

A photograph of a snowy mountain slope. In the foreground, a metal railing runs diagonally across the frame. Three people are silhouetted against the bright, snowy background, standing on the railing. The snow is heavily textured with tracks and footprints. The overall scene is bright and high-contrast.

# Ordained Servant

April 2022

Gender Issues



# Ordained Servant Online

## A Journal for Church Officers

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### CURRENT ISSUE: RESPONDING TO THE TRANSGENDER MOMENT

April 2022

#### From the Editor

Sometimes officers must read the works of others who are perhaps outside of the church or whose religious commitment is unknown but who are experts in a particular area of interest to our ministries. Such is Ryan Anderson, author of the controversial book *When Harry Became Sally*. Anderson's 2014 doctoral dissertation is titled "Neither Liberal Nor Libertarian: A Natural Law Approach to Social Justice and Economic Rights." His thoughtful challenge to transgender ideology is a useful and compassionate intervention into an area of ethics that is seeing tragic results in the lives of young people where the givenness of gender and the law of God are ignored. Andy Wilson provides us with a nuanced review article, "Exposing the Fragility of the Transgender Ideology."

In several installments from the conclusion of Alan Strange's commentary on the Form of Government, he offers explanation of the chapters on divestiture from office and missions. The resultant volume should be of great help to generations of officers.

I review Jeffrey Bilbro's *Reading the Times: A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News* in my review article "How the News and the Good News Shape Our Lives."

Charles Wingard reviews the second volume of a fascinating trilogy about the literary life of C. S. Lewis. *The Making of C.S. Lewis: From Atheist to Apologist (1918–1945)* covers the heart of Lewis's life with the dramatic conversion from avowed atheist to defender of the faith. His 1955 autobiographical work *Surprised by Joy* describes this transition beginning from an earlier time. The recent documentary film, starring Max McLean, *The Most Reluctant Convert: The Untold Story of C.S. Lewis*, is well worth seeing. Lewis's theology was not orthodox at every point; he was a scholar of Medieval literature and a masterful writer of every genre from academic treatises to children's stories.

Our poem this month is Robert Herrick's "To Daffodils" in honor of spring—well sort of. Twentieth century poet T. S. Eliot's famous line "April is the cruelest month" echoes seventeenth centuries lamenting mortality, as many of his poems do, a theme in philosophy and literature known as *Memento mori* (Latin "remember that you [have to] die). Eliot wrote this portion of *The Wasteland* after his recovery from the Spanish Flu pandemic.

The cover picture is the entrance to the extreme ski terrain Vallée Blanche, which descends the Mer de Glace glacier on Mont Blanc above Chamonix, France. One misstep at the beginning of this run leads to almost certain death. I recently took this dramatic picture as a tourist, not a skier, having taken the cable car to the pinnacle Aiguille du Midi. It is an astonishing revelation of God's glory, and one might think man's folly, considering the cover picture.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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

# ServantEthics

## Exposing the Fragility of Transgender Ideology

A Review Article<sup>1</sup>

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By Andy Wilson

*When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, by Ryan T. Anderson. Encounter, 2018, 264 pages, \$16.99, paper.

In February 2021, during the same week when the U.S. House of Representatives was renewing the effort to legislate transgender ideology through the Equality Act and when the Senate was holding confirmation hearings for the transgender appointee to the post of assistant secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources, online retail giant Amazon cancelled Ryan T. Anderson's acclaimed 2018 book *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. That is, the book was thoroughly erased from Amazon's website and all of its platforms. This was a consequential move, as Amazon controls, by various metrics, between 50 and 80 percent of book sales in America. If Amazon refuses to sell certain kinds of books, publishers will likely be unwilling to publish such books. This is yet another example of a strategy that progressives employ as they strive to implement various aspects of their radical agenda for society: the strategy of making it very difficult for opposing arguments to get a fair hearing in the media.<sup>2</sup> As the publisher of Anderson's book pointed out, "Big Tech and Big Media have become drunk with power and . . . have begun to regard Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a how-to manual instead of what it is, a scaring warning about the dangers of totalitarianism."<sup>3</sup> When I learned that Anderson's book had been memory-holed by Amazon, I ordered it directly from the publisher that very day. I am glad I did.

In a society that is truly dedicated to individual liberty and free speech, those who disagree with a particular argument will respond to it with an argument of their own. But in our society, proponents of transgenderism are unwilling to engage those who challenge their position. Instead, they typically denounce such people as dangerous bigots who need to be silenced. Why do they do this? Why not just refute the argument if it is so patently false and harmful? It certainly seems, to use the words of Queen Gertrude in *Hamlet*, that

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<sup>1</sup> Originally presented by Andy Wilson at the March 25, 2021 meeting of Granite State Reformed Ministers' Fellowship

<sup>2</sup> See Rod Dreher, "The War on Religious Liberty," *The American Conservative* (March 17, 2021), <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/the-war-on-religious-liberty/>

<sup>3</sup> Roger Kimball, "The 'World's Largest Bookstore Gets into the Censorship Business,'" *American Greatness* (February 28, 2021), <https://amgreatness.com/2021/02/27/the-worlds-largest-bookstore-gets-into-the-censorship-business/>

they “doth protest too much.”<sup>4</sup> Or as Anderson puts it, the fact that transgender activists constantly adapt their creed, expand their demands, refuse to engage contrary evidence, and employ coercion “suggests a posture of defensiveness—that activists know their claims can’t stand up to scrutiny” (28–29).

*When Harry Became Sally* begins by explaining the rise of transgender ideology, focusing especially on what has taken place at Johns Hopkins University over the past half-century. When a gender identity clinic was established there in 1965, a young professor of psychiatry at the school named Dr. Paul McHugh tried to dissuade his colleagues from treating gender dysphoria with transgender-affirming therapies, including “sex reassignment.” In Anderson’s words,

After studying the evidence, McHugh decided that sex change surgery was bad medicine and was “fundamentally cooperating with a mental illness.” Psychiatrists, he thought, could better help patients with gender dysphoria by “trying to fix their minds and not their genitalia.” (17)

His efforts were successful for a few decades, but in 2016 the school’s hospital once again began performing sex reassignment procedures. This move was not made in response to new scientific evidence that refuted McHugh’s arguments but because of political pressure and shifting cultural attitudes. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated event. In our cultural climate, anyone who tries to help those suffering from gender dysphoria understand why they are the way they are is likely to be deemed a bigot. This only demonstrates how “medical practice is seriously compromised by an ideological agenda” (24).

