

# HADDINGTON HOUSE JOURNAL

• AN INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL PUBLICATION •

Photo was taken  
at the World Reformed  
Fellowship General Assembly  
meetings in August, 2019  
in Indonesia



HADDINGTON  
HOUSE

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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.
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## Editor's Preface

Welcome to our combined 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> volumes. This double volume is produced in part to allow us to recapture our normal schedule for publications. Having moved on from the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, as highlighted in the last couple of volumes, this current combined volume is a little more eclectic. For example, we begin with something a little different – an interview – between Mary Davis, a Christian journalist, and Ranald Macaulay who lives near Cambridge, England. I would encourage you to take time to read it all. If you are not familiar with Ranald Macaulay, this will be a good way to get to know something about him. Then proceed to read two thought-provoking and stimulating articles of his in this volume – *Rescuing Darwin or Wrecking The Faith* and “*Being (even more) Human*”.

After the Macaulay interview is an article by John Koning of South Africa. John has written several times for us. He recently completed his PhD thesis and then wrote some reflections on this endeavor. Since many students read this journal, I think it is good to include John's personal testimony, especially for those working towards advanced degrees in theology.

Traditionally we also include a sermon. This year we have included a very old sermon – one which was preached 250 years ago at the first ordination of an evangelical Presbyterian minister in what is now Canada. The strength of this sermon is the clear Biblical teaching on the need for a converted ministry.

Moving on with our combined volume, you will find selections from seminars presented at the August, 2019 General Assembly of the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) in Jakarta, Indonesia. One is a synopsis of a seminar on the “Prosperity” Gospel and the other, a two-part seminar by Pierre Berthoud and Andrew McGowan, examines Europe and the current state of evangelicalism. As a token of remembrance of this very special assembly, the cover photo of our 2019-2020 volume is a picture from that event. To learn more, you can go to the WRF website, [wrfnet.org](http://wrfnet.org). The new Statement of Reformed Theological Identity which was adopted in August, 2019 has also been reprinted here to allow more to become informed about this document.

Readers should read this Statement of Identity along with the 2010 WRF Statement of Faith (available on the WRF website).

Since it is difficult to find English materials related to the French Huguenots and French evangelical history in Canada, I was particularly delighted to find an old article on the Huguenots in Canada when I was trying to do some background reading on the subject. It was written by a very colourful Canadian Professor, John Campbell. Also, one of our book reviews highlights the Huguenots (see the Historical Theology section and the review of Working's book).

Once again many book reviews and book briefs (over 40) have been included. These cover a wide range of current books, and I encourage you to read what others are saying about some of the recent publications within the four areas of theology: biblical, systematic, historical, and practical.

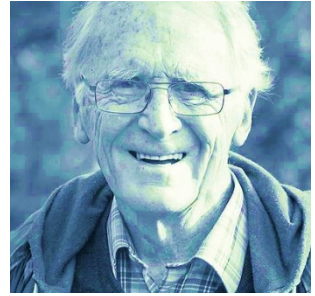
We want the *Haddington House Journal* to be a helpful resource for students and also lecturers. Dave Eby of Africa Reformation Theological Seminary, Uganda has produced a catechism on preaching (for his Preaching One course) which is included in this volume. It is a fine pedagogical tool for teaching on preaching. We believe that students and lecturers alike will find this most helpful. Dave has also produced a second such catechism and we hope to include that in the 2021 volume. Also, Steve Curtis has provided us with a most helpful article on the Fall. I think many students and lecturers around the world will find this essay helpful.

Other article writers this year include Manfred Kohl. His topic is the resurrection of Jesus Christ – some good sermon material here. Another new writer in this volume is Christo Heiberg and we welcome his contribution. Finally, we have two articles (by Andrew Okuch Ojullo and Cameron Fraser) that speak to us about African Presbyterian missions and church history. These articles are an introduction to a three-year writing project that we are embarking upon at Haddington House Trust. Please see the news report about this exciting project at the end of this journal.

Again, I want to say a word of thanks to all those who have contributed to this combined volume by writing. We appreciate your contributions and know that you will provoke us to ongoing study and reflection.

Jack C Whytock,  
Editor  
jcwhytock@gmail.com





## Evangelicalism In Crisis, Part One

**Mary Davis interviews Ranald Macaulay\* for Evangelicals Now (en)**

**June 2018**

*\*Ranald Macaulay studied Law at Cambridge University. While there, he met Francis and Edith Schaeffer who had recently started the L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland. Ranald worked with them for four years – and married their daughter, Susan. Soon after completing a theology degree at Kings' College, London, Ranald and Susan and their family established a L'Abri community in the UK. During that time, he was involved in planting two churches. After many years, Ranald and Susan moved to Cambridge where he ran Christian Heritage. Ranald and Susan have six children and 11 grandchildren. Ranald is the co-author of Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience (IVP, 1978; republished Solway, 1996 and Inter-Varsity 1998).*

*Mary Davis is a wife, mom, member of St. Nicholas Church, Tooting, and a freelance editor.*

NOTE – extensive quotations have been included subsequent to publication in EN and appear as footnotes in this interview here in the Haddington House Journal.

**en: What are you reading?**

**RM:** I've just finished *Theistic Evolution* edited by JP Moreland, Stephen Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann Gauger and Wayne Grudem. And I'm also studying the Middle Ages.

**en: Francis Schaeffer had a huge influence on you – which of his books is a 'must read'?**

**RM:** I would go for *How Should We Then Live?*

**en:** Which of today's authors write with particular clarity?

**RM:** Nancy R. Pearcey is a 'big picture' thinker and very helpful. Her new book *'Love Thy Body'* addresses important current issues. John Lennox, too, is always worth reading.

**en:** Which biblical doctrine do you find yourself mulling over in your mind?

**RM:** At the moment, creation. It's big for me right now and, in my view, central for this age in the church's history.

**en:** What is it about heaven that you are most looking forward to?

**RM:** I learn hymns because I find them so helpful. There's a verse in George Matheson's 'O Love That Will Not Let Me Go' which puts it well: *'O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be.'*

**en:** You are on record as being concerned about the state of evangelicalism today. Why is that?

**RM:** The church is at a critical point in history. The entire culture is racing down a dangerous track: it doesn't believe that God exists; Jesus is totally irrelevant, just a story from first century Palestine. I sometimes call this the 'plausibility problem' – the message of Christianity just doesn't seem plausible to our culture.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, we've got technology developing at a million miles a minute. That accelerates the effect of the 'plausibility problem' quite remarkably.

What creates the seriousness of the situation we're facing is the 'double whammy' of those two things: the perceived implausibility of Christianity and the impact of technology. An example of the accelerating effect of technology is David Attenborough's revelation in Planet Earth II that plastics are destroying our oceans. This is one of countless ways in which technology has transformed the world. And it's happened with such speed. Add to that the effects of television, the Internet, phones, social media and so on.

I think that's the essence of the problem. What we've got on our hands is probably the most serious shift in the history of the human race ever. The changes that have taken place intellectually and practically are seismic.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Cunningham 'Winning Hearts and Minds...' in 'Serving the Church...' 2017 "...The average person in the UK not only regards Christianity as outmoded and unscientific but also as something that is deeply regressive and intolerant in its absolute truth claims...'

Western civilisation sees reality now in a completely different way, no longer as a ‘creation’ but as a mechanical thing. Technology aggravates this to the power of 100. This is what makes post-modernism so powerful. Despite the fact that it lacks any sort of intellectual coherence the mood of the post-modern age – its atmosphere, concerns and speed of change – is very, very powerful. And the direction it’s going in is toxic for the whole planet. Even secular writers are worried. Take Douglas Murray, author of *The Strange Death of Europe*, or people like Roger Scruton, or Melanie Phillips (who has just given a speech out in Israel). They’re deeply alarmed at where we’re heading. It’s very serious.

And, here’s the point: the church doesn’t seem to me to be engaged with this very much. It’s carrying on as if nothing’s changed. Most evangelicals seem to be burying their heads in the sand. Of course, there are notable exceptions, but these are mostly found amongst parachurch organisations. By and large the churches themselves seem to be unaware of the gravity of the situation. That’s why I’m so troubled.

**en: Can you give me an example of why you feel that the churches are failing to engage with the problem?**

**RM:** Well, one of my phrases – and I admit it’s a bit provocative – is that *‘the pulpit is the culprit’*. I’m not suggesting for a moment that preaching isn’t absolutely central. The Word of God must be proclaimed and explained; God’s revealed truth *has* to be communicated verbally. Without it, the church dies. Of course.

But here’s the point: for all our emphasis on ‘expository preaching’ and ‘gospel churches’ I think we’ve succumbed to what I call *sola scriptura in vacuo*. In other words, this emphasis on preaching, while necessary and good, is being undermined by the fact that our preachers aren’t actually addressing the situation our culture is in – especially things like the plausibility problem. An excellent treatment of this and related issues can be found in *Serving the Church, Reaching the World* (edited by Richard Cunningham in honour of Don Carson’s 70th birthday). The chapters by Kirsten Birkett,

Stefan Gustavsson, Jim Packer and Richard himself should be required reading in every Evangelical church in the country!<sup>2</sup>

**en: So are you talking about application?**

**RM:** No, it's deeper than application. Paul says, 'Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind'. Of course, the renewing of our minds involves many things, but it certainly isn't just the regurgitating of Scripture texts or explaining biblical doctrines.

It means we're helped to understand the world we're living in on the basis of God's revealed truth. We're helped to address it and challenge it, intellectually as well as practically. By contrast, sola scriptura in vacuo tends to make our preaching formulaic and predictable. Sermons rotate around two or three issues and those in the pews go out none the wiser about how to speak into this crazy new environment we live in.

**en: How do you think we got into that situation?**

**RM:** There's a big history behind that. I trace it back to the German Pietist movement in the 18th century with Jakob Spener and others. They were trying to resist the cold orthodoxy that had crept into the post-Reformation

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* "...Christian parents with children in secondary school are acutely aware that orthodox Christian faith is variously ignored and attacked in both science and humanities lesson, leaving Christian pupils feeling like 'flat-earthers'. How do Christian teenagers survive in this corrosive and toxic atmosphere, in which they are implicated in crimes of homophobia, transphobia and general intolerance simply for believing the Bible?...Is it any wonder that so many Christian young people fall away during their teenage years? **It is patently obvious to them that Christian leaders need either to step up and defend the Bible to a watching world and commend Christianity as true, relevant and beautiful or (if they cannot do this) stop demanding that young people should embrace an outmoded dogma that is increasingly toxic to their friends...**" (pp. 125, 126) "...some evangelical leaders seem to suggest that intentional persuasion betrays a lack of dependence on the power and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, others are concerned that a persuasion that contextualises and draws on reason and evidence (not to mention imagination and human longing) is at odds with a proper confidence in the power of the Bible. These are serious charges and will naturally discourage the wider church from drawing on those resources that will help us to engage with and persuade a hostile, post-Christian society..." (p 129) "...The challenge to the church is a stark one: we must form a Christian mind in our young people so they become confident the orthodox Christian faith is true, relevant and good. If we do not persuade the next generation of the truth, relevance and goodness of the kingdom of God, the secularists can be confident that they will capture that generation's hearts and minds and welcome our children to their secular republic..." (pp. 129, 130).

Lutheran churches and focused on assemblies of piety (*collegia pietatis* they called them). They quite rightly wanted heart-renewal and not just head-knowledge – but they ended up with the heart rather than the head; and the private (that is, my own little world, my church, my community) rather than the public (that is, society at large)<sup>3</sup>. Soon evangelism and legalistic conformity began to fill the screen. Nobody was encouraged to ask: ‘Where is the whole society heading?’ Essentially, the public arena was surrendered to the devil – while the evangelicals absented themselves to concentrate on ‘church activities’.

Too much of that still remains within UK Evangelicalism, though we may deny it. We faithfully believe in and systematically teach the credal truths – but, because of this ‘Pietist hangover’, we do both in abstract.

**en: And is it right that Francis Schaeffer anticipated this?**

**RM:** Schaeffer’s concerns all turned around the issue of Truth: is True-Truth possible in a finite and human existence?

As a consequence of Descartes and others, the Existentialists ended up saying this kind of Truth is impossible. ‘Don’t worry about essence’ they said – just worry about existence’ (by which they meant experience). So, our individual experience is all we’re left with. That’s where we are with Post-Modernism, hence the gender-crisis today.

By contrast, Schaeffer’s great concern was that God’s revealed truth in Scripture is really true – an accurate description of the universe in which we find ourselves. Not ‘spiritual’ or ‘relativist’ or ‘existentialist’ truth.

**en: This is a pretty grim diagnosis. I hope you have got some wisdom for us about how to deal with it...**

**RM:** Yes, it is grim. The question is, is it right? I’m also convinced there are no easy solutions. That doesn’t mean we can’t work for renewal and reformation. I think Schaeffer had helpful insights and, looking back, I’m sad that UK evangelicalism brushed him aside. But nothing is going to be easy for us given our present situation.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* “Tragically, the evangelical church did not seem to have the categories or contact points to engage with and refute some of the false ideas that were sweeping away a generation of young Christian believers...” p. 127.

## The Opportunity of The Crisis, Part Two

**Mary Davis interviews Ranald Macaulay for Evangelicals Now (en)**

**July 2018**

*Last month, Ranald explained his deep concerns about evangelicalism: how Christianity seems totally implausible to our postmodern culture and how post-modernity's effect is hugely accelerated by the Internet, social media and TV.*

**en: I do hope you've got some wisdom in how to deal with this...**

**RM:** There are no easy answers. I do think that Francis Schaeffer saw things clearly. When I first met him, I was thrilled to find that my questions from my atheist background had adequate answers from Scripture. He was committed to what he called 'true truth' – that is, that what God has revealed in the Bible is really true and, on the basis of that, he was able to challenge the false ideas of the non-Christian world-views around us.

He felt that this was a priority for the church, what he called 'the orthodoxy of doctrine'. Truth matters in every age until Christ returns. But all this rested on his idea of 'true spirituality' – 'the moment-by-moment relationship with the living Christ' as he put it, which, when applied to the local church, he called 'the orthodoxy of community'.

**en: What exactly did he mean?**

**RM:** It was his way of balancing the intellectual things of the faith with the lived experience of individual Christians and of the church – the first 'the orthodoxy of doctrine', the second, 'the orthodoxy of community'.

When I arrived at L'Abri in Switzerland in 1959, for example, I was struck by the reality of the community. Here was an ordinary family where people loved each other, but where they were also idiosyncratic and not sinless; where they had fights and had to make up; where the children were included; where there was plenty of creativity going on. It was a lovely, wholesome thing to see. It was also genuinely sacrificial – when you open your home, as the Schaeffers did, there's lots of noise and confusion and difficult people and broken wedding- presents, etc.

Christianity isn't just an intellectual discussion. We have to embody a life that is totally different from the way the world operates, because it's centred on Jesus, on hope, on salvation, on clear ideas of right and wrong, on the Holy Spirit. So, the combination of these two things – the intellectual answers coupled with a living, communal spirituality – was magical to me.



**en: And you think that evangelical churches are missing this?**

**RM:** Not in the sense that everyone’s working away at community earnestly and sincerely. Where we’re slipping up is in our lack of flexibility, especially given the enormity of the changes in society.

Some of that inflexibility comes from a formulaic mind-set that depends too much on strategies, techniques and programmes, just as in the business world. Not that programmes are wrong. But, as I said before, if we train young people to do expository preaching without helping them to understand the larger picture around us, we’re focusing on technique rather than on truth. We’ve elevated the method and neglected the mind. That can’t be right. As a result, preaching tends to become mechanical.

Another example is church planting. Church planting is great: by God’s grace I’ve planted two churches myself. But if there’s a fundamental weakness in church A, then that will inevitably be transferred to church-plant B. Nothing’s changed. We’ve got a technique rolling but not dealt with the problem.

In terms of flexibility, the apostle Paul gives us a different pattern. He was only too aware of what others were thinking – and it shows in his defence before Festus, the Roman governor, or when he challenges the Athenian philosophers. ‘Why on earth would you think that to be true?’ That’s how we should be challenging Naturalism today. Our culture is hooked on what I call ‘the virus of technique’ and I think we’ve got too much of it in the way we do church. Both our teaching and our church programmes tend to be formulaic. They inevitably take us towards legalism – stiff and sterile.

**en: When did Schaeffer start to identify the weakness of the evangelical church?**

**RM:** It grew on him, I think, after he moved to Europe in the late 1940s. He became aware that a lot of his activism was like ‘selling cornflakes’, as he put it. Then he had a simple but profound spiritual renewal around 1953. His book *True Spirituality* came out of that. This is where people misunderstand him. They think he’s just interested in intellectual things when, really, he was a reformer, a prophet. His basic message was ‘We’ve got to recover a New

Testament spirituality, summed up by the twin ‘orthodoxies’ of doctrine and community. (Of course, Edith, his wife, was also fundamental in all this).

**en: So what should we do?**

**RM:** In terms of doctrine, the church needs to have a much clearer ‘educational’ model in mind.

We have educational goals for our children – GCSEs, A levels, university, etc. We know that’s important for them. Similarly, in the church

we should review all our programmes and ask ourselves honestly: are our kids, are all our adults, being helped to understand what's happening around them so that they can begin to confront falsehood?

Why are we suddenly deluged with gender confusion? What about Adam and Eve? Is Darwinian evolution really true scientifically? What about the relativistic ideas being circulated on TV, as in the recent series called *Civilisations*? What about the deconstruction of language? My point is that the cultural shifts require us to bring these educational needs inside the church – to show that only Scripture, centred on Christ, can make sense of all this stuff.

And not only 'make sense' but inspire us to go out and challenge the 'foolishness' of unbelief, as Paul called it, with the gospel of truth (Romans 1.22). We're living in a pagan culture and we must make sure we understand what's happening. Not to be 'intellectuals' – but so we can help our people understand how glorious the truth is in relation to everything that's hitting them in the public arena.

#### **en: And what about the 'orthodoxy of community'?**

**RM:** Well, on the community side, we can all chip in. And we must. There are gifts of all kinds. Paul used the illustration of the body. So, what about those who are musical or artistic? What about those who are passionate about the deprived and needy? Could our evangelical businessmen/women help to expose the neo-Marxist rhetoric behind so much of our political discourse today – just as Jordan Peterson is doing with gender-politics?

I believe people around us are increasingly wistful about the absence of imaginative, creative, caring, environmentally sensitive communities – because they're increasingly rare in today's consumer society. It's a golden opportunity for evangelical churches to demonstrate that this is possible and that it's the norm for Christians in every century.

It isn't going to be big news. It'll involve lots of 'you-in-your-small-corner-and-I-in-mine'. The last thing we need is inflexible models with an emphasis on conformism – like children parading in a crocodile on a school outing. We're set free by Christ to be fully human and to use our different gifts creatively. I could give so many examples of this: Christians setting up really good schools that non-Christians want to go to; Crossway Books producing a first-class Study Bible (ESV) now not only being published in China, but being distributed to thousands of church leaders in the country. There's so much we can do.

But, there are no techniques! L'Abri isn't 'the' answer. And good as they may be, nor is UCCF or *Uncover*, or FIEC, or AMiE, or 'camp', or whatever. It must be a truly deep, spiritual renewing of our minds, with each

of our Christian communities becoming more and more compassionate, creative and imaginative.

I think about the Pilgrims going to America in the 17th century. The situation seemed dire and their lives were tough in the extreme. But look what came out of their faithfulness. Our time is just as exciting. If you want a real Christian life which could, in due course, involve martyrdom – now is the time to be alive. What each of us needs to do in view of the seriousness of our moment in history is to take ourselves off to the Lord saying: ‘Here I am, Lord. Send me!’

*After many years of involvement with the L’Abri Community (founded by Francis Schaeffer), Ranald ran Christian Heritage in Cambridge. He now lives in Hampshire with his wife, Susan.*





## What I Learnt from Completing My PhD

**John Koning\* email: baldy.john1@gmail.com**

*\*Rev. John Koning is the church planter for Grace Bible Church, East London, South Africa and works with Acts 29 and is a tutor for SATS.*

It's done! 6 years of hard slog and graft are complete. I finished writing my PhD. Here are my reflective musings.

Life will now be different - I am not sure exactly how - but I know I will be consuming less coffee and hopefully exercising more.

A bit of context: At 53, I am an older than average student. My masters and PhD topics are areas of investigation that I deem hugely significant and critical for faithful gospel ministry in South Africa<sup>1</sup>. I have found the exercise worthwhile and am overjoyed to see some early fruits of the research.

### **Things in my favour**

As a post-grad student, there are certain things that I count in my favour – I read and assimilate information fairly easily, and even though stopping formal study 25 years ago, I have kept up with my reading programme and dabbled in writing every now and then.

I also like to be 'in my own head' and think about 'things' and ideas and how they relate to other 'things' and the consequences of those 'things.'

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<sup>1</sup> Biblically faithful gospel contextualization in urban South Africa, particularly the use of Tim Keller's model and methodology.

I have a very supportive wife (*who humoured me when I was pre-occupied, discouraged, side-tracked or manically excited*) and I also had the support of an excellent, wise promoter, the co-leaders in our church and an incredibly helpful editor throughout the process.

### **But there were big obstacles**

*I am not big on patience and perseverance.* Sticking to one topic of research for a couple of years goes against all my instincts. My motto is: *'The best task is the one that is already complete.'* The Christian life has been aptly termed *'a long obedience in one direction.'* I have seen that researching and writing a PhD is something similar.

*My track record is not great.* When I did my initial theological training, I did not exactly set the world on fire. I remember feeling devastated when I failed my very first theological exam at the Bible Institute of South Africa. It was on the doctrine of the person and work of Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of 1987. I felt horrible. Gutted. It seemed to indicate that I did not 'get' Jesus Christ and the cross. *What was I even doing at seminary?* I was never anywhere near the smartest guy in class.

*I am a full-time pastor.* There is the (not so small) matter of planting a church and shepherding that church. That meant being a part-time student. For the entire duration of my Masters and PhD studies, I was involved in leading a new church plant. That was and is my priority. I remember being cautioned at the outset: *'Planting and leading a church will be the hardest thing you ever do.'* True words.

*I am not a gifted multi-tasker.* Furthermore, I have serious tunnel-vision. The concept of multi-tasking is my worst nightmare. It took me a very long time to realise that I was attempting to do two very hard things simultaneously. There were times when I felt way over my head. In mitigation, I must add that the topic of my research helped me in church planting. With hindsight, (*by which one always sees clearly*) I realise that leading a church plant and doing long term PhD research may be considered unwise.

*I am severely technologically challenged.* One of my technological weaknesses and limitations is completing and signing forms electronically, designing questionnaires and pie graphs, formatting documents, and getting to grips with editing processes. Though others did help me, these things were undoubtedly the most challenging and frustrating aspects of the project. At times the technological frustration and anger levels hovered in the red zone. (*PS. Stay away from Linux – it is the anti-Christ of editing options!*)



## Valuable lessons learned

### *Self-awareness*

I realised my own arrogance. Here is a terrible fact. I was introduced to the subject of my research way back in 1987 at the Bible Institute. I still have two old textbooks from then, which proved very valuable in my research project. I remember reacting very negatively to the lecturer, and the course. I (*and a number of others*) thought that we knew better – and we were convinced that what we were being taught was theologically dodgy. We are talking hard-core arrogance!

**Since when is a first-year seminary student the arbiter of truth? How can a new, inexperienced believer have all his theological ducks in a row?**

Good questions but not the ones I was asking at the time. It has taken me nearly three decades to realise the immense value of what we were being taught. I was (*and am*) a recovering theological nincompoop. My humble lecturer was right. I was wrong, but worse than that, I was arrogant. Part of the value of the exercise of my PhD is that I have clarified that I was wrong about some things and realised that there is plenty more to learn. I don't know it all.

### *Integrity*

I have learnt the value and importance of presenting views and opinions accurately. This is critical in our world of social media, and a Christian cliché culture. I see sloganeering, grandstanding, unhelpful clichés, the presentation of 'straw men' and much stereotyping on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter – and it concerns me.

**The importance of representing a view accurately and fairly, defining terms properly and giving context is critical in research.**

Not a day goes by without someone unfairly stereotyping another position or tribe on social media. I am not suggesting any kind of relativism or false tolerance. We must contend for the true gospel. But it is critical to present your opponent's views in such a way as they would approve – and then critique them.

### *Plodding*

I have learnt the value of plodding. Plodding is decidedly unglamorous but post graduate research involves lots of it. Sometimes you find yourself in bypath meadow, sometimes you feel like you are stuck - you are going nowhere slowly and oftentimes you feel uninspired. And you just have to keep on. It's a metaphor for the life of discipleship.

**Plodding is decidedly unglamorous but post graduate research (and the Christian life) involves lots of it.**

Most of us are not going to nail 95 theses to a castle door and cause a worldwide revolution. We have to get into the biblical text, pray, and serve the same old sheep this Sunday and the next. Plodding is good. Plodding is normal. Plodding reaps rewards. Keep plodding.

*God's grace*

I have experienced the wonderful sufficient grace and goodness of God. Given the obstacles I mentioned above, I can say without a shadow of doubt that I have been on the receiving end of God's generous and sufficient kindness and grace. He has helped, sustained, strengthened, provided, and given me unnatural ability. Experiencing that has been humbling.

**God's generous, faithful and sustaining grace always surprises us.**

Knowing myself, I can say that what has happened should never have happened. Furthermore, I am more certain of the complete truthfulness and relevance of the Bible. I have gained more insight into the power and scope of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and am more excited by the mission and calling of the Church – especially the need to plant biblically healthy churches in the burgeoning cities of South Africa.

*John is married to Moekie and they have 2 sons; Nick is married to Sarah and he is involved in full-time Student ministry with REACH in Johannesburg and Michael, who is studying Physics at UCT. John was converted to Jesus Christ in 1984 while in the army. He then went on to study at the Bible Institute in Cape Town. He currently pastors Grace Bible Church (an Acts 29 Church) in East London.*

*Moekie is a Dentist and has always seen her vocation as an opportunity to glorify God. She is John's greatest supporter in full time ministry and together they love being involved with God's people and serving them.*



## WRF Statement of Reformed Theological Identity

### Introduction

*At the inaugural meeting of the World Reformed Fellowship in October 2000 in Florida, a Theological Commission was appointed and instructed to prepare a new Statement of Faith for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A group of scholars from around the world started to work on this but it was only when Bob den Dulk agreed to fund the project that regular meetings were held and the project advanced. At the General Assembly of the WRF in Edinburgh in 2010, the Theological Commission of WRF presented its Statement of Faith, which was approved by the GA. That Statement of Faith stands in continuity with the Reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries but speaks to the issues and problems of the 21st century. It is now available in ten languages. The World Reformed Fellowship accepts as members those who affirm one of the Reformed confessions, together with an affirmation of the authority of Scripture and a commitment to the aims and objectives of the WRF. The WRF Statement of Faith has been added to the list of approved confessional statements for membership.*

*At a meeting of the WRF Board in Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, MD, in March 2011, the WRF Theological Commission was given a second project: ‘It was moved and approved: the Board appoints a new Theological Commission to address the meaning and use of the word “Reformed” and the scope and meaning of the term “Reformed Theology”’.*

*The Theological Commission offered this ‘Statement of Reformed Theological Identity’ in fulfilment of our remit and presented it to the General Assembly of the WRF in Jakarta, in August 2019, for approval.*

*This ‘Statement of Reformed Theological Identity’ stands alongside the ‘Statement of Faith’. It does not seek to define again the doctrinal content of Reformed theology, as expressed in the Statement of Faith. Rather, it aims to offer a wider answer to the question ‘What does it mean to be Reformed?’ It*

*looks at why and how Reformed Christians should approach thinking about their faith and relating it to their theological heritage.*

*The Reformed tradition values creedal, catechetical and confessional statements for several reasons. First, to declare what we believe; second, to teach the church; third, to act as a safeguard against error and heresy; and fourth, for disciplinary purposes. At the same time, Reformed Christians recognise that doctrinal convictions must be accompanied by a spiritual relationship with God, through our union with Christ, expressed in a life of faith, obedience and holiness, centred on loving God and loving our neighbours. Intellectual commitment to certain Reformed doctrines, no matter how biblical, is insufficient. In other words, the 'practice' of the Reformed faith is as important as the 'content' of Reformed faith.*

*A great deal of work has been carried out by the Theological Commission in order to reach the conclusions in this 'Statement of Reformed Theological Identity'. A paper was presented to the WRF Board in 2012, outlining something of the rationale for the project and charting the way forward. Then, between 2012 and 2016, the Theological Commission met several times to discuss the remit and to begin to formulate a response. The work was significantly advanced by a three-day meeting in Bethesda in October 2016. In August 2017, the WRF Theological Commission co-sponsored, with Rutherford House, the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, at which a number of relevant papers were delivered, both by members of the Theological Commission and by other significant scholars. A further meeting was held in Bethesda in 2018, at which an attempt was made to draw together the various threads of the work done between 2011 and 2018. The members of the Theological Commission then worked individually on various sections of the draft Statement. The resulting Statement was edited by the Theological Commission and then sent out to various scholars, not on the Theological Commission, for comment. Finally, the Theological Commission approved this final version of the Statement of Reformed Theological Identity, which we respectfully offered to the General Assembly of the WRF. Just as we were grateful to Bob den Dulk for financial support to complete the Statement of Faith, so we would like to record our thanks to Phil Petronis for financial support to enable the completion of the Statement of Reformed Theological Identity.*

### **The Origins of Reformed Theology**

As with all theological traditions, Reformed theology has a history. An account of Reformed theological identity has to situate it within this history.

Reformed theology is one expression of the theology of the catholic church and claims to summarise the Gospel and the teaching of the

Apostles. In continuity with the history of the church, Reformed theology recognises the importance of the early ecumenical councils of the church and affirms the creeds and statements produced thereby. These include the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Athanasian Creed and the Chalcedonian Definition. The magisterial Reformers affirmed the creeds for use in worship, always maintaining the right to review these documents and creeds on the basis of Scripture.

While standing in the tradition of the ancient church, Reformed theology believes that tradition alone, however important, is insufficient and insists that 'the Word of God' is the only ultimate source of appeal in matters of faith and belief. It asserts the final authority of Scripture, as affirmed by John Knox and the other authors of the *Scots Confession* in 1560, when they said, 'if any man will note in this our confession any article or sentence repugning to God's holy word, that it would please him of his gentleness, and for Christian charity's sake, to admonish us of the same in writing; and we, of our honour and fidelity, do promise unto him satisfaction from the mouth of God (that is, from his holy Scriptures), or else reformation of that which he shall prove to be amiss'.

This commitment to Scripture was understood to be in line with the core theology of the church through the centuries. To that end, the Reformers had no intention initially of starting a new church but rather sought the 'reformation' of the church according to Scripture. While highly critical of many of the distortions of the medieval church, they believed themselves to be in continuity with the historic church.

The Reformation was one of a series of movements of reform which existed in the medieval church. The Humanist movement was a major stimulus for the Reformation. The study of the Greek New Testament prepared by Erasmus led the Reformers to see errors in the church's theology and practice. As these men began to read the Bible in its original languages, they realised the inadequacy of the Latin version of the Bible (the Vulgate). They came to realise that some of the teachings of the church were wrong, partly because they were based on this inadequate translation. They thus adopted certain results of Humanism, without adopting all of its philosophical commitments.

Historically, the Reformation had two specific origins. Most famously, it grew from the incident in November 1517 (All Saints' Day) when Martin Luther published his 'Ninety Five Theses' against the practice of indulgences. This was followed by his rediscovery of justification by faith as the heart of the New Testament Gospel. In 1520, Luther was condemned by the papal bull, *Exurge Domine* and he was thus forced into the position of leading a reformation movement, having been excluded by Rome. Around the

same time, Zwingli led a reform movement in Zurich. By 1524, the town council of Zurich had eliminated the Roman mass and the veneration of images.

The Reformation grew from these two (Lutheran and Zwinglian) roots and spread into various parts of Europe. The Reformation experienced a significant division between the Lutheran and Zwinglian movements after the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. This had been called with the hope of resolving questions of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but could not come to an agreement. From this point on, the main Reformation movement divided into two main camps, the 'Lutherans' on the one side and those who came to be known as the 'Reformed' on the other side. Lutheranism was dominant in Germany and Scandinavia, whereas the Reformed movement, was primarily found in Switzerland, north-western Germany, France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland and Hungary. It was led by men such as Martin Bucer, John Calvin, and John Knox.

The theology developed in this Reformed strand had much in common with the Lutheran strand but also had its own distinctive emphases. The Lutherans produced the Augsburg Confession (1530) as a statement of their theology. Over the next hundred and fifty years, the Reformed strand of Protestantism produced many confessions and catechisms, expressing their understanding of Reformed theology. Alongside the Reformed and Lutheran movements, a third strand also developed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which contemporaries called 'Anabaptism'. This 'radical Reformation', tended to cut ties with the historic church more decisively and saw itself as recommencing the church as a holy society. The Reformed movement differentiated itself from this stream.

While the history of the Reformed church is clearly the outgrowth of the sixteenth-century revolt against the teaching and practice of the Roman church, it is equally clear that the term 'Reformed' ultimately gained a theological history, such that Reformed theology came to designate the theology which arose out of the Zwinglian (later Calvinist) strand of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation and which was neither Lutheran nor Anabaptist.

The developing Reformed movement can be clearly identified in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, though the term was not applied to the movement in distinction from Lutheranism till the very end of the century, when Ursinus' commentary on the *Heidelberg Catechism* was published under the title *Corpus doctrinae Christianae ecclesiarum a papatu reformatarum* (1598). Thereafter, it became a common term for this stream of Christian theology and church life into the 17<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

The Reformed theology which developed in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries had much in common with medieval scholasticism and used similar



vocabulary, logic and methods, not least in its use of Aristotelian forms and concepts. Although the break between the Roman church and the Protestant churches in the sixteenth century was decisive, there are many areas of thought and Christian doctrine where there was unbroken continuity with the earlier medieval theology.

In the following centuries, Reformed churches were planted in the colonies of the European nations which had Reformed churches. There was a significant Reformed presence in many parts of the American colonies, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia. The missionary movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw Reformed Christianity grow in Indonesia, Korea, South India and South America.

Sadly, the churches which have developed within the Reformed tradition have not always been faithful to the original commitments of the tradition. Over the last two hundred years theological liberalism has meant that many churches which stem from that tradition and are historically 'Reformed', no longer accept the full authority of Scripture and question many of the doctrines of the Reformed confessions. There are, of course, many who stand in line with the Reformed theology of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and have remained in continuity with its classic confessional expressions. We recognise that the complex history and international character of Reformed theology means that there is significant variety among its adherents, making it challenging to define 'Reformed theology' in a simple way. Nevertheless, the World Reformed Fellowship offers its Statement of Faith and this Statement of Reformed Theological Identity as one attempt to do so. The WRF also offers itself as a vehicle to draw together those within this stream of Reformed theology, for mutual support and benefit.

### **The School of Reformed Theology**

Our understanding is that Reformed theology is a school of thought and not a strand of thought. For this reason, great care is required when stating that a particular doctrinal assertion is 'Reformed', particularly where this involves criticism of others within the Reformed tradition who do not share that particular doctrinal assertion. None of us has a monopoly on what is 'Reformed' and variety of expression has been part of the movement since the beginning. That is to say, Reformed theology has always been a 'school' of thought with many 'strands'. In the earliest days of the Reformation, scholars throughout Europe were developing Reformed ideas. For example, Martin Bucer in Strasburg, Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich, John Calvin and Theodore Beza in Geneva, Pierre Viret in Lausanne and in France, Caspar Oleveanus and Zacharias Ursinus in Heidelberg. This is to say nothing of Peter Martyr Vermigli who was everywhere! Add to this the theologians in

Holland, Hungary, England and Scotland and you have a varied and fascinating ‘school’ of thought.

These various ‘strands’ of the ‘school’ of Reformed theology did not always agree. In the 17th century, the Reformed movement developed in various nations across Europe. There were strong ties between the various national movements, with much shared theology and practice but each national church also developed its own distinctives. They also produced confessional statements which differed from one another in structure and content (for example, compare the Second Helvetic Confession with the Heidelberg Catechism and then with the later Westminster Confession of Faith). Variants of the confessional documents were also written, to express different emphases between Reformed communities. In England, for example, the Westminster Confession of Faith was completed in 1646 but versions of this confession, with different ecclesiologies, were produced by the Congregationalists (The Savoy Declaration, 1658) and the Baptists (London Baptist Confession, 1689). Despite this variety and these stated differences, all were ‘Reformed’ in character. There was a healthy debate between the ‘strands’ and their fellowship in Christ was evident.

This healthy, positive debate among brothers and sisters in the different ‘strands’ of Reformed theology, in the spirit of ‘iron sharpening iron’, has sometimes been lost today. Indeed, there have been many battles among Reformed theologians which have damaged the reputation of our movement. The tendency to condemn or ‘unchurch’ brothers and sisters with whom we disagree is not germane to the nature of Reformed theology as a school of thought. There must, of course, be some boundaries, such that if an individual or an ecclesial community has moved significantly away from the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the core convictions of historic Reformed theology, then we must be permitted to question their self-designation as ‘Reformed’ and take appropriate ecclesial action. In doing so, however, we must act with love and compassion, remembering that the object of such discipline is to restore men and women to Christ.

Reformed theology has always experienced diversity. While united around the central authority of the Scriptures as being the very ‘Word of God’, Reformed theologians held diverse opinions on the understanding of what the Scriptures taught regarding both doctrine and practice. Nowhere is that diversity more clearly seen than in the debates regarding the nature of the Lord’s Supper, not least between Calvin and the Zwinglians regarding the exact nature of the presence of Christ within the sacrament.

The historical use of the term ‘Reformed’, then, was undoubtedly one of ‘breadth’. It encompassed all who held to the evangelical doctrines that had been rediscovered at the Reformation and had become manifest as a form of

ecclesiastical life and thought. For this reason, there is no historically honest way to describe a monolithic Reformed theology. Instead, we should look to establish a set of common characteristics of Reformed theologies that themselves create the 'Reformed tradition'. Some Reformed thinkers give the impression that to be Reformed means to embrace the historic confessions of the Reformed churches of the 16th and 17th centuries and to confine theological investigation to the issues already addressed by those confessions. This, of course, reduces Reformed theology and the Reformed tradition itself to being little more than recordings of the historic voices of the past and leaves it ill-equipped to deal with the issues of the 21st century. Reformed theology must not be confined to restating in traditional terms the debates of the past. Nor must it assume that the decisions made in past debates are final, or provided all the answers, or even that they were correct in all that they asserted.

Within the Reformed tradition, there have been ongoing debates about Reformed identity, which explains the multiplicity of definitions. This introspective and self-absorbed mentality, focussing on 'in-house' debates, has frequently led to harmful isolation and a false sense of security. These attempts to tie down every single doctrinal assertion into one truly Reformed theology are futile. A wider vision is required, so it is more appropriate today to speak of strands of Reformed theology, rather than *the* Reformed theology.

The ethos of Reformed theology refers to what it means to 'be' Reformed. That is to say, we do not speak simply of what we 'believe' as Reformed Christians but also of what we 'do'. The life and behaviour of the Reformed Christian ought to have a certain nature and quality, arising out of our core biblical convictions. There are perhaps four areas where we ought to see this 'being' Reformed in practice. First, our lives ought to evidence a holiness and piety which springs from the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Second, we ought to love both God and our neighbours in a way that witnesses to Christ. Third, we ought to live in the conviction of the sovereignty of God in all things, not least in our salvation. Fourth, we ought to act towards other Christians, not least other Reformed Christians, as Scripture directs. In other words, rather than merely listing a set of doctrinal convictions which are the *sine qua non* of Reformed theology (which we have already done in the WRF Statement of Faith), we are now seeking to define the 'ethos' of what it means to be Reformed. For example, we believe that the character and practice of Reformed theology is 'embrasive' rather than 'exclusive'. There are sectors of the Reformed community which hold to a rather narrow definition of what it means to be Reformed, thereby excluding many people whose core theology and instincts are undoubtedly Reformed. Our intention is to promote a culture where there is a catholic spirit and a generous acceptance of others. The WRF,

from its origins in 2000, has advocated and sought to model a generous and gracious orthodoxy.

In defining the ethos of Reformed theology we must also stress the need for humility and respect. We must be humble as we state what we believe and take care to avoid the arrogance which has characterised some in the Reformed tradition. We need to listen with respect to theologians from other traditions, perhaps especially those with whom we most disagree. Ecumenism has often been regarded negatively by those in the Reformed tradition but pursuing the unity of the church is an important element of our witness to Christ. Such ecumenical dialogue forces us to recognise that we do not have all of the truth. This requires humility, a willingness to learn and an openness to being corrected.

There are few theologians from whom we cannot learn something, even where we may disagree on major issues. In all of this, we must have an approach to theology which is courteous. The mantra of ‘defending the faith’ can easily be used as a cover for a mentality which enjoys the battle and relishes a fight. Some Reformed theologians and pastors have been quick to go to war but slow to obey the Scriptural injunctions about grace, kindness, gentleness, love and respect.

Reformed theologians are called to defend the truth as we understand it from Scripture, this needs to be done with a warm-hearted and open attitude and with the humility to admit our own mistakes and to discover our own blind spots. Defence of the truth does not require a negative, confrontational attitude. One important element here is to present the views of others fairly. If we present the views of theologians and others with a view to criticising them, we must ensure that the people in question would recognise our presentation of their views as fair.

The other important point to make is that Reformed theology involves a world and life view and is more than the famous ‘Five Points’. Reformed theology is much more comprehensive than simply soteriology. Our attitude to culture, including music and the arts, will arise out of the totality of our Reformed theology, not least our understanding of common grace, as in the work of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. The Dutch Calvinist view is that Christians are to engage at every level with the nation and with the culture. Kuyper himself was a minister, a theologian, the editor of a daily newspaper, the founder of a Christian university, the founder of a Christian political party and ultimately, Prime Minister of The Netherlands. He saw no conflict between these roles because he believed that every thought must be taken captive for Christ. In defining Reformed theology, we should take heed of this important Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition, which is much more biblical than the culture denying escapism of some Anabaptist and Fundamentalist movements

which have so influenced sections of the Reformed church. Reformed theology should be applied to the culture and so a credible Reformed theology will have something to say about creation and ecology, about science and technology, about medical ethics, about communications and social media, about politics and government and so on.

### **The Method of Reformed Theology**

Reformed theology holds that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were ‘breathed out’ by God (2 Timothy 3:16). The means God used to accomplish this was that, ‘men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit’ (2 Peter 1:21). Given these two Scriptural truths, the way we handle and interpret Scripture is of first importance.

Hermeneutics is the study of the way in which we interpret and attempt to understand realities such as works of art, pieces of music, literary works, actions, and gestures. It involves the study of principles of interpretation for all forms of communication, both verbal and nonverbal.

In relation to Reformed theology, hermeneutics deals with the principles and methodology of Biblical interpretation and exegesis. It is the science of interpretation of the Scriptures, which also takes into account the input of the church community and tradition. The method of Reformed theology, then, centres on Scripture and its interpretation. The Scriptures are to be examined using the grammatico-historical method and the study of the literary genres, as well as by comparing Scripture with Scripture (the analogy of faith). In using this language we are not advocating a ‘modernist’ approach to Scripture but rather the approach used by the ‘theological interpretation of Scripture’ movement.

Dealing with the question of the interpretation and explanation of the Scriptures implies mentioning the idea of revelation and, therefore, raising the question of one’s presuppositions. This we have in common with other schools of evangelical theology. Reformed theology takes as its presupposition that there is an infinite and personal God, who is truly capable of communicating his thoughts and his will in the categories and words of human language and expression. God reveals himself to humanity primarily in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures. He does this in such a way that human beings, being made in God’s image, can understand this revelation, although not exhaustively. Such is the foundational presupposition from which we derive the basic principles of objective communication, inspiration and infallibility. Without this basis, the notion of revelation is but a shallow literary formula and tends to become meaningless. The usage and the evidence of the Scriptures themselves underline such a perspective.

We see this in the action of God in the ‘breathing out’ of Scripture. This divine means of communication has a subjective/empirical and personal aspect to it, namely, the work of the Holy Spirit acting upon the depths of human consciousness and creating thoughts that, in fact, proceed from God himself. Thus when the Lord reveals his word to Jeremiah, the prophet experienced a process including reception, appropriation and inscription. This is especially evident in the Psalms. It is, in fact, the usual pattern of divine revelation.

In the practice of Reformed theology, we are not engaged in religious studies, that is, giving an account of the beliefs and customs practiced by individuals or communities who lived in the past. Nor are we engaged in historical theology, that is, giving an account of the theological reflections of individuals or communities on God’s revelation, such as the religious thought of the people of Israel.

Since the object of biblical hermeneutics is the interpretation of divine thought that has been transmitted according to the categories of human language, the idea of inspiration becomes essential. By this means, God, by his authority, guarantees and confirms the truth of the object of our study. This does not preclude the use of reason and an intelligent appropriation of truth. It enables us to stress that God’s own authority, by the means of inspiration, establishes the truth of the object of our study, the Scriptures. It is also important to remember that revelation encompasses both what is expressed in human language and historical facts and events described therein. Without a belief in inspiration, without the mark of the Lord’s authority and competency, a full conviction with regards to divine truth cannot emerge and blossom, but rather doubt and uncertainty linger on relentlessly. That is why Reformed theologians affirm the objectivity, inspiration and infallibility of revelation.

Biblical Theology, understood as the history of revelation, constitutes one of the specific contributions of Reformed theology to the debate on hermeneutics. The emphasis is on the historical development and organic growth of revelation and thus on the progressive disclosure of God’s counsel. The stages of revelation being both distinct and interdependent, it involves a continuous process leading to the full maturity of revelation as it is disclosed in the person and work of the Messiah, as announced and promised by the law and the prophets. As Christ Jesus is the incarnation of the divine word, the New Testament also emphasizes discontinuity insofar as the types (priest, prophet, king and sage) and realities (the sacrificial system) foreshadowed in the Old Testament are clearly manifested and fulfilled in Him.



God, the infinite and personal being has created all of reality, including human beings in his own image. Though the Creator is totally distinct from his creation, this means that both God and human beings are personal. They think and communicate, they love, act justly and deliberate and act. The object of knowledge is thus the revelation that God has given us in creation and history as well as in Scripture. In order to come to a true understanding of such a divine communication, we hold to a unified field of knowledge. We thus maintain that it is open to human reason and is the object of faith. As both the visible and invisible aspects of God's world are one, faith implies a proper understanding of truth. Nevertheless, because the effects and marks of sin are so deep, human beings are in vital need of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It follows that God is the foundation of the cognitive process of human beings, not only because of his work of creation, but also because of his kindness manifested in his work of redemption. When Scripture says that God 'knows' human beings, this means that he seeks them, he remembers them, he chooses them, he calls them and he blesses them. This divine initiative establishes the unique value and the *raison d'être* of human beings. The Lord, through the Holy Spirit, graciously gives to human beings the knowledge and wisdom that lead to life. In this way, the covenant relationship is established.

Clearly Jesus Christ is at the very centre of biblical hermeneutics. It is the light of the Word incarnate, combined with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, that enables us to grasp in truth the depth, beauty and relevance of God's message within their times and settings. The authors of the New Testament quote and refer to the books of the Old Testament in different ways (citations, allusions, illustrations, allegories, etc), but the key of their understanding remains Christ Jesus who is the *exegete* par excellence (John 1:18).

### **The Characteristics of Reformed Theology**

In describing the characteristics of Reformed theology it is important to acknowledge that Reformed Christians share certain aspects of life, faith and belief with all Christians. This includes the call to love the Lord our God with heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbours as ourselves. We are to worship, glorify and enjoy God, we are to fulfil the cultural mandate, we are to work for justice and we are to show concern for the poor and those in need.

Having said this, we can nevertheless, identify certain distinctive emphases which characterise Reformed theology:

*Theological*

Reformed theology is ‘theological’, it is not mystical nor merely practical but has always sought to ground the Christian life in an understandable confession of God. It is also theological in the sense that it strives to be theocentric and to keep God and his glory as the central theme of theology and practice. Even when Reformed theology moves away from the Confessions it usually retains this character to some extent.

*Christological*

Reformed theology stresses that Christ is the final revelation of God, and that in him is found all that is needed for salvation and the Christian life. For example, in very different ways, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and Barth’s theology, both focus on Christ. The Confession’s theology focusses around Christ who is divinely appointed and fully equipped as the mediator of the covenant of grace, and perfectly fulfils that role. Barth almost subsumes the doctrine of God, Scripture and election into Christology.

*Scriptural*

Reformed theology embraces the principle that Scripture is the authoritative norm for decisions regarding life, faith and doctrine and insists that Scripture must govern the appropriation of insights from tradition, reason and experience. The articulation of the doctrine of Scripture has been a distinctive of Reformed theology and, even in some more liberal Reformed approaches, the Bible has continued to have an important role.

*Sovereignty*

Reformed theology has always been conscious of the clear distinction between God, the Creator, and everything else, which is all his dependent creation. While God can and does relate to his creation, creatures can never assert a right to have a relationship with him. Along with this awareness of God’s transcendence, Reformed thought has also stressed God’s sovereignty over the whole of creation, as well as his sovereign grace in salvation.

*Anthropology*

Reformed theology provides a biblical anthropology, seeking to state and deepen its understanding of God’s pattern for human life. Contemporary culture raises a host of questions for Christians about the nature of human life and how it is to be lived well. In order to deal well with issues concerning gender, sexuality, technology and social justice, we need a clear account of human living, grounded in God’s created order and understood in the light of Christ and his redemption.

### *Creation and Providence*

Since God is sovereign, creation is his realm. Reformed theology has not generally been dualistic or ascetic. It has allowed a place for general revelation understood in the light of Scripture. History too is seen as the realm of God's action and redemption is an historical event established by Christ's death and resurrection. Reformed theology has usually been relatively optimistic about the course of history and human culture under God's hand.

### *Sin and Grace*

Reformed theology has analysed the human condition by distinguishing between four states, each of which is determined by its relationship to God. These are: the state of innocence, the state of sin, the state of grace and the state of glory. This has enabled Reformed theology to integrate reflection on human concerns with its theocentric emphasis.

Reformed theology, while stressing that humanity cannot demand a relationship with God, also holds that we are made for just such a relationship. God has made us and calls us to know, love and serve him. This call comes to all human beings, and all are responsible for their response to God, since God's sovereignty does not negate human responsibility. Reformed thought has also had a clear grasp of the depth of human sinfulness. It has viewed all people as fallen in Adam, corrupted by sin and deserving God's judgment. The recognition of the depth of human sin is accompanied by an awareness of the need of God's grace in salvation, and the full sufficiency of his grace. Along with God's sovereignty, Reformed theology has usually had a clear grasp of human sinfulness and so an awareness of the need of God's grace in salvation. The finite cannot reach the infinite but God graciously accommodates himself to, redeems and glorifies his creatures, even sinful creatures. Finally, Reformed theology has looked forward to the day when, with the return of Christ, all of his people will be raised and glorified with him.

### *The Work of the Spirit*

The providential care of God and his sovereign grace are both the work of the Spirit. Reformed theology emphasises the life-giving work of the Spirit perfecting God's purposes in creation and redemption. The work of the Spirit in redemption is based upon the work of Christ and mediated through the reading and preaching of the Word.

### *The Church*

The Holy Spirit unites believers with Christ and unites them to one another. The collective name for the body of believers is the church. In the

earliest days of the church theologians described it as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’. At the Reformation, several ‘marks’ of the church were identified: the Word rightly preached; the sacraments (baptism and Lord’s Supper) rightly administered and discipline uprightly maintained. Jesus himself prayed for the unity of the church and noted that the mark of true believers was their love for one another. The primary duty of the church is worship, thereafter to fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus to ‘go and make disciples’. The church must always be reforming itself according to Scripture.

#### *Justification by Faith*

Springing from the Reformation, Reformed theology holds to a doctrine of justification by faith. This is the view that, while salvation is a gift of God’s grace, its reception by human beings comes through the instrumentality of faith in Jesus Christ. Following Calvin, it is often considered the ‘hinge of religion’, though not as the controlling principle for all theology.

#### *The Christian Life*

Reformed theology places a major stress on the active Christian life, flowing from God’s grace in justification and his ongoing work of sanctification. The role of grace and the law in shaping the Christian life has been a consistent emphasis in most Reformed theology. Reformed thought has understood that theology is a source of practical wisdom – it teaches God’s people how they enter into his salvation and how they are to live for him.

#### *Church and Society*

Reformed theology, coming from the magisterial Reformation, holds that the church should be engaged with the society. This has been expressed in different ways, but the concern for society has been consistent. In Genesis 1:28, Adam and Eve were given what is often called the ‘Cultural Mandate’. This involves populating the earth and exercising stewardship and responsibility for it. This has significant implications for conservation and ecology.

#### *Covenant*

Covenant is a distinctive emphasis in Reformed theology, in expressing the relationship between God and humanity. The covenants made with Abraham and Moses and the new covenant made in Christ are central to our self-understanding as the one people of God in both old and new testaments. Some Reformed theologians, including the Westminster Divines, opted for a bi-covenantal federal theology, centred on a Covenant of Works in Adam and a Covenant of Grace in Christ. Others rejected the idea of a Covenant of Works

but insisted nevertheless that the Adam/Christ parallel is key to understanding sin and salvation.

## **The Context of Reformed Theology**

### *The Church*

Reformed theology arises out of and is nurtured by the church. It has a clear commitment to the view that the church is established by God as his chosen people. This involves an awareness of the continuity of the church with Israel and with the early Church and the medieval Roman Catholic Church. Reformed churches are conscious that they stand in a heritage given by God with roots long before the Protestant Reformation. Theological reflection is grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as the New Testament and builds on the thought of the early and medieval church.

Reformed churches stress the importance of the local congregations gathering for worship, serving one another in love and participating in God's mission by proclaiming his kingdom in Christ. Theology should enable churches to do this faithfully.

Reformed churches are also aware that they exist as part of God global church, expressed in their own denominations, other churches and through wider Christian organisations. They recognise the importance of theology serving the wider ministry of the Church.

Reformed theology recognises the mixed nature of the church and affirms the distinction between the visible and invisible church, while noting the importance of church discipline. Theological reflection should be tested by the Church, both in its local and wider forms.

### *Confessional*

Reformed theology is confessional and to the extent that we want to claim to be 'Reformed', we should find the centre of Reformed theology in the classic Reformed confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many confessions have been written within the Reformed tradition and no one single confession alone defines the Reformed tradition. Reformed theology also affirms the priority of Scripture over confessions, arguing that a confession is binding for the community only insofar as it corresponds to Scripture. It also affirms the reality that any confession can be amended but the Scriptures may not be. Another of the accrued benefits of the Reformed confessional tradition that continues to provide a dividend to the modern church, is the fact that it reminds us that no interpretation of the Scriptures is to be done in a vacuum. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Our understanding in the present will be in the light of the past, which offers a

useful corrective to our postmodern and individualistic way of interpreting Scripture.

Two modern examples of the way in which the confessional tradition has aided the church concern the use of confessions in the modern period to address issues of social justice. One example is the *Barmen Declaration*, which was drawn up to challenge the German church's theological justification for Hitler's Third Reich. Another example is the *Belhar Confession*, which was drawn up to resist any theological justification for apartheid. Whatever may be their theological limitations, these modern confessional statements demonstrate the ability of the Reformed community to address immediate social concerns in a specific geographical community, in a confessional form.

### **The Relevance of Reformed Theology**

In order to judge the continuing relevance of Reformed theology, one significant question which we must ask is whether or not a pre-modern theology has something to say to a postmodern society, or indeed to other non-western cultures and to other Christian traditions.

Some Reformed theologians dismiss postmodernity as denying the existence of truth in favour of total relativism. This misrepresents many postmodern thinkers, though of course some reject any claims to truth. More generally, post-moderns are wary of ideologies masked as truth and are sceptical about reaching truth merely by rational arguments, noting that people seem always able to find rational justification for their own interests. Instead they want to see commitments lived with integrity and beliefs that are held authentically. They want to believe in something that will make a difference to the world and inspire them to go beyond themselves. They will assess Christianity in those terms. In response, Reformed theology can offer a way of knowing God grounded in his actions, not fallible human efforts, which engages the whole person in all of life. It should be able to offer a holistic and satisfying vision of human life, while challenging the assumptions that life and truth are ungrounded. Thus, Reformed theology should be ready to address the despair regarding truth in postmodernism and be able to engage in dialogue and share the gospel with postmodern people and with post-Christian culture.

In reflecting on these different approaches, we believe that our task is to formulate the Christian faith in a way that is intellectually rigorous, yet appeals to postmodern people as comprehensive, genuine and moving. In seeking to develop Reformed theology in this way, we need to counter-balance the emphasis on propositions in Reformed theology, with a renewed understanding of narrative.

At its best, Reformed scholasticism of the 17th century attended carefully to the text of Scripture and, on that basis, offered a tightly argued set

of doctrinal affirmations in ways that connected with the logical thought forms of the day. In our era, we are called to the same task but in a very different intellectual and social context. It is here that a re-emphasis on narrative may serve Reformed theology well, as it connects with post-modern and non-Western cultures effectively. In a way, the call to focus more on narrative is a call to go back to the model of the Bible, which is itself a presentation of the grand narrative of God's work in the world and is filled with numerous smaller narratives. Narrative theology is not contrary to intellectual rigour; good theology can be expressed either in engaging narrative or in logical arguments. Narrative theology is not contrary to facticity since redemptive history itself is a story and a real story. The Reformed tradition should make the most of various modes of theology, especially the systematic and the narrative, to communicate well the riches of Scripture.

A number of Reformed theologians have sought to defend the Christian worldview, including Abraham Kuyper, Cornelius Van Til, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Richard Mouw. These scholars are helpful in our postmodern age, in showing that truth involves a integrated picture of our lives. Nevertheless, these and other Reformed writers are not entirely satisfying to postmodern people and so we must do more to communicate with them.

Speaking generally, post-moderns are not seeking a grand logical vision of the world, an integrated metaphysical system. Rather, they are seeking narrative that fires the imagination, a vision that can inspire them, not a system that puts everything in neat categories. They are looking for a faith that can handle the complexities of life and give them a sense of the worthiness of living.

The biblical narrative gives us a meta-narrative of humanity, as well as providing a history of those who transit from death to life through Christ. This narrative is non-modern meta-narrative, in the sense it is not based on a logic immanent in the historical process, nor does it propagate the superiority of any particular political or economic system. The biblical narrative is based on the creative actions of God throughout history. This narrative climaxed in our Lord, and thus this is the only true meta-narrative of reality. Van Til is correct that Christians should be self-conscious of their own presuppositions when they confront the world but focusing on logical consistency may not be the most helpful strategy. Maybe a creative retelling of the mighty acts of God and of his wisdom, in contrast to the false ideologies of today, is a more helpful and urgent task.

It may be that Reformed theology's over-emphasis on doctrinal correctness and accuracy makes it less able to communicate with postmodern

people. The cost of trying to construct an ever purer Reformed faith diminishes its relevance to the postmodern world.

One way of opening up some of these issues would be to engage in a case study. For example, if we were trying to develop a Reformed theology which would be relevant to Asians, what would that look like? A Reformed theology for Asia must respond to the needs of Asian societies. This is neither to argue for compromise on the truth of the Gospel, nor to argue for a social Gospel. The Gospel is not a tool for solving social problems, it is the proclamation of the everlasting love and mighty acts of God. However, God, in his wisdom, does not intend merely to save individuals, he intends also to renew the whole world. This renewal includes redeeming our cultures and transforming our societies. This is an area in which Reformed theology can make significant contributions for the kingdom of God in Asia.

When we propose the need for a Reformed theology within an Asian setting, we do not mean that Asian cultures somehow contain superior wisdom than occidental cultures. All cultures are beautiful yet fallen cultures, as the Dutch Reformed tradition has emphasized. The meta-narrative of God's redemptive plan serves as a critique of Asian cultures as well as pointing to the true aspirations of Asian cultures. Theologians can utilize the Reformed worldview approach to help transform society to meet the yearnings of Asian people, as well as transform the yearning of the people to help them find their true destiny in God.

From Calvin to the *Canons of Dort* or the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, we have gained in systematic completeness and exactness of language but for most Asian churches, the road from Calvin to Dort is probably not the best direction. Calvin's writings represent a type of confident dance to the rhythm of the sovereign God before the evils of the world. A Reformed theology for Asia needs to recover this spiritual tradition. Sometimes, Reformed people boast about their theological orthodoxy and put down other Christian traditions. To the minority churches in Asia, such partisan squabbles do a great disservice to the Gospel witness. The Asian churches need to learn to dance in joy despite their weakness in society.

Reformed theology has put off many individuals and churches, especially in the southern hemisphere, because it has appeared to them as cold, divisive, rationalistic and western. By describing and developing a biblically sustainable Reformed theology, which makes room for doctrinal issues which are critical to the life and mission of indigenous churches, rather than being controlled by the western European, anti-Roman Catholic origins of Reformed theology, we will do a great service to the Reformed community and perhaps win more people to a Reformed worldview.



Respecting the relevance of Reformed theology, as noted above, we should also be willing to engage with other traditions within Christianity in a Christian manner. Our vision for Reformed theology is an intentionally ecumenical future. Our confessions and catechisms have historically enabled a 'kinship' with other churches and believers who share the same, or a similar, confessional position. For example, those who hold to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* are a worldwide fraternity of Reformed believers. However, there has often been a failure to engage with other Christian traditions.

In this regard, we might well engage in another case study. For example, the way in which Reformed theology engages with classic Pentecostalism. If Reformed theology is to overcome the mutually negative views between Reformed and Pentecostal Christians, it will be necessary to promote and stimulate creative discussion between Reformed and Pentecostal Christians. Many Pentecostals have recently begun showing an interest in Reformed theology and this offers areas of possible dialogue, as well as areas where we could learn from one another. In doing so, we recognise that both Reformed and Pentecostal Christians hold to a common spiritual intention, namely to obey the great commandment to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

One way to promote such dialogue would be to explore five of the key elements in classic Reformed spirituality, together with a preliminary investigation as to how each of these might resonate to a greater or lesser extent with facets of Pentecostal devotion in ways which might mutually enhance dialogue between Reformed and Pentecostal Christians. These elements are: the glory of God, the humiliation of sinners, the activity of the Word, the indispensability of the Holy Spirit and the duty of self-examination. Despite significant differences, there is more common ground between Pentecostals and the Reformed in the case of the doctrines of God, Scripture and the Holy Spirit, while the commonality in relation to humiliation and self-examination lies in the fact that today they are largely neglected by both groups.

This is only one example, however, of the need for Reformed theology to be intentionally ecumenical in its approach to other traditions within Christianity. Historically, the Reformed faith has been at the forefront of authentic ecumenical involvement, having taken its lead from John Calvin, who was at the forefront of ecumenical undertakings. His time with Martin Bucer in Strasbourg (1538-1541) was a time of determined unionist dialogues between Lutherans and the Reformed. Although these talks were not ultimately successful, this did not end Calvin's interest in ecumenical activity. In 1541, at the Colloquy of Regensburg, he and Philip Melancthon came to an agreement on much of their Eucharistic thought, though ultimately

this did not lead to the unity for which he worked. Calvin's efforts were born out of his understanding of the nature of the church and its unity. His repeated efforts led to the *Consensus Tigurinus*, a document widely approved by Reformed churches. This led to a uniting of the traditions of Zwingli and Calvin and was a significant theological achievement.

### **The Future of Reformed Theology**

In looking to the future of Reformed theology, we must recognise its strengths which have enabled it to survive and grow thus far. Nevertheless, we want to advocate a confessional Reformed theology which is contextualised, so that it is not an antiquarian study but a living force for good, dealing with the issues which particular nations face and presenting a Reformed response to these issues.

One significant contribution which Reformed theology can make in the future, concerns the definition of the church. In the theologically diverse and divided present context, no issue captures the diversity of Christians more than attempting to find a common biblical understanding of the nature of the church. Reformed thought offers a way forward, following Calvin, who defined the church in this way: 'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there is not to be doubted a church of God exists'. It is a church which has both visible and invisible aspects and is defined by its proclamation of the Gospel.

As we seek to refine our Reformed theology to make it fit for the future, there are certain areas which require some work. In particular, we must recover some of Calvin's core themes. Reformed theology has become so overlaid with detail and elaboration that a return to Calvin's simplicity of structure and expression would help us enormously. These core themes have not exactly been lost in Reformed theology but often they have been overlaid with a thousand qualifications and explanations, in the process losing the simplicity, clarity, beauty and pastoral concern of Calvin's own expression of them.

In particular, we need to recover Calvin's strong emphasis on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. He was supremely a theologian of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, his commitment to a theology of common grace has been largely neglected, except in the Dutch tradition. Above all, his high Trinitarian theology has not always been understood and appropriated within our tradition. Many modern Reformed theologians have seen the Trinity simply as a doctrinal formulation to be included somewhere in our doctrine of God. The way in which Calvin opened up his whole theological system out of a centre in the Trinity is a masterful model which we ought to

recover. Other neglected areas include Calvin's emphasis on the Fatherhood of God and on adoption, his conviction that faith leads to justification on the one hand and sanctification on the other hand and his emphasis on the importance of union with Christ.

