

# Preach the Word



Ordained Servant

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### *From the Editor*

What a curious world we live in. Recently I received a secondhand book on preaching, John Stott's *I Believe in Preaching*. I learned that proceeds from the sale would go to 4APES.COM, with the request "Please donate to help apes around the world." While I'm sure the apes are grateful—and while the Bible teaches us to treat them humanely—it seems a strange charity in a world that aborts children in the womb and sells the young into slavery. And that isn't all of its cruelties.

So in this issue we focus on the one source of truth that helps us make sense of a fallen world, full of injustices and ironies. Paul exhorted Timothy, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). It is not just reading the Bible but hearing the Word of God preached that enables us pilgrims to navigate the dangerous terrain of this present evil age.

Dennis Johnson emphasizes this with great clarity in his article, "Expository Preaching: What Is It and Why Should We Do It?" Continuing on this theme, T. David Gordon reviews David Helm's *Expository Preaching*; and Sherif Gendy reviews an important new book by Gregory Beale and Benjamin Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery*.

Matthew Kingsbury reviews liturgics scholar Melanie Ross's latest offering, *Evangelical versus Liturgical?* Helpful especially in light of the return of many OPC ministers to the liturgical treasures of our Reformed heritage.

I briefly review Logos Reformed Platinum, which offers a mind-boggling array of Reformed and biblical resources.

Don't miss the cautionary poem by Emily Dickinson "The Broad-minded Preacher (No. 1207)."

Be sure to check out the rich trove of articles on preaching in "From the Archives," below.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES “PREACHING”

[http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject\\_Index\\_Vol\\_1-22.pdf](http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-22.pdf)

- “About Good Preaching.” (Andrew H. Selle) 14:1 (Mar. 2005): 4–7.
- “About Preaching.” (Mark Larson) 13:2 (Apr. 2004): 31–32.
- “A Brief Defense of Manuscript Preaching.” (Matthew Cotta) 20 (2011): 38–41.
- “The Divine Voice.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 17 (2008): 144–46.
- “Editorial [on Preaching].” (G. I. Williamson) 1:2 (Apr. 1992): 25–26.
- “Editorial [on Preaching].” (G. I. Williamson) 2:4 (Oct. 1993): 73–74.
- “‘Especially the Preaching of the Word’.” (Larry Wilson) 9:2 (Apr. 2000): 30–34. [reprinted 15 (2006): 46–51]
- “God Still Speaks: The Power of Orality.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 17 (2008): 25–31.
- “Hearing the Word in the Modern World.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 19 (2010): 16–21.
- “Help in Using the Original Languages in Preaching.” (Jay E. Adams) 3:1 (Jan. 1994): 23.
- “John Calvin: Servant of the Word.” (Glen J. Clary) 18 (2009): 77–92.
- “The Necessity of Preaching in the Modern World” (Robert Letham) 22 (2013): 32–45.

- “On the Matter of Notes in Preaching.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds 20 (2011): 16–20.
- “An Outline of Jay Adams’ *Preaching With Purpose*.” (D. Patrick Ramsey) 11:2 (Apr. 2002): 35–39.
- “Preaching and Fiction: Developing the Oral Imagination” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 16 (2007): 14–16.
- “Preaching and Poetry: Learning the Power of Speech” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 16 (2007): 17–22.
- “‘Reading as Risk’ Means Preaching at Risk.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 15 (2006): 9–12.
- “Rudiments of Preparing an Expository Sermon.” (Larry Wilson) 11:2 (Apr. 2002): 33–34.
- “Some Thoughts on Preaching.” (G. I. Williamson) 3:2 (Apr. 1994): 42–43.
- “The Voice from the Pulpit: John Calvin and Preaching.” (Steven Doe) 17 (2008): 60–66.
- “Without a Manuscript?” (F. Allan Story, Jr.) 20 (2011): 35–38.

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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 Word

## Expository Preaching: What Is It and Why Should We Do It?

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by Dennis E. Johnson

Pastors rightly feel the weight of our calling to feed Christ's people a robust and balanced diet of God's Word, full of spiritual nutrients. We long to be able to echo what Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, as he looked back over his ministry there: "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying . . . of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:20–21, 26–27). What audacious claims to make for a preaching and teaching ministry that lasted only three years (v. 31)! Without fear of contradiction Paul asserted that he had not withheld from his hearers "*anything* that was profitable," that he had delivered "the *whole* counsel of God." Even after a pastorate of thirty-three years, would we dare to echo Paul's claim? Yet all Scripture is God-breathed, so all of it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How should we follow in the Apostle's footsteps as stewards of God's mysteries (1 Cor. 4:1), faithfully distributing his bounty to his hungry household (Luke 12:42)?

