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From the Editor

Paul tells us that death is our last enemy—the last to be conquered by our Savior. By God’s grace in Christ the sting has been removed. So it is always with a curious mixture of joy and sorrow that we remember a departed saint. So it is with Grace Mullen. Danny Olinger has written a touching memorial to this great servant-saint, based on his close personal relationship with her as a worker and friend. She held no special office, shunned the limelight, and gave herself, as Danny says, to service in the shadows. Her form of door-keeping in the household of God was as an archivist. But much more than that, she loved the history of the church, laboring tirelessly to help preserve our little corner of that history, because she loved the church and the Lord of the church above all. She treated everyone with whom she worked with the utmost respect and deep kindness. She was an example to us all. We shall miss her.

Jeffrey Wilson brings his series on the *sursum corda* to a close with “The Sursum Corda Promotes Corporate Worship.” One does not need to agree with everything Jeffrey Wilson suggests, in terms of implications for our liturgies, in order to appreciate the importance of taking the history of Reformed liturgy more seriously. There are untold unexplored riches there.

Stephen Michaud brings his considerable knowledge of music to bear on his review of Calvin R. Stapert, ’s *Playing before the Lord: The Life and Work of Joseph Haydn*. We have five hymn tunes in the *Revised Trinity Hymnal* composed by Haydn (12, 117, 269, 345, 396). The extraordinary output of this musical genius is flavored with an expansive portrayal of Christian truth. The range of human emotion and religious experience in his composition is often forgotten today. He is truly the inventor of the fundamental symphonic form.

Darryl Hart reviews Anthony Bradley’s *Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions*, dealing with a controversial and often polarizing subject that we should never be afraid to honestly address.

I review an important and insightful new book on media ecology by Douglas Rushkoff—*Present Shock*. Finally, two poems for the Yuletide season, one by one of my favorites, Christina Rossetti; the other is my own offering.

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.

Servant Memorial

Grace Mullen: A Life in the Shadows

by Danny E. Olinger

The Lord puts certain people in your life who make a difference, who demonstrate by the grace of God what the Christian life is. To many of us in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and to many others beyond, Grace Mullen was one of those individuals. I have rarely met anyone who was more Christ-centered. I have never met anyone who had more integrity and commitment to the church.

Born on March 7, 1943, Grace grew up in North Wildwood, New Jersey, the younger daughter of Hopwood and Rebecca Brandiff Mullen. Although her grandfather, I. T. Mullen, was a founding member and ruling elder at Covenant OPC, Vineland, New Jersey, her dad, Hopwood, did not have much interest in the church. Her mother, Rebecca, did and she made sure that Grace, and her sister, Becky, were involved in the life of Calvary OPC, Wildwood. For the first twenty-eight years of her life, Grace had only two pastors at Calvary Church, Leslie Dunn and John Davies, but what great pastors they were. Both were absolutely committed to Jesus Christ and to the cause of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Still, the town of Wildwood, with its isolated geographical position at the southern tip of the state of New Jersey was not really on the map for Orthodox Presbyterians. That changed dramatically when Mr. Dunn persuaded the Presbytery of New Jersey to purchase a lot on the Wildwood boardwalk in 1945 with the goal of building a chapel. Soon after, the Boardwalk Chapel was up and running and Orthodox Presbyterians were flocking to Wildwood during the summer. Added to this was the fact that OPC missionary families on furlough during the mid-to-late 1940s and 1950s were often staying in Wildwood for extended periods of time. The convergence of these factors led Grace to believe in her youth that the Lord had made Wildwood and South Jersey the center of life in the OPC. She may well have been right.

She grew particularly fond of the Richard Gaffin family when the Gaffins found themselves living in Wildwood for three years from 1948–51. Pauline Gaffin's vibrant faith and zeal for missions made a great impression on young Grace. She would become one of Grace's spiritual mentors, and Grace would support the work of Reformed foreign missionaries her entire life.

Grace would remain supportive of the Boardwalk Chapel and was very thankful that she had been blessed to participate in its ministry from the beginning. Even after she had moved away from Wildwood as an adult, she would return every summer to the Mullen family home and visit the staff and volunteers whenever she could.

At the start of the decade of the 1950s, Grace providentially found herself at the ground floor of another new ministry that would positively impact her life. Seeking a

camp where they could gather OPC young people for instruction, Pastors Lewis Grotenhuis, Glenn Coie, and Robert Atwell created the French Creek Bible Conference. During the summer time, if Grace wasn't at the Boardwalk Chapel, you would find her there. She not only loved the fellowship, but also being outdoors. It might have been her favorite place in the world, and Grace gave herself entirely to everything involved with the Conference. Over the years, she was a camper, a counselor, a director of activities, a life guard, and a helper in the kitchen where her mother, Rebecca, served as the main cook for decades. In the late 1970s she recruited Dick and Jean Gaffin to join with her as a cooks' trio to assist her mother and Mary Laubach, which they did together for fifteen years. When she no longer was able to spend multiple weeks at French Creek, the Board of Trustees appointed her as its Executive Secretary.

Seemingly, the only thing that Grace didn't do at French Creek over the years was preach! But, it was the gospel preaching and teaching of the covenant youth that was so important to her. Whenever I would have the opportunity to speak at French Creek, she would want the full report on the text I had chosen to preach on, what I emphasized about Christ, and how it was received by the campers and staff.

You also couldn't talk to Grace long about the subject of French Creek before she would mention Mr. Grotenhuis. He was her model of what a pastor in his daily walk should be—godly, humble, and hard-working with a boundless love for Christ and his church. Together, Mr. and Mrs. Grotenhuis were Grace's role models for showing hospitality to friends and strangers alike. Grace would speak of the Grotenhuis children whom she had grown up with at French Creek with such love and familiarity that you would have thought that they were family, which, of course, they were in Christ. The bonds of fellowship were tightened as Ralph and Joan Grotenhuis English would labor for many years as OPC missionaries to Korea and Suriname, and John Grotenhuis, one of Grace's dearest friends, would co-found the Middle East Reformed Fellowship in 1970.

After Grace's graduation from Wildwood High School in 1961, she attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Although there was not an Orthodox Presbyterian congregation at that time in the state of Michigan, much less in Grand Rapids, there was regular fellowship for OPC students at the home of Winifred Holkeboer, whose late husband, Oscar, had been a longtime OPC pastor in Wisconsin and Iowa. Among the OPC students who were with Grace at Calvin College were Nancy Adair, Thomas Armour, Margaret Atwell, David Clowney, Philip Coray, Calvin Cummings, Mary Jo DeWaard, George Elder, Suzanne Galbraith, and Beth Graham.

Following her graduation from Calvin College in 1965 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Grace accepted a job as a teacher at the Charlotte Christian School in Charlotte, North Carolina. After a year there, she taught English for two years at the Philadelphia-Montgomery Christian Academy while living with Dick and Jean Gaffin and their young family. She then accepted a teaching position for the San Jose Christian School.

After spending a year at San Jose and then helping Pastor George Hall and his family in Middletown, Pennsylvania, when Mrs. Hall was ill, she went back to school and received a Masters in English Education at the University of Pennsylvania in 1971. Also at this time, she began to work at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia. In 1972 she decided to teach once again, albeit this time not in the United States, but at the Ardavan School in Shiraz, Iran. She returned to work for the Presbyterian Historical

Society in 1973, and labored there for two years until Arthur Kuschke hired her to serve in the Montgomery Library at Westminster Seminary.

It was at Westminster that she found a home and her globe-trotting ended. She greeted people at the front desk with the warmest smile and then worked endlessly to help them find whatever they needed. When asked a question about who wrote this or that book or where to find a particular article, Grace would almost always know the answer. When Grace didn't know the answer, she knew exactly where to look and what rabbit trails to follow. On both her desk at work, and on tables at her home, you would find stacks of papers and books where Grace was tracking down leads long after the inquirer had given up hope of finding anything.

Grace would also influence many students who worked in the library over the years, including Alan Strange, whom Grace helped in his pilgrimage to the OPC. Alan would later intern at Grace's home church, Faith OPC, Pole Tavern, New Jersey and marry a daughter of that congregation, Kathryn Bacon, which only deepened the bonds of fellowship.