We must also reaffirm the vital relationship between two of the fundamental elements of Reformed theology, namely, the sovereignty of God and the grace of God. When Reformed theology has placed too much emphasis on the sovereignty of God and neglected the love and grace of God, we have ended up with a cold, legalistic, deterministic theology which has denied the free offer of the Gospel. When Reformed theology has placed too much emphasis on the love and grace of God and neglected the sovereignty of God, we have ended up with a weak, liberal Christianity with no real sense of God's justice and judgement. Only when God's sovereignty and God's grace are held in proper balance will Reformed theology be true to the teaching of Scripture and true to its own best instincts.

A final point would be to argue that the development of a Reformed theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires a much closer relationship between the church and the academy. On the one hand, the church has often been suspicious of the academy, believing that so-called ivory tower theologians have little concern for the church and dismissing arguments about academic freedom as an excuse for departing from the confessional position of the church. On the other hand, the academy has often viewed the church as failing to take seriously the important work theologians do in the areas of biblical, historical, systematic and pastoral theology, accusing the church of seeing the academy simply as a machine to churn out candidates for the ministry. We need to recover a sense of unity of purpose between church and academy.

Reformed theology must also maintain its voice on public issues, particularly in the areas of ethics, morality, justice and peace. Too often, Christians have conformed to the prevailing views within their society instead of speaking prophetically from Scripture. The church must be willing to express righteous indignation in the face of evil, not least when human beings are oppressed or exploited. It must also equip the church to speak prophetically to society and culture and guide Christians in their lives as citizens.

## **Conclusion**

What we envisage is a Reformed theology which will constantly re-examine its doctrinal formulations in the light of Scripture, the infallible Word of God. It will be a Reformed theology which will be firmly anchored in the life of the church, a Reformed theology which has its roots in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century but its top branches firmly in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It will be a Reformed theology

which is recognised as a school of thought and not a single strand. It will develop a world and life view, will be open to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit and will avoid overly rationalistic formulations. It will be respectful of those with whom it disagrees, will show humility and respect and always be willing to learn. It will be a Reformed theology which holds on to the fundamental tenets of our system while being willing to explore and to experiment and to take risks. Above all, it will be honouring to God and will be used to explain the truth of the Scriptures to a fallen world in order that more men and women and children may come to know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*This statement of Reformed Theological identity was developed by the WRF Theological Commission and approved by the Fifth General Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia in August, 2019. Any interested in membership in the WRF, please visit [wrfnet.org](http://wrfnet.org) for further details.*



## Part One, Challenge to the Culture

**Pierre Berthoud\***

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How should European Christians engage in witness, evangelism and apologetics in the midst of a broken culture that is severed from its Christian roots? Most Europeans have abandoned Christianity. Indeed, even humanism has been abandoned by many. Scepticism as to the meaning of life, the significance of truth and the possibility of adopting moral/ethical standards prevails. Within this ultra-modern, multi-religious and multi-cultural environment, ‘everyone does what is right in his own eyes’. How should we respond?

The first part of this seminar has as its title, *Challenge to the Culture*. It is divided into four parts formulated as questions:

How did Europe become what it is today, intellectually and spiritually?

What are the prevailing worldviews which drive the current anti-Christian bias?

How can Christians facilitate spiritual and intellectual transformation? And,

How can we show the relevance of divine truth for every aspect of life and culture?

We will seek in the following lecture to answer briefly these four questions. The last two questions will be tackled in the same section.

### **1. How did Europe become what it is today, intellectually and spiritually?**

There is no golden age . . . at least in the present order of things, on this side of the return of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we should not despise the heritage which we have received. History and tradition are important. They help us understand where we come from and how previous generations have coped with the issues they met both in the church and in the civil society. This helps us to face the major private and public challenges that are before us in Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century as well as to work within our European cultures towards the reformation and renaissance of the Christian Faith as we anticipate the return of Christ.

#### *Some Historical and Philosophical Markers*

France has a rich historical and cultural heritage that has contributed significantly to its national contemporary identity. It is heir to both the Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian legacies. Up until the sixteenth century, Christianity in its Roman Catholic version was dominant. But with the rise of humanism during late-medieval times, the Renaissance, and especially the Enlightenment, a struggle gradually arose between those who strove for the emancipation that autonomous reason was expected to offer to the individual and civil society, and those who considered that only the church could contribute significantly to the salvation and peace of both. In other words, the modern era is characterized by recurring conflicts between two forms of authority, that of reason and that of the church. Historically and culturally speaking Protestantism, with its emphasis on Scripture as the ultimate norm, was caught between these two dominant currents in French society, between these two forms of authority, the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and the authority of autonomous reason which sought to emancipate itself from the religious and political dominance of the Church.

In the sixteenth century, the Reformation had a significant impact on the French people. Historians suggest that a least ten percent (and probably more) of the population joined the Protestant movement. The Reformed faith had a significant impact on culture, society, and politics. If the Protestants had not lost the wars of religion, which should in fact be considered as civil wars, the face of France would be quite different. This is what a former French President, François Mitterrand, suggested in a speech in 1983 in La Rochelle,

one of the sixteenth-century fortified Protestant cities of France. Speaking about the tragic siege of La Rochelle, instigated by king Louis XIII and cardinal Richelieu (1627–28), he said: “I think the history of France hesitated on that day. It was even somewhat broken.”<sup>1</sup>

The Reformation in the sixteenth century changed the face of Europe and was one of the most significant spiritual, theological, and cultural renewals in the history of Christianity, which impacted Church and society alike, so much so that it still has a hearing and significant influence in many parts of the world, such as South Korea, Indonesia, Brazil, and North America. The uniqueness of the Reformation, with its world and life view deeply rooted in the Word of God, is well illustrated by John Calvin. In the Introduction to his *Commentary on the Psalms*, Calvin gives an account of his conversion. As he rarely refers to himself in his writings, this account is important. He identifies his conversion with a radical change of mind involving a break with both the Roman Catholic mindset and superstitions and the humanist philosophy of the Renaissance while appreciating and integrating the positive elements of these two traditions.<sup>2</sup>

No doubt the Renaissance was a significant movement with its emphasis on the humanities and the rediscovery of the Greek and Roman heritages. With discernment, Calvin and the other reformers appreciated and integrated these achievements into their system of education. But philosophically the Renaissance was the first major break from the Christian world and life view. We should not forget that Calvin’s first publication was a commentary on Seneca’s *De Clementia* (1532). This publication reveals that he was then a humanist in the tradition of Erasmus and that he had fully mastered his classics. While he was breaking with these two major currents, the writings of Luther (and others) made the reformer of Geneva understand that the ultimate fountain of wisdom was in God and his Word, both written and incarnate, and in the living Christian tradition that remained faithful to the truth and beauty of this glorious heritage.

In France the clear stand of the Reformers was maintained until about the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The persecutions and the civil wars between Protestants and Catholics that lasted some thirty years at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century represented a major disaster for the Kingdom of France as well as for the Protestant Churches. In spite of the Edict of Nantes (1585), the Protestants eventually experienced harassment, second rate citizenship, persecution, and exile. In fact, in this kingdom, an absolute state with emphasis

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<sup>1</sup> Mitterrand, “Allocution,” lines 44–45.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin, *Commentaire*, v–xii.

<sup>3</sup> La Saine Doctrine, iv–xii.

on one faith, one law, and one king, there was no place for religious plurality and specifically for the descendants of the Reformation. Thus by the end of the seventeenth century, the Protestants had all but been eradicated. Such was the aim of the Edict of Fontainebleau, signed by Louis XIV in 1685, which revoked the Edict of Nantes. Many Huguenots left their homeland. As a consequence France was impoverished while many Protestant nations in Europe and beyond were enriched by the arrival of many well-trained and reliable migrants. Thus for more than two centuries the Protestants were marginalized and at best lived on the fringes of society.

During that period humanism, with its emphasis on the autonomy of reason, was gaining ground. Thus in continuity with the Renaissance, Classicism (Cartesian rationalism) of the 17th Century gave way to the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and eventually won the day, thus becoming the consensus in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The original aim of this philosophical movement, was to emancipate itself from the tyranny of the absolute state and the all-embracing Roman Catholic Church. In fact, both Protestants and humanist philosophers were facing the same obstacles, were resisting and fighting the same opponents, not to say the same adversaries. It is precisely at this moment in history that many Protestants made a fatal mistake with lasting effects. Not only were they cobelligerent with the humanists, but they actually became their allies. In other words, they thought they could adopt some tenets of humanism while upholding the Christian faith. Considering their plight, their struggle for survival and recognition, we can understand their move, but as a result the French heirs of the Reformation were tempted to practice a modern version of the syncretism that continually threatened both the people of Israel and the Church since its very beginnings.

In fact, this alliance was the root, the beginning of the doctrinal, ethical, and spiritual confusion and decline we are witnessing in society and culture as well as in many historical Churches, Christian universities and theological institutions today. To seek such a synthesis, such a compromise, is to seek to conform to the cultural climate of the age and to contribute to the secularization of society. Of course, there are points of contact between the two world views and human wisdom offers profound insights; truth is welcome wherever it comes from. But such a move was (and still is) suicidal, for a God-centred world and life view and a human-centred philosophy are incompatible (2 Tim 3:4-5)! Unfortunately, this cultural climate is still dominant at the beginning of the 21st Century. It is illustrated for example by the decision of the United Protestant Church of France, which includes both Reformed and Lutheran communities, at its National Synod in May 2015, to allow same-gender couples who have been married civilly to receive the blessing of the local Church. The ideology of pluralism within Christianity as



it bears on its world and life view and on its core doctrines sooner or later leads to pluralism in vital ethical issues. Truth matters, the unity and diversity of truth matters, for it is rooted in the very character of the triune God and his revealed Word. He is the ultimate authority before whom both reason and Church councils are called to bow!

## **2. What are the prevailing worldviews/mind sets which drive the current anti-Christian bias?**

### *Secularization*

The French philosopher, Luc Ferry, who also recognizes the major influence of Christianity on Western Civilization, when defining the French concept of *laïcité*, argues that secularization is a product of humanism. It represents “the end of the rooting of norms and collective values in a theological realm”. Law and rights are “conceived and promulgated by and for human beings”. This is also true for the moral law “whose roots are severed from religion”. In other words man is the norm and the law. In a concluding statement the philosopher says “we believe that we can and must resolve the question of communal life and the good decisions that relate to it by ourselves without receiving orders from above”<sup>4</sup> Luc Ferry actually minimizes the contribution of the Christian Faith to some of the positive aspects of secularization<sup>5</sup>, but viewed within such a horizontal perspective it is one of major philosophical challenges to which we as Christians are called to question and reply.

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<sup>4</sup> Ferry, Ravasi, *Le Cardinal*, 97, 98.

<sup>5</sup>Another thinker, Marcel Gauchet, remarks that there exist two principles on which the legitimacy of power rests: either “God’s law,” thus “legitimacy comes from above,” or “human rights,” which means that “legitimacy.... comes from society.” He adds that “this problematic arises with the American and French revolutions at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.” In other words, God is at the very heart of the American revolution and democracy. This vertical perspective finds its origin and its inspiration, for the most part, in the Protestant reformations. In fact, it is interesting to note that in the countries where the influence of Protestantism and of Calvinism in particular, has been significant, the separation of Church and State did not hinder the influence of Christian perception of the world and of man on the life of the city. *Laïcité* is not easily reduced to an univocal scheme! M. Gauchet, “Les médias menacent-ils la démocratie?” *Médias*, n° 1. 06/2004, [gauchet.blogspot.com/.../les-mdias-menacent-ils-la-dmocratie.html](http://gauchet.blogspot.com/.../les-mdias-menacent-ils-la-dmocratie.html) (consulté le 30 janvier 2017).

*Advanced modernity*

We are in the midst of a major cultural crisis related to the rapid secularization of France and of Europe, to the breakdown of modernity and the forsaking of the Christian Faith. This has led to the erosion of the civil consensus that makes communal life in society possible and brought about divisions, violence and conflict. As Os Guinness says “the West as a whole is in crisis, for the present moment has falsified the utopian Enlightenment hope that secular progressives placed in history”.<sup>6</sup> He understands the present moment of history as a time of transition toward a post-Christian world (West) qualified as “advanced modernity” for it better captures the “entire spirit, systems and structures of modernity viewed as the child of the forces of the industrial revolution and globalization.”<sup>7</sup> To speak of advanced modernity thus implies that its development is an extension of modernity in so far as man remains the measure of all things. Sure enough reason’s hegemony has been questioned especially in its pretention to present a coherent world and life view and to establish the meaning of life, but it continues to reign in the spheres of what is measurable such as science, technology and the world-wide-web. Thus even the “fluid cultures”, dependent on electronic communication, are the product of advanced modernity. Such a mindset crosses the social and cultural boundaries and is mainly characterized by “an absence of idealism, a reluctance to involve oneself and irreverence towards authority and the sacred.”<sup>8</sup> The cultural and social consequences are significant. Jerram Barrs mentions five<sup>9</sup> :

*The rejection of truth.* Reason being unable to give us a conclusive knowledge on anything, objective and absolute truth doesn’t exist. Within an essentially pluralist environment personal and subjective truth alone has its rightful place.

*The rejection of all forms of authority.* “Neither book, nor idea, nor a person, nor a social organization can claim or is worthy of respect”.<sup>10</sup> We live within a social climate where irreverence is one of the “high values”. But without the recognition of competent authority everything is equal and the very notion of critical evaluation is meaningless.

*The acceptance of moral relativism.* “As there are no more objective norms allowing one to evaluate and judge everything,”<sup>11</sup> no one has the right

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<sup>6</sup> Guinness, *Renaissance*, 18, 19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Jerram Barrs, ‘Post Modernity: “Understanding our Generation’s Thought Life” (Part 2)’, *Covenant Magazine*, December 1997, 16.

<sup>9</sup> J. Barrs, *ibid.*, 16, 17.

<sup>10</sup> J. Barrs, *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem.*

to dictate to another person what he must do or not do. Divine transcendence or human universals being set aside as ultimate reference points, the human being left to himself is now alone to decide what is good or evil, be it in conscience or by majority vote, by an elite taking of power or by the rise of a soft or brutal dictatorship!

*The practice of idolatry.* The nature of the human being is such that his creational calling is to be in relationship with his ultimate Vis-à-vis. When man ceases to believe in God he does not believe in nothing but in something else. In order to find meaning he needs to position himself in the world, he needs a reference point. Since the heavens are seemingly empty and silent the human creature has no other option but to make false gods, to find meaning in sophisticated idols such as success, power, riches and sex, (Dt. 17.14-20). In so doing he becomes less than humane (Ps 115).

*The commitment to a post-Christian neo-paganism.* Thus man being religious, contemporary idolatry fosters a form of spirituality based essentially on personal experience and feelings seeking to be in tune with the energy of the universe. It is inherently impersonal for the emphasis is on fusion with the spirit of the world rather than communication and communion with the infinite and personal God, creator of the universe. Unfortunately this type of spirituality is also advocated by some Christian movements who downplay the importance of truth.<sup>12</sup>

A quotation of J-A Miller well summarizes the characteristics of the new era of collaboration we are entering: “a different line is gradually supplanting the former exclusive stance (the patriarchal discourse): innovation instead of tradition; the attraction to the future, rather than to the weight and the chains of the past; network (horizontal) rather than hierarchy (vertical) and femininity taking precedence over virility. The thrust is not on preserving an order of things within immutable limits, but on standing within a transformational flux, continually pushing back its limits”<sup>13</sup>. Such is the challenge of the “fluid cultures” of advanced modernity we need to understand and answer.

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<sup>12</sup> One can mention as examples some forms of evangelical and charismatic spirituality as well as more liberal models such as the Swiss theologian, Lytta Basset’s approach, and Process Theology.

<sup>13</sup> Interview of J.-A. Miller entitled *Lacan, professeur de désir*, Le Point N° 2125, 2013, 120-122.

*Radical Islam*

In recent years France has experienced some disastrous events<sup>14</sup>. For all these attacks, ISIS claimed responsibility. These dramatic events have left the French population utterly shocked and stunned. Since then we sense within French society a degree of tension, hostility, and anger, as well as some friction and potential conflict between different factions of society. An example is yellow jackets/vests who began public demonstrations in December 2018 and are still walking the streets of the major cities of France.

It is interesting to note that all the places that were attacked had symbolic overtones as they represented significant aspects of French culture, life, and values: freedom of speech and conscience; a life-style involving human relations, leisure, and entertainment; the Jewish community; the law-enforcement institution; Independence Day; and Christianity embodied by the Roman Catholic Church. In the light of these events and independently of their radical aspects it is difficult not to think in terms of a clash of cultural values, between the transcendent world and life view of the Islam faith and the contemporary mindset based on the horizontal world and life view inherited from the Enlightenment. The Islamic world and life view is different from the Christian world and life view. While Christianity maintains a clear distinction between church and state (cf. Luke 20:20-26), Islam does not. As the Lebanese Maronite patriarch, Bechara Raï, says, "Muslims don't separate Religion and State."<sup>15</sup>

### **3. & 4. How can Christians facilitate spiritual and intellectual transformation, and how can we show the relevance of divine truth for every aspect of life and culture?**

*The inadequacy of humanism*

To be sure, the French are aware of the cultural crisis we are experiencing and the challenges it represents, but are they willing to follow Ecclesiastes recommendation: "When times are good be happy, but when times are bad, consider" ("look," Eccl 7:14a). When times are evil, it is time to observe, to consider, to ponder, and to reflect on what is actually happening and on its meaning as well as on the dignity, the fragility, and wickedness of the human heart.

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<sup>14</sup> In 2015 Paris suffered two major series of terrorist attacks which killed 149 persons and wounded many more; in 2016 three more terrorist acts took place, causing the death of 88 people and the injury of many others.

<sup>15</sup> Raï, *Entretiens*, 49, 65.

Our generation, depending on the circumstances, believes it is appropriate to use force (police/army), to appeal to education and social action to alleviate the painful consequences of the present upheaval and unrest. It takes for granted the goodness of the human creature and down plays his fragility and wickedness. As a consequence it totally underestimates the impact that religions and their sets of values have on the mindset and the fabric of societies. In fact this is not surprising, for humanism—in considering religious faith, including Christianity, as unreal, as a mere speech event, and as fiction—neglects an important aspect of reality, the supernatural invisible world. Humanism is thus ill-equipped to handle the present crisis of modernity, to understand advanced modernity, not to mention Islam, with their emphasis on spirituality and religion. It (humanism) is therefore unable to respond to these movements appropriately. It is of crucial importance that these aspects of the present turmoil be addressed.

#### *The Christian involvement*

That is why it is of paramount importance for Christians to get involved in the debate and in offering practical and concrete solutions just like Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylonia. How can they do this? By a careful analysis, understanding and critical appreciation of the cultural climate and an appropriate and balanced response to the challenges that represent secularization, advanced modernity and the all-inclusive world view of Islam. In so doing Christians can show with tact, conviction and respect how the Christian world and life view takes into account and deals with fundamental aspects of reality that are not taken into consideration and are left unanswered by humanism in its diverse contemporary variations. In other words it can seek to offer a well-argued presentation on how the personal divine truth as revealed in Scripture sheds light and bears, on all aspects of life in society, including those vital issues at hand. Communication is the key word as we relate to our generation. We are called to adapt to and to adopt the cultural language(s) of our contemporaries as we share with them the uniqueness and the relevance of the Christian Faith and as we work towards its renaissance.

#### *Renaissance*

But are we convinced that the best answer to the unprecedented crisis we are going through is indeed the renaissance of the Christian faith both in France and in the rest of Europe, or are we resigned and overcome by the fatalism of history? Indeed without a God-given renaissance there will be no significant and lasting revival and reformation. That is why prayer is so important in the lives of individuals and human communities.

G. K. Chesterton made a significant and witty point when he wrote: “At least five times the Faith has to all appearances gone to the dogs. In each

of these five cases, it was the dog that died.”<sup>16</sup> One can think of two of these instances: the Augustinian moment and the Reformation. With regards to the latter, Lucien Carrive, in a study on classic English Protestantism, shows us the way forward:

“The break that matters to us is not a break in the future and in the imagination, it is not the break between this world and the world to come; it is the break *hic et nunc* between sin and obedience. As of now, we must use all our gifts, be they of our body, mind, fortune, our social status, our spiritual gifts, such as they are. As of now, we must know how to recognize “the sight of a new and better world in this olde bad one.”<sup>17</sup>

While avoiding speculation about the future, Guinness does mention three factors that will shape the coming world:

Globalization with its trends, interactions, and challenges the Christians cannot ignore.

“Whether (or not) the worldwide Christian Church recovers its integrity and effectiveness and demonstrates a faith that can escape cultural captivity and prevail under the conditions of advanced modernity.”<sup>18</sup>

God is “sovereign over the course of history and the rise and fall of powers.” This, of course, remains unknown to us, but we can be sure that the future “lies in God’s good and strong hands,”<sup>19</sup> in his faithfulness, justice and love. Because of these last two factors, Guinness is able to avoid the pitfalls of nostalgia and of despair, and to lay hold of a Christ-centred hope. He then goes on to specify the challenge Christians are to meet in the advanced modern world:

“It is, I believe, that we trust in God and his Gospel and move out confidently into the world, living and working for a new Christian renaissance, and thus challenge the darkness with the hope of the Christian faith, believing in an outcome that lies beyond the horizon of all we can see and accomplish today and thus challenge the darkness with the hope of the Christian faith.”<sup>20</sup>

With the talents God has given us, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word, we are called to participate actively in the divine work of reformation and transformation. As J. Gresham Machen said so well, “human institutions are really to be molded, not by Christian principles accepted by the unsaved, but by Christian men; the true transformation of society will come by the influence of those who have themselves been redeemed.”<sup>21</sup> We are not

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<sup>16</sup> Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, 260–61, quoted by Guinness, *Renaissance*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Carrive, “Royaume de Dieu,” 42. The last phrase of the quotation is in Old English. Translation mine.

<sup>18</sup> Guinness, *Renaissance*, 25–26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–27.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>21</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923), 158.

working for the implementing of an utopia nor of an ideal human society, whatever its ideology, but for the furthering of the Kingdom of God that will only be fully manifested when Jesus, the Messiah, returns in glory. Seeking to be faithful stewards, all our undertakings, as we see to our daily activities, are only the fore-shadow of the city we anticipate with much expectation.

### Conclusion

In concluding I would like to share with you the way the chancellor, Angela Merkel, responded to an auditor who had challenged her in a public meeting with regards to the issues related to the large Muslim migrant population in Germany. When giving a lecture at the University of Bern, Switzerland, in September 2015 a "middle-aged woman rose from the audience to ask what the Chancellor intended to do to prevent the 'Islamization' process with so many Muslims entering the country," Merkel's response was most interesting. She rightly emphasized that "fear has never been a good advisor, neither in our personal lives nor in our societies." She went a step further by saying that "cultures and societies that are shaped by fear will without doubt not get a grip on the future." She also added, and this was both unexpected and amazing, that the answer really is in our "courage to be Christians, to be able to create dialogue (with Muslims), to return to Church, and to read and study the Bible." Thus the arrival of many refugees in Europe and the debates this provokes are an opportunity "to reconsider our own roots." If we want to dialogue and speak of ourselves, this requires that we know and understand ourselves.<sup>22</sup>

This brings to my mind as we close the following exhortation of Paul: *"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Tim 2.1-4).

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<sup>22</sup> Merkel, "Courageous," lines 1–27.

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## Part Two, Challenge to the Church

### Andrew McGowan\*

*\*Dr. Andrew McGowan, is Director of the Rutherford Centre for Reformed Theology and Professor of Theology in the University of the Highlands and Islands. This paper is part two of a seminar presented at the World Reformed Fellowship, General Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia in August, 2019. In this second part, Dr. McGowan looks at the influence of European culture on the church in Europe, hence Challenge to the Church.*

In this short presentation, I want to address four questions:

Why have many European Christians lost confidence in God's Word?

Why do Christians so easily capitulate to the consensus of opinion within society?

Has the disunity of the church and the failure to speak with one voice been a factor?

How should Reformed Christians respond to the situation?

#### **1. Why have many European Christians lost confidence in God's Word?**

Europe, perhaps more than other parts of the world, has been subject to sustained challenges to the formerly prevailing Christian orthodoxy, for over 150 years. Pierre has just outlined some of these in the first part of this seminar. There have been philosophical challenges, theological challenges, scientific challenges, cultural and social challenges and much more.

Christians believe in an invisible, sovereign, Creator God. We believe in the supernatural and in miracles, we believe that God became a man in the person of his eternal Son, we believe that the Son of God was raised from the dead, we believe that he will return one day to usher in a day of judgement with heaven or hell to follow. The prevailing message today, however, is that

such beliefs have no place in the modern world. Such beliefs, we are told, were prevalent in all primitive societies but sensible, educated people today do not believe in such things.

Religion is tolerated in Europe but only where it does not make exclusivist claims. In other words, pluralism is the prevailing worldview. The basic argument is that all religions are essentially the same and individuals who want to practice religion should be tolerated, unless their views challenge the views of others. If, however, anyone makes exclusivist claims, such as the claim that Jesus Christ is the only way we can come to God, then immediately the attitude of authority changes. In some parts of Europe, governments are developing equality and diversity legislation which is being embedded in employment law and is being used to criminalise the views of Christians, including, for example, schoolteachers who do not wish to promote the LGBT+ agenda in the classroom, midwives who are unwilling to participate in abortions and adoption agencies who refuse to place children with same-sex parents. Some governments are also developing 'hate speech' legislation, which again has been used against Christians.

These challenges have particularly affected our young people. They have been taught at school (either explicitly or implicitly) that science has disproved the Bible, that the old ways of their parents were superstitious and backward and that the way to progress in our modern world is to abandon religion. They have also been affected by the peer pressure of their non-Christian friends and have often found themselves as a tiny minority in their schools, colleges and workplaces. The influence of social media is huge, encouraging young people towards beliefs and lifestyles which are far from being Christian.

When our people are exposed to this prevailing, secular, anti-Christian agenda every day, on television, in the media, on social media, in the classroom and in conversations with so-called 'enlightened' friends, the pressure can be very great. In the face of this onslaught, many Christians have grown weary of the battle, especially when their own children and grandchildren no longer believe or attend church. Many have now lost confidence in the orthodox Christianity in which they were brought up. So when the challenges have come, Christians have often felt unable to maintain their convictions concerning the authority of God speaking by his Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. It has been easier to question, to modify or even to abandon their earlier convictions about Scripture.

In the face of all this, churches have also lost their nerve. Many Christian denominations have been taken over by those who are willing to ignore the plain teaching of Scripture, in order to promote a deeply liberal social, moral and theological agenda.

It is very clear that, unless we can convince people that the Scriptures in their entirety are ‘the Word of God written’, as the *Westminster Confession of Faith* says and that God speaks through them by his Holy Spirit as much today as when they were first written, then the trends across Europe will continue.

## **2. Why do Christians so easily capitulate to the consensus of opinion within society?**

In Europe in the last 50 years, society has had more impact on the church than the church has had on society. In the United Kingdom, for example, there was a day when our laws and our culture were firmly established on a biblical basis. There was an agreed Christian moral code which provided the undergirding of our society. Even those who were not Christians accepted the moral code drawn from Scripture as the basis for our society. Politicians and others who broke that moral code were expected to resign and normally did so. That is no longer the case.

About 30 years ago I heard the late Sir Frederick Catherwood, former Vice President of the European Parliament, argue that Britain could become a totalitarian state within a relatively short time. I was astonished at this until he spelled out his most compelling argument. Essentially, he said that where there was no agreed moral and spiritual basis for a society, then governments themselves would decide what was good or bad, true or false, right or wrong. This would have the added consequence that there would then be no publicly recognised standard against which politicians and the parliaments could be judged.

Not for the first time, Catherwood proved prophetic. Today, the British government believes that it has the right to define marriage in law, irrespective of the fact that marriage is part of the very fabric of human society as created by God and as such is not a matter for meddling politicians. In addition, we see parliaments legislating for morality on other matters. In the debates on abortion, on homosexuality, on cloning and on other key ethical issues today, the decisions are made largely on the basis of scientific possibilities and majority vote. The Christian faith having been relegated to the margins of society, morality has been weakened and compromised. There is no agreed moral standard against which to make judgements and so governments do as they please.

The problem is that the churches have capitulated in the face of this change in society and have largely followed meekly on behind. The most striking example of this in recent years has been the number of churches who have been prepared to change their theological position in order to accommodate same-sex marriage.

Deeper than any one moral issue, however, is the question of the prevailing worldview. In much of Europe, the worldview is determined by the television, the newspapers and by social media. Instead of developing a Christian worldview, many churches and individual Christians have followed the prevailing worldviews within their society and culture, with all their secular premises and assumptions. Indeed, many Christians hold to the same views as their non-Christian neighbours and arrive at those views in the same way as do their neighbours. They do not work out their worldview from Scripture and from Christian theology. This is sadly true even of many in evangelical churches.

Unless Christians begin to resist the pressures and refuse to capitulate in the face of the prevailing humanist, secular culture, then Europe will never be recovered for the Gospel. The Scripture says, ‘Do not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind’.

### **3. Has the disunity of the church and the failure to speak with one voice been a factor?**

I am convinced that the weakness of Christianity in Europe (and throughout the world) is directly tied to our lack of a coherent doctrine of the church and our staggering divisions. It might well be argued that, at the Reformation, we regained a doctrine of justification by faith but lost a doctrine of the church.

The individualism, voluntarism and sectarian mentality of many Christian churches has weakened and undermined the unity of the church, for which Christ prayed. There are around 45,000 Christian denominations in the world today, as well as numerous small independent groups, sects and congregations. Is this honouring to God? Does this fulfil the prayer of Jesus that we should be ‘one’?

My own country of Scotland is a classic example of disunity, not least among Presbyterians. Following upon secessions, disruptions and re-unions in 1733, 1761, 1843, 1893, 1900, 1929, 1989 and 2000 (to mention only the most significant dates) we are left with the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland Continuing, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland, the Reformed Presbyterians, the United Reformed Church and the Associated Presbyterian Churches. This situation exists despite the fact that Scotland is a country with less than six million people. This means that in some small villages of around 1,000 people there can be as many as four Presbyterian Churches, each of them supporting a minister, a manse and a church building. It is often the case that the total number of members, when all four congregations are added together, comes to less than two hundred. It is also frequently the case that the ministers of these four churches, although serving

in different denominations, are indistinguishable theologically, with the exception of one or two denominational distinctives. Indeed, they often work happily in co-operation with one another and (in some places) even meet together for prayer and fellowship. Yet on a Sunday they go in four different directions!

Our disunity is scandalous, contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture, and our denominations are a curse, not a blessing.

#### **4. How should Reformed Christians respond to the situation?**

So, then, in the light of what I have already said, Reformed Christians and churches in Europe must recover confidence in God's Word. They must develop a Christian worldview and refuse to capitulate in the face of a prevailing secular mind-set and culture. They must work for unity, so as to demonstrate the love for one another which Christ said was the way people would know that we were his disciples.

More widely, we must return to basics. We must put worship at the heart and centre of our lives and our churches, for everyone to see. The primary duty of every Christian is to worship God in the ways he has shown us.

We must also develop and teach a Reformed theology fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and not simply echo the Reformed theology of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This is what the WRF Statement of Faith seeks to do. The danger is that, in the face of the overwhelming secular culture, we close in on ourselves. We circle the wagons, ignore the surrounding culture and create little Amish-type puritan communities, having no contact with the outside world. That would be a terrible mistake. We are called to be salt and light, we are called to mission and evangelism. We are not called to hide.

Can Europe be recovered? Of course, as those who believe in the sovereignty of God the answer must be 'yes'. Nevertheless, we must face up to the possibility that the darkness which has moved across the face of Europe is due to God's withdrawal. Could it be that Europe stands under the judgement of God and that we must wait until that time of judgement has passed, like Israel in Babylon? Europe has witnessed so much of the blessing of God in the past 500 years, not least in the Reformation and in many revivals. We have seen the Word of God powerfully preached, changing communities and even nations. Yet now the vast majority of people have turned their back on God and have forgotten the history of God's mighty acts. Perhaps things will get worse before they get better. Nevertheless, we must work and pray for a day when renewal will come to the church in Europe.

Please pray with us.





## **Global Challenges Facing Christianity: “The Health & Wealth” or “Prosperity” Gospel**

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*\*This article is a synopsis of part two of a seminar presented at the recent World Reformed Fellowship General Assembly in Jakarta in August, 2019. Fergus Macdonald was the moderator for this seminar; John MacClean of Christ College, Australia led the first part of this seminar on facing global challenges with a spirit of prayer. I led the second part as a case study of one such global challenge, namely the health and wealth or prosperity Gospel.*

### **Basic Definition**

What is the “prosperity gospel”? This teaching views financial wealth and physical well-being as evidence of God’s pleasure with the faith of believers. The Christian life is viewed as a contract between God and His people: if people have enough faith, then God will bless them and bring them prosperity and health. There are variants within this teaching, but basically that is it in a nut shell.

### **Streams of Origins**

Though there are several strains or tributaries, a broad evaluation of the movement reveals six separate streams. The first emerged out of the old holiness stream and can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century centring upon healing. Not all in this stream have fully embraced the modern phenomena, but there is a historic root here. The second stream comes from Mind Power Teaching and is rooted in the teaching of E.W. Kenyon; here evangelical theology mixes with mind power thinking. The third stream is rooted in utilitarian and pragmatic thought. We see it manifested in our cultural captivity to consumerism. The fourth stream is post-World War Two Pentecostalism;

this once marginalized group of Christians began to focus on prosperity, blessing and contractual theology. The movement centred on many healing evangelists. The fifth stream is the Word of Faith stream of the 1970s. The sixth stream is from the majority world and is a syncretism of Christianity, African Traditional Religion and/or Asian Shamanism. Variants on all of the above also can be found with a “soft prosperity Gospel” approach – evangelicals who don’t even know they are dabbling with prosperity gospel teachings.

### **Overall Characteristics**

General characteristics have emerged from the prosperity gospel movement: such as, the language of empowerment, a stress upon Christ’s work as healer and liberator from financial bondage, the abundant life, giving and being blessed materially, positive thinking, releasing your potential, pyramidal church governance, and now soft prosperity. We should also note with thanksgiving that there are some within this movement who are emerging out of such teaching and embracing a more historic evangelical theology and ministerial model.

### **Scriptures**

The scriptures are at the heart of this movement but with a high selectivity. The constant scriptural emphasis is upon the Abrahamic covenant as a means to physical blessing; the prayer of 3 John 2, “*Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well*” (NIV) is a constant and many other scriptural references – from the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:10, ‘*Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request*’ to Deut 30:2-9 and Mark 10:30. The issue here is a misuse of scripture or, to state it more accurately, a failure to follow the rules of proper interpretation.

Some other scriptures which need to be studied to gain a wholistic understanding of Scripture include Mark 10:17-24 and the rich young ruler, Luke 9:57-60, and the prayer of Proverbs 30:7-9 which is worthy of quoting here:

<sup>7</sup>“*Two things I ask of you, LORD;  
do not refuse me before I die:*

<sup>8</sup>*Keep falsehood and lies far from me;  
give me neither poverty nor riches,  
but give me only my daily bread.*



*<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you  
and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’  
Or I may become poor and steal,  
and so dishonour the name of my God.’ (NIV)*

These are only a few examples of how to apply a fuller interpretation to the concept of the blessings of God and seek out from all of scripture a fuller perspective.

### **Challenges**

The Prosperity Gospel has many challenges for the evangelical and Reformed community and these challenges centre upon the following:

- a de-emphasis upon the classical understanding of Christ’s atoning work;
- a materialistic idolatry;
- a lack of *sola scriptura* thinking and a replacement with an human authoritarian model;
- a failure to grasp the principle of the analogy of faith when it comes to interpreting scripture;
- both cultural and pagan syncretistic challenges;
- a return to a medieval indulgence type of religious life;
- a failure to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and His will;
- and a failure to see that scripture speaks both positively and negatively.

### **Response**

The key to responding to the false teaching of the prosperity gospel is for the Church to return to rigorous discipleship models of spiritual life and nurture in preaching, bible study, family devotions and personal spiritual formation. Our response must also impact the theological curriculum of theological colleges and seminaries whereby future Christian leaders are trained to identify and respond to this modern false teaching in its various forms whether in Africa, Asia, or Europe. Like most egregious and unbalanced “Christian” teachings, this particular false teaching can be found in past ages. Just as our forefathers identified errors or unbalanced teachings before us, so in our contemporary global context, this is one such challenge that many will be required to face today.

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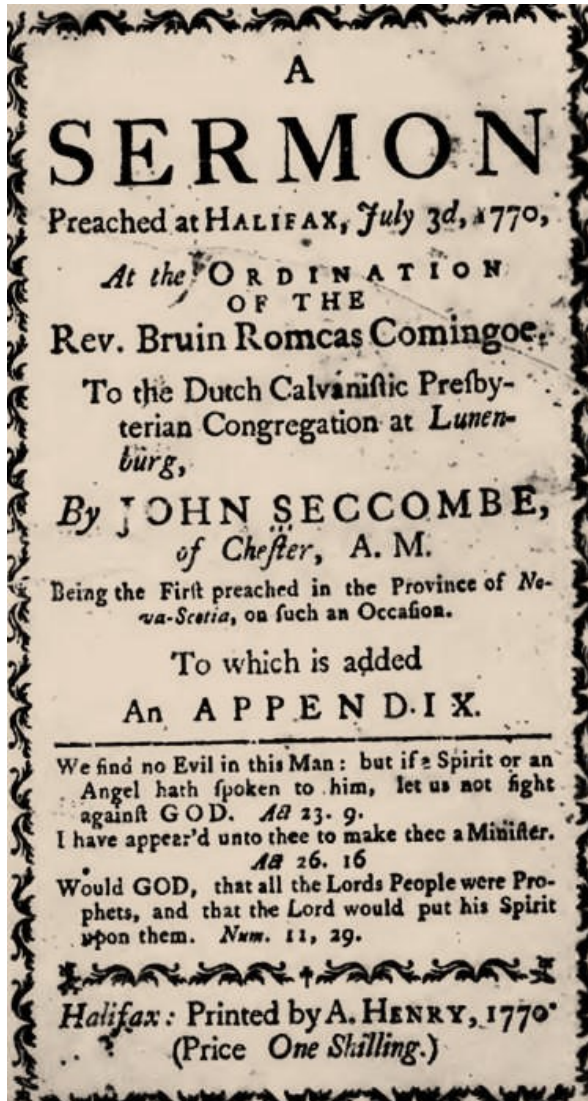
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## An Ordination Sermon

John 21:15-16

Rev. John Seccombe



*The following sermon is a most historic work as it constitutes the sermon preached on the occasion for the first evangelical Presbyterian ordination service of a minister in what was then the colony of Nova Scotia, and the first meeting of a Presbytery in Canada. This is the 250th anniversary year of that service, 3 July, 1770 which took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The person being ordained was Bruin Romcas Comingoe<sup>1</sup> who some think was born in Leeuwarden, Friesland, but it is fairly certain that he was born in Groningen, the Netherlands in 1723 or moved there as an infant. He came to Nova Scotia in 1752 and in 1770 was examined and ordained to be the minister of the German Calvinistic Presbyterian Church<sup>2</sup> in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. He would serve there until his death in 1820. Rev. Comingoe had (it seems) six preaching points in his charge. An assistant (Rev. Johann Adam Moschell) came out from Germany to help in 1818-1819 and then succeeded him as the minister. Rev. Comingoe served 39 years as the minister of the congregation in Lunenburg and received high commendations for his ministry. The preacher for the special/ad hoc Presbytery (“Scripture Presbytery”) meeting in 1770 was Rev. John Seccombe (1708-1792)<sup>3</sup>, then the minister for the Congregationalist and Presbyterian Church (a union congregation) in Chester, Nova Scotia and frequent preacher in Halifax at Mather’s Meeting House. This was the first such presbytery meeting ever to be convened in Canada. The Presbytery had been convened at the request of the German Reformed Congregation to the “Scotch” Presbyterians—a most fluid descriptor ethnically. The Presbytery consisted formally of Revs. John Seccombe (technically a Congregationalist), James Lyon (Presbyterian), James Murdoch (Presbyterian) and Benajah Phelps (Congregationalist). Rev. Seccombe was a Harvard graduate and his family and marital connections ran deep into New England Puritan circles with connections to Rev. Solomon Stoddard (his wife was grand-daughter to Stoddard) and Jonathan Edwards. He also was noted for inviting Rev. George Whitefield to preach for his congregation in the new town of Harvard, Mass., something which not all were in sympathy with – to have the evangelist come and preach. (Seccombe was sympathetic towards the Awakening). The Governor of the colony of Nova Scotia, Lord William Campbell, attended the ordination sermon with his commendation to the proceedings. It is thought that Rev. Seccombe had been a mentor and informal tutor of some kind to Bruin Comingoe as the two men lived beside each other in the Chester area on an island (now known as Seccombes Island). The two men were thus well acquainted and shared much together. When Rev. Seccombe died, Rev. Comingoe preached for his close friend’s funeral. As a footnote, ten months earlier (September 1769), there had been another ordination service in Nova Scotia in Yarmouth area for Rev. John Frost at Jeboque/Cheboque. This ordination service of 1769 was of a*

*different nature as it was a local church and with lay leaders only participating whereas the other of 1770 was on the basis of "a Scripture Presbytery". Rev. Frost remained three months at Chebogue before leaving to preach in Argyle.*

*This ordination sermon was published in 1770 in Halifax, Nova Scotia and in 1771 it was translated into German and published in Philadelphia for the benefit of the German Reformed Churches there.<sup>4</sup> The sermon emphasises saving grace as a prerequisite for a minister of the Gospel. The portrait of Rev. Comingoe which is included below was done about 1800 by his grandson Joseph Comingo, an artist.*

*-Jack C. Whytock, Editor*

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<sup>1</sup> Comingoe is often also spelt Comingo. Some also spell it as Camminga. He was also simply referred to as Mr. Bruin or Mr. Brown. For brief biographical information see, Henry Harbaugh, *The Fathers of the German Reformed Church in Europe and America*, vol. 2, (Lancaster, PA: J.M. Westhaeffer, 1872), 159- 172; Ronald Rompkey, "COMINGO, BRUIN ROMKES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–), accessed December 19, 2019, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/comingo\\_bruin\\_romkes\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/comingo_bruin_romkes_5E.html).

<sup>2</sup> The name does not necessarily mean that the congregation was mainly Dutch, rather think here as German/Deutsch. Very few were actually Dutch and the vast majority were German or Swiss. Comingoe being from Groningen had the benefit of also knowing both Dutch and German. He would have spoken a dialect in Groningen which would be a Low German variant at that time, early 18<sup>th</sup> century. He also was fluent in English. His congregation or congregations were not technically connected to the German Reformed Church but really became independent Presbyterian and used both German and English, then became Church of Scotland, then, Free Church of Scotland etc. Technically speaking they were established in 1754.

<sup>3</sup>S. Bugey, "SECCOMBE, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–), accessed December 18, 2019, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/seccombe\\_john\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/seccombe_john_4E.html). Seccombe is also variously spelt as Seecomb or Secombe. Also, Alexandra L. Montgomery, "An Unsettled Plantation: Nova Scotia, New Englanders and the Creation of a British Colony, 1759-1776" (Unpublished MA thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 2012). Seccombes Island is named after him.

<sup>4</sup> John Seecombe, A Sermon preached at Halifax, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1770, at the Ordination of the Rev. Bruin Romcas Comingoe, To the Dutch Calvinistic Presbyterian Congregation of Lunenburg. (Halifax, NS: Henry Printer, 1770): John Seecombe, Eine Predigt gehalten zu Halifax den 3ten July, 1770, an die Hochdeutsch-Refromirte Gemeinde zu Lüneburg, beg der Einsetzung dewes Ehrw, Herrn Bruin Romcas Comingoe, durch Mag. John Seecombe, von Chester...(Philadelphia, PA: Henry Miller, 1771). [Hochdeutsch means High German]

## An Ordination Sermon: John 21:15–16

<sup>15</sup>*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

<sup>16</sup>*He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, desirous of confirming his disciples in the belief of his resurrection from the dead, (upon the truth and certainty whereof depended all their hopes of salvation) was pleased, after several other appearances to them in Jerusalem, to show himself again in Galilee, where he had appointed to meet them, and found them employed in fishing (Matt. 28:10). But they having caught nothing the preceding night, our Saviour was pleased in a *miraculous* way to make provision for them, and did probably eat and drink with them, not to satisfy his hunger, but to confirm the truth of his Resurrection (John 21:12-14).

*So when they had dined, Jesus saith unto Simon Peter, Simon Son of Jonas lovest thou me more than these?* That is, more than thy nets; than thy fish; than thy friends that are here about thee; more than the rest of my disciples love me? For so he had professed, when he told our Saviour, “tho’ all men should be offended because of thee, yet I will never be offended.”

Here upon he modestly asserts the truth and sincerity, not the degree of his love. *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee, etc.*

In the words of my text we may take notice more especially of these three things:

The person spoken of, and that is Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, one commissioned by Him to preach the gospel (2 Peter 1:1).

The testimony of his own conscience, concerning his love to his Lord and master. He appeals to Christ for the truth of it, “*Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee*”. The love of God was now shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit which was given to him (Romans 5:5).

Christ's approbation of him, relative to the work of the ministry, and encouragement to do discharge of it, from the consideration of this love; this divine principle implanted in him, which includes a regenerating change of being born of the Spirit and being made a partaker of the Divine nature. The apostle having thus asserted his love, Christ hereupon sayeth unto him, "*Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep.*"

In which words, I conceive, an implicit intimation of the excellency and great necessity of sanctifying grace, in those who are employed in the work of the ministry; as they are thereby best qualified to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ, and teach others the doctrines of grace. Therefore, as Mr. Matthew Henry observes:

*Before Christ would commit His sheep to Simon Peter's care, he asked him, "Lovest Thou me?" Those that do not love Christ will never truly love the souls of men, nor will naturally care for their state as they should; nor will that minister love his work that doth not love His Master."*

The doctrinal truth, which I shall take under consideration at this time, is this, namely, that it is a great advantage unto and a very necessary qualification for such as are employed in the work of the gospel ministry, that they be endowed with sanctifying grace; a principle of love to Christ. This doctrine I shall attempt to illustrate briefly, and will great plainness, under the following propositions, namely:

'Tis the will of God, that there should be an order of men to preach the Word, and carry on the work of the gospel ministry.

Preaching the Word is one special part of the ministerial work. This was the business of the apostles, and for which they were separated by that commission and command of our Lord. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt 28:19) and "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And this is the office and business of the ordinary ministers of the gospel, and to be continued to the end of the world; as we learn from those words of our Saviour, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt 28:20). That is, not only His apostles, but with all His ministers successively, whom God shall qualify, and call to the work of the ministry begun in them.

Some are called unto and employed in this work.

Here I shall say something concerning a minister's call to this work. Now, as divines observe, to the due constitution of a minister, there is requisite a two-fold call. First, he must have an inward call, which consists both in gifts of the Holy Spirit, and also in the inclination of his will to use them for God's glory in this holy administration. In the ordaining of deacons in the established church [Church of England], the question is asked, "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and

administration?” The true meaning of this question, saith the learned Bishop Burnet, is this, namely, “That the motives that ought to determine a man to dedicate himself to the ministering in the church, are a zeal for promoting the glory of God, for raising the honour of the Christian religion; for the making it to be better understood, and more submitted to, etc.” And where such a temper of mind and holy dispositions of soul are found, it may truly be said, “Such are called of God”.

But “secondly. As we must have an inward call in the gifts of the Spirit of God, so likewise we must have an outward call by a solemn separation of him to his work through the imposition of hands. It is this gives him the ministerial power, and invests him with authority to dispense the ordinances of Jesus Christ, as an officer and minister of the Gospel”.

It is a great advantage unto, and a necessary qualification, for such men to be endowed with sanctifying grace; that they sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here I am briefly to observe and show, of what special advantage it is to ministers to have an experimental knowledge of a work of Divine grace in their own hearts; principle of love to Christ. And ‘tis of special advantage to ministers themselves and their hearers.

Sanctifying grace is absolutely necessary, in order to the salvation of their own souls. Hence our Saviour tells Nicodemus (a master and teacher in Israel) that unless “he were born of the Spirit he could not enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). It is moreover, a great benefit to them with respect to the work of the ministry, which they have undertaken, and that spirit and disposition of soul with which it is to be performed. As to the work itself, it consists principally in these things. He is to pray for and with his flock. He is to feed the flock; the sheep and the lambs, with wholesome food; giving to everyone “meat in due season; and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ”.

He is to instruct by catechising. To rule over the flock as pastor; and administer the sacraments of the New Testament – baptism and the Lord’s Supper. And finally, to be a good example to the flock in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Now, to render this an acceptable service in ministers, ‘tis requisite they serve God in this work with their spirits, as did the apostle Paul (Romans 1:9). “God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son.” That is with his heart and soul, with all the powers of the inward man; with a sincere and willing mind and upright intentions; sincerely aiming at the glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer, the advancement of His kingdom in the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of precious souls: the love of Christ constraining hereunto (2 Corth. 5:14).



But how can a man do these things with such an excellent spirit; if he is not born of God, and the love of God dwelleth not in Him! Not having the Spirit of Christ he is none of His, and being in the flesh cannot please God. And thus the great necessity of sanctifying grace may be argued from the nature of the work itself, and that spirit and temper of mind requisite to an acceptable discharge of the sacred function.

Moreover, sanctifying grace is of great service to ministers, as it renders them more capable of promoting the noble ends of that holy calling, namely, the glory of God and salvation of souls. To instance a few particulars:

Experimental religion, or acquaintance with the truth and power of sanctifying grace wonderfully excites and engages ministers to the utmost of their power in teaching others what they themselves have seen and heard; as Peter and John declare they were excited to do (Acts 4:20).

The Spirit of the Lord gives them courage to dispense the Word of the Lord faithfully. (Acts 4:13; 28:31; Romans 1:15,16).

Such are more likely to be kept sound in the faith (1 John 2: 20, 27).

They are hereby furnished with a Divine skill of special application in particular cases; to comfort godly men; to speak a word in season to him that is weary, and to comfort others by the comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God (Isaiah 50: 4; 2 Cor. 1:4; Job 33: 22-24).

They are more able to direct men in the way to Christ (Acts 16:17).

They are more able to distinguish between a false and a true work of the Spirit, and to know the state of their flock (1 Cor. 2:12ff).

Experimental religion fits and disposes a minister to be a shining example of piety to the flock and so not only to preach faithfully, but to give a living transcript of it in his life; and consequently, is more likely to win souls to Christ (Matt. 5:16; Titus 2: 11-12; 1 Tim. 4:12,16).

Some having not arrived at the relish of the doctrines of grace, do suppress them in their preaching, and are altogether on morality. If any are converted under their ministry (which very rarely happens) it is very usual that they are forced to desert it to find richer and sweeter pasture for their souls. "As new born babes desiring the sincere milk of the Word, that they may hereby grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). "For what is the chaff to the wheat?", saith the Lord (Jeremiah 23:28).

Finally, the great advantage and benefit of a converted ministry may be further argued from the special success usually attending their labours, above those of other men.

It is commonly observed, that God most usually owns and crowns the labourers of such with success. Those whom He makes wise unto salvation, He makes wise to win souls; and turn many to righteousness.

I might have enlarged on all these particulars, but the naming them may suffice, with what has been offered for evincing the propositions under consideration.

It remains then, that I improve and apply these truths suitably to the present occasion and circumstances of my hearers. And from what has been said we learn:

That a godly minister is a very great blessing to a people. As such, God has promised to give pastors according to His heart, who shall feed His people with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15). And He is furnishing and sending them forth such from time to time for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4: 8-14), in compassion to the souls of men, that they may not be as sheep having no shepherd (Matt. 9:36; 2 Chron. 36:15).

That it must needs be a heavy judgement of God upon a people, when, in the conduct of His holy, just and wise providence, He permits them to choose and settle an unregenerate minister.

Those who are under the conduct of such an unexperienced minister are in great danger of losing their souls. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14)...

God may feed His people (says Bishop Hopkins), as He did Elijah by a raven; and make a cold breath kindle the sparks of grace in the hearts of others, and blow it up into a flame. But yet it is far more comfortable and profitable to the people to sit under a minister, who shall go before them in example as well as in doctrine; such a one who speaks from his heart is most likely to speak unto it: and having himself experienced the way of holiness, can more favourably recommend them to the acceptance of his flock.

Surely then, there can be no deprecation in the litany more necessary than this, namely "From unregenerate ministers, good Lord, deliver us".

We hence learn who are best qualified for the work of the gospel ministry. Namely, such as endowed with the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit. Gifts without grace will not do, they must go together. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal..." (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

And on this account it is justly affirmed, that a good experienced Christian endowed with the ordinary ministerial gifts, is better qualified for a preacher to sinful men, than an angel from heaven. For although we must allow angels to be creatures of much greater sagacity and wisdom than men, yet they have never experienced the workings of a corrupt nature within; they never knew what it was to endure the Divine desertion, or have the light of God's countenance hid from them, etc.

And therefore can't be supposed to speak so feelingly and experimentally, if so intelligibly, about those things as an experienced

minister, who has felt them in his own soul. Such knowledge is too wonderful for angels, it is high, they cannot attain unto it. And this treasure being committed to such earthen vessels, serves to set forth, and make the power and wisdom of God more conspicuous when it proves effectual for the conversion of sinners. (2 Cor. 4:7).

But it is time, as a conclusion of the whole, that I address myself to the person on whom our hands are to be laid; to the people who have made choice of him for their pastor; and finally, to the whole assembly convened on this occasion.

And in the first place,

*Dear Sir,* You are now engaging in a work, in itself of the greatest importance to the souls of men, and attended with so much difficulty, as made the Apostle Paul to cry out, “Who is sufficient for these things?”. We are sensible, you must labour under peculiar disadvantages, as you have not been favoured with a liberal education.

But from a long acquaintance<sup>5</sup>, I charitably hope you have, by the grace of God, attained the knowledge of the holy, which is understanding and consequently, the Lord hath in the best sense given you the tongue of the learned. (Isa. 50:4) “For who teacheth like Him?” (Job 36:22; Luke 24:32, 45).

And we trust, that love to Christ (that Teacher who came from God) and the souls of men, has constrained you to undertake this business, unto which you are wholly to give yourself.

You are to be employed by the Great Shepherd in feeding the sheep and lambs of the flock, which He has purchased with His own blood. Now then, supposing Christ putting the question to you, as He did to Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” And if the love of God be not now so shed abroad in your heart, as you can say, as he did, “Lord Thou knowest that I love Thee”; yet can you say to Him, “Lord, I think I love Thee; I hope and trust, that I do sincerely love Thee, and I desire to love Thee more”? And then, as the effect of this love to Christ, do you find a love to souls, and a willingness to spend and be spent in the service of Christ, and of precious souls?

If so, thank God and take courage. For says Christ, “My grace is sufficient for thee; and His strength is made perfect in our weakness”. (2 Cor. 12:9).

Let me therefore in the words of the apostle, beseech you to grow in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And with the knowledge feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost is now making you the

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<sup>5</sup> Mr. Br. Comingoe, has been a constant attendant upon my ministry upwards of six years.

overseer. Go forth in the strength of the Lord. And the Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.

And among all the subjects with which you feed the people of God, let not the true Bread of Life be forgotten. Let a crucified Christ be the very soul and centre both of your study and preaching. Be sure to have a special regard to the genuine doctrines of grace, as the very salt and soul of your sermons, they will be putrefied things without them. These doctrines will be the life of your ministry; nor can the power of godliness ever be maintained without them. The loss of these truths will render a ministry insipid and unfruitful. We have an excellent compendium of these doctrines in the Larger Catechism composed by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster AD 1647. And next to the Holy Scriptures, probably, a better and more needful book is not to be found in the universe. I therefore advise you to acquaint yourself well with those forms of sound words.

Catechising will take up a considerable part of your time; which will be well spent; for it will serve to render your preaching much more profitable.

Finally, be diligent in your Master's business: carefully improving those talents with which he has entrusted you; for He requires no more at your hands. He that improved his two talents, was equally approved by his Lord and master as he who had improved his ten; and therefore, said to each of them, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:22-23). Be thou therefore faithful unto death, and He will give you a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

I now turn myself to the representatives of the Dutch Calvinist congregation at Lunenburg.

Brethren and beloved in Christ.

Behold here, the man, who this day is to be separated to the work of the gospel ministry among you. A man, not imposed upon you without your approbation and consent; but the man of your choice.<sup>6</sup> And upon whom the hearts of the people are set; the man whom you have a right to call unto, and employ in this service; that you may worship God in that way, which to you appears most agreeable to His Word. For this cause and purpose He hath quitted his secular employments.<sup>7</sup> Thus Simon Peter and Andrew left their nets

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<sup>6</sup> "The laity or people in the Church of England have no right, are by no means allowed to have their candidates on approbation. Their business is to receive and peaceably submit to anyone whom the honourable society sends them. And should the people dislike their missionary ever so much upon hearing him, they can't give him much uneasiness."

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Bruin Comingoe had been much employed in fishing in time past.

and followed Christ that they might become fishers of men. Wherefore, receive ye him in the Lord with all gladness; and esteem him highly in love for his work sake, and be at peace among yourselves – see, that you make the great end of your attendance upon his ministry, your being made wise unto salvation.

And if he becomes the instrument of your new birth, you shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming (1 Thess. 2:19), when He shall put all those that love Him into the possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, where you shall no more need to be fed by Christ’s ministers, Word and ordinances; for the Lamb, (that Great Shepherd of the sheep) shall Himself feed you with the rich discoveries of Himself, and of His love; and shall “lead you unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes” (Rev. 7:17).

I now beg leave in the last place, to address myself to this whole assembly.

Men and Brethren,

We are convened upon a very serious occasion. And Christians of different denominations are joining in the worship of God together.<sup>8</sup> And how good and pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity? Probably we shall not all ever assemble to worship God together again, here below; but why, my hearers, why, shall we worship together in that temple which is above, where we shall be all of one heart and one way? Surely, if we love the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot be rejected [in] the Kingdom of Heaven; that Kingdom which He hath promised to “all those that love Him” (James 2:5). These shall enter in through “the gates into the city; they shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and abide forever in His tabernacle.”

But are there not many here of whom it may be truly said, “The love of God dwelleth not in them?”

And of this number are all such as are not born of God, as our Lord Himself assures us verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

Baptismal regeneration gives us no title to the Kingdom of Heaven! No! We must be born of the Spirit, by which we are made partakers of the Divine nature. Which change being instantaneous, all the graces of the Holy

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<sup>8</sup> His Excellency the Right Honourable Lord William Campbell, Governor of the Province, with a number of his Majesty’s Council honoured this assembly with their presence, who, with the several denominations of Christians present on this occasion, expressed their satisfaction with the transactions of the day.

Spirit, are then implanted in us at once; such as faith and love, fear of God, etc. So that unless we are born of God and become new creatures in Christ, we cannot be said to love the Lord Jesus Christ and consequently have not title to the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him.

And how highly so ever we may think of ourselves, the inspired apostle tells us that we are nothing (1 Corth. 13:2), that is, nothing in the eyes of God with respect to His favour and friendship; nothing as to our peace, safety and happiness. The things which accompany salvation are not to be found in us; and therefore we are nothing. Wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked (Rev. 3:17). In the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:23). And of this number are all those,

Who never saw their absolute need of Christ to save them from hell, and to bring them to heaven, by His meritorious sufferings and death.

Who do not, above all things, desire to promote and advance that Kingdom of Christ in the world, which consists in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Of this number are those who pay no due regard to God's Holy Sabbaths. Who love not the "habitation of God's house, the place where His honour dwelleth" (Psalm 26:8). Who call not the "Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord and honourable; but do their own ways, find their own pleasure, etc." How dwelleth the love of God in such! They could not be happy if they were to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Such are those, who instead of loving, are despisers of good men, such as fear God; especially good ministers, whom Christ sends in compassion to the souls of men, for their salvation.

Such are those, who walk after the flesh, and mind earthly things; and live without any serious intercourse with God by prayer; which is living without God in the world.

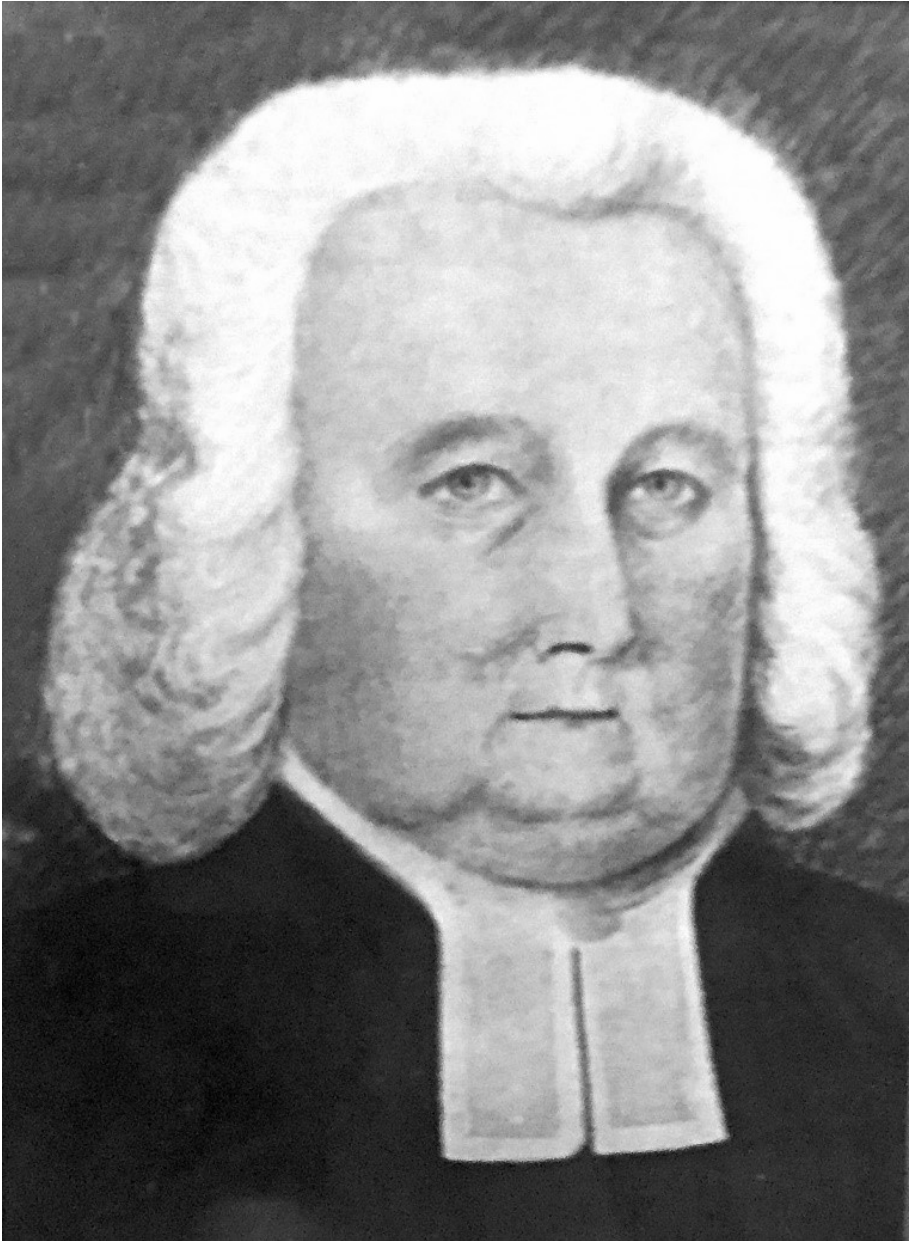
Such are those, who having a form of godliness, deny the power of it. Such as deride and reproach the Spirit of God in His graces which He bestows upon his people – scoffing at those who speak of communion with God, spiritual experiences, desertions, and things of the like nature.

Now, of all these, it may be said, that they have no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God, but the wrath of God abideth on them; and they deserve to be banished from the presence of the Lord forever. For, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maranatha (1 Corth. 16:22). That is, let him be accursed of God, the Lord cometh to execute vengeance on him. How awful this sentence! How dreadful your condition! Nothing remaineth but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (Hebrews 10:27).

If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear (1 Peter 4:18)? “What then will ye do, O ye transgressors, when God riseth up; and when He visiteth, what will you answer Him (Job 31:14)?” To whom will ye flee for help, “when He shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not, that love not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc. (2 Thess. 1:7-9).” For the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish (Psalm 1:5,6).”

We then, who are “ambassadors for Christ, as tho’ God did beseech you by us, do now earnestly pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God (2 Corth. 5:20).” “Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord’s anger come upon you (Zeph. 2:2).” And as ye would “escape all these things that shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of Man with confidence and boldness in the day of judgement, and be found of your judge in peace (Luke 21:36),” you must lay hold on the hope set before you; even, “Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10).” So an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

FINIS



**Rev. Bruin R. Comingoe (1723-1820)**  
Portrait 1800 by Joseph Comingo (1784-1821)



# Book Reviews



## Biblical Theology

***The Miracles of Jesus: How the Savior's Mighty Acts Serve as Signs of Redemption.* Vern S. Poythress. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016, 271 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-4607-5**

This book resonates with one clear message: all miracles are signs pointing to *the* miracle of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which accomplishes redemption for all who trust in Him.

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 introduces the reality and significance of miracles. Part 2 deals with the miracles of Jesus as signs. Part 3 explains each of the twenty-eight miracle passages in Matthew. Part 4 concludes with the climax of the resurrection of Jesus and its application.

