

HADDINGTON HOUSE JOURNAL

• AN INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL PUBLICATION •



HADDINGTON
HOUSE

VOLUME 24 · 2022

CONTENTS

GENERAL ARTICLES

The Blood of the Lamb

Morris Zeidman – Man of Mercy to Jews and Gentiles

Sermon Luke 14: 12 - 24

Why Every Theologian Should Be a Good Historian
Beauty!

BOOK REVIEWS

Department of Biblical Theology

Department of Systematic Theology

Department of Historical Theology

Department of Applied Theology

BOOK BRIEFS

ACADEMIC ARTICLES

Consecutive Biblical Exposition and the 'Weightier' Matters of our Faith

Reflections at the Centenary of Robert Hamill Nassau's death

Holy Spirit and Regeneration

Preaching Preferred Pronouns

AFRICA TEXTBOOK PROJECT UPDATE

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT



Nick Batzig



D. Douglas Gebbie



Travis Hearne



John Koning



Ken Stewart



Jordan VanAmerongen



Paul Wells



Jack C. Whytock

HADDINGTON HOUSE

JOURNAL

An International Theological Publication

Volume 24 2022

ISSN 1929-3925

Editor's Preface.....	3
The Editor's Rambles:	5
The Blood of the Lamb	12
Morris Zeidman—Man of Mercy to Jews and Gentiles.....	22
Sermon Luke 14: 12–24.....	30
Why Every Theologian Should Be a Good Historian	37
Beauty!	41
Book Reviews.....	47
Biblical Theology	48
Systematic Theology.....	54
Historical Theology.....	66
Applied Theology.....	100
Book Briefs	120
Academic Articles	123
Consecutive Biblical Exposition and the 'Weightier' Matters of our Faith....	125
Reflections at the Centenary of Robert Hamill Nassau's death.....	134
Holy Spirit and Regeneration.....	157
Preaching Preferred Pronouns.....	165
Index of Books Reviewed	169
Africa Textbook Project Update	171
Publication Announcement.....	173

CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Aiken, Rick Ball, Nicholas (Nick) T. Batzig, Doug Bylsma, Kent I. Compton, Gertrude DeBoer, Solke DeBoer, D. Douglas Gebbie, Stan George, Travis Hearne, Isaiah Hogeterp, John Koning, Seung Joon Lee, Ross Morrison, J. C. Ryle, Kenneth Stewart, Paul Wells, Jack C. Whytock, Nancy J. Whytock, Jordan VanAmerongen, Robert Widdowson, Nathan Zekveld

Cover by Citrus Design www.citrusdesign.ca

front cover image: Wartburg Castle, Germany

back cover: article contributors

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens, Manitoba

© 2022 Haddington House Trust, unless otherwise stated
All rights reserved

For permission to reprint, contact The Editor, Haddington House,
99 North River Road, Charlottetown, PE C1A 3K6, Canada



Editor's Preface

You will no doubt have noticed the wonderful image of a castle on the front cover of this year's *Haddington House Journal*. No, we are not trying to vie with Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* or the latest medieval thriller. It is Wartburg Castle in Germany, the location of a tremendous undertaking 500 years ago this year for evangelical Protestantism and for the spiritual life of the Lord's people. Thus, the first article in our journal this year is my editor's rambles highlighting this significant achievement. I trust it will remind and challenge us for today—out of persecution and isolation the Lord brought good for His children.

We have two sermons this year: one from the nineteenth century and one from today. Both are clearly gospel focused. The first by J. C. Ryle fits so well with a subtheme in this year's journal, namely Jewish missions and Judaism and Christianity in a broad sense. Ryle's sermon, though on a New Testament text, is rooted in the Old Testament theology of the Lamb of sacrifice fulfilled in the new covenant of Jesus Christ. The second sermon (by D.D. Gebbie) provides wonderful exposition and application concerning the excuses made for not embracing the gospel. It is a strong sermon on the free offer of the gospel.

Before moving to what I see as a subtheme, let me draw your attention to Travis Hearne's article answering why every theologian should be a good historian. I am in full agreement with his conclusions, and I encourage you to read what he has written. Likewise, I encourage you to reflect deeply upon John Koning's article on beauty, something that sometimes as Christians we fail to fully grasp or meditate over.

Now on the subtheme which I mentioned above, you will find the article by Jordan VanAmerongen about the conversion of a Jewish man, Morris Zeidman, and his subsequent mission work in Toronto, Canada. I have also picked up on this theme of Judaism and Christianity in reviewing a new book on Christian Zionism and on a second book review about synagogue worship, polity, and service. I think this may be the first time in our 24 volumes to include so much material on this

theme (some readers may recall several years back; we published an informative article by John S. Ross about the history of Jewish missions).¹

Concerning reviews, once again we have about 40. All subject areas are well represented in Biblical, systematic, historical, and applied theology. You will find some major new reference works also included under reviews but also several smaller works. Since Haddington House Trust is heavily into the Africa Textbook Project, you will notice that there are several new works relating to Africa mission history that have been reviewed in connection with this on-going project.

Since 2019, we have focused our academic articles on catechisms for preaching by Dave Eby. This series is now completed. We have had excellent response from this, so you will find three articles related to preaching—one each by Ken Stewart, Paul Wells, and Nick Batzig. I would suggest that these three articles could serve as excellent discussion articles for a preachers' workshop, a seminar, or a homiletics class. Rounding out our articles is a paper which I delivered at a conference in Wheaton, Illinois and one which relates very much to our Africa Textbook Project. This is about Robert Nassau, a missionary to Equatorial West Africa.

I express my thanks once again to all of our contributors for giving of their time through the ministry of writing. I trust you, the reader, will find something here to stimulate, refresh, encourage, and spark interest. As you converse with these articles and reviews, may you find iron is sharpening iron, as in the way the KJV and NKJV translated the proverb. May these writers become as *friends* to you and sharpen you and truly be beneficial. This is our desire and prayer. (*Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. NKJV*).

Jack C. Whytock,
Editor
haddingtonhouse@eastlink.ca

¹John S. Ross, "An Introduction to Two Thousand Years of Jewish Evangelism", *Haddington House Journal*, 5 (2003), 53–65.

The Editor's Rambles:
Yes, *another* Anniversary of Relevance: Wartburg @ 500

Jack C. Whytock email: haddingtonhouse@eastlink.ca

I have been getting some chiding, with smiles I must add, that I am always pulling anniversary dates out of the hat and giving a lecture or talk about the latest anniversary. I will admit that I do find anniversary dates fascinating, and they certainly allow for a variety of topics to address. Last year it was the centenary anniversary death of Robert Nassau, the missionary to Equatorial West Africa (see the paper here in this journal) and this year, 2022, I just could not resist a “visit” to Wartburg, Germany and the 500th anniversary of an event and achievement there which is still impacting Christians today. So, I hope that you will indulge me in these short Rambles on Wartburg @ 500.

1. Wartburg 1521–1522

Why was Luther in Wartburg when he was a professor in Wittenberg? In 1521, Luther had just attended the noted Diet of Worms and given his defence for his *new* teaching. Things did not go well there for Luther. He was taken stealthily (in a ruse of a kidnapping) by his patron Frederick III to Wartburg Castle for protection. The castle became Luther's place of refuge from May 1521 to March 1522 (he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X for his refusal to recant his teachings of his 95 Theses and was declared a heretic). It was here at the castle that Luther set to work translating the New Testament into German. Some thought that Luther was dead and had been murdered. Luther's stay in Thuringia and away from his beloved Saxony was to have incredible significance for evangelicals in Germany and beyond.

The Wartburg Castle sits high above the town of Eisenach in the state of Thuringia. Luther was “checked-in” under the name Junker Jörg (see sketch) or in English, Squire George. He grew a beard and grew his hair long as a disguise. You will note that all famous portraits of Luther are of him as clean shaven. Luther himself referred to being at the Wartburg Castle as his Patmos, reminiscent of John

the Apostle on the Island of Patmos. It seems though that Luther did also go out for walks from the Castle into nearby villages to talk with the common people.



What did Luther do while at the Wartburg Castle? Luther engaged in various writing projects while at the Castle, but the most significant was his translation of the New Testament into High German. Luther used Erasmus' Greek (1519) New Testament text, the *Novum Testamentum*, as the basis for his translation (Erasmus also included his own new Latin translation in this 1519 work), but it also appears Luther consulted the Latin Vulgate which would be like creating four columns of study as he translated: the Greek text, two Latin translations and then into German. It appears Luther had become acquainted with Greek through his time of study at the Brethren of the Common Life School in Magdeburg. As a lecturer, he had also been growing in his understanding of NT Greek.

Luther, we are told, took walks out into the markets and villages to check on the use of the German language amongst the common people. He wanted to translate in the language of the people, the actual verbiage of the common folk—the vulgar language.

So there was Luther in his room at the castle in Wartburg with his desk and Bible texts but there were also the people around him in the markets and villages. One does wonder really how *in cognito* Luther was to the people of Wartburg. Nevertheless, in God's providence he lived, and he laboured away as a translator in the castle perched high above the area.

And of course, there was also the spiritual dimension—the struggle of one’s own flesh and soul against the evil one. It is here in the Wartburg Castle that we have the popular story of Luther throwing the ink well at the devil.

2. Luther the Translator of the *September Testament* of 1522

In 1521 and 1522, Luther came to his task of translating the New Testament with the advantage of having lectured at Wittenberg extensively on Galatians and Romans. This is significant because as Kolk and Bluhm tell us “(h)is exegetical work created the situation in which ‘the power of his own thought breaks through

the bounds of what is ordinarily understood by translation”¹ When in January 1522 (or December 1521) he began in earnest translating the NT into German he came as an exegete of the scripture with profound insight on various texts of scripture.

Now Luther was not the first to translate the New Testament or portions of such into either Low German or High German dialects. There were several before him, but there were substantial differences which would set what Luther did apart:² First, Luther was going back to the Greek; second, Luther had an ear for the common people and for readability; and, there was a new context and a new reform movement that was clearly emerging as the evangelicals who desired to unleash the Word for the people.

Bluhm summarises Luther's translation approach well:

Luther's procedure as a translator is clear. First he establishes, to the best of his ability and upon his conscience, the meaning of the text before him. Then he tries hard to find the most suitable, idiomatic German garb for it. This is the order in which he works...If [however] the original text contains a word or phrase which would lose its essential religious meaning should too familiar a German expression be used, the flavour of the original Greek should be retained even if the resulting German does not fully measure up to the requirements of the German idiom.³

In essence, then, Luther was following a philosophy of dynamic equivalence in translation work, but it was larger than that at the same time. Kolb likens it to a combination approach of translation with dynamic equivalence alongside a closer literal rendering as the need may arise. “He did not settle on one or the other but used his best judgment in each verse to determine how the content could most effectively be conveyed in German.”⁴ He feared the “literalist donkeys”. Luther himself said:

“You need to listen to the mothers walking on the roads, the children on the streets, ask ordinary people in the markets and look at their faces, listen to the way they are talking, and base your translation on it!”⁵

¹Kolb, quoting from Bluhm's, *Luther Translator of Paul*, 96. See, Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 211–212.

²Fourteen in High German and four in Low German.

³Bluhm, *Luther, Creative Translator*, 130 quoted in Kolb, 213.

⁴Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God*, 214.

⁵<https://www.facsimiles.com/facsimiles/martin-luthers-september-bible-from-1522>, accessed 6 January, 2022.

We rarely encounter Martin Luther as a Bible translator. Generally, we are fixated upon Luther the Reformer, composer, preacher/pastor, commentator, and polemicist with the Roman Catholic Church, Anabaptists, or other Protestant evangelicals. It is very good in 2022 this anniversary year to pause and consider again this critical aspect of *Luther the Bible translator*. It is not just herculean what Luther did in the three or four months of December, January, February, and March, 1521–22 to translate the whole New Testament into German; there is much more here. What he did was to free the text of scripture from the forms of tradition and misinterpretation that had fallen upon it. He was allowing the people to truly be the priesthood of all believers by bringing the Word in their vernacular and vulgar tongue, and he wanted it to be faithful, clear, readable, and engaging. Yes, he was influencing the German language; yes, he was influencing other vernacular translations such as Tyndale, but a muted point I would argue needs to be seen as well—namely *Luther as the translator*. Where would we fit or label him with our 21st categories for Bible translation science? We may find that things are not quite so neat. Luther was a large person, and we find this largeness expressed in his Bible translation approach as well. “I have learned by experience what an art and what a task translating is...”⁶ As Bluhm summarised in the paraphrase of Kolb, concerning “Luther’s method as a translator: he strove to choose words and phrases that were living, connected to daily life, natural German”.⁷

The translation task was completed in March 1522, and it was time now to return at last to Wittenberg, time now for his closest colleagues to see his translation, and for the printers to do their work. One could say an informal committee with Philip Melanchthon and a few others (Georg Spalatin, Georg Sturtz, and Caspar Cruciger) was established as they worked through the translation and made comment and offered suggestions for revision. So, it can be argued that though Luther was a solo translator, this first edition of the New Testament had input from others. Melanchthon had a good grasp of Greek. Quickly then it was rushed to the publisher/printer/patron (Döring, Lotther, Cranach) in August 1522 in Wittenberg and in September 1522 the first edition of 3,000 plus copies was produced (*Das Neue Testament Deutsch*, Wittenberg, 1522). Thus, Luther’s New Testament, *Luther’s Bibel*, has also become popularly referred to as the *September Testament 1522*. These were sold out by December 1522 necessitating a second edition often referred to as the *December Testament 1522*.

The *September Testament* under Luther’s direction had Hebrews and James put before Jude and Revelation showing them more in a secondary light from the rest of the New Testament. It is a complicated story but from 1522

⁶Martin Luther, “An Open Letter on Translating” 1530. Translated from “Ein sendbrief D. M. Luthers. Von Dolmetzchen und Fürbit der heiligenn” in *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1909), Band 30, Teil II, 632–646. Revised and annotated by Michael D. Marlowe, June 2003. Accessed 6 January, 2022 <http://www.bible-researcher.com/luther01.html>

⁷Kolb summarising Bluhm, *Luther, Creative Translator*, 130.

onwards, Luther grew in his understanding and regard for Revelation. As Kolb says, he went from lukewarm in 1522 to seeing its value in 1530. Most know Luther saw James as an epistle of straw, yet Luther also saw that it did have many good sayings.⁸ After 1522, Luther continued to grow in many of the ways he came to understand bible texts and several books in the NT.

One noted and often controversial translation text is Romans 3:28, because Luther inserted the word *alone* (German *alleyn*) as he maintained that this captured the German idiom and was not just forcing one's theological agenda upon the text.

Luther in Wartburg 1522 highlights for us the place and role of Luther the Bible translator and this aspect of Luther must be given prominence as it is a key to Luther as Reformer.

3. The Influence of what came from Wartburg

I want to list the significance of what Luther did at Wartburg 500 years ago under five key take-aways:

Luther's Bibel was for all people. This is most important. Luther saw literacy of the Word as unleashing God's directive for all. It was not the reserve of clerics and professors. Truly this is a key aspect of *living out the priesthood of all believers*. It was for home, church, and society, not just church. To say *sola scriptura* without the Word for all peoples is not acceptable.

We can learn from Luther that scholarship alone does not produce a good translation. Luther combined the science of philology with the artistic ability of translation. In essence science and art are here in this work. This is as relevant today as in 1522.

Luther's translation work of 1522 "provided a model for other vernacular translations throughout the world".⁹ This is a constant refrain repeated many times. His influence upon William Tyndale has already been noted for English translations, but his translation work also influenced French and Dutch translations. Tyndale likewise was able to capture the English idiom and reached profound levels of translation ability which was carried on through into the Authorised or King James Version.

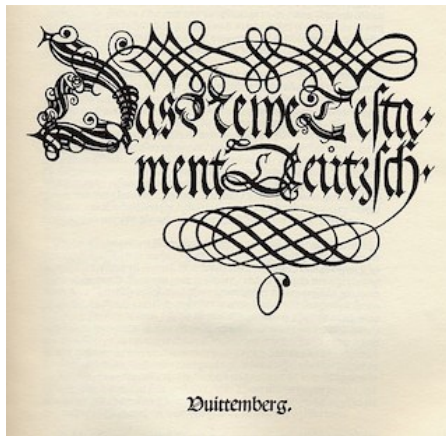
Though Luther was the solo translator of the 1522 Bibel, he was submissive to the input of what was initially an informal team of colleagues, the Wittenberg collegium. Solo translations need the balance of others to offer reflections, insights, and challenge. Luther recognised this: "When one is alone, the best and most suitable words do not always occur to him." This is as true in 2022 as it was in 1522.

Luther's September Bibel had an incredible impact upon the development of what really became a watershed moment in the development of a unified New High German. Germanic peoples used a multitude of dialects both Low and High. Luther used chancery Saxon High German for his translation of the New

⁸Kolb, 224.

⁹Kolb, 238.

Testament and with the rapid spread of the various printings and editions of *Die Bibel* it helped develop a unified spelling pattern, etc. which from 1522 onwards into the next century would establish this new High German as the main Germanic printed form.¹⁰ Thus Luther's *September Bible* is a very significant step in the development of a unified German language and he was able to take a refined chancery-type High German and popularise it for all, which was clearly a great achievement and speaks well of Luther's ability as a translator.¹¹



Luther's German New Testament

¹⁰"Ich rede nach der sächsischen Canzley, welcher nachfolgen alle Fürsten und Könige in Deutschland" ("My language is based on that of the Saxon Chancery, which is followed by all the princes and kings in Germany"), Luther, *Tischreden*, 1566.

¹¹Froude, called Luther's translation of the Bible "the greatest of all the gifts he was able to offer to Germany." Luther, 42, in Philip Schaff's, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910).

The richest fruit of Luther's leisure in the Wartburg, and the most important and useful work of his whole life, is the translation of the New Testament, by which he brought the teaching and example of Christ and the Apostles to the mind and heart of the Germans in life-like reproduction. It was a republication of the gospel. He made the Bible the people's book in church, school, and house.

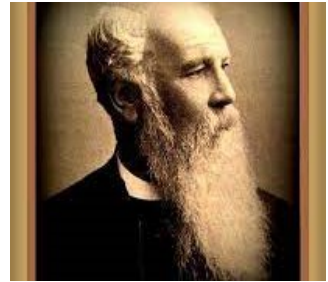
—Philip Schaff

Luther's pioneer work was epoch-making in the history of Western Biblical scholarship because it was based on the Greek original... Luther's September testament shows a high degree of literary excellence. The stylistic superiority is not dependent on Luther's use of the Greek original. It is the product of Luther's own superb sense of rhythm and style...In other words, Luther's two achievements—one in the world of scholarship, the other in that of literature—are independent of each other.

—Heinz Bluhm

Bugenhagen is a grammarian, I am a dialectician, Jonas is an orator, but Luther is all in one; no one can be compared with him.

—Philip Melancthon



The Blood of the Lamb

J. C. Ryle*

**J. C. Ryle (1816–1900) was the noted first bishop (Church of England) of Liverpool, England. The son of a banker and graduate of Eton and the University of Oxford, Ryle was known for his strong promotion of evangelical principles as a low churchman and a clear writer and promotor of various mission causes, whether to the working classes in Liverpool or for the Jewish peoples. His most influential writings are often considered to be his Expository Thoughts on the Gospels. Watch this short video clip on the Expository series:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80xTDPJgfnE&t=15s>

The Expository series is kept in print by Banner of Truth Trust.

These are those who came out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made them white in **the blood of the Lamb**. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. They will never be hungry, neither thirsty any more; neither will the sun beat on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:14–17)

This is a very glorious account, and yet we need not wonder, for it was a vision of heavenly things. You may call it a short glimpse within the veil which separated this world from the world to come. We read in the verses before our text, that the apostle John saw in the spirit a great multitude which no man could number, clothed with white robes, and bearing palms in their hands, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. And not knowing himself who or what these might be, he received information from one of the elders (or chief angels), and was told in the words you have heard, that these were the blessed company of all faithful

people, the redeemed out of every nation and kindred and tongue, the true children of God, the heirs of everlasting salvation.

I propose this morning to consider fully the account which this elder gave. I counsel you, beloved, to search and see what you know of it in your own selves. The day shall come when the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become as blood, and the stars of heaven shall fall unto the earth, and those who are strangers to the character described in our text shall find it had been better for them if they had never been born. Blessed are those who are not ashamed to confess that they seek a more abiding city than this world, even a heavenly one, and count all things loss if they can only win Christ and be found in Him.

Now there are three points to be examined in our text:

I. First, where did these saints come from, whom John saw.

II. Second, how they had been able to reach the place where he saw them.

III. Third and last, what was their reward.

I. First, then, we learn that God's saints have come out of great tribulation. That is, they have come out of a world full of sin and danger, a world in which they have so much to encounter which is hurtful to their souls that you may truly call it a place of great tribulation. How strange that seems! This earth so fair and lovely as it appears, so full of everything to make life enjoyable; this earth on which millions set all their affections and have not a thought beyond it—is a wilderness beset with trials and difficulties to every true believer. Write this down on the tablet of your memory, that if you make up your mind to follow Christ and have your soul saved, you will sooner or later have to go through great tribulation.

Brethren, why are these things so? Because **the WORLD** you live in is a fallen world, the devil is the prince of it, and by far the greater part of the men and women in it have shut their eyes and given themselves up to his service. Once become a follower of Christ, you will see iniquity abounding on every side, you will see your blessed Saviour's laws trampled underfoot, you will find the immense majority of those around you to be spiritually dark, sleeping and dead—some altogether thoughtless, some resting on a form of godliness without the power; and if you love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, to see your Redeemer thus despised, will make the world a place of tribulation.

But this is not all. The earthly minded, the thoughtless, will never let you hold on your way in peace. Oh no! you are condemning their practices and fashions; you are a witness against their deadness and neglect of true religion; and so if you set your face towards Zion they will try to turn you back. Perhaps it will be laughter, perhaps it will be hard words. One day they will accuse you of pride, another of self-conceit; sometimes they will annoy you with arguments, sometimes they will avoid your company—but, one way or another, you will soon discover that the worldly-minded will never let you go quietly to heaven. You cannot please them. You may exercise yourself like Paul to have a conscience void of offence

towards all men; it matters not, you cannot serve the Lord and Mammon, and if you walk with God, you will find your way is spoken against by nearly all.

And then there is **your own HEART**—deceitful, treacherous, and cold—the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit warring with the flesh; your readiness to make excuses, your deadness in the use of means, your wandering thought in prayer, your lack of faith in times of sorrow, your presumptuous self-confidence in time of joy. O Christian, you have **an enemy within** which needs your constant watchfulness; you have a fountain of trials in your own bosom; you will have daily occasion to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

And add to this those **CARES** which you have in common with all children of Adam—sickness, disease and pain, the loss of property, the unkindness of friends, the daily toil for a livelihood, the fear of poverty, the many nameless causes of anxiety which every week almost brings round—and say whether it be not true that all God's people come out of great tribulation. They must deny themselves, they must take up the cross, they must reckon on many a trial, if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mark well, beloved, this truth—the path to glory has been always filled with thorns; it is the experience of all those holy men who have left us an example that we should walk in their steps: Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Job, and Daniel, there was not one of them who was not perfected through sufferings.

We are all too much disposed to think a time may come when we shall have a season of repose and not be harassed with these vexations and disappointments. Almost everyone supposes he is tried more than his neighbours—but let us not be deceived—this earth is not our rest; it is a place for working, not for sleeping. Here is the reason that so many run well for a time and seem to have the love of Christ in their hearts, and yet, when persecution or affliction arises for the word's sake, they fall away. They had not counted the cost; they had reckoned on the reward without the labour; they had forgotten this most important point in the character of God's saints, "they are men who have come out of great tribulation."

This seems a hard saying—but I would have you know these heavy trials are laid on us for the most wise and merciful purposes. We live in such a fair and pleasant world, we are so surrounded with so much that is smiling and mirthful, that if we were not often obliged to taste of sickness and trial or disappointments, we would forget our heavenly home, and pitch our tents in this Sodom. This is why God's people pass through great tribulations. This is why they are often called upon to suffer the sting of affliction and anxiety—or weep over the grave of those whom they have loved as their own soul. It is their Father's hand which chastens them! It is thus He weans their affections from things below—and fixes them on Himself! It is thus He trains them for eternity and cuts the threads one by one which bind their wavering hearts to earth.

No doubt such chastening is grievous for the time—but still it brings many a hidden grace to light and cuts down many a secret seed of evil. We shall see those

who have suffered most shining among the brightest stars in the assembly of heaven. The **purest gold** is that which has been longest in the refiner's furnace. The **brightest diamond** is often that which has required the most grinding and polishing. "For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory!"

The saints are men who have *come out* of great tribulation, they are never left to perish in it; the last night of weeping will soon be spent, the last wave of trouble will have rolled over us, and then we shall have a peace which passes all understanding; we shall be at home forever with the Lord.

I repeat, this seems at first sight a hard saying; and yet it is a true one. Count up the enemies which encompass the children of God—the **world** with its unkindnesses or its snares and seductions; the **flesh** with its unceasing backwardness and indifference to the Lord's service; the **devil** with his arts and devices—and see whether you could give a more correct picture of the saints' experience than may be found in the words, "these are those who came out of great tribulation." An unconverted man may not understand this, and a thoughtless man may not consider it; they neither know nor care about this spiritual conflict; it is foolishness to them—but those who are born again, and have learned the value of their own souls, can set to their seals that it is all true.

II. "How did these shining ones reach that blessed place where John saw them?" Think not it was their own righteousness which brought salvation, and their own strength which upheld them. The cross will surely lead to the crown—but the cross will never deserve it; not all the tears which they have shed, not all the patience they have shown in tribulation, could ever avail to make atonement for transgression—or wash away one single sin. What says the apostle? "**They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!**" They have not been ashamed to acknowledge their iniquities, and they have laid them all before the Lord Jesus Christ, and for His cross and sufferings, and for His righteousness' sake, they have sought a free forgiveness, and they have found it. Lay this to heart, all you who are wise in your own eyes and holy in your own sight. No doubt there were prophets and righteous men of old, men who had wrought miracles and given their bodies to be burned, men who had been valiant for the truth even unto death, in that great multitude which John beheld—but none came boasting of his own attainments and clothed in his own apparel—they were all washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb!

And lay this well to heart, all you that are pressed down with the burden of your sins, if any such there be, and dare not lift up your eyes to heaven. No doubt there were exceedingly great sinners in that company, many who had been thieves and harlots—the very filth of the earth and off-scouring of all things—and yet they found a place of forgiveness and, behold—they are washed, and became white as the driven snow. They were in a world of tribulation like yourselves—but they found time to listen to the gospel, and when they listened, they believed. They did not scorn of the goodly land before them; they did not make light of their

Master's invitations—but they loathed themselves for their past transgressions and forgetfulness, and with earnest supplication and prayer sought to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And no sooner did they knock than the door was opened!

They were not content with hearing of this fountain for sin and uncleanness, like many of yourselves, and talking of it as a thing to be admired, and very useful for others. They did not sit beside the pool of Bethesda without endeavouring to step in—but they cried, "Lord, have mercy, wash *me*, even *me*!" And so, they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God; they obtained a free pardon, and their iniquities were all taken away. By nature, they were as weak and timid and sinful and shortcoming as any among yourselves—there is not a danger or an obstacle or a doubt or a discouragement in any of your minds with which they were not familiar—and yet they were all saved by the free grace of God, they were washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, they were more than conquerors through Him who loved them.

Around that throne you would find many who used to be the vilest of the vile. Go up, and ask them, everyone, "How did you come hither? Where did you get that white robe?" They will answer you, "We were once without God in the world—without light and without hope. We cared for nothing but fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, we were known as drunkards and revellers and fornicators. Many a time we hardened our hearts against advice. Many a careless neighbour did we follow to the grave, and tempted God to cut us off by continued impenitence! But at last, our conscience spoke so loudly that we dared no longer delay. We tried to keep God's law—but we could not answer it one in a thousand, it brought us to flat despair. We made a great profession, and men said we were converted—but it would not do—sin lay upon us like a mountain, all unatoned for, and we were miserable. But we heard a voice, saying, 'If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink!' 'He who believes on Me, though he were dead yet shall he live!' 'Come unto Me and I will give you rest!' And when we heard it, we went at once to the Lord Jesus Christ, we waited for nothing, we laid all our sorrows and all our wickedness before Him, and, behold, that very day we were healed and made whole, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing!" Such is the answer you would get from many in that company which the apostle saw.

This is the way you must walk in, if you would ever stand with them in glory. You must lay aside all pride and self-dependence, you must use the tax collector's prayer, you must believe yourself a miserable undeserving sinner, you must lay hold on the cross of Christ with a simple childlike faith and pray that you may be washed in His blood and pardoned for His name's sake. Show me another way of salvation which will bring you peace at the last; I cannot find one in the Bible. I hear of men who live on many a long year without a thought about this precious washing in Christ's blood, this precious garment of Christ's righteousness, and yet can tell us they trust it will be all right with them at last. But if the Bible is true—this is impossible. I see many who profess a belief in their need of this

fountain for sin and uncleanness—but I fear they do no more than talk about it, they do not count all things loss until they are forgiven. But whether men will receive the doctrine or not, the foundation of God stands sure, and though the saints of God form a multitude which none can number—I cannot read of one who had not washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

III. The reward of the redeemed. "They washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, they serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over them. They will never be hungry, neither thirsty anymore; neither will the sun beat on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Here is a list of privileges. You have heard of tribulation—but it leads, you see, to comfort. You have heard of the cross—but the end is indeed a crown.

Now we can tell you something of the affliction of God's children, for we are able to speak that we know—but when we have to treat of the glory which shall be revealed, we are on ground which human eye has not seen, and we must be careful not to go beyond what is written.

The saints **"shall serve God day and night."** There shall be no weariness in heaven; there shall be no earthly labours to distract our attention. Here, in this present world, alas! the cares of the world are continually breaking in, and these poor frail bodies of ours do often bind us down to the earth by their weakness, even when the spirit is willing. We may be on the mount for a short season sometimes—but our powers are soon exhausted. But there we shall have no wandering thoughts, no distractions, no bodily wants, we shall never faint!

How little indeed do we **worship** God in spirit and in truth; at our very best moments, how cold and dull we feel towards our blessed Redeemer, how willing to allow any excuse for shortening our prayers and diminishing our communion with our Father who is in heaven. But those who stand before the throne of God shall feel no fatigue, they will require no repose, they will count it their highest privilege to be continually singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, and saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

But let us read on. **"He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them."** They shall no longer walk by faith and see through a glass darkly. They shall see face to face the God in whom they have believed and behold His countenance as that of a familiar friend. They shall have no more dark seasons, they shall never feel that their beloved Lord is at a distance, they shall never tremble lest they compel Him to withdraw Himself by their lack of service—but they shall see Him as He is and be forever at His side. And if, while presently groaning in their body of sin, the Christian finds such peace and comfort in drawing near to God in prayer—if even in the flesh he has tasted that it is a joyful thing to pour out his heart before the throne of mercy—oh! who shall describe his blessedness when he

shall find himself forever in his Redeemer's presence, and shall be told—It is finished, you shall never leave this holy place?

It is a pleasant thing to have the company of those we love: our very earthly happiness is incomplete while those who have the keys of our affection, the husband, the wife, the brother, the sister, the friends who are as our own souls, are far away. But there shall be no such incompleteness in heaven; there we shall have the presence of our glorious Lord before our eyes, who loved us and gave Himself for us, and paid the price of our salvation, even His own blood, and the Scripture shall be fulfilled which says, "In Your presence there is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand there are pleasures for evermore!"

But we may not linger here. We read, "**They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore.**" They shall have no more needs and necessities; they shall no longer stand in need of daily application for the bread of life, and find their souls starving in the wilderness of this world; they shall not walk as pilgrims trembling lest their spiritual food should not support them, and thirsting after a fuller draught of the water of life. But they shall find that prophecy made good, "When I awake up after Your likeness, I shall be satisfied!"

But again, "**the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat.**" There shall be no more trial and persecution. There shall not be one reviling tongue nor one ensnaring temptation. The mockers and the flatterers and the scoffers shall be silent forever, the fiery darts of the wicked will all be quenched; there will be nothing to mar and disturb the Christian's peace. The time will have come at last when he may rest! He will be far above the scene of his old conflicts, and the strife shall never be renewed.

But what is the crowning privilege? "**The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes!**" The Lord Jesus Christ Himself shall minister to their comforts; the same kind hand which raised them from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, which healed their spiritual diseases, and brought them health and peace, and made them new creatures upon earth—the same hand shall welcome them in heaven and conduct them as highly favoured guests to a banquet of happiness—such as no eye has ever seen, nor heart ever conceived!

Time was when He sought them out as wandering sheep in the wilderness of this world and made them members of His little flock by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, and refreshed their weary, heavy-laden souls with the water of life. And the same Jesus who began the good work in the days of their tribulation upon earth, the same Good Shepherd shall complete the work in heaven! Here on earth, they have tasted something of the *streams*, a little trembling company, from north and south, east and west. But there they will be gathered around the *fountain* itself, and there will be one fold and one shepherd, one heart and one mind, and none shall make them afraid.

And then there shall be no more weeping, for "God Himself shall wipe away all tears." A dwelling-place in which there shall be no weeping! I know no

part of heaven more difficult to imagine. We live in a world of sorrow, a very valley of tears; tears for ourselves and tears for others, tears over our own shortcomings, tears over the unbelief of those we love, tears over disappointed hopes, tears over the graves of those on whom our affections are set, and all because of sin! There would have been no sorrow if Adam had never fallen—but our very weeping is a proof of sin!

Yet it shall not always be so: a day is still to come when sadness shall flee away, and God Himself shall say—'Refrain from weeping, for the former things are passed away.' There shall be no sadness in heaven, for there shall be no sin! The days of our tribulation shall be forgotten! We shall be able at last to **love** our God without coldness, to **reverence** His holiness without torment, to **trust** Him without despair, to **serve** Him without weariness, without interruption, without distraction. The days of weakness and corruption will be past, and we shall be like our Lord in **holiness** as well as **happiness**; in **purity** as well as **immortality**.

And now, beloved, let me ask you what is the purpose for which the Church of God has been established upon earth, and ministers have been appointed to watch for your souls? What is the object of Bibles and ordinances, and prayer and preaching? Is it not simply this—that you may be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting, that you may enjoy those blessings you have heard described?

Then search and see what SOLEMN QUESTIONS spring out of my text. Have you taken up the cross? are you denying yourself? do you know anything of this spiritual tribulation? Be very sure, that unless you will declare yourself decidedly on the Lord's side, and fight His battle with the ungodly world, and the lusts of the flesh, and the wiles of the devil; you will never stand before the throne in robes of white and carry the palm of victory in your hand!

That carelessness about sin, that trifling with temptation, that earnestness about the things of time, that forgetfulness about eternity, that readiness to swim with the tide about religion, that unwillingness to become more serious than your neighbours, that fear of being thought righteous overmuch, that love of the world's good opinion—is this what you call coming out of great tribulation? Is this living in the Spirit? Is this striving and labouring after eternal life? Oh, look to your foundations, set your house in order. No empty 'trust in God's mercy' will ever save you. You were not baptized unto idleness and indifference. Without a real hatred of sin, and a real forsaking of sin, Christ can profit you nothing. You never can be made white with the blood of the Lamb—unless you desire to have this earth's defilements really washed away!

And then consider, lastly, O unhappy worldling—could you be happy in the heaven you have heard described? Don't you know that sickness and death seldom work a change of heart, they seldom plant in man new taste and new desires? Do you think that men who count it a great trouble to come to church, and find the services a weariness and rejoice when they are over—do you think that such would be ready to serve God day and night in His temple? Will those who take no pleasure in drawing near to Jesus in prayer—delight to be forever in His presence and dwell with Him? Are you who never hunger and thirst after

righteousness—are you to be satisfied with the living fountains of water? Are you who never know what it is to weep over sin and corruption, who never grieve over the wickedness of this world—are you likely to understand the privilege of that holy rest, when God shall wipe away all tears? Oh, no, it cannot be, it cannot be!

Whatever a man sows—he shall also reap! Whatever we love in time—we shall love in eternity! Whatever we think wearisome now—we shall think wearisome then. You must be born again—or heaven itself would be a miserable abode! There is no place in heaven for the worldly-minded and profane. You must be renewed in the spirit of your minds, or you will hear that dreadful voice—Friend, how did you come here without a wedding-garment? You must become new creatures! How long will you insult your Redeemer by putting it off? Oh! pray you to the Lord Jesus Christ, while it is called today, to send His Holy Spirit on you! Go to the fountain, while the door of mercy is yet open—wash and be clean!

But blessed are all you who mourn for your sin—for you shall be comforted. Blessed are you who are persecuted for righteousness' sake—for great is your reward in heaven. You have wept with those who weep—but you shall soon rejoice with those who rejoice, and your joy shall no man take away. It is but a single step, and you shall be forever with the Lord, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest! The worm may destroy these bodies, and yet in the flesh you shall see God, and your own eyes shall behold Him, and your own ears shall hear Him say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father—inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

The saints whose faith and patience you have so often admired; the holy men and women of whom you have so often said, "Oh, that I were like them"; the ministers who have shown you the way of life, and implored you to be steadfast and unmoveable; the friends who advised you to come out of the world, and took sweet counsel with you about the kingdom of God; the beloved ones of your own house, who slept in Jesus and went home before you all are there—are all waiting to receive you! There shall be no more parting, no more weeping, no more separation! And you, even you, this vile body being changed, shall sing the song of the redeemed: "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!" In this world you may have tribulation—but be of good cheer—your Lord and Saviour has overcome the world!



The Sacrificial Lamb

Artist: Josefa de Ayala ca. 1630–1684



Morris Zeidman—Man of Mercy to Jews and Gentiles

Jordan VanAmerongen*

**Jordan VanAmerongen is a graduate (Bachelor of Religious Education) of Heritage College & Seminary, Cambridge, Ontario and is presently studying at Gillespie Divinity School in Woodstock, Ontario. He lives in Woodstock and is married to Leana and they have two children.*

Today it has become a common tradition that prior to a new school year, parents will have their child hold up a little billboard that will contain a few key snippets of information. Just under toothy grins, you will learn the grade about to be attempted, and often the child's dream career. But if we could take those same children 60 or even 80 years down the road, it would be fascinating to see how many of them went on to do what they had dreamed of as children. I suspect the percentage would be triflingly small. But that is often how it goes, isn't it? How many of us have had the life that we fully anticipated as children? As we reflect on the life of Morris Zeidman, we see a life that very few would ever have been able to anticipate. A man, radically changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thrust from his home country, rejected by his own nation, misunderstood by his peers, yet marked by love and persistence in his provision for the poor of his adopted land and city, and unfailing in his advocacy for, and pursuit of, his ethnic nation for Christ.

The Early Years—Conversion

Morris Zeidman was born on Shavuoth (Pentecost)¹ in 1894 as the seventh child to a pious Orthodox Jewish family in the Polish city of Czeszochowa.² The family did well for themselves and owned a prosperous fruit and vegetable store.³ From an early age his father taught him the importance of *tzedeka* (charity),⁴ and this lesson evidently stuck with Zeidman as charity became one of the trademark dispositions of his life. Little is known of his youth in Poland except that as a young man he was involved in anti-Tsarist action that easily could have led to imprisonment in Siberia. This close call led to action from his family who sent him away to the safety of Canada.⁵

In 1912 at only sixteen years of age, Morris immigrated to Canada alone.⁶ Making his way to Toronto, the teenaged Morris sought to make a life for himself. One day while out walking, he noticed a sign offering free English lessons. These lessons were part of a Christian mission to the Jews called “The Christian Synagogue” (a mission of the Presbyterian Church in Canada).⁷ Morris enrolled in the course and at the same time received an English New Testament.⁸ Morris learned more than English at the Christian Synagogue, and in 1914, at the age of 17, Morris became a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of the Hebrew Christian congregation of the Christian Synagogue.⁹

Gaze Fixed Ahead—Hand Set to The Plough

Morris’ decision to embrace Jesus Christ as his Saviour came at an immense and immediate cost. Though gaining Christ, he lost old friends and family and was no longer welcome among the fraternity of men from his hometown of Czeszochowa. He was verbally assaulted by the Jews as a *meshummad* (traitor), sometimes even needing to return home to change his clothes because they were soaked with spittle.¹⁰ Yet it was not only from the Jews that he faced painful ostracism, but sadly from Christians as well. “They were lonely years, because Messianic Jews are neither fish nor fowl. They are ostracized by their fellow Jews and oddities to

¹Ben Volman and Elaine Marković, *More than Miracles: Elaine Zeidman Markovic and the Story of the Scott Mission* (Lagoon City, ON: Castle Quay Books, 2015), 25.

²Alan T. Davies and Marilyn Flecher Nefsky, *How Silent Were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 67.

³Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 25.

⁴Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 25.

⁵Davies & Nefsky, *How Silent Were the Churches?* 67.

⁶Paul R. Dekar, “Morris Zeidman.” Essay. In *Called to Witness: Profiles of Canadian Presbyterians*, edited by W. Stanford Reid and John S. Moir, 75-82 (Hamilton, ON: Committee on History, 1999), 75.

⁷Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 35.

⁸Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 26.

⁹Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 35.

¹⁰Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 35.

fellow Christians.”¹¹ It is telling of the time period and its ethnic tensions that in 1926, when Morris married his wife Annie (of Scottish descent), her own father disapproved of his Jewish heritage and did not attend the wedding.¹² Morris’ life was not easy; aside from his status as an oddity, poor health dogged him from an early age, and persistent colitis would flare up frequently throughout his life.¹³

In an incredible way, regardless of the reception he received or his feelings of being a misfit in his adopted culture, the gospel had changed Zeidman. Shortly after conversion, Morris set to work with remarkable Christian zeal. Already a driven young man, his understanding of the grace of Christ offered to him led to his longing to see others find and share his joy. He began to volunteer and then work at the Christian Synagogue, pursued further education, then seminary, and was ordained in 1925 into the Presbyterian Church in Canada.¹⁴ His hard work and devotion to the mission can be seen in the fact that in 1926 Morris became the new superintendent of the renamed Scott Institute (formerly the Christian Synagogue).¹⁵ While he may have been considered an outcast and traitor by his



Morris and Annie Zeidman on their wedding day

own people, his evangelistic heart is seen in that this seems to have done nothing to diminish Zeidmans’ love towards his fellow Jews. As Superintendent, Morris worked hard to not lose the focus of bringing the gospel to the Jewish nation,¹⁶ although by that time an “all-peoples” approach was in effect at the Institute.¹⁷ Within these two-differing groups, the Nations and the Jews, his life work would be defined. While the preeminent longing of Morris’ heart always remained the conversion of his Jewish brothers and sisters, God had a plan to use

¹¹Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 36.

¹²Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 38.

¹³Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 38.

¹⁴Of interest here is the fact that he chose to remain outside the United Church “out of a loyalty to the Church that had led him to Christ.” Alex Zeidman, *Good and Faithful Servant: The Biography of Morris Zeidman* (Burlington, ON: Crown Publications, 1990), 17.