Pastors have many shepherding duties, but none can rival our central calling to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2). The church has witnessed various approaches to preaching over the centuries: expository, evangelistic, catechetical, festal, and prophetic.<sup>1</sup> Preeminent among these, I would claim, is *the expository sermon*. Let me elaborate that thesis: For the health, safety, and growth of Christ's people and for the advance of the gospel among the unchurched, pastors must preach *carefully-studied, meditatively-processed, thoroughly-prayed, contextually-applied, Christ-centered expository sermons*. Our sermons should explore the wide spectrum of the Bible's books and genres and texts, from Old Testament and New, applying the various forms of God's speech to the diversity of human sin and suffering. In this essay I will first explain what I mean by expository preaching, and then give reasons that such an approach to preaching faithfully fulfills our calling to proclaim "the whole counsel of God."

### What Is Expository Preaching?

An expository sermon is drawn from and controlled by the distinctive content of the biblical passage being "exposited." The text drives and dictates the sermon's thesis,

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1, *The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 8. Old refers to these categories throughout this seven-volume series.

structure, purpose, and application. An expository message is different, for example, from a *topical* sermon, which brings together a variety of biblical passages to address a theme, whether doctrinal or ethical. Catechetical preaching, practiced in the continental Reformed churches, often consists of topical sermons in which various biblical texts are enlisted to demonstrate the doctrinal conclusions summarized in the catechism's answers.<sup>2</sup> The expository sermon, on the other hand, does not try to communicate what the whole Bible says on a particular subject, but rather to express the message and mission of *one specific text*—a psalm, a parable, the narrative of an event in history, a section of doctrinal discourse or ethical exhortation, etc.

The focus of an expository sermon on unfolding the meaning, flow, and implications of one biblical passage appears in classic definitions of expository preaching over the last few centuries. Southern Baptist John Broadus wrote in his influential *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (originally published 1870):

An expository discourse may be defined as one which is occupied mainly, or at any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture. It by no means excludes argument and exhortation as to the doctrines or lessons which this exposition develops. It may be devoted to a long passage, or to a very short one, even a part of a sentence. It may be one of a series, or may stand by itself.<sup>3</sup>

That same year (1870) Presbyterian Robert L. Dabney published *Sacred Rhetoric*, in which he wrote:

If the text [of a sermon] contains a number of verses of Scripture, the whole of which are to be explained and applied in their connection, the discussion is called an “expository” sermon. If the text contains only a single proposition, or at most a brief passage of the Word presenting one point, it is denominated by some a “textual” and by others a “topical” sermon. But . . . assuredly every expository sermon ought to be textual in the true sense, and . . . many expository and narrative sermons may be topical.<sup>4</sup>

Haddon Robinson, who has taught homiletics at Dallas, Denver, and Gordon-Conwell Seminaries, offers this definition:

*Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its*

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<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, catechetical preaching can be offered through expository sermons, expounding one primary biblical passage that reveals the truth summarized in the catechism (or a significant aspect of that truth) in a contextually-fitting way, as I will mention below.

<sup>3</sup> John Albert Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed. E. C. Dargan, rev. ed. (New York; London: Harper, 1926), 322.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Lewis Dabney, *Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures on Preaching* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1999), 76. Originally, *Sacred Rhetoric: A Course of Lectures on Preaching* (1870). Dabney went on to register his vigorous disapproval of a “species of discourse upon insulated fragments of Scripture, which should never have had a place in the Church at all. We will call them, for convenience, sermons without context.”

*context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.*<sup>5</sup>

More recently, in *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, Presbyterian Bryan Chapell explains the expository homiletic that he seeks to “redeem”:

A sermon that explores any biblical concept is in the broadest sense “expository,” but the *technical definition of an expository sermon requires that it expound Scripture by deriving from a specific text main points and subpoints that disclose the thought of the author, cover the scope of the passage, and are applied to the lives of the listeners.*<sup>6</sup>

Some flexibility is built into these definitions of “expository preaching.” As Broadus observes, the biblical text to be expounded may be long or short. Expository sermons may belong to a series that continuously expounds a biblical book in order (*lectio continua*, discussed below). But an expository sermon may also stand alone. The common thread is the sermon’s focus on unfolding and applying *the message of a single passage* of Scripture, understood in its appropriate contexts (literary, historical, and ultimately canonical).