The thesis of miracles as signs of redemption is convincingly established from the explanations of the miracles in John's Gospel. The miracles are signs that manifest Jesus' glory and challenge witnesses to believe in Him (e.g., Jn 2:11, 23; 7:31; 12:37). Thus, John concludes: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:30-31, ESV).

Poythress then applies Edmund P. Clowney's triangle which he developed as a tool to interpret types in the Old Testament, to interpret the miracles of Jesus. In Clowney's triangle the *type* ("an earthly symbol of a heavenly truth, pointing forward to a fulfillment") is the symbol (S). A vertical arrow labelled "Symbolic Reference" points to the truth symbolized (T<sup>1</sup>). A horizontal arrow labelled "History of Revelation" points from T<sup>1</sup> to T<sup>n</sup>, the climactic fulfilment of the truth in Christ. Thus, a diagonal arrow from S to T<sup>n</sup> is labelled "Typological Reference" (pp. 65-66). Poythress's essential argument is that the miracle of the death and resurrection of Jesus should be recognised as the revelation-historical climax and typological fulfilment to which every miracle points beyond its immediate physical effect and contextual symbolic meaning because every miracle is a sign of the arrival of

the kingdom of God. The miracles, the narrative of each of the Gospel accounts, all of revelation history and all God's saving purposes – the kingdom of God – reach their climax in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Poythress first shows the appropriateness of using Clowney's triangle for two miracles in John's Gospel, and then systematically uses the same procedure for each of the miracles in Matthew's Gospel. Thus, although this makes the book repetitive, it also means that it will serve well as a reference work that may be read as required, depending on the miracle passage being studied. Throughout, Poythress enhances his clear explanations with simple, yet very effective diagrams that help the reader to fix the main points in their minds.

Besides using Clowney's triangle to explain the significance of each miracle, Poythress always adds application for today. The emphasis throughout is on the *spiritual* application of the symbolic and typological meanings of each miracle and an appeal for faith to receive the *spiritual* significance of God's miraculous redemptive power, rather than merely faith to receive the physical miracle, though of course, Poythress rightly confesses that God can still do physical miracles if He chooses. Hence, the consistent appeal is that the reader receive *spiritual* food, sight, hearing, cleansing, healing, and deliverance from paralysis, sin, death and the power of Satan by faith in Jesus Christ.

Early in the book for the miracles in John's Gospel, and in the concluding section, Poythress seeks to illustrate the pastoral relevance and application of miracles to the specific personal needs and situations of people in their everyday lives. Some of the created characters and their circumstances are perhaps a little trivial and unconvincing, but in the end the point is helpfully made.

From the beginning in presenting his thesis (p. 57), wherever the record reveals the responses of the witnesses of the miracles, and in closing almost every chapter, Poythress highlights the fact that the right response to every miracle is faith, and giving praise and glory to God (e.g., pp. 145, 166, 172, 178, 188, 195, 198-199, etc.). This is the ultimate application of each and every miracle as they display God's grace and mercy and saving purpose, and point to the miracle of the death and resurrection of Jesus (pp. 243-246).

Poythress does not waste any words. Every thought is precise. Every paragraph is carefully composed for absolute clarity. The explanation is free of technical terminology and complex argumentation. Poythress is an accomplished scholar and an excellent teacher, and as such he has given Christian scholars, pastors, students and ordinary readers a very solid and sober resource on a topic that can be controversial and is often handled without the broad perspective of the overall biblical plan of redemption. In the

dedication of the book the author reveals his intention to provide not just a scholarly book, but a resource “for pastoral ministry and counseling.” I believe he has admirably accomplished that purpose.

*Reviewed by Greg Phillips, academic registrar and senior lecturer at Mukhanyo Theological College, South Africa.*

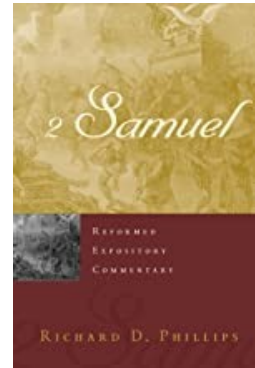
**2 Samuel. Reformed Expository Commentary. Richard D. Phillips. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018, 486 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-62995-4585**

Richard Phillips, along with being the author of this and many other volumes in this series, is also co-editor of the Reformed Expository Commentary series. He is also the senior minister of Second Presbyterian Church of Greenville, South Carolina. He is a council member of both the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and The Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology.

This volume in the Reformed Expository Series published by P&R, is one of the latest in an award-winning series of commentaries. Other volumes in this series have already been reviewed regarding their content and form in previous volumes of this journal. The Publisher states the intention for the series by saying:

All the books in the Reformed Expository Commentary series are accessible to both pastors and lay readers. Each volume in the series provides exposition that gives careful attention to the biblical text, is doctrinally Reformed, focuses on Christ through the lens of redemptive history, and applies the Bible to our contemporary setting (<https://www.prpbooks.com/series/reformed-expository-commentary>).

Regarding this volume specifically, Phillips, with the mind of the exegete and passion of a preacher, in thirty-nine chapters lays out for us the rise, fall and rising again of Israel’s great king. Phillips shows David at his best and how in his better moments he points us forward to His greater Son and how David’s kingdom would be a template for the eternal kingdom of the one who would assume his throne forever.



The author breaks the book up into three sections. Firstly, in a section entitled “The Davidic Covenant” he looks at the rise of David to the throne in Israel with all the attendant promises for him and his house. Insightfully Phillips shows us what exactly made David a great King. He was first a great servant! His heart was totally sold out for God’s glory. His greatness is found, says the author, in his remarks, “*See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the Lord dwells in tents.*” (2 Sam 7:2) Rather than resting in his successes, “*David was troubled that he, the servant, was honoured, while the symbol of God’s majesty on earth dwelt in a common tent servant.*” Likewise, Phillips states, “*Rather than sitting on our thrones, seeking to do things for ourselves, we do better to seek some special way in which we can serve Christ’s church, advance gospel missions, or alleviate the sufferings of our fellow man*” (p. 134).

However, Phillips shows that though David sought first the Kingdom of God, “*yet even godly zeal can be misplaced without clear direction from God.*” Here, Phillips highlights the importance of the Regulative Principle of Worship that states that God alone governs His worship through the Word. He writes “*...while clearly approving David’s motives, God chastens him for presuming to act without a clear word of instruction...When even these two spiritual giants (Nathan and David) reason apart from the revelation of God’s word, they get things terribly wrong.*” (p.138) He adds, “*...if we desire to be used to build God’s church, we must restrict ourselves to the message and methods that he has taught us in the Bible.*” (p. 138) What a word for today’s church!

The second section entitled “The Wages of Sin,” follows the sin with Bathsheba and the complications that that brought for his house and the future of the kingdom.

Here we see those biblical themes continue to progress. As Phillips outlines the downfall of the Kingdom, he notes that as with Adam and Eve, so with David, the end comes through the eyes. “*The first sin began with Eve’s not only listening to the serpent but also gazing upon what God had forbidden.*” *Christian men*” adds Phillips, “*must be aware not only that indulging in lust violates God’s law but also that it is a means of entrapping and ultimately devouring men*” (p. 205). He does suggest however that Bathsheba may herself have been culpable in the fall, since she bathed in view of the palace. He writes, “*This episode does teach women to be faithful stewards of their own beauty, especially as their sensual appeal may arouse the passion of men*” (p. 207).

The commentary ends with a section entitled “Epilogue” which covers David’s Song of deliverance looking back to David’s better days and the ending with a chapter entitled “The Gospel according to Samuel” dealing with his buying the threshing floor of Araunah. Phillips writes, “*Looking back over the length of 1 and 2 Samuel, we see that David’s sacrifice at the spot where the temple would be built, pointing forward to the cross of Christ, provides the*

*answer for the saving hope expressed throughout these two books”* (p. 455). He adds,

Tearful Hannah ... anticipated in her song that God would provide a king and would "exalt the horn of his anointed" (1 Sam. 2:10). The true Son for which Israel waited was only prefigured in Samuel and David, but fulfilled in the birth of Jesus...which is why the virgin Mary was able to take up Hannah's song and sing it to celebrate the news of Jesus' birth” (p. 455).

As we have come to expect from Phillips, this commentary unfolds with illustration after illustration, from modern culture and church history. One appreciates afresh what an enormous value reading broadly does for the strength of exposition.

This is more than a commentary on a book of the Bible. Due to how towering David was in the scheme of redemptive history and how richly it is supplied with Christological light, it becomes a robust biblical theology, as the themes of Creation and Fall, Kingdom and Covenant and much more are traced backward and forwards through scripture. To be familiar with this commentary is to be grounded in the sweep of the great redemptive themes of God’s word.

Thus, Phillips affirms scriptural inspiration and authority, not just by restating the confessional formulas, but proving the case in laying out the beauty of the divine handiwork on the pages of scripture.

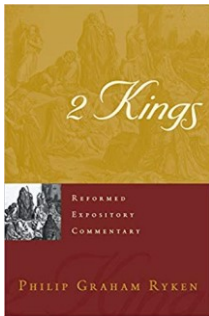
Because these chapters were first presented in sermonic form for lay people, one can utilize them on many levels from sermon preparation to devotional material.

Moreover, each commentary in the series is complemented with a robust bibliography, scripture and name index.

This massive work is worth every penny and minute spent!

*Reviewed by Kent Compton, minister of the Western Charge of The Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island.*

**2 Kings. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillip Graham Ryken. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019, 460 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-62995-446-2**



Philip Graham Ryken was Senior Minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia from 1995 until his translation to Wheaton College as President. He speaks regularly at the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. He is the author of numerous volumes in this series.

As to purpose, the series editors say, “... *we are pleased to present the Reformed Expository Commentary as a fresh exposition of Scripture for our generation in the church. We hope and pray that pastors, teachers, Bible study leaders, and many others will find this series to be a faithful, inspiring, and useful resource for the study of God’s infallible, inerrant Word* (p. ix).

As to design, they add, “*They are not exegetical commentaries...but integrated expositions of whole passages of Scripture*” (p. ix).

Some other points of approach are that “*these commentaries are unashamedly doctrinal. We are committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and catechisms ... Each volume will teach, promote, and defend the doctrines of the Reformed faith as they are found in the Bible. ...[They] are redemptive-historical in their orientation. And finally, “these commentaries are practical, applying the text of Scripture to contemporary challenges of life—both public and private—with appropriate illustrations*” (pp. ix-x).

I remember beginning a series on the historical books and while knowing that Christ is found everywhere in the Old Testament, it was nevertheless daunting to think about how I was going to make those gospel connections there. I found commentaries, precisely like the one Ryken gives us here, to be invaluable to look at these historical narratives through Gospel lenses.

In this volume, Ryken takes us through the life and times of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. With consummate exegetical and pastoral skills, Ryken can take these seeming “other-worldly” narratives and show how “the more things change the more they stay the same”! Ryken traces the steady weakening of both Kingdoms in a way that eerily parallels our contemporary society. Nevertheless, despite their spiritual declension, he offers in each narrative the clear hope of the greater King Jesus who would ultimately satisfy the needs of the people and demands of God.

He divides his exposition into two sections. The first, entitled “Elisha: The Prophet Who Followed The Forerunner” traces the first half of the book through the life of Elisha. The second, entitled “Rush to Judgement: A Tragedy of Two Kingdoms”, continues to trace the tragic results of apostasy in a



divided kingdom. In the opening account of Ahaziah falling through the lattice-work, Ryken concludes his remarks by stating:

King Ahaziah, lying on his deathbed with no chance of recovery, is a picture of a sinner without Christ. Every human being is born alive in the body but dead in the soul because of sin. From the moment we draw our first breath, we are dead in our transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1). It is almost as though we were born into this world on our deathbed, laid in a coffin instead of a cradle. Outside Christ, there remains only "a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire" (Heb. 10:27). Thus, Elijah's prognosis applies to anyone who refuses to worship Jesus: "You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die" (2 Kings 1:4)." The only way to make a full recovery from sin and death is to throw ourselves on the mercy of Christ (p. 16).

Ryken then goes on to illustrate his point by relating a story of how Mickey Mantle's close friend Bobby Richardson witnessed to him on his sickbed.

After entering the hospital room, Richardson went over to Mantle's bed and took his hand. Locking his eyes on him, Bobby said, "Mickey, I love you, and I want you to spend eternity in heaven with me." Mantle smiled and said, "Bobby, I've been wanting to tell you that I have trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior." Faced with the crushing weight of his sin against a holy God and its dire consequence – eternal separation from God – Mickey had asked for and received the forgiveness he so desperately needed (p.16).

A temptation in looking at these portions of scripture is to make a B-line to the cross and neglect the fact that, though the person and work of Christ are always in view in the end, yet there is much in the historical books that teaches us about God's dealings with the church, the unbelieving and the wider world. 1 Kings deals with a variety of people and situations that have much to teach. Ryken takes the time to do that.

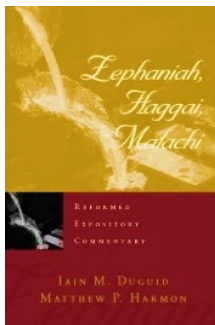
One of the most challenging stories in 1 Kings for the exegete and modern apologist is the bear-mauling of the young boys during the life of Elisha. Ryken says that this episode is one in which the Lord is providing protection for his servant in the face of juvenile delinquency! "*When God's work is done in God's way, not only does it have God's blessing, but it also has God's protection*" (p. 37). Further, says Ryken, "To curse God's prophets is to curse God, to curse God, in turn, is to die by the hand of his judgment" (p. 39). In much the same way that the bad boys of Bethel told Elisha to "go up!" the scoffers of Calvary told Jesus to "Come down!" from the cross (pp. 37-39). These are for sure difficult portions of scripture to preach, but Ryken is a reliable guide in leading us to those important connections.

Michael Horton sums this work up well when he says that Ryken's commentary on 2 Kings is "an ornament of his skill as an exegete and preacher."

This commentary and series work for those who want a devotional focus on the historical books, while at the same time being a major help for those expositing the word week by week. For those who desire a greater investment in these commentaries, each volume is supplemented with a very good bibliography along with a scripture and name index. Warmly recommended!

*Reviewed by Kent Compton.*

***Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi.* Iain M. Duguid and Matthew P. Harmon. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018, 203 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-62995-198-0**



The latest volume in the Reformed Expository Commentary Series is co-written by two former co-pastors, Matthew Harmon and Iain Duguid. Duguid co-pastored Christ Presbyterian Church, Grove City, Pennsylvania with Harmon before heading off to begin another church plant in Philadelphia. It was in Grove City where they both preached the sermons which now make up this current volume. Both preached Malachi together whereas the material on Zephaniah and Haggai belongs to Duguid alone.

In the process of reviewing this book, much—discussion is taking place over a worrying new book by Andy Stanley. Stanley pastors the second largest mega church in the USA. He has recently written a book entitled *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New That Jesus Unleashed for the World*. He basically argues

we ought to expunge the Old Testament from our preaching and teaching due to the assertion that it puts a roadblock before evangelism and apologetics. Recently, Michael Kruger, writing on the Gospel Coalition website, in an article entitled, “*Why We Can’t Unhitch from the Old Testament*”, reviews Stanley’s latest volume and says,

When it comes to presenting the gospel, Stanley has become convinced the Bible, especially the Old Testament, simply gets in the way. I disagree. But it’s not just me. Stanley stands against the entire history of the church as well as the theological heritage of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>1</sup>

It is with that in mind that we continue to be excited about each new volume in The Reformed Expository Commentary series. Where Stanley swims against the stream of The Protestant Reformation, this series stands firmly within it.

Regarding the purpose of these commentaries, series editors Richard Phillips and Phillip Ryken state, “We believe that these interdependent tasks of biblical exposition and theological reflection are best undertaken in the church, and most specifically in the pulpits of the church” (p. ix).

The focus of these commentaries is biblical, doctrinal, redemptive-historical and practical. The commentaries are scholarly but not overly academic. However, any exegetical, theological and historical and cultural background as is relevant to the text, is duly considered. One doesn’t feel short-changed when it comes to issues that matter. It contains a sizable bibliography for further investigation.

The editors write: “We hope that lay teachers will find these commentaries among the most useful resources they rely on for understanding and presenting the text of the Bible.” This is one of the most positive features. The volumes I have reviewed can be preached comfortably in a pulpit, taught in a classroom setting, or even used in family worship.

The authors give a brief (eight-page) introduction to these books covering, author, date and themes. Yet they flesh out these areas more in the body of the exposition.

Each chapter focuses in on a verse that acts as a summary of the section in which it is found, so that while it is not going verse-by-verse, it does cover ably the material in each section. Again, in this way it provides a good

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<sup>1</sup> Kruger, M. (2019, October 22). *Why We Can’t Unhitch from the Old Testament*. Retrieved from The Gospel Coalition: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/irresistible-andy-stanley/>

model for teachers and preachers who want to do the book justice but not get bogged down in the minutia of each book.

What we find from Duguid and Harmon is a solid and accessible exposition of books of the Bible otherwise passed over by many. Zephaniah, with its heavy emphasis on God's judgement, is not a book that gets a lot of coverage by today's church. Yet, unlike those who would relegate the prophetic message to a bygone age, the authors point out that the coming judgement is for the 'whole earth'. In other words, a prophesy that is still to be played out. This fact makes his message very relevant.

His message has been recorded in the Scriptures so that it may have the same impact on us as it was intended to have on his original hearers. If Zephaniah's tornado warning about the oncoming and imminent destructive storm of God's fierce wrath against human evil and sin is still in effect, then all of us had better heed it and seek shelter for ourselves while the opportunity exists. The day of the Lord is still a reality to be reckoned with (p.13).

They add, "How does this fearsome and terrifying oracle about impending justice for Judah speak to us as modern people? To begin with, we are guilty of many of the same kinds of sins as Zephaniah's hearers (p. 17).

The commentary deals competently with the themes and message of each prophet, showing how each complaint God has with his people is regularly reflected in our own time. How the idolatry of technology, sex and entertainment is rife with our world! The authors write:

The ease with which we often dismiss the significance of our idolatry demonstrates that, like Zephaniah's hearers, many of us functionally believe in a god who will not act for good or ill. (p. 20)

However, what strikes the reader is the way in which the Gospel is diffused throughout every chapter. The bleakness of the people's idolatry is matched and exceeded by the darkness and subsequent victory of Calvary that God uses to answer their and our idolatry.

If Zephaniah's description of reality is accurate, how can there be any hope?... That hopeful future was possible for Israel because of the coming servant of the Lord, whose fearful sufferings would finally pay for Israel's sins." (p. 21)

And so it goes throughout the volume. The issues raised by the minor prophets are manifold, but the chorus is the same. The expected Servant of the Lord is the key to each one. As clearly as the sins of God's people are delineated so too is the Messianic hope. He is the God who rejoices over his people (Zeph 3:14-17); He was the glory of the second temple (Haggai 2:9); He was the hope that sustained the people in the 'Day of small things' (Haggai 2:23); He was the ideal priest who would teach God's people from a pure heart (Mal 2:6-7); and the one who would arise with healing in His wings (Mal 4:1-3).

The chapters are addressed to both believer and unbeliever. So the authors conclude:

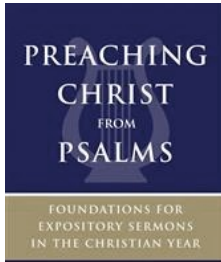
This ... raises the question for each of us as to which of these groups we find ourselves in today. Are we penitently rushing to Christ by faith, grateful for God's inestimable gift, looking to his righteousness as our only hope? Or are we coldly presuming that we can judge God's justice as inadequate, denying his goodness and holiness because he hasn't given us the things that we think our goodness deserves? These are the two groups into which all humanity will ultimately be divided.... Ponder deeply how to grow in loving and serving him more fully (p. 186).

The conclusions confront as well as comfort, leading the reader not only to a clearer understanding but also a worshipful posture. Practical, devotional, and expository, this commentary delves into the ways these three prophets point us to Christ's suffering, God's forgiveness, and glories to come.

This series continue to live up to expectation with each new volume. I look forward to the many still to come. Highly Recommended!

*Reviewed by Kent Compton.*

***Preaching Christ from Psalms: Foundations for expository sermons in the Christian year.* Sidney Greidanus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016, 595 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-7366-8**



SIDNEY  
GREIDANUS

This is now Greidanus' fourth book on preaching Christ from a specific Old Testament book, the previous three being *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (Eerdmans, 2007), *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes* (Eerdmans, 2010), and *Preaching Christ from Daniel* (Eerdmans, 2012). I reviewed his *Preaching Christ from Daniel* in the 2014, volume 16 edition of the *Haddington House Journal*, and many of the general comments on format and standard features apply again. In each case, Greidanus follows the method he argued in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1999), and condensed into a basic ten-step hermeneutical-homiletical model for first-year seminary students (included as Appendix 1). In this book on the Psalms, Greidanus does not attempt, as in his other books, "to trace all possible ways from the preaching text to Christ," but instead intends to suggest "primarily the most solid ways from each psalm to Christ" (p. xv). This is a helpful limitation because it eliminates tedious repetition for every psalm studied, and in any case, the seven options for moving from the Old Testament to Christ are outlined in the introductory chapter: redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfilment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, New Testament references, and contrast (pp. 34-37).

In the preface, Greidanus explains at length how he decided on the twenty-two psalms studied in this book. After considering various possibilities, he finally opted to follow the psalm readings of Year A in *The Revised Common Lectionary* (1992). It is this attachment to *The Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)* that makes this entire book unique in comparison with Greidanus' other books on foundations for expository sermons. The result is not only a number of psalm studies to preach on the "Christian feast days" (p. xiv), but also a good mixture of studies of all the psalm types selected from all five books of the Psalter. However, for those readers not familiar with a lectionary system, the repeated references to the *Lectionary* at the beginning of every psalm study could become a negative distinctive of this book.

Chapter 1, "Issues in preaching Christ from Psalms," is a very useful introduction for every reader and the essential basis for understanding and benefiting from all the subsequent psalm studies. Greidanus does not attempt

to give a detailed introduction to the Psalms and instead focuses on objections to preaching psalms, the literary, historical, theocentric, and Christocentric interpretation of psalms, and finally, how to go about preparing to preach psalms. Greidanus gives four good reasons to preach the psalms (pp. 3-4): a. Psalm 1 is a *torah* (wisdom) psalm signalling that the whole Psalter should be read as instruction; b. Whatever the historical origin and early function of each psalm in Israel, it is now included in the canon as God's word; c. The New Testament writers accepted and used the Psalms as God's word for the Church; and d. Jesus Himself taught from the Psalms as God's word.

Since there is significant confusion about what is meant by preaching Christ from Psalms, Greidanus is careful to clarify what he means: "One can do justice to the psalm in its own historical context and yet preach Christ from it because the psalm is now heard in the broader horizons of redemptive history and the whole canon of Scripture" (p. 5). Greidanus argues convincingly for preaching Christ from every psalm rather than only those widely recognised as messianic because the Psalter is introduced "with the messianic Psalm 2, thereby signalling that the following psalms ought to be read not only as part of God's *torah*, teaching for Israel, but also with a view to the Messiah and his coming worldwide kingdom" (p. 8).

Following this, Greidanus discusses the literary interpretation of psalms. His explanations and examples of types of psalms, poetic devices, especially imagery and parallelism, and the literary contexts of each psalm are very clear and helpful.

Greidanus closes this introductory chapter with brief recommendations on using the psalms in the worship service and determining the psalm's theme and goal, and formulating the sermon's theme, goal, and need addressed. Overall this first chapter is an excellent, concise introduction for pastors and students preparing to preach the Psalms. However, it is made all the more helpful because the "theory" is put into practice in the next twenty-two chapters, allowing the reader to learn by example.

Chapter 2 is a study of Psalm 1 as an introduction to the Psalms. Following that, the psalms studied are those selected in *The Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)* for all the Christian feast days. Psalms 72 and 118 are studied twice because the Lectionary assigns them for both Epiphany and Advent, and Palm and Easter Sundays respectively.

In each case, the psalm study follows the same procedure. It begins with an explanation of the psalm selection, and is followed by discussion of Text and Context, Literary Interpretation focused on parallelism, imagery, keywords, and structure, Theocentric Interpretation, Textual Theme and Goal including consideration of historical setting, Ways to Preach Christ, Sermon Theme, Goal, and Need, and Scripture Reading and Sermon Outline.

In the last section of each chapter Greidanus presents a simple sermon exposition which is intended only as a foundation which individual preachers may revise and expand with their own explanation, illustration and application relevant for their own congregations (p. xv). At the end of each exposition there is a simple model prayer and a song suitable as a closing congregational response to the psalm message.

I found many good insights in both the analysis and exposition portions of each psalm study. I especially appreciated the study of Psalm 22 where Greidanus does not neglect to emphasise the significance of the extended praise section (vv 22-31) which follows the familiar lament section (vv 1-21) with its obvious connections to the cross of Christ. The style of writing is very readable with almost no complex argumentation, though each chapter includes many footnotes with more details and references to other sources. It is probably the line-by-line presentation of the parallelism in each psalm (using the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 1989, not the Hebrew) which the general reader and students will find most difficult to imitate independently in their own analysis.

Regarding the appendices, most are standard to Greidanus' books. However, Appendix 5, A Sermon on Colossians 1:15-20 by Roy Berkenbosch, is a strange addition to a book on Preaching Christ from Psalms, but the connection is that this sermon is about singing doxology (praise) to Christ. The final Appendix 6, Series of Sermons on Psalms, is disappointing because, for the most part, the same psalms already studied are merely reshuffled into various alternative theme series.

Overall, I would definitely recommend Preaching Christ from Psalms as a valuable aid to pastors and preachers and a helpful resource from which to select the introductory chapter and one or two other chapters as examples for Bible college students.

*Reviewed by Greg Phillips.*

***Pride and Humility at War.* Jay Lanier Burns. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018, 205 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-59638-176-6**

How would one define pride? Or, for that matter, humility? Would the definitions you come up with be similar as to how another might define these terms?

Jay Lanier Burns has written this needed book on the topic of pride and humility precisely because though we use these terms in everyday speech, they are often defined in different ways from one culture or individual to the



next. Furthermore, the topic of humility doesn't top the list (or perhaps even make the list) of top-sellers in the world of evangelical literature.

This book is more a biblical theology than a topical study on the subjects of pride and humility. Jay Lanier Burns takes the reader on a walk through scripture, showing how these words are defined and demonstrated in the various genres of scripture.

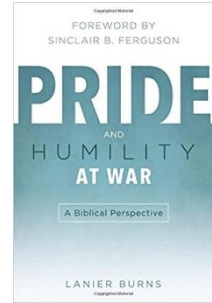
In the introduction to this book, the author traces definitions of pride and humility and whether these attributes have been considered vice or virtue within ancient and modern cultures. He even turns to several modern dictionary definitions of these terms. In doing so he demonstrates that these terms lack fixity. To further complicate, certain cultures have seen pride as a virtue; humility as a vice. The author concludes this introduction arguing that the only way to properly define these attributes is to turn to an authority greater than cultural expression. God in His Word determines how pride and humility are to be defined and appreciated.

Chapters two through six go through the various periods or genres of scripture, looking at how pride and humility demonstrate themselves. In the Pentateuch, particularly the Book of Genesis, pride is revealed in man's refusal to accept God's limitations as creature. Adam and Eve's sin was grasping at what was not theirs, instead of obediently embracing the dominion God had given them. This grasping for more than what God permitted shows up repeatedly throughout the stories of Genesis and the Pentateuch. Leading the author to define pride as a self-centered failure to accept what God has given. Humility is God-centeredness, walking in obedience and submission to God and in love for our neighbor.

Of particular note in chapter 2 is the author's examination of Numbers 12:3, where it is said of Moses that he was more humble than all who walked the earth. Moses' humility can be seen in his obedience to God and in the fact that, as Old Covenant Mediator, his mediation between God and His people (pointing forward to Christ) secured for him this description.

As the author moves through his chapters and the genres of scripture (wisdom literature, prophetic writings, the Gospels, Epistles), each chapter fills out in further detail how pride is self-centered grasping while humility is a child-like attitude that, in all situations of life, considers our relationship of submission to God. Christ is the quintessential exemplar of humility.

The author concludes this book drawing the antithesis (war) that exists between attitudes of pride and humility. Pride ultimately leaves God out of the equation when it comes to assessing success. Humility praises God for all of life and success and willingly submits to the will of God. Therefore it is



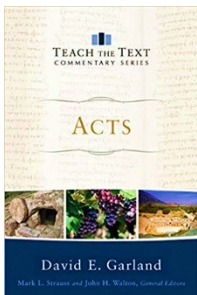
only the believer, in union with Christ and with the indwelling Holy Spirit who can demonstrate and live the life of humility.

Each chapter of this book ends with a brief summary and a helpful definition of complicated terms used within the chapter. There are questions for further thought as well as suggestions for further reading. All this makes this book accessible at a congregational level. For myself, at times I did find the many footnotes rather excessive and distracting. That being said, this book could be used for a small group study.

This book is timely in an age when so many pride-fueled scandals have rocked the evangelical world. For the helpful content of this book, and its call to humility, it ought to be a top-seller.

*Reviewed by Doug Bylsma the minister of Living Hope Presbyterian Church, Beamsville, Ontario.*

**Acts. D.E. Garland. Teach the Text Commentary Series, gen. eds. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016, 336 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0801092299**



It is important that the author begins (in his welcome note) by justifying the reason for another series of commentaries. Highlighting that the Teach the Text Commentary Series (TTCS) is meant to bridge the gap that has existed in previous commentaries by providing a deeper understanding of the text for pastors and teachers enables the reader to explore the TTCS from that stated purpose.

The abbreviations and the map of the ANE (Ancient Near East) are given before the actual content to enable the reader to follow the message well knowing the meanings of abbreviations and references made to different places in the ANE. The reader is made to walk the journey with the author.

In the introduction, the author is drawing a connecting line between the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts that provides clear background and underscores the purpose of Acts. This is very important in focusing the reader on the continuity of Christ's ministry through His apostles. To make the reader easily grasp the text and be able to teach from each text, the author provides similar but well thought out headings for each chapter that provide a funnel approach to understanding the text (beginning with a bigger idea that is narrowed down to give the core in a manner easy to understand). Each chapter

presents the following order of headings: 1. Big idea; 2. Key themes; 3. Understanding the text; 3a. The text in context; 3b. Interpretive insights; 3c. Theological insights; 4. Teaching the text; 5. Illustrating the text. These steps enable the reader to easily follow the text and grasp the message which s/he can teach to others using appropriate illustrations to enhance understanding. The reader who carefully reads the TTCS would have an informed understanding of the message of Acts and would be qualified to teach others. Hence the TTCS is mostly suitable for pastors and other leaders who are responsible for teaching the Word. This does not limit all Christians from having the TTCS on their shelves, because it's a good resource for understanding Acts.

The notes that are at the end of the book provide a snap shot of the message to the reader and point at exact places where the reader can go for details in the TTCS. As a teaching tool, the notes help for quick reference of the point the pastor or teacher would like to make.

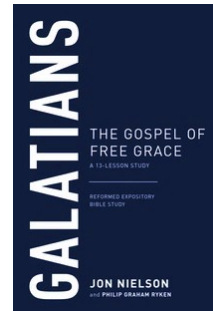
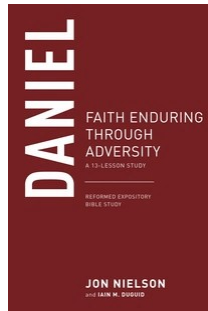
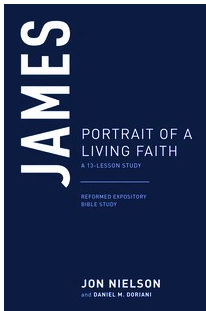
I appreciate the TTCS as being well and thoughtfully written to give readers a deeper and articulate understanding of Acts. The chapters are designed according to the main themes in the book which allows the reader to grasp the message being conveyed. The TTCS is a book that could be used in all Christian institutions to bring out a clear understanding of the apostolic church. Understanding the apostolic church provides benchmarks for the present church. However, giving every detail for the reader might limit him/her from being resourceful in the preparation of the preaching or teaching. The reader might be tempted to echo the TTCS material to the recipients without making it relevant to his/her listeners which might defeat the purpose. I also feel that though the steps in each chapter of the TTCS are well designed and well thought out, their being exactly the same for each chapter might make some readers feel as if they are reading the same material all over again thus making them to lose interest.

*Reviewed by Rev. Wilbert Chipenyu, Principal of Dumisani Theological Institute & Bible School, King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa.*

***James, Portrait of a Living Faith.* Reformed Expository Bible Study. Jon Nielson and Daniel Doriani. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019, 119 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-676-3**

***Galatians, The Gospel of Free Grace.* Reformed Expository Bible Study. Jon Nielson and Phillip Graham Ryken. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019, 119 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-109-6**

***Daniel, Faith Enduring Through Adversity.* Reformed Expository Bible Study. Jon Nielson and Iain M. Duguid. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019, 119 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-679-4**



These excellent guides are a distillation of the Reformed Expository Commentary series published by Presbyterian and Reformed. Many of these commentaries have been reviewed in earlier volumes of this journal.

Jon Nielson is the principal editor. He is senior pastor of Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Roselle, Illinois, and the author of *Bible Study: A Student's Guide*. He pastored at Holy Trinity Church, Chicago and College Church, Wheaton, Illinois. He also served as director of training for the Charles Simeon Trust.

Iain Duguid is the author of other volumes in the Reformed Expository Commentary series. He is professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Dr. Dan Doriani teaches biblical and systematic theology at Covenant Seminary in St Louis, MO.

Philip Graham Ryken is president of Wheaton College. Before that, he pastored as senior minister at Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church.

Each study guide begins with a very robust introduction to the book, centring on typical areas such as main purpose, authorship, date, audience, structure and themes. The introduction ends with clearly defined outlines.

This new series seeks to take the student of the Word into deeper relationship with the text in some unique ways. These emphases are consistent with the approach of the commentaries upon which the studies are based.

Each chapter starts with a summary of a Bible passage, explaining the “Big Picture” of this portion of the text. For example, Neilson and Doriani in their study guide on James say, “*In the first twelve verses of his letter, James tackles the difficult subject of trial in the life of Christians. He tells them to consider these trials as joys, seeing that God is at work in the midst of them to increase their godliness, maturity and steadfastness. As believers cling to faith in God and persevere in the midst of trials, they can do so with the confidence that “the crown of life awaits them (1:12)”*” (p. 15).

Reflective questions in the next section called “Getting Started” introduce the passage’s principal ideas while asking the student to connect them to life experiences. The Daniel study guides asks, “What beliefs or practices as a follower of Jesus Christ have caused you to feel most out of step with your local culture and social circle?” (p. 16)

Throughout the next two sections, “Understanding the Text” and “Observing the Text”, the guides bear down on the text itself, drawing attention to areas of emphasis or repetition, showing how each section ties in with the overall theme. These questions take us through the whole chapter (not simply specific verses), asking us to reflect on larger chunks of scripture. In Daniel, the writer asks, “Why might the narrator have recorded such a lengthy speech from Daniel? What could this communicate” (p. 32). These are the very questions that teach lay persons to be serious exegetes.

The next sections are unique compared to what I have seen in the average study guide. “Bible Connections” and “Theology Connections” draw the student into the areas of biblical theology and systematic theology respectively. The former asks us to discover how the themes of each relate to the same themes found in other parts of the Bible, thus drawing the connections between the book and the overall thematic unity of scripture. The latter section on theology, shows how the theology of the section ties in with the Reformed tradition, especially as they are reflected in the creeds. The Galatians study, for example, after quoting the Westminster Confession on “Liberty of Conscience” asks, “*How does this statement (from the WCF) speak to the importance of the freedom we have through faith in Christ Jesus? What connections do you see between this statement and Paul’s stern warning in Galatians 4:8-20?*” (p. 76).

This smattering of confessional statements and quotations from theologians from the past is again a strong part of the fabric of the “mother commentaries”. This brings readers into many theological disciplines; not only drawing them into the text but introducing them to the riches of the Reformed tradition.

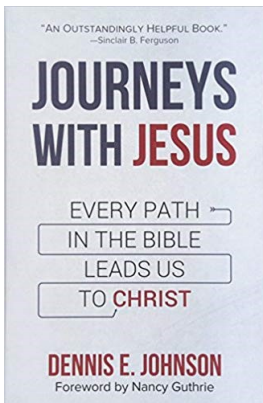
Finally, “Applying the Text” seeks to challenge the reader as to what God expects of us in these passages, such as how our thinking needs changing or what sins must be confessed.

Each study is nicely brought to a conclusion in the section “Prayer Prompt” where the reader is not brought into contact with the text, but the God of the text in the hope of a deeper bond between the reader and God. The James study guide says. “Today as you look back on your study of James 5:7-20, first pray for patience, endurance and resilience as you live faithfully for Jesus Christ and await his return” (p. 118).

The best of the Reformed tradition in scholarship, practice and worship are skilfully brought out in these unique and helpful guides. Each guide is suitable in several settings, including group or personal study. One’s prayer is that these are widely used throughout the church.

*Reviewed by Kent Compton.*

***Journeys with Jesus: Every Path in the Bible Leads Us to Christ.***  
**Dennis E. Johnson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company,**  
**2018, 172 pp., ISBN 978-1-62995-538-4**



*Journeys with Jesus* is an abridgement of the larger work by Dennis Johnson, *Walking with Jesus Through His Word*<sup>1</sup>. The original was the fruit of over 35 years of teaching at Westminster Seminary California as a professor of New Testament and practical theology. Through the efforts of Johnson’s long-time friend and colleague in the PCA, Richard Ramsay, that book has not only been reduced by over half, but it has also been revised and illustrated with the goal of making the work more accessible to a wider audience. The result is a book that is able to lead its readers through a study in hermeneutics with

clarity and purpose, showing them how they can learn to ably use both the Old and New Testaments to find Christ, know him more fully, and lead others to him.

The table of contents lays out the book in a coherent and welcoming manner as it moves from the introductory “Beginning the Journey”, through chapters “Getting the Lay of the Land”, “You Are Here”, “Reading the Road Signs”, and “Recognizing the Landmarks”, to the final “Are We There Yet?”.

<sup>1</sup> *Walking with Jesus through His Word: Discovering Christ in all the Scriptures.* Dennis E. Johnson (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015).

The chapters are structured so that each one introduces and demonstrates one main way of learning from and interpreting the Bible. As the book progresses, the techniques used to read and interpret the Bible are kept clearly connected, and the reader is prompted to call to mind ideas that have already been touched on. At the end of each chapter, several questions form a review of the material so that the reader is able to verify that they have understood it. A second set of questions promotes personal reflection and application based on what has been learned in the chapter. Finally, the chapter closes with a set of exercises designed to lead the reader through the practical application of the hermeneutical principle they have just been reading about to several passages of Scripture.

Although the book's division into only 6 chapters means that the chapters are fairly long, the chapters have several subheadings and divisions that will help readers finish a train of thought or main point without needing to finish the chapter. The arrangement of the material aids the reader in building on points that have already been discussed and worked through and helps the book to be manageable as a study resource for students of varying levels. The language and style are both clear and straightforward, but some readers may find the vocabulary level high. The use of a recurring illustration with updated detail works to clarify the idea that every path leads to Christ, and the consistent use of the same Scriptures for the exercises section allows the student to see how a deeper grasp of hermeneutic principles and strategies leads to a deeper understanding of the Word. The use of Scriptures is varied and copious; and some difficult passages and concepts are tackled by Johnson, which brings a confidence and richness to the study.

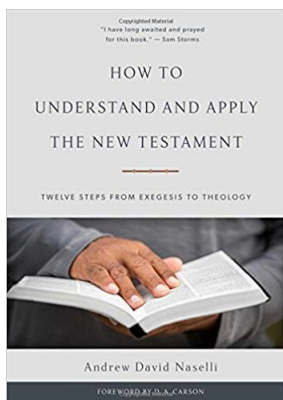
The book can be read through without working through the questions and exercises and still be profitable, but the workbook elements reinforce what has been read and help the reader to think through application that is of concern and interest to them. The reflection questions are especially helpful in their focus on using what has been learned about Christ to both answer personal doubts and confusions and prepare the reader to answer the questions of others. The consistent application of newly learned skills to familiar passages helps the reader working through the book to feel comfortable as they work from the known to the unknown; and at the end of the final chapter, Johnson calls on the reader to pick their own passage of Scripture. Here, the reader is nudged to continue learning by reaching out to other resources available to help study the Bible. The reading list, provided as an appendix, is divided into accessible and advanced categories, providing options for readers at different levels.

This book provides an excellent introduction to interpretation that any reader of the Bible can benefit from, but the most will be gleaned by those who treat the book as a small course on interpretation and take the time to work

through the questions and exercises in a meaningful way. It would make a great study where the leader or members of the group would be available to help with potentially unfamiliar vocabulary or Biblical references.

*Reviewed by Stephen Plouffe who pastors in the Eastern Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island.*

***How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology.* Andrew David Naselli.  
Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017, 384 pp., hard. ISBN 978-1-62995-248-2**



Andrew Naselli has humbly and simply, but brilliantly and authoritatively, managed to share in one accessible handbook not only a well-organised overview of the process, tools and disciplines of New Testament exegesis and theology but also a clear sense of the New Testament exegete's privilege and delight and goal of worship of God in the task of exegesis. He is a fine student of "the Book" who has learnt well from his mentors, especially D.A. Carson and John Piper. From the start Naselli demonstrates his firm commitment to the Bible itself as the final authority and primary source the New Testament exegete must study, know, apply and teach.

The book has all the standard features expected of an academic volume: table of contents, list of figures, appendices, glossary, select bibliography, index of Scripture, and index of subjects and names. Beyond these, a detailed analytical outline breaks every chapter down to headings and sub-headings, but in my view this detail is unnecessary. What I did find helpful was the chapter sub-headings which – each as imperatives – succinctly turn the topic into a task.

In the introduction, it was pleasing to find two emphases: 1) that "*The text means what the text's author meant*" (p.1); and 2) that the twelve steps of doing exegesis and theology are not presented as distinct steps to follow rigidly but as logically organised components of an integrated process. The components considered are genre, textual criticism, translation, Greek grammar, argument diagram, historical-cultural context, literary context, word studies, biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and



practical theology. Naselli rightly insists that the process does not stop with word studies and what the text meant *then*. Neither does he want the reader to jump straight to what the text means *now*. The good exegete must think through the significance of the text in the context of the whole of revelation history, then church history, and finally the whole Bible's teaching.

The beauty of this book is that in a very understandable way it lays out the big picture of the whole process. It is a complete introduction to everything that a New Testament exegete ought to be doing. But the downside is that it can only introduce and illustrate the basics of each topic and task. One chapter overviewing Greek grammar is just not going to do it. For me, the most helpful chapters were those on translation, argument diagrams, historical-cultural context, and literary context. In every chapter, the guidelines and practical examples are excellent. On biblical theology, the studies of holiness and mystery are wonderful. Naselli does a brilliant job, but he is very aware that this book is inadequate on its own and therefore provides the Resources for Further Study at the end of each chapter. Andrew Naselli is phenomenally well-read and with respect and discernment points the reader to many tried-and-tested and up-to-date resources. I would commend to every reader Naselli's personal comments about each resource. You will soon find yourself creating a shortlist of books you need to read or acquire.

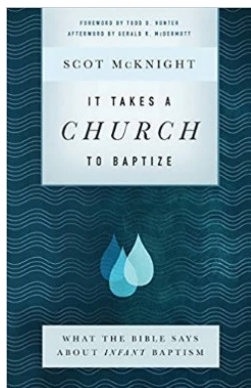
Finally, let me point out that this book has an equally compelling companion, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* by Jason DeRouchie (P&R, 2017).

I heartily recommend this book to pastors, lecturers and students because it will not only refresh your mind but also your spirit.

*Reviewed by Greg Phillips.*

## Systematic Theology

***It Takes a Church to Baptize: What the Bible Says about Infant Baptism.* Scot McKnight. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2018, 128 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-58743-416-7**



From the first time I heard about this book I very much looked forward to reading it as Scot McKnight is a very engaging contemporary Christian scholar and blogger. I found his book, *Kingdom Conspiracy* most interesting and stimulating.<sup>1</sup> However, I did not initially pick up (in the book blurbs that came to me) that this new book, *It Takes a Church to Baptize*, was as specific as it is to the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and in fact, that is his first target audience (p. xiv). That could have been a little clearer in some of the initial book promos. It is interesting that the vast majority of book endorsements are also from the Anglican community in some manner. The exception was one from *Christianity Today's* editor. However, in saying this, this does not detract overall from the substance of the book as the content is engaging for readers beyond that denomination.

The title of the book is most intriguing. The author tells us that he debated with himself about using the title *It Takes a Family to Baptize* but finally settled upon *It Takes a Church to Baptize* (p. 4). In that sense *family* would be nuclear and church family. The way the title now reads, it also can be taken in both senses, not that Matthew Henry is quoted but the book certainly makes me think of Matthew Henry and the church in the home, then the church as the assembly of the Lord's peoples coming together.<sup>2</sup>

McKnight is a former Baptist so this book is all the more compelling because in many regards it is also about his own spiritual journey and his own wrestling. He always writes with graciousness and has an irenic spirit throughout the entire book—something we can all learn from. McKnight's first chapter is written around six key words which he uses as a model of how he will approach the subject. These six words are: family, bible, Gospel, conversion, debate and heritage. That chapter must be read to benefit from all that follows. Then he orders the book around the Anglican baptismal service

<sup>1</sup> Reviewed in *Haddington House Journal* 18 (2016), 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> The children's book by Lindsay Blair and Bobby Gilles, *Our Home is Like a Little Church* original 2008 (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2010) makes for a good parallel read while reading McKnight's book.

and sections of that liturgy, with the exception of chapter five which is, *The Bible and Infant Baptism* (pp. 63-85).

I suspect many will want to know: “Really is there anything *new* here in this book that will make the case stronger.” Yes, because he is writing for our current culture in the West. And what is that? For one, it is an age of *hyper-individualism*. McKnight wrote on page 27, “The biggest challenge to infant baptism today comes not from the Bible so much as from rampant individualism.” The author really spoke to me from the scripture into our context in the flow of history.

McKnight is a New Testament scholar and a scholar of early Christianity. The book reflects both of these strengths of the author’s life. Though arguments from early Christian sources continue to go back and forth with each baptismal side claiming almost universal evidence for credo or paedobaptism, I would challenge readers to consider McKnight’s quotations and descriptors from the early Church and assess these very carefully.

Baptism is an area where almost no two theologians will 100 per cent agree on every jot and tittle—do some serious reading and comparisons and one will find this out. *Overall*, I find myself in agreement with McKnight as *per* what he is primarily addressing in this book. I will not say that about his inclusive approach on church polity or about some other matters. I think I know what he is saying on regeneration in light of his further statements. I checked some of the current reviewers, and I noted one which concluded the same regarding this point.<sup>3</sup> Several did not mention this aspect at all. To me this was a serious issue given the Book of Common Prayer and the issue of baptism and regeneration historically.

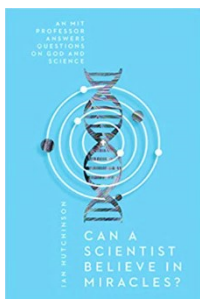
A few years ago, I wrote a review article on thirteen books on baptism. Well, my list just got longer. This book will reach some in our current environment and culture and speak to them, Anglican or not. McKnight does address scripture both macro and micro, early Christianity, liturgy in his grouping, and also the culture of the day. I was refreshed *as per the topic of focus* and others whom I have shared it with have found the same.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock.*

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<sup>3</sup> David Smith, “Why You Should Read Scot McKnight’s New Book about Infant Baptism” (September 2018) Anglican Pastor, assessed 9 April, 2019.

***Can a Scientist Believe in Miracles?* Ian Hutchinson. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018, 270 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-4547**



The subtitle of this book summarizes the content of the book: An MIT Professor Answers Questions on God and Science. Ian Hutchinson, a nuclear physicist at MIT, wrote this book to explore twenty years' worth of question from various Veritas Forums. Hutchinson is interviewed about this book and his purposes in writing it at [veritas.org](http://veritas.org). He states that the purpose of his book is to encourage Christians and to answer questions from unbelievers about science and

Christianity.

The author accepts most modern scientific dogma; this is arguably at the same time the strength and weakness of this book. Its range of questions and the scientific credibility of the author results in a valuable read for many Christians and non-Christians who are concerned about the perceived conflict of science and historic, evangelical Christianity.

Hutchinson has grouped similar questions together and formed chapters from these grouped questions. The Veritas forums are sessions where students and faculty are invited to ask difficult questions, and seek to “put the historic Christian faith in dialogue with other beliefs and invite participants from all backgrounds to pursue Truth together”. The book is impressive in its authenticity, honesty and the manner with which it deals with a wide spectrum of relevant and difficult questions.

There are fourteen chapters in all. The first chapter deals with the author's academic and spiritual journey including his work as a Methodist preacher while he was doing his scientific studies. The second chapter deals with defining science and its limitations. This definition leads to discussion on different types of knowledge. In short, Hutchinson argues that science helps us understand the how but not the why. Chapter three answers questions concerning the author's view of the nature of faith and follows this up with a chapter concerning the faith demonstrated by scientists. The next chapter asks if it is reasonable to believe in Christianity and, in particular, the resurrection.

Chapter six deals with scientism and is one of Hutchinson's strongest chapters due to his informed exploration of epistemological issues. Scientism is the belief that science provides the most significant and valid answers as to what is true. The author does a good job distinguishing science from scientism and further discusses the importance of making this distinction.

Chapter seven deals with questions about spiritual knowledge, which is followed by a chapter on creation, cosmology, the concept of the multi-verse and the anthropic principle. Next, he answers questions about miracles. Hutchinson argues that philosophy is the foundation of one's evaluation of evidence rather than evidence being the foundation of one's philosophy. To argue that miracles do not happen is a metaphysical discussion and not a scientific discussion.

Chapter ten deals with the Bible and science. He argues that the known scientific facts contradict a literal interpretation of the first few chapters of Genesis and in particular a literal 24-hour creation day. He further argues that even from the early church many respected theologians understood Genesis 1 to 3 as a metaphor or a non-literal form of narrative. The author asserts that the first two chapters of Genesis can be fully reconciled with modern scientific theory without denying anything vital for Orthodox Christian theology. However, the concept of original sin and the subsequent curse on the creation as understood by historic Christian dogma is not dealt with or reconciled with Darwinian presuppositions. Readers will have to determine for themselves if they feel Hutchinson's argument is a valid position.

Chapter eleven deals with the uniqueness of Christianity and its inclusiveness; Christianity has a transcultural appeal. However, the author also answers questions about the exclusive claims of Christianity and the concept of hell. He argues that what leads to hell is a neglect and rejection of the remedy that God's forgiveness provides.

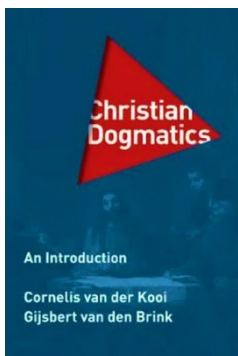
Chapter twelve, entitled "Why does God Seem Hidden?", makes the case that natural sciences are not the source of all knowledge, and deals with purpose and personal agency as a matter of principle. Chapter thirteen deals with the question of the existence of good and evil. The author argues that science addresses what is, not what ought to be. He deals with the seeming conundrum of a good God and the presence of evil and suffering. Building upon his assumptions made in previous chapters, Hutchinson argues that animal death existed long before humans existed and there is the problem of natural evil, which remains separate from moral or human evil. For Hutchinson, the problem of evil is the toughest intellectual challenge for theism but he takes his greatest consolation in Christ's incarnation as God's resolution for this problem.

The book concludes with "Personal Consequences: so What?". This chapter deals with repentance. Hutchinson argues that although "advocating the relevance and significance of the Bible, and its inspiration and authority in church teaching and discipline does not compel us to adopt the literalistic interpretation of it," that one can still achieve good, thoughtful and coherent answers to questions about God and science.

Overall, this book is a welcome addition to Christian apologetics, and I commend the author on his thoughtful and persistent defense of the evangelical Christian faith through the Veritas forums and this book.

*Reviewed by Dr Stan George, an Ophthalmologist who practices in Halifax, NS and is also an Associate Professor in the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences at Dalhousie School of Medicine.*

***Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction.* Cornelis van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink, trans. Reinder Bruinsma with James D. Bratt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017, 806 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8028-7265-4**



While it covers most themes of traditional systematic theologies, Kooi's and Brink's *Christian Dogmatics* is far from traditional. They begin with the thought that everything we know about God comes from God reaching out to make Himself known to us and to draw us to Himself. The heart of this is His becoming man for us. Christ's incarnation is the final and great revelation of God.

Therefore, they begin their dogmatics with the doctrine of God. The doctrine of Scripture is discussed much later, under the work of the Holy Spirit. While they support this approach with persuasive arguments, it appears to lead them astray in their understanding of the interpretation of Scripture. They give high value to Scripture, holding explicitly to the principle of *Sola scriptura*: that everything we believe is tested by Scripture and should conform to Scripture. However, focussing on the principle that Scripture comes from God *to help us to know Him*, they miss the reality that because Scripture comes from God it is true. That leaves a door open for interpretations that do not conform to Scripture but appear to draw people to Christ. One might guess that, if the interpreters claimed it moved them to follow Christ, it would be hard for them to reject an interpretation that legitimizes homosexual relationships, despite their belief that because we were created male and female, "it would seem that our gender is another fundamental defining aspect of our humanness" (p. 281).

The book starts with the Trinity and then follows the plan of the Apostles' Creed: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, each with the themes associated with them. In most areas they defend the historic beliefs of God's people. However, they often approach doctrines in unusual ways which add insight and interest for the reader.

A considerable part of the book is not dogmatics itself but a study of the method of dogmatics and of the problems of starting in the wrong place or being too narrowly focussed. In each section they include a brief survey of the development of the doctrine. This is particularly interesting because it includes reference to Eastern Orthodox theology and to recent discussions. Unfortunately, for the most part they neglect the views of English-speaking evangelicals.

Their emphasis on the broad history of doctrines rises out of their view of the task of dogmatics. "Dogmatics is a contemporary form of giving an account of our faith. ... Dogmatics will always do so in a dialogue with the tradition, with the church, and with a view of our own times. As a result, dogmatics changes and will continue to do so" (*Preface*, p. xii). The emphasis seems to be on contemporary and change. Until recent times the church universally understood that everything the Bible says is true, yet they dismiss that view with scorn, labelling it "proof texting" (p. 17). That traditional view is dismissed because it does not allow dogmatics to evolve, as they want.

Their concern for the tradition, the church and our own times makes it difficult at times to be sure what they are saying. It is not a book to skim through lightly.

Some aspects of *Christian Dogmatics* are very positive. One is its declaration that the focus of Scripture is to enable us to know God and to draw us to love Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. "Our aim in reading the Bible is to come into contact with God and his acts, through the Scriptures" (p. 555). Therefore, the focus of Christian dogmatics should be the same, not just to lay out an academic statement of the teaching of Scripture, but to bring us to see God and to serve Him. I'm not sure they achieve that in their book, but they certainly try.

The authors challenge the individualism that has become a destructive force in western Christianity, stressing the importance of the Christian community. They also take seriously the Jewish roots of the church and remind us that God is not yet done with his ancient people. They encourage us to give more attention to the unity of the church than is common in evangelical circles today.

Some serious flaws overshadow these good points. In particular, weakness in their view of Scripture opens the door to error. They also struggle with issues of God's sovereignty and our sin and the debt of sin.

As we consider their view of Scripture, we need to keep in mind that they give the Bible a very high authority. In fact, they say it is normative for Christian belief (p. 181). But for them it is only one of the sources of our knowledge of God – they list at least four others (pp. 171-181). In their opinion, the Bible's status is as "the special instrument through which the Holy Spirit keeps us connected with the apostolic message about Jesus Christ." (p. 554). Certainly the Bible is that. However, that apostolic message testifies that Jesus said to his Father: "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). No doubt they

would agree that God's Word is truth but their definition of God's Word is broad. They follow Barth in saying that God's Word is first and foremost Christ Himself, the Word, and only secondarily the Bible. They explicitly draw back from the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration, arguing instead that the inspiration of Scripture lies in its message of Christ and salvation in Christ (pp. 544-545). That means in effect that only to the extent that a passage testifies to Christ is it necessarily true. While they defend the traditional canon, the way is opened to discount some passages, saying they don't show us Christ as clearly as others. Kooi and Brink seem hesitant to move in that direction, but their position justifies others who have less respect for the whole of Scripture.

They object to those whom they consider proof-texters, accusing them of using biblical texts while "expending little to no effort to gauge what these texts might mean in their own intra-biblical context" (p. 537). Yet they do exactly that themselves. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, they tell us:

it should be noted that, grammatically, *ruach* [the Hebrew word for spirit] is feminine and *pneuma* [the Greek word for spirit] is neuter. But a term like *paraklētos* (comforter, solicitor; John 14:16) is masculine. ... To do justice to the diversity in the original biblical grammar, we would do well to sometimes use feminine pronouns in our discussion of the Spirit (p. 493).

Hodge and Bavinck, whom they criticize for "proof-texting", would never be so careless in the use of texts. But it appears that Kooi and Brink feel a need to cast a sop to the feminism of our age.

Then there is God's sovereignty, in particular His plan for His creation. The Westminster Confession of Faith declares: "The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care"<sup>4</sup>. The treatment of this in *Christian Dogmatics* shows the wisdom of this injunction. In many places Kooi and Brink affirm that God is sovereign, that everything depends on Him. But they stumble when it comes to evil. They write, "God is minimally present in human sin, only in the sense that he creates the conditions that enable us to sin. God wanted people who would be able to sin but did not want the sin itself" (pp. 242-243). They seem to affirm that God determines only the final result, not the steps along the way. God "remains faithful, with unyielding tenacity to his plans, promises, and intentions. For this reason, he can also change his tactics when it appears that to do so would help achieve these ends" (p. 145). While they emphasize that God does not tell us the origin of evil (p. 299), they try to protect God's goodness by denying

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<sup>4</sup> WCF 3:8.



that evil can be part of his plan. Yet Peter preached that Jesus was "delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

We find similar confusion in several other doctrines. They can say, "everything of faith began with and depends on God's choosing us" (p. 701). Yet they reject the traditional *ordo salutis*, preferring a somewhat Arminian claim that "we are not born again so that we may have faith; it happens *through* faith" (p. 682). In reading about the sacraments, it's important to realize that they are using their own definition of a sacrament; otherwise it would be very misleading. Discussing baptism, they espouse a believers Baptist understanding, arguing that baptism should be given by immersion to people who profess faith (pp. 604ff). However, "the alternative practice of sprinkling with water is not heretical, but it has lost much of the evangelical radicalism that is depicted in the active immersion"(p. 605). Baptism of infants? "Our position is that infant baptism is a secondary practice that finds its justification by appeal to the covenant that God has established with his Church" (p. 608). As in many places, there is an unsatisfying attempt to embrace everything.

*Christian Dogmatics* is stimulating reading for someone with an interest in doctrine and its history. Because its approach is different from the common pattern, it gives new insight into many of the issues discussed. Its strongest point is its emphasis on the need to focus on God's gracious outreach to us in Christ, to be drawn to Christ and enjoy communion with Him *in our dogmatics* as in everything. However, it is badly flawed in many places, above all in its view of Scripture. Even in its doctrine of God, which the authors consider their key concern, it falls short. Kooi and Brink tell us that we should recognize God's sovereignty and expect that He will lead us into uncomfortable places, places we wouldn't go on our own. Yet they find themselves unable to accept that one of those places might be the understanding that Adam's sin, your sin and my sin are also part of God's plan. Their view of sovereignty is a limited sovereignty.

I would not recommend the book to anyone who does not have an absolutely firm grasp on the reliability of the whole Bible, as God's word. Before reading it, a person should be a mature Christian with a solid understanding of the key doctrines of Scripture, enough not to be led astray.

*Reviewed by Don Codling, pastor emeritus Bedford Presbyterian (PCA), NS; BSc, RMCC; BD, Knox College; MTh Westminster Seminary; Drs. (Systematic Theology) Vrije Universiteit (Drs. means "doctoring", not "doctor").*

***Our Ancient Foe: Satan's History, Activity, and Ultimate Demise.* Ronald L. Kohl, ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019, 150pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-645-9. Also available in Kindle format.**

The Editor's Preface of *Our Ancient Foe* stresses the practical importance of the topic and the paucity of "trustworthy resources" on the topic. The book's chapters are based on talks given at the Quakertown and Philadelphia Conferences on Reformed Theology. It seeks to address frequently asked questions: "Who is the devil? How did he become our sworn enemy? What are his intentions? His methods? How do we stand against him? What does his future hold?" (p. ix). Primary texts expounded include Genesis 3, Luke 22, Ephesians 2 and 6, Colossians 3, and Revelation 20 and 21 (p. x).

The book features nine essays written by seven "pastor-scholars". It covers Satan's role in triggering mankind's calamitous fall and in thwarting mankind's recovery. It follows a roughly chronological order, progressing from the temptation in the Garden of Eden and ending in the glorious vision of a vanquished adversary and the holy city coming down from heaven. In between, it covers the pitfalls encountered by the valiant Christian — allusions to Pilgrim's Progress inevitably arise. With a general focus on the necessities of belief, obedience, and sanctification, the authors' contributions work well together to present God's sovereign grace as the struggling Christian's sufficiency

The opening chapter focuses on Satan as a distorter and challenger of God's word. When mankind falls, they too become distorters of God's word. Adherence to the Word is the obvious remedy. The next chapter presents Satan as the foe of God, his image-bearers, Christ, and the gospel. It touches on fallen man's damaged rationality and affections. The third chapter highlights Satan's tactics: lies, deception, temptation, and accusation. When successful, Satan pivots from temptation to accusation. Scripture and the armor of Ephesians 6 are the Christian's antidotes. Chapter four, "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil", presents twin sides of sanctification: mortification (the negative) and vivification (the positive). Sanctification depends on recognizing our new identity in Christ and motivation. "Conflict with Evil" continues the theme of sanctification, emphasizing the positive value and benefit of regeneration, developed by sanctification, and culminating in glorification. Chapter six, "Deliverance from the Evil One", continues the theme of progressive sanctification. The seventh chapter, "Persevering in Satan's Sieve", points the Christian pilgrim to Jesus' provisions, i.e., prophetic admonition, priestly

intercession, and kingly commission. Its author, Joel Beeke, characterizes Jesus' essential ministry of intercession as "one of the most minimized doctrines in all the Bible" (p. 109). In this deeply pastoral chapter the apostle Peter is presented as a fallen soldier who learns to distrust his own resources and rely on Christ's.

The book only touches on demon possession. Topical and scriptural indexes would increase its utility, but this is a quibble. The book achieves its goals admirably and would be valuable in personal devotional study, sermon preparation, and group studies. It deserves a place alongside *The Screwtape Letters*.

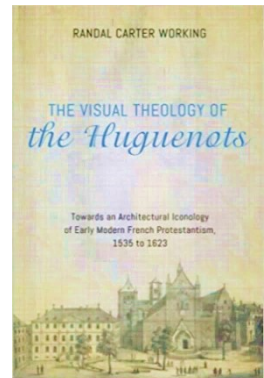
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.

*Reviewed by Dr Rick Ball, who ministers as a PEI Anglican lay reader and teaches apologetics at Trans-Africa Christian University, Zambia.*

## Historical Theology

***The Visual Theology of the Huguenots: Towards an Architectural Iconology of Early Modern French Protestantism, 1535 to 1623.* Randal Carter Working. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016, 205 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4982-2849-7**

This book is based upon the author's Ph.D. thesis from Fuller Theological Seminary, California and readers should keep this in view as they read this very significant and helpful work. Like many works which began as a Ph.D. thesis, the creation of the published version is generally welcomed, yet at the same time there are generally not as many revisions done (to make a general audience more conversant with the work) as maybe there could be. I say this from personal experience and accept my limitations in this regard as well. As I read this work I had wished for more



illustrations and also when illustrations were given that there would be more explicit interaction with the text. Having not visited all the places mentioned in this book, a little more explicit orientation would benefit the reader, at least this one.

The subject is very important in this emerging field of visual cultural studies of the Reformation. *The Visual Theology of the Huguenots* helps to greatly further our knowledge of the French Reformed churches and this is most welcome. There is a growing body of writers who have taken this up and Working's name must be added to those of Andrew Spicer, Catherine Randall, and Hélène Guicharnaud. In reading this work, be prepared for a mental workout on aesthetics, architecture, liturgy, and theology – particularly ecclesiology. It is a good challenge and something which has been infrequently undertaken in Reformation studies.

The work is divided into eight chapters each with a clear theme and helpful organisation. The introductory chapter sets forth some of the author's ruminations particularly about aesthetics and also develops a sense of how space is viewed and then used with intent. Chapter two is also somewhat introductory but takes us further into "The Classic Sacramental Tradition: Origins of Spatial Arrangements in Catholic Churches" and "The Classic Evangelical Tradition". This chapter is a good overview historically, and many aspects will be repeated and developed in subsequent chapters. For example, chapters three and four build upon the contrast which was studied in chapter three and go deeper into "A Catholic Conception of Space: The Visual World of the Middle Ages" and "A Reformed Conception of Space: An Analysis of Spatial Sanctity in Swiss and French Reformed Churches". The author notes some of the possible contradictions in the Reformed leaders and yet does highlight what he sees as Calvin's view of space for the worshipping community. He notes the difficulty of interpreting the Second Helvetic Confession on worship space. My own thinking is that the Reformed leaders were fairly consistent with Calvin and the major differences which emerge were much later. Working concludes that "An ideology of sacredness would evolve within Reformed thinking about architectural space, but it would turn in a new direction, relating space to the ideal of a holy people and the sanctifying Word of God" (p. 102).

