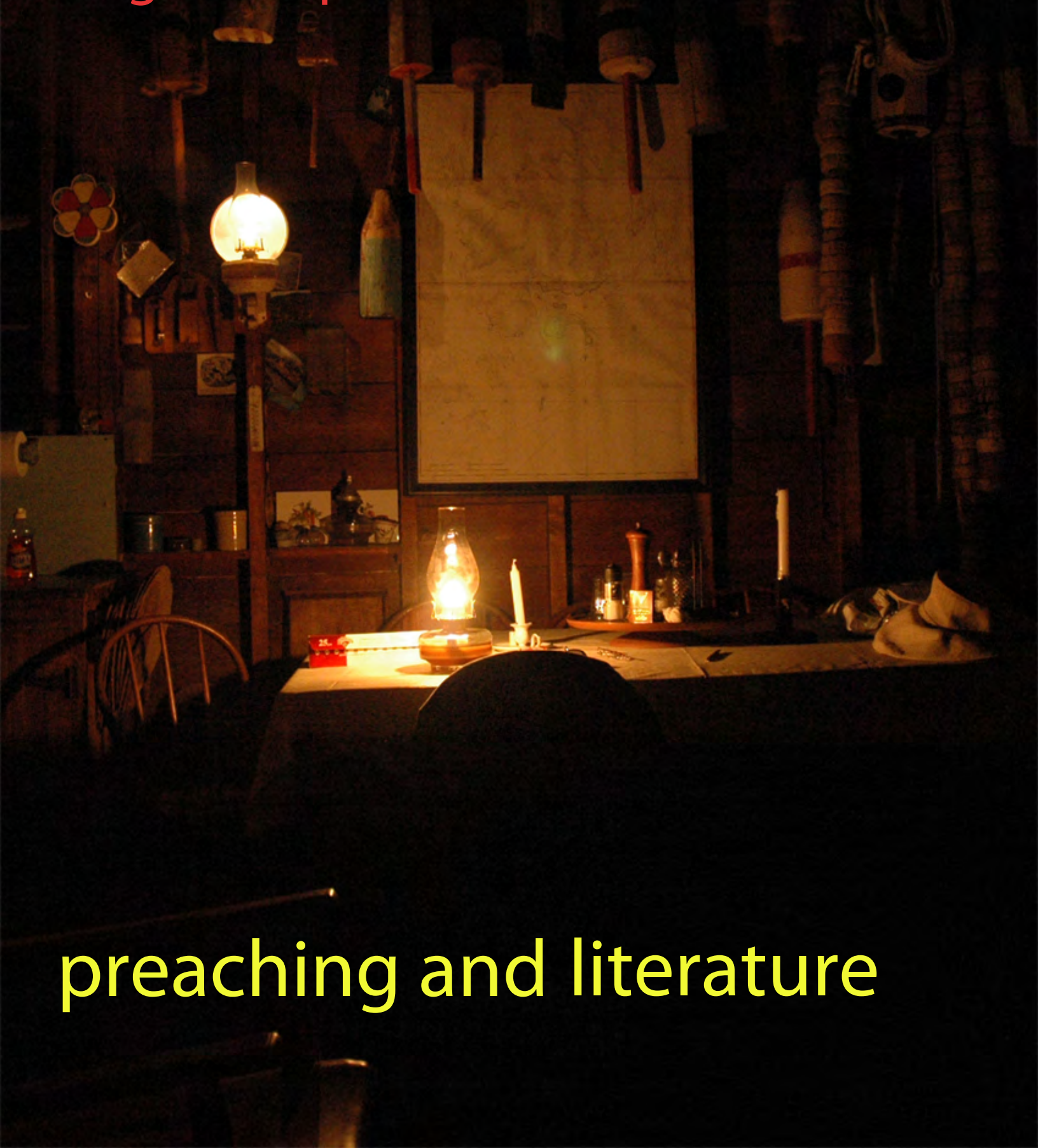


# ordained servant

August-September 2013



preaching and literature

# *Ordained Servant Online*

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**August–September 2013**

### *From the Editor*

I have always believed that the reading of good fiction and poetry helps the preacher linguistically and intellectually: linguistically developing word-craft, and intellectually helping us understand the world in which we live and preach. It continues to trouble me that the reading of poetry is still in decline, despite evidence in the 2009 NEA report on literary reading that the reading of fiction is on the rise. In my analysis of George Herbert's powerful poem "Submission," I offer a few possible reasons why this so. But since more than a third of the Bible is written in some form of poetry, this should not be so for preachers. Thus, I offer some suggestions, based on my own experience, as to how we might improve in this area. Our poem for this month is, of course, a Herbert offering.

In keeping with our theme this month, Danny Olinger writes about one of his literary passions, Flannery O'Connor, in "Understanding Flannery O'Connor," a review article on two books about O'Connor.

On a broader topic, Leland Ryken reviews a collection of articles by humanities professors at Calvin College, *Practically Human: College Professors Speak from the Heart of Humanities Education*. Without saying so, this underlines the importance of a liberal arts education as part of the required preparation for the ministry of the Word.

Darryl Hart reviews Richard M. Gamble's latest book, *The City Set on a Hill: The Making and Unmaking of an American Myth*, an illuminating study that presents a cautionary tale of the dangers of describing nations with biblical metaphors.

Finally, T. David Gordon reviews Tim Keller's *Galatians for You*, one of a new series of popular commentaries.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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*Ordained Servant* exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

# Servant Thoughts

## Submission: A Model for Preachers

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

George Herbert's poem, "Submission" is a model for preachers in both form and content.

### **Submission**

George Herbert (1593–1633)

But that thou art my wisdome, Lord,  
And both mine eyes are thine,  
My minde would be extreamly stirr'd  
For missing my designe.

