

# Church Growth



# *Ordained Servant Online*

## *A Journal for Church Officers*

E-ISSN 1931-7115

**CURRENT ISSUE: CHURCH GROWTH**

**May 2018**

### *From the Editor*

When we hear “church growth” we almost immediately think of the “marketing the church” movement of the last century. However, we certainly believe in the kind of church growth we find in the book of Acts; and that is precisely what Steve Doe explores in his article “The Growth of the Church in Acts: Descriptive and Eschatological.”

Alan Strange reviews a greatly expanded new edition of Richard Muller’s *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*. This is a treasure chest of theology drawn from post-Reformation (Protestant Scholasticism) theology. It’s a pity that it is published in paperback.

Darryl Hart reviews a fascinating book on the American chaplaincy, Ronit Y. Stahl’s *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America*. This topic is a third rail for Evangelicals, who are often confused about the American establishment of religion, wishing on the one hand to keep the government out of church business, yet on the other hand forgetting that chaplaincy is an establishment of religion despite what the First Amendment says, as Hart points out.

I review Alan Jacobs latest book, *How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds*. Jacobs challenges us to think more carefully and thus considerately in order to better navigate the divisive terrain of modern American culture.

Finally our poem this month is by a little known colonial poet, Edward Taylor (c. 1642–1729). After arriving in the American colonies from England he was graduated from Harvard, and went on to become the pastor of the Congregational Church in Westfield, Massachusetts, where he ministered until his death. His poems remained unpublished at his request for more than two-hundred years. In 1937 Thomas H. Johnson discovered a 7,000-page quarto manuscript of Taylor’s poetry in the library of Yale University and published a selection from it in *The New England Quarterly*. His complete poems, however, were not published until 1960, by Donald E. Stanford. Taylor has been compared to the Metaphysical poets George Herbert and John Donne, and is considered the greatest poet of the colonial era.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

## CONTENTS

### ServantMission

- Steve Doe, “The Growth of the Church in Acts: Descriptive and Eschatological”

### ServantReading

- Alan D. Strange, review of Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*
- Darryl G. Hart, review of Ronit Y. Stahl, *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America*
- Gregory E. Reynolds, review of Alan Jacobs, *How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds*

### ServantPoetry

Edward Taylor (c. 1642–1729), “I am the Living Bread: Meditation Eight: John 6:51”

#### **FROM THE ARCHIVES “CHURCH GROWTH”**

[http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject\\_Index\\_Vol\\_1-25.pdf](http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-25.pdf)

- “The Church Growth Movement.” (Martin Murphy) 8:4 (Oct. 1999): 76–77.

---

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

# ServantMission

## The Growth of the Church in Acts: Descriptive and Eschatological

---

by Stephen D. Doe

It is not possible to assess realistically the extent to which the evangelism conducted by the early Church was successful. For one thing, we have no means of comparing their “successes” with their “failures.” For another, God’s assessment of success may differ greatly from our own: and . . . evangelism is supremely God’s work in the lives of men, in which he enlists human co-operation. Nor is it possible to read off from a study of evangelism in antiquity the answers to our contemporary problems in communicating the gospel.<sup>1</sup>

— Michael Green

The book of Acts is replete with references to the growth of the early church, as we’ll see, but are there things that confessionally Reformed churches can learn in facing “our contemporary problems,” in faithfully addressing our times and our culture? In his seminal book on evangelism in the early church, Michael Green is too modest about the guidance he and others draw from study of the early church. I want us to see how the early church in the book of Acts instructs us in eschatological hope of growth, and by eschatological I mean thinking about the end to which God is bringing the church and all of creation.

It is common, when interpreting the Bible, to distinguish between passages in the Bible being descriptive and those that are prescriptive, that is, between passages that tell us things (albeit with God-inspired purpose) and passages that tell us what to do. Believing that all Scripture is “breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17), we have to say that *all* of Acts, including the descriptions of the growth of the church, are profitable to us. When we read about the growth of the church in Acts, it seems far removed from the experience many in the church today can even imagine. When was the last time that we thought of the Lord adding to *our* church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47)? Conversions may be happening on a larger scale in the Global South, but surely not here, not in our day, we think. If a study of the growth of the church in Acts seems to be slightly discouraging, we need to think differently. A better way to think about the emphasis on the growth of the church in Acts is to use the biblical theological category of eschatology. That is to say, Luke’s descriptions of the growth of the early church are basically eschatological in their descriptive purpose, but also prescriptively encouraging as we see how God is fulfilling his covenant promises to enlarge the number of people he is saving.

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 274.

## The Language of Acts

Luke emphasizes the growth of the apostolic church in a number of ways.

One way is giving actual numbers:

- 1:15 > 120 names (ὀνομάτων, *onomaton*)
- 2:41 > 3,000 souls (ψυχῶν, *psuchai*)
- 4:4 > 5,000 men (ἀνδρῶν, *andron*)<sup>2</sup>

A second way is Luke's so-called "summary" statements:<sup>3</sup>

- 2:41, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."
- 2:47b, "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."
- 5:14, "And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women."
- 6:7, "And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."
- 9:31, "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."
- 12:24, "But the word of God increased and multiplied."
- 16:5, "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily."
- 19:20, "So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."