It was during her first years at Westminster that she also developed a deep friendship with Cornelius Van Til as he was finishing up his teaching career there. She agreed with Dr. Van Til that the only Christ that the church had was the self-attesting Christ of Scripture. She also shared with Dr. Van a mutual appreciation of the OPC, J. Gresham Machen, and Geerhardus Vos. When Dr. Van Til was still able to fill pulpits in his 80s, Grace would often drive him to the church where he would be preaching. When Dr. Van Til officially retired, he gave Grace his marked up copy of Calvin's *Institutes*, inscribed to her his Bible used for personal devotions, and many of his and Vos's books.

Her esteem of Dr. Van Til was evident in her asking her lifelong friend Richard Gaffin, Jr. to read the same Scriptures at her funeral service that he had read in April of 1987 for the funeral of Dr. Van Til. In sharing Grace's request to those gathered at her funeral service, Dick vocalized what we all thought. He said, "Dr. Van Til had no more favorite daughter in the faith than Grace Mullen, and she stood so resolutely with Dr. Van Til in his maintenance and defense of the gospel." After reading the passages, Dick then paused and said, "And to these Scriptures I would like to add one more. Grace would not be pleased, but I am going to do it anyway. 1 Timothy 6:6, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.'" He continued,

I know for so many of you here today, especially those of us who have known Grace over the years and have worked with her, you will certainly identify when I say that I have never known anyone who more exemplified, more modeled, godly contentment than Grace Mullen. And now, she experiences that contentment, the greater gain of that contentment with her Savior, in a way that none of us today, here, can truly comprehend. But we know for sure, because the Apostle Paul tells us, that it is better by far.

Grace's love of OPC history was put to good use in the early 1980s when she began assisting OPC historian Charles Dennison in the development of the OPC archives. When Charlie became historian in 1981, previous historian Clair Davis handed him a shoe box that contained the OPC archives. Together, Charlie and Grace started gathering material from first generation members of the church, and Grace began to organize and oversee

the collection. Soon it was apparent that a place larger than Grace's home was needed to hold the material. Charlie talked to then Montgomery Library director John Muether about the possibility of keeping the collection in the basement of the Montgomery Library, and John and Westminster Seminary graciously agreed.

After Charlie died in 1999, Grace was thankful that John was appointed as historian. John, in turn, was thankful for her great service as archivist in preserving the OPC's history. In seeking to recognize Grace's work, Darryl Hart and John dedicated their 2006 book, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* to her. They wrote:

In her work at the Presbyterian Historical Society, the archives of Westminster Theological Seminary and of the OPC, Grace Mullen has a wise understanding of the vicissitudes and riches of American Presbyterian history. And as a lifelong Orthodox Presbyterian, her historical awareness is tethered to a deep devotion nurtured by the Reformed faith. Both of us had the privilege of working with Grace when we served respectively as directors of Westminster's Montgomery Memorial Library—when, in fact, most of the direction came from our relying on Grace's own wise counsel as a librarian and archivist. As an acknowledgement of the debt we owe to her, and as a tribute to her insufficiently appreciated efforts to preserve Presbyterian history, we dedicate this book to Grace.

By the time that I accepted the call to serve as General Secretary of the Committee on Christian Education at the end of 2003, Grace was one of my closest friends. Over the years, our friendship had deepened through my work on the Committee for the Historian and our shared interests. I would ship her cassette tape recordings of the sermons of Charlie Dennison, and she would send me copies of all the hard to find Vos, Machen, and Gaffin materials that I had requested.

One of the first things that I did after telling Grace the news of my appointment was to ask her if she could recommend a real estate agent. She immediately gave me the phone number of Ray Parnell, a fellow worker and friend of hers from Westminster Seminary. A few weeks later, Ray, my wife, Diane, and I were looking for homes without success when we pulled up at the last one on the list in the Glenside area. I was getting out of the car when I heard Grace calling my name from across the street. As I ran to greet her, Diane turned to Ray and said, "He's going to want this one." It was the house we purchased.

For the next decade, I would walk across the street, through her backyard and knock on her back door. She would greet me with the same excited "Danny" every time, and we would start talking all things OPC and the Reformed faith. I learned so much from her in those talks, and not just from her great knowledge of practically everyone who had ever ministered in the OPC. There was a dignified manner to everything that Grace said. She might not have agreed with someone's theological positions or actions, but she treated that person as if he or she were joined to Christ until the person proved otherwise. I have tried to carry that posture from Grace in my service to others.

I also had the opportunity living so close to Grace to participate in the Vos Group meetings that were held monthly in her home. Grace and Chad Bond had asked Lane Tipton in 1998 to lead a Vos study group, which Lane graciously did for the next fifteen

years. Those nights were among Grace's favorites as Lane would explain Vos's writings, exegete Scripture texts, and answer questions from those gathered. Afterwards, everyone would fellowship together. Some of Grace's dearest friends, Robert and Eleanor Meeker, Bob and Linda Jones, Charles and Alayne Martell, and Philip Tachin were regular attenders.

The last decade of her life, Grace was often undergoing radiation treatments, chemotherapy, and surgery for a rare and aggressive form of cancer. When I would visit Grace when she was hospitalized in the Fox Chase Cancer Center, almost always there were OPC members or someone from Westminster Seminary already visiting with her. When friends would ask Grace what they could pray for her, she would not ask them to pray that the pain would lessen, but that they would pray that she would remain faithful.

It was during this period that the Committee for the Historian was able to relocate the OPC archives to the OPC administrative building in Willow Grove. Grace was excited about helping us move into the new space, and we spent hours together arranging the collection. After everything was in its place, the Committee took the official action on March 23, 2010, of naming the archival room "The Grace Mullen Archives Room." This was our small token of appreciation for her labor over the years. No one could have done a better job, and yet she was never paid and never wanted to be paid. For her, it was a labor of love.

The Committee assigned me the task to let Grace know that we were honoring her in this way. When I told her, she immediately said that we shouldn't. I told her that we were so thankful for everything that she had done that we wanted to recognize her in this way. Then appealing to her Dutch-side, I showed her the plaque and told her that we had already paid for it. The plaque read, "Dedicated to the glory of God and named in honor of Miss Grace Mullen whose tireless efforts were instrumental in the establishment of the archives of the church and the preservation of its heritage." Tearfully, she said "okay."

On February 5, 2014, an ice storm hit greater Philadelphia, knocking out electrical power in the Glenside area. In her weakened condition from the cancer, Grace could not stay at her house without power. Douglas and Betty Watson, longtime friends of Grace's from French Creek, lovingly took Grace into their home for the next six weeks. With Betty's cooking, Grace gained some strength, although it was clear that the cancer was taking its toll. When it was announced at Calvary OPC, Glenside that Grace was feeling well enough to receive visitors at the Watsons for a hymn-sing, over thirty people packed into the Watson's living room to sing God's praise from the Trinity Hymnal with Grace seated in the middle. She could not have been happier.

A few months later when Grace entered the last stage of her life at the Fort Washington Estates extended care unit, two dear friends and fellow residents in the residential wing, Beverly Mariani and Charlotte Kuschke, attended to her. Bev, who was probably Grace's closest friend, did a little bit of everything. She would eat her meals with Grace, help her with her doctor's appointments, handle her personal affairs, read Scripture with her, and pray with her.

Charlotte would walk over during breakfast time and, while Grace ate breakfast, she would help Grace, whose eyesight by this time was failing, read her mail and many get-well cards. Whatever Charlotte and Bev couldn't do in helping Grace during this time, Patricia Clawson and James Dolezal did. So many times in the last months of Grace's

life, I would find James reading Scripture to Grace at her bedside or Pat returning to Grace's room after having run an errand for her friend.