Were it not better to bestow  
Some place and power on me?  
Then should thy praises with me grow,  
And share in my degree.

But when I thus dispute and grieve,  
I do resume my sight,  
And pilfring what I once did give,  
Disseize thee of thy right.

How know I, if thou shouldst me raise,  
That I should then raise thee?  
Perhaps great places and thy praise  
Do not so well agree.

Wherefore unto my gift I stand;  
I will no more advise:  
Onely do thou lend me a hand,  
Since thou hast both mine eyes.

For spiritual and lyrical sublimity, as well as superbly crafted clarity, this poem has few equals. Harold Bloom acknowledges, "There are only a few extraordinary devotional poets in the language, including Donne, and the Victorians Gerard Manley Hopkins and

Christina Rossetti. By any standard, George Herbert is the devotional poet proper in English.”<sup>1</sup>

The analysis of good poetry should, first of all, be a pure pleasure; but that pleasure can translate into a great benefit for preachers. The recitation and analysis of the best poetry disciplines the preacher in the economy, power, and beauty of the English language. In the case of sacred poets like Herbert there are personal lessons that may be learned and etched in the memory. This, in turn, can inspire the preacher to pass the most salient lessons on to his congregation. There is no preaching so powerful as that which is born of an understanding of Scripture that the preacher has deeply experienced. While much poetry does not do this directly, the sacred poems of Herbert and Donne are rooted in a profound understanding of Scripture. In the age of “wit,” understanding the complexity of structure and meaning can be daunting to the novice, but Herbert’s poem, “Submission,” is crystal clear.

“Submission” is especially well suited to instruct us regarding our worldly aspirations—to which every sinful man, especially preachers, given our public position, are prone. George Herbert, himself, had deep experience in this matter. If you are not content with your humble place of service to God in this world, a good dose of this poem is a potent and pleasant cure. Herbert was in a high position in Cambridge University as university orator; and he served in the king’s court, with hopes of appointment to secretary of state. Those hopes were dashed with King James’s death. Then the Lord called Herbert to the ministry—a call he hesitated to heed for a time—in a humble place, where he served until his untimely death in the country parish of Fugglestone St Peter, in Bemerton Church near Salisbury, England. He used his wit well as a poet, reminding us of Alexander Pope’s observation, “True wit is nature to advantage dressed, what oft was thought, but ne’er so well expressed.”<sup>2</sup> But unlike much of the wit of his age, he used it for the glory of God and the edification of the church. “Submission” is one of the most powerfully beautiful sacred poems in the English language.

The bulk of his poetry was published posthumously in *The Temple* in 1633. Herbert had instructed his close friend Nicholas Ferrar, whom he tasked with executing his literary remains, to publish his poetry only if he believed that it would be edifying to Christians. For one nobly born, of great intelligence, learning, and gifts, with high hopes of royal preferment, this was no small act of humility.

## **The Importance and Benefits of Poetry**

Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, raised worrisome concerns about the state of literary reading in America in the 1990s. Building on an alarming trend, Gioia sounded the alarm in dramatic fashion in 2004 and 2007 with reports “Reading at Risk” and “To Read or Not to Read.” He was often criticized as a doomsayer. But, because parents and educators, including the NEA, did not simply accept this as an irreversible trend, the 20 percent decline in literary reading in the youngest age group surveyed (ages 18–24) in 2002 was reversed to a dramatic 21 percent

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Best Poems of the English Language: From Chaucer through Frost* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2004), 183.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*. This is actually a long poem.

increase in 2008, as presented by Gioia in a subsequent NEA report “Reading on the Rise.” Sadly the only area of literary reading that continues to decline is poetry.

But, why is this so? My guess is that the difficulty of understanding poetry inhibits its ascendancy in our culture. Of course, poetry slams have appeared in venues throughout America. Although this gives a glimmer of hope, it does not usually represent the kind of appreciation that grows out of a deep reading of the best poetry in the English language. I have even encountered disdain among slammers for the forms and discipline of the greatest poets. But this is not to say they are not onto something important. They read or recite their poetry in small public settings. Thus, I also think the decline is due to a lack of reading aloud, especially hearing poetry well read or recited. What I have discovered in my “memory walks” is that by memorizing poetry, through regular oral repetition, the meaning becomes clearer with time. Memory muscles are exercised along with the physical. The sound of the words begin to sink in, reminding me of Robert Frost’s dictum that poetry is the “sound of sense.” But few of us have patience to repeat poems aloud until it is etched in our memories. That is why I have learned to combine it with my daily two mile walk.

There are also additional benefits for preachers. Reading and memorizing poetry trains us to meditate deeply on texts. The compression of language in good poetry forces the reader to pay attention to the details of grammar and punctuation. It thus tends to make us better oral communicators, speaking in memorable sentences, and—a near miracle for Reformed preachers—making our preaching more concise. I have often finished leading worship before noon since engaging in this exercise. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address was a little over two minutes long (280 words), while the forgotten Oration by famed orator Edward Everett was over two hours long (13,508 words). The next day Everett wrote to Lincoln, “I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes.”<sup>3</sup>

It is also important to read more accessible poets. Herbert is surely one of them, although not every poem he wrote is as accessible as “Submission.”

## Structure to Model

Herbert’s creation of the simple rhythm of the five quatrains is itself an act of submission.<sup>4</sup> So, structure and meaning are closely allied. Herbert often broke from traditional forms to make a point. But here he impresses the reader with the lovely rhythms of his alternating rhyme scheme (abab). The poetic feet, in this case iambic (the syllabic pattern of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable), follow the poetic pattern known as the “hymnal measure.”<sup>5</sup> This standard form of quatrains contains alternating lines first of iambic tetrameter (four iambic feet), and then iambic trimeter (three iambic feet) and so forth.

