

If black Mormons in America who lived while the priesthood policy was in place could maintain their faith, black Mormons in Africa who have never lived under that policy will readily find ways to reconcile their faith with the Church’s record. Those who wish to give African Mormons reason to reconsider their faith in favor of orthodox forms of Christianity would do well to focus on issues other than (or at least in addition to) the LDS Church’s record on race. They should be mindful of the fact that many Christian denominations also have a poor record in this area. The key to reaching Mormons in Africa is clear, loving, consistent Biblical teaching that will graciously but boldly challenge false teaching and by the grace of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, draw many to Christ.

⁴¹ G.J. Bergera, “Smith polygamy essays commendable, but still not the full story,” op-ed, *Salt Lake Tribune* 2 Nov. 2014. Online: <http://www.sltrib.com/opinion/1764594-155/essays-church-smith-polygamy-plural-mormon>.

⁴² J.L. Embry, “Spanning the Priesthood Revelation (1978): Two Multigenerational Case Studies,” in *Black and Mormon*, ed. N.G. Bringham and D.T. Smith (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 63.

Chart: Mormonism in Africa (2014)

Country	Establishment ¹	Members	Congregations	Missions	Family History Centers	Temples ³
Angola	1985	1,436	8	1		
Benin	1998	1,439	11	1	1	
Botswana	1990	3,021	8	1	2	
Cameroon	1993	1,359	6			
Cape Verde	1988	10,796	31	1	2	
Central African Republic	1991	187	1			
Cote d'Ivoire	1988	22,576	72	2	9	
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1986	37,909	130	2	11	(1)
Ethiopia	1992	1,807	6		1	
Ghana	1978 ²	57,748	168	4	34	1
Kenya	1980	12,184	41	1	2	
Lesotho	1988	838	2		1	
Liberia	1987	8,081	22	1	2	
Madagascar	1989	9,826	38	1	1	
Malawi	1992	1,653	8			
Mauritius	1982	442	2			
Mozambique	1999	6,900	20	1	2	
Namibia	1972	775	2		1	
Nigeria	1978 ²	118,139	378	5	45	1
Republic of the Congo	1991	5,787	16	1	2	
Reunion	1979	903	4		2	
Rwanda	NA	221	3			
Sierra Leone	1988	13,078	30	1	2	
South Africa	1853	59,385	154	3	61	1 (+1)
Swaziland	1985	1,693	4		2	
Tanzania	1992	1,263	6		1	
Togo	1997	2,307	12		1	
Uganda	1990	12,380	26	1	2	
Zambia	1992	2,758	12	1	2	
Zimbabwe	1930s	25,001	60	1	4	
TOTAL		421,892	1,281	29	193	3 (+2)

Data Source: <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/> (Oct. 2, 2014)

¹ The date of establishment is the year in which fulltime LDS missionaries arrived in the country or a local congregation was established.

² Beginning in the 1950s, locals in Nigeria and Ghana founded numerous unofficial Mormon churches whose members were not incorporated into the Church until 1978.

³ Active temples: Johannesburg, RSA (1985); Accra, Ghana (2004); Aba, Nigeria (2005). Announced for construction: Kinshasa, DRC and Durban, RSA.

Literacy Issues and Plagiarism in Theological Education

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The following article was first prepared as a seminar and was presented by my husband, Dr. Jack Whytock, and I at the Mukhanyo Theological College Curriculum Consultation held in Pretoria, South Africa in November 2013. The content of this seminar was first motivated by conversations we have had with each other and with colleagues in various theological colleges over many years and as a result I was driven to research. In my own role as an English teacher, I have felt particularly privileged to discuss language challenges with many students and have benefited greatly from their openness and insights. The following paper includes most of the material presented at the seminar along with some additional suggestions for improving academic literacy. The bibliography at the end is not exhaustive but includes materials that I have found particularly helpful both as an English teacher and librarian.¹

Introduction

Anyone who is involved in higher education for any length of time will no doubt be able to attest to encountering the issue of plagiarism in some way or other. Sadly, Christian institutions are not immune. Plagiarism is not a positive word. It is associated with academic stealing, with using the work of another without properly acknowledging indebtedness.