In chapters 2 and 3, Anderson looks at transgenderism through the eyes of both its advocates and its casualties. He explains how the public policies called for by transgender activists grow out of a radical conception of the human person that says that a person’s actual gender is rooted in their internal sense of gender identity, regardless of whether this corresponds to biological reality. This is reflected in the insistence that a person’s biological sex be referred to as the sex that they were “assigned” at birth and that gender transition be construed not as “sex change” but as a matter of affirming and settling into one’s true self. Activists zealously promote transgender educational efforts and public policies that police language, give transgender individuals access to facilities and activities reserved for the sex with which they identify, and provide gender transition therapy for children without parental consent. While these efforts have found a significant measure of success, the fact remains that “the core of the ideology is the radical claim that feelings determine reality” (48). As C.S. Lewis once observed, this is what happens when people reject the notion that nature has any given meaning or purpose: “All motives that claim any validity other than that of their felt emotional weight at a given moment have failed them. When all that says ‘it is good’ has been debunked, what says ‘I want’ remains.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to pointing out the contradictions and inconsistencies of this way of thinking, Anderson devotes an entire chapter to the stories of “detransitioners,” people who found that gender transition did not solve their problems and eventually decided to pursue the course of learning to accept the reality of their biological sex. While such people are often attacked and silenced by trans activists, their stories provide valuable insight into why

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<sup>4</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, eds. Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin, 2002), III.2.226.

<sup>5</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 74.

it is that suicide rates for those who have transitioned are nineteen times higher than those of the general population (73). These individuals attest to the fact that because transitioning fails to address the root problems, “it may actually deepen the alienation from one’s body” (75).

Chapter 4 sets forth the biology of sexual differentiation, making it clear that there is no biological basis for the claim that a man can be born in the bodily form of a woman. Sex is determined at fertilization and, with the exception of rare instances involving disorders of sexual development (DSDs), is easily recognized at birth. As Anderson points out, “The fundamental conceptual distinction between a male and a female is the organism’s organization for sexual reproduction” (79). There is also a wide array of secondary physical and cognitive sex differences between males and females that cannot be attributed to socialization. And as far as DSDs, these are not instances of a third sex but of people who are either male or female with a disorder in their development. In such cases, “The sound medical response is to identify the predominant underlying sex and then take measures to provide health and functioning, as far as possible, through hormones and possible surgery” (91). While transgender activists lobby for classifying these disorders as “*Differences of Sexual Development*,” we do not speak this way of other bodily disorders. If a person’s heart or digestive tract does not function the way it is supposed to function, it is not a matter of difference but a matter of disease. It is also important to note that “most people who have a DSD do not identify as transgender, and most people who do identify as transgender do not have a DSD” (92). In other words, DSDs cannot be used to support transgender ideology.

Chapter 5 begins by pointing out the alarmingly high rate of attempted suicides among people who identify as transgender, noting that the root problems behind those suicide attempts do not seem to be alleviated by sex reassignment procedures. And Anderson points out that these “poor outcomes can’t be blamed on a hostile or bigoted society, since they are reported even in cultures most accepting of people who identify as transgender” (93). The essence of gender dysphoria (which used to be referred to as “gender identity disorder”) is the delusion of thinking that one is the opposite of one’s biological sex. This is similar to the faulty assumption held by those who suffer from anorexia nervosa, who see themselves as overweight when they are actually dangerously thin. In both instances, the person’s feelings do not line up with reality. Instead of addressing gender dysphoria by focusing on treating the mind that is the source of the delusion, transgender ideology insists on changing the body to bring it in line with the person’s feelings. The sad reality is that this does not actually change the person’s sex. As Dr. McHugh explains, those who undergo transitioning treatment and procedures become “feminized men or masculinized women, counterfeits or impersonators of the sex with which they ‘identify’” (101). That being the case, it is not surprising that studies have found strong evidence of poor psychological outcomes for those who have undergone surgical transitioning.

In chapter 6, Anderson focuses on the most contentious issue in the controversy over transgender ideology: the push to encourage gender transitioning among children. For children who identify as transgender, transgender-affirming therapy involves social transition as soon as the child begins to express a transgender identity, puberty blockers at the approach of puberty, cross-sex hormones around age sixteen, and sex reassignment surgery around age eighteen. Proponents of this approach disregard the fact that “the vast majority of children with gender dysphoria—80 to 95 percent—naturally grow out of it, if they aren’t encouraged to transition” (119). Sadly, these chances are likely to be considerably diminished by transgender-affirming therapy, as “one would expect that the

development of natural sex characteristics might contribute to the natural consolidation of one's gender identity" (122). Why encourage children to persist in identifying as transgender when transitioning involves considerable risks and when the alternate approach of helping children work through the potential causes of their dysphoria has seen significant success? While transgender activists dismiss such approaches as "conversion therapy," Anderson contends that it is "an Orwellian abuse of language to say that helping a child be comfortable in his own body is 'conversion therapy,' but transforming a boy into a 'girl' is simply allowing the child to be 'her' true self." (142)

The book's concluding chapters consider the cultural environment in which transgender ideology is gaining ascendancy and the effect this is having in the sphere of public policy. Anderson argues that the morphing of feminism into a movement that seeks to abolish sexual differences has fostered a misguided concept of gender in our culture, and this has opened the door to transgender ideology. While gender is not merely a social construct, it is socially shaped. In Anderson's words,

Gender properly understood is a social manifestation of human nature, springing forth from biological realities, though shaped by rational and moral choice. Human beings are creatures of nature and of culture, but a healthy culture does not attempt to erase our nature as male and female embodied beings. Instead, it promotes the integrity of persons, in part by cultivating manifestations of sex differences that correspond to biological facts. (149)

As this way of thinking gives way to transgender ideology, attempts are being made to impose a radical transgender policy agenda. This agenda "entirely ignores competing interests and considerations" (181), most notably the privacy and safety of girls and women, and the natural advantages that biological males have over women in many sports. While this agenda is being implemented by reinterpreting "sex" in existing anti-discrimination legislation to include gender identity, Anderson shows how such a move is contrary to the original intent of such legislation, is unsupported by science, and compels many people to endorse and facilitate ideas and behavior that they consider to be false and immoral.