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<sup>3</sup> Bob Green, “The Forgotten Gettysburg Addresser,” *The Wall Street Journal* (June 22-23, 2013): A15.

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive literary biography, I recommend Joseph Summers, *George Herbert: His Religion and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954). For commentary from many authors on every English poem of Herbert I recommend *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Thanks to Leland Ryken for these recommendations.

<sup>5</sup> I highly recommend Miller Williams, *Patterns of Poetry: An Encyclopedia of Forms* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).



The biblical metaphor of sight for faith, or its absence, is brilliantly conceived to hold the whole poem together. Scripture is filled with this concept. “I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways (Ps. 119:15); “there is no fear of God before his eyes” (Ps. 36:1).

The poem is also a perfect chiasm, following the patterns of ancient poetry, in Herbert’s pre-Enlightenment world. Each stanza follows the form with the first and fifth, second and fourth, focusing on the problem in the central third—his sin.

But that thou art my wisdom, Lord,  
And both mine eyes are thine,  
My mind would be extremely stirr’d  
For missing my designe.

Were it not better to bestow  
Some place and power on me?  
Then should thy praises with me grow,  
And share in my degree.

But when I thus dispute and grieve,  
I do resume my sight,  
And pilfing what I once did give,  
Disseize thee of thy right.

How know I, if thou shouldst me raise,  
That I should then raise thee?  
Perhaps great places and thy praise  
Do not so well agree.

Wherefore unto my gift I stand;  
I will no more advise:  
Onely do thou lend me a hand,  
Since thou hast both mine eyes.

When he complains about his humble state he views things from a purely human and sinful perspective, thus robbing God of his Lordship.

The chiasmic center is nested between stanzas two and four. Each represents a query. The first asks, would it not be better for the Lord to place him in a powerful position, since then God’s praise would grow with and share in the poet’s ascendancy. Here the hubris of the poet’s ambition is made plain, especially in his address of such a question directly to the Lord. The second (stanza four) asks the convicting question, which gets to the heart of the temptation, how do I know, if the Lord should raise me to a high place, that I would glorify him. He concludes with the most memorable line of the poem, “Perhaps great places and thy praise, Do not so well agree.”

Then the inclusio (bracketing or framing device) of the first and last stanzas focus on the wisdom of living by God’s wisdom, instead of the poet’s own. It begins with an expression of the security the poet feels as a result of being committed to following

God's wisdom in his life as the introduction to the struggle he has been through and resolved. He gladly admits the Lord's gracious hold on him, "both mine eyes are thine." The conclusion in the fifth stanza is a beautiful expression of commitment to submitting the gift of his life and calling to the Lord's wisdom in place of his own. He presents his gift without argument, acknowledging his need for God's guidance with a simple supplication, "Onely do thou lend me a hand, Since thou hast both mine eyes."

The structure and the content, as we will briefly see, are really inseparable.

## Content to Model

Although wisdom is mentioned only once, in the first line, it is clearly the theme of the poem: whose wisdom will guide his sight? Herbert wrestles with God's wisdom over against his own. Herbert scholar Helen Wilcox suggests that the poem is based on Proverbs 4:5–9<sup>6</sup>

Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.

Job 28:28 also comes to mind, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding."

The pilgrim, living in a fallen world, has two pathways to follow—his own or the Lord's. Herbert is brutally honest about his temptation. He knows that following his own vision for his life is a kind of robbery, "pilfring what I once did give," which easily tempts him. But his deliberation on the alternative leaves him deeply disturbed, "My minde would be extreamly stirr'd." He fears missing God's plan for his life, "For missing my designe."

He has a profound understanding of the nature of his temptation,

Were it not better to bestow  
Some place and power on me?  
Then should thy praises with me grow,  
And share in my degree.

This is the folly of thinking that we will naturally use preferment for the Lord's glory. But this is the sight of the natural man, the perspective of the man who seeks self-glorification,

But when I thus dispute and grieve,  
I do resume my sight

This leads to the great question,

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<sup>6</sup> Wilcox, *The English Poems of George Herbert*, 344.



How know I, if thou shouldst me raise,  
That I should then raise thee?

And then the punch line,

Perhaps great places and thy praise  
Do not so well agree.

And finally, the firm resolve,

Wherefore unto my gift I stand;  
I will no more advise:

The plea for help restores his divinely given sight, depending for guidance on his Lord, and looking at his life from God's perspective. This reminds us of Psalm 139:24, "And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

Onely do thou lend me a hand,  
Since thou hast both mine eyes.

What a call to contentment with God's calling in our lives. The world's ambition so easily intrudes into our lives as servants. The quest for celebrity has always been a temptation, and even more so in our electronically mediated world. We are called to be God's ordained servants. This is a lesson in servanthood as well as a lesson in the value of poetry for the servant preachers of the Word.

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# ServantReading

## Understanding Flannery O'Connor A Review Article

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by Danny E. Olinger

*Flannery*, by Brad Gooch. New York: Little, Brown, 2009, 448 pages, \$8.89, paper.

*The Terrible Speed of Mercy*, by Jonathan Rogers. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012, xviii + 189 Pages, \$9.99, Paper.

