He Is Risen

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From the Editor

Because *New Horizons* regularly recognizes Easter and Christmas in its pages, I have rarely felt the need to do so. But I do think that pastors are wise to take advantage of these secular/sacred holidays by preaching on the incarnation and resurrection. "Seven Deadly Denials: A Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:12–19" is a sermon I have preached several times at Easter over the years. The modern take on the first century is that it was loaded with superstition. But despite our scientific savvy, our hubris has blinded us as a culture to the fact that modernity is filled with superstition as much as in any era. But the concept of resurrection from the dead was as unthinkable in the first century of Jesus's day as it is among unbelievers today. Paul encountered this reaction on Mars Hill: "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, 'We will hear you again about this'" (Acts 17:32). The same unbelief was encountered by Jesus at the home of Jairus: "And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, 'Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead" (Luke 8:52–53).

With plagiarism in the news, Andy Selle offers a timely consideration in "Reflections on Plagiarism in Preaching." He focuses on the difference between written and oral presentations as he focuses on preaching.

I present the twelfth chapter of *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, with a focus on sermonic application in "Apply the Word." I discuss the value of ancient rhetoric, the question of relevance, and iconoclasm.

Andrew Miller reviews *Reading the Psalms Theologically (Studies in Scripture and Biblical Theology)* in his review article "Reading the Psalms Theologically." This thoughtful new book discusses nuances of the canonical structure of the Psalter.

The old cliché about good things in small packages is certainly true of David VanDrunen's new book *Natural Law: A Short Companion*. It is reviewed by Bruce Baugus. VanDrunen's academic research and writing over the last several decades has produced an impressive corpus. This short companion brilliantly condenses the oft misunderstood topic of natural law for the busy pastor and the intelligent Christian. My upcoming interview with VanDrunen will be presented in a podcast later this month for the "Ruling Elder Podcast."

I offer a poem about the resurrection, "Risen." It is written in five quintets in free verse with no end rhymes or standard metre, thus relying on rhythm and internal rhyme.

The cover is a sunrise viewed from Camp Shiloh in Jefferson, New Hampshire, which overlooks the Presidential Range in the White Mountains.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

CONTENTS

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

Seven Deadly Denials: A Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

By Gregory Edward Reynolds

"The Body of Jesus has been discovered in Jerusalem." That is what a 2007 so-called documentary claimed. This claim was over twenty-five hundred years old. The original story appears in Matthew 28:11–15, "Satan's Great Commission," when the soldiers were commissioned to perpetrate the lie that the disciples had stolen the body. But unbelievers properly understand that the historic resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is foundational to genuine Christian faith. This is the great fact standing at the center of redemptive history. Paul uses the logic of negative consequences to establish that centrality. For example, if you do not do well in school, you cannot read, write, get a job, or live well. God's Word confronts us with the awful logic of denying the historical reality of the resurrection. These deadly denials reveal seven life-saving affirmations.

1. If You Deny the Resurrection, then Christ Is Not Risen [vv. 12–13]

If there is no such thing as resurrection, then the primary consequence of such a denial is that there is no resurrection of Christ and thus no gospel—no good news for the nations. The concept of resurrection was foreign to the Hellenistic mind, as it is now for the modern mind, it is not among ideas that are plausible in our cultural mindset. Science and human experience have no room for such concepts—dead men do not rise. It was not essentially different in Paul's day— "because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . ." (Rom. 1:25). The entire gospel is based on the reality of resurrection, especially Christ's resurrection; without it everything crumbles, there is no Christianity. Christianity is not a philosophy or a lifestyle, but rather the story of redemption by the true and living God in history—our history. An empty tomb proves nothing, as Satan's great commission proves; Christ's resurrection does!

Furthermore, denial of Christ's resurrection is a denial of his lordship. To say, "He Is Risen" means "Jesus Is Lord." Anything else is "another gospel." This is the essence of biblical religion: God saves sinners through Jesus Christ in history. Christ's death and resurrection are the only way. Trusting his lordship and believing in the sin atoning value of his death and final victory of the historical resurrection save us miserable sinners from sin and death.

2. If You Deny the Resurrection, Then Preaching Is Meaningless [v.14a]

The words of gospel preachers are empty unless there is an empty tomb and a risen Christ. The apostolic message *is* the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But if there was no historical resurrection, then the message is mere "campaign rhetoric." Much modern preaching since the Enlightenment is "religious double talk"— Resurrection is merely a primitive superstition but represents a therapeutic help.

Biblical preaching throughout the entire Bible is based on God acting in history, intruding into his world. Noah and the flood, Moses and the exodus, the prophets and the exile, in all of these epochs historic hope was proffered—Public proclamation of what God has done and will do in history. True preaching is not a subjective psychological tool of survival. Based on God's Word, it is never meaningless.

3. If You Deny the Resurrection, Then Faith Is Meaningless [v.14b]

Empty or vain preaching makes meaningless, empty, futile faith; there is nothing worse than empty promises—like bad checks, broken contracts, broken marriage vows. This is tantamount to believing in nothing. Such faith as a mere psychological benefit is just that—empty! The slogan "hope and change" based on mere wishes is a disaster.

This is biblical faith as Hebrews 11:1 teaches us: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). True biblical faith is not a subjective feeling or mood, but trust in God's acts and promises both present and future. It is only as good as its object. True faith believes that God laid our sins on his sinless Son and raised him from the dead to be our everlasting head.

The world believes only what it can see and control. Christian faith trusts in the God we cannot see, but through the agency of his Word and Spirit. Jesus said to Thomas, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible" (Heb. 11:3). So Paul, "we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

4. If You Deny the Resurrection, Then the Apostles Are Liars [v.15]

The text says that if there was no historical resurrection of Christ, then the apostles are frauds, literally "pseudo-martyrs," false witnesses. Apostles are public witnesses of a fact. If what they claim happened did not occur, then it is not fact but a falsehood, a lie, and they are "false witnesses," like Elmer Gantry. The word "found" implies an evidentiary or judicial standard. The word for preaching describes the apostles as heralds, not orators. The herald was tasked with publicly announcing the message of the king, nothing more, nothing less. Paul is affirming that Jesus is the king whose infallible message he is proclaiming. The world wants to reinforce the official talking point of the temple officials, that the disciples stole the body while the guards were asleep (Matt. 28:13).

The lie of the elders and guards undermines the apostle's true calling as ambassadors of good news. Objective reality is being declared in the gospel. The integrity of the apostolic

message was always an issue in the ancient world, as it is in ours. Paul reminds the Thessalonians of this: "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Th. 2:13). It is either true or it is not. If it is merely an "encouraging myth," then it is bad news. The apostles were called to be truthful witnesses of Jesus's resurrection, they "must become with us a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:22); "this Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32).

5. If You Deny the Resurrection, Then We Are Still Dead in Our Sins [vv. 16–17]

The entire purpose of the incarnation of the Messiah was to free God's elect from the guilt of their sins and consequent eternal death. Without the resurrection of Christ there can be no atonement for sin, undermining God's plan to satisfy the demands of his justice. The phrase, "you are still in your sins," means that we would still remain united to the first Adam, "dead in sin," and sentenced to everlasting condemnation.

