Editorial

This edition of the Bulletin features contributions from across the English-speaking world and includes articles from contributors living in Canada, Scotland, The United States of America and Australia.

Clint Humfrey's paper on Robert Haldane presents a figure of importance in Scottish church history, yet one whose life and works are not so widely known today. For myself, while Haldane is a familiar name, this was the first treatment of his life or works I had read other than in the form of a brief survey. It is a welcome addition to the Bulletin. Humfrey addresses a case of 'guilt by association' that undeservedly cast a shadow over Haldane's ministry. As well as introducing Haldane and his ministry, the argument serves to caution against misrepresentation of those who enter into ministry having attained success in other spheres.

In our second article, Catriona Macdonald takes up the subject of faith and feminism. She argues for an understanding of feminism tempered by evangelical belief and studies developments of women's roles in Christian work through the lens of foreign missions. She addresses the subject of unwarranted discrimination and raises to our attention the achievements of women in Christian work, especially since the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the women she discusses in the paper, I expect, will be lesser-known names to us. It is always valuable to learn of saints in the history of the church who have patiently endured trials while faithfully serving in the promotion of the gospel.

Next in this issue is an article from Kenneth Stewart. His paper was originally offered as one of a series of papers at the Patristic and Medieval History group of the Evangelical Theology Society. On that occasion the group engaged with a subject of contemporary interest, namely the influence of asceticism upon evangelicalism. Stewart has newly formed his contribution on that occasion for the purposes of the Bulletin. He expertly guides us through historical movements in church history related to asceticism. He offers a balanced critique of the movement while raising to our attention the importance of sanctification, a matter which must be of chief importance for all who profess Christ. I anticipate readers will appreciate Stewart's coverage of the subject and how he relates these widespread and historic Christian trends to the present day.

Our fourth and final paper, from Timothy Yap, discusses a sermon preached by Charles Spurgeon during the course of London's cholera epidemic in the mid-nineteenth century. The focus of the paper is the manner in which Spurgeon developed characterisation in his sermon to compel his congregation to Christ. We can be grateful to Yap for directing

our attention to Spurgeon's method in this sermon as a means of appealing to a congregation. The subject of the sermon is itself also of interest following Covid-19 and provides a reference point for preaching the gospel in an appealing way in the context of a pandemic.

CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS NUMBER

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Revd Humfrey's article was originally delivered at the 73rd Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theology Society in Fort Worth, Texas, United States on 16th November 2021.

Professor Stewart's article was originally delivered at the 74th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theology Society in Denver, Colorado, United States on 16th November 2022.

Was Robert Haldane (1764–1842) Among The Illuminati?

Clint Humfrey

In his 2017 book, *The Square and the Tower*, Stanford historian Niall Ferguson opened with a discussion of that most notable of conspiracy theories, the mysterious Illuminati.[1] With the rise of conspiracy theorists such as QAnon,[2] Ferguson's book remains relevant with each passing year. His work continued an exploration of conspiracy theory influences which Richard Hofstadter described in 1964 as 'the paranoid style.'[3] Ferguson pointed out that the renowned physicist John Robison (1739–1805), had published a book that attempted to expose the infiltration of secret cabals into European society in order to facilitate its overthrow.[4] The shadow of conspiracy was a fixation for many back then as it is today.

Ferguson has made the case that the French Revolution was not caused by secret societies. However, Ferguson claimed, 'there were strong incentives to exaggerate the scale and the malignancy of the Illuminati.'[5] The Illuminati originally had been a small collection of German intellectuals founded in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt.[6] This 'Bavarian Illuminati' was notable for how quickly it ended. The secret nature of these societies created speculation about their size, with little public evidence. The idea that the Illuminati were the catalyst for the French Revolution was a claim that, according to Ferguson, 'cannot withstand even casual scrutiny.'[7] Yet the conspiracy theories prove very resilient. As Ferguson pointed out:

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1 Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower* (New York: Penguin, 2017), p. 3.

2 QAnon is an online movement of multiple accounts which promote conspiracy theories about the US government and society. See Zuckerman, 'QAnon and the Emergence of the Unreal.' *Journal of Design and Science*, 2019.

3 See Richard Hofstadter, 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics,.' *Harpers Magazine*, November, 1964.

4 John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* (Philadelphia: Dobson and Cobbett, 1798).

5 Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower*, p. 53.

6 See the doctoral thesis of Vernon Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati* (PhD diss., Columbia University, New York, 1918), pp. 182-85. Stauffer traces the assumed influence of the movement as undermining New England puritan institutions by the late eighteenth century.

7 Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower*, p. 54.

> The myth of the Illuminati has persisted down to the present day [….] What is harder to explain is the widespread belief that the Illuminati really exist and are as powerful today as their founder intended them to be. There are, to be sure, a number of websites purporting to represent the Illuminati, but none is very professional-looking.[8]

The long shelf-life of conspiracy theory claims make the claimant exceedingly influential beyond their own context and time period. The claims, when they become allegations, tend to resist attempts to dismiss them. In fact, John Robison's discovery of the Illuminati theory still produces citations by historians 200 years later. Yet even in Robison's immediate wake, men like Robert Haldane (1764–1842), the Scottish Evangelical, could not escape the guilt by association which followed them in a paranoid style all its own.

Robert Haldane and his brother James were known widely after their conversions for participating in evangelistic enterprises.[9] Robert was the organizer and funder of these projects, and James was the primary preacher. Robert Haldane became caught up in the web of controversy soon after his conversion when he sought to fund a missionary effort to India in imitation of William Carey. After supporting a home mission lead by laymen, Haldane would help found and then abandon the Congregational churches in Scotland. Later he influenced the embryo of the Rèveil in Geneva beginning in late 1816. Throughout his career controversy followed him but the conspiracy theory charge was one of the earliest.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIST

To draw a caricature of the conspiracy theorist, the outlines would show someone who was mentally unstable and lacking all credibility. John Robison was not like that. His career spanned from military service in Quebec and Jamaica to scientific service in Russia, even receiving a pension from the Empress Catherine in 1800.[10] David B. Wilson observed

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8 Ibid.

9 For an overview of the Haldane brothers' careers, see Kenneth J. Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the Francophone Réveil 1816–1849* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006).

10 See John Playfair, 'Biographical Account of the late John Robison' in *Works*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Constable, 1822), pp. 121-80.

that Robison was a key figure in 'Enlightenment Scotland' and that he 'defined a particularly Scottish approach to natural philosophy.'[11]

His work as a physicist and mathematician lent credibility to his ventures into the realm of conspiracy theories. Timothy Dwight (1752–1817) — then president of Yale — published an addendum to his 1801 sermon where he defended the reliability of Robison.[12] Influenced by the claims of Robison, Dwight warned of the encroaching conspiracy:

> It ought by no means to be forgotten, that Infidelity has been formed into a regular school in which, with unprecedented efforts, the young, the ingenious, the unwary, and the licentious, have through a series of solemn gradations, been ensnared, initiated, and entangled, beyond hope, or wish to escape.[13]

It may be debated whether Robison had lost the capacity for precision in old age which he displayed in his early career. Hofstadter argued, 'Robison seems to have made his work as factual as he could, but when he came to estimating the moral character and the political influence of Illuminism, he made the characteristic paranoid leap into fantasy.'[14] Nevertheless, Robison was respected enough on both sides of the Atlantic that his concerns about the Illuminati were readily accepted among the influential leaders in society.[15]

The welcome reception of Robison's views meant that anyone who had been connected by Robison to the conspiracy became naturally tainted by the association. This political guilt could follow a person even if there was a lack of evidence, or whether at an essential level a change of heart had taken place.

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[11] David B. Wilson, 'Enlightenment Scotland's Philosophico-Chemical Physics' in *Between Leibniz, Newton, and Kant*, ed. by W. Lefèvre, Boston Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science, vol. 220 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2001).

[12] Dwight, *A Discourse on Some Events of the Last Century* (New Haven: Ezra Read, 1801), p. 53.

[13] Ibid., p. 34.

[14] Hofstadter, 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics', Harpers Magazine, November, 1964.

[15] There is record of correspondence between G.W. Snyder and George Washington regarding Robison's theories. Washington, in his October 27, 1798 reply to Taylor said, 'It was not my intention to doubt that, the Doctrines of the Illuminati, and principles of Jacobinism had not spread in the United States.' See *The Papers of George Washington*, Retirement Series, vol. 2, *2 January 1798–15 September 1798*, ed. by W. W. Abbot (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), pp. 554-57.

THE MISSIONARY CANDIDATE

One of the figures slandered by Robison's conspiracy theories was the Christian philanthropist, Robert Haldane (1764–1842).[16] Haldane was from the Scottish upper class yet had taken great interest in the principles of social justice which the French Revolution promoted. When Haldane was converted to evangelical faith in 1795, the memory of his radical sympathies remained among his contemporaries.

By the time of Robison's writing of *Proofs of Conspiracy* in 1798, Robert Haldane had become, along with his brother James, a leading figure among the Evangelicals of Scotland. Robert had been a sailor in the British navy — even having fought the French — yet the idealism of the Revolution had stirred his conscience after he had left the military. Even as his brother James had been awakened to evangelical faith, Robert was still found obsessing about politics, with the French Revolution as his favorite topic.[17] Haldane recalled, 'I rejoiced in this experiment that was making in France of the construction of a Government at once from its foundation upon a regular plan, which Hume, in his Essays, speaks of as an event so much to be desired.'[18] On July 1, 1794, Robert went so far as to make a public speech which condemned the aristocracy's plan to arm local volunteers for military service in the wars against France. The speech was long remembered after his conversion and created 'many enemies.'[19]

Yet as Robert's mind was stirred with the thought of revolutionary *social* change, he was also being pressed with the need for *spiritual* change in his own life. Although he had the immediate witness of many ministers, 'when Christianity forced itself on his notice,' as his biographer put it, 'he determined to survey it in all its bearings.'[20]

Missionary ideals quickly took hold of the newly converted Haldane. The example of William Carey (1761–1864) made a deep impression on the aristocrat:

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16 The first biography of Robert Haldane and his brother, James came from the latter's son, Alexander, published as, *Memoirs of the Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of His Brother, James Alexander Haldane* (Edinburgh: Whyte, 1852).

17 Haldane, *Memoirs*, p. 85.

18 Ibid., p. 87. Haldane may have referred to David Hume's essays, published in multiple editions, specifically, 'That Politics may be reduced to a Science' or 'Of the First Principles of Government', both contained in *Essays, Moral, and Political* (Edinburgh: Kincaid, 1741).

19 Haldane, *Memoirs*, p. 90.

20 Ibid., p. 94.

> I had seen the accounts of the Baptist Mission in Bengal, which pointed out both the condition of the natives as destitute of the Gospel, and also the wide, promising field then opened for the exertions of Christians. A strong desire occupied my mind to engage in the honorable service. The object was of such magnitude that compared with it, the affairs of time appeared to sink into nothing, and no sacrifice seemed too great in order to its attainment.[21]

From Haldane's own description, his sentiments about political lobbying had changed, and he was taken up with spiritual concerns and the cause of a heavenly kingdom. This change led him to plan the sale of his trophy estate, Airthrey (now owned by the University of Stirling). The proceeds of the sale would fund Haldane's own plan to develop a missionary enterprise that would go to India, following in Carey's footsteps.

Politics would follow Haldane as he walked this new path of Christian discipleship. In order for Haldane to develop his full-orbed missionary venture (including a printing press)[22] he had to apply to the British government for approval. Specifically, he had to get permission from the East India Company which held the exclusive charter for India.

Although Haldane's plans were supported by Evangelicals like William Wilberforce (1759–1833) in the halls of political power, the memory of Haldane's 'radical' pre-conversion speech of 1794 continued to follow him. Haldane reached out to Mr. Dundas (Lord Melville) who was the Chief Secretary of State on September 21, 1796 to seek permission for the Indian mission. Haldane wrote:

> Whatever fear may be expressed with regard to the political sentiments of any of us, as making it dangerous to send such persons to India, will not apply here. As citizens of this country we conceive we have a right and we esteem it a duty, to speak freely our sentiments about Government. As missionaries abroad we have no such business. Our mouths on that subject will be sealed for ever, when we devote ourselves to preach only the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what it contains in a foreign land.[23]

In another letter to Melville (Sept 30, 1796), Haldane reiterated his spiritual view of the matter: 'we go with the direct view, not to enrich ourselves, but to save the souls of men.'[24] Wilberforce expressed the lingering *political* view taken of Haldane and his mission, saying, 'In this he would

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21 Ibid., p. 99.

22 Haldane, *Memoirs*, p. 101. Carey had the idea of printing a Bengali New Testament in 1795. See John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward*. Vol. I (London: Longman, 1859), p. 73.

23 Haldane, *Memoirs*, p. 107.

24 Ibid., p. 108.

have succeeded if their extreme political opinions had not alarmed the Government.'[25] Haldane's influential social status, combined with his former revolutionary sympathies and a single anti-war speech had left his civic reputation permanently scarred.[26]

SUSPICION

When the British government was suspicious of Robert Haldane, we can see that others in the general public could adopt their opinion. The concerned scientist, John Robison accused Haldane of wanting to export the principles of the French revolution to British possessions in India under the cover of missionary work. He made the charges in print, in his widely read *Proofs of Conspiracy*. Although Haldane had come up with a plan for evangelizing work in India as the zealous product of his conversion, Robison didn't buy it. Robison did not name Haldane, but it was clear whom he intended. He said:

> A very eminent [advocate of Joseph Priestley] once said in company a few days ago that 'he would willingly wade to the knees in blood to overturn the establishment of the Kirk of Scotland.' I understand that he proposes to go to India, and there to preach Christianity to the natives. Let me beseech him to recollect that among us Christianity is still considered a gospel of peace, and that it strongly dissuades us from bathing our feet in blood.[27]

According to Robison's view, Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) was dangerous because he had supported the ideas of the French Revolution.[28] To the slander of this connection with Priestley, Haldane affirmed his nonviolent intentions in Robison's own language saying, 'Christianity is still considered as the gospel of peace, and that it strongly dissuades us from bathing our feet in blood.'[29] By this point, Haldane's theology was soundly orthodox, and he was unsympathetic to Joseph Priestley who had also helped found the non-trinitarian Unitarian denomination. But Haldane had to continue to protest, saying 'in language sufficiently strong, that it was not politics I had in view when I wished to place myself, my family,

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25 Ibid., p. 110.

26 Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward*, p. 73.

27 Robison, *Proofs of Conspiracy*, p. 370.

28 On Priestley see his autobiographical, *Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley* (London: Allenson, 1904) reprint of 1809 edition.

29 Haldane, *Memoirs*, p. 196. Letter to Robison No. 1, September 21st, 1797.

and property entirely under the power of a Government which is so strong as that in India.'[30]

Haldane took issue with Robison ascribing a false motive to his missionary desires. Haldane further clarified that he had 'never been a Freemason and knew nothing of the Illuminati.'[31] Robison in turn offered that if Haldane demanded 'satisfaction' (in a duel), that he would be obliged to accept! In spite of all this, Haldane's awakened Christian faith caused him to repeat his espousal of nonretaliation, saying, 'Christianity, which I consider as the gospel of peace, has taught me that it would be no satisfaction to bathe either my feet or my hands in your blood.'[32]

FULLER ON 'ASCENDENCY IN GOVERNMENT'

The English Baptist pastor Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) offered his comment on the situation in his 1801 sermon on Numbers 14:8.[33] In context, Fuller wished to make clear that the gospel should not be mixed with political pragmatism. He said:

> The object which we pursue must be simply the cause of God, unmixed with worldly policy, or party interest. It has been insinuated that, under the colour of disseminating evangelical doctrine, we seek to gain over the common people, and so to obtain, it should seem, an ascendency in government. If it be so, we may be assured the Lord will take no delight in us.[34]

In a footnote to the published version of the sermon, Fuller stated that the pursuit of 'ascendency in government' that he referred to in the sermon was part of the charge made against Haldane. Fuller wrote:

> To this effect were the insinuations of Professor Robison, concerning the efforts of Mr. Robert Haldane and his friends, in a proposed mission to Hindustan. The modest and dignified manner in which that gentleman repelled

30 Haldane, *Memoirs*, p. 111.

31 Ibid., p. 195.

32 Ibid., p. 198.

33 Andrew Fuller, Sermon: *God's Appropriation of Our Labours Necessary to the Hope of Success (Numbers 14:8)* Preached in 1801, in *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller*, ed. by Joseph Belcher (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1845), p. 183.

34 Fuller, *God's Appropriation*, p. 188. The pamphlet was published as Haldane, *Address to the Public, Concerning Political Opinions and Plans Lately Adopted to Promote Religion in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Ritchie, 1800).

> the accusation, and even forced his accuser to retract it, may be seen in his late excellent pamphlet on that subject.[35]

From the interactions of John Robison and Robert Haldane it appears that the conspiracy theorist and the prospective missionary had a significant misunderstanding. Was Robert Haldane among the Illuminati? Robison was surely mistaken and Andrew Fuller clearly vindicated Robert Haldane in the controversy.

What is also clear is that the taint of conspiracy can follow a person after they have been converted to Christ. Past political affiliations, strong opinions or known sympathies with discredited theories can be remembered long after. In such instances, the dramatic change of Christian conversion goes under-appreciated. Sadly, even in the Christian community there can be a lack forgiveness when it comes to certain sins of the past. Although David Bebbington has argued for conversionism as part of his interpretative quadrilateral for Evangelicalism, some observers view Christian conversion with suspicion.[36] In the case of Haldane, he was misunderstood often throughout his Christian life, yet was repeatedly induced to explain his new governing philosophy that trumped all others, namely evangelical faith in Jesus Christ. It was this commitment that led him to fund missions, ministers and churches from Scotland to Switzerland, including joining in the Genevan Rèveil (1816–1817).

What will future historians of the 2020s say about the spread of conspiracy theories among Evangelicals? Will Evangelicalism be tainted by the association or will conversionism be enough to let the follies of the past lie forgotten?

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[35] Fuller, *God's Appropriation*, p. 188.

[36] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 17.