¹⁵ “The Acts and Proceedings of the One Hundred and Thirty-Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada,” (Sydney: Nova Scotia, June 11, 2010), 333.

¹⁶Daniel Nessim, “Jewish Missions in Canada—a History”, (Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism. Chosen People Ministries, May 2004). http://www.lcje.net/bulletins/2004/77/77_05.html

¹⁷ “The Acts and Proceedings (A&P)”, 333.

him more broadly than he could ever have imagined, to be a blessing to all nations.

Ministering Through Trials

By God's providence, it was the years of the Great Depression that definitively influenced the direction of the Scott Institute towards the nations rather than the Jews. If this was a disappointment to Morris, the response of his life showed he met that disappointment with commendable grace. With the unflagging help of his wife Annie, their children, and countless volunteers, Morris poured himself out to meet the needs of the people of his adopted city of Toronto. As poverty swept the world, the Scott Institute, relying solely on voluntary donations, began to offer free meals, jobs, clothing, and other services to the poor of Toronto.¹⁸ At the height of the depression, nearly 1000 meals per day were served.¹⁹ The need was immense, and often it seemed that there would be nothing to feed the long lines of the hungry, but God continued to provide—sometimes in miraculous ways when items or money would show up when times were most desperate.²⁰ Through those difficult Depression years, Morris and the Scott Institute stood as a light on a hill to which the nations streamed. There you would find both the gospel message and the accompanying hands of compassion. To meet the pressing needs of the impoverished who streamed into Toronto, Morris, in prayerful reliance on God, ministered with remarkable warmth and love. Yet sadly a tension was building, and, in hindsight, a nearly unavoidable division was rapidly approaching.

A man of great zeal and vision, Morris was certainly effective, but he was not always understood or appreciated. This tension eventually became a problem within the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), "Morris had many admirers and the grudging respect of colleagues, but few friends."²¹ Looking back, this tension was heart-breaking and ultimately proved unsustainable. The PCC did not share his vision and did not understand the work on the ground in the same way that Morris did. Driven largely by the difference of missional emphasis, Morris resigned from his position within the PCC in 1941,²² although he did remain on their ministerial roll.²³ Once more, God was preparing Morris Zeidman for a new chapter of service.

A Heart for Jews and Gentiles

Having developed a deep love for the citizens of his adopted Toronto, Morris was determined to carry on ministering to the souls and bodies of those from every tongue and tribe and nation that found their way onto the streets and through his doorway. Therefore, after his official resignation in his service as a missionary of

¹⁸Dekar, "Morris Zeidman", 78.

¹⁹Joan Doty, "Anybody Eats Here Free." *Maclean's*. (Accessed November 2, 2020. <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1955/9/17/anybody-eats-here-free>), 56.

²⁰Doty, "Anybody Eats Here Free", 35.

²¹Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 67.

²²"The Acts and Proceedings (A&P)", 334–5.

²³Paul R. Dekar, "Morris Zeidman." Essay. In *Called to Witness*, 79.

the PCC, Morris did not step back entirely from his broader Christian mission. In Oct 1941, he started a new mission under the banner of the “Scott Mission: Non-Denominational, Strongly Evangelical.”²⁴ It was here that Zeidman would continue in his labours for the rest of his life. There at the Mission, Morris poured himself out, “seven days a week, nine hours a day, calling chronic misfits by their first names, feeding them, clothing them, finding jobs for them, and preaching to them.”²⁵ Through the years, and through many trials and disappointments, triumphs and joys, Morris showed the love of Christ to all who would come to the mission seeking his aid.

Through the years, the work changed but never seemed to decrease. Yet neither did Morris’ commitment to meet that need, or his reliance and confidence upon God to provide what was needed. When the Mission outgrew its premises, Morris rose to the task and was instrumental in finding a new home for the Scott Mission and fundraising for a new building. In what is a telling episode of the social impact that Morris and the Scott Mission had within Toronto, in 1961 Morris was named the citizen of the year for the city.²⁶ A few weeks later he received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Knox College.²⁷

Earnest Love—Faithful Advocacy

Zeidman’s tireless work among the poor of Toronto is itself an extraordinary testimony of Christian love. Yet through all the years of selfless service, he never forgot his other great love—his love for his Jewish kinsmen. Zeidman has aptly been described as, “an inner-city Jewish worker for the Messiah, a Hebrew Christian minister helping everyone in need.”²⁸ This description is foundational to understanding the man and his motivations. As a Jew by birth and a Christian by rebirth, he had a deep longing to see Jews come to faith in their Messiah. “He argued that a Jew who became a Christian became a better and more loyal Jew.”²⁹ He longed to see Jews come to know Jesus Christ as their long-awaited Messiah, and so he preached and taught themes that the Jews would be able to recognize, and at least initially placed less stress on teaching the sacraments.³⁰ Some may see grounds to criticize Zeidman in his customized approach to reach the Jews, but this seems more of a misunderstanding of his vision than a fault in his methodology.

However, as time went on, fewer Jews had need of the social services that the Scott Mission freely offered. As the Jews became more established in Canada, “the social ministry of the mission, initially developed as a means of reaching Jews,

²⁴ “History.” The Scott Mission: A Christian Ministry of Mercy and Love. (Accessed November 2, 2020. <https://www.scottmission.com/about/history/>).

²⁵ Joan Doty, “Anybody Eats Here Free.” *Maclean's*, 35.

²⁶ Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 11.

²⁷ Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 162.

²⁸ Volman & Marković, *More than Miracles*, 47.

²⁹ “The Acts and Proceedings (A&P)”, 334.

³⁰ Dekar, “Morris Zeidman”, 78–79.

ceased to be needed by Jews.”³¹ Yet Zeidman did not simply stand by and watch his beloved people shift away on the new social tide of success. Even though the Jewish community urged its members to steer clear of Zeidman, he did not lose his love for them.³²

Zeidman was a gifted communicator who made and took every opportunity that he could find to speak on the two great passions of his life, the Scott Mission and the Jewish plight. This included public lectures, published magazines, radio broadcasts, and weekly newspaper articles.³³ He spoke out frequently and prophetically against his fears over the rise of anti-Semitism that was taking a grip even in Canada, and at times within the Church.³⁴ It was this love for his fellow Jews that prompted him to travel across the ocean to his home country directly after the war. Having seen first-hand the aftermath of the horrors of the Jewish experience during World War II, he eventually returned to Canada as a shaken man. His time spent in Poland was something from which his family believes he never fully recovered.³⁵ After his experience, he stepped up his efforts all the more to help the Jews. He became a strong advocate for Jews immigrating to Canada and sent over many supplies to Jewish survivors back in Europe.³⁶ Though there is a sad irony here, there is a Christ-like imitation in Zeidman’s life at exactly this point. He was rejected by his own people, yet who can question whether he loved his fellow Jews? Surely this is the gospel shining forth in his life. He never seemed to grow weary of pointing to the open arms of Christ and extending the hands of Christ in his charity to all who would come.

Conclusion

In Morris Zeidman we have an example of a man whose life was radically changed by the grace and leading of God—a young man who God brought over to Toronto and whose eyes were opened to see his Messiah, who was given a new heart of compassion for all mankind, and who worked diligently in thankfulness for the glory of God with eagerness and zeal into his last years. At the proper time God called his servant home, and so in his mid-60’s, on October 28th, 1964, Morris went home to be with his Saviour. Who could have predicted such a life for the young Morris Zeidman? His was a life lived earnestly seeking the face of God for daily provision, for the ingathering of souls. He lived in a land of adoption, a city where all the nations gather, and where many were blessed through the work of this faithful servant. This is the testimony of his life—God took Morris Zeidman and used him as a brightly burning light in a land far from his own. He was the untiring hands of Christ to the poor and the broken, he was misunderstood and ostracized

³¹ Dekar, “Morris Zeidman”, 80.

³² Joseph B. Salsberg, “The Tug-of-War between Rev. Morris Zeidman and Moyshe Tarnovsky’s Chenstochover Society,” (*The Canadian Jewish News*, 30 December 1982), 5.

³³ Dekar, “Morris Zeidman”, 80.

³⁴ Volman & Elaine Marković, *More than Miracles*, 62–64.

³⁵ Volman & Elaine Marković, *More than Miracles*, 85.

³⁶ Volman & Elaine Marković, *More than Miracles*, 88,96.

by many fellow Christians, and he was a faithful advocate and friend even to his own people who rejected him. He was God's servant—who kept his hand upon the plough, and never looked back till he came to glory. May God give us all such a heart of service and love!



Toronto Christian Synagogue, Elm St., Built 1913

Bibliography

- “The Acts and Proceedings of the One Hundred and Thirty-Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.” Sydney: Nova Scotia, June 11, 2010.
- Davies, Alan T. and Marilyn Flecher Nefsky. *How Silent Were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998.
- Dekar, Paul R. “Morris Zeidman.” Essay. In *Called to Witness: Profiles of Canadian Presbyterians*, edited by W. Stanford Reid and John S. Moir, 75–82. Hamilton, ON: Committee on History, 1999.
- Doty, Joan. “Anybody Eats Here Free.” *Maclean's*. Accessed November 2, 2020. <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1955/9/17/anybody-eats-here-free>.
- “History.” The Scott Mission: A Christian Ministry of Mercy and Love. Accessed November 2, 2020. <https://www.scottmission.com/about/history/>.
- Nessim, Daniel. “Jewish Missions in Canada—a History.” Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism. Chosen People Ministries, May 2004. http://www.lcje.net/bulletins/2004/77/77_05.html.
- Salsberg, Joseph B. “The Tug-of-War between Rev. Morris Zeidman and Moyshe Tarnovsky’s Chenstochover Society,” *The Canadian Jewish News*, 30 December 1982, 5.
- Volman, Ben and Elaine Marković. *More than Miracles: Elaine Zeidman Markovic and the Story of the Scott Mission*. Lagoon City, ON: Castle Quay Books, 2015.
- Zeidman, Alex. *Good and Faithful Servant: The Biography of Morris Zeidman*. Burlington, ON: Crown Publications, 1990.



Sermon Luke 14: 12–24 The Great Supper

D. Douglas Gebbie*

** D. Douglas Gebbie is a regular reviewer for this journal. He is a native of Scotland and was educated at Glasgow College of Technology and the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. He serves the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Chesley, Ontario.*

The passage which we want to consider is the parable of the great supper found in Luke 14:12–24. When we look at a parable, we have a story, an explanation, and an application.

What is the story of the parable?

The story is of a man who is going to give a feast for his friends. He has invited them and told them when this feast will be; but in the ways of that day, there were two invitations. There was the invitation which dealt with the day and the meal and there was the invitation which dealt with the time to come when all things were ready. So, on the day, the host waited until everything was set and sent out his servant to call the invited guests.

The servant goes to those who have been invited. We read of three of those people.

When the servant goes to the first man to tell him that everything is ready and it is time to come, the man says that he cannot come because he has bought a piece of ground and must go and see it. He asked to be excused.

The second man says that he has bought five yoke of oxen and must go to prove them. He also asks to be excused.

The third man says that he has married a wife and can't come.

Having received the replies, the servant must go back to his master with the news. On the way back we can be pretty sure that the servant already knows what his master's reaction will be: he is going to be offended. And so he should be, for these are not reasons that have been given here; they are excuses.

Now even if it had not been said that "they all with one consent began to make excuse", we can see that these are excuses. With the first two guests there is certainly a measure of coordination, collaboration, or collusion. The cadence is the same. They both bought something expensive without exercising due diligence.

The first man says, "I've bought a piece of ground and I need to go and see it." He bought a piece of ground sight unseen. Now that it is his, he is interested to go and see it: at dinnertime. An excuse!

The second man has purchased five yoke of oxen without proving them and must go, at dinnertime, to examine these oxen. Now, a yoke of oxen is two oxen that are matched so that they will pull together with the same power and at the same pace. The yoke which joins them together is hand fitted to compensate for the differences between the two animals. Joined together the oxen are a team.

This man bought five yoke of oxen. If he keeps them separate, he has bought the equivalent of five small tractors. If he is going to join the teams together, he has bought one very large tractor. We measure in horsepower. In olden times, they measured things by ox power because, for many centuries all the hard pulling was done by oxen. It was oxen that took people across the prairies on the Oregon Trail. It was oxen that took the Afrikaners from the coast up into the Transvaal and the Free State. It was oxen that pulled the ploughs that broke the ground because they had power and endurance to just keep pulling, putting one foot in front of the other all day. This man has bought five yoke of oxen without knowing whether they can work as teams. He hasn't checked if the yoke that comes with the oxen fits properly. He has not seen them work, but he's paid the money? It is an excuse.

We have two replies to the invitation. And both are excuses; and, as Jesus is telling the story, the people of the day, listening to Him, knew that these were excuses.

The last one says, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." That's it. That is all that he says. And that just puts a cap on things. It proves the point: "they all with one consent began to make excuse".

Now, there have been some who have said that if we were really looking into the culture of that day, we would see that as we look at the Old Testament, if he has married a wife, there are rules which say that couple are to be left alone for a while when they're newly married. For example, a newly married man is not eligible for military service. Similarly, there are those who will talk about a certain type of husk that is used in the middle east to feed animals and it can also be prepared to make a type of imitation bread, a bread-like substance, for people. When you think of the parable of the prodigal son, you are not looking for an explanation to say that there is a food that would feed pigs and would also feed people. What you are looking at is the story of a young man whose life has gotten so bad that he will eat pigswill. And, here, the point is not that there may be some cultural reference to explain why a newly married person would say, "No, please have me excused," and it be an acceptable reason. It is just a line to show how pathetic this man is. He is not going to come to the supper; and he can't make up as good a story as his two friends have.

So, what we are looking at here is three people who are making excuses (they're not giving reasons) and who have colluded amongst themselves. The point is clear: they have no interest in going to this man's house to enjoy his hospitality. The host has every right to be offended.

Nevertheless, he has all this food. The three are not going to eat it; and it's not going to waste. He tells the servant to go out into the town, to go out and bring in all the poor people, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. The servant would know where beggars go when they're not begging. He was to go and find them bring them to the feast. So, out goes the servant and he gets all the people he can find, all the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

Having brought them to the house, he says to his master, "I've done what you have asked, and we've still got space and we've still got food." The master says, "Well, go out and find more. Go out beyond the town into the highways and byways. Go out to the places where the country poor go for shelter. Go out there and find them and bring them: compel them to come in."

Now, compel is a strong word. But, it is a strong man who is speaking, and an offended man. He is not saying to go out there and force them to come in. He is not saying to go out there with sticks and staves and drive them in. No, he is saying go out there and persuade them with compelling words. Go out there and work hard to overcome their reluctance, to overcome any hesitation that they might have. Do not let their excuses go unanswered. They might say that they cannot go into town, not to that house, not like this: "No, no, that feast is not for the likes of us." Yet, the invitation itself is assurance enough of welcome.

What is the explanation of the parable?

That is the story of the parable. To explain a parable, we look, first, at its setting: where and to whom was the story told? Then we look for the key to unlock its primary point.

The setting of this parable was at the home of one of the chief Pharisees. It was on a Sabbath day and Jesus was there for dinner. But the other guests, “lawyers and Pharisees”, were watching him.

There was a man in the company who was suffering from dropsy or swelling. He was retaining fluid in his limbs which is often a sign of a problem with a major organ, like the heart or liver. Jesus asked if it were lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. The others did not answer. But Jesus healed the man. Jesus then told them parables about humility and charity. When Jesus had finished, someone said, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” It was in response to that remark that Jesus told the parable of the great feast.

The key to unlocking this parable is the invitations.

The explanation of the parable is that the great feast stands for eating bread in the Kingdom of God. God is the host. Christ is the servant who calls people to the feast. The first group of invitees are the lawyers and Pharisees who, knowing about the Kingdom, should have been ready and waiting to jump when Christ called. But they made up false reasons, excuses, not to follow Christ. As John says, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” So, the word, then, goes out to publicans and sinners; and after them it goes out to the gentiles. And they will come. But those who dismiss the invitation will not enter the feast; they will have no part in the Kingdom of God.

What is the application of the parable?

We have the story and its interpretation. What has it to say to us?

We might look at the lawyers and Pharisees. They were brought up in the knowledge of the truth. They should have responded eagerly to Jesus’ call. There are some today who have been brought up in the church and know the gospel; but they make excuses for not closing with Christ. Perhaps, like the Prodigal’s older brother, they cannot get beyond conformity to grace, nor can they get beyond duty to love.

On this occasion, however, we shall look at those who are being compelled to come in. Why would they need to be persuaded? What excuses would sinners give today when presented with Christ’s invitation?

One excuse is, “I am unable to come. You have told me that I must be born again. You have told me that I’m dead in trespasses and in sins. How can I come?”

Well, there is an answer to that. Do you think that that excuse would work with regard to the Ten Commandments? Do you think that you could speak to God and say, “I am dead in trespasses and in sins and therefore I cannot keep the commandments. Why should I be expected to keep the law?”

Do you think that that would work? Of course, you don't. So, why would you, or anyone else, think that same excuse could be given with this invitation to come? Inability is no excuse. It is no excuse for the law; and it is no excuse for the gospel.

Yes, you are dead in trespasses and in sins, but the invitation still comes to you. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again. He also told him to look and live, to believe on Him and have eternal life. The new birth, regeneration, is the work of the Holy Spirit who changes “cannot” to “can”. If you want to come, you can come, and you will come. The desire and the ability are graces given by the Spirit. “I can’t come” is an excuse. The reason is “I won’t come”.

A second excuse is that I might be turned away. I don't know that there's provision there for me. Don't you speak of a limited atonement? Perhaps Christ didn't die for me.

Roger Nicole has an illustration which goes a little like this. When a department store has a sale on washing machines, it puts out a flyer which says that between certain dates a particular appliance can be purchased for a stated price. If you want one of those washing machines, you go and buy one. You do not call up the store to ask how many flyers have been distributed and if they have an appliance in stock for every flyer before you go. The deal is that if you go to the store with the correct amount of money, you will receive one of the washing machines on offer.

The gospel says that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved. That is the promise. If you come, the provision will be there. No one who comes is turned away.

A third excuse is that I can't go like this. I need to get cleaned up. That is an excuse. The invitation is “come as you are”.

Spurgeon tells the story of an artist who is walking along the street; and as he is walking along, he sees a child playing in the gutter. The child is dirty, and he has got his cap on askew, and his face has got smudges on it. But there is just something about that wee face that makes the artist think, “I’ve got to capture that

look on canvas.” So, he comes up to the child and he says, “You boy! Here's my card and there's my address. I'll be there at two o'clock in the afternoon. You be there too. I want to see you there at exactly two o'clock; and I'm going to paint your picture.” Well, the child takes the card and runs home to his mother and says, “Ma, Ma, there's a man going to paint my picture, look!” His mother takes the card and looks at it. It is not a story. It's a real card and maybe she recognizes the name of the artist. ‘Right,’ she says, “You stand there.” And she gets him stripped and she gets out the soap and the water, and she boils the kettle, and she gets him so that he is absolutely shining, and she puts on his best clothes, and she takes him by the hand to the address on the card. She does not let the boy even look at a puddle. She stands him at the door, and she knocks it. The last thing she does is lick her hand and take down the last tuft of hair that's sticking up in his head. The door opens; and there is the artist. He looks and says, “Who are you?” The woman says to him, “Here's your card. You said that you wanted to paint a picture of my son.” Taken aback, the artist says that there was a child on the street that he wanted to paint not this one at the door. He gave them something for their time and sent them away.

The boy was wanted the way he was. There were no pre-conditions attached to the invitation made to the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, and those living in the highways and the hedges. There are no pre-conditions to the gospel.

Remember, any change that you try to make will simply be the same as Adam and Eve making clothes out of leaves to cover their nakedness. When they heard God in the garden, they still hid. Their attempt to make themselves acceptable to God was a failure. All our attempts at righteousness are filthy rags, not evening dress.

Excuses are just that. They are not reasons; for there are no reasons not to come to Christ. This is still the day of grace. The offer is still valid. And there is still room.

¹⁸ And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

¹⁹ And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

²⁰ And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

Luke 14:18–20 KJV



Why Every Theologian Should Be a Good Historian

Travis Hearne*

**Travis Hearne is a PhD Student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), Louisville, Kentucky and the Family Minister of Living Hope Baptist Church in Fort Thomas, Kentucky. He did his MDiv at SBTS and has a BA in communication from the University of Kentucky in Lexington. He is married to Jordan, and they have one son, Dawson. A version of this article, minus the bibliography, appeared at: <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/why-every-theologian-should-be-a-good-historian/>*

With one foot in systematic theology and the other in church history, historical theology can be the bridge to take our study of God to the past or our study of the past to God.

It's a great time to study church history. Podcasts, free lectures, articles, books, and movies abound with great information to help us understand God's dealings in history. But why should we go looking in the past if we want to supplement our spiritual disciplines now?

Tom Nettles, an accomplished Baptist historian once told me the reason he dedicated his life to studying and teaching church history was because historians get to do a little bit of everything. New Testament interpretation, Old Testament studies, systematic theology, philosophy, and whatever other topic, the historian has the tools to participate in the conversation because every topic has a history.

Thus, doing church history will refine all areas in our pursuit of knowing God.

I suggest you apply his wisdom and broaden your spiritual horizons with the study of church history. I don't know exactly where you should begin in

studying the past, but here's a simple method to begin supplementing your personal devotions with church history. My journey took me from loving Scripture, to theology, to church history, from being a theologian to a historical theologian (informally).

Scripture, Theology, and History

I first loved the Bible and then grew interested in the topic of God's sovereignty over salvation. Passages such as John 6, Ephesians 1, and Romans 9 raised questions I had to investigate further. From there, I began to read and listen to topics related to theology. I loved thinking deeply about God.

I wanted more.

Naturally, my plunge into theology led me to history because the same questions I kept asking were already present through centuries of Christian thinkers. For the first time, my faith didn't feel like me, my Bible, and God. I was immersed into something bigger. I was participating in the timeless church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. I had discovered my spiritual family's history.

I went from Scripture (John 6, Eph. 1 & Rom. 9) to theology (doctrine of election) to history (the Reformation). The Reformation was my first exposure in church history which sent me back to Augustine and forward to the Puritans. It's a tapestry with an infinite number of starting points and possible routes—all reaching the same destination of intimacy with God.

Scripture to theology to history is the route I suggest you take to enhance your Bible study. It assures our ultimate priority is devotion to God through His Word. Spirituality, our prayer lives, Bible reading, and evangelism are the meat of our Christian lives. Then we can go deeper into history to see how Christians have applied their theology and become witnesses to God, who by His Spirit has been thwarting the gates of hades from overwhelming His bride.

Doing Theology through History

John Piper captures the value of studying the past in light of God when he writes:

“If all the universe and everything in it exist by the design of an infinite, personal God, to make his glory known and loved, then to treat any subject without reference to God's glory is insurrection, not scholarship.”

When we study church history, we're studying God. How he's worked and how others have thought about him.

With one foot in systematic theology and the other in church history, historical theology can be the bridge to take our study of God to the past or our study of the past to God. Historical theology does not draw theology from the Bible, but it examines the past and studies how doctrine has developed. We ask questions like, what context was this theologian writing in? How did this doctrine change over time? What caused them to think about God in this way? Historical theology helps us understand systematic theology which in turn helps to foster better biblical theology.

It's a key part of my argument that historical theology be a primary reason for learning church history. If there's no study of God to gain from looking at the past, you're better off sticking to new theology books.

But that's impossible. Because every new theology book worth its salt will be doing historical theology. Sometimes you can't understand a doctrine unless you know how it developed or was refined over time. When you pick a newer systematic theology, like Wayne Grudem's, he will be interacting with older systematic theologies like Louis Berkhof's (1932) and Calvin's *Institutes* (1559).

So, here's a question: When you read old theology, are you doing history or theology? Both. But there's a difference.

Historical theology asks how Calvin thought about God. Systematic theology asks how *you* should think about God. If you're doing historical theology, your goal is to understand, from a historical perspective, what Calvin meant. But if you're reading Calvin to deepen your systematic theology, you're wanting to see how you can learn from Calvin's application of reason to the scriptures.

This makes it seem like systematic theology is more important than historical theology. It is. But, whether you intended to do historical theology or not, you did it. As you're studying Calvin, you're reading for your own growth. But you also gain a better idea of what Calvin argued.

Getting Our Priorities Straight

It's important to get this step from theology to history right. What I mean is that it's more important to love the Trinity than to map out the development of the Trinity. It's more important to understand, in your own heart, the doctrine of justification of faith alone than to understand what Luther meant when he taught justification by faith alone.

Does learning about the development of the Trinity help us understand the Trinity? Absolutely. There need not be a sharp distinction between theology and history, but there is a priority. Understanding theology will always be more God glorifying and soul refreshing than learning about theology.

I know many Christians who love God and his Word but don't see the value of making time for church history. Partially because they don't know where to start, and partly because it seems like a task separate from personal devotions.

Whether it's exposure to podcasts, documentaries, biographies, or primary sources, Church history can be accessible and refreshing to your soul. By moving from Scripture to theology, to history, you may discover figures who inspire you to pursue godliness or begin to grasp theological topics that ignite your soul in worship.

Select Bibliography

Allison, Gregg R. and Wayne A. Grudem. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine: A Companion to Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Bettenson, Henry, ed. *Documents of the Christian Church*. Second ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Frame, John M. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013.

Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Haykin, Michael A. G. *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.

Haykin, Michael A. G. *Eight Women of Faith*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

McGrath, Alister E. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

Piper, John. *21 Servants of Sovereign Joy: Faithful, Flawed, and Fruitful*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.

Shelley, Bruce L. *Church History in Plain Language*. Updated 2nd ed. Dallas, Texas: Word Pub, 1995.

Trueman, Carl R. *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.

Wellum, Stephen J. *The Person of Christ: An Introduction. Short Studies in Systematic Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.



Beauty!

John Koning*

**Dr. John Koning is the church planter for Grace Bible Church, East London, Eastern Cape, South Africa, works with Acts 29, and is a tutor for South Africa Theological Seminary (SATS).*

A stunning sunset in the Kruger National Park. Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. The Federer backhand. The human eye. Tulips in Amsterdam. An Olympics synchronised swimming performance. The graceful pronking of the springbok. The Matterhorn. St Paul's Cathedral. The splendour of Victoria Falls. These are things of incredible beauty. Sheer beauty. They are savoured, enjoyed, marvelled, appreciated. They evoke a sense of wonder and awe and amazement and joy.

Beauty is not easy to define. The dictionary would define it something like this:

- *The quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind, whether arising from sensory manifestations (as shape, colour, sound, etc.) or*
- *A meaningful design or pattern, or something else (as a personality in which high spiritual qualities are manifest) or*
- *A beautiful thing, as a work of art or a building. An individually pleasing beautiful quality; grace; charm: a combination of qualities, such as shape, colour, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight.*

Beauty is better *sensorially experienced* than defined. It is easier to *show* and *sense* beauty than either define it or explain it. Beauty causes us to look, and to look and to look. When we gaze at beauty we are awed, stunned, mesmerised, perhaps we get goosebumps. Sometimes our senses are so strong we find it difficult to contain ourselves.

God is the SOURCE of Beauty

God is the SOURCE of beauty. Humanity's preoccupation with beauty and aesthetic experience is God-ordained. The Bible presents God as infinitely beautiful. It uses words such as *splendour, majesty, glory, honour, radiance, and delightful*. Little wonder then that such a God would leave His 'beauty touch' on everything He created! Those who have caught a glimpse of God described the experience as: *beholding, adoring, admiring, gazing, even scary*.

If the beauty we behold on earth has its root and origin in God, there must have been beauty in God from all eternity.

God himself is the absolutely original pattern of all other beauty. Beauty is what God is. As divine image bearers we share his great appreciation of all things beautiful and glorious. Deeply rooted in every human heart is a longing for beauty. Why is it that in every tribe of people ever known there has always been some form of art and craftsmanship that goes beyond utility? One will not find an Alsatian reflecting on the majesty of a coastal sunset, or a rabbit intentionally enjoying the masterful compositions of Mozart. The capacity to enjoy and experience beauty is a privilege God has offered human beings alone.

There is in the human heart an unquenchable longing for beauty. The reason it is there is because God is the ultimately Beautiful One and he made us to long for himself. And we can know that our desires are remnants of this urge for God because everything less than God leaves us unsatisfied. He alone is the All-Satisfying Object of Beauty. Only one vision will be sufficient for our insatiable hearts—the glory of God. For that we have been made.

Beauty Is Not in The Eyes of The Beholder

The common proverb is wrong. That would make beauty a completely subjective reality. We don't create beauty—beauty is something that exists outside of ourselves.

John Piper uses this parable to illustrate: Suppose that you were standing by the Grand Canyon at sunset with two other people. You become deeply moved and utter the words, "*This is beautiful; this is glorious.*" The person next to you says, "*Beautiful? It's just a big, ugly ditch.*" And the third person says, "*I hear what both of you are saying. And I think those are equally valid statements.*" And it is true that unless there is a higher aesthetic court of appeal than man, those two judgments are equally valid. But even people who say they believe in such hardcore relativism don't like it when their own judgments about truth and beauty are treated as mere personal idiosyncrasies. The reason for this is that there is in every person a God-given sense that beauty must have meaning that is larger and more permanent than personal quirks.

The materialist is forced to regard beauty as utterly subjective. C.S. Lewis stated that the fact that we humans crave, appreciate, recognise, and delight in beauty, pointed to all people being created in the image of a God of beauty. He argued that because beauty was objective, the idea that true beauty was merely a conjured feeling in response to something one finds appealing, is entirely false. For Lewis, the idea that God created beautiful things is confirmed by our observation of beautiful things. The materialist denies that such beauty actually exists. Instead, the materialist asserts that the viewer merely feels that something is beautiful.

This highly subjective approach is evidenced in contemporary society. A very recent Google search reveals our society's madness when it comes to the subject of beauty. Google beauty and you will find this: *"27 quotes on beauty to bolster your self-esteem."* Utter insanity! What kind of nutcase goes to Victoria Falls to bolster their self-esteem? The whole point is to get taken out of yourself. We go to be awed and thrilled by something great and glorious outside of ourselves. And you will read how Oprah declared: *"Real beauty is to be true to oneself."* A moment's sober reflection proves that this is absolute bilge. Oprah type self-help psychobabble is all the rage! *Let us live for the beauty of our own reality.* Blind fools. Utter nonsense. God have mercy on us.

Creation

Gen 1:1, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...*
 1: 31 God's verdict on creation...*it was very good.*

Ps 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.*

The Belgic Confession states, "the universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God."

Rom 1:19–21 *...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

In the early part of his *Institutes* Calvin interprets Paul as follows: *God has been pleased, ...to manifest his perfections in the whole structure of the universe, and daily place himself in our view, that we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to behold him. His essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought; but on each of his works his glory is engraved in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse....wherever you turn your eyes, there is no portion of the world, however minute, that does not exhibit at least some sparks of beauty; while it is impossible to contemplate the vast and beautiful fabric as it extends around, without being overwhelmed by the immense weight of glory.*

Creation's beauty is God's beauty revealed, and this beauty's "immense weight of glory" should overwhelm us.

Calvin invites us to view the awe-inducing beauty of nature as a mirror in which we may behold something of the majesty and power of the invisible God. Calvin writes, *there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory. You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness.*

However, we should be careful of speaking of purely "natural beauty." The human eye is God-made and God-given. St Paul's cathedral was built with the raw materials that God provided, and with the skill that God gave to Sir Christopher Wren and others. The Federer backhand is the end result of God-given talent. We are not materialists. Aquinas argued that what we admire as natural beauty is infused with divine (common) grace.

One implication is that human beings are free to enjoy and celebrate the beauty they find in creation, for this beauty reflects the goodness of God. There is nothing inherently wrong with sensory pleasures. God placed us in a world that is deliberately designed to give delight.

Fall

Romans 1:21–23 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*

The worst thing about the fall was the eclipsing of God's beauty in the hearts of sinners. *"Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you"* (Isaiah 59:2). *"Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images"* (Romans 1:22–23). At the root of sin is blindness to God's beauty.

Take a walk on the beach. It's a stunning day. The sky is a radiant blue, cotton wool-type clouds decorate the sky, gentle waves are rolling in, seagulls are squawking, kingfishers are investigating the rockpools, the sand dunes are dazzlingly bright. Sheer beauty all over the place. And what else do you see? People giving all their attention to a tiny piece of technology in their hands. Me and my cell phone in a theatre of beauty! Even worse: taking selfies! Narcissus would blush. This is nothing short of catastrophic. Blind fools! In the words of Paul: truth suppressors exchanging the glory of God for idols...in this case, self-worship!

Scotty Smith: "... your voice in creation is heart-palpitating and knee-buckling. How can anyone with a pulse, and any degree of sensual awareness, ponder your creation and not worship you?"

Creation's beauty universally reveals the immense glory of the Creator leaving no man with an excuse for his infidelity. Knowledge of God is

communicated in creation, and man in an unfallen state would be perfectly receptive and responsive to it.

Redemption

Fundamental to the gospel is getting to grips with the ugliness of sin, and the beauty of Jesus Christ and his great work, particularly the cross and empty grave.

The Son of God became man to make the beauty of God visible as never before. *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father”* (John 1:14).

The miracle that creates the sight of Christ’s beauty is the new birth—the new creation. It happens by God’s power, as in the first creation: *“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* 2 Corinthians 4:6. To be converted is to see Christ crucified as compellingly and satisfyingly beautiful.

Eschatological Beauty

Present beauty is not the final reality. There is a future beauty, an eschatological beauty, that surpasses the glory and majesty of present beauty.

Believers can perceive or experience beauty in both worlds. Present beauty is a sign of things to come. We must keep in mind that we exercise faith in the promises of God. This includes both a resurrected body and a renewed creation. When we exercise faith in these promises, we can ‘see’ the future. Present creational beauty points us to a future re-created beauty.

The final blessedness of God’s people will be the beauty of his manifest presence. *“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory”* (John 17:24). *“Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face”* (1 Corinthians 13:12). *“We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2).

The Reformers urge us to wean ourselves from this world and its beauty. Isn’t this a glaring contradiction? Isn’t it entirely appropriate that we enjoy and appreciate God’s good creation—in this life? Yes, no doubt about it. The beauty in the present world is to be enjoyed and appreciated, but it’s not ultimate beauty. Being weaned from the world simply means that one holds onto the promises of God *for something better* over the present world. In other words, to love the beauty of creation too much *at present* can tempt one to think that creation at present is the epitome of beauty, that the promise is already *visually* realized. But in Christ we are promised so much more. So *“weaning from the world”* is simply cherishing the promises of God for a better eschatological future.

The fundamental problem with our lack of a doctrine of aesthetics and beauty is the dualism, the super spirituality which pervades and undergirds much modern evangelicalism. It’s basically a revival of ancient Gnosticism in modern garb. Gnosticism teaches that all that is spiritual and immaterial is what is really significant. The material, the body, the earth is passing away, therefore is not really

important. And isn't the earth going to be trashed anyway? More than that, that which is physical and earthly can pose incredible dangers to the faithful believer. So, the future hope is terribly skewed: individual believers (souls) are each given title deeds to their own cloud, issued golden harps, and strum lovely songs of praise for eternity. Heresy, yet still very much present.

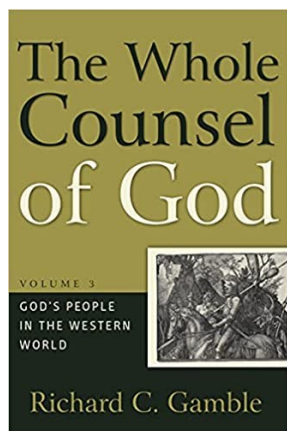
A theology that takes no account of beauty has clearly overlooked something essential to the Christian faith. An unimaginative and aesthetically starved faith not only diminishes God, it also diminishes us.

*Only one vision will be sufficient
for our insatiable hearts—the
glory of God. For that we have
been made.*

Book Reviews

Biblical Theology

***The Whole Counsel of God, Volume Three: God's People in the Western World.* Richard C. Gamble. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2021, 1181 pp., hardcover. ISBN: 978-1-59638-182-7**



This is the third volume of Richard Gamble's work in which he "offers a comprehensive theology attuned to the methodological advantages of biblical theology combined with the strengths of historical and systematic theology". It was said that the set of volumes would follow credal development and the formulation of doctrines over the centuries and bring the results of that search into interaction with perspectives of biblical theology. After a biblical theology of the Old Testament in volume one¹ and a biblical theology of the New Testament in volume two², this third volume gives the reader the centuries of credal development and doctrinal formulation.

The book is divided into seven parts: "The Church under the Cross" (Early Patristics); "The Church Defines Herself" (Later Patristics); "The Church and the World" (Medieval Period); "Post Tenebras Lux" (Reformation); "The Church after the Reformation" (17th Century); "The Church in the Modern Western World" (18th to mid-20th Centuries); and "The Postmodern World" (Late 20th Century to the Present). Within these parts, there are divisions and subdivisions to the extent that the Analytical Outline is twenty-two pages long. The usual approach to each part is to outline the philosophical opinions of the time, to introduce prominent theologians, and to list the important doctrinal contributions of the period. For his overarching theme, Gamble acknowledges borrowing an idea from Douglas Kelly: bridge builders and bridge burners. Theologians who draw on both Scripture and the philosophy of their day are bridge builders; and theologians who turn away from the philosophy of their day to draw on Scripture alone are bridge burners. If

¹ Reviewed in *Haddington House Journal*, 2010, 73. (<http://haddingtonhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Book-Reviews-and-Book-Notices.pdf>).

² Reviewed in *Haddington House Journal*, 2021, 79.

<http://haddingtonhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-Haddington-House-Journal.pdf>

volumes one and two are grounded in the Biblical Theology of Geerhardus Vos, then volume three presupposes the apologetics of Cornelius Van Til, a bridge burner.

Over the course of the book, the Western World moves North and West. It starts out as the Roman Empire, then moves to Western Europe, and finally to the United States. Out of the numerous theologians mentioned, the great pre-Reformation ground breakers are Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm. Post-Reformation they are John Calvin, Johannes Cocceius, John Owen, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, Geerhardus Vos, Cornelius Van Til, and Richard Gaffin.

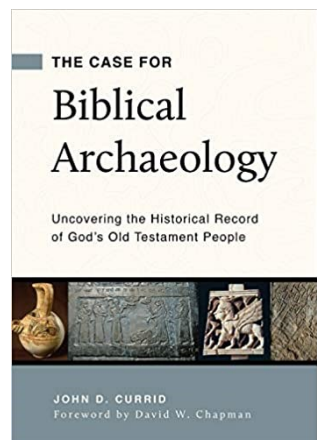
Gamble says that he has modelled his three-volume work on James Buchanan's Cunningham Lectures on Justification. The set reflects the form of the first part of Buchanan's lectures: the Old Testament, New Testament, and historical surveys. However, there is not enough in Gamble's volumes to match the analytical lectures which make up the second part of Buchanan on Justification. These three volumes will not replace the reader's favourite work of systematic or dogmatic theology, but they do provide a comprehensive (3036-pages) introduction to it from an East Coast Vosian-Van Tilian perspective.

Reviewed by D. Douglas Gebbie

***The Case for Biblical Archaeology: Uncovering the Historical Record of God's Old Testament People.* John D. Currid. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020, 263 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-62995-360-1**

The Foreword by David Chapman of Covenant Seminary summarises well the value of the study of Biblical archaeology. He mentions some who desire to "substantiate treasured historical documents, perhaps seeking evidence to corroborate biblical history", and "others realize that perhaps the greatest value from archaeology for biblical studies stems from how excavations illuminate ancient culture" (pp. xi–xii). This book, from what I see, is concentrating more on the second reason.

How could this book be used? Well, it would make a wonderful select reading subject in an Old Testament Bible Backgrounds course. Select chapters could be used for this purpose at a variety of levels. It could also be used for individual study and interest. And it would make a valuable reference book in a Bible College or seminary library. It is not speculative, nor unduly does it create strange and fanciful theories. It seems to be factual, explanatory, and non-speculative for the whole. Currid is a solid



evangelical and Reformed scholar, writer, lecturer (Reformed Theological Seminary) and preacher and has been involved in various archaeological expeditions. He was the senior editor for the *ESV Archaeology Study Bible* and co-author of the *ESV Bible Atlas*. For expansion on related works see a short blogpost I did.¹

One disappointment—there were no separate entries on the book of Daniel in the Scripture Index and the one entry on Daniel in the Subjects and Names Index turned out not to be on Daniel but a person, Daniel *Master*. There is also no separate entry listed for Noah, Sodom, or Gomorrah. So, this is not an exhaustive, encyclopaedic or dictionary style text of archaeology and the Old Testament but is very much a selective work, which is fine as long as one knows this going into it.

The Case for Biblical Archaeology is a good primer to the subject. This book is very well printed and on high quality paper with good illustrations. It is organised around three divisions: Setting, A Journey through the Land, and Aspects of Society. Take note, the word “aspects” tells us this is selective. Of the three appendices, I found appendix three most interesting: Extrabiblical References to the Kings of Israel and Judah (pp. 241–246).

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction.* Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 176 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1433566530**

Complementarianism and egalitarianism have come to describe two theological views on the relationship between men and women, particularly in marriage and in the life of the church. Both groups acknowledge that men and women are created equal in the sight of God, however complementarians believe that men and women are created for different roles that complement one another, whereas egalitarians believe there should not be any gender-based limits on the roles of men and women in marriage or in the church. This book promotes a complementarian understanding of Scripture.

In his introduction, DeYoung acknowledges that there have been many helpful books already written on this topic. What sets this book apart from many of the other books is its size (p. 15). It is meant to be a short book so that it can be something that any interested Christian can pick up and read in a few hours and understand how the text of Scripture supports a complementarian understanding of what it means to be men and women.

¹Jack C. Whytock, “Digging in the Dirt and Digging in the Word” (May 26, 2021). <https://atlanticcanada.thegospelcoalition.org/blog/post/digging-in-the-dirt---digging-in-the-word>

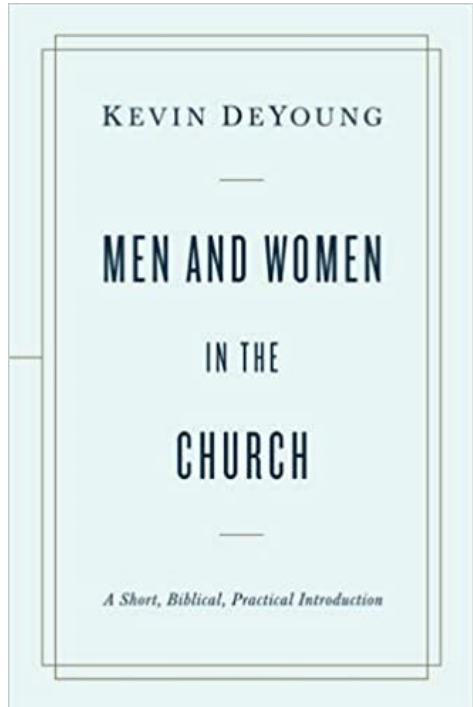
The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, he surveys the biblical data. He lays a foundation by considering the opening chapters of Genesis before noting some patterns and principles that emerge in the Old Testament as a whole and in the Gospels as well. Most of this first part of the book is taken up with a study of 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5:22–33, 1 Timothy 2:8–15 and 1 Timothy 3:1–13.

