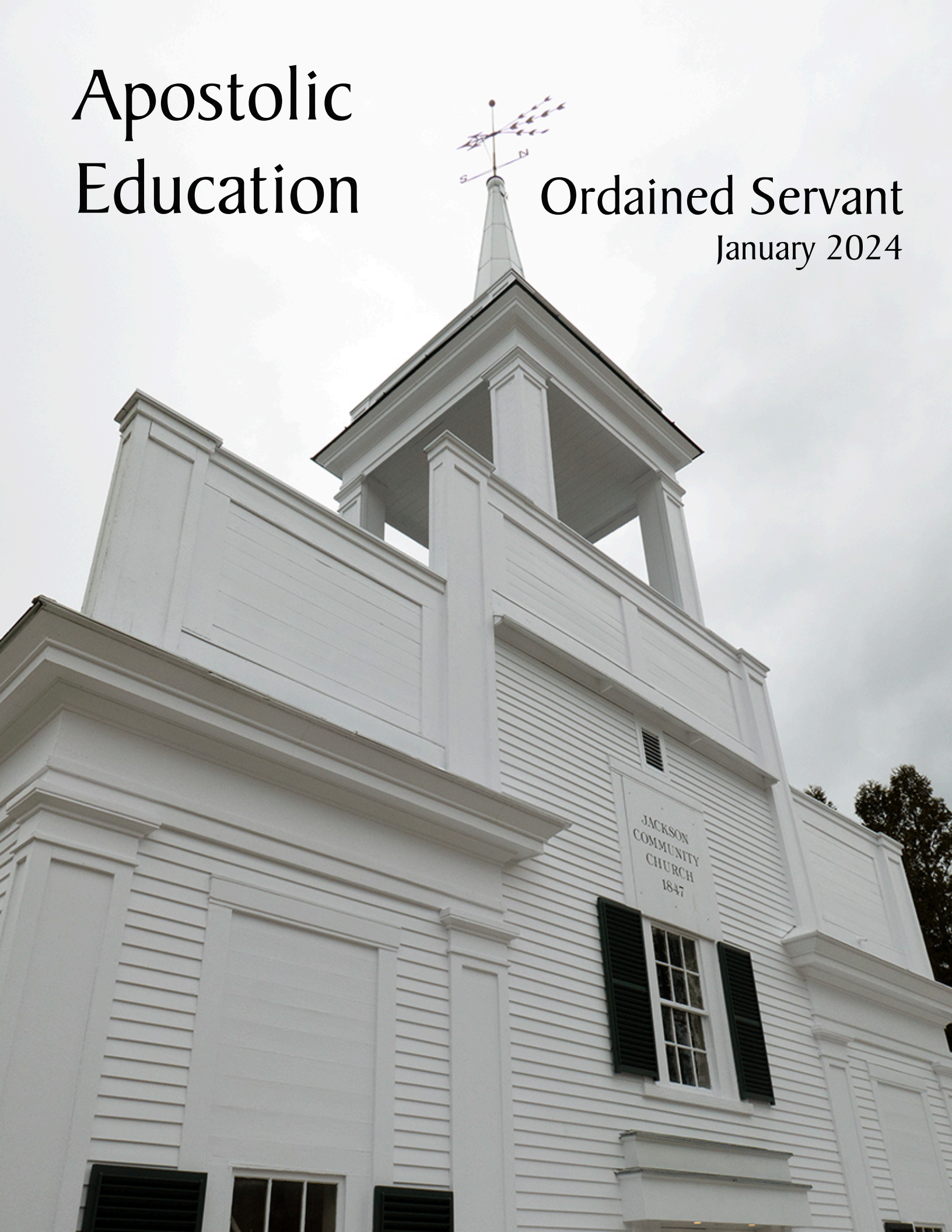
Apostolic Education

Ordained Servant

January 2024



Ordained Servant Online

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From the Editor

Do we accept the Pharisees' assessment of the apostles Peter and John as "uneducated"? T. David Gordon challenges an egalitarian reading of the often misunderstood passage in Acts 4:13. "Were Peter and John 'Ignorant' or 'Uneducated'? A Non-Egalitarian Reading of Acts 3:1–4:22" This has important implications for our ecclesiology.

In chapter 10, "Take Heed to Yourself," of *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, I emphasize the importance of integrity and earnestness in ministers of the Word. This involves paying attention to our central task, which is the preaching of the Scriptures based on a close reading of the text, a task that the electronic environment tends to undermine. This combined with a "passionate intensity" will help us implement Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:16, NKJV).

In 1988 New Rochelle, New York, celebrated the tercentenary of the Huguenot founding of the city, based on the immigration of refugees from La Rochelle, France, in 1688. I was asked to present lectures at the public library, which I did in four parts: "The Huguenot Christian," "The Huguenot Family and Education," "The Huguenot Citizen," and "The Huguenot Craftsman." The research for these lectures was done largely at the libraries of Huguenot Society of America and the Huguenot-Thomas Paine Historical Association of New Rochelle. "The Huguenot Craftsman: Christianity and the Arts" is a slightly revised version of the fourth of those lectures. The first two were published in the October and November issues of *Ordained Servant Online* in 2010.

In "A Humble Minister's Courageous Stand against Ecclesiastical Tyranny," Robert Holda reviews a book about an unsung hero of the early days of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church: *Standing Against Tyranny: The Life and Legacy of Arthur Perkins,* by Rev. Brian L. De Jong.

In "Faith Can Flourish in Our Age of Unbelief," Andy Wilson reviews *Bulwarks of Unbelief: Atheism and Divine Absence in a Secular Age*, by Joseph Minich. Minich demonstrates "how the modern technocultural order makes atheism much more plausible than it has been in previous eras." However, orthodox Protestantism is best equipped with its confessional heritage to thrive in this godless moment. God's sovereignty and the theology of the cross are a potent force aginst the would be autonomy of modern man.

Our poem this month is by Francis Thompson (1859–1907), "New Year's Chimes." Thompson is more well known for his 182 line poem, "The Hound of Heaven." G. K. Chesteron said he was the greatest English poet since Robert Browning. The young Tolkien was also a fan. Thompson's poetic energy is nicely displayed in this welcome to a new year.

The cover picture is the Jackson Community Church in Jackson, New Hampshire. The original congregation was Free Will Baptist, formed in 1803. The building was erected in 1847. In 1951 the Community Church was formed, affiliated with Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Churches. These two joined in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ (UCC). This represents a sad decline. The congregational

church in which I was raised joined the UCC in the 1960s. I never once heard the gospel preached. We were taught to be nice and not naughty.

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 will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

ServantWord

Were Peter and John "Ignorant" or "Uneducated"? A Non-Egalitarian Reading of Acts 3:1–4:22

T. David Gordon

Nathan O. Hatch served us well when he published *The Democratization of American Christianity* in 1991.[1] He observed throughout the book that the same tendency towards a radical egalitarianism that undergirded the American Revolution quickly manifested itself also in the American churches.

> Christianity was effectively reshaped by common people who molded it in their own image and who threw themselves into expanding its influence. Increasingly assertive common people wanted their leaders unpretentious, their doctrines self-evident and down-to-earth, their music lively and singable, and their churches in local hands.[2]

I noted the same tendency when I attempted to correct the common egalitarian mis-translation of Ephesians 4:12, arguing that such a mis-translation required not one, but three, erroneous decisions about Greek grammar or lexicography.[3] What I had not noted at the time was the almost-desperate effort to find justification for such egalitarianism in other passages in the New Testament, such as the now-almost-universal egalitarian mis-reading of Galatians 3:28. Among such would-be-egalitarian texts, Luke's statement about how Jewish rulers evaluated Peter and John in Acts 4:13 is a favorite, to which we now turn.

The apostles had healed a crippled man (Acts 3), which occasioned quite a public stir and a demand for some accounting, which Peter attempted in the portico of Solomon (Acts 3:11–26). This account, however, made a bad situation worse, as Peter's account "greatly annoyed" the priests, the temple captain, and the Sadducees, who "arrested them and put them in custody until the next day" (Acts 4:3). About five thousand people believed Peter's speech, so on the next day "their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family," to investigate the disturbance (Acts 4:5–6).

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[1] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
[2] Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 9.
[3] T. David Gordon, "'Equipping' Ministry in Ephesians 4?," *Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 1 (March 1994): 69–78.

Peter's address at that point merely threw gasoline on an already-burning fire, especially by his arguably tactless reference to Jesus as "whom *you* crucified, whom God raised from the dead," and as "the stone that was rejected by *you*, the builders, which has become the cornerstone," citing Psalm 118:22 (Acts 4:10–11, emphases mine). Luke, no stranger to litotes,[4] probably under-estimated the rulers' reaction:

> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. (Acts 4:13–14)

Litotic[5] or not, Luke's observation has fueled many egalitarian fires, and I would like to attempt to extinguish them, on three grounds.

First Ground: Luke did not affirm that Peter and John were ignorant or uneducated.

Acts 4:13 may be the only passage in the New Testament in which Christian readers endorse the (mis?) perceptions of the enemies of Christ and his apostles. Luke faithfully recorded what these rulers "saw" and "perceived," without indicating at all that he agreed with their perception. The text of Acts 4:13 does not say that Peter and John *were* ignorant or uneducated, but that the rulers were amazed at what they saw. They were surprised that men who had no credentials to speak publicly were doing so. Indeed, the word translated "boldness" often refers to public speaking, as the reasoning in *BAGD* indicates: "'Openness' sometimes develops into *openness to the public,* before whom speaking and actions take place."[6] Indeed, *BAGD* refers also to the use of the term in the last verse of Acts (Acts 28:31), which records that Paul "*welcomed all who came to him*, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with *all boldness and without hindrance*" (μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας ἀκωλύτως, *meta pasēs parrēsias akōlutōs,* emphases mine). Paul had most of the freedoms of any Roman citizen, including that he could welcome visitors and speak with them because he had, as *BAGD* put it, "openness to the public."