At the Eighty-first (2014) General Assembly on June 9, the commissioners expressed their love and appreciation for Grace as they unanimously adopted the following resolution:

The 81st GA of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church hereby resolves to communicate the following:

to Miss Grace Mullen: The 81st General Assembly takes this opportunity to greet you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and to assure you of our love and prayers. We thank God for your life and the many ways your gentle, quiet, and faithful service has enriched the life of our denomination. Your service in the Montgomery Library at Westminster Seminary had led to the establishment of a denominational archives, in a facility named, to the glory of God, in your honor. Your loving, cheerful, and loyal friendship and service have prompted many in the OPC to esteem you highly in Christian love.

In light of your declining health, we pray that you will find comfort in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who gives eternal hope to the living and eternal life to the dying.

Grace's pastor at Faith OPC, Pole Tavern, Richard Ellis, was able to read that resolution to Grace when he returned from the Assembly. Dick's trips to see her despite the long distance always gave her great encouragement. Although Grace lived in Glenside on the northern tip of Philadelphia, she always made clear to everyone that her home church was Faith Church and that she loved the members there. They were as important to her as any of the prominent theologians at Westminster that she helped on a daily basis. For years, Grace would leave after her work ended on Friday at the seminary and drive to Newfield, New Jersey, to take care of her mother, Rebecca. Together, they would worship at Faith Church on the Lord's Day.

Grace loved South Jersey and knew every part of it. Although she grew up along the coast in Wildwood loving the ocean and the lighthouse just minutes from her home, she considered the oft-unmentioned southern and western part of South Jersey a treasure. The Maurice River and the Cohansey River to the Delaware Bay and all the little towns along the way were of intense interest to her.

Almost of equal importance to Grace was her love of England to which she traveled many times, often alone. She would explore the many towns with their cottages and gardens and was not shy about knocking on the door of a house to seek lodging for the night.

When I returned from the Assembly in mid-June, Grace quizzed me in her typical fashion about everything that had happened. But, we also started to talk about what she wanted done at her funeral service. She said that she wanted it held at Faith Church with Lane and me preaching. The instructions that she gave us were clear. She wanted us to preach Christ, to focus on him and not on her in our sermons.

On July 15, Virginia Dennison, Charlie Dennison's wife, and I stopped by to see Grace. Grace was so happy to see Ginger, even exclaiming that she could think of nothing better. I had also just spent the Lord's Day teaching Sunday school and preaching

at French Creek and Grace wanted to hear the full account. We talked non-stop for an hour, and then we read Scripture and prayed. As we left, I wondered if this was the last time that I would see Grace living. Ginger and Grace were more direct. They hugged each other as Ginger said, "I'll see you next in heaven."

A few days later on July 20, Grace's condition worsened, and Lane and I determined to see Grace immediately after the conclusion of the evening worship service at Calvary Church in Glenside. We entered her room with Bev by her side, and Lane began to read from Romans 8. Grace died and passed into glory as he read that glorious passage that speaks of the relationship between Christ and his own.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died— more than that, who was raised— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:31–39)

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Servant Worship

The Sursum Corda Promotes Corporate Worship Part 3

by Jeffrey B. Wilson

In 1572 various ecclesiastical movements, agitating for change in the Church of England, began to line up together with the publication of a tract called *An Admonition to Parliament*. This publication fired a shot at the established church and in doing so marked off those who wanted wholesale revision within the official worship and government of the Church of England from those who essentially embraced the status quo. The agitators were a disparate collection of Barrowist, Brownist, and Anabaptist separatists, Independents, Puritans (who were willing to honor the civil magistrate so long as their worship was unimpeded), and Presbyterians. One of the Presbyterian leaders was Thomas Cartwright. Four months after the first tract was published, Cartwright sent another in which he challenged the use of specific prayers prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer*. In this manifesto he opposed the church regulating what every local congregation was to do and say in worship. Among other concerns, Cartwright argued for a freedom of worship. In this pamphlet he provocatively asks, “Againe, where learned they to multiplie up many prayers of one effect, so many times Glor ye be to the Father, so manye times the Lorde be with you, so many times let us pray. Whence learned they all those needelesse repetitions?”¹ He considered these phrases of worship residue from the Catholic Church and he denounced such prayer as contrary to the words of Christ, “You when you pray use not vaine repetitions as the heathen doe, says he.” Although Cartwright does not mention it by name, his polemic presumably would include the *sursum corda* (lift up your hearts). In the historic liturgies of the church the *sursum corda* is the preface to the prayer of thanksgiving used during the celebration of communion. The complete dialogue is as follows:

Minister: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

Congregation: We lift them up to the Lord.

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Congregation: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

¹ W. H. Frere and C. E. Douglas, eds., *Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt* (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1907, digital scan reprint from the University of Toronto library), 114.

After the *sursum corda*, the minister offers thanksgiving to God focused on the acts of Jesus Christ for our redemption: his incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and outpouring of the Spirit. Because the centerpiece of this preface to the Eucharistic prayer is the summons to “lift up your hearts,” it is called the *sursum corda*, and in the historic liturgies it is said every time communion is served and the prayer of thanksgiving is prayed. Those in the Puritan movement argued for extemporaneous, non-repetitive prayer because they believed a free form of worship was inspired by the Spirit.² Over time the effect of the popular dissent from the established church was to erase responses and dialogues from the worship of many Protestant churches, including Presbyterian ones. It is the argument of this essay that the *sursum corda* should be included in our liturgies because it contributes to a richer theology of the Lord’s Supper and promotes the active participation of the congregation in corporate worship.

John Calvin and Peter Martyr Vermigli did not believe the *sursum corda* was vain or empty. Since they were enmeshed in the controversy with the Roman Catholic Church, the Mass was their immediate context for instruction and debate about worship. The *sursum corda* was a rubric in the Catholic liturgy. Yet both Calvin and Vermigli knew that it had been used by the early Church Fathers and was not exclusively Roman Catholic. Calvin includes this observation in his comments about rightly apprehending Christ in the Lord’s Supper, “And for the same reason it was established of old that before consecration the people should be told in a loud voice to lift up their hearts.”³ Vermigli thought the *sursum corda* and the prayer of thanksgiving were worth keeping, partly because the Fathers (like Chrysostom and Augustine) taught the necessity of the *sursum corda*.⁴

One of the inherent problems with the Mass, according to Calvin, was that it focused the congregation’s faith on the elements of the sacrament, the bread and the wine, rather than on the ascended Jesus Christ whose humanity was locally present in heaven. More to the point, Calvin said the reality upon which the sacraments rest is Christ himself. The reality and the elements are not the same thing. By confusing the elements with Christ’s body, the Catholic Mass wrongly directed the church’s faith to the sacramental elements. As Calvin saw it, this error led to superstition and idolatry. Arguing that a proper distinction must be made in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Calvin decisively uses the language of the *sursum corda* in his writings. In his *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper* Calvin says, “Moreover, the practice always observed in the ancient church was that, before celebrating the Supper, the people were solemnly exhorted to lift their hearts on high, to show that we must not stop at the visible sign, to adore Jesus Christ rightly.”⁵ For Calvin, faith is properly set upon Jesus Christ. In his treatment of the sacraments he refers to Augustine who warned against “not lifting our minds beyond the visible sign, to transfer to it the credit for those benefits which are conferred upon us by Christ alone.”⁶ Vermigli echoed this same point saying, “Wherefore in the church it is not by chance that

² Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1948), 56.

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, LCC, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 1412.

⁴ Joseph McClelland and Thomas F. Torrance, *The Visible Words of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 205 and 232.

⁵ John Calvin, “Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord and only Savior Jesus Christ,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, LCC, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 159.

⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.14.17, 1292.

rule obtains, before we come to the mystery, of calling out *sursum corda*, that is as if to say, ‘Let your souls cling not to these things that are seen, but to those which are promised.’”⁷ Not limited to the communion meal, this faith set upon Christ pertains to the entire Christian life. Writing on the *Life of the Christian Man*, in his *Institutes*, Calvin gives this instruction, “Ever since Christ himself, who is our Head, ascended into heaven, it behooves us, having laid aside love of earthly things, wholeheartedly to aspire heavenward.”⁸ The entire Christian life is lived in faith properly set upon the ascended Jesus Christ. This heavenly aspiration of the life of the Christian is centered in worship at the Lord’s Supper, with the words of the *sursum corda*, “lift up your hearts.” These words in the liturgy state the directionality for faith and the life of the Christian. It encapsulates the nature of Christian faith as directed from creaturely things to Christ.