How Faith And Feminism Have Changed The World

Catriona Macdonald

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is not a concept usually associated with mission. In fact some regard feminism as incompatible with mission and indeed the Christian faith.[1] The very word makes many feel uncomfortable[2] and recently it has proved politic to eschew the label even while acting and thinking in 'feminist' ways.[3]

Yet the relationship between feminism and mission is important since gender discrimination was and is an issue for women in mission as well as society. Donavan notes how 'most church histories simply ignore women' and 'somehow, unwittingly, we in the church have robbed women of their history', while Lederleitner's study of women in mission leadership from across the globe gives examples of discrimination in contemporary mission.[4] Given the centrality of women in mission history from the early church to the present and their numerical dominance in world Christianity today, awareness of women's issues including feminism, is not only inclusive but critical.[5]

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1 *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, ed. by Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. xiii. I argue for a Christian feminism distinct from modern secular feminism, for the latter allies itself with stances opposed to biblical Christianity. From the secular feminist viewpoint, some regard the church as a patriarchal and anti-feminist institution which fosters 'the myth of feminine evil'. Mary Daly, 'The Women's Movement: An Exodus Community', *Religious Education*, 67.5 (1972), 327–35 (pp. 328, 332).

2 Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs* 14.1 (1988), 119–57 (p. 119) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174664> [Accessed: 11th April 2023].

3 Bendroth and Brereton, p. xiii.

4 Mary S. Donovan, 'Women and Mission: Towards a More Inclusive Historiography', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 53.4 (1984), 297–305 (pp. 297, 305) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42974781> [Accessed: 11th April 2023]. Mary T. Lederleitner, *Women in God's Mission: Accepting the Invitation to Serve and Lead* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018).

5 Dana L. Robert, 'Women in World Mission: Controversies and Challenges from a North American Perspective', *International Review of Mission*, 93.368

One place feminism and mission come together is in the women's foreign missionary movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[6] This article argues that this mission enterprise, whilst generally not explicitly feminist, was nonetheless transformative, influencing the acceptance of feminist ideals in various parts of the world. Writing as a woman and an evangelical, and following the historiographical approach highlighted by Francis-Dehqani,[7] I will discuss how women missionaries, their home supporters and the women they served, paradoxically promoted restrictive notions of female behaviour while also contributing to significant feminist change.

Feminism itself is controversial and multi-faceted.[8] Although the term signified women's emancipation when it first came into use in France in the early 1890s, it has come to mean all things to all women.[9] I define it as

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(2009), 50–61 <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2004.tb00441.x>. Robert discusses the history of women in mission and claims that statistically speaking 'the growth of Christianity in the two-thirds world today should be analysed as a woman's movement'. She goes on to argue for greater gender analysis in mission studies.

6 For further information on the women's missionary movement as part of the broader modern missionary movement see Scott Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Pub. Group, 2013), pp. 86–131.

7 Francis-Dehqani advocates a listening approach to history which recognises personal bias on the part of the historian: 'True objectivity arises from a willingness to let past voices speak on their own terms, while exercising critical judgement based upon candid recognition that empathy and bias will always be part of the project.' Gulnar Eleanor Francis-Dehqani, 'The Gendering of Missionary Imperialism: The Search for an Integrated Methodology', in *Gender, Religion and History: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Ursula King and Tina Beatttie (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 125–37 (p. 126).

8 Francis-Dehqani, p. 127.

9 Charlotte Riley, 'The History of Feminism: A Look to the Past?', *IPPR Progressive Review*, 24.4 (2018), 292–98 (p. 293) <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1111/newe.12068>. According to Offen, the origins of the term 'feminism' are uncertain although it was widely used in France ('*féminisme*') in the early 1890s. There is evidence for its use in Great Britain around 1894–1895 and in the USA by 1910. The term was soon interpreted in different ways as divergent forms of feminism arose, such as integral feminism and radical feminism. See Offen, pp. 126–28. Although anachronistic, I use the term to apply to events before (as well as after) its initial usage since 'no other term adequately conveys the extent or intensity of concern regarding the position of women or the sense of injustice at the oppression many experienced.' Francis-Dehqani, p. 127.

'a movement for the restoration of justice between women and men which recognises distinct female roles'[10] while mission is 'bringing good news, freedom and healing in Jesus' name.'[11]

WOMEN AS GOSPEL-BEARERS

The first women gospel-bearers of the modern missions movement were wives and kin of male missionaries,[12] inspired to serve in distant lands by revivals and awakenings of the eighteenth century and by figures such as William Carey (1761–1834) and Adoniram Judson (1788–1850).[13] Single women like Betsy Stockton (1798–1865) participated from the 1820s[14] and by 1900 female missionaries outnumbered their male counterparts.[15] In a few decades, women had become the major players[16] in one of the greatest expansions of Christianity the world had seen.

Although some see this phenomenon as an early feminist movement[17] or evidence of male-controlled exploitative imperialism,[18] the reality is

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10 My definition develops that of Van Leewen and expands the traditional one of a single focus on equal rights with men, allowing for gender difference. Annelies Knoppers, 'Using the Body to Endorse Meanings about Gender', in *After Eden: Facing the Challenge of Gender Reconciliation*, ed. by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993), p. 22.

11 This definition is based on Jesus' description of his own mission in Luke 4:18-21 which quotes Isa. 61:1-2.

12 Jane Haggis, '"A Heart That Has Felt the Love of God and Longs for Others to Know It": Conventions of Gender, Tensions of Self and Constructions of Difference in Offering to Be a Lady Missionary', *Women's History Review*, 7.2 (1998), 171–93 (p. 172) <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029800200170>. Lesley Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland 1830 to 1930* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 2000), p. 105.

13 Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission*, 88–89.

14 Tucker, pp. 231–32. Betsy Stockton, a black woman and former slave, was the first recorded single woman missionary from North America. She went to Hawaii in 1823 but was only permitted to go as a maid to a missionary couple. However once in Hawaii she was also able to teach in a school.

15 Robert, 'Women in World Mission: Controversies and Challenges from a North American Perspective', p. 51.

16 The majority of missionary work during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was undertaken by women. Sunquist, p. 109.

17 Janette Hassey, 'A Brief History of Christian Feminism', *Transformation*, 6.2 (1989), 1–5 (p. 4) <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1177/026537888900600201>.

18 Francis-Dehqani, p. 128.

a complex mix of factors. While interpreting motives can be problematic, the women gospel-bearers were generally fuelled by faith rather than feminism.[19] Most conformed to the prevailing Victorian idea of separate gender spheres, aspiring to the 'cult of true womanhood' in which women disseminated purity, piety and domesticity not only in their home but in wider society. Forsaking all for foreign lands was therefore not seen as feminist rebellion but rather a fulfilment of Christian female calling, the mission field an empire-wide extension of the domestic realm.[20]

The springboard for the feminine leap from local to global mission was the development of 'Women's Work for Women.'[21] Responding to appeals from missionary wives on the field, the establishment of schools for girls[22] and then 'zenana' missions reaching Indian wives living in seclusion,[23] was something only female missionaries were deemed able to do. The predominantly single missionary workforce was therefore galvanized to serve their indigenous sisters by training them up to be godly wives and mothers,[24] while unconsciously exemplifying a rather contradictory model of independent womanhood.[25]

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19 Elizabeth Prevost, 'Married to the Mission Field: Gender, Christianity, and Professionalization in Britain and Colonial Africa, 1865–1914', *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 4 (October 2008), p. 798, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25482893> [Accessed 11th April 2023]. See also excerpts from letters in Cathy Ross, *Women with a Mission: Rediscovering Missionary Wives in Early New Zealand* (Auckland, N.Z: Penguin Books, 2006).

20 Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016), pp. 20–26.

21 Robert, 'Women in World Mission: Controversies and Challenges from a North American Perspective', p. 56.

22 Margaret E. Donaldson, '"The Cultivation of the Heart and the Moulding of the Will..." The Missionary Contribution of the Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India, and the East', in *Women in the Church*, ed. by W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), xxvii, 429–42 (p. 430).

23 *Zenana* missions started off as outreach to wives living in the '*zenana*' of their in-laws' homes but the term came to be synonymous with any work done by female missionaries. Pioneers of this ministry included the Free Church of Scotland Society in Calcutta and later the Church of Scotland Association in Poona. Macdonald, pp. 117–18.

24 Robert, 'Women in World Mission: Controversies and Challenges from a North American Perspective', p. 56.

25 Francis-Dehqani, p. 132.

The paradigms of Victorian femininity were further challenged, albeit unintentionally,[26] as pressing needs on the mission field saw many women branch out into traditional 'male' activities, such as preaching, construction, exploration and itinerant evangelism.[27] Mary Slessor of Calabar (1848–1915) lived among the 'dangerous' Okoyong people, was appointed Vice-Consul of her area and scouted out virgin territory for mission work.[28] Johanna Veenstra (1894–1933) set up a boarding school for young male evangelists in Nigeria and trekked to outlying villages to proclaim the gospel.[29]

This expansion of activity gave many women missionaries a level of freedom and responsibility impossible at home,[30] but theirs was both a liberating and bewildering world.[31] Expected to be feisty mission pioneers yet subordinate helpers[32] to male colleagues sometimes resulted in conflict and hurt. Lottie Moon (1840–1912) complained of the lack of equal rights in field decision-making and moved to another area of China to escape 'the high-handed authority' of her field director.[33] Jane Waterston (1843–1932) stayed in Livingstonia for only six months instead of five years after her supervisor did not acknowledge her superior training and experience plus refused to accept her criticism regarding his harsh treatment of indigenous people.[34]

Yet just as the Bible talks of receiving blessing in giving,[35] the service of the gospel-bearers who sacrificed much for the good of their indigenous sisters,[36] precipitated their own transformation.[37] Women's involvement in foreign missions pushed open doors for women to receive education, not only in the more 'feminine' professions of nursing and teaching but also in theology and medicine. For example Jane Waterston was the first Scotswoman to take a full medical course and qualify for entry on to the Medical Register in 1879 with the intention of serving as a doctor in Central Africa for the Free Church of Scotland, while in 1894 the non-denominational Women's Missionary College was established in Edin-

26 Prevost, p. 798.
27 Macdonald, p. 109.
28 Macdonald, pp. 124–25.
29 Tucker, p. 247.
30 Francis-Dehqani, p. 135.
31 Prevost, p. 824.
32 Haggis, p. 186.
33 Tucker, pp. 236–37.
34 Macdonald, pp. 133–36.
35 Such as in Luke 6:38 and Matt. 20:16.
36 Francis-Dehqani, p. 128.
37 Haggis, pp. 171–72.

burgh.[38] Christian service offered a valid alternative to marriage[39] and women used this freedom to develop new and innovative models of mission, such as Mary Slessor's plan to train indigenous evangelists[40] and the initiative of Mary Elizabeth Wood (1861–1931) to establish China's first public library.[41]

In this way women gospel-bearers became empowered by the gender ideology that also restricted them, their mission-focus making them active agents in the formation of women's history.[42]

WOMEN AS GOSPEL-ACTIVISTS

The women's foreign missions enterprise was made possible by the home-team of gospel-activists who sent female missionaries overseas as their personal representatives.[43] Emboldened by the needs of 'oppressed' indigenous sisters,[44] women worked with sympathetic men to set up church-like missionary societies validated by the cause of women reaching women.[45] British societies like the Female Education Society (1834) and the Edinburgh Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India (1837) led the way,[46] with North American denominational mission

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38 Macdonald, pp. 120–21 and 150–51. Haggis, p. 176.

39 Single women were encouraged to remain unmarried and dedicate themselves to mission work although they were free to marry on the mission field should they so choose. Many missionary societies stopped paying a salary to married women and insisted they repay expenses owed if they married within five years of their appointment. Haggis, pp. 174–75.

40 Macdonald, pp. 140–42.

41 Donovan, p. 303.

42 Francis-Dehqani, p. 129.

43 Dana L. Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, 12.1 (2002), 59–89 (p. 72) <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2002.12.1.59>.

44 'Non-Christian women on the mission field were regarded as oppressed, subjugated, and alienated from their true womanly nature.' Line Nyhagen Predelli, 'Missionary Women and Feminism in Norway, 1906–1910', *Nora: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 9.1 (2001), 37–52 (p. 38) <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740117109>.

45 Macdonald, pp. 113, 144–46. It was essential to have support from men since early mission societies required their participation both legally and to grant validity to the project.

46 Donaldson outlines the establishment of an early example of a society promoting girls' education, the non-denominational Female Education Society, founded in London in 1834 and running to 1899. Margaret E. Donaldson, 'The Invisible Factor – 19th Century Feminist Evangelical Concern for

societies appearing thirty years later after the Civil War. These societies gathered the support of millions[47] and became the first large-scale grass-roots organisations for women[48] as their members focused on missions as the primary church venture they could legitimately pursue.[49]

Although these gospel-activists encountered male opposition and even ridicule,[50] their mission societies generally upheld the status quo regarding a woman's place and were criticized by some for actually being 'mini-brotherhoods' serving men's interests and ideas.[51] Yet they also acted as centres of 'girl-power' in which women gained collective confidence and experience, developing new skills[52] in administration, advocacy and publicity. Missionary publications, which elevated women like Mary Slessor and 'martyr' Harriet Newell (1793–1812) to cult heroine status, captured this emerging dichotomy in the ideal of Christian womanhood by praising the twin missionary qualities of gentle tenderness alongside gutsy courage.[53]

Human Rights', *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 2.2 (1989), 3–15; Donaldson, xxvii. Another example comes from Church of Scotland women who in 1837 set up the Edinburgh Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India, after an appeal for help from missionary wife Margaret Wilson who died in 1835. Macdonald, pp. 112–13.

47 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 68. Robert notes that in North America local mission groups were active in the early nineteenth century although regional and national societies were established from the 1860s onwards. Also referring to North America, she adds 'By the twentieth century, approximately three million women were dues-paying members of more than forty women's denominational missionary societies.'

48 Macdonald, p. 110.

49 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 59.

50 It took sixteen years for Southern Baptist women to get the convention to approve the Woman's Missionary Union in 1888. Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 69.

51 Daly, p. 331.

52 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 68.

53 Harriet Newell (1793–1812) was the first American missionary of this period to die in service, due to complications after giving birth while at sea. Although she was not martyred as such, she became a saint-like symbol of the missionary enterprise. Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', pp. 60–63. Macdonald describes how Mary Slessor became a cult heroine. Macdonald, pp. 159–60.

Glass ceilings were quietly broken in other ways too, particularly in activities such as fund-raising and public speaking. Women's societies made a tremendous financial contribution to foreign missions,[54] supporting hundreds of women missionaries on the field and continually coming up with community fund-raising ideas, from the sponsoring of specific projects to creating handwork for sale.[55] The quest for funds led gospel-activists to do the unthinkable and speak to mixed gatherings. Initially greeted with outrage – a mob burned down the building in which Quaker Angelina Grimké (1805–1879) had spoken in 1837 – female public speaking gradually became more acceptable in the 1840s and 1850s. Yet this came about only because the audience was satisfied with the speakers' 'feminine demeanor,'[56] demonstrating how the women themselves had to negotiate 'an ideological tightrope' in order to fulfil their mission vision.[57]

Many gospel-activists used their newfound female consciousness, skills and self-assurance to play a key role in other female initiatives.[58] Spurred on by a desire for moral reform emanating from the revival movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries[59] and enabled by unprecedented middle-class prosperity,[60] numerous Anglo-American women embarked on a series of vigorous campaigns against traditions and practices harmful to the family. Frances Willard (1839–1898) headed up the Women's Christian Temperance Union while groups of Christian women in the USA formed the Anti-Saloon League and visited public houses threatening to hatchet the bars unless the alcohol was poured away. In Britain Josephine Butler (1828–1906) campaigned against the Contagious Diseases Acts which exonerated men and blamed prostitutes for the spread of sexually transmitted disease.[61] Gospel-activists were at the forefront of these movements[62] which won considerable political victories for women's welfare and human rights.

Women's increasing activism in missions also provoked calls for their involvement in church leadership.[63] The presence of female evan-

54 Donovan, p. 304.
55 Macdonald, p. 145.
56 Lee-Barnewall, p. 27.
57 Francis-Dehqani, p. 128.
58 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 69.
59 Elaine Storkey, *What's Right with Feminism?* (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 140.
60 Offen, p. 137. Brumberg, pp. 351–52.
61 Storkey, pp. 139–49.
62 Lee-Barnewall, p. 19.
63 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 68.

gelists employed in England from the early Victorian period[64] as well as renowned women preachers of the 1860s connected to the revivalist movements, such as Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874) and Catherine Booth (1829–1890),[65] also stood as a testament to the efficacy of women's public ministry. Many of these evangelists and preachers explicitly rejected feminist ideas, with Palmer preaching only from the pulpit steps and often refraining from publishing works under her own name.[66] Yet the example of their ministries combined with the powerful model of women missionaries to provide a catalyst towards female ordination. Interestingly, the numbers of ordained women in North America, especially prolific among premillennial churches, reached its peak around the turn of the century, in parallel with the denominational women's missionary movement.[67] Robert also notes how the forced mergers of women's mission societies with male-controlled parent denominations in the 1910s and 1920s instigated campaigns for laity rights and then ordination as women resisted this barrier to mission-involvement.[68]

The link between feminism and mission becomes more obvious in gospel-activists' participation in suffrage campaigns,[69] Maria Stewart (1803–1879) and Sarah Grimké (1792–1873) being prominent examples.[70] In fact, the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, widely regarded as the origin of the women's rights movement, took place in a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.[71] However because many Christian women disassociated them-

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64 Donald M. Lewis, '"Lights in Dark Places": Women Evangelists in Early Victorian Britain, 1838–1857', in *Women in the Church*, ed. by W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), xxvii, 415–27.

65 Olive Anderson, 'Women Preachers in Mid-Victorian Britain: Some Reflexions on Feminism, Popular Religion and Social Change', *The Historical Journal*, 12.3 (1969), 467–84 <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1017/S0018246X0000724X>.

66 Anderson, p. 483.

67 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 71.

68 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', p. 72.

69 Storkey, pp. 143–44.

70 Susan M. Hartman, 'Expanding Feminism's Field and Focus: Activism in the National Council of Churches in the 1960s and 1970s', in *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, ed. by Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 49–69 (p. 49). Maria Stewart was the first American-born woman to defend women's rights in public while Sarah Grimké was active as an abolitionist and feminist.

71 Hassey, p. 4.

selves with overt feminism,[72] some contemporary feminist historiography has tended to discount their contribution to the women's movement.[73] This view is changing with several scholars recognising a bias on the part of past and present historians.[74] Gospel-activists are becoming seen as 'religious feminists' who base their pro-women stance on scripture rather than rights,[75] with a valid place in the broad spectrum of feminist history and thought.[76]

Thus the gospel-activists, inspired by faith and example, discovered female 'self-conscious corporate agency'[77] in their support of missionary women and used this to push back the boundaries of their own world.

