

## REVIEWS & RESPONSES

**Book Review: Andrew Hofferker, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton*, American Reformed Biographies series, Phillipsburg: P&R, 2011, 460 pages including index, select bibliography, and notes. ISBN 9780875526584. Paperback. \$19.99. Reviewed by Barry Waugh.**

In the Princeton Cemetery of the Nassau Presbyterian Church the remains of Charles Hodge are interred beneath the memorial inscription—"Sacred / to the Memory of the / Rev. Charles Hodge D.D. LL.D / Second Professor / of Systematic Theology / in the Theological Seminary of / Princeton, N. J. / Born in Philadelphia Dec. 28, 1797 / Died in Princeton June 19, 1878 / *To be absent from the body is to be / present with the Lord.*" Remembrances on grave memorials are often limited in length due to the small surface area of the stones, but Charles Hodge's inscription is brief given the large area of the slab marking his grave and the length of his service to Princeton Seminary. From a wee covenant lad to a weak octogenarian, Professor Hodge was looking to be absent from the body to be

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1. Celebrants of the bicentennial of Princeton Seminary and American Presbyterian seminary education may also be interested in reading Paul C. Gutjahr's fine work, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy*, Oxford, 2011, whose extensively researched biography is enhanced by illustrations and includes a helpful bibliographical section that gives brief entries regarding the lives of people in the Princeton community mentioned by Hodge.

2. The seminary was to have a faculty of three whose responsibilities included "instruction in Divinity, Oriental and Biblical Literature, and in Ecclesiastical History, and on Church Government, and on such other subjects as may be deemed necessary." See the *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America from its Organization A.D. 1789 to A.D. 1820 Inclusive* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, [n.d.]), 454. The first professor at Princeton was Archibald Alexander (1812), the second was Samuel Miller (1813), and the third was Charles Hodge (1822). It took ten years to obtain the three faculty members, but these three taught together until the addition of J. A. Alexander made them a foursome in 1835. For the early faculty list, see *Princeton Theological Seminary General Catalogue* (Trenton: [n.p.], 1881), 12.

present with his Lord. Archibald Alexander Hodge's account of his father's life portrays a man who was complex, of varied interests, a patient and loving father, a devoted husband, encumbered by physical affliction, a penetrating scholar, and a faithful servant of Christ. During the more than one hundred thirty years that have passed since A. A. Hodge's book was published, church historians and other interested persons have awaited something new about Hodge's life, something historically detached, by an author with a critical but fair eye; a book based in scholarship, but written for a more general audience. The book has arrived, and it is Andrew Hofferker's *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton*.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hofferker, who is Emeritus Professor of Church History at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, has organized the biography under six divisions corresponding to the eras of Hodge's life. Each division varies in length with a range of chapters totaling from three to eight. Full endnotes, a select bibliography, and a subject and name index facilitate access to the vast resources used by the author. The organization, flow, and presentation of the book are pleasing. It is a subjective comment, but the author's style came across to me as relaxed, casual, and congenial; I felt as though I was in Dr. Hofferker's study and we were sipping coffee and nibbling cookies as he told me the story of the life and work of Charles Hodge. Though many might view Hodge as a "stern Calvinist," an "esoteric systematician," or one who thumped people on the head with the *Westminster Confession*, the picture the author gives of "The Pride of Princeton" is one of a humble, gifted scholar who loved his family, his church, his students, his seminary colleagues, and his Redeemer. The author's presentation of Dr. Hodge's biography confirms that a life based on sound confessional doctrine yields humble and grateful obedience through the application of the Word to all of life.

Princeton Seminary was intended to solve some problems for Presbyterian divinity education, chief of which was the inconsistent quality, doctrine, and content of the instruction provided by well-meaning tutors of divinity candidates. One man might be tutored by a well-read, doctrinally oriented and rhetorically excellent pastor who was aloof in his manner, while another student was instructed by a dear, patient and friendly old man whose flock thrived under his care, but whose own education was obtained catch-as-catch-can and whose instruction to his pupil was not the best. In both of these very different examples there are deficiencies that could be, it was thought, ameliorated by having all divinity students trained in theological seminaries by not only academically but pastorally qualified faculty.<sup>2</sup> The solution to the problem was found in establishing a residential seminary with a full-time dedicated, experienced, and competent group of professors. After considerable debate in the General Assembly, mostly with regard to where the seminary would be located, the site

chosen for the new institution was Princeton, New Jersey. First Archibald Alexander, then Samuel Miller and then Charles Hodge were selected to provide the consistency of theological education needed for candidates.

The influence of Archibald Alexander on Charles Hodge is common knowledge, but as Dr. Hoeffcker notes, the influence of Samuel Miller has not been so thoroughly investigated.<sup>3</sup> An example of the similar interests of Samuel Miller and Charles Hodge may be seen in comments they both made regarding the education of ministerial candidates. Hodge was presenting his analysis of the General Assembly of 1844 in the *Princeton Review* when he discussed the funding of theological education and the need for a greater number of qualified candidates for the ministry.<sup>4</sup> He concluded the paragraph commenting that,

All experience teaches us that ignorance, next to sin, is the most fruitful source of error, and that a few able, well-furnished and faithful ministers, are far more efficient for good, than a multitude of uneducated though zealous men (p. 235).

There is nothing unusual about a Presbyterian seminary professor making the case for educated clergy; thoroughly educating candidates for ministry was and continues to be an uphill battle, as many did and do press for reducing educational requirements and/or making the curriculum more “practical.” The founding of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (C.P.C.) in 1810 in the wake of revival frenzy was at least partially motivated by the desire to reduce educational requirements for ministers. The C.P.C. events were well within the historical view of Miller and Hodge. The quotation from Hodge echoes that of Samuel Miller in 1929 in his address on *The Importance of Mature Preparatory Study for the Ministry* as he compared surgeons of souls to surgeons of the body saying,

Suppose a population of ten thousand families to be laboring under a contagious and mortal disease. Would it be better to send among them half a dozen wise and skillful Physicians, or fifty or even a hundred miserable quacks, who would be likely to kill more than they would cure? Surely no thinking man can hesitate a moment about the proper answer. The truth is, there are unqualified men enough in the ministry.<sup>5</sup>

Certainly, Hodge’s comment is not a direct quote of Miller, but the two comments are similar.

Both Miller and Hodge were also concerned that ministerial education provide the pastor with not only specifically biblical and theological knowledge but general knowledge as well. Dr. Hoeffcker notes that Hodge’s own diverse interests beyond theology were cultivated by Miller’s thought—“Hodge learned from Miller that a minister of the gospel ought to

avoid provinciality by cultivating awareness across the spectrum of cultural developments—history, philosophy, the sciences, literature, and the arts,” which the author attributes to Hodge’s study of Miller’s *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, 1803.<sup>6</sup> As the author suggests, an intellectual biography of Samuel Miller would be well worth the effort and a bonus would be the elucidation of further connections between Miller and Hodge.<sup>7</sup> Potential biographers should be aware that the Samuel Miller Collection at Princeton Seminary is contained in 28 boxes, or nearly twelve linear feet of archival boxes; but they can be relieved that the material is significantly less than the Hodge collection, which occupies 47 boxes, or 17.8 linear feet.

The Charles Hodge volume is the fifth in the series *American Reformed Biographies* published by P&R. It continues the high level of scholarship that has characterized the series, but there is one aspect of the Hodge volume that is different from the previous four entries—it is a paperback instead of a cloth book with a dust jacket. It may seem picky or unnecessary for a review to discuss paperback vs. cloth, but since the only negative comment I have heard regarding the book is four or five iterations of “it should be a hardback” or “why is it a paperback,” I think it is appropriate to address the published form.

The traditional publishing industry is having a difficult time due to the continued annual decline in hard-copy book sales (do a web-search of “book sales” for a vivid picture of the situation via graphs, etc.). The transition from the classic printed page invented by Gutenberg to the digital e-book electron-coated screen is meeting with problems similar to those faced in the fifteenth century, as busy monks transcribing classical and theological volumes were faced with the competition of movable type. Keep in mind here that manual, tedious transcription is the way texts were copied for centuries; it is scribal transcription that preserved and provided the Word of God that we have today.

3. Page 368, note 6; the book index has 31 passages listed for Alexander and 15 for Miller.

4. “The General Assembly of 1844,” *Princeton Review* 16, 3 (1844): 445–448.

5. *The Importance of Mature Preparatory Study for the Ministry: An Introductory Lecture, Delivered at the Opening of the Summer Session of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey, July 3, 1829* (Princeton: Printed by Bernard Connolly for the Students of the Theological Seminary, 1829), 29, which is available in the online collection of Princeton Theological Seminary, <http://scdc.library.ptsem.edu/mets/>.

6. Page 82; Hoeffcker said this regarding Miller on p. 368 n. 6 and p. 376 n. 6, and he cites the work of Anita Schorsch, “Samuel Miller, Renaissance Man: His Legacy of ‘True Taste,’” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 66, 2 (Summer 1988): 71–87.

7. See page 376 n. 6; both Charles Hodge and Samuel Miller have been known to succeeding generations through the biographies written by their sons.

Those old enough to remember (and corrupted by too many hours of television) might have a faint recollection of the commercial produced by a manufacturer of photocopiers four or five decades ago. A corpulent monk with his simple brown habit drawn about his waist by a rope and crowned with his crude bowl-shaped coiffure is seated at his scribal desk meticulously copying the manuscript before him. As he concluded his project and laid aside his quill, he learns there is a photocopier in the monastery, *wonder of wonders*, it is a miracle; many copies can be made in minutes with the simple press of a button! However, what the commercial does not mention is that the flip side of the wondrous miracle-machine is unemployment for the portly little saint. One can imagine the situation. What is a monk to do if his pious dip-and-write skill is no longer needed? Why of course, due to the wisdom of the abbot's program of industrial diversification there are the bakery and brewery; the bread and beer output must be increased so the out-of-work scribes can contribute to the needs of the order, despite the Gutenbergian innovation eliminating the scriptorium. The commercial and comments provide a humorous look at a difficult issue in that the transition from one technology to the next very often makes causalities of those who earn a living via the former technology. Bibliophiles should sympathize with publishers who have to maintain their business, earn and provide livings, maintain competitiveness, and make decisions regarding the best format for a financially profitable book. Undoubtedly, the decision to publish the Hodge book as a paperback was a result of considerable deliberation by P&R as they weighed the market situation in the uncertain book world. But I wonder if traditional publishers might not provide cloth copies to those willing to pay extra for what would be a limited run of books for those of us obsessed with tradition, continuity, aesthetics, and durability.

In conclusion, Andrew Hoffercker's book on Charles Hodge is essential for understanding "The Pride of Princeton," the history and influence of Princeton Seminary, American Presbyterianism, and the historical theology and ecclesiology of Victorian American Christianity. Those interested in reading

this biography may want to first read A. A. Hodge's *The Life of Charles Hodge*, 1880 (also in reprints), because it provides the personal picture painted by Hodge's son, which could then be tempered by the excellent historical and nonconsanguineous analysis of Dr. Hoffercker. ■

**Review:** Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downer's Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press Academic, 2012). 270 pages. Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-0830839650. \$24. Reviewed by James J. Cassidy, M.Div. Westminster Theological Seminary, Ph.D. Student at Westminster Theological Seminary.

### Introduction

In a presbytery meeting back several year ago, I brought a motion to the floor which failed miserably. The motion was not without some effect, however. It became the occasion for bringing awareness to a particular doctrinal issue which has stuck in my craw for some time now. Without going into particulars, it concerned the denial of the eternal generation of the second person of the Trinity. At the time, I did not realize how prevalent this denial was in evangelical theology. It became all too clear to me when I read and reviewed Driscoll and Breshears' book *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe*.<sup>1</sup> This is why Giles book comes to me as a tremendous relief. The fact that it is written by such a capable and articulate thinker is a source of great encouragement.

Not all, however, have been as appreciative as I am. Nick Norelli, for one, has registered a mostly negative review of the book.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, Norelli does not care for Giles' connecting his doctrine of the Trinity to the gender debate (Giles is himself an egalitarian). With this sentiment I am quite sympathetic. I am quite unsure how the issue of the eternal relation of the Son to the Father in the Godhead can be used to advance one's own position in the debate over the role of women in the church. The lines often get drawn like this: if you advocate some form of ontological subordination of the Son to the Father in the Trinity, then you advocate complementarianism and the subordinate role of women in the church. But if you deny subordination in the Trinity (as Giles rightly does), then you must deny the subordination of women to men in the church. There seems to be relatively little room for people like me who deny subordination in the eternal Godhead, *ad intra*, and yet hold to the complementarian position. Or people like Norelli, who holds to a kind of subordination and yet is an egalitarian! In fact, in all my years of being a complementarian, I never once thought to defend the position on the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>3</sup> So, with Norelli I agree that the debates over the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son (hereafter, abbreviated

1. The review can be found here: <http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/doctrine-what-christians-should-believe.php>. In it I go into detail as to why I believe the denial of not only the eternal generation of Son, but also the personal properties in general, is a grave error.

2. <http://rdtwot.wordpress.com/2012/06/20/the-eternal-generation-of-the-son-maintaining-orthodoxy-in-trinitarian-theology/>, accessed October 9, 2012.