Had Peter and John been regular attendees at the synagogue, or been credentialed to speak publicly there, they would have been well-known to the rulers, who would not have been surprised to hear them speaking publicly. But the rulers present knew nothing about them, or whether they had the rights of Roman citizens (they probably did not) or permission to speak publicly in the synagogue, and this is why the rulers were surprised by their public speaking.

They "perceived" that Peter and John were "uneducated, common men" (ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοί εἰσιν καὶ ἰδιῶται, *anthrōpoi agrammatoi eisin kai idiōtai*), which probably meant that they were not known to be the disciples of any of the schools of philosophy or

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[4] Acts 12:18; 19:23.

[5] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* Version 24.0.3 (WebCatalog, arm64): "understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary (as in 'not a bad singer' or 'not unhappy')."

[6] Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, ad loc. παρρησία.

religion in their day. Indeed, "uneducated" does not convey the Greek sense of *agrammatos* (ἀγράμματος), which might be translated "unlettered," because access to manuscripts was highly restricted 1,500 years before the printing press, and very few people would have been permitted access to valuable hand-copied manuscripts. Indeed, the Ethiopian reading from Isaiah in Acts 8 proves the point; the only way of accounting for his access to a scroll of Isaiah is there in the text itself: "And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of *all her treasure*" (Acts 8:27). It was therefore surprising that a person without known access to a scriptorium could have knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (*hai graphai* [αἱ γράφαι], from the same root as *gramma* [γράμμα], or its negated *a-grammatos* [ἀ-γράμματος]), yet Peter made six references to these Scriptures/*hai graphai* in his speech, several of which were direct, word-for-word citations. To not have access to written manuscripts/*graphai* does not mean that an individual was less educated than the general population, none of whom would have had access to such manuscripts. To be ἀγράμματος (*agrammatos*) is not necessarily to be ἀμαθής (*amathēs)*, "without knowledge,"[7] or "unknowing" (ἀγνοέω, *agnoeō*), or "uninstructed" (ἀπαίδευτος, *apaideutos*), all of which also appear in the New Testament.

Similarly, the designation "common" (ἰδιῶται, *idiōtai*) is used most often in the New Testament to refer to people who do not know any language but their own, since the root, ἴδιος (*idios*), means "one's own," which in this case would mean people who speak only their "own" native language. In three of the other four uses of the term in the New Testament, it plainly refers to speaking only one's own language:

> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an *outsider* (τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου, *tov topon tou idiōtou*) say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?…If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and *outsiders* (ἰδιῶται, *idiōtai*) or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or *outsider* (ἰδιώτης, *idiōtēs*) enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all . . . (1 Cor. 14:14, 15, 16, 23, 24)

Note that ESV's "outsider" is evidently someone who does not speak the language being spoken in the assembly, but only his "own," native language. And, in the only other place where the term occurs, Paul used it sarcastically, to refute those who belittled his ministry in comparison to others, and even here it was not his intelligence, but his *linguistic* ability, that was challenged:

> Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. Even if I am unskilled in speaking (ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, *idiōtēs tō logō*), I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. (2 Cor. 11:5–6)

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[7] Liddell-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1843, *ad loc. cit*.

When Peter and John were perceived to be "common" men, this term therefore had none of the negative connotations our English word "common" has today, suggesting a person of *less*-than-usual refinement or intelligence; to the contrary, as its dictionary use suggests, it would mean a person who had at least the knowledge "common" to an adult in his community or culture, though possibly only his culture's own language.

Therefore, even if the perception the rulers had of Peter and John were an accurate perception, the combination of terms employed would not necessarily designate them as being of less-than-typical attainments, compared to the population of their day, the vast majority of whom would not have had access to manuscripts, and the majority would not have been multi-lingual.[8]

Second Ground: Peter demonstrated remarkable knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Certainly, Peter was not "ignorant" of the Old Testament writings. Even in a day before the printing press, when manuscripts were rare and expensive, he made six references to those sacred writings, several of which contained verbatim quotes. In Acts 3:13, he mentioned "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers," something my college-level Bible Survey students could not often do. In Acts 3:18, he mentioned "what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled." indicating he had grasped what Christ had taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:44–47). In verses 22 and 23, he cited a direct quotation from Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, 19:

> Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people."

He continued his discourse in verse 24 by indicating not only a comprehensive understanding of the Old Testament prophets, but also of their chronological *order*, accurately affirming that Samuel was the first: "And all the prophets who have spoken,

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[8] Though I have demonstrated that neither "uneducated" nor "common" likely meant a person of lesser competence, I still would contend that the *perception* the Jewish rulers had of Peter and John was incorrect. Peter employed "Silvanus" in 1 Peter 5:12, which is the Latin form of either a Semitic/Aramaic word or its Greek abbreviation. He would have been more familiar with the Semitic form, "Silas" (12 times in the NT), yet he employed the Latin "Silvanus," which only appears in 3 other places in the New Testament. Further, we know that Jesus spoke in Aramaic from the several places where a New Testament author would provide a Greek translation of the Aramaic original (e.g. Mat. 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:22, 34; John 1:38, 42; 9:7, Acts 4:36; 9:36; 13:8). Peter understood those discourses of Jesus, which nearly all scholars concede were delivered in Aramaic, yet he also wrote elegant Greek. Jesus called him "Cephas," an Aramaic derivative (John 1:42), assuming that Peter could understand either the Greek or the Aramaic. Therefore, Peter was not a "common" man in the sense that idiotes/ἰδιώτης meant an individual who knew only his "own" native language. The evidence of the New Testament suggests that Peter had some familiarity with three, and possibly four, languages: Aramaic (or Hebrew, or both), Greek, and Latin. Whether he knew only Hebrew (but not Aramaic), cf. R. Buth and C. Pierce, "Hebraisti in Ancient Texts: Does ἑβραϊστί Ever Mean 'Aramaic'?" in *The Language Environment of First Century Judea: Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels*, vol. 2, eds. R. Buth and S. Notley (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 66–109).

from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days." In the next verse Peter cited by direct quotation of Genesis 22:18 the third great promise God had made to Abraham: "And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Peter appears to have cited Ezekiel 3:19 in Acts 3:26, "God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness." This appears to be a reference to Ezekiel's having said, "But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way . . ." (and ESV references Ezek. 3:19 in its marginal note to Acts 3:26). Finally, in Acts 4:11, speaking directly to these rulers, he cited a passage ordinarily cited at Jewish festivals, and did so in judgment of those very rulers: "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone" (cf. Ps. 118:22).

Such a rich weaving together of a broad range of biblical texts, in a society where manuscripts were rare and expensive, suggests that Peter was a person of much more than ordinary intelligence, who had learned profoundly from the discourses of Jesus, especially by grasping a hermeneutic by which the entirety of Old Testament Scripture anticipated the coming of Christ. Today, a person with such understanding would be regarded as "*un*common," who had/has a rich and thorough understanding of the pre-apostolic sacred writings.

Third Ground: The evidence from Peter's letters suggest that Peter was, by the standards of his day, erudite.

1 Peter is arguably the finest Greek in the New Testament. I taught Greek for forty-one years, at several institutions, and we rarely studied many New Testament texts in first-year Greek. In second-year Greek, however, we ordinarily translated from both gospels and epistles, to get a sense of both bodies of literature, narrative and epistolary. Only those who persevered to a third year of Greek were ready for really demanding, really erudite Greek, Greek beyond most second-year students. I treated such fortunate students to things like Plato's *Apology* of Socrates, if they were interested in Attic Greek; or, if they were interested in further New Testament writings, I would take them initially to 1 Peter, knowing that if they could handle it, they could handle anything else the New Testament could throw at them. It is a masterful example of Koiné Greek (as are Luke's two volumes). While, of course, Peter may have enjoyed the services of an amanuensis,[9] the thinking itself in the letter, in addition to its remarkable syntax, gives evidence of a person of well-beyond-ordinary intelligence and learning.

In our populist, elitist-despising (and elite-envying?)[10] culture, we have fastened onto Acts 4:13 with the fervor of a dachshund biting a mailman's ankle. We would like to

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[9] Silas/Silvanus may merely have been a courier, "through" whom Peter sent his letter, since he is not listed with Mark as one who "sends his love," (1 Pet. 5:12–13). Further, such amanuenses, such as Tertius (Rom. 16:22), may merely have functioned as stenographers taking dictation.

[10] "Elite" is actually a biblical term, ἐκλεκτός (*eklektos*), which passes into Latin as *elligere*, to French as *élire,* then *élite,* then English "elite." In its neutral sense it merely means "chosen" or "selected" or "elected," and, therefore, for presumably good reasons. We "elect" an apple that has no worms, or an automobile that runs well or efficiently. It is perhaps evidence of our populist culture that "elite" often has negative connotations. There is little virtue for anyone in being mediocre. For those who profess that humans are made in the image of God, there is *no* virtue in mediocrity, whether in attaining it or in

think that Christ founded his church *via* people of modest attainment and ability, and some of them, prior to knowing Christ, may have been people of such modest attainment. Some of them, however, such as Matthew, had been entrusted with significant responsibilities prior to knowing him; and Paul would have been in the upper two percentile in the Jewish-Roman culture of the first century. And the others Jesus trained well, and thoroughly, for several years. Eleven of the twelve (all but John) attained the highest of Christian attainments: martyrdom; and Peter alone was crucified upside down. Insofar as they have left us their writings, they are of an extremely high character, reflecting uncanny understanding of how Christ fulfilled all that came before in the Old Testament writings, and they articulated that understanding in clear, intelligent, and, at times, masterful language.

In our circumstances, as we face the apparently-inevitable anti-clericalism of the American/egalitarian world, it is important for us to acknowledge just how competent the original apostolic clergy were. First, nearly all, if not all, were conversant in Koiné Greek. Early on, they knew the portions of the Greek New Testament as they emerged, and their citations of the Old Testament were ordinarily citations of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint). They knew well, and first-hand, the realities of first century life in the Jewish-Roman world, including its varied customs and geo-political tensions. Many had known Jesus personally, had attended his instruction, and even witnessed him in his post-resurrection body. To know any of these things now, if possible at all, would require years of diligent study. Those who neglect such study are the ones who are truly sub-standard, and unqualified to serve the church.