To the general definitions offered by Broadus, Dabney, Robinson, and Chapell, I would add some details: Good expository sermons should be *carefully-studied, Christ-centered, meditatively-processed, thoroughly-prayed, and contextually-applied*. Let’s explore these qualities, and we will see how they help us avoid pitfalls sometimes associated with expository preaching.

**Carefully-Studied.** The life-transforming power of any sermon springs from the sovereign power of God’s Holy Spirit, but the Spirit uses means. So we can also say that the authority and persuasiveness of an expository sermon depend on the pastor’s showing his listeners that the message he is conveying is, in fact, what the biblical text itself says. So the preacher takes pains to demonstrate that he is not exploiting a scriptural passage as a mere pretext for propounding his own theories. Rather, he comes as a servant to the text, urging hearers to submit their minds and hearts to the Word, as he has. Responsible expository preaching therefore demands that the pastor do his homework, hard work, drawing on every resource available to him in order to grasp, fully and accurately as possible, the message of that particular text. This includes disciplined analysis of the semantics and syntax of the original language (Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek), features of the literary genre, the immediate historical setting and the text’s location in the unfolding history of biblical revelation and God’s covenants, other relevant passages throughout the Bible. Preparing expository sermons is demanding work, because our aim is to exhibit such submission to God’s message in a specific text that, though we are not apostles, our hearers will respond to our sermons as the Thessalonian believers responded to Paul’s: “When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as

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<sup>5</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 20 (italics original).

<sup>6</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 132 (italics original). The first edition appeared in 1994.

the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:13).

**Christ-Centered.** If a sermon gives adequate attention to a passage’s words and phrases, its literary and historical environments, its theological themes, and its contemporary relevance, but fails to place it into its *most important context*, then some may call it “expository,” but it falls far short of the goal of true Christian preaching. That most important context is the history of God’s redemptive plan, worked out in history and climaxing in Christ. This is not the place to make this case at length, so I won’t discuss Jesus’s interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures as all about himself (John 5:45–47; Luke 24:25–27, 44–29; see 1 Pet. 1:10–11); or trace the way that Paul sums up the content that he preaches simply as “Christ” (1 Cor. 1:18–25; 2:2; Phil. 1:14–18; Col. 1:25–28; 2:2–3; see Eph. 4:20–24); or show that apostles asserted that the Old Testament had us new covenant believers in view (1 Cor. 10:6–11; 1 Pet. 1:12).<sup>7</sup> Since Christ Jesus is the only mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), since God’s plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:9), and since only Christ could accomplish what the law as commandment could never do (Rom. 8:1–4), then any sermon that fails to show the text’s connection to Christ has ignored the text’s most significant and most life-transforming context.

**Meditatively-Processed and Thoroughly-Prayed.** The demands of preparing expository sermons do not end when we have explored the passage in its every context and answered every interpretive question it poses. An expository sermon is not an exegetical lecture. It is not a running, word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase commentary on the passage’s linguistic and literary features, its historical background, or its theological concepts, interspersed with whatever “applications” suggest themselves to the preacher’s mind as he struggles to connect an ancient text to his contemporary hearers. To convey the text’s unique message and to serve its God-designed mission (purpose), the expository preacher needs to immerse his preparation in a spiritual discipline of *stepping back* from the plethora of intriguing details turned up in his exegetical spadework. He must get perspective on *the passage as a whole*: What is its central theme? What transformative purpose does the Spirit of God, who breathed out the text, intend to accomplish in people’s lives today? In this pregnant pause between digging, on the one hand, and delivering, on the other, we need illumination from the text’s divine Author, so prayer must permeate our pondering. For ourselves and our hearers we ask “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened” (Eph. 1:17–18). If expository sermons are to resonate with the ring of truth, preachers must spend time in quiet meditation and humble petition, asking the Holy Spirit to write the text first into their own hearts, and then into hearers’ hearts as well.