Yet a third way to see Luke's emphasis is to note the words he uses. Many studies have noted that Luke has a varied, vivid, and evocative vocabulary in describing God's work in the apostolic church.<sup>4</sup> There are two words in particular worth considering:<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Is there an echo here of Luke's language in his gospel in describing the feeding of the 5,000 (Luke 9:14, *andres pentakischilioi* versus *andron chiliades pente*)?

<sup>3</sup> See Dennis E. Johnson's helpful and concise summary in *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1997), 9–10.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the works which gather the lexical data are Harvie M. Conn, ed., *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976); Eddie Gibbs, *I Believe in Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970); John Mark Hicks, "Numerical Growth in the Theology of Acts" *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 8 (Spring 1997), 17–34. A different version was given as a lecture before The Evangelical Theological Society 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, November 1995 entitled "Numerical Growth in the Theology of Acts: The Role of Pragmatism, Reason and Rhetoric" (available online at <http://johnmarkhicks.com/70-2/>); Craig S. Keener, "The Plausibility of Luke's Growth Figures in Acts 2:41; 4:4; 21:20." *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 7 (2010): 140–63; Timothy Keller, "Reformed Church Growth. Part One: The Principles of Church Growth" *Presbyterian Network*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (December 1988): 3–14; Thom Rainer, "Church Growth and Evangelism in the Book of Acts." *Criswell Theological Review* 5.1 (1990): 57–68; Allison A. Trites, "Church Growth in the Book of Acts" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145:578 (April 88): 162–174.

<sup>5</sup> Others include "many" (ἱκανός, *hikanos*), Acts 11:24, 14:21; "increase" (περισσεύω, *peisseuō*), 16:5; "many" (πολύς, *polus*), 4:4, 6:7, 9:42, 11:21, 14:1, 17:4, 12, 18:8, 10; "added" (προστίθημι, *prostithēmi*), 2:41, 47, 5:14, 11:24; "number" (ἀριθμός, *arithmos*), 4:4, 6:7, 11:21, 16:5; "received" (δέχομαι, *dechomai*), 8:14; "turned" (ἐπιστρέφω, *epistrephō*), 9:35, 11:21; "followed" (ἀκολουθεῖω, *akoloutheō*), 13:43; "were made disciples" (μαθητεύω, *matheteuō*), 14:21; "joined" (προσκληρώω, *prosklēroō*), 17:4.

1. Multitude, to multiply (πληθος, *plēthos*; πληθύνω, *plēthýnō*):

- 4:32, “Now the *full number* of those who believed . . .”
- 5:14, “And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, *multitudes* of both men and women . . .”
- 6:1, “Now in these days when the disciples *were increasing in number* . . .”
- 6:7, “and the number of the disciples *multiplied* greatly in Jerusalem . . .”
- 9:31, “And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it [the church] *multiplied*.”
- 12:24, “But the word of God increased and *multiplied*.”
- 14:1, Paul and Barnabas “spoke in such a way that a *great number* of both Jews and Greeks believed.”
- 17:4, “And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a *great many* of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.”

2. To increase (αὐξάνω, *auxánō*):<sup>6</sup>

- 6:7, “And the word of God *continued to increase* . . .”
- 12:24, “But the word of God *increased* and multiplied.”
- 19:20, “So the word of the Lord *continued to increase* and prevail mightily.”

There are several points to draw from these and other passages in Acts in understanding the focus Luke gives to the growth of the early church.

First, Luke uses covenantal language, particularly from the book of Genesis.<sup>7</sup> Both “increase” and “multiply” were familiar to readers of the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint.<sup>8</sup> The LXX, as it is known, pairs these two words (αὐξάνω, *auxánō* and πληθύνω, *plēthýnō*) in many passages in Genesis 1:22, 28; 8:17; 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4. God commands the birds of the heavens and the sea creatures to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:22), and God repeats that command following the flood in 8:17. God creates man and woman and commands them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion” (Gen. 1:28); he repeats the command to Noah and his sons in 9:1, 7. Abraham receives the promise that Ishmael will be blessed, and God will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly (Gen. 17:20). Isaac blesses his departing son, Jacob, with these promissory words in Genesis 28:3; God reinforces that blessing in Genesis 35:11, saying, “A nation and a company of nations shall come from your own body”; and Jacob himself repeats this to Joseph’s sons in Genesis 48:4. Finally, God begins the fulfillment of his covenant promise in Egypt (Gen. 47:27), something which Moses carefully notes in Exodus 1:7, “But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them” to the dread of the Egyptians (Exod. 1:12).<sup>9</sup> When Luke wants to describe what God was doing in the early church he draws on Old Testament

<sup>6</sup> See Acts 13:49 “And the word of the Lord was spreading (διεφέρετο *diaphereto*) throughout the whole region.”

<sup>7</sup> See especially Harvie Conn, “God’s Plan for Church Growth: An Overview,” in *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 1–20; and John Mark Hicks’s “Numerical Growth in the Theology of Acts,” *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth* 8 (Spring 1997): 17–34.

<sup>8</sup> “Increase” or “be fruitful” is the translation of the Hebrew פָּרָה *parah*. “Multiply” is the translation of the Hebrew רָבָה *rabah*.