It is difficult to get any statistics to demonstrate the apparent global rise of plagiarism. "It is clear, though, that plagiarism is not rare. In a UK study of students' self-reported behaviour, a majority of students were found to have

¹ Thanks to Dr. Rick Ball for his insights and also to Dr. Wm. Badke for providing such a succinct and helpful definition of information literacy.

engaged in acts which were equated with plagiarism” (Pecorari, 2013, 24). If students are actually reporting that according to the standards of their institution they are plagiarizing, then there can be little doubt that such activity is a **moral** issue.

However, the issue of plagiarism is not always so neatly defined or discerned. What one professor or institution considers plagiarism is not necessarily identical to the judgment of another. Such variations in understanding and policy may reveal **pedagogical** or **cultural** issues which greatly add to the complexity of this subject. Likewise, because students, professors and theological institutions may be confused as to the real nature of plagiarism, they may struggle to satisfy or support competing definitions of it simultaneously.

This complexity regarding plagiarism has been further complicated by the increase of two worldwide phenomena:

1. **Many students of theology are now studying in a language and culture other than their L1 (the mother tongue).** Susan McCulloch (2012, 56) very helpfully points out the unique pedagogical issues of L2 (a language other than the mother tongue) writing in relation to issues of plagiarism. For example, McCulloch shows that L2 students who copy work out of sources may simply be revealing their “lack of linguistic dexterity” and academic development and yet are often accused of academic dishonesty (McCulloch, 2012, 57). She further goes on to do an excellent job of showing that the academic community worldwide is being forced to address this issue of “plagiarism” in a manner that widens the concept beyond the narrow assumptions of dishonest intent and thievery that have traditionally defined it.

AND

2. **The explosion of information access through technology** which has led to a whole new challenge for institutions (not just institutions of theology), professors and students: information literacy. In a keynote address given at the Annual Conference of the Association of Christian Librarians in June, 2013, Dr. Wm. Badke noted, “Study after study finds the same thing that most of us are seeing behind a reference desk: students doing research are lost. They don’t understand the information world in which they are supposed to function and have little experience using libraries. They don’t understand the assignment. They don’t understand what the professor wants from them” (Robinson, 2013, 60). **There may well be glaring pedagogical issues in many of our theological institutions.**

Is plagiarism a Moral Issue? A Pedagogical Issue? A Cultural Issue?

Is plagiarism always the diagnosis or is it sometimes the symptom of dysfunctional educational policies and methods?

In order to “widen the scope” on issues concerning plagiarism, it may be preferable to reword any discussion of this worldwide academic problem into

a more inclusive, constructive framework such as the following: *the necessity and benefits of learning to properly use and document sources for academic writing purposes*.

Regarding the word “necessity”, it is worth noting that conventions concerning source documentation are a relatively recent phenomena following the period of the Enlightenment. For example, Calvin’s *Institutes* originally were without source citation (in-text, footnote, or endnote). Nevertheless, by the late 20th and early 21st centuries, we have arrived at strict academic conventions in formal academic writing.² And yes, this modern necessity and expectation of proper source documentation does have its benefits:

- 1) **Moral integrity** – the modern concept of intellectual property requires us to give the individual “their due”. In our generation, we see copyright and individual ownership of property as paramount. Thus, when we can show honour through proper documentation, it becomes part of our Christian testimony. That is beneficial.
- 2) **Dialogue** – proper documentation allows for greater dialogue between the lecturer/tutor and the student as the professor has a better grasp of what material is influencing students. That is beneficial.
- 3) **Aid to Memory** – proper documentation allows us to return to sources to find ideas, quotations, etc. that we may want to look at again for future study. In an age of massive amounts of information, surely that is beneficial.

The question then arises: What kinds of literacy skills are needed in order to be able to properly use and document sources? The way an institution answers, or does not answer, this question will shape pedagogical policy and ultimately shape in some measure academic progress within the student body.

Defining Literacy and Academic Literacy

1. Literacy

The basic definition of literacy is commonly said to be the ability to decode and encode words on a page. Yet this definition is somewhat simplistic.

There are actually four basic functions or practices that are involved in literacy:

² It is important to note that there is a distinction between “academic” Christian writing and “vocational” Christian writing and oral communication; for example, devotional articles or sermons. This distinction can help to bring clarity to the topic of plagiarism. The concept of honour applies in both spheres but the manner by which honour is given will vary. More discussion and writing needs to take place on this distinction. The evaluations and discussions below focus on *academic writing* and are meant to be directed toward students, professors and institutions in higher learning, colleges and universities, with specific reference to the development of academic writing/literacy.