WOMEN AS GOSPEL-RECEIVERS

Women missionaries advanced on foreign lands with the express desire of bringing transformation to their indigenous sisters.[78] Ironically, those who were expected to 'exercise a cohesive and unifying influence' at home became 'agents for social change' on the mission field.[79] The politically correct thinkers of today often baulk at the cultural bias and paternalism of some missionaries of the modern missions movement who offered the gospel tied up in the bundle of 'civilisation'.[80] While women were not responsible for setting the colonial agenda, some were indeed guilty of 'feminist imperialism': on one hand identifying with indigenous sisters in their shared inferiority to men while also lording over them as bearers of a 'superior' culture.[81]

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72 Lee-Barnewall, p. 32.

73 Francis-Dehqani, p. 126.

74 Lee-Barnewall, p. 19.

75 Storkey, pp. 133–41. Storkey discusses the origins of both rights-based feminism, stemming from Enlightenment ideas of individual liberty, and scripture-based feminism which stresses dignity and equality plus the need to uphold the rights of others.

76 Offen, p. 138.

77 Macdonald, p. 21.

78 Macdonald, p. 130.

79 Macdonald, p. 107.

80 Brumberg, pp. 349–50. Brumberg shows how some mission society publications promoted cultural stereotypes. Donaldson, p. 9. Donaldson tells how missionaries from the Female Education Society in South Africa tried to prevent their pupils from wearing tribal dress and attending traditional dances.

81 Francis-Dehqani, pp. 131–32.

However missionaries have often been unfairly lumped together with the sins of colonialism and empire.[82] It is unhelpful to regard imperialism in simplistic terms of 'virtuous, idyllic east meets evil, destructive west'[83] and foist contemporary 'enlightened' expectations on nineteenth century missionary figures who cannot speak back.[84] Rather, it should be remembered that many gospel-bearers, such as Scots missionary to India, Annie Small (1857–1945),[85] recognised the failings of their home culture and adapted successfully to their new one, as did Amy Carmichael (1867–1951).[86]

Women gospel-bearers brought real and life-transforming changes to thousands of women, in terms of spiritual life, medical treatment and sense of worth.[87] The recent flourishing of the church in the majority world, particularly among women, is no doubt due in no small part to their ministry. Great strides were also made in education, so much so that in the space of sixty years some Indian women had gone from no schooling to the possibility of attending university, even before women in Scotland had achieved these goals.[88] Many, like Female Education Society teacher Elizabeth Sturrock, empowered the girls in their classroom by training them as monitors and trainee teachers and by taking collections for mission work elsewhere.[89] Lucky pupils were brought to the west and became the first generation of modern women leaders in their own countries, such as Michi Kawai who studied in the US and later founded the YWCA and a girls' school in Japan.[90]

Although women missionaries sometimes spoke up *for* their indigenous sisters instead of *with* them,[91] they prioritised the wellbeing and rights of women and children,[92] fighting against harmful practices, such

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82 Sunquist, pp. 94–98. See Sunquist's useful discussion on mission, colonialism and power.

83 Francis-Dehqani, p. 133.

84 Alan Jacobs, *Breaking Bread with the Dead: Reading the Past in Search of a Tranquil Mind*, 2020, pp. 27–43. See the interesting discussion on 'Table Fellowship' regarding interaction with historical figures in chapter two.

85 Macdonald, pp. 107–8.

86 Tucker, p. 241. Francis-Dehqani, p. 129.

87 Macdonald, p. 131.

88 Macdonald, p. 117.

89 Donaldson, xxvii, pp. 440–41.

90 Robert, 'The Influence of American Missionary Women on the World Back Home', pp. 77–78.

91 Riley, p. 295.

92 Robert, 'Women in World Mission: Controversies and Challenges from a North American Perspective', p. 57.

as twin deaths and wife fattening.[93] In 1906 a clash by Scottish missionaries with people in Kenya over female circumcision eventually resulted in indigenous women asserting their right to stand against this custom in 1922.[94] Many women missionaries influenced both in precept and example.[95] Although they didn't preach feminism, the nature of their ministries acted as a countersign to the rhetoric of separate spheres[96] and impacted the broader social structure of their host cultures.[97]

In this way the women gospel-receivers inherited a legacy of faith and feminist change from their Anglo-American sisters which opened doors for many.[98]

CONCLUSION

Feminism and mission came together in the women's foreign missionary movement as women surpassed boundaries of geography, religion, politics, culture and gender to bring the gospel to their indigenous sisters. While most only whispered the word feminism rather than shouted it, women were both transformed and transformative on the mission field and at home.

'Women's Work for Women' demonstrates the power of a God-anointed women's movement and provides incentive for celebrating the female majority in the world church today. Instead of simply lamenting the 'missing males,' this encourages us to develop holistic mission strategies which realise the 'full liberating potential of the gospel'[99] and empower women to serve shoulder to shoulder alongside their brothers. It also provides a model to reclaim feminism on scriptural grounds and proclaim the revolutionary biblical concepts of dignity, justice and freedom that women have in Christ.

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93 Macdonald, p. 123.

94 Macdonald, pp. 126–27.

95 Donaldson, xxvii, p. 8.

96 Macdonald, p. 109.

97 Donna Downe, 'Confused Missionary Roles – Theirs or Mine?', in *Frontline Women: Negotiating Crosscultural Issues in Ministry*, ed. by Marguerite G. Kraft (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003), pp. 101–22 (p. 117).

98 Donaldson, xxvii, p. 441.

99 Robert, 'Women in World Mission: Controversies and Challenges from a North American Perspective', p. 61.

The Attraction of Monastic Asceticism: Some Issues to Face

Kenneth J. Stewart

An evangelical Protestant aiming to evaluate the history of monastic practice does not take up this task as a neutral observer. The entire Protestant movement in general and the evangelical Protestant heritage in particular represent a kind of verdict against monastic history. And yet, the examination of monastic history can prove disarming. The writer can recall that while a Puritan-leaning evangelical postgraduate, he developed a surprising kinship with St. Bernard and the austerity-loving Cistercians. Only later did he learn of the major theological debt John Calvin owed to Bernard (1090-1153), a second-generation Cistercian.[1]

Admitting to this admiration is a helpful starting point from which to assemble a critical and biblical framework for thinking about monasticism and the ascetic practices we have come to associate with it. Such evaluation is highly necessary at the present time as we witness growing curiosity in the monastic past.[2] As evangelical Protestants we should want a critical framework that honours the supremacy of Holy Scripture and privileges it to be the judge of all important questions of faith and life. Here then are several guardrails to keep our explorations of monastic asceticism from veering off the main road of biblical Christianity.

I. THE NEW TESTAMENT CONTAINS NO MORE THAN THE SEEDS OF A CONCEPT OF ASCETICISM

The NT contains what might be called allusions to the idea of 'training', 'exertion', or 'practice' in holy living. But for this purpose, it employs words already in circulation in the Graeco-Roman world. The sole NT occurrence of the verb '*askéo*' (from which our term 'asceticism' is derived) is found in Acts 24:16, where the Apostle Paul speaks of his '*striving* to

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1 These dependencies have been explored by W. Stanford Reid, 'Bernard of Clairvaux in the Thought of John Calvin', *Westminster Theological Journal* 41.1 (1978), 127-145, and Anthony N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), chaps. 4, 5.

2 This fascination is illustrated by the attention paid to Rod Dreher's *The Benedict Option* (New York: Sentinel, 2017). Within evangelicalism, the trend is illustrated by the reception given to the writings of Greg Peters, *Reforming the Monastery* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013) and *The Story of Monasticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015). The first volume is especially illuminating.

keep his conscience clear'. Using an athletic metaphor, he speaks of the Christian's need for 'strict training' as in training for competitive games; this requires bodily control. The verb is '*hupopiazo*' (1 Cor. 9:25-27).[3] A parallel concept of 'training' appears in 1 Timothy 4:7, where Timothy is exhorted by Paul, 'train yourself to be godly'. The verb is '*gumnazéo*'. Worthy of consideration alongside these Pauline statements is that of the writer to the Hebrews (12:1-2) who urges readers to 'run with perseverance'. The verb is '*trecho*', suggesting exertion. We need to ask the question 'what are the things most conducive to this training?' We consider *four* possible avenues which have been recurring in monastic history.

a) Will training in godliness have to do with Terrain?

In the New Testament, we read of the rigorous style of life associated with the wilderness ministry of desert-dweller John the Baptist: 'In the wilderness of Judea…John's clothes were made of camel hair and he had a leather belt around his waist; his food was locusts and wild honey' (Matt. 3:1-4). By contrast, we need to allow that Jesus endured an extended temptation in the wilderness which was at the same time *preparatory* to the commencement of his public ministry (Matt. 4:1-11). We cannot say that Jesus' own earthly life was characterized by what could be called a withdrawal from society. Admittedly, his own communion with God was sometimes carried out in solitary places (Luke 4:42) and he did some of his training of the twelve in just such locales, where they would be undisturbed (Mark 6:31, 32); but He and they were most often in towns and cities. And unlike John the Baptist, neither Jesus or the disciples shunned the Jerusalem temple or local synagogues. Apostolic Christianity was to be lived out in society (Matt 28:19-20) and so is the life of the believer (1 Cor. 5:9).

b) Will training in godliness have to do with Residence?

While on the one hand, Jesus stressed that he personally had no place to call home (Matt. 8:19), we are on firm ground in supposing that, prior to the dispersion of the Apostles after the Jerusalem Council (circa 48AD), home ownership such as Peter's (recorded in Mark 1:29) was the custom. The meetings of the first Christians after Pentecost took place in homes as well as in the part of the temple courts known as Solomon's Colonnade (Acts 2:46; 3:11; 12:12). These devout believers continued to maintain personal property and voluntarily liquidated portions of it to meet common needs (Acts 4:36). Maintaining a home of one's own had no stigma attached to it, though Jesus did contemplate at least some of his follow-

[3] Scripture references and quotations are from the *New International Version* (1984).

ers 'leaving home…and family' (Matt. 19:29). Evidently, Paul was such a disciple; he reminded the proud Corinthians that he knew, by experience, what it was to be hungry, thirsty, ragged and homeless (1 Cor. 4:11).

3) Will training in godliness have to do with Diet and Social Life?
Jesus was criticized for his social life. He knew that others described him as 'the Son of Man coming eating and drinking.' In the same passage, he is reportedly accused of being 'a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners' (Matt. 11:19). And if his approach to companions was eclectic, so also was it eclectic as regards food. The New Testament teaching on food is not only that the former distinction between clean and unclean food is passé (Mark 7:19, Acts 10:15, 1 Tim. 4:4), but that limiting or restricting food is without merit. The Apostle Paul says (Romans 14:6), 'Food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.'

4) Will training in godliness have to do with Marriage and Celibacy?
Jesus was, of course, unmarried. But while he allowed that there would be disciples who were 'eunuchs for the kingdom' (Matt. 19:11), the New Testament records no command or obligation that anyone should make this their choice. It is clear that marriage was not forbidden to the twelve Apostles. Peter had a mother-in-law whom Jesus healed (Mark 1:29); the Apostle Paul, while at least single at the time of writing his first Corinthian letter (1 Cor. 7:8), alludes in the same letter to the fact that *other* apostles (Peter included) are travelling the Mediterranean world *with* their wives (1 Cor. 9:5). The brothers of Jesus (by then travelling preachers in their own right) are similarly described in the same place.

II. THERE WAS ANOTHER ASCETICISM ROOTED IN PLATONIC THOUGHT

In sum, we may say that the 'striving' or 'training' in godliness encouraged in the New Testament is *not* bound up with these things. It is with this framework clarified that we can next consider that in the world of the New Testament, there was another asceticism being advocated that was an outgrowth of Greek philosophical ideas. Plato had supplied the basis for a form of asceticism different from the training of a Christian. The *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* indicates:

> Plato formulated a cosmological dualism between the home of the gods as a realm of ideas, being and perfection and the human world of shadows, becoming and imperfection. Human existence came to be seen as the tempo-

> rary sojourn of the eternal soul (which comes from the realm of ideas), in a material body. The latter in fact imprisons the soul, which properly seeks its proper level…Corporeal nature is transient and only interferes with the soul's quest to become like God.[4]

There is evidence that these ideas were confusing Christian believers in the first century. Thus, Paul's first letter to Timothy warned against those who 'forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving' (1 Tim. 4:3). The same Apostle cautioned his Colossian readers to be wary of the 'false humility' bound up with man-made rules dictating what could be touched or tasted (2:20-23). The New Testament examples of encouragement of abstinence from marriage are urged on Christians because of the perceived nearness of the return of Christ rather than because of disdain for bodily life. 'The time is short,' Paul says. This is the basis for Paul's advice to those not yet married (1 Cor. 7:29). Yet he is quick to add that those who marry do *not* sin.

Some forms of ministry actually assumed married status (1 Tim. 3:2); others required that there be no re-marriage after bereavement (1 Tim. 5:9, 10). We may say that the married state was normal among the Apostles. All this being so, we are left to explain how later Christian ascetic practices—so many of which went counter to this record of the gospel history—took hold. There are so many instances of variance.

III. THE GROWTH OF THESE ASCETIC PRACTICES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES EXPLANATION AND ASSESSMENT

While the NT contains what might be called rudimentary indications of the training of the Christian, the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era show a proliferation of strategies and practices which were assumed to advance holiness of life. If these developments would be deemed to be questionable, how is their emergence to be explained? It is time to call on some historians of monasticism. They suggest:

a) The absorption of Platonic notions which denigrate the body and promote the ideal of celibacy

We begin to see traces of this in the heretic, Marcion, who had been exposed to Gnostic teaching. Marcion will not accept the incarnation of the Son because he accepts that the human body (in this case, that of

[4] s.v. 'Asceticism' in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. by Everett F. Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1990), pp. 104, 105.

Mary), being physical matter, is tainted.[5] There are also traces also of this among the Montanists, who prescribed long fasts, utterly forbade remarriage, and dictated the length of veils to be worn by women.[6] Alexandria, Egypt—a great centre of Greek education and culture , as well as early Christian theology—was, along with these, a depot for the spread of sub-Christian ideas about the neglect of and disregard for the human body. Manicheism (which ensnared the young Augustine) also exhibited these traits. There were strict dietary regulations including abstention from meat and wine; they renounced all material goods. Here, there is the clear possibility of the passing on of traits to monasticism.[7]

b) The third century alarm at the worldliness of the Church

It ought to strike us as odd that when the revered Antony of Egypt (251-356) first heard the call of Jesus to give up all that he had and to come and follow him (as Matt. 19:21 was read in church) his first thought was of leaving the church.[8] The year was about 270 A.D. The great Decian persecution had come and gone. In the lulls between state-sponsored persecutions, the church in the Roman world experienced significant growth. And yet many thoughtful Christians did not like what they observed unfolding in the church. Antony first found a 'holy man' at village-edge. Evidently, such semi-withdrawn holy men were common in the third century.[9] Only later did Antony join with hermits and monastic communities already established in the desert. Evidently, earnest Christians like Antony no longer looked on the church as the 'locale' where the Spirit of God was doing His best transformative work. Why settle for the church when you could join yourself to a community of the committed in the wilderness? This explanation for monasticism's origin (the sagging of church vigour through the influx of nominal believers, rather than persecution) is supported by monastic historians H.B. Workman, David Knowles, and Christopher Brooke.[10] The first of these insisted, 'The rise of monasticism coincided, roughly speaking, with the loss of the church in the world.'

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5 s.v. 'Antony of Egypt' in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. by Ferguson, p. 569.

6 s.v. 'Montanism' in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. by Ferguson, pp. 622, 623.

7 William Harmless, S.J., *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 437-439.

8 Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, ed. and trans. by Robert P. Meyer (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1950), p. 20.

9 Harmless, *Desert Christians*, p. 419.

10 H.B. Workman, *The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal* (1913; reprinted Boston, MA: Beacon, 1962). David Knowles, *Christian Monasticism* (London: Wei-

Knowles added that the earliest monks had 'a conception of the Christian life as lived at different power, so to say, by recognized groups or classes'. Christopher Brooke put it this way: 'Antony and his colleagues and followers fled into the desert to escape both popular religion and persecution. In the late third century, the crowd must have seemed the greater menace.'[11]

The undoubted industry, self-reliance and discipline of the desert fathers (as they were called) do not, in and of themselves, deflect attention away from certain nagging defects in their way of life. Of these deficiencies, we can name three in particular:

a) The neglect or slighting of the human body through excessive fasting, extended exposure to the elements and insects, and sleep deprivation represent a Platonic rather than a biblical mindset.

b) The evading of oversight by the church (about whose health the early monks were sceptical), by geographical separation. It took centuries for the church to assert its authority over the monastery. This concern goes hand in hand with a third:

c) The promotion of the avoidance of society as if it were a good thing in itself. Desert monasticism, whether of the hermit or communal type, used the desert experience *not* as a preparation-ground for public ministry in society (which might have been said to characterize the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles), but as a destination. The promotion of this life as if it were modelled on apostolic life was deeply flawed; it shunned public ministry in favour of sequestered devotion. Basil of Caesarea (330-379), having gone to observe the desert monks at first hand, returned home with the conviction that something was amiss. 'If you live alone, whose feet will you wash?' he asked.[12] Basil's monastery would serve an adjacent orphanage, a hospital and a workshop for the unemployed.[13] For the monks of Egypt and Sinai, the social and societal horizon was being

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denfeld and Nicolson, 1969). Christopher Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister: The Story of Monastic Life in the Middle Ages* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003).

11 Workman, *The Evolution of the Monastic Idea*, p. 6. Knowles, *Christian Monasticism*, p. 10. Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister*, p. 29. C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 3rd edn (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001), like Brooke acknowledges two factors motivating monastic recruits. In addition to persecution, he mentions (p. 1) 'a reaction by finer spirits against the laxer standards and the careerism that crept into the church'.

12 *Regulae Fusius Tractatae, Interrogatio* vii, PG 31, 394, translated in W.K. Lowther Clarke, *The Ascetical Works of St. Basil* (1925) as quoted in C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 3rd edn (Harlow, U.K.; Pearson Educational, 2001), p. 9.

13 Knowles, *Christian Monasticism*, p. 22.

eclipsed by the personal quest for holiness. This last consideration leads us to a concern implicit in what has just been said.