3. I am aware that Augustine used the family as a picture of the Trinity, but whether or not such an analogy is legitimate is for another debate. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that while Augustine rejected ontological or personal (as opposed to economical) subordination, he also fully agreed with the church's and the Bible's teaching that women are not to hold positions of authority in the church.

as *DEGS*) and gender roles/authority in the church should remain distinct issues. Yet I remain somewhat disappointed in Norelli's review, in that he seems to think that the whole book is a cover for Giles's egalitarian agenda.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, it is Norelli's review which seems to make the doctrine of the Trinity a tool to further the debate! This clouds his judgment of the book throughout the review. So I want to propose a fresh reading of the book without undue weight given to the small section Giles dedicates to making the (unfortunate, in my opinion) connection to the gender debate.

### About the Book

The introduction to the book details the current rejection of *DEGS* in evangelical theology. It is interesting to note that he lays at least part of the blame at the feet of the Old Princeton theologians (Giles, 31, fn. 46). While it is true that the old Princetonians were weak on the doctrine, they *did* hold to it and teach it as the received tradition. It is unfortunate that the cherry-picking of the Princeton theologians continues without reading them more broadly. They have become like Calvin among modern scholars, being used out of context to justify said scholar's own particular theological distinctives. Nevertheless, while the Old Princeton theologians cannot be blamed for the rejection of the doctrine, there is no doubt that their irresolute disposition toward the doctrine has been exploited by some to justify rejection of *DEGS*.

This rejection is no small matter, according to Giles. In fact, he goes so far as to claim, "we can see why [the doctrines of the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit] are foundational elements...why they are 'the linchpin' that holds together divine unity and eternal threeness.... Remove these two doctrines and the historic doctrine of the Trinity collapses" (Giles, 21). Giles raises the stakes of this rejection as he claims that "the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son takes us to the heart of the gospel, the good news, that in Jesus Christ we meet with the God who saves" (Giles, 16).

In chapter 2 Giles tackles the issue of theological methodology. How do evangelicals do theology? Here he sets two different approaches over against one another. First, there is the method of "the Bible alone." He describes this method in this way:

This definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizes their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic (p. 40).

Furthermore, this is the view that apparently believes that theology is "simply a reiteration of the explicit statements of Scripture" (p. 42). The second method holds the Bible as the

ultimate authority, but also involves more than direct appeals to Scripture. This is the view exemplified by Robert Letham's work, especially in his award-winning book, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*.<sup>5</sup> There, Letham concedes that "other Christians provide insights that do not immediately spring from the text of Scripture" and that "we should listen seriously and attentively to the Fathers" (p. 41). Furthermore, this approach does not "downplay the ecumenical creeds in favour of the latest insights from biblical studies" (ibid).

I did have some concerns about this chapter on methodology. I am not sure that the two options he highlights are the only two available to evangelicals, nor that his categorization is accurate. This is what I mean: the "Bible alone" approach, as he described it, sounds a lot like biblicism to me. Biblicism has more in common with fundamentalism than with the mainstream Protestant view as it was held in the days of Old Princeton. In short, it is an approach that is "proof-texty," in that it approaches the Bible in an unhealthy, literalistic fashion. It demands a word-for-word saying in order for a doctrine to be true. This has more in common with a baptistic approach to theology. I say baptistic because it is the approach you find in the London Confession of 1689. If you compare its first chapter with the parallel one in the Westminster Confession, you will discover that the expression "by good and necessary consequence" is deleted in the 1689. It is a shame that the Baptists deleted that phrase. It is a shame because the doctrine of the Trinity is not founded on direct proof texts alone, but is also deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequence. While the 1689 Confession does, happily, affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, its theological method does not allow for it. The great Baptist confession and our brothers are thankfully inconsistent at this point!

The point is, Giles's categories don't quite reflect reality. The "Bible only" approach he highlights is more characteristic of Baptist theology rather than traditional Protestant theology as you find in Old Princeton. Princeton affirmed that doctrine had to be founded upon either explicit references in the Bible or drawn by good and necessary inference. But

4. For instance, Norelli says, "If there's one thing that my reading of Giles' work has taught me, it's that somewhere in the background (or foreground!) is always going to be his obsession with connecting the Trinity to the gender debate. Now to be fair, he denies that he's the one who does this, preferring rather to attribute this phenomenon to his complementarian counterparts. I'll let the individual reader make his or her own assessment. All one has to do in *EGS* is look at the table of contents in order to realize that he'll address this in chapter 8 [*sic*, he actually addresses it in chapter 9] but in truth Giles prepares the way for this discussion in all the chapters that precede it and he continues it in the chapters that follow."

5. Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004).

Giles seems to lump them all together. There should be at least three categories, it seems: bibliocentric view, the good and necessary consequence view, and the ultimate authority view.

But even the “ultimate authority” view that Giles proposes has its problems. It seems to acknowledge other things as authoritative for doctrine in addition to the Bible. Tradition, creeds, and theologians provide other authorities for doing theology today, in addition to the Bible. Only the Bible is the ultimate authority. Furthermore, theology is described as being like a puzzle which different theologians help solve (p. 41). Each generation of theology leaves the puzzle undone for the next generation to improve. This smacks of historicism, and I think Giles falls into a postmodern historiography at this point. However, if all Giles means is that creeds and confessions can help us on our way so that we do not need to reinvent the wheel, then I have no problems with what he’s saying. But what exactly he is saying about the relation between the Bible, creeds, and doing theology is not entirely clear to me. Tradition can, should, and must help us in our theologizing, but the only *source* of theology is the Bible. Giles could use greater clarity at this point.

Chapter 3 is a survey of the biblical warrant for *DEGS*. He helpfully traces back the denial of the doctrine to the 1952 article by Dale Moody who argued that the John 3:16’s *monogenes* is more accurately translated “only” or “unique” son, rather than “only begotten” son. Giles, in this chapter, helpfully divides the question between the translation issue and the theological one. In other words, to object to the older translation (only begotten) is not necessarily to deny *DEGS*. So we can translate it as “unique” son, and still hold to *DEGS*. In fact, Giles says that the meaning of *monogenes* “was not an issue” in the early debates between the pro-Nicenes and the Arian (Giles, 67). Rather, the debate concerned the whole teaching of Scripture, including passages such as Proverbs 8:22, 25; Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5. Nevertheless, their interpretation and application of verses to the question of the self-differentiation of God was never bibliocentric. Rather, the Bible taught certain things from which they—and Giles with them—deduced the doctrine of *DEGS*. While Giles does not use this language, we might note that what Giles is doing is using certain explicit biblical teachings as *limiting concepts* which form the conceptual parameters within which *DEGS* is deduced. Perhaps the most persuasive argument, using this method, is what Giles says the Father-Son relationship implies. In what sense is the Father a father eternally, relative to the

Son, if there is no meaningful father-son relationship between them (p. 69)? What is it that defines a father as a father, or a son a son? It is the nature of begetting to render one a father and one a son. In this way, the properties which are proper to the Father and Son are rightly said to be unbegotten and begotten, respectively. And this, furthermore, cannot be an event which occurs in time, for otherwise the Son would not share in the divine perfection of eternity with the Father. Therefore, the Son must be begotten of the Father from all eternity.

Chapters 4 to 7 survey the history of the development of the idea of *DEGS* from the apologists right up to Karl Barth.<sup>6</sup> The survey Giles offers is concise and helpful for gaining a snapshot picture of the particular theologians’ formulations. What is also helpful is that there is included a survey of Arius’ articulation of the Trinity and the orthodox response. I myself am no ancient church historian, so I will leave it to others to evaluate the accuracy of the survey of patristic thought. But it is worthy to note one thing Giles says with regard to Athanasius:

To reject the doctrine of the eternal begetting of the Son, Athanasius concluded, opened the door to either “Sabellianism” (what is today called “modalism”) or to “polytheism” (three separated and divided divine person, in the case of Arius, hierarchically ranked), which in both cases denies the eternal triunity of God (p. 118).

A brilliant observation on the part of Athanasius! In particular, what is most helpful here is to observe the *potential dangers*—or else, the logical conclusions—of the rejection of *DEGS*. While it is true there are plenty of theologians, both ancient and modern, who reject *DEGS* and yet also reject Sabellianism and polytheism, one must wonder about the issue of consistency. Without *DEGS*, what is the conceptual mechanism in place to prevent collapsing the Trinity into a monad on the one hand, or dividing it into three gods on the other? More on this, in the conclusion.

Now, it is true, in these chapters Giles hits home the point consistently that the great doctors of the faith reject any subordination within the Trinity. He rejects the idea of subordinationism among the persons whether in power, being, authority, or obedience (see, for instance, 141 and 143). And with this, we are generally agreed. Giles could have nuanced things a wee bit, however. For instance, orthodox protestant theology will speak about the *pactum salutis*, a subject—as far as I know—completely ignored by Giles. The Son in the eternal covenant of redemption agrees to do the Father’s will in laying down his life on the cross (à la Philippians 2:6–8). This covenant is properly said to be eternal in so much as it takes place between the persons primally. However, it is *not* eternal

6. As an aside, I strongly disagree with Giles for bringing Barth in to defend *DEGS*. Barth’s whole theological system, being radically actualistic and thoroughly anti-metaphysical, militates against an orthodox version of *DEGS*. For a full treatment of Barth’s unorthodox doctrine of the Trinity, see my “Election and Trinity,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 53–81.

if by that we mean it constitutes the personal properties or the relations between the persons of the Trinity. No, the relations are there necessarily by virtue of who God is as Trinity. But the *pañtum salutis*, while eternal in the way just described, is a conditional relation between the Father and the Son. Here, and only here, can we say that the Son is obedient to the Father. But his obedience is not inherent to his personhood as Son. It is a voluntary act of the Son in agreement with the Father for the sake of the Trinity's acts of redemption *ad extra* and *pro nobis*. Contrary to Norelli's argument, then, there is—in fact—no subordination among the persons of the Trinity *as persons*. Here Giles is absolutely correct, as far as I can tell theologically (if not historically—again, I leave that to better minds than myself).

Chapter 8 is another extremely helpful section of the book, where Giles outlines four views on the relation between *DEGS* and subordinationism. For one, the way he outlines and surveys the various perspectives out there with regard to the relation between *DEGS* and subordinationism is as lucid as it is useful. The first view is that *DEGS equals* subordinationism, and because of that should be *endorsed* by evangelicals. The second view is that *DEGS equals* subordinationism, and because of that should be *rejected* by evangelicals. The third view is that *DEGS equals* subordinationism in terms of authority (but not in terms of ontology), and because of that should be *endorsed* by evangelicals. This is the view espoused by those who use *DEGS* to advocate for complementarianism. The fourth view is that *DEGS implies* subordinationism, and because of that should be *rejected* by evangelicals. In a brilliant turn, Giles goes on to show how *DEGS* in no way equals, entails, or implies any form of subordinationism whatsoever. Even the obedience of the Son to the Father in the economy of salvation does not come into play here, because that is a reference to God's acts *ad extra* not his nature *ad intra*. The issue of *DEGS* has to do with his nature *ad intra*, not his works *ad extra* (unless you adopt Barth's revolutionized doctrine of the Trinity!). If we are speaking about God *in se*, then Giles is absolutely correct that the orthodox tradition is unified in its anti-subordinationism. It is in this context that Giles has rendered a service to the church in explaining that when the Nicene Creed speaks about the Son as "God from God, light from light," that it is speaking precisely *against* subordinationism. It affirms that the Son is no less divine than is the Father. In other words, Father and Son share the same substance and thus are equal in power and glory (not to mention in authority as well!).

In chapter 9 Giles speaks to the matter of other alternatives to understanding the differentiation of the persons in the Trinity. This is also the chapter Norelli is most concerned about because in it Giles argues against subordinationism and applies his position to the debate on gender roles. I do agree

with Norelli that this is a weakness in this chapter, though perhaps for different reasons. But what is useful in this chapter is the way Giles exposes the weaknesses of other contending views as their advocates try to figure out a way to speak of some kind of subordination without falling into heresy. It is a tricky task, to be sure! Giles does a fine job showing that it is a fool's errand.

Chapters 10 and 11 are wrap-up chapters with a survey of where modern theology is on *DEGS*. He divides the chapter up into good news and bad news. The good news section shows theologians who are wanting to advance a robust trinitarian theology, and the bad news contains those who try to recast the doctrine along modalistic and/or tritheistic lines. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book, if for no other reason than to gain a sense of where modern trinitarian theology is today. Chapter 11 is simply a wrap-up and summary of his argument for *DEGS*.

### Conclusion

It may seem that *DEGS* is a relatively minor doctrine given the heavy emphasis on other matters currently being hotly contested. However, we do not want to underestimate the dangers lurking for those who dismiss centuries of theological articulation. The theological greats of the past knew what they were doing and what was at stake when it came to how they said what they did. So, in closing, I would like to recap my concerns from my review of *Doctrine*, which I mentioned above. Giles's book has only confirmed for me the general soundness of those concerns.