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applauding it. There is also no virtue in envy, a vice that is prohibited throughout Scripture, a vice that motivated Cain to murder his brother Abel, and a vice that is the second of the Seven Deadly Sins.

ServantWord

The Voice of the Good Shepherd: Take Heed to Yourself, Chapter 10

By Gregory Edward Reynolds

Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands
take heed lest he fall. (1 Cor. 10:12)

—The Apostle Paul

For no one may benefit another
with that which he does not have himself.[1]

—Augustine

Eloquence is not something we seek.
It's something that is the by-product of loving the truth,
not of careful planning and structuring.[2]

—Dave McClellan

If one of the central values of pastoral preaching is the personal presence of Christ in his chosen messenger, or as it is often called the "Incarnational Principle," then we must own the maxim that nothing is as important to our preaching as following our Master in daily life and ministry. Make it your business to be an *authentic* communicator through cultivating a holy life and a sympathetic pastoral ministry. Augustine understood this: "However, the life of the speaker has greater weight in determining whether he is obediently heard than any grandness of eloquence."[3] Even secular orators like the ancient rhetorician Quintilian knew this: "I am convinced that no one can be an orator who is not a good man . . ."[4]

[1] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 89.
[2] Dave McClellan and Karen McClellan, *Preaching by Ear: Speaking God's Truth from the Inside Out* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014), 15.
[3] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 164.
[4] McClellan and McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 33. Quintilian, *The Institutes of Rhetoric* (*Institutio Oratoria*), trans. H. E. Butler (London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922), 355, 357.

Exemplify Your Office

Take Paul as your example:

> For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. (1 Thess. 2:1–10)

There is nothing more needed in the modern world than men of character, who live what they preach. This is a biblical given, which every good book on the subject of preaching emphasizes amply. The image media have tended to foster is that of the performing preacher—the celebrity. How many are there whose performance in public is betrayed by the awful fact that they are not what they *appear* to be. The electronic age is filled with such performances. Helmut Thielicke's searching question should frequently be ours: "Does the preacher drink what he hands out in the pulpit?"[5]

I remember the awful feeling as a young Christian, worshipping in a church where an evangelical pastor was conducting the service before a live television audience. It reminded me of Johnny Carson. Mic in hand, strutting around the stage in the conversational style of the talk show host during the monologue. This performance was not for the congregation. It was a performance for the television audience, and thus undermined the very integrity of which the world, in our celebrity-worshipping, scandal-ridden age, is in such dire need. I believe that this particular man was a man of real spiritual integrity. But his public life undermined his real identity, in a way in which I am sure he was quite unaware. The integrity of a holy life, then, must be exhibited in the very act of preaching. The way a man preaches must not undermine this integrity. We must preach what we practice and vice versa. There must be no discontinuity between his life in the pulpit and his life outside the pulpit. In word and deed, in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, he communicates God's truth. His secret devotional life with the Lord is always evident in public, especially over the long term. Without communion with the Lord and deep meditation on his message, there will be no spiritual power in his ministry.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question #159, is instructive in this regard:

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[5] Helmut Thielicke, *The Trouble with the Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 3.

> How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto? A. They that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

On preaching "sound doctrine" the Westminster divines used Titus 2:7–8 as a proof text: "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." Integrity of speech and life go hand in hand. The detection of the least insincerity will mar the reception of the Word: "my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4–5). Genuine love for God and the congregation ought to be communicated by every element of the preacher's life (2 Cor. 5:13–14; 12:15).

Sincerity stands out in this description of biblical preaching as an attribute especially necessary in the age of advertising and televangelism. In 2 Corinthians 2:17 and 4:2 Paul teaches us the true nature of ministerial sincerity:

> For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. . . . But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

What you see is what you get.

This is where the old adage comes into play: "practice what you preach." This means that before we can hope to see others transformed by our preaching labors, we must internalize the Word for ourselves. Or in the words of Dave McClellan, ". . . building a sermon from the inside out."[6] Preachers are called to take the preaching portion of God's Word to heart. The sermon, then, must be "the overflow of a saturated life, a life marinated in Scripture and in this week's passage." This prevents our preaching from being divorced from our true spiritual lives, ours first, and the congregation's second.[7] This requires asking hard questions of the text and of ourselves.

Cultivate Attentiveness[8]

Such concentrated attention assumes freedom from distraction—not easily assumed in our electronic world. Maggie Jackson's challenging book *Distracted* describes the disease

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[6] McClellan and McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 123.

[7] McClellan and McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 125.

[8] Portions of this section are based on Gregory E. Reynolds, "The Value of Daydreaming," *Ordained Servant* 21 (2012): 18–20; and Gregory E. Reynolds, "Changing Pace: The Need for Rest in a Frenetic World," *Ordained Servant* 18 (2009): 14–17.

(dis-ease) in order to focus on the cure—attentiveness, a vanishing human attribute in her opinion.[9] The problem has been growing ever since the sluiceway of electronic information was opened by Samuel Breese Morse over a century and a half ago. If your cell phone is not vibrating in your pocket, a wide screen is attracting your attention in the corner of a restaurant. This is the culture in which we are called to minister. My deepest concern is for ministers of the Word. The torrent of noise and visual distraction unsettles our minds and unsuits us for deep thinking and meditation of any kind. Focusing on how this affects preachers, T. David Gordon writes:

> Well, they read the Bible the same way they read everything else: virtually speed reading, scanning it for its most overt *content*. *What is the passage about?* They ask as they read, but they don't raise questions about how the passage is *constructed*. . . . All of their sermons are about Christian truth or theology in *general*, and the *particular* text they read ahead of time merely prompts their memory or calls their attention to one of Christianity's important realties (insofar as they perceive it). Their reading does not stimulate them to rethink anything, and since the text does not stimulate them particularly (but serves merely as a reminder of what they already know), their sermon is not particularly stimulating to their hearers. . . .
>
> Culturally, then, we are no longer careful, close readers of texts, sacred or secular. We scan for information, but we do not appreciate literary craftsmanship. Exposition is therefore virtually a lost art. . . .
>
> Our inability to read texts is a direct result of the presence of electronic media.[10]

Positioned in our studies—not offices, please—the distractions are around every corner. Long before the Internet became a pace-altering reality, the telephone, and before that, the telegraph, were eating away at the old pace of life. The answering devices, in seeking a remedy for the interrupting tendency of the telephone, have only delayed the sense of urgency that lingers when that annoying beep, beep, beep, beep, beep greets you when you go to make a call. My phone has a flashing red light that adds to the sense of emergency. "Call me, now!" says the phone. Email is worse, because under the guise of not interrupting us, it takes more time than written correspondence ever did. And we are all annoyed when someone fails to respond. I have come to admire those who do not let the tyranny of the urgent, built into email, drive them to respond immediately, if ever. Call waiting is another example. It is like someone barging into line in front of you. But the most well-mannered of family and friends allow it because the technology itself demands it. Inattention by distraction is the default position of modern life and probably humanity itself in its undisciplined form. Attentiveness is an acquired skill that requires intentional practice.

Media commentator Christine Rosen worries that the cognitive bottleneck caused by multitasking will spawn a generation of quick but shallow thinkers.[11] Rosen argues convincingly that what was early on labeled a virtue is now proving to be a hindrance to

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[9] Maggie Jackson, *Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2008).

[10] T. David Gordon, *Why Johnny Can't Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 46–47, 49.

[11] Christine Rosen, "The Myth of Multitasking," *The New Atlantis* (Spring 2008): 109.

productivity of all kinds, and even to intelligence and learning ability. Marshaling journalists, psychologists, and neuroscientists, she makes a strong case for considering multitasking a myth. While some are optimistic that the brain will adapt to the new situation, I cast my lot with the biblical notion that part of the givenness of human nature includes our ability to focus our personal intelligence. Rosen speculates about what the rising generation will look like:

> The picture that emerges with these pubescent multitasking mavens is of a generation of great technical facility and intelligence but of extreme impatience, unsatisfied with slowness and uncomfortable with silence.[12]

Unchecked by prudent stewardship of the electronic media,

> this state of constant intentional self-distraction could well be of profound detriment to individual and cultural well-being. When people do their work only in the "interstices of their mind-wandering," with crumbs of attention rationed out among many competing tasks, their culture may gain in information, but it will surely weaken in wisdom.[13]

I think many are already like this.

Writer, literary critic, and teacher of creative writing Sven Birkerts has observed that electronic media tend to "spread language thin, evacuating it of subtly and depth."[14] Birkerts sagely observes, "Language is the soul's ozone layer and we thin it at our peril."[15] It is here that preachers must be most alert to this cultural peril. How will preachers—distracted in such a world, as we are—be equipped to deal with the most difficult and profound text in history, the Bible? Paul gives us a description of Word ministry that requires the profoundest kind of attention and focus:

> Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. (1 Tim. 4:13–15, NKJV)

The frenetic pace cultivated by electronic distraction can only be slowed by dramatically, and intentionally, changing the pace. It makes the blessing of the Sabbath all the more attractive and important.

Thus, preachers must cultivate the power of solitude. This concept first came to my attention through the mystical, countercultural poetry of Gary Snyder. He wrote eloquently of the "power-vision in solitude."[16] As a fellow mystic in the late sixties, I pursued his

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[12] Ibid., 108.
[13] Ibid., 110.
[14] Gregory Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 263.
[15] Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1994), 133.
[16] Gary Snyder, essay in *A Controversy of Poets: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*, eds. Paris Leary and Robert Kelly (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), 551. "There is not much wilderness left to destroy, and the nature in the mind is being logged and burned off. Industrial-urban society is not 'evil' but there is no

vision relentlessly. While my mystical quest left me in a spiritual quandary, I did discover the importance of solitude for reflecting on the meaning of my existence in this crazy world. Ironically, as I used my solitude to seek union with the one (a monistic quest that ended in futility), I learned the beauty and power of being alone with my thoughts.