In June 1952, the month following the publication of her debut novel *Wise Blood*, twenty-seven year-old Flannery O'Connor learned that she was suffering from lupus erythematosus, the autoimmune disease that had killed her father in his mid-forties. Physically limited by both the disease and its side effects, she lived with her mother on the family farm, Andalusia, in Milledgeville, Georgia, the remaining twelve years of her life. Undeterred by her diminishing health she made it her practice to write two hours every day producing one more novel (*The Violent Bear It Away*) and two volumes of short stories (*A Good Man is Hard to Find* and *Everything that Rises Must Converge*). When she died in 1964, her literary reputation was firmly established, but nowhere near its current status. O'Connor is now widely praised as one of the great writers of the twentieth century; some even consider her the most important Christian writer that the United States has ever produced. Nearly two hundred doctoral dissertations and over seventy books have been written about O'Connor; since 1972, her alma mater, the now Georgia College, has operated the *Flannery O'Connor Review*, which annually publishes critical pieces regarding her writings. Two new biographies, Brad Gooch's *Flannery* and Jonathan Rogers's *The Terrible Speed of Mercy*, reflect the growing interest in O'Connor and add to the understanding of her and her work.

At 448 pages, Gooch's *Flannery* is professional, impeccably researched, and well-written. It will undoubtedly serve as the standard for straight biographical information on O'Connor, her life, influences, and relationships. However, it is also not terribly exciting. Gooch seems to acknowledge this in the epigraph where he places O'Connor's declaration, "As for biographies, there won't be any biographies of me because, for only one reason, lives spent between the house and the chicken yard do not make exciting copy."

Gooch recognizes that the dominant influence in O'Connor's writing—as well as in her life—was the Roman Catholic Church. After rising daily at 6 a.m. to pray, O'Connor rarely, if ever, missed morning mass, and her practice at bedtime was to read twenty minutes of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. When confronted with the claims of

modernism at the then Georgia State College for Women, O'Connor claimed that it was her Christian faith that preserved her, "I always said: wait, don't bite on this, get a wider picture, continue to read" (114).

In graduate school at the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa, O'Connor marked up heavily French Catholic Jacques Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism*, particularly his statement, "Do not make the absurd attempt to sever in yourself the artist and the Christian" (156). O'Connor took as her creed Maritain's contention that the job of the Christian writer was pure devotion to craft, to telling strong stories, even if the stories involved the undesirables of culture.

O'Connor was also in the words of a friend a "demon rewriter" (145). O'Connor remarked, "When I sit down to write, a monstrous reader looms up who sits down beside me and continually mutters, 'I don't get it, I don't see it, I don't want it.' Some writers can ignore this presence, but I have never learned how" (86). Her eventual publisher, Robert Giroux, took a chance and signed O'Connor as an author because he thought "this woman is so committed, as a writer, she'll do whatever she's made up her mind to do" (172).

Surprisingly, Gooch stays away for the most part from interpreting O'Connor's fiction other than giving a summary statement or relating how a real life experience affected a story. Gooch relates, for example, that, while staying at the home of Robert and Sally Fitzgerald, O'Connor had reached an impasse in the development of the character of Hazel Motes in *Wise Blood*. Her solution in moving forward came from reading a copy of Robert Fitzgerald's translation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*. Just as Oedipus had blinded himself in recognition of his sins, she had Motes remove the mote in his own eye by blinding himself with quicklime. Gooch observes this pattern would often be repeated in O'Connor's fiction, the use of the grotesque to convey a shocking Christian vision of original sin.

Regarding O'Connor's acclaimed short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find," Gooch notes Giroux's reaction upon first reading it, "I thought, this is one of the greatest short stories ever written in the United States. It's equal to Hemingway, or Melville's 'Bartleby the Scrivener.' And it absolutely put her on the map" (227). Gooch, however, never goes into detail on what made "A Good Man is Hard to Find" so exceptional. He simply says that the Misfit is a prophet of existential nihilism far more harrowing than Hazel Motes, and quotes a friend of O'Connor's who believed that the grandmother was a version of O'Connor's mother, Regina. This is the pattern that Gooch uses throughout the book. He provides interesting background material, but at the same time maintains a critical distance.

Jonathan Rogers acknowledges openly that his biography covers much of the same ground as Gooch's biography. The difference, according to Rogers, is that his interest is in exploring the spiritual themes in O'Connor's writings, which Gooch does not emphasize. The question is whether Rogers has included enough new material to distance himself from Gooch's volume. In reading the biographies back to back, the amount of overlap was painfully obvious for the first third of Rogers's volume. Thankfully, once Rogers gets to *Wise Blood*, the book starts to pick up speed, although it never really takes off as it should.

Rogers argues that what occurs in every O'Connor story is that a person must face the truth that he or she is accountable before the living God. In *Wise Blood*, Hazel Motes

seeks to deny this truth, but Jesus proves to be a wild, ragged figure moving from tree to tree in the back of Motes's mind. Motes cannot escape the conviction that Jesus had redeemed him, and, in the end, Jesus wins.<sup>1</sup> Deformed as he was by original sin, it was not something that Motes did that brought him to Jesus. It was only the grace of God, but the way that grace appeared was scandalous. That to Rogers is the essence of O'Connor's writing. She will offend conventional morality because the gospel itself is an offence to conventional morality.

In analyzing *The Violent Bear It Away*, Rogers makes the case that this book represents O'Connor distilled and fortified. In the long opening sentence, fourteen year old Francis Marion Tarwater is drunk, haunted by his dead uncle who remains seated at the breakfast table. A Negro passing by to get his jug filled—the boy and his uncle being moonshiners—has to finish digging the grave, drag the body from the table, and bury the body in a decent and Christian way, with the sight of its Savior at the head of the grave and enough dirt on top to keep the dogs from digging it up. The combination of the sign of the Savior juxtaposed with sniffing dogs looking to uncover an old man's rotting flesh is a capsule of O'Connor's fiction as a whole. It is a picture of this world at its ugliest, but overshadowed by the grace of God.