<sup>9</sup> See Leviticus 26:9 for God’s promise repeated during the wilderness wanderings. In Jeremiah 3:16 and 23:3 the two words appear together in a Messianic context.

language of covenant promise and command, “increase and multiply.” The growth of the apostolic church was a continuation and partial fulfillment of God’s pattern of blessing his people, a foretaste of the coming great day of the Lord (Rev. 7:9).

Second, growth is associated with the Word of God. Particularly striking is the language that the Word of God grew (6:7; 12:24; 19:20). As Dennis Johnson puts it, “Luke uses the metaphor of organic growth to express both the expansion of the Word’s sphere of influence and the vitality of the message itself.”<sup>10</sup> The Word of God was not some mysterious, disembodied divine manifestation but rather the ongoing, embodied announcement of the gospel of Jesus Christ by believers, which God used in the conversion and maturing of others. In other words, the church grows as God’s people faithfully declared the Word of God. Peter preached the crucified and resurrected Christ, and the church grows (2:40–41, see 4:4). In Acts 6:7 the appointment of the seven meant that the apostles devoted themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer (6:4), which led to growth (6:7).<sup>11</sup> In 12:24 the increasing power of the verbal witness of the church followed upon the demonstration of the deliverance of Peter from prison and the judgment of God on Herod. In a similar way the word of the Lord continued to increase in Ephesus after God brought conviction of idolatry (19:19–20). Paul and Barnabas preached the Word of God in Iconium and Derby, and the church grew (14:1, 21). Many of the Corinthians listened to Paul and became believers (18:8).<sup>12</sup> The Word of God was central to the growth of the church from the beginning as believers were devoted to it (2:42). A fledgling church, without worldly power, had the greatest possible power, the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16–17). The Word of the kingdom, to put it another way, has enormous growth potential (see, e.g., Matt. 13:23, 31–33).

Third, the growth of the church cut across all boundaries in fulfillment of Christ’s command to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20), beginning with Jerusalem (Acts 1:8, see Luke 24:47). The church grew in Jerusalem (4:32; 5:14; 6:1, 7); in all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria (8:5; 9:31, 35, 42); in Antioch (11:19–26); in Iconium (14:1); and in Thessalonica (17:4); even to the future church in Ethiopia (8:26–39), as Christ’s promise began to be seen in fulfillment. And in light of Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28 that in Christ Jesus there is “neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female,” Luke notes that women as well as men believed (4:32; 8:12; 17:4, 12), and that Romans like Cornelius (10–11), and Greeks as well as Jews (14:1), believed. The church began to represent all the nations as a new, redeemed humanity was being brought together by the power of God. The eschatological character of this is clear when we think of it as prefiguring the eschatological glory of Revelation 7:9.<sup>13</sup> That great day of glory is the culmination of God’s promise to Abraham that he would bless the nations through Abraham’s seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true heir of God’s promises to Abraham (Gal. 3:16; see Gen. 12:2; 17:4–6; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4).

Fourth, it is the church that grows. In the gospels Christ often spoke about the kingdom of God or of heaven. He came preaching the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15), and in his parables Jesus spoke of the growth of the kingdom (e.g. Matt. 13:19, 23, 31–33, etc.). In the book of Acts the kingdom (βασίλεια, *basileia*) is mentioned eight times. Before his ascension Christ spoke of the kingdom (1:3). Then Philip preached the good news of the kingdom and of

---

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, *Message of Acts*, 15n16. See Calvin on Acts 6:7 and 19:20, John Calvin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Henry Beveridge, ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), vol. 1, 239; vol. 2, 221–22.

<sup>11</sup> We should not think that only the apostles spoke the Word, as Acts 8:4 reminds us.

<sup>12</sup> See also 8:14; 13:16–44; 19:10; 28:31a.

<sup>13</sup> “After this I looked and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes.”

Jesus to the Samaritans (8:12), and Paul and Barnabas warned that it is through many tribulations we entered the kingdom of God (14:22). In the synagogue in Ephesus Paul reasoned about the kingdom of God (19:8; see 20:25). And the book of Acts closes with Paul, in Rome, proclaiming the kingdom of God and Jesus from the Old Testament (28:23, 31). But proclamation of the kingdom of God was to the end that people might be added to the church as the most visible manifestation of the rule of God in the world. When people were added, they were added to the Lord (5:1; 11:24) but that meant they were added to the church (2:41, 47) where the Lord reigns over his people.<sup>14</sup> As Tim Keller writes, “The church is an agent of the kingdom because it spreads the word of the kingdom. . . . The church is spreading the kingdom, but it is not the kingdom.”<sup>15</sup>

## How Does Luke’s “Theology of Growth” Help Us Today?

It is enough to read of God’s work in growing the church in the book of Acts and be filled with praise for his sovereign display of power. And Luke does put God’s sovereign, electing work before us repeatedly.