In his discussion of 1 Corinthians 11, the author alludes to the controversy of the eternal subordination of the Son and he helpfully highlights that some complementarians have made too much of the fact that Paul relates the husband-wife relationship to the headship of God over Christ (p. 51). DeYoung discourages using the trinity as a model for the marriage relationship because he says it is not necessary and the inner workings of the Trinity do not readily allow for easy application (p. 52).

Before he summarizes the biblical teaching, he stresses the importance of considering the many things that women can do in the church. He lists several things including: sharing their faith, writing, counselling, mentoring, organizing and administrating. He also mentions how they can come alongside elders and deacons in difficult situations involving women or needing a woman's perspective, such as victims of abuse and caring for widows (pp. 94–95). This was a helpful section for seeing that what needs to be stressed is not only the boundaries, but also the many ways in which women can serve in the church.

After asserting that church office and the task of preaching are limited to qualified men in the church, DeYoung considers the practical questions of whether women should teach in mixed adult Sunday school classes and small groups. He acknowledges that complementarians sometimes disagree on how to apply their principles, and this will be one of those issues that churches must work through (p. 97).

In the second part of the book, he deals with many of the common objections and questions that will be raised against complementarianism. One question that is addressed is whether it is possible to have female preachers under male elders. There is also a chapter dedicated to answering the very practical

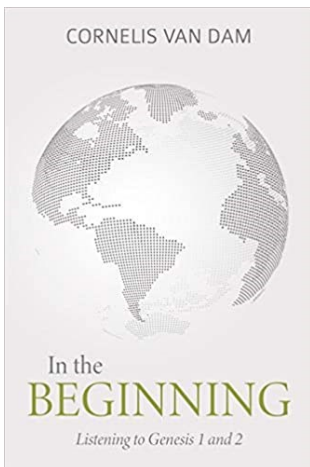


question of how parents can explain what it means to be a man or a woman to their sons and daughters (p. 131).

This would be a great little book to have in the church library and to give away to people in the congregation to help them think through the issue.

Reviewed by Peter Aiken, the minister of Birchwood Free Church of Scotland in Charlottetown, PEI.

In the Beginning: Listening to Genesis 1 and 2. Cornelis Van Dam. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021, 371 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-1-60178-805-4



Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, who is a professor emeritus from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, writes this stellar work on Genesis 1–2. His purpose in this book is not to write a commentary on these passages, but to deal primarily with questions of historicity surrounding these chapters in Scripture.

The book itself begins with some broader matters such as the use of extra-biblical evidence (i.e., ancient near eastern literature) in interpreting Scripture. The author then proceeds to go through various clauses throughout Genesis 1–2 that have been heavily debated as to whether or not they disprove the historicity of these passages. The author spends somewhat less time working through Genesis 2 than Genesis 1 but spends adequate time on both.

He concludes by talking about the dangers of evolutionary thought to the gospel. Finally, there is an appendix where Dr. Van Dam takes some time to consider the topic of heaven and angels.

I really appreciate Dr. Van Dam's handling of the issue of extra-biblical evidence in the texts of ancient near eastern literature. In my own research on matters surrounding Genesis 1 and 2, I have been led to many of the conclusions that Dr. Van Dam came to in this chapter. The study of these ancient near eastern texts may be interesting and informative. But they can only go so far (which is not very far) in helping with good exegesis of these first passages of Scripture.

I also appreciate the author's handling of the scientific issues surrounding this text. While he upholds science as an important academic discipline and even encourages those in academia to pursue it, he also rightly recognizes the limitations of science. This is highly important in maintaining and upholding the doctrine of the authority and inspiration of Scripture.

The author looks back to the teaching of the Christian Church including the work of pastors like Bavinck, Calvin and some of the church fathers. It is

helpful to look with him into the actual viewpoints of Bavinck and Calvin with a little more depth. A greater analysis of some of the different hermeneutical and exegetical methods in church history may have been helpful here, especially when dealing with the method of the church fathers.

His exposition of the text is faithful and deals heavily in the Hebrew. He brings out a number of interesting points in relation to the text.

Given the very fine and detailed nature of the work done in this book, I would highly recommend this work. I would recommend it especially to pastors and seminary students who will probably be called upon to respond to evolutionary thought and/or preach through Genesis 1–2. That being said, I would also recommend this work to university students who are wondering how to respond to professors in Christian or secular universities who teach a less historical reading of the text. Books like this can be highly effective in equipping students to give an answer for the truth of God's Word.

To sum it up, Dr. Van Dam has a very high view of the authority of God's Word and his love for God's Word can be seen in his writing. He accomplishes His goal of establishing a clear case for the historicity of these passages. His book is very thorough and is written in reasonably accessible language. I could imagine that it will be read in future centuries as an enduring resource for the church.

Reviewed by Nathan Zekveld, the minister at the United Reformed Church of Prince Edward Island.

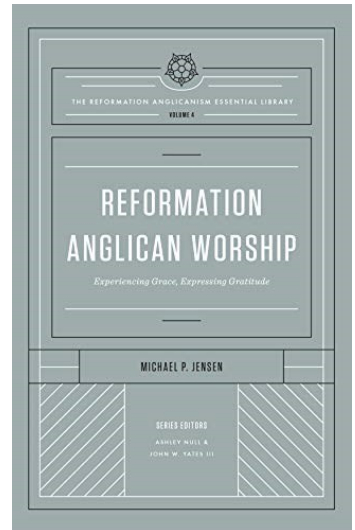
Systematic Theology

***Reformation Anglican Worship: Experiencing Grace, Expressing Gratitude.* Michael P. Jensen. Volume 4, The Reformation Anglicanism Essential Library, edited by Ashley Null, John W. Yates III. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 192 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-7297-5. Also available in Kindle format.**

Michael Jensen assesses Cranmerian Reformation theology and practices codified in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) to determine their soundness (p. 15). He concludes that they were and continue to be sound because they cohere with Scripture and do so in a better way than non-Cranmerian theologies competing for Anglican loyalties.

With regards to reforms, the BCP's most important move was away from the medieval doctrine of the Mass as a sacrifice offered to God; worship is, rather, a response of gratitude to grace freely offered and given in Christ. Moreover, Cranmer was clear, not vague; his primary criteria for worship reforms was that of edification, i.e., the potential to inspire and motivate to godliness, and as such, the Scriptures must be heard and the service understood, the pragmatic result being services in the vernacular English language.

Jensen's two introductory chapters feature razor-sharp analysis and crisp definitions. These are followed by four chapters devoted to the dominant characteristics of Anglican worship: Scripture, Sacraments, Prayers, and Music. Jensen characterizes Scripture as the instrumental means of salvation without denying the instrumental character of the dominical sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper rightly administered and received. Cranmer's Anglicanism takes a middle path between transubstantiation and memorialism. Regarding the issue of baptismal regeneration, Jensen offers J.C. Ryle's formulation that the baptismal service optimistically assumes the candidate is elect and therefore a proper



recipient of God's sacramental grace. Common prayers acknowledge God's nature and character and supplicate for continued grace. Music, like all aspects of worship, must be judged by its utility in edifying the congregation.

Jensen agrees with Chapman's assessment that, "Perhaps the best way of conceiving the English Reformation is of a Reformation halted in progress, with many loose ends, not least in Church order" (p. 69). This is not to suggest stasis. However, he argues that 18th cc. Evangelicals, 19th cc. Anglo-Catholics, and 20th cc. Charismatics have all introduced innovations to Anglican worship that go "above and beyond the words on the pages of the prayer book"; he then asks, "What are we to make of this diversity, and how can we evaluate it?" (p. 15). His answer, in typically irenic Anglican fashion, is "not that the Reformation Anglican position is more authentically Anglican than the alternatives, but that it is biblically and theologically more convincing..." (p. 131f). He includes theological liberalism and modern prayer liturgies in his critiques, noting that changes to "the nature of our address to God" can change the identity of God—with the result that "a completely different doctrine of God is at play" (p. 21).

Jensen's depiction of Jesus Christ as the true worshiper of God (p. 37ff) is inspiring, and worth the price of the book. His depiction of Christian worship as political is less precise and developed than the rest of the book.

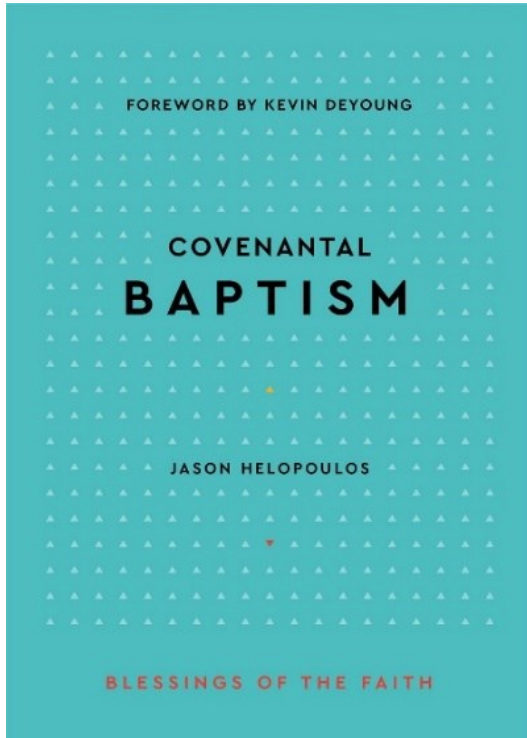
I would have liked more on how he thinks Evangelicalism deviates from Cranmer. The book would be excellent for a congregational deep-dive into the heart of Reformation Anglican worship and how this allows for diversity of forms. The book includes a robust General Index as well as a Scripture Index and Bibliography. A brief article by Jensen on Anglican worship may be found at <https://tinyurl.com/2myabww4>.

Reviewed by Rick Ball, an Anglican lay-reader in Prince Edward Island, Canada.

***Covenantal Baptism.* Jason Helopoulos. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2021, 160 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1629957272**

Our Lord Jesus exhorted his disciples, in Matthew 28, to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19, ESV). When faithful Christians read this text, it will be plain to them that baptism is inseparably linked to discipleship and to the Great commission of Jesus Christ. Yet, as Reformed and Presbyterian theologians would see it, baptism is not only connected to discipleship, or even to worship, but also to *covenant*, as it is a sacrament of the new covenant instituted by none other than by our Saviour Jesus himself.

In *Covenantal Baptism*, Jason Helopoulos, senior pastor of University Reformed Church (PCA) in Michigan, USA, provides readers with thorough arguments and moving stories about baptism that is contextualized in the realities



of Christ, covenant, and church. To undertake the task in five chapters, the first chapter deals with the kindness of God as the fundamental reality that gave birth to the institution of baptism as a sacrament of the gospel of Jesus Christ. “Fundamental to baptism is the kindness of our covenant-making God. That is the most important thing I want to impress on you in this book” (p. 19). The reason why the author begins from this point is that “[b]aptism is a gift from a kind Father who loves to lavish good things upon his children” (p. 19). This kind and loving God did two important things for his children in Helopoulos’s account, and those two entirely shape the doctrine of baptism: He established with them the covenant of grace, and he also

gave signs of the covenant in order that those who participate in it may receive the spiritual benefits promised in the covenant. Thus, this chapter provides a broad sketch of covenant theology, first by focusing on the kindness of God in establishing the gracious covenant with Abraham, and then by explaining the sacrament in the context of that gracious covenant that is ultimately about Christ.

The second chapter narrates how the doctrine of paedobaptism is a good and necessary consequence of four important theological streams, which altogether explain the place of infants in the new covenant. Then the third chapter focuses on how baptism is a blessing to those children of believers. It is a blessing to children because, to put simply, it calls them to faith as well as to faithfulness with respect to the things of God. The fourth chapter, on the other hand, moves beyond the focus on children to parents, and expositis wonderfully how baptism is a blessing to the parents of the children baptized. The fifth chapter then broadens the scope and explains how baptism is a blessing to the witnessing congregation: “Each person in the congregation is blessed by being able to observe the sacraments taking place in the midst of God’s people in the local church” (p. 91). Also, it has to be said here that, although the last section on questions and answers is designed as an appendix, it still deserves to be read as a distinct chapter in its own right, as it distills the materials and applies them to various theological questions in superb, simple, and seamless ways.

In short, *Covenantal Baptism* by Jason Helopoulos is a wonderful work on baptism from a Reformed perspective, and it is a great resource for pastors and theological students. The arguments provided are thorough and, in certain places, quite technical, yet thoughtful lay people can still benefit from it for its balanced mixture of stories and truths, or dramas and doctrines. There is no doubt that this book will be a great resource for Reformed and Presbyterian Christians and, considering its accessibility and readability, its usefulness may possibly surpass John Murray's excellent short work, *Christian Baptism*.

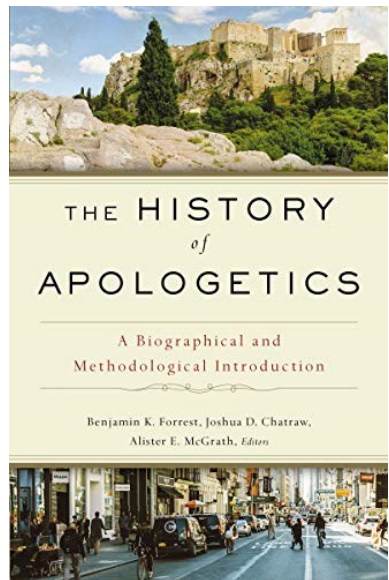
Reviewed by Seung-Joo Lee (PhD, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) is academic support officer at Reformed Theological College in Australia and an elder at Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

***The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction.* eds. Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D. Chatraw, Alister E. McGrath. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020, 848 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-0-310-55941-2. Also available in Kindle format.**

An ECPA Christian Book Award 2021 Finalist (Biography & Memoir), this outstanding encyclopaedic work weighs in at 848 pages by 49 contributors covering 42 apologists from the patristic era to the present.

The book's organizing principle is that apologetics is cultural and contextual: "Apologetics is a response to culture and its *critiques of* or *questions for* Christianity and is always done in conversation with culture and the people who define it" (p. 23). As if to illustrate, the selected apologists cover a wide range of apologetical topics, methods, and personalities, and include apologists from both the western Roman Catholic/Protestant and eastern Orthodox traditions.

The book is divided into eras: Patristic, Medieval, Early Modern, Nineteenth-Century, Twentieth-Century American, Twentieth-Century European, and Contemporary. Each era is introduced by a three-page preface which concisely outlines the apologetical issues and primary apologetical figures of the era. Included apologists are in bold print; apologists not in bold are indicative of the editors' selection process—and, perhaps, an initial template for a second volume.



Each chapter is a fully-footnoted academic essay, complete with bibliography. The task of each essayist is to show how each apologist functioned, as issues arose within his or her culture, to defend the faith. An editors'-imposed structure ensures consistency. The structure, with some variation is: Title/subtitle (e.g., Lesslie Newbigin—*Missionary Apologist*), a one paragraph Summary, then Historical Background, Theological Context, Apologetic Methodology and Response, Contributions to the Field of Apologetics, and Bibliography. The introductory materials contain a section called Contributor Bios which this reviewer excitedly misread initially as Contributor Bias.

The book's design facilitates multiple ways of approaching it. Besides the obvious ways of either reading it straight through or selectively based on interest in a particular apologist or era, the reader may wish to read the three-page introductions to each era to get a panoramic view of the apologetical issues and those who addressed them over the centuries. Alternatively, the reader may wish to read the introductory Summary paragraph for each apologist along with the concluding Contribution to the Field of Apologetics.

The book covers both "threats" from without (e.g., "Irenaeus of Lyons: Anti-Gnostic Polemicist) as well as from within (e.g., Gregory Palamas: Defending the Authority and Evidential Value of Religious Experience in Eastern Orthodoxy"). At times these internal apologetical defenses seem to border on sectarian, "insider baseball" feuds; Palamas, for example, defends Eastern contemplative practices against Roman Catholic rationalism. Similarly, Anglo-Catholic John Henry Newman defends against 19th cc. theological liberalism, but might not another apologist wish to weigh in against Newman's Anglo-Catholicism (as many did)? Perhaps one should think of apologetics in such contexts as a dialectical means of sharpening the sword of Christian orthodoxy—answering what is truly Christian and truly orthodox.

As the editors acknowledge, the book was necessarily selective. The somewhat obscure Palamas is included, but Calvin, who wrote his *Institutes* as a defense of the Christian faith, is not. Another selection—Ravi Zacharias—will require at least an editor's note in subsequent printings.

This welcome volume is currently available at an attractive price-point of around 50 CAD/35USD. Recommended for those interested in the history of Christian thought, church history, and, of course, apologetics.

Reviewed by Rick Ball, an Anglican lay-reader in Prince Edward Island, Canada.

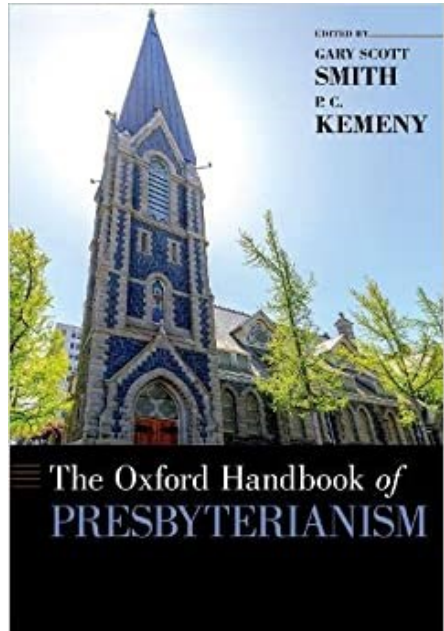
***The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism.* Gary Scott Smith and P. C. Kemeny, eds. Oxford/New York: University of Oxford Press, 2019, 640 pp., hardcover. ISBN 9780190608392**

Despite the tide against denominationalism today, works focused upon denominational studies with a larger canvas are still being produced and used. *The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism* is one of these larger-canvas, denominational-grouping works and as such will be of use to a large segment of global readers, students, and scholars. The work has 36 contributors and is edited by two Grove College, Pennsylvania professors, both Presbyterians from two different denominations, PCA and PCUSA.

The work is divided into five parts: History of the Presbyterian Tradition, Ecclesial Forms and Structures, Theology, Worship and Ethics, Politics, and Education. Within each of these five parts are a series of essays developing the parts chronologically or thematically or a combination of the two. It is a massive undertaking to organise such a work that has global dimensions such as with Presbyterianism. The editors have done a very good job in their organisation and selection process, and all will quickly realise the difficult task of selecting and surveying the subject parts.

Handbooks are collections, first go-to works, and the line between a *handbook* and a *companion* seems to be a mysterious editor's and publisher's domain. I have a handbook which I refer to often in a closely related field, *The Calvin Handbook*, edited by Herman J. Selderhuis. It is a constant companion to me in the field of Calvin studies. *The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism* I am sure is also going to be to me a constant companion in the field of Presbyterianism.

The two largest sections are the History of the Presbyterian Tradition and the Theology sections, with ten and eleven essays respectively. The word "tradition" speaks of allowing for a larger exploration of history rather than just a more standard approach to a chronological church history in each chapter. Some of the history section essays are fairly much chronological by century (e.g., the chapters by Gary Neal Hansen, Chad Van Dixhoorn and Sean Michael Lucas) and others are broader surveys and include selective case studies and comment on beliefs and some values, and challenges. This for example was in the chapter or



essay on “Presbyterianism in Africa” in part one (by Benhardt Yemo Quarshie). It took a highly selective, case study approach and dealt with challenges and trends, so not a chronological history approach there. Handbooks like companions are also the bugbear of what are the gaps or what was missed. They cannot be encyclopaedic so they will inevitably have gaps and areas which were omitted, and the critics will come forward some less than gracious to alert all to the gaps! So, with that proviso I will say graciously that I found it odd that a separate chapter was not included on Australia and New Zealand; instead, one must revert to the Index and locate references. I also found that many of the great missionary statesmen within Presbyterianism for Africa were not mentioned, nor were the largest historic fields of Presbyterian missions in South Africa and the Congo included within the case studies. Finally, perhaps it is just being a Canadian, but I found the two chapters dealing with North America lacked some key details about Presbyterianism in British North America and Canada. The ordination in 1770 in Nova Scotia was a significant historic event. Likewise, the “other” Presbyterians in Canada were given muted attention in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Some of the most illuminating chapters I found were the chapter by Richard Burnett on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit; Mark Noll, Presbyterians and Church-State Relations; and Paul Kemeny’s Presbyterians, Schisms, and Denominations. The survey chapter on Women’s Ordination provides much background material yet does have a concluding bias in my estimation and has its perspective of triumphalism on the subject. It highlights in many ways the diversity within the denominational grouping of Presbyterian. Theologically Presbyterianism today is a very divided grouping much like global Anglicanism. It is difficult for books like this to bring together the whole grouping under the banner of “Presbyterian” and find a unified theological core. The reality is each author will endeavour to be unbiased, yet it is not always possible or desired.

Each chapter ends with end notes and a select bibliography. These are generally very helpful and will point readers in the right direction. The work does not include maps or illustrations. The Index is most helpful and a good complement to the Table of Contents. I am not really aware of any comparable work like this as an encompassing book. There are several select works which address portions covered within this book but nothing as full as this and attempting to be as global in perspective. However, in saying this last point about being global, it does seem that it is heavily American in its orientation. Some chapters certainly attempt to draw upon sources and details from the wider global Presbyterian community, but by-and-large it is rooted and crafted with strong reference to the American Presbyterian context. It is an expensive work for some smaller Christian colleges and for students to buy yet a very important work. Perhaps Presbyterian associated Bible colleges and seminaries can seek out a donor and obtain a library copy.

Reviewed by Jack C Whytock

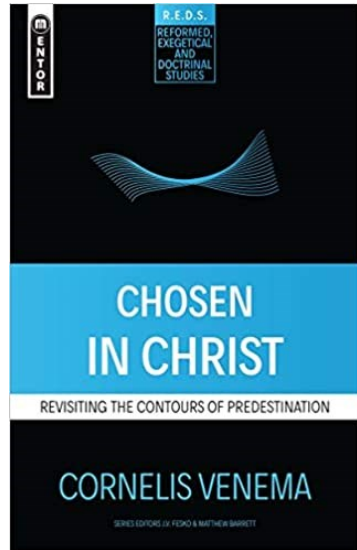
***Chosen in Christ. Revisiting the Contours of Predestination.* Cornelis Venema. Reformed Exegetical Doctrinal Studies series. Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, Mentor, 2019, 402 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1527102354**

Those who have read any of Cornelis Venema's previous writings on the covenant, justification or eschatology will already know what to expect, and they will not be disappointed. Venema, who is President and professor of Doctrinal Studies at the Mid-America Reformed Seminary, lives up to expectations with this title on a thorny subject.

It's quite correct to remark, as the author does in the introduction, that the number of books on the subject might discourage from this one. However, many of them are complex historical studies or rather unreadable, and few of them give the succinct spread of exegesis, biblical theology and historical theology that this one does. The level is demanding for the average reader who would best stick to Arthur Pink, but it is well-pitched for pastors, theological students and others who want a well-balanced and biblically faithful presentation of the subject and who are not put off by detail.

The book presents a fine introduction setting the scene, followed by nine chapters covering the subject in the Old and New Testaments, the Pauline epistles, Augustinian and Reformation theology, the Dort debate with Arminianism, Barthian theology and the neo-arminianism of the Open theology movement. Thus, Venema brings us right up to the present, even if one is not all that taken with the dialectical meanders of modern theology. The conclusion, with its theological and pastoral reflexions, is stimulating, revisiting perennial issues such as the fairness of God in choosing some and not others, whether the number of the elect is few, election and the nature of the gospel offer, human freedom, and the question of election and assurance.

I enjoyed the biblical presentation, particularly the material bearing on election in John's gospel, Romans and Ephesians. Venema is right to resist the recent fad of playing up collective while playing down individual election. The presentation of Arminianism was balanced and the discussion of Dort useful, but those who think that Moïse Amyraut and the Saumur school provided a third way with their novel approach to the divine decrees will be disappointed. In the light of the Christian tradition as a whole Thomas Aquinas hardly gets the place he deserves, while Barthianism gets 40 pages. Personally, I thought it would have



been better to discuss the thought of Suarez and Molina and “middle knowledge” in the context of the development of prescience from Aquinas to Arminianism rather than with relation to open theism. Even if Arminius makes little specific reference to Jesuit middle knowledge, he must have been well informed about it (cf. 230).

One of the most influential works on the subject of election in the 20th century was *Divine Election* by G.C. Berkouwer, published in the mid-1950s. This book marked a turning point in the influential Dutch theologian’s thought as he moved toward neo-orthodoxy, taking a good many along with him. In reaction to Berkouwer’s influence I. Howard Marshall of Aberdeen wrote *Kept by the Power of God*, about the possibility of falling away (67–68). Surprisingly, no reference is made to Berkouwer other than in the introduction (on 13 and not 14 as in the index) where his tendency to accent “praise” is noted. One wonders why this should be in a book of this nature?

The book has the advantage of a handy glossary, and bibliographical details are given for each chapter, a feature I did not particularly appreciate. Scripture and subject indexes are a good concluding feature.

Reviewed by Paul Wells of Liverpool, England, current editor of Unio Cum Christo (Union with Christ).

***Embracing Doctrine and Life: Simon Oomius in the Context of Further Reformation Orthodoxy.* Gregory D. Schuringa. No place of publication: North Star Ministry Press, 2021, 387 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-64999-352-6. Also available in hardback. ISBN 978-1-64999-363-2.**

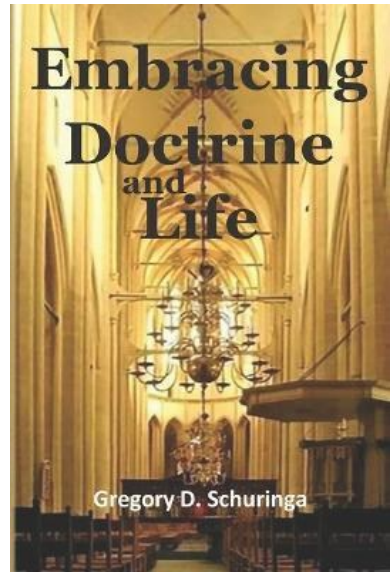
This is the first book that we reviewed from what is a new publishing house to us, The North Star Ministry Press (Nsmpress). This press, it appears, grew out of the ministry founded by Dr H. (Henry) David Schuringa, a Christian Reformed Minister and former adjunct professor at Calvin Theological Seminary and Kuyper College and professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido and now a consultant of North Star Ministry and serves on various boards, etc. The press operates from this perspective:

Nsmpress seeks to promote a worldview Calvinism of the Spirit and the Word. So here are Five Alls, Five Omnias, five big ideas, on how the faith we hold dear, and is precious, provides an all-inclusive perspective on God’s entire creation. Think of Christian

Worldview as sprouting from Calvinist theology, life, history and piety.¹

Greg Schuringa is the son of H. David Schuringa and is also a Christian Reformed minister who has served as a pastor for twenty years in the CRC. He currently pastors in Wisconsin.

The subject of the book is most interesting and enlightening. It deals with the Second Reformation period in the Netherlands, popularly known as the *Nadere Reformatie* and also as the Further Reformation using one theologian of that period Simon Oomius (1630–1706). Richard Muller, who wrote the foreword for this book, states: “The theology and piety of the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* has been given only scant attention in English-language scholarship” (p. 9). Since it parallels in many aspects the Puritan movement, it is a critical field for study. Both the Puritans and the *Nadere Reformatie* emphasized the pursuit of theology not just as a theoretical study but also directed towards *praxis* or piety. Muller wrote that in both versions it did not “mean a loss of substance or necessarily, of the detail of orthodoxy” (p. 9). Finally, Muller points us in the foreword in the direction of comparison and contrast with Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*. The reader should carefully read Muller’s very helpful foreword.



Schuringa commences his text with this same thesis: “...in Oomius, at least, orthodoxy, Reformed scholasticism, piety, and praxis cannot be separated” (p. 24). There has been a popularised notion that the Further Reformation departed from orthodoxy in method or substance and this book will argue the opposite by using Oomius as a case study approach.

The book is divided into four parts: Part I Simon Oomius Biographical Data, Part II Theologian Simon Oomius, Part III Oomius’ Doctrine of Scripture, and Part IV Oomius’ Doctrine of God. If you are like myself, Oomius was a theologian of whom I was not familiar, thus the first part as a biographical study was necessary to read and study before proceeding. If one is more familiar with Oomius and the Further Reformation, then perhaps one can dive right into parts two to four. At the end of Part I, Schuringa summaries the categories of Oomius’ writings into: those on the Christian life, (*theologia ascetica*), occasional, polemical, dogmatic, and programmatic. This five-fold classification is helpful to study (pp.

¹Accessed from the Nsmprss website,
<https://www.nsmprss.com/worldview> 8 December, 2021.

66–71). Schuringa also produces a most helpful Appendix on the Works of Simon Oomius (pp. 355–363). Combining these two sections makes for a good overview of the publications of Oomius by classification and date, title and where they may be found today. It is disappointing that a 1656 work by Oomius is now missing. This work, *De eygenschappen ende voortganch van de kerke enz* would certainly allow much deeper reflection on his ecclesiology.

Part II deals with matters related to prolegomena: defining theology, dealing with natural theology and supernatural theology, the latter which must also be practical theology. Truth must lead to practice. This section is primarily from Oomius's *Dissertatie*, the Introduction to his *Institutiones theologiae practicae*. Schuringa also expands the definition section here on *theologica practica* and makes the case well that both the *theoretica* and *practica* were seen by Oomius and numerous others as not to be separated. Part II further develops the nature of Oomius's *Institutiones* as it was originally planned as a grand two-part work, divided into The Faith, Part One, and Love, Part Two. Part One would be preceded by the Introduction (*Dissertatie*....) and then deals with the faith as relates to scripture and God. Part Two would cover *theologia moralis* and *theologia ascetica* as two books. Part Two was never published and there seems to be some uncertainty if the treatise on God in Part One was fully completed before his death.

Oomius's *Instituiones* was written in Dutch not Latin and was for the “unlearned” but also it seems for pastors and students of theology. It was to be the first major Dutch practical theology work. We should not confuse the term practical theology with modern constructs of that term.

Then Parts III and IV come fully to deal with what was published concerning scripture and God by Oomius in his *Institutiones*. Schuringa gives us the table of contents on Scripture (pp. 163–166) from the *Instituiones*. It is truly exhaustive! It is more extensive than both Ames's and Marckius's and comes closer to Turretin or Van Mastricht (lengthwise, that is), yet Oomius is longer also than Van Mastricht (p. 163). It contains seven divisions with 29 chapters! The combination of the theoretical and the practical is clearly in evidence here. The language is most revealing, for example, fourth division, “Internal Duties to be Practiced with Respect to the Holy Scriptures” and the fifth division, “External Duties to be Practiced with Respect to the Holy Scriptures” and a sample chapter such as 4, “On Listening to the Preaching of God's Word”.

Part IV, which is On God, appears to have been published at two dates, 1676 and 1680. Oomius covers God's being, name, attributes, and the divine persons in these two versions of the *Institutiones*. Schuringa follows much the same style as with Part III. He provides the full listing of Oomius's divisions and chapters (pp. 248–251) and then summarises and comments.

On the publishing side of things, there are some differences about this work: the title page gives no publisher or location of publication; there seems to also be a different interpretation of the concept of “edition”, as this is called the 2021 edition which raises the question as to whether it was published in 2003 as

“First Edition” (yet I thought it was an unpublished thesis); the cover does not include the sub-title but only the main title; and the bibliography needed space changes as it looks still more like a thesis style. Perhaps these are just matters of an emerging publishing house.

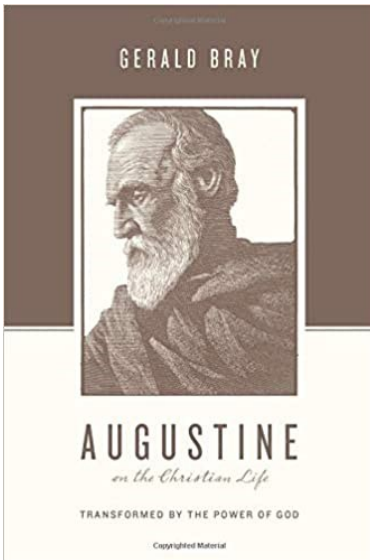
However, on the plus side the work is nicely bound in both the paperback and hardcover formats, and it is clear and easy to read. It is graced with an attractive cover.

The author is to be commended for a most helpful work and truly introduces many of us for the first time to Simon Oomius. The case is argued well for the unity of doctrine and piety of life with this pastor-theologian of the *Nadere Reformatie*. It is a commendable, contextual read to study before taking up à Brakel and will be profitable to make comparisons with the English Puritans.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

Historical Theology

Augustine on the Christian Life: Transformed by the Power of God. Gerald Bray. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015, 230 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-4494-1.



This volume on Augustine is the first in the series, *Theologians on the Christian Life*, which includes books on Bavinck, Bonhoeffer, Calvin, Edwards and others, edited by Stephen J. Nichols and Justin Taylor. Among the important theologians whose writings impacted the Christian church, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, is the first and perhaps the greatest. Much of the extensive writings of this man of God who lived during the early formative years of the church is still available today for study and reflection. While this volume by Bray includes pertinent biographic information, it is not a biography of Augustine, but rather an overview of his theology and beliefs. After an introductory chapter on Augustine's life and times,

subsequent chapters deal with Augustine as the believer, the teacher, and the pastor. A final chapter discusses Augustine's reputation and legacy today.

Bray clearly describes how, from his conversion onward, Augustine strove to "praise God for his greatness" (p. 64) and proclaimed, "the faith that he had received in Scripture and sought to explain how it could be understood in the context of human life" (p. 81). In part, Augustine's theology was shaped by his past experience with the Manichees and Platonism, opposition to the heretic Pelagius, and the teaching of Ambrose, bishop of Milan. For Augustine the Bible was a coherent body of theology that was authoritative for the life and teaching of the church. Although he was at times handicapped by the poor translations of the Bible available to him (he was no linguist able to go back to the original language), Augustine believed "...that God had placed obscurities in Scripture in order to test us and make us think for ourselves...they are challenges that help us grow in faith

and love...” (p. 103). Augustine covered a wide swath of theology in teaching and writing, and Bray discusses Augustine’s stance on many of these subjects such as the Trinity, Christology, grace and the means thereof, the Psalms, the meaning of a personal relationship with God, and the doctrine of election. It is clear that Augustine was a man of his time and while this is reflected in his theology, much of his writing is still relevant for the church today. Bray clearly brings out where and how Augustine was influenced by the thinking of his time but yet shows how valuable and impactful his insights have been for Christians over the ages.

The writing is lucid and clear, it’s an enjoyable book to read albeit the theology sometimes is deep and thought provoking. While the in-depth review of Augustine’s thought is of interest in itself, this book also challenges the reader to assess one’s own theology and thinking about the great truths of the Christian faith. Augustine may have lived a long time ago, and in very different social circumstances, yet his insights and observations are still of great value to the serious student of theology. Each chapter of the book is divided into helpful subheadings, but I would have appreciated further division with sub-subheadings for some of the longer sections dealing with a range of theological themes. The book contains numerous citations from Augustine’s works and I really appreciated the contemporary language of their translation. Definitely a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the history and development of Christian doctrine.

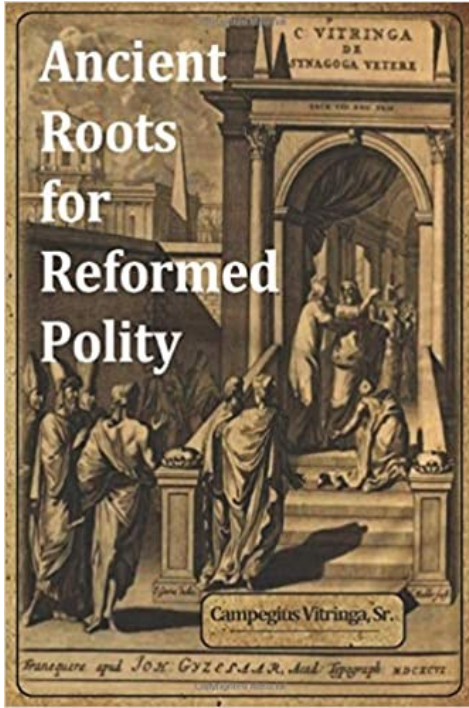
Reviewed by Solke H. De Boer, emeritus research scientist (plant pathology) and elder in the United Reformed Church of Prince Edward Island.

***Ancient Roots for Reformed Polity: De Synagoga Vetere and the Ecclesiology of the Early Church—An Annotated Compendium.* Campegius Vitringa, Sr., trans. Joshua L. Bernard, gen. ed. H. David Schuringa. No place of publication: North Star Ministry Press, 2020, 220 pp., paperback. ISBN 978 1 64633 633 3**

Campegius Vitringa Sr. (1659–1722) was a most significant Dutch Reformed theologian and minister. He studied at the University of Franeker (or University of Friesland) and also served there as a professor (a university which does not exist today, yet was noteworthy in its period, not least because the noted English Puritan William Ames was on the faculty and taught Johannes Cocceius).

Vitringa’s work on the synagogue, first issued in 1685 and revised in 1696, has been a standard reference work for generations. Unfortunately, it is likely less consulted in the last couple of generations. The 1100-page work was written in Latin. This English compendium is 200 condensed pages. The basic thesis of the work, as stated by Herman Bavinck, is: “The Jews of the Diaspora gradually acquired a worship service that... consisted wholly in preaching and prayer. It was

these assemblies which in the Old Testament era laid the groundwork for the Christian church community to come.” (back cover).



This edition begins with a most helpful foreword by the general editor, H. David Schuringa, who introduces Vitringa and the contextual issues of church polity. Polity should not be seen narrowly defined as strictly limited to church office-bearers but inclusive of governance and order, discipline and worship. The translator’s preface is included. I assume this was from the English translation of 1842 (which also makes the nature of polity, as the new title of 2020 uses it, inclusive): *The Synagogue and the Church: Being an Attempt to Show That the Government, Ministries and Services of the Church were Derived from Those of the Synagogue*, trans. Joshua L. Bernard (London: B. Fellowes, 1842). The new compendium does not tell us who Bernard was and I could not find reference to him elsewhere either.

The compendium is divided into two main parts: twelve chapters on The Synagogue and ten chapters on The Church. A listing of the chapter titles under the first part provides a good overview: The Words Synagogue and Church, Jewish Places of Prayer, The Schools, The Origin of the Synagogue, The Furniture of the Synagogue, The Governance of the Synagogue, The Discipline of the Synagogue, The Elders of the Synagogue, The Chazzans of the Synagogue, The Sermons in the Synagogue, and The Worship of the Synagogue. Likewise, the chapters for the second part are: The Apostolic Basis for Church Polity, The Places of Prayer, The Governance of the Church, The Discipline of the Church, Care for the Poor by the Church, The Elders of the Church, The Ministers, The Deacons of the Church, The Sermons in the Church, and the Worship of the Church.

There are two short appendices which have been added to this compendium. The first is a selection of quotations from one Princeton professor, Samuel Miller, and one Louisville Presbyterian professor, T.D. Witherspoon. In essence, both support the thesis of Vitringa that Presbyterian organization and worship was derived from the synagogue. The second appendix asserts that Vitringa, as a second reformation theologian, saw that the Reformation was a return to the synagogue and a turning away from the temple, hence “reformation”.

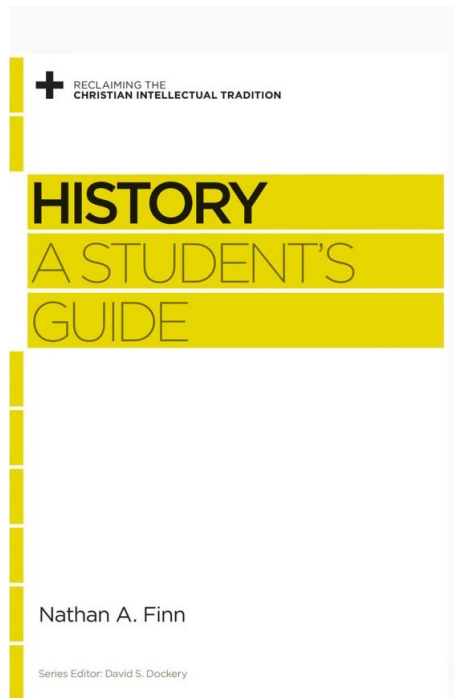
This compendium is most helpful and needed today. May it serve a new generation well. Vitringa does not provide a complete blueprint-style approach to

every detail concerning polity and worship. One must think in terms of principles. I remain as convinced of Vitringa's presentation as I was many years ago when I first discovered it. It should be in all Bible college and seminary libraries and should also be an essential reference work for ministerial candidates. Appreciation is given here to the editor for working through the text, reducing it (p. 16), and making it a user-friendly compendium. The one downside of this book is the inconsistent typesetting. This detracts from the work as there are several consistency issues which should have been addressed before final publication. Perhaps a second printing will correct these. Readers may also find the recent book edited by Charles Telfer of interest in order to gain a fuller appreciation of Vitringa.¹

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***History: A Student's Guide.* Nathan A. Finn. Reclaiming the Christian Tradition, series ed. David S. Dockery. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016, 117 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-3763-9**

The welcoming structure of the series *Reclaiming the Christian Tradition* presents the reader with such an inviting style, it is no wonder that it is so useful and popular. A series directed at "...Christian students and others associated with colleges and university campuses...(Dockery, p. 11)," each book or "study guide" as editor David S. Dockery calls them, encapsulates a subject and explains its connection to Christianity. These subjects range from philosophy to economics to media and communication. The editor of each of the 15 books, Dockery was the president of Christian Studies at Union University and currently serves at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The series editor states that each study guide author writes affirming first the need of saving faith as foundational to the Christian worldview and then applying this to the particular



¹ Campegius Vitringa, *The Spiritual Life*, trans. ed., Charles Telfer. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage/Soli Deo Gloria, 2018).

discipline. This is the most important part of education. How is all thought and philosophy we learn shaped by what we believe? What of the Arts? Or perhaps the Sciences? The guides aim to stimulate the modern student's mind to strive towards Christian intellectualism in each of these. The books serve as steppingstones, introducing that vital connection between each subject and faith. This step, Dockery stresses, is a helping hand, and thus it is up to the readers to put their trust in God and move forward in their chosen vocation. This is the first step in reclaiming the Christian intellectual tradition.

History: A Student's Guide by Nathan A. Finn emphasises this point further. The author is employed as the Dean of the University Faculty at North Greenville University and also teaches at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The book itself is structured with the author's goal in mind: short, precise chapters that explain a point and build on the previous one to explain a new point. It is a veritable handbook for history as it relates to the Christian. The book is organised with a preface, the author's acknowledgments, the bulk (main part) of the work, followed by questions for the reader, a glossary of unfamiliar terms, further resources, and general and scriptural indexes. The main work is divided into an introduction and four chapters. First, the subject of history is introduced and connected to Christianity. Why should we care about history? The author asks this and then explains. He delves into the subject and explores what it is and how to view it. He then explains the different ways people view the movement of history as well as an overview of historiography. This chapter involves briefly explaining each view and how it relates to Christianity's view of history. The author concludes with an overview of Christianity and history together as well as a final chapter filled with practical ways to study history and introduce it to daily life and the church.