First, if the Son is not begotten of the Father eternally, then how is the Son differentiated from the Father? If the Son is not eternally begotten of the Father, then in what sense can we say that the Son is truly, ontologically, the Son? Is "Son" simply a title which has no ontological reality standing behind it? In other words, to be properly called a "son" requires some kind of begetting. It requires having some kind of property proper to one's personal relation to the begetter. To deny this property seems to amount to nominalism. And nominalism, at its heart, is nothing but Sabellianism in disguise.

Second, when the eternal personal properties are denied, another (ironically opposite) error becomes a danger: tritheism. The personal properties not only provide for differentiation within the Godhead, but they also serve to keep the three persons in an eternal perichoretic unity. If each person of the Trinity is *autotheos*, but no eternal relations of generation and procession bind them together, then we are left with three separate essences; i.e., three gods.<sup>7</sup>

Third, it seems fundamentally wrong to pit economic references against ontological categories. In the history of doctrine,

7. Of course, these two points are Athanasius' insights highlighted so well by Giles on page 112 of his book.

it is held that economic statements have ontological referents. So, when in John 15:26 Jesus says, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me,” Jesus *is* referring to an economic procession of the Spirit. However, this is the case in time only because it is first the case in eternity. As Francis Turretin has helpfully explained, “the order of operating follows the order of subsisting.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, what the triune God does in redemptive-history really connects to his personal relations. What happens *in history* is true only on the basis of what is first true in the Godhead. Yet, while there *is* a relation—an all-important relation!—between God’s acts in history and his divine subsisting, not all things predicated of the economic Trinity can be predicated of the immanent Trinity. For instance, while the Son is subordinate to the Father in time in terms of his obedience, that is not something which can be pushed back into the divine, eternal subsistence. Remember, the relation between the economic and immanent Trinity is analogical, not univocal (which would result in tritheism) or equivocal (which would result in nominalism/Sabellianism).

Fourth, however one translates John 3:16—unique son or only-begotten son—the reference is clearly to the Son who is “in the Father’s bosom” (John 1:18) before the creation of the World. He is the Son who transcends the world, which is the object of the Father’s sending. Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 may indeed be understood as a reference to economic events (i.e., the coronation of the exalted Son). However, that economic event may never be pitted against the ontological reality which stands behind it. As Herman Bavinck has succinctly stated it: “the economic Trinity reflects the ontological.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the Son is “begotten” in the economy of salvation only because He is first eternally begotten of the Father.

In closing, no longer can today’s theologians simply and easily dismiss the doctrine of the eternal generation of Son. Given Giles’s work, the case must be made again, this time while engaging Giles’s objections to the denial. This will, one can hope, once again get us back on the track of reading, loving, and appreciating all that the early fathers did for us in fighting for the truth of who our God is. Giles has thrown down the gauntlet against myopic, bibliocistic, and a-historical approaches to doing Protestant theology today. We would do well to do the same. ■

**Review:** N.T. Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2012). 304 pages. ISBN 9780061730573. \$25.99 (hardbound). Reviewed by Caleb Nelson, M.A. student at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

### The Problem

Where is the gospel in the Gospels? That question is the driving force behind N.T. Wright’s new *How God Became King* (HarperOne, 2012). The book sets out to examine all four Gospels to see what they are trying to say, and to some extent Wright claims to be setting aside the theological presuppositions that have driven gospel interpretation throughout Christian history and taking a “fresh look” at the work of the four evangelists. Here is how Wright formulates his problem: in evangelical circles,

there has been the assumption, going back at least as far as the Reformation, that ‘the gospel’ is what you find in Paul’s letters, particularly in Romans and Galatians. This ‘gospel’ consists, normally, of a precise statement of what Jesus achieved in his saving death (‘atonement’) and a precise statement of how that achievement could be appropriated by the individual (‘justification by faith’). Atonement and justification were assumed to be at the heart of the ‘the gospel’. But ‘the Gospels’—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—appear to have almost nothing to say about those subjects. (6)

Wright sees this same problem in the Creed, which jumps from “and was made man” to “he was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.” Basically, Wright’s question has to do with the material in between. Why is by far the largest portion of gospel material stories about Jesus healing people and interacting with the disciples, the Pharisees, and the crowds? In other words, what is Matthew 3–26 doing in the Bible? Rather than taking what a particular tradition identifies as important to the faith (Christ’s saving death, or perhaps his moral teaching) and making that the point of the Gospels, the church, Wright argues, ought to see what the Gospels have to say for themselves.

### The Wrong Answers

*How God Became King* poses two common answers to the problem of why the Reformation gospel is so hard to find in the inscripturated Gospels. The first is what the book calls the Bultmannian response: the Gospels are not history, but fictional stories told by the early church to itself. Conservatives read the middle of the Gospels in largely the same way, says Wright—“as signposts toward the cross and the faith of the early church” (23). They are historical, to be sure, but meaningful only as “somewhat random illustrative material for ...

8. *Institute of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1997), 1:281.  
9. *Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1951), 296.

the saving death and resurrection of the divine Savior” (23). The second answer, the liberal goſpel, is to deny virgin birth, atoning death, and resurrection and focus entirely on the life of Jesus. This is what Wright calls “*unfaith seeking historical validation*” (28, emphasis original). Each of these responses can be pigeonholed in a slightly different way: the first, Bultmannian response, has cross without kingdom. The second, liberal, social-goſpel response, has kingdom without cross.

Since not all theological traditions can be captured under the two-answer rubric, Wright also summarizes six “inadequate” answers, which address part of the problem but not its entirety. First, some churches teach, if only implicitly, that the point of Jesus’ life is to enable believers to go to heaven when they die. Wright argues that this is a fundamental misreading of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is not a place but an action—God’s dynamic reign and rule.

This argument reflects the first step of Wright’s false dichotomy between eschatological salvation and God’s present kingdom. When Christ prays for the kingdom to come on earth as in heaven, says Wright, he is praying for God’s rule to be acknowledged and obeyed on earth as in heaven. He goes on to explain that *zoe aionios* is actually a reference to the Hebrew two-age eschatological scheme, in which God would take *ha-olam hazeh*, this age, and eventually replace it with *ha-olam ha-ba*, the age to come described by Isaiah and the prophets as a time of “God’s justice, peace, and healing” (44). The age to come is not extra-earthly, or “*eternal in the sense of being outside time, ſpace, and matter*” (45, emphasis original). When Jesus inaugurated the age to come, he began the eschatological process of rescuing the entire world—not saving sinful humans so they can escape from the present world.

Thus, in place of one inadequate answer, Wright has supplied the opposite inadequate answer. No, saving souls was not Christ’s only goal. Establishing the kingdom was not his only goal either. He did both, as Wright points out in other parts of the book.

A second inadequate answer looks to Jesus’ ethical teaching as the overall point of the Goſpels. Wright critiques this answer even more severely than the previous one: Christ was announcing the news that “*a whole new world was being born*” (47), not simply a vision of the good life. This runs together with the third inadequate answer, which looks to Jesus as an example of morality. Wright says that one might as well get in shape by watching a great athlete run a mile in four minutes. Moral exemplitude will not help moral couch potatoes.

The fourth inadequate answer is to look to the Goſpels as narrating the active obedience of Christ by which he pleased God and acquired merit to transfer to those who embrace him by faith. Wright admits that this theme is present, but argues that it is so obscure than one can hardly make it the main theme. He particularly names Reformed theology (“some

branches” of it, at any rate [51]) as the culprit in this faulty explanation, and (citing his 2009 *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision*) he ends with a somewhat backhanded compliment: “Although Reformed theology has made points about grace and faith that are themselves fully justified by the biblical data, the ways it has tried to argue these points from texts, eſpecially in Paul but also in the Goſpels, leaves a good deal to be desired” (52).

Wright diſpatches the final two answers in a few words. They are, reſpectively, that the main portions of the Goſpels are there to provide ſtories with which readers can identify, and that the narratives of Jesus’ life exiſt mainly to prove his divinity. The first one is simply silly, says Wright; the other ignores men like Elijah, who also went around doing miracles without any ſuſpicion that they were divine. The Goſpels presuppose Jesus’ divinity, rather than trying to prove it (54). Wright ſuggests that translations of John 20:31 ought to be flipped: these things are written

“that you might believe that the Messiah, the son of God, is none other than Jesus.” ... He has written this book to show that it is in Jesus, and his death and reſurrection, that Israel’s God has done what he promised he would do in and through Israel’s anointed king and has in this way revealed fully and finally who he himself actually is (55).

Wright adopts this insight as a support for his thesis (which, in some sense, it is) without commenting that D.A. Carson was the first scholar to ſuggest this reading of the verſe. While one hopes that translation committees will make it so, this reading is not yet a theological commonplace, and Wright probably could have cited Carson here. On the other hand, that would detract from the somewhat ſelf-contained nature of *How God Became King*, because Wright, whether from principle or expediency, cites only his own books and does so very ſparingly—once each, in fact. He refers to broad ſcholarly trends, but this book is almoſt entirely without footnotes or any references but biblical ones.

Wright uses Carson’s reading of John 20:31 to come to a complete announcement of the overall theme he ſees in the Goſpels: they are the ſtory of how God became king on earth as in heaven.

#### The Four Goſpel Themes

Examining the main ſtory in four chapters under four thematic headings, but also using the controlling metaphor of a four-ſpeaker ſound ſyſtem, Wright argues that the Goſpels really talk about four major themes. First, Christ is the continuation of the ſtory of Israel. Second, he is Jehovah come in the flesh. Third, he is the founder of a revitalized community of faith, the church. And finally, his kingdom, though not

originating in this world, is very much a threat to all worldly kingdoms and especially the kingdom of Caesar and, behind Caesar, the kingdom of the devil (whom Wright always calls “the satan,” no capital letters).

The first speaker in the sound system has been turned down so far it is barely heard, but its message is that Christ is the fulfillment of the calling of Israel. Abraham was called out of Babylon, but when the Old Testament ends, most of his seed is right back in exile in Babylon. The story is stuck. Despite God’s mighty acts, his people have not lived up to their calling. But through some solid exegesis, Wright demonstrates how each gospel presents Jesus as the one who stands in Israel’s place and fulfills Israel’s calling. He also takes a short excursus to show that this is precisely what the so-called Gnostic Gospels do not do. “They are later, de-Judaized, dehistoricized distortions, offering salvation not *for* the world, but *from* the world” (80, emphasis original).

The second speaker has been turned up so loud that its music is distorted. This is the Jesus-is-God speaker, and its message is true and present in the Gospels in all kinds of subtle but powerful ways. Again, Wright’s exegetical work, showing how prophecies about Yahweh are applied to Jesus through all four Gospels, is beautifully compelling. The Gospels are the story of “*how YHWH came back to his people at last*” (90, emphasis original). Look at Mark 1, where the great messenger of the covenant suddenly comes to his people—or at Luke 19:44, where Jerusalem does not know what Wright calls “the moment when God was visiting you” (99). Though this message is indeed marvelous, the Biblical support presented for the idea of God leaving his people is more assumed than stated. Wright mentions the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and says that Ezekiel declared that “Israel’s God had abandoned his house, had left the Temple and city to their long-deserved fate” (101).

While some may question the accuracy of Wright’s view, the departure of God’s glory from Solomon’s temple (described by Ezekiel 10:18; 11:23) and the prophetic silence for four hundred years can very properly be described as God’s special glorious presence leaving His people. Pompey entered the Holy of Holies in 63 B.C., and a century before, Antiochus offered a swine to Zeus in Jehovah’s temple. The only way to account for the continued life and health of these reprobate trespassers on the holiness of God is to admit that his glory was simply not present in the Temple in anything like its former state. This does not mean, nor does Wright ever imply, that God had absolutely abandoned his people; he was still present because of his unbreakable promise never to leave them (cf. Joshua 1:5 and Isaiah 7:14; 8:10 with Hebrews 13:5 and Romans 11:1). But his glorious presence in the temple was gone, and only Jesus Christ fulfilled Malachi’s warning that the Lord would suddenly return (Malachi 3:1).

If the second speaker was loud in conservative circles, the third speaker was deafening in liberal ones. This is the message about the launching of a renewed people, the church, and this is, says Wright, virtually the only message that many scholars have been finding in the Gospels for more than a century. In academia, “it has become an either/or question: *either* this story is about Jesus, *or* it is about the church” (107). Wright shows that because the stories are true and are about Jesus’ historical actions, therefore they can actually have some relevance to the church. Yes, one purpose of the Gospels is to be foundational documents for the church. But they do this by telling what happened with deep literary artistry, not by making up incidents to express the faith of the church.

The final speaker, says Wright, has been so low that it has been almost universally ignored. But make no mistake: the Gospels are *political* documents (as some liberation theologians have seen and then wandered off into the weeds, Wright notes [167]) because they show the confrontation of the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of Caesar. He draws convincing parallels with Psalms 2 and 89, but his key text is Mark 10:35–45. Here is Wright’s translation of that passage, beginning at verse 42.

“You know how it is in the pagan nations,” he said. “Think how their so-called rulers act. They lord it over their subjects. The high and mighty ones boss the rest around. But that’s not how it’s going to be with you. Anyone who wants to be great among you must first become your servant. Anyone who wants to be first must be everyone’s slave. Don’t you see? The son of man didn’t come to be waited on. He came to be the servant, to give his life as a ransom for many” (quoted on 138).