- 1) Breaking the code of texts – phonics and grammar.
- 2) Participating in the meaning of the text.
- 3) Using the text functionally by knowing and acting on the different social, cultural, religious functions that texts perform and using these to derive deeper meaning and understanding.
- 4) Critically analyzing the text and placing it within the framework of other ideas and concepts

Even at this very basic level, institutions should be aware that students may appear to function well in reading and writing by demonstrating competency in 1. and 2. above, yet their ability to use the text functionally and analytically may be very limited. Obviously then, the student's lack of advanced literacy becomes a major stumbling block to success in higher education. This limitation seriously affects the next level of literacy, that is, academic literacy.

2. Academic Literacy

Academic literacy refers to the literary practices or competencies that allow people to succeed in academic work in schools and universities.

One of the most helpful descriptions of academic literacy comes from a report prepared by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates based in California, USA. The report focuses on the four main areas of language competency: **reading and writing**, **listening and speaking**, but also includes two very interesting categories: **habits of mind** and **technology use** (Warschauer, 2002, 3). A fifth area, information literacy, has been added by the present author.

1. Reading and Writing

There is a range of skills here from very basic (eg. retaining information or identifying main ideas) to more complex (eg. understanding the rules of various genres of writing, anticipating where arguments or narratives are heading, and properly documenting research materials). NOTE: properly documenting research materials (avoiding plagiarism) is reported by the California study to be in the more complex range of reading and writing skills (Warschauer, 2002, 2).

2. Listening and Speaking

These skills range from fairly basic competencies (eg. recognizing digressions and illustrations) to more complex skills (eg. interrogating diverse views or recognizing the spoken form of vocabulary previously encountered only in written form).

3. Habits of the Mind

Skills related to habits of mind are listed first in the California Report and include “the ability to sustain and express intellectual curiosity, experiment with new ideas, exercise persistence in pursuing difficult tasks, and respect principles as well as experiences” (Warschauer, 2002, 3).

4. Technology Use

The fourth aspect of academic literacy is the realm of technology. This includes such tasks as using search engines effectively and consulting experts via email. In the case of online learning, it includes the ability to use programmes such as *Moodle* or *Angel* in order to participate in a cohort or engage in a virtual classroom setting.

5. Information Literacy

Dr. William Badke (Robinson, 2013, 62) suggests that this fifth aspect of academic literacy can be broken down into five elements that must be encouraged and developed if students are to be successful in higher education.

a.) Students need “a substantial understanding of the current information landscape” (Robinson, 2013, 62). Even such basic understanding as the difference between an article and a journal must be taught.

b.) Students must “understand the purpose of research and have the skills to design it well” (Robinson, 2013, 62). This includes teaching the concept of solving a problem through research.

c.) Students need to “know how to move beyond Google thinking in information acquisition” (Robinson, 2013, 63). Many students are now under the impression that everything there is to know can be found on Google. Institutions must provide training in library catalogue searches and alternative data bases that often contain higher quality research materials.

d.) Students need help “to develop solid skills in evaluation information” (Robinson, 2013, 63). This takes time and help from professors and librarians alike.

e.) Students need to be called “to join the academy as participants” (Robinson, 2013, 63). This means students should not be left with the idea that they are to learn about the professor’s subject. In some way, through a process of mentoring, the student should be encouraged to “own” the subject and participate as an “insider” or “player” in the field, not an “outsider” or “spectator”. This point relates well to the concept of habits of the mind found above.

Obviously, developing literacy, and academic literacy in particular, involves the active participation of institutions, professors and students as well as their purposeful commitment to the above incremental and long-range goals. Hence, ideally any discussion of plagiarism should be integrated with a discussion on literacy issues in order to avoid treating the symptoms without properly diagnosing the illness. With this in mind, the following charts are provided as guidelines for discussion and evaluation.

Exploring Student Issues

Pedagogical

- Students may have varying levels of educational background and may have large gaps in some areas. For example, essay writing, critical thinking skills, and even “general knowledge”.
- Students may lack a pedagogical framework that appreciates the structure of formal theological education and the necessity of building from the “bottom up”.
- Students may be at the very basic end of “academic literacy” yet will be enrolled in courses that will require a much more advanced literacy level.