In chapter five, Working takes us on a journey to discover the Roman architect Vitruvius as a prototype for French Renaissance architecture. His summary of Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture* on page 110 is very well done. Vitruvius was appropriated by Sebastiano Serlio in France. Working then sees the French Huguenots as wanting to depart from the medieval Gothic style and replace it with the classical style for their new building projects and also in their purpose-built churches. One question which kept coming back to

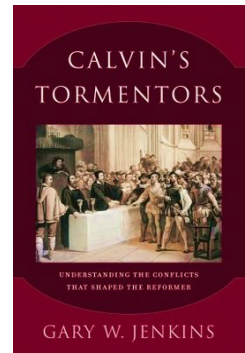
me throughout reading this book concerns St. Peter's in Rome and the classical Renaissance influences upon that building project: I just was not sure how Working's thesis of the Huguenots turning to the classical world for inspiration in order to make a departure from the medieval Catholic Church can be resolved with the architectural style of St. Peter's. Perhaps a better thesis is that various styles could be used, but it was the *arrangements* of the interior space which were the critical issue. Many had already turned away from the Gothic style within the Catholic Church and many of these did not become Protestant. So a wider contextual glance needs to be made.

An index would have been appreciated, as would have one map, and a few more illustrations could have been included with the book. *The Visual Theology of the Huguenots* needs to be in all Reformed theological college libraries. It makes an excellent contribution in its area and is to be welcomed. It will no doubt allow further engagement and discussion on this very neglected field of studies. The author's background and academic training in both art and theology is evidenced in this book and makes him well qualified as a trusted authority.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock.*

***Calvin's Tormentors: Understanding the Conflicts That Shaped the Reformer.* Gary W. Jenkins. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, 208 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-9833-8**

Readers of biographies of John Calvin (1509-1564), the French exile and co-reformer of Geneva, will know the experience of reading –in passing– of various persons with whom Calvin was drawn into controversy; given the constraints within which any biographer works, these minor characters must be left largely unexplored. Perhaps the opponent of Calvin, the heretic Michael Servetus (1511-1553), represents an exception to this rule; Calvin's association with the trial and execution of this man is still explored by every biographer. At the same time, the reader of a Calvin biography is frustrated at being barely introduced to Bishop Jacopo Sadoletto (1477-1547) whose 1539 pamphlet wooing Geneva back to Rome required a reply from Calvin (just then banished to Strasbourg) to Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563) early Calvin collaborator turned literary foe, or Ami Perrin, the Geneva council member who, while



eager to secure Calvin's return from Strasbourg exile, was himself eventually banished from his native city because of his determined opposition to Calvin's program of city-wide reform.

Author Gary W. Jenkins, history professor in Philadelphia's Eastern University, determined to do something about this lack. Having come to admire an earlier volume, *Friends of Calvin* (Eerdmans, 2009), he determined to investigate Calvin's relationships of the opposite type. His project in fact brings together a large quantity of existing research (some of which is his own) about these alter-egos of Calvin. It stands largely alone in this field as earlier volumes such as Wulfert de Greef's *The Writings of John Calvin* (1993; revised 2008) and Herman Selderhuis' edited volume, *The Calvin Handbook* (2009) shed important, but less direct light on the question of Calvin's conflicts.

Let us speak first of the volume's strengths. Jenkins writes as a historian with theological sensitivities. He is thoroughly at home in the world of sixteenth-century studies and conducts his examination of Calvin's various conflicts with a thorough knowledge of the military, dynastic, papal and diplomatic undercurrents of the age. He writes as one with empathy for the Reformation era (while acknowledging initially that he has moved beyond Protestantism to embrace Eastern Orthodoxy); we do not find here catty remarks about Calvin in any of his controversies.

Jenkins is helpfully alert to the evidence for development in Calvin's thought, rooted especially in the fact that at his first arrival in Geneva he was trained primarily in law and wide-open to the more determined influence of Guillaume Farel, who was by then a battle-hardened controversialist. Thus, in an opening chapter (I), Jenkins demonstrates how Calvin's attitudes rapidly hardened towards his erstwhile French comrades who continued on as Roman Catholics seeking reform of that Church from within. Until very recently their stance (which he denounced) had been his own. Similarly, Jenkins concurs with the verdict of recent Calvin biographer, Bruce Gordon (2009) that the two, Farel and Calvin, helped precipitate the crisis with the Geneva authorities that led to their banishment in 1538. Real light is shed on the development of Calvin's sacramental theology and its eventual moderation (reflecting the need for a military alliance with Zurich) in a chapter (IX) which focuses on Calvin's literary battles over the sacraments with the Lutheran, Westphal. An excellent bibliography concludes the work.

On the other hand, readers will find *Calvin's Tormentors* heavy going at times. It digests a very large body of research from recent decades (and is therefore heavily footnoted). Its prose is sometimes turgid and its sentences often so long that a reader might want to wield an editorial pencil. Not every chapter is equally illuminating; the concluding chapter (X) avalanches the reader with far more detail about the growth of Italian anti-trinitarianism and

its transmission through Switzerland (where Calvin combatted it as it appeared in Italian refugee congregations) to Poland than most readers will want to know.

But if we think of Jenkins' *Calvin's Tormentors* as a resource, able to be consulted (selectively as needs be) as a companion to the reading of Calvin biographies and our gaining of a more nuanced understanding of Geneva's reform, we will have properly estimated the value of this illuminating book.

*Reviewed by Kenneth J. Stewart, professor of theological studies at Covenant College; adjunct, Reformed Theological Seminary; and member on the council of reference of Haddington House Trust.*

***John Gerstner and the Renewal of Presbyterian and Reformed Evangelicalism in Modern America.* Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Jeffrey S. McDonald, Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017, 263 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4982-9631-1**

I had wanted to read this book for some time and when I did, found it to be a delight and also an enlightening read. John Gerstner (1914-1996) had considerable impact within and outside the “old United Presbyterian Church” and unions. He influenced many individuals, and, in some ways, the particular influences upon individuals were far more significant than on his own denominational structures and spheres. His protégés were the names in many ways who carried his torch for orthodox, evangelical Presbyterianism forward, names such as: R.C. Sproul Sr., Mark Ross, Walter Kenyon, Bruce Mawhinney, David Coffin, and Carl Bogue (p.105). Gerstner has often been neglected in American conservative evangelicalism, and yet his influence both for conservative Presbyterians and conservative evangelicals in America and beyond was significant. This book helps us understand this reality.

The book can be traced back to McDonald's PhD thesis at the University of Stirling in Scotland under Professor David Bebbington. It reads well. McDonald belongs to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, serves an EPC congregation in Nebraska, and contributed a chapter to the recently published work *The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff McDonald, “Presbyterian Polity”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism*, eds. Gary Scott Smith and P.C. Kemeny (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 217-228.

This is not just a biographical study but is rather specifically a book centred around the central thesis “[t]his study analyzes Gerstner’s life and thought in relation to the history of the mainline Northern Presbyterian church and the burgeoning evangelical movement and reveals his importance in pre- and post- World War II American religion” (p. 2). A comparable parallel study in part would be A. Donald MacLeod’s *W. Stanford Reid: An Evangelical Calvinist in the Academy*.<sup>2</sup> Both men knew each other, both men had their heroes, Knox and Edwards, both were church historians, both were Westminster Theological Seminary alumni, and both men served in “mainstream” mixed Presbyterian churches as conservatives. The question could also be asked of each, “Did their role within their denominations really make a significant impact, or were they so marginalised that their impact was in the end minimal, but their contributions may be seen to a greater extent outside their denominations?” McDonald does appear to directly answer that question: “[I]n the realm of mainline Presbyterian church politics Gerstner was almost completely unsuccessful” (p. 210). “...Even though he lost his battles in the UPUSA, it seems clear that he was successful in helping spawn the renewal of Presbyterian and Reformed evangelicalism in the last three decades of the century” (p. 211).

The book is divided into eight chapters and these are developed thematically and chronologically. Chapter two is “The Making of an Evangelical Scholar (1914-1949)” and chapter three “The Emergence of a Reformed Professor (1950-1959)”. Generally, the themes and chronologies fit well, yet they should not be viewed too rigidly as, for example, chapter four, “An Evangelical Defender of the Faith (1960-1969)”, applies in reality to most of Gerstner’s Christian life.

Reading the book was a little bit like reading a who’s who of conservative American evangelicalism in America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and also like exploring many of the divisions that the century experienced. Also, it raises many questions about renewal movements within mixed denominations for which each reader will need to come to their own conclusion. Reading the book does not give you endless stories about Gerstner and his life. There are several woven into the text, but overall it is not that kind of a book. I did find it interesting to discover a name which I had not heard about in some time, John Orr at Westminster College who was really the spiritual mentor behind Gerstner and hence in the line to Sproul as well.

This book provides insight and questions about theological education; denominational politics and struggles; one man’s battles on many fronts; his

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<sup>2</sup> A. Donald MacLeod, *W. Stanford Reid: An Evangelical Calvinist in the Academy*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004).



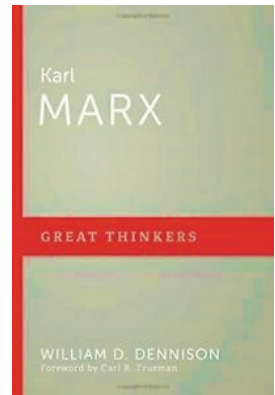
writings and his legacy, particularly on Edwards, inerrancy, and classical apologetics; and as a defender of the faith amidst liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. I was disappointed not to see any illustrations inside the book and it was a little strange that Gerstner's writings were not given a separate bibliographical section at the end. These are more oddities than major criticisms. *John Gerstner and the Renewal of Presbyterian and Reformed Evangelicalism in Modern America* helps to fill a very neglected area in American Presbyterian, evangelical history and studies. It is most welcomed.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock.*

**Karl Marx. William D. Dennison. Great Thinkers, series ed. Nate Shannon. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, 122 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-150-8**

In *Karl Marx*, William Dennison analyses the Marxist socio-economic mentality of Marx from a Christian perspective. “Amid the rise and fall of nations and civilizations, the influence of a few great minds has been profound” (p. ix). Similarities between Marxist and Darwinian thought abound. This volume intends to lay out a framework for a response of Christianity to socialist, communist, Marxist philosophies.

Both Hegel and Rousseau heavily influenced the nascent Marx in his earlier days. Marx, in his early years was quite destitute and became quite a controversial figure. “[T]he state of grace, as applied to Marx’s position, involves revolution changing the world and leading it towards its final state.” (p. 88). “Like all non-Christian systems of thought Marx’s view of redemption exchanges the truth of God’s grace for the fraud of human achievement” (p. 8).



The Marxist worldview is such that humanity is a secularized, non-spiritual end in itself. One must only look to one prominent so-called Marxist, Stalin, to see the ugly side of the Marxist-inspired communism. Stalin imprisoned and tortured thousands all in the name of a Marxist-inspired programme. Stalin literally swallowed up smaller nations to create a Soviet

conglomerate. The Christian church, as exemplified for the most part in Orthodoxy, was repressed.

“A second factor leading to the undesirable state of labor, in Marx’s estimation, was that the mechanical power of the machine negated the muscular power of human beings, particularly that of men in the workforce” (p. 61). Marx views the existence of the wage-earner as being cheapened by the advent of machinery, and that the working class is being trampled upon by the proponents of capitalism.

It is interesting to note that in scripture, in particular in the book of Acts, the early Christian community lived in a “semi-communistic” state, having all things in common, to the point where Ananias and Sapphira perished for their fraudulent actions. Marx made the attempt to re-organize society away from a Christian model of community to a society where each person is part of a collective; however, each person, supposedly liberated, actually ends up in a state of bondage to Marxist-Socialist communism. God’s plan is thrown out the window, sin is negated and grace is dissolved. What we essentially have is a socialist worldview as opposed to a Reformed Christian worldview, and these two worldviews collide.

Marx also had a certain fixation on history (being somewhat Hegelian himself), being at heart “an atheistic metaphysician” which is anathema to evangelical Reformed Christianity. Marx’s own background was Judaism, followed by his family’s conversion to Lutheranism, neither faith tradition seeming to have had much sway with Marx’s own view of metaphysics. As mentioned earlier, the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau influenced the fledgling Marx.

Marx’s Darwinian influence is certainly felt, for he held Darwin’s “Origin of Species” in high regard. He goes even deeper as he maintains that human passions belong to the natural construct of humanity’s essential being (pp. 92-93). A humanity devoid of the hope of eternal salvation is a sorrowful prospect to Christians, but to Marx the fact that man is an end in himself resounds.

Dennison’s little book in the Great Thinkers series is a “Tiger-Tank” of a book, and in its albeit concise format certainly brings out a succinct analysis of evangelical Reformed Christianity as opposed to Marxist thought.

*Reviewed by Aaron MacLure an active lay-Christian and a life-long learner and reader who resides in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.*

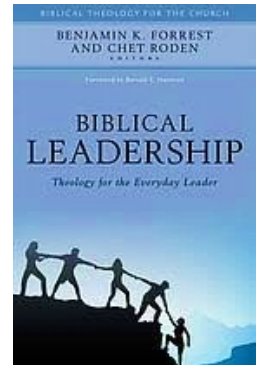
## Applied Theology

***Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader.* Eds. Benjamin K. Forrest and Chet Roden. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2017, 537 pp., paper. ISBN 9780825443916**

*Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader* is a Genesis-to-Revelation study of the examples and theology of leadership in the Bible with application for the contemporary church. The 33 chapters of this book analyse leadership in every book or section of the Bible. Most chapters are divided into three parts: 1) exposition of leadership in the given Bible book or part of the Bible; 2) theological conclusions of leadership drawn from that expository work; and 3) the significance of leadership principles for today's church based on that expository and theological work.

The 36 contributors are evangelical Old and New Testament scholars. Though a diversity of ecclesiastical backgrounds is represented among the authors, the book is clearly a project of the theological faculty of Liberty University in Virginia, USA.

The vision of the editors is to let the Bible speak for itself on the subject of leadership, rather than reading contemporary management models back into Scripture. The ultimate aim of the book is a comprehensive biblical theology of leadership based on the exegetical work of the diverse chapters.



*Biblical Leadership* covers those biblical heroes we most often turn to for examples of leadership - Moses and Jethro (presented by Jennifer and Benjamin Noonan), Joshua (Chet Roden), Ezra and Nehemiah (Dickson Ngama, Mark Allen, and Edwin Yamauchi), and Esther (Debra Reid). The value of this book is that it exposes biblical leadership in hidden places, such as the Proverbs (Daniel Estes), Ecclesiastes (Tremper Longman III), the Minor Prophets (Allan Fuhr, Andrew Hill), and Revelation (Edward Hindson).

Two chapters are dedicated to detailed concept studies of every word connected with leadership both in Hebrew in the Old Testament and in Greek in the New. Robert Stacy concludes that shepherding (guiding, helping, coaching) rather than governing provides the comprehensive idea of leadership in the New Testament based on the numerous words in its semantic domain.

A few highlights of the book stood out for me:

William Mounce provides a brilliant summary of the character, calling, and competencies of elders and deacons in the Pastoral Epistles. Mounce observes, “[E]xperience has taught me that you do not know a person’s character until you give them power” (p. 446). Mounce recommends that, second only to sermon preparation, a pastor’s task is to prepare leaders for the next generation.

Peter Davids’ presentation in the Petrine Epistles is a clear reproof to our concept of leadership informed by our democratic society when he insists that elders are Spirit-appointed, not democratically elected. Davids warns against an illegitimate use of Jesus Christ as our leadership model - “there is the danger of wanting to model on the exalted Lord without going through the passion of Jesus” (p. 465).

Walter Kaiser, Jr opens Psalm 23 line by line, discussing leadership in light of shepherding in the Ancient Near East.

Benjamin Merkle surveys the entire New Testament bringing together a summary of the offices, titles, and roles of all leadership categories in the early church.

An inherent danger exists in writing such a thematic study of the Bible. The tendency could be extracting one’s theme (leadership in this case) from areas where that theme is not intended. The contributors seemed to avoid this; they discovered leadership in natural areas in biblical history without forcing it out.

The concluding Epilogue (Toward a Biblical Theology of Leadership) was disappointing. The purported aim of the book was to develop a biblically informed theology of leadership. And with the massive amount of expositional and theological work throughout the book, the result is only a two-page presentation of a theology of leadership (pp. 515-516). So much more could have been developed in this section. But what *is* presented, is helpful: 1)

authority and leadership come from above; 2) biblical leadership is best summarised as shepherding (providing and protecting); 3) biblical leadership is “crucicentric” as leaders follow Christ to his cross; and 4) church leaders must be incarnationally servant-driven.

An author index would make this book more helpful.

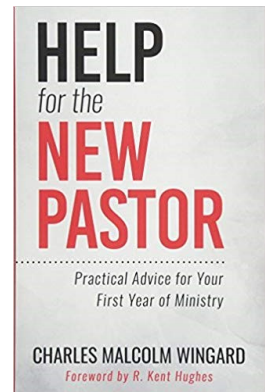
In Africa, where the velocity of evangelism and church planting is far outpacing sound leadership development, this book could be used for a leader’s self-study, a fine college textbook, or the basis of a leadership-training seminar.

*Reviewed by Karl Peterson, a former church planter in Mozambique and lecturer at the Bible Institute of South Africa and currently on staff at Parker Hills Bible Fellowship in Denver, USA.*

***Help for the New Pastor: Practical Advice for Your First Year of Ministry.* Charles Malcolm Wingard. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2018, 206 pp., ISBN 978-1-62995-467-7**

Any undertaking benefits from a clear vision and plan to see it accomplished, and the goal of Charles Wingard in *Help for the New Pastor* is to provide a practical vision of pastoral life and ministry for those starting out. As senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Yazoo City and associate professor of practical theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, he is able to share both pastoral and professorial wisdom. Wingard introduces the book as a “nuts and bolts” treatise rather than a comprehensive one, but the breadth and depth of his treatment makes it extremely helpful as a guide for “realistic preparation for ministry.” Much like an architect draws up plans that encompass all aspects of a building, some foundational, some hidden and not readily noticed, and others easily seen and observed, Wingard draws on his more than 30 years of pastoral experience to lay out a full and rich structure of the life and calling of the minister.

Beginning with an examination of calling, the 18 chapters of the book detail Wingard’s four-fold focus on preaching, pastoral care, administration, and caring for self and family. Each chapter is prefaced with a page providing applicable quotes and Scriptures to introduce the subject matter under discussion. These are a helpful touch in themselves as they both point to the



Biblical foundation for aspects of ministry and serve as an introduction to a variety of Christian authors who have contributed to a practical understanding of ministry. The chapters are introduced with a clear objective, which is then expanded on with several short sections that make up the body of the chapter. Some chapters draw to a short conclusion, while others end with a discussion of a particular aspect of ministry. The style of writing is easy to follow and the short sections provide easy stopping and starting points that suit reading the chapters in smaller portions.

This book is very helpful for sketching an outline of your pastoral ministry, but Wingard notes that it is “suggestive, not prescriptive”, and here his practical wisdom can be seen again. Outlines can become taskmasters and heavy burdens if they become an end in themselves and Wingard shares experiences from his own ministry that illustrate how your outline will be tweaked and adjusted as you grow and adapt to the realities of your particular area of service and ministry. It could also be very useful as a tool for recalibrating and adjusting a ministry that is already underway. The broad strokes of the advice are helpful in reviewing current practices and evaluating the state of progress that the church under your care is in. After years of service a book like this one can play an important role in bringing a more complete picture of ministry back into focus and revealing where work most needs to be done.

Beyond the practical nature of the instruction, however, is a deeper undercurrent of pastoral love and care that stems from Wingard’s own experience of having a caring and capable mentor. His desire is for those who enter the ministry to do so in faith and humble reliance upon God, showing the fruit of the Spirit in their lives as they serve. This emphasis is shown in his call to ministers to seek a spirit of reconciliation and service, to love and serve their congregations, to work towards harmony among the leadership, and to pray continually for themselves, their families, and their congregations. The fullness of the practical framework that Wingard provides is grounded in the saving work and love of God and Wingard advises that those entering the ministry maintain a habit of studying His works and ways in the lives of others. An appendix of “good friends” for further reading is provided to help those specifically looking for resources connected to pastoral ministry.

Wingard writes in the introduction, “Realistic preparation for ministry can go a long way toward allaying the doubt and fear that arise during your first year” (p. xv). This book will be a great help in that regard for those just entering into ministry, and will also be a challenging refresher for ministers with years of experience.

*Reviewed by Stephen Plouffe.*

***Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global.* Andy Johnson.  
Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017, 126pp. paper. ISBN  
9781433555701**

*Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global* provides biblical principles of local church-based missions which can happily be used in the African church/mission context.

This short book is part of the 9Marks Ministries' Building Healthy Churches series. Author Andy Johnson is an associate pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC, USA.

This book answers a few important questions:

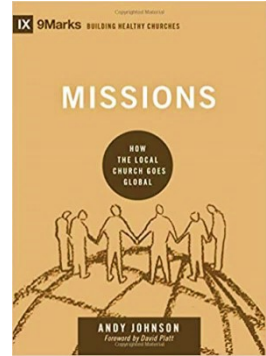
*What is the church's mission in the world?*

Johnson opens by showing that the church's mission priority is making disciples of all nations and planting local churches for the glory of God.

*What is a missionary?* A missionary is "someone identified and sent out by local churches to make the gospel known and to gather, serve, and strengthen local churches across ethnic, linguistic, or geographic divides" (p. 36).

*What kind of missionaries should a church send and support?* Before a person is sent to a mission field, he or she should prove to be a self-starter, be elder-qualified according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9; demonstrate proven ministry faithfulness ("a trail of conspicuous fruitfulness in other's lives is one of the grand marks of a good prospective missionary," pp. 44-45); possess a deep and clear-headed understanding of the Bible and theology; demonstrate disciple-making and other ministry skills; maintain accountable membership in a local church; and partake in some form of international cross-cultural experience prior to leaving for the field long-term.

*How should a church support a missionary?* Local churches must know and have a relationship with missionaries they support. Johnson recommends that it is better for a local church to support a few missionaries generously than to support many missionaries poorly. When on the field, sending churches must maintain regular communication with the workers, provide pastoral visits, send short-term help when the mission workers request it, extend hospitality when the mission workers are back home, and supply team-workers when needed. If a local church uses a mission agency to send their missionaries, Johnson recommends a strong relationship between the



local church and the agency. Churches must not abdicate their responsibilities of support and accountability to mission boards.

*Are short-term missions useful?* Johnson's chapter on Reforming Short-Term Missions (STMs) is a sound guide. Even though many short-term mission trips are "ineffective, distracting, wasteful, and in some cases flat-out counterproductive to the cause of Christ among the nations" (p. 92), thoughtful short-term missions can be a blessing if the STMs aim at helping the missionary and local believers, not just go for a holiday; and if the STMs focus on visiting missionaries with whom the local church already has a relationship.

I personally have used this book with my fellow elders, with our church's mission committee, and with prospective missionaries I mentor. I highly recommend the book.

There are issues concerning the sending of missionaries which the African church faces which are not addressed in this book. Nevertheless, the principles in this little volume are easily translatable to missions in Africa.

*Reviewed by Karl Peterson.*



***Only One Way.* David F. Wells, Albert Mohler, Peter R. Jones, Richard D. Phillips, Philip G. Ryken, D. A. Carson and J. Ligon Duncan III. Edited by Michael L. Johnson and Richard D. Phillips. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2018, 168 pp, paper. ISBN: 978-1-62995-393-9**

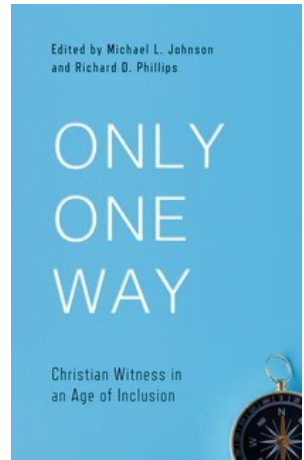
*(Note: Chapters 1 and 3-7 originally published in 2006 by Crossway Books as Only One Way? In 2018 P&R Publishing revised and expanded the second edition for the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.)*

Addressing Christians living in a post-modern society that readily embraces pluralism and relativism – the belief that there is no absolute truth – this book seeks to remind Christians of the absolute, concrete and exclusive truth that there is ‘*Only One Way*’ when it comes to the Good News of Christ.

The book is divided into seven chapters written by different authors; each proclaiming, defending and explaining an absolute Christian truth that is challenged by post-modernism such as ‘One Gospel’, ‘One God’, ‘One Saviour’ and ‘One Way.’ Most of the material originated as conference addresses at the 2005 Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology themed ‘One Way’, sponsored by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

In the introductory chapter, David Wells opens by acknowledging that the world has undergone massive and indisputable changes over the past century; however, he draws parallels to the situation faced by the apostle Paul in the pagan city of Athens, Acts 17. Although centuries have elapsed, sin in its nature has not changed nor has God’s character as the creator, sovereign and judge of the world.

In chapter two, Albert Mohler explores the meaning and importance of the gospel’s unified truth as presented by Paul in Romans chapters one to eight. Paul concludes the argument with the great statement of assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God. He can say this with absolute confidence because of the preceding argument that there is only one gospel that has the power for salvation through faith in Christ alone. ‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as



a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus' (Romans 3:23-26 ESV). Removing this fundamental truth renders Christianity void, therefore we need to stand firm that there is only 'One Gospel' that saves.

Peter Jones, in chapter three, addresses what is perhaps the chief doctrinal attack of our time – the rejection of the doctrine of God. The very denial of God himself is one of the primary obstacles to preaching the gospel. He highlights the increase of alternative polytheistic spirituality. Jones points us to the Bible as testament to the 'One True God'; a unique, eternal, triune, creator God, who is holy, sovereign and transcends beyond anything else we know, yet chooses to form a personal relationship with his people. He calls us to celebrate the God at the centre of the gospel.

Chapter four, 'One Saviour' written by Richard Phillips, considers the Bible's claim that Jesus Christ is the world's only Saviour. The claim that all religions are 'the same' is prevalent in our relativistic world. Therefore, the exclusive truth that there is only one saviour is a contentious topic which can be perceived in a post-modern society as uncompromising, militant, imperious and invincibly self-righteous. Phillips exposes the biblical basis for such a claim including the distinguishing doctrine of sin, the need for a perfect saviour and why Jesus Christ is the only one who fulfils this role.

In the ensuing chapter, Philip Ryken confronts us with Pontius Pilate's unforgettable question, posed to Jesus himself during his trial; 'What is truth?' (John 18:38, ESV). Pilate, confronted with Jesus and claims of the absolute truth, questioned whether it is even possible to know the truth. Ryken highlights the same nature of people today, when people hear the claims of Christianity they are often 'quick to raise objections about the possibility that anyone can really know the truth.' Post-modernism argues that the truth depends on one's perspective and that different things can be true for different people. Ryken expounds what truth is and encourages us to live out the truth we believe in the way that we behave as Christians.

The final two chapters veer away from the conflict of idea between Christianity and the world towards challenging the Christian reader to embrace the Bible's call to exclusivity.

In chapter 6, D.A Carson considers the antitheses presented in the Sermon on the Mount which remind us there are two ways to live but only one way to God. Carson explains how the Sermon on the Mount 'simultaneously tells us how to live and exposes us to the fact that we cannot meet the challenge.' Jesus is the only Way. Furthermore, Carson challenges the reader to consider whether the exclusivity of 'One Way' penetrates our everyday lives.

In the final chapter –7, Ligon Duncan reflects on the ‘One People’ chosen by God, for his service and unified through saving faith in Jesus Christ. He implores us, as people of truth, to unite as God’s ‘One People.’

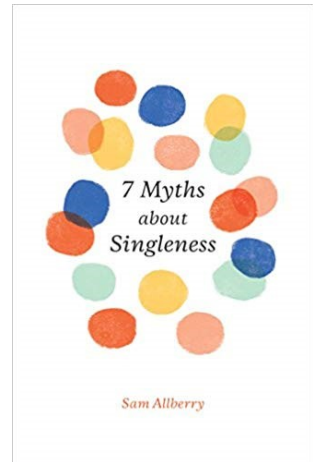
Dedicated “To Him who is ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6, NKJV)”, these seven scholars and pastors boldly uphold the uniqueness of Christ, reaffirm the exclusive truth claims of Christianity, and encourage us to hold firm to the only kind of Christianity worthy of His Name.

*Reviewed by Dr Keri McLean originally from Northern Ireland, now a resident ophthalmologist and Ph.D. researcher in Liverpool, England.*

**7 Myths about Singleness. Sam Allberry. Wheaton, IL:  
Crossway, 2019, 175 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-6152-8**

What role does the state of singleness play in a person’s Christian life and in the life of the Christian community? These are really the overall questions that Sam Allberry, pastor, speaker, and writer with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, sets out to answer in this book.

Allberry begins by carefully defining what he means by singleness – “From the point of view of Christianity, to be single means being both unmarried and committed (for as long as we remain unmarried) to sexual abstinence. (p. 12). This definition then prepares the reader for the 7 myths that are dealt with – one chapter devoted to



each: singleness is too hard, singleness requires a special calling, singleness means no intimacy, singleness means no family, singleness hinders ministry, singleness wastes your sexuality, and singleness is easy.

While each of the chapters is helpful in considering the subject of Christian singleness, the book is really equally debunking myths about marriage: marriage is easy, marriage is for everyone, marriage automatically involves intimacy, marriage means family, marriage helps you in ministry, etc. One wonders if a better title would be seven myths about earthly relationships (though that is a less catchy title!) – especially when the author so beautifully writes: “This reminds us that marriage now is not ultimate. It will be absent in the age to come and is not vital in this present time. This reality is reflected in the life of Jesus himself. The most fully human and complete person ever to live on this earth did so as someone who was single, and yet called himself

‘the bridegroom’.” These words speak to all, to remind us that we only have complete and lasting fulfillment and complete and lasting intimacy with Christ.

Likewise, the author points out that our status as “single” or “married” is one that can and does change throughout life. “Most of us who are married will one day be single again” (p.14). Therefore, it seems the real theme of the book is to look to Christ for ultimate fulfillment no matter what marital status we possess as we live “here below”. Allberry is certainly very clear that the whole church needs to be considering the material in this book and challenges readers to have a clear grasp on the two states – single and married – and their value to the body of Christ.

Readers may wonder how Allberry’s work compares to the 2017 publication *The Ultimate Guide to Christian Singleness: Loved, Secure, Guided* by Mark Ballenger. There are at least two major points of difference: one, Allberry is writing as a single man himself and, two, he is addressing the whole church in contrast to Ballenger’s intended audience which appears to be young adults.

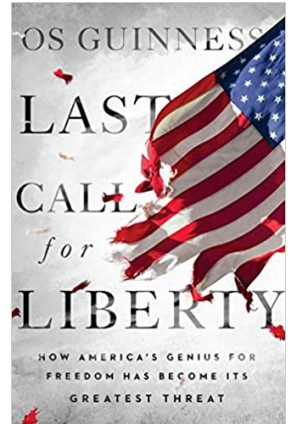
There is a helpful appendix entitled “Four Ways to Avoid Sexual Sin”. Again, there are strong words of advice for those who are currently married. One will find themselves praying and even longing that these four words of advice would be heeded in increasing measure as a preservative to marriage and to Christ-honoring relationships in our modern-day culture.

The back of this 175-page paperback book contains two helpful indexes – one general and the other scriptural. *7 Myths About Singleness* is helpful for unpacking Biblical teaching on both singleness and marriage. Allberry is remarkably candid about his experience as a single man in the church. All Christians can learn from his honesty and be challenged to think biblically about our “temporary” marital status as we wait for our beloved Bridegroom to return.

*Reviewed by Nancy J. Whytock.*

***Last Call for Liberty: How America's Genius for Freedom Has Become its Greatest Threat.* Os Guinness. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018, 306 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8308-4559-0**

Os Guinness, (D.Phil) is an author and social critic. He is a senior fellow at the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics in Oxford. According to the dust jacket, he has written or edited more than thirty books, including *The Call, Time for Truth, A Free People's Suicide, The Global Public Square, Renaissance and Fool's Talk – The Recovery of Christian Persuasion*. Along with this, Guinness speaks at universities and various other forums around the world.



Though I've never read Guinness before (to my shame), I have enjoyed his appearances at the Veritas forum where he is a regular contributor.

This volume, which some have called Guinness' magnum opus, is a development on an earlier work called *A Free People's Suicide*.

In this book, *Last Call for Liberty*, Guinness says, "The great American republic is in the throes of its gravest crisis since the Civil War, a crisis that threatens its greatness, its freedom, and its character" (p. 1).

It is, as the title suggests, in part due to America's love for freedom itself. One might ask, "How can that be? How can liberty be the problem?" Guinness suggests that liberty is desirable and essential for any free society but must be undergirded by robust virtue where people agree, or as he suggests, covenant, to pursue freedom, in a way that doesn't lead to the trumping of individual freedom over the freedom of the society at large.

"If nations are to be understood by what they love supremely, then freedom is and always has been the key to America. But the question facing America is, what is the key to freedom?" (p. 3).

The liberty for which the United States has been the envy of the world stems from the founding principles of the American Revolution in 1776. However, these principles were not shaped in a vacuum either. They find their origins in the Judaeo-Christian mores set forth in the Old and New Testament.

Guinness looks at the losing and recovery of freedom through the lenses of two revolutions, or as he calls it the "tale of two revolutions" --The American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. This is a story of how "the heirs and allies of 1776 clash with the heirs and allies of 1789" (p. 208). Both seemingly on the surface shared similar goals, but

because of their underlying ethos, they produced very different results: one leading to greater human flourishing and the other to societal fragmentation and degeneration. Guinness states,

Which of the two rival views of freedom best serves the interests of human flourishing? Which of the two grounds the vision of a free and just society for all citizens, based on the dignity of every human person and allowing for disagreement and opposition? Which view allows free people to sustain their freedom under the challenging conditions of the advanced modern world and the global era? (p. 5).

Guinness leaves no stone unturned in looking at the threat to liberty. He engages in a prolonged discussion on the definition of freedom and how it sometimes means different things to different people. He dedicates a chapter (which I will highlight in this review), perhaps the most important in the book, to the question "Do You Know Where Your Freedom Came From?" Guinness disabuses us of the notion that liberty, as we know it in the west, was principally a product of Athens or Rome. He asserts that the American concept of freedom has more to do with Mt Sinai than Mars Hill. Or to quote Heinrich Heine, "Since the Exodus, freedom has always spoken with a Hebrew Accent" (p. 22). Tragically, say Guinness, the other popular revolutions, including the French, Russian and Chinese, saw the Biblical principles at variance with progress, and subsequently, the people paid dearly with their loss of freedom and their lives.

The Biblical principles that undergirded the American Revolution and later the American Constitution and Bill of Rights were "Covenantal" in nature. These principles recognized that a people created in the image of God were endowed by God with dignity and rights that could not be given (and therefore could not be taken away) by the state. This meant that people of all backgrounds were of value.

Again, because it was biblical in its approach to man, it was also realistic about man's sinfulness and therefore included governmental structures to guard against human excess and the tyranny of the majority. It sought to guard against the idealistic utopian ideas that assert the general goodness of man and his ability to build a society without God which characterized the bloody Chinese and Russian revolutions.

Against the covenantal model of the Bible that emphasized the reciprocal responsibility to one's neighbour, the French Revolution and its heirs emphasized more personal rights. This became visible in the west

through the sexual revolution of the 60s, culminating in what we see today in a society consisting of millions of splinter groups vying for their own rights to the detriment of more assumed, foundational and biblical values that have been proven to allow for human flourishing more effectively.

Guinness says, "Democracy as a notion, has next to no moral content and absolutely no social content whatsoever, whereas covenantal (or constitutional) republicanism, is moral at its heart and creates a society before it creates a state. It, therefore, puts responsible relationships and the common good at the heart of life and society" (p. 32). So, while the French Revolution of 1789 was democratic on the face of it in giving back power to the people, it did not have the moral content afforded by the Bible, giving it the staying power of the Revolution of 1776. However, today the trend is to mock the founders' ideal and opt for a "purer democracy" void of covenantal obligations and insights. It is simply rule by popular vote. It is moral change through popular consensus. It is democracy without a soul.

In other chapters, the author explores questions such as, Are there enough Americans who care about freedom? What do you mean by freedom? Have you faced up to the central paradox of freedom? How do you plan to sustain freedom? How will you make the world safe for diversity? How do you justify your vision of a free and open society? Where do you ground your faith in human freedom? Are you vigilant about the ideas crucial to freedom? Which revolution do they serve?

This is not just a book for the times but also for the ages. It soundly proves the adage that the 'proof is in the pudding' or more biblically, "You shall know them by their fruits" (Matt 7:20). Guinness proves convincingly that only by anchoring human freedom in God and His Word can the great American experiment with liberty last.

However, questions left hanging at the end are numerous. Have Americans lost such respect for their founding principles as to recognize what made America great? Will a covenantal renewal take place in America in time to reverse complete societal breakdown or will the heirs of 1789 finally win? Is there enough goodwill to make it happen or have Americans become far too polarized? "In the words of Lincoln, '...will you as a free people do what it takes to live free forever, or will you die by your own hand'" (p. 284).

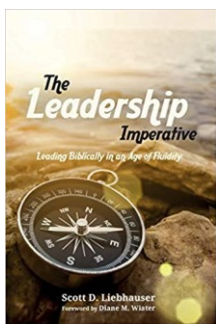
Guinness is masterful in his penetrating analysis on the origin and preservation of human freedom. Though dealing specifically with an American context, it is a must read for all who enjoy the inheritance of liberty passed down to us by generations who believed that freedom is not free.

*Reviewed by Kent Compton.*

***The Leadership Imperative: Leading Biblically in an Age of Fluidity.* Scott D. Liebhauser. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017, 150 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-5326-3875-6**

The author's first two sentences in his preface were absolutely brilliant and they made me want to keep reading:

With a genuine concern for the deficiency in courageous Christian leaders willing to proclaim the 'whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:27) in this current postmodern era of dysfunction, ambiguity, and disorder, I embarked on this particular theme. This work is designed to educate Christian leaders regarding the current era and its nuances and challenges, as well as provide encouragement through biblical solutions to lead faithfully, even counter-culturally, in these times. (p. xi)



His first chapter, “A Leader’s Primer on Postmodernity”, carries right on from this theme in the preface and is very concise and well stated on a difficult subject. Then Liebhauser proceeds to deal with “Answering Pilate’s Inquiry, ‘What is Truth?’” connecting with a quotation from Søren Kierkegaard (p. 13) – relevant and well done. Next, the author tackles something missed in most books on Christian leadership, “Puritanical Leadership: A Commitment to Conscience” (chapter three). What a blessing to read this chapter!

I have not fully settled yet on how to evaluate chapters four and six. Chapter four deals with vocation and leadership, again something not always tackled in leadership books. However, there just might be too much in that chapter, and it needed to be separated out more. Chapter six on “Reformational Leadership: Serving through the Solas” is most unique. I have never seen this presentation quite like this before. I see the connections yet am also a little wary of the five *solas* being so set in stone as the author makes them out – a “codicil” as he calls them (p.63). This is where I wondered if vocation and calling needed to also be incorporated into this chapter in some way. The author works from a good premise, “[a]s each of the *solas* are considered, the Christian leader has five core principles from which to lead” (p. 65). The author is most creative and certainly offers here a clear framework for



evangelical leadership. He teaches at Regent University in Virginia and Indiana Tech yet has aligned himself clearly with the larger conservative and Reformed evangelical community – very interesting to see.

The remaining chapters deal with leadership and leading for change within a culture of fluidity; the author’s four C’s of Christocentric leadership, namely, courage, credibility, character and compassion; servanthood as a nemesis of postmodernity; and leading by communicating with clarity in a period of fluidity. I am amazed by how this author has crafted a biblically faithful approach to leadership with such creative talent and depth of insight and relevance. He clearly lives in the world of the scripture but he can dissect so well the contemporary world.

This is a book which for some reason has gone largely unnoticed in many circles as a valuable resource on Christian leadership<sup>1</sup>. It deserves a wide reading and an engaged reading. It will serve as a senior-level course text in Christian institutions as well as a work for leaders willing to think deeply over the Bible and the world in which we live and the keys to being a leader today. The book was originally a doctoral project for the strategic leadership programme at Regent University. It has an excellent bibliography and is a solid theological Christian work on leadership.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock.*

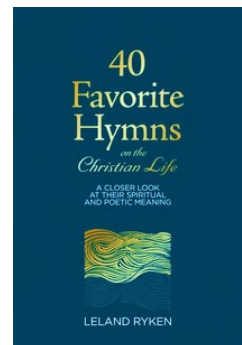
**40 Favorite Hymns on the Christian Life. Leland Ryken.**

**Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2019, 156 pp., hc.**

**ISBN 9781629956176**

When was the last time you “read” a hymn? Leland Ryken, author and emeritus professor of English at Wheaton College in Illinois, has written *40 Favorite Hymns on the Christian Life* with a view to asking readers to consider the spiritual and poetic meaning of some of the most beloved hymns – some old, some new. In order to do that, he is asking you to read, not sing, these hymns.

The premise is simple, yet profound. Every hymn is first a poem. Because of this, the author asserts



<sup>1</sup> Liebhauser’s book is very different from another fairly contemporary book on Christian leadership, Peter A. Lillback’s, *Saint Peter’s Principles: Leadership for those who already know their incompetence* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019).

that we should read hymn lyrics in their entirety and take time to consider the deep spiritual truths they are trying to convey. Ryken suggests that these devotional exercises in reading will deepen our appreciation of the biblical meditations of the poet and will ultimately enhance our own worship as we pair the poetry with music and sing it.

The book has a very simple layout – introduction (essential to read as it unlocks the key to the whole book), an analysis of 40 hymns, a conclusion, notes, and a glossary of terms. Each entry in the anthology includes a hymn/poem, an explanation of that poem from both a literary and biblical/theological analysis, and a scripture reading. For example, at the close of his analysis on the hymn *And Can It Be?*, Ryken writes, “As we will see with many poems in this anthology, this one contains so many different biblical allusions that it is difficult to choose a single devotional passage as collaborative reading. Nonetheless, the poem’s sentiment that salvation is too amazing to be fully understood finds a parallel in Ephesians 3:17-19” (p. 43).

The author clearly hopes that this book may be used for devotional purposes. That being the case, readers will want their bibles open as they work through the various hymns. It is regrettable that P&R did not use a binding for Ryken’s book that allows it to remain open as one goes back and forth between scripture and these hymns.

Readers who do not find their favorite hymn listed in this anthology will nevertheless benefit. How? Apart from the obvious benefit of meditating on the great truths expressed in these poems, the author is also teaching us how to evaluate the words that we are singing. He is showing us how to draw out the theology, how to understand the intent of the poet, how to assess the structure and themes, how to ponder the scriptures that have most influenced the poet in a particular composition. This is immensely helpful for all Christians to consider.

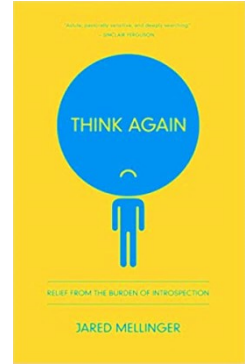
So often we are prone to reject a hymn based on whether or not we like the music. While musical analysis is also of value, by separating the poem from the tune, we are reminded that the words that we are singing must be carefully evaluated. We are also challenged that we can in fact improve our ability to evaluate as we apply the methods used in this small book.

This hardcover 156-page book is attractively presented and would make a great gift for any Christian. Perhaps opponents in the “worship wars” could find greater peace and harmony (no pun intended) if more emphasis were placed on the kind of reflection and analysis that Ryken has so ably introduced us to in this devotional anthology.

*Reviewed by Nancy J. Whytock.*

***Think Again: Relief From the Burden of Introspection.* Jared Mellinger. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017, 180 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1942572565**

As the title suggests, this book is about introspection – the act of looking in on oneself and reflecting on one’s thoughts, emotions, actions and identity. In his introduction, Mellinger acknowledges that the Bible commends self-reflection. At the same time he points out that we tend towards extremes. While some people never study themselves, others constantly study themselves and this book is largely written for those who tend toward the latter extreme. Mellinger explains that the goal of this book “... is to show how the gospel rescues us from fruitless self-examination, false guilt, discouragement and inaccurate thoughts of ourselves (p. 1).”



He begins by setting out the problem of introspection. Drawing from his own personal experience, Mellinger shows how introspection causes a person to be constantly turning inward, which is a form of bondage. He writes, “The antidote to this excessive introspection is not to completely forget ourselves, but to look more to the Lord Jesus, which leads to thinking rightly – and less often about myself (p. 12).”

If we are going to rightly know ourselves, then we need to move beyond ourselves and to see ourselves in God’s sight. Our value and significance is not something we earn but something found in Christ. He also writes about how we are to feel about ourselves. He talks about self-image and how Jesus rescues us from both self-hatred and self-esteem. He helpfully points out that self-loathing attitudes cannot be overcome by simply replacing them with self-confident attitudes since the same problem of being centered on ourselves remains (p. 37). It is only by the gospel that we can be rescued from idolizing ourselves and viewing ourselves apart from anything within us.

In the middle chapters of the book, Mellinger seeks to give guidance about how to rightly guide of our thoughts on ourselves. Drawing upon Asaph’s experience in Psalm 77, he points out how our focus must turn from ourselves to what we know to be true of God and how the promises of God are important for dealing with our inner thoughts (p. 61).

One of the most helpful chapters in the book deals with fighting false guilt. He stresses the need to distinguish between *feeling* guilty and actually *being* guilty (p. 67). He provides six essential distinctions for determining whether we are guilty of sin or dealing with false guilt. He also provides

concrete examples of where Christians can *feel* guilty about something that is not actually sinful.

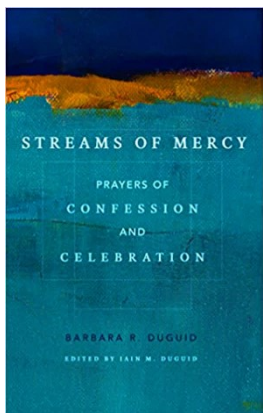
He then offers ten practical suggestions to help guide our self-reflection, which include: starting with Christ; having a purpose; choosing a good time; asking for God's help; basing our evaluations on the Bible; looking for signs of God's grace; keeping it short; involving others; confessing sins; and having a clear sense of what faithfulness would look like. The final chapters of the book focus on being drawn outside ourselves in order to appreciate the glorious reality of God's creation and the gift of loving others.

This is a short, practical and Christ-centred book. This would be very useful for those who wrestle with introspection, but it would also be beneficial for anyone who wants to understand and care for those who experience this burden and for Christians in general who want to know how God wants us to think about ourselves (p. 2).

*Reviewed by Peter Aiken who serves as the pastor of the Central Charge, the Free Church of Scotland, in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.*

### ***Streams of Mercy: Prayers of Confession and Celebration.***

**Barbara R. Duguid, edited by Iain M. Duguid. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2018, 249 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-342-7**



Like its companion book, *Prone to Wander*<sup>2</sup>, *Streams of Mercy* is a book of prayers of confession written for use in church services, though it can also be used for personal devotions. There are over 80 themed prayers of confession, each introduced with a Scriptural call to confession, followed by another passage of Scripture offering assurance of pardon. The prayers themselves are specific and pointed, confessing in corporate language particular sins as prompted by the call to confession. Each prayer is followed by two suggested hymns relating to the theme.

The prayers are Trinitarian: while focusing on confession to God the Father, each prayer also offers thanks and praise for the work of Christ, and

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<sup>2</sup> Duguid, Barbara R. & Wayne Duguid Houk, *Prone to Wander: Prayers of Confession*, ed. Iain M. Duguid (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014).

supplication for the Holy Spirit's help. Each of the Ten Commandments are featured as themes, but after that there are a great variety. Themes are not limited to sins of commission such as anger, shame, fear, and pride, but also include sins of omission in areas such as faith, humility, justice, and our response to God's goodness.

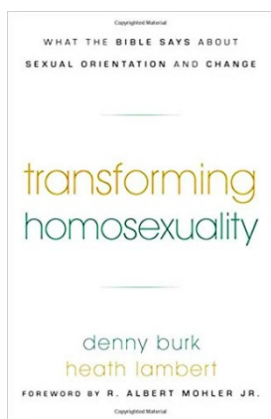
I used this book in my personal devotions for a few months. As a methodical person, I started at the beginning of the book and began to pray each prayer in sequence. I soon found this approach difficult, as praying with the church is different than praying privately. While I felt that I could join with the church in saying "we have sinned" even when a particular sin is not one I struggle with, but it felt insincere to confess such sins privately. One instance that stands out in my memory was the sentence, "We all hate people in our hearts, whether with icy cold resentment or red-hot fury, and we daily struggle to obey your command." (p. 236) This prompted me to examine myself, and while I have struggled with this sin occasionally in the past, I could honestly say it was not the case at the moment I was praying. Every believer wrestles with sin, but not every believer struggles with the same individual sins. I decided to change my approach and choose themes that seemed to apply to me at the moment, and that enabled me to enter into the written prayers more fully. An index of themes and of Scripture references was helpful to me and will be even more helpful for churches using this resource.

My favourite part each day was the assurance of pardon from Scripture. I also loved the suggested hymns, about half of which were new to me. I looked forward to finding them on iTunes each morning as I finished my devotions. There is an index of musical resources for churches wanting to find these hymns. In the mix of old and new I saw Isaac Watts and Horatius Bonar's names many times alongside Keith Getty and Stuart Townend and "Sovereign Grace Praise."

Though I do not come from a church tradition that uses written prayers, I believe *Streams of Mercy* may be a helpful resource for those who do. I felt its value in my personal devotions, even though using a written prayer sometimes felt unwieldy. It often made me stop and examine my heart, and also prompted me to confess my sin more fully. I was grateful for every chapter's final emphasis on the grace of God and the assurance of pardon in Christ.

*Reviewed by Nelleke Plouffe an active home-schooling mother who resides in Donagh, Prince Edward Island.*

***Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says About Sexual Orientation and Change.* Denny Burk and Heath Lambert. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015, 135 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-59638-139-1**



Why yet another book on homosexuality written by evangelicals for the orthodox Church? In recent years there have been a plethora of faithful books published on this subject.

The authors, Denny Burk and Heath Lambert acknowledge that they are writing on a subject written on by many. But in a culture where one's sexual orientation has become one's identity, this short, readable exposition on this topic offers new insights that most books on the ethics of homosexuality do not cover. The authors assume the one reading their book will already be convinced of the faithful and orthodox position regarding sexual ethics and homosexuality. Where this book offers new insights is in the exploration of the topic of same-sex attraction (SSA). The authors' desire is to help those who are committed to Christ, yet experience SSA, to find real help and change (change being holiness!).

I particularly appreciated the pastoral tone of this book. The authors know their position on SSA will not be accepted by many. Their desire is to truly help struggling Christians embrace holiness in their sexuality, while finding support through the faithful and compassionate ministry of the Church.

There are 5 chapters to this book. The first chapter lays the foundation for the particular subject covered in this book: SSA. The authors use the American Psychological Association's definition of SSA, not because they are necessarily overly excited about the definition. The definition is helpful in defining the two aspects of SSA that most people think about when discussing the issue: same-sex sexual attractions and same-sex emotional attractions. The authors then examine the four main positions found within the "Christian" Church regarding SSA. In interacting both with the American Psychological Association's definition of SSA, and the various responses within the Christian Church to SSA, the authors show a necessary charity in seeking to "hear" what other voices are saying.

The gem of this book is in the second chapter. Here the authors raise the controversial question: is SSA sinful? They readily acknowledge the different responses to this question and realize that even within conservative

Christian circles there is a growing acceptance that SSA is not sinful, but that the homosexual lifestyle is. The authors know they are rowing upstream.

In reaching their conclusion that SSA is sinful, the authors base their conclusion on a very careful, exegetical examination of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:27, 28, together with an examination of different respected Church Fathers in the area of concupiscence (sinful desires and inclination). The authors ask the very simple question: what makes any desire, homosexual or heterosexual, sinful? Their answer is that if the object desired is sinful, that make the desire itself sinful. Because the object of SSA is sinful (i.e. a physical and emotional desire for that which God forbids) that makes the attraction itself sinful.

They close this chapter with some gracious pastoral insights. Those with SSA attraction are in the same league with all sinners. There is nothing extraordinary about their sin that should cause the Church to shy away from compassionate ministry to those who experience SSA.

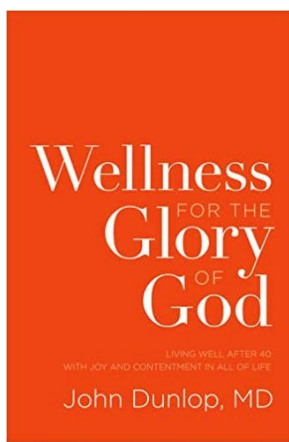
One other observation of particular note from this book. In chapter 3 the authors examine one popular avenue for change for those who experience SSA or are living the homosexual lifestyle: reparative therapy. The authors acknowledge that this avenue of change for homosexuals has seen some success. But overall they argue that this avenue for change is Pelagian in theology: undervaluing the radical effects of original sin while overvaluing the ability to make correct life and lifestyle changes.

For the authors, transformation comes through biblical repentance.

Having spent several months studying this issue, and reading several books on this topic, I do highly recommend this book for the shelf as well. This book could be used in a small group bible study for a congregation, helping the congregation cultivate a spirit of graciousness leading to compassionate ministry for those who experience SSA. Each chapter closes with several searching and helpful questions on the material covered in the chapter. This book certainly adds needed clarity to a controversial topic.

*Reviewed by Doug Bylsma.*

***Wellness for the Glory of God: Living Well After 40 With Joy and Contentment In All Of Life.* John Dunlop. Wheaton: IL: Crossway, 2014, 192 pp. paper. ISBN 9781433538124**



John Dunlop, MD, has practiced medicine in Chicago, Illinois for almost four decades. He is a practicing geriatrician and holds a master’s degree in bioethics. Not only does he have a wealth of experience in treating older patients, but he is committed to Jesus Christ and living out the implications of his robust faith. As a Christian physician he has a wealth of experience in helping senior folk navigate their closing years.

He asserts that he has observed that the later stages of life can be quite different for believers as compared to non-believers, but warns that this is not always the case. He says much that makes the difference between the two is outside of our control, but he is convinced that some of it is within our control. He argues that the difference between ninety-year olds on the golf course, and those in nursing homes are choices that they made in their sixties. His point is that wellness in our senior years requires intentionality and planning. Dunlop addresses these issues in the book. His fundamental point (expressed in the title) is wellness depends on living with a purpose that goes beyond the here and now, “...the one way in which Christians can stay well in their twilight years is to keep their focus on God, his greatness, and his glory“ (p. 12).

As a man approaching my mid-fifties, I found Dunlop’s book tremendously helpful, “just what the doctor ordered” as it were. This is what I found helpful and valuable:

He takes a holistic approach to health and aging. Dunlop defines wellness as “that blessed state of experiencing all spheres of life functioning in harmony with God’s ordained purpose” (p. 21). Wellness then involves the totality of our being, including these 6 areas: physical, mental, social, financial, spiritual and emotional. He notes that these areas are independent of each other, but they are interrelated. He devotes a chapter to discussing each of these areas.

Dunlop takes a God centred approach, and his approach is winsomely evangelistic, without being overbearing. He quotes Scripture often and appropriately. Yet, you could give this book to a non-believer in the knowledge that the recipient will not be Bible bashed – but will certainly be challenged.



The author takes a realistic approach to ageing and sickness. He shows that there is no “magic bullet” that is going to make ageing easy, but he does offer help. In no ways does he understate the challenges and difficulties in growing older, but he keeps returning to the sufficient grace of God.

He is pastoral. He calls on decades worth of experience in helping more senior folk navigate their twilight years. He relates many helpful anecdotes (which many readers will relate to) from his experience to illustrate his main points. His tone is one of caring, gracious wisdom.

He is practical. He does not let you off the hook too easily. Dunlop calls for resolutions to be made, and for practical correctives and action. Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection and discussion, and a prayer. He also allows for space to record resolutions made as a result of what has been learned.

He is clear in his style and presentation. Dunlop’s writing is clear, and devoid of too much medical or theological jargon.

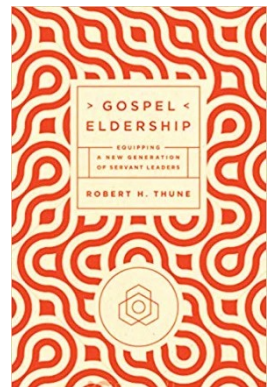
I wholeheartedly recommend Dunlop’s book. As a man in my fifties, I am very glad for the opportunity to have read it at this stage of my life.

*Reviewed by John Koning.*

***Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders.* Robert H. Thune. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016, 144 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1942572619**

Bob Thune is the founding pastor of Coram Deo Church in Omaha, Nebraska. He is part of the Acts 29 Network through which he trains and coaches church planters. In this recent publication, he addresses the critical matter of eldership within the local church.

Thune’s book has two sections. The first deals with *What is an Elder?* He stresses the critical importance of servant leadership and the primacy of godly character: “The cultivation of Christlike character is essential to spiritual leadership” (p. 35). This is very helpful and very important in some western contexts where style and spin trump substance and depth. He then introduces the Leadership Triangle where he stresses the non-negotiables for eldership. In addition to Character (the Normative perspective), he asserts that Competence (the Situational perspective, being biblically qualified, especially



in applying the Scriptures) and Compatibility (the Existential perspective, a man aspires to serve as an elder in a particular local church) are essential requirements to serve as an elder.

The second section deals with the *Duties of Elders*. Thune has chapters on Feeding, Leading, Protecting, and Caring for the Church. These chapters are not exhaustive, but deal clearly and adequately with these important tasks. His language is not terribly technical, and all his key points are well applied. Each chapter unpacks and applies relevant Scriptures. His final two chapters deal with *Missional Eldership* and the *Temptations of Leadership*. By his own admission, he leans on Alexander Strauch's great work on this topic and does not break new ground. But his work is not simply a re-hashing of Strauch's work. I found this work tremendously helpful, refreshing and deeply challenging for the following reasons:

Each chapter concludes with an *Exercise*, which is related to the material just covered. This section asks deep, searching, sometimes uncomfortable questions, and calls for faith and repentance. Thune keeps bringing the reader back to the wonder of the gospel. So Thune's book is not fundamentally a theological textbook, or a full scale biblical exposition, but a spiritual formation resource.

His title, *Gospel Leadership* indicates the major thrust and perspective of the book. It is the gospel itself that should motivate and shape the nature of pastoral care. He asserts: "Our job is to help people *fully* and *thoroughly* believe and apply the gospel amidst the challenges and circumstances of everyday life" (p. 94, Thune's emphasis).

I appreciate his emphasis on *missional* eldership. He argues that if the church is God's missionary people, then elders are missionary leaders (p. 102). This means that eldership is not only about caring for those in the church, but that elders are to be the chief missionaries, the missional pace-setters of the church. He argues that NT elders were not merely figureheads, but were leaders and disciple-makers. This emphasis is often missed in books on Church Leadership.

There is no doubt that leadership is an immensely important issue in the church. Thune's book will help nurture a leadership culture which is gospel fuelled and focussed, honest and transparent, holy and winsome and passionately missional. It is a great book to work through as an eldership team (or with aspiring elders) -- but be warned, it will not be comfortable. I recommend it wholeheartedly.

*Reviewed by John Koning.*

## **Book Briefs**

***Learning From Lord Mackay: Life and Work in Two Kingdoms. J. Cameron Fraser. Lethbridge, AB: SoS-Books, 2017, 128 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-9959953-1-4***

This work is both biographical and thematic and is a rare gem to find upon a most interesting life and personage, James Mackay – a former Lord Advocate of Scotland and Lord Chancellor of Great Britain. The book has a foreword by Sinclair Ferguson and then proceeds to the preface by the author, then its four chapters: the first on introducing the two kingdoms, the second on the life and work of Lord Mackay, the third learning from Lord Mackay, and the fourth on *locating* Lord Mackay. The book ends with two appendices of primary source writings by Lord Mackay. This is a welcomed book for introducing readers to an exemplary contemporary Christian and also for helping us to consider the significance of the Christian in the world of public office. Though a small book it is very important.

Beautifully published with a well composed cover. Make sure that you secure a copy.

*JCW*

***Work: Its Purpose, Dignity, and Transformation. Daniel M. Doriani. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019, 225 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-559-9***

I find myself drawn to books that I see Daniel Doriani's name upon. He has written several now for the Reformed Expository Commentary series. Doriani says this particular book was written for "all who want to practice love and justice in their work, whether they be professionals or labourers, business leaders or artisans, students, retirees, or stay-at-home parents. Still, I especially write for two kinds of people. The first kind doubts the value of their labor. When asked about their work, they often begin with two words: 'I just'... I also write for a second kind of person, the woman who ardently yearns to do significant work, the man who dares to think his work can change his corner of the world..." (p. xiv). Doriani is well organized and begins with foundational principals rooted in God's creativity and that this should shape the character of our work. He is exegetical and balanced. Following these foundational four chapters he looks at "calling, faithfulness, work amid hardship, and the rhythm of work and rest" (p. xv) then two chapters about Christians and reform. The book ends with a most interesting appendix on "Principles for Representative Professions" (pp. 189-206). Each chapter ends with questions for discussion. The book will be a helpful resource for many to use whether pastors or study

group leaders. There is a strong ethical element to the book reflective of Doriani who also teaches Christian Ethics.

- JCW

***China Mishkid.* A. Donald MacLeod. Victoria, BC: Friesen Press, 2018, 277 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-5255-3216-0**

The subtitle of this autobiographical account of A. Donald's Macleod's formative years, *My Life as a Missionary Kid in China (1938-1955)*, will be an interesting read for many people; for example, mishkids (missionary kids) and missionary families, Chinese Christians, and those interested in Chinese history during WW2. By researching a vast amount of his parents' correspondence and missionary reports, the author has been able to piece together his own childhood story of sacrifice, blessing, challenge, and growth in grace. The book is divided into 35 chapters and though these are compiled in chronological order, they could be read independently of one another – perhaps even at a retreat for missionary families where a chapter could be read as an illustration to a theme to be discussed: for example, Chapter 21 “Readjusting to New Realities” or Chapter 29 “Adolescent Angst”. The author expresses a sincere desire that his work will become the inspiration for other mishkids to share their stories as the “forgotten” participants of the “foreign” missionary movement. This book is also available in hard cover and as an e-book

- NJW

***The Radical Pursuit of Rest: Escaping the Productivity Trap.* John Koessler. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016, 176 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-4444-9**

The topic of this book – rest – is certainly a subject worth exploring! What is true Biblical rest? Does God rest? How does rest relate to work? How can we rest in a digital age? What about our final rest? The author, John Koessler – chair and professor of pastoral studies at Moody Bible Institute – tackles these questions and many more in this excellent work. Each of the nine chapters ends with questions for reflection, and there is also a section at the back of the book of questions for group discussion based on each of the chapter sections. These group discussion questions include a passage of scripture to be read and considered.

The author is refreshingly honest and though he does not claim to have perfected the concept of biblical rest, he asserts that for Christians, “rest as the Bible describes it is our destiny. It is what we were made for. In this book I am arguing for the radical pursuit of rest” (p. 15). Pastors and church leaders would benefit from absorbing the Biblical principles outlined in this book. Others may use this book to reach out to those caught in anxiety and depression that is often a symptom of restlessness, “The first step in the radical pursuit of rest is to seek Christ. This is also the last step. When you find Christ, you will find rest” (p. 16). Recommended for all who want to escape “The Productivity Trap”, as the author so aptly calls it.

–NJW

***God’s Hostage: A True Story of Persecution, Imprisonment, and Perseverance.* Andrew Brunson with Craig Borlase. Milton Keynes, England: Authentic Media Limited, 2019, 251 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-78893-127-4**

Many readers worldwide will have followed the story of Pastor Andrew Brunson and his recent two-year imprisonment in Turkey (Oct. 2016-Oct. 2018). Now Pastor Brunson has released a book that gives a comprehensive account of that harrowing experience and the way that God sustained him through the fear, anxiety, false accusations, isolation, and brokenness. This account is incredibly transparent as Brunson sets forth the details (with the help of writer Craig Borlase) of what the Lord allowed him to experience. Brunson hopes that those who read this book will themselves be encouraged to prepare for persecution and, when faced with persecution, will remember his honest report of suffering for the sake of Jesus. The book is divided into seven sections. It could easily be read aloud – not to children – in a group setting and would be a good stimulus for gathering for prayer for the persecuted church around the world.