- 2:47, “And *the Lord* added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
- 11:18, “And they glorified God, saying ‘Then to the Gentiles also *God has granted repentance that leads to life.*’”
- 14:27, “And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared *all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*”
- 13:48, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many *as were appointed to eternal life believed.*”
- 16:14, “The *Lord opened her* [Lydia’s] *heart to pay attention* to what was said by Paul.”
- 18:9–10, “And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, *for I have many in this city who are my people.*’”

The Apostle Paul testified to the sovereign hand of God in his own labors to grow the church when he says in 1 Corinthians 3:5–7 that “only God . . . gives the growth.”<sup>16</sup> The opponents of the gospel in Thessalonica said that Paul and Silas were men “who have turned the world upside down” (17:6), but in reality it was the word of the sovereign God who did it all, to echo Martin Luther.<sup>17</sup> God’s Word cannot be ineffective but must accomplish that for which he gave it (Isa. 55:10–11<sup>18</sup>). The early church had utter confidence in the power of the gospel it proclaimed (Rom. 1:16-17; e.g. Eph. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:4-10). Faith comes by hearing

<sup>14</sup> This is very directly seen in the work of the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent to rule by filling believers (2:4; 4:8; 6:5; 7:55; 10:44; 11:15, 24; 13:9, 52; 19:6), and guiding in everything from discipline (5:1–9), to sending out Paul and Barnabas (13:2–4), to dealing with crisis (15:28), to missionary strategy (8:29, 39; 16:6-7), to choosing leaders (20:28).

<sup>15</sup> Timothy Keller, “Reformed Church Growth. Part One: The Principles of Church Growth,” *Presbyterian Network* 1, no. 4 (December 1988): 4.

<sup>16</sup> The verb he uses in vv.6 & 7 is *αὐξάνω*, *auxánō*.

<sup>17</sup> “I did nothing; the Word did everything.” Sermon preached in Wittenberg, March 10, 1522, Martin Luther, *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. W. R. Russell & T. F. Lull, eds., (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012), 292–94.

<sup>18</sup> Note God’s use of growth imagery here.



and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17), so the apostolic church was constantly testifying to the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2:11). The growth of the church in Acts, as the Word was declared, should strengthen our resolve to faithfully and without fear, be churches where the Word of God is boldly announced in the pulpits and in the course of our individual lives and witness. Surely in a time like our own, where to be boldly biblical is to invite criticism and even attack, the apostolic church reminds us that true growth cannot take place apart from a firm confidence in God's sovereign grace working through his Word and Spirit.

There is a second thing we can draw from a study of Acts. The modern church growth movement has pointed out the importance of prayer in the early church.<sup>19</sup> To this we should agree. Reading through Acts, we find some twenty-five times when prayer or praying are noted by Luke.<sup>20</sup> The church prays (1:14, 24; 2:42; 12:5, 12; 13:3), the apostles pray (6:4, 6), Peter and John pray (8:15), Saul/Paul prays (9:11; 20:3; 22:17; 28:8), Cornelius prays (10:4, 30–31), Paul and Barnabas pray (14:23), Paul and Silas pray (16:13, 25). Perhaps the most vital description of prayer and, humanly speaking, its consequences, is found in 4:31,

And when they had prayed [δεηθέντων, *deēthentōn*], the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Believers prayed for courage and boldness and the Lord answered their prayers. Luke immediately tells us about the fruitful life of the church (4:32–37). Today many people lament the so-called “death of the prayer meeting.” It seems increasingly difficult to get people to come to anything beyond a service (or services) on Sunday. Yet if we connect the growth of the apostolic church with the focused prayer of God's people, we should be earnest in not only teaching the importance of prayer, but creatively seeking ways to get people to pray, and to pray with others if all possible. The lack of prayer for God to work as only he can is a danger sign that we should heed.<sup>21</sup>

These two emphases, on the Word of God and prayer with dependence on a God who is sovereign, come together in passages like:

- 2 Thessalonians 3:1, “Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed (τρέχει, *trechē* – to run or progress freely or advance rapidly) ahead and be honored.”
- 2 Timothy 2:8–9, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound (δέδεται, *dedetai*)!”

This confidence of the apostle Paul came because of his awareness of God's power and purposes. He had seen it in his own life and ministry. We remember, however, that the Scriptures certainly make clear that because God sovereignly works, the application of principles, even sound biblical principles, will not necessarily give us the outcome *we* desire.

---

<sup>19</sup> Notably Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); and Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> The verb προσεύχομαι *proseúchomai* occurs sixteen times and the noun προσευχή *proseuchē* occurs nine times. The verb δέομαι *deomai* is sometimes translated “pray” and sometimes “beseech” and occurs seven times but only twice in reference to praying to God (4:31, 10:2).

<sup>21</sup> The Westminster Standards give us much help in framing our prayers (WCF 21.4, WLC 178–196, see especially Q. 191 on the petition “Thy kingdom come.”)

