

Ordained Servant

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Women Theologians



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From the Editor

The title of this month's issue of *Ordained Servant* is not meant to be provocative, since neither I nor the author of our lead article is in favor of women's ordination. The Report of the Committee on Women in Church Office (1988) concluded:

Finally, sessions should consider ways to make greater use of the gifts of women in the total life of the church, so long as good order is not subverted by replacing or undermining or otherwise eclipsing the teaching and rule of the elders. . . . And may the church be wonderfully adorned in these days with gifts from her risen Lord.

In this issue author and conference speaker Aimee Byrd encourages church officers to better equip women with sound theological reading and study material. She warns that much that is written for Christian women is popular but not theologically sound. "Nurturing Theologically Rich Women's Initiatives in Your Church" is a delightful challenge, chock full of excellent recommendations on material written on women's issues, the Christian life, and Reformed theology.

Sherif Gendy offers another in a very useful series of review articles on Old Testament studies; he reviews Oren Martin's *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan*. David Booth reviews Daniel Block's *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*, a favorite theme of Reformed theology, and according to Booth one of the best on the subject. Ryan McGraw reviews Hunter Powell's *The Crisis of British Protestantism: Church Power in the Puritan Revolution 1638–44*, a book he says sheds new light on an old controversy on church government.

On the subject of preaching I review a unique homiletical treatment of the oral nature of preaching, Dave McClellan's *Preaching by Ear: Speaking God's Truth from the Inside Out*.

Don't miss the piece of edifying humor from our sleepy friend Eutychus II. Our poetry this month is "In a Feed Trough Born."

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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- “A Brief Defense of Manuscript Preaching.” (Matthew Cotta) 20 (2011): 38–41.
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- “The Divine Voice.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 17 (2008): 144–46.
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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 will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

Servant Truth

Nurturing Theologically Rich Women's Initiatives in Your Church

by Aimee Byrd

The OPC values robust, theological teaching. This is evident in the confession (Westminster) to which our denomination subscribes and the investment we put into our preachers. However, one area where this may not be as noticeable is in women's initiatives. I am thankful that the OPC esteems the offices of the ministry, which is why I want to encourage the officers of the church to become more invested in the women's groups that study together.

Please do not misunderstand. I know that women are valued in the OPC. The invitation to write this article reveals an interest in equipping women with good resources and helping pastors and elders gain awareness of what is being marketed to women. Whether women in your church are gathering together for a study, or shopping for their own personal reading and growth, they have become a valued target market for the so-called Christian publishing industry. From Bible studies to personal growth books, there is now a copious supply of resources available for women. The Christian bookstore can be a dangerous place to enter without proper discernment. And we do not want the women's study groups in the church to be dangerous places to enter without proper discernment.

Unfortunately, I have seen this become an issue even in OPC and PCA churches. And I don't think that it is because of the preaching. I have done a fair amount of traveling, speaking at women's retreats for Presbyterian, Baptist, non-denominational churches, and more. It is such a blessing to meet and talk with so many Christian women who desire to grow in God's Word. However, it is also disheartening to see women, across the board, caught up in poor theology. And it often causes discord in the church. Many of these women are under good preaching, and they claim to have a high view of Scripture. And yet some of the material they are studying with other women in the church, or reading for their own personal growth, contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture. How can this be? Why are numerous women embracing false teaching?

While good preaching is imperative, I think this is also a shepherding issue for pastors and elders. A pastor loves to hear that his congregation is taking initiative to learn more about what Scripture teaches. It's a challenge sometimes to find people who love to read. But what are they reading, and how are they processing the information?

I like to compare this situation to the wake up call parents had when the television talk shows and news networks conducted faux abduction investigations, revealing the inadequacies of the whole "stranger danger" message. No matter how confident these parents felt about their talks with their children about never going off with a stranger under any condition, the whole "I lost my puppy, could you help me find him" guise worked every time. The problem is that predators are very friendly; they don't look like the monsters that their parents make them out to be. What child wouldn't want to help a smiley guy with a picture find man's best friend?

My illustration isn't meant to compare women with children. I am talking more about a shepherd and his sheep. This really applies to the whole congregation because there are plenty of men reading and promoting harmful doctrine as well. But I'm writing to talk specifically about women's resources. When a top-selling Christian author, who belongs to a big church, who has adopted children from third world countries, and who relates to the everyday Christian woman, offers a "stimulating" study on how to help "overwhelmed women" with an "underwhelmed soul," she sure doesn't look like the image we may have of a false teacher.¹ These great qualities easily distract a reader from asking discerning questions about how the gospel is presented and how God's Word is being handled.

If pastors and elders become more aware of the books that are being marketed to their congregations, it will be time well spent. What are the top-sellers in the Christian bookstore, and how faithful are they to God's Word? What is their appeal? Why would some of your congregants be attracted to their teaching? This does take a lot of shepherding, because it also takes an invested relationship between elders and the congregation.

But the investment doesn't need to be as daunting and time-consuming as it may appear. Of course, pastors want to spend most of their time being enriched by good teaching. This should be the case for all of us in God's church. Are there a few people in your congregation who may know the Christian market well and can help you in this area? Are you acquainted with some trusted websites and publications that you could refer to for book reviews? What if you were to ask some theologically sharp women in your church to read one or two books a year for review?

And yet, there's something even more important than offering book reviews for congregants to read, and that is teaching them *how* to read. That may sound superfluous, but many in the church are lacking the skill to read a book critically these days. False teachers do not come waving "We want to wreck your theology" signs. Many appear to have their lives more together than we do. So it is imperative to teach the discernment skills for what to look for in a book. What does it say about who God is, who man is, and the message of the gospel? How can we evaluate how the author is handling the Word of God? What is the conversation going on between the author and the reader?

Reading is an active engagement. In *How to Read a Book*,² authors Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren compare the reader to a baseball catcher. While the writer is sending a message, readers are not passive. They need to receive the pitch, discerning whether it is a fastball, curveball, or knuckleball. And recognizing a changeup or screwball may take some conditioning.