The author briefly and comprehensively introduces history as something to be fascinated with and acknowledged as a believer or unbeliever. In addressing his audience, our author brings together real-life examples, relatable stories and down to earth language. This is extremely helpful in the displaying of his goal to his readers. In showing the reader many different aspects of the Christian view of history, the author draws the reader in, making them completely invested in what is written. The reader is expertly guided by the author. This makes for both a no-nonsense tour that the title indicates but also a sense of satisfaction in the lessons learned.

History is one of the hardest subjects to bring to life in the present day as something to be interested in because of the idea that it is for the most part actually dead. Our author bypasses this mindset skilfully and sets the reader down a different path; one that promises fulfilment and excitement. By showing how the subject of history relates to the now as well as the average everyday Christian, he revitalises the past and invigorates the reader to do something about it.

The fifth chapter is especially pertinent in this sense, though he develops this line of thought throughout the book. Whoever may read this will walk away

with a solid grasp on the relation between history and Christianity and perhaps, if the author would have his way, a new direction in his or her life.

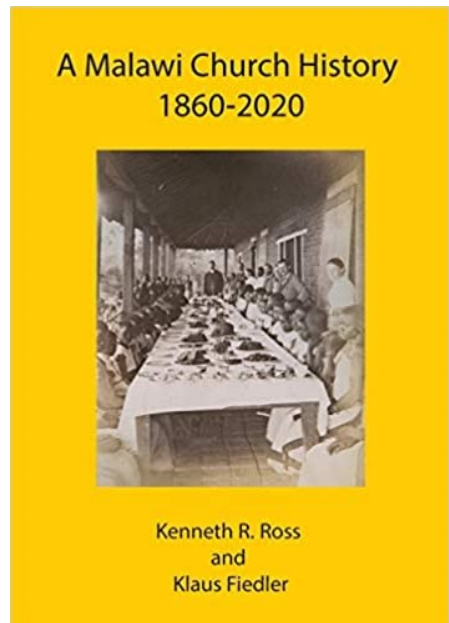
Reviewed by Isaiah Hogeterp of Prince Edward Island, a member of the United Reformed Church, PEI and a recent graduate of Gillespie Academy, Woodstock, Ontario.

A Malawi Church History 1860–2020. Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler. Mzuzu, Malawi: Mzuni Press, 2020, 493 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-99960-60-74-8

It was a real delight to read this book which will certainly become the standard text now on the history of the Church in Malawi for several years. This is a comprehensive work bringing together the whole vista in one single book. There are many monographs, denominational and thematic works, but no comprehensive single volume work so this makes this book stand-out in the field and is most welcome.

The authors have crafted a most clearly formulated Introduction as to their aims for the book and certain limitations that they foresee. Amongst their stated purposes is that they desired that it will be used as a teaching text for undergraduate studies. The work is developed around four periods of organisation: Founding Charisms 1860–1910, From Mission to Church 1920–1960, Growing Churches 1960–1990, and Church Come of Age 1990–2020. The word “charisms” may at first be a little off-putting, so it is good that it is defined in the Introduction (p.16 and later p. 120) as to how the authors mean the term. It will no doubt be first seemed by many as more a word related to charismatic gifts for many today rather than in the way the authors use it as a “founding charism” that is a distinctive quality of a founding group. I had thought of the word in church history more as related to the aura of a founder/foundress of one of the Catholic orders whether Francis of Assisi or Don Bosco and the Salesians.

The authors are seasoned lecturers and writers who are very familiar with Malawi. They are very fluent writers who can create chapters which read very well and are quick-paced, something necessary in a single volume comprehensive work such as this. Each chapter includes an excellent “Further Reading” list and going



through several of these I found them to be thorough and accessible. The book includes several illustrations, maps, and occasional charts and boxed quotations. A comprehensive Index finishes off the book as well as a very helpful “Relevant Primary Source Texts by Chapter” (pp. 474–475). This primary source list is keyed to what is really a companion volume called *Christianity in Malawi. A Source Book*, Revised and Enlarged Edition, also by Mzuni Press and published also in 2020. Thus, by using both, *A Malawi Church History 1860–2020* together with *Christianity in Malawi. A Source Book* lecturers would have at their disposal an excellent class set to use.

Comprehensive surveys like *A Malawi Church History 1860–2020* cannot by their very nature deal with all details of a church or mission, nor can they also cover all churches or missions. There will be churches which will be missed. For example, the smaller Presbyterian denominations in Malawi are not there, nor are the varieties of Baptists that are in Malawi. The book focuses very much on the larger mainline Presbyterian (CCAP) and Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches and does a very good job on Zion Churches, Adventist, and also the more recent Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches.

The book uses the words “church history” in its title. That does not mean that it just speaks about institutional churches as the book looks at several themes along the way such as women or nationalism, yet generally relating these back to the institutional church. Readers will be fascinated, at least I was, as to how women’s ordination was dealt with for example in the CCAP (pp. 397–399). The para-church groupings or missions/ministries may not be as prominent as some may desire. Yet in saying this, it does not mean that it is not there. One will find references to some para-church entities or faith missions along the way also, but there were some which I was looking for and could not find, such as in higher education, radio, and medical work. All comprehensive surveys have their limitations, and the authors acknowledge this.

The authors attempt to present recent matters as relating to Malawi in as an objective manner as possible by stating the facts of the story. This can be seen particularly towards the end of the book in chapter 27, “Navigating Confusion and Division: Ethical Issues” (pp. 429–444). Here the topics are HIV and AIDS, healing and fake healing, prosperity Gospel, marriages and church weddings, sexuality, gender-based violence, and regionalism and tribalism—all issues which will divide and engage Christians in Malawi and relations globally as well.

The book is well bound and typeset and I believe will prove an excellent teaching resource. It will be welcomed not just in Malawi but in colleges outside of Malawi as well for libraries and as a standard go-to work. Warmly commended.

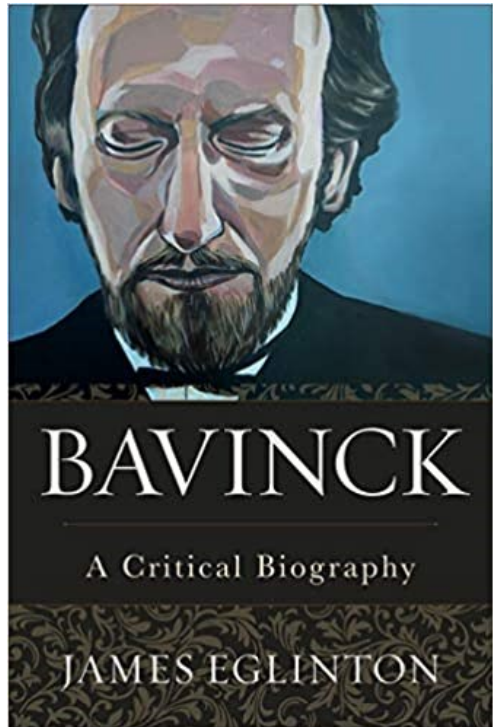
Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***Bavinck: A Critical Biography.* James Eglinton. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020, 450 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-1-5409-6135-8**

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) was a Dutch theologian of note, well-known in the Netherlands for his *opus magnum*, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, which has become available in English since 2008 as *Reformed Dogmatics*.¹ This four-volume study is considered by some the most important theological work of the twentieth century. Bavinck's work is particularly interesting to Reformed Christians because the dogma of the Christian faith is set forth without compromising the pre-Enlightenment intellectual tradition of men such as John Calvin while recognizing its tension with the modern and critical thinking that pervades academic schools of religion.

In this biography of Bavinck's life, Eglinton in the first section of the book describes the turmoil in the churches in the Netherlands occasioned by the secession (*Afscheiding*) of 1834 and the struggles of his father, a Secessionist pastor, in shaping the world into which Herman was born. Subsequent sections, each one to three chapters in length, deal with Herman Bavinck's life as student, as pastor, and as professor, first at the Theological Seminary in Kampen, and later at the Free University in Amsterdam.

As a student preparing for the pastorate Bavinck was conflicted about where he should study. On the one hand, as a member of a secessionist church he was expected to study at the church's federational seminary in Kampen, as did all prospective pastors of those churches. On the other hand, Bavinck being unimpressed by the seminary's educational standard, desired the more rigorous academic, but liberal, education available at the University of Leiden. Resisting pressure from the secessionist church leaders such as Anthony Brummelkamp, but with his father's support, he ultimately attended at Leiden and held his own. While



¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*. 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). The four volumes were released in English from 2003 onwards.

becoming well versed in critical Biblical analysis and modern philosophy, Bavinck remained true to the Biblical confessions of his home church and even earned the respect of the professors with whom he disagreed. Nevertheless, Bavinck's later work would be influenced by Lieden lecturers, such as the anti-colonial, anti-Christian, and anti-Calvinist E.D. Dekker, the novelist writing under the pen name Multatuli, as well as the prominent professors Johannes Scholten and Abraham Kuenen. Two fellow students from Leiden notably influenced Bavinck throughout his life through regular correspondence: Henry Dosker who completed his theological studies after emigrating to America, and Snouck Hurgronje, a theologically liberal student who would become an important Dutch scholar of Islam. Bavinck kept up regular correspondence with these friends throughout his adult life, the one becoming increasingly conservative as a Christian, the other forsaking Christianity altogether and embracing the Islam faith.

At twenty-six, Bavinck earned a doctorate in theology *cum laude* from the University of Leiden. Within a year of graduation, he was called to serve as pastor in Franeker, an out-of-the-way town in the northeast of the Netherlands. Trained as an academic theologian, the transition to performing the functions of a local pastor was a challenging and difficult time. While his preaching was well appreciated and he was loved by the congregation, it was a lonely time. The young lady he had courted since he was 18 remained elusive. For thirteen years he intermittently perused this love affair and was ultimately thwarted by her father's disapproval. In 1891, he married Johanna Schippers, fourteen years his junior, but an intellectual equal and from a privileged family. Together they had one child, a daughter.

Bavinck served as pastor of the church in Franeker for only a year when he was appointed professor at the Theological Seminary in Kampen. His appointment attests to the trust he retained among church leaders in his faithfulness to God's word despite his liberal education. For almost twenty years he taught and wrote at Kampen until in his late forties he accepted an appointment at the Free University in Amsterdam, an appointment he had declined several times before.

Dogmatics and ethics were Bavinck's main area of study and reflection, but he also wrote extensively and spoke publicly on issues of contemporary importance such as psychology, feminism, pedagogy, and Christian schooling. His major work on Christian ethics was never completed during his lifetime but was published posthumously (English editions of volumes 1 and 2 were released recently as *Reformed Ethics* by Baker Publishing Group; the final 3rd volume is forthcoming). He was active in politics, serving as a member of the Dutch parliament for many years, and worked closely with Abraham Kuyper on political affairs, in the church split (*Doleantie*) of 1886, and the church union of 1892. He was also an accomplished preacher.

Without getting caught up in the theological issues that shaped Bavinck's life, Eglinton critically evaluates the various influences and writings, in an attempt to understand who Bavinck was as thinker, as theologian, and as writer. Bavinck grasped the consequences of Nietzschean atheism and the shadow it cast on the

Christian world view—it subtly but significantly altered his course. Like Abraham Kuyper, Bavinck appreciated Groen van Prinsterer’s neo-Calvinist approach to politics but in later years was increasingly realistic about the systemic influence of sin. Other influencers on Bavinck included Geerhardus Vos, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary; the Dutch Calvinist poet Willem Bilderdijk; and Lucas Lindeboom, colleague at the Theological Seminary in Kampen with whom he initially had significant tension on account of theological differences but later appreciation over concern for those suffering mental illness.

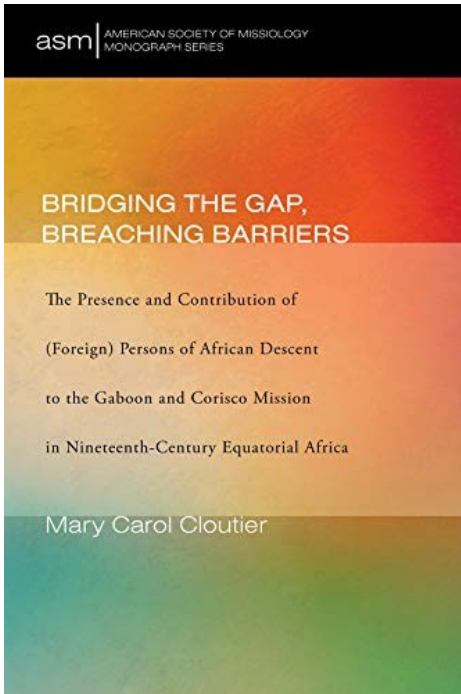
Eglinton, who currently teaches Reformed theology at the University of Edinburgh, was well positioned to write this biography, having degrees in theology and law, a PhD on Herman Bavinck from the University of Edinburgh, and post-doctoral experience at the Theological Seminary in Kampen. He takes issue, from time to time, with previous Bavinck biographers who evidently saw inconsistencies and conflicts in Bavinck’s thought and work. Eglinton presents a coherent analysis of Bavinck, the man, relying heavily on Bavinck’s private journals, personal letters, newspaper articles, and tracts written by Bavinck himself.

The book is an interesting read, particularly for one familiar with the idiosyncrasies of Dutch culture and knowledgeable in reformed church history in the Netherlands. For those who find Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics* to be an important resource in support of a truly Biblical understanding of Christianity, they will undoubtedly find this biography a helpful aid in understanding the author’s intent and stance on doctrinal issues.

Eglinton’s positions throughout the book, and especially on controversial issues pertinent to Bavinck’s life, are well-researched and extensively documented. There are fully 81 pages of notes in fine print included in the book! Also, a list of works by Bavinck is included in an extensive bibliography. There are several appendices, one of which is an English translation of Bavinck’s travelogue of his 1892 trip to America—in itself a fun and insightful perspective of a thoroughly European intellectual’s view of the new world.

Reviewed by Solke H. De Boer, emeritus research scientist (plant pathology) and elder in the United Reformed Church of Prince Edward Island.

Bridging the Gap, Breaching Barriers: The Presence and Contribution of (Foreign) Persons of African Descent to the Gaboon and Corisco Mission in Nineteenth-Century Equatorial Africa. Mary Carol Cloutier. American Society of Missiology Monograph Series. Series Vol. 50. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021, 242 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-5326-9749-4



A book with such a long title needs careful unpacking. The main title is superb and speaks so well to the theme of this book. There are differences and those differences need to be overcome or forged together by engaging partnerships. We hear this phrase “bridging the gap” in a wide variety of contexts today; for example, in education, music, politics, and economics, but here it is applied to missionaries of colour who stepped-up to fill many personnel needs. They came forward to serve when there were real barriers in the eyes of many. Our world has not been and still is not perfect. People have often been estranged. This book helps us to hear the story of those who filled gaps and did it often with walls of division which needed to be overcome—a brilliant main title.

The sub-title is very descriptive and sets the book’s parameters well. It is about African Americans, Americo-Liberians, and West Africans who laboured in missions in the field(s) of Gaboon and Corisco in the 19th-century. The book itself fills an obvious gap in research on a neglected area of study. Thus, it is setting itself as a book which will be referred to for many years to come.

Cloutier writes with a depth of experience. She is currently associate professor of intercultural studies at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and before this served for ten years as a missionary with the Christian and Missionary Alliance chiefly as a professor at Institut Biblique de Bethel in Libreville, Gabon. Cloutier appears to know her way around very well these Presbyterian and ABCFM mission fields and their history. Her bibliography is extensive and most helpful to any working in this mission history area.

The three-page Introduction (pp. 1–3) is tightly packed. It sets the stage well for the book’s thesis. Then follows in chronological order the Prologue—the Cape Palmas Mission in Liberia, 1834–1842; then the Gaboon Mission (Baraka

1842–1870; then the Corsico Mission 1850–1870; then, when the two missions united, the Gaboon and Corisco Mission 1871–1895; ending with an Epilogue and a separate Conclusion. It should be added that the Bibliography is an exacting work of primary source material. It reveals a book built with fresh forays into correspondence and diaries etc. to help us to see these missionaries of colour.

Reading this book will show the tensions of the coloured missionary force: were they accepted by natives? Who did they relate best towards—the native community or the white mission community? And were they really an intermediate missionary force? This all comes out in the opening section on the ABCFM and the Cape Palmas Mission and is a constant theme throughout the book.

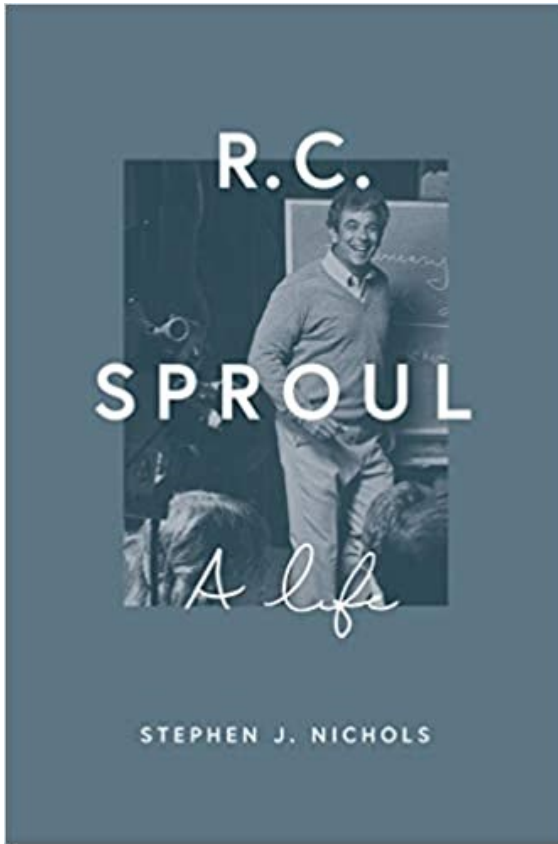
Some of the coloured workers who are highlighted are Benjamin V. R. James, Mary Harding, and Charity Sneed. This is very good as rarely does one encounter these names in most histories. On several occasions as I was reading, I continued to ask more about the person and realised that it is very difficult to often find archival or secondary materials on several of these mission workers. Hence the strength of this work is that it brings the stories to us of some of these coloured mission workers and it may very well, as it did for me, leave you wanting to know more. The book also provides much rich detail about Robert Nassau and his challenges to the colour-line that he saw in the mission.

Cloutier interacts especially in the Conclusion with various interpretative historical perspectives as relates to this mission period and work. She knows her way around the field very well and is fair and is in sympathy to the work of evangelical mission undertakings. Mission history is not all glorious, yet the evangel and the spread of the evangel must not be forgotten, or cynicism and revisionism will be the result. Honesty and integrity in this historical monograph have been found without cynicism and revisionism.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

R.C. Sproul: A Life. Stephen J. Nichols. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020, 371 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4335-4477-4

This reviewer recalls first encountering R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) in 1975 at the second annual Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology. Not yet a household name among conservative evangelicals (the way he would come to be in following decades), Sproul in 1975 was a youthful and winsome advocate of Reformed theology just recently returned from advanced studies under renowned theologian, G.C. Berkouwer, at Amsterdam. He emerged also as the protégé of another frequent participant in the Philadelphia conferences, John Gerstner (1914–1997). Sproul evidently also had a growing friendship with PCRT host, James M. Boice (1938–2000), with whom he shared Pittsburgh roots.



A first great strength of Stephen Nichols' new biography is that it effectively introduces the reader to the trajectory the youthful Sproul was travelling up to and beyond 1975. We are helped to follow a line leading from Western Pennsylvania, with Sproul's studies in that region's Westminster College (where he was converted), to the predominantly liberal Pittsburgh Seminary (where he came under Gerstner's wing), and to that important year of study in the Netherlands. We learn too of his subsequent brief teaching stints in his college alma mater, Westminster, in Gordon College, and in Conwell Seminary (then at Philadelphia). All this was on his résumé by age 30; but Sproul had not yet quite found his 'niche'.

Leaving academia voluntarily in 1969 because of a determination to spend his future in doing theological education *outside* the classroom, Sproul briefly filled a pastoral position in Cincinnati. There he took responsibility for directing congregational evangelism, mission outreach, and theological instruction. This role confirmed him in the conviction that there was a great need for the outside-the-classroom instruction he longed to supply. Little wonder that by 1971, with the help of a major benefactor, he was launching the Ligonier Study Center with which his name would be associated for the rest of his life, first in Western Pennsylvania and (after 1984) in central Florida. It was now that R.C. Sproul began to become known across conservative evangelicalism through the circulation of cassette and video tapes; these offered those at a distance what was available in person at Ligonier.

That next era of Sproul's Ligonier career (extending to Florida) overflowed with opportunities for seminary teaching (at the RTS campuses in Jackson, MS and Orlando, FL), extensive conference ministry (Ligonier soon beginning its own annual theological conferences, like the Philadelphia gathering, PCRT), his sequential pastoring of two Florida congregations and a steady stream of the books for which he will long be remembered. Certainly, by the time of the

relocation of the ministry to Florida, Sproul had become not only a household name theologian, but a ‘personality’, and the director of a conservative evangelical ‘empire’ which would soon entail a publishing house, conferences, broadcasts by radio and the internet, and the launch of a college.

A second strength of Nichols’ biography is that it highlights what might be termed the ‘great causes’ which absorbed so much of Sproul’s energy. The larger significance of these causes might have been brought out more clearly than it is. Sproul, while still a theological conservative within the doctrinally-comprehensive United Presbyterian Church USA (now PCUSA), had from the mid-1960s collaborated with others in forming the group, Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns. This group agitated for continuing loyalty to the Westminster Standards and orthodox ethical teaching in a decade of serious flux within his denomination.

By 1973, with that initial battle for traditional standards lost, Sproul used the independent study centre in Western Pennsylvania as the venue for a major consultation on the truthfulness of the Bible. From this ‘Ligonier Conference on Scripture’ emerged a significant volume of essays, *God’s Inerrant Word* (1974). This conference led directly to others (not hosted by Ligonier, but in which Sproul was prominent): the Chicago Conference on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) and on Hermeneutics (1982).

The reader of the biography needs to recognize that in these developments (all documented by Nichols) Sproul was committing himself to a pattern often repeated: the airing and attempted correction of what were, in effect, *denominational* doctrinal defections, by extra-denominational means. Yet, such efforts put *no* particular denomination under obligation to reform. Sproul’s *own* denomination had abandoned the conviction that the Bible was utterly truthful. The Ligonier Conference of 1973 had not made that denomination (or any other) blink.

While the repercussions of this abandonment moved Sproul to personally re-affiliate with the emerging Presbyterian Church in America (which stood firm on Scripture), Sproul had from 1973 onward shown a readiness to formulate theological pronouncements on questions vexing American churches from Ligonier’s *independent* platform. From that same platform, Sproul would eventually be outspoken in his critique of the 1994 efforts of the ecumenical group, ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together’ (ECT). This entailed public denunciations of two ECT participants, his erstwhile friends, Chuck Colson and J.I. Packer. Sproul’s bent was to speak vociferously *for himself*, through his organization. Near the end of his life, Sproul, still demonstrating this proclivity to articulate theological formula for the church from *beyond* the church, led in the production of a ‘Ligonier Statement on Christology’ (2016).

Having credited Nichols with supplying readers with a clearer grasp of both Sproul’s life-trajectory and the causes which he passionately took up, it is worth noting a number of ‘shadows’ associated R.C. Sproul’s career which needed clearer analysis. For one, the denunciations made by Sproul of ECT (and his hitherto friends associated with it) seem to have worked to *limit* rather than *expand*

Sproul's subsequent influence. He was certainly less welcome in various conservative Reformed seminaries which, while themselves skittish about ECT, broke no friendships over it. Again, as with other parachurch ministries built around charismatic individuals who fade in old age, it is far from clear that the Ligonier 'empire' has ensured an unclouded future. In his final years, Sproul tried to provide for the continuance of the Ligonier ministry by 'anointing' a team of trusted individuals who, it was hoped, could sustain the teaching ministry. Numerous of the 'teaching fellows' appointed by Ligonier in 2010 (with Sproul's approval) were men of his own generation, also very late in their careers. When, subsequently, some younger men were added to augment the first group, Sproul (with the concurrence of Ligonier's board) advanced his own son, R.C. Jr. as one such 'fellow', when he was clearly not the theological equal of others in that number. The son's subsequent moral failures brought discredit on his father and the Ligonier ministry.

Thus, in the end, Nichols' admirable biography presents the reader with a puzzle. Is the lasting legacy of R.C. Sproul his admirable championing of orthodox theological learning for the Christian masses—in his original rural retreat centre, by books, by cassette and video tape, by radio and lively conferences? There is so much evidence to suggest that it is. But on the other hand, it may equally be argued that Sproul's legacy is that of the populist theologian, who having determined to focus on the study centre and the conference hall, directed his theological appeals to Christian believers at large, with denominational structures of clearly secondary importance. On this reading, Sproul was 'theologian for the invisible church'.

Reviewed by Kenneth J. Stewart, Professor Emeritus of Theological Studies at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia.

***Christian History in Seven Sentences: A Small Introduction to a Vast Topic.* Jennifer Woodruff Tait. Seven Sentences series. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021, 168 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-0-8308-5477-6**

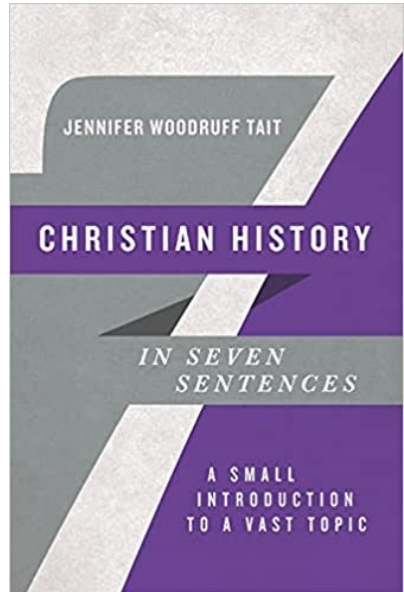
This was my first book to read in this new series by IVP Academic. The series aims at selecting seven key sentences or extended phrases in a discipline and then using these as springboards to introduce that subject. The publisher sees these as primers to introduce an academic field "that give readers a birds-eye view of the most pivotal truths on that subject". This is now the fourth book in the series and follows on from *Philosophy in Seven Sentences*, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*, and *The New Testament in Seven Sentences*. The idea is certainly a good one and there is always a place for such primers within a discipline.

The author, Jennifer Woodruff Tait, has served for several years now as the managing editor for the *Christian History* magazine. Over the years, these magazines have been helpful resources to me as a lecturer in church history. Tait has made extensive reference to various volumes of this magazine in her notes; one would imagine this in such a primer, and it is highly appropriate here.

The book's introduction clearly sets out the seven selections (sentences) that the author has made (pp. 3–6). This is followed by a short, almost what I would call an ethos, statement: "Understanding our Brothers and Sisters" (pp. 6–7). It is a word of encouragement on seeing this book as a conversation with the past, taking the study up with a spirit of charity, and seeking to live as "one, holy, catholic, apostolic" Church. The author is an Episcopalian (USA) priest (non-GAFCON), and the book does show that tradition at various junctures and may also have influenced the seven sentences which were selected.

That does raise the question, "How will readers and lecturers respond to Tait's seven selections?" I found myself in agreement on five or six of the seven. Tait's seven are: The Edict of Milan, The Nicene Creed, The Rule of Saint Benedict, The Excommunication of Patriarch Kerularios by Pope Leo IX, Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, The Edinburgh Conference, and The Second Vatican Council. I was surprised that the modern era and the rise of liberalism and/or neo-orthodoxy and the response to it by conservative theologians was not prominent, given the vast ethical issues facing the Church today and the vast divisions which are there and the pressures of secularism impacting Christianity. Thus, I do believe this is an important "sentence" which should have been included in this primer. Unity is a great desire, yet there are seismic divides and shifts that are essential to study; I do not believe a work published in 2021 can ignore these.

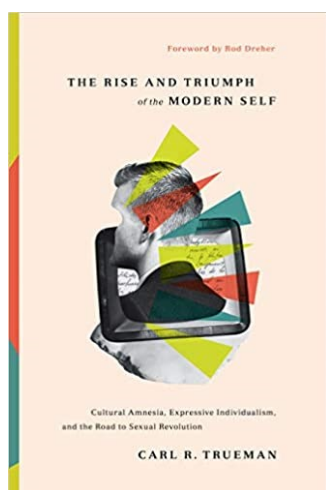
Tait has an amazing ability to wrap an engaging narrative around these select sentences by way of explanation and introduction for readers to the main people and conflicts or themes involved. For example, the chapter on Luther and the Reformation engages a vast panorama in a most interesting way, and Tait covers just so much here in one chapter. It makes for an excellent example of how one can lecture by using such a select sentence or extended phrase. In this way, this book also will be useful for classes in church history. Those familiar with Mark



Noll's *Turning Points*¹ will find perhaps a fuller vista in Noll's work which is modelled around fourteen turning points and perhaps drawing upon both texts by Tait and Noll will be useful to lecturers.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self.* Carl R. Trueman. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2020. 425 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4335-5633-3**



Carl R. Trueman, formerly of Westminster Theological Seminary, is currently Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies at Grove City College in Grove City PA. Trueman is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He is author of *Histories and Fallacies*, *Luther on the Christian Life* and *The Creedal Imperative*.

The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self sets out to trace the origins of the modern notion, “I am a woman trapped in a man’s body.” The fact that Trueman is framing it around such a statement reveals how deeply the sexual revolution is impacting us today. But within that, the particular legal and legislative challenges the transgenderism movement poses to the culture at large, from which

the assertion arises.

The question, says Trueman, “...touches on the connection between the mind and the body, given the priority it grants to inner conviction over biological reality” (p. 19). In his introduction, he summarizes the argument of the book, suggesting that in order to grasp where we are, we need to appreciate that our present moment hasn’t occurred in a vacuum, but has deep historical roots.

“At the heart of this book lies a basic conviction: the so-called sexual revolution of the last sixty years, culminating in its latest triumph—the normalization of transgenderism—cannot be properly understood until it is set within the context of a much broader transformation in how society understands the nature of human selfhood” (p. 20).

Coupled with this, Trueman seeks to explore the question of how the modern self radically differs from the traditional Christian understanding of the origin and purpose of a person’s self-understanding; that is, what are its origins? Is it purely self-defined or objectively mapped out by God? Similarly, what is the

¹ *Turning Points, Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Third Edition. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

teleology of self? Is it an end in itself? Is personal expression the noblest goal in life to, or is it personal formation for the good of society and ultimately the glory of God? He states,

...the changes we have witnessed in the content and significance of sexual codes since the 1960s are symptomatic of deeper changes in how we think of the purpose of life, the meaning of happiness, and what actually constitutes people's sense of who they are and what they are for (p. 23).

We travel back as early as the eighteenth century to men like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, up to figures like Nietzsche, Marx, Freud and Darwin. He introduces the reader to more modern, though less-known thinkers like Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, Antonio Gramsci, and Michel Foucault. These men, though known basically only to academics, are largely responsible, for shaping the sexual culture we know today.

Trueman stands on the shoulders of some the greatest minds in this field of study; most pre-eminently Philip Rieff, Charles Taylor, and Alasdair MacIntyre, who he introduces us to in part one of this volume. Rieff developed the idea of the therapeutic, psychological man, while Taylor develops the modern notion of the expressive self. MacIntyre explores the problem of how this purely subjective understanding of self has hindered objective analysis of whether something is true and how it can be quantified; "...that claims to moral truth are really expressions of emotional preference" (p. 26).

Part two deals with the psychologizing of the self. Here he deals with the origins of where western society begins to separate the self from society and God, to see it as an end in itself. "The central point here is that with the era of Rousseau and Romanticism a new understanding of human selfhood emerged, one focused on the inner life of the individual (p. 27).

In Part three Freud comes to the fore as one who built upon the notion of self to emphasize the sexual-self. Here we are making a greater leap toward where we are today in terms of the tyranny of sexual expression. The sexual self would be married, by more modern thinkers, to the Marxist idea of class oppressor and oppressed, which was taken out of the economic sphere and applied to the area of human sexuality and race. This became what we know today as "Cultural Marxism". Italian Antonio Gramsci saw that, though Marxism failed to take root in the West as an economic model, it could be applied culturally helped along by academics progressively occupying places of learning in the western world. It would take time but this "long march through the institutions", as it is now popularly known, would be realized.

Trueman unpacks this unlikely marriage as he speaks of the "shotgun wedding" between Marx and Freud, dealing "with the sexualizing of psychology and the politicizing of sex" (p. 28). Freud proposed "the idea that humans, from

infancy onward, are at core sexual beings. It is our sexual desires that are ultimately decisive for who we are (p. 28). Trueman says,

When Freud's thought is then appropriated by certain Marxist thinkers, most notably Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, the result is a heady mix of sex and politics. The New Left that emerges from this synthesis sees oppression as a fundamentally psychological category and sexual codes as its primary instruments. The theoretical—and the rhetorical—background to the sexual revolution is therefore established (p. 28).

Independently, none of these thinkers, going back to Rousseau, would have drawn the conclusions of the modern sexual revolution, nor was it their intention, but in the hands of the right people mixing and matching these ideas we have what we see today. Though our situation would have been unimaginable to the eighteenth centuries philosophers and poets like Rousseau and Shelly, yet the whole stream of thinkers that that led us to the present moment share one characteristic in common—their contempt for the biblical worldview of personhood and sexuality and the community that embraces it. Trueman says that “For Marx and for Nietzsche, the present community is one that needs to be overthrown in order for humanity to reach its full potential (p. 48).

For the poets like Blake and Shelley, “... it is in the affirmation of free love and the rejection of institutionalized religion that true liberty and personal authenticity are to be found.” While for others like Marx, Freud and Marcuse, “...the community as it now exists becomes not simply repressive but oppressive and in need of revolutionary change specifically in terms of its sexual codes” (p. 48).

The latter part of the book is concerned with how these ideas are currently being applied, from the 2015 Obergefell decision in the US Supreme court legalizing gay marriage, the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement with its distinctively Marxist flavour, to whether or not it is legal to refuse to bake a cake or create a flower arrangement for a same-sex wedding. He says that “Prior ages were characterized by a transcendent frame, a belief that this world stood under the authority of a reality that transcended its mere material existence” (p. 77). But now “...the refusal by any individual to recognize an identity that society at large recognizes as legitimate is a moral offense, not simply a matter of indifference” (p. 69).

What conclusions does Trueman draw for those still holding to a biblical worldview? He says we cannot glorify the past as “the good old days” and seek to return to a simpler or easier time. For each age comes with its own particular challenges. “In short”, he says, “we have to play with the hand that we have been dealt.” And more importantly for the church to try and discover where we went wrong and how we have, perhaps unconsciously have fallen prey to many of these sentiments.

In short, our response to the major issues of our day...cannot be isolated from the wider framework of the anticulture in which we live. We cannot blithely accept no-fault divorce, for example, and then complain that Obergefell redefined marriage. To address the symptoms adequately, we need to think long and hard about the causes, their wider ramifications, and our relationship as Christians to them (p. 389).

He further and wisely warns against what he calls an aesthetic approach to worship but toward one soundly grounded in the objectivity of the Word and Christian community (p. 404).

For me, the book was a slow and very considered read. That's not a criticism, but rather a testament to the thorough way he lays out his case. He goes into the life and thought of these men in great depth, so you know they are not being misrepresented. Trueman takes deep dives in many places and might lose the average reader not familiar with the historical lines of discussion. But most would still greatly profit though not catching every line of argument.

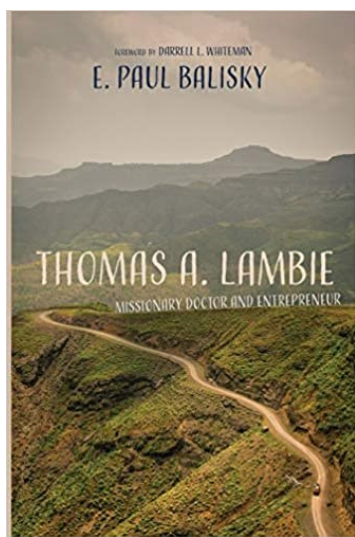
As he says, "this book is neither a lament nor a polemic" (p. 383). And that comes through well. He doesn't panic his readers, but neither does he minimize the cultural implications for the church and religious liberty at large.

However, those who want to access the book in a more distilled form can look forward to *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution*, also from Crossway.

The book, *Rise and Triumph...* is a tour de force and highly recommended!

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

Thomas A. Lambie: Missionary Doctor and Entrepreneur. E. Paul Balisky. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020, 290 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-7252-5764-1



I was delighted to see a full-length biography on Thomas Lambie finally appear. Partee's biography on Donald McClure has been out for many years now and yet there was a missing biography of Lambie, whom McClure described as the most colourful missionary amongst the American Presbyterians in Africa (one suspects that McClure was not being completely favourable, but I am uncertain). So, Balisky has filled a gap which needed to be dealt with.

Writing Christian biography in today's climate is a perilous task but cannot be ignored. There are many pitfalls to watch for from the extreme of perfectionist, inspirational hagiography to virtually one of total destruction, rejection and constant finger-pointing to failure. Balisky has done his best to walk through the

extremes and acknowledges a man saved by grace, yet not without flaws in living the Christian life, yet being used as a servant of the Lord for Kingdom work.

Further, good Christian biography should bring you into the wider trajectories than just the person's story. One should come away seeing many larger connections and a range of intersections, whether these be spiritualities, theological controversies, missional ideals, conflicts, movements, and achievements. Balisky has accomplished this. The author, together with his wife, served as a missionary for 38 years in Ethiopia as an evangelist and church planter and lecturer in Bible colleges and a seminary. He is retired and now resides in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada.

Thomas Lambie (1885–1954) was first an American Presbyterian missionary with the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA) serving in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Abyssinia/Ethiopia, then with the Sudan Interior Mission, and finally with the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions in Palestine. Balisky correctly places him as a medical missionary and as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneur broadly taken here is a good way of seeing Lambie. He did not see himself as only a preacher missionary but very much a *medical* missionary. He was clearly a preacher and an evangelist, but his training and calling was identified with medical missions.

Some readers will want to know more details about Lambie and his theological and ecclesiological orientations. Lambie lived not only through a period which was politically in turmoil in Ethiopia, but he also lived through a

period of theological and ecclesiological realignment in America. The book does not answer such questions fully nor does that seem to be the focus of the author. The move from the UPCNA to the Bible Presbyterian Church is not developed with detail. That was one area which I would have liked to have seen explored more fully.

Lambie died in Jerusalem in 1954 while preparing for the Easter sunrise service and was buried in Bethlehem, Jordan (Palestine)—according to Balisky—not in America as many have written. I must say I find this intriguing that there has been such a controversy as to where he was buried!

Balisky provides us with many interesting facts and details concerning Lambie's work latterly. For example, the wording on a bronze plaque at the Berachah Tuberculosis Sanatorium south of Bethlehem includes these words: "*Thomas Alexander Lambie...Built This, His Seventh Hospital...Beloved for His Selfless Life/ And Steadfast Service/ Man of Faith and Prayer/ For the Word of God/ And the Testimony of Jesus Christ*" (p. 234). The funeral was held in the Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem as Lambie was a good friend of the Bishop. The plaque makes a clear statement not just about achievements in medical missions but also theological convictions. Lambie was not a theological liberal. I was wondering also about Lambie's views on Christian Zionism given the facts that he worked so closely with Palestinians in the Bethlehem area (Palestine) and that Lambie was in Palestine during the years 1946 to 1954 (Israel was created in 1948).

Several intense tragedies marked Lambie's life. His first wife Charlotte died while en route to Palestine and was buried in Egypt. The short description of this burial scene is most moving (pp. 217, 221). Their son Wallace was killed in an accident at age 24 in Columbia. The author records several missionary challenges and disappointments which Lambie faced during his long period of service.

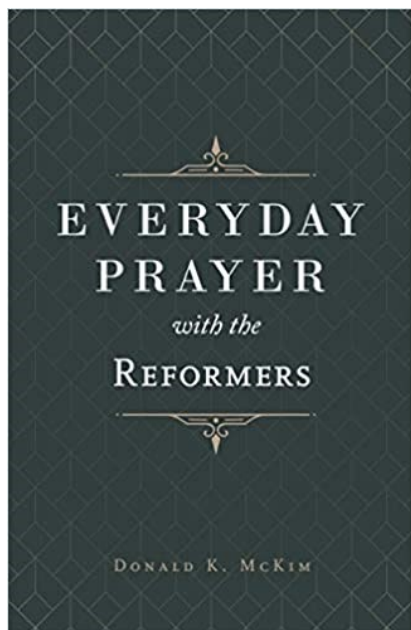
His energy launched Keswick conferences in the Middle East, and he welcomed many prominent leading evangelicals into his home, such as the president of Wheaton College. Balisky does tell us that Lambie showed no evidence of second blessing teaching. He seems to be in the next generation of Keswick leaders. One of Lambie's numerous books was dedicated to Keswick "English, American, and Canadian – and to those who 'follow in their train'" (p. 206). Reading Balisky's book also allows one to connect him to so many evangelical leaders: Rowland Bingham, Mr. and Mrs. Robert McQuilkin of Columbia Bible College (Mrs. McQuilkin was Lambie's sister). The Bishop of Jerusalem asked Lambie to be a medical officer of their Hospital in Hebron. He raised money for the new hospital in Palestine across denominational lines in America including UPCNA churches. This raises many questions that show there was more grassroots contact with the IBPFM personnel than has often been stated. A curious sidenote: Lambie attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. There is no doubt about it, Thomas Lambie was a colourful missionary.

Missionary colleague Clarence Duff said of Lambie: "I regard Dr. Lambie one of the best and greatest [missionaries] it has been my privilege to know. If

sometimes his judgment or his actions proved to be unwise, he rose above his faults, outlived them and the criticism incurred, and went on to fresh achievement” (p. 162). Delighted to welcome this new book which will prove helpful to those interested in mission history and biography. The book is accompanied by good illustrations and maps.

Reviewed by Jack C Whytock

***Everyday Prayer with The Reformers.* Donald McKim. Everyday Prayer Series. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020, 131 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-1-62995-773-9**



This is the second book in the Everyday Prayer Series and follows on from the earlier one, *Everyday Prayer with John Calvin* (2019). The next forthcoming one is *Everyday Prayer with The Puritans*. All three are the work of Donald McKim, a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and professor at Memphis Seminary and also University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. The style of these books is that McKim, a noted Reformation scholar, sets out to create a devotional work of daily scripture texts. Each page is headed with a theme, followed by a germane thought from one of the Reformers related to the scripture text, and then concluding with a prayer point or reflection question. There are also one-page, beautifully type-set prayers from various Reformers or the Book of Common Prayer sprinkled throughout the book.