IV. THE STEADY MODIFICATION OF MONASTIC LIFE INDICATES NOT ONLY ADAPTATION BUT CRITIQUE OF EARLIER FORMS

It is a commonplace to observe that as monasticism is transported from Egypt and Sinai to Syria, Cappadocia and points further west, it adapts to new climates (where seasonal changes are more pronounced) and new social conditions (with monasteries now often being nearer to towns and cities). The *Rule* of Benedict is symbolic of these adaptations; the Benedictine regime is also more moderate when it comes to diet, clothing, and dormitories. Benedictine monasteries will, at least initially, function as working farms. Meanwhile, the priest-monks supervised by Augustine of Hippo (termed 'canons' because they live by a Rule) take urban ministry very seriously. By contrast, the Irish monks of the era of the barbarian invasions combine features of the Egyptian desert, marked by disdain for the body (hence the unheated, unlit, windowless beehive-like stone cells of the west of Ireland) with itinerant evangelism. There is the same expectation (evangelization) laid on the monks who accompany Augustine of Canterbury, sent from Rome to England in 597 as well as those who cross from Ireland to Scotland and the Continent. These developments represent critique as well as adaptation. The adaptation and critique are ongoing. What is most obvious is that the notion of holiness as requiring utter removal from the world has been challenged. It is coming to be accepted that Christian monks have obligations to reach the world at large.

As well, it is becoming more clear with the passage of time that monastic life is not for men of peasant stock, but for young men from families of means. Monastic recruits generally come from good families and bring with them some net worth to contribute to the life of the monastery. In the era of Charlemagne (crowned 800 AD), western monasteries are coming more and more under the jurisdiction and protection of wealthy landowners, who site monasteries on their own lands and function as patrons over them. These are now called 'proprietary' monasteries. Such monasteries and convents soon become havens for younger sons (who cannot inherit family assets under laws of primogeniture) and for unmarried daughters of the wealthy (who now may find an honourable position in a convent as an abbess). Monastic life is growing more comfortable, and monasteries are themselves well-endowed in consequence of their readiness to accept bequests intended to ensure prayers for the departed. The earlier Benedictine emphasis on monastic physical labour as the counterpart to prayer (*ora et labora*) gives way to the employment

of substitute 'lay brothers' who undertake the sweaty toil necessary to feed and to support the monastic community. Benedictine monks spend more and more hours of the day in chapel services. This domestication of monasticism in the West calls forth a reaction.

In the hill country of north Italy, Romuald of Ravenna (950-1027) left a comfortable Cluniac monastery to establish at Camaldoli 'the solitude and severity of Egyptian monasticism.'[14] Romuald also established a strict Benedictine monastery as the 'prep school' of that Egypt-style hermitage which was set at a higher mountain elevation. The Carthusian movement, begun near Grenoble in 1176 similarly promoted mountain hermit life. The Cistercian movement, led by Stephen Harding (1060-1134) is simply the best-known of the several reactions against the too-comfortable existence of the Benedictines (exemplified by Cluny) and the too-intrusive arm of the secular power which had adversely affected monasticism in the west since Charlemagne. Their monastic houses would not be built close to existing towns and cities, but in waste places. The monks themselves would labour and perspire to support the life of the community. And they did so with remarkable results.

Within a century these Cistercian 'white monks' had grown affluent and comfortable by the strength of their own physical labour. The Cistercians of what is today's coastal Belgium were soon so rich that they maintained a fleet of their own sea-going vessels to transport their superabundant supplies of wool to markets. The Cisterican order itself had to forbid these ships from carrying any cargo other than that produced by the monks themselves.[15] The Cistercians soon had lay-brothers helping with the chores, just as the Benedictines had done. This order, originally embodying a primitive impulse, had become the Cistercian Corporation LLC!

The growth of urbanization in western Europe after the year 1200 called for a further adaptation and critique. The rural population began to be depleted as working people gravitated to the towns and cities in search of employment in manufacturing and trade.[16] Recognizing both that Europe's existing urban churches could not cope with this influx of population from the countryside and that European clergy were ill-equipped to preach to the masses, Dominican and Franciscan orders arose to address the deficiencies among the European clergy. This is

[14] Knowles, *Christian Monasticism*, p. 62.

[15] R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 266, 267.

[16] Knowles, *Christian Monasticism*, p. 77 claims that the population of Europe doubled between 1050 and 1200.

church reform by innovation of ministry. These orders were intentionally urban. They took up itinerant and open-air preaching; they gathered funds for the erecting of new urban churches (which remain to this day in European cities bearing the names 'Franciscan' and 'Dominican'). These orders had put themselves at the service of the papacy for urban ministry, for the refutation of heresy and for the conduct of missionary effort to the East and West. What had this to do with the deserts of Egypt or the wilds of West Ireland? Where was the old aloofness from the institutional church? The monastic idea was being altered and reconfigured for a new and demanding age. And the same, exactly, could be said about the origin of the Society of Jesus in 1534. Here was a strike force, also directly responsible to the Papacy, for the refutation of Protestant error in Europe and the spread of the gospel elsewhere. The earliest monks had kept the institutional church at arm's length. A thousand years later, the new monastic orders are at the beck and call of the church hierarchy.

One is entitled to ask, 'Will the genuine monasticism please stand up?' Is it solitary or corporate? Is it independent of the institutional church or an auxiliary, subject to the same? Is it best sited in rural and wilderness areas or ought it to be proximate to the areas of greatest human need? Must the monastic life be self-sustaining or may it accept endowment, and with that endowment a degree of control by persons outside it?

In passing, it is worth acknowledging that Benedictine monasticism, so often criticized in past centuries for its placidity, its accumulated wealth, and tendency to allow domination from wealthy non-monastic feudal lords, has actually proved to be the most enduring.[17] It has rebounded while some other forms, begun in attempts to return to more primitive and rigorous forms, have dwindled. Were the critiques made of the Benedictines without point then? Or were the Benedictines, like other orders, only approximations, attempts at something which while noble, was elusive?

V. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE MONASTIC LIFE WERE IN DECLINE WELL BEFORE THE AGE OF REFORM

Not only was there strife between the religious orders, as to which of them most nearly approximated Apostolic life, but there is evidence of public dissatisfaction with the vaunted claims of monks in advance of any threatened breach of western Christendom in Luther's time. Pre-Refor-

[17] It is striking how contemporary author, Denis Okholm, drew attention to what could be called the 'comforts' of the Benedictine way in his *Monk Habits for Everyday People* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

mation monasticism, like the pre-Reformation church stood in need of reform on account of a decay of devotion and the interference of secular authorities. Sometimes the initiative for monastic reform was provided by public authorities, who noted the decline.[18]

There were criticisms in print: I mention first the Christian humanist, Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457), most famous for his research showing the ancient 'Donation of Constantine' to be fraudulent. In his treatise 'On the Profession of the Religious' (c. 1440), Valla strongly objected to the distinction drawn since the time of Thomas Aquinas, between 'religious' persons (the monastic orders) and rank and file Christians. 'What does it mean to be religious, if not to be a Christian, and indeed a true Christian?' Valla asked.[19] He also held up to critical scrutiny the idea of requiring espousal of religious vows beyond customary Christian teaching. He maintained that ordinary Christians were just as capable of observing poverty, chastity, and obedience as were members of the religious orders.[20] Valla was posing questions overdue for attention since the age of Antony.

Similarly, Erasmus of Rotterdam portrayed the monastic orders unfavourably in his *Colloquies*. In 'The Funeral', a parish priest, a Dominican and a Franciscan are at a dying man's bedside competing with one another as to who will administer the last rites. Then Augustinians and Carmelites arrive and join the fray. It is clear that there is financial gain to be had in administering the last rites and the question at issue was—who was most fit to perform this pastoral duty? The clear implication is that the monks (all under vows of poverty) are intruding in hope of financial gain, in a situation where the pastor's ministries were more than adequate.[21]

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[18] Barry Collett, 'Monasticism' in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. by Hans Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), III, p. 79.

[19] This treatise remained in hand-written copies only until modern times, first appearing in English translation in 1994. By contrast, his *Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine* (1440) was widely circulated and mechanically printed in the wider Renaissance and Reformation period. I consulted it here in the 1994 edition, Lorenzo Valla, *The Profession of the Religious and selections from The Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine* (Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 1994). See especially pp. 48-49.

[20] *Profession of the Religious*, pp. 50-55.

[21] *Erasmus: Ten Colloquies*, ed. and trans. by Craig R. Thompson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp. 90-95. The further irony is that in addition to all the monastic orders being required the taking of vows of poverty; Franciscans were forbidden to ask for or to receive donations. One may find similar

Two such snippets do not make an argument. But they do serve as a caution to us to keep our critical faculties operative. Dewy-eyed evangelicals looking into monastic history are more prone to give blanket approval to what they see than some Roman Catholic eyewitnesses across the centuries.

VI. TAKING PROPER NOTE OF THOSE WHO LEFT MONASTIC LIFE, UNFULFILLED

This acknowledgement that there was Roman Catholic unease about the monastic life in advance of the era of Protestant Reform easily leads us to consider a related concern, i.e. that the ranks of the Protestant Reformers were filled not only with former Roman priests, but also numerous members of Catholic religious orders who had abandoned the cloister. This was true of some orders, more than others. Owen Chadwick has insightfully observed, 'Many leaders of reform were monks or friars. […] More reformers were friars than monks.'[22] He noted that while few Benedictines and Dominicans joined the ranks of the reformers, Franciscans were most likely to do so.[23] All such monks had in common that they had accepted the need for the Scriptural reforms brought in by the Reformation. A few examples will help to make this concrete:

German lands:	Martin Luther, an Augustinian
	Martin Bucer, a Dominican
Netherlands:	Heinrich Moller (Brother Henry): an Augustinian
Switzerland:	Conrad Pelikan, a Franciscan
	Sebastian Münster, a Franciscan
England:	John Hooper, a Cistercian
	Myles Coverdale (Tyndale's continuator), an Augustinian
	Robert Barnes, an Augustinian
Scotland:	John Winram, an Augustinian
	John Willock, a Franciscan
Italy:	Jerome Zanchius, an Augustinian
	Peter Martyr Vermigli, an Augustinian[24]

unfavourable late-medieval finger-pointing at monastic foibles in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Bocaccio's *Decameron*.

22 Owen Chadwick, *The Early Reformation on the Continent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 151.

23 Ibid.

24 I have verified these monastic linkages using the entries in *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) and in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. by Hans Hillerbrand (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

This sampling suggests that for many, monastic life (especially of an Augustinian type) and monastic study opened up inquiries and aspirations which were not fully capable of realization within monastic life. The orientation to biblical and Patristic study and to theology (in all of which monks were frequently more adept than parish clergy) had the effect of catapulting these individuals forward first into Christian humanism and then beyond into Protestant reform.

VII. THE REFORMATION IDEAL WAS NOT ONLY THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS, BUT ALSO FULLER OBSERVANCE BY THOSE BELIEVERS

Reformers such as Luther could take up pen and ink and write against monastic life and vows because they believed it had constituted a 'wrong turn'.[25] The question, early identified in the history of the church, 'what is to be done about the disparate levels of observance and commitment among professed Christians?' had in monasticism received a well-intentioned, but ultimately mistaken answer from the various movements which followed across the centuries. Christian observance, Christian devotion, Christian training, ought to be worked out in the life of the church, rather than away from it. In departing from this principle, monasticism had proved to be an elitist and divisive attempt at addressing a genuine and pressing question.

In the larger frame of Christian history, this pressing question of how to raise the standard of godliness among Christians has been addressed by a number of other strategies. Within Roman Catholicism, this need was eventually addressed by such initiatives as the Brethren of the Common Life (the separate communal life of men and women, living lives of service, yet without formal vows) and in various lay confraternities (voluntary organizations of Catholic believers united to accomplish some identified task, such as poor relief). The advent of the printing press made more widely available Catholic devotional aids such as 'books of hours' which furnished aspiring Christians with Bible readings and prayers for set hours of the day (in imitation of monastic practice). Within Protestantism, the raising of the standard of godliness has variously been addressed by the creation of Pietist 'cells' within mixed congregations,[26]

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[25] Martin Luther, 'On Monastic Vows' (1522) in *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986) 44, pp. 251-400.

[26] Such cells appear to have been promoted at Strasbourg in connection with the ministry of Martin Bucer. See James Kittelson, 'Martin Bucer and the Ministry of the Church' in *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community,*

'praying societies',[27] and by movements of Christian revival.[28] Modern conceptions of Christian education within the local congregation have aimed at raising the level of Scripture knowledge and Christian living for all who enrol.

The major issue to be faced is that of whether Christian congregations will take this need seriously enough to address it directly. Evidently, in the age of Antony of Egypt, local churches were not meeting this need. Monasticism arose to provide a kind of 'finishing school' for Christians with aspirations for discipleship which were not provided in their local churches. Thus came to prominence the ancient equivalent of what we today term 'parachurch' ministries, i.e. mission-specific organizations that aim to advance evangelism, youth ministry, or discipleship. This essay does not mean to suggest that all such efforts are ill-advised or questionable, for valuable parachurch ministries have been aimed at world evangelism, at Christians in business, at mothers of children, and at fathers—all aiming to help Christian believers to function effectively.[29] But we are today, as ever, obliged to ask whether our churches are adequately accepting responsibility for leading believers as a whole to 'purify (themselves) from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.' (2 Cor. 7:1).

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ed. by David F. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 83-94. These were later advocated by Jacob Spener in his *Pia Desideria* (1675).

27 These were common in England and Scotland in the period prior to the Evangelical Revival/Great Awakening of the 1730s. See Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival* (London: Banner, 1971), chap. 4, where the author indicates the prevalence of such gatherings in England and Scotland as well as the Netherlands in the late seventeenth and early eighteenths centuries.

28 The classic in this field is that of Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of the Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979).

29 Here, I refer to such organizations as Operation Mobilization, The Gideons, Christian Businessmen's International, Moms in Prayer International, and Promise Keepers.

What Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Sermon On The Cholera Epidemic Can Teach Us About Multi-Dimensional Characterization In Preaching

Timothy Yap

The recent coronavirus pandemic is not unprecedented. Throughout history, the world has had been acquainted with many similar catastrophes.[1] Starting in the 1830s, London, a city of more than two million people, was struck with the outbreak of cholera.[2] Though scholars are not entirely certain who the first victim of cholera in Britain was, Amanda Thomas argues that it was a twelve-year-old girl by the name of Isabella Hazard (of Sunderland) who passed away in October of 1831.[3] Initially, doctors were not familiar with the symptoms and prognosis for cholera. They had no idea how the disease spread and there was no cure.

Nevertheless, the impact of the catastrophe rippled across the city. According to the *London Medical Gazette*, by 18 June 1831, the epidemic was already on people's minds. 'No medical man can enter a house with-

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1 Sonia Shah, *From Cholera to Ebola and Beyond* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2016).

2 On the issue of the outbreak of cholera in Victorian England, see James Alderson, *A Brief Outline of the History and Progress of Cholera at Hull* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1932);
Thomas Shapter, *The History of the Cholera in Exeter in 1932* (London: S. R. Publishers, 1978); Margaret Pelling, *Cholera, Fever and English Medicine, 1825-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Dorothy Porter, *Health, Civilization and the State: A History of Public Health from Ancient to Modern Times* (London: Routledge, 1999); John G. Avery, *The Cholera Years: An Account of the Cholera Outbreaks in Our Ports, Towns, and Villages* (Southampton: Beech Books, 2001); Amanda J. Thomas, *The Lambeth Cholera Outbreak of 1848-1849: The Setting, Causes, Course and Aftermath of an Epidemic in London* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2009).

3 Amanda J. Thomas, *Cholera: The Victorian Plague* (Croydon, UK: Pen and Sword History, 2015), p. 38.

out being questioned about it; and the papers, both at home and abroad, teem with the most alarming accounts. In short, there is complete panic'.[4] On Saturday, 12 November 1831, *The Times* reported the first group of causalities.[5] The outbreak would go on to wreak havoc on London, killing over fourteen thousand people.[6]

With cholera taking away the lives of many, renowned Victorian preacher and pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon did not lock himself up in his ivory tower nor did he escape to a quarantined area. Rather, his priority was to be with his people. He testifies, 'During that epidemic of cholera, though I had many engagements in the country, I gave them up that I might remain in London to visit the sick and the dying'.[7] This has led *The Examiner* to call Spurgeon 'an evangelizing philanthropist' and 'a man… whose name was "Help"'.[8]

In the midst of such a catastrophe, how did Spurgeon minister to his people through preaching? Though the esteemed preacher had often referenced the outbreak in the applications of his sermons, he had only delivered one sermon that was exclusively focused on the cholera epidemic. Delivered on August 12, 1866 at London's Metropolitan Tabernacle when Spurgeon was 32 years-old, the sermon 'The Voice of the Cholera', was based upon Amos 3:3-6.[9] In this passage, the prophet Amos brings a charge against the city of Jerusalem who has broken covenant with Yahweh.[10] Through the use rhetorical questions, Amos tries to show his audience how their relationship with God has been fragmented and that God's judgment is imminent.

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4 *The London Medical Gazette*, 18 June 1831.

5 *The Times*, 12 November 1831.

6 William Luckin, 'The Final Catastrophe: Cholera in London, 1866', *Medical History* 21 (1977): 32-42.

7 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, C. H. *Autobiography Volume 1: The Early Years 1834-1859, A Revised Edition, Originally Compiled by Susannah Spurgeon and Joseph Harrod* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), p. 273. On Spurgeon and his care for social issues, see Christian T. George, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon Volume I: His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), xx.

8 *The Examiner*, July 10, 1884.

9 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 'The Voice of Cholera', *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 12 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1866), pp. 448-62.

10 Jonathan Ben-Dov, 'Justice and the City: A Reading of Amos 3:9-15', *Vetus Testamentum* 67 (2017): 528-45.

Thomas Breimaier notes that for this sermon, Spurgeon breaks from his usual habit of preaching from several verses rather than just one.[11] In the sermon, Spurgeon argues that the cholera epidemic was sent by God as a wake-up call for the city of London to repent. Specifically, identifying the issues of drunkenness and the breaking of the Christian Sabbath, Spurgeon believed that London's sinful behaviours warrant God's 'national chastisement'.[12]

In this article, we want to examine how Spurgeon engages with his listeners through the creation of multi-dimensional characters within his sermons. To accomplish such an aim, we will be offering a close reading of the Victorian preacher's sermon, 'The Voice of Cholera'. Central to Spurgeon's rhetoric is his creation of four multi-dimensional characters within the sermon. Through these characters, Spurgeon addressed the epidemic and what the city's response towards it should be. We will proceed in four steps. First, we will briefly outline the content and theology of the sermon. Second, four of these characters within the sermon will be examined. Third, attention will be paid to the role of the gospel and the development of these characters. Finally, we will conclude by drawing out some practical applications for preaching today.