–NJW

***Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present.***  
**Eds. Jonathan Gibson & Mark Earnley. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018, 688 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-948130-21-9**

The editors – Jonathan Gibson, presently assistant professor of OT at Westminster, Philadelphia and a minister of the International Presbyterian Church and Mark Earnley, a doctoral candidate in Oxford and a presbyter in the Anglican Church of Australia, Sydney Diocese – have done a massive amount of collecting from 26 Reformation sources and their respective liturgies. The editors have overseen a team of three translators, Matthias Mangold (German & Dutch), Bernard Aubert (French), Michael Hunter (Latin), and one contributing musician, Joseph Waggoner. The work includes three introductory essays/chapters by the editors before we come to the liturgical texts. Each text is introduced by the editors. Previously, the two standard works “to go to” were by Charles Baird and Bard Thompson.<sup>1</sup> I suspect this new work will supersede these two earlier often-consulted works. The editors write in one of their essays, “There is no proposal for one, set order of worship (p. 720)”. The book is written with an irenic and catholic spirit of the magisterial Reformation. A necessary book in all theological college libraries.

-JCW

***Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ, Revised and Expanded.*** Greg Ogden. Original 1998. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect, 2018, 233 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-2128-0

*Discipleship Essentials* has been in use since 1998. It then went through an expanded second edition in 2007 and now this is its third edition, which has been revised and expanded once again. It remains a modern classic in the field of evangelical discipleship. It is divided into four parts: growing up in Christ, understanding the message of Christ, becoming like Christ, and serving Christ. A “bonus section” is included on the topic of money; an appendix is included, building a discipleship ministry; plus a leader’s guide. The work, as its sub-

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<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Baird, *Eutaxia or The Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches* original 1855/6 and Bard Thompson, ed., *Liturgies of the Western Church* (1961).

title states, is about being built-up in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each of the 25 separate studies can be developed (as a leader is so led) for a particular group. The strength of this work is that it gives a leader a basic grid and thematic approach to work through. It will not cover everything such as baptism or the Lord's Supper. Each lesson follows a consistent pattern; core truth, memory verses, inductive bible study, and reading (all of these preceded by an assignment). I suspect it may be difficult to get everyone in a discipleship group to complete these tasks! Chapter two on "Being a Disciple" should have been further developed, although when I got to the second part of the book, I noted that this theme is expanded. A good resource for basic catechesis and discipleship.

–*JCW*

***Katharina, Katharina: The Story of Katharina Schütz Zell.***

**Christine Farenhorst. Kitchener, ON: Joshua Press, 2017, 324 pp., paper. ISBN: 978-1-894400-84-8**

The year 2017 saw a plethora of books and articles being published to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. Among these was this historical novel on Katharina Schütz Zell, one of the lesser known but important characters from that period. She was a remarkable woman who lived in the early days of the Reformation. Huldrych Zwingli said of her, "She combines the graces of both Mary and Martha."

Martin Luther's teachings were becoming known and Katharina Schütz was introduced to them by Matthew Zell, pastor in Strasbourg. She married Zell in 1523, making her one of the first Protestant women to marry a priest turned Protestant pastor. Besides being a pastor's wife, as if that were not ground-breaking enough, she also became a pamphleteer whose writings in support of Reformation principles came to the attention of Luther himself.

–*Cameron Fraser*



# **Academic Articles**



## **The Fall of Man: Cause, Consequence, and Cure**

**Steve Curtis\* email: [steve@timothytwo.org](mailto:steve@timothytwo.org)**

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### **Introduction**

Apart from two chapters in Genesis, the entire Bible is directly or tangentially related to the Fall. Apart from a firm grasp, then, of the singular significance of this event, the balance of Scripture is denuded of its ultimate relevance. Further, apart from a biblically consistent understanding of the Fall, the reality of present suffering and evil in the world is inexplicable. Finally, apart from the Fall, there is no justification for a hope of a better world; for what is not fallen need not be restored or changed; and what need not be changed will be subject to a metaphysical version of Newton's first law of motion; that is,

“Every object in a state of uniform motion tends to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it.” This “external force,” biblically, is understood in terms of God’s response to the Fall. This article will address three questions: what was the cause of the Fall? What were/are its consequences? And, finally, what is its cure?

### **The Fall: Its Cause**

When one begins to consider the narrative in Genesis 3, it is quickly apparent that “[t]he doctrine of the fall is notoriously troublesome.”<sup>1</sup> There is simply not an abundance of information provided in the text to answer the fundamental questions: “How could a holy man fall, and what was the true cause of his fall?”<sup>2</sup> Though there is by no means a universal consensus of ideas, a number of suggestions have been offered. A brief survey of three of the more significant of these may be of help.

#### *Augustine: Concupiscence*

Augustine has often been mischaracterized as believing the Fall came about as a result of sexual sin, or lust. A closer examination of his work, however, reveals an entirely different emphasis:

[W]e cannot believe that Adam was deceived, and supposed the devil’s word to be truth, and therefore transgressed God’s law, but that he by the drawings of kindred yielded to the woman, the husband to the wife, the one human being to the only other human being . . . the woman accepted as true what the serpent told her, but the man could not bear to be severed from his only companion, even though this involved a partnership in sin.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it is love – misapplied love, but love nonetheless – and not lust that Augustine impugns for introducing sin into the world. The specific term he employed was *concupiscence*, which may be understood as “a quality which might be good or evil, but which was normally employed in an unfavorable

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Beck, “The Fall of Man and the Failure of Jonathan Edwards,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2007), 224.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, volume one, trans. by George M. Giger, ed. by James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 606.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, volume 3 (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), 14:11.

sense.”<sup>4</sup> It is “essentially a sin of the heart and the will which may (or may not) give birth to outward sins.”<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Augustine cautions that this motive is not efficient (i.e., positive, or present), but defective (i.e., negative, or absent). He concludes that “to seek to discover the causes of these defections,—causes, as I have said, not efficient, but deficient,—is as if someone sought to see darkness, or hear silence.”<sup>6</sup>

#### *Luther: Disbelief*

Luther sought to “see darkness,” as it were, and dug a bit deeper into the causes of Adam’s motivation to sin. He argued that Adam sinned out of disbelief;<sup>7</sup> that is, he simply did not believe God when He said that to eat from the tree of good and evil would surely bring death (Genesis 2:17). While some consider this to be a significant departure from the view of Augustine,<sup>8</sup> it is not necessarily so.<sup>9</sup> Luther, in attributing the Fall to disbelief may well be building upon the Augustinian exposition; that is, that which, to Augustine, was deficient and manifested itself as misplaced love was, to Luther, a deficient belief in the word and decrees of God. The sin, for Luther, was “the refusal to listen to God and his mandate” and, perhaps, to lose sight of God’s authority. As Lester Kuyper notes, “The attractiveness of this independence from all restraints caught the fancy of the human pair and they arrogated to themselves that authority which only Yahweh has and exercises.”<sup>10</sup>

#### *Edwards: Sovereignty*

Eminent theologian Jonathan Edwards moved the discussion of the Fall back from the material event of the eating of the forbidden fruit, all the way to the mind and the will of God. Taking more of a philosophical approach, Edwards wrote:

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony N. S. Lane, “Lust: The Human Person as Affected by Disordered Desires,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 78.1 (2006), 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *City of God*, 12:7.

<sup>7</sup> Bell, 177.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, “Here we notice remarkable differences with the theological tradition that was shaped by Augustine.”

<sup>9</sup> Though Luther may have been closer in line with the view espoused by Irenaeus (that the Fall was “a wrong turning taken by moral children”) than with the Augustinian view of “a fall from a great height by moral giants,” Lane, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Lester J. Kuyper, “To Know Good and Evil,” *Interpretation* 1:4 (1947), 492.

It has been a matter attended with much difficulty and perplexity, how sin came into the world, which way came it into a creation that God created very good. If any spirit had at first been created sinful, the world would not have been created very good. And if the world had been created so, things placed in such order, the wheels so contrived and so set in motion, that in the process of things sin would unavoidably come out, how can the world be said to be created good?<sup>11</sup>

While careful to avoid indicting God with the sin of Adam, Edwards nevertheless finds in the Fall a demonstration of the sovereignty of God:

[I]f by ‘the author of sin,’ is meant the permitter, or not a hinderer of sin; and at the same time, a disposer of the state of events, in such a manner, for wise, holy and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin, if it be permitted or not hindered, will most certainly and infallibly follow: I say, if this be all that is meant, by being the author of sin, I don’t deny that God is the author of sin (though I dislike and reject the phrase, as that which by use and custom is apt to carry another sense), it is no reproach for the most High to be thus the author of sin.<sup>12</sup>

The “ends and purposes” Edwards attributes to this activity of God are the “glorious exercise of the infinite excellency of his nature,” and the redemptive plan of God, saying: “God permitted the fall that his elect people might know good and evil.”<sup>13</sup>

Showing affinity with Augustine’s perception of Adam’s concupiscence, Edwards argued that Adam was endowed with “sufficient grace” that *enabled* him to choose not to sin, but was not endowed with “confirming grace” that would have *ensured* his choosing not to sin:

If it be inquired how man came to sin, seeing he had no sinful inclinations in him, except God took away his

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<sup>11</sup> Beck, 209.

<sup>12</sup> Beck, 212 (quoting Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, Works 1:399).

Compare the words of Calvin: “It offends the ears of some, when it is said God willed this fall; but what else, I pray, is the permission of Him, who has the power of preventing, and in whose hand the whole matter is placed, but his will?” John Calvin, “Commentaries of the First Book of Moses, called Genesis,” tr. John King, in *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 140.

<sup>13</sup> Beck, 209.

grace from him that he had been wont to give him and so let him fall, I answer, there was no need of that; there was no need of taking away any that had been given him, but he sinned under that temptation because God did not give him more.<sup>14</sup>

This dual granting of sufficient grace and withholding of confirming grace are assigned to the overarching sovereignty of God.

### *Summary*

While each of these analyses represents different foci, they are not necessarily saying wholly different things. In the end, however, while there may be any number of speculations, the reader who is convinced of the veracity of Scripture and its affirmations of God's character must finally acquiesce to the wisdom and justice of God regarding the motivating factor(s) behind the Fall. Perhaps Turretin's words best acknowledge the apparent tensions, while asserting what Scripture and reason attest:

Let it be sufficient to hold together these two things: that this most dreadful fall did not happen without the providence of God (but to its causality, it contributed nothing); and that man alone, moved by the temptation of Satan, was its true and proper cause.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, while the Bible does not address the cause of the Fall specifically, it does inform the reader sufficiently concerning the nature and character of God as to exempt Him from any charge of causality and to lay full blame at the foot of man.

### **The Fall: Its Consequence**

We find ourselves on much surer ground when considering the consequences of the Fall than when considering its cause. Our perceptions and experiences aptly confirm the reality of evil and suffering in the world, and the Bible offers a well-developed understanding for why that is so. Indeed, as Calvin noted when considering a denial of the doctrines of the Fall and of original sin: "an error so gross is plainly refuted, not only by solid testimonies of Scripture, but

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<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Miscellanies*, 209 (Accessed via <http://edwards.yale.edu>).

<sup>15</sup> Turretin, 1:611.

also by experience itself.”<sup>16</sup> While many examples from experience could doubtless be introduced to prove the ongoing consequences of the Fall, the biblical record alone makes ample allusions to its reality. The Old Testament provides definitive and severe examples of the consequences of the Fall, while hinting at the theological implications. The New Testament, in turn, acknowledges the material consequences of the Fall, yet additionally offers a wealth of information concerning the ideas of original sin, federal representation, and spiritual death. Both are essential in developing a fully-orbed possible doctrine of the Fall.

### *Old Testament*

The first exposition of the consequences of the Fall are spoken by God, shortly after the first couple sinned. However, the first effect of the Fall occurred instantly: the eyes of both of them were opened. And, far from being “opened” to the knowledge promised by the serpent, “ironically, their opened eyes bring them shame.”<sup>17</sup> Their nakedness immediately caused them to be humiliated and to have “an awareness of guilt and a loss of innocence.”<sup>18</sup>

Soon, God comes walking in the garden, and “models judgment”<sup>19</sup> with the investigatory questions: Where? Who? What? His questions lead them to confession, though woven throughout with aspersions. Adam blames Eve, and even evidences a remarkable arrogance in seeming to transfer at least some of the burden of guilt to God, saying, “the woman whom You gave me.” Eve, “after the example of her husband, transfers the charge to another,”<sup>20</sup> and quickly passes the blame to the serpent. In the midst of such rank displays of guilt and sinful shame, God pronounces judgment all around.

To the serpent, God curses him and declares that there will be enmity between his offspring and the woman’s. On one level, there is likely to be understood a conflict involving the serpent literally. Also, however, there appears to be a deeper implication that the enmity will involve the embodying power of the serpent, namely, Satan. God then declares that, while the serpent may bruise the heel of the woman’s offspring (i.e., humanity), his head will,

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<sup>16</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* (Accessed via <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.html>).

<sup>17</sup> Wenham, 92.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* (Accessed via <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.html>).

in turn, be bruised. Many commentators understand this to be a prophetic allusion to the crushing of Satan by Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Turning to the woman, God declares that there will, henceforth, be pain in childbirth, the implication being that there would not have been otherwise. She then learns that she will have a psychosexual desire for her husband and yet he will rule over her. Wenham suggests that “the chiasmic structure of the phrase” indicates that “her desire will be to dominate,”<sup>22</sup> yet this desire will be frustrated.

Finally, to Adam, God calls to remembrance the creative act that brought Adam from the dust of the ground, and then solemnly declares that he shall return there. The earth that Adam was to have dominion over now “resists and eventually swallows him.”<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, Adam must draw sustenance from the ground in what will now be painful toil, compounded by thorns and thistles, as the very ground is cursed.

As the Genesis story continues beyond the banishment of the first couple from the Garden of Eden, more and more consequences of their actions begin to unfold: from envy and murder (Cain) to wanton unrighteousness (in the days of Noah and of Lot). The beauty of the created order is becoming increasingly unraveled. God created mankind with natural desires but sin has “twisted these into inordinate and disordered desires.”<sup>24</sup> These “disordered desires” affect every sphere of life after the Fall. Indeed, Augustine wrote that as a result of the Fall we are ruled by concupiscence. Fallen humanity is, as he put it, under a “cruel necessity of sinning.”<sup>25</sup>

Moving past the Fall narrative itself, Tennant contends that “there is certainly no didactic use made of the subject-matter of the Fall-story with regard to human sinfulness and its origins.”<sup>26</sup> Though he admits that in Job, “the question of the source of human sinfulness once or twice suggests itself,”<sup>27</sup> he argues that this would appear to be an excellent point for a didactic explanation for the presence and prevalence of sin. From this, he goes on to

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<sup>21</sup> However, Calvin sees Eve’s offspring as humanity, generally: “the sense will be (in my judgment) that the human race, which Satan was endeavoring to oppress, would at length be victorious.” (Commentary) Cf. Wenham: “the seed of the serpent refers to natural humanity...” and “the woman’s offspring must be a heavenly Adam,” (93-94) anticipating Paul’s discourse in Romans 5.

<sup>22</sup> Wenham, 94.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>24</sup> Lane, 33.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> F. R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin* (Cambridge University Press: 1903), 91.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.



conclude that the Fall-story was “arrived at independently of Genesis” and was actually later “read back into”<sup>28</sup> the composition of the Pentateuch. While there may not be references to the Fall in places where they might seem appropriate, it does not necessarily follow that it is proper to conclude that the absence of such references implies an ignorance of the broader idea of the Fall.

Mayes writes that, “The Old Testament understanding of sin is... based on the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Sin is a breach of the covenant.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, while the remainder of the Old Testament does not deal extensively with the Fall, *per se*, there is throughout this thread of a covenant breached by the sins of the characters along the historical narrative. Ecclesiastes 7:29 points to this: “Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.” There are, in fact, a number of passages that explicitly acknowledge the universal sinfulness of man, and thus implicitly acknowledge its inherent quality in human nature.<sup>30</sup> There are also allusions to a general understanding of the Fall in ancient Jewish sources, such as that found in Esdras:

O Adam, what have you done? / For though it was you  
who sinned,  
the fall was not yours alone, / but ours also who are  
your descendants.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, it may reasonably be concluded that the general idea of the Fall and its universal consequences for all humanity were, to some degree, underlying the religious thought of Israel before the advent of Christ.

### *New Testament*

Turning to the New Testament, the Bible becomes much more didactic regarding the theology of the Fall, particularly the breadth of its impact (universal: “all have sinned”) and the depth of its impact (rendering man lost and helpless before God). Perhaps nowhere is this topic more fully explored than in ten verses in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Romans 5:12-21 has been the subject of intense study and debate since the earliest times of the church, and provides a critical factor in the foundation of orthodox Christian theology, and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Mayes, “The Nature of Sin and its Origin in the Old Testament,” *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 40 (1973), 250.

<sup>30</sup> Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Psalm 14:2; 58:3; 51:5; 130:3; 143:2; Isaiah 1:3;4; Jeremiah 17:9; et al.

<sup>31</sup> John J. Scullion, “New Thinking on Creation and Sin in Genesis 1-11,” *Australian Biblical Review* 22 (1974), 7.

is the essential biblical basis for the doctrine of original sin, as espoused by Augustine, who is arguably its greatest proponent.

In this passage, Paul equates the appearance of sin into the world with the fall of Adam. He begins with a protological argument that seems to readily admit the historicity of Adam and the Genesis narrative, and then he reinforces the covenant idea of federal representation: “by the transgression of the one the many died” (5:15); “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one” (5:17); “through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men” (5:18); and, finally, “through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” (5:19). Thus, the disobedience of Adam results in not only his “fall,” but in the subsequent fall of all humanity. Earlier in the letter, Paul quotes from Psalms and Isaiah to reiterate that:

There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one (3:10-12).

Countless other allusions are made throughout the New Testament that testify to the consequence of the Fall. Second Corinthians 4:4 indicates that humanity’s minds are blinded; that is, the reasoning faculties and process are defective. In John 8:34, Jesus pronounces that “everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.” Thus, the human will is now in bondage, for all, having fallen in Adam, do in fact sin. We learn in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that the result of the Fall is an inability to receive the things of God and instead to find them to be folly. Further, and most condemingly, Ephesians 2:1, 5 and Colossians 2:16 judge humanity to be spiritually dead apart from Christ.

This is, undoubtedly, the most crucial element in the consequence of the Fall: the introduction of death into the world. In light of Genesis 2:17 and the realization that Adam and Eve do not die physically “in the day” that they eat the forbidden fruit, one must re-evaluate what was meant to be understood in that verse. If not physical death, then what? As Paul indicates in the above-referenced passages, humanity is alive, yet dead. The death thus alluded to in 2:17 was not only physical death (though this, too, entered the world though Adam), but spiritual and judicial death, as well. Each of the three (physical, judicial, and spiritual) “evidences in a different manner the essential quality of death as separation from God, which renders life meaningless, wretched, and miserable.”<sup>32</sup> Physical death is self-evident. Everyone dies. Judicial death

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<sup>32</sup> Marguerite Shuster, *The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 24.

“means that we are under the wrath and curse of God.”<sup>33</sup> Finally, spiritual death means that humanity has “become incapable of restoring and renewing their inner conformity to the will of God.”<sup>34</sup> Taken together, the condition placed upon man in 2:17 becomes vivid and absolute.

This death – in all three manifestations – is presented in Scripture as something foreign to the original design of creation. This idea was central to the Pelagian debates in the early church. As the principal (and prevailing) voice in that debate, Augustine held that God had created Adam to be immortal and that the Fall not only wrought Adam’s spiritual death, but his physical death, as well. He wrote,

But in addition to the passage where God in punishment said, “Dust thou art, unto dust shalt thou return,”—a passage which I cannot understand how anyone can apply except to the death of the body,—there are other testimonies likewise, from which it most fully appears that by reason of sin the human race has brought upon itself not spiritual death merely, but the death of the body also.<sup>35</sup>

### Summary

Augustine looked back to the earlier fathers and commented: “In the work which the saintly Ambrose wrote, *Concerning the Resurrection*, he says: ‘I fell in Adam, in Adam was I expelled from Paradise, in Adam I died.’”<sup>36</sup> This, then, is the essence of the consequence of the Fall. In addition to the myriad material trials, hardships, fractured relationships, and the sense of emptiness and incompleteness, in Adam we died. Yet “death creeps into our perceptive powers like leprosy,”<sup>37</sup> for we live in a fallen world where death – spiritual and physical – is what we experience naturally. We cannot even imagine a world where we do not. Yet we are reminded from Genesis 3:15 onward that the Fall and all it entails is not the end of God’s dealings with humanity. Death need not be the final chapter. Indeed, “In banishing His rebellious creatures from His presence in paradise, God still extends His grace.”<sup>38</sup> And that grace provides the cure for all the consequences of the Fall.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sin* (NPNF 1-05), IV.

<sup>36</sup> Bradley L. Nassif, “Toward a ‘Catholic’ Understanding of St. Augustine’s View of Original Sin,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 39:4 (1984), 287.

<sup>37</sup> Bell, 165.

<sup>38</sup> Sidney Greidanus, “Preaching Christ from the Narrative of the Fall,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (July-September 2004), 261.

### The Fall: Its Cure

After considering the Fall's cause and consequence, it is both necessary and expedient to consider its cure. Scripture provides compelling testimony to the reality of that cure, as well as its availability and efficacy. From the earliest verses after the actual Fall narrative to the final pages of the Revelation, there are many references to this cure. Indeed, "[r]edemptive history starts right after the Fall,"<sup>39</sup> as many see in Genesis 3:15 the *protoevangelium*, the first presentation of the gospel: the Seed of Eve (Christ) will be victorious. The redemptive history continues to unfold as God deals progressively with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then the nation of Israel. It is, however, when Christ appears on earth that the plan of God to redeem a people is finally and fully revealed. Yet even then, many do not understand. A doctrinal exposition of the Fall, and of God's plan to restore what was lost, would finally be explained by Paul.

More than any other biblical author, the apostle Paul addressed both the consequences of the Fall and the cure for it. In a tale of two "Adams," Paul shifts to a study of contrasts between Adam and Christ (the "last Adam"). Paul presents an "antithetic typology,"<sup>40</sup> denoting Adam as "a pattern of the one to come" (Rom. 5:14). In the process, he offers a series of analogies between the first and last Adams:

Adam's trespass made "the many" sinners, Christ's obedience makes "the many" righteous; Adam's trespass brought condemnation, Christ's obedience brings justification; Adam's trespass brought death, Christ's obedience brings life.<sup>41</sup>

Paul, then, finally puts the pieces of the puzzle together: what was lost by Adam can be restored by faith in the Person of Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

In the Fall narrative, we find that "Man had taken to himself a right which is God's. God had delegated to man his realm of dominion, the created world. Man broke the confines of his realm to enter the dominion of God."<sup>42</sup> What motivated him to do so remains somewhat of a mystery, but reasonable hypotheses have been put forward that do no violence to the text and, in fact, fit well with what Scripture and reason imply. What can be known

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<sup>39</sup> Greidanus, 262.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>42</sup> Kuyper, 492.

unequivocally is that the consequence of the Fall was monumental in scope and devastating in severity. Fallen man stands justly condemned before God. However, God, in His grace, condescended in the form of another Adam who fulfilled the requirements the first Adam did not. “The life of Jesus was a repetition of the great drama of creation and temptation; only this time ... there was no fall.”<sup>43</sup> Greidanus offers a fitting close to this discussion, clothed in the eternal hope of the gospel:

Paradise is not lost after all. Through Jesus Christ it will come again. That is the hope and comfort for all those who suffer in this in-between time. Paradise will one day be restored on earth, through the work of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup>

Even so, come Lord Jesus.

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<sup>43</sup> Edward Hugh Henderson, “Faith and Inquiry,” *Anglican Theological Review* 58:1 (1976), 48.

<sup>44</sup> Greidanus, 273.

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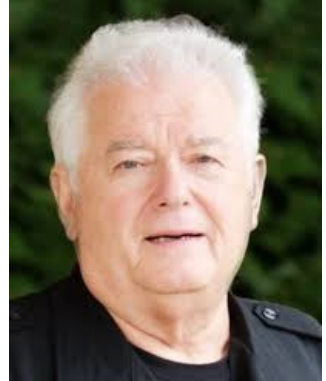
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## The Lord is Risen... The Lord is Risen Indeed!

**Manfred W. Kohl\***

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In May, 2019, I attended an international conference held at the Orthodox Academy on the island of Crete, Greece. This conference brought together key theologians from the six major Christian ecclesial families: Evangelical, Historic Protestant, Independent, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic. Participants at this, the second meeting of the GFTE<sup>1</sup>, came from all parts of the world. Being at an Orthodox Academy we were greeted daily with the beautiful statement “The Lord is Risen”, to which one is to reply “The Lord is Risen Indeed”. It is a wonderful greeting to exchange with each other,

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<sup>1</sup> GFTE – Global Forum of Theological Educators. In 2003 in Bossy, Switzerland, I had the assignment to bring together key theological leaders from various Evangelical groups to meet with their counterparts from the World Council of Churches, Geneva. At that meeting I was asked to enlarge the group to include theological educators from all the six major Christian families, namely: Evangelical, Historic Protestant, Independent, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic. The first meeting was held in 2016 in Dorfweil, near Frankfurt, Germany. Twenty key theological educators from each of the six groups, a total of 120 scholars, came. It was the first such meeting ever where all the six groups gathered together in one place.

Only two weeks prior to the GFTE Conference – right after Easter, 2019 – I was asked to preach and teach in a church of refugees in the Iran region, Middle East. Everything was translated into the Farsi language, the language of the Persian Church. I was asked to preach and teach on the fact that **“Jesus Christ has risen indeed and that He is alive”**. **The assigned Bible text was Luke 24:13-25**. The underlying, fundamental Biblical truth is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to our Christian faith.

Several years ago I was asked to speak on the same topic to a large group of theological students and faculty at The Torch Trinity Graduate University in Seoul, Korea. The theme was “An Encounter with the Risen Lord.”<sup>2</sup> For the students I called my presentation “From Stupidity to Ecstasy”. A very long and fruitful discussion followed the lecture, especially because of my opening question, “How can we be very stupid, ignorant, and blind in interpreting the Bible and at the same time very excited – even ecstatic – about our interpretation and totally committed to it? It seems that the one does not cancel out the other.” These young and future leaders of the church needed an explanation which I summarized in the following seven points.

Let me begin with a simple story about an everyday activity: two people walking along a road. The two people (probably a man and his wife) are walking home on a Sunday afternoon. As is the custom, the wife walks a step or two behind her husband. They do not talk happily with each other. They are disappointed and upset, completely exhausted and frustrated. Not a glimpse of hope in the eyes of either of them. One does not need much imagination to put one’s own names into a scenario like this. How often we are disappointed with what happens around us, and how often we feel hopeless and clueless about our todays and our tomorrows.

### **I            Jesus is always with us; we are never alone**

The change for these two people came unexpectedly. A stranger overtook them, but they did not recognize that this stranger who joined them was Jesus Christ. Mary Magdalene also had not recognized the risen Lord, nor had the disciple at first at the Sea of Galilee. Jesus just appeared, joined them, and listened in on their conversation as they walked along. He appeared in another form from that to which they were accustomed (Mark 16:12), and they did not expect him.

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<sup>2</sup> The presentation was published in the Korean language book (English translation: “Speak to us: Messages from The Torch Trinity Chapel”) Seoul: Torch Trinity, 2016.



Jesus is our traveling companion, too, accompanying us on all our journeys. When we least expect him, when we are weak and feeble, when we are walking *away* from Jerusalem, he is so intimately close to us, concerned about us, filled with love for us. It is the most exciting and comforting fact that the risen Lord and Savior – one person of the triune God – is with us all the time. We are never alone. He walks with us and he stays with us. He hears us, sees us, and even knows our thoughts and all our secrets.

As the stranger joined the two on the road to Emmaus, he asked a penetrating question, “You seem frustrated, without hope. Why?” In the ensuing conversation he made some very strong statements to his traveling companions: “You fools!” he said. “You are very slow to grasp the truth. You are *Dummkopf!* (You are stupid!)”

Jesus wants to participate in every sphere of our lives, even if we are very confused, frustrated, or even angry.

## **II In the presence of Jesus we can say anything**

Cleopas and his companion (wife?), the two walking along the road to the village of Emmaus (probably Kubebe today), had hoped that their leader, Jesus Christ, would redeem and restore Israel. They did not understand the purpose for Christ’s coming: the Cross, the Resurrection, the divine eternal glory. They did not understand that he was the Creator God, who had become a human being; that he in his own person replaced the temple building with all its sacrificial offerings when he, as the ultimate sacrifice, went to the cross. They did not understand that when the curtain in the most holy part of the temple was ripped apart the old was finished and the emphasis was now on establishing a new earth, a new heaven, a heavenly Jerusalem – the Kingdom of God. Their expectations were self-centered, as are the expectations of many of us today. They did not see the big picture, the ultimate picture – the purpose and vision of Jesus Christ.

The disciples were sad and disappointed, and in need of help. But before Jesus helped by giving the word of life, they had to spell out their frustrations, doubts and disbelief. Only an empty vessel can he fill (John 4: the account of the Samaritan woman). He challenged them, asking them to be more precise about what it was that made them so sad and gave them such a feeling of hopelessness. During the first part of this “dialogical prayer,” Jesus was listening patiently, taking all the time that was needed. With his two simple questions, he tried to focus on the issues which were hurting them, without giving room for anything unnecessary. He went straight to the point.

### III When Jesus speaks, we should listen with head and heart

Still incognito, Jesus began with a rather sharp rebuke: “O foolish people... slow of heart to believe...” (v. 25) He tells it as it is. The two (and many, many others, like us today) fail to understand the necessity of Christ’s suffering and death before he entered into his glory. They knew what the prophets had said (probably had memorized these passages from the Torah) but they did not see the plan of salvation, the plan God has for his kingdom. Christ had to tell them. The natural person will never understand God’s plan unless it is explained to them by Christ, unless enlightenment is given through God’s Spirit.

It seems that most people build their hopes on obtaining the most advantage for themselves. Every theological position interprets the Scriptures in such a way as to support their point of view, to seek the fulfillment of their expectations. Most theologians are unwilling to even attempt to recognize other positions, different understandings of the teachings of Scripture, each claiming that their position is right and all others are wrong. The rift between the various groups grows deeper and wider, to the point that building bridges often seems impossible. We may need to evaluate and readjust our own expectations and interpretations.

In my quest for those expectations that are legitimate (the *correct* biblical interpretation), as opposed to those that are not, I am reminded of the simple formula I was given as a child, “In every situation ask yourself ‘What would Jesus have said? What would Jesus have done?’ and you will be very close to the right answers. I would simply like to follow this advice and search for “the Jesus answer.” I believe that by searching the Scriptures honestly, with an open mind and without focusing on our own expectations, we can find out not merely what Jesus “would have” said but also what Jesus “would have” done.

The Lord went with the two travelers, guiding them into all truth. He presented a comprehensive view of all Messianic prophesies and their fulfillment. Jesus thus declared that he was the heart of the Old Testament Scripture.

... he was the substance of every Old Testament sacrifice ordained in the Messianic law...

... he was the true deliverer and king...

... he was the coming prophet, the true high priest...

... he was, and he is, the key to all of Scripture...

Emphasis here was also on the glorification of the resurrected Christ in the present. There was no mention of the Parousia.

These simple words, but also eternal revelation, kindled a fire within the hearts of these two people. Later they testified, “Did not our hearts burn

within us while he opened the Scripture to us..?” (v. 32) When Jesus Christ is the center of our normal conversation, of our biblical discussions, of our prayers, divine fire is poured out. The heart, with all its emotional faculties, begins to pound, and the head, with all its logical faculties, follows. Our totality is affected. Holistic ministry takes place.

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*A brief theological discourse on “Jesus and the Land”*

Throughout history this text (Luke 24:13-35) has often been used in the debate about the Holy Land.

Jesus knew the Old Testament better than we do. He knew that His Father had made a promise to Abraham about this land. He was aware that this land was the place where God’s revelation took place. He recognized that, for the Jews, God and the Land of Israel were inseparable. Jesus knew the rabbis’ teaching, their prayers, and their blessings, in which the land was always a central theme. Jesus himself, however, never focused on the land in his prayers or his teaching. He showed no interest in Israel as a Kingdom – nor was it important to him that he was a part of it (John 6:15). To the authorities Jesus said, “Yes, I am a king, but my kingdom is not from here.” Jesus was the ruler of a different kingdom (John 18:36-37).

Jesus was sent by his Father as the fulfillment of all the promises of the Old Covenant, including the land, and to establish a New Covenant through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead.

*For us today, to insist on holding on to some parts of the Old Covenant means not to recognize Jesus Christ in his totality.*

As the one and only Messiah, Jesus’ teaching focused only on the Kingdom of God – the Kingdom of Heaven. This new teaching about God’s kingdom was completely opposite to the commonly held understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant and the emphasis on the city of Jerusalem and the temple and its priesthood and sacrifices. With Christ, the new covenant is established and the old is no more. This is the Good News: the fulfillment of the promises made in the old covenant (John 3:16-17).

The Palestinian theologian Alex Awad describes the change from the Old Covenant to the New as follows:

In the Old Covenant we had Israel, which in the New Covenant becomes all believers.

In the Old Covenant we had the Promised Land, which in the New Covenant becomes the Kingdom of God.

In the Old Covenant we had the city of Jerusalem; in the New Covenant we have the heavenly Jerusalem.

In the Old Covenant we had the temple mount; in the New Covenant we have the hearts of believers.

In the Old Covenant we had the priesthood of Aaron and the Levites; in the New Covenant we have Christ and the believers.

In the Old Covenant we had animal sacrifices; in the New we have Jesus Christ on the cross.

Jesus did not teach that the Jews had a right to own the land. He did not even express criticism of the foreign occupation. At Jacob's Well he told the Samaritan woman that the holy places in Samaria and Judea (Gerasim and Jerusalem) would be replaced by worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). The Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed sees the divine space shifted from a physical place to himself. He said, "I am the gateway to heaven" (John 1:51). The entire prologue of John's gospel testifies that Christ's entering the world signals not only a cosmic change but also a complete change in a person's relationship with God. God came to dwell among us as a new living tabernacle, replacing the old tabernacle made with stones, and by faith in Christ his followers become the heirs of Abraham's original promise, indeed a New Covenant (Hebrews 11). About the Kingdom of God the British theologian Stephen Sizer states, "The Kingdom which Jesus inaugurated is spiritual in character, international in membership, and gradual in expansion. And the expansion of this kingdom throughout the world would specifically require their exile from the land. They must turn their backs on Jerusalem and their hopes of ruling there with Jesus in order to fulfill their new role as ambassadors of his kingdom. (Matthew 20: 20-28; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21). . ." The followers of Christ, the church, were sent out into the world to make disciples of all nations but never were they told to return. Instead, Jesus promised to be with them wherever they are in the world (Matthew 28:18-20). The new covenant that Christ established is the global kingdom of God for all who believe in him, Jews and Gentiles alike.

The term "replacement theology" is correct if by it we understand Jesus the Messiah's replacement of the Old Covenant, with its kingdom of Israel, by the New Covenant, with the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of heaven. An even better term than replacement theology would be fulfillment theology. Israel, described throughout the Old Testament as the vine rooted in the land in order to bring fruit, finds its fulfillment in Jesus' statement "I am the true vine and there is no fruit outside of me" (John 15). In God's vineyard membership is granted only to those grafted into Christ, the true vine. He promises to everyone who remains in Him a room in the New Jerusalem, which fulfills and replaces the old promises of the land and the city of Jerusalem. Christ not only replaces the physical space of the land and the city, but He becomes the center of God's kingdom because He is one with the Father. There

is no provision for holding on to the “Kingdom of Israel” which is defined by ancestral borders.

Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the temple, as well as of His own death, came true, but only Jesus was raised up again, not the temple. Nowhere, according to Scripture, did Jesus say that the old temple has to be rebuilt. Christ’s followers find in the relationship with Him, the Son of God, what Jews were hoping for in the old promise of the land. The early church had no territorial theology. Their commitment was to tell others that “Christ is alive!” It is indeed significant that when the stranger on the road to Emmaus spoke of Christ’s new concept of the kingdom our two travelers became ecstatic. Their hearts were on fire, and when their eyes were opened to see their Lord they immediately returned to Jerusalem to tell others. When the Samaritan woman realized who the Messiah was, she left everything behind and became one of the first missionaries of the New Testament era. The jump from blindness and stupidity to ecstasy comes when the focus is on Jesus, the living Christ. When the focus moves to Jesus, the living Christ, the issues of Land, Jerusalem, and temple become obsolete. Peter Walker sums it up in this way: “The classical Christological interpretation of the Old Testament promises, far from being the result of a later Gentile ‘spiritualizing’ tendency, stems instead from the Jesus of history. Jesus of Nazareth dared to forge a new hermeneutic which placed himself and his work at the center of the spiritual narrative. . . It remains a mammoth claim, but those who accept it have no option but now to read the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. As he told the Emmaus disciples, the Scriptures were written concerning himself (Luke 24:27).”<sup>3</sup>

So much for this brief theological discourse. Let us now return to the chapel presentation.

#### **IV Jesus must have a central place in all areas of our life**

Like any traveler, Jesus was simply passing through. He never forces himself upon anybody (Rev. 3:20). But the two on the road to Emmaus constrained him, inviting him to continue the blessed fellowship time they had been having (Gen. 18:3; 32:26; Judges 6:18). They not only invited him into their home, but they gave him the place of honor. The “dialogical prayer” they had just experienced and the burning of their hearts gave them new hope, their reason gave them glimpses of more to come. They gave the Lord a central position

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<sup>3</sup> More reading on the topic “Jesus and the Land” see the added bibliography. The references made in the paper are included in the list and indicated by \*.

because they wanted him to give them more of the spiritual food of which they had already received a part on the way.

It is important to understand that our two friends wanted more from the stranger. Often we have fellowship with Christ in our church and bible study, or at small or large conferences and activities, but to invite him into our homes, into our private lives, is often avoided at all cost. We want to be in control of the private spheres of our lives.

There is no mention of a re-enactment of the Lord's Supper, and these two followers probably knew very little, if anything, about it. Through simple intuition (coming from burgeoning hearts) and a clear conviction (coming from an enlightened mind) they naturally gave Jesus the place of headship. He was invited as a guest, but he became the host. With the prayerful request, "Abide with us", a miracle happened: "their eyes were opened."

## **V Jesus never separates blessing and giving**

Treated as host by the two followers, Christ now shared the meal with them. He probably spoke the customary blessing on the food, but he surely reflected in his prayer all the experiences of that day. He was a new creation (it was the precise day of his resurrection). He was no longer bound by earthly elements. It was the climax of the entire day's experiences. It was a blessing with a new meaning of triumphal victory. Every prayer after Easter morning reflects the blessing of the resurrection. The new era of "victory over everything" restructures all communication between creator and creation.

The two recognized Jesus in the breaking/sharing of the bread. Although some theologians have suggested that the marks of the nails in the Lord's hands were noticed, I believe much more that the manner in which he unified triumphal prayer/blessing with the breaking/sharing was the key of this recognition miracle. As risen Lord, Jesus makes clear that through thankful sharing (dividing with others) divine multiplication power is wondrously released. Already earlier in his ministry Jesus had demonstrated this precept as, for instance, in the miracle of the feeding of the multitude (Mark 6:37-44). Now, however, having victoriously overcome even death with all its material implications, glimpses of heavenly values are communicated.

## **VI Recognizing Jesus as the Christ means serving Him**

Jesus did not simply leave the home following this encounter. He disappeared instantaneously. He left them alone to decide for themselves what to do with this new knowledge. He went as far as he would go. They recognized him fully for what he was: their risen Lord and Master. There was no sadness or regret

because of his departure. Rather, they were empowered by it to get up quickly and to share the news with others. The good news of Christ's resurrection and of his biblically based breaking/sharing exercise can never be kept hidden. Recognizing him implies sharing him, what he is and what he has done. The only appropriate response to this dialogical prayer experience with Christ was to proclaim his victory.

These two followers overcame fear, hopelessness, even physical fatigue. Every moment counted; it was a matter of real life and death. During the late evening hours their testimony back in Jerusalem was an enormous encouragement for the other disciples, changing their hearts. The fire kindled in the hearts of these two was so strong that it set others on fire, possibly a foretaste of Pentecost.

One could spend hours, days, and months sharing what men and women have done in serving God throughout history and time. The so-called first wave of mission, from the early church to the Reformation, service showed enormous sacrifice and dedication, missionaries often paying with their own lives. Many of the religious orders were founded for serving Christ, and Christianity spread from the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe to many other areas, and the message of Jesus and his resurrection reached many foreign shores. The second wave of mission combined the preaching of the gospel with social ministry, and for hundreds of years almost an explosion took place. Wherever a revival took place, people's lives were changed. The slogan was "We must tell the world that Christ is alive and we must demonstrate our faith with action." The third wave of mission is basically our generation. Are you, students and faculty, part of it? Every Christian is a missionary and every non-Christian a mission field.

## **VII Reflection and Application**

Jesus demonstrates that he is closer to his people than they will ever know; he has time to listen...

Jesus demonstrates that he is able to fill us with his presence if we are empty vessels...

Jesus demonstrates that he himself is the key to all Scripture; when he speaks our hearts are on fire...

Jesus demonstrates that he is the first, the last, the living one; there is none like him...

Jesus demonstrates that prayer/blessing and breaking/sharing are inseparable – biblical stewardship...

Jesus demonstrates that to know him means to serve him faithfully and with integrity...

Jesus demonstrates that life with him is everything, and he invites you and me to participate...

And it all began with a simple dialogical prayer.

*Soli Deo Gloria.*

Amen

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## The Huguenots, And Presbyterian Missions In Quebec

### Professor John Campbell\*

*\*Dr. John Campbell was born in Edinburgh in 1840 and died in Yoho Island in the Muskokas in 1904.<sup>1</sup> He was one of Canada's most colourful and expressive Presbyterian ministers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and wrote widely on a number of subjects from anthropological theories to theology, ballads, and one novel, Two Knapsacks. He taught for over 31 years at Presbyterian College, Montreal where he and his wife attended a French Presbyterian Church. He was a friend and advocate for evangelistic work in French Canada and a strong advocate of Charles Chiniquy. He possessed tremendous knowledge of the history of French Canada and Protestantism. This article reads almost like an oral talk from Campbell's memory.<sup>2</sup> -Ed. JCW*

### Beginnings to 1759

The French expedition of Pierre De Monts in 1604 was composed very largely of Huguenots, and, although Henry IV commanded him to make Catholics of the Indians, the utmost freedom of worship was allowed his settlers first at Port Royal and afterwards at Quebec. In his vessels there were Huguenot pastors and Catholic priests, whose discussions Champlain relates with evident bias; but neither seem to have settled in the colony, for it is recorded that no priests were resident in Canada before 1615, when Champlain brought out four Recollets. The Huguenot pastors were not encouraged to stay in a public capacity, yet religious services were certainly held and the sacraments

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<sup>1</sup> John S. Moir, "CAMPBELL, JOHN (1840-1904)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, (Toronto: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–), 154-156.

<sup>2</sup> This article is lightly edited and appeared originally in: *Canada: An Encyclopædia of the Country*, ed. J. Castell Hopkins, vol. 4 (Toronto: Linscott, 1898), 53-62.

administered according to the order of the Reformed Church, which leads to the belief that ordained men were found in private life.

A contest speedily began between the two creeds owing to the desire of Madame de Guercheville to send two Jesuit Fathers, Biard and Masse, to convert the Indians of Acadia. Du Chesne and Du Jardin, Huguenot merchants of Dieppe, who had a lien on the vessel chartered for this expedition in 1610, refused to allow it to sail unless the Jesuits were excluded, whereupon the devout Marchioness raised the amount of the bond at Court, and the vessel sailed. Thus these two Jesuit Fathers were the first priests to settle in New France, and gave tone to the whole of its religious life. The captain and the sailing master of the ship in which they arrived were Jean D'Aunc and David de Bruges, Huguenots both, and apparently men of liberal mind. The next Huguenots after De Monts to lead settlers to Canada were William and Emeric de Caen, uncle and nephew, whom the Duke de Montmorency made superintendents of the Quebec Colony.

The De Caens were devout men of a fighting type, and held religious services with their Protestant compatriots from 1621 till 1627, when their charter was revoked. The Jesuits meanwhile arrived in 1625. In the year of the appearance of the De Caens, the first child of European parents was born in Canada. This was Eustache, son of Abraham and Margaret Martin. The father gave his name to the famous plains of Quebec, and was called "The Scotchman." He seems to have been an apostate from Protestantism, as his youngest son, Charles Amador, born in 1648, was the first Canadian ordained as a priest. It is not a little interesting in a pathetic way to observe that the sponsor of Charles Amador was Chailes de la Tour, another apostate, whose father Claude, and his own heroic wife, were both devoted Huguenots. In 1623 the troubles of the Protestants in Canada began. De Montmorency's nephew, the Duke de Ventadour, purchased the Vice-royalty of Canada from his uncle. He was a lay-brother and had the spiritual interests of the Colony solely in view. The Huguenots of France had been looking over to Canada as a refuge from probable oppression, and resented the change of Viceroys equally almost with those resident in the country. Both parties, that in Quebec led by the De Caens in particular, are accused of doing all in their power to thwart De Ventadour's designs. He could hardly find Roman Catholic sailors or settlers to fill his ships. He did indeed succeed in obtaining captains of his own faith, but by far the greater portion of his crews were Huguenots. The consequence was that, on the ocean, two-thirds of the whole command regularly engaged in religious exercises and that publicly. As a concession, however, to the Duke's prejudices or scruples, they forebore to make their hymns sound too noisily on the St. Lawrence. But the Jesuits soon put a stop to external worship on the part of Protestants.

So far as can be judged from contemporary records the two parties, Catholic and Huguenot, must have been about equally matched in New France at this time, if, indeed, the Huguenot did not preponderate. But Louis XIII, devoted to the Virgin, was on the Throne of the Mother Country; Rochelle had fallen; and Richelieu had won over Sully, Rohan, and other Huguenot peers of France. What wonder that defection on a smaller scale should take place in France's possessions beyond the sea? The religious disputes between Champlain and the Jesuits on the one hand, the De Caens and the Huguenots on the other, are alleged as the reason for putting the American colonies on a new basis. In point of fact the De Caens and their fellow Protestants simply asked for liberty of conscience and equal rights. In 1627 came the blow directly aimed at the Huguenot party. Richelieu deprived the De Caens of their charter, and gave it to the Company of One Hundred Associates, on, amongst others, the condition that their emigrants should be Frenchmen and Roman Catholics; that no stranger or heretic should be allowed into the country; and that the Company should place and provide for the maintenance of three priests in each settlement. Thus in 1627 came the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes for the Huguenots of New France.

The following year, the younger De Caen, smarting under his wrongs, joined the Huguenot refugee in England, Sir David Kirke, in the Duke of Buckingham's invasion of Canada. That year they were unsuccessful, but in 1629 Champlain surrendered Quebec into their hands. The Colonists received the victors with something approaching joy, certainly with the utmost goodwill, which would indicate a considerable population friendly to the Reformed faith. Sir James Le Moine does not know whether Abraham Martin, the Scot, fraternized with the new Governor and his Protestant chaplain, but he does inform us that the latter was sent for to christen the little daughter of Monsieur Couillard, who was a man of note in the city. How many more Huguenots there were in it then, future research may declare. Charlevoix furnishes the names of five: Le Bailiff, a native of Amiens, to whom Kirke gave the key of the Magazine, and his fellow-deserters: Etienne Brulé, of Champigny; Nicolas Marsolet of Rouen; and Pierre Raye, of Paris; which last he calls "one of the most wicked men it was possible to see." The fifth was "the furious Calvinist, Jacques Michel," who had incited Kirke to his expedition, and was actually on board it as vice-admiral. There is no mistaking the rancour of Charlevoix. In 1632 the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye restored the Colonies to France, and to the Hundred Associates.

Meantime Claude de la Tour, the Huguenot, in connection with Sir William Alexander's grant of Nova Scotia, had established a hundred Scotch Colonists at Port Royal, of whom many died from hardship or were killed by the hostile Indians. In 1635, La Mothe Cadillac saw two men of one of the

surviving families at Port Royal, who had become Roman Catholics and married French wives. The same state of things happened, on a far larger scale, after the British conquest of Quebec, when the discharged men of Fraser's and Montgomery's, and other Highland regiments, settled all along the Lower St. Lawrence, and, marrying French wives, lost their language and their religion. Charles de la Tour, who deserted his father's Church, was rewarded "for his zeal for the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion," as was the Commander de Razilly, with grants of land. Yet they do not appear to have carried their zeal to the extent of persecution, for Dr. Gregg seems to indicate that descendants of a Huguenot remnant are to be found about Lunenburg and the River St. John. They may, however, be descendants of later immigrants.

Thirty years pass, and still there are Huguenots in Canada. Parkman, in his *Old Regime*, says of the year 1665 in Quebec:

The priests were busy in converting the Huguenots, a number of whom were detected among the soldiers and emigrants. One of them proved refractory, declaring with oaths that he would never renounce his faith. Falling dangerously ill, he was carried to the hospital, where Mother Catherine de Saint Augustin bethought her of a plan of conversion. She ground to powder a small piece of bone of Father Brebeuf, the Jesuit martyr, and mixed the sacred dust with the patient's gruel ; whereupon, says Mother Juchereau, 'this intractable man forthwith became gentle as an angel, begged to be instructed, embraced the faith, and abjured his errors publicly with admirable fervour.'

In the ranks of the Regiment Carignan Salieres, a Huguenot captain and fifteen men were converted and reported joyfully by the Intendant Talon to the French King. Many of the non-resident merchants of Quebec were Huguenots from Rochelle. "No favour was shown them; they were held under rigid restraint, and forbidden to exercise their religion, or to remain in the Colony during winter without special license." This sometimes bore very hardly upon them.

The Governor de Denonville, an ardent Catholic, states the case of one Bernon, who had done great service to the Colony, and whom La Hontan mentioned as the principal French merchant in the Canadian trade, "It is a pity," says Denonville, "that he cannot be converted. As he is a Huguenot, the Bishop wants me to order him home this autumn, which I have done, though

he carries on a large business, and a great deal of money remains due to him here." Louis XIV sent orders to imprison heretics who should refuse to abjure, or to quarter soldiers on them, whereupon the pious Denonville, having stated that a few had abjured in the former year, added, "Praised be God, there is not a heretic here."

Denonville's report was untrue. Charlevoix, indeed, tells how La Salle's pilot, Tessier, abjured his Calvinism in the parish church of Montreal in 1688. But, while giving the names of several Huguenot officers, he is careful to make no mention of their faith, classing them singly with other *Reformés* or half-pay captains and lieutenants. Other documents, however, put the word Calvinist in place of *Reformé*. Families supposed to have been of Huguenot origin are those of Francois Bissot, Olivier le Tardiff, Jean Nicolet, Nicholas Macart, Charles Couillard de Beaumont, Jean Guyon, Couillard de Lespinay, Marsolet and Kertch. There is little doubt that Medard Chouard Les Grosseilliers and Pierre Esprit de Radisson, who, in 1663, guided the English to Hudson's Bay, were also Protestants. In 1684, M. de la Barre, the Comte de Bangy, Aubert de la Chesnay, Champagne, Le Ber and Du Luth were suspected of treason, and their Catholicism called in question. The Baron de la Hontan at the same time was regarded as an infidel rather than as a heretic, but M. de Lino, who, in 1693, was imprisoned in the Bastille in Paris on a charge of conspiracy with the English, seems to have been a Huguenot, like Thomas Pichon, who, in 1758, betrayed Cape Breton.

In a despatch of M. de Monseignat, Comptroller-General of the Marine of Canada, giving an account of hostilities against the British Colonies in 1689-1690, it is stated that: "The best qualified Frenchmen were the Sieurs de Bonrepos and de La Brosse, Calvinist officers, who served as volunteers." And, in the despatch relating to Frontenac's expedition against the Onondaga Indians in 1696, mention is made of Sieur Dejordis, a Calvinist captain at the head of the Quebec battalion, and further on in the document appears the name of Dauberville, a third Calvinist captain. These are but small samples of what the Archives of Canada will yet furnish in large measure to patient research. As for individual Huguenots of humbler rank, it is hardly probable that their record has been preserved.

In his "Frontenac," Parkman says: "the Church, moreover, was less successful in excluding heresy from Acadia than from Canada (Quebec). A number of Huguenots established themselves at Port Royal, and formed sympathetic relations with the Boston Puritans." The Bishop at Quebec was much alarmed. "This is dangerous," he writes, "I pray Your Majesty to put an end to these disorders." But the priests were busy there also, for M. des Goutins, who was Judge in the Colony, wrote to the Minister in 1689, charging one Trouvé, a priest, with causing the banishment of a family of nineteen



persons. What are these, however, save accidental records, preserved doubtless against the will of the dominant religious party, of a relentless and untiring persecution of the unhappy Huguenot until he was compelled to apostatize or betake himself in exile to the New England Colonies. What happened to the faithful who refused to deny the faith? Mr. Smith, in his "History of Canada," says:

During the time that Canada was a Colony of France, a person suspected, with or without foundation, was seized, thrown into prison, interrogated, without knowing the charge against him, and without being confronted with his accuser; and he was deprived of the assistance, either of his relations, friends or counsel. He was sworn to tell the truth, or rather to accuse himself, without any value being attached to his testimony. Questions were then put more difficult for innocence to unravel than vice to deny. The prisoner was never confronted with the person who had deposed against him, except at the moment before judgment was pronounced, or when the torture was applied, or at his execution; and judgment in capital cases was invariably followed by confiscation of property.<sup>3</sup>

Where are the records of that secret tribunal before which the law called the Huguenot heretic? Canada and Acadia as well as France lost much of their best blood when the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was put in force on this side of the Atlantic. Yet there are well-known French Canadians at the present day who point with not a little pride back to their Huguenot ancestry.

### 1759 to 1898

In 1759 Quebec was taken by Wolfe, and in 1763 the Treaty of Paris ceded the whole of New France to Great Britain. In 1774 there were only 400 Protestants, exclusive of the Army, in the Province of Quebec, and these were, with few exceptions, of recent importation. An obscure but apparently truthful piece of French-Canadian Protestant tradition that links the Huguenots of the past with the missionary labours of the present century is the fact that prior to 1795 two Frenchmen were found selling Bibles, the version of Martin<sup>4</sup>, in the Province

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<sup>3</sup> William Smith, *History of Canada from its First Discovery to the year 1791*, (Quebec: John Neilson, 1815).

<sup>4</sup> This was a popular French Bible version based upon David Martin's 1707 revision of the *Bible de Genève*.

of Quebec, or Lower Canada, and were compelled to retire before the activity of the priesthood. They withdrew to Niagara, and there a M. Filiatrault bought a Bible from them which he carried back to his home at St. Therese, in which it exercised a salutary influence. Whence these two Frenchmen came or by whom they were employed who can tell?

It was reserved for the beginning of the nineteenth century to see an effort inaugurated for the evangelization of Lower Canada. The British Wesleyan Conference sent out the Rev. Jean de Putrun to preach the Gospel in the French language in Quebec and other places, a work which he continued from 1815 to 1821 – the year following that in which the Montreal Branch of the Bible Society was formed. Captain (afterwards General) Anderson, K.A., being stationed in the Province, took a deep interest in Protestant instruction, and was grieved over the successful aggression of the Roman Catholic priesthood. He apparently succeeded in obtaining for some years an agent of the British Reformation Society to do Home Mission work in Quebec and elsewhere about 1830, but there are no traces of his name or influence. The Church of Rome seems to have had all its own way without let or hindrance. But in 1834 the Rev. Henri Olivier, who had been sent out by a Missionary association of the Lausanne churches, together with his wife and two young men, to labour among the Indians, was arrested by the Macedonian cry of French Canada. The young men went on to evangelize the Sioux, but the Oliviers remained in Montreal, where they formed a small Baptist Church which exhibited three French-Canadian converts as the result of a year's work. At the end of that period the climate compelled them to go home.

Before they left Montreal they were joined by Madame Feller, whose name stands so high in the annals of French Mission work, and by M. Louis Roussy, delegated by the Associated Churches of French Switzerland. M. Roussy continued the Roman Catholic French School, which had been commenced by Mr. Denton, one of M. Olivier's two young friends who afterwards went to the Sioux; but was soon driven out by opposing influences. Then Madame Feller and he laboured for a while in Montreal and St. John's, and at last in 1836 returned to Grand Ligne and established the mission which has there proved so successful. They continued the Baptist traditions of the Olivier's, and the record of their faithful and victorious years of service, down to the year 1868, when Madame Feller went home to her rest, is told in the memoir of that sainted woman by the Rev. Dr. Cramp. All honour to the Swiss Baptist missionaries. They broke almost fallow ground, and inaugurated the educational system which has been followed with most beneficent results. The Haldane brothers, who had aroused the evangelical sentiment in French Switzerland that affected Madame Feller and M. Kuussy, did not forget their disciples, but formed at Edinburgh about 1835 an "Edinburgh Committee for

the Management of the French-Canadian Mission." Not all on the Committee were Baptists, but they helped the Baptist Mission as the only one then in the field.

But others were not idle. The Bible Society (which appears to have distributed copies of the Scriptures in French long before the Montreal Auxiliary was formed) was aroused by the state of affairs during the Rebellion of 1837 (with which the French converts sympathized) to do something for the spiritual well-being of the French-Canadians. The State prisoners in jail received 200 copies of the Scriptures in their own tongue, and read them. As early as 1836 the Montreal Auxiliary had employed an agent to circulate French Scriptures in Montreal, and in 1838 there appears the name of P. V. Hibbard as *colporteur* for all the French-Canadian parishes in the district. This was the sowing of the seed, and it was well sown and fell in many cases upon good ground and bore fruit. Since that time all the Canadian agencies have scattered French sacred and religious literature, broadcast with gratifying results, from Halifax to Quebec, from Montreal to Cornwall, from Ottawa to Bayfield, and from Algoma to Manitoba. The Bible and Tract Societies have furnished the Lumberman's Mission of the Presbyterian Church, and many similar evangelistic bodies, with the printed sinews of war for the great contest between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

The Rev. James Thompson was the agent of the Bible Society in Montreal, a Society in which all Denominations of Protestants met on a common platform. Owing largely to his instrumentality, there was formed in 1839, the French-Canadian Missionary Society, an undenominational body in name and management, but sustained almost exclusively by Presbyterian gifts and offerings. Among its founders may be mentioned the Rev. Dr. Taylor, of Erskine Church, Dr. Wilkes and Dr. Strong, and Messrs John Redpath and James Court. The Society at once opened communication for financial purposes with Glasgow, Scotland, and for missionary supply with Geneva, Switzerland. Money came from Glasgow, and from Geneva came several noted missionaries, including M. and Madame D. Amaron, and Mm. Moret and Prevost. They arrived in 1840, and, a little later, came the Rev. J. E. Tanner and his wife, and M. Chevallez. Independent of the French-Canadian Missionary Society, and the Baptist Mission of Grande Ligne, was M. E. Lapelletrie, who left France in 1839 as the agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and, in the end of the following year, another Frenchman, M. J. Vessot, joined the ranks of the F.C.M.S.

The non-denominational French-Canadian Society, emulating the Baptist Mission of Grand Ligne, engaged at various times in four branches of missionary work: primary Protestant education, *colportage*, evangelization by preaching, and the training of missionaries. Mission-school work was begun

by Madame Amaron at Belle Riviere, in 1840, with comparatively small attendance, and was in 1846 transferred to Pointe-aux-Trembles, so far as the boys' school was concerned, under the care of Messrs. Tanner and Vernier. The school for girls, begun by Madame Tanner in Montreal in 1846, was, three years later, also transferred to Pointe-aux-Trembles, where, under many able and devoted directors and directresses, the double school has since gathered in large numbers of French-Canadian Roman Catholic youth, and has made through them a permanent impression upon the religious thought and life of the Province. A very complete history of this school and its eminent teachers is contained in the forty-second annual report of the French-Canadian Missionary Society in 1881. The invaluable services of the *colporteurs* have not met with the same recognition. Only a name here and there has been preserved of the men who, more than all others, spread abroad the Gospel light. Messrs. Vessot and Chevallez commenced this good work, which extended to all parts of the present Dominion in which French-speaking Canadians were to be found. In 1848, the Rev. John Black, afterwards the pioneer missionary of the North-West, began a three years' service in the F.C.M.S.

The Society made an effort to unite all French-preaching ministers in a French-Canadian Reformed Church. These included its own ordained missionaries and the ministers of churches that had independently taken up French work, such as M. Roux, a Baptist, and M. Doudiet, of the Presbyterian Church. This was in 1858, but the Synod, which at one time consisted of ten congregations, with about 2,000 adherents, disintegrated in 1876, and its components returned to the Denominations of their choice. The effort, however, had not been in vain, for it had drawn the isolated pastors into mutual sympathy and enabled them to present an united front to the common enemy of their work. The training of missionaries was first undertaken by the Rev. P. Wolff in 1852, whose four students were A. Solandt, E. Jamieson, A. Geoffroy, and R. P. Duclos. The latter and subsequently the two Groulx and J. M. Des Ilets, also studied at Geneva. In 1867 the Society procured the services of the Rev. D. Coussirat, B.D., of Montauban, as Professor of Theology, and transferred the Seminary from Montreal to Point-aux-Trembles in 1869. But, in 1870, the Canada Presbyterian Church having taken up the work of French evangelization, Professor Coussirat cast in his lot with it, and occupied a chair in the Presbyterian College, Montreal. It is hard to over-estimate the importance of the influence brought to bear on French-speaking Canada by the French-Canadian Missionary Society in the matters of primary religious education, the dissemination of the Scriptures, the direct preaching of the Gospel and care of souls, together with the training of Christian workers.

Nevertheless, there was a weakness in the administration, not arising out of the character of the men who composed it, for rarely has a more able

and consecrated body of Christian philanthropists been assembled; nor out of any lack of zeal or prudence on their part ; but out of the lack of cohesion which non-denominational enterprises are apt to exhibit, and partly out of the impatience of ordained missionaries at being dictated to by a Committee composed largely of laymen. The Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland had its separate mission of St. John's Church in Montreal from 1862. A little later, Messrs. Labelle and Groulx and Paradis had begun work under the auspices of the Canada Presbyterian Church. The Church of England had its mission of Sabrevois; and the Methodists were working up towards their present flourishing French Institute in the western suburb of Montreal. Also, as early as 1859, a great event took place. Father Chiniquy, Priest of the Parish of St. Anne, Kankakee, in the State of Illinois, U.S., partly through the teachings of the Rev. T. Lafleur of the Baptist Mission in Montreal, had renounced Roman Catholicism; and several years after, with 600 of his people, was received into the Canada Presbyterian Church. Added to this, the members of the Presbyterian Churches who were the chief supporters of the French-Canadian Missionary Society, and the ministers and elders who were on its Board saw the necessity for having Church work under Church control, inasmuch as this would only mean ceasing to share its direction with the comparatively small Congregational Church in British North America.

In 1869 Prof. Coussirat began to give instruction in the Presbyterian College, Montreal, which had been founded in 1867, and in 1870 the Presbytery of Montreal petitioned the General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church to enable it to engage in French work. At the following Assembly, Dr. R. F. Burns read the first Report of the Committee on French-Canadian Evangelization, which emphasized Prof. Coussirat's good work, and referred to the missionary labours of ten students. Principal MacVicar succeeded Dr. Burns as Chairman of the Committee; and it was deemed advisable by him and his colleagues, of whom the writer was one, to strike a blow for free religious speech in French Montreal, the Protestant churches of which had frequently suffered from the violence of Roman Catholics. It was felt that the man for the work was the Reverend Charles Chiniquy, better known as Father Chiniquy. Dr. MacVicar's report of the Committee to the Assembly of 1875 contains the substance of the story of the remarkable movement which took place in Montreal during the previous winter and can hardly be improved upon, but the writer, as a participator in all but one of Father Chiniquy's meetings, can add some picturesque particulars.

The object of the struggle was freedom to preach the Gospel to French-Canadians. In response to the Committee's desire and promise of substantial help and defence, Father Chiniquy came to Montreal on the 22nd of January,

1875, and laboured till the 25th of March. He began his preaching in the Craig Street Church, then under the French-Canadian Missionary Society. It could not hold the crowds that came to hear him, for the Committee advertised him by posters all over the city, but the Craig Street people were unable to give the venerable missionary the protection guaranteed him. The church windows were smashed, and preacher and congregation stoned out of the building. Other churches farther removed from the French element were asked for the use of their buildings, but their managing Boards, fearing violence, declined to grant them.

Then it was that the office-bearers of Côté St. Church, the nearest among Canada Presbyterian churches to the French quarter, ventured into the breach and welcomed the apostle of French-Canadian Protestantism. The Protestant

press was aroused; the city police placed in requisition. A corps of 300 able-bodied Protestant sympathizers, numbering in their ranks Dr. Beers, Mr. William Greig, and many other brave men whose names it would be a privilege to mention, did space permit, occupied the basement as a reserve force, and helped the students of the Presbyterian College as ushers and preservers of order in the sacred edifice. All were armed, many, indeed, only with stout walking-sticks, but the writer had occasionally more dangerous weapons thrust into his hands by watchful friends. Three large sleighs formed the escort of the preacher. The first, full of armed men, broke the way; the second contained Father Chiniquy, Principal MacVicar, the writer, and occasionally such aids as Professor Coussirat, Mr. Doudiet, and Mr. Tanner, together with a complement of Protestant defenders; the last was like the first, and its object was to guard against an attack from the rear. The writer accompanied the preacher into the pulpit, partly because the mob would hardly care to injure an English minister, and partly to take notes of the Gospel addresses, a synopsis of which was published weekly in the *Canada Presbyterian*.