Which Reformers does McKim draw upon? He uses over thirty. Of course, the obvious names appear: Calvin, Bucer, Luther, Latimer, Melancthon, Zwingli, Knox, and Ursinus but so do other names which one generally associates with the later Puritans, such as James Ussher. Curiously, John Wesley is included, and from what I could tell was the only eighteenth-century reference (I take it he is viewed as a reformer of the Church of England). One devotional each is based on the Heidelberg Catechism and the *English Annotations*. There are several names which may not very familiar: Henry Airy, Thomas Becon, Johannes Brenz, Veit Dietrich, Edwin Sandys, Nikolaus Selnecker, Viktorin Strigel, and Johan Spangenberg. Thankfully, the author has provided two lists at the back of the book, one the Index of Quotations and the second a one-sentence bio comment on each “Reformer”. I found myself going several times to this second list of brief bios.

These books introduce us to Reformers but also nurture our souls. Mckim writes in the Preface of the present work: “The fact that their theological comments can nurture and benefit our Christian lives today shows that their theologies can live in the church and with Christian believers in the present... [and] prayer is a prime topic for theological refection” (pp. 11–12). McKim encourages us to use this book as follows: first *read* the scripture passage and mediate upon it and then proceed to read through the devotion. Follow this by *meditation* and here he gives us some questions to follow (p. 16). Then proceed to *pray* and *act*.

In devotional books like this, the publisher should include a ribbon marker as it just creates the right publishing approach for this genre. This is a way to introduce “reformers” in a gentle and gracious way. It may lead to further study and reading. It keeps the balance that Christian devotion is head, heart and life. Looking forward to the next one on the Puritans.

I close with the opening prayer of Huldrych Zwingli found on page 18:

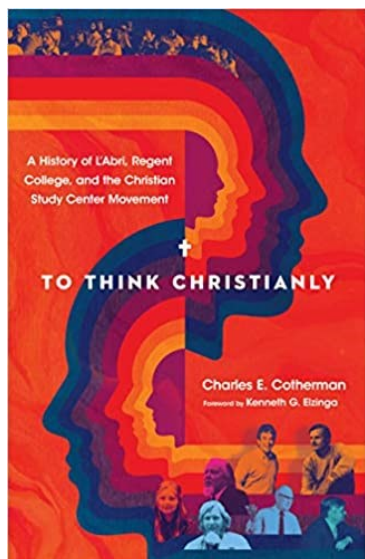
Almighty, eternal and merciful God, whose Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, open and illuminate our minds, that we may purely and perfectly understand your Word and that our lives may be conformed to what we have rightly understood, that in nothing we may be displeasing to your majesty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***To Think Christianly: A History of L’Abri, Regent College, and the Christian Study Center Movement.* Charles E. Cotherman. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020, 301 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-0-8308-5282-6**

As I read this book, there were three very direct connections that I found myself reflecting upon: I was at English L’Abri in the early-80s; I graduated from Regent College in the mid-80s; and I was involved directly with Ligonier Ministries as a co-partner for conferences in the early-90s. Thus this book had particular interest to me.

The main title, “*to think Christianly*”, is a phrase I distinctly remember hearing from James Houston, Francis Schaeffer and his co-workers, and from R. C. Sproul. Everything must come under the Lordship of Christ and there is no profession, vocation, or calling outside of which those who bear the name of Christ are to retreat but rather all believers must grow and mature in their Christianity in their life and their callings. There is no area for non-engagement. It truly is to live out a Christian worldview which will require reflective thought and engagement.



The subtitle may need some unpacking as the connecting line from Schaeffer and L'Abri to Regent College and to the Christian Study Center Movement is complex. While all were and are concerned “to think Christianly”, Schaeffer came to epitomise a certain type of study centre approach—evangelical and evangelistic in a particular way, apologetic, hospitable, engaging, wholistic, and studious, all wrapped up together. In contrast, Regent College’s approach was graduate-level, formalised study for all Christians, situated beside and affiliated with a major university campus (UBC)—not exactly a L'Abri. Regent entered into educational standards and criteria for external accreditation, whereas L'Abri did not.

Part one of the book is about L'Abri and Regent College. If you are not familiar with Schaeffer and Houston, here are two chapters that will help you to learn much—not just about these Christians but the context of their labours. You will see the web and network of connections drawn together between Houston and Schaeffer, Schaeffer and Sproul (p. 14), etc.

The Schaeffer/L'Abri and Sproul/Ligonier Valley Study Center connections are intriguing (pp. 126–131 for parallels and contrasts). Readers will find a lengthy presentation on Ligonier Valley Study Centre at Stahlstown, Pennsylvania and then on Ligonier Ministries as it transitioned from a study center place to a video and conference ministry and organisation; The C. S. Lewis Institute; New College Berkley; and The Center for Christian Study. These are all under part two of the book which the author has organised under his rubric of “replication”—a word which does not necessary imply exact duplication but rather shows commonalities of ethos and approach in context.

There is literally a wealth of information in these chapters; they are most helpful to understand evangelical and also Reformed developments of the last fifty to sixty years, particularly in North America. There are also many things to think through. For example, the role of the Open Brethren and how some within that grouping were moving into the egalitarian fold. The author seems to fixate at various junctures on the issue of women and their roles (pp. 6–7, 77–81). I do recall in the mid-80s this was a “hot” subject amongst our student body at Regent College, but it was also an ecclesiastical issue for many of us. I am not sure I interpret it all the way the author does and am not convinced women were as “shut out” as is implied.

Part Three of the book, which is the shortest, deals with “Multiplication” and the Consortium of Christian Study Centers. Drew Trotter is one of the prominent figures in this chapter (along with others, such as Skip Ryan). Trotter was a key leader in Charlottesville, Virginia and the Christian Study Center there

but was also a key leader until very recently of the Consortium of Christian Study Centers. I suspect that many have not heard of this Consortium. It is worth taking a few minutes to review the website to find who and what this is all about (<https://studycentersonline.org/>).

The study centre movement has undergone many changes over the last sixty years. For many it is a centre approach next to a major secular university providing place, presence, hospitality, ministry etc. for Christians and also seekers. There are incredible varieties of approach for study centres: from local church initiatives to residential places, to meeting places, to affiliates of larger educational entities for credit acceptance etc. Generally, they minister to all God's people and enquirers but also some to those pursuing clerical office. This "movement" does not reach the normal chronological lines of Christian history as it blends university ministry, apologetics, discipleship, spiritual formation etc. all outside the normal lines we think of today, i.e., college, university, seminary, or InterVarsity, Navigators, Campus Crusade, and Reformed University Ministries.

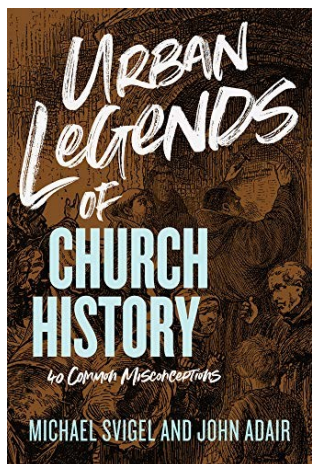
Cotherman has brought together a vast array of research—archival, secondary, and interview—to write this book. It is sorely needed; I cannot think of anything quite like it. It will now be the first place to start a serious reflective study on the matters related to the influence and story lines of Christian study centres. There remains much room for further research and writing. For example, what about the later branches of L'Abri in Europe and globally? I found that a very mute area in this book as Cotherman focused more upon university-based study centres and not so much on church-based, city-based, or destination-based centres. Perhaps using this nomenclature L'Abri would fall into the destination category (p. 8, Cotherman attributes these categories to Trotter). Perhaps too this would be a good book to read alongside William Edgar's short book, *The Christian Mind* as it complements well the stress to think *Christianly*.¹

Cotherman is presently a pastor at the Vineyard Church in Oil City, PA and administrative director of the Project on Rural Ministry and Grove City College. His background appears to have been with the United Presbyterian Church. This book is a reworking or development of his PhD thesis. The book will help one to put many things in perspective—whether from the hippie countercultural days, the Jesus Movement, to worldview thinking. There is much to explore here.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

¹ *The Christian Mind*, Mini Guides series. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2018).

Urban Legends of Church History: 40 Common Misconceptions. Michael Svigel and John Adair. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020, 307pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-4336-4983-7. Also available in Kindle format



Did you know the early church worshipped on Saturdays and celebrated the Lord's Supper as an agapé love feast? Sadly, it failed to differentiate between orthodoxy and heresy, and apostatized shortly after the apostolic era. Then, the doctrine of the Trinity came along centuries later, as did the canon of Scripture which was set by an Emperor, Pope, or church council (choose one). The Emperor Constantine capped it all off by making Christianity the official state religion.

If any of the above sounds right—or just about right, you may want to read the book *Urban Legends of Church History: 40 Common Misconceptions*, by Michael Svigel and John Adair, because each of the above statements represents a

distortion if not outright error, and is addressed, along with over 30 more errors and distortions spanning the history of the church, in the book.

The book is divided into four eras of church history. Each of the four eras is prefaced with a concise and value-added two-page Timeline. A sample entry: “1536: Calvin’s *Institutes* published”. Then the legends/distortions are considered:

- The distortions presented in the opening paragraph of this review were taken from The Early Church, 50–500 AD.
- The Medieval Period covers 500–1500 AD (e.g., “The Substitutionary Atonement First Appeared in the Middle Ages” and, “The One True Church Is Marked by an Unbroken Chain of Apostolic Succession”).
- The Protestant Era covers 1500–1700 AD (e.g., “The Anabaptists Were the Predecessors of Modern Baptists” and, “The Reformers Removed the Apocrypha From the Bible”).
- The Modern Age covers 1700 AD–Present (e.g., “Modern Scholars Were The First to Notice Problem Passages in the Bible” and, “Christians Took Genesis 1 Literally until Darwin’s Theory of Evolution”).

Each legend is covered in a short, easy-to-read 6–7-page chapter consisting of three sections. The first section, The Legendary Story, is a one or two paragraph statement of the legend “as if coming from the lips of a proponent” (p. ix). The second section, Unraveling the Legend, explicates the myth. The third, Application, suggests present-day implications.

Chapters often include sidebar Mini-Myths, e.g., “The Roman Catholic Church Once Had a Female Pope” (p. 83). Each chapter ends with a Resources

section which, along with helpful footnotes scattered throughout, facilitates further study. The book also features Name and Subject Indexes.

Two chapters may be of special interest to Reformed pastors (or non-Reformed for that matter): “John Calvin Summarized His Theology in the ‘Five Points’” (p. 199ff) and “Calvinists Nearly Killed Evangelism and Missions; Non-Calvinists Revived Them” (p. 285).

This book could be used for either individual study, or group study as an easy introduction to the matters of church history. Written in an irenic spirit, it is an informing and often entertaining read. If you want to find out, for example, if St. Nicholas really socked Arias in the face (Mini Myth, pg. 52), this is the book for you!

Reviewed by Rick Ball

***Early Reformation Covenant Theology: English Reception of Swiss Reformed Thought 1520–1555.* Robert J. D. Wainwright. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2020, 404 pp., paperback. ISBN: 978-1-62995-700-5.**

England was formed from the influences of waves of invaders. First, there were the Romans, then the Angles and Saxons, who were followed by the Danes, and, lastly, came the Normans. This, according to Sellar and Yeatman, was a good thing. So good was it that historians have a preference for describing other influences on the English in terms of waves or phases. Wainwright rejects this. In his description of the English Reformation, the influence of the Continental Reformers on their English counterparts is partial, complex, simultaneous, and, on occasion, mediated. His explanation would not make for an easy-to-follow slide presentation with neat diagrams, but it captures and draws the reader into the reality of the English Reformers’ theological and historical situation.

In a lengthy and wide-ranging introduction, the author outlines the historiography of early Continental and English covenant theology. It might be beneficial to speak of these early doctrinal formulations as proto-covenant-theology. Wainwright separates himself from those who seek to look back from the Federal Theology of the 17th century, irrespective of whether they are looking

Robert J. D. Wainwright, M.A., M.St., D.Phil.
Foreword by Diarmaid MacCulloch

**Early Reformation
Covenant Theology**
*English Reception of Swiss Reformed
Thought, 1520–1555*

REFORMED ACADEMIC DISSERTATIONS

for continuity or discontinuity. In letting the Reformers speak for themselves, he renders much previous work on the subject obsolete.

The introduction is numbered as chapter one, so chapter two gives some historical and theological context to the thesis. Chapters three and four describe Swiss concepts of covenant and English concepts of covenant respectively, while chapters five and six do the same for sacramental theology. Chapter seven is in effect the conclusion.

Wainwright's main historical point is that the English Reformation was not merely politically motivated. It begins with Henry VIII's interest in Erasmian reform even before his break with Rome. After the breach, a number of Henry's reforms went beyond those suggested by Erasmus; nevertheless, he never moved in his views about transubstantiation nor his antipathy toward Lutheran *solefidism*. At the same time, there were others, Thomas Cromwell for one, who were looking beyond Henry's reforms to Protestantism.

His secondary point is that the English Reformation was not as insular as some historians have stated. From the beginning, there was contact with European Protestant thought through such things as the Frankfort Book Fair. There were exiles moving in both directions. So, even though the English Reformation culminated in the distinctly English Elizabethan Settlement, Anglican theology had much in common with the rest of the Reformed world.

To prove his secondary point, Wainwright has chosen the doctrine of covenant. As this is a book about Reformation theology, he begins with the Medieval doctrines of the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna* schools. Dealing mostly with the latter, he shows that the Swiss Reformers reformed the doctrine from one of grace and works to one of grace alone. Their doctrine was of a unilaterally imposed bilateral covenant. Despite voices to the contrary, this was the doctrine of Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin. The covenant is Christocentric. Christ secured its conditions personally. Like Luther, the just shall live by faith alone. Unlike Luther, the Swiss added that the faith which alone justifies is never alone.

Wainwright sees in the Swiss formulation an aversion to personal and social antinomianism. He also uses the word *solefidism* to distinguish between Luther and the Swiss. He would say that the mark of Luther's completely unilateral covenant and doctrine of justification by faith alone is *solefidism*. The mark of the Swiss conception is not *solefidism* but grace alone. Salvation is by grace and that salvation includes sanctification along with justification.

To investigate the influence of Swiss covenantal thinking on the English Reformation, Wainwright selects William Tyndale, Miles Coverdale, John Hooper, and John Bradford. They are chosen not because they are the perfect balanced sample, but because they have left their opinions in writing. Many in this period from 1520 to 1555, known as Nicodemites, kept their thoughts to themselves, outwardly conformed, and survived Wolsey and More, Henry's enforcement of the Six Articles, and even Mary Tudor.

The Reformation did not come to England in waves from Wittenberg, then Zurich, and then Geneva. Works by Luther, Zwingli, and Oecolampadius arrived

about the same time, followed some years later by those of Bullinger and then Calvin. In the 1540s, exiles came from the Continent to England: Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and John à Lasko among them. At other times, Englishmen went abroad for safety. They send back their works in which they mediated continental Reformed thought to those at home; and they brought those influences with them, had they opportunity to return. Out of all these contacts, the strongest were with Reformations in Zurich and Strasburg. Tyndale, Coverdale, and Hooper were influenced by the former while on the Continent; and Bradford at home by Bucer's lectures at Cambridge. Regarding the doctrine of the covenant, Tyndale, Coverdale, and Hooper held to the Swiss formulation, and Bradford to a unilateral formulation in line with Luther's view mediated through Bucer.

Using the same Swiss and English writers as before, Wainwright continues to develop his thesis by examining the connection between covenant and sacrament.

To the Swiss Reformers, the sacraments were covenant signs. The point on which they differed was the connection between the sign and the grace which it signified. With regard to the Lord's Supper, this was worked out in the *Consensus Tigurinus*.

The English Reformers' doctrine of the sacraments followed their doctrine of the covenant. Those with a Swiss connection followed the Swiss and expressed themselves in the language of the *Consensus*. Bradford's views included elements of Bucer's and of the *Consensus* as it was expressed by Cranmer.

Wainwright's conclusion is that there was Continental influence in the English Reformation. However, rather than coming in waves, there were streams which fed English theology at that time. There was a Lutheran stream which was never strong, but it had its moment at the time of the Schmalkaldic League's negotiations with Henry VIII in the 1530s. There was the Strasburg stream. But the strongest stream from the 1520s to 1555 was from Zurich, particularly from Bullinger.

Looking forward to the Elizabethan Settlement, which is beyond the scope of his thesis, Wainwright points out that the Church of England had a pre-Reformation polity, a Reformed theology, and a Lutheran form of worship, and that the Settlement was formed by the Nicodemites who survived Mary's reign, not the returning radicalised exiles.

For students of the English Reformation, this is an important book. It successfully challenges some long-held assumptions.

For students of historical theology, it a helpful book. It is of the school of Richard Muller; and it complements the work of Andrew Woolsey (*Unity and Continuity in Covenant Theology*) in his treatment of the Medieval and Early Reformation periods.

Divinity students writing essays on Zwingli versus Calvin on the Lord's Supper will find the chapters on the Swiss Reformers most plunderable.

A difficulty for the average reader is that this book assumes a greater knowledge of the Tudor period than can be obtained from television series. But

then, Ph.D. theses are not written for an airport clientele. Their authors have lived for a number of years immersed in the milieu of their subject; and it is hard for them to realise that not everyone has accompanied them step by step. Perhaps those who print such theses should bear that in mind.

In a book like this, there are always incidentals which catch the attention. Here, there are three. The first is that contemporary reaction to the Marburg Articles was not that Luther and Zwingli did not agree on the last point, the Lord's Supper, but that the colloquy agreed unanimously on the fourteen points which preceded it. The second is that the English Reformers did not frame their own articles on the Lord's Supper until the Swiss had formulated theirs in the Consensus Tigurinus. The third is that Wainwright describes Jane Grey as Queen Jane. This writer has never seen that before. Wainwright is to be thanked for giving that ill-used young woman the dignity of her position.

Robert Wainwright is a Priest of the Church of England and a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. His book is an important contribution to the literature on the subjects of the English Reformation and early Swiss covenant theology. From whichever area of interest the reader approaches this book, there will be something in the other which will catch the attention.

Reviewed by D. Douglas Gebbie

***A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century.* Donald M. Lewis. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021, 373 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-0-8308-4697-9**

At not far off 400 pages this book may not be considered by all would-be readers as a "short history". This new book builds upon Lewis's ground-breaking earlier work, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and the Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). *A Short History of Christian Zionism* does cover much of the same ground but in a more encompassing survey approach reflecting both earlier and later periods. In this sense, it is a fuller history survey. It is fundamentally the history of an idea, an idea which grows and (as Lewis says) "morphs" over time and has various shades of meaning both historically and dependent upon where and with whom it is being discussed. The one thing which will perhaps make this new book more accessible is the price. The IVP book in paperback is about half of that of the Cambridge Press book in its paperback format, so affordability will perhaps make for a wider readership. I do find it interesting that IVP Academic decided to offer a second book to its stable of recent publications, following on after the edited work by McDermott, which of course was a collection and quite distinct from Lewis, so

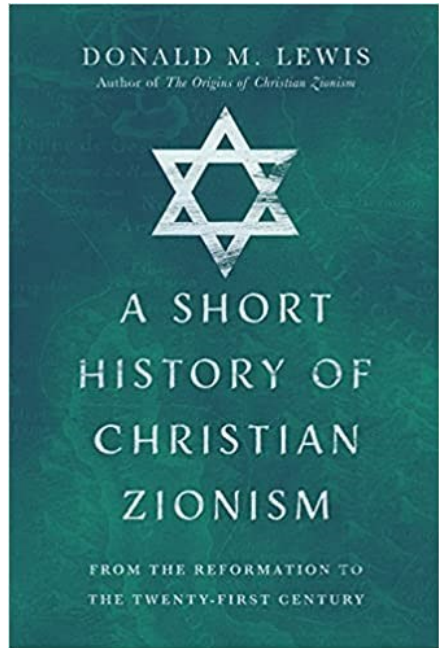
there was room it seems for both.² Lewis interacts particularly and rightly so chronologically with the McDermott collection in Lewis' last chapter, "Christian Zionism Today" (see, pp. 344–346), especially concerning Darrell Bock in contrast to those such as Bruce Waltke or Chris Wright.

Lewis died in October 2021, the month after the release of *A Short History of Christian Zionism*. He taught at Regent College, UBC, Vancouver as professor of church history for 40 years and I was pleased to count him amongst my professors. He had made several noteworthy contributions in the history of evangelicalism, one of which was his editorship of the two volume *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730–1860* (1995). Thus, Lewis was

growing and building in this field over several decades and this, his last book, shows the breadth of historical detail and knowledge which he was well acquainted with within evangelical Protestantism in particular.

Lewis knew that a working definition of what would morph into Christian Zionism was needed. He gives us his definition: "I define Christian Zionism across time as a Christian movement which holds to the belief that the Jewish people have a biblically mandated claim to their ancient homeland in the Middle East" (p. 3). Lewis is careful at various junctures in the book to qualify and nuance the meaning of the term and those who may seemingly come close yet hold to only a portion of such a definition or a related yet distinct concept or idea. There are many variables here. For example, someone such as Jean-Henri Dunant supported a Jewish return but not as a biblical mandate but rather from a humanitarian viewpoint. Then there is also Reinhold Niebuhr who likewise supported a Jewish return on Biblical *ethical* grounds but not on Biblical *prophetic* grounds. Related of course to this was the origins as an idea of the restoration of the Jewish peoples to a homeland or to a community. The idea would take time to develop historically as a restoration to possession of the land as a state. Readers may even find it fascinating to hear of ideas being discussed in Britain of a Jewish community being formed in British East Africa which of course did not happen.

This book will acquaint readers with many terms which need to be carefully digested. For instance, the concept of the Jewish peoples who were



²Gerald R. McDermott, ed. *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

advocates of *assimilationism* into the Western world versus those who were Zionist Jews. Another concept which Lewis repeatedly speaks of is *esteem* or *esteemism* for the Jewish peoples by evangelicals and others versus *anti-Semitism*. The idea of *philo-Semitism* is presented here versus *anti-Semitism*, esteem, kindness, and high regard versus *contempt*. Then towards the end of the book more terms are developed, such as the concepts of *conversionist mission* to the Jews versus *witness* and, related also but distinct, the *collectivism of the state* of Israel and support for the state but without conversionist mission. Then there is the whole field of eschatology and Biblical prophetic interpretations that one must come to grips with in reading and digesting this book; the ideation of its developments and nuances in the long history of Christian Zionism: *historic premillennialism*, *postmillennialism*, and *dispensational* thought concerning the *rapture* in particular and the two strains here whether the Jews will return to the land before the rapture or after the rapture (and, of course, subsequent *dispensational revisions* after Israel becomes a state). The dispensational maze here can be quite daunting to follow unless one perhaps has spent much more time within this eschatological and hermeneutical world than I have. Another issue is how to interpret Romans 11: 25–26 “...all Israel shall be saved”. Is this the Church or the Jews? Lewis argues that Calvin went with the Church and Beza and Bucer with the Jews (pp. 48–49). Also, will the Jews be *restored spiritually* to the Messiah, or does this mean a *physical restoration* to the land as this is an *eternal covenant* attached to the land? This is not a light read by any means!

There is just so much here and the details that one comes across are absolutely intriguing whether it be about Henry Ford, the automobile manufacturer, or whether it be about Martin Luther, the Puritans, the Pietists, Balfour, Churchill, the early American fundamentalists, the Palestinians and their German connections during World War Two, Jerry Falwell, Jacques Maritain, Billy Graham, or contemporary charismatic and prosperity gospel preachers and Christian Zionism and *blessing Israel*, a new type of *esteemism*.

Lewis has crafted an orderly work. It shows years of research and depth. His conclusions are generalist and perceptive, and his goal is to aid understanding and not to persuade or render the definitive word on the subject. His evaluations are judicious and fair. The section on the German Pietists was most helpful to me as background to understanding English Jewish missions also of the nineteenth century, something that I had not appreciated before. I could see parallels in methodology in the development of the Christian synagogue in Toronto (see the Jordan VanAmerongen article in this journal volume). I do wish there had been attention given more to the Scottish evangelical Presbyterians in the 1830s and 40s as the book appears to be very heavily weighted towards English and American evangelicalism. A full bibliography at the end of the book would have been appreciated.

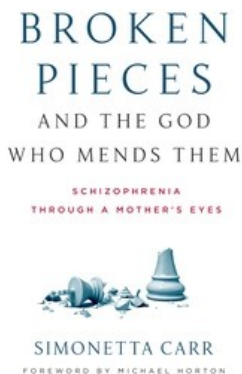
A Short History of Christian Zionism is an essential resource for all those who want to understand something of Christian Zionism. I think it is more encompassing than the McDermott collection, so it will have an abiding place

likely for several years to come. It is a worthy final work by the author; it certainly generated for me much thought and caused me to reflect over many new connectors. As I was reading this Lewis book, I was also reading the new biography of Thomas Lambie the missionary who served in Bethlehem and Jerusalem (see my review also in this journal—Lambie served there in 1945–1954, immensely charged years for sure). It created a whole series of questions about an American conservative evangelical Presbyterian who embraced certain tenets of dispensational thought and appears to have seen the creation of the state of Israel as a prophetic fulfilment and spent his final years as a medical missionary to the Palestinians chiefly (Lewis, p. 229). Christian Zionism has many shades and is not always easy to unpack in terms of its origins and applications. Lewis helps us in this very complex study of an idea.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

Applied Theology

***Broken Pieces and the God Who Mends Them.* Simonetta Carr. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019, 359 pp., paperback. ISBN 9781629953960**



Broken Pieces and the God Who Mends Them by Simonetta Carr is a book about mental illness, from a Christian and Reformed perspective. Those who read it will be challenged, but the effort will prove worthwhile. If they persevere to the end, readers will receive a full account of the spiritual wisdom that Carr imparts, from the opening page to her conclusion. Most importantly, it views the vicissitudes of life from a Christ-centred perspective.

The book is divided in two equal parts; the first section recounts in the form of a chronological narrative the life of Carr's son, with a primary focus on the years when his mental illness was manifest.

The second section is a sustained (and well-informed) discussion of the medical and therapeutic responses to mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, from a Christian perspective, tempered by Reformed theology. While both sections are worth reading, it is possible to read one without necessarily reading the other. Significantly, Carr does not provide easy answers based on medical or therapeutic theory or practice. Rather, she draws her strength and hope from a vital union with Christ Jesus. It is precisely this emphasis, on the triune Saviour God, who is both transcendent and immanent, which makes the book invaluable. Carr demonstrates serious, thoughtful respect for the secondary means of healing that comes through modern medicine and therapy. Nonetheless, the reader never loses sight, while reading of mental illness and its sometimes-harrowing affects, of the One who is willing and able to heal the everlasting soul.

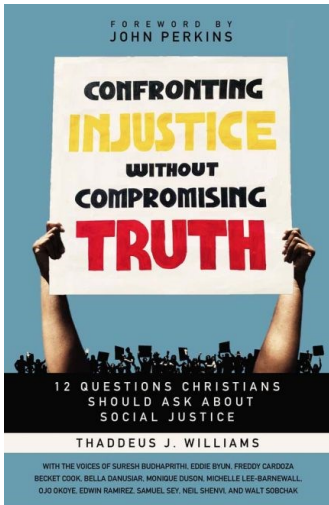
Many readers will know of Carr as the author of fictional accounts of major figures from Church history, including the series *Christian Biographies for Young Readers* published by Reformation Heritage Books. She has retold the lives of such luminaries as Augustine, Luther, and Knox.

In the present book, Carr writes as the mother of a son who was clinically diagnosed with schizophrenia as a young adult and died only a few years later, either intentionally (by suicide) or unintentionally (during an episode of auto-asphyxiation that went wrong); the circumstances of his death are unclear. For obvious reasons, the author has chosen to make her personal experience of the daily hardships of parenting someone with mental illness the central focus of the book. The choice to give a personal report of what she saw and heard is a masterstroke. Although Carr includes thoughts from experts in various fields of knowledge, the book ultimately shows mental illness through a mother's eyes and the result is, at times, harrowing. This is due not only to the subject matter itself, but her gifts as an author. Before now, Carr wrote almost exclusively in the genre of Christian historical fiction, and she brings all her talents as a novelist to bear in describing the anguish the family endured for years as one of their own descended into a mental and moral maelstrom, bringing the rest with him. Indeed, the evocative power of Carr's prose is *almost* unbearable to read at times, particularly the moment when she enters her son's bedroom one morning only to discover his lifeless body. The prose is sparse, the description of her thoughts and actions simple and understated, which heightens the overwhelming emotive nature of the moment. This reviewer found himself needing to put the book down, take a walk or get a coffee, and return to reading only after sufficiently decompressing. The heartache is piercing. For many readers, it will be a journey to an unknown realm, similar in some ways to the journey another author once took.

In the great medieval classic, *The Inferno*, the author, Dante Alighieri, imagines himself on a journey through hell. Along the way, he describes the suffering and misery of the inhabitants. Although a work of fiction, the poem describes the harrowing of lost souls so vividly that one seems to experience the anguish directly. Indeed, the fact that we can be moved inwardly when we see the sorrow of another is a fundamental premise of every great work of art. It is a curious fact, long understood by artists and their audiences, that witnessing the suffering of others is itself a type of suffering—a surrogate suffering—which may be both cathartic and medicinal. (Greek tragedies being prime examples). Such is the case, to a different scope and degree, with Simonetta Carr's new book, *Broken Pieces and the God Who Mends Them*. Carr leads the reader through a very dark valley, showing us a kind of sorrow that many of us had never encountered before now. The exercise is both harrowing and edifying. It is, however, an exercise in faith in the providence of a sovereign God who saves his people through the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Carr's faith is clearly communicated through the book.

Reviewed by Robert Widdowson an associate pastor at Grace Presbyterian Church (ARP), Woodstock, Ontario. Among other things, he is a chaplain in a local pallet factory and teaches Church History and Western Civilization at a Christian preparatory school.

***Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth.* Thaddeus Williams. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020, 218 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-11948-7**



Confronting injustice has become a major concern in our world in recent years. The Scriptures speak about the need to seek justice, but they also stress the need to be discerning and take every thought to obey Christ. As Thaddeus Williams points out in this book, not everything that is branded as done in the name of justice is in fact according to God's Word. This means that the church needs to not only strive for justice, but she must distinguish true social justice from its counterfeits (pp. 3–4). In this book, Williams engages with some of the very polarizing and explosive issues that are being discussed today. Issues like racism, sexuality, abortion, and wealth distribution.

Thaddeus Williams presently serves as an associate professor of systematic theology for Talbot School of Theology. In the past he has served as a lecturer in worldview studies at L'Abri Fellowship and in ethics for Blackstone Legal Fellowship and the Federalist Society.

The book is divided into twelve chapters with each chapter asking a question that examines the reader's vision of social justice. The questions relate to matters of worship, community, salvation, and knowledge of the truth. These questions are intended to lead the reader to examine whether their own convictions are shaped by Scripture or by the influences of their own culture. But the questions that frame each chapter can also serve to equip Christians to engage with other Christians on their vision of justice in a constructive way.

In part one, he looks at the topic of worship. He begins by asking whether our view of social justice gives God his due. He asks whether our view of justice acknowledges the image of God in everyone, regardless of sex, race or status. In chapter three, he deals with the question of idolatry and whether our view of social justice makes an idol out of the self, the state or self-acceptance.

In part two, Williams looks at the idea of community. He asks whether our view of social justice makes any group identity more important than being 'in Adam' and 'in Christ' (p. 43). He asks whether our vision of social justice replaces the fruit of love, peace and patience with suspicion, division and rage (p. 63).

In part three, Williams addresses how some see systemic injustice wherever there are unequal outcomes (p. 80). He also helpfully points out that the redefinition of terms like racism, tolerance and bigotry actually tends to feed a narrative of enmity and division (pp. 98–101). The last chapter in this section deals

with whether our understanding of social justice actually distorts the best news in history. If the good news is not about Jesus' finished work, but about what we must do, then it ceases to be good news. He also points out that as people are being conditioned to judge one another for all their shortcomings, people in the West are feeling the weight of guilt in a way that they haven't for a long time and this, in God's providence, may be what prepares them for the gospel itself (p. 117).

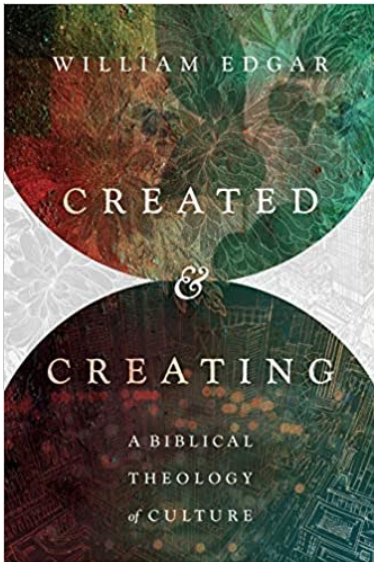
In part four, the book considers our understanding of things. In chapter ten, he deals with 'concept creep' where a valid observation on something spreads and becomes the way we see everything (p. 129). In chapter eleven, he addresses a question that deals with standpoint epistemology and the reliability of lived experiences (p. 144). In chapter twelve, he asks whether the quest for truth has in fact become an identity game. Here, he addresses the oft-repeated phrase, "God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed" (p. 156). Having raised these questions, the book ends with a summary chart contrasting what he characterizes as true social justice over against what is promoted as social justice in the wider culture. There is also an appendix where he addresses issues such as abortion, race, sexuality, and socialism directly.

The reader will appreciate the fact that Williams writes from the conviction that God's Word is authoritative and sufficient to direct our understanding of true social justice. Throughout the book, Williams exposes the ways that the contemporary social justice movement does not reflect a biblical worldview as it relates to issues such as human nature, human sexuality, truth, the family, and redemption. He challenges those who are passionate about social justice whether they are picking and choosing their issues or whether they are directed by all of what Scripture teaches. He asks whether Christians are also concerned about fighting for the protection of the unborn and bringing down the dehumanizing pornography industry (pp. 132–33)? He also questions whether the church's passion for justice has removed the concern for evangelism. He writes, "If our vision of social justice reduces evangelism to an offence or an afterthought, then we don't care about the oppressed the way Scripture calls us to care for them (p. 136)." In these ways, he shows that Scripture sets the standard for how the believer thinks about social justice.

This would be a very helpful place for Christians to start to think about the issues revolving around social justice. The reader will not find answers to all of society's complex problems, but the twelve questions provide a clear framework for at least identifying some of the problems of the social justice movement and for engaging with others on the issues raised from a biblical worldview. The questions that shape the structure of the book along with the study questions that end each chapter make it an ideal book to work through and discuss with others.

Reviewed by Peter Aiken, the minister of Birchwood Free Church of Scotland in Charlottetown, PEI.

***Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture.* William Edgar. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 262 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-0-8308-5152-2**



John Frame, professor of systematic theology and philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary, accurately and succinctly summarizes Bill Edgar's *Created and Creating*, on the back cover of this book, as

[...] the most thorough and the most solidly biblical contribution to the current discussion of Christ and culture. Edgar's analysis of the historical discussion is wonderfully erudite and nuanced. His treatment of biblical texts and principles is deep and cogent. His conclusion is that God's cultural mandate to Adam is still in effect and that the Great Commission of Jesus applies that mandate to a world lost in sin.

I would add to Frame's summary that this book is easily accessible to someone who has no formal training nor academic credentials in cultural or biblical studies, such as the writer of this review.

The book begins with insights on culture from leading historical scholars and Edgar argues that Christians could benefit from many of these insights. He gives a brief historical overview of the "father of anthropology" Sir Edward Taylor, which is followed by a discussion on Arnoldianism, the Romantics, Marxism and beyond. He then reviews the twentieth century anthropological views of culture before touching on Functionalism.

His overview on Functionalism is followed by "Biblical and Theological Reflections". The author notes the emerging awareness of culture in the interpretation of Scripture. He alludes to the published works on biblical studies/cultural studies from several universities. He gives an overview of "Christian Voices" where he concisely reviews how many prominent believers viewed how the Bible looks at culture. This review includes H. Richard Niebuhr, T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis, Abraham Kuyper, Klaas Schilder, Francis Schaeffer, Harvie M. Conn, Leslie Newbigin as well as a few others mentioned with less detail.

The next chapter argues that the Bible teaches that cultural engagement before the living God, along with worship, is the fundamental calling of humans. Edgar then goes on to explore several Bible verses that on face value seem to

contradict this argument and then in a subsequent chapter Edgar reviews some texts, such as the sermon on the Mount, from the synoptic gospels that have been misunderstood as anti-cultural. He argues these texts should be understood as not a radical rejection of the world, that is God's creation, but a vigorous hostility to the malignancy that has corrupted the creation: "in a word sin and evil must be combatted, but not the creation as such"(p. 103). Cultural pursuits are legitimate if the Christian recognizes that there is a priority for kingdom values.

Subsequent chapters argue that God's will on earth is comprehensive. It includes evangelism and spiritual matters, but it also includes the "whole realm of human life: family, citizenship, farming, artistic pursuits—in short, culture" (p. 126). The author briefly comments on Augustine, the Johannine works and the other New Testament texts that allude to "the world" and our approach to it. The author reviews several biblical texts that support his argument that the "contra mundum teachings are not contra creation but contra the malignancy of sin" (p. 136).

The book then deals with creation and redemption. He comments on the Ascetic heresy by reviewing 1Tim 4:1–4 and several other Bible verses. He writes about Paul's comments in Colossians 1: 15–20 and Paul's powerful comparison between the supremacy of Christ in creation and His supremacy in redemption. From these and other texts, William Edgar argues that the reconciliation of all things is not a narrowly spiritual work, but a comprehensive work involving the healing of individuals, groups, countries and, in short, all things. He then reviews the Magnificat (Lk 1:46–55) and Ephesians 1:5–10. He concludes that legitimate cultural pursuits can be conducted to the glory of God even in a fallen world, simply because the fall has not attenuated the order of creation.

The author reviews some of the work of Klaus Schilder, who first used the expression cultural mandate, along with Harvie Conn and others. He amplifies on their work and that of others; there is an essential unity between the cultural mandate (Genesis 1:26–30) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:19). "Cultural engagement is the human response to the divine call to enjoy and develop the world that God has generously given to His image-bearers" (p. 176).

The Genesis texts are explored, and Edgar argues that the cultural mandate after the fall was reiterated and further developed at different levels with God's covenant with Noah and Abraham and his descendants.

The author reviews the reference to Psalm 8 in Hebrews 12 and how Jesus Christ is now our "champion" and the one who will bring the cultural mandate to its full realization. Jeremiah 29 is reviewed to show how God blesses hostile cities through His people, a theme that is developed in the Christian Church. He deals with culture in the New Covenant with an exploration of how this interconnects with the mission mandate (Mathew 28:18–20, Luke 24:45–49, John 20:21–23).

There is an insightful exploration of what the Bible says about culture in the afterlife. The author touches on what heaven may be like, the resurrection and redeemed cities. He concludes with: "culture and cultural engagement are not suspended in the afterlife but given their impetus"(p. 231).

The epilogue concludes that the book is largely a study of biblical theology as it pertains to the cultural mandate that has been declared at the dawn of human history, and reiterated through the different episodes of redemptive history, culminating in Jesus' Great Commission. Human flourishing will not occur unless we place it in the wider context beginning with the worship of God.

I would agree with other reviewers that William Edgar's book is an erudite, biblical review of culture but I would add that it is very accessible and enjoyable to read for anyone who is interested in what the Bible says about culture; further, it is a book that on repeated reading gives one further insight into a biblical understanding of our daily activities and pursuits. I highly recommend 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.

Forgiveness: Reflecting God's Mercy. 31-Day Devotionals for Life.
Hayley Satrom. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020, 96 pp.,
paperback. ISBN 9781629956251

This is just a small, 31-day devotional but don't let its size be a reason to dismiss it. In clear, compassionate but direct messages, Hayley Satrom helps us on the road to forgiveness. We, who know Christ's forgiveness, who have so much to be thankful for because of this forgiveness, still often have great difficulty in forgiving others. Satrom understands that and takes us by the hand directing us to what forgiveness looks like and why it is so important in a Christian's life.

The book has four sections plus a conclusion. The section headings are God Forgives Us; God Shows Us What Forgiveness Looks Like; God Teaches Us How to Forgive; and God Helps Us to Forgive. I appreciated how Satrom divided the devotions, beginning with pointing us to how God has forgiven us. It is only when we look to His work that we can see the importance of forgiveness and are motivated to see how important it is for us to forgive others. Her opening sentence on Day One says it well, *The degree to which we rejoice in God's forgiveness of us will be the degree to which we are able to forgive others* (p. 15). It's a very humbling thought. Satrom unpacks this message in the following five devotionals as she reminds us of God's love and grace.

In the second section we see that forgiveness brings joy and peace. Ultimately being unwilling to forgive, she tells us, doesn't make sense and is

unacceptable in the Kingdom of God. For those who really struggle to forgive, this hits hard but Satrom is not harsh. She helps us to see the importance and the beauty of forgiveness and the healing it brings to our hearts.

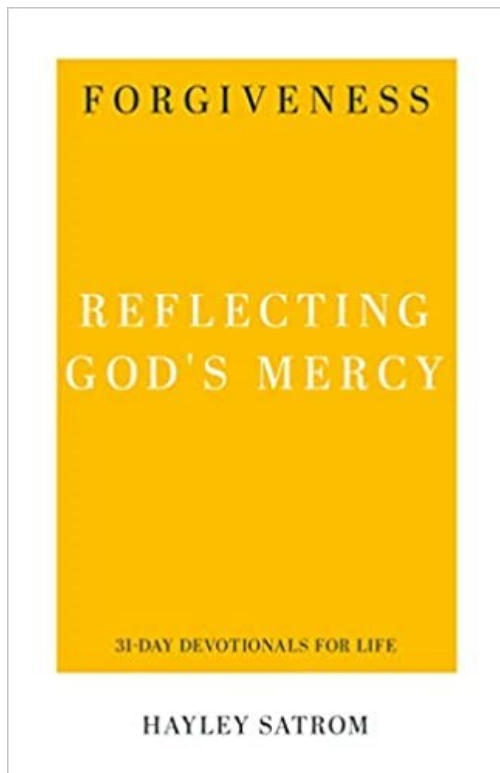
In order to forgive we need to set our minds on Christ as it says in Colossians 3, not on things that are on earth. We do this by spending time in His Word so that we can know Christ, so that we can let the Word change us and mould us more and more into His likeness. This takes effort. Without it our faith is shallow, and we will not be able to do the difficult things in life like forgiveness. As God's children we always need to be busy with the Word or we will slip into unhealthy thinking and acting. In this section she also shows us that not all forgiveness involves confrontation. There will be times when we need to confront a

person because their words or deeds were truly hurtful but there are plenty of times when we need to forgive and let it go. Satrom helps us to see what that looks like in real life. I appreciated that she is careful to warn those who are abused not to put themselves in danger but to seek help when necessary.