Moral

- There can be no debate that student moral issues (failing to honour, failing to respecting ownership and failing to tell the truth) contribute to a percentage of the problem of not properly using and documenting sources.
- There may be a lack of understanding or conviction of the seriousness of these moral offences.
- Temptation may be overwhelming (not meaning the behaviour is acceptable) especially for students who are struggling to keep up.
- The fear of failure and of losing financial sponsorship may be greater than the fear of willfully engaging in plagiarism.

Cultural/Contextual

- All over the world, many theology students are studying in a language other than their L1.
- Many students speak several languages and are therefore much more gifted in listening and speaking (skills that will probably be used more in future ministry) than in reading and writing.
- Some students come from an L1 that does not have a large corpus of literary material – studies have proven that this strongly affects literacy gains in a second language.
- Some students are considerably behind in terms of technology skills simply because they have not had access to and training in technology for as long as their fellow students.

Exploring Faculty Issues

Pedagogical

- Due to budget constraints or other factors, professors may be required to teach courses “out-of-order” at which point prerequisites are not fulfilled and teaching becomes less effective and frustrating to all concerned.
- Professors may be “too specialized” and may not see their place in “the whole” in terms of the overall flow of the theological education curriculum within a programme.
- Many professors have not received any in-service training to assist them in meeting the growing pedagogical challenges faced through technology, L2 learning and the globalization of education.

Moral

- Faculty members may fail to advocate for pedagogical reform even when patterns of incompetency are evident and identified. Thus students may consistently be in a position of temptation due to inappropriate pedagogical standards or methods whereby faculty are teaching “over-the-heads” of the students.
- Educators lose sight of the first principle of excellence in teaching: meet the student(s) where they are and take them a little farther. (Consider Christ’s example.) As a result, students may become exasperated.

Cultural/Contextual

- In some areas of the world, a very high percentage of professors at theological institutions are from a foreign country. This can make it difficult for such professors to appreciate the educational differences of their home culture versus their present culture. For example, standards for receiving Grade 12/Matric Certificates vary greatly.
- Ex-pat professors often do not speak the L1 of their students. The onus is almost always on the students to accommodate the L1 of the professor (this must be acknowledged and appreciated).
- Examples, illustrations, even humour can sometimes seriously challenge the student as the professor may be speaking from a totally different cultural context.

Exploring Institutional Issues

Pedagogical

- Theological institutions may lack the services of an academic dean/curriculum council who will seek to ensure that the programmes incrementally address the needs of the students from the time of admittance to the time of graduation.
- Similarly, theological institutions may respond to one area of need (for example, skills based courses) without deliberately integrating the use of such skills in the overall curriculum.
- Theological institutions may feel pressure to perform at a certain academic level in order to participate in the globally-growing “obsession” with degrees. This can potentially weaken the actual educational effectiveness of the college while appearing to strengthen it.

Moral

- Institutional standards may be inconsistently applied which may leave students with the impression that adherence to policies is optional.
- Finances or institutional ambition may interfere with proper goals. For example, the underlying motives for admitting students (to increase college finances, to increase student numbers, etc.) may overrule fair judgment as to whether the student would/could actually benefit from being admitted.
- Theological institutions may enter into academic partnerships for reasons of prestige or academic snobbery that may fail to protect the student body from unrealistic academic expectations.

Cultural/Contextual

- Many theological colleges in the developing world receive funding from the international community – “money” talks and decisions may be made to please donors rather than in the best interests of the students and the college.
- Beyond funding, many theological institutions receive other types of donations from the international community (eg. books) and struggle to bridge the gap between being thankful and finding practical uses for such material versus the actual needs of the students.
- Many theological colleges are on a “subsistence budget” and are not able to respond properly to student needs because of financial constraints including lack of personnel.
- Many theological colleges do not have the IT support (personnel or equipment or both) to implement advanced technology in the classroom.