Wright’s verdict on this passage is fascinating, though it will certainly not convince everyone:

The passage just quoted is not a “political” statement (about different types of power) followed by an “atonement” statement (about how sins would be forgiven), as though the two were entirely separate things. ... [W]hen we put together kingdom and cross ... Jesus establishes the new kind of power—God’s kingdom as opposed to Caesar’s, on earth as in heaven—precisely through his (scripturally interpreted) death. ... God rescues his people from their sins, through the work of the Isaianic “servant,” precisely in order to establish his rule, his own very different kind of power, in all the world (139).

The rule of God on earth is established precisely by the death and resurrection of Christ; the kingdom comes by the cross. In short, says Wright, the turning point of history was Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. This idea is diametrically opposed

to the propaganda fed to Westerners for the last three centuries, which declares that the Enlightenment was the turning point of history. Not at all, Wright argues: history has only *one* turning point, and that was the life of Christ. He unseats all competitors, including the Enlightenment and its project of avoiding the political implications of the Gospels.

This is precisely the point where the book begins to do what Wright does best: paint the big picture on a vast canvas. Having set up the overarching biblical storyline, and shown how the Gospels pick up on this storyline, Wright starts to synthesize it all. He shows how kingdom and cross relate to each other, and thence to Israel, God, the church, and Caesar's empire. This is the true genius and value of Wright's book: his ability to tie together genuine biblical themes in an unforgettable way. When God says that he set his king on his holy hill (Psalm 2:6), who would have thought he was referring to Golgotha? When Isaiah says that God has made bare his holy arm, who would have realized that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 *was* the arm of the Lord? This is high-octane biblical theology, and for all Wright's markedly heretical soteriological problems, what he gets right he gets mind-bogglingly right.

#### Evaluation

Wright does not exactly address his original quest to find the Reformation gospel in the Gospels. For him, the best news of all is that God reigns, on earth as in heaven: *malak Elohayik*, as the Hebrews would say. Through the cross, the kingdom has come and is coming, sins are taken away, and humans can participate now in the *zoe aionios* which Wright "translates" as "the life of God's coming age." Despite Wright's corporatistic, point-missing view of justification, the story of God's determination to save his people in the way he always promised and they never expected is here in its literary, thematic, and historical wealth. He does not really address the problem of sin and justification, and thus cannot show the entire picture. But his vision does fit with Isaiah's proclamation: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isaiah 52:7 ESV). Salvation is not the total point; it is part of the good news that God reigns. For those who come to this book with a strong pre-existing understanding of sin and grace—in fact, of the Reformation or "Pauline" gospel—Wright's vision of the part of the big picture which he does see is a truly glorious one to which all Christians can give a hearty "amen."

A non-theological issue, but one that unmistakably marks the book, is Wright's constant quotation from his own New Testament "translation" or paraphrase, *The Kingdom New Testament* (HarperOne, 2011). This work consistently renders *dikaioyne* as "covenant status," and it uses a contraction

virtually wherever a contraction can possibly be used. Yet the oddest thing about this translation is that it contradicts Wright's own putative ideas about reading the New Testament in its first-century context. "If we really put Jesus back in his first-century Jewish context, people feel (and I mean 'feel'—I'm not sure 'thinking' really comes into it), we risk making him irrelevant, awkward, and distant" (110). That his true context is exactly where he ought to be put is Wright's point, and it has this reviewer's hearty agreement. Yet Wright's entire modernization job on the New Testament betrays his own thoughts (or feelings) on the subject. Gene Edward Veith comments on this problem of updating the culture of the first century: "We have seen attempts to make the Bible more contemporary, using modern language and thought-forms.... Our problem is that we can become so familiar with a story that it loses its power. Making the story seem even more familiar by contemporizing the language and the cultural references just compounds the problem."<sup>1</sup> Wright's overall project in *How God Became King* is to make the story more alive, not less—but his New Testament version tends to frustrate this goal.

"Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him," says Hebrews 9:28 (ESV). Wright could be accused with some justice of rewriting this verse to make it say that Christ came the first time to begin his kingdom and will appear a second time to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. Yet this weakness, though major, is far from enough to overwhelm the strengths of the book. In the final analysis, *How God Became King* is preeminently a message of encouragement to those stuck between this age and the age to come, already part of the kingdom but waiting eagerly for its consummation. ■

**Review:** Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). 205 pages. Paperback. ISBN 9781433521904. \$16.99. Reviewed by W.G. Crampton, Th.D.

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1. Gene Edward Veith, "Foreword" in Colin J. Cutler, *The Ward of Heaven and the Wyrn in the Sea* (Charleston, SC: Eden Books, 2012), iii.

In this review, *The Creedal Imperative* will be overviewed and used as somewhat of a springboard to discuss the importance of the use of creeds and confessions in the Christian church.

Reformed churches are noted to be “confessional” churches. When we speak of the significance of a “confessional” church we are talking about the need to hold to a confessional system of belief. This is what “confessionalism” is. Whenever an “ism” is suffixed to the root of a word or a name, it changes the meaning of the word or name in a significant way.<sup>1</sup> To be “liberal” is one thing; “liberalism” is a worldview based on certain “liberal” teachings. The man John Calvin (1509–1564) was a sixteenth-century Reformer; “Calvinism” is a worldview based on the basic tenets of the Reformer’s teachings. And Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a nineteenth-century German philosopher and economist; whereas “Marxism” is a worldview based on the teachings of Marx.

A confessional church is one which holds to a world and life view based on a system of belief. All persons have and live by creeds or confessions. Creeds are inescapable. The word “creed” comes from the Latin *credo*, which means “I believe.” Creeds have to do with what we believe. The word “confession” (from the Greek *homologeō*, “to speak the same thing”) has to do with assenting to a set of beliefs. When a person or group of persons confesses something, the confession is what is believed, and it is assented to by the person or group. Every person has a creed; it is impossible not to have a creed, because all persons have beliefs which are foundational. Even to say that “I don’t have a creed” is a creed.

We might define the confession of a biblical church as “a precise summary and orderly statement about what the church believes concerning Christian doctrine.”<sup>2</sup> Christianity is the teaching of the 66 books of the Bible. That is the definition of Christianity. The Christian life is the embracing of and application of this teaching. As taught in Hebrews 11:6 (“But without faith it is impossible to please Him [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is [God], and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”), it is not possible to be a Christian without a confession. One must have a biblical confession about God, who He is and what He does, in order to be saved. The book of Hebrews explicitly expresses the importance of confessions in three separate verses:

1. R. C. Sproul, *Lifeviews* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1986), 30–31.

2. This definition was given in a lecture on the importance of church confessions by Pastor Greg Nichols of the Grace Immanuel Reformed Baptist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

3. Greg L. Bahnsen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, a tape study (Nacogdoches, Texas: Covenant Media Foundation, n. d.), tape 8.

4. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1957, 1979), 136.

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our *confession*, Christ Jesus” (3:1); “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our [literally “the”] *confession*” (4:14); and “Let us hold fast the *confession* of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (10:23). These verses and other like them (see below) implicitly demand of us a “biblical confessionalism.”<sup>3</sup> That is, the church of Jesus Christ is hereby under divine mandate to be a confessional church.

It also needs to be said that in the New Testament there are a number of passages which teach us that Christian creeds or confessional statements already existed in the first century church. We have noted that the book of Hebrews speaks to the issue of confessions in 3:1; 4:14; and 10:23. Other verses which confirm the use of creeds in the early church are 1 Corinthians 12:3; 15:3–4; Romans 10:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 3:16; 6:20; Philippians 2:5–11, 2 Timothy 1:13–14, Jude 3; and Paul’s five “faithful sayings” in the pastoral epistles (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:8–9; 2 Timothy 2:11–13; Titus 3:4–8).

It is important for us to understand that the “keys of the kingdom,” which authoritatively “bind and loose,” were given by the Lord Jesus Christ to His church (Matthew 16:13–19; 18:15–20), not to individual Christians. This is not to say that individual Christians do not have the privilege and responsibility to search the Scriptures daily for themselves, because they do (John 5:39; Acts 17:11). And every individual will be held accountable before God as to how he responds to God’s Word (Mark 4:21–25; Revelation 2:7). But the means of grace (the preaching of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments, and prayer) are given to the church (Ephesians 2:19–22; 4:11–16; 1 Corinthians 5:1–8; 2 Timothy 4:1–5).

According to Paul it “is the church of the living God, [which is] the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). The church is not “the” truth, but as the pillar and foundation (or ground) of a building support the superstructure, “so the church supports the glorious truth of the gospel.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is the church which has the authority vested in it by Christ to set the doctrinal standards within the church, and to administer the means of grace. This is not the responsibility of individual Christians; it is the responsibility given to the church. Affirming the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* does not in any way deny the role that the church plays in biblical interpretation.

The doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is not the same as “solo” *Scriptura*. The great creeds and confessions of Christendom are to be adhered to by the church; they are not to be abandoned for individual anarchy within the church. The church does not infallibly interpret Scripture (as taught by the Roman Catholic Church), but it does have the Christ-given authority

to administer the means of grace and to “bind and loose” (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:22–23).

With these things in mind, we will review, comment on, and expand upon *The Creedal Imperative*.<sup>5</sup> Following an Acknowledgments page *The Creedal Imperative* consists of an Introduction, six chapters, a Conclusion, an Appendix, and an Index.

The Introduction (12–19) begins with the author reflecting on a friend of his who visited a church wherein the pastor stood in the pulpit and proudly pronounced that the Bible “is our only creed and our only confession.” The interesting thing, we are told, is that this particular church group actually did have a creed; it was merely unwritten. In fact, the church professed to hold to an amalgamation of various doctrines, many of which are biblically incompatible with one another. Dr. Trueman comments that not only is it impossible for churches not to have a creed, it is “vital to the present and future well-being of the church” to do so.

Trueman forthrightly states that he is a “professor at a confessional Presbyterian seminary, Westminster in Philadelphia, and a minister in a confessional Presbyterian denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.” He is “a confessional Presbyterian.” He believes that the teaching of the Westminster Standards,<sup>6</sup> comprised of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*, best summarize the teachings of the Word of God. These Standards function as a “subordinate standard” to the Word of God, which is the supreme standard by which all things are to be judged. The infallible, inerrant Word of God stands over all other standards as absolutely authoritative. Whereas the subordinate standards function as “subordinate” to the Word of God, at the same time they are “standards” by which ones orthodoxy to what the Presbyterian Church maintains is confirmed.

As the author goes on to claim, although the confessional view to which he adheres is at odds with (perhaps) the majority viewpoint in the church today, this has not always been the case. “Most Christian churches throughout the ages have defined themselves by commitment to some form of creed, confession, or doctrinal statement.”

It is somewhat ironic that many in the church today believe that tradition is for the Church of Rome and Scripture is for the Protestant Churches. But this is not true. In fact, during the exchange between the Protestant Reformer John Calvin and the Roman Catholic Cardinal Sadoletto, whereas the latter argued that the Protestants had abandoned church tradition, Calvin asserted the opposite. The Geneva Reformer maintained that he was calling for the church of his day to return to the confessional statements of the early church. “Thoughtful Christians then, and ever since,” writes Dr. Trueman, “have understood the Reformers as arguing for what we might call a tradition that is *normed* by Scripture.” In theological jargon, confessions function as *norma normata*

(“normed norms”), whereas the Scriptures are *norma normans* (“norming norms”).

In the remainder of the Introduction the author gives us a brief statement about that which each of the following chapters and the Appendix intend (which we will study below). Having completed the overview, he concludes by saying that “in this book I want to argue that creeds and confessions are thoroughly consistent with the belief that Scripture alone is the unique source of revelation and authority.” According to Dr. Trueman, it is “necessary for the well-being of the church” for creeds and confessions to be adhered to by church bodies. It is a “biblical imperative.” In the words of Robert Reymond, “the church did not err when it wrote creeds; it errs when it ceases to write them.”<sup>7</sup>

Chapter 1 deals with “The Cultural Case against Creeds and Confessions” (21–49). This chapter follows up on the “knee-jerk reaction” against the necessity of creeds and confessions which was addressed in the Introduction. Creeds and confessions in the church are wrongly assumed to supplant the supreme authority of Scripture. The author begins by stating “three basic presuppositions” which he believes “must be true for the case for confessions to be a sound one.”

First: “The past is important, and has things of positive relevance to teach us.” Creeds and confessions accomplish this in the church. Second: “Language must be an appropriate vehicle for the stable transmission of truth across time and geographical use.” Creeds and confessions function in this way as “documents that make theological truth claims.” And third: “There must be a body or an institution that can authoritatively compose and enforce creeds and confessions.” This body is the church, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (see 1 Timothy 3:15).

Sadly, says the author, each of these presuppositional assumptions is suspect in our day. How is this so? First, there is the “devaluing of the past.” People of our day seem to think that confessions drawn up by men who lived hundreds of years ago under a different mindset in culture, morals, etc., can hardly have anything to do with our present day affairs.

Then too, there is the present day issue of “words, mysticism, and pragmatism.” Creedal words are denied as a reliable means of communication. Mysticism is seen as an alternative. Pragmatism is also a prevalent worldview. Whatever seems to work is given priority. Confessions of hundreds of years past are not considered to be practical today.

5. Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2012). The pagination found in the body of this review is from Dr. Trueman’s book.

6. All references to the Westminster Standards in this review are from *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994). The English has been modernized.

7. Robert L. Reymond, *Faith’s Reasons For Believing* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2008), 56.

“Antiauthoritarianism” is a problem in the twenty-first century. The possibility of ancient creeds and confessions having authority over the church of our day is seriously questioned. The “fear of exclusivism” in our day is another hindrance to the usefulness of creeds. Church creeds make statements which are exclusivistic. Positive declarations about doctrine inevitably exclude those who disagree. Those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity are declared to be non-Christians. Christianity itself is exclusive in nature (see Luke 11:23; John 14:6), and those who disagree with its truth claims are not permitted to join a biblically based church.

The factors spoken of above tend to be “cultural factors that militate against creeds and confessions.” Far too many people in this generation find it to be a form of “distasteful Christianity.”

Chapter 2 has to do with “The Foundations of Creedalism” (51–80). In this chapter, writes the author, “I do not intend to refute, point by point, all of the challenges I outlined in chapter 1.” Rather, he intends to set forth a “series of positions that, taken together, will require the church which rejects confessions to realize how much unbiblical ideas have shaped her thinking in this area and thus revise [his or] her attitude toward creeds and confessions.” He does this by addressing “the adequacy of words,” “words in service of the Divine,” “human nature as universal,” “the church as an institution,” and “a form of sound words.” Biblical passages are adduced in each section to assure us of the soundness of the author’s arguments.

He contends that:

God is a God who reveals Himself through actions and words. In His revelation words have a primary power because they are the means by which He articulates His presence, by which He commands and promises, by which He establishes and defines relationships with His people, and by which He explains the significance of other, non-verbal revelatory actions. To jump forward from Paul to the Reformation, it is why the Reformers made the pulpit central: they saw the verbal proclamation of God as being central to the church, as that which in a sense constituted her very being in the present. That God remains the same, that human beings continue to be made in His image and to face the same fundamental questions in terms of their relationship to Him, means that the basic conceptual building blocks of theology and doctrine...remain the same, despite superficial changes of context.

Dr. Trueman then explains that Paul’s charge to Timothy to “hold fast the *form* of sound words that you have learned from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13)

8. Douglas F. Kelly, *Systematic Theology: Volume One* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2012), 426–435.

tell us that there is a “model, form, or standard that is intended to function as a trustworthy or reliable guide.” Other passages such as 2 Timothy 1:9–10, Philippians 2:5–11, and Paul’s five “faithful sayings” in the pastoral epistles (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:8–9; 2 Timothy 2:11–13; Titus 3:4–8) should assure us that “the notion of tradition, of the need to hand on the gospel, is deeply embedded in the nature of the gospel itself.” Therefore, “the historical particularity of the history of Israel and of Jesus Christ means that, if the gospel is not passed on from generation to generation, then it remains in a sense trapped in the past.” Creeds and confessions are essential to the furtherance of the Christian faith.

Chapter 3 studies “The Early Church” (81–108). Having shown that the New Testament itself contains the elements of early confessional statements, the author goes on to point out that “the immediate post-apostolic period” evidences the same. From as early as the second century there was a body of creedal theology which was prominent within the church. The early church referred to the “rule of faith” as such a confessional document. Early Christian creedal statements speak of both the importance of church government (and thereby authority levels within the church) and doctrinal content which adheres to the basics of apostolic teaching.

Douglas Kelly also maintains that from its earliest days the church never separated the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* from the “rule of truth” (*regula veritatis*) of confessional statements.<sup>8</sup> As stated above, *sola Scriptura* was never meant to imply *solo Scriptura*. Church confessions were considered of the utmost importance as “subordinate standards” in the Christian community. The truth of God’s Word is taught through the church (1 Timothy 3:15).

In the balance of this chapter Dr. Trueman speaks of and elaborates on the Apostles’ Creed (the earliest of the church creeds), the Seven Ecumenical Councils (Nicaea I, Constantinople I, Ephesus I, Chalcedon, Constantinople II, Constantinople III, and Nicaea II), and the Athanasian Creed. The church does itself a great disservice, says the author, when it disclaims the significance of creedal theology.

Chapter 4 is on “Classical Protestant Confessions” (109–133). Having dealt with creedalism in the early church, in chapter 4, Dr. Trueman studies the time of Reformational theology (i.e., the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). The period of the Reformation, he tell us, was bothered by a good deal of “institutional fragmentation.” During this time the need for confessions became even more evident.

In this chapter the author does a superb job of summarizing the Anglican Articles (consisting of the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and Homilies), the Lutheran Book of Concord (a Lutheran collection of The Apostles’ Creed, The Nicene Creed, The Athanasian Creed, The Augsburg Confession, The Apology of the Augsburg Confession,

The Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, The Small Catechism, The Large Catechism, and The Formula of Concord), the Three Forms of Unity (the continental Reformation's collection of The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort), the Westminster Standards (consisting of the Presbyterian's Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and the Shorter Catechism, along with a Directory of Public Worship), and the London Baptist Confession of 1689.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Trueman concludes the chapter by correctly pointing out that "there is a remarkable degree of consensus among these documents on the basics of salvation."

Chapter 5 covers "Confession as Praise" (135–158). Confessional praise, asserts the author, is an often over-looked aspect of the importance of creeds and confessions. Dr. Trueman begins by pointing out that the New Testament itself contains doctrinal songs of praise. Romans 10:9–10, Philippians 2:5–11, 1 Timothy 1:15–17, and 1 Timothy 3:14–16 are cited as examples. We are told that creeds in the early church were used in this fashion. The *Didache*, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed were used doxologically in worship services. The great creeds and confessions of the Christian faith "highlight the fact that God is Trinity." And the fact that the Christian life is Trinitarian in nature is a biblical truth that should be proclaimed in our worship services. Confessional recitation is useful in this way. Further, we are assured that such creedal liturgical use does not need to lead to some kind of formalism.

The chapter concludes with a "three-fold aspect of creedal doxology." First there is the "significance at the congregational level" wherein the members of the gathered congregation remind each other of the identity of the God who is being worshiped. Second there is the "significance at the level of the congregation's relationship to the broader culture," wherein the church body boldly proclaims that all other deities are pretenders to the divine throne of the God of the Bible. Third, there is the "significance in terms of God in that it represents the ascribing to Him of that glory and honor which is His alone." Biblically based creeds and confessions are useful as "Confessions of Praise."

Chapter 6 deals with "On the Usefulness of Creeds and Confessions" (159–185). In this final chapter the author lists a number of ways in which creeds and confessions may be used effectually within the church. He comments that the list is not exhaustive and that some might want to add certain points or delete certain points. This reviewer will attempt to do this very thing (where it is appropriate), while at the same time saying that Dr. Trueman's list is well thought out.

First, the author begins by restating that "all churches and all Christians have creeds and confessions." Creeds are inescapable. When a person or group of persons confesses

something, the confession is what is believed, and it is assented to by the person or group. Every person has a creed; it is impossible not to have a creed, because all persons have beliefs which are foundational.

Second, Dr. Trueman comments that one of the most important functions that confessions fulfill is that of "delimiting the power of the church." Living in an age where the idea of authority levels is suspect, this creedal function seems counterintuitive. In actuality, however, it is not. There are two important aspects of elder leadership that must be dealt with: doctrinal competency and authority. Doctrinal competency without authority renders elder authority impotent, preventing the elders from leading the congregation effectively. Authority without doctrinal competency, on the other hand, may lead (and often does) to a form of despotism. Confessions function as an aid in both areas.

Third, we read that confessions and creeds "offer succinct and thorough summaries of the [Christian] faith." They serve as distillations of the teaching of Scripture, and are therefore tools for Christian education. Here we have the "pattern of sound words" that Paul speaks of in 2 Timothy 1:13–14. As stated by Robert Reymond: "The church must reflect deeply on the truth of God's Word and frame what it finds there in symbols and confessions in order better to engender in its members a clear conception of their faith and to convey to outsiders a definite understanding of its doctrines."<sup>10</sup>

In the Bible we have nearly 1200 chapters and 750,000 words. Confessions such as the Westminster Standards condense the doctrine for teaching purposes in accordance with passages such as Matthew 28:18–20; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; and 2 Timothy 1:13–14. In the *Westminster Confession of Faith* we have 33 chapters; the *Larger Catechism* has 196 questions and answers; and the *Shorter Catechism* has 107 questions and answers (all of which contain Scripture proofs for the doctrines taught therein).

Fourth, confessions "allow for appropriate discrimination between members and office bearers." In the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (30:1–4), for example, we read

The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.

To these officers, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed: by virtue whereof, they have power respectively to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word and censures; and to open it unto

9. It is somewhat surprising that Dr. Trueman does not mention the Congregational Savoy Declaration of 1658.

10. Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998), 878.

penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.

Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the Church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person.

Here we are told that the Head of the church, Jesus Christ, requires a form of government in His church which is under the authority of "church officers." We are also told that these officers have the biblical responsibility and right to carry out church discipline where necessary.

Confessions also are an aid in guarding us against heresy. Various doctrines which are taught may be run through the "grid" of our creed or confession to see if these teachings are in conformity to proper doctrine.

And fifth, confessions serve as the basis for ecclesiastical fellowship. The Bible does not envisage the church as a union of those who agree to differ with one another, but as a body of persons who are marked by peace and unity. The church is "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). The members of the church are to be "likeminded toward one another...that [they] may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5-6). Confessions are to be seen as "aids in the protection of a church's unity and in the preservation of peace." They serve as a basis of ecclesiastical fellowship.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, in Amos 3:3 we read "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" And in Matthew 12:25 we are taught that: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand." There are certain doctrines that distinguish the Reformed church and separate her from other groups (e.g., Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholics). There are also some doctrines wherein some church bodies differ with other "Christian" bodies that disallow us to be in the same denomination or fellowship group (e.g., the doctrine

of infant baptism, the doctrine of the necessity of a church court system).

The Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Protestant Church all hold to the doctrine of the Bible as the infallible, inerrant Word of God. But these church bodies differ in their interpretation of the Bible. Which teaching is correct? What do we believe is true regarding the teaching of the Bible? The only proper answer is: "What the Bible teaches." But what does the Bible teach? This is where confessions and creeds play an important role. As noted above, the teaching of the church as a whole is far more significant than the statements of just one teacher, no matter how good that teacher is. According to Scripture, it is the church which is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). We must be careful not to "remove the ancient [doctrinal] landmark, which our [church] fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:28; 23:10).

In these ways confessions serve as "subordinate standards" to the Word of God, which function in a "ministerial" fashion rather than in a magisterial fashion (as in the Roman Catholic Church). The Westminster divines were very careful to guard against anyone thinking that the Standards are on the same par with Scripture, or that the confessional statements were to be considered as magisterial in import rather than ministerial. In 1:6, 8, 10, for example, we read (emphasis added):

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: *unto which nothing at any time is to be added*, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, *in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them.*

The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined; and in whose sentence we are to rest; *can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.*

The Westminster Standards, then, serve as "subordinate" standards; the Word of God alone is "the" Standard.

In the Conclusion (187-189) the author summarizes the six chapters and closes the section by saying: "I hope that this book goes some way to persuading those who earnestly

11. Robert Paul Martin, "Introduction," Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1989, 2005), 17.

wish to follow Paul and to be faithful, biblical Christians, that such is best done in the context of confessional churches. To take the Bible seriously means that creeds and confessions, far from being intrusions into the Christian life, are actually imperatives for the church.”

The Appendix is on “Revising and Summarizing Confessions” (191–197). The author begins this Appendix by stating that church confessions are not the ultimate standard. That status is given to the Word of God alone. So wherever we find that there are errors in any confession, the errors need “to be corrected or supplemented.” There are several things that need to be remembered when it comes to revisions. We will look at three of them.

First, confessions are “ecclesiastical documents.” That being so, confessions are more significant than the works of one man would be. For example, John Calvin’s *Institutes* are very profitable and should be studied with reverence. But Calvin’s writings are the work of one man (as important as he may be); they do not have the same status as a church confession. When the church writes a confession there is an authority level involved which far transcends the writings of one man.

Second, subscribing to a confession does not mean that we must believe every aspect of the document with the same level of adherence that we would the Scriptures. There may well be phrases that could be better stated today than they were hundreds of years ago. This does not, however, necessitate the revision of a confession.

And third, “many creeds and confessions have retained their basic form and matter and yet transcend their original contents to become the beloved standards of churches all over the world.” Any revision, therefore, would affect the church worldwide. Great caution should be exercised prior to such a revision. The present writer recalls that J. Gresham Machen was once asked about the necessity of making changes to the Westminster Standards in his day. He appropriately replied that the generation in which he lived was not a “confession changing” generation.<sup>12</sup> This reviewer doubts that we who are living in the early part of the twenty-first century are such a generation either. We must be careful not to “remove the ancient [doctrinal] landmark, which our [church] fathers have set” (Proverbs 22:28; 23:10).