**Contextually-Applied.** Expository preaching at its best becomes a bridge “between two worlds.”<sup>8</sup> It connects its first recipients’ life-context and locale in redemptive-covenantal history, on the one hand, to our cultural environment today, on the other. In terms of the deep realities—our unchanging creator and Lord, our identity as his image-

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<sup>7</sup> See Dennis E Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> John R. W Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

bearers who have fallen into sin, our need of redemption, and his provision of the matchless redeemer —our context now and theirs then are identical. But God works in history. So history’s ceaseless change is significant. The realities that span ages display themselves in different ways at different times. As our prayerful meditation turns toward the challenge of our proclaiming the text’s burden to others, our exposition has to take account not only of era-transcending spiritual truths but also of the distinctive challenges to God’s message posed by our location in time and space. Idolatry is a constant threat. But the idols that vie for our allegiance today are rarely carved from wood or cast in gold. Instead, they may take the form of sophisticated electronics or economic investments. Faithful expository preaching interprets both the biblical text and the time in which we live.

## **Reasons for Expository Preaching**

**1. The expository approach to preaching reminds pastors and shows their listeners that preachers are “men under authority,” like the rest of us.** Jesus marveled over the faith expressed by a Roman centurion, who understood Jesus’s authority to heal with a word as analogous to the military chain of command that he knew well: “For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” (Matt. 8:9–10) Pastors too are men under authority, “stewards of the mysteries of God,” slaves entrusted with our master’s message and charged to preserve and deliver it, undistorted and undiluted—uninfected by our own opinions—to others (1 Cor. 4:1–2; see 2 Cor. 2:17). When our sermon exposes the distinctive message of a biblical passage, we are implicitly inviting listeners to put our words to the test of God’s Word, as the members of the synagogue at Berea did to Paul’s preaching: “They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

**2. Expository preaching implicitly subverts the postmodern “hermeneutic of suspicion” that views preaching as a pastoral power-play to wield influence over congregants.** Topical sermons, which convene a variety of biblical passages to address a single theme, should express the fullness and balance of God’s revealed truth concerning that theme. In principle, every passage cited in a topical sermon should be soundly interpreted in context. But even when a topical sermon faithfully fulfills its mission to present the Bible’s truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, jaded postmodern listeners may harbor suspicions that the preacher is playing fast and loose with Scripture, “cherry-picking” texts that support his point and ignoring others, in order to leverage its endorsement for his own ends. Expository sermons, on the other hand, help to disarm skeptics of the suspicion that the preacher has chosen this Sunday’s Scripture for the sake of some personal agenda.

**3. Expository preaching models how to read Scripture in its contexts.** Whenever pastors preach, they are setting an example for those who hear them. Consciously or unintentionally, preachers model for the persons in the pew what should be “best practices” in studying and understanding the Bible. When they lead listeners into the passage’s content and flow of thought, placing it against the backdrops of its book, its historical occasion, and its place in the Bible’s big story of redemption in Christ,

preachers are implicitly informing and forming how their congregants will read the Word throughout the week.

**4. Expository preaching displays the integration of God’s various ways of speaking in the Bible.** It is fine to distill from a biblical text doctrines to be believed and duties to be fulfilled. And we can draw together the truths and obligations distilled from different passages into a coherent summary, a “pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). Our confessions and catechisms handle the Bible in this way, sketching for our finite minds the vast system of truth that the Lord has disclosed in his Word. Yet God’s speech in Scripture displays the variety we hear in other conversations, interweaving truth and urgency, delight and dismay. The Westminster Confession of Faith (14.2) cites some of the different ways God addresses us when it describes saving faith’s response to the Bible’s various tones of voice (emphasis added):

By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and *acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof contains*; yielding *obedience to the commands*, *trembling at the threatenings*, and *embracing the promises* of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are *accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone* for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

Often doctrine and duty (truth and command, gospel and law, indicative and imperative), not to mention threatenings and promises and love songs and laments, come interwoven with one another in the biblical text, just as our everyday conversations blend appeals or demands with rationales and motivations. A topical sermon enjoining truth-telling could certainly appeal to Ephesians 4:25. But an *expository* sermon on Ephesians 4:25, will not only show *that* we must speak truth but also *why*: “for we are members of one another,” which evokes the imagery of the church as the body of Christ (4:12–16). When pastors preach passages as we find them in the Bible, our listeners are drawn into the lively conversation that our God has initiated and carried with his people.

## **Expository Preaching and *Lectio Continua* Series**

Preaching pastors labor at the intersection between God’s final, firm, fully sufficient revelation in the Bible and the vicissitudes of his people’s life in the present. How can we preach to meet the diversity of spiritual conditions represented in the folks sitting attentively before us as we enter the pulpit? How can we prepare and serve a balanced, healthy diet for our hearers’ hearts, the right blend of various nutrients—Old Testament and New, narrative and doctrinal texts, praise and lament, passages that comfort and those that command—in appropriate proportions?