The richness of the *sursum corda* is found in the directionality of the faith of the church to Christ; but there is also the directionality of Christ to the church. Jesus Christ who ascended into heaven comes to be present with the church. Calvin’s teaching on the Spirit as the bond between the Christian and Christ is well known. The Spirit who is sent by Christ at Pentecost unites the church with the ascended Lord. In the Lord’s Supper the Spirit’s bond makes Christ present with his church. In his discussion of the benefits of receiving the Lord’s Supper, Calvin insists on the presence of Christ: “We say Christ descends to us both by the outward symbol and by his Spirit, that he may truly quicken our souls by the substance of his flesh and of his blood.”⁹ On this point Vermigli used the *sursum corda* to explain Christ’s participation with the church. The faith of the Christian is lifted up to Christ which Vermigli explains further:

For there [at the Lord’s Supper] you must not think either of the bread or of the wine—your mind and sense must cleave only to the things represented unto you. Therefore it is said “Lift up your hearts,” when you lift up your mind from the signs to the invisible things offered you.¹⁰

For Vermigli there is a real reception of Christ offered to the Christian, “I judge the real and substantial body of Christ to be only in the heavens, yet the faithful truly receive, spiritually and through faith, the communication of His true body and His true blood, which was delivered to the cross for our sake.”¹¹ The Church’s faith is not lifted up to a static Christ, but to the One who promises to give himself to his people for food.¹² Calvin agrees in his treatise on the Lord’s Supper:

⁷ Quoted in McLelland and Torrance, *The Visible Words of God*, 136.

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.6.3, 687. For further reading on this see Julie Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.24, 1390.

¹⁰ McLelland and Torrance, *The Visible Words of God*, 175. For one analysis of Calvin and Vermigli’s understanding of the relationship between Christ’s body and the sacrament see George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 40. Hunsinger explains that Vermigli preferred the word “traselementation” for the mystery of the transforming union of Christ with the sacrament, like a rod of iron thrust into a fire. “Just as the iron did not cease to be iron, or the fire fire, so did the bread not cease to be bread, or Christ’s flesh his flesh.” Ibid.

¹¹ McLelland and Torrance, *The Visible Words of God*, 174.

¹² See John 6:51–58.

On the one hand we must, to shut out all carnal fancies, raise our hearts on high to heaven, not thinking that our Lord Jesus Christ is so abased as to be enclosed under any corruptible elements. On the other hand, not to diminish the efficacy of this sacred mystery, we must hold that it is accomplished by the secret and miraculous virtue of God, and that the Spirit of God is the bond of participation, for which reason it is called spiritual.¹³

The *sursum corda*, then, is the church's prayerful declaration that its faith is lifted up to the Lord; the same Lord Jesus Christ who comes to be present with the church by his Spirit.

Calvin and Vermigli had no reservations about the value of the *sursum corda* for the church's celebration of the sacrament of communion. For them it was not an empty liturgical phrase. However, there is some ambiguity in the way they used it, which leads to the question, is the directionality of the *sursum corda* individual or corporate? These two reformers do not address this question and their use of the *sursum corda* leaves the door open either way. Each individual Christian could take the words "lift up your hearts" as a call to set his or her own faith on Christ, by himself or herself. In a society where individualism is ubiquitous, this becomes the default way of hearing the *sursum corda*. To put it another way, with an individualistic conception of the *sursum corda*, each Christian's faith lifted up to the Lord is a singular line, like an arrow flying to its mark. The problem with this way of understanding the *sursum corda* is that it isolates the individual Christian within the church by encouraging each person to focus on himself or herself, obscuring the corporate nature of the church, its worship, and its sacraments.

Julie Canlis has called attention to the ambiguity of Calvin's doctrine of the *sursum corda*. She argues that this doctrine can remain nothing "more than a 'cognitive plus' or 'mere psychological process.'" ¹⁴ Calvin placed the *sursum corda* in his exhortation at the beginning of the communion liturgy. Consequently, it no longer functioned as a liturgical dialogue with the congregation. Taken this way the *sursum corda* can become an invitation to a personal communion with Christ, and the bond of the Spirit becomes merely a personal bond. So, each individual Christian participates in Christ, one-to-one. Canlis compares Calvin's doctrine with Irenaeus's theology of recapitulation which teaches that God's redemption in Christ extends beyond the individual to a collective humanity and to the creation. Calvin was no stranger to Irenaeus and drew upon this Church Father in his theology. On union with Christ, Calvin can be understood in broader terms than just the individual.¹⁵ Yet if a theology of corporate union with Christ does not find liturgical expression in worship, then participants in worship can easily continue in

¹³ Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord and only Savior Jesus Christ*, 166. Elsewhere, in his sermon on II Samuel 6:1–7, Calvin says, "Thus, we must note that when God declares himself to us, we must not cling to any earthly thing, but must elevate our sense above the world, and lift ourselves up by faith to his eternal glory. In sum, God comes down to us so that then we might go up to him. That is why the sacraments are compared to the steps of a ladder." See, John Calvin, *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, Chapters 1–13, trans. Douglas Kelly (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 234.

¹⁴ Julie Canlis, 168.

¹⁵ Calvin brings out the corporate nature of the church in his doctrine of the unity of the church. He can say we are engrafted into the unity of the church and for believers "no hope of future inheritance remains to us unless we have been united with all other members under Christ, our Head." For our engrafting into the unity of the church see Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.3, 1014.

their individualistic thinking, even with Calvin's use of the *sursum corda*. This is what makes Calvin's use of the *sursum corda* ambiguous.

What we do and say in worship goes a long way toward shaping the church's faith and theology. Far better than dropping the *sursum corda* from worship, or turning it into a monologue, is using it in dialogue with the congregation, and using it every time the Lord's Supper is celebrated. But is such liturgical repetition to be avoided, as Cartwright suggested in his manifesto? Of course mindless, insincere repetition should be avoided in worship. Worship should engage our hearts and our minds. Jesus did warn against vainly repeating ritualistic words themselves, as if that alone were pleasing to God.¹⁶ In the writings of the prophets God declares that obedience and justice should accompany the worship of his people.¹⁷ Rattling off the same prayer without being engaged in the prayer makes for empty praying. However, removing a prayer or a liturgical response from worship will not prevent mindlessness and insincerity in worship. People can be disengaged from the liturgy—their thoughts drifting away to work or pleasure—even with an order of worship that is new and different every week. There needs to be a distinction made between the behavior of vain repetition and the content of the liturgy of worship. If the content of a prayer is faithful to Scripture and is in a form conducive for worship, then it is not vapid and fruitless in and of itself. In the case of vain repetition, with a prayer that is biblical, the problem is with the one praying it, not the form of the prayer.

There is another way. Instead of excising biblically rich liturgy, like the *sursum corda*, from the worship of the church, it can be incorporated into the prayers and responses of the people in order to become the language of the congregation. In so doing, the content of the liturgy becomes "our" prayer and "our" language of worship. This can be done with the *sursum corda*. In the church I serve we use the *sursum corda* every week. It resonates within me every time I say it. It sharpens my focus for the Lord's Supper. My heart is lifted up to the Lord by means of the bond of the Spirit, and so the Lord himself is present with me and he offers himself to me for the food of eternal life. I think of this every time I say the *sursum corda*, and I am not the only one: the members of the church I serve also think about this when they say the liturgy because they have been taught what it means and because they have taken it to heart. The words of the *sursum corda* have become their words. With the *sursum corda* our prayer is filled with fruitful theological content when we come to the Lord's Table.