This has been one of the weaknesses of the church growth movement. God is not captive to our desires, even when they are good desires. Since God is sovereign, he had his own purposes in Noah's faithful preaching which yielded a harvest of only his own family (2 Peter 2:5), or in God's telling Ezekiel to preach though he would not be listened to (Ezek. 3:7–9; 33:32; see Isa. 6:9–10; Mark 4:11–12, etc.). Though it was faithful, the church in Philadelphia had but little power, yet Christ had set before it an open door (Rev. 3:8) with the promise to keep it in the hour of trial (Rev. 3:10). This is an important lesson from the study of the growth of the church in the book of Acts: trust in God to work as he pleases. The disciples testified to the gospel of God's saving grace with joyful and expectant hope because Jesus Christ had come, died for sinners, and been raised. They understood that the "last days" had come (Acts 2:17). The ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit gave them confidence and boldness that sometimes we seem to lack. This eschatological hope filled their writing:<sup>22</sup>

- 1 Corinthians 15:45, "the last (ἔσχατος, *eschatos*) Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit."
- Hebrews 1:1–2, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last (ἔσχατος, *eschatos*) days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."
- 1 Peter 1:3–8, "who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last (ἔσχατος, *eschatos*) time."
- 1 Peter 1:20, "He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last (ἔσχατος, *eschatos*) times for your sake."

This is a great encouragement we can draw from looking at Acts: Christ has come, he has redeemed a people for God and is building his church (Matt. 16:18; see Eph. 2:21), and we are part of this great work. Christ's kingdom will fill the earth (Dan. 2:44–45), and the church, as the visible manifestation of the rule of God, also is growing because of what Christ by his Word and Spirit is doing. While we may not see the numbers of conversions we desire in our particular part of God's vineyard, still we can and must rejoice that the eschatological picture of growth which Luke sets before us is happening. We can preach and pray faithfully with expectation that the day of complete fulfillment is coming. The book of Acts is full of the promise that this is happening. As God says:

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord shall arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isa. 60:1–3)

**Stephen Doe** is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and serves as regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.

---

<sup>22</sup> The last days also brought warning, see 2 Timothy 3:1; James 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18.

# ServantReading

## Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms *edited by Richard A. Muller*

---

by Alan D. Strange

*Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, 2 ed., by Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017, xxi + 408 pages, \$37.00, paper.

“I was reading the dictionary,” Stephen Wright deadpanned, “I thought it was a poem about everything.” Richard A. Muller’s new edition of his *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* is a work about everything theological, at least as it pertains to Greek and Latin terms used by the Protestant Scholastics, reflecting his and their reading in the history of the church. How does one review such a work? Perhaps by noting its significance over the last few decades. In the last thirty-plus years, this work has helped countless theological students in their historical and theological work. More than one senior churchman has opined that a mastery of its contents (along with that of the Westminster Larger Catechism) would render anyone a first-rate disciple/teacher of Reformed theology.

Muller published the first edition of this seminal work in 1985, coming in at 340 pages. This second, long-awaited edition comes in at almost ninety pages more, though, alas, it is only printed in paperback this time. What is the justification for a second edition, one might ask? Muller admits that the first edition “charted my own introduction both to the intricacies and, underneath those intricacies, to the incredible clarity of Protestant scholastic thought” (viii). In his continuing study of such, Muller has discovered that the “language of this highly variegated, philosophically attuned, and sometimes highly technical theology was far richer than I had originally imagined” (viii). This second edition has afforded Muller opportunity to incorporate the learning of the intervening years by “adding over one hundred terms and phrases; by editing, refining, and expanding other definitions” (viii), and by correcting errors.

Richard Muller, after receiving the PhD at Duke University, taught historical theology for a dozen years at Fuller Theological Seminary. He was, in fact, an associate professor there when he first published his *Dictionary*. He came to Calvin Theological Seminary in 1992 and is currently P. J. Zondervan Professor of Historical Theology Emeritus and is senior fellow of the Junius Institute for Digital Reformation Research. Dr. Muller has become a premier church historian, a recognized expert on Protestant Scholasticism, especially expressed in his four-volume *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (also published in a second edition by Baker, 2003). Muller has worked extensively in these sources and is perhaps more qualified than anyone else to write, and now revise, such a dictionary.

Before the seminal work of Muller in the Protestant Scholastics, many scholars (chiefly, Karl Barth and his followers) had viewed Calvin as opposed to his successors, the Calvinists that followed in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Muller was perhaps the chief architect of the paradigm shift of the 1970s and 1980s that came to view Calvin and the Calvinists as consonant, albeit with understandable developmental differences. Muller's contribution in that regard is reflected in this volume, as he defines terms used not only by Calvin and Owen, but also by the medieval scholastics that preceded them.

To be sure, Calvin and the Calvinists (even the Protestant Scholastics of the seventeenth century) differed in some important respects from the medieval scholastics, some of the latter teaching things like congruent merit (235–36; the Franciscans especially) or *facere quod in se est* (118; “to do what is in oneself,” as Gabriel Biel taught, and Luther rejected). The Reformation, in other words, rejected the semi-Pelagianism that had developed in the Roman Catholic Church, but ultimately, in the seventeenth century, did not reject the scholastic method altogether, ably employed by a number of Reformed theologians, perhaps most notably, Francis Turretin.

So from *accommodatio* (4; the ways in which a transcendent God condescends to “human ways of knowing in order to reveal himself”) to *communicatio idiomatum* (69–71; in Christology, the way in which “the properties . . . of each nature are communicated to or interchanged in the unity of the person”) to *lex naturalis* (197–98; “natural law”) to *voluntas Dei* (399–402; “the will of God,” with many important scholastic modifiers), Muller treats the researcher to a feast of (mostly) Latin and Greek theological terms. Many have been awaiting this expanded dictionary, and we are happy now to have it. This book is prominent on the shelf on which I keep my most frequently used reference books, and I highly recommend it to all theological students.