Faith is "futile" (μάταιος, *mataios*, is a different word from "empty" or "vain" in v. 14, which is κενός, *kenos*); it is worthless, that is, it cannot take hold of the worth of Christ's sacrifice. It achieves nothing; we remain guilty before God. But faith rooted in the historic resurrection "will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:24–25). "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption" (Ps. 16:10). The historic resurrection of Christ is absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of God's justice.

But now we are no longer dead in sin, we are new creatures in Christ— no longer "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:1–3), but now made alive in Christ as a "new creation," part of a new humanity (2 Cor. 5:17).

6. If You Deny the Resurrection, Then Dead Christians Are Destroyed [v. 18]

Destruction here is everlasting. Death is the end and leads to hell and outer darkness; Those who died in Christ simply perish without hope. This is contrary to God's promise that death is the doorway into the paradise of God's presence. Paul is assured of the glorious life to come: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Phil. 1:21–23). "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11).

7. If You Deny the Resurrection, Then Hope Is Limited to This Life [v. 19]

Without Christ's resurrection, the church is hopeless and to be pitied; it is just like the world, "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). We are pitiable fools, not because we could be having fun instead of denying ourselves; but because we have believed a mirage—all we have of blessings are the imperfect and temporary ones of this

life. So says the apostle, “What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (1 Cor. 15:32). In Ecclesiastes the Preacher uses this idea positively, “that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man” (Eccl. 3:13, cf. 2:24, 26; 5:18, 20; 8:15; 9:7). He commends our enjoyment of God’s temporary blessings in a fallen world as a kind of foretaste of the consummate blessings the believer anticipates. But Paul is lamenting the idea of these blessings being all there is.

The logic of unbelief makes the fallen human mind, especially its fallen imagination, the final judge of truth (1 Cor. 15:12). Unbelief says resurrection is impossible, unthinkable; this is the plausibility structure of unbelief. Technology makes this more credible as it focuses us on the surface of temporary realities. Control is the issue. Given enough research and development we can overcome all the maladies of living in a fallen world. But who is the master of your future if you are doomed? “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (Rom. 1:18). The lie that this is all there is and that the empty tomb can be explained in human terms is the intellectual milieu in which we live.

The logic of faith is the only hope of Paul’s bold apostolic assertion (v.20), “but in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,” and we long for this future, “we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). The eschatological goal of God is at stake because we seek “the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. . . . For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come” (Heb. 11:10; 13:14).

Conclusion

Notice that Paul is addressing the church not the unbelieving world; to the Corinthian church he asks, “How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12). Remember people of God what faith is: “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Your temptation is to believe that the only reality is the city in which you live. The atmosphere of thought surrounding us seeks to impinge on our beliefs and practices; the ubiquity of electronic means exacerbates the temptation.

All seven deadly denials are the opposite of seven faith affirmations. Listen! Because Christ is risen the preaching of God’s Word is true and can be trusted and depended upon; faith is well placed on the proper object, Jesus the risen Christ and the triune God; the apostles and their gospel message are trustworthy; your sins are covered by the pure righteousness of your Savior; and finally, dead Christians will be raised from the dead someday, and so will you.

Is this your hope? Romans 10:9 says, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” I plead with you to make it so. Christian, live like a new creature in Christ: “everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

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ServantWord

Reflections on Plagiarism in Preaching

By Andrew H. Selle

This article presents a few thoughts on a topic that has received much airtime in the past decade—plagiarism in preaching. I am quick to add that if you searched the Internet hard enough and long enough, you might discover that someone else said or wrote something nearly identical to this article. Perhaps I am plagiarizing while writing on the topic of plagiarism!

That is part of the quandary that preachers live in today. The overwhelming power of Internet technology never ceases to astonish me. We must use that resource well, for God's glory, to serve his purpose "in his own generation" (Acts 13:36) with opportunities afforded to us that were inconceivable to our forebears. There are legitimate ways to do so. With respect to biblical understanding, all God's people—certainly the most mature among them—make it their mission to learn from others who know more than they do about Scripture and how to apply it. God teaches the whole church, not merely individuals, over the entire course of human history. That is a good thing. It means I do not have to start from scratch to hammer out the doctrine of the Trinity. And a preacher does not start from scratch when he is preparing a message on any text from the Bible. The best writers on the topic of plagiarism agree.

The nuances in the discussion, however, surround the issue of the *attribution of sources* within a sermon. Note carefully that our focus is upon spoken sermons, not written and published ones. The rules are different for a variety of reasons that I will not get into here. Our concerns about plagiarism surround the application of the Ninth Commandment: we must be truthful, never deceitful. The most egregious cases of plagiarism demonstrate an obvious violation of trust, compromising of integrity, failure to speak truthfully, perpetration of a lie. There is also an obvious violation of the Eighth Commandment: plagiarists steal something from another. Plagiarism is sin.

Yet most cases of supposed plagiarism are far less obvious. To illustrate, let us consider a sermon I preached recently from Genesis 14: "Faith for Battle, Faith to Worship." I first preached from this text in the 1980s, early in my pastoral ministry. Back then I used my fresh seminary training to carefully exegete the Hebrew text (the *real* text in a *book,* not a bunch of ones and zeros on a screen! Harumph.). I also read a couple sermons that were available, such as those by James Boice. Or maybe that was ten years later when I prepared version two or three of the message. What books did I read, what preachers did I hear, and when? I do not remember. That is the problem. I have decent retention for quotes but a poor one for sources. Not to mention that aging is not kind to long-term memory. After four decades, I truly do not know what I borrowed or from whom.

But does it matter? Seriously? Everything I declared from the pulpit came from my own mind and heart with the conviction of its truth. The sermon was my own, as the Holy Spirit has taught me through the Word. And I freely and joyfully admit that the Spirit used the gifts of many other students and preachers to teach me over the years, such that now I can teach

others also. Does that sound faintly like, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2)?

The implication of Paul's instruction to Timothy is clear: Whatever God teaches individual believers from his Word is never meant only for their personal edification; it is for the whole church. That fact is particularly true for pastor-teachers who are called by God "to equip the saints for the work of ministry . . ." (Eph. 4:12). By all means, let us always speak truth, never lie, and never steal. Yet I wonder if some concerns about "plagiarism" in preaching arise from the modern idea of "intellectual property" and the demand for individual rights. We will not deny that the Eighth Commandment applies to published works. But ought we apply the same standard to the living words spoken from our pulpits, by men taught by the Holy Spirit? We must not allow a preoccupation with twenty-first century academic protocol to bind our consciences, hinder corporate learning, and undermine effective preaching.

Some charges of plagiarism might be facile and shallow at best, slanderous at worst. Yet another concern looms even larger. We must ponder the very nature of preaching itself. To plumb this, let us change the perspective from the preacher to the worshiper. On the Lord's Day, I sit with the congregation, while the preacher mounts the pulpit. He reads the inspired Scriptures, prays, and then opens his mouth to speak. He informs my mind from that particular text, explaining its meaning within the context of the whole Bible. He urges me to believe it *in* my heart and obey it *from* my heart—and to repent where I have failed to do so. There I hear the very "oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:10–11; cf. 2 Cor. 2:17; 6:3–7), the Living God's authoritative voice binding my conscience to serve my Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart, even if I must die as a result. Nothing less qualifies as good preaching.