Expository preaching is often associated with continuous sermon series that work through one book of the Bible after another. This practice of continuously preaching through books or sections of Scripture over a span of weeks or months or years, called *lectio continua* (continuous reading), has ancient and honorable pedigree. Church fathers such as Origen and John Chrysostom planned and conducted their preaching agenda this way. After centuries in which the church’s homiletical diet was controlled by lectionaries and liturgical calendars, Protestant Reformers such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli

revived the practice of preaching through biblical books.<sup>9</sup> It makes sense to connect an expository handling of a specific biblical passage, on the one hand, with the *lectio continua* approach to scheduling a congregation's ongoing diet in the Word, on the other. It models the sound practice of reading each passage in the Bible in context.

Some may wonder whether an unbroken series of sermons that plods, text by text, through a long biblical book—Job, for example—over a period of months or years might run the risk of serving one's congregation an imbalanced spiritual diet. Consider the numbers. Depending on a church's weekly schedule, today's pastor will typically proclaim God's Word in Lord's Day worship services between 50 and 100 times a year. Pastors with extraordinary expository preaching ministries may sustain *lectio continua* series in a single book over a span of years. During his ministry to Westminster Chapel, Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached 366 sermons on the Epistle to the Romans on Friday evenings. That is the equivalent of seven years of messages, although the series actually extended over thirteen years.<sup>10</sup> Yet Lloyd-Jones also preached twice each Lord's Day, feeding God's flock on other sections of God's Word.<sup>11</sup> Pastors who preach only once or twice weekly might expose their flocks to "the whole counsel" of God by taking Romans in bigger "bites" than the Doctor did, or by interspersing briefer series on smaller biblical books among their expositions of longer books (Isaiah) or deeper books (Romans). A *lectio continua* series of expository sermons could also focus on discrete units within books (for example, the Joseph narrative in Genesis 37–50, or the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7).

Pastoral wisdom is needed in mapping out a congregation's homiletical diet year-by-year. The distinctive spiritual challenges confronting the congregation should be taken into account in selecting biblical books, or sections of books, to be preached. The important thing is that pastors demonstrate their submission to the Word, display the distinctive message of each passage, and proclaim the Bible's coherent witness to Christ and his grace in each and every sermon.

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<sup>9</sup> For the big picture of the *lectio continua* approach to sermon series, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 7 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998–2010), which was reviewed in four parts in *Ordained Servant* 21 (2012), 148–53; 22 (2013), 130–32; 23.3 (March 2014), 15–19; and 23.8 (October 2014), 24–30. (Accessed at: <http://www.opc.org/os.html>)

<sup>10</sup> Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939-1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1990), 233, 582–83. Murray reports that the Friday sermon series ran from October through May, "with a short break at Christmas and Easter" (233 n1). The Romans series began in 1955 and concluded in March 1968. Audio-recordings of 366 of those sermons can still be heard online. <http://www.mljtrust.org/collections/book-of-romans/>.

<sup>11</sup> In the preface to *Preaching and Preachers*, Dr. Lloyd-Jones reported preaching ordinarily three times each weekend at Westminster Chapel. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 3.

# ServantReading

## From the Mouth of God *by Sinclair Ferguson*

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by Stephen J. Tracey

*From the Mouth of God: Trusting, Reading, and Applying the Bible*, by Sinclair B. Ferguson. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2014, xi + 209 pages, \$13.50 paper. (Also available in Kindle and EPub format.)

One old Scottish preacher on visiting members of his congregation would habitually ask, “What portion of God’s Word did you read today?” It was a wise question for two reasons. First, it was an open question, it would lead to conversation either on the struggle to read the Bible, or on the fruit enjoyed in reading. There was no place for simply saying, “Yes!” or “No!” And secondly, the anticipation of the pastoral question encouraged Bible reading. That pastor knew the place of Scripture in the Christian life.

One would not like to call the venerable Sinclair Ferguson an old Scottish preacher, but he is clearly cut from the same cloth. In the introduction to this wonderful book he states, “The conviction that lay behind writing about the Bible in the first place was that God’s word is itself the worker in the life of the individual Christian and in the fellowship and outreach of the church” (xi).