**Alan D. Strange** is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and serves as professor of church history and theological librarian at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana, and is associate pastor of New Covenant Community Church (OPC) in Joliet, Illinois.

# ServantReading

## Enlisting Faith *by Ronit Y. Stahl*

---

by Darryl G. Hart

*Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America*, by Ronit Y. Stahl. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017, 384 pages, \$39.95.

Conservative Christians in the United States often lament the indifference of federal and state governments to religion. Whether the complaint takes the form of objecting to secularization or the loss more generally of shared moral standards based on Christian convictions, Protestants and Roman Catholics alike since the 1960s have faulted American government officials and institutions for excluding religion from public life. Rarely do these criticisms mention the US military's chaplaincy program as one way that American government actually recognizes and encourages religion. One reason for overlooking the work of chaplains in all branches of the military may be that such religious service only compounds the problems that arise from religious freedom and the diversity it encourages.

Even when the government recognizes the importance of religion for those serving in the armed forces, the state winds up encouraging the sort of diversity and tolerance to which many conservative Christians object. Indeed, if anyone ever wanted to contemplate what an established religion might look like in the United States, and how government agencies might try to regulate the nation's religious diversity, the military's chaplaincy program should be the first item to consider. Here the government establishes criteria for which faiths to include, what kind of training chaplains must have, and what sort of spiritual work they should perform. The chaplaincy is, no matter what the First Amendment says, an establishment of religion. Yet, the military's supervision of ministry hardly shows theological or spiritual discernment. It is, what religious establishments usually become, a pragmatic arrangement to use religion for national ends.

This is the implicit argument of Ronit Y. Stahl's *Enlisting Faith*, a fascinating account of the ways that US military officials tried to harness religion for national aims while also striving to serve the spiritual needs of soldiers. For the most part, the clergy who functioned as chaplains were glad to minister among the soldiers and generally supported the United States' twentieth-century war efforts as extensions of a generic faith and global brotherhood. During World War I, for instance, one manual instructed chaplains that though they might be constrained by the communions that had ordained them, a chaplain "should preach such sermons as would be spiritually helpful to everyone, without discussing dogmatic or controversial doctrines" (23). During World War II, the nationalistic dimension of the chaplaincy became even more pronounced, for example, when another report claimed that military chaplains "give our democratic faith a very large measure of its strength" and implicitly demonstrated the weakness of

totalitarian regimes that, because of their unbelief or ideology, spurned the Judeo-Christian tradition's "moral law and individual dignity" (144). Only with the Vietnam War did the chaplaincy begin to question the nation's military and foreign policy aims. When brutalities from that war surfaced, chaplains found it easier to recognize that "Jesus Christ knows no national boundaries" and to criticize America's civil religion (212).

If military chaplains echoed the American public's understanding of the nation's wars, they also, as Stahl shows, reflected the religious diversity of the United States. During World War I, the Protestant mainline churches dominated the chaplaincy even as the military included Roman Catholic priests and Jewish rabbis to honor the "tri-faith" character of the American people. During World War II, the chaplaincy started to include in a deliberate way African-American clergy. Another spurt of inclusiveness came during the Vietnam War when the military approved policies to allow Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jehovah's Witnesses, and even atheists to occupy positions among the chaplaincy. The intent was to serve as many soldiers as possible, which meant recognizing clergy from as many religions as possible.

That effort to adapt the chaplaincy to the religious backgrounds of soldiers and officers was a challenge and not always successful. Stahl opens her narrative with the case of a Leonard Shapiro who died during World War II. Military officials had him buried as a Roman Catholic with appropriate services and a cross on his grave. Shapiro sounded like an Italian-American name and so the chaplain responsible for overseeing the burial ceremonies called for a Roman Catholic observance. But in point of fact, Shapiro was Jewish and Leonard's mother was shocked to learn that her son had received last rites. Eventually, the military caught up to the diversity of American faiths and Stahl closes her account with the case of Captain Humayun Khan who died in Operation Iraqi Freedom and received a Muslim burial, complete with the star and crescent on his grave at Arlington National Cemetery.

Stahl resists the predictable judgments—either that chaplains violate the separation of church and state or give up religious integrity to gain the military's favor—that might give reasons for abolishing the chaplaincy. Her primary purpose is to examine military chaplains as one of those rare occasions where the American government interacted directly with and cultivated the services of religious institutions. He acknowledges that this was both a religious and political "project." In the end, the chaplaincy also gave legitimacy to the religious diversity of the United States and was an unwitting agent in the decline of Protestant hegemony in national life. That story has many lessons to consider about the inherent dangers to faith that come with the state's sponsorship and oversight.

**Darryl G. Hart** *teaches history at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan, and serves as an elder in Hillsdale Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hillsdale, Michigan.*

# ServantReading

## How to Think *by Alan Jacobs*

### A Review Article

---

by Gregory E. Reynolds

*How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds*, by Alan Jacobs. New York: Currency, 2017, 157 pages, \$23.00.