Finally, in the last section Satrom reminds us that we cannot do the work of forgiveness in our own strength but only with the help of our Heavenly Father. He enables us to forgive. Again, this means being busy in the Word and being on our knees in prayer. Christ calls us to come to Him and He will give us rest. We don't find rest in ourselves; we do not do the heavy lifting alone. He comes to us and helps us. The conclusion is also very helpful as she reminds us that this is lifetime work, not a one-time event.

Each daily devotion takes no more than two minutes to read. However, you will want to spend some time pondering the message. Satrom helps us in this task by daily giving us a few questions to consider as well as a suggestion for action to get us started on the road to forgiveness. All Christians can benefit from reading this short book.

Reviewed by Gertrude DeBoer who lives in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island and is a member of the local United Reformed Church.



***Reading the Times: A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News.* Jeffrey Bilbro. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021, 186 pp., hardback. ISBN 978-0-8308-4185-1**



The subtitle of this book, *A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News*, may sound too academic to be useful to a wide readership. However, Jeffrey Bibro, Associate Professor of English at Grove City College, actually seems to have a wide audience in mind as he addresses the subject of how Christians can and should engage with the news in order to be in the world but not of it (John 15:19 and John 17:14–16). Bilbro writes:

If we have a better understanding of what the news is for—and what it’s not for—we will be better able to produce wise reports and analyses of contemporary events and to respond to these charitably (p. 7).

The book is divided into three parts with three chapters in each part. In Part One—Attention, we are challenged to consider *what* is getting our attention. Bilbro draws very heavily on 19th-century American philosopher and essayist Henry David Thoreau who warned of the temptation to give our minds over to trivial matters, to gossip, to “news” that actually has little significance for our everyday lives. In offering a response to this temptation, Thoreau famously wrote, “Read not the Times, read the Eternities” (p. 19). Bilbro points out that “habitually attending to the trivia of the day” (p. 32) actually makes us less able to attend to and love our neighbours.

Bilbro then goes on in chapter two to offer helpful direction for Christians, direction that is rooted in biblical truth. For example, the author shows how making God’s Word our primary focus of attention makes us more grounded in the physical world and its providential circumstances. That biblical principle is applied in the third chapter where the author suggests that *one* way to refocus our attention away from constant media bombardment (watching 24-hour news stations, checking the news feed on our phone, etc.) may be to learn a “craft”—even ‘inconspicuous, homely’ activities like “music, gardening, the culture of the table,

or running” can become “focal...practices” that reinvigorate our relation to the physical world” (p. 62).

In Part 2—Time, Bilbro looks first (in chapter 4) at the distinction between time as *kairos* (time that is right for a certain act) versus time as *chronos* (time that is linear and sequential). After clearly explaining these two concepts of time, he submits that a balance between the two is essential for Christians as we pilgrim through this life. “This matters crucially because the way we tell time provides the standard by which we judge an event’s significance, its newsworthiness” (p. 69).

As in Part 1, the book’s *pattern* is repeated as the remaining two chapters of Part 2 deal with *the biblical theology* of time (chapter 5) followed by a *practical application* of these principles (chapter 6). The author wants Christians to understand that we can “attend to the events of the news while seeking their meaning in the pattern of God’s redemptive work” (p.108). Bilbro is in complete agreement with Stewart (see page 125 of this journal) that preaching and meditating on the great redemptive themes is essential for Christian pilgrimage.

The final part, Part 3—Community, looks first (chapter 7) at what it means to belong to the public sphere in today’s society. Bilbro shows the dangers and limitations of this public sphere, especially considering modern communications and warns,

What we really need is to be shaped by embodied communities that are rooted outside the public sphere and its unhealthy dynamics. Our engagement in the public sphere can only be redemptive to the extent that it is predicated on prior commitments—most fundamentally commitments to loving God and our neighbors (pp. 141–142).

Bilbro then goes on to unpack what it means as Christians to “belong outside the public sphere” (chapter 8). Here the author argues that the company we keep and the topics of conversation we share with them determine our affective response to the news and shape the conclusions we come to. Examples are given of Christians who have effectively engaged with the news, not as a hobby but as a means of being informed for effective Christian service and evangelism within our spheres of influence.

The final chapter of Part 3 is an application of the principle of Christians belonging—in *both* public and private spheres—and practical suggestions for effective engagement in our time and place.

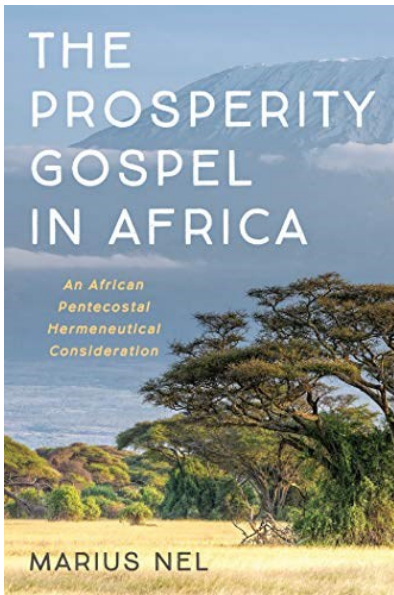
A general index and a scripture index make the book more user-friendly. There is a full bibliography that some will find helpful for further study. The author refers extensively to his sources throughout the work. This was at times a bit distracting to the points themselves. Some diagrams to illustrate concepts could be used to further guide readers.

This is an excellent resource for any Christian wanting to be challenged and encouraged in the subject of news consumption. It would be great for a book-study group or as the basis for a workshop on this topic.

...there is a profound, insidious kind of formation that happens when the first thing we do in the morning is to reach for a smartphone to find out what new thing occurred while we were sleeping. Such habits form the horizon of meaning by which we judge the significance of our daily life and actions. Structuring our days and weeks instead around Christ orients us to his story and equips us to fit the news of our day into the redemptive pattern of his life and work (pp. 111–112).

Reviewed by Nancy J. Whytock

***The Prosperity Gospel in Africa: An African Pentecostal Hermeneutical Consideration.* Marius Nel. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020, 296 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-7252-6662-9**



This book is attempting to do two things: to expand our understanding of the African versions of the prosperity gospel *and* to evaluate it from the perspective of what the author considers to be an African Pentecostal hermeneutic. On the first point, I believe the book achieves its aim and does this quite well. It is on the second point, the book's sub-title, that I am less convinced.

Concerning the African Pentecostal hermeneutical consideration of the prosperity gospel, I begin with my conviction that this is the *author's* interpretation of this hermeneutical method or perspective. I do not think there will be universal agreement on this. I can think of many Pentecostals who would not agree to such. I think it is in part because the author has created a caricature of the "Evangelical fundamentalist" as he coins the

phrase. The word "fundamentalist" is a word with many complexities. It can be said for example, he is a "fundamentalist but not a dispensationalist," or "he holds to fundamental theology but is not a fundamentalist in the sense of a list of lifestyle rules." The term "Evangelical fundamentalist" presents problems of definition across the board. In conclusion, I began to think that Nel's African Pentecostal hermeneutic sounds more like a theology of experience as authoritative, and I

wonder if experience trumps all and where the lines of authority will be when it comes to culture versus scripture? Classic Pentecostalism may have been marginalised, as the author asserts, but the rift with a couple of generations later in Pentecostalism into adopting a new hermeneutic with “Evangelical fundamentalism” needed more connectors for me to see the full shift that was being presented here. I wonder if the real shift is not in the present generation with some such as this author. Is this a failure to understand experimental Christianity as an integrated whole with proper perspectives on the subjective experience being subservient to the objective authority of the Word? I realise that the author is an authority on this African Pentecostal hermeneutic and has authored a major book on the subject, *An African Pentecostal Hermeneutic: A Distinctive Contribution to Hermeneutics*, in 2018. But it seems to me that this is not a classic Pentecostalist approach nor a classic conservative evangelical approach. I hesitate to say this when there is such praise for these books, but I do not see consistency with a doctrine of biblical infallibility and inerrancy here and await other theologians to assess this further. I can only ask where this will lead ethically.

Now the benefits of this book to me are clearly the author’s wealth of research into the prosperity gospel as evidenced clearly in chapter three—the heart of the book at about seventy pages. The author entitles chapter three “The Project” and here he draws out the “origins and historical developments and present-day appearance” (p. 113) of this prosperity gospel movement. Readers clearly will benefit from his years of being inside this grouping of churches and his reading and research. He captures diverse strains and emphases and really helps one to consider much more than is usually discussed.

Then when the author proceeds to do the same for Africa in chapter four, again he does a fine job. He knows this field well and he uncovers many perspectives that I found to be new angles for me to see concerning versions of African prosperity gospel thinking and custom distinct from that in North America in particular. It made me realise that one can also say the same for Asia as it can also be argued there are distinct prosperity gospel versions and origins there as well.

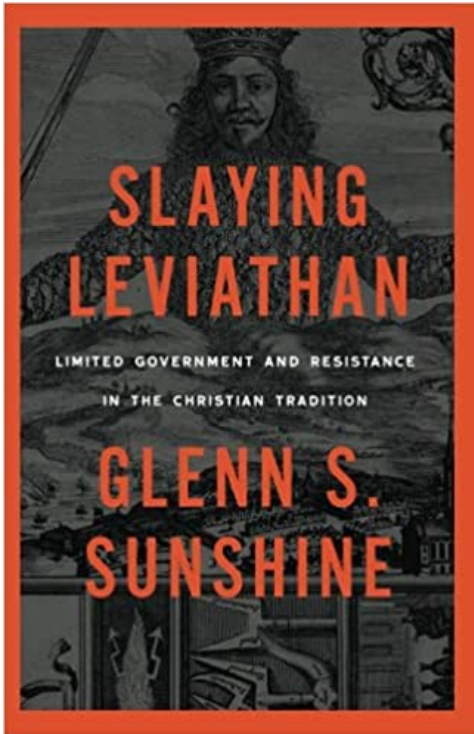
Here is another book which adds to the growing literature on the theme of the prosperity gospel in Africa. (see also the new 2021 book by Tonderai Sylvester Faravadya, *The Cult of Mammon*). Nel writes with a clear, well-organised, excellently researched, and engaging style. Right from reading his preface and his opening personal story, I was drawn into this book. Followed by his tightly reasoned one page “Research Justification” (p. xi) and then his “Motivation for Study” (pp. xiii–xxi), which in itself would be worth a class seminar for teaching purposes.

Nel sincerely questions the link that many make between healing and the atonement within Pentecostalism and also the link between prosperity and the atonement within prosperity gospel circles (p. x), but he does not return to this in a substantive way in this book. That was a disappointment but may reveal that systematic theology is not the strength here and also that this whole hermeneutic

which has been developed in the book needs a critical evaluation. Nel is a source of authority on Apostolic Faith Mission history but not without controversy in his interpretations on John Lake. He is a prolific author and has just finished another book published by Wipf & Stock in early 2022.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock

***Slaying Leviathan: Limited Government and Resistance in the Christian Tradition.* Glenn S. Sunshine. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2019. 184 pp., softcover. ISBN 978-1-9524-1072-7**



Dr. Glenn S. Sunshine is a Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University and a Senior Fellow at the Colson Center for Christian worldview. An award-winning author, Glenn has written about history, theology, and culture, online and on both sides of the Atlantic. He is the author of several books and is a contributor to the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, and the *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*.

In this important book, Sunshine tries to address how Christians today can respond to the possible threat to religious and civil liberties. Only through knowing where we've lost it and how we have recovered it in the past, can we prepare for what lies at our door today.

Beginning with the Early Church, Sunshine traces the history of a Christian view of limited government

and resistance through the teachings of Augustine, through to the Middle Ages and the Protestant Reformation. He concludes with a broader discussion of its emergence in the American Experiment following the Revolutionary War.

He states that for 300 years the early church was a persecuted minority, and, though independent of the state protection which the Jews enjoyed, they were also independent of the state's influence. So that when Christianity was legalized, it had already developed a well-formed idea of itself as an entity, not under the Roman empire, but the government of Christ (p. 9).

He goes on to say,

...Christianity is the only major world religion to begin and spread without government support. Constantine's actions would not and could not change the precedent that had been set that church and government are separate institutions and that the church can exist and function even in the face of government opposition (p. 12).

It was Augustine, an early church father, in formulating the doctrine of Original Sin, who came to have such an important influence on the Protestant Reformers, not only their theology but their view of political theory. Later Augustine's thought was dominant in John Locke's writings, who in turn, was the single most influential thinker on the framers of the Declaration of Independence.

Sunshine rightly recognizes the influence of Aristotle who was rediscovered by many during the Renaissance, including political theorists. Aristotle left a heavy footprint on the three branches of the American government. He recognized the dangers inherent in Monarchies, Oligarchies, and even democracies while also seeing strengths in each when taken together. As a result, the Americans blended these ideas to give eventually the Presidency, Senate, and House of Representatives (p. 161).

The title of the book comes from one of Thomas Hobbs' works entitled *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*. It was,

...a totalizing vision of the state that was not only made up of all the people under the king but whose reach extended into every area of life, even religion and conscience. Hobbes's anthropology... had no room for abstract ideas such as unalienable, natural rights; everything was mechanical and empirical, and thus could and should be properly placed under state control in the name of preventing us from falling back into the chaos and anarchy of nature (p. 125).

Sunshine goes on to show how John Locke, while by no means a friend of Christian orthodoxy, nevertheless drew heavily upon the doctrine of sin in Augustine. He bequeathed to the framers of the American constitution the principle of limited government. Locke understood that the trajectory of government is always toward the consolidation of power. This was a defining principle for the framers of the new American government who built in a system of checks and balances between the various divisions of government (p. 27).

The author traces the development of the idea of the Church and state relationship under the Magisterial Reformers. He shows how Calvin drew upon Zwingli and earlier reformers, who saw in the Old Testament a covenantal approach to government, typified in the Sinai Covenant. Calvin saw that "the idea of covenant was easily transferable to secular government" (p. 84). Since the Israelites agreed three times before the covenant was established, Calvin drew

from this that, “government was to be based on the consent of the governed...” (p. 84).

This directly challenged state absolutism, advocated by Hobbes but rejected by Locke and the American founders.

But a question that occupied the minds of many of the Reformers was how does one resist a lawfully instituted magistrate. How do you prevent resistance from degenerating into social chaos? Sunshine says,

...they insisted that reform be done in an orderly manner with the support and under the direction of the magistrate... that is, by men in lower offices of the government. That way, those in resistance would still be able to honor the political leaders God placed over them ... (p. 110).

Following this, Sunshine highlights the opposite view propagated by Thomas Hobbes and infamously embraced by Charles I and II—The Divine Right of Kings. “According to absolutists, there can never be grounds for resisting royal authority: The king speaks for God, and if he gets it wrong, the people will be held guiltless if they ‘sin’ by obeying him” (p. 117).

To this Scottish theologian Samuel Rutherford, writing in *Lex Rex* replied that, yes,

... there are a variety of legitimate forms of government, but in all cases, authority is vested in offices, not in the persons who hold those offices. Thus, in a monarchy, the office of the king has authority, not the person of the king himself. This means that it is possible to depose the king without undermining royal authority” (p. 119).

How timely this discussion is for our present age! Sunshine wrote the book during one of the most unprecedented challenges to limited government and Christian liberty that we have seen in many generations—the current debates in Canada illustrate this. We are currently living through a global pandemic, and among other challenges to civil liberties, is the assault on the right of Christians to assemble. The issues are not black and white. How do we honour the leaders of the land while honouring King Jesus? What are the “hills to die on” as Christians? At what point can we lawfully resist?

What will our relationship with government look like for us in a post-Christian, Post-Enlightenment age, where we are taught to throw off the oppressive ideas of the past to forge a new reality?

But, it is here where Sunshine draws our attention to a timeless solution. It was the recovery of the gospel preaching of the Methodists and British Evangelicals in the 18th and 19th century, so despised by the absolutist establishment, that was responsible for the survival of Christianity in Britain, while

at the same time, preventing a repeat of the bloody French Revolution on British soil (p. 127).

Overall, *Sunshine* provides an important summary of the history of limited government and Christian resistance. There are very helpful correctives to those who suggest that Romans 13 is the last word on Christian submission. It also provides a very high view of the magistrate which is possibly also in danger in these radical times.

It would make a great textbook for high school or university. The only criticisms of the book were the quality of the binding which made it rather awkward to hold and that it didn't have an index. Perhaps the next addition would correct that. Highly recommended!

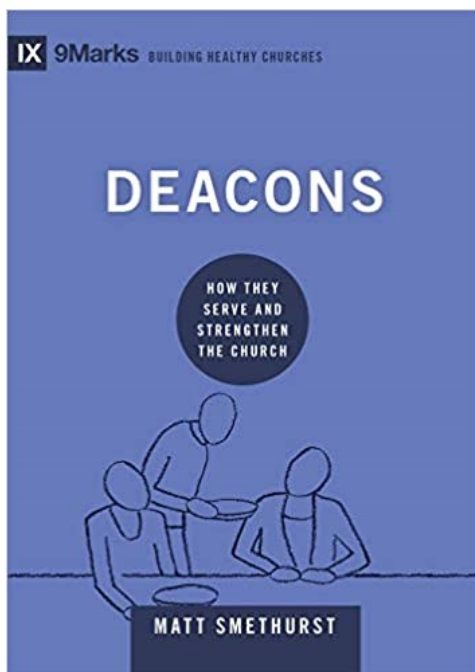
Reviewed by Kent Compton, minister of the Western Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island.

***Deacons: How They Serve and Strengthen the Church.* Matt Smethurst. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches series. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 155 pp., hardcover. ISBN 978-1433571626**

This is definitely the best book that I have ever read on the topic of deacons. It is biblical, accessible, practical, and very comprehensive for a relatively small book!

Smethurst's book has an introduction, followed by six chapters, a conclusion, and then two appendixes. He also has a helpful general index and scripture index at the back. The book consists of one hundred and fifty-five pages.

In his introduction, Smethurst does a brief study of the Greek words *diakonos*, *diakonia*, and *diakoneo*, giving a sense of the various nuances. He explains that every Christian is a deacon [servant] in the generic sense of the word but that there is a more technical sense to the word, which applies to the office of a deacon. He shows that Jesus is the highest expression of the meaning of these words. Smethurst also shows through the lives of two pastors how a functioning diaconate can be so beneficial to their well-being (pp. 15–22).



In chapter one (pp. 23–39), Smethurst briefly sketches the way that deacons have functioned throughout church history. He looks at the Early Church, the Middle Ages, John Calvin’s influence, and then the Reformation to the Modern Era. He ends the chapter by looking at six popular conceptions of deacons that fall short of the biblical model (pp. 32–37).

In chapter two (pp. 41–57), Smethurst turns to the Scriptures to see where the role of deacons began. He explains the context of Acts 6:1–7, showing the need that the apostles had for qualified men to help with the ministry to needy widows. He notes that while the noun for deacon is not found in these verses, “... *Biblical scholars have long understood the seven to provide a pattern for the diaconal office* (p. 44).” Smethurst goes into detail showing that deacons function as ‘shock absorbers’ and ‘problem solvers.’ He notes the profound impact that the seven men had upon the peace and growth of the church (pp. 56–57).

Chapter three (pp. 59–71) is entitled, ‘The Baseline: What Deacons Must Be.’ To discover what deacons must be in regard to Scriptural qualifications, he exegetes 1 Timothy 3:8–13. He breaks this section of Scripture into six parts and does a good job in explaining the importance of godliness for the deacon in both life and doctrine. He also refers to the promise for Deacons who serve well in the church.

The heading for chapter four (pp. 73–94) is ‘The Breakdown: What Deacons Must Do.’ Smethurst outlines a three-phase job description in regard to what deacons must do. First, they are to spot and meet tangible needs in the church. Second, they are to protect and promote church unity, and third, they are to see and support the ministry of the elders. He also notes two key differences between elders and deacons (pp. 84–85). And in the last pages of the chapter, he highlights three healthy models for organizing deacons. I found this to be a most helpful chapter because I have noticed over the years that there is much confusion as to what deacons should do in the church. This chapter clears up a lot of ambiguity for organizing a Model for Deacons.

Chapter five (pp. 95–116) is called, ‘The Benefits: What Deacons Provide.’ This section is full of stories about deacons who have strengthened churches by faithful service. The stories are very encouraging and inspiring.

Chapter six is about the Deacons of Deacons, the Lord Jesus Christ (pp. 117–127)! I love the fact that Smethurst’s thesis about deacons points to Jesus as the ultimate example of what deacons should be and should do. He quotes numerous passages from the prophet Isaiah and shows their fulfilment in the New Testament in Jesus Christ. This is a Christ-exalting chapter! A short five- page conclusion follows.

There are two appendixes. The first appendix deals with whether or not women may serve as deacons (pp. 135–152). He does a good job of outlining the strongest arguments for both positions. His view is that women may be deacons when there is a biblical model of elders and deacons in the local church. This is also my own position. The second appendix is a sample questionnaire for deacons’ candidates. There are eighteen questions for consideration (pp. 153–155).

I have found this book so biblical and beneficial that we have ordered copies for all the elders and deacons in our church family. We plan to do a chapter-by-chapter study in the upcoming months. I highly recommend this book! Smedhurst is presently planting a church in Virginia and has served in the past as a deacon and an elder and is also the managing editor for the Gospel Coalition.

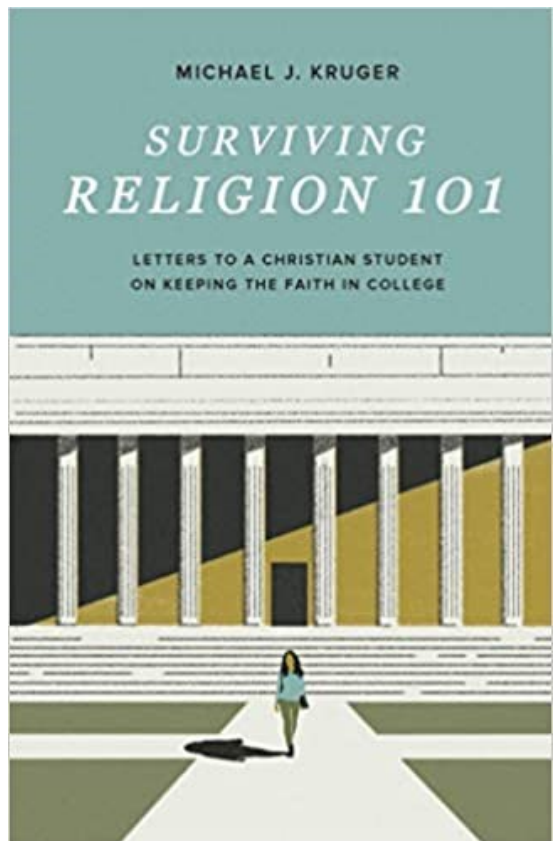
Reviewed by Ross Morrison the pastor of the Alberton Baptist Church, Prince Edward Island. Ross is originally from Margaree, Cape Breton Island.

***Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College.* Michael J. Kruger. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 262 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-7207-4**

As Christian parents face the prospects of their children leaving to secular college or university, this can be a time of apprehension. Concerns are had regarding the stalwartness of their child in an increasingly hostile secular environment that universities have become. Indeed, for this reviewer, whose oldest daughter will be departing shortly for university, this concern cuts to the heart.

Author Michael J. Kruger, president of Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina has written this book to help prepare Christian students for the sorts of criticisms they will face in the halls of higher learning. As he writes in the Preface, what prompted him to compose this book was his daughter's acceptance to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill—a

university that he himself had graduated from 30 years prior. As he reflected on his own experience in the religious course he took in university, he recalled how his own faith commitments were challenged by Professor Bart Ehrman, who has



gone on to be one of Christianity's most prolific critics. Knowing the sorts of criticisms Christian students will face, Kruger desires to help Christian students keep their faith without sacrificing their intellectual integrity (p. 24).

In the Introduction to the book, the author discusses the intellectual shift within the university in recent years. Universities are traditionally thought to be places where ideas can be engaged and critiqued, leading the student to reach their own conclusions. The shift has come in that, though institutions of higher learning claim to be champions of diversity, when it comes to the truth claims of Christianity, there is a decided rejection of such truth claims. Christian students, ill-prepared for such criticism, are leaving the Christian faith in significant numbers.

The format of this book is structured around fifteen letters a father writes to his daughter in her freshman year at university. I found the letters to be succinct, easy to read (at a university level), well-illustrated, and containing helpful answers to the questions a Christian student will encounter. Some of the letters engage in very current issues for today's students: "My Christian Morals are Viewed as Hateful and Intolerant—Shouldn't I be More Loving and Accepting?", "I Have Gay Friends Who are Kind Wonderful and Happy—Are We Sure That Homosexuality is Really Wrong?" These letters are very warm and personal, yet faithful to the biblical sexual ethic.

In my estimation the first two letters are foundational to preparing the Christian student for the secular environment. Letter One—"I'm Worried About Being a Christian in a Secular University—How Will I Survive?"—encourages the student to realize that just because they don't have a ready answer to a particular question, that doesn't mean answers don't exist. In fact, the good of being challenged is it pushes the Christian to pursue satisfying answers to the questions they face. The opening letter contains practical advice: the Christian student should find both a solid local Church and a campus ministry to attend. Both will help a struggling student find answers to difficult questions.

Letter Two—"My Professors are Really Smart—Isn't it More Likely That they are Right and I am Wrong?"—has a lengthy and helpful discussion on matters of worldview. Key to this chapter is the insight that university professors may claim they are neutral in the presentation of "the facts." However, everyone operates according to their pre-determined worldview.

The range of topics covered in these 15 letters, and how they are discussed, will equip the Christian student to stand fast in a secular environment. I would recommend using this book as a resource for discussions between parents and their child preparing for university.

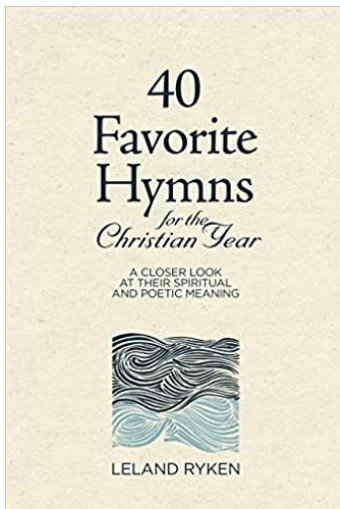
My only caveat to this discussion regards the limitations of this book (as acknowledged by the author, 13). This book is preparing the student for secular universities. Christian parents and the Evangelical Church should not be waiting till the final months before a student enters university to prepare them. The topics discussed in this book should be the topics regularly discussed within the home

and Church, as Christian parents and ministries seek to develop a Christian worldview in the youth of the Church.

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

Book Briefs

***40 Favorite Hymns for the Christian Year.* Leland Ryken. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2020, 170 pp., hardcover. ISBN 9781629957937**



What are your traditions throughout the Christian year? For many, the singing of special hymns that highlight the Birth of Christ, Good Friday, the Ascension, etc. are significant to us as we move from one season to the next. Leland Ryken, professor emeritus at Wheaton College in Illinois, USA has provided us with a companion to his 2019 *40 Favorite Hymns on the Christian Life* (see review *Haddington House Journal*, Volumes 21&22, 2019/2020). This latest 2020 work, as the title suggests, looks at hymns that are particularly associated with the various seasons of the Christian Year and analyses these hymns as poetry.

Professor Ryken is highly skilled at leading us through an analysis of forty hymns in a way that he hopes will increase the reader's appreciation of how both the structure and content of these poems (hymns) is intended to affirm biblical doctrine and thus glorify God and edify His people. As in his 2019 work, Ryken asks Christians to carefully consider the *words* they are

singing by *reading* these poems and meditating over them. An Index of Scripture and a Glossary of Terms will help readers to analyse both biblical content and literary devices.

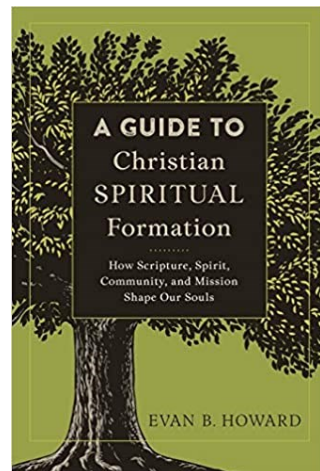
As we read the poems contained in Ryken's latest collection, may we praise God that in His mercy He has given His redeemed people the ability to understand and respond to His Word—and this response is sometimes expressed in poetic praise and wonder. Beyond the analyses of the poems in this work, Ryken reminds us of the image bearers we are as men and women—and, in particular, as redeemed men and women: able to use our God-given creativity to praise God with and for His truth.

This book would make a great gift. It is regrettable that no modern hymns are included; there were some in *40 Favorite Hymns on the Christian Life*. Perhaps that is something to ponder about the hymns we sing throughout the Christian Year: are the “high days” so entrenched in tradition that modern hymn writers are being left out—not yet “favorites” as the title suggests? That said, the tools of analyses that Ryken provides can be applied to any hymn and can help us to evaluate both old and new compositions so that our sung praises come from voices that have “pondered these things in our hearts”.

—NJW

***A Guide to Spiritual Formation: How Scripture, Spirit, Community, and Mission Shape our Souls.* Evan B. Howard. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, 278 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-9780-5**

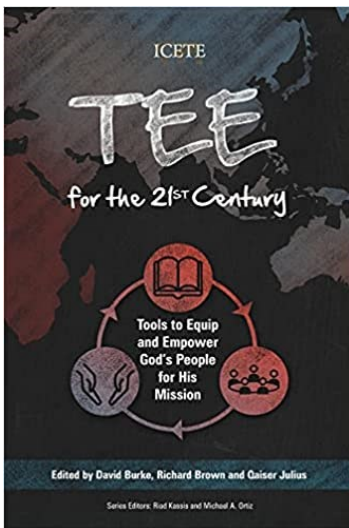
This book represents a comprehensive study of what we have come to know as spiritual formation which is now close to 45 years old and is a sequel to the author's monumental work in the field, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (2008). Of course, spiritual formation, is much older than that but such terminology, courses and discussion has taken this name now for about 45 years. This work I found to be more academic and something that I could not readily adapt to using when leading seminars, workshops and some courses on this theme. In part because I did not find it to engage at the level I find myself often working. I have read parts and digested sections and then reworked it to give out. It also is much more ecumenically oriented in spiritual formation than I would often labour. One reviewer called it “ecumenical evangelicalism”, but I was not so certain of that. It is a must for those who will



teach the subject especially I think at advanced educational levels. The sub-title and book front cover all complement well this “guide” text.

–JCW

***TEE for the 21st Century: Tools to Equip and Empower God's People for His Mission.* David Burke, Richard Brown and Qaiser Julius. Carlisle, England: Langham/ICETE, 2021, 543 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-1-83973-269-0**



TEE for the 21st Century should be read by anyone involved in the broad scope of theological education, not just theological education by extension (TEE) practitioners. If you have not engaged with TEE, then this is the book to take up and read. TEE is old enough to merit serious study and reflection. Though many chapters deal with TEE and its application to the Asian context, other continents are included and theological educators from around the globe will benefit from the themes presented. The context today of COVID-19 makes this book that much more relevant as an incredible retooling has been taking place in the delivery of theological education and we can learn much from the heritage and practice of TEE. The book speaks

with humility and grace rather than a false triumphalism. TEE (and indeed this book) clearly challenges us to recall that theological education is for both ordained leaders and all the people of God as the universal priesthood of the Lord. This is truly a work that endeavours to engage across the board and has much to offer the global Christian community.

–JCW

Academic Articles

So then, how can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one about whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news of peace, who preach the gospel of good things!”

***Romans 10:14–15 EHV
(Evangelical Heritage Version)***



Consecutive Biblical Exposition and the ‘Weightier’ Matters of our Faith

Kenneth J. Stewart*

email: ken.stewart@covenant.edu

** Dr. Kenneth J. Stewart is Professor Emeritus of Theological Studies at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia. Amongst his published works are Ten Myths about Calvinism (IVP, 2011) and In Search of Ancient Roots (IVP, 2017).*

A. Lessons Learned too Slowly

I owe a great personal debt to practitioners of consecutive biblical exposition. As a struggling young evangelical believer raised on what might be called the “blessed thought” style of devotional preaching, to hear at age twenty (as I did) consecutive exposition of a Gospel, an Epistle or a Minor Prophet ushered me into a new appreciation of the Christian faith. It became clear to me then, as it had not been clear earlier, that the units which together comprise Holy Scripture ought to be studied, ought to be interpreted as “wholes”. It was at this time that an aunt, concerned for my Christian growth, gave me a one-volume Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary. I had a new concern to understand what I read; gradually there came a desire to communicate the teaching of Scripture to others.

Travelling such a road, I was chagrined when, sitting in a homiletics class in Philadelphia’s Westminster Seminary, I heard the professor speak disapprovingly of consecutive biblical exposition. “This does not rise to the level of preaching” he said. “It degenerates into mere Bible-teaching”. His point was not that there was no place for biblical exposition in the church; only that biblical exposition does not necessarily rise to the standard of proclamation. It was more

suited to the classroom than the pulpit, because its objective—to “cover” the passage—easily slipped into mere “survey”. Proclamation required a more specific anchor to the text and needed to entail the unfolding of a ‘case’ or ‘argument’. Yet the teacher did not convince me. Caring more to follow in the footsteps of role-models I had come to appreciate before theological seminary, I determined that I would sail in *their* wake, not *his*. And so, off I went to preach to farmers and fishermen upon the Sermon on the Mount (in its entirety), and Paul’s *Galatians* (in its entirety). We did *Jonah* (all of it) and before long, both *Epistles* of Peter.

Was there appreciation for this kind of extended exposition? Certainly! There were parishioners (some at least) who told me that I had opened up the Scriptures for them in a new way; they now wanted to study the Bible for themselves. But on the other hand, there were some brave souls who told me plainly, “stop teaching; start preaching”. Their complaint was that my efforts at explanation were winning out over exhortation; that my determination to offer comprehensive coverage of units of Scripture did not sufficiently identify the urgent texts, the golden texts, which stand out as the massive redwood trees of northern California do above the surrounding forest.

There were at the same time other, emergent, matters that forced reconsideration—if not yet radical change. In the first month of a first pastorate the local undertaker rang to indicate a teen suicide. Would I take the funeral? Not long after, it was an instance of crib-death. Did I have ‘arrows’ in my quiver that would effectively bring the Word of God to bear on such needy situations? I can admit that I scrambled to bring the Word of God to bear in such local crises. Before long, a power utility lineman was electrocuted within a stone’s throw of the church; *of course*, it would be appropriate that his funeral would take place so near the place of tragedy. Jettisoning thoughts of consecutive exposition, I settled on Ecclesiastes 12:1. Soon, I learned that it was the Presbyterian minister’s turn to preach at the yearly November 11th Cenotaph service, commemorating the Great War (1914–18). I had to beg off! Later, I struggled with what to preach in the aftermath of tornado activity (an extremely rare event in that region). Psalm 104:4 came to my rescue. Without fully realizing it at the time, I was gradually being confronted by the clear limitations of the method I had adopted so unreservedly. There was more to come!

Naturally, there was the entirely justifiable expectation that there would be appropriate sermons for the Christmas season, for Passion Week and also Easter. In a second pastorate, I can recall benefitting by taking part in a community Good Friday service in which different preachers were each assigned one of the seven “last words” of Jesus, spoken from the cross. It was an illuminating (as well as edifying) exercise; I was being forced to see that both ‘seasonal’ sermons and “theme” sermons must have an assured place in my preaching program. Such “theme” sermons could themselves be quite solidly grounded in their texts. I found that I could preach a series, “Reasons for Christ’s Coming”, by assembling major Scripture texts in sequence (e.g., Luke 4.43, John 12.27, 1 Tim. 1.15; 1 John 3.8). And there could also be an immediacy, an instantly-recognized relevance, with this

kind of proclamation—something much harder to achieve with consecutive exposition as I had practiced it. And so, by about year ten of pastoral ministry, circumstances had combined to oblige me to diversify my preaching method. The result was invigorating for both the preacher and his hearers.

But I might have saved a lot of trial and error, or at least trial and frustration, if I had heeded the counsel of my homiletics teacher. He had, after all, cautioned young preachers against undertaking too-lengthy series. He had actually recommended that the opening years of pastoral ministry be given over to preaching what he called the “golden texts” of Scripture, i.e., the memorable texts which deserve to be drawn to the attention of both believers and seekers. Not every tree in the forest of Scripture requires to be harvested at once.

Buttresses Reckoned to Support the Penchant for Consecutive Exposition

One of the most compelling reasons for my opting for consecutive exposition was an inference, easily drawn, from the acceptance of the full inspiration of Scripture. Whether divine inspiration is reckoned to have occurred at the level of individual words or at the level of units of meaning (i.e., sentences, or thoughts), the inference is the same: the Scripture as a totality has come to us from God and is worthy of our careful attention.¹ Scripture in its totality possesses authority which God, the divine author, lends to it. Does it not follow then that the units of Scripture deserve to be expounded sequentially? Does not the preacher grow in confidence knowing that he is, in the end, only a messenger of sacred oracles (Rom. 3.1)? In conversation with other preachers (also committed to consecutive exposition), we would insist “We preach it because it comes *next*.” (This was thought to vanquish all possible objections).

Another, which was almost as compelling for this ministerial candidate bent on a ministry of biblical exposition, was the example of earlier and contemporary practitioners of the expository art. Consecutive biblical exposition had been revived in the Reformation age, as practiced by Zwingli and Calvin. Zwingli took his Greek Testament into the pulpit at Zurich and started with Matthew. Calvin, after his three-year exile from Geneva to Strasbourg (1538–1541), returned to Geneva and resumed preaching with the verse following where

¹For an interesting exchange of the interplay between such distinguishable views of inspiration and the work of Bible translation, see William D. Mounce, “Do Formal Equivalent Translations Reflect a Higher View of Plenary, Verbal Inspiration?” in *Themelios* 44.3 (Dec. 2019) available at:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/issue/44-3/> and Dane Ortlund, “On Words, Meaning, Inspiration, and Translation: A Brief Response to Bill Mounce” in *Themelios* 45.1 (April, 2020) available at: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/issue/45-1/>

he had left off.² To know G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945) both through the *Westminster Pulpit* volumes, or his book-length expositions, was to admire him.³ His London successor, D.M. Lloyd Jones (1899–1981), carried this kind of exposition to a whole further level with quite exhaustive published series on the Sermon on the Mount, as well as Paul’s epistles to the *Romans* and *Ephesians*.⁴ In North America, Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895–1960) and his eventual successor, James Montgomery Boice (1938–2000) preached (and subsequently published) consecutive expositions on multiple segments of Scripture.⁵ Who could fault a young preacher for taking as his models servants of the Word like these?

And last of all, there was the appeal of pastoral efficiency. *Not* to preach consecutive expositions would require the preacher to locate suggestive Scripture passages and then prepare and deliver innovative sermons non-stop. Especially for those who exercise solo preaching ministries (i.e., where there is no pastoral rotation) this can be a very tall order, when adequate time for sermon preparation is always in short supply. Call it “energy conservation” if you will; sermons are more easily prepared in series!

B. The Vulnerability of Each of These ‘Supports’ to Criticism

It is not the full inspiration of Scripture which needs re-examination, but the too-easy assumption that consecutive biblical exposition corresponds to the biblical idea of preaching which must be held up to the light. While there are examples of extended biblical exposition in Scripture (e.g., Nehemiah 8.8), this description cannot fairly be applied to the preaching of Jesus or of the Apostles. Biblically-rooted preaching begins with some particular Scripture, set in its context, and goes on to apply the thrust of it to the hearers (e.g. Luke 24.27; Acts 2.16; 8.35). As for the post-Pentecost preaching of the Apostles, it has long been shown that their preaching contained an irreducible core or ‘kerygma’ that entailed reciting the gospel story culminating in the unjust arrest, innocent death, and triumphant resurrection of Jesus before ending with a summons to repentance (e.g., Acts. 2.38; 4.10; 5.29; 7.52; 10.38–43; 13.27–31; 17.30–31; 24.24–25; 26.22–23).⁶ In the book

²John T. McNeil, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 30; T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 91.

³Among Morgan’s published expositions were *The Acts of the Apostles* (1924), *The Gospel According to Mark* (1927), to *Luke* (1931) to *John* (1933), *God’s Last Word To Man (Hebrews)* [1936].

⁴Among Lloyd Jones’ published expositions: *From Fear to Faith* (Habakkuk) [1953], *Studies on the Sermon on the Mount* (1959–60), *Ephesians* (8 vols) [1976 ff.].

⁵Barnhouse is best remembered for his 4-volume exposition of *Romans* [1952 ff]; Boice left published expositions of *John* (1975 ff), *Genesis* (1982 ff), *Minor Prophets* (1996 ff), among others.

⁶This N.T. emphasis was freshly captured by C.H. Dodd in his book, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (1935) and continued by Leon Morris in his *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (1955).

of Acts, it is *this* message and its spread which is referred to as the spread of the ‘Word of God’ or the ‘Word of the Lord’ (Acts 6.7; 12.24; 19.20). As and when the New Testament writings were composed and recognized, they too would be recognized as comprising the divine Word (note especially 2 Peter 3.16). But the ‘word of the Lord’ is being preached by New Testament heralds *prior to* and contemporaneous with the composition of the New Testament writings. Authentic Christian preaching today will, of course, reckon with Scripture *as complete*; but it needs always to draw attention to this irreducible ‘core’ of the Gospel message as the Apostles did from the start.⁷ Consecutive biblical exposition, in order to reach the standard of N.T. preaching, must display this quality. For lack of it, biblical exposition may descend to the level of the merely ‘scribal’. Ezra “gave the meaning so that people understood” (Neh. 8.8). The scribes and teachers of the law were able to identify Bethlehem in Judea as the Saviour’s birthplace (Matt. 2.4,5). But biblical interpretation, however accurate, requires proclamation and application.

As for those I considered ‘exemplars’ of consecutive exposition, I have come to recognize that these individuals had many more arrows in their quivers than I had at first supposed. Campbell Morgan, while quite capable of preaching through *Mark*, *Acts*, and *Hebrews* and turning them into published form, was versatile enough to prepare more topical sermon series which when published took the names of *The Crises of the Christ*, *The Answers of Jesus to Job*, and *The Purposes of the Incarnation*. Lloyd-Jones, though best known for his consecutive expositions, particularly of Pauline epistles, nevertheless preached topical sermons which, when published, took names such as *The Plight of Man and the Power of God*, *Faith on Trial: Studies in Psalm 73*, *Evangelistic Sermons at Aberavon*, and an entire course of sermons preached to mark the awakening of 1859, entitled *Revival*. Barnhouse, still remembered for his volumes on *Genesis* and *Romans* (which grew out of weekly expositions) was at the same time preaching material which came into print as *Your Right to Heaven*, *The Invisible War*, and *God’s Methods for Holy Living*. James Boice, who eventually succeeded him⁸ and is well remembered for his expositions of *Genesis*, *The Psalms*, *The Sermon on the Mount*, and *John* was at the same time preaching sermons (in series) which came before the wider public as *Ordinary Men Called by God: Abraham, Moses and David*, *Parables of Jesus*, *Christian Discipleship*, and the doctrinal sermons, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*. In short, the larger picture of the preaching ministry of these servants of God demonstrated how important variety and versatility was in their proclamation. Did they expound whole books of Scripture? Yes, *alongside* themed series of shorter duration.