O'Connor herself commented that the story was about the boy's struggle not to be a prophet, which he loses. In that sense, Rogers observes that Francis Marion Tarwater is yet another Protestant prophet tormented by "wise blood," the visceral hunger for the holy (133). Much like Hazel Motes, Francis Tarwater's tenuous grasp of reality does not change the fact that ultimate realities have a firm grasp on him and will not let him go.

Rogers finishes the volume by briefly commenting upon the stories that would comprise O'Connor's posthumous volume, "Everything that Rises Must Converge," and with a concluding chapter on the rapid deterioration of her health and death in August 1964.

Rogers's style is not as smooth as Gooch's, and the editing is a little inconsistent. Still, Roger's biography is helpful in filling out the picture of O'Connor's spirituality in her life and writings. Rogers's fundamental insight about O'Connor's writings, that she saw a broken world that was beyond self-help or instant uplift, alone distinguishes his

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<sup>1</sup> Although Rogers communicates this theme from *Wise Blood* clearly, the line "in the end, Jesus wins" is not found in his biography. Reportedly, this is what producer Michael Fitzgerald, son of Robert and Sally Fitzgerald, told director John Huston that the book was about in the 1979 filming of *Wise Blood* as a movie. Francine Prose recalls the episode:

In the preface to the second edition of *Wise Blood*, O'Connor made her novel's stance toward the life-and-death nature of Christianity unmistakably clear, even for those readers who saw the story's grotesqueness without quite catching its gravity. Huston himself seems to have been one such reader, persuaded throughout the filming of the unmediated comedy of Hazel's obsession, until [Brad] Dourif questioned him about the meaning of the last scenes. Without giving anything away, it seems safe to say that the dark plot turns considerably darker as Hazel, the prophet of the Church Without Christ—"where the blind don't see and the lame don't walk and what's dead stays that way"—takes an exceedingly sharp turn toward Jesus. The Fitzgeralds had believed all along that they were making a film about redemption and salvation, but Huston had been under the impression that he was shooting a picture about the semi-ridiculous religious manias prevalent throughout the South. According to Huston biographer Lawrence Grobel, a hasty script conference about Hazel's faith persuaded Huston that at "the end of the film, Jesus wins." See, Francine Prose, *Wise Blood: A Matter of Life and Death* in the *Criterion Collection*, May 11, 2009.

book from many of the critical theories regarding O'Connor and her literature that would undoubtedly horrify the author if she were still alive.<sup>2</sup>

However, for those who desire to supplement Rogers (and Gooch) with a fuller understanding and appreciation of O'Connor's fiction, a number of helpful books still remain in print or are available online through Amazon.com or other used book stores. The single best book on Flannery O'Connor's literature remains Ralph Wood's *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South*.<sup>3</sup> Not as well-known by Wood, but also extremely helpful in understanding O'Connor's writing, is his *Comedy of Redemption*, in which he devotes two chapters to O'Connor as a satirist of the negative way and comedian of positive grace. The later chapter contains perhaps the best defense against charges of racism against O'Connor. Wood argues that O'Connor's

concern with divine mercy explains her refusal to give the standard moralistic account of black-white relations. Only because God's justice is not primarily wrath but forgiveness can human injustice also be made redemptive rather than destructive.<sup>4</sup>

Wood's "From Fashionable Tolerance to Unfashionable Redemption" in Harold Bloom's excellent anthology, *Flannery O'Connor*, is also very valuable. There Wood argues that O'Connor's work must be understood as religious to the core. "The single religious concern woven through the tapestry of the entire O'Connor oeuvre," says Wood, "is that the heedless secularity of the modern world deserves a withering judgment."<sup>5</sup>

Bloom's volume also includes two chapters from O'Connor's close friend and literary executor, Robert Fitzgerald, which are "must reads" when it comes to O'Connor's writings. The first "The Countryside and the True Country" analyzes O'Connor's short story "The Displaced Person" and it gives a seminal insight into O'Connor's writing.<sup>6</sup> According to Fitzgerald, O'Connor's stories are always pointing beyond the visual to the unseen, beyond even the pastoral to the yet realized. This, according to Fitzgerald, energizes O'Connor's writing with a Pauline quality that does not abide the religiously lukewarm. Almost all of her characters consequently are displaced, whether they realize it or not.

Fitzgerald's second article, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," shows that while O'Connor did parody certain philosophies like existentialism, the parodies were quite serious.<sup>7</sup> That is, she gave godlessness a force proportionate to what it actually has—Hazel Motes preaches with passion what the world believes—nothing matters but that Jesus was a liar. The pushing back of belief, then, must be as violent as the force

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<sup>2</sup> As one example of many, see *Flannery O'Connor: New Perspectives*, edited by S. Rath and M. Shaw (University of Georgia Press, 1986). The editors state that the book's aim is to offer new directions and insights into reading O'Connor's fiction in light of new critical insights from gender studies, rhetorical theory, dialogism, and psychoanalysis. The articles, at least to this reader, are dreadful and already outdated, as literary theories from the decade of the eighties have shifted to new paradigms.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph C. Wood, *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). See Danny E. Olinger's review of this book in *Ordained Servant* 16 (2007): 124.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph C. Wood, *The Comedy of Redemption* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 132.