Some Recommended Resources

Women have indeed become a profitable target-market for Christian publishers. But I don't want to end this article talking about all the bad books marketed to us. There has been a resurgence of great books written by women, for women. If you have women in your

¹ For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "The Best Yes: Making Wise Decisions in the Midst of Endless Demands," Books at a Glance, February 4, 2015, : <http://booksataglance.com/book-reviews/the-best-yes-making-wise-decisions-in-the-midst-of-endless-demands-by-lysa-terkeurst>.

² Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 5.

church who are interested in studying the books in the Old Testament, Nancy Guthrie's five part series, *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament*,³ is outstanding. The Old Testament can be intimidating to teach, especially if you do not have any formal education. But Guthrie has provided a great resource for teachers, or even for private study, with tables and maps to help the reader gain an understanding of the historical context from which the book is written. Guthrie is faithful to the meaning of the text, highlighting the main themes while helpfully breaking down the important details. What I like best about this series is the author's zeal to show how the Old Testament Scriptures point to Christ. Readers will finish the study enriched by Guthrie's teaching. She also provides discussion questions for the ten-week studies and accompanying videos for the group studies. The one complaint I have heard about the videos is that they are a bit redundant if everyone is reading the book.

Nancy Guthrie has written many good books. She is also a great resource for bereaving families. Her work here comes from her own painful experience that drove her to find comfort in God's Word. Her book *Holding on to Hope: A Pathway through Suffering to the Heart of God*⁴ has been a help to many grieving families. And while on the topic of bereavement, Jessalyn Hutto has written a helpful, small book, *Inheritance of Tears: Trusting the Lord of Life When Death Visits the Womb*,⁵ for women who have suffered a miscarriage. These are great resources to offer to women in your church.

Kathleen Nielson's *Living Word*⁶ Bible study series is worth noting. I love how these books are spiral bound and have the feel of a notebook that the reader can write in. Along with great teaching, the benefit of using Nielson's studies is that she constantly forces the reader to go digging in the biblical text herself to find the meaning of the text. She doesn't prepackage her teaching into easily digestible bites, but rather teaches the reader to be a student of the Word. Nielson is not aiming to be an "answer person," but a teacher, and she does that well. She also has a section at the end called "Notes for Leaders" that will help your teachers do the same.

The issue of biblical distinctions between manhood and womanhood has been more pressing in the church lately. One book that I have found refreshing to read in this area is Hannah Anderson's *Made for More*.⁷ What I appreciate about this book is how, as a conservative, Anderson does not write in an over-correcting way against feminism by focusing more on men's and women's roles as the subject matter rather than Christ. She begins with our identity as beings made in the image of God, and how that is true for both men and women. She then moves to our differences, and how we depend on one another to fully reflect God's image. This isn't a book that cherry picks all the "pink" verses to teach

³ See <https://www.crossway.org/books/?newnotable=All&series=Seeing+Jesus+in+the+Old+Testament>. For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "The Word of the Lord, Seeing Jesus in the Prophets," Books at a Glance, August 27, 2014, <http://booksataglance.com/book-reviews/the-word-of-the-lord-seeing-jesus-in-the-prophets-by-nancy-guthrie>.

⁴ Nancy Guthrie, *Holding on to Hope* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2002).

⁵ Jessalyn Hutto, *Inheritance of Tears* (Minneapolis: Cruciform, 2015). For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "Inheritance of Tears," Housewife Theologian, March 12, 2015, <http://www.alliancenet.org/mos/housewife-theologian/inheritance-of-tears#.ViUebrTatUQ>.

⁶ See <http://www.prpbooks.com/blog/2013/09/kathleen-nielsons-living-word-bible-studies/#sthash.efv0Az7F.dpbs>. For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "Book Review: Nehemiah, Rebuilt and Rebuilding," Housewife Theologian, Feb. 7, 2012, <http://www.alliancenet.org/mos/housewife-theologian/book-review-3#.ViUf6rTatUQ>.

⁷ Hannah Anderson, *Made for More* (Chicago: Moody, 2014). For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God's Image," Books at a Glance, June 6, 2014, <http://booksataglance.com/book-reviews/made-for-more-an-invitation-to-live-in-gods-image-by-hannah-anderson>.

biblical womanhood, but one that covers the big picture of the fall, redemption, and restoration as it teaches about our blessing and distinctiveness as women. Hannah Anderson is an engaging writer who is a joy to read.

Another favorite of mine is Melissa Kruger's book on contentment, *The Envy of Eve: Finding Contentment in a Covetous World*.⁸ When I first picked this book up, I thought that it was only written for a certain type of woman. I quickly realized how beneficial it is for every woman in the church to read. Kruger writes like a friend who wants to help you find your satisfaction in Christ. While it is convicting, her book encourages weary women with the richness of the gospel.

Both Melissa Kruger and Gloria Furman have written gospel-centered books for new moms. Kruger's *Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood*⁹ is an eleven-week devotional Bible study for busy moms, who of course still need to be nurtured in the Word throughout the week. What I like about this book is Kruger's reminder that we aren't to be more concerned with what we are *doing* as busy moms, than with what we are *becoming* in Christ. The study isn't about how to be a better mom, but on being a disciple of Christ as a mom. Gloria Furman's *Glimpses of Grace*¹⁰ helps moms find those glimpses of God's kindness to us in our everyday living. She offers a short, easy read that focuses on living our lives to the glory and praise of God. This is a needed encouragement for every mom. These are good books to give new moms, or mothers who are beginning to learn more about the faith. Also, Jen Wilkin has written a helpful book for beginners in Bible study called *Women of the Word*.¹¹

This, of course, isn't an exhaustive list. It's just a few suggestions. And I am encouraged to know that there are more great books for women in the making. But women shouldn't just read books written by women, specifically for women. And this is an issue that I think is worth discussing. While I do think that it is valuable for women to have resources like this, I am afraid that women's groups are getting pigeonholed into a target market that is quite limited. Wouldn't it be great to have a women's group reading through some of the Puritans, or the theologically robust books that have stood the test of time? In fact, I was first introduced to the doctrines of grace while reading a Jonathan Edwards sermon,¹² and so identified with his account of wrestling with God's sovereignty in his *Memoirs*.¹³

Encouraging Readers

⁸ Mellissa Kruger, *The Envy of Eve* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 2012). For a short reflection I wrote on it, see Aimee Byrd, "Reading Reflection," *Housewife Theologian*, April 2, 2012, <http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/housewife-theologian/reading-reflection-64#.ViUuhLTatUQ>.