This book is a revised and enlarged edition of *Handle with Care!*, published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1982. Ferguson sets out to answer three questions. First, “Why is it that Christians throughout the ages have believed, with Jesus, that the Bible is God’s mouth, from which his word is heard?” (x). The little qualification, “with Jesus,” makes all the difference. In fact it is the essential strength of Ferguson’s approach; he always turns our attention to Jesus. This section is no mere academic study of inspiration, accommodation, or concurrence. It is a study of these things, but always more. It stirs the affections for our Lord. This section clearly states a sound and orthodox doctrine of Scripture— but in it Ferguson exalts the Father and the Son and the Spirit. It is rich devotional theology.

The second question is “How should we approach reading the Bible in order to gain a better understanding and appreciation of its message?” (x). This is the largest part of the book. It is a master class on how to interpret Scripture. Ferguson provides five keys, 1. Context, 2. Jesus, 3. The Unfolding Drama, 4. Biblical Logic, and 5. Literary Character. This fifth section, on literary character, is then expanded to explain all the major genres of Scripture: prose, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, gospels, epistles, and visions. It is like a refresher course on exegetical theology. And it is very refreshing. More than that, at times it provides a glimpse into Ferguson’s approach to exegesis. The book is packed with preacher-style examples. While the book is not a homiletics book, incidentally, it provides profound homiletical help. There are nuggets of insight into parables and

narratives and gospels, as well as extended examples of approaching the book of Ruth. Not that we think everyone should want to preach the way Sinclair Ferguson preaches. In the best preacher tradition, however, he is teaching the Bible-reader how to preach to self. You'll never have the accent, but you can apply the Bible just as pointedly.

Ferguson sees the dominant plot line of the whole Bible to be "what God accomplishes through his Son, and in the power of the Spirit," and consequently, "from start to finish these sixty-six books tell a single, multifaceted story whose central character is Jesus Christ and what he does" (76). Of course, there are sub-plots within the plot. Ferguson calls these "The Grand Narrative," "The Big Picture," and "The Plot Line" (76). He looks at the various types of literature in Scripture and teaches us how to approach them. We are steered gently away from misguided and wrong interpretation, while all the while he picks up portions of Scripture and sweetly presses home his point. It is a kind of "Look, do it this way, not that way." And he always leads us to Jesus.

The third question is "How can we do this (that is, read the Bible) in a way that is well-grounded in Scripture and that actually helps us get to know the message of the Bible better?" (x). Using Scripture, Ferguson shows how to put all this to use. From 2 Timothy 3:16–17 he explains how Scripture is "profitable." From the Parable of the Sower he reminds us that the heart of the matter is the disposition of our heart. There must be plowing, rooting, and weeding.

This is a timely reprint of a wonderful book. The doctrine of the Word of God written (and in particular of the inerrancy of Scripture) seems to be always passing through heavy squalls. From the charge that Princetonian men invented inerrancy, to the recent controversy over the views of Peter Enns, we seem to be buried under four feet of heavy snow. The publication of this book is like the arrival of a friendly plow guy. With a few sensible passes he clears your yard. Ferguson's pastoral sense makes this an eminently readable book. His theological skill makes this a profoundly helpful book.

This is a great book. It is systematic theology, New Testament theology, Old Testament theology, hermeneutics, homiletics, all wrapped up in faithful, godly, pastoral expression. This is pastoral practice at its very best.

**Stephen J. Tracey** *serves as the pastor of Lakeview Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Rockport, Maine.*

# ServantReading

## Expository Preaching *by David Helm*

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by T. David Gordon

*Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today*, by David Helm. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 125 pages including appendix and indices.

Full disclosure: David Helm was a student of mine at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, and my high regard for him may prevent my being entirely objective.

I often tell my students that I evaluate a book by the criterion of “insights per page.” This little volume (125 pages) satisfies that criterion very well, because it contains a remarkable amount of insight for its size. In its four chapters it contains roughly equal coverage of: contextualization, exegesis, theological reflection, today (with introductory and conclusive thoughts). Books *could* be written, and indeed *have been* written, about each of these, and Helm does a remarkable job of saying the most important and pertinent things about each of these areas with great concision.

As its title suggests, the chapter on exegesis is pivotal, and it contains wonderful emphasis (and good examples) of contextual exegesis, on noticing the structure and emphases of the biblical author, and on the importance of recognizing and accounting for genre. There is almost no fat on the bones here, as Helm says what needs to be said (convincingly and clearly), without cluttering the chapter by chasing every smaller rabbit. It would not hurt the busy pastor to re-read this chapter several times annually. The chapter on the danger of context overwhelming/overpowering exegesis is also critical to Helm's point, and his warnings are well founded and his points there are well taken. The chapter on theological reflection is a virtual survey of both biblical theology and systematic theology (and their respective roles in expository preaching), and yet it is done very concisely and wisely, with an unmistakable concern for their effect on expository preaching.