While media outlets like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have attacked Anderson's book as hateful and bigoted,<sup>6</sup> it is actually a courageous, compassionate, and carefully researched effort to challenge a zealously-promoted ideology that is bringing great harm to people's lives. Soon after the book's cancellation by Amazon, one individual who struggles with gender dysphoria published an article attesting that Anderson and his book have been of great help to him, saying,

The arguments he makes are positioned within the compassionate and empathetic interest of a scientist trying to understand what is causing a person so much pain and what can truly be done to relieve it. Without ever dismissing the experience of the transgender person, he asks the important question, one I struggled with for years, of whether a medical transition is

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<sup>6</sup> Ryan T. Anderson, "A New York Times Writer's Reckless Hit Piece on My Transgender Book," *The Daily Signal* (February 27, 2018), <https://www.dailysignal.com/2018/02/27/new-york-times-writers-reckless-hit-piece-transgender-book/>

genuinely the best option to alleviate gender dysphoria and all the pain and suffering associated with it. . . . Anderson’s book asks necessary questions that deserve to be given fair consideration and debated, not restricted from public view.<sup>7</sup>

Amazon’s stated reason for banning the book from their platforms is that they have “chosen not to sell books that frame LGBTQ+ identity as a mental illness.” However, as Anderson pointed out in response, “Gender dysphoria is listed in the APA’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which Amazon sells. So, the real deciding factor seems to be whether you endorse hormones and surgery as the proper treatment or counseling.”<sup>8</sup> People are being helped by having access to well-reasoned arguments like Anderson’s that expose the unscientific, metaphysical nature of the assumptions that underlie transgender ideology. The fact that this is so intolerable to trans activists suggests that their objective is not really to help those who suffer from gender dysphoria. If not, then what is their objective? To use identity politics to solidify their hold on the levers of cultural power? To create more consumers for the transitioning products and services on offer from the pharmaceutical and medical industries?

It is crucial for Christians to recognize what is going on here. As R. R. Reno points out, we have seen this strategy employed before:

The game plan is simple. Begin with an unobjectionable affirmation of our duty to care for the weak and vulnerable. Then use it as a hook to compel affirmations of progressive cultural politics. I saw this strategy employed in the Episcopal Church in the 1990s. Gay youth are vulnerable to suicidal thoughts and need our support, we were told. That support cannot be fully effective unless one affirms “gay identity,” which of course requires Christianity to “evolve.” As this strategy moves forward, we reach the point at which, if you are not in favor of gay marriage, you are condemned as a “hater” who is in favor of teen suicide.<sup>9</sup>

The reason why LGBTQ identity is so fragile and requires universal affirmation is because it is located in feelings that are in conflict with the order that God has inscribed in nature. The loving response is not to affirm such feelings but to help people align their lives with external reality, the way God our Creator has made us, while at once recognizing the ways in which sin distorts our perception of that reality. “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (Ps. 139:13–14).

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<sup>7</sup> Chad Felix Greene, “How Ryan Anderson’s Banned Book, ‘When Harry Became Sally’ Helped Me with Gender Dysphoria,” *The Federalist* (March 1, 2021), <https://thefederalist.com/2021/03/01/how-ryan-andersons-banned-book-when-harry-became-sally-helped-me-with-gender-dysphoria/>

<sup>8</sup> Tim Pearce, “Amazon Bans Books Framing Transgenderism as ‘Mental Illness,’” *The Daily Wire* (March 12, 2021), <https://www.dailywire.com/news/amazon-bans-books-framing-transgenderism-as-mental-illness>

<sup>9</sup> R.R. Reno, “The Public Square,” *First Things* (April 2021): 65.



# Servant Standards

## Commentary on the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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by Alan D. Strange

### Chapter XXVI Divesting from Office

1. An officer may be divested of his office, or deposed, by judicial discipline for an offense in doctrine or life. Such divestiture, or deposition, shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

**Comment:** This chapter of the FG often appears to be the most challenging, if not to say the most confusing, of all the FG chapters. It need not be. The comments on the next section (2) will address the question of the overall place of this chapter within the FG. This section, due undoubtedly to its title (“Divesting from Office”), among other things, has been the source of some of that confusion. Persons are doubtless drawn here by the title when they are thinking something like “that person should not, for some reason (s), be in special office,” whether the person in view is a minister, ruling elder, or deacon. Carefully attended to, however, this first section should be a help not a hindrance in rightly interpreting this chapter, particularly as one pays attention to the distinctions drawn in this section of the chapter.

Section 1 of this chapter helps distinguish with respect to the reasons one might think that an officer should be divested and clearly sets forth that an officer might be divested, or deposed, i.e., removed from his church office, for an offense in doctrine or life. This would not mean any offense of any sort in doctrine or life but an offense that is sufficient to warrant trial and consequent censure in accordance with the Book of Discipline. BD 3.7.b., para. 2 makes clear that such an offense in doctrine is different for the office-bearer than for the unordained member. For the member, an offense in doctrine would involve holding beliefs that would contradict a credible profession of faith. For the ordained officer, an offense in doctrine serious enough to warrant censure would be any views that “constitute a violation of the system of doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures as that system of doctrine is set forth in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms.” The standard for ethical conduct is the same for both non-ordained and ordained members: “an offense in the area of conduct and practice which seriously disturbs the peace, purity, and/or unity of the church.”

If an offense in either doctrine or life is in view, according to FG 26.1, one may not consider divestiture under the rubrics of this chapter. If one thinks that an office-bearer should be removed from his office of minister, ruling elder, or deacon because of any such alleged offense in doctrine or life, then that one must leave the Form of Government and go to the Book of Discipline. This is because this section in the FG provides for something that is part of the ordinary administrative and governmental part of the work of judicatories. When one is considering, however, an offense in doctrine or life, one should be acting not

simply governmentally but judicially, and this means that one must proceed in terms of the Book of Discipline where full judicial due process is in play.

It might be put bluntly: “if you have come here to FG 26 looking to remove someone from office because of an alleged offense in doctrine or life, you must go instead to the Book of Discipline.” It is the Book of Discipline that will direct you on how to proceed if one wishes to deal with matters of alleged offenses, either in terms of what one believes and teaches or in terms of how one is thought to be departing from proper ethical behavior. The Book of Discipline affords someone accused particular protections—one is presumed innocent until proven guilty, and the burden of proof rests on the bringer of charges, whether the judicatory or private parties—and offenses must be dealt with by a judicial rather than by an ordinary governmental process.

It should be noted that this chapter may be used in a mixed case, i.e., one in which there are valid governmental *and* judicial concerns. It is just that if something is dealt with under the rubric of this chapter, *offenses* must not be in view *but only administrative matters* (e.g., “he does not have gifts and graces for office; his services are not edifying.”). A man thought unqualified for office may, in other words, also be thought liable for accusations of offense. If the judicatory, however, chooses only to deal with that which is potentially disqualifying and not clearly sinful (it is not sinful not to have qualifications for office; otherwise, every unqualified, unordained man in the church would be liable for charges, a manifest absurdity), then a judicatory may address such under this chapter. If a charge of an offense is in view, on the other hand, then the BD is the appropriate venue for dealing with such concerns.