⁷The *Handkonkordanz zum Griesichen Neuen Testament*, ed. Alfred Schmoeller (Stuttgart: Wurtembergische Bibelanstadt, 1968), 315 lists 32 such usages of ‘word of God’ and ‘word of the Lord’ in Acts alone.

⁸Between the passing of Barnhouse in 1960 and the commencement of Boice’s ministry in 1968 came the important transitional ministry of Mariano Di Gangi (1923–2008).

And then there is the question of efficiency. We can grant that from the single standpoint of conservation of energy, yes it is probably a more efficient use of time and energy to carry on a preaching series through a single unit of Scripture, without turning aside to other parts of Scripture. Consecutive exposition *is* better than an uncoordinated, non-methodical approach to choosing sermon texts and topics. But what may be called ‘efficiency’ is hardly the only criterion to guide the earnest preacher in planning his preaching. Of at least equal importance is *timeliness, fitness*. Natural disasters, bereavements, national or world crises are not distractions, not intrusions: they represent opportunities. Many readers will be able to recall the sense of disappointment they experienced upon entering a place of worship in a time of disaster or peril (of national concern) only to hear the preacher utter the words “as I was saying last week”. These are words of defeat! God’s Word preached must be seen to be *fitting and timely* (Prov. 25.11); it must be seen to connect with questions and dilemmas hearers are actually pondering. Paul instructs Timothy to preach “in season and out of season” (*eukairos akairos*) (2 Tim. 4.2) which seems to mean ‘whether convenient or not’. In order for the preacher to respond in a timely way to emergent concerns of this kind, he will need what a homiletics teacher of another day, Andrew W. Blackwood (1882–1966,) called a “homiletical garden” in which a variety of crops (in this case, Scripture passages, themes) are simultaneously cultivated so that they can be harvested on short notice to suit emerging needs.⁹ The preacher who is entirely focused on preaching through a single unit of Scripture may have ‘blinders’ on and will not be adequately prepared to preach in a timely and fitting way.

Now, having thus shown that three supposed supports for consecutive exposition are not what they at first seemed, we must turn to something still more considerable.

C. The Question of “Weightiness”

Jesus shared with his contemporaries, the Scribes and Pharisees, a high view of Scripture. When he affirmed that “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 19:35), they did not quarrel with him. When Stephen affirmed before his critics that the Law had been recorded with the assistance of angels (Act 7:53), they did not find fault. And yet from the identical Scriptures, Jesus taught his disciples to see and to emphasize what the Scribes and Pharisees claimed not to find there. They found other things. And so Jesus told them, “You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness”. The AV here used the memorable word “weightier”; the underlying term is ‘*baruteras*’: burden, weight, importance. For our purposes, the principle to grasp is that within inspired Scripture, while all is true, some matters are of greater urgency than others. To make such a distinction is not to disparage any part of Scripture in favour of another; this is not the old argument about a

⁹Andrew W. Blackwood, *Planning a Year’s Pulpit Work* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1956).

necessary distinction between the “wheat” and the “chaff” within the Bible. No; all is true, yet some takes precedence over the other. Some is more urgent than others. Some decades ago, I participated in an ordination exam in which the candidate was asked “What is your favourite book of the Bible?” The one who posed the question was taken aback when the candidate answered, “Zephaniah”. The questioner, while acknowledging this prophet’s place in the Holy Scriptures, did not agree that this was an acceptable answer for a future minister of the Gospel! He cited Hebrews 8.7 “If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.” His concern was about weightiness.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism recognizes such a valid distinction when it poses the question (Q.3) “What do the Scriptures *principally* teach?” In theology, we appropriately distinguish between primary and secondary doctrines; about the first, dissent or difference of opinion is out of place while about the second (matters also found in Scripture) some difference of opinion can be allowed for. When we apply this question of “weightiness” to the task of preaching, where are we to turn to reliably set our priorities for preaching from Scripture? After all, who among us would knowingly commit to preaching on what might be called the “other-than-weighty”?

D. Ensuring Weightiness in Preaching

Some will advocate that the perfect solution to this challenge is the adoption of the lectionary method, whereby there is an assigned Scripture to be read (and expounded) for every Sunday of the calendar year. While the strength of this approach is that it does bring to the attention of the church Scriptures which might otherwise be neglected (and neglected especially by a too-exclusive reliance on extended consecutive exposition), it does not ultimately address the question of identifying “the weighty”. The lectionary method offers systematic *variety* without any guarantee of depth.

A superior approach to this was the one insisted upon by my homiletics instructor, referred to earlier in this essay. He taught his preaching classes to familiarize themselves with the table of contents of a good hymnal and to ensure that our preaching ministries exposed our people to the wholesome range of biblical teaching reflected there: divine attributes, the humanity and divinity of Jesus, his atoning work, resurrection, ascension, and return. From experience, I can testify to the value of this method. It was hard to come to admit that one could toil away at extended exposition for months and even years and yet fall short of instilling this framework of faith firmly in our people’s hearts and minds. Can one go so far as to say that extended exposition is often done *at the expense* of establishing our people in sound convictions about these ‘pillars’ of the faith? I myself suspect that this is often so.

One could accomplish the same purpose (the inculcating of sound doctrine in our people) by a return to a preaching practice that has fallen on hard times: i.e., *catechetical preaching*. For those who have not been exposed to this concept, these are sermon series taking their themes from the great standards or ‘rules’ of the faith

such as the Apostles' Creed, the Westminster Shorter Catechism or the Heidelberg Catechism.¹⁰ Of course, such doctrinal sermons must flow from major Scriptures, carefully expounded. This second approach to doctrinal preaching leaves less to the judgment and selectivity of the preacher than the first (with subjects suggested by hymnal categories). But the two approaches have in common that they concentrate on the major themes of our faith.

Yet, there is one more alternative to consecutive biblical exposition which is very much in need of fresh consideration at the present time: a judicious use of what is called the 'Church Year'. The adjective, 'judicious' is key here. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, there was deep concern that medieval Catholicism had run riot with this concept of 'holy time'. In addition to days concerned with the saving career of Christ (e.g., Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and Ascension), there had been added numerous 'saints days' (falling on weekdays). The legitimate question was asked, "what basis is there for these observances in the Word of God?" Reformation opinion went in two directions: the English Puritan position (endorsed also in Reformation Scotland) was that the Lord's Day is the *only* day whose keeping is mandated for Christians in Scripture (e.g., Acts 20.7; 1 Cor. 16.2); there was also the European Reformed position which upheld the view that days directly connected to the earthly ministry of Jesus ought both to be observed in the churches and made the occasion of doctrinal preaching.¹¹

The reader can reach his or her own conclusions about the case for a judicious use of the cycle of events in Jesus' earthly ministry as providing the themes for preaching. I put it forward here simply as an indication of how the default tendency of so many preachers towards consecutive exposition might be re-calibrated. It strikes this writer as extremely worthy of fresh consideration. For lack of such consideration, it would seem that the only aspects of Jesus' earthly ministry which will receive regular attention in our churches will be His birth, His death, and His resurrection. But I ask, "In addition, is there not a strong case to be made for preaching with regularity on the annunciation of His coming birth (Luke 2), His ascension into heaven (Acts 1), His sending of the Spirit from the Father's right hand (Acts 2) and His coming glorious return (John 14; Acts 1.11)?" These are among the weightiest themes in the New Testament! How can we, in justice, encourage the view that—if our people will only be patient with the process of biblical exposition, then all such themes will *eventually* be dealt with in their own good time? I have seen this method produce teaching about Christ's return once in a decade; I have also seen the Ascension and Pentecost seasons regularly pass by

¹⁰Historically, catechetical preaching was utilized in the second or afternoon service on the Lord's Day. The aim of catechetical preaching was the training of Christians in the major tenets of the faith. Lengthier articles of faith or confessions do not lend themselves to this as well as catechisms.

¹¹This Continental position was most clearly set out in the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) chap. XXIV; the Scottish reformers approved of all elements of that confession except this chapter. Find it in A.C. Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 291.

without comment. Would it have been an uncalled-for intrusion if their significance had been made the subject of proclamation? Where is the weight being placed?

Does some reader conclude that this essay means to banish biblical exposition to the wilderness? Perish the thought! It is not biblical exposition itself which is under review here: *every* sermon will be based on sound interpretation of a biblical text and expounded carefully. The urgent question is only that of whether the current penchant for consecutive biblical exposition is not deflecting us from preaching, with sufficient regularity, on the great themes of Christ's gospel. I concluded, years ago, that it is to be blamed for this very thing.

Is there not a strong case to be made for preaching with regularity on the annunciation of His coming birth (Luke 2), His ascension into heaven (Acts 1), His sending of the Spirit from the Father's right hand (Acts 2) and His coming glorious return (John 14; Acts 1.11)?

Reflections at the Centenary of Robert Hamill Nassau's death (1835–1921):

An Overshadowed American Presbyterian Missionary to Equatorial West Africa

Jack C. Whytock¹

Introduction

Robert Hamill Nassau was one of the key pioneer American Presbyterian missionaries to Equatorial West Africa. He and both his first and second wives came from highly connected families within the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) and had associations to many prominent Presbyterian congregations and institutions.² He spent over 45 years as a missionary of the PCUSA Board of Foreign Missions and was a prolific author, translator, researcher, and poet.³ He holds the record for the longest serving missionary in Africa of the PCUSA in the 19th century, and he was a noted pioneer missionary

¹This paper was delivered on October 20, 2021, at the Presbyterian Scholars Conference, held at Harbour House, Wheaton College, Illinois. Thank you to Dr Jeff McDonald for extending this kind invitation.

²His mother had three brothers all Presbyterian ministers (surname Hamill) and one sister who also married a Presbyterian minister. His father was a Presbyterian minister and educator and educated at Princeton Seminary and taught at Lafayette College and served there as president for one year and taught also at Lawrenceville School. Robert had two sisters who married Presbyterian ministers. Nassau's one brother Joseph was also a Princeton Seminary graduate and became a Presbyterian minister. His first wife's grandfather and great grandfather were Presbyterian ministers one having been Moderator of the GA. His second wife was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. His sister also became a Presbyterian missionary. Thus, over a dozen Presbyterian (PCUSA) ministers and missionaries are associated within his direct family connections.

³For an excellent collection of many of his published works available electronically see: <https://www.logcollegepress.com/robert-hamill-nassau-18351921>

opening up new stations, planting churches and preparing significant linguistic texts for these stations. Yet, no major biography has yet been published on him except a short study in a medical journal done in 1963.⁴ The best overview study remains Raymond Teeuwissens' 1973 unpublished thesis. Curiously Albert Schweitzer (the noted French medical missionary and social gospel advocate to Gabon) saw himself as a successor of sorts to Nassau, medically, in Gabon: "I have always considered myself to be, somewhat, the successor to Dr. Nassau/ *Toujours, je me sens un peu le successeur du Dr. Nassau.*"⁵ Thus he remains the overshadowed American Presbyterian missionary and names such as William Sheppard or John Leighton Wilson dominate the field, yet rarely does the name Nassau appear. Major biographical texts or thematic studies have been published in recent years on these missionaries and others but not so with Nassau.⁶ Teeuwissen claims, "Nassau's published books alone total more printed page than the combined output of all other West African Presbyterian missionary writers..."⁷ Nassau is one of the neglected and overshadowed names of American Presbyterian missionaries in Equatorial West Africa or Africa for that matter. Then...

⁴Fred B. Rogers, "Robert Hamill Nassau (1835–1921): Apostle to Africa", *Transactions & Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, 30, (January 1963), 150–156.

⁵English translation by Raymond Teeuwissen from an original letter by Schweitzer, 1949. See his thesis (p. viii), as mentioned in my next footnote.

⁶See Erskine Clarke's, *By the Rivers of Water: A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey* (New York: Basic Books, 2013) and the studies on Sheppard by William E. Phipps. *William Sheppard: Congo's African American Livingstone* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2002) and Kennedy Pagan, *Black Livingstone: A True Tale of Adventure in the Nineteenth-Century Congo* (New York: Viking, 2002). Major studies of other American Presbyterians missionaries to Africa over the last thirty years include: Charles Partee's, *Adventures in Africa: The Story of Don McClure: From Khartoum to Addis Ababa in Five Decades*. Original. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Kimberly Hills', *A Higher Mission: The Careers of Alonzo and Althea Brown Edmiston in Central Africa* (Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2020); E. Paul Balisky's, *Thomas A. Lambie: Missionary Doctor and Entrepreneur* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020); and Mary Carol Cloutier's, *Bridging the Gap, Breaching the Barriers: The Presence and Contribution of (Foreign) Persons of African Descent to the Gaboon and Corisco Mission in Nineteenth-Century Equatorial Africa* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021). Thus, the gap remains on Nassau as only two unpublished theses have been done on Nassau back in the 1970s and some occasional article references since then but no major published book-length study. Raymond W. Teeuwissen, "Robert Hamill Nassau, 1835–1921: Pioneer Missionary to Equatorial West Africa" (unpublished ThM thesis, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1973) and David J. Mandeng, "The Philosophy of Mission of Robert Hamill Nassau in the Contemporary World." (Unpublished PhD thesis, Temple University, 1970).

⁷Teeuwissen, 79.

Why so overshadowed?

Teeuwissen had asked this question in his thesis back in 1973. I will expand his answer to six possibilities.

One of the complexities of Nassau's mission work is that it is centred around Equatorial West Africa. This is unifying but today this geographic region includes the three modern nations of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Cameroon, and thus not one modern named country can claim his attention.⁸ This may be a factor but is not a good reason for neglect. The second factor may be that the topic of fetishism,⁹ his major work, has gone out of vogue and has been marginalized with the new rising academic disciplines of anthropology and ethnology. The missionary ethnographer is now considered to be an "amateur" and to be "biased" so is not deemed to be a good source. That is a stronger argument for neglect, but it also presents problems as I will briefly consider later. Third, and related to this, there has also been a failure to interpret Nassau's work on fetishism from an interdisciplinary perspective. I think this factor has led to his neglect perhaps more so than any other reason. Fourth, there is the personality factor: he was not at the centre of the Mission Board, e.g., as a secretary like Wilson, and he crossed many swords with both missionaries and others as we will see. Fifth, somehow Nassau did not engender the explorer persona the way Sheppard managed to. There may be other reasons (my sixth) for his being overshadowed, such as confusion with Albert Schweitzer, i.e. some may see Nassau as having been caught up in the same social gospel or liberal theology as Schweitzer and therefore the evangelicals have ignored him due to misunderstanding, or it could be a misunderstanding that Schweitzer was the pioneer and not Nassau, so Schweitzer receives the attention.¹⁰ These are six reasons that I see as at least a start to answer the question of why Nassau has been overshadowed. I now hope to convince you that they are not sufficient reasons to neglect this American Presbyterian missionary giant of Africa.

Nassau holds the record for the longest serving missionary in Africa of the PCUSA in the 19th century

⁸ It also resulted in a complexity of churches today: *Iglesia Evangélica Presbyteriana en Guinea Equatorial*; the *Eglise Evangélique du Gabon* and the *Eglise Presbytérienne Camerounaise*. Teeuwissen, 45. This may also be a related factor as it is hard to draw all the lines together.

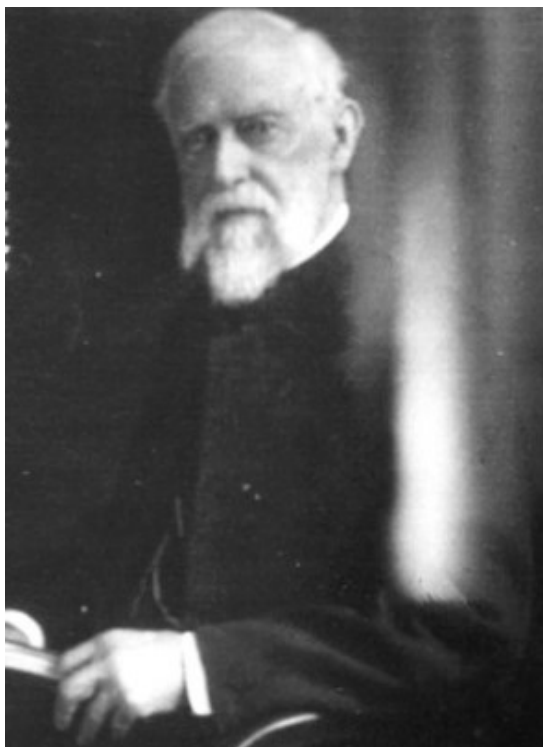
⁹ Today *fetichism* is usually spelt as *fetishism*.

¹⁰ Mandeng, 147 also mentions that the Schweitzer comparison may be a reason for neglect and develops that point.

Life Overview: A Brief Biographical Sketch of Robert Hamill Nassau, 1835–1921

Nassau¹¹ was born in Montgomery Square, Pennsylvania (near Philadelphia) in 1835 and was schooled at Lafayette College and at Lawrenceville School, New Jersey and attended the College of New Jersey (Princeton University) and Princeton Theological Seminary. He taught for two years at Lawrenceville, between finishing his BA at the College of New Jersey, and before starting seminary. He also studied concurrently (after returning from teaching at Lawrenceville School) at both the college and the seminary (taking the MA in 1857 from the college and completing seminary in 1859). He undertook his medical training (MD) in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School (graduating in a record two years, 1861¹²) chiefly to help him preserve his life as a future missionary. His seminary days were marked by decided interest in the Foreign Missionary Society, a Black Presbyterian congregation (Witherspoon), and summer work doing home missions in Missouri and Kansas. While at university, he lived in the seminary dorms and thus came to know the seminary students more-so than the university students. He was highly connected to Presbyterian ministers and to Princeton where he was a most loyal alumnus and supporter.

In 1861 he was sent by the Presbytery of New Jersey and the Board of Foreign Missions (PCUSA) as a missionary to



Robert Hamill Nassau

Corisco Island, West Africa which is today part of **Equatorial Guinea**.¹³ Earlier,

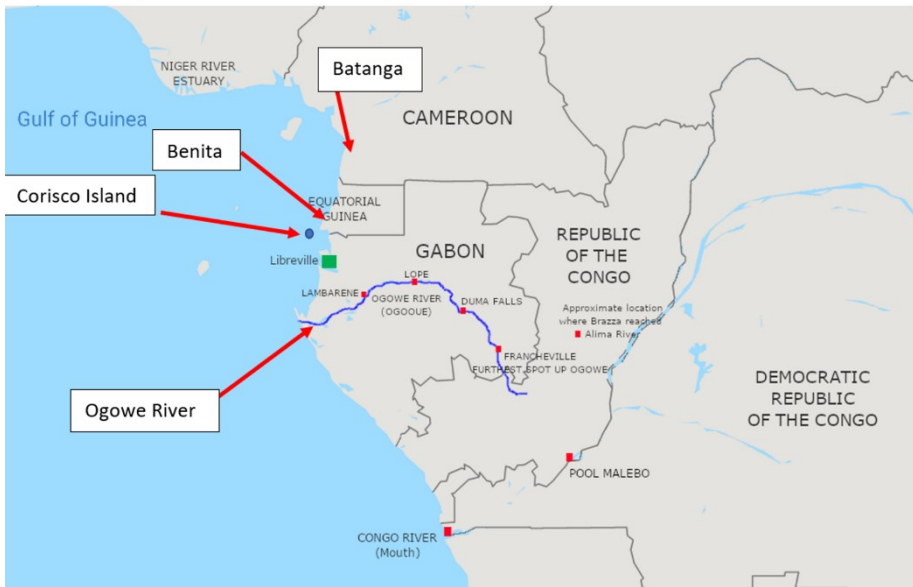
¹¹The Nassau name was originally Von Nassau. "He was the great-great-great-grandson of Karl-Hans von Nassau-Usingen, a German nobleman who emigrated to the United States in 1745." Raymond Teeuwissen, "Article sur Robert Hamill Nassau", no date or place. <http://suzannetteeuwissen.free.fr/Article%20sur%20Nassau.html> The article was in French originally.

¹² Nassau's thesis was "*De Officiis Adipis*" [The Functions of Fat] (unpublished thesis for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, February 13, 1861).

¹³Equatorial Guinea was also on old maps called **Spanish Territory**.

the then secretary, John Leighton Wilson, had at first proposed East Africa but it was

then changed to West Africa and near where Wilson had served in Gabon.¹⁴ He quickly became fluent in **Benga**, the dominant local language on Corisco Island and in parts of the nearby mainland (he became fluent basically while on the ship's crossing to Africa under James MacKey's tutelage), which made him quickly received into a variety of ministries: superintendent of the girls' school at **Evangasimba**, preacher, trainer of candidates for the ministry, visiting the mainland out-stations, and regularly stated clerk of the Corisco Presbytery. He would remain four years living on Corisco Island. He and Rev. George Paull



Map of Equatorial West Africa

selected the first mainland permanent station for the Presbyterians, at Benita to settle a resident missionary. Nassau would assume the **Benita station** [in modern Equatorial Guinea] after Paull's death and establish the first Presbyterian congregation on the mainland in 1865. Benita was on the coast, but Nassau's vision was to go inland.

Nassau's first wife, Mary Cloyd Latta (1837–1870), translated several hymns into Benga at Benita. Mary died in 1870 and was buried in Benita. Mary served the Corisco Mission from 1860–1870, having arrived one year before Robert. In 1868 Nassau's sister, Isabella joined the mission on the mainland from Corisco Island where she had gone in 1865.

¹⁴Nassau was ordained on the 17th of April 1861 five days after the American Civil War had begun on April 12th. By then Wilson was no longer the Secretary for the Foreign Board of Missions of the PCUSA but had resigned to go South.

Nassau's next work was at **Baraka, near Libreville in Gaboon**, now Gabon,¹⁵ where he moved in 1871 to care for the mission there. The missions around Libreville were established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1842. In 1871, the ABCFM transferred this work over to the PCUSA Board of Foreign Missions.

Slowly, from 1874 onwards, Nassau pioneered stations inland on the **Ogooue**¹⁶ **River at Balimba**, 200 miles inland then at **Kangwe** and **Talaguga**, all in modern-day Gabon. The church at Kangwe was officially constituted in 1879 amongst the **Mpongue**. (Kangwe and Andende on the Ogooué River eventually became known as **Lambaréné**, where Schweitzer's famous hospital was located). This was a significant event as it was for the Presbyterians their first church in the interior with converts from the interior being baptised. From this, often the epithet has been given to Nassau "The Pioneer of Presbyterian Missions in Gabon", and others have afforded him the title "Apostle of Africa". His pioneering mission work of almost 17 years on the Ogooue River was very important in developing the interior church.

In 1881 Nassau married **Mary Brunette Foster**. In 1884, she died at Talaguga (deep in the interior of the Gabon) following the birth of their daughter, Mary Brunette. The infant was the first white child born on the Ogooue River. Nassau insisted that the baby stay with him there—200 miles inland.

He returned again to Baraka near Libreville from 1893–1903. His final work was in **German Kamerun at Batanga**, 1904–1906, and he "retired" from there in 1906.

Upon returning to America, he briefly pastored three Presbyterian churches in Florida (Starke, Waldo and Hawthorne) and then moved to Ambler, Pennsylvania where he continued with writing projects and speaking engagements about West Africa. He died in 1921 (86th year) and was buried in the family plot at Lawrenceville Cemetery, New Jersey.

Nassau was conferred an honorary Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD) by the University of Pennsylvania in 1891. He always saw himself as a Christian preacher and evangelist and used his medical training in a supportive role. Nassau was sent to Equatorial West Africa as a missionary not as a *medical* missionary, the missing adjective was a very important distinctive to Nassau himself. This emphasis on gospel ministry was in contrast with Albert Schweitzer who saw himself as a medical missionary.

Nassau's most significant text was *Fetichism in West Africa*¹⁷—the modern print-on-demand edition is entitled *West African Shamanism*. It can be argued that Nassau was the premier missionary ethnologist in Equatorial West

¹⁵Gabon was also during part of Nassau's time there referred also as the **Gabun District of the Kongo-Française**.

¹⁶Various spellings, one being, Ogowé.

¹⁷*Fetichism in West Africa: Forty Years' Observation of Native Customs and Superstitions* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1904).

Africa in the late 19th century, yet he has been marginalised by modern anthropologists. As one of my reflections, I will attempt to present a way to understand how his major work should be considered on a larger canvas today.

Reflections

I will offer three main reflections at this the centenary year of Nassau's death. These reflections reveal much contemporary relevance and I hope will open up windows for further research, study, and writing on Nassau, his missionary contributions in Equatorial Africa, and his place in mission history. I will prioritise these three reflections and then mention in passing three further ones that could be pursued.

Nassau has been called "The Pioneer of Presbyterian Missions in Gabon" and others have afforded him the title "Apostle of Africa".

1.The Schooling of Missionary Children: "a bugbear" of the generations of Protestant missions

This is fundamentally a Protestant issue as many Protestant missionaries marry and have children, so *both living conditions for children and their schooling* have been critical issues for Protestant married missionaries. Nassau was no



Left: Anyentyuwe (governess) and her daughter Right: Nassau and his daughter

different, but he did challenge "the system" of the period.

Nassau had come to a settled conviction about raising and educating missionary children. He had observed that his two sons (from his first wife, Mary)—raised back in America—hardly knew who he was when he appeared

during furloughs. He had told his second wife, also Mary, that this would not happen to the next child. True to his word, after his second wife died at Talaguga from giving birth to their daughter, he kept her with him until she was seven years old. It was about family life but also about something else. Nassau believed that white children could be raised in Equatorial Africa—a conviction which virtually no one else in the PCUSA mission of that time shared (or for that matter any other mission).¹⁸ There were basically three alternatives at the time. One, the children would go with you to the field and could be tutored at home or schooled in the local native mission school, but the thinking was that they would likely die of tropical diseases. Two, the mother would remain behind in America and raise the children. Three, the children would be sent to a boarding school—that was rare in Africa or almost non-existent as an option in the 19th century (and travel could be almost equivalent to a return to the West, e.g., send them to Lovedale in the Cape Colony). Another complexity was that some parents and most mission boards saw raising the children on the field and schooling them as detracting from their calling. Therefore, it was considered best to send them back to the West as, for most in the 19th century, ministry came first, not family. Early in the 20th century, it became more that the mission agency would help with the children and the rise of residential missionary children's schools became popular solutions.¹⁹

Nassau believed that white children could be raised in Equatorial Africa—a conviction which virtually no one else in the PCUSA mission of that time shared (or for that matter any other mission)

¹⁸Teeuwissen, 34. Referring to Nassau's, *The Path She Trod; A Memorial of Mary Brunette (Foster) Nassau by her Husband* (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane & Scott, 1909).

¹⁹<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-ga/boarding-school-for-missionary-children/> accessed 5 October, 2021.

Nassau's approach was radical for the time in many circles: he employed a female native assistant to help raise his daughter. It was a modified approach but clearly opened him up to much criticism by colleagues and others. Later in the 1920s, The Southern Presbyterian Church would begin an experiment in the interior of the Belgian Congo with a residential missionary children's school. This was an attempt to deal with this issue. In recent years, that institution has come under scrutiny concerning abuse issues.²⁰ It seems that every solution has been fraught with controversy.²¹ In 1893 Nassau was quite radical when he wrote:

The solution to the family problem. If ever it was right or necessary for the African missionary parent to part with his young infant, it is not now necessary. And I go so far as to believe positively that it is wrong.... There still remained, however, another part of that family problem – children may safely be born, but can they reside in Africa with safety beyond infancy? So, for years, the sad tragedy was enacted of tearing out one's heart in sending away for training in America by other hands—hands not always loving or judicious—young infants, too young to remember the parent who (performing his part of the tragedy under a mistaken sense of duty) had to make the acquaintance of his child as a stranger if in some future day they should meet...²²

The controversial part of his life as a missionary was after his second wife, Mary Brunette Foster (1849–1884), died in childbirth. Nassau, as mentioned previously, made the avowed decision that his infant daughter, Mary, would remain by his side until at least aged seven, unlike his two sons who were sent back

²⁰Howard Beardlee, et al. *Final Report of the Independent Committee of Enquiry, Presbyterian Church (USA)* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (USA), 2002).

²¹Today the response has been more one of "We need multiple solutions for schooling." That was not the perspective of the second half of the 19th century amongst American Presbyterians. Today the discussion is usually a dialogue to find a solution best for the missionaries and their children and an exploration of a multitude of options which may change over time as well. A new vocabulary has arisen such as "third culture children" and even some missions employ staff to help third culture or "missionary kids" and to help families navigate through the schooling maze. Some of these options may be taken for granted now but for Nassau and his period this was not the case. See, <https://www.sim.org/-/missionary-kid-education> accessed 5 October, 2021. For example, home schooling, online schooling at home, international schools—Christian or secular, national schools, and mission boarding schools. See the booklet produced by TEAM: *The Insider's Guide to MK Education: Get the Scoop on Homeschooling, Boarding School and Everything in Between* (n.pl.: TEAM, 2018). Karen A. Wrobbel, "Educational Options for Missionary Kids" *EMQ*, 40.2 (2004), 204–210.

²²Robert Hamill Nassau, "Some Causes of the Present Improved Health of Missionaries to Africa", *The Union Seminary Magazine*, (Sept-Oct 1893), No. 1, 44–45.

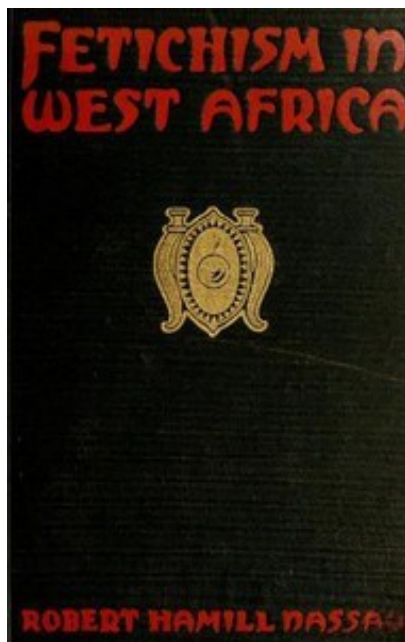
to America to be raised.²³ He hired a young African woman, Anyentyuwe²⁴, to serve as the governess for his daughter, Mary, at the Talaguga Station, deep in the interior of Gabon. This was not well received by many fellow Presbyterian missionaries, including Rev. Adolphus Good. It created many strains in Nassau's last years as a missionary and opened the door to numerous slanders and accusations of infidelity. Nassau was very much for inclusion of all races in mission work. As a result, at times he found himself in conflict on that front. Therefore, the raising of missionary children also has a racial undertone attached to it as does the criticism Nassau received for the way he chose to raise Mary.

Residential schools of missionary children and how children are raised and schooled is a current issue and is still a major discussion point in mission agencies and in child psychology and sociology of MKs. Nassau is one of the links in the history of this discussion for American Presbyterian missions globally.

2. Fetishism, Ethnography or More: and the precursor to modern ATR studies

A. Introduction

"Missionary ethnographers provided expert knowledge during the formative years of nineteenth-and-early-twentieth-century anthropology but are generally relegated to the footnotes of academic anthropology", wrote the anthropologist John Cinnamon of Miami University, Ohio in 2006.²⁵ Thus, 19th century and early 20th century missionaries have been side-lined and their contributions to ethnography, anthropology (and I would add also worldview studies and comparative religion) often ignored. Yet there are some scholars who are realising that a too hasty ignoring of the key texts by Christian missionaries—especially in the field of ethnography, a subfield of anthropology—is not always the best way forward. There is more there than is first thought. Nassau may



²³Willie was taken back to America by other missionaries when he was 16 months old. Baby Paull died at Benita Mission in 1867 and Charles Francis was born in Benita in late 1868 and sent to America in 1871.

²⁴ See photo – page 140 of this journal.

²⁵ "Missionary Expertise, Social Science, and the Uses of Ethnographic Knowledge in Colonial Gabon" *History in Africa*, 33 (January, 2006), 413.

have been side-lined, but he is worthy of a second consideration.²⁶ I also suggest it is much larger than ethnography.

B. Words and their coming and going and dots on the line to connect

Today we must stop briefly and consider the group of words related to the word “fetish”. Fetishism was the standard term in the 19th century for matters of human custom whereby objects, or circumstantial matters, or feelings etc. take on meanings or spiritual powers. The term also went well beyond this, so it could have a narrow meaning *and* an expansive meaning. Thus custom, culture, family and societal structures, superstition, and spiritual force and religion all become intertwined with fetishism. Today we might speak of cultural customs or traditions as being rooted in one subfield of anthropology, namely ethnography, and drop the word fetish, but such customs and traditions also cross the lines into the field of worldview studies—which was emerging by the end of the 19th century and early-to-mid 20th century through writers such as James Orr and Abraham Kuyper. African cultural customs and traditions also cross today into what we popularly call African Traditional Religion or ATR. Fetishism then, as used in Nassau’s day, is inclusive of aspects of anthropology, ethnography, worldview, ATR and even modern prosperity gospel theology. Around 1920, the term “fetishism” was being replaced by the words “sorcery” or “magic” (again, problematic terms that would also fall out of usage in due course). **What we need to see is that Nassau’s work was a building block on the road to African worldview studies and what has come to be known as ATR. When we see this, in a line of connected dots, then Nassau’s place in such studies becomes more meaningful and significant.**²⁷ The term ATR was officially first adopted in 1965 and 1970.²⁸ It is a relatively new term but basically an attempt to come up with a way of dealing with what word or words best describe the religious world of Africa—superstition, fetishism, sorcery, magic, animism, totemism and spiritism. Fetishism and animism were

²⁶The Kobo electronic edition available of Nassau’s *Fetishism in West Africa* makes two comments in its advert: first that this is one of the earliest major works on *traditional* religion in West Africa (note the adjective) and second, the reference again to John Cinnamon who is said to have commented that “*when Nassau was able to refrain from the constant, invidious comparison between enlightened Christian truth and degraded African wickedness, his observations contain glimmers of ethnographic insight*”. Accessed on 13 October, 2021 and originally stated in Patrick Harries and David Maxwell eds., *The spiritual in the secular: missionaries and knowledge about Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2012).

Pub.Co<https://www.kobo.com/ww/en/ebook/fetichism-in-west-africa-8>.

See Cinnamon’s chapter, “Of Fetishism and Totemism: Missionary Ethnology and Academic Social Science in Early Twentieth-Century Gabon”, 100–134.

²⁷Mandeng, 202 was correct when he stated that he saw in Mbiti and Parrinder raising the same questions that Nassau had raised over a half-century earlier.

²⁸René Tabard, “Theology of African Traditional Religions”, *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 96: 3, (2008), 327–341.

seen as problematic terms but so were the others. But even ATR is problematic as should it be singular or plural, ATR or ATRs? Also, it still needs to somehow fall into an organised manner and hence worldview is the logical way to do that within ATR. Nassau is a dot in the line of a long journey of well over 200 years of thought.²⁹

For orthodox Christians, fetishism transgresses into “idolatry” and “polytheism” or at the very least a hierarchy of the spiritual world; yet at the same time, it demonstrates something of what the apostle Paul was speaking of in Romans One that the knowledge of God is not completely gone or erased in the human—corrupted but not void of some spiritual sense. Nassau did not believe that religion evolved but rather that it could degenerate into fetishism. “Knowledge of God was thus an original, donated, component part of us... To account for the religious nature in man by evolution I regard as a thing that cannot be done...Immortality cannot be evolved out of mortality”.³⁰

The classic fetish illustration of West Africa of this time period was Mary Kingsley’s encounter with Mary Slessor in Old Calabar and the killing of twins (and often the mother) because the twins were thought to be a sign of a bad spirit impregnating the mother. The very etymology of the word itself goes back to West Africa. Fetishes are often related to what some refer to as talisman, amulets, charms, poisons, and spells; in many cases, fetishes are related to rituals or dances associated with objects or an event or desire. Witches, witch doctors, shamans, priests, or members of secret societies may be connected with fetishism. The subject is not just localised but has wider connections, whether to voodooism in the Caribbean or for comparative global studies.

C. His Influence on Kingsley the English Explorer

Nassau’s keen mind and extensive time serving in Equatorial West Africa (almost 45 years) allowed him to collect, search out, research, and converse with literally hundreds of people about the peoples of West Africa and beyond. In his preface in *Fetichism in West Africa*, perhaps his greatest work, he wrote, “In my study of the natives’ language my attention was drawn closely to their customs; and in my inquiry into their religion I at once saw how it was bound up in these customs.”³¹ Mary Kingsley, that noted English explorer of West Africa of his time period, summarised her indebtedness to Nassau this way in her extensive chapter on “Fetish”:

²⁹Mandeng, 119. ATR is a contemporary movement and “its origins, like the origin of any movement, goes back to the past. Dr. Robert Hamill Nassau is one of those who pioneered this movement”.

³⁰Stephen S. Farrow, *Faith, Fancies, and Fetich: or Yoruba Paganism: Being Some Account of Religious Beliefs of West African Negroes, particularly of the Yoruba Tribe of Southern Nigeria* (London: SPCK, 1926), 158—159 quoting from Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*.

³¹Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, vi. Also, a quick read through the 17 chapters as stated in Nassau Table of Contents reveals a remarkable breadth to his understanding of fetishism and that this is quite an exhaustive study.

I am indebted to the Reverend Doctor Nassau for a great quantity of valuable information regarding Bantu religious ideas—information which no one is so competent to give as he, for no one else knows the West Coast Bantu tribes with the same thoroughness and sympathy. He has lived among them since 1861, and is perfectly conversant with their languages and culture, and he brings to bear upon the study of them a singularly clear, powerful, and highly-educated intelligence.³²

Kinsley used Nassau unapologetically for about 70 pages of her text. Nassau spent many more years in field observation than many modern-day anthropologists do. The reality is that a modern anthropologist also brings bias and a worldview to the subject. It is not quite so easy to dismiss the 19th century missionary ethnographic writer as may be thought. Anthropology owes more than it may want to admit to the amateurs of the past and the resident missionaries just may have caught many nuances over time that short-term professionals may not always see.³³ It is due to Kinsley making Nassau more widely known that the new secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions Robert Speer encouraged Nassau to write what would eventually become *Fetichism in West Africa*. This writing project did not sit well though with fellow missionaries on the field who resented such a work being written and were concerned about it taking precious time from mission work. One does wonder, “Was there also jealousy, or is that too much to try to capture?”

D. Nassau and Du Bois

Nassau may appear dated and is only occasionally mentioned in contemporary discussion, particularly in the disciplines of anthropology or ethnography, yet he has contemporary merit. He may also be dismissed for seeing fetishism as an expression of degraded humanity in Africa, whose religion, though believing in God, was fundamentally flawed as it rejected the revealed Word of God. One early debater of Nassau was W.E.B. Du Bois, author of *The Negro* (1915). Chiltern writes, “Du Bois’s account of fetishism placed the fetish in a positive light. In recovering an African history of the fetish, therefore, Du Bois in 1915 suggested that fetishism was not superstitious ignorance, fear, or fraud but a coherent material philosophy of the spiritual dynamics of life.”³⁴ Du Bois did cite

³²Mary Henrietta Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa: Congo Français, Corisco and Cameroons*. Second Edition. (London: MacMillan, 1898), 299. Kingsley uses Nassau from pages 299–361 on fetishism, and then on 388, 390.

³³See John Cinnamon quoting from V. Y. Mudimbe in this regard in “Missionary Expertise, Social Science, and the Uses of Ethnographic Knowledge in Colonial Gabon” *History in Africa* 33 (2006), 419–420.

³⁴Chiltern, 39. *Re-cognizing W. E. B. Du Bois in the Twenty-first Century: Essays on W. E. B. Du Bois*, eds. Mary Keller and Chester J. Fontenot, Jr. (Macon: GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 39.

Nassau as showing evidence of African belief in God, but Nassau was rejected in his degraded and dehumanising perspective on fetishism amongst Africans. Fundamentally, Nassau, as a classic orthodox evangelical Christian, looked askance at what he saw as syncretistic Christianity incorporating elements of African fetishism. Thus, for many today he is dismissed.

Nassau was an evangelical who saw the need for conversion and *transformation* when people become followers of Christ. Nassau used the term “civilized” as a synonym for transformation. This terminology may sound dated for us today—even in an evangelical theological world. Faith will lead people to become different (Nassau—civilised)—with a new moral compass and work ethic. Customs will change or associations with fetishism will undergo a real change. The word we stumble over is “civilised”. Yet Nassau openly discusses polygamy, wife slavery, cannibalistic eating of human hearts, fetish murders, leopards and the leopard man (a type of werewolf concept but in Africa rather than Germany), and trade and how the gospel brings change for a people dehumanised and degraded by attachment to fetishism. David Chiltern said that W.E.B. Du Bois saw in the fetish not degradation but a positive and logical position. Du Bois thus stands in direct contrast to Robert Nassau.

E. The Sources for Nassau

Nassau sometimes identifies and provides brief endnotes as to some of his sources. They include his predecessors such as John Leighton Wilson, as one would expect, but he also freely corrected missionary thinking, such as Robert Moffat (whom he chided for inexactitude). He references non-missionary explorers and travellers. Much is also based upon personal interviews (one chief person being the governess for his daughter, Mary) and observations of his extensive travels in Equatorial West Africa. At times he states his theories; for example, that the origins of cannibalism were rooted in offering human sacrifice, but he does not dogmatise such—he is careful.³⁵ Thus, Nassau’s work is a developed work from that of Wilson, is more focused thematically, is a rich resource into the 19th century situation, and remains a treasure-trove of information.

F. Those who followed Nassau

Nassau’s work was followed by others such as Stephen Farrow’s *Faith, Fancies and Fetich* (published 1926). It is most interesting that this book was reprinted in 1996 and on the back cover it reads more like a work on ATR: The Yoruba held to “spiritual beings of various types, falling properly into four distinct classes, vis: (A) a Supreme Deity, Olorun by name; (B) a large class of Lesser

³⁵Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa*, 33, 39, 399. The endnotes are very selective and do not constitute a full citation of sources by any means.

Gods, or Orishas, their number being variously stated....(C) The Spirits of the Dead (Ancestor-worship, etc; (D) a supreme Spirit of Evil, Eshu, i.e. the ‘Devil’”.³⁶

Thus, at this centenary of Nassau’s death I believe an area of relevance for future research is Nassau on fetishism. The range here is well beyond the academic disciplines of anthropology and ethnography; it must enter into worldview studies and African Traditional Religion. Here is where Nassau has not been properly given his due place. He is worthy of a second consideration. I suggest that he has been largely overlooked by modern anthropologists and ethnologists whose worldview is in direct conflict with that of Nassau, yet the richness of detail should not be discounted.

G. Pointers for Interdisciplinary Research

The historian has many lines to follow here which will bisect with the missiologist today, so an interdisciplinary study is in order. A worthy comparative approach would be to compare Nassau’s book *Fetichism in West Africa* and the engaging paper for the Lausanne Movement by Yusifi Turiaki in 2000, “Africa Traditional Religious Systems as a Basis of Understanding Christian Spiritual Warfare”.³⁷

All will have to come down on one side or the other concerning Nassau’s theological interpretation in his work; quite frankly, it is even shown today in the various streams of Presbyterian theology, some who would reject his conclusions and others who would embrace them. The stable is not monolithic within Presbyterianism concerning worldview, ATR, and syncretism, so it is expected that Nassau will be received in various ways.