What are we to conclude regarding *The Creedal Imperative*? It is a well written book that addresses a much misunderstood biblical truth. In the words of Cornelis Venema: “[Dr.] Trueman’s case for what he terms ‘the creedal imperative’ is spot on.”<sup>13</sup> Creeds and confessions are important. They are more than merely important. In the words of Dr. Trueman, the Bible gives us a “creedal imperative.” If the church of Jesus Christ is going to be faithful to her Lord, she must be a confessional church. ■

**Book review:** *The Day of Worship: Reassessing the Christian Life in Light of the Sabbath*, Ryan M McGraw. Paperback: 208 pages. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books (2011). ISBN-10: 1601781555. ISBN-13: 978-1601781550. Pbk \$16.00. E-book \$7.99. Reviewed by Matthew Vogan, Ruling Elder, Inverness, Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

This is not simply one more book on the Sabbath. The focus of the book is not primarily upon the principle of the continuing obligation to observe the fourth commandment or its practical application. There is no shortage of books, whether historical classics or contemporary treatments, that seek to defend the doctrine of the Sabbath maintained in the Westminster standards (the author refers to recent books by Joseph Pipa, Walter Chantry, and Iain D. Campbell). That doctrine is well summarised in the Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 61: “The Sabbath is to be sanctified by an holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and by taking up the entire time in the public and private exercises of God’s worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.”

As the author notes, however, although defenders of this principle have done excellent work, “many have read these works and remained unconvinced” (p.2). This is largely because the prevalent attitude to the Sabbath maintained by many in evangelical and Reformed churches is a symptom of other fundamental problems in their approach to spiritual things. There are presuppositions in relation to the Christian life such as the Christian’s relationship to the law of God and the world that must be addressed in order to prepare the way for accepting the biblical concept of Sabbath keeping. In short, the puritan biblical Sabbath will never be adopted until puritan attitudes to the Christian life are understood and accepted as scriptural.

This book is unique in establishing the biblical foundations for the Westminster position from a different angle and seeking to address “the primary underlying issues behind the widespread neglect of the Sabbath day” (p.2). The author addresses head-on the response of many who “have dismissed this viewpoint out of hand as unwarranted from Scripture, legalistic, and inconsistent with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In this sense it is a supplement rather than a replacement for existing volumes in defense of the Westminster position on the Sabbath.

The book is also about much more than the Sabbath itself. It addresses “significant issues such as, the kind of obedience required by the gospel, the relation of the believer to an unbelieving world, the relationship between the Law and the gospel, and the focus of our hope of eternal life” (p.4). The

12. This reviewer does not recall where he read this statement.

13. Dr. Venema’s comment is found on the back cover of this book.

whole purpose of the book could be well summarized in the words of J.C. Ryle: “vital religion never flourishes where the Sabbath is not well kept” (p.143).

The book begins by outlining the importance of Sabbath keeping as emphasised in Scripture. It is a creation ordinance as fundamental to society as marriage and work and it is a sign of God’s covenant connected with the worship of God within the Ten Commandments. The author emphasises the frequency with which the Sabbath is emphasised in Scripture, especially as a litmus test of backsliding. It is “one of the greatest causes of the weakness of the church and serves as a lightning rod that attracts the judgement of God to churches and nations” (p.8).

In contrast, this importance “has largely been underestimated in the modern Reformed community” (p.2) and treated as a peripheral issue. According to the author there is a general belief amongst Reformed Churches in the USA that the fourth commandment remains binding but that it is breached only by volunteering for secular employment on the Lord’s Day (i.e. one must comply with the request of an employer). The reviewer must confess to being genuinely shocked to learn this. The author appositely quotes Joseph Pipa’s question: “Is it not possible that one reason for the spiritual weakness of the church is her failure to honor God on the Lord’s Day?” (p.24).

“There was a time in which Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and even some Anglicans and Dutch Reformed shared a fundamental unity as to how the Lord’s Day, or Christian Sabbath, should be kept” (p.1). Within the past century the questions about Sabbath keeping have, however, turned from diversity in relation to the application of the principle to debate about the principle itself. It must be genuinely shocking to some to learn that in 1853 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA declared: “A Church without the sabbath is apostate” (quoted p.12).

Debate over the Sabbath principle and the extent of its requirements often centres upon the competing interpretations of the locus classicus in the concluding verses of Isaiah chapter 58. The author believes that the basic reasons for disagreement in interpretation are generally ignored and he seeks to investigate the presuppositions that Isaiah brought to the passage rather than those of the interpreter by exploring the passage within the context of the book. The underlying theological and contextual issues inexorably lead to a view of the Sabbath as a means of worship and communion with God. The principle of worship is, as it were, built into the essential design of the Sabbath. The author engages with and effectively counters R.C. Sproul’s “anti-Puritan” interpretation of these verses, to show that recreation is prohibited as contrary to the spirit and purpose of the day. The practical implications of “not finding thine own pleasure” or “speaking thine own words” on God’s holy day are drawn out for life in

contemporary society, together with a winsome treatment of the promises attached to these requirements which speak of heaven-sent revival.

It is no surprise that this view of Sabbath keeping seems like a spiritual marathon to the average Christian today. “Striving to keep the Sabbath day holy may reveal that we are out of shape spiritually. Worldliness, or earthly mindedness may be the underlying cause” (p.65). Sabbath-keeping exposes the extent to which worldliness has gained upon us. This is an intensely challenging portion for us, however high may be our view of the Sabbath. In this section the author also refutes effectually the idea that Sabbath keeping is negated because “all of life is worship”.

A very challenging chapter follows, asking the question “What is Missing?” in the Christian life as it is lived in our day. Separation from the world is certainly missing. Bringing the mirror of Scripture before us, the author explores the theme of godly living before returning to the Sabbath question in order to point out that we are shamed by the piety of the Old Testament Church which “spent more time in extended and intense acts of spiritual worship than most believers do today” (p.89).

The author emphasizes that the Westminster position on Sabbath-keeping cannot survive in a worldly church. He has an apt turn of phrase in underlying this point with sententious effect. “Sabbath-keeping either causes the church to flee from worldliness, or worldliness causes the church to abandon the Sabbath” (p.89). “Observing the Sabbath as a day of worship to the Lord must either begin killing the worldliness dwelling in the hearts of God’s people, or it will uncover it to an extent they have never known before.” No wonder it is “so painful to many because it places a firm finger on a besetting sin that mars the entirety of their Christian lives” (p.91). “Keeping the Sabbath as a day of worship will either help *prevent* hypocrisy in religion or it will help *expose* it” (p.90). This will give cause for much searching self-examination on the part of even the most sabbatarian of believers.

Chapter 6 deals with the Reformed Application of Law as central to this question. He shows how the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles give us a model as to how the Law of God should be interpreted and applied in the Christian life. The application of the sixth commandment is taken as a case study and then used as a “template” for how to apply the fourth commandment. This establishes the overall approach to the Ten Commandments adopted by the Westminster Catechisms as biblical in regarding the Commandments as both positive and negative in purpose, capable of transgression in thought, word and deed, and also capable of being transgressed in our relationships with others. From this point of view there “was a certain inevitability about the pattern of Sabbath-keeping proposed by the Westminster divines” (p.116).

“Some General Practical Observations” are introduced in the next chapter. The chapter is comparatively brief and hints at miscellaneous issues such as preparing the night before the Sabbath, the principle of what best facilitates worship and the priority of corporate worship.

In directly tackling the allegation of legalism generally levelled against Westminster Sabbatarianism, the author gives an accurate definition of legalism. He shows that it is either justification by the works of the law, sanctification by the works of the law or adding to or taking from the law of God. It is not simply keeping the law and “cannot refer to the careful and particular keeping of God’s law” (p.126). He goes on to demonstrate that antinomianism is in fact “a subspecies of legalism” (p.137); both regard the law as only a covenant of works. The prevalent antinomianism in relation to the Law among Reformed churches reveals the deeper problem of legalistic views of the gospel. The gospel requires joyful obedience and love to the law of God in dependence upon the Spirit of grace. The puritan Sabbath is the inexorable result of a biblical view of the relationship between the law and the gospel.

Our attitude to Sabbath-keeping unmasks not only our view of the law and gospel of God but even how we regard the Most High Himself. Thomas Shepard asked: “Is the infinite majesty and glory of God so vile in your eyes that you do not think him worthy of special attendance one day in a week?” (quoted on p.115).

The final chapter deals with the eternal perspective of the Sabbath, beginning with the attractive illustration that if “a man spent one-seventh of his life in a foreign culture...he could not return to his own country without weaving something foreign into all he said and did” (p.145). A Sabbath in communion with God is a day spent in heaven; the influence of this queen of days upon our lives ought to be evident.

The author presents an overview of Hebrews 4:1–11 in order to “establish the inseparable connection between Sabbath-keeping and the hope of our eternal rest in heaven” (p.146). He proceeds to speak of the activities of heaven, i.e., the worship of God and how Sabbath keeping starts out to imitate such activities, thus strengthening us by fresh exercise of faith on our pilgrimage to the heavenly Zion. Depending upon one’s interpretation of the pictures of Revelation, there is some difficulty in establishing the activities of heaven. The author feels that Revelation 4 and 5 “illustrate this beyond doubt” (p.153) although older interpreters found here a symbolic vision of the spiritual realities relative to the visible church on earth and its divine superintendence rather than a picture of heaven. Nevertheless all would agree that the hope of the beatific vision is something to long for and cultivate by promoting the glory of God in this life. The chapter provides an appropriate crescendo with which to close the main body of the book.

The chapters are concise and contain much in little. In

some cases they are self-contained in their treatment of a subject. In other cases it has proven difficult to restrict further related discussions to the relevant chapter. There is a familiar and direct style of engagement with the reader which derives from its origin in a series of sermons to his congregation Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA), Conway, South Carolina.

There are two appendices. The first is B.B. Warfield’s excellent defence of the perpetuity of Sabbath, rooted in the exegesis of Paul’s epistles and the words of Christ. In particular, he draws vital truths from the way in which Paul applies the rest of the Ten Commandments. The second appendix is Ryan McGraw’s review of *Keeping the Sabbath Today?* by Jay E. Adams. We were not familiar with this book but the quotations that are reproduced from it are deeply shocking in the antinomian views of the law of God that they reveal together with Marcionite views of the Old Testament. The review shows not only that the reformed view of the law has been abandoned by Adams but that he condemns it as judaizing. It is sad and solemn to learn that one of the reasons that the book was written by Adams was to enable anti-Sabbatarians to take their ordination vows with “greater confidence.” We ought to pray that he and others would not be left to such views and to cause others to stumble. The review has a definite place within this book in illustrating just how far modern Reformed Christians may be from historic and biblical views of the Sabbath.

Overall, *The Day of Worship* is an excellent, robust yet accessible resource that anyone will profit from and must make sure to obtain. The book is in fact a far more unique and hard-hitting contribution to this subject than the title would suggest on face value. While the title and subtitle represent the theme of the book accurately, we fear that it will be primarily those already sympathetic to Sabbath-keeping who will be inclined to take it off the shelf. That would be disappointing, since a more direct and challenging title might well have engaged a different response.

There are one or two areas that must qualify our enthusiastic recommendation. One of these relates to the vexed question of Sabbath public transport. The author is very clear that it is contrary to the fourth commandment to engage others to work on our behalf. This is, of course, expressly forbidden within the commandment itself: neither “... thy man servant nor thy maid servant ...” (Exod. 20:10). The author does not, however, apply this with consistency. “Is it not strange,” he asks, “when Christians do not hesitate to hire pilots and flight attendants to break the Sabbath for them?” (p.103). Only pages later we read that “though patronizing the labor of others on the Sabbath is wrong, men’s consciences differ whether or not it is lawful to use public transportation on the Sabbath, provided that it is the only means of attending corporate worship” (p.109). The author recognises that there “is only one legitimate answer to such questions, yet the answers are not

always easy to determine, and brethren must exercise charity and patience toward one another in these cases.”<sup>1</sup>

It is very disappointing to learn that the author’s charity and patience is less extensive to those who seek to be consistent on this matter. Reference is made to the fact that John Murray was unable to pursue licensing in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland since he wished to allow others to travel by public transport on the Sabbath, though it was something that in conscience he could not himself do. The author then comments: “sadly some will always lean toward an extrabiblical pharisaism” (p.23). In the light of discussions in the rest of this book, this is a very strong, unsubstantiated charge indeed.

The core matter is whether or not use of transport run for commercial gain on the Sabbath is a breach of the fourth commandment.<sup>2</sup> If we shy away from the difficult applications of the commandment it will in fact undermine the consistency of our whole approach and encourage people to search for loopholes where they wish to find them. How far does one push this particular open question? Is taking a Sabbath flight (run by a commercial airline) for the purposes of attending or perhaps leading corporate worship to be winked at too? How can one condemn the drivers, attendants, operators

1. Clearly, however, engaging such means on the Sabbath is “wrong on the part of the payee, because, without deference, implied or expressed, to what the Fourth Commandment prohibits, on the one hand, or allows, on the other, he, as a contracting party, carries forward into the business of the Lord’s Day the same mercenary aims, the same working conditions, and the same contract terms which he lawfully and necessarily employs on the six days during which, God says, ‘thou shalt do all thy work’ and wrong on the part of the payer, because, as the other contracting party, by availing himself of the service, and by paying the stipulated fare, he voluntarily, and for the most part, cheerfully accommodates himself to these aims and conditions and accepts these terms. Nor can any amount or species of motive serve to make it right,” *Statement in Reference to Churchgoing by Public Conveyances on the Sabbath*, Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1928.