2. An officer may also be divested of his office without censure, for reasons other than delinquency in faith or life.

**Comment:** Section 2, after Section 1 has warned readers to leave the Form of Government and go to the Book of Discipline if they have judicial matters in view, now proceeds to recognize that there are reasons for removal from special office “other than delinquency in faith or life.” The rest of the chapter proceeds to deal with these non-judicial, what we might call administrative, reasons for such removal. Some have needlessly puzzled, in my estimation, over this chapter and the reason(s) for its being in the FG, even calling into question that there should be such a chapter and such a provision.

I would argue, though, that such a chapter is needed, at least in part, due to the recognition that we routinely express as Protestants that the church, at every level and in all judicatories, never claims to be infallible. The church can and does err. And one of the errors of the church is that she does not always get it right with respect to whether any given candidate for special office indeed possesses the necessary qualifications. In other words, the church occasionally puts men in special office, who, subsequent events prove, do not belong in special office. Just as it is a governmental, not a judicial, act for a judicatory to go through the process of ordaining men as ministers, ruling elders, and deacons, so it is a governmental act when a judicatory comes to recognize that it should not have placed men in these special offices, because it has become clear that they lack the graces, gifts, and temperament for such offices.

Sometimes it is not a matter of the church coming to think otherwise about a man’s qualification for office than they did when they placed him in such an office. Rather, the man himself, though earlier qualified, has through subsequent developments become disabled for office and is for whatever reason “hanging on to office,” refusing to relinquish

it. Perhaps an accident has rendered the previously qualified officer to be now intellectually or emotionally incapable of any longer fulfilling the duties or meeting the requirements of his office.

This is the purpose of this chapter: it makes eminent sense that the same FG that provides for the process of ordination/installation also provides for the removal of those who either never truly had or came to lose the gifts and graces necessary for such office-bearing. And when one considers, especially for the office of minister, the level of support necessary for one to enter upon the office (exams must be sustained by a vote of three-fourths plus one), it seems reasonable that if a man comes to lack support in his presbytery as to his proper qualifications, that there should be an FG process whereby he might be removed from office. This chapter provides such a process and is wise and useful over against its detractors and naysayers.

3. a. A presbytery shall consider divesting a minister of his office without censure if:

- (1) he fails to seek a ministerial charge actively unless temporarily for reasons of health; or
- (2) it appears to the presbytery, over a period of time normally not to exceed two years, that he is not called to ministerial service because he does not possess the gifts requisite for the gospel ministry; or
- (3) he fails to perform adequately the work of the ministry through lack of the requisite gifts; or
- (4) permanent physical or mental disability prevents him from exercising the office.

b. If a presbytery contemplates divesting a minister without censure the minister in question shall be duly informed and given the opportunity at a meeting of the presbytery to defend his continuance in office or to demit the ministry.

c. A motion to divest shall require a two-thirds majority of those voting.

d. When a minister is divested of his office or demits the ministry, the presbytery shall remove his name from its roll and dismiss him to a local church. Until his reception he shall continue a member of the regional church without membership in a local congregation.

e. If a minister desires to resign from or refuses to serve in his office, the presbytery ordinarily shall require him to wait six months and in the meantime ascertain whether the reasons for his actions are of sufficient weight. If at the end of this time his desire is unchanged and the presbytery is satisfied of his reasons, he shall be allowed to demit the ministry and the presbytery shall record the fact in its minutes and remove his name from the roll.

**Comment:** Now the FG turns to address the circumstances in which a minister of the gospel may be removed from office without censure. The first instance involves a minister not currently serving in a ministerial office, i.e., a minister who does not have a ministerial charge. A minister lacking a current ministerial charge, is, all things being equal, bound to engage in such a quest. Otherwise, he opens himself to being asked by his presbytery, if he continues not to seek a charge, to demit the office, or, if he refuses to do so, to be prepared for the presbytery to divest him of the office. The listed exception is that his health, temporarily, keeps him from pursuing a charge of some sort. It is tacitly assumed that upon the recovery of his health he will pursue a charge. If he continues not to pursue one, the provisions of this chapter that describe his removal may be utilized.

The second and the third instances of such governmental (as opposed to judicial) removal are related. The second applies to a man who is presumably relatively new to the ministry. The presbytery, through whatever means, comes to make a judgment that a more recently ordained minister in fact lacks the necessary gifts (and graces, though not explicitly cited here, yet likely tacitly assumed) for office and moves to remove him under the terms of this chapter. The third instance in which a man may be removed from office without censure is related to the second: the second was an explicit provision for the removal of a newer ordained man (hence the time reference of “over a period of time normally not to exceed two years”), while the third involves the removal of a minister from office without any specified term of service on his part being in view, i.e., he may have been in the ministry some time, though previous circumstances did not afford presbytery the opportunity to evaluate his gifts and graces as subsequent ones have.

In this third case, a man may be removed from office if it becomes clear to the presbytery, through whatever means, that the man lacks the gifts necessary to perform adequately the work of the ministry. The second instance seems to suggest the presbytery coming to realize that it ordained a man that it should not have ordained and the third that, whatever service this man has hitherto rendered, he has made it evident that he ultimately lacks the requisite gifts for adequate ministerial performance. In both cases, the presbytery comes to the conviction that whatever gifts (or graces) that it (or another presbytery) earlier concluded rendered the man fit for ministry, the man in question does not, in fact, appear to have such gifts at this point and is no longer fit to continue in gospel ministry. The fourth and last case involves a minister coming to be afflicted with some physical or mental disability of the sort that the presbytery determines renders him to be no longer qualified for ministerial office.

Section b. then proceeds to detail the process whereby a man described under the four-fold categories listed under section a. might be removed from office without censure. Whatever circumstances may have preceded getting the question of the man’s qualifications before his presbytery, the process of non-judicial divestiture begins with the presbytery of the minister in view voting to “contemplate” such divestiture. This means that his presbytery must be convinced that there is sufficient warrant for it formally to consider the question, which presupposes that matters have been brought to its attention that call into question the minister’s continued service. Thus, by a simple majority vote in the presbytery determination is made that at some upcoming meeting of the presbytery the minister in question will be given opportunity either to defend his continuance in office or permitted to demit the office. The presbytery shall duly inform the minister in question about the details of when such a meeting shall take place.