Others who constantly stood by the brave Father were Principal MacVicar, the organizer of the whole work, Professor Coussirat, the Rev. Dr. Burns, and the Rev. Messrs. Doudiet, Lafleur and Tanner. Many who should have been there stood aloof. The congregations filled the whole of the large church to overflowing, and consisted for the most part of respectable men eager to learn the truth. There were occasional interruptions, but so well did the ushers and guards do their duty that offenders were speedily handed over to the police, and the magistrate, to give him his due, meted out justice to them. But one evening the students of the College held a public meeting, and the Professors, judging from the good order of the past that their services in the Cote Street Church could be dispensed with that night, accepted the students' invitation. As the meeting was about to close, a sleigh drove up to the door,

and soon Father Chiniquy came in, a melancholy figure, yet full of cheerfulness. The mob had broken through the imperfect guard and assaulted the pulpit. The brave old Father had to save his life by flight, and in getting over a back wall had injured at least his clothes.

Next morning the news of the outrage was all over the city, and young, active men everywhere laid their heads together and looked out serviceable weapons. In the evening, Father Chiniquy's escort of the sleighs was at the church shortly before eight, and the students and the 300 were there to meet it, while a strong detachment of police guarded the doors. The veteran surpassed himself that night, and at the close of his address was preparing to withdraw, when a tumult arose outside. A large body of French-Canadian students and others made an assault upon the building to carry it by storm, as they had done the night before, when suddenly a new force made its appearance. Twelve hundred English volunteers in everyday dress charged up the street. There was a crash and a brief scuffle, work made for the French doctors, and then a hasty retreat. The battle of liberty was fought and won. The twelve hundred deprived the 300 and the students, of their privilege of home escort for that night, all eager to see the gallant champion of the faith. Since then the French-Canadian Protestant has as much right to speak in Montreal as the Archbishop. As to the result of Father Chiniquy's Montreal mission, I cannot do better than quote the succeeding Report of Principal MacVicar. He said:

It is difficult to give an adequate impression of the arduous labours of Mr. Chiniquy while night and day seeking the salvation of his countrymen, and your Committee record with gratitude the fact that the Lord was pleased to crown his efforts with signal success. During the two months referred to he delivered twenty-seven public addresses in French to audiences averaging about 800 each; so that many thousands of French-Canadian Roman Catholics heard the Gospel from his lips, and thus a work was accomplished which would require years, even by several missionaries going from house to house. He delivered also thirteen addresses in English to audiences averaging about 1,000, besides many private meetings which he held with converts and others. In addition to these public labours, he conversed with about 900 enquirers, more than half of whom were led to see and acknowledge the errors of Romanism. The total number of converts already gathered is over 300; and I now place on the table of the Assembly the autograph list of signatures of those who sent their demission to the priests, and thus publicly renounced

their connection with the Church of Rome. A large proportion of these, your Committee have reason to hope, are exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are not satisfied with having simply abjured the errors by which they were long enslaved. On the 24th of March, these converts and their friends held a social meeting in the lecture-room of the Coté Street Church, to which about 700 persons were admitted by ticket. Professor Coussirat presided. Resolutions were proposed, ably spoken to and unanimously adopted by the converts, expressive of their renunciation of Romish errors, and their attachment to the Gospel and the freedom which it secures. The meeting was addressed by the Reverends C. Doudiet, Theodore Lafleur, C. Chiniquy and others, and was fitted to be most useful to those so recently brought out of darkness in uniting their hearts and sympathies, and strengthening them to endure the reproach and persecution which they have since encountered.

At the union of the Presbyterian Churches in that same year, 1875, the first act, framed by Principal MacVicar, Dr. Jenkins, and the writer, and passed, was: "That the work of French Evangelization, hitherto carried on by the Churches, be united under a General Assembly Board of French-Canadian Evangelization, whose office shall be in Montreal." The Minute provides that the training of missionaries shall be a first charge on the fund. The Rev. C. A. Tanner was appointed General Secretary; and in the following year, the Rev. Mr. (now Dr.) Warden was made agent, and infused new life into the Board's finances. Mission work was consequently largely extended. In view of the increasing efficiency of the Denominational missions Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist and Baptist the French-Canadian Missionary Society somewhat reluctantly decided to hand over the results of its long and successful labour of love to them. In accordance with this decision it transferred to the Board of the Presbyterian Church in Canada the schools at Point-aux-Trembles (receiving for the property there the sum of \$5,500), and with them the whole work of the Society. The Craig Street Church, however, it made over to the Methodist Conference. The Presbyterian Board bought Russell Hall in the east, and built Canning Street Church in the west of Montreal, and established preaching stations and schools in many parts of the Province, as well as in Quebec, Ottawa, and other central localities. The Rev. Principal MacVicar is still the Chairman of the Board, and the Rev. Dr. Warden its Treasurer, but for several years past the Rev. S. J. Taylor, M.A., an accomplished French scholar, has



efficiently discharged the various duties of secretary and personal director of mission work. The gross income of the Board last year was over \$36,000. The Rev. Dr. Coussirat still (1898) occupies the position of French Professor of Theology. The efficient head of the Points-aux-Trembles schools, during the past 25 years, has been the Rev. Jules Bourgoïn, whose Christian zeal, devotion, and scholarship have tended greatly to place them in their present prosperous condition. The following statistics are taken from an admirable Report by the Rev. Mr. Taylor to the General Assembly. There have been engaged in these missionary labours during 1897 28 pastors and ordained missionaries, 17 evangelists, *colporteurs* and students, and 20 teachers – in all 65 toilers in the French-Canadian vineyard. Of mission fields there were 37, and 93 mission stations in the Presbyteries of St. John, N.B., Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa, Glengarry, Barrie, Algoma, and Huron.

The average Sabbath attendance was 2,415. There are 928 families under our care, with 1,079 Church members, 990 pupils attending Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes. There were 153 members added to the Church during the year, and there were distributed 901 Bibles or New Testaments and 21,976 tracts, etc. The amount contributed by converts for salaries and other expenses was \$5,917.70 amount paid as school fees, \$1,602.30; making a total of \$7,520.00. There were 25 mission schools in active operation, some during the year, others for a shorter period, with an aggregate attendance of 809 pupils.

The schools at Pointe-aux-Trembles have already given a Christian education to about 5,000 pupils, a large proportion of whom became converts and have exerted an immeasurable influence for good in various walks of life. Not a few have become missionaries, pastors and teachers; and others lawyers, doctors, artizans and agriculturists. Many French-Canadian Protestants, including some descendants of the old Huguenot settlers, and of the disbanded Highlanders, who have returned to the faith of their fathers, live remote from mission stations, and thus have no part in Church statistics. The common report with which the late Premier Mercier is credited is that there are in the Province of Quebec over 30,000 French-Canadians who call themselves Protestants whether they go to church or not. There is also a large body in the United States, including thousands of converts made in Canada, who were driven across the lines by social persecution, and who are gathered, some into the many French mission churches of New England, others into English-Protestant

congregations. Dr. Amaron in his book, entitled *Your Heritage*<sup>5</sup>, estimates the French Protestants of New England at 10,000 and those of the United States at 40,000.

The old state of affairs is changed. Mr. Chiniquy may walk and talk where he pleases, and be treated with respect. Roman Catholics send their children to the English public schools in spite of discriminating fees. They purchase *L'Aurore*, the French-Protestant paper, and read it publicly. Their intelligent men and women seek the society of the intelligent and cultivated among the French Protestants, and in many ways show that the old barrier between Catholic and heretic has been broken down. "Wise people" say this is the progress of modern ideas, the influence of the neighbouring States, and many things besides, but those who are familiar with life and society in the Province of Quebec see in this change the fruit of good seed labouriously sown through long years of painful and weary waiting. The bread cast upon the waters is found after many days, and teaches the Apostolic lesson: "Let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

#### **Updated Bibliography for further Reading:**

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<sup>5</sup> Calvin Amaron, *Your Heritage*, (Springfield, MA: French Protestant College, 1891).



## Getting the Gospel Right

### Christo Heiberg\*

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Once upon a time, long ago in Israel's history, during the reign of their first king, God's people were woefully unprepared to face their enemies the Philistines. What is even worse is that the Philistines knew it! This is what we read about at that time: *"There was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel... every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe or his sickle... So on the day of battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan..."* (see 1 Sam. 13:19-22).

Imagine being unarmed on the day of battle, while your enemy knows all about it? What a tragedy! And what a shame! Are we as God's people in Africa and the world fully armed for the day of battle that is upon us? Paul's prayer is that we will be able to stand strong in the day of evil, and once the battle is over "having done all, to stand firm" (Ephes. 6:13). The sword of the

church is the Word of God, wielded through much praying in the Spirit. But what if that sword is blunt or broken, or perhaps even lost?

If we are going to win this mother of all wars during the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century against foes anytime as formidable as Goliath, yes if we are going to overcome and not succumb, then we will have to make sure that we believe, proclaim and defend *the Gospel of the Kingdom*, as our Lord Jesus and His apostles delivered it to us two millennia ago. We need to get the Gospel right. And the errors to be avoided are not simply “legalism” on the one hand and “antinomianism” on the other, as we often rightfully hear (that certainly too).<sup>1</sup> The decay goes much deeper. In many ways the church has settled for a *minimalist* Gospel that falls far short of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This minimising of the Gospel has very much to do with the *spirit of the age* we have been living under for more than two centuries now. As Protestant Christians we have – like all others – greatly underestimated the impact the *spirit of the age* on our understanding of the Bible and its core message of God’s grace.

### **A Westernized Gospel**

Karl Grebe and Wilfred Fon both worked in the Cameroon for many years, in Bible translation and theological education respectively. In their concise but profound little work *African Traditional Religion and Christian Counselling* they make some bold claims about the “weakness of the Western Gospel in the African context.” They say that the problem of syncretism, which is widespread in African Christianity, was caused in part by the kind of Gospel presented to generations of Africans by many well-meaning missionaries from the West. This “westernized” Gospel addressed a void in *African Traditional Religion* (ATR) while not really exposing the heart of it. It provided in the felt need of the African for direct access to a distant God and in assurance of a blessed existence beyond the grave. It failed however to address the heart of ATR, namely its worldview steeped in its superstitious fear for an unseen realm, filled with spirits of various kinds.

It provided an opportunity of having one’s sins forgiven and of “going to heaven”, both of which were foreign to ATR. All that was needed was “faith in Jesus” and to “go to church”. Africans readily received that message. For them this Gospel complemented their traditional beliefs. It resulted however (as one can expect) in a *dual* allegiance. As far as daily life was concerned -

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<sup>1</sup> See Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism and Gospel Assurance – Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

and especially with regards to its many challenges, set-backs, and uncertainties – the African believer was still dependent on those in his community who had access to the unseen powers of the spiritual world, for good or ill. But, as far as his hope for “salvation” was concerned, he believed on Christ and therefore went to church. In summary: “They look to the Christian faith for final salvation, but look to pagan practises for present help”.<sup>2</sup> This serious indictment by two seasoned Christian missionaries on much of African Christianity, behooves us to look a little closer at this “westernized Gospel” that was supposedly brought to Africa by many.

Thousands of missionaries no doubt did amazing work and brought incredible sacrifices in Africa, and many more are still doing so. One only has to page through *The Faith Moves South – A History of the Church in Africa*<sup>3</sup> by Dutch missiologist Steven Paas to become aware of this fact. Knowing also the legacy of someone like Andrew Murray and his remarkable missionary posterity personally, I can hardly believe that all missionaries peddled a weak westernized Gospel on the beautiful continent. And yet one can hardly deny that a certain popular understanding of the Gospel has weakened Christianity not only in Africa, but the world over, for at least the last century or so. And we all know what this Gospel sounds like more or less: “Trust in Jesus as your Saviour, so that your sins may be forgiven and you may go to heaven”. That’s what Jesus supposedly commissioned his apostles to preach! Not much more.

Marsha Witten, a self-confessed atheist, analysed 47 sermons of *Presbyterian Church (USA)* and *Southern Baptist Convention* pastors on the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* as part of her Ph.D. research project<sup>4</sup> at Princeton University. She concluded that the bulk of these sermons - though originating from a more liberal leaning denomination on the one hand, and a more conservative one on the other – basically do the same thing. They greatly diminish Protestantism’s view of God, of sin and depravity, as well as of the Biblical scope of salvation, and it all happens under the pressures of secularization. And though these sermons were preached long after the missionary movement reached its apex by the early twentieth century, they do signal the end of a process that was well underway already during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in much of Protestantism.

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Grebe & Wilfred Fon, *African Traditional Religion and Christian Counselling* (Oasis International Ltd, 2006), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Steven Paas, *The Faith Moves South: A History of the Church in Africa* (Zomba, Malawi: Kachere Books, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Marsha Witten, *All is Forgiven: The Secular Message in American Protestantism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

In fact, none other than Dr. Andrew Murray sounded the alarm in his book *The State of the Church – An Urgent Call to Repentance and Prayer*, published in response to 1910 *Edinburgh Missionary Conference* (which he could not attend for health reasons). Murray did not share the optimism voiced at Edinburgh, that the unreached part of humanity would be evangelized “in this generation”.<sup>5</sup> His clarion call warned that the state of the church in the West did not warrant Edinburgh’s optimism. One concern that he raised in his book was about the Gospel that was so readily preached and received all over the Protestant world. A hundred years later his book reads like a vision of a Hebrew prophet.

### **Evidence of a Westernized Gospel**

I have no doubt that legalism is a huge problem among many churches in Africa. But where legalism has slain its thousands, a radically diminished Gospel has slain its tens of thousands. Was the Gospel so many believed in really “the grace of God (that) has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11) or was it a promise of a quick fix for all your problems, tagged onto a free pass to glory?

So what is this popular Gospel that failed to truly transform Africa and which has also weakened Christianity overall? Let me quote from evangelical billboards that I personally saw by the roadside here in North America. Here is what two of them said:

*Free trip to heaven: details in the Bible!*

and

*Heaven or hell? The choice is yours.*

These examples are by no means exaggerated. A typical example of the Gospel, as explained to school children here in North America, is neatly summarized in a tract published by a very reputable reformed publisher. Its title is *God knows my name*.<sup>6</sup> It goes on telling the child how much God knows us and loves us, and then concludes as follows: “God knows all about us and he loves us... even when we do bad things. He calls these bad things sin. Everyone who sins must be punished, but God loves us so much that He did a

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Murray, *The State of the Church: An Urgent call to Repentance and Prayer* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publication, 1983), 13-17.

<sup>6</sup> *God Knows My Name*, Good News Tracts, Crossway.

wonderful thing. He sent his own Son Jesus, to be punished in our place! Now we can live with God forever in Heaven if we believe and accept God's gift of Jesus to us". The tract then offers a short prayer that a child may pray to receive Jesus.

Maybe this sort of thing doesn't surprise us anymore, because we have become so used to it. But is this really the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus and his apostles proclaimed? Is this the grace of God that appeared to all men, to use Paul's words again? Did the apostles go around telling everyone: "Believe in Jesus so that you can go to heaven?" No word of repentance, of the cost of discipleship, of promising to love God's people, of obedience to our risen Lord and of forsaking a sinful world, so as to live a life to God's glory, etc.

Grebe and Fon claim that this Gospel is the reason why Africa's Christianity is so powerless to break the stranglehold of ATR. And yet, if we dare to be honest, we will have to admit that this "Gospel" has not only led to a double allegiance in Africa. It also did so in the West. For centuries it has been difficult to discern the average Christian from the world, first in lifestyle, but later also in doctrine. For example, in a missionary report that the legendary David Brainerd wrote to the *Missionary Society of Scotland* in 1745, he mentioned as the primary reason for the North American Indian people's strong resistance to the Gospel the following: the lives of the Christians! The Indians observed to Brainerd "that the white people lie, defraud, steal and drink worse than the Indians" and also pushed them off "their lands by the sea".<sup>7</sup>

This situation was by no ways unique to North America. It was in fact this diluted form of Christianity that gave rise to the open mockery of men like Friedrich Nietzsche and Bertrand Russell, or to the sincere protest of someone like Soren Kierkegaard already during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Millions of professing Christians in the West lived with one foot in the church and another in the world, from cradle to grave, without winking an eye about it. The very fact that we often hear today that X% of pastors (often a very high percentage) regularly view pornography, points to a tragic double allegiance also here in the West. Because, as the vicar of Bagdad<sup>8</sup> rightfully noted somewhere, whoever is doing porn is unfit for ministry, and shouldn't be in ministry. That's how simple it is. Thankfully this state of affairs is changing for the better now,

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<sup>7</sup> John Thornbury, "David Brainerd, Missionary to the Red Indians of North America" in *Five Pioneer Missionaries* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, London) 71-72.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew White, the Anglican vicar at St. George's in Bagdad until 2014 when the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered his evacuation due to security concerns.

as nominal Christianity is being pruned away from the vine by the heavenly “husbandman” (John 15) in age of radical secularism and hostility to Christ.

Nonetheless, in this radically diminished “Gospel” there is little mention of God the Creator, of man’s catastrophic fall, of the gift of the law, of Israel’s failure, of the fear and the grace of God, of the incredible advent of Immanuel, of the extent of Christ’s suffering, of his resurrection and ascension, and of his Lordship over life and the Holy Spirit’s glorious power to transform us, and of the amazing hope of a new creation. We can scarcely see what John and his friends once beheld when he wrote about the awesome sight of beholding “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 NKJ). We can scarcely fathom what he meant by saying how they, as needy sinners, received from the grace upon grace from the eternal Logos made flesh.

Neither does it mention our evangelical calling to forsake self, Satan and the world, nor does it really seek to explain the meaning of “repentance” and “faith”. It doesn’t really point us to Christ’s return on the clouds of heaven either, when we will stand before a righteous God, to give account of what we have done here on the earth, whether good or bad. Marsha Witten rightly observed that unpopular themes were neatly trimmed away in favour of more customer-friendly personal truths. However, when Paul the apostle stood on the Areopagus long ago, he boldly proclaimed to the Athenians that the only living God now “commands all people to repent, because He has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed: and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17: 30-31).

### **Possible Origins of a Westernized Gospel**

But where did this Gospel come from? Is there any book in Scripture that presents us with such a seriously moderated Gospel? Would any of the four Gospels in the New Testament allow us to reduce the *Good News* to this minimalist message of a great fire-escape at the end of our lives? Is this the Gospel we find in the Acts of the Apostles? Is it the message Paul longed to take even to Spain? If not, where did this Gospel come from and why did it deceive us for so long?

Ultimately, we have to conclude that it was the *unintended* consequence of the Reformation’s message of the centrality of justification. No one reading the Genevan Reformer John Calvin would ever arrive at the minimalist Gospel outlined above, but unfortunately, among the Protestant clergy and laity, the idea emerged sometime since the Reformation that the



Gospel is all about “having assurance that I am going to heaven”. That assurance then is to be found in the doctrine of justification, we were told. And since justification is the message “by which the church stands or falls” (Martin Luther) it basically became everything.

Hence, you can have almost everything wrong in your theology and your life, and hardly read your Bible, as long as you get justification right! Let me illustrate from my own background. Even the famous opening question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, as *the most memorized point of entry into the Biblical message* in reformed circles, helped nurture this distortion: God’s passion for us is that we have the comfort that we belong to Jesus. The rest of the Catechism for that matter, may then for all practical purposes fade into the background.

Our issue is obviously not with the beautiful prelude to the Heidelberg Catechism, but with the fact that that prelude (and especially its emphasis on our “comfort”) has become for so many the essence of the Biblical message. It requires a very short step from taking “my only comfort in life and death” as the essence of all that God wants to tell me, to making “my own happiness, health and prosperity” God’s plan for my life, with reference to Jer. 29:13! Living for God’s glory here on earth (also when that will include suffering) and “enjoying Him forever” hereafter, as the Westminster divines so famously opened their *Shorter and Larger Catechisms* with, would have been a much healthier starting point. It could however never convince those who firmly believed that the Bible’s message was all about justification and our comfort!

More and more sincere believers are beginning to see it clearly though. At a conference recently I twice encountered conversations where mature reformed believers asked me something like this: “Christo, how did we ever get so fixated on personal salvation, when the New Testament has such a broader focus?” But to find the answer to this question, one even has to go even beyond the Reformation and ask whether the medieval Western church, to which the reformers reacted, did not have *its* focus all wrong to begin with. Did the kind of Roman Catholicism against which our fathers reacted not determine the playing field from the outset? In the late Middle Ages, the message of the church was indeed almost exclusively about escaping God’s awful judgment, or finding ways to reduce time spent in purgatory for one’s loved-ones or for oneself. I do not fault our Protestant forebears for stepping into the trap. Their confessional statements tell us what an admirable job they did to set the Biblical record straight. But in the end, they struggled to wrest the church from a paradigm telling us that everything is about “my eternal salvation” (never mind how important that issue might be).

Contemporary Christianity in North America and beyond has taken that Gospel to even further extremes in recent decades. The contemporary grace movement,<sup>9</sup> seeks to answer every single problem, issue or question in the life of the church or the believer with the doctrine of justification. It equates every mention of obedience to Christ's lordship to legalism, and views a call to repentance as harsh and unloving. We seem to have forgotten that for Luther it was the condemned sinner's experience of begging God for his undeserved mercy, and of receiving Christ's "alien" free grace and righteousness, instead of that righteous wrath, that opened the doors to God's Kingdom. For the contemporary grace movement however, it is more or less one's adherence to the doctrine of justification that puts every single concern in your Christian life to bed.

### **Being in Christ**

To illustrate this dilemma from another angle, it is worthwhile to listen to a Protestant scholar who in recent years discovered the true Gospel. I am quoting in full from the preface of a book entitled *One with Christ*, written by Marcus Peter Johnson. The subtitle of this work is quite telling: *An Evangelical Theology of Salvation*.<sup>10</sup> The author frankly admits how his reading of the reformer John Calvin opened his eyes (with shock) to the fact that *salvation* implies much more than what we were so readily made to believe in our Protestant, evangelical circles.

“This book is the result of a shocking encounter I had, and continue to have, with John Calvin. When I decided during my graduate studies to pursue the thought of the great pastor-theologian of sixteenth-century Geneva, I expected a number of things. I expected that I would find in Calvin an enormously helpful resource for understanding the depth and significance of evangelical Protestant theology. I expected that I would find in his theological understanding an important historical

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<sup>9</sup> See “The Gospel of Permissive Grace” in Erwin. W. Lutzer, *The Church in Babylon: Heeding the Call to be a Light in the Darkness* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2108), 192-198.

<sup>10</sup> Marcus Peter Johnson, *One with Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), Preface.

grounding for the Protestant and evangelical faith that I confess...

And Calvin did not disappoint. My expectations were met and exceeded, not only because his theology is rich and profound, but also because it is consistently pastoral and emotionally penetrating...

The fact that Calvin's theology exceeded my expectations was delightful and enriching, but that was not what was shocking. What was shocking to me was the way in which Calvin spoke of salvation. This was both familiar and foreign to me at the same time. I expected and found familiar concepts, terms... However, I was constantly disrupted by Calvin's consistent and ubiquitous refrain about being joined to Jesus Christ. At first, I simply absorbed this element of his theology into my pre-existent understandings, assuming that Calvin's language about union with Christ was simply another, perhaps sentimental, method of expressing that believers are saved by the work of Christ on the cross. But then I realized, in a way that was initially disconcerting, that when Calvin wrote of being united to Christ, he meant that believers are personally joined to the living, incarnate, crucified, resurrected Jesus.

Moreover, I realized that this union with Christ, which Calvin described in strikingly graphic and intimate terms, constituted for him the very essence of salvation. To be saved by Christ, Calvin kept insisting, means to be included in the person of Christ. That is what salvation is. Due either to my theological naïveté or to my theological upbringing (or both), I did not have the categories to grasp what Calvin was saying. It was only when I began to realize that what he was saying was not only thoroughly biblical, but also in concert with many of the theological luminaries of the Christian tradition,

that I began to be amazed rather than disconcerted. What at first had seemed foreign to me was nothing other than Calvin's articulation of something basic to the Christian confession, a gospel truth that is fundamental to (the Bible) and a living reality that was assumed by Calvin's predecessors and contemporaries in the faith. As it turned out, I was the theological foreigner.

Once I began to see that Calvin's language was in line with the language and thought forms embedded in the Bible and in the historic stream of Christian orthodoxy, new vistas of biblical, theological, and historical understanding began to open up to me. Salvation, in particular, took on a meaning that I had never imagined. Calvin had not contradicted anything I had believed, but his understanding of being united to Christ enriched my understanding in ways from which I have yet to recover (and hope I never do). My shocking encounter with Calvin revealed to me the beauty, wonder, and mystery of salvation in Christ, and along with it, the beauty, wonder, and mystery of the church. This surprising encounter is the impetus for this book".

Note what Johnson is saying: Calvin's theology not only exceeded his expectations, it shocked him and blew him away! "To be saved by Christ, Calvin kept insisting, means to be included in the person of Christ. That is what salvation is". And that according to the Genevan reformer is basic to the Christian confession. In fact, the most common way to designate Christian believers in the New Testament was that to say that they were "in Christ". And so, if to be saved by Christ, means to be included in the person of Christ, then to be saved by him must have far wider implications than simply for the life to come. It must pertain to every square inch of life and to every minute of the day. Three examples will suffice.

Firstly, if the risen and exalted Christ is seated "above all principalities and powers in this world and the next" as Paul wrote in Ephes. 1 and Col. 1 and elsewhere, then the apostle must have meant that every evil spirit, force, and power structure, both supernaturally and politically, both culturally and socially, in "this present darkness" that our world has become, was subjected

to King Jesus. And if we are now indeed “in Him” as Christian believers, then we are also in principle “seated above all the principalities and powers” of today. All of that must certainly have huge implications for how Christians in Africa for example are going to respond to wild rumours and fears ahead of a political election; or to the latest aberrations spouted by some self-proclaimed prosperity prophet; or whether they will stand firm in their faith when bad things happen to them, rather than to succumb to the traditions of their ancestors. Above all, like all of us, African Christians need to overcome fear. And “in Christ” they have no reason not to.

Secondly, not only may we no longer live in fear, we can no longer live in sin. If one is joined to Christ, says Paul somewhere, how can he also be joined to a prostitute? If our bodies are now temples of His Spirit, should we not cleanse ourselves from everything that defiles us both in body and spirit (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1)? The Son of God came to set us free. We are now His possession. It is therefore unthinkable that one could be a Christian while living in slavery to anything of this world, whether to alcohol, pornography, gaming, gambling, television, food, tobacco, narcotics, or whatsoever. Whoever is in Christ Jesus is a new creation. The old things have passed away, the new has come. At the very least a true believer would engage in a bitter struggle for life and death. Yes this is often a gut-wrenching fight of repentance and faith, to rid our hearts and lives entirely from the control of another master, that seeks cripple us spiritually, to ruin our testimony and to destroy us eternally. But did Jesus not come to bind him and rob his possessions from him, yes to destroy the work of the devil. How can one claim to know Christ and yet be in bondage to such a cruel master? It makes no sense. .

Thirdly, to be “in Christ” must have huge implications for emotional restoration, forgiveness and reconciliation. The recent history of Rwanda and South Africa has taught us how precious and real the Christian truth of forgiveness is. In 1994 South Africa had its first democratic elections and Rwanda its shocking genocide. After those elections many white people and black people, who were formerly estranged from each other, learned to trust and love each other, motivated by the Gospel. In Rwanda, after the genocide, Hutus and Tutsi who came to know Jesus, received each other in grace, contrary to what their carnal natures would have demanded.

What lies at the root of so many religious, tribal and racial conflicts in Africa and in the world? Is it not the desire to get even, to retaliate, and to take revenge? But how could anyone who claim to be “in Christ” still drink the poison of bitterness and nurse grudges against his enemies every day? For every individual who has been freely forgiven of all her sins and

transgressions, is now in Christ. He taught us by his example and teaching to forgive “from the heart” (Matt. 18:35) those who have sinned against us; or if they refuse to repent, to pray passionately for God’s blessing of conversion to be granted to them (Matt. 5:38-42). Whatever the case, whether full reconciliation is possible or not, nursing bitterness and feelings of revenge is never an option in Christianity. Never.

Forgiveness is not some incidental issue in the Gospel, it is front and centre. Christ emphasized the need for a forgiving spirit after the Lord’s Prayer, making sure we all got the message: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15). An unforgiving spirit is possibly the number one cause for hatred and violence in the world today, and for deep spiritual bondage, depression and addiction in our lives. It is the means whereby the devil gains a foothold in our lives. What a difference will it make if all God’s people in Africa would embrace their new status in Christ and live it out in faith!

We have mentioned here only three practical consequences of “being in Christ”. That should motivate us now to ask what the Gospel is really all about.

### **The Gospel of the Kingdom**

The term *Good News* (from which *Gospel* is derived) comes from Isaiah. In Isaiah we find a people who are defeated, dejected and distraught because of what God’s righteous judgments have done to them. The Babylonians sacked the city of God in 586 BC, burned it with fire and carried off the majority of Jews into exile. Only a handful remained behind. And so, they wondered: “Has God forgotten us? Will he ever again reign over us?” Until one day a watchman on the city walls saw someone running. It was a messenger. And so, the watchman cried out: “How beautiful are the feet of him who brings Good News, who says to Zion, your God is King!” (see 52:7).

The Good News is: “God has not abandoned us. Yes, we got what we deserved, but He is coming back to comfort us and will yet again reign in Jerusalem and will gather all nations to him”. And so, the bearer of Good News basically tells them: “Your King is coming! And there is none like Him!” His message to his penitent remnant is: “Fear not, because I am with you. I have blotted out your transgressions... I will come to save you and reign over you”. And so, God tells them about that *Servant of the Lord* that will bring justice to the nations and come to take the sins of his people upon himself (Isaiah 42, 49,

52-53). That is how he will pave the way for the dawn of the Messianic Age at the end of time, when Jerusalem will be established forever and when he will create new heavens and earth (Is. 65-66). The last Biblical Malachi prophesied then that the “awesome day of the Lord is coming”, and that Elijah will return to announce it. And then we have a 400-year lull. Dead silence, during all the intertestamental period, while Messianic expectations are growing all the time.

If we now turn to the New Testament and begin to read it, we get caught up in the phenomenal sweep of its amazing narrative that proclaimed something exceedingly wonderful. It is indeed in every sense of the word *euangellion*: Good News! At the very centre of that Good News stands (of course) the deliverance and salvation of needy sinners by the mighty God of Israel. But for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as well as for Paul, Peter, James and the others, the appearance of God’s grace in Jesus Christ was also about so much more.

It meant that God’s promise proclaimed by the “mouth of all the prophets” has been fulfilled, that he had sent Someone to restore all things, to crush the serpent’s head and destroy the heavy yoke on his people’s neck, to set them free. That was how he was going to fulfill the covenant that they and their fathers had broken, and how he would bring salvation to Israel and then to all nations. That was how he was going to reclaim for us *all* that our first parents so tossed away so recklessly in paradise. So, it is in light of all this that Jesus of Nazareth came about preaching in Galilee saying (Mark 1:15):

*The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand;  
repent and believe the Gospel.*

In him God’s kingdom came to us. Everything that follows in the Gospel, as it was handed down by the four evangelists, stand in the light of these words. Likewise, the message which the apostles preached, and which most of them sealed with their own blood in martyrdom, is *the Gospel of the Kingdom*. A herald of good news’ task was to announce the arrival of the king! That is what the Gospel does. It is the Good News of the arrival of God’s Son ushering in the righteous reign of the living God – the almighty King - breaking into a world that has fundamentally rebelled against him from the dawn of time, plunging us all into bondage of sin, death and Satan. Everything Jesus said, did and suffered for, is predicated on this fact. The grace of God in Christ Jesus appeared to such a world, in spite of what we deserved. But that grace is

now freely offered to all sinners, who longed to have their lives restored and their sins forgiven.

Every ounce of Paul's strength and emotion poured out in his Gentile mission is predicated on this fact: God's kingdom is breaking through in Jesus Christ, born, crucified, risen and exalted in glory (I. Cor. 15). In Paul's Gospel rebels like us are offered amnesty by God's ambassadors of reconciliation (II Cor. 5). We can escape the King's righteous wrath at the end of time, if we immediately cast down our weapons, surrender in sorrow and kiss his feet in love, to become the Messiahs' new people on earth.

Wherever a genuine community of believers in this Messiah is found (called his *ecclesia*), regularly gathering to worship him in gratitude for His grace (even if they are but two or three), there the living God has liberated a piece of sacred space by His power from Satan's dark domain and sphere. And Jesus promised, that wherever such an *ecclesia* is found, that he will never abandon it. The very gates of hell will not prevail against it until he comes. Jesus made this known to the twelve at a place called Caesarea- Philippi, beyond the Sea of Galilee, that was known for its devilish cults and pagan influence.

In his acclaimed work *The Coming of The Kingdom* twentieth century Dutch New Testament scholar Herman Ridderbos<sup>11</sup> points to the three indisputable *signs* that God's kingdom broke into our sad and sin-soaked world through the ministry of the penniless preacher from Nazareth. These signs John said were so powerful that they compelled those who sought to arrest Jesus to turn around (John 7:28-31) and they were so numerous "that all the books of the world could not contain them" (John 20:30-31, 21:25). Ridderbos points to three "signs": (1) his incomparable speaking with heavenly clarity and authority, (2) his mighty miracles of restoration and command over nature, (3) his divine power (which Luke calls "the finger of God") to cast out demons by simply speaking a word.

These signs tell us plainly: "The King is here!" Jesus himself said to the Jews who would not believe: "...the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me" (John 5:36). In John 10:37-38 Jesus said to them at another occasion: "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me, but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father".

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<sup>11</sup> Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: P&R Publishing, 1962), 61-81.



In other words, he was appealing to their plain common sense, but sadly even *that* was greatly warped by sin. In summary, Jesus' presence, miracles, teaching and command over demonic forces had but one simple message for us all: *Repent and believe the Gospel, for the Kingdom has come.*

The Good News is that Jesus is that long-expected Messiah that has come to establish God's reign of justice, truth, love and peace again on earth... after sin and Satan caused so much havoc and misery. Jesus came to usher in that Messianic era of which we read in Isaiah 2:1-4, 11:6-9, 35:1-10 and 65:17-25, which will one day fully dawn when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:9b NIV). He did and will do so in two phases. At his first coming he came to announce that the "zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this", calling all of us to turn to him, as he was going to the cross for us.

At his second coming Jesus will come to publicly judge all nations and people in righteousness, especially those who spurned his offer of amnesty in the Gospel to lay aside their arms and kiss his feet (Psalm 2). Immediately after this awesome event heaven will finally come down to earth (Rev. 21), and all of creation will be restored to what it once was. Jesus will reign with his saints (all his redeemed people) forever and ever to the glory of the Father and in the love of the Holy Spirit. And here in his new creation no-one will ever again "harm or destroy on all his holy mountain" (Is. 11:9a). Sin will never again enter there, because sin and Satan and all who loved them will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14).

To put it in the words of New Testament scholar NT Wright: "We say that the present world is the real one, and that it is in bad shape but expecting to be repaired. We tell... the story (of) the good Creator longing to put the world back into the good order for which it was designed. We tell the story of a God who does the two things which, some of the time at least, we know we all want and need: a God who completes what he has begun, a God who comes to rescue those who seem lost and enslaved in the world the way it now is"<sup>12</sup>

It is in light of that glorious day that's coming that the Messiah's people all over the world sing with such longing...in the words of an incredible song composed for a choir: "Is He Worthy?"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (Harper San Francisco, 2006) 46.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Peterson and Ben Shive, "Is He Worthy?" published in *Awake to Praise Choir*, Concert Programme (Smithville, ON: Carruthers Printing, 2019). 16-17.

## **Is He Worthy?**

The soloist sings and asks:

*Do you feel the world is broken?*

The choir responds:

*We do!*

And so it continues... until the incredible crescendo at the end...

*Do you feel the shadows deepen? We do!*

*But do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through? We do!*

*Do wish that you could see it all made new? We do!*

*Is all creation groaning? It is!*

*Is a new creation coming? It is!*

*Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst?*

*It is!*

*Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? It is...*

*Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole? Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?*

*The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave,*

*He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave*

*Is He worthy?*

*Is He worthy of all blessing and honour and glory?*

*Is He worthy of this?*

*He is...!*

*Does the Father truly love us? He does!*

*Does the Spirit move among us? He does!*

*And does Jesus our Messiah, hold forever those he  
loves? He does!  
Does our God intend to dwell again with us? He does!*

*From every people and tribe, every nation and tongue,  
He has made us a kingdom and priests to our God,  
To reign with the Son.*

*Is He worthy?  
He is worthy of all blessing and honour and glory,  
He is worthy of this,  
He is! He is! He is!*

The Gospel of the Kingdom is utterly unique in that it presents us with a two-creation worldview. The creation which now is and which is groaning in birth pains and in anticipation of its final redemption from this age of suffering and sin (Rom. 8:22-23). And the creation which is coming, which will be this one completely renovated and restored, where there will no longer be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in its midst, with God's face shining upon his people day and night (Rev. 22:3-4).

To put it simply... Jesus has come "to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of his God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever amen" (Gal. 1:4). He has come to liberate us from the life-sucking, soul-destroying clutches of sin, from Satan and evil host, *by his grace* (and never by our works), so that we may become his own possession... *zealous for doing good*, anticipating his return (see Titus 2:11-14). These are the good deeds he has prepared for us beforehand, that we may "walk in them" (see Ephes. 2:10). The purpose of the Gospel then is not simply "to be justified", full-stop. Being justified is simply a means to an end, namely to restore us in our righteous standing before God (from which we have fallen so far and so deep) so as to joyfully live for him forever.

The purpose of the Gospel is to transform us into the image of Christ, as we behold him through the work of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18) because we are the divine proof in this world of what is to come: a new creation. We must resemble our oldest brother (whom we will adore for eternity) so as to point the world to a better future and so as to draw as many as possible to this New Man who rescued us from God's wrath. No, the Gospel is not simply a "fire escape policy". Neither is it simply an intellectual assent to the truth. It is above

anything else the truth about a liberating (and ongoing) encounter of God's saving power and grace in Christ, rescuing our fallen world, by first radically transforming lost sinners, and then by using them to point all others to that which God is going to do soon at the end of the age.

### **Faith and Repentance**

When Jesus told the crowds "the law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it" (Luke 16:16) he could have meant only one thing: "holy violence" is needed to enter in. That is what faith and repentance is all about. It's the only way by which one can "force your way" into the kingdom, only to acknowledge afterwards it was all God grace that prompted and enabled me!

Faith means receiving the apostolic Gospel as God's truth about himself, the world, myself and the future. It is secondly all about embracing Jesus as he is freely offered to sinners in that gospel. Though it is through faith that we receive the forgiveness of our sins and a wonderful new status as God's beloved children, it entails also more. In the Gospels, as in Paul's letters, such faith could hardly have meant anything else than swearing total allegiance to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord of one's life. It implied changing sides, from those who were against him or who were undecided, to those who were now decidedly and openly for him and following him.

It meant absolute loyalty in turn for absolute protection, understanding that one's life is from now on "bound up in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord" (as Abigail told David in I Samuel 25:29) or that it is "hidden with Christ in God" (as Paul wrote to the Colossians in Col. 3:2). You have thrown in your lot with the Messiah and his people and there is no turning back. Where Jesus is, there his servant will be also. Life from now is all about having fellowship with the crucified and risen Christ and his true disciples wherever they meet, in the Holy Spirit. Everything else is secondary. For in him alone do we have everything: a complete redemption and the promise of a new creation.

Faith also means an embrace of the truth as it is in Jesus; as sinners desperate for grace, trusting in His sacrifice for everything we need. It means being devoted for life and death, resolving to take up our cross in following him, for his blessed name's sake, no matter the cost.

Repentance as the flipside of the coin, can only issue forth from faith. It is because the treasure in the field is so incomparably wonderful, that the merchant goes *in joy* and sells all that he has in order to buy that field (Matt. 13:44). The love and glory of Christ in the Gospel, freely offered to sinners, is

what prompts sincere repentance. Repentance may never become the precondition for faith, for our poor hearts would never generate true repentance. Repentance then is nothing else but a leaving behind of everything that cannot be carried along through the narrow gate (Matt. 7:13). It is a leaving behind of every pattern, every attitude, every custom, habit, thought and action that is not worthy of the Saviour and of his Kingdom. Above all it encompasses the denial of self; of sin in all its forms; of the world in its powerful allure; and of all the dark secrets of Satan. It is the result of having a new direction and purpose in life, of no longer living for ourselves but for him who loved us and gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20). Its ultimate goal can never be merely “to stay out of trouble”, but to be changed into Christ’s likeness and to bear fruit to the Father’s glory by fulfilling the royal commandment of love. Whatever is not of love, must always be repented from.

Faith and repentance can only spring forth from the miraculous new birth (John 3 and Eph. 2) as the singular gift of the Holy Spirit. All of life after the new birth continues to be a journey (and sometimes a struggle) of growing in grace through trusting and obeying our Lord, as we live in fellowship with his cross and with his crucified community by his grace.

### Conclusion

I recall a time here in Canada when Christians would end an argument with the words: “But that is not a salvation issue”. By a salvation-issue they meant, something that would prevent you from “going to heaven”. Anything that was not a “salvation issue” was considered not important to fuss about. And that was quite a bit! For instance, throwing your plastic water bottle out of the car window, won’t jeopardize your “salvation” in any real sense. Nor may a habit of avoiding my next-door neighbour prevent me from “going to heaven” perhaps. And what about our unwillingness to work closer together with the struggling little evangelical church down the road? Anyone can sense how appallingly self-serving such a theology is. Did Jesus really come to make such kind of people out of us? And do those who think he did, really understand the Gospel?

The Bible tells us “when Jesus Christ is acknowledged the King of our hearts, He will not rest until He has laid His hand upon every province of our being, and has subdued all things to His holy will” wrote the great mission scholar Dr. J.H. Bavinck back in 1948.<sup>14</sup> The very struggle we often go

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<sup>14</sup> J.H. Bavinck, *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1948), 47.

through in life as Christians, to rid our lives from the chains of sin and darkness, is the proof that we are now Christ's own possessions. That we are now under new management, since we have been washed by his blood and cleansed by His Spirit.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers, he said to them: "you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardness of heart". He went on to talk about their sanctification, and then said "...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light..." (Ephes. 4:17-18, 5:8-9). In fact Paul's whole mission among the Gentiles, as Christ told him in a heavenly vision in Damascus, was "to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me". And that means, as the letter to the Ephesians and Galatians tell us, that Christians must now walk in love, in wisdom, in the light and in step with the Spirit, and no longer like the Gentiles do, in Africa and everywhere.



## Preaching I Catechism

**Dave Eby\***

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**1. What is preaching?** Preaching is God speaking to His people from His Word and from a particular text, through His appointed preacher-herald, on a particular occasion, by the power of His Spirit, for the purpose of glorifying His name by exalting His Son and the gospel of grace, making His people glad in Christ, bringing in His elect to Christ and changing them to become like Christ in heart and conduct.

**2. What are four key NT words that describe the task of preaching?** Four key NT words that describe preaching are (1) *Kerusso*, to announce a message from King Jesus as his official and qualified ambassador; (2) *Euangelizo*, to announce good news; (3) *Martureo*, to witness or testify as a solemn, objective witness in a courtroom about the great historical events and facts of redemption in Christ; and (4) *Didasko*, to teach and instruct in

the truth in order to win, build and send into ministry learners or disciples of Christ.

**3. Are these four terms for preaching four different and separate kinds of preaching?** These four terms for preaching are not four different and separate kinds of preaching but describe four inseparable elements of all biblical preaching.

**4. How does all preaching involve these four elements?** All preaching involves doing all four elements because all preaching involves doing all four of these things at once. (Olyott 2005, *Preaching pure and simple*, 18).

**5. What are twelve important indicators that a man MIGHT be called by God to preach?** Twelve important indicators that a man MIGHT be called by God to preach include that he loves Christ, loves people, loves the church, loves God's Word and is a student of the Bible, has an interest, desire and willingness to teach the Bible to others, is teachable, available and faithful, is concerned about sound, healthy doctrine and biblical truth, is humble, has a servant heart, demonstrates some ability and gift to teach, demonstrates some ability to speak and to communicate verbally with some degree of clarity, exhibits some capacity and character to be patient with others in teaching and gentle especially towards those with whom he disagrees.

**6. What are the nine NT pictures of the preacher?** The nine NT pictures of the preacher are (1) herald, (2) sower, (3) ambassador, (4) steward, (5) shepherd, (6) worker, (7) witness, (8) father and (9) servant.

**7. What are the five theological foundations for preaching?** The five theological foundations for preaching are (1) The doctrine of God (He is creator, sustainer and redeemer, He is light, He has acted and He has spoken); (2) The doctrine of Scripture (Scripture is God's Word written and God still speaks through what He has spoken); (3) The doctrine of the Church (the Church is God's creation by His Word and dependent on His Word); (4) The doctrine of the pastorate (pastors shepherd, feed, and lead the Church by the Word); and (5) The doctrine of preaching (preaching exposit the Word of God) [John Stott 1982, *Between Two Worlds*, Chapter 3, 92-134].

**8. What role does preaching play in the church and in its public worship services?** Preaching plays an indispensable role in the church and in public



worship as the primary means or method for calling unconverted sinners (both visitors and congregation members) to repentance and faith and for building up the converted in faith and in godly living and maturity in Christ.

**9. Why is preaching in the world and in the church so important?** Preaching in the world and in the church is so important because it is the primary means of grace and because God has ordained the foolishness of preaching to create and build Christ's church to be God's agent for his mission in this world and to restore and extend Christ's kingdom on earth.

**10. Why does the preacher need to preach the gospel of grace in the congregation's public worship services?** The preacher must preach the gospel of grace in the congregation's public worship services because as a minister of the gospel, he must continually evangelize the unconverted (either visitors or congregation members) and also preach the gospel to believers.

**11. Why do believers need to continually have the gospel preached to them?** Believers need to continually have the gospel preached to them because the gospel alone is the power of God for salvation for believers and because believers live by faith in the gospel.

**12. What role does preaching play in God's mission in the world?** In God's mission in the world, preaching is the primary method or means God uses to bring the unconverted to repentance and faith, to keep the converted in grace and thus to redeem a people from all nations for His glory.

**13. What two basic kinds of preaching are there?** There are two basic kinds of preaching: Evangelistic preaching is heralding, announcing and proclaiming the good news to win to Christ the lost and the unconverted and pastoral or edificational preaching is heralding, announcing and proclaiming the good news to build up the converted in Christ and to equip and send them into specific, God-ordained ministry.

**14. What must the preacher preach?** The preacher must preach the Bible alone and all the Bible.

**15. Why are preachers called "ministers of the gospel"?** Preachers are called "ministers of the gospel" because the primary task of the preacher is

to proclaim the gospel of grace as God's power for salvation of sinners and as the only foundation, formation, motivation and transformation that produces a healthy, God-pleasing church and that equips the church to do God's mission in the world.

**16. Who should be ordained to preach?** Only those called by Christ, qualified by a holy life, gifted by Christ to preach and officially examined, recognized and ordained by the church.

**17. What is ordination to preach?**

Ordination to preach is the church recognizing that Christ has gifted and called a scripturally qualified man to be set aside to labour in the Word of God and to feed the flock as a preacher. Ordination is a formal, serious and public appointment, by properly selected church elders, to the spiritual and authoritative office of teaching elder or pastor.

**18. Should men preach who are not called or qualified to preach?** Yes, all men who profess faith in Christ and are members of his church, should "preach" as the "pastor" of the church in his home, to his wife and children, in the community as "gossipers" of grace, in the church to younger men, women and children, but not as official and ordained preachers or pastors to all members of the church and not as official preachers to the world.

**19. Should women preach?** Yes, women should "preach" in the home to children, as the "assistant pastor" to her husband, of the church in the home, in the community as "gossipers" of grace, in the church to younger men, women and children, but not as official and ordained preachers or pastors to all members of the church and not as official preachers to the world.

**20. Why preach?** The church must preach for the glory of God's name, the making glad of God's people in Christ and the calling of God's elect to Christ.

**21. Who defines good preaching?** God's Word alone has the authority to define the content, manner and method of the good preaching of His word and of gospel of grace.

**22. What is the content of biblical preaching?** The content of biblical preaching includes what people need to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of people. This content includes the character and nature

of God, mankind's desperate condition due to sin and guilt, accountability to God, the coming judgment, the eternal consequences of sin, the person and work of Christ who is the only Saviour of sinners, salvation by Christ alone, on the basis of grace alone, received by the empty hand of faith alone, the necessity of repentance, sober warnings to flee the wrath to come, and all the demands of gospel obedience and holiness, i.e. the whole counsel of God.

**23. How might the content of biblical preaching and the responsibility of the preacher be summarized?** The content of preaching and the responsibility of the preacher can be summarized in the words of the apostle Paul in Acts 20: 20 and 27, "... I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable,...testifying both to Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.... I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."

**24. In summary, what then must the biblical preacher preach?** In summary, the biblical preacher must preach repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the whole counsel of God.

**25. What does it mean to preach the whole counsel of God?** To preach the whole counsel of God is to preach all of Bible and all of its doctrines.

**26. What is the manner of biblical preaching?** The manner of biblical preaching includes humbly submitting to the Holy Spirit in prayer, zeal, intensity, boldness, fear toward God and fearlessness toward people, trusting God's protection when the Word is opposed, expecting the Word to grow by God's sovereign appointment and preaching with love, compassion and tears.

**27. What are the methods of biblical preaching?** The methods of biblical preaching include proclaiming in all circumstances and indiscriminately to all kinds of people, persuading, evangelizing and appealing to the mind, ministering the Word publicly in preaching and privately in counselling.

**28. What are the fruits of faithful and good preaching?** The fruits of faithful and good preaching are mighty worship, mighty prayer, mighty evangelism, mighty holiness, mighty good deeds, humility, perseverance, comfort, encouragement, strengthened faith, strong teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, strong equipping for serving, strong doctrine, detection of false teaching and false gospels, calling forth spiritual gifts,

feeding in the truth of God's Word, and preparing Christ's congregations for bold and risk-taking ministries of evangelism, mercy, love, justice and world missions.

**29. What are the fruits of unfaithful and poor preaching?** The fruits of unfaithful and poor preaching are weak worship, weak prayer, weak holiness, weak evangelism, weak good deeds, weak teaching, weak reproof, weak correction, weak training in righteousness, weak equipping for serving, weak doctrine, weak faith, weak obedience, departures from the true faith, susceptibility to false gospels, failings in the true practice of godliness, and the neglect of world missions.

**30. Who creates and calls a preacher?** God alone creates and calls a preacher to preach the gospel of grace.

**31. What graces and gifts are required for a man to preach?** For a man to preach, it is required that he have the graces of practical holiness of life, moral and spiritual maturity and the gifts of study, teaching and preaching.

**32. Who gives the graces and gifts required for preaching?** God alone gives the graces and gifts required for preaching.

**33. Can any human, congregation or church give the gifts for preaching and create a preacher?** No! No human, congregation or church can give the gifts to preach and create a preacher.

**34. What role does the preacher play in the process of becoming a preacher?** The preacher plays an active and significant role in the process of becoming a preacher, that of seeking God's will, a diligent use of prayer, Bible reading, meditation and memorizing of Scripture, learning to walk by faith in the gospel of grace, pursuit of holiness and the mortification of sin, seeking diligently to grow in moral and spiritual maturity, gaining experience in various ministries, stirring up the gifts God has given, and in seeking to grow in love to God and to people.

**35. What role does the congregation and church play in the calling of preachers?** The congregation and church plays an active and significant role in the calling of preachers, that of the faithful exposition of the Word which calls forth holiness of life, moral and spiritual maturity and the spiritual gifts God has given, calling and exhorting the members to use their spiritual gifts,

including the gift preaching, praying for the Holy Spirit to be poured on the congregation and praying for the Lord of the harvest to raise up and send out gospel preachers and laborers for the gospel harvest.

**36. Who appoints and ordains a preacher?** The church appoints and ordains preachers through her scripturally qualified and ordained elders.

**37. What is involved when elders ordain a preacher?** When elders ordain a preacher there must be recognition of required graces and gifts, training, teaching, accountability, examination of the experience of converting grace, examination of theology, examination of life and gifts, confirmation of holy character and good reputation, and finally prayer and the laying on of hands in the solemn act of ordaining or setting aside the preacher to the spiritual office of teaching elder or pastor.

**38. Who can best hold a preacher accountable for faithful doctrine and life after ordination?** Fellow elders, especially fellow preaching elders from the regional church who minister outside of the preacher's congregation, can best provide objective accountability for a preaching elder concerning faithful doctrine and life after ordination.

**39. Who enables the preacher to be fruitful in the ministry of preaching?** God alone enables the preacher to be fruitful in the ministry of preaching because God alone causes the seed of the gospel of grace to germinate and grow in a sinner's heart at conversion and in the heart of the converted in on-going sanctification.

**40. Who has the responsibility for preaching?** The whole congregation and church has the responsibility for preaching through her called, scripturally qualified and ordained preachers.

**41. How does the whole congregation and church carry out her responsibility for preaching?** The whole congregation and church carries out her responsibility for preaching primarily by praying for the Holy Spirit to grant preaching gifts, to call and multiply gospel preachers and to anoint the preaching of the Word.

**42. Why does the church need to pray for the Spirit's anointing on preaching?** The church needs to pray for the Spirit's anointing on preaching because the church is helpless to create powerful preaching by herself and

because preaching cannot depend on human wisdom or strength but must depend wholly on the work of God the Holy Spirit to impart the needed power and to create and sustain faith through the preaching of the Word.

**43. How does the Holy Spirit come upon the preacher and preaching?** The Holy Spirit comes upon the preacher and preaching in response to simple asking and humble prayer.

**44. How can the whole congregation and church pray for preaching?** The whole congregation and church can pray for preaching in daily private worship and in corporate prayer before, during and after the public worship services.

**45. How should a preacher preach according to the Westminster Larger Catechism Q 159?** According to the Westminster Larger Catechism Q 159: “They that are called to labour in the ministry of the Word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.”

**46. How must a preacher prepare to preach?** A preacher must prepare to preach with much prayer and humility, with much study, meditation, and labour in the Word, comparing Scripture with Scripture, seeking to understand the language, background, context and purpose of the text, so that the text might be preached with the instruction, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, warning, exhortation, encouragement and comfort that the Holy Spirit has intended in the text.

**47. How must a preacher depend on the Holy Spirit in preparing to preach?** The preacher must depend on the Holy Spirit in his study and preparation to preach by humble prayer, calling on God for wisdom to understand the text and its purpose, for humility and holiness to personally learn repentance from the text, to write an outline for faithfully preaching the text, for anointing to preach the text with clarity and for the love and compassion required to preach the text to God’s people as Christ’s under-shepherd.

**48. What role must the biblical text play in preaching?** The biblical text plays the primary and controlling role in preaching. The preacher preaches only under the authority of God in the text, not his own authority. The text controls the preacher and everything he preaches. The preacher does not control the text.

**49. What does it mean for the preacher to be under the control of the biblical text?**

For the preacher to be under the control of the biblical text means that he reads, studies, prays through, understands, exposit and exhorts the text so that the Holy Spirit's purpose, meaning and message in the text are not distorted but proclaimed.

**50. What does it mean for the preacher to study the text?** For the preacher to study the text means that he interprets the text by other Scriptures, and by investigating the language, the historical background, the cultural context, the biblical context, the purpose, the doctrines taught, the applications and implementations of the text and the connection of the text to Christ and to the gospel so that the text might be rightly understood and preached.

**51. What goal must the preacher have in mind as he studies the text?** As he studies the text the preacher must have in mind that his preaching is to call his listeners to be both hearers and doers of the Word.

**52. What is exposition of the text?** Exposition of the text is to bring out of a text what is there, to expose it to view and to explain it.

**53. Why must the preacher exposit the biblical text?** The preacher must exposit the biblical text because exposition is the only way for the text to be allowed to speak its own message with its own authority. The preacher, being under the control of the text, has the responsibility of exposition or to simply preach what the text speaks.

**54. What is *exegesis*?** *Exegesis* is to read out of the text the author's, intended meaning and message through careful study.

**55. Why must the preacher practice *exegesis*?** The preacher must practice *exegesis* in order to allow the biblical text to do the preaching.

**56. What is *eisegesis*?** *Eisegesis* is reading into the text and imposing on the text a meaning and message that is not there. *Eisegesis* is the opposite of *exegesis*. *Eisegesis* discounts, disregards, discredits, defies and disobeys the Word of God.

**57. Why must the preacher flee the practice *eisegesis*?** The preacher must flee the practice of *eisegesis* in order to faithfully preach the Word of God and to humbly submit to its authority and message.

**58. Who is the author of every text in the Bible?** The author of every text in the Bible and of the whole Bible is God himself, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who breathes out and superintends all that the human authors wrote.

**59. Whose purpose, meaning and message in the text is the preacher obligated to understand and preach?**

The preacher is obligated to understand and preach the purpose, meaning and message of the Holy Spirit.

**60. What is the goal of exposition?** The goal of exposition is to open up a passage of the Bible (regardless of the size of the text) in such a way that it speaks its purpose, meaning and message clearly, plainly, accurately, and relevantly without addition, subtraction or falsification.

**61. What are the tools of exposition?** The tools of exposition are the grammatical-historical method and the analogy of faith.

**62. What is the grammatical-historical method?** The grammatical-historical method investigates two questions, what did the language of the text mean in its original historical and cultural context and what message did the author intend to speak?

**63. What is the analogy of faith?** The analogy of faith is that Scripture alone has the infallible authority to interpret and explain itself and that questions



about the true meaning and full understanding of any passage are to be sought for and known by comparing it with other passages of Scripture that speak more clearly (WCF1:9). “Analogy” comes from a Greek word that literally means “according to the word.” We properly understand any part of the Bible in relation to the whole Bible and all that it teaches on any given doctrine and topic.

**64. On what doctrines is the analogy of faith based?** The analogy of faith is based on the doctrines that all of Scripture is God-breathed or authored by God, that all Scripture possesses unity because God does not contradict himself, that God has revealed all that is necessary for our salvation and understanding of our duties before him and that God clearly explains each part of Scripture that we must understand and practice by another part of his Word.

**65. What are the four benefits of exposition for the preacher?** The four benefits of exposition for the preacher are that exposition sets limits, demands integrity, avoids pitfalls and imparts confidence.

**66. What is the purpose of the text?** The purpose of the text is what the Holy Spirit intends to do to bring changes in the thinking, beliefs and actions of the readers and hearers by the words of the text.

**67. Why must the preacher understand the purpose of the text?** The preacher must understand the purpose of the text in order to preach the text as the Holy Spirit intended it; otherwise, he will distort the meaning of the text, lose the authority and power of the passage, confuse the congregation, fail to feed them the truth of God and substitute his own purpose for the Holy Spirit’s purpose.

**68. How can the preacher determine the purpose of the text?** The preacher determines the purpose of the text by carefully asking how the Holy Spirit intends to call people to repentance and faith and to change people to Christ-likeness through the teaching, reproof, correcting and training in righteousness of the text and by asking why the Holy Spirit is calling for these particular changes in this particular context.

**69. What does God require of those who hear the preaching of the Word according to the Westminster Larger Catechism Q 160?**

According to the Westminster Larger Catechism Q 160, “It is required of those that hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.”

**70. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching?** The role of the Holy Spirit in preaching is to work through the preaching to convince and convict in order to save sinners and to sanctify the saints.

**71. What will happen to preaching without the anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit?** Preaching, without the anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit will have no transforming fruit in repentance and faith and no power to convict the unconverted and to sanctify the converted.

**72. What is the role of prayer for the Holy Spirit in preaching?** The role of prayer for the Holy Spirit in preaching is critical and indispensable. Prayer for preaching simply recognizes the desperate need for the anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit and in simple faith asks for the Spirit to come upon the preacher and the preaching.

**73. When should the preacher pray for the Spirit to anoint his preaching?** The preacher should pray for the Spirit to anoint his preaching daily during sermon preparation, privately early on Sunday mornings, during congregational prayer before the public worship services, and immediately before he commences to preach.

**74. When should the congregation pray for the Holy Spirit to anoint the preacher and his preaching?**

The congregation should pray for the Holy Spirit to anoint the preacher and his preaching daily, as the preacher prepares the sermon, privately and in family worship, early on Sunday mornings, during congregational prayer

before the public worship service, during the pastor's prayer immediately before he commences to preach and with brief prayers during the preaching.

**75. Why should the preacher pray publicly immediately before he commences to preach?**

The preacher should pray publicly immediately before he commences to preach in order to model humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, acknowledgement of personal helplessness and inability to accomplish spiritual fruit through preaching and to sincerely ask for and call on the Holy Spirit for anointing and power to preach so that God is glorified, God's people are sanctified and elect sinners are brought to Christ.

**76. What is the relationship between biblical preaching and biblical counselling?**

The relationship between biblical preaching and biblical counselling is that the first ministers God's Word publically and the second ministers God's Word privately.

**77. What is biblical counselling?**

Biblical counselling is a call for God-required change (according to the standard of His Word), repentance and the fleeing of sin (that begins in the heart and expresses itself in thought, attitude, desire, word and action) through verbal instruction, exhortation and confrontation with Scripture, in the power of the Holy Spirit, done in a loving, caring, patient, humble manner that aims to glorify God and to benefit and restore the hearer (or counselee) to love, obedience, perseverance, Christ-likeness and usefulness in serving Christ and His church.

**78. What is another way to describe biblical counselling?**

Another way to describe biblical counselling is discipleship or remedial discipleship or teaching believers to learn from Christ how to deal with the problems that come from the sin that remains in their hearts. Remedial discipleship provides a remedy from God's Word for a specific sin problem and corrects and heals a spiritual disorder, restoring health and vitality.

**79. Why does every believer need counselling about some sin problem at some time?**

Every believer needs counselling about some sin problem at some time, because every believer has remaining sin and will need specific teaching,

reproof, correction and training that will address these sin problems and call for God-pleasing change and restoration. Every believer will need counselling at some time on how to deal with indwelling sins like anger, bitterness, malice, slander, jealousy, anxiety, worry, fear, pride, coveting, depression, greed, lust, selfishness, revengefulness, grumbling, complaining and promoting disunity.

### **80. Why are biblical counselling and preaching inseparable?**

Biblical counselling and preaching are inseparable because they are two expressions of the one ministry of the Word. Counselling is the private ministry of the Word to individuals, married couples, families and small groups while preaching is the public ministry of the Word to larger groups and congregations.

### **81. What are the goals of both counselling and preaching?**

The goals of both counselling and preaching are to call for God-required and God-pleasing change through the verbal ministry of the Word, in the power of the Holy Spirit, done in a loving manner, aiming to glorify God and to benefit and equip hearers to love, obedience, Christ-likeness and usefulness in serving Christ and His church.

### **82. Why is counselling necessary for elders, shepherds and preachers?**

Counselling is necessary for elders, shepherds and preachers because shepherds cannot carry out biblical pastoral ministry without counselling and because everyone in the congregation will require counselling at some time about some sin issue.

### **83. Why is counselling so important for effective preaching?**

Counselling is important for effective preaching because counselling enables the preacher, and the preacher's fellow shepherds, to know the congregation and the needs of the sheep.

### **84. What is stance in preaching?**

In preaching, stance concerns how the preacher orients or addresses himself to the congregation or hearers.

### **85. Why is it important for you, as a preacher, to understand stance in preaching?**

It is important for you, as a preacher, to understand stance in preaching to enable you to do well in preaching and to enable you to understand better your purpose in preaching and what you are attempting to do.

**86. What does Jay Adams say about the importance of stance?**

Jay Adams says about the importance of stance that “Until your stance toward the Bible, God, and your congregation is proper, you will never really preach as you should” (Adams 1982, 45).

**87. How is the purpose in preaching related to the stance of preaching?**

The purpose in preaching is directly related to the stance of preaching: If your purpose is to lecture to people (to give an informative address to an audience) then the lecture stance is appropriate. If your purpose is to preach to a congregation that needs God’s Word for conversion, edification, transformation and the changes required by sanctification, then you must learn a preaching stance.

**88. What is the focus of the teaching or lecture stance?**

The focus of the teaching or lecture stance is to speak about the Bible to the congregation, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (he, she, and they), reporting on what God did long ago with people in Bible times, and providing information for the purpose of informing about the meaning of the text. Application is under-emphasized and subordinate to information.

**89. What is the focus of the preaching stance?**

The focus of the preaching stance is to speak to the congregation from the Bible in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural (you), applying the meaning of the text to people now, what they ought to be doing now, what God intends to do to the congregation through the text, with concern about the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the text, seeking to preach this purpose to the hearers, focusing on the application of the Bible to hearers’ needs and appealing to and exhorting hearers to apply the truth of the Bible to life today.

**90. What is the purpose of a sermon outline in the teaching stance?**

The purpose of a sermon outline in the teaching stance is to remind the speaker to lecture to the congregation about the Bible, providing information, teaching Bible facts in an accurate and academic manner addressed to the intellect, viewing the congregation as a “classroom” of pupils, providing accurate understanding, interpretation and information about the Bible text with the goal of informing but not necessarily addressing the heart and conscience with the need for God-pleasing change.