The modern penchant for "connectedness" often leaves us strangely disconnected from things that count, including our thoughts. It was in a state of utter solitude that I was brought face to face with my own need of a Savior who could liberate me from my sin and the awful prospect of death. Such solitude is often thought to be a sign of being antisocial. Yet I have found it essential to fortifying the most important thoughts and virtues necessary to maintaining healthy human relations. Disconnecting from the ordinary means of communication gives us opportunity to overcome the tendency to the jejune promoted by the electronic environment. Christian meditation is the biblical version of the power-vision in solitude.

The Sabbath is the biblical implementation of rest. The first Sabbath rest recorded in the Bible is not ours but God's:

> Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Gen. 2:1–3)

This raises the question of just what this resting is. It cannot be sleep for the divine being. It was rather a concentrated enjoyment of the completed work of creation. The Sabbath, made for man—redeemed man in the worship assembly—is characterized by focused attention on worshipping and enjoying the presence of God through the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian Sabbath offers a marvelous respite from the cares of life, especially from the frantic pace of modernity. Our OPC Directory for the Public Worship of God encourages us, "In order to sanctify the day, it is necessary for [God's covenant people] to prepare for its approach. They should attend to their ordinary affairs beforehand so that they may not be hindered from setting the Sabbath apart to God."[17] Spiritual refreshment has, of course, always been necessary for exiles and strangers awaiting the eternal Sabbath. But the sabbatical principle involved in the Lord's Day, as the first of a new creation, is meant to form the character of the remainder of the week. Since public worship is "a meeting of the triune God with his covenant people,"[18] everything else must stimulate our focus on him. This has never been more necessary than in the present environment.

Therefore, ministers should promote these benefits of the Lord's Day. We must apply the attentiveness cultivated by biblical Sabbath keeping to every area of life, and practice good stewardship of every human invention to ensure that these inventions foster attention to the important things, rather than distract us from them. This means we must instruct

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progress either. As a poet I hold the most archaic values on earth. They go back to the Neolithic: the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-vision in solitude, the terrifying initiation and rebirth, the love and ecstasy of the dance, the common work of the tribe. A gas turbine or an electric motor is a finely-crafted flint knife in the hand. It is useful and full of wonder, but it is not our whole life."

[17] "The Directory for the Public Worship of God," *The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2015), I.A.3.a, 124.

[18] "The Directory for the Public Worship of God," I.B.1, 125.

God's people in the cultivation of thoughtful, attentive lives. Finally, to guard the ministry of the Word, sessions need to protect pastors from distractions of every kind and promote sabbatical rest in their lives.

Pastors, take time to disconnect from every modern distraction. Give your undivided attention to the things that count so that your congregation may know that you have communed with heavenly reality, a sacred "power-vision in solitude." "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18).

My concern is for the minister who claims a single book to be the main course of their soul's nourishment. King David, a few years before the advent of electronic communication, was no less a very busy man. But he made it his business to step out of the fray frequently, perhaps a habit formed in his shepherding days, to meditate. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:1–2).

In Acts 19:9 we are told that in Ephesus, when Paul encountered stubbornness and unbelief, "with some speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus." The word translated "hall" is σχολῇ (*scholē*), the root of our word "school," which literally meant "freedom from occupation"[19] or leisure for learning. This implies an intentional effort to carve out spaces in our fast paced lives for true meditative learning.

"Meditation" in Psalm 1 is a kind of musing, and musing requires undistracted consideration of God's communication to us. This involves the carefree element of daydreaming which, combined with the idea of meditation, yields a definition of meditation something like this: "a series of pleasant thoughts, cultivated by removing oneself from distractions, in order to focus one's attention on our relationship with the Lord."[20] Even the dictionary definition can be understood eschatologically by the Christian. And while not all meditation on God's Word is pleasant, for example when it reveals our sin, it leads, through our union with our Mediator, to ultimate pleasantness in communion with our God.

Of course, as in preaching, there is another dimension to meditation (involving daydreaming), that I have not yet accounted for. That is serendipity. Again, the dictionary is helpful:

> the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way: a fortunate stroke of serendipity | a series of small serendipities. . . . coined by Horace Walpole, suggested by *The Three Princes of Serendip*, the title of a fairy tale in which the heroes "were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of." [21]

When the soil is good, a surprise flower will often appear, unplanted, blown in by the wind, or planted by a bird. Among thesaurus synonyms for serendipity are good fortune and

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[19] William D. Mounce, *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. William D. Mounce and Rick Bennett, Jr., http://www.tecknia.com/greek-dictionary. Accordance edition hypertexted and formatted by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 3.2.

[20] *New Oxford American Dictionary*, s.v. "meditate."

[21] *New Oxford American Dictionary*, s.v. "serendipity."

providence. I believe that God created our minds for meditation, with the serendipitous ability to connect ideas in a mysterious way that defies formulation. One example is found in our application of the Word we are meditating upon to our daily lives and relationships.

In the absence of times and places conducive to daydreaming, I fear the famine of good and great thoughts. We chase the muses away, amusing ourselves to death. Without such thoughts, ministers of the Word will necessarily be superficial, perfectly suited to feed the superficial minds our culture is cultivating. Without cultivating deep relationships with God, ourselves, and others, we succumb to the perpetual connectivity of modern life that immerses us in mediated social realities that snuff out our mental solitude and spiritual development. A deficit in mind renewal exposes the Christian to the default position or world conformity (Rom. 12:1–2), the pressures of which are increasing apace.

And it should not escape the reader's notice that David wrote Psalm 1 and many other poems, called psalms. More than a third of the Bible is written in poetic form. So every minister loves poetry whether he appreciates it or not because it is God's Word. Plato worried that writing would rob the mind of its furnishings, since the mnemonic orientation of oral tradition would be undermined. Print, hard drives, and the cloud only exacerbate this tendency. The Bible is structured to encourage remembering God's Word. In the oral culture in which it was written believers had no choice. We, on the other hand, must choose to furnish our minds with material upon which to meditate. Daydreaming without something worth dreaming about will only cultivate empty souls, "like the chaff that the wind drives away" (Ps. 1:4).

A well-lived life can only grow out of a well-cultivated interior. Emerson recognized this when he observed, "The saint and poet seek privacy to ends most public and universal."[22] David put it this way: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither" (Ps. 1:3). So, unscheduled—daydreaming—time may represent the most important spaces on our calendars. The serendipity of solitude is imperative.

Also, however, a daily routine of meditation on God's Word and related literature must be a staple of the minister's life. A regular place where electronic interruptions are not possible is necessary—no phone, no email, no texts.

Be Earnest

The earnestness of an authentic life must be evident in the very act of preaching. Earnestness is, according to *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, "serious and intense; not joking or playful; zealous and sincere." The earnest preacher believes every word he utters. Authenticity requires the message and its communication to dominate our concerns in the pulpit. Love for God, God's people, and sinners will generate simple language, genuine style, gestures, and emotion.[23]

The greatest impediment to earnestness is pride, which draws attention to self. A professional attitude and tone of voice detracts from the authenticity of the preacher. The entire purpose of public worship, in which preaching is central, is to draw people into the

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[22] William Deresiewicz, "The End of Solitude," in *The Digital Divide: Arguments for and against Facebook, Google, Texting, and the Age of Social Networking*, ed. Mark Bauerlein (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher / Penguin, 2011), 316.

[23] McClellan and McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 126–30 is excellent on earnestness.

presence of God himself, in adoration and praise. The preacher who does anything less will tend to lack earnestness and will consequently exude inauthenticity. Preachers need to labor to have an "aura of authenticity" in a world which sees very little of it.[24] If the preacher acts outside the pulpit as if his preaching makes no difference in his life, he cannot expect his preaching to make any difference in anyone else's life.

A closely related word, and one which is often misunderstood, is *boldness* (παρρησία, *parrrēsia*). It is used ten times in Acts, in connection with preaching the Word. Like *unction*, boldness is not to be confused with volume of voice or forcefulness of delivery or personality. It denotes a fearlessness and courage which reflects absolute confidence in what is being spoken.[25] The biblical focus is first of all on the *message*, not the method. But the method must reflect and embody the message. Boldness is the freedom which arises from the certainty that the gospel is true. "Now when they saw the boldness (παρρησίαν, *parrrēsian*) of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

The ultimate test of this certitude was the willingness of the apostles to give up their lives, security, and earthly happiness for the announcement of this message. Paul lived with the threat of death from the beginning to the end of his ministry. Shortly after his conversion and call to the apostolic ministry we are told the following:

> But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. (Acts 9:27–8)

At the conclusion of the book of Acts, we find Paul teaching the gospel in his rooms as a prisoner with this same boldness, using the same word παρρησία (*parrēsia*), but in the New King James Version it is translated "confidence": "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him" (Acts 28:31). Paul was the genuine article, and everyone knew it from his life and from the confidence with which he preached amidst the fiercest opposition. In other words, his earnestness was evident in his life *and* in his preaching. His method was a simple reflection of his ultimate confidence in the message, which in turn grew out of confidence in the Messenger of the Covenant, Jesus Christ. "[O]ur gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (πληροφορίᾳ *plērophoria*). You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake" (1 Thess. 1:5).

Now you may ask, How does this translate into the *way* we preach? While Phillips Brooks's definition of preaching expressed in the pithy phrase, "truth through personality,"[26] is an inadequate definition, it does emphasize an important point: let God use

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[24] Joel Nederhood, "Effective Preaching in a Media Age," class notes, Westminster Seminary California, 1990.

[25] παρρησία also refers to the "right of speech in Roman public assemblies" (T. David Gordon). Thus, in God's providence Paul was free to preach. In the case of Peter and John (Acts 4 & 5), even when civil/religious authorities forbade preaching, God gives the freedom to preach based on the historical veracity of the message.