If we hold to this biblical view of preaching, what are the implications for plagiarism? How can we avoid it? Let's begin here: I emphatically do *not* want to hear a bunch of footnotes from the pulpit about this author or that author, with chapter and page number! I did not come to church to hear a lecture, carefully annotated to satisfy the strict scruples of academics and publishing house editors. Yet we acknowledge that we must avoid real plagiarism, after carefully defining it, in ways that maintain the Christ-centered nature of preaching. You readers may have practical suggestions about how to accomplish this. Here is one of my own (Really. I did not get this idea from anyone else. Cross my heart and hope to die. And my fingers are not crossed behind my back—which according to 1950s folklore allows children to lie with impunity.) Place a written note in every Sunday bulletin, giving proper attribution where necessary, along with this note: "The speaker has learned from many other writers and preachers and is thankful to God for them. If any important acknowledgments have been missed, please let him know, and he will gladly correct the oversight."

We have been hard on any practice that requires us to read reams of distracting acknowledgments from the pulpit. But we can lighten up a bit here. You do not lose your humanness in the pulpit. You can still thank God for particular writers you have learned from. You can even urge people to read this or that particular book, including the chapter and page number information for them. Just go easy on those things. Get back to your main task—proclaim the oracles of God to the people of God for the glory of God. As you do, you will behold the Spirit of God building up Christ's church in love, in holiness, and in number.

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ServantWord

The Voice of the Good Shepherd: Apply the Word, Chapter 12

By Gregory Edward Reynolds

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.
Persist in this, for by so doing
you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim. 4:16)

—The Apostle Paul

He who is eloquent should speak in such a way
That he teaches, delights and moves. Then he added,
"To teach is a necessity, to please is a sweetness, to persuade is a victory."[1]

—Augustine

He is not the best preacher who tickles the ear, or who works upon the fancy;
but who breaks the heart, and awakens the conscience![2]

—Thomas Brooks

What Use Is Classical Rhetoric?[3]

It is surely one of the great weaknesses of the modern world to discount the benefit of old books. C. S. Lewis warns us against this pernicious tendency:

> It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. . . . We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. . . . None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. . . . The only

[1] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (427 AD; repr., Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 136 [Cicero *Orat.* 21. 69].
[2] Thomas Brooks, "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ," in *The Select Works*, ed. C. Bradley, vol. 1 (London: L. B. Seeley and Son, 1824), 274.
[3] I owe much of the material in this section to Robert Godfrey's course "Rhetoric," delivered at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1978, and his course "The History of Rhetoric," delivered at Westminster Theological Seminary in California in 1990.

> palliative is to keep the clean breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books.[4]

The use of ancient rhetoric by the best homileticians, past and present, is a recognition of the blessings of common culture, in which the world has gained wisdom about the art of effective oral communication. Not to glean from this wisdom is as foolish as rejecting the rules of grammar because they were formulated by unbelievers. A quick survey of the parts of ancient rhetoric will quickly convince the experienced preacher that the ancients can teach us a great deal about good public discourse. As a teacher of rhetoric in first century Rome, Quintilian summed up his description of the orator he wished to produce in his training by quoting the famous orator Marcus Cato: an orator is "a good man, skilled in speaking."[5]

Here are the five essential parts of classical rhetoric.[6] *Inventio* (discovery) is the business of gathering the raw material for a public discourse, along with determining the particular purpose of the oration (deliberative, forensic, etc.). For the preacher this means studying Scripture, especially in the original languages, meditating on the meaning of the text, scouring his library for commentary and all other helps in understanding the pericope. It also involves prayer and meditation in the act of gathering. It involves determining the *telos* or purpose of the text as inspired by the Spirit of God.

Dispositio (arrangement) is the act of placing the material in its proper order for public presentation. It was considered barbaric for this structure to be obvious. For the preacher this means building an outline, or structure, natural to oral delivery, which proclaims the meaning and the God-given purpose (telos) of the chosen text (pericope) as God's Word to his people.

Elocutio (style) pays attention to the particular forms of expression, vocabulary, phrases, figures of speech, narrative, forms of argument. Here the preacher focuses on the specific tools of good oral presentation of his message.

Memoria (memory) is internalizing the material so that it may be presented in public from memory, not necessarily *verbatim*, with minimal attention to notes if he uses them. For the preacher this means mastering the sermon so as not to be tied to his notes in order to maintain eye contact with his audience.

Pronunciatio (delivery) is the actual delivery of the speech. For the preacher this is the preaching moment. Emphasis, cadence, elocution, proper pronunciation, tone of voice are all important skills to learn.

These parts of ancient rhetoric come into their own when considered from the perspective(s) of the medieval media of education, namely the *Trivium* (grammar,

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[4] Athanasius, *The Incarnation of the Word of God* with an introduction by C. S. Lewis (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 6–7.

[5] Quintilian, *The Institutes of Rhetoric* (*Institutio Oratoria*) (Loeb Classical Library, vols. 124–27), trans. H. E. Butler (London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921–22), 12.1.1.

[6] The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is the oldest surviving Latin book on rhetoric, dating from the late 80s BC. Loeb Classical Library, vol. 403, Latin text with English translation by Harry Caplan, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1954. It lays out six steps in an argument: *exordium*, relevant generalities, anecdotes, quotes, or analogies to capture attention and connect to the specific topic; *narratio*, succinctly states the point to be proven; *divisio*, outlines the main points; *confirmatio*, sets out the arguments with evidence; *refutatio*, refutes the opposing arguments; *conclusio*, summary of the argument, with call to action.

rhetoric, and dialectic) and *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). The lost tools of learning, delineated by the Trivium, should be prized by the preacher, but held in strictest balance and in the order given: the knowledge of language, public persuasion, and logic. For example, logic alone leads to pure speculation. That is why the study of language, as it is found in texts, comes first. Rhetoric is not simply public speaking but speaking in the context of citizenship. The wise orator was a leading citizen, persuading for the common good. It is not that logic comes after learning how to persuade—that would be impossible—but that logic is subordinated to the tradition and truth imbedded in texts, and in the memory of the community, and to the interests of the commonwealth as they are publicly declared and inculcated.

However, good oratory is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of good preaching. As Charlie Dennison put it:

> Still good preaching is not oratory. It cannot be equated with mastery of Public Speaking 101. It does not hail, for instance, from the principles of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, but from the revelations received by the Hebrew prophets.[7]

In 1 Corinthians 1 and 2, Paul is eloquent in his warnings about the danger of elevating rhetorical skills and techniques above the humbling message of the crucified Christ. Today, the danger probably lies more in elevating electronic communication to a place equal or superior to preaching itself. A healthy dose of good classical rhetoric will provide good tools for the preacher. Although preaching is much more than good rhetorical skills and practice, it must be nothing less. Hughes Oliphant Old demonstrates that the writers of Scripture, who were first preachers, used "rhetoric with great mastery and power."[8] Augustine quoted freely from Cicero and Virgil.[9]

Aristotle

The use of pagan authorities in rhetoric must be approached critically, but much has and can be learned from them. I will briefly look at the contributions of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian as they play into the development of homiletics. It should be remembered that along with Augustine, these three ancient giants among the many teachers of rhetoric were principally concerned with rhetorical practice in the areas outlined by Aristotle in his principle text on oratory, *Rhetorica* (350 BC): judicial advocacy (forensic), political persuasion (deliberative), and ceremonial oratory (epideictic).[10] What we may learn from them must not overshadow the important differences between their rhetoric and New Testament preaching. Chief among these differences is the distinction underlying Paul's opposition in Corinth between persuasion and proclamation (cf. chapter 6).