⁹ Mellissa Kruger, *Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2015). For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood: an Eleven-Week Devotional Bible Study by Melissa Kruger," *Books at a Glance*, July 13, 2015, <http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/housewife-theologian/reading-reflection-64#.ViUuhLTatUQ>.

¹⁰ Gloria Furman, *Glimpses of Grace* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013). For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "Glimpses of Grace," *Housewife Theologian*, June 3, 2013, <http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/housewife-theologian/reading-reflection-64#.ViUuhLTatUQ>.

¹¹ Jen Wilkin, *Women of the Word* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014). For my review, see Aimee Byrd, "Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds," *Books at a Glance*, July 14, 2014, <http://booksataglance.com/book-reviews/women-of-the-word-how-to-study-the-bible-with-both-our-hearts-and-our-minds-by-jen-wilkin>.

¹² Jonathan Edwards, *The True Believer* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001), 104–65.

¹³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), liv–lv.

Let me encourage you. People love to be invited—even to read sometimes! Make personal recommendations to your congregants, including the women. Ask them what they are reading. When a pastor or elder conversationally asks, “Have you read any good books lately?” that makes an impact. If she has read something worthwhile, she will be excited to share about it. This will help you get to know what the women in your church are interested to learn about and give you a gauge of what they are reading. It will also show them that you care about that sort of thing. And if she hasn’t read anything lately, maybe she will walk away with a notion to crack something open. In that case, this is an opportunity to give a suggestion.

Maybe some of you are reading this, wishing that you had more women readers in your church. For those who have trouble finding time and interest to read, I like to suggest Cruciform Press books. They have published a range of unintimidating books on interesting topics. Each book is about a hundred pages or less. The church can subscribe to get their bimonthly releases and offer them in the library. Go to their website¹⁴ to find books on identity in Christ, backsliding, miscarriage, with titles like: *Sexual Detox*, *The Company We Keep*, and *Cruciform: Living a Cross-Shaped Life*, to name a few.

Another way I like to get women into reading is through biographies. Crossway¹⁵ has a wonderful series, *Theologians on the Christian Life*, on influential theological figures from history. Not only will they be reading about the lives of, for example, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Francis Schaeffer, John Owen, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, they will be learning about the teaching of these ministers and benefit from its influence on the reader’s own Christian life. Also, Karen Swallow Prior has written a fascinating biography on Hannah More, *Fierce Convictions*,¹⁶ that will cause the reader to think about her own convictions. Another good recent biography written about a woman is *Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes*¹⁷ by Ian Murray.

A related complaint I often hear from women is that they are having a hard time getting into their Bible reading throughout the week. Often it is because they are lacking direction in reading. It may be helpful to recommend a devotional commentary for them. P&R’s series on *Reformed Expository Commentaries*¹⁸ may be helpful. Each author of these commentaries is a pastor-scholar who has first preached through the book in the pulpit ministry of his church. The commentaries are broken down into short chapters that enrich daily Bible reading.

With all these resources at our fingertips, women have no reason to settle for the theologically trite studies that are marketed to them! Let’s be active in showing the women in our churches that who they decide to learn from matters, not only in the pew on Sunday morning, but also in the books they are reading.

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¹⁴ <https://cruciformpress.com>.

¹⁵ See <https://www.crossway.org/books/?newnotable=All&series=Theologians+on+the+Christian+Life>.

¹⁶ Karen Swallow Prior, *The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More: Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014).

¹⁷ Ian Murray, *Beauty for Ashes* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2015). For my review, see Aimee Byrd, “Amy Carmichael, ‘Beauty for Ashes’: A Biography, Books at a Glance, March 23, 2015, <http://booksataglance.com/book-reviews/amy-carmichael-beauty-for-ashes-a-biography>.

¹⁸ See <http://www.prpbooks.com/search?query=Reformed+Expository+commentary&records=10>.

ServantReading

Bound for the Promised Land

by *Oren R. Martin*

A Review Article

by **Sherif Gendy**

Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan, by Oren R. Martin. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015, 208 pages, \$25.00, paper.

Bound for the Promised Land is volume 34 of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. Oren R. Martin demonstrates how, within the redemptive-historical framework of God's unfolding plan, the land promised to Abraham advances the place of the kingdom that was lost in Eden. This promise also serves as a type throughout Israel's history, anticipating the even greater land prepared for God's people, which will result from the person and work of Christ. This land will be enjoyed in the new creation for eternity. Martin unpacks the land promise as it progressively unfolds across the Bible's two testaments in ten chapters with a concluding summary of the Old Testament after the sixth chapter and a concluding summary of the New Testament after the ninth chapter. Also provided are a bibliography, author index, and a Scripture index. Here is a summary with assessment for each chapter.

1. Biblical Theology and the Land Promise

In this chapter Martin lays the foundation for his study by briefly surveying the land promise in biblical scholarship through classic and modern works. Aiming to clarify and complete what is lacking, Martin furthers the land study from the standpoint of a whole-Bible theology. He explains his approach and assumptions, which include unity in the diversity of the books of the Bible, continuity between the Old and New Testaments, progressive typology, and interpreting texts within their textual, epochal, and canonical horizons. Worthy of note here is Martin's summary of the four components in typology. First, it pays careful attention to textual and the historical/theological correspondences that develop across the canon. Second, typology is prospective and prophetic. Third, typology stresses escalation as the Old Testament story line moves forward to its New Testament fulfillment. Finally, typological connections find their terminus in the person and inaugurated-yet-not-consummated work of Christ.