1. THE CONTENT AND THEOLOGY OF SPURGEON'S SERMON

Spurgeon begins his sermon by acknowledging the tragic crisis in London. He then proceeds to thank the medical and scientific professionals who are working to contain the outbreak, saying, 'I am thankful that there are many men of intelligence and scientific information who can speak well upon this point, and I hope that they never cease to speak'.[13] He further notes that 'the gospel has no quarrel with ventilation, and the doctrines of grace have no dispute with chloride of lime. We preach repentance and faith, but we do not denounce whitewash…'.[14]

After his preamble, he offers some theological reflections on the cholera epidemic. He starts off by clarifying his belief that not every affliction is the result of sin.[15] He cautions, 'among those, as you know, who believe

[11] Thomas Breimaier, *Tethered to the Cross: The Life and Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), p. 116.

[12] Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 450.

[13] Ibid., p. 445.

[14] Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 446.

[15] On Spurgeon's view of God's purposes in suffering, see Michael Reeves, *Spurgeon on the Christian Life: Alive in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), pp. 163-74; John Piper, *Charles Spurgeon: Preaching Through Adversity* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2015); Peter J. Morden, *Communion with Christ and*

that every affliction is a judgment upon the particular person to whom it occurs. We perceive that in this world the best of men often endure the most of suffering, and that the worst of men frequently escape'.[16]

Though not all sufferings are to be equated with sinful rebellions, Spurgeon also believes that God sometimes uses events, such as the cholera, as a wake-up call for a city to repent. Specifically, mentioning the issues of drunkenness and the breaking of the Christian Sabbath, Spurgeon holds that London's sinful behaviours warrant God's judgment.[17] However, the sermon is not all about gloom. Characteristic of Spurgeon's penchant to exalt the cross of Jesus,[18] Spurgeon continues: 'Can you bear to be at disagreement with God […] you ask his protection, but how can you expect it if you are not agreed with him? Now, if two men walk together, there must be a place where they meet each other. Do you know where that is? It is at the cross. Sinner, if thou trusteth in Jesus, God will meet thee there'.[19]

Therefore, if the sermon's 'big idea'[20] is that 'God uses the cholera epidemic as a sign in calling Londoners to repentance', how does Spurgeon draw out this homiletical thrust? We want to argue that Spurgeon brings his 'big idea' across through the presentation of four multi-dimensional characters in the sermon, which is what we will look at next.

2. SPURGEON AND THE USE OF MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERIZATION IN PREACHING

In his seminal *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster is one of the earliest scholars to make a distinction between flat and round or multi-dimensional characters in a narrative.[21] On one hand, flat characters, as Forster puts it, are 'constructed around a single idea or quality'.[22] Their behaviours are stereotypical and predictable. Their purpose is usually didactic: such as, they foreground a human vice or virtue. Jacques Souvage and Dennis Bromley further maintain that a flat character is not fully described in

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His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), pp. 259-85; Zach Eswine, *Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for Those Who Suffer from Depression* (London: Christian Focus, 2015).

16 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 446.

17 Ibid., p. 450.

18 Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: Complete and Unabridged* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), p. 395.

19 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 459.

20 Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), pp. 15-26.

21 E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Mariner Books, 1927), p. 68.

22 Ibid.

the text and we should not expect a flat character to show an array of emotions.[23]

On the other hand, a round character is multi-dimensional: he or she is complex, capable of change and development.[24] According to Forster, the test of a round character is that he or she is able to surprise in a convincing way. Adding to the discussion, E. M. Lekganyane and M. J. Mojlefa believe that a multi-dimensional character is able to express a variety of emotions; he or she is able to reflect 'real life-like complexity of human existence'.[25] Renaming Forster's 'round character' as a 'full-fledged character', Adele Berlin believes that such a character is

> realistically portrayed; their emotions and motivations are either made explicit or are left to be discerned by the reader from hints provided in the narrative. We feel that we know them, understand them, and can, to a large extent, identify with them.[26]

In the sermon 'The Voice of Cholera', Spurgeon creates four such characters.

2.1. The Intoxicated City

Instead of charging at his parishioners with accusatory indictments about their failings, Spurgeon invites his congregants to take a tour of London with him as his fellow travellers. This tour is congruous with Spurgeon's text, where Amos invites his readers to embark on a tour of Jerusalem with God. Functioning as the tour guide, Spurgeon highlights the areas in the city which have lapsing in morality as he commences this city-wide tour. In so doing, Spurgeon has rhetorically created a space between his hearers and their environments. This space will allow his congregants to see the city's failings with greater perspicuity and objectivity.

In Spurgeon's rhetoric, the city comes alive with a multi-dimensional realism. Anticipating the advice of C. S. Lewis 'not to use adjectives which

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[23] Jacques Souvage, *An Introduction to the Study of the Novel* (New York: Wetenschappelijke Uitgevery, 1965), p. 38; Dennis B. Bromley, *Personality Description in Ordinary Language* (London: Basil Wiley, 1977), p. 24.

[24] Kristin Moen Saxegaard, *Character Complexity in the Book of Ruth* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), p. 16.

[25] E. M. Lekganyane and M. J. Mojalefa, 'Flat and Round Characters in Northern Sotho Literary Texts', in *Rabadia Ratshatsha: Studies in African Language Literature, Linguistics, Translation and Lexicography*, ed. by Mawatle Jerry Mojalefa (Stellenbosch: Sun, 2007), pp. 105-14, here p. 105.

[26] Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretations of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 31-32.

merely tell us how you want us to feel about the thing you are describing',[27] Spurgeon uses vivid descriptions to paint a three-dimensional London where one can see its sights, smell its filth, and experience the brawl at the local tavern. If Charles Dickens' description of London in his book *Oliver Twist* is prided for the attention paid to its details,[28] Spurgeon's depiction trails not far behind. Within the space of the sermon, Spurgeon's tour visits a gin palace,[29] London's gilded chambers,[30] musical taverns,[31] a few churches,[32] the royal palace,[33] and even a bakery.[34] In his first stop, Spurgeon brings us to a tavern. With language that appeals to sight, sound and touch, Spurgeon allows us experience what it is like to be surrounded by debauchery at a local tavern.[35] He describes:

> the gin palace blazes with glaring lights at every corner, and the gates through which drunkards reel to Hell are open at every turn — it may be so; but I must still hold that there is no other country where drunkenness is carried on to such an extent under so strong a protest, for drunkenness happens to be a sin against which not only the pulpit, the press, and the bench are continually exclaiming, but tens of thousands of earnest, indefatigable, courageous, self-denying men, and women are both by their example and their teaching, denouncing this vice.[36]

According to Spurgeon, the sin of drunkenness is rampant not only in the taverns, but also across the entire city, affecting both women and men. Riots and unrest are everywhere:

> Shall not God visit London for the sins which nightly pollute her streets, fester in gilded halls, and riots amid revelry and music? Like a terrible monster, the social evil drags our daughters down to destruction, and our young men to the gates of the grave, and while this lasts, we need not wonder if God's

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27 Clive Staples Lewis, *C. S. Lewis Letters to Children*, ed. by Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie L. Mead (New York: Touchstone, 1985), p. 64.

28 Andrea Warren, *Charles Dickens and the Street Children of London* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2011), pp. 104-14.

29 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 450.

30 Ibid., p. 451.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., p. 458.

34 Ibid., p. 453.

35 The appeal to the senses is one of Spurgeon's rhetorical forte, see Jay E. Adams, *Sense Appeal in the Sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975).

36 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 450.

> health-giving Providence should refuse to walk with us, for He cannot be agreed with a people who choose the way of filthiness.[37]

With sin being described in concrete terms in tandem with the city's landscape, God's judgment is similarly expressed. If the people choose to be unrepentant, God will lay 'the axe at the root of all sin' and he will through the power of the gospel and those who herald it saw off 'this particular limb from the great tree of evil'.[38]

However, London is not only visually depicted with a multi-dimensional realism, Spurgeon also helps us to 'smell' the city's odour. Throughout the sermon, he also uses words such as 'stench', 'filthiness', and 'filth' to describe the sins of the Londoners. He even refers to God as one 'in whose nostrils fornication is a stench'.[39] Spurgeon's reference to smell is particularly poignant during the outbreak of the cholera epidemic.

Prior to the discoveries of London-based physician John Snow,[40] the prevailing thought was that the inhalation of miasma or unpleasant smell caused the transmission of cholera;[41] the biggest culprit being the smell of the River Thames. Published in 1842, Edwin Chadwick in his report argued that unless there was a better drainage system, the noxious smells would lead to 'acute disease; and eventually we may say that, by depressing the system and rendering it susceptible to the action of other causes, all smell is disease'.[42] Victorian scientist Michael Faraday in a letter to *The Times* shocked many Londoners and the state of the River Thames when he dropped a white piece of paper to 'test the degree of opacity'.[43] His conclusion was that 'the whole river was for the time a real sewer'.[44]

Nevertheless, the question arises: Of all the social and moral misdemeanours plaguing London, why does Spurgeon single out alcohol abuse? In 1831, *The Times* reported that a 17-year-old girl suffering from cholera was cured by a naval surgeon.[45] She recovered after she was given a wine glass of brandy and water, followed by 30 drops of laudanum, a pint of

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37 Ibid., p. 451.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 For more on John Snow, see Sandra Hempel, *The Medical Detective: John Snow, Cholera and the Mystery of the Broad Street Pump* (London: Granta, 2007).

41 Thomas, *Cholera: The Victorian Plague*, p. 20.

42 Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965).

43 *The Times*, 9 July 1855.

44 Ibid.

45 *The Times*, 16 November 1831.

hot gruel, and a tablespoon of salt. Less than two weeks later, *The Times* again reported how two seamen on board the naval vessel HMS *Revenge* had recovered from cholera after they drank brandy.[46] As a result, many Victorians believed that brandy was the cure to cholera.[47]

However, this view was later challenged by the medical community.[48] Not only did brandy fail to keep the infection numbers down, but it had also given rise to drunkenness and violence.[49] Representing the medical community, John Snow, a pioneer anaesthetist, writes:

> The brandy treatment has been extensively tried in cholera, but it is now abandoned in all parts of the world. If the debility is not so great that life is not destroyed by it (brandy), still it hurries on and makes more violent that reaction, that secondary fever which is most to be dreaded, and increases the tendency which there is to inflammation in the head and elsewhere.[50]

2.2. The Muted Church

If the city of London is depicted as a drunkard, the church is seen as a mute. In his virtual tour around the city, Spurgeon stops at various 'places of worship' during 'the hour of public worship'.[51] He observes how empty some of churches are:

> In some of our country towns and villages the accommodation in places of worship is even larger than the population, and I know places in England where there is scarcely a soul to be found at home at the hour of public worship — certainly not more than absolutely necessary to nurse the sick, care for the infants, and protect the doors, for the whole population turns out to attend a place of worship. But in London the habitual forsakers of public worship are probably in a large majority.[52]

In contrast to the past, Spurgeon observes how the churches are not only empty, but the churches have also lost their 'voice'. Where once the 'voice

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46 *The Times*, 5 December 1831.

47 Robert J. Morris, *Cholera 1832: The Social Response to an Epidemic* (London: Croon Helm 1976).

48 James Johnson, *The Medico-Chirurgical Review and Journal of Practical Medicine Vol. 20* (S. Highley, 1832), p. 283.

49 Thomas Shapter, *The History of the Cholera in Exeter in 1832* (Wakefield and London: S. R. Publishers, 1971), p. 78.

50 Thomas Snow, 'A Doctor's Teetotal Address Delivered in 1836', *British Temperance Advocate* (November 1888), pp. 20-21.

51 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 451.

52 Ibid., p. 451-2.

of the Gospel' resounded across London, now it is 'despised'.[53] Churches are no longer 'protesting' against the ways of the world. Conversely, they now singing in harmony with the chorus of the world. Spurgeon indicts, 'We have no longer any right to speak of our national Protestant Church; it is not Protestant, it tolerates barefaced Popery, and swarms with worshippers of the god whom the baker bakes in the oven, and whom they bite with their teeth'.[54]

In order to heighten volume of the church's former testimony, Spurgeon lists the contributions of former saints, such as Hugh Latimer, John Knox, John Welch, and John Bradford. In contrast to the glowing testimonies of the past, the church is now reduced to a feeble murmur. 'In days of yore, men like Knox, and Welch in Scotland, and Hugh Latimer, and John Bradford, fought like lions for the Truth of God, and are we to yield like cowardly curs? Are the men of oak succeeded by the men of willow'?[55] He continues, 'Shall you forever turn your foot from God's House and despise the ministrations of His Truth, and shall He not visit such a city as this'?[56]

Spurgeon's censure against the church is not baseless. The Oxford movement, which started in 1830s, had been criticized for their tendencies to 'Romanise' the church.[57] This is why the movement is later known as Anglo-Catholicism. It started with a group of devotees at the University of Oxford argued for the reinstating of some older Christian traditions of faith and their inclusion into Anglican liturgy and theology. Sometimes the principles of the movement were also known as Tractarianism, which was named after its series of publications, the *Tracts for the Times*, which were published between 1833 to 1941. Spurgeon is militantly vocal in his opposition against the Oxford movement in this sermon. Referring to Tractarianism as 'Papistical heresies';[58] Spurgeon believes that such teachings should be eradicated:

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53 Ibid., p. 452.

54 Ibid., p. 453.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., p. 452.

57 For more on the Oxford movement, see George Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?* (London: Continuum, 2002); Geoffrey Rowell, *The Vision Glorious: Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); David Newsome, *The Parting of Friends: A Study of the Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (London: John Murray, 1966); Peter Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

58 Ibid., p. 453.

> If the Church of England does not sweep Tractarianism out of her midst, it should be the daily prayer of every Christian that God would sweep her utterly away from this nation; for the old leprosy of Rome ought not to be sanctioned and supported by a land which has shed so much of her blood to be purged from it![59]

Was Spurgeon fair in his criticism of the Oxford movement? Spurgeon certainly was not the only evangelical to express concern over the movement's Roman Catholic tendencies. Leading evangelical scholar of the mid-Victorian era, John Harrison had written about how one of Tractarian's leaders Edward Pusey had been incorporating the Roman Catholic doctrine of the real presence into his teaching of the Lord's Supper.[60] Meanwhile, William Goode, the author of *The Rule of Faith*, was engaged with many Anglo-Catholics in the debate about the validity of baptismal regeneration.[61] On the political front, Lord Shaftesbury, in his parliament speeches, had been vocal about his opposition.[62] He feared the Oxford Movement would bring in 'high church Catholic features' into the Church of England.

2.3. God and His Messenger

When it comes to God, Spurgeon believes that God has a purpose in sending London the cholera virus. Taking his cue from his text (Amos 3:4-5): as a lion roars when it catches a prey and as trap is laid for the purpose of catching a bird, 'God had a purpose in sending tribulation, we may expect that He will not remove it until that purpose is answered'.[63] With such a view about the epidemic, Spurgeon was not peerless. Most outspoken in this regard was Christian socialist and English clergyman Charles Kingsley.[64] In his three watershed sermons on the topic, Kingsley attrib-

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59 Ibid., p. 453-4.

60 John Harrison, *An Answer to Dr. Pusey's Challenge Respecting the Doctrine of the Real Presence* (London: Longmans, Green and company, 1871).

61 Bruce D. Griffith and Jason R. Radcliff, *Grace and Incarnation: The Oxford movement's Shaping of the Character of Modern Anglicanism* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2020), p. 104.

62 Stanley Holbrooke-Jones, 'The Triumph of Anglo-Catholicism Challenged', *Churchman* 119 (2005): 159-78, here p. 161.

63 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 456.

64 Most preachers during this time would agree with Spurgeon and Kingsley that the epidemic is the result of people's sins. One exception is Florence Nightingale, for her views, see *Florence Nightingale on Society and Politics, Philosophy, Science, Education & Literature,* ed. by Lynn McDonald, vol 5 of the *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 2003), p. 780.

utes the cause of the outbreak to the transgressions of the people when he denounces, 'Fever and cholera, as you would expect them to be, are the expression of God's judgment, God's opinion, God's handwriting on the wall against us for our sins of filth and laziness, foul air, foul food, foul drains, foul bedrooms'.[65]

Similarly, J. C. Ryle, the evangelical vicar of Stradbroke in Suffolk and the first Bishop of Liverpool, in his tract called *The Hand of the Lord!,* insists that 'cholera, like every other pestilence, is a direct visitation from God'.[66] He continues:

> Some men will tell us confidently that cholera arises entirely from second causes. Bad drainage, bad water, want of cleanliness, want of sufficient food — all these are enough in the eyes of these men to explain the present visitation. But unfortunately for these people there was no drainage at all in former day! The streets of our great cities were dirty and unpaved! The water supply was miserably defective! The sanitary condition of the people was in every respect disgracefully bad. Yet in these days there was not cholera. No! it will not do. Second causes, no doubt, may help on cholera when cholera begins. But second causes will not account for its beginning. There is no standing ground for a man on this point, but the simple ground of the Bible [….] It is the Lord's hand![67]

Though Spurgeon would agree with Ryle and Kingsley regarding how God was the one behind the plague, he was more nuanced in the way he talked about God. God, in the sermon, is depicted as a multi-dimensional traveller in the sermon. Spurgeon describes:

> Two travellers have been walking together for some little time, but all of a sudden they fall to angry words, and after a while one strikes the other and maltreats him. You cannot suppose that the person thus attacked will continue to walk with him who maliciously assaults him. They must part company.[68]

In depicting God as a fellow visitor, Spurgeon places God on the same level as the congregants. Rather than pointing an accusatory finger at his parishioners, God's dissatisfaction surfaces in a discussion between two comrades through a series of questions. With the use of sixty-five ques-

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65 Charles Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1880), p. 141.

66 J.C. Ryle, *'The Hand of the Lord' Being Thoughts on Cholera* (London: William Hunt, 1865), p. 10.

67 Ryle, *Hand of the Lord*, p. 11.

68 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 450.

tions in this message alone, Spurgeon's use of rhetorical questions is certainly poignant. According to Gloria Anzilotti, the use of questions in a debate not only lowers the defences of the opponent, but it also signals the willingness to listen and negotiate.[69] Similarly, Spurgeon's questions serve a pastoral function, it shows that his openness to the struggles of his parishioners towards holiness.