Beyond giving content to the people's prayers, the *sursum corda* also serves to unite the congregation in worship. By saying it together, the ambivalence of Calvin's use of the *sursum corda* is cleared away. When the minister says, "Lift up your hearts," and when the congregation together responds with one voice, "We lift them up to the Lord," an individualistic interpretation of our relationship to God gives way to an interpretation more reflective of the unity of the church. Saying the same thing together helps combat individualism. Along with all of Christ's people, we are lifted up to Christ—one body, one family. Together we partake of his one body and blood shed for us. Together we are justified and forgiven of our sins—each one of us, yes, but also all of us together. Our Lord gives himself to us in love. He did not do this for each one of us alone. We share in his salvation together in Christ. The *sursum corda*, used responsively in worship, helps

¹⁶ See Matthew 6:7.

¹⁷ See Isaiah 1:12–17.

tip the balance of the church's worship from being a collection of individuals who dwell on their one-to-one relationship with God, to the people of Christ joined together and lifted up to the Lord in the unity of the Spirit.

In the interest of enriching our liturgy and promoting corporate worship, let us return the *sursum corda* to its place as a dialogue at the beginning of the prayer of thanksgiving in the service of communion. Many churches have already done this, including some in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The OPC's Directory for Worship has retained the first line of the *sursum corda*, "lift up your hearts," in its suggested form of the exhortation given by the minister before the Lord's Supper. This placement is according to Calvin's use, and it serves its purpose to teach the congregation the proper focus of our faith as we partake of the sacrament. However, it can have the undesirable effect of sidelining the congregation and making the people passive in the liturgy. By pulling the *sursum corda* out of the communion exhortation and returning it to its place as a dialogue with the congregation, the church's service of communion becomes a corporate act and increases the participation of the people in worship.

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ServantReading

Playing before the Lord *by Calvin R. Stapert*

by Stephen Michaud

Playing before the Lord: The Life and Work of Joseph Haydn, by Calvin R. Stapert.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014, 282 pages, \$24.00.

Presbyterians have long enjoyed the music of Haydn in their worship, whether singing “Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken” to the majestic tune *Austrian Hymn*, or “Exalt the Lord, his Praise Proclaim” to the uplifting melody extracted from Haydn’s sublime masterpiece, the *Creation* oratorio. But lurking just underneath the surface of the more familiar oeuvre of the old master, a tremendous goldmine of unforgettable music awaits to be discovered—all the more so for Christians, as some of Haydn’s music is powerfully imbued with distinctly biblical themes. One of many poignant examples would be Haydn’s setting of the seven last words of Christ to the string quartet medium. This alone should be enough to whet the appetite of any warm-blooded saint who desires to explore some profoundly moving music. Of course, the more religiously-themed works yield a high rate of devotional return for the Christian, but it is really the exuberant *joy* running through much of Haydn’s music which helps the listener to meditate on the God-given happiness still to be enjoyed in this fallen world.

Joseph Haydn, however, was such a prolific composer, that the sheer vastness of his output can be intimidating. How helpful would it be to have a book which provides the important background to understanding this composer and his music! Thankfully, in Calvin R. Stapert’s new book, *Playing before the Lord: The Life and Work of Joseph Haydn*, such a resource has been provided.

Clearly, this is an author with a mission. For him, Haydn belongs to the upper echelon of the great composers. Sadly, the more recent diminishing of Haydn’s reputation—no doubt due to the “happy” tone of his music which is seen to be somewhat escapist and out of step with reality—has led some to think (erroneously so) that this composer lacks the depth of the best composers. But Haydn, though certainly not avoiding the darker elements of life in his work, has nevertheless chosen to paint his musical vision in the shades of light and beauty for good reason: in the words of the author, here quoting Abraham Kuyper, “Haydn’s music is fulfilling art’s ‘mystical task of reminding us of the beautiful that was lost and anticipating its perfect coming luster’ ” (257).¹ Stapert, resonating with this vision, thus seeks to persuade his readers to *love* Haydn’s music. He sees himself as writing in the same spirit as the seventeenth-century minister and metaphysical poet Thomas Traherne, whom he quotes as saying, “You never enjoy the

¹ In Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures in Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 155.

world aright, till you so love the beauty of enjoying it, that you are covetous and earnest to persuade others to enjoy it” (x).² Indeed, the author’s enthusiasm for his subject is contagious throughout, making this a very engaging read.

Stapert explains that his book is both a biography and a “listener’s guide,” giving first a bird’s eye panorama of Haydn’s work, but also providing more specific summarizations of representative pieces from various genres, that the reader might listen to other works more perceptively. In a few instances, the book even provides a much more detailed analysis of several pieces. While there is a certain amount of technical language in these portions of the book, the text does not allow itself to get overly bogged down, and the author wisely includes a glossary at the end of the book to aid the reader.

At first, the book leans heavily on the biographical, focusing on Haydn’s ancestry and boyhood years in Rohrau and Hainburg, through his years as a choirboy at St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna, then to the years he spent literally cast out on the streets. One marvels at how Haydn worked so industriously despite his “wretched existence,” eventually becoming a freelance musician and music director for Count Morzin. It is at this point that the reader is introduced to some musical analysis of an early work, the *Salve Regina*, scored for soprano, choir, and strings. The first of his string quartets were soon to follow. Haydn, frequently called the “father of the string quartet,” would go on to write sixty-eight such pieces—more than any other composer. Not surprisingly, he is also known as the “father of the symphony,” as attested by his 104 works in that genre, and Stapert takes a good amount of time dealing with these two important categories of Haydn’s music.

In order to get the full and intended benefit from this book, the reader should seek to acquire recordings of the pieces which are described. Most of Stapert’s analysis of Symphony no. 15, for example, would be lost on the one who was not doing some listening in tandem with the reading. This by no means is a shortcoming of the book; on the contrary, the author himself stresses at the outset that his book is a *listener’s guide* and thus intended to accompany the actual hearing of these pieces.

At this point, the book moves to the period in which Haydn was employed as Vice-Kapellmeister at the Esterhazy Court—a period which yielded, among other things, a trilogy of symphonies, nos. 6, 7, and 8. Stapert offers a helpful diagram of Symphony no. 6 that can be consulted throughout his analysis. With Symphonies no. 7 and no. 8, the author notes the programmatic features of these works as well as their respective influences. While there is some musical notation given in Stapert’s analysis, it is not overly cumbersome and can be skipped over by the non-technical reader without too much loss of benefit. The same could be said of the description of musical examples peppered elsewhere throughout the book.

The remaining bulk of chapters finds the author deftly weaving the unfolding phases of Haydn’s life with key works of these periods, from his church music, to the *Sturm and Drang* symphonies, to the Divertimenti, Sonatas, Quartets, and keyboard trios, to his forays in to opera and song. To cap off an exciting journey, Stapert gives detailed attention to Haydn’s celebrated oratorios, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, the latter which the author counsels us to listen to in the Christological context that Haydn intended.

Stapert wants his readers to appreciate Haydn as one who composed and played “before the Lord,” as the title suggests, as evidenced in the words he wrote often at the

² In Thomas Traherne, *Centuries* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse, 1985), 15.

end of his scores: “LAUS DEO!—PRAISE TO GOD!” Although Haydn was a devout Catholic, the Protestant need not be deterred from enjoying this composer fully, with his accents on joy and other biblical themes. Certainly joy, biblically understood, is no less “profound” than the tragedies of life! Stapert appropriately quotes Jeremy Begbie in this regard: “Any music which dares to bear the name ‘Christian’ will resound with the heartbeat of joy.”³ For the Christian who wants to nurture these inner sympathies with the help of some sublime artistic expression, he could do no better than imbibing a heavy dose of Haydn. Stapert’s book is a ready aid to keep at hand for the task, along with Haydn’s music itself. I would heartily recommend, for starters, obtaining Antal Dorati’s complete coverage of the symphonies, the Lindsays’ profound recording of *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, and the moving DVD of *The Creation*, celebrating the 250th anniversary of Haydn’s birth, under the baton of Gustav Kuhn in the Great Hall of the Old Vienna University, the very place in which Haydn himself attended a festive performance of this great work.

In summary, I know of no other book that is better suited as an introduction to this highly rewarding composer. Highly recommended!

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³ Jeremy Begbie, *Music in God’s Purposes* (Edinburg: Handsel, 1989), 18.

ServantReading

Precious in God's Sight, But What Do God's People See?