Next, I would suggest that a full comparison is in order of the three American Presbyterian texts, Nassau’s *Fetichism in West Africa*, John Leighton Wilson’s, *Western Africa: Its History, Condition and Prospects*³⁸ and the essay by Adolphus Clemens Good, “Superstitious and Religious Ideas of Equatorial West Africa, Especially of the Galwā Tribe”.³⁹ Wilson’s work is more broad-sweeping and chapters or sections within chapters on fetishism must be culled out. However, it is a marked work in mid-19th century ethnography as it was published in 1856. Nassau’s was published in 1904. Good’s essay, though focusing upon a singular tribe, is valuable in this comparative study of these three American Presbyterian missionaries.

Third, things have advanced in missiology as a discipline since Mandeng’s 1970 thesis. Mandeng was correct to see Nassau as a connector to modern worldview and ATR studies. However, I believe the four categories which

³⁶Stephen S. Farrow, *Faith, Fancies, and Fetich: or Yoruba Paganism: Being Some Account of Religious Beliefs of West African Negroes, particularly of the Yoruba Tribe of Southern Nigeria*. Original 1926. Brooklyn, NY: Athelia, 1996. Reprint back cover.

³⁷<https://lausanne.org/content/west-african-case-study> accessed 9 October, 2021.

³⁸*Western Africa* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856).

³⁹Appendix B in, Ellen C. Parsons, *A Life for Africa: Rev. Adolphus Clemens Good* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 299–316.

Mandeng establishes for missions in Africa⁴⁰ (now more in the realm of missiology) are too simplified for today and fail to understand integrative or wholistic evangelical missions. A new thesis or study is needed following this 52-year-old thesis on Nassau, and there is clearly room for such.

The centenary of Nassau's death should give us an opportunity to open the door to many possibilities for study and interaction on fetishism (or worldview) and ATR studies as well as modern missiological understanding (including background study on the prosperity gospel in Africa). Nassau work shows a heart of love for the people of Africa, a "right attitude", as some have called it (such as, Mandeng). Nassau researched and wrote to understand, yet he never compromised his Christian convictions.

3. Missionary Explorers

Nassau must be placed in a larger grouping of missionaries who also contributed as "missionary explorers"—using the term here in an expansive way (folklorist, ethnographer, geologist, zoologist, naturalist, botanist, linguist). He, like many others, belongs to that unique group of polymaths. Recent attention has been given to the Southern Presbyterian missionary William Sheppard as the "black" David Livingstone, but there are others that need to be brought to our attention. The 2012 edited work by Harries and Maxwell, *The spiritual in the secular: missionaries and knowledge about Africa*, helps us to see this wider position of the missionary explorer in an expansive way.

A. Academic Contribution

In his day, Nassau was a missionary contributor to academic knowledge related to exploration. Four of the chapters in his *Fetichism in West Africa* originally appeared as articles in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* between 1901 and 1903. Nassau was a corresponding member of this society. He was also an honorary member of the Archaeological Association of the University of Pennsylvania. Further, he had an extensive paper presented at the American Society of Comparative Religions on Bantu theology in 1893. This paper was likewise used at the Chicago Exhibition of the Parliament of Religions in 1893. Also, he was published in the *Journal of the Royal African Society*. Reviews of his book on fetishism appeared in America in the *National Geographic* and in France in *Année Sociologique*—hailed with acclaim in the first and sidelined in the latter because it kept to the narrow definition of fetish (not the inclusive). Nassau also contributed two collections of folktales from Equatorial West Africa in the *Journal of American Folklore*.

B. Aid to Explorers

"The Apostle of Africa" was esteemed by **Mary Kingsley** (1862–1900). She introduced Nassau to a wider audience of explorers and readers—interesting in that Kingsley was not an evangelical, like Nassau, yet she references him in her

⁴⁰The Mandeng four-fold paradigm is: evangelizing, philanthropic, religious, and pietistic.

noteworthy book, *Travels in West Africa* with open acknowledgement that he was a walking source of information. Such commendation helped to inspire him to actually compose his own book. She wrote of him: “Had he but had Livingstone’s conscientious devotion to taking notes and publishing them, we should know far more than we do at present about the hinterland from Cameroons to the Ogowé, ... *Dr. Nassau’s fame would be among the greatest of the few great African explorers* - not that he would care a row of pins for that”.⁴¹

He also met **Savorgnan de Brazzà** (1852–1905) and developed a friendship with this naturalised French explorer of the Ogooué one year after Nassau conducted his explorations of the Ogooué. Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo, is named after de Brazzà. De Brazzà has been considered one of France’s most illustrious explorers. His work in Gabon and the French Congo was extremely significant.⁴² De Brazza held Nassau and his sister in high regard and as worthy examples.⁴³

C. The Ogoe

Nassau’s explorations in the interior on the Ogooué River were significant. He literally explored thousands of miles of the Ogooué and its tributaries and its delta area. He was the first to reside amongst the Fang. His major work *My Ogoe* is a most detailed work about the interior of Gaboon.⁴⁴

D. Princeton

At Princeton University, he was inspired by Professor William Libbey to prepare and publish on fetishism in West Africa. Libbey was a professor of physical geography and the director of the Museum of Geology and Archaeology at Princeton University. Libbey, it seems, reviewed much of the MS on fetishism before publication.

E. The Collector

Nassau brought items to his native land, such as a complete gorilla skeleton from Equatorial West Africa (which is thought to be the first ever full skeleton taken to America). He brought back or sent back gorilla brains,⁴⁵ parasites, insects, reptiles, eyeworms, minute worms and live mandrill monkeys. According to Teeuwissen, some of these can still be found in the Guyot Hall at

⁴¹Mary Henrietta Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897), xxx quoted in Teeuwissen, 70.

⁴²Maria Petringa, *Brazzà, a Life for Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2006). Though the most recent work in English, it fails to mention Nassau resided in the interior on the Ogooué before de Brassà arrived (and stayed with Nassau).

⁴³Mandenga, 158.

⁴⁴*My Ogoe: Being a Narrative of Daily Incidents During Sixteen Years in Equatorial West Africa* (New York: Neale, 1914).

⁴⁵Nassau wrote an article entitled, “Collecting Gorilla Brains,” *Science*, 19, (April 29, 1892), 240–241,

Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science. It would be most interesting to investigate these. I have not explored this line of investigation. There is also the question, “Was it Nassau who introduced three plants (the Kola nut, the *Strophanthus* and the Calabar bean) to American pharmacology?” The answer seems to be yes. He was constantly sending or collecting for many people in America. In 1893, he contributed anthropological specimens to the World Exhibition in Chicago.⁴⁶

F. Linguistics

A subfield to study (related to the missionary explorer) is linguistics. Here Nassau certainly made many contributions in three dialects in Equatorial West Africa. Again, we see that he was modest and never claimed more for himself than he saw as his due. For example, his revision (and correction) to James MacKey’s 1855 *Benga Grammar* is striking—the revised book reads: *Mackey’s Grammar of the Benga-Bantu Language*. Revised by R. H. Nassau (1882).⁴⁷ Further work in **Benga** included contributions to the Benga hymnal, translation and revision works of a Gospel harmony, and the Acts of the Apostles, plus translating OT books into Benga. He also promoted (and saw through to press) the first literary work by an indigenous Benga minister. Again, this places Nassau in a unique perspective for the time. Nassau’s linguistic gifts and abilities appear to have been very profound. He was heavily involved in Bible translation work as the senior missionary statemen. This may have also created friction with Adolphus Good who was much younger and was doing translation work in **Mpongwe**. Nassau checked and often corrected Good’s work. Finally, on the subject of linguistics, Nassau became fluent in **Fang** and saw a grammar work in that language through to press.⁴⁸ **Nassau, as far as we know, was the only Presbyterian missionary who could preach in three native languages: Benga, Mpongwe, and Fang.**

Nassau did make contributions, both scholarly and popular, to wider exploratory work in West Africa. As a pioneer missionary, he also expanded the missionary presence into new territories and was a keen writer and collector of actual material objects and cultural tales, customs, and language. He is a source for such information and occasionally is used by a range of historians and other academics—not church historians, so maybe the church historian needs to be chided here to see the need to include Nassau in their studies of American Presbyterian mission history.⁴⁹

Exploration encompasses physical geography, zoology, botany, etc. but also customs, cultures, tribal divisions, and linguistics. Nassau integrates these well and stands in a unique position in Equatorial Africa as an American

⁴⁶ Teeuwissen, 74–78.

⁴⁷ *Mackey’s Grammar of the Benga-Bantu Language*. Revised by R. H. Nassau (New York: American Tract Society, 1882).

⁴⁸ Robert Hamill Nassau, *Fañwe Primer and Vocabulary* (New York: Edward O. Jenkins, 1881). Again, Nassau carefully honours those who helped with this work.

⁴⁹ Cinnamon, “Missionary Expertise”, 424 n 45.

Presbyterian missionary. Few missionaries made such wide-ranging contributions.⁵⁰

Three further reflections that I mention in-passing.

4. The Evangelical of Old Princeton

Where did Nassau fit theologically? The answer is clear. Nassau was not a modernist. Teeuwissen made the point with this illustration: “When Nassau met the Rev. Dr. [George W. F.] Birch at General Assembly, he thanked him for having moved the case of discipline against Professor Briggs.”⁵¹ The Briggs trial, of course, was a significant case in the history of the PCUSA concerning the particular theological doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. The case came to the 1893 Assembly, and Nassau sided with the majority view of the Assembly which voted to discipline Briggs.

Nassau’s writings are not generally towards systematic theology or exegetical papers. One paper on “Sowing Beside All Water” does set forth his views on preaching and the broad aspects of proclaiming the gospel message and dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit to bring people to saving faith.⁵² He very much saw himself as a herald of the gospel as is reflected at his request for his tombstone wording at Lawrenceville, NJ,—“He preached unto them Jesus Christ and the resurrection”. He died before Princeton Seminary was reorganised, so we must be careful to keep him to his time period. However, it can be safely said that he was very much in keeping with the views of Old Princeton and the Old School.

He was decidedly anti-Roman Catholic in his theology and saw Romanism as a curse on much mission work in West Africa. There are several references to his anti-Romanism in his works, but much of this needs to be read in the context of the French administration of Gabon District.⁵³

Where exactly Nassau was on the spectrum of creation and evolution? I am uncertain at this point. I suspect he was in sympathy with most of the faculty at Princeton Seminary with whom he studied.

Curiously, at one time, the Board of Foreign Missions thought that Nassau and his support for a Mission Industrial School showed him as going “secular”. The then secretary of the board stated, “Dr. Nassau, I fear that you are becoming

⁵⁰See Appendix A for a comparative study. Ellen C. Parsons, *A Life for Africa: Rev. Adolphus Clemens Good* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897). See Appendix A, “The Scientific Labors of Rev. A. C. Good” by W. J. Holland, 291–298.

⁵¹Teeuwissen, 104. See also, *Presbytery of New York, The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America Against Rev Dr Charles Briggs, Argument of Rev Dr, George W. F. Birch, a member of the Prosecuting Committee* (New York: Douglas Taylor, 1892). *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: MacCalla, 1893), 228ff.

⁵²Robert Hamill Nassau, “Sowing Beside All Waters,” *The Assembly Herald*, (June, 1899), 344–346.

⁵³Teeuwissen, 108.

secularized. You were sent to preach the Gospel!” Nassau’s reply was curt, “Yes, I have preached the Gospel, by all waters, in season and out of season. But I see Gospel in soap, to make people clean; and Gospel in a saw mill to make them industrious.”⁵⁴ It was not a social gospel agenda but an evangelical gospel perspective with transformative application that Nassau was advocating (nothing contrary to what the Bebbington thesis also stated for the evangelical as also an activist).

Nassau was anti-Briggs but also anti-racist. He was disappointed by meeting someone who was anti-Briggs but racist. From his Princeton days to his death, he was clearly respectful of all peoples and strove for their inclusion. In Corisco Presbytery, he saw the inequality of the Mission Council and the Presbytery meetings. He saw in Rev. Good a racism which was oppressive. Adolphus C. Good had stated at a Corisco Presbytery meeting, “Keep the negroes down!”⁵⁵ There is little wonder Nassau and Good were not close friends. He also saw what happened at local session meetings in the presbytery where white missionaries were appointed as ruling elders on sessions and thus took control of the session. He did find himself in conflict at times with fellow missionaries regarding racial equality. He often felt conflict with fellow missionaries who seemed to oppress other races.⁵⁶ Mandeng argues well that Nassau stood in the minority amongst PCUSA missionaries in Equatorial West Africa regarding racial equality. Further, Mandeng shows that Nassau was wrongly interpreted by Edward Blyden and Blyden did not understand that Nassau was a true friend of the African peoples.⁵⁷

5. Women and Missions

There is much material to pursue with Nassau on women and missions. There are several lines to consider. First, there are his short books on white female missionaries and on indigenous Christian women of West Africa. This is rare to find—especially as it was composed by a white male missionary.⁵⁸ Second, there is the whole question about his sister Isabel and her work with training Bible women and also training indigenous ministers. Much more needs to be studied there and comparisons need to be made back to America and Princeton. Third, the role of his first wife, Mary, and her production of the first Benga hymnal needs to be studied. Fourth, the role of Anyentyuwe (the governess) as a key individual whom

⁵⁴Teeuwissen, 98 quoting from Robert Hamill Nassau, “Industrial Work in African Mission Fields,” *The Medical Missionary*, 20 (May 1911), 133–135.

⁵⁵Teeuwissen, 164 quoting from Nassau, *Two Women*, 29 and in Mandeng, 170.

⁵⁶Teeuwissen, 158.

⁵⁷Mandeng, 323. See, Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and Africa*. Original 1887. Second edition 1888. (MD: Black Classics, 1994), 65. Blyden was referring to remarks made by Nassau in an address to the American Colonization Society January 21, 1873. Blyden thought that Nassau was unsympathetic to African peoples.

⁵⁸At Lincoln University Library, PA there is a copy of Nassau’s *Two Women, The Lives of Two African Christians*, Philadelphia, 1911.

Nassau interviewed when writing his book on fetishism could be researched. This expands the role of Anyentyuwe beyond governess and presents another layer to consider.

6. The other name of the Ogooué—Albert Schweitzer

A comparison needs to be made between Nassau and Schweitzer on the Ogooué. I think this is where some popular-level confusion has arisen concerning Nassau, and this needs to be clarified. Then a full comparison of their theologies, ministries, and ethos towards the indigenous will be in order.

Summary/Conclusion

Nassau had his critics and still has his critics in academic circles. Some of his missionary-colleague critics softened over time and came to see that Nassau was not as wrong as they had once thought about some issues, such as the raising children and their schooling. His work may be technically that of the amateur, but he was an amateur who spent more years than most professionals ever do observing and trying to understand. He was also an excellent linguist and could preach fluently in three native languages and converse in French and German. He admitted he was weakest in Spanish. Language knowledge is a key to understanding people as well as the nuances of custom, culture, and religion. One should not be too quick to dismiss “the amateur”. His bias or theological position is very clearly stated. There are advantages to such as well.

As a missionary he was an orthodox evangelical who practised what today some may refer to as wholism in missiology or integrated mission, but he always prioritised the gospel message. He was very much a committed Presbyterian and sought to establish this church structure and theological teaching in West Africa where he was a pioneering missionary.

I like this short account of Nassau written by Southern Presbyterian missionary Samuel Philips Verner. Verner met Nassau and listened to Nassau as Verner was heading to the Congo. Verner writes: “*I sat charmed with the conversation and manners of this noble man of God, who ranks alone in my esteem with Dr. John G. Paton, whom I came to know later.*”⁵⁹ This is a most fascinating sentence and evaluation and is good to carefully unpack.

On October 11th, 2020, a new video was posted on YouTube honouring the life and ministry of Robert Hamill Nassau (Oct 11 was Nassau’s birthdate) by *365 Christian Men*. I was delighted to see this posting.⁶⁰ The image work may not have all been correct, but the actual wording was quite good. I hope that it will help to bring attention to this overshadowed American Presbyterian missionary.

Maybe in future a full book-length study or PhD work will be undertaken. Princeton Seminary alone has a collection of 15 boxes of Nassau’s writings etc. in

⁵⁹Teeuwissen quoting Verner, 118.

⁶⁰October 11, 2021 and issued on You Tube for *365 Christian Men: Inspirational Stories of Real Men*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg6aQWVGz_Y Accessed on October 13, 2021.

the archives; other locations include Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania.⁶¹ I offer these reflections as perhaps a door to such a study. Though this paper may have started negatively as to my asking why Nassau has been neglected, I hope that it has turned to the positive. There is much to stimulate reflection concerning this American Presbyterian missionary in this year of the centenary of his death.

*Therefore go and gather
disciples from all nations by
baptizing them in the name of
the Father and of the Son and
of the Holy Spirit, and by
teaching them to keep all the
instructions I have given you.
And surely I am with you
always until the end of the age.*

*Matthew 28:19–20 EHV
(Evangelical Heritage Version)*

⁶¹The Robert Hamill Nassau Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. SCM 100.



Grave of Robert Nassau – Lawrenceville, New Jersey



Holy Spirit and Regeneration

Paul R. Wells*

**Paul R. Wells, ThD, is Emeritus Professor Faculté Jean Calvin, Institut de théologie protestante et évangélique Aix-en-Provence, France. He is the former Pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church of France (a member church of the Protestant Federation of France and the Conseil National des Évangéliques de France) and is presently a member of Aigburth Community Church in Liverpool, UK. He has published extensively in English and French, including Taking the Bible at Its Word. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2012. He is the current editor of Unio Cum Christo (Union with Christ).*

Introduction

In the theological context of the order of salvation, effectual calling is the first stage of new life in Christ. Regeneration results from the call and produces the radical transformation of the person, a new life.

Modern individualism collapses regeneration into new birth, a personal conversion experience expressed in a “decision for Christ”. Renewal is limited and weakened, the danger being a multiplication of conversions in the same person or a loss of assurance and eventually a loss of faith.

In contrast, classical Reformed theology affirms that human beings are spiritually regenerated by faith, which is a gift of God. Regeneration is not simply about the moment of conversion but about the whole life that flows from it in union with Christ. It covers the whole subjective renewal: its beginning in new birth and continuation in sanctification. The whole life, in its personal and temporal dimensions, is radically transformed by faith. Regeneration is therefore sometimes

defined in a narrow sense as new birth and in a broad sense as the regenerated life¹. John Frame's definition sums this up quite well:

Regeneration is the re-creation of the inner nature of the sinner through the gracious action of the Holy Spirit. This renewal consists of a change of heart (Rom 12:2) by the Spirit of God, whereby the person becomes a new creature through knowledge, holiness and truth, in order to live in Christ (Eph 4:24, Col 3:10). The new birth introduces into a regenerated life; sanctification is the fruit of grace, with good works (1 Jn 2:29), through which the new life continues. My definition of regeneration, then, is this: it is a sovereign act of God, the beginning of a new spiritual life in us....²

1. The new birth, Biblical testimony largely in John

As Herman Bavinck noted, there is complementarity, not opposition, between the Johannine and Pauline notions of renewal. He affirmed that "Regeneration in the ethical sense of Paul's use of it cannot be separated from regeneration in the metaphysical sense that John frequently uses."³

The idea of renewal or new birth was already found in rabbinic Judaism, which explains why Jesus expressed himself in this way. The Midrash on the Song of Solomon (1:3) says: "When someone brings a man under the wing of the Shekinah, it is as if he had formed and created him." Elsewhere one reads, "A newly converted proselyte is like a newborn child." The comparison between creation and new birth is the background to the new birth in John and the renewal or new creation in Paul.

The begetting (*gennaō*) mentioned in Psalm 7:2, "I have begotten you this day" is applied to the exalted ministry of Christ in the Hebrews (1:5 and 5:5) to indicate the divine begetting by the work of the Spirit. The resurrection of Jesus opens the age of the Spirit and the beginning of the last days. For example, in Paul's writings in Romans 8:17 and 29, Christ is the firstborn of the brethren who will be formed in His image and will inherit life with Him. Titus 3:5 also speaks of the "washing of regeneration (*palingenesia*) and renewal (*anakainoseos*) of the Holy Spirit" and recalls Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3:3–7 and the Master's answers to this "ruler of the Jews" about the new birth:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Unless a man be born of water

¹Benjamin B. Warfield, "On the Biblical Notion of 'Renewal'", *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952), 367-368.

²John Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord. An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2006), 186.

³Herman Bavinck, *Saved by Grace. The Holy Spirit's Work in Calling and Regeneration* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2008), 166.

and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.

In John's writings, "being born" always indicates a point of origin. The regenerate are born *of the Spirit, of water, of the flesh, and born anew or from above*. Jesus insists on the divine character of the renewal of the Spirit⁴. The new birth is necessary to see the kingdom of God and to enter it. This repetition indicates that without the Spirit of God it is impossible even to discern the presence of the kingdom. "Water and Spirit" refer to purification followed by new divine life⁵. Purification is one aspect of the change, the other complementary aspect is the birth by the Spirit. Both are spiritual and supernatural in character⁶.

Three observations can be made about the character of this new birth:

- It is a radical and decisive event, necessary because the old existence is dead due to sin. The old life is over, the new one has begun. Hence the contrast in John 3:6 between "that which is born of the flesh" and that which is "born of the Spirit";
- The monergism of birth by the unilateral action of the Spirit eliminates synergistic cooperation. Regeneration takes precedence over any human decision in conversion, either in repentance or faith. The priority is not temporal but "causative". If a person is converted, it is because of the action of God's grace;
- Just as human beings are passive at the time of natural birth, spiritually they depend on the divine work for birth from above. Just as we did not decide our

⁴*Ek pneumatos, ex hudatos*, John 3:5, *ek tes sarkos*, 3:6, *anōthen*, 3:3, 7, *ek tou pneumatos*, 3:8. Cf. There are four references in 1 John (*ek tou theou*, 1 Jn 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1).

⁵For the multiple interpretations of "water and Spirit", see Donald Carson on John 3.5. Carson indicates five interpretations before concluding that the meaning of Ezekiel 36 and 37 is decisive, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). It cannot be said either that water is the natural birth and the Spirit the second birth—a common idea in evangelical circles—or that water is a reference to baptism. The birth of water is a reference to the purification of Ezekiel 36:25–26, while the Spirit evokes the valley of dry bones reanimated by the Spirit in the subsequent chapter.

⁶Is it paternal action in begetting or maternal action in birthing? It remains uncertain, but the fundamental meaning of the passage is fundamentally the same in both senses, since spiritual birth depends on the work of the Holy Spirit. John Murray says that "begotten again" and "born again" are synonymous. Cf. John Murray, *Collected Writings*, II (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 178. Cf. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 465, 469.

natural birth, so birth from above is due to the decision and action of the Spirit. This interpretation is confirmed in John 3:8. The wind blows (the efficiency of action) where it wills (the sovereignty of the Spirit's gracious action).

To sum up: spiritual regeneration always precedes faith in a *logical* sense and sometimes also in a *temporal* sense. Repentance or works of righteousness according to the law do not "prepare" the way for regeneration. But once born again, as the newborn infant begins to breathe, the believer spiritually cries "Abba, Father". This is the first step of new life.

A misreading of John 1:12 - "to all who received him (the Word), he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name" has led to misunderstandings and an interpretation contrary to what the text says. It is not because one receives the Son that one becomes a child of God. On the contrary, as verse 13 states, one becomes a child of God "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Negative statements about human impulses are followed by the expression "begotten of God" (*ek theou egennethen*). The word "begotten" is used for paternal action concerning posterity. Although John does not develop a theology of the new birth here, he emphasizes its "miraculous" character, which is "nothing but an act of God... those who receive the Word are identical with those who believe in His Name, and they are identical with those who are born of God."⁷

The first *visible evidence* of regeneration is therefore to "receive the Word", to "believe in His name" as a child of God, because one is born anew. If regeneration is mysterious, like every divine miracle, it is not abstract; it is recognized in the new life which is its consequence. Am I regenerate? Do I exercise faith in the Word, love for God, hope in his promise? It's fundamentally the same question.

2. The action of the Spirit, mediate or immediate? Historical approaches

The relationship between Word and Spirit in regeneration has been raised by most of the major Reformed theologians: Hodge, Dabney, Kuyper, Bavinck, Warfield, Berkhof and Murray. Nearly all of them until recently come down on the side of immediate regeneration; that is, the Spirit acts in prior fashion to the Word, with the exception of Warfield who has a more coordinate view of a dual action.

Is it possible to be more precise about the *modus operandi* of regeneration? As with any miracle in which divine power intervenes within the framework of created reality, questions arise about regeneration and the respective roles of the Spirit and the Word in the transition from death in sin to life from grace in Christ. In the reception of salvation, does the Spirit work immediately in people's hearts to permit reception of the Word of grace, or does the power of the Word itself serve

¹...How are we converted to Jesus Christ?

⁷Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 181–182 on John 1:13.

as the Spirit's instrument in changing the heart? The latter concept is called "mediate" to indicate the joint work of the Word and the Spirit. The issue here is not synergism, for these two models of classical Reformed theology maintain the sovereignty of divine action and its priority to the human reception of the Gospel.

The background to these discussions is the old debate between Lutheran and Calvinist theologies about the Means of Grace and the respective work of the Spirit and the Word⁸. Lutherans asserted that the Spirit works through the Word and in symbiosis with it, a position that rules out the action of the Spirit outside the Word and also the danger of illuminism. The emphasis of the Calvinist position is different. The Spirit works with the Word—concomitantly with it—thus distinguishing between the respective functions of the Word and the Spirit. If in the Lutheran position there is an identity of the two, in the Calvinist position they are distinct but complementary. These nuances are also present in the discussion on the Lord's Supper, with consubstantiation among Lutherans and spiritual presence among Calvinists.

On the subject of regeneration, faithfulness to the position "the Spirit works with the Word" and opposition to Arminian synergism after the Synod of Dordrecht and its "canons" have led to a further distinction between the two.

- Louis Berkhof proposed an "immediate" position by affirming that James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:12, two texts that associate the work of the Spirit with the Word, refer not to regeneration as such, but to consciousness of new birth through the Word of God.
- Benjamin Warfield, on the other hand, reiterating the position of John Calvin, affirmed the joint action of the Word and the Spirit: "The new birth imposes itself on the conscience of the person following the call of the Word, to which corresponds the persuasive action of the Spirit; the conscious possession that the person has of it is thus mediated by the Word".
- A third position, which we adopt, is presented by Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. It seeks to maintain the "immediate" position, with a strong distinction between the Spirit and the

⁸This discussion has recently become quite pointed. See for example: Ralph Cunnington, *Preaching With Spiritual Power: Calvin's Understanding of Word and Spirit in Preaching* (Geanies House, Ross Shire: Christian Focus, 2015) and Stuart Olyott, *Something Must be Known and Felt* (Bridgend: Evangelical Movement of Wales, 2014).

Word. Bavinck's main argument concerns the distinction between the seed and the Word in 1 Peter 1:23 and 1 John 3:9:

You have been regenerated, not by (*ek*) corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by (*dia*) the living and permanent Word of God;

Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, because the seed of God dwells in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Bavinck points out that Peter does not dwell on regeneration itself, but on its imperishable character. However, he believes that these texts support a distinction between the seed and the Word, despite their close relationship, a difference seen in the difference of the prepositions *ek* and *dia* used in Greek. Believers are regenerated *by* an imperishable seed, *by means of* or *through* the living Word of God. The Word is regarded as the means by which regeneration takes place, but the seed is the principle from which regeneration proceeds⁹.

Thus, the Spirit is the *effective* principle of regeneration, the origin and cause of new life, while the Word is the *instrumental means* by which change takes place.

In regeneration, therefore, the Spirit and the Word of truth are distinct in their respective actions, but without confusion or separation of their operations. Kuyper (in his classic *Work of the Holy Spirit*) brings eight considerations to support the distinction and the priority of the Spirit in the implanting of spiritual life in believers¹⁰. We have selected five of these:

1. The condition of sin is death and does not change without the effective vivification of the Spirit;
2. the "new creation" is an act whose origin is from God, it is the miracle of his grace, without intermediate means;
3. the Spirit, who is sovereign and effective in his testimony, is sent by Jesus for this purpose. This is why Jesus "breathes" upon his disciples at the Johannine Pentecost (Jn 20:22);
4. the inspired Word of God comes in human words and therefore does not have a sovereignty comparable to that of the divine Spirit;
5. the Word which is the *instrumental* means of regeneration is the Word of truth; it is therefore appropriate to make the incorruptible seed of the Spirit bear fruit. But the Spirit itself is the *effectual* means of regeneration.

To quote an instructive illustration by Bavinck:

⁹Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 162. Cf. Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), 521–522.

¹⁰Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 295–297.

Just as the eye alone is insufficient and sees only when rays of light pass through it, and the ear alone is insufficient and hears only when it receives sounds from the outside, so also the seed which is sown in regeneration cannot progress to the act of faith without encountering the Word of the Gospel from the outside. Just as light suits the eye and sound suits the ear, so the object of faith offered in the Holy Scriptures suits the new life which the Holy Spirit breathes into the heart through regeneration.¹¹

This position is also that of Charles Hodge and Robert Dabney who of course wrote before their Dutch fellows. Writing on the Means of Grace, Hodge affirms that the efficacy of the Word comes from the Spirit alone working through it: “The Scriptures clearly teach that there is an operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul antecedent to the sanctifying influence of the truth, and necessary to render that influence effective.”¹² If this were not so, asks Hodge, how would we account for the fact that many were converted under the teaching of the apostles and few under the teaching of the Master himself? This is an interesting observation and it serves to indicate the humility of Jesus in his humanity.

3. Practical implications

Why does this question matter? Beyond conformity to biblical teaching and giving due honour to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, on the practical level, one will rely less on verbal consistency and convincing demonstration in the communication of the Gospel than on the presence and effectiveness of the Spirit himself. This is no doubt an encouragement to prayer. Here are some possible ways in which the belief in the immediate work of the Spirit may provide a challenge to us:

1. Correct exegesis in exposing the truth does not convert sinners. We can get it totally right in understanding and expounding the Scripture and yet none may be converted.
2. This implies that dependence on the Spirit is primary *before* our preparation, *in each step* of it and *during* it when the Word is proclaimed. And *after* preaching the seed planted depends on the work of the Spirit in germination. It might be useful to spend Monday morning in prayer for each member of our community rather than otherwise!
3. Prayer, not study, is the number one calling of the minister. Prayer then study.
4. Is this the reason for the lack of effectiveness of the Gospel in our day? We have a better prepared, more educated, and more sophisticated ministry in terms of means than ever before and yet there is a spiritual dearth like never

¹¹Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 150.

¹²Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, III (London: James Clarke, 1950), 470–476.

before. We have more books, more means, and an abundance of media. But what we need is renewed power in preaching and only the Holy Spirit can confer this.

We have more books, more means, and an abundance of media. But what we need is renewed power in preaching and only the Holy Spirit can confer this.



Preaching Preferred Pronouns

Nicholas (Nick) T. Batzig*

**Nicholas (Nick) T. Batzig is the pastor of Church Creek, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in Charleston, South Carolina, USA and an associate editor of Ligonier Ministries. He formerly was the pastor at Wayside PCA in Signal Mountain, Tennessee and the organising pastor of New Covenant Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Georgia. He has written for Tabletalk, Reformation21 and contributed to two collections, Jonathan Edwards and the Church and Jonathan Edwards and Scotland. See <https://www.feedingonchrist.com/> for blogs, sermons, articles etc. by Nick.*

Personal pronouns have been all the rage and debate in recent years. It's amazing how important such short words are in our everyday speech and in our anthropology. That being said, personal pronouns are also some of the most important words to interpret when reading the Scriptures. One of my professors in seminary used to always challenge the students to give careful consideration to what pronouns (i.e., singular and plural; 'I,' 'you,' 'we,' 'he, she, it,' 'they,') are being used in the text of Scripture. Paying attention to these pronouns will help the reader better understand the meaning of any given passage. Personal pronouns guide the interpretation of a passage, they inform us of the individual and communal nature of the Christian life, and they aid the minister in the preaching of God's word. However, it is not always easy to discern the last two of these.

It is not always clear in the English whether a biblical personal pronoun is singular or plural. We have to work with the text in the original languages. For instance, in the Greek version of Luke 22:31, the first "you" is plural (i.e., "Satan

has asked for 'you [all]'), the second is singular (i.e., I have prayed for you - Peter). The English translations of Scripture fail to capture this.

Both personal pronouns and the voice of a verb play a significant role in understanding the individual and the corporate nature of the Christianity. We see this in the Saviour's addresses to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 2–3). In Revelation 2:2, Jesus addressed the members of the church collectively with the second person plural pronoun "your." By so doing, He is acknowledging the collective nature of the people of God in a local church. The members of a particular church are subject to the collective criticism and commendation of the Saviour. However, at the end of each letter, Jesus addresses individuals with the first-person plural aorist word ἀκουσάτω (i.e., the one who hears). By so doing, Jesus is calling individuals to respond personally to what He has said.

This paves the way for the consideration of what pronouns should be used in preaching. There has been no small debate over the past century and a half about this matter. The nineteenth century Anglican theologian, J.C. Ryle, in his little book, *Simplicity in Preaching*, made the following observation about why he believed that the use of the second person singular or plural pronoun "you" is a better option than the second person plural use of "we." He wrote,

Many people, I am sure, do not understand what the preacher's 'we' means. The expression leaves them in a kind of fog. If you say, 'I, the pastor of the parish, come here to talk of something that concerns your soul, something you should believe, something you should do'—you are at any rate understood. But if you begin to talk in the vague plural number of what 'we' ought to do, many of your hearers do not know what you are driving at, and whether you are speaking to yourself or them. I charge and entreat my younger brethren in the ministry not to forget this point. Do try to be as direct as possible. Never mind what people say of you. In this particular do not imitate Chalmers, or Melville, or certain other living pulpit celebrities. Never say 'we' when you mean 'I.' The more you get into the habit of talking plainly to the people, in the first person singular, as old Bishop Latimer did—the simpler will your sermon be, and the more easily understood. The glory of Whitefield's sermons is their directness. But unhappily they were so badly reported that we cannot now appreciate them.¹

In more recent years, the biblical counsellor, Jay Adams, also taught that the second person singular "you" ought to be the primary pronoun a minister uses in preaching. He wrote,

¹J.C. Ryle, *Simplicity in Preaching* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1882), 31–33.

Two words ought to dominate preaching: 'God' and 'you.' The preacher must make sure that his congregation understands that he is bringing a message from God to each one of them. And therefore, most frequently, his use of the second person should be the use of the second person *singular* ("you" as an individual). How he preaches will make that clear. He will often say such things as, '*God calls each one of you* to do this' and 'Now, don't think of the person sitting next to you when you hear what God has to say in this passage. This is God's message to *you*.' In other words, he will preach confrontationally.²

That being said, there is a case to be made for the use of both "you" and "we," when preaching. When the Apostle Paul addressed the subject of human depravity in Ephesians 2, he did so first by the use of the second person pronoun "you" in Ephesians 2:1–2). Then he switched to "we" and "us" in Ephesians 2:3–7, in order to press home the universality of human depravity and the common salvation believers have in Christ. Finally, he moved between "you" and "we" in Ephesians 2:8–10. Although this is not functionally a sermon, it is clear apostolic teaching.

Notably, John Calvin preferred the second person plural personal pronoun "we" in his preaching. T.H.L. Parker explained what he believed to be Calvin's rationale, when he wrote,

The preacher must show by his life that he also is obedient to the Word he preaches; his life must ratify his doctrine. In fact, the first obedience must come from himself, for he has no right to command the people anything which he is, at the least, not trying to obey himself. Calvin shows by his continual use of the pronoun 'we' in his sermons that his words are addressed as much to himself as to the congregation. Woe to the preacher if he does not set an example of holy obedience and reverence towards the Word of God that he proclaims. 'It were better,' Calvin declares passionately, 'for him to break his neck going up into the pulpit, if he does not take pains to be the first to follow God.'

There is great merit in this sort of approach. The use of the second person plural pronoun puts the minister in the same need as those to whom he is preaching. It keeps him from being exalted over the congregation. It tells the people of God that what God is saying in His word is directed to him every bit as much as it is to them.

²Jay E. Adams, *Preaching That Persuades* (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 24.

Perhaps the best way forward for ministers of the gospel in their use of pronouns is to diversify in their use of "we" and "you." I sometimes include myself when preaching about depravity or my need for the salvation that is only offered in Christ. At other times, I use the second person singular pronoun "you" in order to help congregants search their own hearts regarding what they have heard from God's word. Still, at other times, I may say "you and me" in order to both distinguish and to express solidarity. It takes wisdom to know when to utilize various pronouns in preaching.

Regardless of one's conclusion about these matters, it is incumbent on all of us to give careful consideration of the Bible's personal pronouns. They guide our interpretation of any given passage; they explain the collective and individual aspects of Christianity; and they serve as useful homiletical tools for the minister of the gospel to preach the word to himself and to the people of God. May the Lord deepen our understanding of the importance and usefulness of pronouns.

Index of Books Reviewed

Balisky, E. Paul. <i>Thomas A. Lambie: Missionary Doctor and Entrepreneur.</i>	86
Bilbro, Jeffrey. <i>Reading the Times: A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News.</i>	108
Bray, Gerald. <i>Augustine on the Christian Life: Transformed by the Power of God.</i>	66
Burke, David, Richard Brown and Qaiser Julius. <i>TEE for the 21st Century: Tools to Equip and Empower God's People for His Mission.</i>	122
Carr, Simonetta. <i>Broken Pieces and the God Who Mends Them.</i>	100
Cloutier, Mary Carol. <i>Bridging the Gap, Breaching Barriers: The Presence and Contribution of (Foreign) Persons of African Descent to the Gaboon and Corisco Mission in Nineteenth-Century Equatorial Africa.</i>	76
Cotherman, Charles E. <i>To Think Christianly: A History of L'Abri, Regent College, and the Christian Study Center Movement.</i>	89
Currid, John D. <i>The Case for Biblical Archaeology.</i>	49
DeYoung, Kevin. <i>Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction.</i>	50
Edgar, William. <i>Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture.</i>	104
Eglinton, James. <i>Bavinck: A Critical Biography.</i>	73
Finn, Nathan A. <i>History: A Student's Guide.</i>	69
Forrest, Benjamin K., Joshua D. Chatraw, Alister E. McGrath, eds. <i>The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction.</i>	57
Gamble, Richard C. <i>The Whole Counsel of God, Volume Three: God's People in the Western World.</i>	48
Helopoulos, Jason. <i>Covenantal Baptism.</i>	55
Howard, Evan B. <i>A Guide to Spiritual Formation: How Scripture, Spirit, Community, and Mission Shape our Souls.</i>	121
Jensen, Michael P. <i>Reformation Anglican Worship.</i>	54
Kruger, Michael J. <i>Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College.</i>	117

Lewis, Donald M. <i>A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century.</i>	96
McKim, Donald. <i>Everyday Prayer with The Reformers.</i>	88
Nel, Marius. <i>The Prosperity Gospel in Africa: An African Pentecostal Hermeneutical Consideration.</i>	110
Nichols, Stephen J. R.C. <i>Sproul: A Life.</i>	77
Ross, Kenneth R. and Klaus Fiedler. <i>A Malawi Church History 1860–2020.</i>	71
Ryken, Leland. <i>40 Favorite Hymns for the Christian Year.</i>	120
Satrom, Hayley. <i>Forgiveness: Reflecting God’s Mercy.</i>	106
Schuringa, Gregory D. <i>Embracing Doctrine and Life: Simon Oomius in the Context of Further Reformation Orthodoxy.</i>	62
Smethurst, Matt. <i>Deacons: How They Serve And Strengthen The Church.</i>	115
Smith, Gary Scott and P. C. Kemeny, eds. <i>The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism.</i>	59
Sunshine, Glenn S. <i>Slaying Leviathan: Limited Government and Resistance in the Christian Tradition.</i>	112
Svigel, Michael and John Adair. <i>Urban Legends of Church History: 40 Common Misconceptions.</i>	92
Tait, Jennifer Woodruff. <i>Christian History in Seven Sentences.</i>	80
Trueman, Carl R. <i>The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self.</i>	82
Van Dam, Cornelis. <i>In the Beginning: Listening to Genesis 1 and 2.</i>	52
Venema, Cornelis. <i>Chosen in Christ. Revisiting the Contours of Predestination.</i>	61
Vitringa, Sr., Campegius, trans. Joshua L. Bernard, gen.ed. H. David Schuringa. <i>Ancient Roots for Reformed Polity: De Synagoga Vetere and the Ecclesiology of the Early Church—An Annotated Compendium.</i>	67
Wainwright, Robert J. D. <i>Early Reformation Covenant Theology: English Reception of Swiss Reformed Thought 1520–1555.</i>	93
Williams, Thaddeus. <i>Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth.</i>	102



Africa Textbook Project Update

a four-year publication project
co-ordinated by
Haddington House Trust
2020-2024

This project, Lord willing, will now be published as two volumes:

Volume One—A Survey of Presbyterian Mission History in Africa: Historic Beginnings (c. 1790s to c. 1940) *projected publication date 2023*

Volume Two—A Survey of Presbyterian Mission History in Africa: Modern Beginnings (c. 1945 to 2020) *projected publication date 2024*

THE GENERAL EDITOR,

Dr. Jack C. Whytock haddingtonhouse@eastlink.ca or
jcwhytock@gmail.com

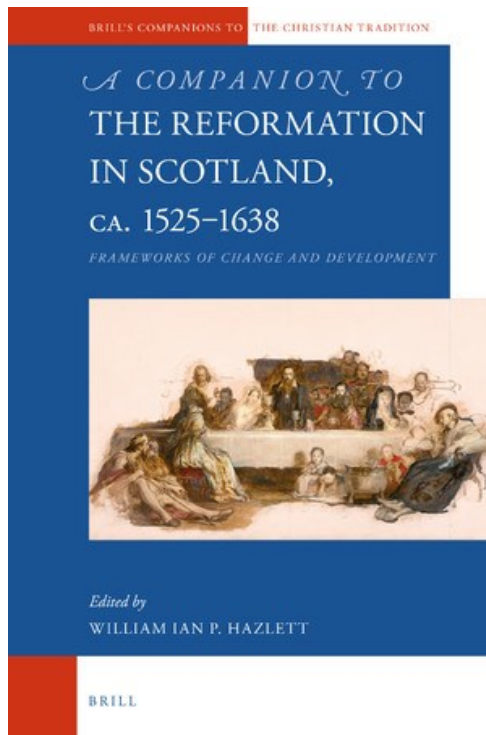
For general project inquiries, please contact:

THE PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR,

Mrs. Nancy J. Whytock, nancywhytock@gmail.com

Publication Announcement

The new book, *A Companion to the Reformation in Scotland* edited by W. Ian P. Hazlett and published by Brill in Leiden, arrived recently at Haddington House.



Haddington House Trust was honoured to be involved in this project by contributing a chapter. Dr. Whytock's chapter is entitled "Ministerial Education in the Scottish Reformation".