More importantly, through the use of rhetorical questions, Spurgeon wants to show how sin 'maliciously assaults' God.[70] He queries, 'Brothers and Sisters, let me ask you soberly, without fanaticism, to consider whether there has not been enough in England, and especially in this great city, to make God angry with us'?[71]

In contrast to a muted church devoid of witnesses, for Spurgeon, 'cholera' is God's prime messenger. Spurgeon elaborates, 'My Brothers and Sisters, our God is too gracious to send us this cholera without a question'.[72] As a 'gentle blow from his hand',[73] Spurgeon believes that God allows the disease to disrupt the lives of Londoners so that they may turn to God in repentance. Spurgeon explains:

> We heard of some 1,200 or more who died in a week in London, but did we estimate the aggregate of personal pain couched in that number, the aggregate of sorrow brought to so many hundred families, the aggregate too of eternal interests which were involved in those sudden deaths? Time and eternity, both of them big with tremendous importance, were wrapped up, just so many times in those hundreds who fell beneath the Mower's scythe. Do you think the Lord does this for nothing? The great Lion of Vengeance has not roared unless sin has provoked Him.[74]

How does Spurgeon characterize cholera in the sermon? First, cholera takes on the persona of the angel of death. Recalling Exodus 12:23 where God's angel strikes the firstborn of Egypt in the middle of the night, cholera is tasked with a similar assignment. Spurgeon elucidates:

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69 Gloria I. Anzilotti, 'The Rhetorical Question as an Indirect Speech Device in English and Italian', *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 38 (1982): 290-302. See also, Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 132 and Pauline Slot, *How Can You Say That? Rhetorical Questions in Argumentative Texts*, SLLU 2 (Amsterdam: IFOTT, 1993).

70 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 450.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., p. 454.

73 Ibid., p. 452.

74 Ibid., p. 454.

> When God permits disease to walk through the streets at night, to stretch out his mighty but invisible hand, and take away here a child, and there an adult, and consign to the grave those who might have otherwise long survived, you cannot believe that the Lord commissioned so dread a messenger, without intending to answer some end by his errand.[75]

By personifying cholera as an angel of death roaming the streets at night ready to prowl on a child or an adult, an arresting fear is immediately struck with his hearers. Instead of just an invisible virus, now his congregants not only 'see' the disease, but they can also feel the terror blowing onto their skin as they imagine walking in the back alleys in the middle of the night.

To make his congregants feel even more vulnerable, he describes the virus as 'a snare', an image borrowed from Amos 3:5.[76] Like a bird who is susceptible to fall captive to a fowler's snare, human beings have no inoculation against the virus. Fear is heightened when Spurgeon further develops the imagery, 'The fowler takes not away his net unless some bird is caught, and God takes not away the trouble which He sends unless He has answered His Design by it'.[77]

Second, following his text in Amos 3:6, Spurgeon also likens the cholera virus to a trumpet. If the imagery of the angel of death appeals to the people's sight and emotions, the blow of the trumpet evokes their aural faculties. Earlier in the sermon when Spurgeon's London was filled with the sounds of revelry, now the virus blast has taken over. It now 'reach(es) the miserable attics where the poor are crowded together […] the darkest cellar in the most crowded haunt of vice […] the palaces of kings […] (and) the halls of the rich and great'.[78] Spurgeon hopes that such appeals will incite enough fear that they may 'fly to Christ Jesus'.[79]

Finally, according to Forster, the test for a multi-dimensional or round character is that it is capable to evolve or change.[80] God's character is developed as the sermon progresses. As God's call for repentance continues to fall on deaf ears, God reveals that he is more than just a wayfarer in the city. Rather, he continues his tour now as a judge dispensing his punishments on the people. Spurgeon indicts:

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75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p. 456.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., p. 458.
80 Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 50.

> God *Himself* is traversing London. God, with footstep walks the hospitals, enters the chamber, strikes the wayfarer in the street, and chills the heart of the suppliant kneeling by his bed. God, the great Judge of All […] it was none other than *He* who walked down our crowded courts and entering our lanes and alleys called one after another the souls of men to their last account! God *is abroad!*[81]

All of these rhetorical devices are employed with a singular purpose in mind. They are created so that the people may be terrified at God's fiery indignation, so that they may run to the gospel that Jesus offers.[82] This is what we will turn to in the next section of the article.

3. THE GOSPEL AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTERS

God is not the character who changes within the narrative of the message. According to Spurgeon, the gospel of Jesus can also change the city and its habitants. In his initial depiction of London, the taverns are filled with drunkards, the streets are filled with violence, and riots frequent the music halls. Besides, morbid language is used throughout to describe the city. London, for instance, is described as a 'cemetery',[83] the taverns as 'hell',[84] and the musical halls as 'the gates of the grave'.[85] Meanwhile, the social life of the city is likened to 'a terrible monster'.[86] With children being kidnapped and adults assaulted at night, Spurgeon's London is inhumane, dangerous, and savage.

In a city that is devoid of warmth and love, Jesus is presented as one whose 'eternal love sweetly entangle [sic] me, I am, I would be, thine'.[87] Where cholera functions like as a fowler's trap, Spurgeon urges his hearers to 'fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly! Be taken in God's net'.[88] Moreover, for a city that is depicted as inebriated, Spurgeon urges the people to drink from the water of life with a paraphrase of Isaiah 12:3: 'Come. And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely'.[89]

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81 Italics are in the original, Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 458.
82 Spurgeon, 'Voice of Cholera', p. 461.
83 Ibid., p. 459.
84 Ibid., p. 450.
85 Ibid., p. 451.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., p. 460.
88 Ibid., p. 458.
89 Ibid., p. 462.

Though Spurgeon does not promise that the Jesus will heal every case of infection or that God will remove the epidemic once the people turn to Christ, he promises something even better. He promises them a joy untouchable by death. Spurgeon explicates:

> When I heard the other day that Mrs. So-and-So was dead, and that she died of cholera, I could not lament, for she was one who had long feared God. When they told me that a worthy young man had fallen, I was sorrowful to have lost so good a student from the College, but I was thankful that one who had served his God so well in his youth had gone to his rest; but if I heard of the death of some of you; it would cause me unmingled grief and fear. [90]

For Spurgeon, Jesus is the epidemic's ultimate panacea. Geoffrey Chang, in his analysis of the theology of Spurgeon, concurs, 'Committed to preaching Christ, Spurgeon was convinced the world needed no other remedy'.[91] The preaching of the gospel, according to the esteemed preacher, is what changes the church and subsequently the city. Spurgeon pleas that the church will find its voice in the articulation of the gospel: 'If you and I do not exert ourselves to teach them the Gospel, upon our heads must be their blood'.[92]

As a result of the church's witness, the city will become more and more humane. Rather than just revelling in booze and debauchery, they will start caring for the unconverted and the neighbour sitting next to them in church.

> Have you no friends unconverted? Have you no acquaintance unsaved? May there not be even sitting in the pew with you some unpardoned person? May there not be, Sunday after Sunday, sitting in the next seat someone who knows not Christ, who was never warned of his danger or pointed to the Remedy.[93]

Augmenting his vision of a more personal and caring city, Spurgeon adds his own personal plea:

> I speak to you as a dying man, and pray you not to venture into Eternal Wrath. Give these words some consideration, I pray you, and as you consider them, may God the Holy Spirit fasten them as nails in a sure place, and may you seek the Lord while he may be found.[94]

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90 Ibid., p. 461.

91 Geoffrey Chang, *Spurgeon the Pastor: Recovering a Biblical and Theological Vision for Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2022), p. 17.

92 Ibid., p. 461.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid., p. 462.

4. CONCLUDING APPLICATIONS

Having examined how Spurgeon uses characterization in his preaching, it is worth asking, what bearing does this have on sermon preparations today? First, the characters in Spurgeon's sermon are well-situated within the happenstances of the time. Spurgeon in fact has written an entire book, *The Bible and the Newspaper*, illustrating how sermons should never be divorced from the world around us.[95] In this sermon, Spurgeon not only shows his understanding of the cholera epidemic, but he also shows his understanding of what was happening within the Oxford Movement and its impact on the churches. Therefore, for preachers to be effective communicators of God's word, we need to understand both our congregations and the worlds we are living in.

Second, Spurgeon gives the characters in his message a multiple dimensional reality. London, for instance, is not just a city. Rather, in the sermon, we get to see the night life of the city, smell the filth of the River Thames, and we get to feel the terror of how cholera like an angel of death coming to kidnap a child in middle of an isolated alley. In his autobiography, Spurgeon speaks of the importance not only of reading the Bible, but also to 'see' the text. He illustrates:

> I often fancy that I am looking out upon the Lake of Gennesaret, or walking at the foot of the Mount of Olives, or peering into the mysterious gloom of the Garden of Gethsemane. The narrow streets of the old town are such as Jesus traverse, these villages are such as He inhabited.[96]

Similarly, it is not enough for preachers to just describe the text. Rather, we need to help our congregants see, feel, hear, and touch the various aspects of the sermon.

Finally, Spurgeon has a high view of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the preacher, the gospel not only brings joy that prevails over death and diseases, but it also brings about lasting transformation. Likewise, we need to expect that God can bring changes through the preaching of the gospel. This calls to mind a time when one of Spurgeon's students by the name Mr. Medhurst paid his mentor a visit. Complaining that he has never witnessed a single conversion after three months of regular preaching, Med-

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95 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Bible and the Newspaper* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1880).

96 Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, IV, p. 219.

hurst expresses his frustrations.[97] 'Why'? Spurgeon asks, 'you don't expect conversions every time you open your mouth, do you'?

'Of course not'. To which Spurgeon concludes, 'Then that is just the reason you haven't had them'.

[97] Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1903), pp. 325-28.

Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation. By Collin Hansen. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2023. ISBN 978-0310128687. 272pp & indices. £18.99.

Writing the biography of a still-living person brings with it great challenges. For one, how does a writer assay the overall influence of a life which is still characterized by industry and creativity? For another, how does one establish the needed critical distance which is required if the biography is to go beyond narration to appraisal?

It is to biographer Collin Hansen's great credit that he demonstrates that he has reflected especially on the first of these challenges. He has wisely made his aim that of providing to readers an understanding of the influences which have contributed significantly to Keller's still-ongoing ministry. And what a story *that* is! This review will return to the second issue, that of the need for appraisal, in due course.

For the moment, plaudits are in order to the biographer for his very skillful depiction of the manner in which Keller proceeded from a broadly-Christian family and congregation to Bucknell University, Pennsylvania as a young man quite unprepared for the anti-supernaturalist atmosphere he would encounter. There, in the early 1970s, his chosen field was Religious Studies and Philosophy. In the midst of what can only be viewed as a period of disorientation, Keller's life and convictions were oriented anew. He was introduced to the on-campus and beyond-campus evangelism and leadership training ministry of Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship (in the UK, UCCF). It was in this Inter Varsity setting that Keller's hitherto inchoate faith in Christ was clarified and solidified; he soon moved from campus waverer to campus witness. Involvement in Inter Varsity brought him into contact for the first time with Edmund Clowney, the Westminster Seminary president who so often spoke on university campuses in that decade.

Keller also read C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien voraciously. He came under the wing of a winsome mainline Presbyterian minister, Dick Merritt (a Princeton Seminary graduate), and the (then) up-and-coming apologist R.C. Sproul. The reader becomes aware that in these respects, Tim Keller was moving on a trajectory also characteristic of thousands of other baby-boomer evangelical students; they were learning to anchor their existing eclectic evangelical loyalties in older, broadly Reformed theology. That trajectory drew Keller, his future wife Kathy, and scores of their Pennsylvania student friends towards the newly-established Ligonier Valley Study Center at Stahlstown, Pennsylvania, where R.C. Sproul

was holding forth. Soon, a sizeable contingent of 125 from that region enrolled at one time at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

Keller, while in these seminary studies, was simultaneously working at nearby campuses for the same Inter Varsity student ministry which had been so very influential in his own life. The reader could easily anticipate that Keller's ministry path, now being enhanced by seminary education, lay just there: in future decades of campus evangelism.

But there were further providential developments in store. Of no particular theological orientation prior to his seminary study, Keller now came under the weighty influence of theologian Roger Nicole, who helped to ground him in Reformed theology. There was also the church historian, Richard Lovelace, who oriented Keller to Jonathan Edwards and the history of revival. Not yet particularly oriented to pulpit ministry, Keller was enthralled by a series of guest lectures on preaching at Gordon-Conwell by Edmund Clowney, who demonstrated what it is to preach Christ in all of Scripture. And while not previously a party to the emerging evangelical debate about gender roles, Keller — with his now-spouse Kathy — was won over to Elizabeth Elliott Leitch's traditional views on this subject.

Yet the Kellers, who graduated with an excellent academic preparation, had 'only middling' ministry prospects; they were preparing to work for the U. S. Post Office. And then — as from the blue — an opportunity was offered to Tim to serve a congregation of the then-fledgling Presbyterian Church in America. Never a Presbyterian previously, Keller 'earned his spurs' by learning to pastor effectively in a small Virginia industrial city. For nine years, he preached twice each Sunday, he counselled, they entertained, and the church grew steadily. The reader will ask 'has Keller now found the niche which that earlier campus ministry could equally have been?'

Seeking to enhance his pastoral effectiveness during that extended pastorate, Keller enrolled for continuing education in pastoral studies at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, only to be recruited to teach homiletics and pastoral theology. Would it be academia that would provide his niche? He was drawn into participating in a study of the need for church planting in America's metropolises and when no one came forward to accept the daunting challenge of going to Manhattan, agreed to relocate there himself — uprooting his wife and sons to settle on Roosevelt Island, New York, in 1989. The sizeable achievement of Hanson's biography of Keller is that it so effectively tells how this Christian leader was steadily learning ministry skills and learning to trust God in increasingly demanding circumstances *before* Redeemer Church, New York City was ever attempted, before the Gospel Coalition was conceived and before the

international church planting network launched from Redeemer, New York, was ever contemplated.

In sum, we see Tim Keller as the broadly evangelical, wisely eclectic, winsomely Reformed apologist, preacher and church-planting strategist that he is; we also better grasp how that wide usefulness came as the fruit of what can only be called long apprenticeships which filled the two previous decades. This is a deeply inspiring story and makes us admire this Christian leader all the more, for reading it.

Biographies ought also to provide appraisal; appraisal is admittedly difficult when the life and ministry being explored is still ongoing. As this review is written, the 'retired' Keller is still writing a book a year. Nevertheless, the question still arises as to whether this biography might have offered more appraisal. The only shortcoming noted in the biography is that — while blessed with a wide array of ministry gifts — Keller's lack of managerial skills eventually became a problem as Redeemer Church, New York, experienced rapid expansion. The only criticism of Keller mentioned in this biography is the 'brouhaha' which erupted at Princeton Seminary in 2017; under pressure from the politically correct, that seminary reneged on its announced plan to award Keller the Abraham Kuyper prize.

With these items acknowledged, one could not detect from reading this biography that Redeemer, New York and its ministry to urban professionals is actually a source of concern for some American evangelicals who live outside large urban areas. We need to look elsewhere to learn that at least one book has been written challenging aspects of Keller's theology. Currently, some evangelicals of a generation younger than Keller question whether Keller's apologetic of 'niceness' represents a whistling in the dark as secular society grows more hostile towards evangelical Christianity. Finally, a thoughtful reader may wonder whether the biographer, an accomplished journalist who is also editorial director at Gospel Coalition, is writing this Zondervan biography in part as a publicist (yet note his comments on p. 269). The final page of this biography proclaims in large font the launch of the new 'Keller Center for Cultural Apologetics'.

Here is a biography that needed to be written. It reflects an impressive use of documents, published literature and interviews. I, for one, am wiser for having read it.

Kenneth J. Stewart, Covenant College, USA

Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings. Edited by Todd A. Scacewater. Fontes Press, Dallas, 2020. ISBN: 9781948048439 (paperback). xxiii + 747pp. £37.99.

Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings is ambitious, collaborative and the first of its kind: a one-volume text presenting discourse analysis (DA) of each New Testament book. It assumes readers competent in NT Greek, but, while technical, does not require prior knowledge of DA. Editor and contributor Todd A. Scacewater assembles twenty-two scholars (twenty men and two women; mostly in America, but six in other nations) who each contribute on particular NT books. His goal is 'to demonstrate the usefulness of DA when applied to written documents, particularly the NT writings, and to motivate biblical students and scholars to study DA and linguistics in general' (p. 1).

The introductory chapter surveys the definition, history, development, topics and vocabulary of DA. There Scacewater gives three pages to carefully defining DA; nevertheless, in his chapter on Galatians, Stephen Levinsohn's succinct description is apt. It 'takes into account factors that are not treated in Greek grammars (questions of morphology or syntax). In particular, it concerns features of the larger context than the individual sentence. It may simply focus on how the contents of the previous sentence affects the way the current sentence is structured. However, it also looks for ways in which the author's *purpose* influences the way the information in each sentence is presented' (p. 298).

Due to limitations of space, and to provide some degree of detail, I will comment on three chapters, each of which discusses a single NT book.

Robert Longacre writes on the gospel of Mark. He is notable in the field of DA, being cited heavily by other contributors in the book. He is transparent about his assumptions and thought process. Recognizing Mark as narrative discourse, Longacre discusses the elements of a story, then provides five guidelines to apply DA to the text, including finding seams in the story and watching for peak-marking. While this chapter contains some errors of punctuation and, more problematic, structure labelling (pp. 77-78), it is clear and useful, as emphasised in the concluding section which discusses several specific ways his DA provides exegetical and theological insight.

Jenny Read-Heimerdinger discusses the book of Acts. She writes as an established DA scholar and an expert on the Codex Bezae NT manuscript. She makes the unique argument, convincingly, that DA is best applied to a single complete manuscript rather than an eclectic text. This is because, she says, the distinctive language of a given manuscript is not reducible to scribal style, error, or embellishment; rather, it involves the

scribe adapting the text to a particular audience. This can affect the way the discourse is marked, especially at the microstructural level. She thus bases her DA on Codex Bezae (B03), using Codex Vaticanus (D05) as a foil. Discussion of two discourse features, connectives between sentences and word order, set the stage for her DA of Acts. She succinctly describes the halves and related parts of Acts, but narrows the bulk of her DA to discussing the microstructure in Acts 12 in B03 (contrasted with D05). The chapter would be stronger if it spent more time analysing Acts as a whole, as most of the contributors do for the books they treat. However, the chapter makes up for that significantly by its stimulating, original thinking.