A Review Article

Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions, edited by Anthony B. Bradley. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2103. 256 pages, \$15.99.

by Darryl G. Hart

Imagine two African-American young men who around the age of twenty consider a vocation as a Reformed pastor. One of these young men, let's call him James, grew up in a major metropolitan area and attended with his parents a congregation that belongs to one of the NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Churches) denominations. The church was mainly white but possessed about a half-dozen African-American families as well as members from other ethnic groups, as you would expect in a large American city. This young man received his high school education at an inner-city Christian school that was a mix of white and black students before going to an evangelical college familiar to many in his denomination. From there he enrolled at one of the larger Reformed seminaries, did an internship at a generally white suburban congregation, and then sought a call in the denomination to which his family belongs.

The other young man in this thought experiment, let's call him Omar, was reared in a predominantly black congregation that belonged to one of the largest African-American holiness denominations. He attended public schools before enrolling at an Assemblies of God university and then decided to attend a seminary with deep ties to the black church in the United States. There he became exposed to popular writings on Calvinism in a theology and culture class while writing a paper and became convinced of the truth of Reformed Protestantism. Instead of transferring to another seminary, he started to attend a nearby Presbyterian church that catered to university students and finished his seminary degree. Session members at the Presbyterian congregation put him in touch with the home missions coordinator of their denomination who placed Omar on a list of potential church planters.

When James and Omar receive a call to minister in a largely white Presbyterian communion, how similar will their experience be? Will James, who spent his whole life as a minority member of a Presbyterian church, feel like his life as a pastor is all that different from what he knew while growing up and going to school? Probably not. But Omar will likely begin to feel like an outsider since he has had little experience in all-white churches and knows little of the networks of ethos that set the tone for his new church home. But to what degree is Omar's sense of being an outsider a function of race?

If he were white, would the adjustment to a new denomination and its set of practices and expectations be easier? If, for instance, Omar were not black but a white young man who grew up in holiness and Pentecostal circles, came to the Reformed faith in young adulthood, and then sought ordination in a white ethnic church such as the United Reformed Churches, would a white Omar have an easier time than his African-American version? In other words, do white conservative Presbyterian and Reformed denominations lack black pastors because church members prefer white ministers? Is race the explanation for the awkwardness that persons like Omar feel? Or is it a function of the different institutional networks that African- and white Americans inhabit? If the answer to the latter question is yes, then the hope for integrated Reformed communions may involve a project much bigger than any NAPARC denomination can muster. It may depend on an overhaul of American society, and if the United States government has not succeeded at eliminating the residue of racism and segregation, how could a denomination that comprises .001 percent of the U.S. population possibly do it?

The place of ethnic and racial minority pastors in predominantly white denominations is the topic of the collection of essays edited by Anthony B. Bradley in *Aliens in the Promised Land*. Although the contributors come from a spectrum of backgrounds (Asian-, Latino-, and African-American) and labor in a variety of Protestant traditions, Reformed Protestants will be particularly interested in chapters by Bradley, Lance Lewis, Vincent Bacote, and Carl F. Ellis Jr., who write from experiences in Presbyterian and evangelical settings.

The perspectives of each author are by no means the same, even if frustrations with white majorities inform each account. For instance, Bradley has been a member of the Presbyterian Church in America for almost two decades and has been surprised by reactions to some of his writing on race. He admits that he was aware of historic patterns of racism among Southern Presbyterians. But ongoing signs of it within the PCA prompt him to conclude that conservative Presbyterian churches are culturally captive to white and Western norms even as the center of gravity in the Christian world is moving to the southern hemisphere among Africans, Asians, and South Americans. Lance Lewis, a church planter in the PCA, praises Reformed Protestantism for teaching and defending biblical truth but, like Anthony, has also suffered from careless if not hostile remarks about his racial identity. He cautions against white denominations attempting to plant mixed-race congregations for a variety of reasons—presumption of white superiority, ignorance of black Americans, and black distrust of whites in the United States. For this reason, Lewis calls for a moratorium on planting churches among black people even when the church planter is of African descent. The reason is that as African-Americans migrate from historically black communions into white denominations, they “lose touch” with the minority community. “The fact that a man has a black face and comes from a black church doesn’t mean that he’ll be able to connect with black people” (36).

Ellis, who teaches practical theology at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas, explains, though perhaps unintentionally, why an African-American pastor might lose touch with the urban sector of his racial group. The “meltdown” of neighborhoods and the growing animosity between “achievers” and “non-achievers” (i.e., those who did or did not take advantage of Civil Rights legislation) saw the flight of the black middle-class (138). The result has been the triumph of “ghetto nihilism” among the African-American urban population (139). Meanwhile, Vincent Bacote, who teaches theology at Wheaton College,

wonders if white Protestants will be able to include minority perspectives in theological conversations if they do not “take seriously the theological questions that are central to minorities.” If the problem of evil, for instance, is merely an abstraction that avoids discussion of the history of lynching, the theology of white and black Christians will remain separate from a common enterprise (84).

These points illustrate the difficulties that minorities confront in trying to minister or do theology in predominantly white settings. The challenges are personal, historical, and theological—in other words, not easily overcome. Nor is it clear that these contributors are all on the same page. Lewis, for instance, reckons the differences between blacks and whites to be so great that the idea of preserving blackness in predominantly white churches (or vice versa) seems well nigh impossible.

Part of the book that sheds helpful light on the possibility of cultivating mixed-race churches is the study produced by the 1994 Lutheran Church Missouri Synod study, “Racism and the Church,” and reprinted as an appendix. The historical section of the report is especially instructive because it demonstrates that ethnic Lutherans did not adopt explicitly racist or segregationist policies. In fact, the Missouri Synod’s experience was like that of many mainline Protestant churches in attempting to integrate churches and train black clergy. What such policies could not overcome, however, was the formation of independent black denominations in the late nineteenth century that became in many cases the most important institutions within the African-American community. In addition, the voluntary migration of whites and blacks throughout the twentieth century into distinct neighborhoods, the demise of inner-city Lutheran congregations and concomitant rise of suburban churches, were social dynamics that no American Christians, not even those with an infallible pontiff, could fight. For that reason, as much as the LCMS did and continues to provide biblical teaching in support of integration and mixed-race communions, it has not been able to control social and economic forces that inform how ordinary Christians make a living, support families, and join congregations.

As insurmountable as the barriers posed by the tragedy of race relations in the United States may be, this book is valuable if only to make readers aware of those minority pastors, church elders, and families that are part of the conservative Presbyterian and Reformed world. These brothers and sisters in Christ need encouragement and support. For the sake of overcoming the barriers of race, conservative Protestant churches need the presence of minority families and church officers who will put down ecclesiastical roots. Perhaps after several generations of African-, Asian-, or Latino-American presence within Reformed Protestant circles, minority families and pastors will feel at home.

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ServantReading

Present Shock *by Douglas Rushkoff* A Review Article

by Gregory E. Reynolds

Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now, by Douglas Rushkoff. New York: Penguin, 2014, vii + 296 pages, \$16.00, paper.

Douglas Rushkoff seeks to bring Alvin Toffler's 1970 bestseller *Future Shock* up to date. A longtime member of the Media Ecology Association, he was awarded the Neil Postman award for Career Achievement in Public Intellectual Activity and the Marshall McLuhan Award by the Media Ecology Association for his book *Coercion*. He is technology and media commentator for CNN, and has had commentaries aired on CBS and NPR's "All Things Considered." While Toffler asserted that the future was coming at us too rapidly for us to cope, Rushkoff is insisting that we are now trapped in the now without a sense of the future or the past, "diminishing anything that isn't happening now" (2). Our technologies have undermined the idea of story, with beginning and end. Thus, we are out of sync with the normal rhythms of life, especially as they are related to the natural order. He calls this new situation "Presentism." He suggests helpful ways of navigating this environment by reasserting our priorities in the use of our electronic devices and networks in order to stay better connected with the real world in real time.

Rushkoff is an authentic media ecologist, neither shunning nor embracing the new electronic world, but considering ways of wisely navigating it in order to avoid being sucked into the vortex of the electronic present.