<sup>5</sup> Harold Bloom, ed., *Modern Critical Views: Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 55.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

pushing against it.<sup>8</sup> Fitzgerald maintains, then, that the humility of her style is deceptive for “the true range of her stories is vertical and Dantesque in what is taken in, in scale of implication.”<sup>9</sup>

One reason such commentators as Wood and Fitzgerald are so helpful is that they allow O’Connor to speak for herself in her literature, and also in her lectures, letters, and interviews that have been collected and preserved. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald selected and edited O’Connor’s occasional prose for *Mystery and Manners*,<sup>10</sup> and Sally Fitzgerald did the same for O’Connor’s letters, *Habit of Being*.<sup>11</sup> *Conversations with Flannery O’Connor* is also a wonderful collection of print interviews with O’Connor.<sup>12</sup> What O’Connor makes apparent throughout is that the character of her books and short stories is Christian. She wrote the way that she did because of her faith, not in spite of it, and that, combined with a gift for language and storytelling, has resulted in a literary corpus that is remarkable for its power and insight.

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<sup>8</sup> O’Connor’s passion for this belief is seen in her adopting the Douay translation and its reading of Matthew 11:12 for the title of her second book, *The Violent Bear it Away*.

<sup>9</sup> Bloom, *Modern Critical Views*, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Sally and Robert Fitzgerald, eds., *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970).

<sup>11</sup> Sally Fitzgerald, ed., *Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O’Connor* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Rosemary M. Magee, ed., *Conversations with Flannery O’Connor* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1987).

# Practically Human

*by Calvin College Faculty*

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by Leland Ryken

*Practically Human: College Professors Speak from the Heart of Humanities Education*, edited by Gary Schmidt and Matthew Walhout. Grand Rapids: Calvin College Press, 2012, 171 pages, \$12.00.

The moment I opened this book and saw the table of contents I felt an adrenaline surge. It was obvious that the book belongs to the same genre as a Festschrift that twenty-five of my Wheaton College colleagues authored on the occasion of my retirement in the spring of 2012. That genre is a book of essays written by professors at the same college commending the value of their respective disciplines and academic passions to college students. The goal is to make a Christian liberal arts education be all that it can be for students, and in fact to make the Christian public see a liberal arts education as sufficiently valuable as a foundation for life that it becomes the preferred choice.

The first stroke of genius is the book's title. *Practically Human* plays off the common cliché about something being “practically” something, with the word *practically* carrying the force of “nearly” or “almost.” In this case, “practically” reverses that connotation and means “having practical usefulness.” This is a double comment about the book. On the one hand, the authors make the case for the humanities being practical and useful. But it is also a comment on the envisioned audience for the book. In a preface entitled “About this Book,” the editors delineate a broad range of potential readers, including college students, parents, guidance counselors of youth groups and high schools, and high school teachers.

The word *human* in the main title signals that the focus of the book is the academic disciplines that have traditionally been known as the humanities. The subtitle tells us that the authors have written as experts immersed in their respective disciplines, but also that they have written “from the heart,” that is, about their respective intellectual and professional passions.

The context for the book is highlighted in the editors’ introduction. That context is our culture’s obsession with utilitarian goals for education and anxiety about whether a liberal arts education is likely to lead to a satisfying career. From start to finish, this book has an apologetic slant as the authors make a case for the importance of the humanities in its constituent disciplines. This apologetic slant lends a nice unity to the book and validates the thesis that the humanities are useful, partly because they are humanizing.

Nothing delights me more as an academician than to see one or two professors mobilize members of their own faculty to produce a book of essays that showcases the intellectual excellence of their college. Part of my gratification stems from the excitement that I sense about the communal nature of an academic community. But I am also gratified to see how projects like this one elicit the best from the contributors. Everything in *Practically Human* is well thought out, aptly stated, and marshaled in a persuasive



direction. I cannot imagine the topics being handled more expertly than they are in this anthology of essays. In keeping with the practical aim of the book and the envisioned audience, the essays are eminently readable.

The academic disciplines that receive their defense in this book are as follows: philosophy, music, history, art, literature, writing, rhetorical studies (speech), foreign languages, classics (ancient texts), and biblical studies. I was gratified to see that the book is dedicated to Calvin College literature professor Clarence Walhout, my contemporary with whom I enjoyed interactions early in my career and with whom I once co-edited a book.

**Leland Ryken** is professor of English at Wheaton College, where he has taught for forty-three years. He has had a publishing career as well as a teaching career. His three dozen books cover a broad range of subjects, including the Puritans, the Bible as literature, and Bible translation. He is the author of *The Legacy of the King James Bible* (Crossway, 2011).

# In Search of the City on a Hill

*by Richard M. Gamble*

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by Darryl G. Hart

*In Search of the City on a Hill: The Making and Unmaking of an American Myth*, by Richard M. Gamble. New York: Continuum International, 2012, 224 pages, \$24.95.

Richard M. Gamble's latest book, *In Search of the City on a Hill*, is an odd one to recommend to church audiences where titles in theology, practical Christian living, and biblical studies are most popular. Gamble's book is both an example of intellectual history in which he follows the history of an idea—in this case, “city on a hill”—and a version of political history that examines the construction of American exceptionalism—the notion that the United States has a unique mission in world history. Although this book does not even qualify as church history, it is essential reading for American believers precisely because of the overlap between the Bible's popularity with Americans and the mythology of American nationalism. Indeed, one of the specters that haunts this superb book is the way that U.S. Christians allowed presidents and statesmen to transform a biblical metaphor into a tag line for American greatness. A remarkable aspect of this transformation is that few if any believers objected to the misappropriation. Instead, most Christians welcomed the exchange, fully convinced, in the lines of “God Bless America,” that God had shown his face on their nation.

Gamble's aim is to explain how Jesus's words from the Sermon on the Mount entered American political discourse and became so common that even a British Prime Minister (Gordon Brown) as recently as 2009 would tell the United States Congress that the world looked to Washington, DC, “as a ‘shining city upon the hill,’ lighting up the whole of the world” (1). Gamble's story is, in effect, “the unmaking of a biblical metaphor and the making of a national myth” (5). As it turns out, the appropriation of Christ's words had a lot more to do with the United States' battle with Communism during the Cold War than the pious hopes of either the original European settlers in North America or the mixed religious motives of the American Founders.