Stephen Levinsohn, well known for his previous work on DA, contributes a chapter on Galatians. He walks clearly and methodically through his process of analysing the book. He takes a functional perspective to DA: a writer's word choice in not simply stylistic; 'choice implies meaning' (p. 298). Each contributor's methods have overlap and differences; Levinsohn's involves six steps: assessing in turn the nature of discourse, the genre of letter, areas of consensus and disagreement about divisions of the text, surface features marking boundaries, implications of intersentential conjunctions, and prominence-giving devices. He applies the methodology lucidly, for example, using flow charts to outline how conjunctions link and delineate sections of Galatians. He draws his analysis together in a conclusion centring on the key point of Galatians and its pastoral application.

Each of the other chapters provides broadly comparable engagement with the remaining NT books.

For the scholar, student or pastor doing work on the structure of NT books, this text will be a useful reference, both for its book-by-book discussion and for the abundant resources listed in the footnotes and bibliography. While it is understandable that a project of this scope can be done more easily by a team than an individual, and it is fair that Scacewater gives each contributor freedom to apply his/her own approach to DA, I wish the chapters were more evenly balanced in terms of how much they deal with the actual text. For example, in the chapters on the gospels, the text of Luke receives twice as many pages of discussion than that of John (26 pages versus 13). Additionally, while overall this highly technical book is very clearly presented, it is unfortunate that a few content errors occurred, requiring the reader to reinterpret coded language that was meant to clarify (mentioned above). These concerns aside, I recommend *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings* as a valuable and practical tool to understanding how to use DA to expose the structure, themes, and central ideas of the NT books.

David Mitchell, Connect Church, Kirkcaldy

The Pastor and the Modern World: Reformed Ministry and Secular Culture. By William Edgar, R. Kent Hughes, and Alfred Poirier. Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-955859-04-2. xvi + 114pp. £12.65.

This book is a compilation of the first three chair-holders' of the John Boyer Lectures on Evangelism and Culture at Westminster Seminary. The original intent was to publish each lecture separately, but providentially the lectures provided a cohesive and sequential theme that would prove beneficial to the church and the minister:

> William Edgar's brilliant modern cultural analysis should be paired with R. Kent Hughes's loupe-like study of the timeless essentials of pastoral ministry, and that the conclusion should be a vision for ministry that Alfred Poirier mined from the ancient life of Gregory of Nazianzus (p. xv).

Each is a pastor-theologian; Edgar is professor of apologetics, Hughes was professor of practical theology, and Poirier is professor of pastoral theology. *The Pastor and The Modern World* provides a picture of the pastor-theologian, one who interacts with his culture while at the same time having a vibrant preaching and pastoral ministry.

Chapter One (Edgar) *Are We Really Secular?* — combines theology and culture. Secularization casts an ominous shadow, attempting to replace trust in God with trust in self, emphasizing subjective over objective truth. Hence revelation is marginalized at best and discarded at worst (pp. 11, 12, 16). Against religion, secularization seeks to insert the values of intellectualization, rationalization, and disenchantment (p. 18). Edgar illustrates this aptly by devoting several pages to the arts where he explains that 'there is no real dependence on revealed truth, either general or special' (p. 47). Further, he reminds the reader that 'a truly biblical worldview is not vaguely spiritual but highly definite: beginning with the ontological Trinity, centred in the Incarnation, anchored in the verbal revelation of Scripture' (p. 47). Edgar provides a two-fold emphasis to battle secularization: 1) the certainty of judgment to come (i.e., Acts 17:22-34) and 2) our message must be the gospel — as secularization permeates every area, every institution, every artistic vision, so the gospel applies to every area of life (p. 53).

The next chapter (Hughes) *The Heart of the Pastor and the Pulpit* is a homiletic intensive. Hughes probes the preaching task by looking through the lens of Jonathan Edwards' religious affections and his use of 'heart' — one's inclinations and will (pp. 64, 69). As Hughes begins with the *Affec-*

tions and Preaching, ultimately providing us with a twofold focus. First, there is *Affectionate Preparation*, what Hughes calls twenty sacred hours:

> Sermon preparation is twenty hours of humble, holy, rigorous, critical thinking (in the presence of God!) about the text in its context […] I say all of this because getting the text right is serious business, because our theology and religious affections are determined by it. Precision in exegesis and homiletics is of cosmic importance (p. 71).

The preacher must let the 'light' of God's Word elevate the heat of the religious affections (pp. 71, 72), thereby enlightening his imagination to raise the 'Fahrenheit of [his hearers'] affections' (p. 72). Second, *Affectionate Proclamation* is essential in reaching the heart (p. 75). The effective proclaimer will be a man of prayer (pp. 75-76) and the Spirit (p. 80), authentic (p. 76), and genuinely passionate, 'Where there is no passion, there is no preaching' (p. 78). The conclusion of all preaching is to exalt Christ (pp. 82-83).

Chapter Three *Gregory of Nazianzus: The Pastor as a Physician of Souls* (Poirier) is a master class in pastoralia. Poirier provides a sketch of Gregory's life, who saw the church move from persecuted, to tolerated, to being the official state church (p. 92). Poirier gives keen insight into Gregory's *Second Oration, In Defense of His Flight to Pontus*, a document that stands as the first pastoral theology of the church (pp. 98). So, why did Gregory flee the ministry? He longed for solitude with God rather than to be 'thrust into the midst of a life of turmoil' — a fitting description of pastoral ministry (p. 101). Gregory contrasts the physician of the body with the physician of the soul. They differ in terms of:

1. Subject matter: One is concerned with the physical, the other with the soul,
2. The ends for which they labour: One deals with prolonging human life, the other with matters of eternal destiny; and
3. The power of the science each employs: One appeals to medical science while the other ponders the mysteries of God and the gospel of his Son (p. 104).

In the end, Gregory believed that no one was fit to be a pastor, yet someone must care for God's flock (p. 113).

This book is for the church, but especially the minister and is highly recommended. Hughes is worth the price of the book. The faculty of Westminster expands each of these through panel discussions at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16rixJqJQY8&list=PLktunQkWQgh X1s8NmEOUGuBBe68nayoM0.

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Face to Face with God: A Biblical Theology of Christ as Priest and Mediator. By T. Desmond Alexander. Essential Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove: IVP, 2022. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4295-7. xiii + 156pp. £18.99.

The recent increase of interest in biblical theology has opened up a renewed appreciation for the sophistication and significance of the overarching story of the Bible. That renewal has fostered a good deal of important and signal contributions. However, the variety of different studies and the increasing complexity and ingenuity of those studies can be dizzying to new students seeking a lay of land and non-scholarly audiences seeking understanding of the importance of a biblical-theological approach for core Christian doctrines. Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (ESBT), edited by Benjamin L. Gladd, bridges an important gap between the academy and the church. In this volume in the ESBT series, T. Desmond Alexander considers the centrepiece of Christian life: the high priesthood of Christ.

The scope of this book is focused and to the point. He writes in the preface that he is concerned with 'how the Bible presents the theme of priesthood as it relates to Jesus Christ' (p. 6). Rather than tracing the development of priesthood, Alexander builds a theological description based on pertinent Old Testament texts in the Pentateuch, paralleling and contrasting that description with how Hebrews portrays Christ as the great high priest.

Readers looking for a scholarly contribution to the subject of either priesthood or Christ will be disappointed. While Alexander does interact with the current scholarship, the aim of the book is much more modest, and in some ways all the more impressive. The recent explosion of interest in atonement and priesthood in the Old Testament, building on Jacob Milgrom's body of work, and in Hebrews, following David Moffitt, Madison Pierce, and R. B. Jamieson makes the concept of Christ's priesthood rather unwieldy. And while Alexander does engage with some of the recent claims of scholarship (e.g., whether the tabernacle and temple represent the cosmos (p. 32), or if the high priest is primarily a mediator or a steward of God's house (pp. 61–62), or what it means for Israel to be a 'kingdom of priests', (p. 127)), he admirably summarizes the best and most salient points of the conversation. He is also obviously indebted to the legacy of Geerhardus Vos and Richard Gaffin. Alexander gleans the best insights from important contributors to these questions, notably G. K. Beale, Mary Douglas, Margaret Barker, alongside those listed above, and presents a pithy biblical theology in outline.

Running through the entire work is the concern to show how the author of Hebrews draws on the imagery and language of the priests in the old covenant to illuminate and flesh out Christ's ministry as the mediator of a new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15). This new covenant that Christ mediates replaces and perfects the old covenant, the condition of which the Old Testament people of God were unable to fulfill. It is difficult to summarize the book's core argument, as Alexander's aim is more descriptive, simply paying close attention to the contours of the text, that is, he fleshes out the question, 'what does it mean to speak of Jesus as our high priest?' (p. 2). His answer proves traditional: 'As high priest, Jesus Christ sanctifies and perfects, achieving all that is necessary for us to come into God's holy presence' (p. 136).

There is little in here that an informed reader will find new. But that is not necessarily a weakness. While he summarizes and expounds on things that for some are well-trodden trails, he provides plenty of meat on which most can ruminate. Given the space limitations of the series and the significance of the subject, the biblical-theological scope of priesthood felt curtailed at times. But that is to be expected. For a helpful and traditional exposition of what Christ's intercession means for us, both in terms our plight and our Christian life, one should turn here.

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More Things in Heaven and Earth: Shakespeare, Theology and the Interplay of Texts. By Paul S. Fiddes. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-0-8139-4652-8. xii + 373pp. £39.95.

The publication of this monograph marks the end of a very prolific academic year (21-22) for the baptist theologian Paul S. Fiddes, Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Oxford. Following closely the publication of two other monographs (Paul S. Fiddes, *Charles Williams And C.S. Lewis: Friends In Co-Inherence* (Oxford University Press, 2021); Paul S. Fiddes, *Iris Murdoch And The Others: A Writer In Dialogue With Theology* (T&T Clark/Bloomsbury, 2022)) this third monograph to be published in 12 months is the culmination of a lifetime of academic research in two out of the three areas of Fiddes' scholarship — systematic theology and the relationship between theology & literature.

The book title, taken from the famous line in Shakespeare's play Hamlet, succinctly reveals the thesis of the book: that all humanity is part of a larger drama and so we should seek to examine and understand our place within the current act from which we will discover 'more things' in the surrounding spiritual and physical realms. This can be done, avers Fiddes, by theologising what is 'in front of the text', whether that text be

scripture or other writings that point to Christ since, as the apostle John anticipated, other texts will be written that will extend his own account of the works and words of Christ (p. 295 cf. John 21:25).

Anyone who is familiar with Fiddes' theological *oeuvre* will know that his articulated panentheistic doctrine of God, which is undergirded by a strong participation in God account and somewhat unique 'persons as relations' definition of the triune God, has led Fiddes to develop an understanding that literature not only illustrates theological themes but can actually *construct* theology in ways outside the historical and traditional boundaries of the theological project.

The chosen literature for this text are eight plays of Shakespeare. Before engaging with each play, Fiddes spends the first three chapters justifying the methodology used to analyse and construct theology from the plays. He defines the 'more things' in terms of the religious context at the time the play was written, the general spirituality imbibed in each of the plays, and the 'presentist' theology that can be constructed in front of the text by the theologian.

Most of the justification of the methodological approach comes from theological doctrines that Fiddes has developed over his fifty-plus year academic career and are central to his theological corpus. For instance, his well established participatory doctrine of God as persons-as-relations is applied to Shakespeare and elucidated in order to conclude that when someone is participating in a Shakespearean play (whether as actor, audience observer, or reader) they are *inter alia* participating in the Triune God.

Therefore, when Fiddes analyses and critiques the chosen eight plays, he traces the religious context and spirituality of each play before constructing theology 'in front of' the text of the play. His main claim regarding the society's religious and spiritual background when Shakespeare was penning these plays is that the bard of Avon was acutely aware of the multi-confessional social and religious scene of the times but he resisted any dogmatic stance one way or another. Instead he used the blurring of doctrinal boundaries which happened during these tumultuous years of protestant-catholic back and forth to develop a general Christian spirituality that transcended the doctrinal and ecclesial conflict of the time.

Subsequently, Fiddes then generates theology in front of the text, specifically systematic theology that is typical for him: broad, commodious, connectional and more modern than traditional. To illustrate, his theologising from *The Merchant of Venice* postulates an inclusive definition of covenant drawn from Fiddes' panentheistic doctrine of God and the Noahic covenant of Genesis 9 which could aid inter-faith dialogue and is in keeping with the spirit of mercy and love within *The Merchant* text

(pp. 114-121). Another example is a delineation of a theology of forgiveness and memory; a journey of forgiveness and reconciliation that is a 'voyage of anguish' and based upon an Abelardian atonement of transformation and the right remembering of painful memory. It is a theology that builds upon the themes found within one of Shakespeare's final plays, *The Winter's Tale* (pp. 226-263).

More Things in Heaven and Earth is the latest contribution to an ever-growing theological literature on Shakespeare and religion. For some readers I suspect a number of Fiddes' underlying theological presuppositions, such as his radical understanding of the triune God and the panentheistic reality of a passible God, will be regarded as too unorthodox. However, for any reader who can get past these modern theological sensibilities and has an intricate knowledge of Shakespeare's plays, this text will prove an insightful work of general revelation and an expression of what it means for all of creation to live and move and have being in Him.

Alistair Cuthbert, University of St Andrews

Flourishing in Tensions: Embracing Radical Discipleship. By Michael Bräutigam. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-6667-3529-1. xv + 242pp. £28.00.

Flourishing in Tensions is a book on discipleship. It recognises, and addresses, many of the challenges that are faced by those who are following Jesus today. This is achieved through an excellent balance of rigorous scholarship and practical application related to discipleship, all of which is presented in language that is accessible, engaging and clear. That combination of rich theology and day-to-day relevance makes the book a worthwhile read for every disciple, whether you are an experienced scholar, an eager student, a working pastor, or a struggling pilgrim.

The book opens with a chapter highlighting the need to embrace tensions on the path of discipleship. The call to follow Jesus comes from the one who transcends the boundaries of our knowledge, whose plans are higher than ours, and before whom we will inevitably face the tension of not being able to comprehend the depths of God's being and purposes. But rather than despairing at such tensions, Bräutigam instead calls his reader to embrace them, and in fact to delight in them. The author rightly laments a domestication of God and a diminished view of the seriousness of sin and instead invites his readers to purse a path of radical discipleship. It is only with a reverent awe of the magnitude and mystery of God and his ways that the disciple will flourish. The framework for the main body of the book is then structured around Jesus's words to his disciples that if anyone desires to come after him, 'let him deny himself, take up his

cross and follow me' (Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). Each of these are expanded in Parts One, Two and Three of the book.

In exploring Jesus' command to deny self, Bräutigam offers penetrating diagnoses of our frequent self-centredness. Such tendencies are to be treated by embracing the newness that faith in Jesus brings, while at the same time remaining aware of the provisional nature of our current stage as pilgrims on a path of discipleship. An analysis of the actual practice of self-denial then identifies pitfalls on the path of discipleship and encourages a quiet self-awareness that places confidence in the reality of all that Christ has done, and promises to do, for his disciples.

On the subject of taking up our cross, the author offers moving reflections on Christ's sufferings, before presenting a convincing argument that the path of discipleship will involve our own trials as we share in the sufferings of Christ. There is also a courageous and persuasive explanation of what, precisely, is involved in filling up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings (Colossians 1:24), and a bold acknowledgement that the path of discipleship may involve times when we feel forsaken by God. There follows an immensely helpful discussion of the value of our sufferings as they bring fellowship and transformation into the experience of the disciple.

Finally, under the heading 'Follow Me', the book discusses both personal following, and the collective following of the church community together. The latter offers a superb defence of the importance of the church community, which stands in welcome contrast to the individualism that can so easily shape teaching on discipleship today. This section, and the whole book, culminates in a moving discussion around seeking the face of Jesus as the disciple's friend, a topic that is both beautifully simple yet immensely profound.

This book makes a specific and valuable contribution to the subject of discipleship in several ways. Much of the teaching is simple but striking, such as Brautigam's perceptive reminder that discipleship is not about leadership, but about *follow*ship. Moreover, the book incorporates wisdom from some of the great continental theologians of history, such as Luther, Schlatter and, especially, Bonhoeffer. And equally interesting and helpful is the inclusion of insights from psychology, accompanied by pertinent, and at times startling, statistics from the present day.

This book will be very useful for pastors because it is both rigorous and thorough, yet immensely practical and deeply moving. It is a book for the head, the hands and the heart, and it is a wonderful reminder that academic rigour and practical usefulness for the church can be woven together in the same book. It is perhaps appropriate to acknowledge that there is always a risk that employing a term like 'radical disciple' could leave some readers feeling as though this is a superior category among

whom they have no place. However, Bräutigam's work is sensitive and winsome towards those readers who may be prone to such feelings.

A final comment must highlight the books dedication. It is dedicated to Donald Macleod, under whose tuition Bräutigam once sat. Macleod is a theologian whose genius lies in his ability to explain the deep truths of Christian theology in a way that is clear and understandable and which never forgets the real-life needs and struggles of disciples battling onwards in their journey of faith. In writing this volume, Bräutigam has offered a superb book worthy of the example set by his mentor.

Thomas Davis, Carloway Free Church, Scotland

Mission in Contemporary Scotland. By Liam Jerrold Fraser. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-80083-020-02. xvii + 262pp. £24.99.

This missiological interpretation of today's Scotland by the minister of St Michael's Church, Linlithgow, and former Campus Minister to Edinburgh University, deserves to be read and prayerfully pondered by every Christian leader in Scotland. The author borrows from secular research, utilising a wealth of sociological insights, to offer a penetrating analysis of Scottish culture and Scottish churches. The need for mission is undeniable. Although called to be 'the sign, instrument and foretaste of the new creation' (p. xx), most churches have declined dramatically in numbers and influence in face of growing secularisation — a sea-change to which, according to the author, churches themselves have contributed to in part by welcoming liberal biblical criticism, and too often opting for secession and schism. The book's contents are divided into three parts: background, context, and practice. It concludes by offering a contextual missiology for Scotland.

This volume offers Scottish church leaders a key missiological resource in at least three ways.

First, it will help Scottish churches to interpret contemporary Scottish society. To be effective churches need to explore a popular mood where individuals feel they must be faithful to themselves and their needs and desires, rather than to God or to others. Many are obsessed by identity and feel constantly obliged to renegotiate self-identities 'that privilege authenticity and personal freedom over community and traditional morality' (p. 57). At the same time there is frustration as greater affluence, social mobility and the power of mass-media advertising seem to bring perfection within reach, but never close enough to grasp.