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[7] Charles G. Dennison, "Some Thoughts on Preaching," *Kerux* 11:3 (December 1996), 4.
[8] Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume 1 - The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 49, 50, 65.
[9] Dave McClellan and Karen McClellan, *Preaching by Ear: Speaking God's Truth from the Inside Out* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014), 20–22.
[10] "Rhetorica," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1319.

Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian each emphasized the importance of the integrity of the speaker in order to warn us against skilled charlatans. In his *Rhetoric* (335 BC) Aristotle insisted:

> We believe good men more fully and more readily than others. . . . It is not true, as some writers assume on their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary his character must almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.[11]

This is clearly a biblical emphasis, which has been explored in chapter 10. Paul on many occasions had to assert his integrity to undergird the authenticity of his message:

> 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. (1 Thess. 2:3–5)

Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric was the first to endure and have a powerful influence in modern times. Through Cicero, Augustine, and Quintilian, Aristotle's rhetorical work has influenced homiletics. His accessible, comprehensive organization of the art of rhetoric (sixty chapters in three books) is largely responsible for his influence on homiletics.

Cicero

Cicero, too, has had his influence on homiletics through his impact on Augustine's life and writings. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) lived through the last period of the Roman Republic, prior to Imperial rule; he was a prominent figure in the events of this era. He was an orator, lawyer, statesman, and philosopher. He wrote *On the Orator* (*de Oratore*) in 55 BC to demonstrate the importance of true eloquence in the life and work of a statesman. This is a dialogue written in three books. The first deals with the studies necessary for the orator. The second expounds on the subject matter of orations. The third treats the form and delivery of a speech. He also wrote a history of Roman eloquence (*Brutus*, or *de Claris Oratoribus*). Finally, he wrote *Orator,* in which he portrayed the ideal orator. "These three treatises are intended to form a continuous series containing a complete system of rhetorical training."[12] It is important to note that Cicero, in common with all ancient orators, possessed an ear for the metrical or rhythmic character of speech.[13] This sensibility appears even with classically trained contemporary orators like Winston Churchill, who wrote his speeches in poetic lines.

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[11] *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. McKeon, 1329; McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 23.
[12] "Cicero," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, vol. 4 (New York: The Encyclopaedia Britannica Co., 1910), 355.
[13] "Cicero," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 355.

Quintilian

Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilianus 35–96 AD), building as he did on those who went before him, has influenced homiletics more than any other of the ancient rhetoricians. His influential magnum opus, *Institutio Oratoria*,[14] was published near the end of his life (ca. 90–95 AD). In 68 AD he was called from his birthplace in Spain to Rome by the Emperor Galba to establish a school of rhetoric in Rome.[15] "The oral world of Cicero and Quintilian is the oral world of the New Testament."[16]

Dave McClellan makes extensive use of Quintilian to establish the vital connection between the heart and the mouth, in order to encourage preachers to consider the oral nature of preaching.[17] This where the virtue of the speaker (*virs bono*) is inextricably connected with his message as mentioned above. Included in this virtue is the insight of the speaker into the nature of man and his motivations.[18] For the preacher this means he must "have an identity before God and the people that is deeper than the preaching role. We must be lovers of God first."[19]

As we shall see in chapter 16, and as Dave McClellan points out based on the work of Chris Holcumb, one of the neglected aspects of Quintilian's rhetoric is the role of extemporary delivery.[20] However, Quintilian is a rich source of ancient rhetoric, a treasure to be explored by the preacher, and especially helpful, along with Cicero and one of the greatest preachers in the ancient church—Augustine—because this is the rhetoric of an oral culture, something those with intense literary training need to appreciate and practice.

Augustine

Augustine, trained in the ideal of Ciceronian rhetoric, expounded his understanding of preaching, based on the Ciceronian model of persuasion, in *De Doctrina Christiana*. The citizen of heaven, who is a herald of the King, must marshal the disciplines of ancient rhetoric in his service. The first three books deal with hermeneutics, or the grammar of Scripture interpretation. The fourth book is offered, with great diffidence, on homiletics.

For Augustine, the text must speak first and foremost, lest the preacher become a mere Sophist—a persuader without truth, a charlatan. So grammar takes precedence. Rhetoric alone can be an instrument of either truth or falsehood.[21] It may be learned almost as a natural result of the study of language and should not be emphasized in itself, but only in as much as it aids the teaching of the Scriptures. "For a man speaks more or

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[14] Quintilian (Quintilianus, Marcus Fabius), *The Institutes of Rhetoric* (*Institutio Oratoria*), (Loeb Classical Library, vols. 124–27), trans. H. E. Butler (London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921–22).
[15] McClellan. *Preaching by Ear*, 39.
[16] McClellan. *Preaching by Ear*, 39.
[17] McClellan. *Preaching by Ear*, 31.
[18] McClellan. *Preaching by Ear*, 41–43.
[19] McClellan. *Preaching by Ear*, 45.
[20] Chris Holcumb, " 'The Crown of All Our Study': Improvisation in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2001): 53–72.
[21] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 118.

less wisely to the extent that he has become more or less proficient in the Holy Scriptures."[22] Augustine goes to great lengths to demonstrate that preachers like Paul employed eloquence in the interest of truth. He never "followed" or desired to exhibit the art of eloquence.[23] Like the servants in a great house, eloquence stays out of sight.

However, as we have seen in chapter 6, Augustine did not fully appreciate Paul's polemic against persuasion and in favor of proclamation. For Augustine, the choice was between the good or corrupt uses of persuasion. I have come to recognize a distinction, which seems to lie in the back story of Augustine, as has been said above—the difference in ancient rhetoric between persuasion and proclamation, a point that Paul makes central to his own homiletics in 1 Corinthians 1–4.