The classic invocation of the “city on a hill” for Americans was, of course, John Winthrop's “Model of Christian Charity,” the words that in 1630 inspired the Puritans who settled in Massachusetts Bay. When originally written, as Gamble shows, little distinguished Winthrop's exhortation to mercy and charity from a host of addresses and sermons from other Puritan leaders. It was simply an exposition of biblical standards for God's kingdom that should inform the community the New England Puritans planned to establish—nothing more—no dreams of an empire, military might, or even constitutional provisions for the state. The “Model” was a churchly document that only made sense in the context of a people who believed what the Puritans believed. In fact, Winthrop's use of Matthew 5:14 came only in passing toward the end of the discourse when he compared the Puritan's project to the Israelites' crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land. As such, Winthrop, following the example of Moses, reminded the Puritans of the terms of

the covenant—what would happen if they obeyed, and the consequences of disobedience. The “city on a hill” was not a call to national greatness, but a warning about what would become of the Puritans’ endeavor if they failed. Gamble supplies useful contexts for how the “city on a hill” was interpreted through church history and among Puritans, with some debate over whether any modern society could claim the status of the Old Testament Israel. Either way, Winthrop’s original “Model,” the ur-text of American identity, was hardly what it later became in the hands of American nationalists and statesmen.

For almost two centuries, the “city on a hill” was a metaphor about which only preachers wrote. Until 1838 when Winthrop’s manuscript was first published, the only traces of commentary about the metaphor’s meaning came in discussions about the place of the New World in the plan of redemption. (Gamble features Jonathan Edwards’s sermons about New England as the New Israel, for instance.) But even when antiquarians discovered Winthrop’s manuscript, “No scholar or statesman left any record of experiencing such an ‘aha!’ moment when he saw the Model in print” (92). What did happen, as Gamble shows, is that throughout the nineteenth century, the Puritans emerged as the “founders” of the United States (even if 150 years separated the “Model” and Declaration of Independence), with Winthrop emerging as the model for later statesmen. Older notions of the United States as a nation with a special relationship to God also prevailed and secularized into a full-blooded nationalism. But the image of “city on a hill” remained untapped.

This would change in 1960 after a turbulent set of decades that firmly bequeathed to the United States, now the leader of the free world, a global footprint. Perry Miller, a Harvard University professor, who almost single-handedly refurbished the image of Puritanism, gave careful readings to Winthrop’s “Model” and recognized the power of the “city on a hill” as a metaphor for national identity and mission. Then in 1961, president-elect, John F. Kennedy, a Harvard graduate, and the nation’s first (and so far only) Roman Catholic president, gave an address to the General Court of Massachusetts that became known as his “City on a Hill Speech.” Kennedy described Americans as “beacon lights for other nations.” “We do not imitate—for we are a model to others,” he added. He also invoked Winthrop explicitly and quoted directly from the first governor of Massachusetts’ talk—“we shall be as a city upon a hill—the eyes of all people are upon us” (135).

From there, a metaphor first used by Jesus to describe the church, became a phrase associated almost exclusively with the United States and its superpower status. Ronald Reagan virtually turned the “city on a hill” into a brand by adding “shining” to it. He first used the metaphor in 1969 as governor of California and continued to employ it at pivotal times in his career. While for Kennedy “the city” had meant good government and public service, for Reagan it signified the American ideals of economic and religious freedom, and the nation’s global opposition to tyranny (read: Communism). The Gipper had used it so frequently and successfully that Democrats felt compelled to take it back. Mario Cuomo gave a stirring speech at the Democratic Convention in 1984 that questioned whether all Americans had access to the “shining city.” Michael Dukakis, the Democratic nominee for president in 1988, also invoked Winthrop. By that point, Gamble argues, “city on a hill” had become as inseparable from American identity as the Stars and Stripes, the Battle Hymn of the Republic, and the Statue of Liberty. The number of

presidential candidates who have used the metaphor grows: Bill Clinton, John Kerry, George W. Bush, and most recently and vociferously Sarah Palin.

Christians who worry about conflating faith and patriotism will likely find this narrative disturbing. More harrowing is the silence from conservative American Protestants, who generally voted for Reagan and took inspiration from his speeches and never objected to such a crass misrepresentation of either Winthrop or Jesus Christ. But Gamble is not silent. He argues that Christians should have guarded their metaphor vigilantly. But they did not. Instead, Christians wrangle over which “national values the politicized city should stand for and miss the fact that they have lost their metaphor” (179). They miss that “Jesus’ city on a hill was never the American, or any nation’s, mission in the first place” (180). But thanks to the popularity of the metaphor, the American nation has assumed “the calling of the apostles” and “the Body of Christ” (181). To illustrate how scary this is, Gamble writes the following:

In Christian theology, it is simply not true that America is the city on a hill, not now, not ever. To seek to protect America from this falsehood is not to do her any dishonour. Quite the opposite. It spares her from delusion. Proper love refuses to cooperate with the effort to divinize America. We would not indulge any friend’s fantasy that he is the Messiah. We would get him the help he needs. . . . Likewise, it would be healthy for America to see itself—and if that goal is too ambitious, then for Christians in America to see their nation—as part of the kingdom of this world, called in the Providence of God to fulfill its earthly purpose but not called to be the Saviour of the World. (183)

Insights like these are what turn a history of national mission and political discourse into a must read for anyone who wants to teach and faithfully defend God’s Word. Far too often Christians in the United States have let partisan politics obscure their higher commitment to Scripture. That is why evangelical Protestants, for instance, overwhelmingly supported Republican candidates who despite the misuse of biblical language appeared to be defending traditional American ideals. Of course, as Gamble shows, those ideals were not Jesus’s or Winthrop’s. But patriotism proved to be a more forceful influence than Scripture’s own teaching. That is a lesson, no matter how difficult, that conservative Protestants who consider themselves political conservatives need to learn.