**91. What is the purpose of a sermon outline in the preaching stance?**

The purpose of a sermon outline in the preaching stance is to preach to the congregation about themselves from God's Word; about what God has done (in the gospel, i.e. the biblical indicatives) what God is doing and what they ought to do now (the biblical imperatives), connecting to people in a personal and emotionally involved style, addressing the specific concrete needs of the congregation, speaking about their lives from a proper interpretation and explanation of a Bible passage, preaching in a persuasive and motivational manner to bring the congregation face to face with God, his gracious provisions, and His gracious requirements, as a personal message of specific communication between two persons, God and His congregation, brought by a personal messenger (the preacher), calling for personal change by driving God's truth into hearts and consciences.

**92. What is the most biblical and effective stance for preaching?**

The most biblical and effective stance for preaching is the preaching stance.

**93. Why is second-person preaching stance the most biblical stance for preaching?**

The second person preaching stance is the most biblical stance for preaching because it follows the models of direct and personal preaching in Scripture: God's address to his prophets and people, the prophets address to the church, Jesus' preaching, and the preaching of the apostles in Acts and the letters all exhibit the preaching stance, with the whole sermon being aimed at transformation and application through teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness so that the congregation of Christ's people are equipped for worship and ministry (II Tim 3:16-17; Eph 4:11)

**94. Why is the teaching stance so often adopted by preachers?**

The teaching stance is so often adopted by preachers because traditional training in preaching, or homiletics, in Bible colleges and seminaries has, for many generations, taught pastors to preach in a third person, "lecture stance" manner; because theological textbooks and commentaries ordinarily take an academic, analytical and third person approach to the study of biblical passages and pastors tend to mimic what they read; and because it can be easier and less work to teach biblical doctrines in an analytical manner and add application than to practice the second person "preaching stance" that teaches doctrine in a personal and applicational manner throughout the sermon.

**95. What are six reasons why biblical preachers should reject the teaching stance and adopt the preaching stance?**

The six reasons why biblical preachers should reject the teaching stance and adopt the preaching stance are (1) because of the overwhelming witness of Scripture to the adoption of this stance; (2) because effective preaching requires the employment of biblical practices and principles; (3) because biblical preaching entails teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, rebuke, admonishment, warning and exhortation and these elements of preaching are impossible without the second person preaching stance; (4) because the second person stance is always the form of natural and personal communication between people; when people talk to each other they speak directly, with engagement, concretely, personally and without ambiguity; (5) because of the weaknesses of the teaching stance that tend toward indirect, impersonal, abstract, academic, intellectual and ambiguous communication; and (6) because the weak preaching plaguing the church today calls for a preaching reformation and revolution that can be promoted by the adoption of the biblical practice of preaching in the preaching stance.

**96. What is the role of the preaching outline in preaching?**

The preaching outline structures and organizes the purpose and teaching of the text and enables the preacher to preach in the second person, with order, form, arrangement, simplicity and clarity.

**97. What purpose does the outline play in preaching?**

The purpose of the outline in preaching is to help the preacher preach the text and to help the hearers hear the text.

**98. From where must the preaching outline derive its content and form?**

The preaching outline must derive its content and form from the biblical text or preaching portion.

**99. What happens when the preacher does not obtain his preaching outline, content and form from the text?**

When the preacher does not obtain his preaching outline, content and form from the text, he undermines the authority of the text, he replaces the authority of Scripture with his own authority, he communicates to his hearers that he is over the text and not under it, he disorients the congregation and draws their attention away from the text, he inhibits and even prevents the congregation from hearing the text, he creates misunderstanding concerning the source of his preaching, he opens a door for future disregard and neglect of the Bible as

the origin of all preaching, he erects many barriers to the clear preaching and hearing of the text and thus he fails to clearly preach the Bible.

**100. What happens when the preacher's content is generally biblical but he does not obtain his preaching outline, content and form from the text?**

When the preacher's content is generally biblical but he does not obtain his preaching outline, content and form from the text, he brings to his hearers all the confusion stated in the previous question.

**101. What does the preaching outline remind and cue the preacher to do?**

The preaching outline reminds the preacher to preach the text personally, to the congregation from the Bible, in the second person, purposefully, concretely and persuasively, with application at each major point, addressing their needs and God's call from the text for God-pleasing change.

**102. Why does preaching have a unique role in God's mission to redeem the church and creation?**

Preaching has a unique role in God's mission to redeem the church and creation because the preacher is a unique communicator, preaching possesses unique authority, preaching has a unique function as the chief means of grace, preaching has unique power and because preaching requires unique humility and unique dependence of the preacher on God.

**103. What are seven distinguishing marks of false preachers according to the Puritan Thomas Brooks?**

The seven distinguishing marks of false preachers according to Thomas Brooks are (1) Man pleasing, (2) discrediting and scorning [disregarding] Christ, (3) preaching self-created ideas, (4) dwelling on unimportant matters and

neglecting truly important and weighty issues, (5) deceiving with attractive rhetoric and captivating speech, (6) seeking followers of self rather than followers of Christ, and (7) exploiting their followers through greed and covetousness (Thomas Brooks [1608-1680], "The Distinguishing Marks of False Teachers").

**104. What is a common and prominent example of dangerous false preaching today?**

A common and prominent example of dangerous false preaching today is the health, wealth and prosperity gospel that misunderstands and misinterprets biblical health, biblical wealth and biblical prosperity and substitutes a



damning, false, self-centred and materialistic gospel for the true gospel of grace.

**105. How should a biblical congregation view her preacher?**

A biblical congregation should view her preacher as a servant of Christ, called to faithfully feed the congregation the Word of God with Scripture alone, to bring them to depend on Christ alone and grace alone, to live by faith alone, to God's glory alone, recognizing their preacher as nothing and incapable of producing spiritual fruit, seeing him as absolutely dependent on God, as helpless in himself, as strong in Christ's strength alone, and as desperately needing the prayers of the congregation and the anointing of the Holy Spirit in order to carry out the humanly impossible responsibilities of the preaching and pastoral ministry, to resist the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and desperately needing daily grace to live by faith in the gospel and to persevere as a boaster in the cross alone.

**106. How should a biblical preacher view himself?**

A biblical preacher should view himself as a servant of Christ, called to faithfully feed the congregation the Word of God with Scripture alone, Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone, and to live for God's glory alone, recognizing himself as nothing and as totally incapable of producing spiritual fruit, seeing himself as absolutely dependent on God, as helpless in himself, as strong in Christ's strength alone, and as desperately needing the prayers of the congregation and the anointing of the Holy Spirit in order to carry out the humanly impossible responsibilities of the preaching and pastoral ministry, to resist the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, desperately needing daily grace to live by faith in the gospel and to persevere as a boaster in the cross alone.

**107. What are three prerequisites for the preacher for effective preaching?**

Three prerequisites for the preacher for effective preaching are (1) A settled conviction of God's call to preach, (2) a settled conviction of the primacy of preaching among the pastor's public duties, and (3) a settled conviction that genuine personal godliness and holiness are necessary for preaching power.

**108. What are five essentials in the heart of the preacher for effective and powerful preaching?**

Five essentials in the heart of the preacher for effective and powerful preaching are (1) A growing heart love and commitment to Christ, (2) a growing liberation from the fear of people, (3) a growing genuine love for people, (4) a

heart-deep acceptance of one's identity, gifts, strengths, weaknesses and limitations as a person and as a preacher, and (5) a conscious cultivation of dependence on the Holy Spirit through prayer.

**109. What are three assumptions of the preacher for effective preaching?**

Three assumptions of the preacher for effective preaching are (1) preaching must strive to be eminently biblical and evangelical, (2) preaching must be painstakingly exegetical, and (3) preaching must be theologically balanced and symmetrical.

**110. What are five directives for effective preaching regarding form and content?**

Five directives for effective preaching regarding form and content are (1) Clear, simple uncluttered structure for sermons, (2) sermons that begin with purposeful, attention-grabbing introductions, (3) sermons with major points that are heart and conscience-directed application that call for God-pleasing change, (4) sermons with clarity-producing and light-imparting illustrations, examples and stories and (5) sermons with concrete language.

**111. What are the four major systems of the sermon that can be remembered by the word COLD?**

The four major systems of the sermon that can be remembered by the word COLD are content, organization, language and delivery.

**112. What are the four major vital elements of the sermon that can be remembered by the word SOAP?**

The four major vital elements of the sermon that can be remembered by the word SOAP are speaker, occasion, audience and purpose.

**113. What is a pivotal NT text for preaching and preachers?**

A pivotal NT text for preaching and preachers is 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

**114. What is God's call to preachers in 2 Timothy 4:1-5?**

God's call to preachers in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 is to God-accountable and fearless preaching.

**115. What are the eleven exhortations to preachers concerning God-accountable and fearless preaching in 2 Timothy 4:1-5?**

The eleven exhortations to preachers concerning God-accountable and fearless preaching in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 are

1. Remember your accountability to God and preach in light of this accountability (:1); 2. Realize that your preaching is vital for advancing Christ's Kingdom (:1); 3. Preach God's Word and preach it alone (:2); 4. Be faithful in your preaching at all times (:2); 5. As you preach the Word, reprove, rebuke and exhort (:2); 6. Preach with great patience and instruction (:2); 7. Flee the temptation to compromise God's truth in difficult seasons (:3-4); 8. Be sober in all things (:5); 9. Endure suffering (:5); 10. Do the work of an evangelist (:5); 11. Fulfill your ministry (:5).

**116. Why is 2 Timothy 4:1-5 so important for the preacher?**

2 Timothy 4:1-5 is so important for the preacher because this passage plainly defines faithful, biblical preaching, calling for no compromise or caving to the ideas and philosophies of the world, exhorting the preacher to no retreat fearlessness in the face of opposition, ridicule and market-driven desires for a diluted, non-offending gospel, appealing to the preacher for perseverance in preaching, persistence in proclaiming the whole counsel of God, endurance in suffering, and love for the lost and for evangelism in the ministry of preaching the Word.

**117. What are six key duties for the biblical preacher in biblical preaching?**

Six key duties for the biblical preacher in biblical preaching are (1) **Preach expositionally**: explain what the text says and means; (2) **Preach doctrinally**: explain how the text defines and teaches world-view creating and life-impacting ideas; (3) **Preach redemptively**: show how the text relates to Jesus and the gospel; (4) **Preach practically**: show how the text applies to living; (5) **Preach missionally**: show how the text connects God's people to God's mission in the world of redeeming a people for His glory from every tribe, clan and nation and how the text connects God's people to God's mission; (6) **Preach purposefully**: demonstrate that the Spirit's purpose in the text is to change people to become like Christ and to do God's work on Christ's behalf.

**118. What are five important factors that make a good sermon?**

Five important factors that make a good sermon are (1) It is **preaching that is directed to the hearers** throughout (not disconnected story telling or stuffy lecturing); it speaks God's Word directly and personally and brings people face to face with Him; (2) It is **biblical preaching that explains a biblical passage**, drawing its points and authority from the text; (3) It is **interesting**,

bringing out the full flavour of the passage and delivering it with enthusiasm and zest; (4) It is **well organized** with strong points, logically connected and easy to follow, helping hearers understand the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the text; (5) It is **practical**, adapted to the hearers explaining to them what and how to do the truth in applications and implementations derived from the passage. (See Adams 1982, *Truth Apparent*, 1-2).

**119. Why is preaching such a great privilege for the preacher?**

Preaching is such a great privilege for the preacher because in preaching the preacher has unique opportunity to feed his own soul on the eternal Word of God, for his own growth in holiness and grace, for his own eternal benefit and because in preaching the preacher becomes the co-labourer with God, building Christ's bride and church and restoring and extending God's kingdom, completely dependent on God's grace to the magnifying of God's glory.

**120. Why should you join the preaching reformation revival and revolution in Africa?**

You should join the preaching reformation, revival and revolution in Africa because most preaching in the church today around the world is very poor to poor. There is very little good preaching. Most churches are barely surviving on poor preaching.

**121. Is it possible for the church to have good, biblical preaching?**

Yes, it is possible for the church to have good, biblical preaching that is desperately needed. God can raise up effective and powerful preachers in response to prayer and preachers can learn, by God's grace, how to preach biblically and effectively.

**122. Why must the church learn biblical and effective preaching?**

The church must learn biblical and effective preaching because without it the next generation is lost and the church becomes anaemic and dies. With it the church can grow and flourish and take the gospel of grace to the nations, especially to the unreached two billion among the Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, and finish the great commission.

**123. Is it possible for you to learn good, biblical preaching?**

It is possible for you to learn good preaching by God's grace.

**124. Can Africa Reformation Theological Seminary help you learn good, biblical preaching?**

Yes, by God's grace, Africa Reformation Theological Seminary can help you learn good, biblical preaching.

**125. How should you think of preaching in relation to your Africa Reformation Theological Seminary studies?**

You should think of preaching in relation to your Africa Reformation Theological Seminary studies this way: preaching is the goal and the consummation of your theological studies. Good biblical and theological knowledge is useful and profitable only when it can be preached and used to build up Christ's church to do God's mission in this world?

**126. Why is it so important for you to learn good, biblical preaching?**

It is so important for you to learn good, biblical preaching because good, biblical preaching is the single-most important factor for a healthy church. The health of Christ's church depends on God's Word and Spirit. The Word works through preaching and the Spirit works through prayer to anoint preaching.

**127. What can you do to learn good, biblical preaching?**

To learn good, biblical preaching you must take your preaching courses at ..... seriously!; you must learn to preach; you must learn to devote yourself to prayer and the ministry of the Word; and you must think of learning to preach as a life-long calling in which you continually seek to improve as a preacher over many years of your ministry.

**128. What will you do if you learn good, biblical preaching?**

If you learn good, biblical preaching you will join and help to create the desperately needed preaching reformation, revival and revolution for Africa and beyond!

## **Rescuing Darwin or Wrecking The Faith**

**Ranald Macaulay**

I was weaned from Darwinian evolution completely by surprise. Converted my first weekend at university back in 1956, I found I had an immediate love of the Bible and a thirst to read more. At the same time I remained sceptical about origins. ‘Yes’ I said to my friend, ‘I do believe the Bible to be true, but don’t think I’m going to accept the Genesis myths uncritically!’ Like practically everyone today I had been raised to think that evolution was unquestionable - hence my problems about Adam and Eve.

Imagine my surprise some months later, while browsing in a library, to find an eminent scientist, W.R.Thompson, taking issue with Darwinism root and branch. He had been invited to write the introduction for the 1956 ‘Everyman’ edition of the ‘Origin of Species’. I took it off the shelf and began reading. There, within the inner sanctum of the Origin, a Fellow of the Royal Society was saying that evolution theory had been bad for science and for society. Astonishing! Later I came across K.A. Kerkut’s ‘Implications of Evolution’ (Pergamon 1960) in which the author gently lampoons his new undergraduates for accepting Darwin on authority, ‘by faith’ – ‘much as Christians do the Bible’.<sup>1</sup> Clearly there was more to all this than met the eye.

After 50 years - admittedly as a non-scientist and therefore less qualified for such a discussion than others - my layman’s conclusion is that evolution needs a radical rethink. By evolution I mean only macro not micro-

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<sup>1</sup> An open discussion between Koestler, Polanyi and Lakatos at the London School of Economics in 1967 revealed the widespread dissatisfaction with the evolutionary paradigm even at the highest levels of science. Koestler’s 1970’s Alpbach discussions were intriguing for the same reason.

evolution – *micro* being the small changes within species, as in dog or horse breeding, which are evident to all. With respect to *macro*-evolution the picture is different. The argument from *morphology*, for example, remains as much a *non-sequitur* today as it was 150 years ago. Certainly human beings look like chimpanzees and have similar bone, blood and nerve structures - but in the absence of other compelling evidence this proves nothing. Similar structures indicate common creation as readily as they do a process of slow evolution. Again, the concept of ‘*vestigial organs*’ (‘left over organs’ from earlier stages of evolution) has been discredited since they don’t exist: all organs, it is clearly recognised now, serve important though not necessarily vital functions. Similarly, the idea that the developing human embryo passes through the stages of evolution, at one time looking like a fish with gill slits etc. (technically referred to as ‘*ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny*’) is a fiction invented by the German biologist, Ernst Haeckel, to try to make evolution look better. Finally, the *fossil record* itself, far from getting clearer since Darwin’s day seems increasingly problematic. Fossils exist and have a story to tell and may in fact be very ancient as is claimed, but just what that story is remains uncertain. The cladistics controversy at the Natural History Museum in London 30 years ago is a case in point.

For a scientific theory to have this sort of track-record after 150 years of research is serious. But for the ‘grand narrative’ of evolution, which impinges so directly on human origins and therefore on the Bible (not to mention the history of ideas) the failures are especially noteworthy. Why on the basis of a questionable scientific paradigm should an extensive revamp of traditional Christian doctrines like Denis Alexander’s new book, *Do We Have to Choose?* (2008) be considered necessary, especially by anyone with a high view of Scripture? <sup>2</sup> Admittedly the most recent ‘evidence’ about evolution, i.e. that the 1953 discoveries leading to the Genome Project etc have settled the matter once and for all, needs careful consideration. The genetic evidence, it is claimed, puts evolution beyond doubt because it traces how DNA came to be shared across the species. But evolution’s poor track record briefly outlined above surely advises caution about this new step also. Many, for example, already argue that the alleged evidence is simply a restatement of the morphology principle, shared structures in the animal kingdom which by themselves prove nothing. But euphoria and dogmatism prevail: ‘*Vive*

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<sup>2</sup> Denis Alexander: *Do We Have To Choose?* (Monarch) 2008.

*l'evolution !*' writes one;<sup>3</sup> 'Darwin must be rescued from the obscurantists of both left and right' cries another;<sup>4</sup>

With this background in mind I was intrigued to find myself included in a list of UK 'creationists'<sup>5</sup> for a sociological survey related to Darwin's anniversary next year. The research would be impartial, of course, so I laid aside my concerns out of respect for the commissioning agent, THEOS (the new evangelical think-tank headed by Paul Woolley) and was duly interviewed. Subsequently I realised that my earlier concerns were not without foundation. It emerged, for example, that the Faraday Institute of Cambridge, whose hostility to 'creationism' is no secret, was more closely involved than had been thought. A subsequent article in the Times by Libby Purves prompted further unease<sup>6</sup>. In quite rightly rebuking Richard Dawkins for his atheistic histrionics, she made passing reference to the THEOS survey and quoted its director as follows:

*"Basically the idea (of the research) is to 'Rescue Darwin' from the crossfire of a battle (between the creationists and public atheists)... the main objective (of which) will be a kind of 'plague on both your houses', arguing that both the creationists/IDers and the militant atheists are wrong, that Darwinian evolution is compatible with Christianity...etc."*

To what degree impartiality can survive such an approach remains to be seen, particularly when the research report will be written jointly by Nick Spencer (Theos) and Denis Alexander (Faraday) - who share the above view.

All of which may seem rather remote from our title, which asks how Darwin and evolution theory *can* be 'rescued' without causing irreparable damage to 2000 years of historic Christian teaching? But the background is important for two reasons. First it shows that evangelical Christians holding

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<sup>3</sup> Denis Alexander article in *Third Way* magazine (July 08).

<sup>4</sup> See quotation below – Paul Woolley.

<sup>5</sup> The expression 'Creationist' is, of course, unfortunate because all Christians believe that the universe and everything in it had a beginning. But it is now common parlance and serves its purpose. It also helps to distinguish between those who accept evolution and those who don't.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times* (08.08.08).



the traditional views<sup>7</sup> of Genesis have little reason to feel intellectually cowed by the opposition. Evolution is under fierce and increasing attack by Christian and non-Christian scientists alike. Second, it shows that the defence of the older view of origins is hotly opposed and not infrequently derided by secular and evangelical opinion alike. The former comes as no surprise but the latter does. Surely evangelical scientists more than anyone would want to support an unhindered Darwinian critique. For one thing as scientists they are committed to the investigation of empirical truth. More importantly with the growing threat to freedom of expression today - as the recent resignation of the Royal Society's education officer indicates all too clearly - they should be insisting upon open and rational dialogue. But perhaps this is what Theos and the Faraday Institute intend, media reports notwithstanding. One certainly hopes so. The stakes are high as we shall see.

### **Christian Doctrine:**

Considerable vagueness has been a feature of Theistic Evolution since 1859. Eminent evangelical leaders and scholars have accepted Darwinism and then interpreted the Genesis account in a variety of ways, but none very exactly vis a vis evolution theory – until Denis Alexander's book that is. Previously I took the view that the whole TE approach is neither advisable nor necessary, but that its interpretations could be considered consistent with wider evangelical teaching if they fell within three carefully defined doctrinal boundaries.

First, creation must have been *ex nihilo*. That is to say, nothing existed apart from the triune God when God decided to bring contingent reality into existence. Second, by whatever means it was effected, God created two sinless human beings, Adam and Eve, who were the '*image of God*'. On the finite level their experience uniquely resembled that of the members of the Trinity. Unlike any other creatures in heaven (angels) or on earth (animals and plants), they were unique expressions of God's love and goodness. In short they were made '*in (his) likeness*' (Gen 1: 26) and all human beings are their physical descendants. Third, Adam and Eve were without sin and knew no evil of any kind. Yet their relationship with God included, to their added glory, the reality of significant choice. When in due course, therefore, they succumbed to

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<sup>7</sup> Space precludes a more detailed outline of evangelical interpretations re Gen 1-3. Some have accepted the 'old earth' view that Genesis allows considerable freedom in terms of chronology; others have taken the 'young earth' view and see God's creation as comparatively recent. Before Darwin, however, neither view involved the radically new interpretations considered in this article.

temptation and rejected God's command, the disaster of human alienation followed. They were alienated both vertically from God and horizontally from man and nature and they died physically as a result of sin.

The latest version of origins now breaches these boundaries. Largely the product of two closely related UK organisations, Christians in Science and the Faraday Institute, it tries to work out more explicitly what previously had been left rather vague. And because it is sincerely and ably stated it deserves our respect. In all other ways, sadly, it is a recipe for confusion because it challenges the historic Christian view of the Fall. Human death, it says, is *not* a result of the Fall but simply a part of the natural process of evolution.

### *A plausible scenario?*

Behind all this lies an allegedly plausible scenario which it is important to understand.

By means of natural selection, it is suggested, God's sovereign oversight produced, around 200,000 years ago, the first individuals whom we now call '*homo sapiens*'. In all external ways they resembled contemporary human beings. Language, art, religious ritual, music, social order, agriculture etc. became a part of their experience – but they did not yet 'know God', they did not yet have a personal relationship with God. A further (presumably?) miraculous step was needed. So... 'God in his grace chose a couple of Neolithic farmers in the Near East, or maybe a community of farmers, to whom he chose to reveal himself in a special way...'<sup>8</sup> As *homo sapiens*, along with the 1 to 10 million members of the species reckoned to be alive at the time, they had already, from the start of the new species, been God's image (though what this means is unclear as we shall see). Certainly, however, when this new step occurred, it was the first time they realised what it *meant* to be 'the image of God'. They are therefore designated a new type of image, namely '*homo divinus*'. Emerging from a context of social and individual conflict, in which, presumably, they experienced varieties of pain, upheaval and suffering and, very particularly in relation to our present discussion both deliberate and natural physical death, it remains unclear to what extent the first couple or community of *homo divinus* 'knew God'. Were they, for example, both the image of God and at the same time 'sinful' i.e. immoral by comparison with

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<sup>8</sup> Denis Alexander *ibid.*, 236.

the nature of the perfect and loving Creator, defined supremely for us now in the person of ‘the second Adam’, Jesus Christ? Did they continue to be sinful in much the same way that they continued to experience physical death? To which the answer appears to be ‘Yes’ for we are specifically cautioned not to ‘imagine Adam and Eve as superhuman, living in an environment that sounds a bit like heaven on earth...an envisaged paradise (sic)’<sup>9</sup>. Either way, when in due course ‘Adam and Eve’ rebelled against God (or the ‘community of Neolithic farmers now called ‘*homo divinus*’ - for both the number of those involved and the actual manner of the ‘Fall’ remains unclear in this interpretation for legend is interspersed with fact) they lost their special divine relationship and introduced ‘sin’ into the world. *Physical death, however, was not a new experience.*

A host of doctrinal questions spring immediately to mind, only three of which can be treated here and far too hurriedly of course.

First is the issue of ‘Image-ness’. Are human beings of value simply because they are human beings, or do they have value only because they have a relationship with God? Take for example the status of those *homo sapiens* already in existence when the *homo divinus* development took place. Could it be that descendants from these creatures are still alive today, like the Australian aborigines who are specifically admitted to precede ‘Adam’ by many thousands of years.<sup>10</sup> If so what is their relation to the descendants of *homo divinus*? Could they be considered lesser ‘human beings’, perhaps equal to animals since they too had no personal relationship with God and no conception of ‘sin’?

Alexander’s response to this is both speculative and dubious. What he suggests, though the degree of speculation makes it somewhat unclear and therefore open to misrepresentation, is that at some point all *homo sapiens* were included in the ‘federal headship’ of the first ‘*homo divinus*’. In other words when this switch came, when...‘(this) bright light appeared in the (Neolithic) Near East thousands of years ago (eg. the one introducing ‘Adam and Eve’ into the picture), it shed its light around the world...’<sup>11</sup> Whereupon, those *homo sapiens* living at the time started to have a divine relationship along with their federal head, ‘Adam’.

That this reading of federal headship bears little relation to the biblical teaching and to historical theology is troubling to say the least. Adam’s federal

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

headship in Scripture turns on the fact that it is *physical* not ‘spiritual’. Paul argues carefully in 1 Corinthians 15 that the physical comes first, by which he clearly means that all human beings are derived through procreation from a single couple. Only after Adam’s disobedience does God provide his ‘spiritual’, i.e. his miraculous and literally heaven-sent, solution. Jesus is a federal head for all who believe because he is ‘the second man *from heaven*’. He becomes a spiritual rather than a physical head because he is divine. Adam’s headship, by comparison, is what it is because it is physical. He is literally the ‘father’ of the human race. Christ’s headship operates spiritually because he has come from above – a distinction ignored by the new interpretation which makes no sense in the context of 1 Corinthians 15.

Second, because all human beings descend from Adam and Eve they share in the Genesis 3 disaster - increased pain in child-birth, arduous work and the disruption of all relationships, human and non-human. Physical death, however, is the principal indicator of how terrible a disaster it really is.<sup>12</sup> Paul insists that physical death remains the last *enemy*. Death is not a friend. It is not a part of God’s design for human life. It devastates his good creation and needs to be overthrown and conquered. Hence Paul’s repeated use of the expression ‘the law of sin *and death*’ and his shout of triumph as a result of Christ’s resurrection, ‘Where O *death* is your victory? Where O *death* is your sting?’ (1 Corinthians 15:55) His argument forces home the message that Christ’s *physical* resurrection resolves the problem of *physical* death in man. The new exegesis, by contrast, argues that God’s original threat of death was of a broken relationship only. Clearly it is forced and unnatural.

Overarching all other concerns, finally, stands the problem of the atonement and the nature of suffering generally. For if physical death is not part of the original fall of man, how is it part of Christ’s atonement? Sin breaks our relationship with God and only Christ’s substitutionary death can make atonement for that sin. But if physical death is not part of the judgement, i.e. of the Gen 3 curse, how is it included in Jesus’ work on the cross? Did he *have* to die physically? Could he not have reconciled us to the Father some other way, possibly through a break in the divine relationship other than physical death? Added to which if physical suffering and death are simply part of the natural order, our perspective of physical suffering changes completely. The agony disappears. Evolutionary processes work this way and human beings, like everything else in nature, suffer as a result. Why complain? Conceivably

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<sup>12</sup> See Gen 5 – the genealogies emphasise the reality of death by the oft repeated refrain... ‘and he died’.

resistance to the natural order is even counter-productive! The logic of evolution moves inexorably on until, as Baudelaire insists, we find ourselves confronted not with an entirely good God but with someone looking pretty like the Devil. In Scripture, by contrast, Christ's work of atonement deals precisely with this dilemma - *for death is an enemy*. When confronted by Lazarus' tomb Jesus is angry. When he agonises on the cross it is to end agony. By his death he conquers death. Because tears and sadness ought not to be there in the first place he wipes them away in the end. Jesus is separated from the Father on the cross and brought cruelly to the grave - he *dies*! But in so doing he destroys not only the power of sin *but the power of death*. His is a *physical* resurrection because *physical* curse was a part of the Fall. But if suffering and death are 'normal' for human beings, what do we say now to suffering and why did Jesus have to *die*?

### **Conclusion:**

Why rescue Darwin? Is it because the evidence is overwhelmingly clear? Hardly! Surely the defining evangelical principle of *sola scriptura* encourages, at the very least, a healthy scepticism about 'the assured results of science'. But it goes further and warns each generation of God's people to be ultra cautious the further they move from the Bible's explicit teaching, especially when enshrined in the didactic portions of Scripture, like Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

With respect to origins, the New Testament's frame of reference could not be clearer: mankind (*homo sapiens* 'male and female') was created to be the image of God; the act of Adam and Eve's rebellion introduced sin into human experience; in due course sin led to human death. The doctrines of Christ's divinity, justification by faith and the resurrection of the body are held inviolable by evangelicals simply because Scripture demands them, regardless of whether or not they fit with current theories. By the same token, surely, the framework surrounding human creation and the Fall is equally inviolable.

Not that we have to pretend that intellectual puzzles in the Bible are then easily resolved or that science cannot be useful in understanding scripture – far from it. But if I take only my personal experience and look back to those early days as a young believer in 1956, I realise the dangers facing us now. The assured results of scientific criticism so called would have cut swathes through my evangelical convictions, not only with respect to Genesis but to a host of other things. Now they have been silenced simply because the past is more clearly understood – many times, ironically, through better scientific investigation!

Is it not unwise, then, to invent novel interpretations about Adam and Eve on the grounds of current scientific theory when the New Testament speaks so unequivocally about human death and when an almost palpable unease about Darwinism seems to be spreading through the scientific community today (thus occasioning the need for ‘a rescue’!).

The temptation to elevate scientific theory above Scripture accounts in no small measure for Christianity’s decline in recent centuries. Well before the rise of modern science, however, the ‘assured results’ of countless other human speculations endangered faith, as both the New Testament and church history testify. Were they ever presented as anything but plausible and benign because, like evolution since 1859, so ‘obvious’ and ‘normal’ and ‘necessary’? From the perspective of God’s revealed Word they were simply foolish and destructive.

An insistent choice seems almost daily to grow in intensity: do we wreck the church in order to rescue Darwin – or vice versa?

## “Being (even more) Human”

**Ranald Macaulay**

By the time ‘Being Human’ was published in 1978<sup>1</sup>, Jerram [Barrs] and I and our respective families had been living in the Manor House, Greatham, for seven years. The village lies about 50 miles south west of London and is as hard to find in an atlas as L’Abri’s birthplace, Huemoz, in Switzerland <sup>2</sup>. In view of L’Abri’s wide influence since, this obscurity may be significant, but more of that later.<sup>3</sup> The Manor itself is mainly Victorian except that a ‘1789’ plaque on the front confirms that some of it goes back to the French Revolution. Large rooms with typically high ceilings make it a gracious home, but nowhere is it what you would call sumptuous; impressive yes, with a 40 foot oak staircase above the front hall, but not luxurious. And when we moved to the Manor a tall cedar opposite the living room dominated the extensive lawns until it was shattered by gales later.

It was an idyllic situation: two young families living in a real Manor House surrounded by beautiful countryside just north of the Hampshire Downs. Sounds romantic, doesn’t it? Few people in their thirties get that sort of break (and come to think of it Jerram was probably still in his twenties). It was all pretty amazing. The trees, gardens and outbuildings clustered about the big house provided a magical atmosphere. Children roamed in and out and climbed up and down without interruption. C S Lewis could hardly have devised better; indeed *Narnia* via a door in the Well House seemed eminently feasible.

The romance, of course, went little further than my description. Certainly, by comparison with what most people have at that age it couldn’t

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<sup>1</sup>Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs, *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience* (IVP, 1978; republished Solway, 1996; and Inter-Varsity 1998).

<sup>2</sup> The village is pronounced ‘gret’ not ‘great’ incidentally.

<sup>3</sup> See page 11 note 22.

have been better. We were happy. We loved being able to provide a ‘shelter’ for those who came to stay. Our friendships were real. Our children got on well together. They particularly enjoyed the mixture of ages. When I led square dances they joined in. And when it came time for their Sunday evening stories around the living room fire the adults got as much out of it as the children.

### **The real context**

The truth remains, however, that life at the Manor in 1971 was far from romantic. Wherever we live, of course, we have to struggle with complications, yet the Manor *did* have its special strains. We were not simply restoring a dilapidated old house in the country. Right there in the Manor we were starting a L’Abri and as the name implies we were creating a ‘shelter’ for whoever showed up. This meant we had about twenty strangers to integrate into our family right from the start. They often arrived unannounced. Their backgrounds were diverse. And they didn’t come through a selection process. Our task was to make them feel at home. Meals had to be cooked, studies supervised, supplies brought in from the shops. Budgets were tight. Basic expenses had to be taken care of first and salaries paid only if there was enough left over at the end of the month! As a ‘faith mission’ L’Abri didn’t have capital funds to fall back on – either then or now. So when things needed fixing those of us living in the Manor had to fix them.

Our first week a storm flooded the basement and disabled the already hesitant boiler. There was nothing for it but to hand-haul buckets of water up through the entrance hall and dump them outside in the drive. Being January, of course, it was cold. Even when the basement was cleared the boiler wouldn’t work, so we froze. And when the drainage problem was traced to its source we discovered the pipes were jammed solid with roots and soil. Then, too, the whole place had to be rewired which meant the floors were being taken up and the walls gouged out. Similarly the old septic tanks were quickly swamped. Six foot trenches had to be dug to connect to the mains beyond our boundary wall. In short, moving to the Manor in 1971 felt a bit like trying to settle in Outer Mongolia. And we had three small girls under the age of ten.

Into this melee of conflicting pleasures and pressures came Jerram and Vicky. By then the weather was warmer and a few of the teething problems taken care of. But even after our initial six months of settling, the challenges they faced were no less intense: it was simply L’Abri as usual. Home for them meant a small apartment called ‘the back flat’ with a minute kitchen and a dining room only slightly larger. Almost immediately they had to provide daily meals for the ‘students’. And when Peter, their firstborn, arrived they were really pushed for space.

I mention all this to give you a better idea of the context within which ‘Being Human’ was written, but there’s more to it as I’ll explain.



What we did *not* have to learn before embarking on the book was the content of ‘Being Human’. That was already clear to us because we’d lived and worked with Francis and Edith Schaeffer at L’Abri in Switzerland. One of their common expressions was ‘*the lordship of Christ over the whole of life*’ which sums up pretty well what we learned in this area. They also helped us to see what it looks like in real life. Edith, for example, took pains to make her dinner tables attractive. And ‘Fran’ (as Edith called him) would invariably have a large art book open on his bed to savour whichever artist he was studying at the time. It was a new and intriguing lifestyle for us and the more we examined their theology the less we could fault it. Hadn’t Jesus said, ‘Look at the lilies of the field...Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these’?<sup>4</sup> Isn’t the entire universe ‘the work of His hands’? Why then would Christianity *not* be a glorious affirmation of life! The problem, we quickly saw, isn’t human experience per se but sinful human experience. It was a huge relief. We basked in the freedom this refreshingly different vision of the Christian life afforded. It had not been like this in Cambridge. As an undergraduate, an older evangelical, who later became a well-known preacher, gently reprimanded me once for buying a few contemporary books like T.S. Eliot’s ‘Wasteland’! They would distract me he felt because they weren’t spiritual. In the Schaeffer home such memories began to fade. I realised that Christianity doesn’t restrict our humanity, it restores it. These things, as I say, were clear to us. Our seven years at the Manor didn’t add much to our intellectual grasp of the content for the book. We’d learned a lot of that already from the Schaeffers.

### **Misguided Alternatives**

However, as if to highlight what we’d already understood, our introductory years in the Manor provided us with a veritable cornucopia of false alternatives. Almost every misrepresentation one could imagine could be found right there at L’Abri. Some of the students, for example, had the not uncommon idea that the real point of becoming a Christian is to tell others about it. ‘You’ve been saved so now you have to go and win others’. They may not have been told this explicitly, but the message was clear. Since the need is urgent nothing else should be allowed to get in the way. Social and cultural pursuits are merely a distraction – like reading ‘The Wasteland’. All has to be set aside in favour of ‘preaching the gospel’. Of course, a proper emphasis on the urgency of evangelism is right. But is it the case that we need to ‘leave all’ in this sense? Why go to college or take an ordinary job? Why get married even? It was an emphasis often accompanied by anti-

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<sup>4</sup> Mathew 6:29.

intellectualism. 'The Bible doesn't need human reasoning, it just needs to be proclaimed. Getting to grips with the ideas of the culture is a waste of time'. The development of a Christian mind was almost taboo even at university. The result was that few Christians had the faintest idea how to challenge the scepticism surrounding them.

Others had been involved in the Charismatic Movement which was in full spate just then. Michael Harper (who later ended up in the Greek Orthodox Church interestingly) had started the Fountain Trust. One of his conferences took place at Guildford Cathedral nearby. Literally thousands arrived for a heady cocktail of euphoria and hand-waving. Punters were confident that the charismatic approach to spirituality would turn things upside down. The church would now be able '*to march across the land*' with a message of power. Once again the sales pitch was simple and clear: 'your Christian experience is going to be unsatisfying and ineffective until you are baptised in (by) the Spirit' - in other words until you speak in tongues. It seemed plausible enough. The Book of Acts says quite a bit about tongues-speaking so perhaps, after all, it *is* the sort of Christian experience we need.

The Anabaptist emphasis on peace-making through pacifism was also a draw. Even John Stott joined forces with the advocates of unilateral nuclear disarmament. His authority as an outstanding Evangelical leader carried considerable weight and his imprimatur seemed to guarantee the biblical integrity of this idea. We were less impressed. Jerram even went to Cambridge and London at John's invitation for a three-way debate with a leading British Mennonite. He basically showed that their view was far from biblical and even dangerous. But nuclear disarmament sounded good at the time.

In similar vein left-leaning Mennonites in North America were championing the cause of a simple life-style. The socialist agenda wasn't hard to spot. Developing nations, it was said, would overcome famine and poverty best if we in the west lived more frugally and gave more generously. Jerram and I were, of course, sympathetic to this critique of western consumerism and not simply because we were actually *living* 'the simple life-style'. Our dislike of excessive consumption was as real as anyone's. But we were far from convinced that the Bible's remedy for social decline should be this. Were there not other factors maybe, like the absence of the rule of law and high levels of corruption? Or could poverty be related to *idolatry*? Compassionate spirituality, however, had an immense appeal and many evangelicals were drawn to it. The BBC and the pop idols of the day promoted it vigorously. Not to be active in support was to be heartless.

The catalogue of misleading models for a 'normal Christian life' could be extended almost indefinitely. In fact, the very phrase '*normal Christian life*' can't help but remind the older ones amongst us of Watchman Nee's book of that title. Published in the 1950s its title couldn't have been better: we do want

a normal Christian experience and some of the things Nee says are helpful<sup>5</sup>. Once again, however, his structure for spirituality is misguided. For one thing, he says the Bible teaches a tri-partite view of the human self – body, soul and spirit – which it is vital to accept in order to gain a proper understanding. But is it? Then he insists that our human minds, wills and emotions belong not within the ‘spirit’ but within the ‘soul’ and as such can only be a hindrance. By contrast the soul (an individual’s mind, will and emotions) needs to be ‘put to death’ in order that the human spirit may be ‘released’ for its proper communion with God. The upshot is that most of our humanity has, somehow, to be jettisoned. This being so it becomes difficult to see what Jesus means when he commands us to love God *with our minds*? Nee’s writings, however, were a big influence in the post-war years especially into the early charismatic movement.

As I’ve intimated, this entire range of alternative spiritualities, more or less representative of Evangelicalism then as now, was in fact confusion worse confounded. Yet these were the sorts of things people were being taught. When tutoring at L’Abri, therefore, Jerram and I had to keep reminding people of the biblical basics. In many ways it was a sad enterprise, but we were learning how to argue the case for ‘Being Human’ and to show what spirituality is and isn’t. In that way our preparation for the book had begun.

### **Pietism**

It is, of course, entirely natural to wonder how such an array of misconceptions about the Christian life arose in the first place. Several historians have looked at this, and Mark Noll’s ‘The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind’ is perhaps the most well-known<sup>6</sup>. Amongst other things, he draws attention to Evangelicalism’s neglect of intellectual engagement almost to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. David Wells’s three or four titles, including ‘No Place for Truth’, add to this the decline of doctrinal teaching in evangelical churches generally and its replacement by management and ‘technique’<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, he draws attention to the promotion of consumer satisfaction rather than costly sacrifice. The subject is too big to broach meaningfully here. But a quick look at the background helps explain some of the reasons for our current confusion and thus of the significance of what Jerram and I wrote about.

To start we need to go back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. ‘Pietist’ leaders like Jacob Spener began a sincere and entirely laudable attempt to renew the

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<sup>5</sup> Watchman Nee: *‘The Normal Christian Life’* Gospel Literature Service (1957).

<sup>6</sup> Mark Noll: *‘The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind’* Wm B Eerdmans (1994).

<sup>7</sup> David Wells: *‘No Place for Truth’* (1993), *‘God in the Wasteland’* (1996), *‘Above all earthly powers’* (2005) *‘The Courage to be Protestant’* (2008).

German church. Sermons had become intellectual and wordy. It was hard for ordinary folk to see the connection between pulpit and everyday experience. They needed the Bible to be brought alive once again as in Luther's day. The movement became known as 'heart-felt religion'. Small assemblies or '*collegia pietatis*' encouraged prayer, Bible reading and fellowship and became active forces for change. Pastors began to preach more simply and to focus on devotional and experimental subjects rather than on doctrine. Caring for those in need was considered vital, as was 'mission' to the lost. A seam of vibrant Christian experience spread quickly across Europe preparing the ground for revival both locally and abroad. The Wesley brothers and the Great Awakening echoed the new vitality. It was an impressive shift and had long-lasting results reaching to the present.

But there was a sting in the tail. A disinterest in the life of the mind and a lack of participation in the political institutions of the day weakened Evangelicalism irreparably. Piety of heart took precedence over piety of mind (as if the two are separable!) and though personal philanthropy became a pietist hallmark it was at the expense of wider social engagement. These, too, were long-lasting results - unhappily. Where was Truth in all this? Where, in particular, was a Christian mind? The consequences were disastrous, especially in terms of timing. The Enlightenment philosophers were gaining influence throughout the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The French Revolution of 1789 reinforced their agenda. They unashamedly repudiated Biblical revelation and morality. The intellectual and social challenges had never been more serious since the fall of Rome. Yet evangelical believers were like flotsam and jetsam, hardly knowing what was going on. The truth of the matter was that they had deprived *themselves* of what they most needed in this unprecedented onslaught. Their neglect of public engagement had cost them their heritage without them even noticing it. Churches began to haemorrhage. The reversal of a Christian consensus in Europe was just a matter of time.

### **The Writing**

So, after seven years, Jerram and I were ready to put things down in black and white. On one hand we had been given ample evidence of how Christian spirituality can be misrepresented. On the other we were satisfied about Christianity's intellectual credentials, though this appears in the book only as a footnote<sup>8</sup>. Conversations each day revolved around one or other of these topics and it was hard not to notice the Pietist vacuum. As yet, though, the thought of writing a book hadn't occurred to us.

How that happened was almost coincidental. Around 1976 an invitation came to speak at a L'Abri conference in Canada. If my memory

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<sup>8</sup> '*Being Human*' IVP 1978 (ch 1 n 1), 197,198.

serves me well we'd agreed in general terms to speak on the subject of 'spirituality' but hadn't discussed the details. In a way we didn't need to. The topic was always in our minds, as I've said. Only when we boarded the plane in England did we choose who should do what, and that too was fairly straightforward. We'd each developed our own interests and strengths and were able to give about half a dozen lectures between us. The response was immediately encouraging. People were hungry for more. Our approach struck them as different. It seemed to them straightforward, common-sense, biblical teaching without how-to gimmicks. They liked that.

That's when some suggested we put pen to paper.

It was easier said than done. We wondered if it was even feasible. Family responsibilities and a growing work meant we were already stretched. Typical L'Abri distractions hampered us, as I've indicated. Time for serious reading let alone writing was at a premium. In addition, a small Presbyterian congregation had formed in 1972 of which Jerram and I were assistant pastor and pastor respectively<sup>9</sup>. Writing a book seemed out of the question. However, a publisher by now had expressed interest. We knew the need was real. A decision had to be made. Our colleagues lent their support. So we took the plunge only too aware that we might not be able to do a very good job.

The Calgary lectures were an immediate help. The subject divisions were to hand and we only had to add a few more. Then we submitted the embryonic manuscript to IVP in the States. Jim Sires, the editor at the time, indicated that our styles would need to be rationalised. That threw us a bit but there was no turning back. We had a month's break from visitors and Jerram and I set to work at a table in the living room. Looking across to the cedar tree we took turns reading the text line by line. Finally a manuscript was ready to be sent off. Then Jim returned with it in person to finalise things. (I don't think he ever forgave us for the Manor's unimaginable cold!) But that was it. The book was published.

### **Weaknesses**

Given what I've said about the misrepresentations at the time my main reaction thirty years later is one of thankfulness - and no little surprise. I don't mean simply that I am glad the book was published and remains in print, though that is part of it. As a quite solid exercise in theology the fact it has stayed in print is no small achievement. It may even indicate its lasting significance because of its emphasis on the long-neglected teaching about God's image in man. God's defining statement about mankind in Genesis 1:26, we argued, provides

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<sup>9</sup> The International Presbyterian Church – originally known as *The International Church: Presbyterian, Réformée*' this was founded by the Schaeffers in Champéry, Switzerland (a Catholic canton), before L'Abri began.

an ‘*organising principle*’ for all that follows. Here was a new and critical addition to the discussion not because the doctrine had been neglected entirely but because it had not been applied to this particular subject. What ‘Being Human’ recovered was a teaching on Christian experience which is of timeless importance.

Meanwhile, by 1978 other factors were at work towards the same end. The 1974 Lausanne Covenant, for example, was explicit: since Christianity is concerned with all human experience it can’t be reduced merely to evangelism. Despite this, however, traditions were entrenched and the overall picture remains troubling<sup>10</sup>. A contemporary illustration from the UK shows how deeply ingrained the older patterns remain. Key university churches are loud in their praise of ‘gospel ministry’ but still say little or nothing about the need to develop a Christian mind. They are right to insist on the importance of sustained evangelism as we said earlier, but it seems to be their sole concern. Though they say spirituality involves all of life, they deny it in practice. In fact they simply regurgitate those teachings and attitudes which led to our decline in the first place, even in academic communities where we can least afford them.

Over against this reactionary influence, ‘Being Human’ has helped some to stand their ground. One thing only, I think, makes it less effective than it might have been and that is its failure to explore more fully the subject of sacrifice. Not that this element of costly obedience should be exaggerated: Jerram and I had a modest agenda after all. We weren’t trying to produce an all-encompassing manual or scale the heights or plumb the depths of the Christian life. We simply wanted to get the right *framework* in place. Not that we were unaware of the problem. We even asked the publisher if we could add another chapter to say more about this topic of sacrifice. But the book was already too long he said. So we had to leave it: all of which stands behind my somewhat enigmatic title, ‘Being *even more* human’.

### **Schaeffer’s True Spirituality**

Before launching into this, however, I need to do one more thing: I need to show the connection between what we wrote and what Schaeffer wrote if only to explain why we focussed on what we did. True Spirituality<sup>11</sup> had been published a few years earlier and Jerram and I had benefited from it. More than that we knew the central place it held in Schaeffer’s thinking. His introduction

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to the Lausanne Covenant (1974) see the Manila Manifesto (1989) and the Cape Town Commitment (2010); see also my paper called ‘By the open statement of the Truth – Lausanne & the Polemical Imperative’ [www.christianheritage.org.uk/articles](http://www.christianheritage.org.uk/articles)

<sup>11</sup> Francis Schaeffer: ‘*True Spirituality*’ Hodder & Stoughton (1972).

makes that clear<sup>12</sup>. It was the basis for the work of L'Abri, he says, and for everything else he wrote. In this respect its general significance can hardly be exaggerated even though its stylistic weaknesses are obvious.

The burden he wanted to share can be summed up by his expression '*a moment-by-moment enjoyment of the living Christ*'. He'd had a period of questioning in Switzerland in the early 1950's which led him to review the basics of the Christian faith which in turn led to a quite dramatic renewal experience. He was given a fresh insight into the biblical teaching about 'true spirituality'. When we bow as sinners and enter a relationship with the living Christ, he saw, we are meant to enjoy him continually. Paul is similarly lyrical about this. He prays for his fellow believers, 'that you may know the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of Christ which passes knowledge – and so be filled with all the fullness of Christ'<sup>13</sup>. This was Schaeffer's burden. Despite the book's obvious stylistic weaknesses, as I said, it compares favourably with other great devotional literature from the past.

However, it has another weakness which is more serious. Where *we* were focussing on introduction and framework and not even attempting to cover the wider reaches of spirituality, Schaeffer was trying to do just that. He was exploring what one writer calls 'the journeying of (the) heart'<sup>14</sup>. That being the case and those being its strengths what struck us was its inadequate framework. This may have been due to the fact that 'True Spirituality' came out of an earlier manuscript. The original was a series of talks to denominational colleagues in the States in the early 1950's. So it was already some years before L'Abri started and a decade at least before the book came out. Possibly he felt that the framework issues were less important then (which I doubt) or he felt they would distract readers from the central thrust of his message (which is more likely). In any event the absence of this complementary teaching created misunderstandings. We even found our L'Abri students getting confused. So we set out to provide a balance in 'Being Human'.

On top of this Schaeffer was using terminology related to the Keswick Convention of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He had read the writings of Keswick speakers before L'Abri began. They had helped him during his uncertainties and he included their insights. Like them he stressed the need for faith in sanctification (as in justification) and the need to understand how as believers we have already died in Christ. The resemblance was more than superficial. However, in terms of their pietistic framework he was completely different.

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<sup>12</sup> See Preface.

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 3:18.

<sup>14</sup> Frank Houghton (b 1894) '*Christian Praise*' IVP 1973 'O thou who dost direct my feet...'

Yet this didn't come out in his book. We felt the vacuum needed to be redressed.

Ironically, then, both True Spirituality and Being Human suffered from the same weakness. Schaeffer was strong on experience. We were strong on framework. But each book left out something whose addition would have made it better. In any event, because Jerram and I were responding to Schaeffer like this we limited what we could achieve in 'Being Human'. In providing a primer only we failed to say more about what being human *really* involves.

### **Being 'even more' Human**

As with most things in our experience the nub of the issue involves the cross. We need to be clear not just about Christ's death but about our own also. First, we have to accept the fact that only Jesus can take away the guilt of our sin. Then we have to be clear that Jesus died for us *not merely to reconcile us to the Father but to transform us into his likeness*. As soon as we understand this we realise that the height of Christian experience is not the forgiveness of our sins – though that is the indispensable 'door' that Jesus speaks about. To be properly human we need first to accept this unique salvation and to hold onto it throughout our lives for it is the rock upon which all else rests. But what follows is equally important. Jesus says 'Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect'<sup>15</sup>. Paul says, 'Be imitators of Christ and live a life of love'<sup>16</sup>. God welcomes us into his family not to provide us with R+R ('rest and relaxation') but in order to change us into his likeness. Not that the 'rest' isn't real as Isaiah makes clear: 'in repentance and *rest*' he says 'is your salvation'<sup>17</sup>. We never work for our salvation the way man-made religions require. But alongside the rest comes our repentance: we commit ourselves to undergo, at God's hand, a process of gradual transformation, of continual repentance, of laying aside what is un-human so as to become properly human. On one hand this means becoming like Jesus in positive virtues, on the other it means being willing to die with him and to imitate his sufferings. He was kind, just, patient, generous, merciful and all the rest. He was prepared to go to the cross. We have to become like that too, though conscious always of our shortcomings.

Knowing the importance of this theme of self-denial Jerram and I devoted a whole chapter to it. It was partly what attracted us to L'Abri in the first place and certainly what we appreciated about 'True Spirituality'. Schaeffer was insistent that we need to die not only to what is bad but to what is good – in other words to offer our lives to God without reservation, to

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew 4:48.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:1, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 50:15.



become ‘a living sacrifice’ as Paul puts it<sup>18</sup>. But working within the limitations we had, our approach could be tangential only. The most we could do was try to offset the common impression that sacrifice means a denial of our humanity. No, we said, it is our humanity’s greatest affirmation. When Christians lay aside something for the sake of others they demonstrate God’s eternal character - and are most true to their own character as his image. When they resist sin they give expression to human nature as it is made to be. Having been created in God’s likeness they are restored to it by grace. Though sinful and in need of constant change until the end, self-sacrifice is the deepest affirmation of a believer’s true (i.e. original) humanity.

My point is this: we were dealing with the subject of sacrifice only to *defend* it from misrepresentation. What we were unable to do was *commend* it for what it is in itself. The New Testament does just that – as did Schaeffer. Scripture doesn’t just allow for sacrifice, it embraces it and urges it on us. I don’t mean ‘embrace’ as if it calls us to be ascetic, like a competition to see who can devise the most uncomfortable and difficult experiences possible. That is abhorrent in God’s eyes. We don’t artificially *make* the sacrificial situations (like some in the past who stood in freezing water up to their necks to show how spiritual they were!). We *meet* them as God leads us along. ‘The servant is going to be treated like his Master, and the student like his Teacher’ says Jesus. So difficulties and sufferings don’t surprise us. They are par for the course.

He couldn’t have said this more clearly. The gospels are full of it. When he anticipates his death in Jerusalem he immediately relates it to what his disciples must expect themselves. In fact he goes further and insists that unless they are prepared to undergo a similar life – by taking up their own cross – they *cannot* be his disciples. In a sense it becomes the focus of John the evangelist’s whole presentation. At the final stage of Jesus’ ministry after Judas leaves to betray him we read, ‘When he (Judas) was gone, Jesus said “Now is the Son of Man *glorified and God is glorified in him*”’.<sup>19</sup> He focuses not merely upon Jesus’ physical distress, great as that was, but upon what it reveals of God’s nature. Christ’s full glory, he says, the very nature of God in fact, is now going to become most evident in the world – *by suffering*.

The necessity of this kind of experience appears everywhere in the New Testament. Paul, too, is full of it. He labours the point when writing about his ‘thorn in the flesh’ because it illustrates another aspect of the same principle<sup>20</sup>. He had heard about false teachers in Corinth who were impressive speakers and boasted about exceptional supernatural experiences. He cuts

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<sup>18</sup> Romans 12:1.

<sup>19</sup> John 13:31.

<sup>20</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:7ff.

them down to size. He shows that he too has had remarkable supernatural experiences. But his main thrust is to draw out the reality of his sacrificial service to Christ. He lists all the trials as he travelled around – beaten up several times, hungry, living out of suitcases etc. And then he comes to his climax: but not a climax of ‘wonderful experiences’ but of the opposite. He talks about his ‘thorn in the flesh’. Whatever it was it was a trial which finally drove him, in desperation, to beg for release: ‘Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me’ he says. The intensity comes across in his emphasis on the *three* times (not three times, obviously, within the space of a few minutes but on three occasions when he felt he couldn’t go on). It’s a terrible experience. (Some, incidentally, on the basis of another text<sup>21</sup>, have inferred that Paul was suffering from an eye complaint because he goes on to say ‘you would have torn out your eyes for me’). And what does God say to him in the midst of this trial? Far from releasing Paul, God tells him it is how his divine power is best revealed in the world. Weakness keeps Paul from becoming conceited and God uses it to show that what matters is not our success but our dependence. Again, we have to learn to be weak, to deny ourselves. Jesus did the same. He who had everything died for those who have nothing. He who was hated by sinners surrendered himself to their malice that they might see his love. As his image we are caught up within the same drama. We are made (and saved) to be like him. Paradoxically the loss becomes our gain. Jesus is quite clear, ‘if you lose your life you will find it’<sup>22</sup>.

### **Reformation and Renewal**

This is why I went into some detail about our settling-in process at the Manor. It seemed an ideal situation, as I said: two young families with no money, a large house and garden, lots of exciting things going on and beautiful surroundings. The reality was different. I mentioned the cold for instance. Were we living like that because we thought it more spiritual not to be warm? No. Should we have demanded better working conditions as our legal right? No. We had to make do with what we had. That’s how God was preparing us for the book. The difficulties I outlined were our ‘daily cross’ right there in the Manor. Yes, we could explain Being Human theologically but we had to go through the process of learning to *become* more human. It was an

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<sup>21</sup> Galatians 4:15 - Those who know Jerram will realise, of course, that I have deliberately chosen this example in 2 Corinthians 12 to honour his perseverance through a similar ear affliction. I honour Jerram by simply writing this essay but the truth of the matter is that no eulogy of mine can adequately express my indebtedness to him throughout my working life.

<sup>22</sup> Mathew 16:2.

indispensable lesson. In fact it is the only really important lesson any believer has to learn.

Sadly, it is now the lesson Western evangelicalism has to *re-learn*, for our forefathers understood it well. To coin a phrase we have had the dubious privilege of falling on easy not hard times. Consumerism has destroyed us. John Steinbeck's conclusion after travelling across the States near the end of his life was that our western lifestyle has made us soft - and 'a nation can't afford that', he said. He was merely echoing Moses before the Israelites crossed into the Promised Land. 'When you become prosperous in your new surroundings realise how dangerous a situation you are in. Your comfort will tempt you to forget God. You will then lose everything. Your fate will be that of the peoples you are about to conquer: God himself will drive you out of your land'<sup>23</sup>.

That being the case the American church faces a daunting challenge. If she is to escape the judgement of which the current financial and social crises are merely a preliminary, she needs to be reformed and renewed as never before. Since spirituality is more than 'gospel ministry only' the church has to affirm and encourage Christians to be engaged in art, commerce, music, invention, social action and all the rest. We have to be restored to God's image in the totality of what he has made us to be. Pietism, in other words, can be tolerated no longer. A massive culture-shift has to be implemented consciously and determinedly. Evangelicalism has to be returned to the model of her Reformation forebears of the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. She has to start by becoming salt and light within herself. Only then will she be able to renew the body politic. Truth is not best served if God's people vacate the public square. They need to enter and renew it. But truth is even less well served if, on entering, they know nothing of the reality of sacrifice. In short, the message of Being Human has to be infused with Schaeffer's insights in True Spirituality. They alone can energise the renewed vision which we outlined. Those engaged in the market place of ideas or commerce can afford to be no less dedicated than preachers, evangelists or missionaries entering 'Christian ministry'. It was what made the Clapham sect in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century so powerful an instrument in God's hands. Charles Grant became the senior Director of the British East India Company. Henry Thornton became the Director of the Bank of England. William Wilberforce worked closely with England's youngest Prime Minister, Pitt, and was his closest friend after leaving Cambridge.

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<sup>23</sup> Deuteronomy, chapters 6-8.

Wealth and status were immaterial to them<sup>24</sup>. Whether successful or not, whether honoured or reviled, their chief concern was to be faithful to God's calling. Their cry was their Master's, 'not my will but yours'<sup>25</sup>. This and only this is the sort of awakening which will suffice. A reformation and renewal marked by the biblical vision I've outlined is, I believe, our highest priority. We are truly human only to the degree we echo Christ's consecration. Anything less than this simply masks a new type of worldliness in which engagement in the world becomes an excuse for self-indulgence.

But what such a vision may lead the church to do in practice is not for us to say. As William Cowper memorably wrote, 'God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform...' Renewal may come in unlikely ways and from a part of the church and a region of the world we don't expect. Within our own western churches, however, we must at the very least begin to address our own most glaring shortcomings. They are many and deeply entrenched as I've suggested. But the time for prevarication is long gone. We are weak now because we failed to face up to our real weaknesses earlier. Three in particular need attention:

- our *lack of confrontation*,
- our *failure to develop true Christian character*
- our *neglect of community*.

By *lack of confrontation* I mean our failure to mount an effective and public challenge to intellectual falsehood. Surrounded by agnosticism and atheism the church must confront this rationalistic scepticism head on. The reason we have failed here is because Evangelicalism, as we saw, debilitated herself by withdrawing from the arena of ideas. She thought she was being 'spiritual', but she was in fact being faithless. Her failure to confront un-truth was a dereliction of duty. These internal weaknesses are now exacerbated by seemingly invincible external pressures. Irrationalism, for one thing, has swept through western society in a way which is unparalleled in European history since before the Greeks. Many on the basis of scientific materialism have denied that God exists. Lacking a transcendent reference point they are of necessity driven to treat everything including intellectual ideas as relative only.

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<sup>24</sup> The Schaeffers founded L'Abri in an obscure village in Switzerland (see page 1) only because God led them there in dramatic circumstances (see Edith Schaeffer: *The L'Abri Story* 1969). But their obscurity also underscored their dislike of American Evangelicalism's thralldom to business techniques, advertising and big numbers.

<sup>25</sup> Mt 26:36ff; Mk 14:32ff; Lk 22:41ff.

Therefore, the very concept of truth has died and life is rendered meaningless. Why talk about truth if truth is impossible?

Added to this, modern technology has simply reinforced the irrational trend. One writer likens the digital revolution to a ‘nuclear attack on the human mind’<sup>26</sup>. Another compares its all-encompassing embrace, particularly through television and the computer, to the totalitarian ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

What is happening in America is not the design of an articulated ideology. No Mein Kampf or Communist Manifesto...(just) the unintended consequence of a dramatic change in our modes of public conversation. But it is an ideology nonetheless for it imposes a way of life...about which there has been no consensus, no discussion...Only compliance. Public consciousness has not yet assimilated the point that technology is ideology. This in spite of the fact that before our very eyes technology has altered every aspect of life in America during the past 80 years...<sup>27</sup>

The end result is that Evangelicalism has to contend for truth within an intellectual climate inimical to truth. Far from enlightening the contemporary mind, technological advances have darkened it. Schools lament that children can’t pay attention very well. Concentration levels universally are in decline. People have been subjected – or rather have subjected themselves – to limitless distractions. They have been detached, as it were, from their own minds<sup>28</sup>. Image is everything. What a misguided philosophy produced in an earlier generation (a disinterest in ideas), technology has

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<sup>26</sup> Morris Berman: *‘The Twilight of American Culture’* Norton (2000) p. 96 ‘...One could argue that corporate consumer culture is tantamount to a kind of nuclear attack on the human mind...’ and again, “...as the new era (*starting with the fall of communism in 1989*) enters its twelfth year in 2000, its three defining characteristics – globalisation, cybernetics and deconstruction – have emerged quite clearly...and they are making most Americans anxious and disoriented, for they inevitably lead to lives of emptiness and futility.”(p. 169).

<sup>27</sup> Neil Postman: *‘Amusing Ourselves to Death’* Methuen (1985), 162.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161: ‘...When a population becomes distracted by trivia, when cultural life is redefined as a perpetual round of entertainments, when serious public conversation becomes a form of baby-talk, when, in short, a people become an *audience* and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk; culture-death is a clear possibility...’

achieved mechanically in our own (an inability even to *grasp* ideas). And now, a more ominous threat has arisen. To philosophic and mechanical irrationalism must be added multi-cultural tolerance. Everyone is to tolerate everyone. All cultures, religions and philosophies have to be seen to be equal. None can claim pre-eminence. To believe otherwise is to be immoral and dangerous. Ironically, but not surprisingly, humanistic liberalism has unmasked her true self: those she tolerates are those only who ascribe to relative truth – her new Absolute. It may even be a case of Robespierre *redivivus*. People must be made free when they resist. A reign of terror, in other words, may once again darken the skies of Europe. And where does this leave us as Evangelicals today? Our choice is stark and unpleasant however we view it. If Christianity is true we must stand up and be counted. We are ill-prepared for this. The public's patience with 'fundamentalist bigots' as it calls us, is wearing thin. To confront falsehood in such a climate is to invite persecution. Widespread compromise, therefore, is not unthinkable.

Closely related to this is our softness as a result of Western consumerism. When the need for Christian *character* is most acute we realise this is just what Evangelicalism has failed to develop. We have been closeted in ghettos instead of pioneering ways of sacrificial living in the outside world (except perhaps through missionary activity to Africa or wherever!). Within an increasingly soft culture church leaders have accommodated rather than challenged our desire for comfort. We have become as spineless as the rest. But the apostle Paul envisages a very different kind of lifestyle: 'we rejoice in our sufferings' he says, 'because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, *character*; and character, hope...' <sup>29</sup> On this account also Evangelicalism faces a daunting challenge. As David Wells puts it:

...The choice for God now has to become one in which the church begins to form itself, by God's grace and truth, into an outcropping of counter-cultural spirituality. It is after all only when we see what the church is willing to give up by developing this antithesis that we see what it is actually for...It must give up self-cultivation for surrender; entertainment for worship; intuition for truth; slick marketing for authentic witness; success for faithfulness; power for humility; a God bought on cheap terms for the God who calls us to costly obedience. It must in short be willing to do God's business on God's

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<sup>29</sup> Romans 5:3ff.

terms. As it happens that idea is...as old as the New Testament itself, but in today's world it is novel all over again...<sup>30</sup>

Lastly there is the absence of *community*. The same forces which have militated against rational thought have reduced our experience of community. Those nations enjoying the greatest technological development are the ones enjoying the least community. A current survey in the United Kingdom is headlined 'Love thy neighbour is outdated in Britain'.