It should be of paramount concern that today the church often allows men to preach who have neither mastered good public speaking nor the ability to exposit a passage of Scripture clearly. The first should be a given, like piety; the second should be a high, and non-negotiable demand. The exposition of Scripture has fallen on hard times. If anything of value about the nature of media has been learned thus far, we will conclude that this medium—preaching—is all about what God has to say in his infallible Word. Thus, whatever we helpfully glean from ancient rhetoric, the Hebrew prophet and not the Greek orator, is our model for preaching. This was the oral tradition of Jesus and His apostles.[24]

The Question of Relevance and Application

This raises the question of relevance—a word frequently used by American evangelicals in their quest to be influential and sometimes culturally acceptable.[25] How is preaching to relate to the people of our world? Of course, preaching is not simply a repetition of the biblical message, or else the task of the preacher would be simply to read the Scriptures to the congregation. The message

> must be actualized into the present. If preaching is to be true and relevant, the message of Scripture must be addressed to people in their concrete historical situation. The biblical message may not be *adapted* to the situation of today, but it must be "accommodated" (Calvin) to the situation. As in Christ God stooped down to take upon himself our flesh, so in the preaching of the word the Holy Spirit stoops down to reach people in their situation. The preacher must therefore be an exegete of both Scripture and of his congregation, so that the living word of God for today will be heard at the intersection of text and situation.[26]

But the goal is not to *make* the text relevant to the situation, but to *demonstrate* its relevance. The text is always relevant, because it reveals the true state of the church united to the crucified and risen Christ. Calvin's idea of accommodation is not that we must seek to overcome any supposed distance between then and now—between past history in biblical times and today. It is rather that in God's condescension he speaks to

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[22] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 122.
[23] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 125.
[24] Clyde E. Fant, *Preaching For Today* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 36–37.
[25] This section is adapted from Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures*, 375–77.
[26] Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988). s.v. "Preaching, Theology of," by Klaas Runia.

fallible and blind humans by the illuminating power of his Spirit. For Calvin there is no dichotomy between "then and now." We are in the epoch of the "better covenant" ever since the incarnation.

The question of relevance is one of the profoundest questions under discussion in homiletics today. Charlie Dennison has astutely observed: "Whether conservative or liberal, Calvinist or Arminian, most preachers pursue their task to the text of the world."[27] The titles of hundreds of books and articles indicate that "relevance" or "application" is their chief concern. The question concerns the connection between the text and the hearer, or more properly the church. The problem is that, however laudable the quest of many preachers to communicate, the impression is left that the ancient text is culturally determined and thus that application means *making* the text relevant to a very different culture—the modern world. This was the over-riding concern of Rudolph Bultmann's project of "Demythologizing." The "ancient text must be 'delivered' in the interests of relevance. . . . The modern preacher lives in a qualitatively different age than the Biblical figures."[28]

Cornelius Trimp nicely turns the tables on this distorted understanding:

> The church pulpit is not a platform for demonstrating a timeless system of truths, but the place which God Himself reserves for the proclaiming of His living Word which seeks the hearts of God's children in their concrete needs, temptations, and expectations. Thus preaching is by definition "relevant."[29]

Sola Scriptura "carries with it the relevance of preaching."[30] The congregation is never a group of mere spectators:

> The historic distance between our time and the days of the apostles and prophets is therefore not bridged by our human work of re-presentation, but by the faithfulness of God Himself. . . . We do not draw old stories towards ourselves, but in the garb of the old stories God approaches us across the centuries and countries, and the Christ of Scriptures desires to dwell in our midst. . . . *Christ is relevant*—the same Christ in whom God at one time expressed Himself totally and about whom the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments testify. No relevance can ever surpass this relevance. . . . This relevance breaks through the myopia of modern man, the shortsightedness of the minister of the Word, and through the narrow scope of human demands for relevance. . . . All relevance which is not at the same time a preaching of the Christ of Scripture, is pseudo-relevance and falls below the mark of the ministry of the Word.[31]

When it comes to application, this redemptive-historical approach is never a matter of merely reciting the history of redemption, as is often alleged. As Trimp has reminded us, the Christ of Scripture, who as the crucified and risen Lord, is the same yesterday

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[27] Dennison, "Some Thoughts on Preaching," 7.
[28] Charles Dennison, "Preaching and Application: A Review," *Kerux* 4:3 (December 1989): 51.
[29] Cornelius Trimp, "The Relevance of Preaching," *WTJ* 36, no. 2 (fall 1973): 1.
[30] Trimp, "The Relevance of Preaching," 2.
[31] Trimp, "The Relevance of Preaching," 25–29.

and today and forever, and therefore always relevant, but not always in the way demanded by many modern Christians. As Geerhardus Vos insists: ". . . we know full well that we ourselves live just as much in the New Testament as did Peter, and Paul, and John."[32] Thus,

> good preaching calls men and women, young and old, to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ so that they might be delivered from the present evil age. . . . good preaching does not make the text meaningful for us in our contemporary situation; rather good preaching makes us and our contemporary situation meaningful in the text.[33]

"*The kerygma proceeds from conditions fulfilled in Jesus Christ*. It does not offer an exposition and application of the story of Christ's redemptive work; it implicates the hearer in that story."[34] Preaching

> is not only the proclamation of the saving event that once took place in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it is also the announcement to the listener that, when he believes in this Jesus Christ, he finds himself in the new situation of salvation brought about by Jesus.[35]

Preaching in the electronic situation is not qualitatively different, whatever differences there may be between the Areopagus and the World Wide Web, from the first century situation. The same call to repentance and faith is in order. The question is never application or no application, relevance or no relevance, but rather which text defines relevance and application, the world or the Word? The heavenly reality brought to earth through the incarnation transcends and invades the cultural developments between the times in this New Covenant epoch. And thus, in a real sense, "there are no 'modern' preachers; there are only preachers."[36] But this does not mean that preachers should be any less aware than Paul of the alluring cultural assumptions and expectations that surround us and tempt the church. Nor does it mean that the face of culture is not different from Paul's Roman Empire, but rather that the idolatrous tendencies of fallen human nature remain the same no matter what the materials of their implementation.

In an atmosphere befogged by various definitions of preaching, we do well to look at the biblical conception. God's Word clears the fog. T. David Gordon takes his definition of preaching from 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

> The role of the minister, when preaching, is *not* to amuse (though some may find it amusing), is *not* to provide pastoral advice (though some may find good advice therein), is *not* to give a religious speech (though some may think it was a good

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[32] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 303, in Dennison, "Preaching and Application: A Review," *Kerux* 4:3 (December 1989): 51.
[33] Dennison, "Some Thoughts on Preaching," 5, 8.
[34] Jacob Firet, *Dynamics in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 45.
[35] Klaas Runia, "What Is Preaching according to the New Testament?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 19.
[36] Dennison, "Preaching and Application: A Review," 52.

> speech), is *not* to inspire people to live as Christians (though some may be so inspired); the role of the minister is to *declare to the conscience* of the hearer what God has declared. God, not the minister, is to speak to the hearer, *through* the minister.[37]

Here we see that it is not relevance or irrelevance, neither application or no application, but God's relevance and application. These spring from the very text of God's Word. We are called to proclaim *his* application and relevance, his indicatives and imperatives.

Expose and Destroy the Idols

In light of the critical tool of idolatry, discussed in chapter 1, you must challenge your congregation with a clear understanding of the nature and effects of modern media in order to overcome the naïveté of the evangelical church with respect to the electronic media. And you must teach them how to be better worshipers and sermon listeners in this cultural context by helping them understand the uniqueness, excellence, and genius of preaching as a medium. You must break through, rather than imitate or accommodate, the electronic environment. You must cultivate a counterculture, which is the nature of the church united to its heavenly Lord. Challenge the idolatry which is woven into the fabric of our culture with the fullness of the gospel message as Paul did everywhere he preached.