2. The Beginning and the End: The Land and the Kingdom

This chapter provides the biblical-theological framework from which a theology of land can be canonically understood within the biblical story line, from creation to new creation. Martin shows how the land theme is organically related to both the kingdom of God and the covenants as they unfold and progress across the canon. More specifically, Martin establishes a framework for understanding the place of God's people in the kingdom. He considers the

beginning (Gen. 1–3) and the related eschatological themes that reach their terminus in the end—the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21–22). Martin concludes that the biblical story describes the teleological design of *God's people* in his *place* under his *rule*. Moreover, the structure of the covenants shows how God's ordained means will reach his divinely ordained end.

Martin's discussion of the covenant at creation (Adamic covenant) does not show how it relates to the kingdom of God or the land theme. This is true to some extent in Martin's discussions of the Noahic and, surprisingly, the Abrahamic covenant. In biblical theology, divine covenants are means by which God governs his kingdom among his people who are living in the land. At the heart of the covenant is the promise of the Lord's dwelling among his people. Therefore, the place where the Lord dwells among his people, the land, is portrayed as a sanctuary where the Lord's glory is revealed as a sign of his dwelling. When the people keep the covenant regulations, they enjoy living in the land. However, for disobeying the covenant stipulation, the Lord warns that his people would experience an exile from the land (e.g., Deut. 28:36–37, 63–65). Martin does not connect these themes together and fails to see the development of the land theme and the establishment of the kingdom through the covenants with Adam, Noah, and Abraham.

3. Making the Promise: Genesis

Martin considers here the importance of Genesis 1–11 for the entrance of Abraham into God's redemptive plan. He examines the nature and scope of the Abrahamic covenant and the promise of God in Genesis 12–50. He concludes that, with Eden as the prototypical place for the kingdom, the land promised to Abraham advances the place of the kingdom. This land promised is a type of a greater reality with international and worldwide dimensions.

Martin wrestles with the question of conditionality, or lack thereof, of God's promises in the Abrahamic covenant. He sees both elements in the covenant where God's fundamental intention to bless Abraham was unconditioned yet the *how* and *when* of the blessing are conditioned. These conditions are met by God himself when he sends his obedient Son—the true seed of Abraham—to fulfil the demands of the covenant.

4. Advancing the Promise: Exodus–Deuteronomy

This chapter evaluates the progress of God's fulfillment of his promise of land to Abraham in two plot movements in Israel's history. First, Martin looks at the Exodus event and demonstrates how it is a means through which God fulfills his promises to his people, constituting the beginning of a great journey to relocate to a new land. Through the Exodus, Israel is God's blessed new humanity destined for a new creation from where and through whom blessing to the world will come. Second, Martin considers Deuteronomy's way of portraying the land. This includes the land as a gift Yahweh owns, a new paradise with the Edenic creational mandate passing on to Israel, and a place of *inheritance* and *rest* where "life" and "prolonging of days" are experienced when there is obedience.

Martin rightly argues that the land is not earned by Israel; rather it is an underserved gift from God tied to his unconditional election of Israel (Deut. 7:6–11).

5. Partially Fulfilling the Promise: Joshua–Kings

In this chapter Martin continues his focus on the progress of the fulfillment of the land promised to Abraham through Joshua and Kings. Joshua significantly advances the promise of land and marks how it will be fulfilled. Standing in continuity with Deuteronomy, Joshua

marks a new beginning that results in conquest, occupation, and possession of the land. With the arrival of David, who appears in a Joshua-like role, the fulfillment of God's promise of the land significantly advances and escalates. Solomon is portrayed as an Adam-like figure who on the one hand typifies a restoration to Edenic conditions, while on the other hand being responsible, through his disobedience, for the second expulsion from the sanctuary-land and the end of the monarchy.

Seeing David as a Joshua-like figure, while Solomon as an Adam-like figure, is scripturally warranted. However, Martin does not spend time discussing them being messiah figures, too.

6. Fulfilling the Promise? Exile and the Prophets of an Eschatological Hope

In this chapter Martin examines the loss of land in exile and the prophetic anticipation of an international and universal restoration realized through a new covenant. This eschatological hope advances God's cosmological plan from Adam through Abraham, and is cast in terms of an Edenic land, city, and temple—all of which are coextensive. Martin concludes that through the substitutionary work of a Davidic Servant-Shepherd-King, God will make a new creation that is reminiscent of the idyllic conditions of Eden, where his people will dwell securely.

Martin speaks of Jerusalem becoming the center of the world, where all the nations will go to receive blessing, within the context of the new covenant. This description needs some qualifications on Martin's part. While the Old Testament prophets spoke of Jerusalem as becoming the land of blessing for God's people, when read carefully, one can see that the prophets had a larger peripheral vision when they spoke of the earthly Jerusalem (Isa. 65:18–19; cf. 4:2–6; Jer. 31:38–40). In fact, when we come to the New Testament, we realize that the *earthly* Jerusalem was merely a shadow or picture of a much greater *heavenly* Jerusalem (Heb. 11:10, 16; Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 10). In the new covenant, the earthly Jerusalem does not become the center of the world, with nations going *into* her to receive blessings, rather the blessing (the gospel message) goes *out* of Jerusalem to all the nations (Isa. 2:3; cf. Luke 24:47; Isa. 37:32).

7. The Fulfillment of the Promise Inaugurated: The Gospels

In this chapter Martin examines the most relevant passages in the Gospels of Matthew and John to demonstrate that the land promised to Abraham will finally be won by Christ. Christ, being the typological fulfillment of Israel, has inaugurated a new creational kingdom through his physical resurrection. Martin's treatment of the Gospels is brief and misses some key passages (e.g., Matt. 2:6; 5:13).

8. The Fulfillment of the Promise Inaugurated: The Epistles

Martin considers here the fulfillment of the land promise in Paul, highlighting the inheritance language that Paul uses which is linked to the Abrahamic promises. There is a future orientation inherent within the idea of inheritance, which is expressed through the typological correspondences that unfold within the Old Testament. The fulfillment in Hebrews comes through Christ and his work. God will bring those who persevere in faith into his eschatological rest, the heavenly Jerusalem, their final homeland, and the unshakeable kingdom. Finally, in Peter we see a transformed eschatological reality with the promised new heaven and new earth.