At the meeting where consideration of such occurs, the presbytery shall, if the minister defends his continuance in office, either accede to his defense and the matter proceeds no further, i.e., the man remains in ministerial office, or else entertain a motion to divest him. A motion to divest must be carried by a super-majority (two-thirds of the members of presbytery voting). If he demits his office or is divested from the ministry under the terms of this chapter, the man in question shall be dismissed to a local congregation (mutually agreeable to all concerned), meaning that his name shall be removed from the roll of ministerial members of presbytery. Until he is received by some local church, his name will remain on the rolls of the regional church, not as a ministerial member, of course, but simply as any other non-ministerial member of the regional church.



Section e. describes two different situations: one in which an ordained minister seeks to resign his office without any other ministerial charge in prospect, or another in which he refuses to serve in his office. Presumably, the minister in question has either come to presbytery seeking to resign, or the presbytery has discovered that he is unwilling to serve. In either case, the presbytery ordinarily (but not necessarily in every case) asks the man seeking to resign or refusing to serve to wait for six months so that the presbytery can assess the case and ascertain what is going on, including his reasons for wanting, or needing, to demit the ministry. The presbytery, if it determines his reasons to be of sufficient weight, at the end of the six-month period, can grant him permission to demit.

If he does not cooperate with the presbytery and insists on leaving on his own terms, contrary to the provisions of this section of the FG, the presbytery is under no obligation to grant him demission as herein provided. It may proceed to judicial process if it finds such warranted. This is, of course, true in any of these cases. A presbytery may determine at any point that judicial process is needed in any given case and proceed immediately thereunto. If he cooperates with the presbytery, and it deems his reasons for wanting to demit satisfactory, he shall be permitted to demit the office. The presbytery shall record in its minutes the circumstances under which such demission was permitted and remove his name from the roll of the presbytery.

4. a. A ruling elder or deacon may be divested of his office if his services do not appear to be edifying to the congregation. In such a case the following procedure shall be followed:

(1) The process of divestiture may be originated by the session or by a petition to the session signed by one-fourth of the communicant members in good and regular standing. The officer in question shall be given the opportunity at a meeting of the session to defend his continuance in office or to demit the office.

(2) If the question is to be presented to the congregation it shall be at a regularly called meeting. The call for the meeting shall stipulate that this matter is to be considered at the meeting, and the officer shall be notified at the same time.

(3) The congregation, by a two-thirds majority of those voting, may request the presbytery for permission to remove him from office.

(4) If the presbytery gives its permission the session shall divest him of his office.

b. A ruling elder or deacon who desires to resign from or refuses to serve in the office shall be counseled by the session concerning his decision. If, after such counseling, he persists in his decision, he shall be allowed to demit his office, and the session shall record the fact in its minutes.

**Comment:** Here we come to the situations in which an elder or deacon, whose membership is customarily in some local congregation, may be divested of office without censure. We do not have in the governmental removal of either the elder or deacon the specificity that we do in the removal of a minister without censure. Rather, the grounds upon which either elder or deacon may be removed are simply stated as their “services do not appear to be edifying to the congregation.” This means that the congregation, together with the session (the procedure makes it clear that the approbation of both is ordinarily necessary), may determine that the service of a given elder or deacon, whatever it may have been in the past, is currently not viewed by the congregation and session as any longer being something that builds up (the meaning of “edifying”) the congregation. It is a determination that lies in the discretion of the local session and congregation. If it “appears”

to them to be such, it seems difficult for the local office-bearer, especially at the conclusion of the process, no matter how much he may see things contrariwise, to continue successfully to argue that his services are indeed edifying. In all these cases, including ministers, the officers in view should listen carefully to judicatories and congregants and not simply ceaselessly and determinedly defend themselves at all costs.

Such a process of governmental removal of a local elder or deacon may be started by the session or by at least a quarter of the communicant members of the congregation (in good and regular standing, earlier defined in this commentary on FG 16.1) asking the session to consider such a question (cf. FG 16.1). The session may, either on its own determination or in fulfillment of the request of a part of the congregation, make its own assessment of the fitness of the officer before the elder or deacon in question comes before the session. In any case, it shall call the officer before it and present him with either their settled view of the matter or simply report what a part of the congregation thinks. The elder or deacon can either demit the office upon hearing that the session or some in the congregation find his services unedifying, or he can defend his continuance in office.

If the officer in question demits, then the matter is concluded by such action. If he defends his continuance in office, then the session, if this question of divestiture originated with the session, can either find his arguments for such satisfactory, and this concludes the matter (hence the conditional language about whether this is brought to the congregation), or it can, if it does not find such satisfactory, proceed and bring it to the congregation. It is my view that if this originated with the congregation by way of petition, if the officer wishes to continue in office, after his defense to the session, the matter goes to the congregation in any case. This is in keeping with the right of a quarter to require the session to call a congregational meeting (cf. FG 16.1). When it goes to the congregation, the session shall specify that this is a meeting for the purpose of considering divestiture of the officer in question. The officer shall also be notified of the upcoming congregational meeting as well.

When the matter comes to the congregation, the disposition of the session respecting the officer—whether it supports his continuance in office or thinks he should demit—would ordinarily be communicated to the congregation. While the officer in question has the right to full participation in the congregational meeting as does any other member of the congregation (and any such extra time as the session may grant), the formal defense of his continuance was given already before the session. When it is ready for the vote, the congregation shall determine whether it finds the service of the officer in question to be edifying. If a super-majority finds the service not to be edifying, it can request the presbytery for permission to remove him from his office. If the presbytery grants permission for such, the session shall divest the elder or deacon in question from his office. The basis of presbytery permission is that presbytery is involved, at least, in ascertaining that an orderly process occurred at the sessional and congregational level; it may go further than that if it deems it necessary, though customarily it would not repeat all that was done at the lower level.

Section e. sets forth a process for the elder or deacon like that for the minister in 3.e. of this chapter. If an elder or deacon, of his own accord, wishes to resign from or refuses to serve in his office, the session shall counsel the officer in question regarding such. If the officer in question persists after such counsel in his desire to demit, the session shall permit him to do so and record the circumstances in its minutes. If, of course, the session, under 4.a.(1) of this chapter, urged the officer in view to demit, this section does not apply. This

section has to do with an officer seeking to resign or refusing to serve, maintaining such a course in counsel with the session, and ultimately demitting the office at his discretion.

5. A man who has been divested of office and who is subsequently elected to that office shall be viewed as receiving initial election to that office.

**Comment:** If a man is divested of office, under any of the rubrics of this chapter, if he is subsequently elected, he shall be subject to all the procedures of FG 24–25, as if he were newly elected as a minister, elder, or deacon. That process, eventuating in ordination and installation, is not to be short circuited: a man divested of office who subsequently comes back into office goes through the full regular process of anyone coming into office for the first time.