The Christian will be most alarmed by the first chapter of the book which describes the collapse of narrative. In an interview with Ken Myers (*Mars Hill* Audio, vol. 120 Feb. 2014). Rushkoff surprises Myers by favoring the collapse of narrative. It turns out that what he favors is the demise of twentieth century metanarratives, such as National Socialism, that were used as ideological weapons to oppress entire nations (4). This does not mean there is no value in storytelling, only that Presentism has destroyed the concept of story. We have arrived in Toffler's future and do not find stories to be compelling explanations of the present (15). It's as if we are in the midst of a giant happening, but unlike the sixties phenomenon it is not an event that ends but comprises our entire environment. He quotes the cautionary statement of Aristotle, "When storytelling in a culture goes bad, the result is decadence" (23).¹

The Internet by its very nature decontextualizes everything. Rushkoff cites the TV program *The Office* as an example of appealing to the "narrative-wary" viewer. The

¹ From Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: ReganBooks, 1997).

YouTube “cutscene” rules (27). What TV used to do so well, the dramatic, has given way to a purposeless present. *Seinfeld* is a classic example—a show about nothing (31), a pastiche of plots without denouement (34). Watchers want the immediate sensations that the dangerous rescue, extreme sports, or painful, violent reality show deliver, often in the basest forms (37).

Rushkoff maintains that “always-on news becomes the new approach to governance” (47) as leaders respond to constantly changing polls and news stories, crafted by the media. The need to shock the viewer in order to keep him watching creates a sense of panic (48). Intelligent commentary loses its force and the idea of objective truth disappears (50–51). Mediated reality undermines traditional institutions and fosters an “astonishing—and unwarranted—confidence in the self” (53). The postnarrative landscape favors the endless movement of video games (58–62). Rushkoff oddly sees much good in video games because, as a kind of antidote to Presentism, the player becomes the story, which would seem to enhance, rather than modify, the solipsism Rushkoff seems to reject. There is also some evidence that gaming may help those with post-traumatic stress (64–65).

In the second chapter, “Digiphrenia,” Rushkoff begins to hint at some strategies to help deal with Presentism. He brilliantly and provocatively observes that “[p]eople are still analog” (71). But our “virtual identities” are spread over “device, platform, and network.” And then this media ecology zinger—“[t]he things we use do change us. . . . It’s not about how digital technology changes us, but how we change ourselves and one another now that we live so digitally” (73). While this may sound contradictory, Rushkoff is offering hope that we are responsible for our media and can do something about the existential crisis we face.

By trying to keep up with the multitude of electronic intrusions and distractions, we actually lose touch with the real present, hence becoming disoriented and experiencing what Rushkoff calls “digiphrenia” (75). The Industrial Revolution invented a way of measuring time and thus dictating the rhythms of life. People were being “tuned up like machines” (81). The analog clock left a vestige of the cyclic movement of a day based on the sundial, while the digital timepiece doesn’t move it “flicks,” distancing us completely from the natural order (83). Rushkoff quotes IT researcher Mark McDonald, “The nature of change is changing because the flow and control of information has become turbulent, no longer flowing top down, but flowing in every direction at all times” (86).

Remaining captive to this “new temporal order” exacts a price. Being out of sync with the cycle of night and day is unhealthy for body and soul (90–92).

Yes, we are in a chronobiological crisis depression, suicide, cancers, poor productivity, and social malaise as a result of abusing and defeating the rhythms keeping us alive and in sync with nature and one another. (93)

But the good news is that while our inventions are “fungible . . . our bodies are resistant.” Thus, we may use our technologies to “reschedule our lives in a manner consistent with our physiology.” We need to offload time intensive tasks to our machines in order to regain time to think—what technology analyst Clay Shirky calls “cognitive surplus.” Instead of keeping pace with our machines, we need to make our machines work at our pace (93). This proposed solution is a refreshing antidote to the artificial intelligence (AI) crowd’s idea that

we can reinvent ourselves in whatever way we wish, *imago siliconi*. Not bad for an atheist.² Like the founders of media ecology Rushkoff believes that we are not determined by our inventions if we choose to wisely understand and use them.

So we need to reject the “always-on philosophy” that suits business but not our humanity (94).

By letting technology lead the pace, we do not increase genuine choice at all. Rather, we disconnect ourselves from whatever it is we may actually be doing. . . . The opportunity offered to us by digital technology is to reclaim our time and to reprogram our devices to conform to our personal and collective rhythms. Computers do not really care about time. They are machines operating on internal clocks that are not chronological, but events-based: *This* happens, then *that* happens. (98)

We need to program our technologies to follow the natural cycles of days and seasons like farmers have always done. Rushkoff goes on to discuss scientific evidence that shows the relationship between seasons and our human natures.

Then he secularizes the Edenic “myth” by describing the eating of the forbidden fruit as a maturing process which “introduced humanity to the binary universe of active choice that computers now amplify for us today” (111). Theology is a discipline from which Rushkoff needs to steer clear. Relating his misinterpretation of Genesis 1–3 to the Apple computer logo is, however, insightful. Using computers is like taking a bite of the forbidden fruit. On January 27, 2010, Steve Jobs introduced the iPad as “a truly magical and revolutionary product.”³

As an aside, I would note that magic became a reality as the scientific order began to take form in the sixteenth century. This should not be a surprise as the ultimate issue is autonomous human control over God’s world. C. S. Lewis explores the relationship between science and magic in *That Hideous Strength* (1946). The book’s name comes from Sir David Lyndsay’s *Ane Dialog* (1555) in which he describes the Tower of Babel, “The shadow of that hyddeous strength sax mile or more it is of length.” The evil Lord Feverstone—a telling name—states his agenda, “If Science is really given a free hand it can now take over the human race and re-condition it: make man a really efficient animal.”⁴ Rushkoff doesn’t explore the connection between magic and science, although he is clearly opposed to Feverstone’s agenda. Jobs, however, seems to have had it in mind.

The penultimate section of this second chapter describes a crucial distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* measures time quantitatively, whereas *kairos* considers time qualitatively in terms of historical meaning (112). Christians understand this in terms of eschatology. “Digital time ignores nearly every feature of *kairos*, but in doing so may offer us the opportunity to recognize *kairos* by its very absence” (112). Like the light bulb, *chronos* creates an environment without any content. This is what Marshall McLuhan meant by the medium is the message (115). What we call “information overload” should, according to Clay Shirky, be called “filter failure” (116). Push notifications can be turned off, thus protecting our personal *kairos* of real time (117).

² Douglas Rushkoff, *Nothing Sacred: The Truth About Judaism* (New York: Three Rivers, 2003).

³ <http://www.cnn.com/2010/TECH/01/27/apple.tablet/>

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 41.

Then there is the matter of multitasking. Rushkoff contends that computers can do this, but not humans (123). The tenfold increase in attention deficit disorder is directly related to humans seeking to imitate the multitasking of computers. Intelligence is increasingly wrongly equated with speed (125). The cognitive dissonance this creates is a major source of society's ills (126). Thus,

our ability to experience sync over disphrenia can be traced to the extent to which we are the programmers of our own and our businesses' digital processes. In the digital realm we are either the programmers or the programmed—the drivers or the passengers. (128)

Chapter 3 is “Overwinding: The Short Forever.” The concept of temporal diversity is central to this chapter, “to understand and distinguish between the different rates at which things on different levels of existence change.” *Whole Earth Catalog* founder Steward Brand divides society into six levels from the slowest to the fastest rates of change: 1) geological 2) cultural 3) civil governance 4) infrastructures 5) commerce 6) fashion (133–34). Failure to distinguish among these leads to “overwinding” or temporal compression, when we live only at the “fashion” pace (incidentally, watches and clocks cannot be overwound, a minor mistake in Rushkoff's analogy). Instead, energy needs to be stored like the photosynthetic process. Rushkoff uses the example of the difference between cramming the night before an exam, and studying over months for the same exam (135). Only the latter way of dealing with time will yield memory. Or like the difference between RAM and hard drive. Presentism is like RAM, “all processing, with no *stuff* to hang onto” (140). “Where we get into trouble is when we treat data flows and data storage interchangeably” (142). There is no space for deep thinking left. “When everything is rendered instantly accessible via Google and iTunes, the entirety of culture becomes a single layer deep. The journey disappears, and all knowledge is brought into the present tense” (153). This is what Rushkoff calls “the short forever”.