> For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess. 1:9–10)

This means that the gospel of the cross and resurrection must be central to all of your proclamation. "I plead with you: Good preaching is Christ-centered, not morality or behavior-centered; Scripture-centered, not culture-centered; history of redemption-centered, not history of the world-centered."[38] Instead of pandering to the modern mindset with a Christ who is good for the sinner, who will help make him a successful or better person, the gospel must be proclaimed as God's radical call for repentance and faith. The gospel in its utter uniqueness must be heralded, not as a fine system of behavior, but as God in the crucified and risen Christ reconciling himself to the world. "The Jesus that offends no one is not the Jesus of the New Testament."[39]

The real, biblical Jesus Christ must be announced as the Savior of the world, not because he is a great psychologist or social worker, but because he is the Second and Last Adam, who challenges this present evil age at the core of its existence in the First Adam. The message is to be presented with urgency because it is true, and because the offer of reconciliation will be followed by the coming Day of the Lord, when Jesus the Christ will come to claim the territory and the citizens which are his, earned with his obedience, purchased with his blood.

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[37] T. David Gordon, "Presuppositions Regarding Preaching," unpublished manuscript, nd.
[38] Dennison, "Some Thoughts on Preaching," 6.
[39] Daane, *Preaching with Confidence*, 34.

Preachers, you need to help Christians develop their critical faculties—their spiritual sensibilities. When you expose the nature of specific idols, demonstrate their destructive effects, your congregation will be transformed. Then they will never watch television, movies, or streaming services in the same way again. They will never think about the Internet or their computers or their smart phones in the same way again. It is not that we want people to stop using technology. This is the Anabaptist-Luddite mistake. We need to help Christians develop sales resistance in an idolatrous culture. T. S. Eliot quipped that "paganism holds all the most valuable advertising space."[40] But the church has the preaching of the Word of God. The best place to take the magic out of idolatry is not in the newspaper, on the television, radio, or the Internet, but *in the pulpit*. Hendrick Berkhof counsels, "When the Powers are unmasked, they lose their dominion over men's souls."[41] Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can slay the idols.

We must aid the church in discerning the vanity in Vanity Fair.

> False gods are highly catching! With good reason both Old and New Testaments abound with warnings against participating in Pagan cultures . . . "World" complements "flesh" to constitute monolithic evil: the manufacture of idols instead of the worship of the true God.[42]

Counselor David Powlison observes:

> If we would help people have eyes and ears for God, we must know well what alternative gods clamor for their attention. These forces and shaping influences neither determine nor excuse our sins. But they do nurture, exacerbate and channel our sinfulness in particular directions. They are often atmospheric, invisible, unconscious influences.[43]

The preacher is called to awaken people from their deadly slumbers.

> The Biblical gospel delivers from both personal sin and situational tyrannies. The Biblical notion of inner idolatries allows people to see their need for Christ as a merciful Savior from large sins of both heart and behavior.[44]

Roman Catholic McLuhan makes a remarkable comment in a 1977 interview with Edward Wakin: "That's one of the jobs of the Church—to shake up our present population. To do that you'd have to preach nothing but hellfire. In my life, I have never heard one such sermon from a Catholic pulpit."[45] In his usual hyperbole he has

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[40] Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Toward the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 18.
[41] Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John Howard Yoder (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1962), 36–46, in Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols For Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation With American Society* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 308.
[42] David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," (photocopy), 15.
[43] Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," 15.
[44] Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," 24.
[45] Marshall McLuhan, "Our Only Hope Is Apocalypse," in *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*, eds. Eric McLuhan and Jacek Szlarek (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999), 62.

exaggerated, but the need to preach on the reality of heaven and hell is clearly present in the church, tempted as it is to "moods of conciliation" by the electronic culture. Moralizing and psychologizing not only pervert the biblical text, but they cannot penetrate the darkness of the Adamic soul; they only assuage it.

During the reign of Jehoshaphat, idolatry was completely abolished.

> The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel. . . . His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah. (2 Chron. 17:3–4, 6)

It was not enough, however, to remove, or turn off the media of idolatry. The king resisted and overcame the idolatry of Baal worship by sending prophets and Levites throughout the land to teach the truth of the covenant. "And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them. They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people" (2 Chron. 17:9). It was not only the Word of God read by the people, but the written Word preached and taught by God's appointed spokesmen, which cultivated the only anti-environment capable of overcoming idolatry and winning people to become disciples of the LORD. Such is the task of the preacher today.

Be careful with all of your critical awareness, and with your trenchant challenge to the idols of our age, never to be a cynic. Be a critic sparingly, and make it count. Focus on the truth, hopefulness, and glory of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Know Your Audience

The parable of the soils (or the seeds or the sower) reminds us of the importance of knowing our audience. Every congregation will have a mixture of soils—the varieties of people who receive the ministry of the Word. Tim Keller has a superb outline of the varieties we may encounter and ought always to have in mind as we prepare for the ministry of the Word.[46] He lists a variety of hearers under these major categories: conscious unbeliever, nonchurched nominal Christian, churched nominal Christian, awakened, apostate, new believer, mature/growing, afflicted, tempted, immature, depressed, and backslid. Each preacher could probably amplify this list, but it is a poignant reminder of how carefully we need to consider those who hear our preaching. As pastors, this means that knowing the life situation, the joys and sorrows of our flock, is essential to our ministry of the Word of the good Shepherd. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

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[46] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 289–93.

ServantReading

Reading The Psalms Theologically

A Review Article

By Andrew J. Miller

Reading The Psalms Theologically (Studies in Scripture and Biblical Theology), edited by David M. Howard Jr. and Andrew J. Schmutzer. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023, 344 pages, $29.99.

Reading most books out of order would be a disaster. Encyclopedias and collections of essays aside, if I was to randomly rearrange the chapters of a story like *Pilgrim's Progress* and have you read it for the first time, you would understandably struggle. The ordering of things communicates something—in the Westminster Confession of Faith, for example, effectual calling (ch. 10) comes before justification (ch. 11), matching and expressing our theological understanding of their logical ordering.

Yet curiously, readers of the Bible often skip over the intentional ordering of certain biblical books—the Psalms being chief among them, perhaps because it seems more to us like an encyclopedia than a narrative. Here the book *Reading the Psalms Theologically* helps readers to see the intentional ordering of the "chapters" of the book of Psalms and its significance. *Reading the Psalms Theologically* introduces readers to "editorial criticism," wherein study of the final form of the psalter reveals the theological intention of the editor(s) (4). "Editorial criticism" could be described as a form of "canonical criticism," associated with Brevard Childs and Christopher Seitz, which evangelicals can embrace to the degree that it reacts against the anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions of much modern biblical criticism by suggesting that we read the biblical books as the sacred Scriptures of the church.[1]

While Christians today are rightly cautious of anything with the term "criticism" in it, we should remember that this is essentially the same work that O. Palmer Robertson engaged in through his own *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology*.[2] In other words, editorial criticism, at its best, is reminding us that someone, by God's inspiration, collected the Psalms (individually inspired at their composition) and

[1] A helpful introduction to canonical criticism and related biblical criticism is Mark S. Gignilliat*, A Brief History of Old Testament Criticism: From Benedict Spinoza to Brevard Childs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), particularly 145–68.