6. Nothing in this chapter shall be held to imply that when a minister retires, or is retired, because of advanced age or disability, from his official position, he shall be divested of his office or prevented from performing any of the functions of that office.

**Comment:** Nothing herein suggests that upon retirement from the pastorate or other ministerial position, either because of advanced age or disabilities, a minister is thereby divested of his office. After retiring from a pastorate, for instance, a man remains fully a minister, able to fulfill the duties and functions of such when called upon and as he sees fit. A minister who is retired, lacking a call or a charge, is still a minister and may preach, administer sacraments, etc.

7. Nothing in this chapter shall be held to imply that when a ruling elder or deacon retires, or is retired, because of advanced age or disability, from his official position, he shall be divested of his office or prevented from performing, on occasion, the functions of that office.

**Comment:** Similarly, a ruling elder or deacon upon his retirement, due to his being older or having a disability, retains his office and is not thereby divested. He may, as occasion affords, perform the functions of his office, not only in the local congregation, perhaps assisting in the distribution of the elements in holy communion, but also serving in higher judicatories and on committees of such (with sessional approval).

## Chapter XXVII

### Missions

1. Sessions, presbyteries, and the general assembly have their respective responsibilities for the work of missions. Each congregation and presbytery, as well as the general assembly, is obliged to pursue the task of evangelism within its respective bounds. Foreign missions is conducted by the general assembly on behalf of the whole church, or by individual presbyteries and congregations acting in coordination with one another and with the general assembly.

**Comment:** In the history of the OPC, missions (both home and foreign) have played a key role. The denomination came into being, in no small measure, due to the refusal of Machen and others to compromise with the liberalism then infecting the churches, including the PCUSA, which modernism also demanded the recasting of missions to serve a world offended by the exclusive claims of the Christian faith. This section reflects that the responsibility for missions obtains at every level of the church—the local, the regional, and

the national. Thus, judicatories at all those levels—sessions, presbyteries, and the general assembly—rightly have responsibilities proper to each for the work of missions. Each is obligated to pursue the task of evangelism—proclaiming the good news, the free gospel offer—to all within its respective bounds. Thus, this task of home missions especially pertains to local and regional churches.

Even foreign missions, for which the whole church, and therefore the general assembly, has responsibility, may be conducted by local and regional churches, by sessions and presbyteries, acting in concert with each other and with the general assembly. Most obviously, and most regularly, the general assembly, acting on behalf of the whole church, does and will conduct the foreign mission endeavors of the OPC. It is perfectly proper, then, that foreign missions be conducted at lower levels, in consultation and cooperation with the general assembly; moreover, it is most fitting that the general assembly, acting through its committee on foreign missions, commit itself to and devote due resources to pursuing this work on behalf of the entire denomination.

2. The general assembly or its agencies normally may initiate mission work within the bounds of a presbytery only with the consent of that presbytery; but in extraordinary circumstances the general assembly on its own initiative may appoint missionaries to labor within the bounds of a presbytery for a period not to exceed six months.

**Comment:** The general assembly or its agencies (CHMCE, The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, for instance) can also initiate mission work within the bounds of a particular presbytery only with the consent of that presbytery. In extraordinary circumstances, perhaps the presbytery has been rendered inoperative by attrition or other deleterious circumstances, the general assembly (or its agencies which have executive powers to act on its behalf, as the program committees do) may, on its own initiative, appoint missionaries to labor temporarily within the bounds of that presbytery. Such labor shall not exceed six months. The purpose of this limit is that while a presbytery may be temporarily aided by a general assembly, it should not be dominated by it.

3. A person appointed to labor within the bounds of a presbytery shall place himself under the jurisdiction of that presbytery as soon as practicable. If his work is not limited to one presbytery he shall be under the jurisdiction of that presbytery most convenient to him.

**Comment:** Someone appointed to labor within the bounds of a presbytery, like the sort of temporary missionary cited in section 2, should place himself under its jurisdiction as early as practicable. If his work overlaps presbyteries, such a missionary shall come under the jurisdiction of the presbytery that is most convenient to him, perhaps where his residence is, or his chief labors are.

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# ServantReading

## How the News and the Good News Shape Our Lives

### A Review Article

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

*Reading the Times: A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News*, by Jeffrey Bilbro. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021, xii + 187 pages, \$24.00.

I was intrigued that Bilbro, an orthodox Christian, would begin a book on media with a lengthy section on Henry David Thoreau. In 2001 I quoted Thoreau for being unique in his mid-nineteenth century era as a critic of the new electronic medium of the telegraph:

Henry David Thoreau was one of the few intelligent critics to point out the most significant negative consequence of the new wonder. In the seclusion of Walden Pond (1845–47) he opined: “We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. . . . We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad flapping American ear will be that Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough.” By decontextualizing information the new medium would change the nature of discourse, trivializing the profound and making the irrelevant relevant.<sup>1</sup>

While Thoreau was a Transcendentalist in a very Unitarian religious environment in Concord, Massachusetts, there still existed the culturally pervasive remnants of a once vibrant Trinitarian Christianity. Thoreau was a diligent student of the Bible along with many eastern religious texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita*. He rejected the institutional church and clearly did not side with a minority of Trinitarians who started their own church in reaction to the liberalizing of the town’s First Parish Church in Concord, Massachusetts. On the other hand, Thoreau was a brilliant naturalist, an ardent abolitionist, and critically astute in observing man’s inventions.<sup>2</sup> It is refreshing for Bilbro to appreciate these aspects of Thoreau’s thought.

Bilbro divides his book into three sections of three chapters each, covering attention, time, and community.

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Edward Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, R: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 140. The Thoreau quote came from Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), 65–69.

<sup>2</sup> For some of the content of this paragraph see Laura Dassow Walls, *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 47–49.

He begins by analyzing Thoreau's essay "Life Without Principle" in Chapter 1, "Macadamized Mind" (11–32). The proliferation of printed news and then the speed of the telegraph fragments our attention, leaving us unable to properly assess what is really going on (11). Thoreau's warning about the dangers of contextless, and thus useless, information have proved prescient. He was deeply concerned that such news distracts from transcendent realities that he called "the Eternities" (12). Thoreau's essay poses the question "How are you spending your life?" (14). The daily newspaper can become an idol that steals one's life. Thoreau warns "You cannot serve two masters." In quoting Scripture I fear that he is substituting the God of Jesus's quote for the Unitarian or Transcendentalist God, who may be known and approached without a Mediator. However, as Bilbro asserts, "Thoreau claims that the news competes with his God, offering an alternative, secular ground of being" (15).