2. Noted leading ministers of the past such as J.C. Ryle, R. Murray M’Cheyne, James Begg and John Kennedy of Dingwall were staunchly united against public transport on the sabbath.

3. It may be of interest to learn that Samuel Miller led the 1836 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in condemning sabbath public transport as tending to “disgrace the church of God” and making those who used it to be “partakers in other men’s sins” (*The Religious Monitor and Evangelical Repository*, Vol. 13, [1836]: 91). In 1855 the Presbyterian Board of Publication, published the title *Monitory Letters to Church Members* (Philadelphia, 1855) which condemned Sabbath public transport as “a systematic violation of God’s holy day” (pp.51–55). Presbyterians also promoted strict blue laws in Pittsburgh in 1859 which prohibited Sabbath public transport.

4. Henry Alford, Christopher Wordsworth, F.H.A Scrivener, James Drummond, Ezra Abbott, John Burgon, Herman C. Hoskier, Wilbur Pickering, Bart D. Ehrman and Allen Wikgren, a member of the UBS Greek New Testament Committee who dissented on this point.

5. P<sup>75</sup> does not have the article, i.e. “the,” at the beginning.

and owners of public transport run on the Sabbath who are employed by those who travel to corporate worship? If one form of employment in the realm of worldly gain could be permitted then, to be consistent, no type of employment on the Lord’s Day can be made a matter of discipline. Having reached this point it is futile and contradictory to maintain any witness against breach of the Sabbath. In a different context, the author quotes an apposite remark by William Plumer: “He who is not prepared to stand in a minority of one with a majority of millions against him, will not keep a good conscience respecting the Lord’s Day” (p.126).<sup>3</sup>

To take refuge in the assertion that one would not travel by Sabbath public transport but could not condemn others for doing so is, as the Free Presbyterian minister Neil Cameron pointed out, a form of sophistry. “God’s Word says: ‘Thou shalt not suffer sin on thy neighbour.’ The real meaning of such an argument is that the Synod should consent to allow their people to do that which they (these sophists) feel to be sin in their own conscience. If that be so why do they say that they would not do it themselves? Such arguments are devoid of any real force in face of the terms of the Fourth Commandment, and integrity of conscience.”

We are pleased that the Bible version quoted throughout is the AV/KJV. McGraw is, however, critical at times of the translations adopted by that translation. One example is in relation to Hebrews 4:11 where he believes “unbelief” should be “disobedience” “in order to be more faithful to the Greek text” (p.150). John Owen persuasively defends the AV/KJV translation of this word in his comments on Hebrews 3:18.

Sadly, it does not appear that the author has complete sympathy with the providentially preserved Received Text underlying the AV/KJV. He writes in relation to John 1:18: “There is strong textual evidence that the word ‘Son’ here should actually be ‘God’ which emphasizes that the one who came and declared the glory of God was himself the one and only God in human flesh” (p.152).

This textual variant has been much debated and, due to space, relevance and lack of expertise, it will not be possible to do more than allude to the issues involved. It is significant to note, however, that the reading “Son” has been defended by a number of textual critics; a number of whom do not favour the Textus Receptus.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps by strong textual evidence for “God”, McGraw means the antiquity of manuscripts such as P<sup>66</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>, which are 3rd century as opposed to the 5th century witness of Codex Alexandrinus and Codex W.<sup>5</sup> The patristic testimony of Valentinus c.170 and the 3rd Century fathers Irenaeus, Clement and Origen are in its favour.

This is not, however, without its problems since Valentinus was a Gnostic and “only begotten God” appears to have been a trademark phrase which supported his distinction between the Logos and the Son as different deities in this portion of

John's Gospel; the reading "Son" would, however, deny this.<sup>6</sup> The eclecticist textual critic J.K. Elliott notes that the reading 'God' is uniquely Egyptian, being found "virtually exclusively in Alexandrian tradition."<sup>7</sup> Theodore P. Letis draws upon scholarship that highlights the Coptic influence upon the Alexandrian manuscripts and suggests that the reading may have derived from an altered Coptic version used within a Gnostic community in Egypt.<sup>8</sup>

The reading "Son" is supported by the oldest versional evidence (but not the Coptic) and has wider geographical testimony in terms of patristic, versional and manuscript (Western, Caesarean, Byzantine) evidence. It is, as J.K. Elliott notes, "evidently ancient, being known to Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian"<sup>9</sup> to whom we can add the third century fathers Clement, Origen, Hypolytus and Hymaneus. Indeed the number of fathers supporting "Son" is virtually double that of the contrary reading (20 against 11).

The reading "God" was also asserted by Arians (with whom it was a favourite phrase) over against men such as Athanasius who maintained "Son". "Only begotten God" is "a term that reverential minds instinctively shrink from" and one "which one hardly likes to utter with the voice."<sup>10</sup> Various attempts have been made to give the phrase an orthodox sense or to punctuate it or reverse the word order in ways not followed in modern versions. While the manner of the Eternal Son's subsistence is by way of eternal generation, it is, however, heretical to maintain that the substance of the Godhead is begotten. The reading "Son" best fits with the usual Johannine terminology expressed elsewhere (John 1:14; 3:16; 18; 1 John 4:9). We feel that "strong textual evidence" really ought to mean the number of manuscripts (99% in favour of "Son" according to Wilbur Pickering) and versions, their ecclesiastical usage, ongoing witness in all generations and the number, as well as the orthodoxy and antiquity of corroborative patristic citations; all witnessing to the special preservation of Providence. We have very high regard and gratitude for the publisher but this only increases our disappointment that such ideas should appear in one of their books.

These necessary caveats aside, we are confident that this book will be profitable where heed is given to its patient approach in distinguishing the precious (the glory of God through His appointed day of worship) from the vile (love of the world and hatred of God's law). It will have done faithful work in this generation if, by the Spirit's help, it sends out many more diligent reapers into what Thomas Watson calls "our spiritual harvest days" who come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. ■

**Review:** Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) 538 pages. \$36.99 (cloth). ISBN 9780310243731. Reviewed by Jimmy Hall (M.Div., Mid-America Reformed Seminary), an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in the United States, serving in Herreid, South Dakota.

### Introduction

When somebody begins to take up the study of New Testament Greek for the purpose of serving the beloved people of God, one can be compared to a meteorite entering the atmosphere of earth burning bright in the beginning of exegesis and quickly going out when reality sets in. Part of that reality is coming to acknowledge that the exegete lacks the competence unless God makes such a one competent (2 Cor. 3:5). But never fear, all of the volumes of Greek New Testament manuals for beginners, lexical aids, inductive and deductive, comprehensive surveys and Greek readers promise to help the exegete to go beyond the basics.

The next step many take out of frustration is to forfeit the study of New Testament Greek and chew the food of other people via commentaries. As a consequence, many fall into the trap of vain confidence having not done their own work, as is evident in the repetitive verbal pauses from the pulpit (awkward...). Does the world of commentaries really need another commentary or merely exegetes who will do the work? Besides, don't commentaries replace with indolence the diligent preparation for the pulpit, and the sweat and hard work of prayerful and meditative wrestling with the text? However, what if a commentary is structured in such a way that it becomes very useful as you work through a general discussion regarding exegetical steps on the way to the structure of the sermon?

6. Moreover, the Gnostics prohibited speaking the name of the Father, i.e., Son as a mystery reserved for the initiated. It is also significant that Clement's reference to this verse in *Excerpta Ex Theodoto* is in the context of discussing the views of the Gnostics.

7. James K. Elliott, *New Testament Textual Criticism: The Application of Thoroughgoing Principles* (Leiden, Brill, 2010), p.218. Elliott thinks that the evidence is inconclusive for either reading. Bart D. Ehrman also draws attention to its Alexandrian origin in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 82.

8. The Gnostic influence is discussed at length by Theodore P. Letis in *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind* [Philadelphia: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1997], 107–32. Gnostics were known to emend the Prologue to John's Gospel.

9. Elliott, *New Testament Textual Criticism*, 218.

10. F.H.A. Scrivener, *Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament and the Ancient Manuscripts which contain it, chiefly addressed to those who do not read Greek* (Cambridge, 1875), 154–55.

The Editorial Board of Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series seeks to equip such a person with an up-to-date exegetical tool. However, the caution we must all heed is that we must do our own work in respect to the text of Scripture, sweat in it and over it, and live in it in order that we may bring the Word of God to the people of God. It will be the author's privilege to consider the commentary before us, namely, *Ephesians*, edited and written by Clinton E. Arnold and published by Zondervan in 2010. We will consider the contents of the exegetical commentary, its usefulness, and finally, the contribution this commentary has made to the milieu of the world of commentaries.

### The Author

Who is the author of the *Ephesians* Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament? Sometimes institutions of study provide the reader with information regarding why certain decisions were made regardless of the subject under consideration. However, we should not dismiss a scholar's conclusion because of his or her university training. After all, Leiden University graduated both Jacob Arminius and Abraham Kuyper! Clinton E. Arnold is an accomplished scholar who teaches at the same school from which he earned a Masters of Divinity. At Talbot School of Theology, Clinton E. Arnold teaches New Testament language and literature. He also earned a Ph. D. from one of the oldest universities in the world, the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. In addition to the degrees and professorship, he also did some post doctorate work on Colossians at Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen, Germany. Clinton E. Arnold is in the company of such scholars as Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer, Hans Kung, Pope Benedict XVI, and Philip Schaff; all of whom had some relationship to the university. Finally, Clinton E. Arnold is also president to the Evangelical Theological Society which produces the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. So, who is the author of the *Ephesians* Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament? The answer is that the author is a well-respected and accomplished scholar who also desires to equip pastors for the ministry of the Gospel.

### The Contents

Too often a pastor new in the ministry of the Gospel hears from other ministers, young and old, inside and outside of their denomination a wrong principle of sermon preparation. That wrong principle is "just read and re-read good

commentaries" until something good, useful, and pragmatic comes to mind. Sometimes added to this advice is the reading of the Bible as well, though not usually in its original languages. Well, for the diligent student of the Scriptures, *Ephesians* can be a blessing concerning the various steps one painstakingly takes to produce a sermon faithful to the Word of God and not the word of man. How so?

There are a variety of books available out there to help understand the task or strategy of exegeting the text of Scripture and method<sup>1</sup>. Without getting bogged down in too many exegetical steps and decision trees of steps to follow, the author of *Ephesians* provides seven primary components for each section of Scripture under discussion; Literary Context, Main Idea, Translation, Structure, Exegetical Outline, Explanation of the Text, and Theology in Application. Whatever other exegetical steps that were learned in seminary might be embedded in one of the seven components of the treatment of the biblical passage.<sup>2</sup> Not all of these sections or components will be commented on in this short critique. As we turn our attention to the sections, we will note several areas of commendation as well as concern, to be precise, soteriology, ecclesiology, debatable Christology, redemptive historical substance, exegetical tags, and exegetically false assumptions. These several areas are mixed with some commendations and concerns.

The first of the steps is the Literary Context. Throughout each section of the epistle, the author focuses the reader on the specific context as to how the letter functions not only narrowly but also broadly in the entire book. *Ephesians* connects the context of the letter from chapter 1 to chapter 6 throughout his discussions of literary context.

For instance, in line with the common practice of Paul communicating an apostolic greeting to the church (Eph. 1:1-2), another blessing begins in 1:3 and continues on for 202 words (Eph. 1:3-14). The praise due to God for His redemption is connected throughout the epistle as the Apostle exhorts the readers and listeners to a lifestyle antithetical to the world around them, as seen in the second to last Exegetical Outline exhorting believers in Jesus Christ to resist the Devil and the powers of darkness in this fallen world (Arnold, 72).

Moving then from the praises due unto God for the Ephesian Christians (Eph. 1:15-23), the literary context is connected to the believers by way of exhorting them to a new life in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:1-10). This new life in Jesus Christ is realized in their new status in relationship with God through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). This is the central theme in the second half of the epistle (Eph. 5:15-21), namely, "that the reader possesses a new identity in Christ" (Arnold, 341). This affects our lives before the face of God in various vocations of life, including the vocational subset of husbands and wives. These God-created institutions provide the only legitimate foundation

1. Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis Third Edition: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). George H. Guthrie and J. Scott Duvall, *Biblical Greek Exegesis: A Graded Approach to Learning Intermediate and Advanced Greek* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998).

2. Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 10.

of all other social groups. Following the self-revelation of God concerning marriage, the epistle then addresses how the Christian is to live in other relationships (Eph. 6:1–9; see Arnold, 411). No doubt the call to be distinctly Christian is difficult, more difficult than many are willing to acknowledge. Nevertheless, the literary context exhorts Christians to live consistently with their new identity by using the armor of God (Eph. 6:10–20). The imagery here is not borrowed from the Roman historian Polybius (contra the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school of thought) but from the Scriptures (Isaiah 11:4–5 and 59:17; see Arnold, 436). How is this helpful to the exegete?