Martin adequately explains the land promise in the Epistles with a special consideration of the use in Hebrews of “city” and that city’s already-and-not-yet fulfillment of the promise.

9. The Fulfillment of the Promise Consummated: The Eschatological Kingdom in Revelation

In this chapter Martin examines the new creation in the book of Revelation as the fulfillment of the land promise. More specifically, the new creation is depicted as Edenic paradise, temple, and city (new Jerusalem). These images portray the glorious return to God’s people living in his care under his rule. God’s people will once again dwell in the land of promise forever. Martin rightly emphasizes that the fulfillment of the Old Testament types of Eden, land, temple, and city are in light of Christ and his work of creating a new people and place. The consummation is not merely a spiritual or ethereal place, rather the earth will be redeemed. The new temple-city will recapture and advance the idyllic conditions of Eden, which reach their terminus in the new creation.

10. Theological Reflections

Martin concludes his study by making theological connections and applying the interpretative findings of the previous chapters to eschatology. More specifically, this chapter evaluates how the land promise is interpreted and fulfilled in the theological systems of dispensationalism and covenant theology. In the end, the chapter provides a *via media* in the light of the arguments presented throughout the book. Martin argues that the New Testament demonstrates both when and how the Old Testament is brought to fulfillment in Christ in a way that does not reinterpret, spiritualize, or contravene the earlier texts.

Martin’s *via media* is indeed what covenant theology teaches if understood properly. It seems that Martin is equating covenant theology with replacement theology, which is not accurate. Covenant theology does not see the church replacing Israel; rather the church consists of believing Israel along with believing Gentiles in both the Old and New Testaments.

What believing Israel obtains is far greater than the land of Canaan, for they—along with the nations—will inherit the whole earth in fulfillment of God’s gracious and irrevocable promises. Indeed, Abraham was promised the whole world (Rom. 4:13). The New Testament shows that all of God’s saving promises have already been fulfilled in Christ and that these promises are expanding where Christ is present—in the church now and finally in the new heaven and new earth.

Martin skillfully connects the land theme with the garden of Eden on the one hand, and the new heaven and new earth on the other. He reads the land promise in light of the overall plan of redemption and particularly through the person and work of Christ. Martin interacts with many scholars and cites a number of resources, to the point where his own voice is lost in the presentation. It is hard to distinguish his own argument or contribution in the subject.

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For the Glory of God *by Daniel I. Block*

by David A. Booth

For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship, by Daniel I. Block.
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014, 432 pages, \$34.99.

Worshipping the Lord is the most important thing that we do, so the Bible is filled with teaching that bears either directly or indirectly on individual and corporate worship. The vast quantity of scriptural material on worship, which includes every historical period and every genre, makes attempting a biblical theology of worship a daunting task. Therefore most books on worship focus on reclaiming aspects of the historical tradition, specific topics such as the sacraments, or pragmatic discussions designed to make worship more appealing to the communities in which we minister. While such studies may be of significant value to the church, surely those committed to the core Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* will want to develop a theology of worship that flows organically from the totality of what the Bible teaches. What we need is a work from a scholar with a profound understanding of the Old Testament and how it applies to modern Christians. Ideally, such a work would reflect the wisdom gained from decades of committed worship with God's people. It would seek to reform our practices to bring them into greater conformity with God's Word, and it would be crafted with clear prose that is a delight to read. *For the Glory of God* is that book.

This volume clearly owes its existence, in part, to the deep concerns Block has with many of the practices that pass for private and corporate worship in the evangelical world. Block agrees with the five maladies that professor Edith Humphrey¹ has identified as plaguing worship in the North American church:

(1) trivializing worship by a preoccupation with atmospherics/mood (it's all about how worship makes me feel); (2) misdirecting worship by having a human-centered rather than God-centered focus (it's all about me, the worshiper); (3) deadening worship by substituting stones for bread (the loss of the Word of God); (4) perverting worship with emotional, self-indulgent experiences at the expense of true liturgy; and (5) exploiting worship with market driven values. (xii)

Although this volume is specific in its criticisms, the book is primarily a positive exposition of what the Bible as a whole teaches about worship.

The first chapter develops a working definition of worship: "True worship involves reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign in response to his gracious revelation of himself and in accord with his will" (23). This definition is unpacked throughout the book in twelve additional chapters along with three helpful appendices. Block rightly rejects the notion that "true worship" is mainly what takes place inside of the individual in favor of a holistic approach that involves the totality of our lives (5). The book is organized thematically. After developing "The Object of Worship" and the "Subject of Worship," Block discusses "Daily Life as Worship," "Family Life and Work as Worship," "The Ordinances as Worship," "Hearing and Proclaiming the Scriptures in

¹ William F. Orr Professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Worship,” “Prayer as Worship,” “Music as Worship,” “Sacrifice and Offerings as Worship,” “The Drama of Worship,” “The Design and Theology of Sacred Space,” and “Leaders in Worship.” The discussions are consistently and refreshingly theocentric. Confessionally Reformed Christians will appreciate how attentive Block is to listening to what the Holy Spirit is teaching us from the first three quarters of the Bible rather than treating the Old Testament as though it were God’s Word *emeritus*.

There are remarkably few weaknesses in this work, given the vast scope of the project and Block’s helpful willingness to consistently offer his best judgment on each topic rather than blandly acknowledging that committed Christians hold diverse interpretations. However, readers may wish to note three weaknesses in the book.

First, Orthodox Presbyterians will disagree with his views on baptism, which include immersion and limiting the sacrament to those who make a credible profession of faith. One surprise is that a scholar of Block’s abilities would repeat the notion that Jesus coming up “out of (*ek* ἐκ) the water (Mark 1:10; cf. Acts 8:38–39) suggests support for the immersionist interpretation” (147) when it almost certainly refers to Jesus coming out of the water at the side of the river rather than standing erect after being immersed in baptism. This can be seen by looking at the parallel passage in Matthew 3:16 that uses the preposition *from* (*apo* ἀπὸ) for Jesus coming out of the water. While both “*ek*” and “*apo*” can be used for coming out of the side of the river it is nearly impossible to see how “*apo*” could be used to refer to Jesus emerging from the Jordan after being immersed. Furthermore, Block compares the baptism of Jesus with the baptism of the eunuch in Acts 8:38–39 without noting the plural verbs. Yet, “they both went down into the water” and “they came up out of the water” clearly indicate the transition between water and land and not the mode of baptism.