Thoreau used an industrial metaphor to make his point. "I believe that the mind can be permanently profaned by the habit of attending to trivial things, so that all our thoughts shall be tinged with triviality. Our very intellect shall be macadamized . . ." (17). Macadam covers nature completely. It is a brilliant metaphor to accent the point that the news tends to reduce everything to the horizontal, making us earthbound. Bilbro is reminded of Paul's instruction to the Colossians to "set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). Thoreau's two-part remedy is simple but profound: "Read not the times. Read the Eternities" (19). Thoreau's borrowed Christian capital is vague enough to be easily applied by the Christian.

Changing metaphors, Thoreau likens the "indiscriminate consumption of news" to a cultivated craving for junk food. Bilbro sees Twitter as a heightened example of this (20). The ingredients in food and advertising alike are designed to addict (21). Worse, the addiction leaves us spiritually and intellectually malnourished. Moreover, the news tends to focus us on distant events with which we have nothing to do, rather than what is happening in our neighborhood (29). Neil Postman agreed with Thoreau's dislike of contextless information, "Only four years after Morse opened the first telegraph line on May 24, 1844, the Associated Press was founded, and news from nowhere, addressed to no one in particular, began to crisscross the nation" (30).<sup>3</sup> More information, but less meaning.

In Chapter 2 Bilbro analyses Jewish artist Marc Chagall's painting, *Solitude*, painted during Hitler's rise in 1933 Germany. The heifer in the picture is a symbol of meditation as she chews her cud (34). Chagall's love of the Jewish Scripture depicts a seated figure beneath an angel in heaven, reminding the viewer that like David in Psalm 1 the person who delights most in heavenly realities will be most useful in this world of trouble (35–6). French mathematician and theologian Blaise Pascal "recommends a profound sort of apathy, *sancta indifferentia*." Epistemic humility relies on God's sovereign workings of Providence (37). Being aware of what is going on in the world while rising above it by faith avoids being overwhelmed by current events. Both Thoreau and Pascal were deeply involved in the world around them, without being swallowed up with the news (41). True discernment of what is going on around one requires silence amidst the cacophony of the news (51). Bilbro concludes this chapter with sage advice,

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<sup>3</sup> Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, 67. See also Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures*, 270.

When we leave the outcome in God's hands, we receive the courage to do what is right regardless of the consequences. A contemplative response to the news, then, depends on eschatological hope, on fixing one's identity in a victory that lies outside the vicissitudes of daily news and politics. (54)

In the final chapter of this section, Bilbro focuses on the liturgies of attention, habitual patterns of thought and life that shape our theology (56). He suggests reading widely, serendipitously, old, and new works (59). Bilbro recommends the homely activities, like gardening and cooking, crafts that form an antidote to distraction (64).

Chapter 4 begins Part 2, on time, with a fascinating and important distinction between kairos and chronos. Kairos time is "rhythmic, cyclical, seasonal," whereas chronos time is "linear and sequential . . . of quantifiable duration" (67). Paul uses this idea in warning the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7) that the time is not propitious for marriage (68). The modern idea of progress makes us focus on the news through the lens of chronos time. The Christian must seek to interpret the events in chronos time in light of the history of redemption. Bilbro warns the reader not to overvalue either kind of time. Kairos time alone makes history meaningless; chronos time alone makes daily events the sole locus of meaning. The technological environment concentrates on the temporal (81).

Appeals to being on the right side of history are rooted in the temporal. Metanarratives are no longer tenable (85). But, declares Bilbro,

People long for such a narrative in order to make sense of the news and events of their time. And a Christian mode of keeping time provides exactly that, enabling us to value the news according to the horizon of divine redemption while steering clear of both the Scylla of kairos and the Charybdis of chronos. (87)

In Chapter 5, "Figural Imagination," Bilbro explores the implications of Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Augustine and Dante located the temporal "events of chronos within the divine drama enacted in kairos time" (88). Such a configuration reorders secular time (89). "The trivia of our lives becomes caught up in the eternal significance of Christ's life" (98). Thus, great Christian thinkers like Dante and Jonathan Edwards have read the times "by an eschatological horizon" (104-5).

Chapter 6 enumerates the "Liturgies of Christian Time." The Mosaic feasts are recapitulated in the life of Christ (109). Bilbro suggests that "Calibrating ourselves—body, soul, and mind—to the liturgical calendar" will mold our lives and change our relationship to the news (111). He goes on to recommend some profound Christian classics that cultivate our figural imaginations as an antidote to the patterns cultivated by the news (112).

Bilbro begins Part 3 on community with the lapidary statement, "What we attend to determines to whom we belong" (119). The danger of the daily news is it tends to bind us to communities created by "secular chronos time and the market" (121). Tradition is eliminated (125). "[W]here we get our news signals and shapes our identity" (126). Communities rooted in secular chronos are thin and lonely; whereas Christian community is "thick" because rooted in Christ's kairos (127). Christian community is embodied in

places. Bilbro quotes Elizabeth Eisenstein to the effect that the reading public is dispersed and individualistic. But he overlooks the difference commitment to one transcendent text, the Bible—the ultimate metanarrative—makes in term of community solidarity. It is rather the disembodied nature of the electronic media that makes us “alone together,” as Sherry Turkle observes (130–1).<sup>4</sup>

Bilbro is well versed in the literature of media ecology. Neil Postman, Marshall McLuhan, Jacque Ellul, Lewis Mumford are among the constellation of sources he has gleaned. Bilbro counsels us to diversify our news feeds (138ff). Better still is to be part of communities that foster various points of view and cultivate nuanced understanding of complex issues. This can only be fostered in what the title of Chapter 8 conveys, “Belonging Outside the Public Sphere” (143ff). “[W]e need to cultivate embodied forms of belonging and allow these commitments to foster . . . convivial modes of participating in the public sphere” (145). He wisely concludes, “In short, if we want to think well about the events of our day, we will first need to belong well to the body of Christ and to the neighbors with whom we share our places” (147). He commends the distinction elaborated by Daniel Kahneman in *Thinking Fast and Slow*<sup>5</sup> in which System 1 is “intuitive, fast, and relatively effortless, whereas System 2 is rational, slow, and requires hard work” (147). The electronic environment fosters System 1 thinking and connects us with invisible “communities.” Bilbro gives examples of redemptive publishing and exemplary lives, concluding the book with Chapter 9, “Liturgies of Christian Belonging” (165ff). In good Walden fashion he recommends walking. Thoreau wrote an entire book on the subject.<sup>6</sup> Our own J. Gresham Machen wrote a fine essay “The Benefits of Walking.”<sup>7</sup> Bilbro provides some fine suggestions for “aspirational subscribing” (170–73).