Practical Suggestions for Improving Academic Literacy³

The Student

Reading:

- Recognize that developing reading skills are vital to academic success.
- Set aside regular time (a daily amount of time) to read in a quiet environment.
- Try to slowly increase the amount of time you are able concentrate on silent reading (eg. add five minutes per month to your daily schedule until you reach your goal).
- Report to your professor if you are not coping well with assigned readings.
- Make notes as you read in order to keep your mind focused.
- Try to also read about your subject in your L1, if possible.
- Discuss what you are reading with fellow classmates.
- Read material outside of your assigned readings for courses.
- Read as much as you can (newspaper, stories, etc.) in your L1, not just in English.

Writing:

- Write down ideas (in English or in your L1) before you begin to write a report or essay.
- Organize your ideas so that they follow a particular order.
- Write notes when you hear preaching – a great way to get better at note-taking.
- Write a diary.
- Keep a small book with you – when you hear or read a new word, write it down and look it up – there are excellent on-line dictionaries as well as traditional print dictionaries.
- Take a computer course and start to make use of all of the writing help provided in software programs such as Microsoft Word.
- Write emails to friends and family to practice more writing.
- Start a blog and post your ideas in your L1 or English or both.
- Meditate on a passage of scripture and try to write it into a paraphrase.

³ Over the past several years, I have tried to record suggestions. The following lists, though still works in progress, are provided as possible starting points for discussion.

Listening:

- Inform your professor if you find he is speaking too quickly.
- Listen to podcasts or radio and then try to tell someone about what you heard.
- Make notes as you listen to improve your concentration.
- Look for pointing gestures and other visual clues from your professor that will help with the meaning.
- Ask your institution to create a listening library and be sure to make use of it.

Speaking:

- When speaking publically, prepare notes so that you can be more confident and deliberate in your speech.
- Practice reading the English Bible out loud – use Bible Gateway online to help.
- Use English in conversation whenever possible.
- Repeat what others have said in order to add new words to your vocabulary.

The Professor**Reading:**

- Remember that the features that make a text attractive to a professor may not necessarily make the book more comprehensible for the student – when possible, solicit the advice of a language teacher and/or colleagues who speak the L1 of the students in deciding on reading material.
- Eliminate all nonessential pages and reading assignments.
- Provide a vocabulary list with definitions that will make the reading more comprehensible.
- Assign study questions to guide students rather than giving vague directions such as “summarize the reading”.
- When considering the amount of reading, remember that it generally takes at least twice the time for ESL students to read and comprehend text as compared to native speakers/readers of English.
- When setting the number of required sources for an essay, consider that fewer sources properly used are far superior to many sources improperly handled.
- If possible, extend class hours and work together as a class in the library/classroom as professor circulates to assist.
- Incorporate readings in the L1 if possible.

- Actively encourage students to read in their L1 – the Bible, newspapers, online resources, magazines, novels, etc.

Writing:

- Do not expect ESL students to write like native English-speaking students.
- Focus your evaluation on content and organization.
- Keep grammatical corrections to a bare minimum – eg. subject/verb agreement or correct word order.
- Endeavour to be consistent in your writing expectations by providing clear guidelines for the various types of writing you will be expecting: book reports, annotated bibliographies, research paper, journal of readings, etc.
- Communicate with the college librarian and solicit their help in assisting students with reading/writing assignments.
- Try to think of writing errors in a similar manner that you would think of a foreign accent, only in writing instead of speech.
- At college entry-level (and whenever deemed appropriate), give shorter writing assignments and more of them so that the overall amount of work is the same, but the work is broken down into manageable portions. Have students then put these portions together to see how they can follow this model to produce larger written assignments in the future.

Listening Comprehension:

- Make a conscious effort to speak at a reasonable rate.
- Write key terms on the board (chalkboard, whiteboard, smart board), spell out new meanings and explain their meaning.
- Use visual aids to enhance oral presentations – emphasis on “enhance”.
- Distribute copies of lecture outlines ONLY – dense text is confusing – prepare hand-outs with careful attention to layout and readability (including font size).
- During lectures and course discussion, periodically summarize what has been covered so far in class.
- Encourage students to assist each other (partner together) in note-taking.
- When asking questions, provide plenty of time for students to consider the question and provide an answer – repeat the question at least once.
- If you use an idiom or make a joke and realize students do not under-

stand, explain it if time permits. Keep the use of idiom and jokes to a minimum because of the fact that they are generally culturally bound and do not translate well into other cultures.