Stylistically, I ordinarily find illustrations/diagrams to be distracting, if not cheesy, but I found these very helpful. As the “them/then . . . us/now” was introduced on page 40, then filled out later, I found this very helpful. Some readers will find the mid-chapter summaries (“In this chapter we have looked at . . .”, 35) to be distracting; others will be helped by them. Helm probably did not wish to clutter the manuscript with bibliographic footnotes (though the ones that are there are helpful). But I thought I saw the unmistakable influence of Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart in the section about recognizing the importance of genre to exegesis (*How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to*

*Understanding the Bible*),<sup>1</sup> Meredith Kline when discussing the move from “creation to consummation” (*Kingdom Prologue*),<sup>2</sup> and Edmund Clowney in the instructions about biblical theology (*Preaching and Biblical Theology*),<sup>3</sup> and, since I learned about Charles Simeon’s counsel regarding the three goals of a sermon from professor Nigel Kerr, who was still alive and teaching when Helm was a student at Gordon-Conwell, I would be surprised if Helm did not learn about Simeon from Kerr. Perhaps Helm included attribution in the manuscript and the editors removed them to avoid/evade becoming too academic.

In the section on historical context, I believe Helm may have confused the historical-critical method with the grammatico-historical method. He *says* “historical-critical,” but probably *means* “grammatico-historical” (65ff., 86). Most evangelicals and inerrantists object to the anti-supernaturalism ordinarily associated with the historical-critical method.<sup>4</sup> Everything Helm says here is true, helpful, and well within a commitment to inerrancy; but the designation employed would arouse the suspicion of those readers who were otherwise unaware of Helm’s strong commitment to the authority and inspiration of Holy Scripture.

There are many good books on expositional preaching; but there are none—to my knowledge—which contain so much important insight per page as this one. Even the busiest preacher could find time to re-read it annually, and his congregation would be the benefactors of his doing so.

**T. David Gordon** is a minister in the Presbyterian Church in America serving as Professor of Religion and Greek at Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania.

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, transl. by Edwin W. Leverenz and Rudolph F. Norden (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977); Archie L. Nations, “Historical Criticism and the Current Methodological Crisis,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36, no. 1 (1983): 59–72.

# ServantReading

## A Biblical Theology of Mystery A Review Article

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by Sherif Gendy

*Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery*, by G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014, 393 pages, \$27.00, paper.

G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd worked on the topic of mystery, to some degree, for their doctoral work. Beale, an OPC minister and J. Gresham Machen Chair of New Testament and Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pennsylvania, worked on, among other things, how the book of Daniel's conception of "mystery" connects to areas of Judaism and the book of Revelation. Gladd, an assistant professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS, was a doctoral student of Beale at Wheaton College and wrote a dissertation on how mystery in the book of Daniel influences early Judaism and 1 Corinthians.

In *Hidden but Now Revealed*, Beale and Gladd combine their research and trace the biblical theme of mystery in the New Testament with its foundational background in the book of Daniel. Throughout the book, the authors explore all the occurrences of the term *mystery* and unpack the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, highlighting issues of continuity and discontinuity. Their hermeneutical approach takes into consideration the function of the biblical concept of mystery in its original Old Testament context and in Jewish background and writings. In doing so, Beale and Gladd define mystery as the revelation of God's partially hidden wisdom, particularly as it concerns events occurring in the "latter days."

The authors' two primary goals in this book are: 1) to define the Old and New Testament conception of mystery and to grasp its significance, and 2) to articulate those topics that are found in conjunction with the term "mystery" in its various uses throughout the New Testament. From the outset, the hermeneutical presuppositions that control the study are laid out: the divine inspiration of the entire Bible, the unity of the Bible, and the accessibility of divine authorial intentions communicated through human authors to contemporary readers (intentions that can be sufficiently understood for the purposes of salvation). Inner-biblical allusion receives much attention in this book, and the authors attempt to give an explanation for literary connections and their significance in the immediate context, making use of Richard Hays's six criteria for discerning and discussing the nature and validity of allusions.