[26] Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching: The Yale Lectures on Preaching* (1877; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 5.

your personality, which he gave you, to express his truth with passionate earnestness. Do not imitate another's style. The personal attributes and gifts with which God has provided you are to be cultivated. Augustine said it well: "That should not be called eloquence which is not appropriate to the person speaking."[27] This appropriateness included the person's age, experience, station in life, as well as his natural gifts. "Be yourself" is often enjoined upon young preachers. However, apart from the good idea of letting go of stiff formality, this injunction may seem to imply a lack of effort. Developing your own manner of preaching takes a great deal of conscious effort. Jay Adams sums it up well:

> A good preaching style is plain (but not drab), unaffected (but not unstudied) style that gets in there and gets the job done without calling attention to itself. It is clear and appropriate at every point to the message. Content should control this style.[28]

Whatever you do, do not try to imitate the satin smooth style of the media personality.

An excellent book on the subject of earnestness was written in the nineteenth century by John Angell James, titled: *An Earnest Ministry: The Want of the Times*. At the heart of the word *earnest* is the idea of "intense devotedness."[29] James defines earnestness under five headings. First it implies a single object of pursuit. For the preacher this is to herald the glad tidings of salvation to sinners. Second, this object must possess the mind and kindle the heart. Nothing less than a lifelong engagement in preaching the gospel can satisfy the true preacher. Third, the earnest preacher will use every available means at his disposal to accomplish the desired task of preaching. Fourth, everything else will be subordinated to this desired end.

Finally, the preacher will energetically engage in preaching in season and out of season.[30] D. Martin Lloyd-Jones exemplified this sort of attitude toward preaching as exhibited in the effect on the hearers:

> There is an element of compulsion in preaching, and people who are there are gripped and fixed. I maintain that if that is not happening, you have not got true preaching. That is why reading must never be a substitute for preaching. You can put the book down, or you can argue with it. When there is true preaching you cannot do that, you are gripped, you are taken up, you are mastered.[31]

Whatever eloquence God grants us must not be aimed *at* but rather spring *from* a soul ardently committed to communicating God's Word.

In practice this means that extensive and laborious preparation must not be shirked. If earnestness and boldness derive ultimately from the message, then the message must be our primary concern. The quality of our preparation is always evident in the act of preaching week in and week out. The arduous work of studying the text in the original languages scouring the best commentaries and theology so that our exegesis brings out the Spirit's

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[27] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 123.
[28] Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982), 105.
[29] John Angell James, *An Earnest Ministry: The Want of the Times* (1847; repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993), 28.
[30] James, *An Earnest Ministry*, 31ff, 41ff, 45ff, 49ff, 66ff.
[31] D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, "Knowing the Times: Extracts from an Important New Book by Dr. Lloyd-Jones," *Banner of Truth Magazine* 317 (February 1990), 12.

meaning and application, represent the only course for the earnest minister. In an age which lives on the surfaces of reality, which prides itself in superficiality, only deep penetration beneath the surface of the biblical text will avoid the light-weight homilies and sermonettes which we are relentlessly told the market wants.

Avoiding the proverbial use of texts as pretexts does not occur easily. Expository preaching, which I will explore in chapter 11, is a useful antidote to this poison. But nothing prevents it like probing the text through prayer, and meditating in the throne room of the Great King—this will all tell in the pulpit. Without the presence of the God of the text, we will have only ourselves and our opinions to present in the place of worship. Alas, the impulse of marketing the church has, as its stock-in-trade, immediate impressions. This is the secret of its "power." This is the genius and the danger of marketing. This is the assurance that earnestness will be absent. The unreflective immediacy of electronic "communication" is precisely the environment which we must counter, not imitate.

In all that we may say about the medium of preaching, we must ever be aware of the danger of emphasizing technique or style over substance. In a homiletics class in 1990, Jay Adams warned us of this danger with a story. Marjo was the Bible Belt preacher prodigy who was ordained at age four. The techniques of Pentecostal preaching were drilled into him, and he mesmerized crowds from the beginning. Later he became disenchanted and exposed the sham, pointing to the power of group dynamics. Adams observed, "artfully manipulated words influence people." Stay close to God, or you will become a Marjo.[32] I have said all of this because we now turn our attention to several crucial elements of "technique." Properly understood they will not undermine but enhance authenticity in the pulpit.

We must not fall into the trap so aptly described by poet William Butler Yeats in his oft quoted "The Second Coming" (1919), which is not about Jesus's second coming, but about a world-devouring beast, the apotheosis of the worst features of modernity as Yeats saw them. He wrote:

> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

The preacher must cultivate his convictions in order that he might from the inside out be full of passionate intensity.

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[32] Jay Adams, "Preaching with Purpose," class notes, Westminster Seminary California, 1990.

ServantHistory

The Huguenot Craftsman: Christianity and the Arts

By Gregory Edward Reynolds

A Biblical View of Creation and Creativity

Wherever they immigrated, the Huguenots were welcomed for their industry and craftsmanship. These desirable characteristics came as the fruit of their biblical view of creation and creativity. Article 2 of the Confession of La Rochelle[1] sets forth the concept that God reveals himself in his creation as well as in the Bible.

> II. As such this God reveals himself to men; firstly, in his works, in their creation, as well as in their preservation and control. Secondly, and more clearly, in his Word, which was in the beginning revealed through oracles, and which was afterward committed to writing in the books which we call the Holy Scriptures.
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> VIII. We believe that he not only created all things, but that he governs and directs them, disposing and ordaining by his sovereign will all that happens in the world; not that he is the author of evil, or that the guilt of it can be imputed to him, as his will is the sovereign and infallible rule of all right and justice; but he hath wonderful means of so making use of devils and sinners that he can turn to good the evil which they do, and of which they are guilty. And thus, confessing that the providence of God orders all things, we humbly bow before the secrets which are hidden to us, without questioning what is above our understanding; but rather making use of what is revealed to us in Holy Scripture for our peace and safety, inasmuch as God, who has all things in subjection to him, watches over us with a Father's care, so that not a hair of our heads shall fall without his will. And yet he restrains the devils and all our enemies, so that they can not harm us without his leave.
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> IX. We believe that man was created pure and perfect in the image of God, and that by his own guilt he fell from the grace which he received, and is thus alienated from God, the fountain of justice and of all good, so that his nature is totally corrupt. And being blinded in mind, and depraved in heart, he has lost all integrity, and there is no good in him. And although he can still discern good and evil, we say, notwithstanding, that the light he has becomes darkness when he seeks for God, so that he can in nowise approach him by his intelligence and reason. And although he

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[1] *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*. The French Confession of Faith, A.D. 1559; Also known as The Confession of La Rochelle A.D. 1571.

has a will that incites him to do this or that, yet it is altogether captive to sin, so that he has no other liberty to do right than that which God gives him.

Genesis 1 teaches that man is made in God's image and given dominion over the flora, fauna, and other resources of the creation. Man, therefore, is a creative steward, called by God to develop the riches of God's world. So Adam cultivated the garden in Eden and named the animals (Gen. 2). Even after the Fall, man continued to develop his culture. For the redeemed sinner, restored to a proper relationship to his Creator through Christ, the world becomes a theater of servanthood in which he serves God and his fellow man in various vocations. Thus, for the Huguenot, the creation was not a place from which to escape, but a setting to restore and develop along biblical lines.

In 1938 Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo, in reflecting on Huguenot industriousness, remarked, "Our American culture was founded, not on the economic determination of Karl Marx, but upon the spiritual determination of a Christian faith."[2] Sizoo understood that Marx's teaching of economic determinism and materialism directly contradicted the Christian view of man and things.

To see a Huguenot workman firsthand, we need to consider a well-known French artisan of the sixteenth century, Bernard de Palissy (1510–1589). M. de Lamartine provides us with a perfect model of the Huguenot craftsman in his biography of Palissy titled *Palissy the Huguenot: A True Tale* (New York, 1864). His description of Palissy begins as follows: "He is a patriarch of the workshop, showing how to exalt and ennoble any business, however trivial, so that it has labor for its means, progress and beauty for its motive, and the glory of God for its end."[3]

Palissy lived in Saintes, a town just south of La Rochelle on the Charente River. This region of Saintonge in southwest France had been a place of refuge for the young Jean Calvin. The same preacher and martyr, Philibert Hamelin, who had encouraged Calvin to use his writing gifts for the Lord also encouraged Palissy to use his artistic gifts for the same grand purpose. [4]

It is noteworthy that Palissy faithfully pursued his calling during a period of intense religious persecution. Many of his friends endured torture for Christ.[5] Palissy himself appeared on a list of preachers in the despised Huguenot church.[6] At one point he was arrested and imprisoned for his faith.[7] Living for Christ and pursuing one's earthly calling were never at odds for the Huguenot.

Since Palissy's God was the Creator of the universe, "the Sovereign Architect,"[8] the young craftsman took his inspiration from the Bible. The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 warned him not to bury his talent but to use it for God's glory.[9] Palissy took

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[2] Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo, "The Huguenot Contribution to American Democracy," Huguenot and Historical Association of New Rochelle commemorative address (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Huguenot and Historical Association of New Rochelle, 1938), 7.
[3] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter, A True Tale* (New York: American Sunday School Union, 1864), 1.
[4] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 81.
[5] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 24.
[6] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 81.
[7] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 132.
[8] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 14.
[9] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 1.

to heart the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."[10] After reading the account of God's inspiration of the tabernacle craftsmen Bezaleel and Aholiab in Exodus 15, Palissy declared, "Then I reflected, that God had gifted me with some knowledge of drawing, and I took courage in my heart and besought him to give me wisdom and skill."[11] All he did was viewed by Palissy as a service to his Savior.[12]

Pottery was raised to a fine art in the deft hands of Palissy. His title was "Worker in Earth, and Inventor of Rustic Small Modellings."[13] Known as "Palissy ware" today, his ceramic pieces depict subtly drafted, bright-colored plants and animals, such as snakes, lobsters, turtles, and crabs found along the French shores, forests, and countryside where he loved to roam and think.[14]

In his day, Palissy was widely recognized as a consummate natural philosopher. *Discourses on Natural Objects* was the best known among his many treatises describing and organizing the flora and fauna of his native land.[15] He read and admired the great scientists of his day.[16]

Palissy labored arduously to the end of his life. "Old age," he tells us, "pressed me to multiply the talents which God had given me," and he desired to "bequeath them to posterity."[17] Today many of his works are displayed in the finest museums in the world.