Rushkoff goes on to chart the rise of consumer culture. “While mass production may have disconnected the worker from the value of his skill set, mass marketing has disconnected the consumer from the producer” (166). Moreover,

the economics of consumption have always been dependent on illusions of increasing immediacy and newness, and an actuality of getting people to produce and consume more stuff, more rapidly, with ever more of their time. (167)

A classic example of economic present shock is seen in the way the expansion of credit undermines the ability to consider the future consequences of present purchases (175).

Rushkoff concludes this chapter with a call for community as the solution to the problem of the individualistic, short forever. “We must be able to expand our awareness beyond the zero-sum game of individual self-interest. . . . The individual is flow, and the community is storage” (194). Here's where the doctrine of the church and the communion of saints would be of immense help to Rushkoff.

In Chapter 4 we encounter another Rushkoff neologism, “Fractalnoia: Finding Patterns in the Feedback.” The problem is that we encounter links without a narrative to connect them to. This leaves people unable to interpret the present (199). Fractals seek to make sense of cyberculture by discovering patterns, whether they are actually there or not (200).

This, as McLuhan recognized, is the only way to navigate a chaotic electronic environment. This requires looking more at the medium than at the message (202). “In the presentist world the feedback loop gets really tight.” It’s like the screech of the microphone getting feedback from the speakers that are too close This why we need to step back and consider what’s happening (208).

Rushkoff observes that unlike electronic broadcasting, which is a one-way form of communication, digital networks give people the ability to engage with one another (215). Here Rushkoff begins to engage in a bit of utopian egalitarianism. While it is true that longstanding falsehoods may be quickly undone through the availability of information and networking, it is certainly not true that the transparency of WikiLeaks is helpful to the safety of sovereign nations. His mantra is that it is as easy to cooperate as to compete (221). This simply ignores the reality of sin and deception, by locating the problems of humanity in systems without feedback. In the actual fallen world in which we live, civilization is based as much on what we refrain from saying as on what we say.

“Hierarchies of command and control began losing ground to networks of feedback and iteration” (224). This is good in fighting tyranny, but may also undermine respect for legitimate authority. Rushkoff helpfully cites Norbert Wiener, the inventor of cybernetics. Wiener developed this theory in connection with improving the timing of anti-aircraft fire during World War II. “Feedback allows a source gradually to self-correct the effectiveness of a series of messages, making them closer and closer to what is needed to accomplish their intent.”⁵ Based on this brilliant insight, however, social scientists have believed that by building feedback into social structures they could improve the human condition (225). Rushkoff concludes with a healthy skepticism about such proposals: “Pattern recognition may be less a science or mathematic than it is a liberal art” (230). The liberal arts deal better with complexity and nuances than do the formulaic tendency of the sciences. Fractalnoia is a self-oriented “networked sensibility” that defines paranoia (240). Pattern recognition realizes that that there are not more shark attacks now than a hundred years ago, only more reporting of them.

The concluding chapter “Apocalypso” deals with the “belief in the imminent shift of humanity into an unrecognizably different form.” This is a secular version of Christian eschatological hope. For the secularist it represents relief from the stress of present shock (245). The zombie phenomenon, Rushkoff observes, taps into our deepest fears of being consumed (248). Because “[p]eople are the bad guys” the postnarrative future is thought to belong to the zombies (251).

Rushkoff proceeds in a section titled “Transcending Humanity” to describe several mystical alternatives, from Irish folklorist Terence McKenna to the Taoist Book of Changes, the *I Ching*, to Jesuit evolutionary mystic Teilhard de Chardin (251–54). Their quest is to get everyone to appreciate the interconnectedness of all things, the staple of all mysticism.

Finally Rushkoff comes out of the closet to with the author’s message:

As I have come to understand technology, however, it wants only whatever we program into it. I am much less concerned with whatever it is technology may be doing to people than what people are choosing to do to one another *through* technology. (257)

⁵ Everett Rogers, *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 394–99.

To the techno-enthusiasts he responds “I find myself unable to let go of the sense that human beings are somehow special, and that moment-to-moment human experience contains a certain unquantifiable essence” (258). Rushkoff continues by insisting that DNA gives only a small part of the total picture of what comprises humanity. Neuroscience is inadequate to account for human cognition. Finally, outspoken atheist Richard Dawkins reduces humans to information in organic form. Rushkoff responds, “It seems to me this perspective has the medium and the message reversed. We humans are not the medium for information; information is the medium for humans. We are the content—the message” (259).

Here Rushkoff reminds me of philosopher Thomas Nagel’s challenge, in *Mind and Cosmos*,⁶ to the materialist philosophers and evolutionary scientists to the effect that their scheme is unable to adequately account for our humanity, especially our cognitive abilities as well as consciousness itself.

In the final section of the book Rushkoff posits that the urgency to envision an endgame is a religious impulse exemplified by the Puritans who colonized America. “[T]hey came with the express intent of bringing on the eschaton” (260–61). “Present shock provides the perfect cultural and emotional pretext for apocalyptic thinking. It is destabilizing; it deconstructs the narratives we use to make meaning; . . . it drives us to impose order on chaos” (261). He asks, “Without time, without a future, how do we contend with the lingering imperfections in our reality?” (262). Here he reminds me of Neil Postman’s proposal in *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century*.⁷ Re-imposing the Enlightenment of the past on the present is not much different than Rushkoff’s appealing to the “foundational framework” of the monotheistic culture of which we are a part as a way to help us out of our current dilemma (262). The real question is whether Christian belief in the eschaton is a theological imposition on reality or the actual plan of the One who created it?

Rushkoff calls the reader to take responsibility and dominion in the present moment to confront present shock. He admits that this book has been the hardest to complete of any he has written. Ultimately, he humbly resorts to thoughtfulness that resists hasty conclusions. As a Christian I appreciate his modesty, honesty, and what appears to be his soft atheism.

While I have found Rushkoff’s analyses and many of his navigation proposals useful and even compelling, what he does not take sufficiently into account is the cultural force of a culture that is not very attuned to his sensibilities. Furthermore, his essential belief in the uniqueness of humanity is in need of the fortitude that only a biblical anthropology can offer. Although he feels the pervasiveness of the cultural pressure, his lack of a metanarrative that transcends the cultural moment leaves him at loose ends which ultimately only the Christ of Scripture can tie together.

This is not an easy book, but one well worth reading, if for no other reason than that it slows the reader down to think.

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⁶ Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford, 2012).

⁷ Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (New York: Knopf, 2000).

ServantPoetry

A Christmas Carol

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

Before the paling of the stars,
 Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cockcrow
 Jesus Christ was born:
 Born in a stable,
 Cradled in a manger,
In the world His hands had made
 Born a Stranger.

Priest and King lay fast asleep
 In Jerusalem,
Young and old lay fast asleep
 In crowded Bethlehem:
Saint and Angel, Ox and Ass,
 Kept a watch together,
Before the Christmas daybreak
 In the winter weather.

Jesus on His Mother's breast
 In the stable cold,
Spotless Lamb of God was He,
 Shepherd of the Fold:
Let us kneel with Mary Maid,
 With Joseph bent and hoary,
With Saint and Angel, Ox and Ass,
 To hail the King of Glory.

Sonnet in Winter

G. E. Reynolds (1949–)

In New England we only love the fall
Because we can hunker down in warm
Houses to defeat the cold and hope in all
That the sweet birds will sing and swarm

As they congregate in choirs upon those boughs,
When frozen dirt thaws to spawn the flowers
And greet the buds that from sullen earth grows
To demonstrate the God of nature's powers.

The wintry nights teach us well to love
Those things that barely live a season
And yet beckon us to look beyond, above
That which transcends all reason.

In winter, after all, we celebrate the birth
That in the darkest season beats death's dearth.