Many times, as we preach week after week to the beloved people of God from Scripture, it is easy to look at the Word of God atomistically and forget or neglect its overall literary context. As a consequence, the people of God can wrongly separate Scripture from its broader context as well. *Ephesians* has concisely dealt with the literary context not only for study week after week for sermon development, but also in such a way as to keep the broader context fresh in the exegete's mind. The total reading of just the literary context is 28 pages out of 538 pages—a good concise way to review the literary context as needed.

The third of the steps is the Translation. The portion of the commentary called the “Translation” has more than just a translation of the text. This section is made up of a reasonable pericope (i.e., paragraph), a number series on the left side of the graphic layout, exegetical tags, and the actual phrasing of the translation.

How is the pericope helpful for the exegete? *Ephesians* provides reasons for the divisions in the “Explanation” section of the commentary. For instance, to guard against any arbitrary selection of a preaching text, the commentary says, “Paul *begins* his letter with an explanation of praise to God and continues . . .” (Arnold, 77, italics mine). Then, in order to bring the selection to its natural conclusion the commentary says, “Paul *then* ends the introductory *berakak* on an exclamation of praise” (Arnold, 93, first italics mine). Now, through prayer and hard work the preacher can work within the pericope to construct a sermon or a sermon series.

Exegetical tags are extremely important! One teacher and author says that this weight “cannot be overemphasized” (Guthrie, 39). With similar concern, in *Ephesians* each clause is identified as to its function with an exegetical tag. No doubt many are eager to settle on just how a clause functions in the text in order to get main points and sub points and then to a sermon outline. However, at each step the preacher is still accountable before God for carefully considering His word. Therefore, since the exegetical tags provided in *Ephesians* are not a given, the minister should prayerfully do his own work. For consideration, we will look at one example from Ephesians 1:3 on page 74.

In Ephesians 1:3, line 3c, is the exegetical tag “dative of content” or is it something else (Arnold, 74)? If you are persuaded with the author of Ephesians, at least know that not every scholar of Greek grammar is in agreement. One professor of New Testament Greek argues that the Dative of Content is “debatable” and is “extremely rare.”<sup>3</sup> The same person even says the following concerning the Dative of Content, “there are no clear examples in biblical Greek . . .” (Wallace, 170, 374–375).

So what now, is this commentary not useful because of this? On the contrary, only be careful. If the wrong exegetical tag is assumed or in question, the relationship between the parts of the text can be misunderstood . . . and misapplied.

Next, the translation and graphic outline is visibly appealing, follows the eclectic text, is a good translation, and is at the same time designed to help the reader understand the relationship between the clauses, phrases, and the various thoughts of the text. However, this is not the same as diagrammatical analysis. While diagrammatical analysis requires tedious and long hours of work, the phrasing is less technical and aimed at those who have had at least two years of formal education in New Testament Greek.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the available space for such a commentary including that kind of information would outgrow this volume. But *Ephesians* can be an aid to sermon preparation and a teacher.

In preparation for a sermon, *Ephesians* can be beneficial in this way, quickly helping preachers understand the main clause or phrase at a glance and all the subordinate clauses as well. As many ministers know, nothing is typical during a so-called typical day or a typical week. At one fortune 500 company, managers, and supervisors are taught to make a typical day plan. Many would retort back, “But, we don’t have typical days!” And that was the point. Without a plan or preparation, achieving goals can be impossible. So, what does that have to do with *Ephesians*?

Many ministers have felt the pressure of a lot of work suddenly due and no time remaining. Without neglecting essential spiritual preparation and the hard work of exegesis, the minister can quickly make decisions about the function and relationship of the text with its parts in order to formulate points and sub points. *Ephesians* is commendably helpful in this area. A companion for the graphical outline is two grammar guides common to most ministers’ library, namely, Dana

3. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 170.

4. For more information on diagrammatical analysis see: Lee L. Kantenwien, *Diagrammatical Analysis* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2007); William D. Mounce, *A Graded Reader of Biblical Greek: Companion to Basics of Biblical Greek and Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996); or William Ramey, “The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Greek Exegetical Library Edition,” *NT Greek In Diagram* (2007).

and Mantey and Daniel B. Wallace.<sup>5</sup> In this way, *Ephesians* can also teach throughout the exegesis process with the aid of other books.

The sixth part of the steps is the Explanation of the Text. In summary we will look at several issues as mentioned above; soteriology, ecclesiology, Christology, historical substance, and an exegetically false assumption.

The first issue has to do with soteriology. While you will not find in the author index the name Jacobus Arminius, one wonders if there are whiffs of his system of conditional salvation as summarized in the Five Arminian Articles.<sup>6</sup> One of those important areas of controversy is *Ephesians* 2:8–9.

In the Explanation of the Text of *Ephesians* 2:8 we read, “Although the sole basis for salvation is God’s grace, Paul clarifies that it is received by people ‘through faith’ ...” (Arnold, 138). We read here that an exception is made to the fact. This situation is further confused or obscured in that the definition of faith is never clarified. Is faith something produced in man in and of himself or is it the gift of God? In addition, how is the word “faith” used here and elsewhere?<sup>7</sup> In the next paragraph, faith appears to be the work of man; it is “a heart response to hearing ...” (*Institutes*, 139). Proof of this is alleged from *Romans* 3:22.<sup>8</sup> In fact, in the next paragraph, Arnold denies that faith is a gift of God. We read, “some interpreters have thought that Paul is referring to faith as the gift from God, but that is clearly not the case” (Arnold, 138). No doubt, Reformed and Presbyterian Churches are in agreement that people receive faith and that there is the responsibility on the part of the sinner to respond to

5. Cf. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1927) 268–95; and Wallace, 65–65.

6. Cf. Philip Schaff, ed., *The Evangelical and Protestant Creeds*, Vol 3 of *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, reprint 2007), 545–49.

7. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 1960), 558.

8. Arnold, pg. 138. Cf. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1996), 45–47.

9. Charles Hodges, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 64–65.

10. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 227.

11. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 49.

12. Cf. William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon of New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, fourth printing 2007), 120–123; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, n.d.), 704; Wallace, 334–35; James R. White, *The God Who Justifies* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2001), 323–25; and Ramey, 16.

God’s grace with faith. However, strangely, this is not what is being said.

In the first place, Charles Hodge and John Calvin are misquoted. Hodge says, “It is not only said in general, ‘ye are saved by grace,’ but further salvation is by faith.”<sup>9</sup> Then, Hodge continues and argues that the middle clause refers to faith, since both salvation and faith are from God (Hodges, 64–65). Arnold makes the argument that Hodge thinks the demonstrative pronoun’s antecedent is faith to the exclusion of any other possible antecedent (Arnold, 139). When Hodge is only partially quoted in isolation to the entire sentence and paragraph, then he is used as a straw man to win an argument. Speaking to the issue in *Ephesians* 2:8–9 Hodge begins by arguing that this is a “manifold assertion.” Then he says, “It is not only ... but further ...” (Hodge, 64). The idea that Hodges expresses negation and then adds an additional modifier argues against Arnold’s assertion. Hodge, I think, meant the entire preceding clause, that is, salvation by grace through faith is the gift of God.

In the second place, Calvin is placed against the Calvinist, at least according to *Ephesians*. How is this done? Arnold makes the argument that Calvin does not think that the demonstrative pronoun’s antecedent is faith, but salvation (Arnold, 139) Is Arnold suggesting, then, that Calvin would agree that faith is not a gift of God? Let the reader discern and decide. Not only does Calvin argue that salvation in no way is the work of man, but he also asks a very important question, namely, “in what way do men receive that salvation which is offered to them by the hand of God?”<sup>10</sup> The answer is that salvation is by the grace of God. Even faith is alien to man prior to God granting it. In fact, Calvin is not a good source to refute Calvinists. In another commentary John Calvin says, “Here Paul clearly testifies, that faith, as well as constancy in enduring persecutions, is an unmerited gift of God.”<sup>11</sup>

In summary, it appears that both Hodge and Calvin would argue that salvation by grace through faith is a gift of God. However, this is not how Arnold represented these men. Arnold, it seems to me, takes up other people’s arguments, clothes them with other words, and attributes to them absurdity and by extension all those who follow this Reformed and Presbyterian tradition.

It is my opinion that important and highly esteemed commentaries and grammar books are not noted or noted in part and important scholarly work is omitted.<sup>12</sup> Someone may argue that in a commentary like *Ephesians* it is impossible to consider all the material out there. True. But of all the texts important to the history of the Church and the doctrine of salvation *Ephesians* 2:8–9 could at least have some footnotes or references to other works to consider over against the work of *Ephesians*!

What does the Scripture teach us in *Ephesians* 2:8–9? This

reference teaches that in no way does salvation or any part of salvation originate in man. In addition, God is the sovereign Author of faith (Phil. 1:29) and salvation (Eph. 2:8–9). The modifiers expand or qualify the sense of these verbs and do not change it in order to sneak in a doctrine of self-salvation or synergism—to say one thing but mean another.

The second issue has to do with the doctrine of the church. How can the Gentiles be a “distinct body” (Arnold, 192) yet be the children of Abraham? In Ephesians 3:6, we read, “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” I have never heard of a scenario of somebody belonging to God’s people but not quite fully so, but that is exactly what *Ephesians* seems to have us believe. *Ephesians* says that although “Gentiles become children of Abraham and become heirs of the promised blessing made to . . .” Abraham, nevertheless, “this would not extend to the land promises made to Israel . . .” (Arnold, 192). As a correction, R.C. Sproul says the proper “heir of God the Father is God the Son. God the Son alone is worthy to inherit the kingdom that his Father promised . . .”<sup>13</sup> This confused ecclesiology of Arnold’s ruins the previous discussion of being “together” as God’s people through Jesus Christ, and the Explanation of the Text of Ephesians 2:1 (“he made you alive with”), and 2:6a (“he raised us with him”), 2:6b (“he seated us with him”).<sup>14</sup> It is possible to walk away with a Dispensational understanding of the land and modern Israel.<sup>15</sup>

Having considered the first and second issues, the third is the doctrine of Christ in respect to the *descensus ad inferos* (Hendriksen, 254). The Roman Catholic view on the descent of Christ expresses that Christ further suffered in hell after His death. The Lutheran view expresses that Christ went into hell to proclaim victory to His enemies. On the other hand, the Reformed view is that Jesus went immediately into heaven following the death of the cross. This information, including Wayne Grudem’s excellent explanation, is not present.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the comfort, the same comfort given to believers in Peter’s Epistle, (to be precise, bearing witness in an evil world, the assurance that God infallibly saves, and that believers will triumph over the Devil, even as Christ triumphed) is diminished.

The last issue is whether or not a hint of an exegetical fallacy is assumed in Ephesians 6:10. One was already mentioned above, but another is in question. Looking at page 442 we read, “The preposition (ἐν) attached to the verb may serve simply to intensity it, but it could have the additional function of conveying the notion of inner strengthening” (Arnold, 442). Cited in support of this is BDAG. The note says, “BDAG, s.v., notes that it is commonly used of inner or moral strength” (Arnold, 442). Despite BDAG’s agreement with Arnold on the definition of this word, the overall context and source of strength is left out. Furthermore, each of the Bible verses cited cause a problem for *Ephesians*. In each verse there is a

preposition followed by a reflexive pronoun. In our text, the preposition is present and the reflexive pronoun is absent. This could possibly fall under the root fallacy known as false assumptions about technical meaning (Cf. Carson, 45–47). But, what about the verb, ἐνδυναμοῶ, also cited by *Ephesians*? Can solace be found here for inner strength apart from God? This verb is passive, that is, man receives the action of the verb. In footnote 168 William Hendriksen argues that the modifier is “in the Lord” (Hendriksen, 270). So, the question is whether or not too much emphasis is made with the prepositional addition to a verb in order to give too much strength to man. Let the reader decide. Lastly, in *Ephesians* it is indicated that a similar situation existed with Timothy and Joshua (Arnold, 442), as if the Lord God was exhorting them to use their inner strength. But, omitted from each reference is the source of strength, which is God.

#### Conclusion: The Commentary’s Contribution

Does the world of commentaries really need another commentary or just exegetes who will do the work? Yes and no. More and more ancient discoveries are being made and can be helpful to bring to light the flora and fauna of the ancient world, especially the biblical world. The author of *Ephesians* places in our hands recent scholarship concerning the religious milieu in the ancient world that we may take for granted.

Even though much of *Ephesians* is commendable, there are several issues of concern. Unless the student of the Bible is careful in his own exegetical work, this commentary will sometimes confuse him and those to whom the Lord is pleased to preach and teach. I really enjoyed looking at this work, especially since I translated, diagrammed, and preached on the entire book of Ephesians. In some places I thought that Arnold had made mistakes only to find out that I was in error. It forced me to reconsider his ideas as much as I could. As a result, by the grace of God, the book, although I disagreed with some aspects of it, was instrumental in teaching me NT Greek and exegesis. ■

13. R.C. Sproul, *Romans*, St. Andrew’s Expositional Commentary (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2009), 126.

14. Sproul, 191. Since the entire world was promised to Abraham (Rom. 4:13), I guess Gentiles will have to find some other real estate.

15. William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans of New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, twelfth printing, 2007), 154–55.

16. Wayne A. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 203–239.