In old age Palissy was imprisoned in the Bastille and sentenced to be burned for his faith. He commented that prison walls could not conceal him from the sight of God. In God's providence he died a natural death before his sentence could be executed. His final words were, "I am ready to yield up my life for the glory of God."[18]

It is interesting to note that Paul Revere, best known today for his patriotism, was better known in his day as a silversmith and engraver. His father, Apollos Revoire Romagnien, was a Huguenot immigrant and goldsmith.[19]

The much-maligned "Protestant work ethic"—often blamed for the wanton waste and destruction of natural resources and for conspicuous materialism—only becomes a curse when separated from the Protestant faith that spawned it. A capitalism bereft of a commitment to biblical stewardship and lacking a sense of God's calling, creates the problems, not Protestantism. Without the biblical idea of calling, industry and creativity tend to deteriorate to the level expressed by some modern art; in its introverted quest for self-expression, such art is appreciated by few and understood by almost no one.

Huguenot Craftsmanship in New Rochelle

The Huguenots brought the creativity of their forefathers to New Rochelle. Lucien Fosdick says of the early settlers, "Every household became a little industrial colony.

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[10] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 14.
[11] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 24.
[12] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 93.
[13] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 93.
[14] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 93.
[15] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 189.
[16] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 192.
[17] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 189.
[18] M. de Lamartine, *Palissy the Huguenot Potter*, 201.
[19] Albert Q. Maisel, "The French Among Us" in *The Reader's Digest* (Dec. 1955), 109.

Those who had never before laboured, now learned to do so, and hardships were cheerfully borne."[20] Although not wealthy, these French Protestants were cultivated in their taste and enjoyed more comforts from their industry than most of their contemporaries.[21] The famous Boston businesswoman and diarist, Sarah Kemble Knight (1666–1727), visited New Rochelle during her trip to New York City in 1704. She remarked in her journal that she was "greatly impressed with the neatness of the houses and fields, and the cleanliness and comfort of the inns."[22]

It is amazing what an impressive community these early New Rochellians developed out of practically nothing in a short period of time. John Machett, an elder in the French church, died in 1694, only six years after settling in New Rochelle. In that brief time, he had built a stone house and another wood frame dwelling. He also left a partially finished ship.[23] A perusal of Seacord's *Biographical Sketches*[24] reveals Andre Armaud, a sail maker; Jean Contaut, a chair maker; Jeremiah Chardavoire, a tailor; and Francois Coqcillet, a blacksmith. In whatever line of work he found himself, the Huguenot was an industrious craftsman.

Even today the standing architecture of New Rochelle reflects this emphasis on quality. Nowhere is a more diversified and interesting domestic architecture to be found. The Presbyterian Church of New Rochelle's Pintard Avenue edifice is a monument to Huguenot craftsmanship. The manse, known as the Lewis Pintard House, is one of the oldest buildings in the area, predating 1710. Its dignified simplicity captures the Huguenot spirit. Pintard, a patriot and publisher whose lineage can be traced to La Rochelle, came to New Rochelle in 1774 and resided in the home (formerly the Vallade Farm) until his death in 1818.[25] The church building itself, a colonial reproduction designed by the famous American architect John Russell Pope, was completed in 1928. It includes portions of its eighty-year-old predecessor as well as the original building built in 1697. Considered one of the most beautiful church buildings in the nation, it was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1979.[26]

The Huguenots harnessed the creative impulse to reflect God's glory and to serve their fellowmen by fostering the enjoyment of their Creator in this world. On the anniversary of the Huguenot settlement in New Rochelle (1988), Huguenot craftsmanship is another wonderful testimony to the fruitfulness of their religious faith.

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[20] Lucien J. Fosdick, *The French Blood in America* (New York: Rochelle Press Almanac, 1880), 409.
[21] Fosdick, *The French Blood in America*, 410–411.
[22] Henry Darlington, Jr., "The Significance of New Rochelle as a Huguenot Settlement," in *Huguenot Refugees in the Settling of Colonial America* (New York: Huguenot Society of America, 1985), 235.
[23] Westchester County, N.Y., *Book of Wills*, Liber B, 58.
[24] Morgan H. Seacord, *Biographical Sketches and Index of the Huguenot Settlers of New Rochelle* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: The Huguenot and Historical Association of New Rochelle, 1941).
[25] Seacord, *Biographical Sketches*, 44.
[26] George M. Walsh, "Church Manse Wins Landmark Status," *The Standard-Star* (Sept. 21, 1979), 4.

ServantReading

A Humble Minister's Courageous Stand against Ecclesiastical Tyranny

A Review Article

By Robert T. Holda

Standing Against Tyranny: The Life and Legacy of Arthur Perkins, by Rev. Brian L. De Jong. Independently Published, 2023, 516 pages, hardcover $26.99, paperback, $19.99.

The origin story of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as seen through a study of the life of J. Gresham Machen, is familiar to most *Ordained Servant* readers. We well know about the modernizing restructuring of Princeton Theological Seminary and Machen's subsequent establishment of Westminster Theological Seminary. We know the story of how Dr. Machen's involvement with the Independent Board of Foreign Missions led to his own suspension from his ministry in the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA), his withdrawal from that body, and his participation in the founding of that fellowship that has become the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). We have adopted these events as our own history almost as fervently as we have adopted the Westminster Standards.

What our brother, the Rev. Brian L. De Jong, provides us with in *Standing Against Tyranny* is an unfamiliar, but parallel, account of the OPC's origin, through a study of the life of Arthur F. Perkins, a founding member of that new church and the first moderator of its Presbytery of Wisconsin. Here we find the concurrence of corroborating testimony about the real issues of the day, particularly as it pertains to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s and 1930s in Presbyterian Wisconsin. Many have already heard the testimony from the Northeast. De Jong has now provided us with a confirming report from the Midwest.

The uniqueness of this work's contribution to our understanding of that era is more than geographical, however. For through the life of Arthur Perkins we have the opportunity to see the spiritual, theological, and ecclesiastical conflict of his day from the perspective of one who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with J. Gresham Machen in his vigorous fight for the faith, while being a very different sort of man, something the author rightly emphasizes:

> Indeed, two more dissimilar men you could not find. One a seminary professor, the other a small-town pastor. The one grew up in Baltimore in comfortable circumstances. The other came from a farm in Wisconsin, living on modest means. One studied at Princeton and was covenantal, the other graduated from the Moody Bible Institute and was a Dispensationalist. One was a lifelong bachelor, the other was married with five children. The one was a scholar with an international reputation, the other was largely unknown outside of Central Wisconsin. One traveled

> extensively in Europe, the other rarely left his home state. Machen and Perkins were vastly different men, yet a shared faith in Christ united them in deep friendship. The abuse they each suffered for resisting modernism drew them even closer together. (228–29)

Both men also died in unity, not only because they passed into glory three days apart from one another, but also because they ended their earthly lives as persecuted soldiers of the cross, bearing the cost of their faith, in part, in bodily weakness and affliction.

This definitive record of the life and legacy of Arthur Franklin Perkins (1887–1936) reveals him to be a humble man of modest means and education, but also one of vibrant Christian faith and of great zeal for the salvation of sinners and the growth of the Presbyterian Church in Wisconsin. Having been an unconverted Wisconsin farmer for over ten years, Perkins came to saving faith in Christ around age twenty-eight and the following year sold his two farms so that he might focus on being prepared for labor in full time Christian service. He was trained at Moody Bible Institute and was ordained as a minister of the gospel in the PCUSA in 1922 at the age of thirty-four. He did not graduate from Moody for another three years but served multiple Presbyterian churches in Wisconsin during that time. After six years of pastoral ministry, Perkins was hired as the Field Director of the Winnebago Presbytery of the PCUSA, a role that was much like that of an OPC Regional Home Missionary.

Although he was not anywhere near as well-trained or as theologically educated as the average minister in our communions today, that didn't stop the Spirit of God from making Perkins into a positive force for the gospel throughout his state. His labors in the area of home missions and church planting are impressive and inspiring. In his first four years as Field Director, Perkins's average month of ministry included "15 sermons . . . 58 pastoral calls . . . 6 baptisms . . . 3 personal spiritual interviews . . . over 5 session meetings . . . 3 congregational meetings . . . 11 new members. . . [and] an average of 644 miles" (34–35) travelled for ministry purposes. After he completed his seven years in that position, he reported, "I have received 764 members into these churches or an average of 108 each year . . . I have seen 1179 profess Christ, have baptized 441 and have traveled 171,839 miles" (p.34). Surely, in spite of his deficiencies, Arthur Perkins was mightily used by the living God in his day. I personally find Reverend Perkins's testimony to be a great encouragement to my own persistence in gospel ministry, being myself a man with feet of clay and with temptations to insecurity regularly lying close at hand. Every gospel minister needs the exhortation which a testimony like Arthur Perkins's provides in a concrete fashion—that we might abide contentedly with God's ordinary way of making his power perfect in our weaknesses (2 Cor. 12:9).

Perhaps it was, in part, this evangelistic power that God displayed through Arthur Perkins, a jar of clay, which occasioned the fire he drew from a number of his fellow presbyters. His enemies, to a man, all embraced the modernism of the day, a movement that Machen condemned as "not only . . . a different religion from Christianity but [one that] belongs in a totally different class of religions."[1]

De Jong helps us see how the conflict between Reverend Perkins and the modernists within the PCUSA was fundamentally over spiritual differences of doctrine, particularly in ecclesiology. However, the official cause of Perkins's persecution and eventual

[1] J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; repr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 6.

suspension from the ministry centered around Perkins's involvement in the distinctly orthodox ministry of Crescent Lake Bible Camp, which Perkins cofounded. Also included were the baseless allegations that Perkins had used his position as Field Director to create "a Presbytery within the Presbytery, creating a political group within the Presbytery, sowing disunion and division and suspicion toward the other camps" (179). Perkins's persecution over his involvement with the Crescent Lake Bible Camp runs very much in sync with the persecution Machen endured over his involvement with the Independent Board of Foreign Missions, which Perkins and his congregation also gladly preferred to support. Other trying episodes, such as Perkins's lonely opposition to the ordination of a man who denied the virgin birth of Christ (96–7), also lined the path of Perkins's eventual departure from the PCUSA and entrance into the new church, now the OPC.