Second, Liam Fraser's analysis challenges churches to look inward as well as outward. Are they contextualising the service they offer and the

message they proclaim, in the lived experience of those they wish to serve? To what extent are they able to empathise with people caught up in the existential exasperation of postmodern Scotland? Contextualising and empathising will involve listening carefully to others. Part of the listening will mean researching our culture through local histories, questionnaires and interviews. Listening will enable the Gospel to be presented in terms and actions which demonstrate its relevance to the needs and aspirations of today's Scots. In their critique of contemporary culture, churches are urged to affirm what is good and reject what is false. By promoting 'a politics of grace' in the public square, the churches can help heal current disunity over Brexit, Scottish independence, race and issues of gender and sexuality, and raise the level of social media discourse.

Third, this volume has the potential to become a catalyst that will facilitate renewal of the missional strategy of Scottish churches. Fraser wants churches to incorporate into their strategy three critical elements: plausibility, worship, and missional discipleship. Congregations must work imaginatively to create in and around them a culture which will illustrate the *plausibility* of Christian belief and Christian practice in secularised Scotland. Church *worship* services, motivated by wonder at the majesty of God's glory, will be critical in fostering ecclesial communities where belief is nurtured and built. And congregations can reinforce impact by equipping members to be *missional disciples*, willing to carry the gospel out into society as they share with others the *raison d'etre* of their faith.

The book's theological framework has a strong focus on Christology, and takes a high view of the missiological significance of the church worship service. It recognises the important prophetic role of the church in speaking truth to power, and stresses the objectivity of truth. The Venerable Bede is reputed to have said, 'No one is suddenly made perfect' — an observation that perhaps might in a kindly way be applied to this otherwise excellent book, for its theological architecture is somewhat under constructed. The work of the Spirit scarcely features, and prayer has a remarkably low profile. Apart from passing references to Wesley, Whitefield, and the Haldanes, there is no allusion to the capacity of religious awakenings to renew the church. The assertion that mission is absent from the traditional marks of the Scottish Church is surely debatable, and there is little on the role of preaching to fulfil and further mission. Such lacunae notwithstanding, we should be genuinely grateful to Liam Jerrold Fraser for making this invaluable resource available for all active servants of the *Missio Dei* in Scotland.

Fergus Macdonald, Edinburgh

In the Fullness of Time: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Acts and Paul. By Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-4335-6334-8. 448pp. £14.99.

This work is the published version of the lecture notes for the course Gaffin taught on Acts and Paul at Westminster Theological Seminary for most of his tenure. The book, however, is not a standard introduction. There are no matters of authorship, dating, provenance, historical reliability, or any of the standard matters often covered in the various introductions available. Instead, *In the Fullness of Time* is concerned specifically with the biblical theology of Acts and Paul. 'Biblical Theology' is used here in the sense of the discipline inaugurated by Geerhardus Vos; Gaffin's concern is the place of Acts and Paul in the historical and organic development of Scripture as God's revelation centred around Jesus Christ. Pastors and students interested in the theological unity of Acts and Paul will find much of value in this book.

For an introduction to writings as complicated as Acts and the Pauline epistles (Gaffin assumes the authenticity of all thirteen canonical letters), the volume is remarkably focused. As he goes through Acts, Gaffin directs most of his attention to Pentecost and the role it plays in the larger narrative of Acts. Gaffin's 'central and overall thesis' concerns the 'place of Pentecost not only in Acts but also in the Lucan double work, in Luke-Acts seen as a unit, or in other words, the central place of Pentecost in the entire history that Luke is seeking to relate to Theophilus' (p. 60). Following G. W. H. Lampe, Gaffin seeks to show how 'Pentecost is the great turning-point, the hinge, as it were, of the two-volume narrative' (p. 60). One of Gaffin's important and convincing arguments in favour of this thesis is reading Pentecost as a Christological, rather than a pneumatological, event: Pentecost, in the book of Acts, serves to accentuate Christ's judgment over the earth, and in its statements of Christ it summarizes and establishes the kingdom focus of Acts (see Acts 1:6; 8:12; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

As Gaffin moves on to Paul, he identifies the same concerns that he found in Acts, namely, 'the *basileia*—the eschatological rule and realm of God, present and future' (pp. 238, 241). Although other centres have been proposed, Gaffin follows Herman Ridderbos and Geerhardus Vos. For these two Dutchmen, the eschatological aspect of Christ's work should be placed as the centrepiece of Paul's theology. Those familiar with Gaffin's previous writing and research will find nothing new here. In many ways, Gaffin is developing and simplifying the insights in his dissertation, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*. Save from an introductory chapter surveying various interpretations up through the New Perspective

on Paul, the entire section on Paul, which is over half of the 450-page book, concerns Paul's eschatological structure and the resurrection in the thought of Paul. Gaffin's careful and thorough exegesis of texts presents a convincing account of how one should construe Paul's eschatological and resurrection-centred theology.

For those already inclined towards Gaffin's hermeneutic, this book will not disappoint. However, others less convinced of the Vossian model will have a difficult time agreeing with all its conclusions. While the volume is rewarding, four critiques are worth mentioning. The first two are circumstantial and the other two material. Circumstantially, *In the Fullness of Time* sometimes feels out of place. Because the book is simply a reproduction of his lectures, one gets the sense of something missing, as though this were a small part of a broader curriculum. Which, of course, is exactly what the book offers. While it makes sense given the origins of the book, I wish the 'incompleteness' had been supplemented or at least mitigated. A second and related issue is the lack of current scholarship. Most of Gaffin's work concerns the text of Acts and Paul (a commendable feature in a discipline that can often be waylaid by dealing with secondary literature), but when Gaffin does cite other scholarship, it is rather antiquated. The two most recent monographs that Gaffin notes are N.T. Wright's *The Resurrection and the Son of God*, published in 2003, and Simon Gathercole's *Where is Boasting?,* published in 2002. Although understandable, given Gaffin's retirement from scholarship and the nature of the book, a fuller interaction with scholarship would have been valuable, even if it simply situated Gaffin's work with current discussions.

The material critiques are twofold. First, Gaffin's emphasis on redemptive history and eschatology, following the maxim of Geerhardus Vos that 'soteriology is eschatology', is not always convincing. At times, what is truly an illuminating and crucial piece of Paul's theology becomes the whole thing. Gaffin never says that Paul is only concerned with eschatology or the resurrection, but the level of emphasis can be overextended to the detriment of other important aspects of Paul's thought. This is seen clearly in the conspicuous *lacunae* in Gaffin's treatment of Paul, which is the second material critique. It is incorrect to fault someone for not writing the book they did not intend to write, and Paul's theology is far too vast to cover in a volume this size. However, significant areas of Paul's thought are left practically untouched or mentioned only in passing, two examples being justification (surprising, given Gaffin's confessional Reformed commitments), and the nature of sin in Paul.

None of the critiques mentioned above take away from the value that lies in what Gaffin offers. Those of us unable to sit under his teaching now have a rich deposit left by one of the greatest Reformed exegetes of the

twentieth century. Gaffin spent his entire career listening closely to Paul and attending to the major motifs that informed his preaching. We would do well to pay close attention to what he says.

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God is God and You are You: Finding Confidence for Sharing Our Faith. By Thomas Davis. Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2023. ISBN: 9781527109384. 144pp. £9.99.

This book contains excellent practical theology encouraging evangelism. It does not seek to break new ground so much as to support those struggling with key theological truths artfully applied to our lives. The target audience for this book is any Christian from a reformed tradition struggling with knowing they need to evangelize, wanting to evangelize, but feeling overwhelmed and insufficient for the task. The language is highly accessible as would be expected given the target audience.

Following a short introduction that gives a brief overview of what the book contains, the book is split into two major parts: God is God; and, You are You. Part one provides a number of truths about God's role in evangelism relating to: who God is; what the truth is; what the good news is; what grace is; and what eternity is. Likewise, part two provides a number of truths about our role in witnessing relating to: what, who, and when we are; what witnessing is; what evil is; what people are; and what the church family is. Finally, he ends with a short postscript pointing out the significance of the fact that 'God is not You and You are not God'.

Each chapter is simply laid out, easily followed and logically ordered. For example, in chapter one, 'God is God', Davis introduces the chapter then lays out the central theological point being made: God is God. This entails the uniqueness and attributes of God. He then takes this point on to demonstrate how it counters fears like when we might 'think that God is weak', 'that God is distant' or 'that God is a bit irrelevant' (pp. 14-15). In each of these cases he outlines a number of related thoughts to those central ideas that will strike home for many of us. In so doing he demonstrates how theological truth about God counters false beliefs. He then provides an example from scripture demonstrating the truth in action. After this, he summarises four truths about God: 'God is sovereign', 'God takes the initiative', God is powerful' and 'God is compassionate' (pp. 16-17). He then demonstrates how these four truths are not just abstract truths, but are highly relevant and helpful for sharing our faith. Then, on the next few pages, Davis demonstrates that these practical truths should give us confidence, a sense of dependence, motivation to obedience and act as a reminder never to give up. Finally, at the end of each chapter there is a

set of study questions to help the reader think through the content of the chapter and apply it to their own lives.

This book is excellent and attentive to the frequent doubts of many Christians including Davis himself (demonstrating to those that might think otherwise, that just having studied does not render us immune to false thoughts). Davis's pastoral heart can be clearly seen on every page of this book. Take, for example, the last paragraph to page 22:

> When it comes to sharing your faith, it is normal to feel weak, it's OK to feel daunted, and it's very likely that you'll feel inadequate. But in the midst of all that, never, ever forget that God is God. We can be so easily discouraged by thinking that the nation is too dark, the church is too weak, the challenge is too great, people's hearts are too hard, the situation is too bleak, and we are too useless. But none of that is true. In fact, all of that is complete nonsense, because God is God!

I would highly recommend this book. Its accessibility means it can be recommended for wide reading in the church. Furthermore, because those of us who have studied are not immune to these fears and thoughts, Davis's gentle dealing and correction will help us to refocus on the author and perfecter of our faith and help us too as we seek to live out what we believe.

Philip D. Foster

Why God Makes Sense in a World that Doesn't. By Gavin Ortlund. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. ISBN: 9781540964090. xiv + 225pp. £15.99.

The Preface to this fascinating book declares that addressing the basic conflict between Christianity and naturalism today calls for an apologetic which will ask: 'What kind of story does each tell us about our world? Which is the most satisfying to mind and heart?' Gavin Ortlund's use of three criteria — Beauty, Story, and Probability — to address these questions provides a very useful and well written resource for readers struggling with the science versus God quandary. For Ortlund, beauty and truth are joined at the hip, and he passionately believes that an appeal to beauty, the power of narrative, and abductive argument, can better persuade the disenchanted, the distracted, and the infuriated of the plausibility and probability of God.

In chapters 1-3 Ortlund explores ways in which his three criteria enhance the cosmological, the teleological, and the moral arguments for theism. Substantive responses are offered to claims of atheists, past and present, from Nietzsche to Dawkins.

Chapter 1 is entitled: 'The Cause of the World: Why Something is More Plausible (and Much More Interesting) Than Nothing.' Here the two basic current scientific theories of origins are evaluated — Big Bang and Multiverse — the one compatible with creation *ex nihilo*, the other incompatible because it assumes a self-starting universe or universes. The importance of distinguishing between a 'first cause' and an ontologically distinct *uncaused* first cause is stressed. The present state of debate prompts Ortlund to assert: *It seems more likely than not that our physical world (universe / multiverse) has a cause, and therefore it seems a distinct possibility that our physical world is not all that exists (since whatever caused it would exist independently of it, as its cause)* (p. 43). The chapter concludes alluding to C. S. Lewis and Tolkien's view of human existence as participating in a very great story, and by citing Einstein's metaphor of the external world as a library.

Chapter 2 interprets the remarkable fine-tuning of creation, focussing on evidence of design in mathematics, music, and love. He avers that the permanence, beauty and usefulness of mathematics indicate that mathematical truth reveals a profound mathematical substructure, creating a genuine point of contact with something beyond nature. The doctrine of the Trinity entails numbers being eternal in a special way, not only in the mind of God, but also, in some sense, in the very being of God. Music also is a source of transcendence, providing a window into the heart of reality. And the human experience of love, in Ortlund's view, enjoys a similar status to the enjoyment of music. He asks: How can natural selection be the source of human love when its driving force is death? In contrast, Trinitarian theism's affirmation of love originating in the Godhead (1 John 4:8, 16) is both more rational and more comforting. Our experience of love, like that of maths and music, makes better sense if there is some ultimate meaning undergirding the world.

Chapter 3 explores the fundamental moral conflict lurking within humanity. The author identifies two aspects of our moral experience: conscience and the hope of justice. Conscience he defines as 'our intuitive sense of the objective reality of moral values and obligations' (p. 113). Our perception of moral justice prompts us to hope instinctively for good to triumph ultimately over evil. Movies almost always have happy endings! A theistic worldview provides a more plausible and more meaningful explanatory framework for conscience and justice, contrasting markedly with the illusory and arbitrary morality of naturalism.

Chapter 4 focuses on Christian hope. It assesses positively the reliability of the four Gospels, the credibility of the unique claims of Jesus, and the historical evidence for his resurrection which is 'as significant a turning point in the course of created reality as the initial moment

of creation itself' (p. 202). To believe in a divine, rather than a strictly human, account of Jesus of Nazareth is wonderful as well as plausible, for it anticipates eternal life. In his Conclusion ('Moving Forward with Probabilities'), Ortlund declares that the Christian story is more plausible, more interesting, more elegant, more dignifying, and more hopeful than its naturalistic counterpart. His last word to readers is to urge them to move beyond probabilities. 'We must make the best decision we can in the light of the information that we do have' (p. 214).

Fergus Macdonald, Edinburgh

The Plot of Salvation, Divine Presence, Human Vocation and Cosmic Redemption. By Bernardo Cho. Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-83973-627-8. 204pp. £14.99.

Before reviewing *The Plot of Salvation*, it is important to provide a brief background on the author, Bernardo Cho. Bernardo is a pastor and theologian. He currently leads a church in Sao Paolo, Brazil — Igreja Presbiteriano do Caminho. He is also head of the DMin programme at Seminario Teologico Servo de Cristo, Sao Paulo. He studied for a MDiv in Seminario Teologico (2006-2008), an MA in New Testament at Regent College, Canada (2009-2012) and a PhD at New College, Edinburgh University (2012-2016).

Bernardo has a rich and diverse background. He is Brazilian by birth but ethnically Korean. There was a major migration of Koreans to Brazil following the Korean War of the 1950s. He speaks fluent Portuguese, Korean, and English, and is proficient in Spanish.

Bernardo Cho is an example of a growing number of gifted pastor-theologians from the Majority World. These are voices not often heard in the west but thankfully, due to the work of Langham Publishing, they are being given a voice. They bring refreshing insights to the biblical text from their own contexts. Now to *The Plot of Salvation*.

When we fail to understand the overarching plot of the Bible, we can easily reduce the gospel to something smaller than it is — and at the same time compromise the scope of God's calling on our lives.

In this adapted collection of twenty interrelated sermons, Bernardo Cho lays out the history of salvation as it is revealed through the entirety of Scripture, from creation to new creation, from Genesis to Revelation. He demonstrates the cohesive nature of the biblical narrative, while expanding our awareness of Christ's redemption, our identities as people of God, and our role in the world and in God's story of reconciliation.

He has the ability to write as a theologian and at the same time communicate in the language of a Pastor — this is a unique gift. The book

provides readers with a framework for examining biblical passages in light of the overarching plot of salvation and serves as an excellent model for teaching the Bible as a unified whole.

Bernardo Cho does not adopt a common evangelical approach to the plan of salvation. Often, in our evangelical tradition, we go from Genesis 1-3 to Genesis 12:1-3 and from there to Matthew 1:23 and the angel of the Lord's message to Joseph of the coming Messiah — 'Immanuel — which means God with us'. As a New Testament Scholar, Cho devotes nearly 100 pages of the book to the Old Testament to help us grapple with all that God was seeking to accomplish through, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets and the Children of Israel and their place in this plot.

Following the Introduction, the book is divided into 4 parts with five chapters under each heading.

I. Creation to Israel (pp. 9-50)

II. From Sinai to the Exile (pp. 51-94)

III. From the Birth to the Resurrection of Jesus (pp. 95-138)

IV. From the Empty Tomb to the New Jerusalem (pp. 139-76)

Conclusion: *The Story Goes On* (pp. 177-181)

Throughout the book, Bernardo Cho constantly takes us back to Genesis 3 and the roots of our alienation from God — 'the fall was Adam and Eve's attempt at ascending to God's position, which led them to forfeit their fundamental vocation and to dig their own grave' (p. 22). This led them to be exiled from the Garden. The exile theme continues to be explored throughout the book: the exile of God's people in Egypt, the exile in the desert, in Babylon and ultimately, we, the Church, living as exiles in the present age. In the conclusion, he examines the Christian's engagement with this current age. He discusses the temptations of the 'permissive' stance and the 'sectarian' stance (p. 178) and challenges us to resist moving in either of these directions. He invites us to live with a stance of 'engagement'. His description of our roles as *ambassadors* is insightful and very helpful (p. 179).

The book is filled with wonderful theological gems; for example, his understanding and reflections on the momentous occasion when God passes by Moses on Mount Sinai and answers Moses' request to show him his glory (Exod. 32-34, especially Exod. 34:5-8; pp. 56-58). In pages 173-75 his observations on the completeness of creation in the Garden of Eden and the anticipation of the 'new heaven and earth', reflected now in a city, the New Jerusalem, shows 'the redemption even of that which was originally a human idealization'; that is, the city. His guidance in the conclu-

sion on how to conquer the sacred–secular divide leaves the reader with much to consider (pp. 179-80).

The book culminates with the truth that 'Genesis 3 is not the final word. The plot of salvation informs us instead that the same God who created the heavens and the earth, and called the cosmos "very good", remains committed to rescuing his creation and restoring his image bearers [….] What has the final word on our future, then, is not the chaos following Genesis 3 but the empty tomb following Jesus' crucifixion' (p. 170).

I am delighted *The Plot of Salvation* it is now available in English, having been first published in Portuguese. It is an exciting and accessible portrayal for the twenty-first century of God's heart and passion to redeem his creation. I have no hesitation in giving *The Plot of Salvation* my full recommendation for readers wishing to understand God's great plan of redemption.

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