- Use online technology such as *Voice Thread* and *The Spoken Test Language Lab* to upload or record your own listening material for students.

Speaking:

- For discussion purposes, break the students into smaller groups to facilitate increased participation and reduce anxiety.
- When you do not understand a student question, be careful to ask students to repeat the question in a manner that does not discourage them from asking questions in the future.
- If the technology is available, start an audio blog for your students so that prior to a class discussion students can listen to each other's opinions and familiarize themselves with the arguments (*Voxopop* would be great for this as you can upload photos, articles or audio clips for the "group" to consider).
- When listening to student presentations, have students provide an outline in order to facilitate listener comprehension.
- Use speaking assignments as training ground for writing assignments – integrate listening/speaking and reading/writing skills.
- Similarly, use oral assignments/discussion before and after reading assignments to see if students are able to interact with the readings – this will improve critical thinking skills.
- Use opportunities for casual conversation (before class begins, after class, during college tea breaks and meals) to familiarize yourself with student accents in order to increase your comprehension of student speaking.
- Do not assume that because students can speak to you in English socially they are fully bilingual and can handle academic English.

Assessment:

- Be aware that the speed and accuracy with which students can interpret the exam or test questions will be a major factor in their success during assessments – allow extra time when possible to compensate.
- Endeavour to make questions as unambiguous as possible – consider having colleagues read through assessment materials and provide feedback.
- Pay attention to assessment areas where all or most of the students fail – use this feedback to evaluate the root cause – lack of preparation, lack of clarity in the question, etc.

- Consider the modes of assessment for assignments, tests and exams and use a variety of assessment tools that incorporate all aspects of language – reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The Institution

Reading:

- Carefully select and evaluate new library materials with ESL students in mind in order to better direct various students to appropriate reading levels.
- Endeavour to collect relevant reading material in as many of the student L1s as possible.
- Keep bilingual dictionaries in the reference section – be aware of online resources for students in this regard.
- Provide library support by assisting students to find appropriate materials.
- Provide students with helpful on-line reading lists – eg. filter massive data bases for material that is pitched at the educational level of the students within your own institution.
- Provide courses in library skills and computer skills in order to enhance research/reading capabilities.
- Provide a library environment that is conducive to reading: quiet, clean, organized, comfortable, convenient, and dependable (hours).
- Model reading through having professors regularly working in the library.
- Provide a form for students to make requests for new books, e-books, e-journals, etc.
- Ask incoming students to complete a questionnaire on their present reading habits – in their L1 as well as in English.

Writing:

- Develop academic writing policies as an entire faculty in order to maintain consistency – eg. use same referencing style (MLA, APA, etc.).
- Create a writing clinic/centre that provides one-on-one remedial help for students.
- Conduct a series of seminars that deal with student moral, pedagogical and cultural issues concerning properly using and documenting sources. Ask students to fill out a survey to provide feedback on whether or not these seminars were helpful – measure this feedback

against actual results.

- Select one or two senior students to run a student newspaper (can be a print copy or an e-copy) to encourage student writing.
- Solicit the help of students in translating English material into their L1 – should be reasonably short – pamphlet-style.
- Partner students with native-English speaking students in an on-line discussion forum – could be a partnership between two theological colleges.

Listening:

- Offer a list of on-line audio materials (podcasts, YouTube materials, etc.) to encourage students to listen to English as much as possible. Divide the resources according to the course catalogue so that students can use the materials as a supplement to their course studies.
- Offer a list of resources that provide audio lessons along with a transcription to enable students to follow the text while listening (BBC ESL website does this with current events).
- Provide a select list of metrical Christian music that can be accessed on-line (along with written lyrics). The slower sounds of singing can greatly enhance comprehension and the metre enhances memorization of content (numerous free websites for this – google “Christian music with lyrics”).

Speaking:

- Implement a chapel mentorship programme whereby all divinity students are mentored in the public reading of scripture, public prayers, leading in song, and preaching.
- Identify a few able musicians and ask them to form a college choir – singing is a wonderful handmaid to speaking and is particularly useful for improving pronunciation.
- Invite students to represent the college in giving college presentations at English-speaking churches and schools.