Community spirit has almost disappeared with fewer people prepared to look out for their neighbours or ask them for help. It underlines the fears that the concept has become outdated, with only 6% of people agreeing that their neighbourhood has a strong sense of community...70% admit that they do not even know their neighbours' names...<sup>31</sup>

In a culture where even the family seems on the point of extinction the church needs to shift gear dramatically. Everyone needs a family. Human well-being is related to the reality of human relationships not to wealth and possessions<sup>32</sup>. People don't do well in massed groups – except to make themselves more easily the victims of manipulation. They thrive best in communities where the individual is the principal concern. What then is the responsibility of the church? Clearly evangelicals have to do something drastic both within their own constituency (how they carry out 'church') and within society at large (by creating vibrant communities open to all). People, not 'programs', have to become their central priority. And because larger and ever more homogenous congregations are inimicable to this project they must be downsized and personalised. More than that, the church has to apply its biblical insights and by example change the culture itself, holding out another ideal to emulate, giving it a different idea of what community is actually like.

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<sup>30</sup> David Wells *'God in the Wasteland'*, 223,224.

<sup>31</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 28 November 2011.

<sup>32</sup> See the work of the Relationships Foundation based in Cambridge, England. Susan Schaeffer Macaulay's *'For the Family's Sake'* (Crossway) 1999 is full of practical advice - as is her earlier *'For the Children's Sake'* (Crossway) 1984.

### The Challenge

Given such weaknesses we could easily give up. But we don't have to. Our heritage by itself provides an antidote sufficient to dispel all hesitation. It reminds us that impossible situations can be reversed.

Were our forefathers not similarly overwhelmed in their day? Did they not also wonder if the forces confronting them could be contained and conquered? Those who pioneered the 17<sup>th</sup> century development of New England, for example, faced animosity more severe than anything multiculturalism throws at us today. Political and economic developments in Europe were dire. The constitutional changes they longed for were denied them. The doors they hoped would stay open were slammed shut. The hopes they cherished were dashed. What did they do? They determined first and foremost not to give in. They considered the options and chose to dare all. Putting their lives and the lives of those dependent on them in jeopardy they sailed to a little known land.

Even as I write, another Thanksgiving Day commemorates their unsurpassed achievements. They gave rise to freedoms and prosperity, which, though riddled with faults, have never been surpassed. And we need to remind ourselves that even though, after nearly four centuries, their secular descendants now ridicule what they stood for and retain almost nothing of their early legacy, their God remains the same. Indeed, their God is our God, their Scriptures the same as those on which we rely. The Truth which was powerful then is no less powerful now. When God chooses to act, as he did with them, none can resist him.

Of course, the 17<sup>th</sup> century withdrawal to another continent is no longer possible. No 'new worlds' remain to be explored and settled. But we don't *need* to go anywhere. No second *Mayflower* is required. What remains unchanged is simply the challenge: the courage and vision asked of our forefathers is what is required of us today. Reformation and renewal can and must begin where we are.

Only one inspiration will suffice – that we hear God's call to be '*even more human*' ... and then respond without reservation.





## **The Beginnings of Presbyterianism in Sudan, c.1890s to c.1960**

**Andrew Okuch Ojullo\***

*\* Andrew Okuch Ojullo was born in Pochalla, South Sudan and lived there until he went to the refugee camp in north-west Kenya where he lived for 3 years and then moved to Kisii, Kenya where he completed his schooling. From there he went to Nairobi and joined Zetech College to study IT. He then moved to Kampala, enrolled at Westminster Christian Institute, Uganda, and completed the BA in Theological Studies. He recently graduated from Africa Reformation Theological Seminary, Uganda with his M.Div.*

### **Introduction**

This is an introductory paper about the beginnings of the Presbyterian mission and churches in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan/Sudan from c.1890s to c.1960. In the future this paper will be developed further to include the division of the two Sudans in 2011 and also the development of other Presbyterian missions and more churches in the two Sudans (Sudan and South Sudan) through to 2022 and also including the diaspora Sudanese Presbyterians. We will also include analysis of the various Presbyterian missions and churches in the future.

**Early Contact**

Presbyterian missions first began in Egypt in 1854<sup>1</sup> when the American United Presbyterian Mission (AUPM) missionaries laboured to do work there among the Coptic peoples at the time when Sudan was unreachable due to the strict control of the Arabs in the region. The Nubian Kingdom, which was a Christian Kingdom, had fallen into the hands of the Arabs who spread the Islamic faith far and wide in the region, especially the northern part of Sudan. Muhammad Ali<sup>2</sup>, the Ottoman commander who was controlling the entire north of Sudan, was not a friend to Christians. Hence it was very difficult for Christian missionaries to enter the region. Attempts were made, but all were in vain. Thus many missionaries remained in Egypt doing gospel work there as they waited for God's timing.

When Muhammad Ali finally fell, Sudan was reopened up to free entrance by the missionaries and their activities. In other words, Muhammad's fall saw Sudan getting into contact with the outside world again – especially Europe for the first time in its history. Later, missionaries in large numbers came to explore and to work with the unreached people of the Sudan. Many Western missionaries also died in Sudan in their endeavours to plant what Ahmed called “European Christianity” amongst the Sudanese people (Ahmed, Pdf, p. 20).

It was in the 1890s when the Presbyterian missionaries, especially those from the United Presbyterian Church of North America, planned to enter Sudan via Egypt. As was mentioned earlier, the American United Presbyterian Mission had been doing mission work in Egypt since 1854 – long before they were able to enter Sudan (Jean Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, 1999, pp. 466-467). These American missionaries focused on evangelism among the Coptic community of Egypt; by the year 1895, more than five thousand Copts

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<sup>1</sup> This paper does not discuss the Scottish mission work to Egypt begun by Rev. Dr. John Hogg and the Scottish Society for the Conversion of the Jews and its subsequent becoming part of the American United Presbyterian mission work in Egypt. See, Milton Lippa, “The Life and Impact of Dr. John Hogg as a Missionary in Egypt”, *Haddington House Journal*, 18 (2016), 11-24.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Ali was born in Kavala, Ottoman Macedonia to a family of Albanian origin. He was a military commander in an Ottoman force and was sent by the Ottomans to Egypt to recover Egypt from French occupation under Napoleon and he emerged as a leader whose regime was welcomed by the European powers who supported the secular-minded Turkish soldiers who came to govern Egypt. Egypt at this time was governed by the ruling Turkish-speaking Ottoman elite. After consolidating his power in Egypt, Muhammad Ali turned his attention to Sudan because he wanted to build an Empire and to secure the source of the Nile by conquering Sudan, he would build a strong army by recruiting Sudanese slaves and accumulated wealth by exploiting Sudanese's gold mine. (Ahmed, Pdf, pp. 19-20)

converts were baptized and about seventy-five converts from Muslim families were baptised in Egypt (Ahmed, Pdf, pp. 47-8). Even when the missionaries moved down to Sudan, the work in northern Sudan was still connected with the Coptic Evangelical Church of Egypt as they concentrated on education and health alongside a small church composed mostly of Egyptian expatriates. However, later this church in northern Sudan became known as the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) (Jean Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, 1999, p. 467).<sup>3</sup>

When Sudan was reopened up for missions, the British governor in Egypt limited the number of missionaries who could enter Sudan, and there were some terms and conditions attached to this restriction as well. They were ordered not to be involved in direct evangelism, but the British government in the Sudan allowed them to do educational and medical work like it was done in Egypt as long as no attempt to spread the Christian faith was made. Giffen recalled in his book when he wrote:

We were informed that no Christian mission work would be allowed among the Moslem population in the Sudan. At the same time, it was pointed out to us that we might go beyond, to the black tribes of the White Nile, with liberty to open as many stations as we wished and with freedom to teach the people the Gospel as we pleased (Giffen, 1905, p. 63).

Sir Reginald Wingate, who was the deputy Governor General, was a devout Christian, and he encouraged the missionaries to go to south of Sudan and begin preaching there, for the south until then was unexplored. Wingate wanted to see Christianity come into this southern region because the entire north of Sudan was by then occupied by Arabs who penetrated into the region very early setting up their centres over there (Wheeler, 1982, p. 31). However, at the time when Christianity moved to the south, there were still missionaries who remained in the north especially in the city of Omdurman where the missionaries first set their feet. The American United Presbyterians Mission both in the north and south concentrated on educational work, as I mentioned above. Hence, they began a girls' boarding school in Khartoum North in 1908

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<sup>3</sup> Before this period, the British Governors in Egypt and Sudan (by the names of Kitchener and Lord Cromer) did not want to allow any missionaries in Sudan because they thought that would spark conflict with the Arabs present in the region. In 1898, a young pastor by the name of Llewellyn Henry Gwynne was waiting in Egypt for permission to enter Sudan.

and Bible work in the homes where they gave lessons in reading and writing, with the Bible as the main textbook, to Sudanese women. Their Bible class for Muslims at Omdurman was considered in the first decade of the twentieth century to be the biggest in all of North Africa because there were 120 students admitted who were taught Christianity by a converted Muslim (Ahmed, Pdf, p. 48).

While in the north amongst the Muslims, there were strategies put in place. Education was used as a tool of change while modernization was also used as a tool to attain a reformed Islam in the north. All these strategies were drafted to be carried out by both the government and the Christian mission according to Hassan, although there was to be no direct evangelism allowed in the northern part of Sudan amongst these Muslims (Ahmed, Pdf, p. 39).

When Rev. J. Kelly Giffen, who was an American Presbyterian missionary, heard that the town of Omdurman in Sudan was captured by the British and Egyptian troops from Muhammed Ahmed<sup>4</sup>, who led the Mahdists rebels, Giffen could not wait to see the American Mission enter Sudan and start work there. He did not begin until 1900 when he paid a visit to Omdurman town with a friend of his by the name of Dr. Andrew Watson and the two stayed with Gwynne and Harpur who were already in the area. These two reported back to Egypt (where the Headquarters by then was), and the mission in Egypt set aside Rev. & Mrs. Kelly Giffen together with Dr. Hugh T. McLaughlin, who was a physician, and his wife to start work in Sudan immediately (Wheeler, 1982, p. 32). In the south of Sudan, the Presbyterian Missionaries led by Giffen and McLaughlin opened up the region in 1901 when they visited Upper Nile region (south Sudan is divided into three regions, Upper Nile, Bahr-el-Ghazal, and Equatoria Regions). The three regions of the south were divided up among three mission societies and Upper Nile was given to the Presbyterians (Jean Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, 1999, p. 467). While they were in Upper Nile region, they chose to set up their mission station at Doleib Hill near the junction of the Sobat and the White Nile Rivers, which is to the north of Pochalla town. There at Doleib Hill, they stationed the

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<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Ahmed was born in Dongola, Sudan a self-claimed prophet who considered himself to be the long-looked for or expected Islamic leader whose coming was prophesied in the Koran and is anxiously awaited in the whole Mohammedan world. Ahmed claimed to be the religious leader who was a piety man took armed against the corrupt regime in Sudan winning victory over Egyptian soldiers in Sudan on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1883 at the town of Shekan near El-Obeid thus controlling the entire Sudan after he set up his headquarter at the west bank of the white Nile which later became known as Omdurman city.

mission headquarter and this was not officially opened until 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1902 because of the delay that was caused by the British government in Sudan who were reluctant to give permission to the American missionaries (Wheeler, 1982, p. 42).

The first few months after the missionary families arrived at Doleib Hill were spent in putting up houses for the missionaries with the help from a few Shilluks who were the host community. The larger community of Shilluks did not want to help the missionaries in their work. Thus Giffen came up with a plan for missionary work; he called it “The Dignity of Labour”. This plan was based on two ideas. First, only by labour could improvements be made in the country. Secondly, working is a way to cure the sin of idleness. Giffen later recorded this when he said, “Without labour – productive, useful labour – there could be no development of character. We must teach people to do something before we can expect them to be anything” (Giffen, 1905, p. 107). I think Giffen saw that it was laziness that made the Shilluk uninterested in any kind of work, or they saw work as a curse and did not want to have anything to do with it. The other reason could be that the Shilluk, having experienced the forced labours from the Arabs, saw these missionary works as just another form of the same. Besides giving them the gospel, the missionaries taught the local Shilluk people many useful skills; such as, carpentry, brick-making, new building methods and skills in agriculture (Wheeler, 1982, p. 43).

### **Expansion of Presbyterian Mission in Upper Nile Region**

The missionaries were facing one problem in Doleib Hill. They had not yet learnt to speak in the Shilluk language; thus, they could not preach the gospel as there were no English translators. However, since they had spent some times in Egypt, they spoke Arabic to some extent and there were some Shilluk people also who spoke Arabic – especially a man called Muhammad whose father was an Arab and whose mother was a Shilluk woman. This Muhammad became a great help to the missionaries especially in translation as the missionaries began with him as their main translator. They went around villages preaching the gospel in Arabic with Muhammad as the interpreter.

At the Mission Headquarters, the missionaries set up a small building for worship on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1903 where fourteen people were recorded in attendance in the first service. The missionaries were encouraged though, and the first baptism was carried out in 1913 when a man by the name of Nyidak was baptised. In 1919 two more Shilluks, a man called Deng and a woman by the name of Dak, were baptised.

The work began to grow although it was slow. By 1923 about 200 people had been baptised and there were five elders from the local people who helped the missionaries in the work. This development encouraged the missionaries to open up a school in the area to train the Shilluk people, because the missionaries believed that the preaching of the gospel went together with the practical service to the local people. The missionaries also believed that education could change the minds of the Shilluk people and cause them to understand the gospel easily. They also saw this as one way to empower development amongst the Shilluk people. Hence, the first school was opened up in September 1903 which began in English with only two students but after one year the number increased to 16 students. Missionaries were encouraged again and opened up a boarding section for the school which began operating in March 1924. This school bore many other “bush schools” as they were called (Wheeler, 1982, p. 44).

Apart from preaching of the gospel and education, the missionaries were also involved in medical work amongst the Shilluk people with the help of Dr. Hugh T. McLaughlin. The missionaries saw medical care as one way to show the love of Christ to the local people. They expanded this medical work to the nearby villages and since the only possible way to travel around the region was by boat, the missionaries bought a boat from the local people in 1907 to take medicine to the Nuer people’s villages along the Sobat River. This medical work saw tremendous success in the area. Even the Nuer people, who mistrusted the missionaries in the first place, were drawn to them because of the medical work. Hence when the missionaries finally decided to expand the mission work among the Nuer people, they decided to start with the medical work. Finally, Rev. McCreery (who was a linguist) and Dr. R.A. Lambie were posted among the Nuer at Nasir where they arrived on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1912. They recorded that the Nuer were more receptive to the gospel than the Shilluk. In 1923, the first hospital was built at Nasir with the help of a Christian from America who gave money to the missionaries for the project. Therefore, at Nasir, schools and one hospital were built as the gospel was being preached to the local Nuer people (Wheeler, 1982, p. 45).

These missionaries persevered through the various difficulties they went through, especially sickness in the area. However, in 1946, the congregation founded by the American mission in Upper Nile region decided to form their own presbytery. The request was tendered in the same year in which it was granted in 1948. Hence, the Upper Nile Presbytery came into existence with its headquarter at Malakal town which became the capital of the Upper Nile Region. This church in the south was merged with the

Presbyterians in northern Sudan and was formed under one name, Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS) (Jean Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, 1999, p. 467). This presbytery was separated from the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches of Sudan (EPCS) and the Coptic Evangelical Church of Egypt (CECE) but still held fellowship with them.

Thereafter, the Dutch Reformed Church in America sent some missionaries to Sudan who were not part of the United Presbyterian Church in America, but they wanted to see the church in Upper Nile become more African and less tied to the United Presbyterian Church in America. Hence, there was a plan to form a fully independent church in the Upper Nile Region though the plan still linked the Upper Nile Presbytery with the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches in Sudan and Egypt in some ways. This Presbytery would remain independent of their control which was realised in 1948 and later the Upper Nile Presbytery became fully independent from all other Churches especially Evangelical Presbyterian of Sudan and Egypt and less tied to Presbyterian Churches in America but enjoyed fellowship with them as I mentioned above (Wheeler, 1982, p. 83).

Although the south Sudanese enjoyed the benefit of the gospel preached to them by the missionaries, when Sudan became independent from the British, the Arabs showed a bad sign that they would soon interfere with the mission works. The first civil war in Sudan broke out in 1955, one year before the independence of the nation, which happened later on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1956. Two interests were witnessed: the British saw religion as an important factor to unite all the Sudanese while the Arabs saw the missionaries as trouble-makers who were working against the unity of the Sudanese people because the Arabs wanted Islam to be the religion of the nation. Thus, in 1957, just one year after independence, the government which was in the hands of the Arabs by then took control of all mission schools that were opened in the south by the missionaries. This was seen as an attempt to reduce the power of the missionaries and their influence on young people in the south of Sudan (Wheeler, 1982, p. 86).

There was a power shift in 1958 when General Abboud seized power through a coup d'état. General Abboud believed that the problem in the south of Sudan was education and therefore he opened so many schools in all the corners of the south with Arabic as the language of the instruction in these schools. He also took a step to restrict the missionaries and the churches in the south and advanced Islam. For example, in 1960 Friday was made the official day of rest from work throughout the country instead of Sunday, which had already been introduced by the missionaries and the British government

throughout Mongalla Province<sup>5</sup>, South Sudan where Sunday was officially proclaimed the day of rest on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1918. This new development affected the southern region that was resting on Sunday. Christian students who protested in Rumbek Boys School were harassed by the Arab police and detained where they were given long prison sentences<sup>6</sup> (Wheeler, 1982, p. 86).

The government in Khartoum was slowly crafting to do away with the missionaries in the south with an aim to kill Christianity in the south and Sudan at large. In 1962, the Missionary Societies Act was introduced which tried to restrict the missionaries further in the south of Sudan. This act forbade missionaries, and any other Christian ministers, from preaching or from baptising children under the age of 18 years without a licence from the government (which had to be renewed yearly). Many of the Sudanese priests and pastors refused to adhere to this act and did not apply for the licences to preach the gospel. The Government of General Abboud then expelled all the missionaries from Sudan the same year accusing them of becoming trouble makers in the south of Sudan. This happened at the time that Anyanya I, a guerrilla movement of the southern Sudanese, was fighting against the government of General Abboud and was gaining ground and strength in the South. The evil government of General Abboud fell at the end of 1964 when demonstrations sparked out in the north – beginning at Khartoum University and SIRR el Khatim – and took over. The government called a round table conference to resolve the problems in the south, but this conference failed. Then later Abboud was also removed and Mohammed Mahjoub took over and formed a new government and promised to win the war against the Anyanya I movement of the south in three months. However, his government saw the worst of it all, worse than the governments before him. The Mahjoub government in anger destroyed villages, schools and churches in the south and forced people out of their towns and villages with many of them crossing the borders to Uganda and Zaire. Nevertheless, there were a few pastors who remained preaching the gospel to those who were left behind. Wheeler recorded that at this time, there was a great revival and growth of the church in the south. Many people saw the providence of God and his protection. Thus, many became Christians and were baptised. “The church therefore grew in

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<sup>5</sup> Mongalla province by then covered the current entire Upper Nile region and Eastern Equatoria with its post at current Mongalla.

<sup>6</sup> Sunday was restored as official day of rest later after independence of South Sudan on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2011. In northern Sudan Friday remains the official day of rest. This is because the northern country is dominated by Islam while South is mostly Christian.



numbers and faith and it came out of the forest and out of exile stronger than it went in” (Wheeler, 1982).

### **How Presbyterians Reached out to the Anyuak People**

From the history I gave above, the first Presbyterian missionaries who moved to the south settled in Doleib Hill amongst the Shilluk people in 1902. The work soon expanded to adjacent neighbourhoods; the missionaries expanded their mission works to Nasir amongst the Nuer people, where they arrived on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1912 and established another post there. Around Nasir were Anyuak<sup>7</sup> people who were easily reachable by the missionaries. In addition to Nuer boys, the Nasir School also received Anyuak and Murle boys (from Akobo and Pibor respectively) sent by government administration who gained school confidence. The Nasir school system had some village schools and planted an out-school in Akobo among the Anyuak under the direction of Joel Gilo. Some girls’ education started in 1935 in the greater Upper Nile region, but it did not show much progress until the 1940s (Adingora, 2019). Before this period, we see a picture of an out-school of Nasir, inspected by Rev. Will Adier (with Mun Omot from Torbar) who commended the amount of commitment put forth in the work done there right from the beginning by the missionaries. The first Anyuak to be baptized in 1923 was Bakat, who died the same year (Ronald Werner, William Anderson, & Andrew Wheeler, 2000, p. 309).

The missionaries proceeded from Nasir to Akado (on the Ethiopian side) still amongst the Anyuak people, which became known as Pokwow. They succeeded in winning some souls who later became evangelists. They continued and penetrated to the Gilo region in the heart of the Anyuak land and established their base in Pinyudo, where they opened up a clinic and lower primary school just like they did in Akobo and Akado. Although they established churches that survived more or less up to today, they did not go to all the regions of Anyuak. Adingora commented that there was a task left for the Anyuak converts to carry out and win more souls to Christ (Adingora, 2019).

### **Rev. McClure, The Main Missionary Behind the Mission Work Among the Anyuak People**

At first, the American missionaries were very slow to extend their mission to the Anyuak people because of the fact that the missionaries had a shortage of funds for mission. Presbyterians in the USA annually reduced expenditure

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<sup>7</sup> The Anyuak people are found in two towns in South Sudan, Akobo and Pochalla town.

from 1926-1936, while at the same time they had already projects in the north of Sudan that hampered them from beginning new missions. They aimed to keep their work alive and not to extend it. This is one of the biggest barriers that kept the Anyuak out of the missionaries' dream. Following his graduation from Westminster College, PA, Don McClure had a burning heart to go to Africa (and specifically Sudan amongst the Shilluk people) and do the work of evangelism. He and his wife Lyda, having prayed for this great task, agreed to go for the Lord. McClure and his wife proceeded to south Sudan and landed in Doleib Hill, which was the American Mission Headquarter in Upper Nile Region. His primary call was to preach the gospel to the unreached people in the region. Seeing that there had never been evangelism done amongst the Anyuak people, McClure planned to go to Akobo and he landed in Akobo in 1938 where he started a mission and served for most of the years of his service as a missionary in Africa. He opened mission stations at Akobo, Akado, Gilo, Shuma area near Dimma in the southern Gambella region of Ethiopia and went all the way to the Somalia region of Ethiopia serving the Lord Jesus Christ. McClure's mission was supported by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia who told him, "You must hurry, if you don't reach them quickly for Christ, others will, then your case will be set back decades perhaps centuries, time is short" (Ronald Werner, William Anderson, & Andrew Wheeler, 2000). The Ethiopia emperor Haile Selassie spoke these words to Don McClure who dedicated his life to work with the Anyuak in both Ethiopia and Sudan. The words were truer than anyone could realize at the time. Don McClure pioneered missionary work among the Anyuak people first at Akobo in the Sudan side, as I mentioned above, and later in the Ethiopian side. He was a very close friend to the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie which enabled him to organize assistance for Upper Nile from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He continued to work in Ethiopia until the fall of and the death of the Emperor. After retirement, McClure continued as a volunteer at Gode, Ethiopia, until he was shot to death by a guerrilla movement in Ethiopia (called Ogaden) where he lost his dear life on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1977 (Ronald Werner, William Anderson, & Andrew Wheeler, 2000).

### **Mission Work in Akobo and the Surrounding Region**

Joel Gilo started work in Akobo as a teacher and evangelist under mission supervision in 1935; this was in the same year that McClure questioned why he was "working there in Doleib Hill. The oldest mission saw a need to move to a new place" (Ronald Werner, William Anderson, & Andrew Wheeler, 2000, p. 309). From then McClure concentrated his mission on the Anyuak

people. McClure was motivated by the Anyuak traders who would go to Doleib Hill almost yearly to trade their canoes and tobacco for cows. McClure insisted on going to start a work at Akobo, and the mission insisted that unless there were houses, doctors and a lorry first in Akobo he would not be allowed to go. Despite all these terms and conditions, he declared to go by himself and build his own tukuls<sup>8</sup>, and he then hired a lorry, driving it to Akobo in 1937. It was in this year that McClure got clearance from the British authorities and finally launched an Anyuak mission at Akobo.

A vision to reach the Anyuak helped to rescue the sleeping American Mission in south Sudan. Don McClure could not get back to south Sudan on time when he went back to America because of the civil war that closed the way until 1943. When he finally came back, there was a famine in the area so he brought in *dura*<sup>9</sup>, which he used to help the local people as they worked for the mission – what he called “food for work” – clearing the mission land and building schools for food as wages so that the mission work could resume. In Akobo, McClure witnessed that the Anyuak people showed openness to education and to the gospel more than the Shilluk and the Nuer people of Doleib Hill and Nasir. He then widened his vision amongst the Anyuak people concentrating on agriculture (teaching the local farmers to improve their agricultural methods), but his request was turned down by the British government in Khartoum when he appealed for some help. The missionaries later transferred this plan and their agriculturalists to Ethiopia over the border (Ronald Werner, William Anderson, & Andrew Wheeler, 2000).

In 1944 McClure proposed what he called the *Anyuak plan* which called for 15 missionaries to be available amongst the Anyuak people to do a thorough work for 15 years evangelizing, healing through the medical work, educating, leadership training, working in agricultural, doing Bible translation and then leaving the Anyuak people to carry on the work by themselves. It was a brilliant vision. Sadly, the Second World War interrupted the plan and prevented McClure from remaining in Akobo. However, his plan received some support from some of his friends in the mission, including J. Lowrie Anderson, the mission secretary in south Sudan and the mission secretary of the board of USA, Glen Reed, who worked with him in Doleib Hill. McClure then went all over to the USA stirring churches to back his Anyuak vision (Ronald Werner, William Anderson, & Andrew Wheeler, 2000, p. 347). The United Presbyterian Church was seeking to join the Reformed Church in

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<sup>8</sup> Thatch-grass houses with mudded walls.

<sup>9</sup> *Dura* is the local name for sorghum.

America at that time, and McClure visited some of the Reformed Churches (RCA) and they decided to support the Anyuak plan. On his return to Akobo amongst the Anyuak, McClure went to Egypt with Evangelist Adwok Mayom and the Evangelical Church in Egypt decided to participate in south Sudan, commencing in 1954. However, in 1952, just two years before his plan commenced, all the missionaries in the south were expelled. McClure refused to go back to the USA but crossed the border to Ethiopia where he opened a mission at Pokwow and Gilo River.

### **Conclusion**

The commencement of Presbyterian Mission work in Sudan begins with the United Presbyterians of North America and the Evangelical Church of Egypt entering Sudan as a mission field in the 1890s and establishing stations at the end of this decade and early into the next. It is a complex history in part due to the complexity of the political situation and also the complexity of the ethnic and tribal divisions and groups in Sudan from the 1890s through to after independence in the 1950s. The advance of the mission was with much sacrifice, and yet we also see certain indigenous men of peace emerging who were of great assistance to advance the work. There are many strategies which the mission used to advance its work of God's kingdom in Sudan and also a long list of missionaries and indigenous church leaders both Egyptian and Sudanese. Theologically the work in this period was evangelical in nature, and yet there may be some questions which need further exploration (for example, to dig deeper and to ask about syncretism) which at present are beyond the scope of this introductory paper.

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## **Foundations of the Free Presbyterian Mission in Zimbabwe**

**J. Cameron Fraser\***

*\*Cameron Fraser was born in Zimbabwe, grew up mostly in Scotland and has (among other things) pastored in western Canada for thirty years before retiring to concentrate on writing as well as preaching. He has a Th.M. in missions from Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia) and a D.Min. in pastoral care from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.*

It is both a privilege and a challenge for me to write about the history of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland mission in what is now Zimbabwe. I was born there, back when it was Southern Rhodesia. Not only my parents but other members of my family as well as friends have played an integral role in the mission's history. It seems strange for me to refer to them objectively and formally, but this I have tried to do. I have been helped by a number of published resources, including biographies of key leaders. As much as possible, I have told the story in my own words but have also paraphrased and quoted liberally from the sources on occasion. One of these sources was my own short account of my missionary father, and in places I have shamelessly plagiarized my own words, to which I hold the copyright! A complete bibliography can be found at the end.

### **An Auspicious Start**

The way in which the Free Presbyterians' African mission began was quite remarkable and auspicious, clearly indicating divine guidance and provision. John Boyana Radasi was born sometime around 1876 and grew up in a Christian home in Seymour, Transkai, an area in Britain's Cape Colony of South Africa. As part of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee

in 1897, John Radasi joined a choir that travelled to the United States the previous year. There he became friends with another young African, James Saki. Having apparently heard that “Scotland was a very religious country where there were good preachers,”<sup>1</sup> the two men decided to visit Scotland on their way home. They made their way to Edinburgh, where they found themselves standing at the side of a street across the road from the house of a Free Presbyterian lady, Mrs. Sinclair. Her son was looking out the window and was interested to see two African men, as he had lived in South Africa himself for some years. He went outside to speak to the men, then invited them in for a meal. Conversation ensued, indicating the Africans’ spiritual interest. “Mrs. Sinclair knew that the Rev. Neil Cameron, then a Free Presbyterian minister in Glasgow, was prayerfully interested in beginning foreign mission work. She sent him a telegram which read, ‘I have your missionary’. Mr. Cameron replied, ‘Send him along’.”<sup>2</sup>

This was just three years after the founding of the Free Presbyterian (hereafter FP) Church of Scotland.<sup>3</sup> Both men began studying for the ministry in the new denomination, with a view to returning to Africa as missionaries. In 1900 Saki left to join the Plymouth Brethren, but Radasi continued his studies as both a teacher and a minister, was ordained in 1904, and set sail for Cape Town in his native South Africa. He belonged to the Fingo tribe and had heard that some of his people had settled among the Ndebele near Bulawayo in Matabeleland, part of what was then Southern Rhodesia. As the languages of the Fingo and Ndebele were similar, in that both tribes were offshoots of the Zulu race, which in turn traced its roots to the Bantu of the Congo, he decided to take the train north to Bulawayo and begin his missionary work there. He arrived at the train station, not knowing anyone, but was glad to see someone wearing clerical attire (as was he). This turned out to be an African Wesleyan minister, “who introduced himself and offered the newcomer accommodation for as long as he would require it—a wonderful provision for

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Nicolson, *John Boyana Radasi: Missionary to Zimbabwe* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1996), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolson, 11.

<sup>3</sup> The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland was formed in 1893, in response to a Declaratory Act passed the previous year by what was then the Free Church of Scotland. This act modified the Free Church’s adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith. It also made way for a merger with the United Presbyterian Church in 1900. A minority of ministers, elders and members stayed out of the union and formed the current Free Church, which has since divided into the Free Church and the Free Church Continuing.

a stranger in a strange land.”<sup>4</sup> There was also a young porter by the name of Stephen Hlazo who came from a Fingo location thirty-eight miles from Bulawayo. He overheard the conversation between the two ministers and some days later, while visiting his father, Chief John Hlazo, told him about this newcomer.

Chief Hlazo and a few friends set off for Bulawayo to meet John Radasi and discovered that they knew some of his relatives in Cape Colony. As their present location was situated next to the Ndebele, they helped arrange for the newcomer to settle on a ten-acre piece of land (for a pound a year) that came to be named Ingwenya Mission in the Ntabazinduna Reserve (now “Area”). Ingwenya, meaning “crocodile,” was named after a nearby river.

It is interesting to note some of the historical background that led John Radasi to choose Matabeleland as his mission field. Matabeleland had been settled by a noted warrior Mzilikazi, who had defied the fearsome Zulu chief Shaka and then fled north with a small group of his followers. Mzilikazi met the Scottish pioneer missionary Robert Moffat, father-in-law of missionary-explorer David Livingstone. A friendship developed between the two men. In 1859, Moffat and his son received permission to begin a mission in what became known as Matabeleland, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society.

Southern Rhodesia was formed in 1898, named in honour of Cecil Rhodes of the British South Africa Company, comprising Matabeleland to the south and Mashonaland to the north. Rhodes invited the Fingos from Cape Colony to settle in Matabeleland, as they had been loyal to the British. Thus, it seemed natural for Radasi, a Fingo, to make this area his mission field.

Something of the challenges native Africans faced under colonial rule can be gauged from a letter John Radasi wrote to Rev. Neil Cameron in Scotland:

Rhodesia is under the British Chartered Company, and it seems as if I am in a foreign country. Its laws are quite different from the Cape Colony. As soon as I arrived in Rhodesia, I had to go to the police and report my arrival. All natives without a pass are arrested. The Matabeles have to carry a pass for being in Bulawayo, and another special pass if they want to go out after nine in the evening, and another pass if they are going to the country. They have to report themselves to the police in every place they go to, and ask permission to stay. If they

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<sup>4</sup> Catherine J.N. Tallach, *Mfundisi Tallach: a man with a burden for souls* (imprintdigital.com, 2012), 38.



wish to visit friends, they have to get a special pass. I had to go to the magistrate and ask for an exemption pass for Bulawayo and district. The Matabeles are just living in terror of being arrested, as there are so many kinds of passes wanted.<sup>5</sup>

Such indignities would eventually be a factor leading to armed rebellion and the establishment of African rule in Zimbabwe as well as in other African nations, but there was no indication of that as yet in Radasi's time.

In Radasi's new mission field at Ingwenya a church building, a school and a home were constructed. In addition to evangelistic work among the animistic people of the region, he began primary school teaching and also some medical work, with the help of a textbook. He later extended his teaching to young adults. Whenever people learned to read, they were rewarded with a Bible, a policy that continued for some time. The new missionary "found that polygamy and superstition were the main hindrances, and lack of European clothing was often given as the reason for not attending the services." With the help of some Fingo Christians, services were arranged at two outstations (besides Ingwenya) and "in May 1908 Mr. Radasi's fourth year of labour saw the first fruits of that in two adult and eight infant baptisms, and a Communion service for the few Fingo members of the Church."<sup>6</sup> A number of metrical Psalms in Xhosa (the language of the Fingo) were found in the Wesleyan hymn-book and used, and references to the translation and printing of Psalms continued through the twenty years of John Radasi's ministry. The entire Psalter was printed in 1922. It would be forty years later before a translation of the Psalms into Ndebele was completed.

Radasi's wife (a daughter of Chief Hlazo) died in 1910, after only four years of marriage, leaving a baby girl. He married another chief's daughter five years later and was to have four sons and a daughter with her. The year 1915 was otherwise "a bad year for sickness, mainly malaria. A sufferer's first resort was usually to a witch-doctor, because the prevalent belief was that an enemy had had him bewitched, and only a witch-doctor could undo that.... Mr Radasi had to be continually visiting the sick, seeking to inform them of the

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<sup>5</sup> *The Life and Labours of a Native African Missionary*, compiled by M. Macpherson. (T Gisborne, NZ: Gisborne Herald Co. Ltd., 1966) 11. Letter to Rev. Neil Cameron, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1904.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour in Africa Part I: 1904-1959" in *A Hundred Years of Witness* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1993), 168-69.

spiritual causes underlying all the ills that afflict men, and praying with them and for them. Many died that year.”<sup>7</sup> The Spanish flu also caused many deaths.

In August 1923, Radasi became unwell from diabetes and arrangements were made for him to receive treatment in Johannesburg, South Africa. There was initial improvement, but a relapse the following year. Meanwhile, arrangements were being made in Scotland for John Tallach, a ministerial student, to join the work at Ingwenya. With Radasi’s deteriorating health, it was felt advisable to speed up Tallach’s ordination and induction to the work. He arrived in Bulawayo on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1923, expecting to be met by Radasi. Instead, he received the news that his intended missionary colleague had been run over and killed by the train he had intended to board for Bulawayo at nearby Bembesi Halt. Thus, Tallach’s first official act of ministry at Ingwenya was to conduct Radasi’s funeral. He observed that “The whole service bespoke (the people’s) love for their pastor and his influence over them.”<sup>8</sup>

A number of tributes were received from government offices in Salisbury (now Harare) and other parts of the country. Among them, the Director of Education wrote: “Although it is now a good many years since I last saw Mr. Radasi, I have always followed his work with much interest, and have known him to be steadfast, loyal and devoted, without any trace of arrogance though living in surroundings which might easily have made even an upright and God-fearing man somewhat arrogant... I know that his example was a pure one and am persuaded that his influence will remain among the people whom he served so long and faithfully.”<sup>9</sup>

### **A Challenging Transition**

It is difficult to imagine a more challenging introduction to missionary work than the one faced by John Tallach, a challenge “that only Divine grace, coupled with the natural qualities of cheerfulness, adaptability and energy of body and mind could meet.”<sup>10</sup> His situation was greatly helped after a few months by the arrival of his fiancé, Ann Sinclair, to become his wife. Together, they were to have five children, two sons and three daughters. Two of the three daughters, Catherine and Margaret, and the elder son James were to play important roles in the mission’s future. Catherine has also written a biography of her father, *Mfundisi Tallach: a man with a burden for souls - mfundisi* meaning “teacher” or “minister” - a long awaited and fitting tribute to an outstanding and much-loved father and missionary pioneer. The book also

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<sup>7</sup> McPherson, “Missionary Endeavour,” 169-170.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolson, 106.

<sup>9</sup> Nicolson, 107.

<sup>10</sup> McPherson, “Missionary Endeavour,” 172.

provides useful information on the mission's background and several other key leaders.

In 1928, the Tallachs were joined by Roderick MacDonald as an ordained medical missionary. "To begin with, Dr. MacDonald had to use as a dispensary a small iron-roofed hut which had been Mr. Radasi's study. In the summer it became like an oven, and was almost intolerable for doctor and patients alike. Along with many minor ailments, there were cases of pneumonia, dysentery, malaria and venereal disease. Sick visiting was done on horseback, and 2,000 cases were treated in the first year."<sup>11</sup>

After almost nine years of hard but productive work, John Tallach was overdue furlough, so with his wife and family he returned to Scotland in June 1932. He "spent a good deal of his time giving lectures, which did much to increase the Church people's interest in their Foreign Mission work. In his absence, Dr. MacDonald took responsibility for the oversight of the work."<sup>12</sup>

When the Tallachs returned in 1933, they were accompanied by Jean Nicolson, a remarkable and courageous woman who had been born in the Arizona desert to Scottish parents. Following her father's death when she was just one year old, she moved (after a brief stay in San Francisco) to Scotland with her mother and older brother and grew up there. She was to devote her life to mission work, beginning as head teacher at Ingwenya, and later as an administrator. Her widowed mother also made the trip and proved to be of assistance to the mission in a number of ways. Jean Nicolson never married, but was in later years to be known as "Auntie Jean" to the children of other missionaries.

John Tallach observed "It is owing to (Jean Nicolson) that we have a boarding school. It is owing to Mr. Radasi that we have a mission."<sup>13</sup> In one of his annual reports to Synod, he noted that the local people "whether adults or children, require some understanding and 'Misi' (Jean Nicolson) seems to have understood them immediately. To us it was a wonder to see the trust they immediately placed in her; there seemed to be no suspicion. This I take it is owing to her large sympathy. The school is now run on systematic lines and a new life has entered into all parts of it."<sup>14</sup> Miss Nicolson's leadership in the school freed up Tallach's time to visit the surrounding kraals (traditional African villages consisting of a number of mud huts), "which he did every weekday except Saturday."<sup>15</sup>

Jean Nicolson's biographer, Dolina MacCuish, explains:

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<sup>11</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 173.

<sup>12</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 174-75.

<sup>13</sup> MacCuish, 70.

<sup>14</sup> MacCuish, 72.

<sup>15</sup> MacCuish, 72.

By the time Mr Tallach had arrived in 1924 about 360 pupils were being taught under the aegis of Ingwenya Mission, 120 at Ingwenya School, the rest in four Kraal Schools. The policy was that when there were converts in a village and a preaching station had been established, only then would a school be opened. These schools were at first taught by persons who had simply learned to read and their function was chiefly to teach Bible knowledge and reading. Writing and simple arithmetic were also taught according to the teacher's ability, and cleanliness and order were promoted. The schools were thus an extension of the Mission work of spreading the gospel. Such schools came to be called officially Kraal Schools—that is, elementary schools taught by an unqualified teacher....

Mr Tallach carried on the work, supervising the schools and teaching as necessary just as Mr. Radasi had done. The education offered was a great advance on no education, but it had its limitations. For one thing, Kraal Schools attracted minimum grants, so scope for improvement was limited....It was desirable that Ingwenya should take its pupils beyond the elementary stage of education.

This is what Mr Tallach decided to do....Thus the school was in 1927 upgraded from a Kraal to a Central School with four teachers – three African and one European. It attracted about three times the former grant with the great bonus of being able to train its own teachers for the side schools instead of sending them to other institutions for training.

Throughout the years there had been girls in the school, but they were greatly outnumbered by the boys. The prevailing view was that girls did not matter. Mr. Tallach had other ideas. He was something of a pioneer in his attitude to the education of girls; they were the mothers of the future, he argued, and the well-being of a family was largely in their hands. Girls did matter.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dolina MacCuish, *A Heart for Africa: The story of Jean Nicolson – Missionary in Zimbabwe* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2008), 61-63.

As an experiment, John Tallach decided to accept up to 20 girls from outstations as boarders. In fact, 24 girls from the outstations attended. "In addition another 40 or 50 youngsters attended as day pupils for domestic and industrial instruction....The new venture was a great success and numbers increased steadily....The boys were not neglected. It was proposed to start agricultural work with them. The Government was approached for an extension of the grounds allocated to the Mission and they were enlarged from 20 to 60 acres. The boys were encouraged to plant vegetables and were allowed to take their produce home...their families' appreciation nurturing their enthusiasm."<sup>17</sup>

A government requirement that one member of the staff should be appointed mission superintendent for administrative purposes led to John Tallach occupying that position. Meanwhile, "Dr. MacDonald was now giving 3,000 treatments in the year and had around one hundred in-patients in the same period. His wife, along with Mrs. Nicolson, was helping by teaching practical subjects to children and adults. The MacDonalds went on furlough in 1936 and the Nicolsons two years later."<sup>18</sup> At that time, and for many years later, the standard period of service was seven years for men and five for women.

During the eighteen months that Miss Nicolson was away, her place at Ingwenya was taken by James Fraser who had recently begun a teaching career in the Scottish Highlands. "Ingwenya Primary School was now regarded as second to none in the colony, and continued to hold that place."<sup>19</sup> Many new members were accepted into the church, particularly at Ingwenya from among the girl boarders.

It was April 1940 before Jean Nicolson was able to return to her post, and another six months before her mother managed to join her, after being a German detainee – a dramatic story of suspense and bravery vividly told in Jean's words in her biography *A Heart for Africa*. James Fraser then left to take over teacher-training at Hope Fountain, a mission station of the London Missionary Society. (This was one of the missions originally founded by Robert Moffat.) It was there that he received the nickname *Thandabantu* ("the man who loves the people") and earned a reputation as a trainer of teachers perhaps without an equal in the country. In years to come, the teacher training centres in both government and missionary schools were to be run on principles developed by him.

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<sup>17</sup> MacCuish, 63.

<sup>18</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 175.

<sup>19</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 175.

During his time at Ingwenya, Fraser had developed what was to be a lifelong friendship with James Stewart, a fellow Scot who was the government inspector of native schools. Once Stewart made a surprise visit to announce that pupils at Ingwenya had taken five out of eleven prizes for essays on “veld fires”,<sup>20</sup> in some cases competing against students two grades higher in other schools. As a result, there was a flood of applications to the school, but Tallach as mission superintendent had already been forced, due to space limitations, to reject quite a few.

It was as a result of James Stewart’s recommendation that James Fraser went to Hope Fountain, originally intending to stay for a year before resigning and returning home to help in the war effort. However, appeals originating from the mission superintendent resulted in a letter from the prime minister’s office requesting him to stay at his post, as it was “of the greatest national importance”. Thus, it was not until September of 1945 that he returned to Scotland, after what had been a seven-year absence from his homeland. Before he left, he offered himself as a full-time Free Presbyterian missionary (despite having received attractive offers from other mission agencies) and while at home studied for the ministry, as well as taking a dentistry course in London. He also married his childhood sweetheart Christine (Chris) Finlayson, a nurse. Their first child, Elizabeth, was born in 1946 and the following year the young family set out for Africa. (A second daughter, Isobel, and the present writer were born on the mission field. A second son was stillborn in 1956.)

Meanwhile, the church work at Ingwenya continued to expand, and the ordaining of a number of elders and deacons meant that outstations which had depended on visiting preachers now had their own regular services. There were now fourteen elders, the same number of deacons, and twenty-six African teachers with 1,200 pupils. Ingwenya itself had four hundred pupils and eight African teachers.

By 1945 education at Ingwenya was being handicapped by a severe shortage of accommodation. Nearly five hundred pupils in thirteen classes were being taught in only eight classrooms, so the Director of Education suggested that a large H-shaped block of classrooms be erected at a rate of two or three rooms annually. A low interest loan would be available. It was also stated that Jean Nicolson needed an assistant. She received one in January 1946 in the person of Jane Mackay.

The new school buildings for Ingwenya were approved. An advertisement in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* for a builder was answered by Alexander MacPherson, then a deacon in the Glasgow congregation. He was accepted and the condition made that he should also help with services

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<sup>20</sup> Also known as “bush fires” or “wildfires”. “Veld” is “open, uncultivated grassland in southern Africa”.

and teaching “as opportunity offered”. In April 1947 he arrived at Ingwenya and “taking up the work which under Dr. MacDonald’s supervision had made an impressive beginning, tried, as soon as materials became available, to prepare the first classrooms for use.”<sup>21</sup>

John Tallach’s health had deteriorated to the point that in 1946 he tendered his resignation. After seven years of ministry in the Oban congregation back in Scotland, he died there in 1955 at the age of 65. Although he was known to be an effective and much appreciated preacher, it was the example of his life as a whole that one African friend recalled in commenting, “It can be said of Mr. Tallach that he preached more by deed than by word. His life was a powerful sermon to many souls in Rhodesia’.”<sup>22</sup>

It is fitting that when a secondary school was built at Ingwenya in 1957, it was named “The John Tallach Secondary School”. It was built under the supervision of John Tallach’s son James who, having trained as a carpenter and joiner (finishing carpenter) in Scotland, had returned to work in Rhodesia and had been recruited by the mission to replace MacPherson who had returned to Scotland by this time. When James Tallach (with wife Ello whom he married on the mission, and four children) left for Scotland in 1972, his place was taken by an African, David Ndlovu. Catherine and Margaret Tallach were also to serve in the mission hospital that developed later at Mbumba in the Shangani Reserve.

### **Expansion to Shangani**

In 1923, due to government resettlement policies, a local chief and his people were moved about eighty miles northwards, to the Nkayi District in the Shangani Reserve. Despite being approached by two other missions, the chief indicated his preference for the FPs and asked for a preacher, so John Mpofu, a lay preacher from Ingwenya, and his son Alexander, a teacher, went there. The scope of the work increased greatly over the years. John Tallach, on his arrival at Ingwenya, became concerned to offer as much support and encouragement as possible. First, he sent an elder and Stephen Hlazo to visit. Then towards the end of 1925 he used money received as wedding gifts to buy a car in Bulawayo, had a half-hour driving lesson, and drove it back to Ingwenya, accompanied by his wife. By the time they arrived, the fuel guage registered empty and they had to await a further gift before they could buy enough petrol to drive to Shangani. This was the first of several trips.

In his 1940 report to Synod, John Tallach pointed out that the Shangani area might well become of greater importance than the Ntabazinduna Reserve, where Ingwenya Mission was situated. The latter was a small reserve

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<sup>21</sup> McPherson, “Missionary Endeavour,” 178.

<sup>22</sup> MacCuish, 150.

where already five different missionary bodies were operating. Shangani, on the other hand, was about one third the size of Scotland, and people were moving into it all the time.

Before he left for Scotland, James Fraser had made two visits to Shangani with James Stewart. He also accompanied Tallach on occasion. It was after visiting Shangani with Tallach that Fraser wrote to the convener of the Foreign Missions Committee offering his services as a full-time missionary. On that trip, he and Tallach had been accompanied by an African convert, Paul Magaya. Fraser noted that Magaya seemed very happy and asked why. Magaya replied, “Well, it is not so long ago that the Reserve was in total darkness and, even now, there is only a little light but the Word of God is in this Reserve and the Holy Spirit is at work here too—and there is no hope for the power of darkness. Christ must prevail. The whole Reserve will yet be lit up with the glory of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

While at home in Scotland, James Fraser presented the challenge of Shangani to the annual Synod meeting in 1946. After explaining the situation and its needs, he continued, “There is a cry from Africa going out to us here tonight, and the cry – a cry for help – is none the less urgent because it is not articulate. I have stood on one of the hills of the Shangani Reserve and have looked forth on, I believe, hundreds of square miles of forest and grassland, with the smoke of African villages rising in the evening air here and there among the trees, and I have felt almost overpowered by a realization of the enormity of our task as a missionary body, and yet when we think of the almighty power of God and the prayers of a sympathetic Church at home, we feel that we can go on in the strength of God the Lord, and we feel too that our Church may yet be used more and more in the conversion of the heathen.”<sup>24</sup>

Edwin Radasi, a son of the mission’s founder, had gone to Scotland in 1932 at age eighteen to be trained “for future usefulness in the Mission.”<sup>25</sup> This included preparation for the ministry and, after a delay caused by the war years, he returned in 1946 and began work at Zenka in the Shangani Reserve. He was joined by the Frasers in January 1948. By now there were now twenty-two kraal schools. The Native Education Department regulations required that a certain proportion of trained teachers be employed. To this the FP Mission added the further requirement that such teachers be brought up in the church, or at least have attended a mission school. Fraser determined, with synodical approval, that the mission would have to do its own teacher training. He began this in Shangani in addition to his other work, and an advertisement back home

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<sup>23</sup> Alexander McPherson, *James Fraser: A Record of Missionary Endeavour in Rhodesia in the Twentieth Century* (London: Banner of Truth, 1967, 1968), 128.

<sup>24</sup> McPherson, *James Fraser*, 127.

<sup>25</sup> McPherson, “Missionary Endeavour,” 175.



was made for an assistant in that work. Chris Fraser was also running a busy clinic at Zenka, with dentistry assistance from her husband.

Meanwhile, Dr. MacDonald and family left for home in 1948. "For him it was the end of twenty busy years as a doctor, minister and – after Mr. Tallach's departure – superintendent of the mission. He had some time before predicted that government provision of medical facilities for Africans would obviate the need for missions near cities and towns to provide clinics, and saw this applying to Ingwenya. In this he was correct."<sup>26</sup> During his furlough he resigned and spent the rest of his life as pastor of the FP's Vancouver, Canada congregation. Jean Nicolson was then appointed mission superintendent and a further building project was begun at Ingwenya with the help of a government grant. Four dormitories, a dining hall and a matron's house were built, "creating a great improvement in the living conditions of the boarders."<sup>27</sup>

Edwin Radasi was appointed to take Dr. MacDonald's place as minister at Ingwenya and its outstations on a temporary basis, as it was thought by the Synod in Scotland that a white missionary was really needed at Ingwenya. At the same Synod, the Zenka Kirk Session was authorized to examine Petros Mzamo as a candidate for the ministry. He was accepted and a course of studies set by the Synod was to be carried out under James Fraser's supervision. Petros was a son of Patrick Mzamo, a noted elder at Ingwenya "who into old age had given the mission good service by example and preaching."<sup>28</sup> Petros was at this time head teacher at Zenka.

### Troubles at Ingwenya

The years 1951-55 were difficult ones specifically for Ingwenya. The period following the end of World War II saw the beginning of African nationalism. Trade unions were formed and a general strike took place briefly in Bulawayo in 1947. These developments affected mission work as well. It came to light that Edwin Radasi had been holding secret meetings with office-bearers in Ingwenya who believed African ministers should replace white missionaries. When challenged to produce minutes of these meetings, Radasi admitted that there were none. A minister was sent out from Scotland, but he sided with the disaffected Africans, and so was withdrawn after eighteen months. Charges of malpractice were made against James Fraser, who had come from Mbumba to deal with the situation, but Jean Nicolson and her mother were the main focus of mistrust and resentment.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Radasi confided to Miss

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<sup>26</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 179.

<sup>27</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 180.

<sup>28</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 180.

<sup>29</sup> To his credit, the Scottish minister in question visited Jean Nicolson in her Edinburgh retirement to apologize for his treatment of her.

Nicolson that he was finding the office-bearers a hindrance more than a help. The missionaries took the view that he was being used by his fellow-Africans, rather than being an instigator of trouble himself. However, he abruptly resigned from the mission and started his own independent church. Over time, some of those who left with him returned, but the damage was done.

It is difficult at this distance in time, with all the main players deceased, to assess the situation and how it was handled. It has become fashionable among academics to portray missionaries as agents of colonialism. This is a gross misrepresentation that fails to take into account the motives of missionaries and the sacrifices they often made as compared to those who profited by exploiting Africa and Africans.<sup>30</sup> Frequently, missionaries sought to intervene when they saw Africans being mistreated. On the other hand, with few exceptions, they were content to operate under the benefits of colonial rule and showed no interest in challenging the *status quo*. In the case of the FP Church of Scotland, although a Southern Rhodesian (now Zimbabwean) presbytery was later formed in 1962, it continues to function as a branch of the Scottish church, and while at the present time, all ministers and most teachers and nurses are in fact African, there is no thought of forming an indigenous Free Presbyterian Church of Zimbabwe.

On a visit to the mission in 1974, I was privileged to meet Edwin Radasi at the Ingwenya home of Jean Nicolson. He came specifically to meet me and demonstrated obvious respect for my father's legacy. He impressed me as a gracious Christian gentleman. Certainly, there was no hint of any ill-will between himself and Miss Nicolson.

### **Further Developments in Shangani**

As a head station, Zenka had some disadvantages, so after some further exploration the decision was made in May 1952 to move to Mbuma, further into the Reserve. African families were beginning to move into the area and more were expected. After five years of building projects at Ingwenya, Alexander McPherson moved to Zenka with his wife and son, Dugald, in September 1952. A classroom and large church were the first jobs, both to be done at the least possible cost. Norman Miller, an English businessman, arrived with his family in February 1953. After two weeks of intensive briefings on the tasks facing the new arrival, James Fraser and family departed for a much-needed furlough. They returned in early December and the family moved to their new home at Mbuma on the 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1954. Three days

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<sup>30</sup> See Thorsten Prill, "Ambassadors Of Christ Or Agents Of Colonialism? Protestant Missionaries In Africa And Their Critics" in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 37/1, Spring 2019, 81-99.

later Fraser began a one-year course of teacher training with fourteen students and the following month decided to switch to the more useful standard two-year course. Less than two weeks after the beginning of classes he had to take over the supervision of the building operations. McPherson had suffered a serious breakdown in health and had to go back to Scotland in June. Providentially, James Tallach was now in the country and he accepted the vacant position of builder on a temporary basis. Under him the work went on well, and later he became a permanent member of the staff.

James Fraser was greatly relieved to obtain an assistant in the teacher training work in March 1955. Katie Mary Macaulay proved to be an excellent colleague in every way. She was a cheerful helper, with a ready smile. Just before her arrival, Norman Miller had to return to Scotland to attend to business there, so that for the next five months the kraal schools and Zenka itself became James Fraser's responsibility. Zenka's need of a missionary became especially pressing when Norman Miller, soon after his return to work, was posted to Ingwenya to oversee the schools in that area. Fraser who now had the spiritual oversight of Ingwenya on top of his other responsibilities, managed to visit Zenka each month and was glad to find the congregation there "holding together well under their godly elders".<sup>31</sup>

Petros Mzamo went to Scotland in 1957 and was ordained in May. Returning home in June, he became superintendent of the Shangani kraal schools, did pastoral visitations and assisted at communions. Another addition to the staff at this time was Jan van Woerden, originally from Zeist, in the Netherlands, who had been converted under the preaching of an FP minister in Scotland and became a member of the London (England) congregation while working there. He was a male nurse and motor mechanic with bookkeeping experience, all of which had prepared him for missionary service of a practical nature. He was initially designated for Zenka and also accompanied Mzamo in his trips to the Mbumba area. Nearly 9000 treatments were given at Mbumba in 1957 and Jan van Woerden, once he experienced the work involved, spoke of the need for a doctor and a hospital. Meanwhile, a teacher was required to begin the secondary work in Ingwenya and this post was filled by Ishbel MacCuish who began teaching in January 1958.

As the Frasers were expected to go on furlough in January 1959 it was decided to transfer the second year of the current teacher training course to Ingwenya under Miss Macaulay. Then in December, James Fraser took ill and had to be taken to hospital in Bulawayo. He was treated for a virus of uncertain origin. Drugs were sent from the UK and USA, but to no avail and after three months of suffering he died. In retrospect, we wonder if he had not contracted some sort of acquired immunodeficiency from a monkey bite while retrieving

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<sup>31</sup> McPherson, "Missionary Endeavour," 183.

a small boy's ball from a tree at Victoria Falls.<sup>32</sup> He was buried in Ingwenya next to his infant son and the elder Radasi. Some 2000 people, mostly Africans, attended his funeral. Chris and the three children continued on to Scotland. She had been in poor health for some time and passed away in 1961.

In the words of the Convener of the Foreign Missions Committee, James Fraser's death was a "crushing blow", but it soon became apparent that the Lord's work is dependent on no one person, as others rose to the challenge. The ongoing story of the mission's development will (DV) be told as a chapter in the forthcoming publication mentioned elsewhere in this journal. Meanwhile, we bring this initial instalment to a close with one remarkable providential provision.

### **A Providential Provision**

Back in 1956 when Chris Fraser was suffering from ill health, she wrote to her sister Margaret Finlayson, asking her to come out from Scotland to give her some support. Margaret went for three years, for some of this time working as a nurse in Bulawayo. She returned to Scotland in 1959 with her sister and the three children, following James Fraser's death.

In 1961, Jan van Woerden appealed to the Foreign Mission Committee to send someone out to help him develop the medical work based at Mbumba. The committee approached Margaret Finlayson and she agreed to return to Rhodesia where she not only assisted van Woerden, but married him in 1961! The van Woerdens had four children, all now settled in Scotland.

As noted above, van Woerden saw the need to develop the medical work into a hospital with a fully trained doctor. This presented a considerable challenge in terms of fund raising. For this, van Woerden turned to a cousin in the Netherlands, M. A. Meijnders-van Woerden, a journalist married to a wealthy businessman and always referred to as Mrs. Meijnders. She wrote about the need in a church publication, which sparked an outpouring of Dutch interest in this Scottish mission. A missionary organization, *Mbumba Zending* was set up. "By 1965 over seventy Dutch congregations were supporting the hospital. Initially, the money went directly to the hospital, but by 1968 the

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<sup>32</sup> According to The AIDS Institute and other sources, the HIV infection mutated from a similar virus in a type of chimpanzee in west Africa. The earliest known case in humans was detected in a 1959 blood sample from a man in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The virus spread slowly across Africa and other parts of the world. (<https://www.theaidsinstitute.org/education/aids-101/where-did-hiv-come-0>).

support was going into the General Missions Fund and “all areas of the work were benefitting.”<sup>33</sup>

Jan van Woerden worked mainly at Mbumba from 1957 to 1968. He and his family moved to Scotland in 1977. He died there in 2019. Rev. John Tallach (a nephew of his missionary namesake) conducted the funeral and subsequently published a short tribute in article form. Describing van Woerden as a visionary, he summarized his work post-1968 as follows: “As time passed...differences arose between Jan and the leadership of the FP Mission.... In the end, Jan felt led to explore new areas of work. This involved the setting up of a new organisation - the ‘Ebenezer Scripture Mission’. This provided literature evangelism, adult literacy, and Scripture correspondence courses. It also led, in 1976, to the opening of a home for destitute children. Called Thembiso, this was the only such home at the time in the whole of Matabeleland.”<sup>34</sup> A new support organization, initially called *Rhodesia Zending*, was set up in the Netherlands.

Despite his differences with denominational leaders, Jan van Woerden remained a member of the church and served as an elder in a congregation that was developed in Bulawayo.<sup>35</sup> Later, when, for family and other reasons, the van Woerdens left for Scotland, Thembiso Children’s Home and a Bookroom they had started were taken over by the FP mission. Eventually, *Zimbabwe Zending* (as the new support organization became) merged with *Mbumba Zending*.

One significant result of the financial help from the Netherlands was that when Prime Minister of Rhodesia Ian Smith declared a Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1965, in an attempt to stave off the inevitability of majority rule, and Rhodesia became subject to British sanctions, there was no restriction on money received from the Netherlands. “This meant that, while other missions had to cut back on buildings and

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<sup>33</sup> James R. Tallach, “Missionary Endeavour in Africa Part II: 1960-1993” in *One Hundred Years of Witness*, 191.

<sup>34</sup> John Tallach, “Jan van Woerden,” in *The Door* (Associated Presbyterian Churches), Autumn/Winter, 2019, 18. The vision for Thembiso Children’s Home was initially Margaret van Woerden’s.

<sup>35</sup> In Scotland, Jan van Woerden served the FP Church as a home missionary before joining others in forming the Associated Presbyterian Churches in 1989. In a 2013 article in *The APC News* (later renamed *The Door*), he indicated that as early as 1963 he and Margaret “were developing an interest in tribes in more remote parts of the country and visited the Tonga people in the Zambesi valley” (“Memories of Zimbabwe,” May/June 2013). This outward looking vision, rather than one of building on the mission work already begun no doubt contributed to the “differences” mentioned above.

sometimes staff, (the FP mission was) able to expand and grow.”<sup>36</sup> This expansion and growth remains to be told. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

### For Further Reading

Fraser, J. Cameron. Thandabantu: *The Man Who Loved the People* (Belleville, ON: Guardian books, 2010, 2016).

MacCuish, Dolina. *A Heart for Africa: The story of Jean Nicolson – Missionary in Zimbabwe* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2008).

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\_\_\_\_\_. *James Fraser: A Record of Missionary Endeavour in Rhodesia in the Twentieth Century* (London: Banner of Truth, 1967, 1968).

Macpherson, M (compiler). *The Life and Labours of a Native African Missionary* (Gisborne, NZ: The Gisborne Herald Co. Ltd., 1966).

Nicolson, Jean. *John Boyana Radasi: Missionary to Zimbabwe* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1996).

Thorsten Prill. “Ambassadors Of Christ Or Agents Of Colonialism? Protestant Missionaries In Africa And Their Critics” in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 37/1, Spring 2019, 81-99.

Tallach, Catherine J.N. *Mfundisi Tallach: a man with a burden for souls* (imprintdigital.com, 2012).

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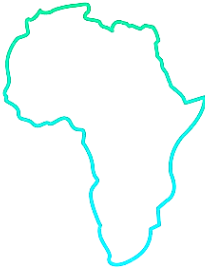
<sup>36</sup> James R. Tallach, 193.

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**Announcing a three-  
year publication project  
co-ordinated by  
Haddington  
House Trust  
2020-2023**

**WORKING TITLE:**

***From Cairo to Cape Town:  
Presbyterian Missions and Churches in Africa***

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**PUBLICATION RELEASE DATE 1 JANUARY, 2024  
*for***

**The 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Establishment of  
The First Presbytery on The Continent of Africa**

**Basic Parameters:**

- to use a connectional basis to the Westminster Confession and/or Shorter Catechism as a linkage constitutionally or practically for inclusion purposes
- to focus upon the evangelical tradition of Presbyterianism
- to include dates from the beginnings to 2022
- to produce a book with several chapters with a variety of contributors

**Purposes:**

- to promote the writing of Presbyterian mission and church history for African church history
- to promote exchanges through this project and new networks so people become aware of one another and of other missions and churches, agencies etc. who have or continue to be involved in Africa
- to produce this work as a textbook for theological training institutions for classes and libraries across Africa and also globally

**Approach:**

- identify and find writers who can assemble chapters for this collection
- edit work and provide a forum for writing and publication
- produce a new textbook for African church history

**The following topics as chapters will be considered:**

- denominational histories/mission and church
- regional histories
- specialized ministries
- institutional development/history, eg. *schools, hospitals medical, other*
- diaspora
- controversies
- themes
- Ethiopianism, Presbyterianism
- other

**Style and Format:**

- all chapters must contain a bibliography at the end of the chapter
- maximum word count will be between 8,000 and 10,000 words
- average article lengths of 5,000 are encouraged
- footnoting style should be kept fairly light and not take over the page
- no remuneration but each contributor will receive one complimentary published copy

**Schedule:**

- chapter or section proposals welcome early in 2020 addressed to the general editor (proposals of 250 to 500 words should be sent, stating the area which is being proposed)
- the general editor will also be contacting potential contributors
- deadline for draft text submissions will be January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 but the editor will accept drafts for examination and consultation before that date
- editing and returns, if necessary, for rewrites, where needed, will be done throughout 2022
- no draft text will be received after January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022
- typesetting and publishing will be done in 2023

**Book launches and lectures in 2024**

- some chapters will also be read by others
- all contributors will be encouraged to be collaborative and exchange draft chapters where there may be possible overlap, etc.



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**Those interested in researching and writing  
for this project,  
please contact**

**THE GENERAL EDITOR:**

Dr. Jack C. Whytock haddingtonhouse@eastlink.ca or  
jwhytock@gmail.com

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