[2] O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015). Also see Leslie McFall, "The Evidence for a Logical Arrangement of the Psalter," *WTJ* 62 (2000): 223–56.

put them in an order. *Reading The Psalms Theologically* asks why the Psalms were put in the order they were and what we can learn from that order.

This is a popular new way of looking at God's Word, and thus pastors should be aware of it (if even to reject it). For example, another new Lexham title is *Text and Paratext: Book Order, Title, and Divisions as Keys to Biblical Interpretation*.[3] One more example is Don Collett's intriguing proposal that Hosea has a signal position among the minor prophets ("The Twelve"), wherein

> Hosea's marriage to Gomer is intended to be a living parable of the Lord's covenantal marriage with Israel. . . . Hosea is not only the first prophet through whom the Lord spoke in the Twelve but also . . . the word the Lord speaks to Hosea is the founding agent or agency by which the witness of the Twelve is established. [4]

The first chapter, "Reading the Psalter as a Unified Book: Recent Trends," sets the table nicely, describing the state of Psalms scholarship. Here we are told that notable scholars like Roland Murphy, John Goldingay, Norman Whybray, and Tremper Longman have been skeptical of the editorial criticism approach to the Psalms (24). Nevertheless, lamenting that "traditionally, most readers have approached the Psalter atomistically, looking only at individual psalms, assuming that they are included in the work in random fashion," (31) the authors of the first chapter suggest there is indeed an intentional ordering to the Psalms. Again, this should set theological conservatives at ease: what we are after is the author's intention as presented to us in the words of Scripture and its order. Explicitly we are told (and it is worth quoting at length because of the importance of this point),

> We understand the entire Bible to be "God-breathed" (or "inspired by God"), as Paul puts it in 2 Timothy 3:16, and so another question arises in a collection such as the Psalter as to where, exactly, the locus of inspiration is to be found—in other words, what stage(s) of a text that came together over time is/are inspired? Only the original writing? Only the final form? Something in between? We affirm that the Spirit inspired the writing of the very words of individual psalms when they were originally written. We base this on Jesus' words in Matthew 22:41–45 (NIV), where he states that David, "speaking by the Spirit," uttered the words from Psalm 110:1. That is, when Psalm 110 was first written, this was done through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But we also affirm that the Spirit superintended the process that finally resulted in the collection that we call 'the book of Psalms.' (32)[5]

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[3] Gregory Goswell, *Text and Paratext: Book Order, Title, and Divisions as Keys to Biblical Interpretation* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023).

[4] Don Collett, "Jezreel, the Day of Visitation, and Hosea," in *The Identity of Israel's God in Christian Scripture*, eds. Don Collett, Mark Gignilliat, and Ephraim Radner (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 180–81.

[5] Here, John N. Oswalt's cautions for canonical criticism thirty-five years ago seem to be addressed, whether intentionally or not. See "Canonical Criticism: A Review from a Conservative Viewpoint," *JETS* 30/3 (Sept. 1987): 317–25. On the other hand, some have argued canonical criticism is *too* conservative! See Dale A. Brueggemann, "Brevard Childs's Canon Criticism: An Example of Post-critical Naiveté" *JETS* 32 (1989): 311–26.

In other words, at least these contributors (one who is an editor of the book) do not believe that a robust understanding of editing necessarily undermines Scripture.

I believe that one can be a skeptic towards much of historical-criticism and still recognize the value (however limited) of careful editorial criticism. This is simply what readers do with every book of the Bible: we understand there is an intentional structure, an ordering, which builds upon and is communicated through the very details of the text.[6] We can certainly benefit, for example, from considering how Psalm 126 is almost at the midpoint of the psalms of Ascent, almost at the arrival at Psalm 127 which explicitly speaks of the Lord's house. Perceiving such an order enhances the sense of "already-not-yet" in Psalm 126, and it does not take much imagination to envision Psalms 120–126 as the songs of the journey *to* God's house, and then 128–134 related to the journey back. As Robertson points out, "This arrangement of fifteen individual psalms in a symmetrical form with seven psalms balancing one another on either side of a centralized focal psalm cannot be purely accidental."[7] Or, more obviously, Psalms 22, 23, and 24 have been appropriately dubbed, "the cross, the crook, and the crown," with their proximity helping us to see God's Old Testament promises of Christ. At the same time, we should be careful not to let "paratext" or editorial critical insights overwhelm the words themselves.

We read in chapter 1: "We believe that there is much merit in understanding the book of Psalms not simply as a random collection of unrelated Psalms, but also as an organized, unified 'book' that has an overarching message, to which the individual psalms and smaller psalms collections contribute" (33). What then is the message of the book of Psalms? It points to and shows the need for Christ, the "true David," the Messiah (34). Thus, even though the book is titled *Reading the Psalms Theologically*, it could just as appropriately have been titled "Reading the Psalms Messianically."

The book successfully demonstrates the significance of seeing intentional ordering in the Psalter. *Reading the Psalms Theologically* features various scholars, making some chapters more beneficial than others. Several chapters at the opening reinforce the view that Psalms 1 and 2 should be read together and were intentionally placed there (e.g., 40, 59, 67, 82, 98). Jim Hamilton wrote chapter 2, continuing the emphasis on the human author's conscious intention in typology (which Hamilton wrote about in his 2022 book *Typology*[8]), positing here "that David understood himself as a prefiguring type of the future king God promised to raise up from his line of descent" (64). Hamilton makes the fascinating observation that the call of Psalm 8 to look to the stars, recalls God's promise to Abraham (72).

Similarly hitting on Psalm 8, Seth Postell's chapter asserts that given the similarities with Daniel, "the book of Psalms does, in fact, present a divine Messiah" (97). Few issues are more naively treated today as the "creation mandate" and if and how it applies to us today. Thus, Postell's work is helpful as he notes that "the rule of the [Psalter's Messianic] king is portrayed as a fulfillment of the creation mandate (cf. Ps. 8:5–9 with

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[6] As the book argues, "There is much merit in looking [at a book's] 'literary context,'. . . .For example, in the book of Isaiah, we do not simply read each prophetic oracle on its own, but we read them in relation to other oracles, all of them ultimately contributing to the book's overall message. The same is true with the book of Psalms" (33).

[7] Robertson, *Flow of the Psalms*, 212. On Psalm 127 as the center of the Psalms of ascent, see Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* SBLDS *76* (Chico: CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 208.

[8] James M. Hamilton, Jr., *Typology-Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022).

Gen. 1:26–28)" (99). This claim is strengthened by the reference to Solomon with similar language in 1 Kings 5:4 (101). Thus, "The Messiah in the book of Psalms is most clearly, quintessentially, a son of Adam, and a human being in the image of God" (101).

Other chapters are full of notes of interest to students of the Psalms, like Jill Firth's observation that Psalm 144 echoes Psalm 18 but turns indicatives into imperatives, "leading to a different rhetorical strategy" (122). Likewise, Rolk A. Jacobson writes that "the relationship of the theology of the cross to the Old Testament, however, is a field that has yet to be satisfactorily plowed" (157). C. Hassell Bullock invites doxology, additionally noting how Psalm 23 equates the LORD with a shepherd: "That David, the shepherd of Israel, should himself have a shepherd, and that his shepherd was equivalent to his God, was a dazzling truth. What was more astounding still was that the Lord would stoop so low as to assume one of Israel's most menial roles" (129).