Assessment:

- Develop/use proper assessment tools for incoming students to determine actual literacy/academic literacy level – some are available on-line.
- Consider the place of oral examinations in the overall curriculum and implement this form of assessment as a vital component of accurate student assessments.
- Use assessments to not only gauge student achievement but to provide important information on areas for improvement in the college curriculum as well as faculty approaches to teaching.

- Regularly evaluate the overall use of technology at the institution – is it being used to its full potential to ensure academic literacy is advancing in a globally high tech world?

General Institutional Policies:

- Develop a policy statement that outlines how the institution will deal with offers of donations, staffing, materials, etc. from the international community – begin the policy with a statement of institutional goals and objectives – measure all further policies against these.
- Encourage professors to make use of professional skills of the librarian in teaching information literacy.
- Whenever and wherever possible, hire professors who speak the L1 of the majority of students and if admissible, offer at least some of the teaching in that language.
- Provide in-service training for all faculty members that offers practical discussion on teaching L2 students in a higher educational setting. Focus discussions on the use of sources and strategies for effectively using reading material with L2 learners.
- Ensure that a person/committee is in place to evaluate the overall student body versus the curriculum and assess if the college standards are realistic, clear and unified given the needs/educational background of the student body.

Conclusion⁴

Both the increase of technology use in education and the rapid growth of students studying in a language that is not their mother tongue have changed the way we can and should approach theological education around the world. A discussion of plagiarism often leads to a discussion on these two factors and this is positive. Actual lying, stealing, and failing to honour will always be part of the academic dilemma and discipline of a college, even a theological college. It is part of the reality of living in a fallen world. However, where students, professors, and institutions can band together to support each other in the pursuit of righteous academic development to the glory of God, there will at least be one practical response to the biblical exhortation, “... let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good

⁴ Please note: Beyond listening, speaking, reading and writing, academic literacy also includes technology use, information literacy and habits of mind. Suggestions for improving these literary elements are consciously imbedded in the above suggestions. Website addresses mentioned above are available upon request. Contact Mrs. Nancy Whytock: nancywhytock@gmail.com.

deeds” (Hebrews 10:24). May theological colleges worldwide set an example of excellence in education before a watching academic world.

Appendix

Review of a Recent Work on Plagiarism

***Teaching to Avoid Plagiarism: How to promote good source use* by Diane Pecorari. Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press, 2013, paper, 192 pp. ISBN 978-0-33-524593-2**

The title of Diane Pecorari’s book, *Teaching to Avoid Plagiarism: How to promote good source use*, provides a helpful summary of the author’s intent and tone for this important contribution to the international issue of academic writing and plagiarism. Those involved in higher education will recognise immediately that Pecorari, Professor of English Linguistics at Linnaeus University, Sweden, intends to focus on understanding and prevention versus detection and punishment.

The book is divided into three main parts: understanding plagiarism, managing plagiarism, and contextualizing plagiarism. In part one (containing three chapters) the author begins by showing just how difficult it is to define plagiarism and how this lack of consensus on definition can and does contribute to the issue in a significant way. Consequently, Pecorari goes on to discuss the statistics concerning plagiarism and writes, “it is clear that identifying plagiarism is a problematic, contentious and sometimes haphazard affair, so it is not surprising that pinning down the frequency of plagiarism is very difficult, and figures and estimates diverge considerably. What is clear, though, is that plagiarism is not rare” (pp. 23-24). This begs the question: Why does plagiarism happen? Pecorari further develops our understanding of plagiarism by addressing this question. She looks at two different kinds of answers: “the reasons which impel students to cheat, and the reasons they feel they can justify or excuse cheating” (p. 29).

Part two (containing three chapters), managing plagiarism, provides specific guidelines for writers, teachers and institutions that Pecorari hopes will be implemented in an attempt to reduce plagiarism. This three-fold approach is very welcomed as the author clearly recognises that avoiding plagiarism in academic writing requires the student, the teacher and the institution involved to evaluate what changes are needed in order to produce the best possible outcomes in academic writing. “The most desirable outcome for a policy on plagiarism is that it is so effective in providing both a carrot and a stick, telling students what they will gain by not plagiarising and what they will lose if they do, that students never consider plagiarism” (p. 97).