**Darryl G. Hart** *is visiting professor of history at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan, and an elder at Hillsdale Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hillsdale, Michigan.*

# Galatians for You

*By Timothy Keller*

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by T. David Gordon

*Galatians for You*, by Timothy Keller. Purcellville VA: The Good Book Company, 2013, 199 pages, \$22.99.

Full Disclosure: Candor requires me to state two things to the reader of this review. First, Tim Keller is an old friend whom I've known for thirty years. It would be difficult for me to find fault with him even if he were ever to commit one. Second, I just recently finished writing a five hundred-page monograph on the reasoning in Galatians 3 and 4, in which I argued (as I have for thirty years in print and the classroom) that neither the traditional approach to Galatians (which Keller adopts) nor the New Perspectives approach will work. So, I write from the (preposterous) point of view that the reasoning in Galatians has not yet been correctly understood, whether by Luther, Calvin, Keller, et al.

Tim Keller is one of the most able men I know, and one of the most cooperative. The editors of this series asked for his notes from a study he had done many years ago on Galatians, and Tim graciously provided them. I wish I had the un-edited notes, which, I am confident, would have been rich with insight. The editors have edited those notes to satisfy the purpose of their series: "Each volume of the *God's Word For You* series takes you to the heart of a book of the Bible, and applies its truths to your heart" (7). The specific goals of each book in the series are four, to be: Bible-centered, Christ-glorifying, relevantly-applied, and easily-readable. Now, these four cannot, of course, be equally achieved. The Bible is an ancient book written in ancient cultures and languages, so it cannot be "easily-readable," so the criteria of "Bible-centered" and "easily-readable" cannot be equally attained. But I believe that last criterion of "easily-readable" is the determinative criterion.

To achieve this end of readability, the volume reads almost more like a web page or a teen magazine than a book: summary statements in large font appear on many pages; questions for reflection occur about every two or three pages, The fonts are non-serifed, important words are in **bold** font, and others are in *gray*. There is a glossary in the back that includes abbreviated definitions of words that may need them, e.g., "incarnation," "egalitarian," "epistle." But the glossary also informs us that "barren" means "unable to have children," that "affections" are "the inclinations of our hearts," and that "subjective" means "something which is based on feelings and opinions," definitions that many of us have known since we were nine or ten years old. The over-all purpose is to create a series of books that are "welcoming" to those who ordinarily do not read (and "emerging adults" in the ages of 18–29 only read printed matter for 49 minutes per week). The editors have probably achieved that purpose, but for those of us who read, the presentation is entirely too distracting and busy.

At some point, one reaches Malcolm Gladwell's "tipping point," where, in the effort to make something easy you make it simplistic. I think this series does so. One page on the historical background to the letter? Three pages on the New Perspective on Paul? It might have been better to have said nothing about these matters than to have said so little. Indeed, there is little here that could not be gleaned simply from reading an English translation of Galatians thoughtfully.

Keller's approach is a fairly standard "dominant Protestant" approach, that regards the problem at Galatia to consist in the Judaizers teaching that people must obey the ceremonial law of Moses in order to be saved. I published my reasons for disagreeing with this view many years ago, so I will say no more about that here (if interested, cf. my "The Problem at Galatia," *Interpretation* 41 [January 1987]: 32–43). As such, Keller's approach is entirely "safe," theologically, and is characterized by his always-clear declarations about salvation being an entirely free, dismerited, gift from God. Considering the series of which it is a part, the book is fine. Keller's love for the gospel is evident throughout the book; his capacity to make refined distinctions, however, is less evident, because the editors have tried to make the volume approachable to non-readers, readers who would probably fail to catch anything that was nuanced or refined. Insofar as Keller's thoughts can be found here, they are fine, orthodox, and encouraging; but they have been somewhat concealed behind a cloud of simplification.

The poet Oliver Goldsmith once physically assaulted Thomas Evans for a negative review, and then Goldsmith published an apology for the assault in the *London Chronicle*. When James Boswell asked Dr. Johnson about the apology, Johnson replied, "He (Goldsmith) has, indeed, done it very well; but it is a foolish thing well done." I am inclined to think the editors of this series have also done a foolish thing well; they have skillfully produced a book for non-book-readers. But should such a thing be done at all? If people cannot read thoughtful, sustained, adult prose, perhaps we should just leave them alone and let them Tweet, Text, or Instagram. I really do not know what kind of a recommendation to make about a book like this: Readers will find its visual presentation distracting and its content simplistic; non-readers will probably find it to still be too wordy, too "booky." I doubt even Goldilocks could find someone for whom it is "just right."

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# Servant Poetry

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George Herbert (1593-1633)

## Sonnet (2)

Sure Lord, there is enough in thee to dry  
Oceans of ink; for, as the Deluge did  
Cover the earth, so doth thy Majesty:  
Each cloud distills thy praise, and doth forbid  
Poets to turn it to another use.  
Roses and lilies speak thee; and to make  
A pair of cheeks of them, is thy abuse  
Why should I women's eyes for crystal take?  
Such poor invention burns in their low mind  
Whose fire is wild, and doth not upward go  
To praise, and on thee, Lord, some ink bestow.  
Open the bones, and you shall nothing find  
In the best face but filth; when Lord, in thee  
The beauty lies in the discovery.