Second, Block seems to confuse the doctrine of divine impassability with the erroneous notion that God lacks emotions. He therefore rejects WCF 2.1 for what it was never intended to teach (203).

Third, Professor Block’s insightful and robust treatment of the Sabbath lacks an adequate presentation of the New Testament passages which make clear that the Sabbath day has been moved from the seventh day to the first day of the week. At one point he writes: “In Acts the apostles never suggest that the seventh-day Sabbath does not apply to Christians or that it is to be replaced by an alternate day” (278). The lack of an express command in the New Testament to move the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week apparently leaves Professor Block reluctant to bind anyone’s conscience to maintaining Sunday as the prescribed day of Sabbath rest. Orthodox Presbyterians, while recognizing the lack of an explicit command, would deduce the shift to a Sunday Sabbath as a good and necessary consequence of the Apostolic pattern and therefore obligatory for all Christians. These are relatively minor criticisms for such an ambitious book.

This volume is overflowing with extraordinary biblical insights presented in a clear and balanced manner. I picked up this volume expecting to learn a little bit more about worship. I put it down knowing the LORD and his Word better. What more could one ask? This is not only the finest book that I have ever read on worship, it is one of the best Christian books I have read in the past several years. I could not recommend this work more highly.

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The Crisis of British Protestantism

by Hunter Powell

by Ryan M. McGraw

The Crisis of British Protestantism: Church Power in the Puritan Revolution 1638–44 (Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain), by Hunter Powell. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2015, 264 pages, \$105.00.

This is likely the most significant work written to date on the thorny subject of church power in British Reformed orthodoxy. Powell focuses on debates over the nature of church power from 1638–44 (2). He aims to redefine and to clarify categories related to debates over church government at the Westminster Assembly. He does so by treating primarily the views of the so-called five “dissenting brethren” in relation to the Scottish commissioners, setting both in their historical context. This is such a paradigm shifting work that, in spite of its price, it is one of the most important books that anyone interested in the Westminster Assembly and its theology could take up and read. It shows how the Westminster debates over church government were not as neat and tidy as many have assumed and how the question of church polity fits into the broader context of Reformed orthodox theology.

This book challenges historical conceptions of Presbyterian polity at the Westminster Assembly. Powell modifies the common narrative of church government debates at Westminster, which often treats these debates as an exercise in how long it took the assembly to fall in line with the Scots. Instead, Powell shows how the Scots achieved a high degree of unity with the Apologists (Congregationalists who were known later as the Dissenting Brethren) over the question of the seat of church power.

While English Presbyterians in the assembly were divided over whether church power was seated in the local church and was then communicated to presbyteries, or whether church power was seated in presbyteries and was communicated to particular churches, the Apologists and the Scots agreed that Christ communicated church power to the congregation as a whole and to its elders directly and in two distinct ways. According to men such as Rutherford on the Presbyterian side and Burroughs on the side of the Apologists, the only significant difference that existed between them resided in the power of synods, especially with respect to excommunication. The Apologists denied that synods could execute this censure while the Scots affirmed that they could. However, many English Presbyterians opposed both the Scots and the Apologists by denying that the elders of local congregations could excommunicate members without a synodical act. This meant that both the Scots and the Apologists held minority positions at the assembly.

At the end of the day, the real “grand debate” at the assembly was not over Presbyterianism vs. Congregationalism, but between the assembly as a whole and Erastian opponents, which included debates among Presbyterians over the proper seat of church power. The Scots held the tenuous position of attempting to accommodate the

Apologists on the one side and of preventing the fracture of the Presbyterian majority on the other side over the question of the seat of church power. The Scots agreed with the Apologists over church power, but they agreed with the Presbyterian majority over the governmental power of presbyteries.

This work gives us a unique window into debates at the Westminster Assembly. Part of the reason why Powell's research creates such a seismic shift in how we read assembly debates over church government lies in the sources that he used. Previous research relied on pamphlets written by authors outside of the assembly rather than on records of assembly debates and the writings of the Westminster divines. Powell guides readers by the hand through the assembly debates in a way that makes history come to life. The reader can virtually feel the tension in the air and recognize the temperaments and personalities of the divines in their proceedings. He shows that all primary sources are not equal and that we gain a different picture of events when we follow the actors in the story instead of the spectators in the crowd commenting on the play.

This does not mean that his historiography is flawless. In comparing the polity of the famed Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) with the Congregationalists at Westminster and in highlighting Voetius's enthusiastic endorsement of the Congregationalist John Cotton's *Keys of the Kingdom* (1644), Powell makes almost no appeal to primary sources. He also repeatedly refers to the Netherlands as "Holland," confusing two Dutch provinces with the entire region. However, his treatment of the vital subject of church government at Westminster gives a picture of the development of varied versions of Presbyterian polity that Presbyterian ministers in particular bypass to their great detriment.

This book is just the kind of history that Presbyterian churches need. It forces readers to listen to the Westminster divines and to assess them on their own terms and in their own world. Modern readers may not always like what they find in reading books like this one. Yet this work is necessary to help explain what the Westminster Assembly did and did not intend to say in its affirmation of Presbyterian polity. Presbyterians were not all cut from the same cloth and not all Congregationalists were as far away from some forms of Presbyterianism as we may tend to think. Above all, this book provides us with an admirable example of how the Scots and the Apologists pursued catholic unity in their theology without threatening their distinctives. It also provides us with a model of doctrinal precision, spiritual maturity, and catholic charity that has potential to serve the church well today.

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Preaching by Ear *by Dave McClellan*

A Review Article

by **Gregory E. Reynolds**

Preaching by Ear: Speaking God's Truth from the Inside Out, by Dave McClellan, with Karen McClellan. Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014, xvii + 171 pages, \$15.99.

Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilianus AD 35–96), building as he did on those who went before him, has influenced homiletics more than any other ancient rhetorician. His influential magnum opus, *Institutio Oratoria*, was published near the end of his life (ca. AD 90–95). In AD 68 he was called from his birthplace in Spain to Rome by the Emperor Galba to establish a school of rhetoric (39). “The oral world of Cicero and Quintilian is the oral world of the New Testament” (39).

The great value of McClellan’s work is his extensive application to preaching of Quintilian’s pioneering treatment of the principles of rhetoric in *Institutio Oratoria*. He uses Quintilian to establish the vital connection between the heart and the mouth in order to encourage preachers to consider the oral nature of preaching (31). As with Aristotle and Cicero the virtue of the speaker (*virtus bono*) is inextricably connected with his message. Included in this virtue is the insight of the speaker into the nature of man and his motivations (41–43). For the preacher this means he must “have an identity before God and the people that is deeper than the preaching role. We must be lovers of God first” (45).

This fine work on orality connects the interior life of the preacher with his preaching. It refers to excellent sources of ancient rhetoric as well as media ecologists such as Ong, McLuhan, and Ellul. McClellan applies Ong’s nine characteristics of oral communications to homiletics.

McClellan insists that preachers must learn to distinguish between oral and written communication. As preacher and homileician he reminds us:

In the last three hundred years we can trace a move away from oral roots toward an increasing literary structure of the sermon. . . . While reading and writing were certainly not rare skills in the first century AD, their purpose was fundamentally different. Communication was primarily oral with literacy serving in a backup role. To a large degree those tables have turned. We now think of generating sermons in literacy and then converting them to some form of orality on Sunday. (36, 38)

The greatest problem for the seminary-trained preacher—few men can do without such training—is rigorous literary training, which often translates into an academic approach to the preparation and the act of preaching. We are book, text, and lecture oriented. Lectures are content heavy and meant basically to inform, not to move or persuade. J. C. Ryle emphasized this point: “English composition for speaking to hearers and English

composition for private reading are almost like two different languages, so that sermons that ‘preach’ well ‘read’ badly.”¹

McClellan works with a dimension of Quintilian that has been largely ignored: the place of improvisation in rhetoric.² The function of memory in preaching must not be confused with memorizing a sermon text, but rather, as McClellan insists, remembering the pathway of the sermon like the main points of a story, which can then be told without notes (97–98, 132, 136–37). Quintilian observed, “[T]he crown of all our study and the greatest reward of our long labours is the power of improvisation [*ex tempore dicendi facultas*].”³ For Quintilian improvisation was the *sine qua non* of oratory, “The man who fails to acquire this [faculty] had better . . . abandon the task of advocacy.”⁴ But improvisation for Quintilian was a learned and high art, acquired only after years of disciplined study and practice, never to be confused with the effusive efforts of mere talent.⁵

Thus, McClellan takes on the perennial debate concerning the use of notes or manuscripts in the preaching moment. He pleads for an oral form used in the pulpit in a way that does not impede vital visual and personal connection with the congregation. Something else a manuscript should not restrict is the openness of the preacher in the preaching moment to add or subtract from the manuscript as the moment demands. McClellan quotes Quintilian’s observation that student orators who have been exposed to good examples of rhetoric

will have at command, moreover, an abundance of the best words, phrases, and figures not sought for the occasion, but offering themselves spontaneously, as it were, from a store treasured within them. (148n4)

McClellan insists:

A reader may be a good reader but can never match the communicative intensity of an orator discovering out loud. . . . To preach well we need to be in a sort of discovery mode, which is categorically different than a reporting mode. (106)

Quintilian insisted that “premeditation is not so accurate as to leave no room for happy inspiration [*fortunae locus*]: even in writing we often insert thoughts which occur to us on the spur of the moment.”⁶

On the other hand, one of the great weaknesses of preaching without notes is the tendency to stray from the theme of the text and expand minor points in a distracting way. It is all too easy to become so enamored of one’s own facility in speaking without notes that one forgets that his expansion of the sermon may lose or even bore his hearers in the process. McClellan recommends with Quintilian an “artful spontaneity” (147n1).

¹ Iain Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1990), 345.

² Chris Holcomb, “‘The Crown of All Our Study’: Improvisation in Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2001): 53–72 in McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 147n1.

³ Holcomb, “The Crown of All Our Study,” 53; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 10.7.1, 133.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 56–58.

⁶ Chris Holcomb, “‘The Crown of All Our Study’: Improvisation in Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2001): 66; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 10.6.5–6.

It is foolish to try extemporaneous preaching without careful preparation and experience. Richard S. Storrs's *Preaching without Notes* is a classic on the subject.⁷ Extemporaneous preaching requires as much, if not more, careful preparation as does preaching with a manuscript, just a different kind of preparation. We should distinguish between two kinds of extemporaneous preaching. Some write out a full manuscript and then memorize it word for word. A better way is to memorize the outline, markers guiding you in the right direction, and leave the articulation of the content to the preaching moment, based on one's study of the text. But, if one uses a manuscript of some kind, what kind should it be? As McClellan notes, Quintilian insists that sticking to a manuscript does "not allow us to try the fortune of the moment" (149). For the preacher that fortune, of course, is directed by the Spirit. McClellan sums up his thoughts on the subject: "It is this balance of both preparation and spontaneity that Quintilian upholds as our standard" (150).

McClellan, in his quest for true extemporaneous preaching, takes issue with homiletician Clyde Fant's "sermon brief,"⁸ as resembling an outline, which McClellan views as artificial. Instead he advocates a "roadmap as the visual and iconic sense to the thought blocks that portrays [sic] a sense of destination toward a specific end, and the resultant ease of transfer to memory" (133n11). I think he overstates his rejection of outlines, since his roadmaps function in a similar way. Fant seeks a slightly different means to achieve much the same end, which is a truly oral set of notes that maps a progression of thought. But this is what a good outline does.