The third and final section of this book (containing four chapters) is predictable and necessary, contextualizing plagiarism. Here Pecorari discusses a

host of subjects that reveal some of the greatest challenges to academic writing today: international students, second-language writers, policy differences across academic subjects, diversity of academic backgrounds, and the attitudes of millennials. For example, the author notes concerning students who are allowed university entrance but are poorly prepared: “The risk for students from backgrounds where academic literacy was not emphasised is that they may arrive at university less prepared to manage a heavy reading load, find information in the library, and accommodate to the demands of academic writing (p. 135).” Her comments on millennials are insightful, “For this generation, relating texts to each other in the way that academic writing traditionally prizes and requires is an alien and mysterious activity” (p. 138). This third section is definitely helpful for anyone who is facing the issue of plagiarism and is trying to untangle the various roots of its existence.¹ However, there is no evidence that Pecorari is writing as a Christian, so the matter of institutions, professors or students missing the mark concerning loving our neighbour as ourselves, as it applies to higher education in general and academic writing in particular, is never discussed. Theological institutions will certainly want to explore this root as they grapple with academic writing issues.

The book has a very logical layout and at the close of each chapter there is a suggested “activity” and then “Questions for reflection or discussion”. The activities are meant to be used to apply each chapter’s subject matter to the context of the reader and most involve some sort of informal research. Both the activities and the questions would make for effective faculty in-service training and development on this subject at Bible colleges and theological institutions worldwide. As Pecorari wisely notes, “Plagiarism is a complex phenomenon and an understanding of its complexities is a precondition for being able to respond to it effectively” (p. 1).

Reviewed by Nancy Whytock

¹ In discussing these roots, Pecorari never dismisses the fact that actual plagiarism should be punished. This is a welcome contrast to Angelil-Carter’s work, *Stolen Language*, which leaves the reader feeling that the author finds plagiarism to be a necessary and unavoidable outcome of the developing writer.

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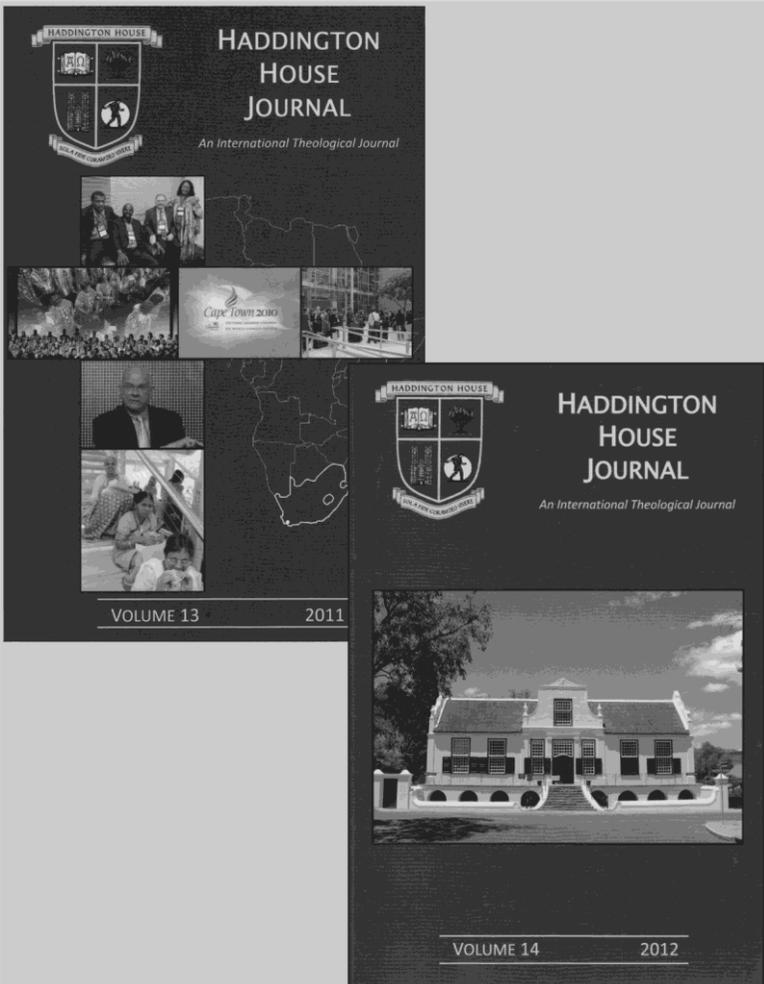
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