The author presents well the drama of Perkins's prosecution at trial, exposing the manipulative tactics of those who hijacked and abused the institutional structure of the Presbyterian church for selfish ends. Especially in this portion of the book, De Jong provides us with more than just a biography of a presbyterian pastor. It is a window into the ongoing ecclesiastical conflict within the visible church of Christ on earth. Here we have a cautionary tale that all presbyters ought to heed, with lessons about the tyrannical abuse of church power and the vital importance of safeguarding liberty of conscience for all those within and without the church of Christ.

With its five appendices, which include a timeline of major events in Perkins's life, tributes made to Perkins by his friends, thorough outlines of eighteen of Perkins's sermons, all the extant correspondence between Perkins and Machen, as well as the full text of a number of relevant documents, this biography will serve as a useful repository of historical insights for those who desire to study this era in general, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, the founding of the OPC, the history of Midwest Presbyterianism, or the life of J. Gresham Machen.

Of special interest to some may be the final set of letters between Perkins and Machen, in which they discuss the degree of accommodation that might be made for those holding to premillennial dispensationalism within the new denomination that these men were zealous to establish. Considering the role of premillennial dispensationalism in the OPC's division of 1937, one wonders where Perkins would have affiliated if his life had been extended. Perhaps we should plan to consider such at the centennial of the founding of the Bible Presbyterian Church in 2037.

This year, however, we celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of J. Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*, a book that has been widely read by those inside and outside of the OPC. A good number of us have Machen's other writings on our shelves as well, in addition to various works that have been written about him and his peculiar cause since his death. No doubt, if Machen was still with us today, his own shelves would be lined with many of the theological and historical books that have been published since his passing—volumes on the Reformed faith, on Presbyterians and Presbyterianism in America, and on the errors of theological liberalism within the visible church.

But I have personally become convinced that this most recent publication by our brother, Brian De Jong, would have certainly been on Machen's shelves. And I say that, not simply because I know that the author would have gladly shipped a free copy to Dr.

Machen if he were still with us, but because Machen himself indicated the value of what is contained within this book. Maybe I'm being overly presumptuous, but I do believe *Standing Against Tyranny* is a book that J. Gresham Machen would have read and encouraged others to read.

I say that because, in the correspondence between Perkins and Machen, which De Jong has provided in full, we find the following statements from Machen, written to Perkins: "Your testimony has been a blessing to very many Christian people," (221) and "you, in particular, have given us all wonderful refreshment. . . . I believe your Christian testimony will sound forth far and near—not only among the people of Wisconsin for whom you labor immediately, but also in every other place" (247).

In this biography, Reverend De Jong has made a thoroughly researched and edifying presentation of Arthur Perkins's testimony of Christian faith under trial, such that the blessing Machen personally received by that same testimony might now indeed be multiplied. By his research and writing, De Jong has taken up the noble task of sounding forth Perkins's Christian testimony, in fulfillment of Machen's expectations. For that reason alone, all those who trust the discerning perspective of J. Gresham Machen ought to seriously consider reading this new book.

The closest I can come to a critique of this work is to acknowledge that some readers may feel the author's pattern of repeatedly quoting the same original source material slows the pacing of the narrative, while a more purely chronological method of including the quoted content might have streamlined his presentation. Others, however, will look at that same use of repetition and appreciate the author's scrupulous commitment to immediately provide his readers with supporting evidence of his interpretive claims, as well as his wise use of both simple chronology and noteworthy themes to organize his writing.

This volume was a delight to read. It fed my soul and provided me with a faithful testimony of a life worth imitating in many ways. I am most thankful for the godly legacy of Arthur F. Perkins and for the way this book has enabled that legacy to be applied to my own heart. I heartily recommend it.

This book is available in multiple formats on Amazon.com, including an audio version, read by the author, on Audible. Also available are a series of seven video lectures on The Life and Legacy of Arthur Perkins as well as the preaching of four of his sermons, all delivered by the author. Those videos can be found on *The Perkins Study Center*, available at www.graceopcsheboygan.com.

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Faith Can Flourish in Our Age of Unbelief

A Review Article

By Andy Wilson

Bulwarks of Unbelief: Atheism and Divine Absence in a Secular Age, by Joseph Minich. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023, xii + 311 pages, $32.99.

Given the extent of our society's moral decay, it is reasonable to have concerns about its future. While civilizational decline cannot prevent Christ from building his church (Matt. 16:18), it should motivate us to be like the men of Issachar, "who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32). Joseph Minich's recent book *Bulwarks of Unbelief* contains a number of insights that can help us understand our times and how to navigate them as faithful Christians.

How the Modern Technocultural Order Makes Atheism Much More Plausible Than It Has Been in Previous Eras

Minich contends that, in the modern age, the role technology plays in our engagement with the world creates an environment in which God's existence is no longer felt to be obvious, regardless of what a person believes conceptually about the question of God. This stands in sharp contrast to ancient and medieval times, when the world was understood as a mysterious agent that acted upon man. In the modern era, the world is seen as material that can be manipulated by man, or as a machine whose malfunctions always have some kind of technical solution. It is generally assumed that any problem can be fixed with a pill, procedure, product, policy, or protocol. Anything that does not fit in with this conception is perceived to be nonexistent. In short, when our engagement with the world is so thoroughly mediated by technology, we tend to view reality as consisting only of that which we can control. This makes the notion of a transcendent God both implausible and inconsequential.

Echoing sociologist Peter Berger's notion of "plausibility structures"[1] and philosopher Charles Taylor's idea of the "social imaginary,"[2] *Bulwarks of Unbelief* contends that modernity has created an atmosphere "which does not require constant conscious reference to the divine" (57). As noted above, Minich sees modern technology, in connection with the loss of traditional networks of trust and our increasing insulation from the natural world, as playing a key role in this development. While man has

[1] The term "plausibility structures" refers to the standards that a culture implicitly accepts and uses to judge all other proposed belief and action.

[2] The term "social imaginary" refers to the way most people in a given society imagine their social surroundings.

employed technology throughout history, in the modern era technology plays a unique role in our engagement with the world. As Minich explains,

> We experience the world as what is revealed and presented to us in our technologies. . . . Nature, for us, becomes an abstraction. For us, technology *is* what nature was to many generations of our ancestors. . . . It reveals to us a world full of convenience, a world in which unsavory items can be fixed by an enhanced technical apparatus, a world in which the heavier aspects of suffering and death are sanitized and rendered invisible. . . . Against this backdrop, then, what is the initial plausibility of any God (or transcendental reality) who is not suited to our convenience? (124–25, italics original)

Because our technological interface with reality extends even to our relationships, we are trained to view human beings (including ourselves) as manipulable material rather than personal agents. As a result, the world no longer seems to reveal a personal God. While 81% of Americans still say they believe in God,[3] many of them live as practical atheists, conducting their day-to-day lives without giving any thought to God. The postliberal, feminist writer Louise Perry has characterized this as a repaganizing of Western culture, noting that the distinguishing feature of pagans is that they "are oriented toward the immanent."[4]

Minich develops his thesis by drawing upon a wide array of sources. He employs Jacques Ellul's thoughts on how technique "strips us of our relationship with the natural world" (107), Martin Heidegger's concept of how the enframing function of technology "shapes the way in which reality automatically appears to us" (113), and, perhaps most surprisingly, Karl Marx's ideas pertaining to "modern labor in its relationship to our perception of reality" (115). On the last point, Minich explains that "the products that populate and mediate our experience do not have the marks of craft" but are mass produced by persons who tend to "lack *investment* and *engagement* in their making" (152, italics original). This shapes us to see reality as impersonal, because "a human's self-conscious sense of agency and self-possession is fundamentally developed in *response* to the felt active personhood of others" (156, italics original). While our technocultural order compensates us with the conveniences offered by the many tools upon which we are made to depend, this has the effect of muting "those features of the world that reinforced God via the world's own imposition" (177). Consider the similar observations of political philosopher Glenn Ellmers, who notes that we have lost

> the conception of nature: the conviction that there is a fixed and intelligible order in the cosmos, outside our will, that supplies a permanent ground of morality and justice. In the absence of nature, *history* and *science* became the authoritative substitutes. History would supply man's purpose by situating him within the course of historical progress. But this historicism teaches that we are not only situated but in fact *isolated* in our particular historic moment. Science,

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[3] "How Many Americans Believe in God?," Lydia Saad and Zach Hrynowski, *Gallup*, June 24, 2022, https://news.gallup.com/poll/268205/americans-believe-god.aspx.
[4] Louise Perry, "We Are Repaganizing," *First Things* (Oct. 2023): 35.

> meanwhile, through its technical methodology, was intended to confirm man's mastery over the raw materials of nature, including human nature. Only that which can be counted and measured is real, and the only real knowledge is the quantifiable. . . . Neither Science nor History, needless to say, has delivered on the promised results. As political scientist John Marini explains: "By recreating man as a historical being, his meaning is established in becoming. . . . That required a rejection of being and truth, or the eternal, as providing the necessary conditions, and limitations, on human understanding derived from philosophy and religion, and undermined the authority of nature, reason, and God. . . . [History] could not establish the meaning of man in terms of the end of History or its rationality. History is irrational and never ending."[5]

To sum up, the rendering of reality as impersonal "stuff" at the mercy of the human will leaves man without a sense of ultimate purpose.