No, this is not a book about logic, although without the subtitle one might legitimately think that. Jacobs begins with the common question: What were you thinking? “It’s a question we ask when we find someone’s behavior inexplicable, when we can’t imagine what chain of reasoning could possibly lead to what they just said or did” (11). He relies heavily on Princeton professor of psychology Daniel Kahneman’s *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (12).<sup>1</sup> Jacobs analyzes the ways in which our prejudices drive our decision-making and our arguments in controversy. Jacobs builds on a fundamental distinction made by Kahneman between slow and fast thinking. As Jacobs wittily titles one section of the first chapter: “Speed Kills.” Kahneman labels fast thinking, “System 1”; it is based on things we have already decided for whatever reason, hence *prejudice*. “System 2” is slow because it takes time to think carefully about anything, especially complex topics and ideas. Because this takes a great deal of effort we tend to live rather thoughtlessly in System 1 mode. Only when System 1 raises a problem do we stop to think with System 2 (16).

Jacob unpacks the problem by referring to Marilynne Robinson’s essay “Puritans and Prigs,”<sup>2</sup> in which she observes that our pejorative use of the term Puritan “is a great example of our collective eagerness to disparage without knowledge or information about the thing disparaged, when the reward is the pleasure of sharing an attitude one knows is socially approved” (20–21). As American philosopher and psychologist (1842–1910), William James opined: “A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.”

Even in academia ideas are often studied by professors and students alike to shore up prejudices, rather than engage in true inquiry, especially those that are required for club membership (24). Jacobs is especially fascinated by Megan Phelps-Roper a member of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, infamous for its rabid antigay rhetoric and protests. Her Stage 1 thinking was challenged when, through Twitter, where she was promoting the Westboro message, she encountered friendliness among the gay opposition. This slowed her down, and she began to think (31–34).

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Marilynne Robinson, “Puritans and Prigs,” in *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999), 150–73.

Jacobs raises the issue of the place of feelings in thinking: Do feelings undermine rational thought? (39–44). Although Jacobs doesn't use the word affections his plea for the place of feelings would have been better served had he done so. Feelings or emotion often seem so subjective as to interfere with healthy thinking; but when connected with deep seated loyalties and commitments, which I believe is Jacobs's point, they become an essential ingredient in proper thinking. Jacobs uses poetry to bolster his point. Poetry appeals to sensibilities that combine reason with emotion or feeling, all of which play a part in the decisions and assessments we make. The biblical concept of the heart involves both loyalty and rational thought. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34). The heart senses the value of ultimate loyalties through thought and affection. These relational decisions cannot be reduced to reason alone. Jacobs puts it this way: "[A]n account of rational thinking, and a resulting set of judgments about irrational thinking, that can't account for the power and the value of relational goods is a deeply impoverished model of rationality" (48). By "relational goods" Jacobs means the commitments and loyalties we value as good, either for good or ill.

Chapter 2 deals with attractions. "This suggests that the problem of belonging and not belonging, affiliation and separation, is central to the task of learning how to think" (54). Thus to be accepted in a group to which we are attracted requires knowledge of the "moral matrix" which governs judgment of the members of the group. This does not necessarily require the rejection of conformity, but rather taking into account the effect this loyalty has on our thinking. Jacobs closes this chapter with a proverb, "The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge" (Prov. 14:18). He explains:

Prudence doesn't mean being uncertain about what's right; it means being scrupulous about finding the best means to get there, and it leads us to seek allies, however imperfect, in preference to making enemies. And all this matters if we want to think well. (70)

In "Repulsions" (Chapter 3) Jacobs addresses our basic desire to be rid of adversaries, whereas the best way to face adversaries is to take the best of them and carefully consider their position. One of the classic ways to recognize and overcome the power of animus "is to seek the best—the smartest, most sensible, most fair-minded—representatives of the positions you disagree with" (75).

Here, Jacobs introduces the role technology plays in inflating unthoughtful opposition and the logical fallacy of ad hominem (79–83). In place of face-to-face interaction, the printing press—and the underestimated European postal system—and now social media, move our judgments from the neighbor to the more distant other (82). But for all the bias that this System 1 way of thinking accommodates, Jacobs reminds us that it also has a place, because it "reduces the decision-making load on our conscious brains" (86). As English essayist William Hazlitt observed: "Without the aid of prejudice and custom, I should not be able to find my way across the room, nor know how to conduct myself in any circumstances, nor what to feel in any relation of life" (86).

At this point Jacobs rejoins the discussion of the place of feeling in right thinking, encouraging us to consider dispositions along with beliefs (87). At this point G. K. Chesterton deserves to be quoted in full:



If you argue with a madman, it is extremely probable that you will get the worst of it; for in many ways his mind works all the quicker for not being delayed by the things that go with good judgment. He is not hampered by a sense of humour or by charity, or by the dumb certainties of experience. He is the more logical for losing certain sane affections. Indeed, the common phrase for insanity is in this respect a misleading one. The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the one who has lost everything except his reason. (88)<sup>3</sup>

In Chapter 4, “The Money of Fools,” Jacobs makes a case that the intellectual currency of words may incline a person either to wisdom or foolishness. The keywords in our vocabularies may cultivate and reinforce our prejudices (89–91). While keywords have a place, as they sum up areas of meaning, they also “have a tendency to become parasitic: they enter the mind and displace thought” (95). When it comes to differing with others “we lose something of our humanity by militarizing discussion and debate; and we lose something of our humanity by dehumanizing our interlocutors” (98). By dichotomizing arguments we distance ourselves from our opponents and dismiss complexities and nuances.