The combination of Bilbro’s excellent writing style and his finely tuned literary and theological sensibilities makes this book a very edifying delight to read. I highly recommend it.

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<sup>4</sup> Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Walking* (Thomaston, ME: Tilbury, nd). Published posthumously in 1862.

<sup>7</sup> J. Gresham Machen, “The Benefits of Walking,” in D.G. Hart, ed., *Selected Shorter Writings* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 438–40.



# ServantReading

## The Making of C. S. Lewis by *Harry Lee Poe*

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By Charles M. Wingard

*The Making of C. S. Lewis: From Atheist to Apologist (1918-1945)*, by Harry Lee Poe. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 399 pages, \$32.99.

For several years, “deconversions” have been a hot topic on social media as a succession of Christian celebrities—including pastors—have announced their departure from the faith. Apostasy is a tragic but not new phenomenon; one need look no further than the New Testament and Demas (2 Tim. 4:10). While writing this review, I am reading a biography of George Eliot, who abandoned the Christian faith and evangelical doctrine she once ardently espoused.

The current interest in evangelical deconversions makes it a good time to examine one of the more remarkable conversions in recent Christian history—that of C. S. “Jack” Lewis. Harry Lee Poe tells this unlikely story exceedingly well in *The Making of C. S. Lewis*, the second in a projected three-volume biography. His narrative covers the period from Lewis’s post World War I convalescence from severe battle wounds to the end of World War II, a period during which Lewis moved from atheist to theist, to Christian, and ultimately to formidable advocate of the faith.

Jack Lewis’s life was one of privilege and pain. During the Great Depression, when much of the world was in dire straits, he lived comfortably (217). His father, Albert Lewis, financially supported him well into adulthood, making it possible for him to pursue his Oxford studies. Albert, a lawyer, refrained from pressuring his son to follow in his profession. Instead, he encouraged his love for books—not only by purchasing them but also by becoming his conversation partner in discussing them. “In the end, Albert Lewis had the greatest role in the making of C. S. Lewis as a literary man” (127). In later years, with the arrogance of youth gone, Lewis would sadly recall that his stance toward his father was far from upright. He frequently deceived him regarding his use of money and other matters, withheld from him his true views about religion before his conversion, and spoke to others about him with contempt. Opportunities to set things right were gone, much to Lewis’s regret (340). Heartache was a traveling companion on Lewis’s journey to Christian maturity.

One of the excellent features of this book is the author’s helpful analysis and critique of Lewis’s works during this period, beginning with the publication of his first widely applauded and scholarly book, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936), and its study of medieval chivalry and the courtly love tradition. Poe says of this book: “In many ways, it is the only book Lewis ever wrote. All the other books flow from it like a stream” (151).

Poe comments on other books, including *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942), *The Abolition of Man* (1943), and *The Great Divorce* (1945), as well as his famed BBC broadcasts during the World War II, messages that would later become the basis of *Mere Christianity* (1952). In his addresses, Lewis presented reasons to believe in God and clear teaching on basic Christian doctrines. His keen ability to answer objections to the Christian faith was not surprising. In addition to his considerable intellectual gifts and the ability to write and speak to a popular audience, “he knew the materialist objections to Christian faith because they had been *his* objections” (342). Citing Dennis Beets, Poe observes that “Lewis was a pastoral theologian who aimed at bringing comfort to people who were confused and afflicted” (257).

In his first volume, *Becoming C. S. Lewis: A Biography of Young Jack Lewis (1898–1918)*, Poe observes that Lewis was “someone who collected friends like other people accumulate pennies” (255). Those friendships shaped him. About the Inklings, the author notes that they were “a company of friends who liked stories, poetry, and Jesus” (316). In that group were J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams, his closest friends. One member exaggerated when he wrote, “I believe Williams was the only one of us, except perhaps Ronald Tolkien, from whom Lewis learnt any of his thinking” (311). Nevertheless, the influence was real and mutual. For example, Lewis’s critiques and encouragements were critical to the publication of Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (131).

Other friendships were cultivated through the exchange of letters, as in the correspondence over many years with writers and scholars of considerable intellectual depth. Among these correspondents were Sister Penelope Lawson and Dorothy Sayers. The latter shared with Lewis “the common concern for the representation of the Christian faith in popular culture” (306).

Readers like me, who have been heavily influenced by the Puritan tradition, will especially find interesting that during his journey from theism to Christianity, Lewis read Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding*. “He was struck by Bunyan’s uncertainties, doubts, and fears even after his conversion, when he ‘felt himself united to Christ.’” He began to see truth’s “darker side” found in older works like this (132–133). Lewis “came to recognize the distinction between an idea or belief being out of fashion and being untrue” (83).

Attention is given to Lewis’s long-time relationship with the separated but not divorced Janie Moore, who was twenty-six years his senior. They lived under the same roof for more than three decades. Poe offers, to my mind, a convincing argument that this was never a sexual relationship. Instead, Moore functioned as a surrogate mother. (206–209; Lewis’s mother had died in 1908). During World War I, Moore’s son, Paddy, a friend of Lewis and fellow soldier, was killed in action. It is possible that Jack and Paddy had made promises to care for the other’s parent in the eventuality of either’s death (*Becoming C. S. Lewis*, 257). In any case, Moore never experienced a religious conversion like Lewis’s and became increasingly difficult to live with as the years went by. Lewis’s perseverance in caring for her may have been an example of the chivalrous codes of conduct he came to love and live by.

I finished reading this wanting to know more about C. S. Lewis; I will be turning to several of the resources Poe recommends. Certainly there are beliefs Lewis held, that as a confessional Presbyterian, I must demur. His doctrines of biblical inspiration and atonement are inadequate. Nevertheless, as others have pointed out, he may well be the

last Christian public intellectual with widespread name recognition and admiration throughout the English-speaking world. Many people trace their interest in the Christian faith to his writing. Others have found his apologetics helpful supports to their faith. If for no other reasons, one is well-served by studying his life and works.

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# ServantPoetry

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Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

## To Daffodils

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.  
Stay, stay,  
Until the hasting day  
Has run  
But to the even-song;  
And, having pray'd together, we  
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a spring;  
As quick a growth to meet decay,  
As you, or anything.  
We die  
As your hours do, and dry  
Away,  
Like to the summer's rain;  
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,  
Ne'er to be found again.