Another contribution of Quintilian that McClellan observes is that he "provides the basis for the Western liberal arts education when he advocates devotion to subjects as impractical as music" (47n15). For example, Quintilian asserts the vital connection in antiquity between music and rhetoric. Music, poetry, and philosophy were considered to be of divine origin. "The art of letters and that of music were once united."⁹ Music, particularly vocal music, has a direct bearing on rhetoric:

Now I ask you whether it is not absolutely necessary for the orator to be acquainted with all these methods of expression which are concerned firstly with gesture, secondly with the arrangement of words and thirdly with the inflexions of the voice, of which a great variety are required in pleading.¹⁰

McClellan's contribution to the subject of orality in preaching is significant and much needed in today's pulpit. I highly recommend this book.

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⁷ Richard S. Storrs, *Preaching without Notes* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1875).

⁸ Clyde E. Fant, *Preaching For Today* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 166–69.

⁹ Quintilian, *The Institutes of Rhetoric*, 1.10.18, 169. He deals with the place of music in the training of orators in 1.10.9–33.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.10.22, 171.

ServantHumor

Stooping and Lipping

by **Eutychus II**

I've been an officer in the OPC for over two decades, which means I have done my share of Sunday school teaching. It's part of the job description. I have taught on books of the Bible, on doctrinal standards, theology, church history, you name it. And all of this to adults, of course.

But about a year ago I ventured into unfamiliar territory—teaching four- and five-year-olds. What possessed me, you ask? For one, I had a growing conviction that the men of our church should pitch in to teach the young'uns. Also I thought it would be good stewardship for me to familiarize myself with the curriculum that our denomination promotes. Finally, we had a shortage of teachers, and I thought that an elder condescending to take on this lowly task might set a good example for others. The idea struck many in my church as comically implausible. Not least my adult children, who long suspected that my patience level with children in the church registered fairly close to the standard set by W. C. Fields.

Despite my impressive Sunday school curriculum vitae, I underestimated what was in store for me. I can't say I wasn't warned by the teacher's manual from Great Commission Publications, which gave me plenty of warning: the kids in my class would have only five-ten minute attention spans (a wild overstatement, I am convinced), they are literal and concrete thinkers, they are curious and talkative (you think?), and they tire very easily (or would that refer to the teacher?).

Still, I was convinced I had this covered. After all, there were just five kids in the class. The superintendent even secured for me an assistant, whom I tried to wave off so as not needlessly to burden. "No imposition at all," she insisted, "I am happy to help you. Oh, and yes, you will need me." Five minutes into my first class, a young pupil announced it was time for her bathroom break. My assistant took her hand, smiled at me, and escorted her out of the classroom.

While the teacher's manual promised that I would be "enlightened and enriched" in this experience, I set a different goal: survival. Compared to teaching adults—I can yak about anything for forty-five minutes—this was work. One problem was the curriculum, which was either feast or famine—too ambitious or restrained in its combination of teaching and activities. So I learned critical clock management techniques. With time running out, I employ a hurry-up offense through the lesson with the precision of a Tom Brady. With time to kill, there is always another chorus of a song or a review of catechism questions. And if I am really desperate, I pull out the crayons. What kid doesn't like to draw?

An experienced teacher underscored for me the importance of addressing students at their level. So I consciously make efforts to bend down to make eye contact. Those

ungainly and ungraceful exercises reinforce the bitter reality that knee replacement is in my future.

I committed my share of rookie mistakes. One day I set out to teach the kids a song to the tune of a familiar nursery rhyme. I practiced diligently the night before, to the amusement of my wife. But when it came time to lead the singing I could not recall the tune. My co-teacher drew a blank as well, which prompted one five-year-old to observe: “well, this is awkward.”

A particular struggle was to keep lessons focused on one simple take-away every week. Something like, “God created a wonderful world that we see and touch and smell,” or “God gives us grace to trust and obey him.” I strive to keep my words simple and my sentences short. This is hard to do. But what is not hard is telling whether I am getting through. Adult students disguise their boredom. Kids can’t hide it.

If the challenges proved daunting (and don’t even get me started on the crafts), the rewards were even greater than I imagined. “Hi, Mr. Eutychus!” (or something similar) my pupils holler when they see me every Sunday. Two weeks into our class, a conversation with a friend before evening worship was interrupted when a young girl ran up to me and gave me a big hug that nearly knocked me over. My friend’s jaw dropped, and I proudly explained that she was among my “posse.” I image these kids a decade or so from now, nervously seated before the session and stumbling to make a credible profession of faith. I am heartened to think that one improbably friendly face will serve to put their minds at ease.

More than shaping me as a teacher, my tenure among the pre-schoolers has prompted reflections on my life as a learner. The things I share in common with these young saints were brought home to me in public worship a few weeks ago. A paraphrase of Psalm 113 offered this thanks to the Lord:

Yet I may love thee too, O Lord,
Almighty that thou art,
for thou hast stooped to ask of me
the love of my poor heart.

This is the doctrine of accommodation on which Calvin has written so eloquently. “For who even of slight intelligence does not understand,” he asks in his *Institutes*, “that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in measure to ‘lisp’ in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness” (1.13.1).

Stooping and lisp. Short sentences and simple take-aways. Isn’t that the essence of verbal revelation? If you study textbooks on Christian education, you will find one consistent theme—Jesus is the “master teacher.” I have no argument with that label, but I do with the logic behind it. Explanations range from Jesus’s way of confounding the wise to exposing the proud, or confronting stubbornness and pride, or appealing to emotions. These explanations only serve to flatter ourselves, and they overlook the obvious: Jesus knew how to stoop and lisp.

ServantPoetry

G. E. Reynolds (1949–)

In a Feed Trough Born

In the filthy feed trough born,
You, you of lofty origin come;
How of your nobility shorn
Did you our humanity plumb?

It is a mystery that makes us dumb
And weep for our ignoble birth,
And leaves us in our sin—numb
Feeling our righteousness's dearth.

How in that dirty little stable
Could you come as the king
Wrapped in death's dire garb able
To save a people from death's sting?

I cannot comprehend humility
So great as this I see in you—
My magnificent Savior, the utility
Of which to you the glory will accrue.