“The Age of Lumping” (Chapter 5) suggests that the modern world is especially prone to classify people and ideas into facile categories. Such simplification relieves the “cognitive load” (114). Jacobs reminds us that: “*All* are prone to these forces of consolidation and dissolution, assembly and disassembly, because, unlike biological taxonomies, they are all temporary and contingent—and are often created by opposition” (117). While we should be more charitable to those who inherit their taxonomies, we should be less so of those, like Margaret Sanger, who seek to impose their categories on their culture by force of law (121).

Chapter 6, “Open and Shut,” puts the lie to the conventional wisdom that open-mindedness is a virtue and closed-mindedness is a vice. Again G. K. Chesterton comes to our aid: “Whereas I am incurably convinced that the object of opening the mind, as opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid”<sup>4</sup> (126). Of course, we all have positions that are unsettled when they should be settled and settled when they should be unsettled. And the more we have invested in our positions the more reluctant we will be to consider evidence against them (129). In the case of Megan Phelps-Roper “social media gave her a way out of her echo chamber” (137). “You can know whether your social environment is healthy for thinking by its attitude toward ideas from the outgroup” (138). At this point it would have been helpful to point out that orthodox Christianity at its most consistent has never been afraid to take on the tough questions and has always sought to understand its opponents fairly before critiquing them.

The final chapter, “A Person Thinking,” considers a David Foster Wallace essay, “Authority and American Usage.”<sup>5</sup> His point is that the democratic spirit “is best manifested in the ability to persuade without dictating” (142). The failure to do so is

the failure to recognize other dialects, other contexts, other *people*, as having value that needs to be respected—especially, it’s tempting to say, if you want those people

---

<sup>3</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane, 1908), 32.

<sup>4</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *The Autobiography of G. K. Chesterton* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1936), 228–29.

<sup>5</sup> David Foster Wallace, *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2006).

to respect *your* dialects and contexts and friends and family members, but perhaps what really matters is the damage this inability to code switch does to the social fabric. It rends it. (144)

This requires willingness “to inquire into someone else’s dialect . . .” (145). Jacobs concludes:

I just want to emphasize, here at the end, that you won’t profit from this book if you treat it as offering only a set of techniques. You have to be a certain *kind of person* to make this book work for you: the kind of person, who, at least some of the time, cares more about *working toward the truth* than about one’s current social position. (150)

My only quarrel with this excellent book is that Jacobs doesn’t refer enough to Scripture. This is perhaps because his audience is broader than the church. Currency is an imprint of a division of Penguin Random House. That being said, demonstrating that Christians have an epistemological and motivational foundation in the grace of God found in the wisdom of the Bible to think the way he recommends, has tremendous value in the public square. Christianity is the profound source of the model of thinking that Jacobs so eloquently articulates.

**Gregory E. Reynolds** serves as the pastor of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire, and is the editor of *Ordained Servant*.

# ServantPoetry

---

## I am the Living Bread: Meditation Eight: John 6:51

by Edward Taylor (c. 1642–1729)

I kening through Astronomy Divine  
The Worlds bright Battlement, wherein I spy  
A Golden Path my Pensill cannot line,  
From that bright Throne unto my Threshold ly.  
And while my puzzled thoughts about it pore  
I finde the Bread of Life in't at my doore.

When that this Bird of Paradise put in  
This Wicker Cage (my Corps) to tweedle praise  
Had peckt the Fruite forbad: and so did fling  
Away its Food; and lost its golden dayes;  
It fell into Celestiall Famine sore:  
And never could attain a morsell more.

Alas! alas! Poore Bird, what wilt thou doe?  
The Creatures field no food for Souls e're gave.  
And if thou knock at Angells dores they show  
An Empty Barrell: they no soul bread have.  
Alas! Poore Bird, the Worlds White Loafe is done  
And cannot yield thee here the smallest Crumb.

In this sad state, Gods Tender Bowells run  
Out streams of Grace: And he to end all strife  
The Purest Wheate in Heaven, his deare-dear Son  
Grinds, and kneads up into this Bread of Life.  
Which Bread of Life from Heaven down came and stands  
Disht on thy Table up by Angells Hands.

Did God mould up this Bread in Heaven, and bake,  
Which from his Table came, and to thine goeth?  
Doth he bespeake thee thus, This Soule Bread take.  
Come Eate thy fill of this thy Gods White Loafe?  
Its Food too fine for Angells, yet come, take  
And Eate thy fill. Its Heavens Sugar Cake.

What Grace is this knead in this Loafe? This thing  
Souls are but petty things it to admire.  
Yee Angells, help: This fill would to the brim  
Heav'ns whelm'd-down Chrystall meelee Bowle, yea and higher.  
This Bread of Life dropt in thy mouth, doth Cry.  
Eate, Eate me, Soul, and thou shalt never dy.