How Orthodox Protestantism Is Well-Suited for an Age Marked by the Felt Absence of God

Minich shows how orthodox Protestantism is especially suited to thrive in this historical moment. While he does not define what he means by "orthodox Protestantism," the term is typically used to refer to the consensus found in the major Protestant confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the heart of this consensus is the notion that Christian faith is shaped not by what can be seen but by what God says in his Word. Martin Luther explained this in his *Heidelberg Disputation* by distinguishing between the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross. Fallen man is by nature a theologian of glory, relying on his reason to understand God. The only way to become a theologian of the cross is by submitting to what God says in his Word. Through this Word we learn that, in the economy of salvation, outward appearances often look contrary to true spiritual realities. It was the Protestant Reformation's embrace of the theology of the cross that led to the recovery of the definition of the justified Christian as one who is simultaneously righteous and sinful.

The aspect of Luther's thought that Minich explicitly employs in setting forth an orthodox Protestant response to modernity's sense of divine absence is the theory of the two kingdoms. This is refracted through the famous statement from Luther's treatise *The Freedom of a Christian*, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (191). Thus, in Luther's "spiritual kingdom" the believer is bound only to God, and in Luther's "earthly kingdom" people are bound to the duties they owe to their neighbors. Because Christians dwell in both dimensions simultaneously, our involvement in the historical process connects the two realms and points to the ultimate meaning of history.

Christians must be strategic if we are going to preserve orthodoxy in the spiritual dimension while living in an earthly context that fosters unbelief. The first step in Minich's proposed strategy is to engage frequently in four acts of remembrance that can

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[5] Glenn Ellmers, *The Narrow Passage: Plato, Foucault, and the Possibility of Political Philosophy* (New York: Encounter, 2023), 48–9. Italics original.

help attune us to reality. First, we need to remember that God is not one being alongside other beings but is the transcendent source and ground of all creation and all the beings that inhabit it. Second, we need to remember that God originally made human beings with freedom "to participate and to be engaged in the unfolding of the historical process via their access to and ability to change the world of which they are stewards" (197). Third, we need to remember that, because man has misused the freedom that he was given at creation, human history is a project that, on its own, has no ultimate purpose. And fourth, we need to remember that God's activity in creation, providence, and the preservation of our rebellious race "provide the grounds for the hope that divine activity can both resolve the problem of our exile and bring the human project to completion" (206).

The second step in Minich's proposed strategy focuses on embodied practices that are vital for realigning "our distorted tacit sensibilities" with "our persuaded convictions concerning the nature of reality" (207). At the individual level, such practices include the following: engaging in activity that involves direct, embodied participation in the world; faithfully practicing the classical Christian disciplines of prayer, Scripture meditation, and worship in the church; living not merely for our own enjoyment but also for the benefit of others; and extending generous hospitality. One practice that I would add to Minich's list is recognizing propaganda and the human impulse toward social conformity.[6] This is necessary because our society's lack of a shared sense of transcendent purpose makes people especially susceptible to an activist, regime-aligned press and a government that eagerly engages in censorship. This added practice is all the more important in light of the fact that our primary media of communication are image-based, making it easy to shape people's thoughts and attitudes through the sensory manipulation of emotion.

At the corporate level, one key "earthly kingdom" practice for Christians is to push back against our regime of social manipulation and its disdain for individual freedom and agency. Philosopher Matthew Crawford offers an astute description of this regime when he writes that "under the pretense of their own rationality and benevolence, some men seek to manipulate other men as beings incapable of reason."[7] Retired entrepreneur and present-day book-reviewer Charles Haywood adds that, in the American managerial regime, "putatively private entities are the main actors, using narrative control and manipulation to control the population."[8] According to Minich, mounting a challenge to this established order will require the cultivation of "a positive vision of finitude and of the limits of men with respect to other men" (222). In my opinion, chief among the things that such a vision should stress are the following: (1) our technocratic, managerial regime's invocation of scientific objectivity as the preeminent factor in governance is specious, because moral and political judgments are always guided by scientifically unprovable presuppositions; and (2) ordinary people have the right and responsibility to

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[6] The power of propaganda is famously illustrated in George Orwell's novels *Animal Farm* and *1984*. The impulse toward social conformity is a key theme in Terrence Malick's historically-based film "A Hidden Life," in which an Austrian farmer's refusal to pledge loyalty to Hitler earns him and his family the disdain of almost everyone in his village.

[7] Matthew B. Crawford, "The Rise of Antihumanism," *First Things*, no. 335 (Aug/Sept 2023): 50.

[8] Charles Haywood, "Lyons on the Managerial Regime," *The American Conservative* (Sept. 11, 2023) https://www.theamericanconservative.com/haywood-lyons-managerial-regime/.

evaluate expert claims and proposals on the basis of standards of truth and goodness that are intelligible to all people in the light of nature, which serves as the standard of authority for political society. In short, political power is neither absolute nor omnicompetent, and its exercise does not override individual agency. G. K. Chesterton addressed this just over one hundred years ago amid the controversy over eugenics, saying, "There cannot be such a thing as the health advisor of the community, because there cannot be such a thing as one who specializes in the universe."[9] Elsewhere he quipped, "If the ordinary man may not discuss existence, why should he be asked to conduct it?"[10] C.S. Lewis made a similar point in *The Abolition of Man* and *That Hideous Strength*, in which he showed that when a society embraces the illusion of man's mastery over reality, some men end up claiming mastery over other men. In Minich's opinion, any success in pushing back against our manipulative regime and its agenda of dependency will make modern atheism "less and less plausible—because our attunement to reality (and the character of reality itself) will be perceived to have an irreducibly agentic and meaningful character" (224).

While modernity has created conditions that are conducive to unbelief, we should note how this presents orthodox Protestants with an opportunity to mature in faith. Instead of nostalgically longing for days gone by, we should remember that God is the one who has brought us to this historical moment and that he is working through it to further his plan. In Minich's words,

> Rather than seeing the present situation as a bad thing to be overcome by an approximation of the past, . . . it is worth seeing the present as an opportunity to shape a future that could not have been attained without going through this stage of human development in relation to our own religious faith. (179)

Minich adds that a similar point was made by Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he wrote these words while imprisoned by the Nazis:

> The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God. God lets himself be pushed out of the world on the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which He is with us and helps us (236).

In other words, the theology of the cross is perfectly suited for our historical moment. In an age of unbelief, hope is not to be found in *seeing* God as present, but in *hearing* the Word by which he reveals himself to us. And this does not consign our faith to the private realm, because the Word upon which our faith rests is the same Word that "initiates and drives the history in which human beings are subsequently caught up. . . . The history to which human beings belong, then, is one that groans for the revelation/word that both is its origin and summons it to its end" (240).

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[9] G. K. Chesterton, "Eugenics and Other Evils," in *Collected Works*, vol. IV (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987), 332.

[10] Cited in Michael D. Aeschliman, *The Restoration of Man: C.S. Lewis and the Continuing Case Against Scientism* (Seattle: Discovery Institute, 2019), 29.

Conclusion

The decline of our civilization is put into perspective when we remember that it has historical antecedents. In the fifth century, Augustine saw the fall of Rome as an opportunity to stress that, because the church is the earthly expression of God's eternal kingdom, it exists beyond the rise and fall of empires. Today's believers can do something similar as we reckon with the way our technocultural order leaves modern people without a sense of God or ultimate purpose. Because Christ has set us free from such bondage to vanity, we are well-positioned to hold forth a hopeful vision in this age of unbelief. We know that history is the unfolding of God's plan to establish his eternal kingdom. This enables us to participate in the human historical project while resting "contented within human limits in the expectation that the final hope of history is not dependent upon humanity's hubristic seizure of it (which, in any case, inevitably destroys rather than redeems)" (219). Instead of being seduced by the idea that man can gain control over every aspect of life, Christians should carry out the duties we owe to God and to our fellow men while accepting the reality of human finitude, always remembering that the final hope of history does not rest upon man, but upon God.

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Francis Thompson (1859–1907)

New Year’s Chimes

What is the song the stars sing?
(And a million songs are as song of one)
This is the song the stars sing:
(Sweeter song's none)

One to set, and many to sing,
(And a million songs are as song of one)
One to stand, and many to cling,
The many things, and the one Thing,
The one that runs not, the many that run.

The ever new weaveth the ever old,
(And a million songs are as song of one)
Ever telling the never told;
The silver saith, and the said is gold,
And done ever the never done.

The chase that's chased is the Lord o’ the chase,
(And a million songs are as song of one)
And the pursued cries on the race;
And the hounds in leash are the hounds that run.

Hidden stars by the shown stars’ sheen:
(And a million suns are but as one)
Colours unseen by the colours seen,
And sounds unheard heard sounds between,
And a night is in the light of the sun.

An ambuscade of lights in night,
(And a million secrets are but as one)
And anight is dark in the sun’s light,
And a world in the world man looks upon.

Hidden stars by the shown stars' wings,
(And a million cycles are but as one)
And a world with unapparent strings
Knits the stimulant world of things;
Behold, and vision thereof is none.

The world above in the world below,
(And a million worlds are but as one)
And the One in all; as the sun's strength so
Strives in all strength, glows in all glow
Of the earth that wits not, and man thereon.

Braced in its own fourfold embrace
(And a million strengths are as strength of one)
And round it all God's arms of grace,
The world, so as the Vision says,
Doth with great lightning-tramples run.

And thunder bruiteth into thunder,
(And a million sounds are as sound of one)
From stellate peak to peak is tossed a voice of wonder,
And the height stoops down to the depths thereunder,
And sun leans forth to his brother-sun.

And the more ample years unfold
(With a million songs as song of one)
A little new of the ever old,
A little told of the never told,
Added act of the never done.

Loud the descant, and low the theme,
(A million songs are as song of one)
And the dream of the world is dream in dream,
But the one Is is, or nought could seem;
And the song runs round to the song begun.

This is the song the stars sing,
(Tonèd all in time)
Tintinnabulous, tuned to ring
A multitudinous-single thing
(Rung all in rhyme).