Readers may not agree with all the points made by all the contributors to *Reading the Psalms Theologically*. I take exception, for example, to the claims made in chapter 10 related to death, namely, that "punishment after death is a later development, arguably on the margins of the Old Testament but certainly not present in the Psalms" (177). This is followed by a curious confidence: "The general perspective just outlined is so widely attested as to be incontrovertible and uncontroversial" (177). The author of this chapter must wrestle with Psalms like 1 and 73 which both mention the judgment of the wicked, but the author concludes that these were "relectured" and "later read in eschatological terms. . . . this was more a rereading than the original intent" (181). Thus,

> these psalms can be seen to illustrate *relecture*. While the Old Testament texts generally exhibit no concept of a positive afterlife, hints of this emerged in response mainly to the catastrophe of exile and the political uncertainties of the ensuring centuries. And as this concept developed, older texts were reread and new texts written to reflect it. (182)

Perhaps these comments illustrate why some caution is warranted with editorial criticism—here it seems most like faulty types of biblical criticism. Such comments are far from, for example, what Geerhardus Vos articulates in his "Eschatology of the Psalter," that is, for example, "The Psalter is wide awake to the significance of history as leading up to the eschatological act of God."[9] Thankfully, the New Testament has no problem affirming a clear and original eschatology of personal bodily resurrection in the Old Testament (e.g., Matt. 22:29; 1 Cor. 15:3; Acts 2:27).

These concerns aside, *Reading the Psalms Theologically* provides an interesting and encouraging advanced taste of editorial criticism, doing so with vigor and an apparent love for the Psalms. The overall thrust is that the Psalter does point to Christ, which should lead believers to reverence and awe of God.

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[9] See Geerhardus Vos, "Eschatology of the Psalter," *Princeton Theological Review* 18 (Jan. 1920): 13.

ServantReading

Natural Law: A Short Companion, *by David VanDrunen*

By Bruce P. Baugus

Natural Law: A Short Companion, by David VanDrunen. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2023, xvi + 135 pages, $19.99, paper.

David VanDrunen's *Natural Law: A Short Companion* is just the kind of clear and concise introduction to the topic (from a Reformed perspective) that I believe many readers have been wanting, even if many of those readers will not realize just how much till they read this breezy little volume. VanDrunen has taken seriously the wider evangelical audience assumed by the Essentials in Christian Ethics series, in which this volume appears, and it serves the work very well. The result is a pithy and useful guide that will clear up common confusions and orient readers—students just wading into the topic, friends unsure of the scriptural support for natural law, critics who believe it contradicts Protestant convictions, and so on—to the biblical case for the natural revelation of the moral order.

VanDrunen does not assume his readers are already familiar with the concept or contours of the natural law, much less a decidedly Protestant account of it. On the contrary, he takes the time to straighten the ethical room and set aside some common misconceptions as he begins to build a generously illustrated argument from Scripture. Each of the six chapters is clear, focused, and edifying. While those who have read VanDrunen's other works will find this volume a relatively straightforward review of one of the major themes of his corpus, it is more than a mere recap of what he has already said elsewhere.

VanDrunen achieves something striking in these 120 pages that gives the work an almost unique place within his corpus: he successfully avoids the intramural Reformed debates over covenant theology and two kingdoms that have so often shaped the reception of his previous works. Since 2010, VanDrunen has produced a series of lengthy studies in Reformed moral theology related one way or another to the natural law. The weightiest contributions include *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* (Eerdmans, 2010), *Divine Covenant and Moral Order* (Eerdmans, 2014), and *Politics after Christendom* (Zondervan Academic, 2020). He has another on the way: *Reformed Moral Theology* (Baker Academic). His shorter practical work, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms* (Crossway, 2010), fits the pattern too.

VanDrunen's *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* together with Stephen Grabill's *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Eerdmans, 2006) marks something of a turning point in recent Reformed moral theology. Reformed moral theology had grown hostile to its own natural law tradition and nearly lost its way in the

twentieth century. What was needed, and what these two authors began to provide, was a recovery of this tradition and revitalization of Reformed moral theology more broadly. Grabill's work was purely historical, demonstrating that Reformed moral theology was, prior to the twentieth century, a natural law tradition in substantial continuity with the medieval tradition and tracing out where it veered off course. VanDrunen went further, however, by developing a fresh exposition of a natural law Reformed moral theology—an exposition that he has continued to build on in each subsequent work and will continue in his forthcoming *Reformed Moral Theology*.

VanDrunen's previous works have attracted devoted fans—no doubt including many readers of *Ordained Servant*—among those who view him as integrating the best strands of Reformed covenant theology with the best strands of Reformed moral theology and social thought. VanDrunen's many and varied detractors, however, seem to think he is doing the tradition a great disservice. Perhaps ironically, the former may find his latest contribution of little interest. The latter, and those like me who fall somewhere in between, would do well to read *Natural Law*. They may discover a new appreciation for his contribution on this significant topic.

VanDrunen has always offered us far more than his opinion on the intramural debates that have sometimes swallowed the reception of his previous works. As he knows, I have welcomed his contributions on natural law and two kingdoms from the start, while finding his integration of covenant theology into moral theology unconvincing in places. (Readers interested in more on that can check out some of our recent collegial conversations hosted by Reformed Forum.) My reading of VanDrunen's previous works have always been a very mixed exercise for me, with points of strong agreement and disagreement alternating throughout, not infrequently within a single sentence. I suspect—I know, actually—that I am not alone in this.

Natural Law is an exception. By largely sidestepping these intramural debates VanDrunen gives his readers a way to admire his significant contribution to recovering the classic Reformed account of the natural law and its abiding usefulness for contemporary Christians without the distraction of areas of potential disagreement or conflicting thoughts. While careful readers will see, for example, the contours of his covenant theology with its emphasis on discontinuity between the Mosaic and New covenants creeping into his illustrations here and there, it is not material to the biblical case for the natural law he is making. In other words, while there is ample evidence he has not changed his views, he has exercised considerable restraint in his determination to give us a clean and clear account of the natural law.

This work now tops my list of recommended primers on the natural law. I will likely require it in my introductory courses in moral theology, and I highly commend it to you. It is a great place to dive into the natural law; it is also a great place to dive into VanDrunen's corpus; and it is just the right book to put into the hands of anyone you know who would benefit from a fresh and more appreciative reading of his significant contributions to contemporary Reformed moral theology.

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ServantPoetry

G. E. Reynolds (1949–)

Risen

All things through calculation
Cannot be conceived.
No, this account won't stand,
Because the witnesses you banned
Are here to stay.

Five hundred saw the risen
Lord—this is of first importance,
No chimera for those who gave up
Life and limb to say what
They saw on resurrection day.

Why would you wish
This is not true, when hope
Intruded in this grim graveyard
That you call your life? It is
The only alternate to this gray

Reality you hold as treasure.
The flowers of the calculators
Fade in this eviscerated day
Where bits and bites of virtual
Reality fail to make a way.

The Lord of glory rose to
Cancel all the empty dreams
Of Paradise you seek
With its bleak future and
Replace it with Reality.