Nine occurrences of the term "mystery" are identified in the canonical Old Testament (in the book of Daniel), and twenty-eight occurrences are identified in the New Testament. Early Judaism is indebted to Daniel's conception of mystery, employing the term a few hundred times. The authors discuss each occurrence in the New Testament and pay close attention to

the surrounding Old Testament allusions and quotations that occur in association with the uses of mystery to unlock the content of the revealed mystery. They first examine the immediate New Testament context of each occurrence, then explore the Old Testament and Jewish background to show how it stands in both continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament and Judaism. This method shows how the New Testament incorporates Old Testament quotations and themes but expresses them in new ways, though still retaining some continuity with the Old Testament.

Chapter 1 deals with the use of mystery in the book of Daniel and forms the backbone of the entire volume. In Daniel, the term “mystery” encapsulates both the symbolic form of revelation that comes in dreams, writing, and visions mediated by either an individual or angel, and the interpretation of this revelation. This twofold structure of mystery is associated with an end-time element that accompanies the content of the revelation. The authors argue that the revelation of mystery is not a totally new revelation but the full disclosure of something that was to a significant extent hidden. Proper understanding of mystery in Daniel requires analyzing its connection with Daniel’s concept of wisdom. Therefore, in Daniel the revelation of a mystery is God’s full disclosure of wisdom about end-time events that were mostly hitherto unknown (cf. Dan. 2:20–23).

Beale and Gladd limit their analysis of mystery in the Old Testament to the book of Daniel. They make no effort to consider other Old Testament places where mystery plays a role in redemptive history. While the exact terminology may not be used, the concept of mystery is found in places like the fall narrative in Genesis 3 where the promise of the seed of the woman is an eschatological mystery that is revealed in the coming of the Messiah (v. 15).

Having covered the concept of mystery in the book of Daniel, the authors consider in chapter 2 how mystery is featured prominently in early Judaism. What is surveyed here are primarily the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Targums. Through representative sampling, Beale and Gladd show how mystery retains its eschatological and twofold characteristics of a revelation that is partially hidden and, subsequently, more fully revealed.

Chapters 3–10 focus on New Testament mystery texts at different levels. Chapter 3 discusses Matthew 13, which presents mystery as it relates to the end-time invisible kingdom of God that is already installed through the work of Christ but without consummation.

Chapter 4 covers mystery in Romans 11 and 16, where Paul details the order in which people groups participate in the end-time kingdom. In chapter 5 the authors discuss the mystery of the cross in 1 Corinthians 2, which discloses the exalted, kingly, divine Messiah who is affixed to the cross, reigning at the same time defeated and accursed. Closely related to mystery in 1 Corinthians 2, the revealed mystery in 1 Corinthians 15 is the transformation of believers both alive and dead into an escalated, eschatological Adamic condition.

In chapter 6 the authors turn to Ephesians and examine four main passages. In Ephesians 1 the scope of the unveiled mystery is Christ’s rule over the cosmos, his death is the instrumentation of achieving this rule, and the cosmic unity of all things in Christ is the result of this rule. The mystery in Ephesians 3 pertains to the manner in which Jews and Gentiles are united as true Israel, namely, through Christ. The marital mystery in Ephesians 5, which is organically tied to Genesis 2:24, deals with the theme of unity. The “mystery of the gospel” in Ephesians 6:19 describes how the inaugurated rule of the Messiah is established through the centrality of suffering, the resurrection of only one righteous Israelite, and the already-and-not-yet nature of the kingdom.

Chapter 7 looks at mystery in three passages in Colossians. In Colossians 1:26–27, the mystery entails two organically related topics, namely, the theocratic kingdom as reconstituted in Christ and the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Mystery in Colossians 2:2–3 is Christ himself who is the true “wisdom and knowledge” of God, and believers share in such understanding by virtue of their identification and union with him. In Colossians 4:3 Paul’s prayer request is for an opportunity to proclaim the mystery that pertains to Christ. This mystery is the welcoming of the Gentiles into end-time Israel through faith alone.

While it is certainly true that Gentiles are invited to Christ through the preaching of the gospel as they come by faith alone, the authors state that Paul’s conviction in Colossians is to preach a “Torah-free gospel” to the Gentiles (213). But is this articulation of the content of the gospel Paul preached biblically justified? The gospel is indeed rooted in the Torah. The content of the gospel, the person and work of Christ, is foretold in types, figures, and shadows in the Torah. In fact, Christ tells us that Moses wrote of him (John 5:46), and Paul indicates that Abraham was preached the gospel (Gal. 3:8). Elsewhere Paul declares that the sacred writings, the Torah, are able to make one wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15; cf. John 5:39).

Chapter 8 covers 2 Thessalonians where the latter-day antagonist, the man of lawlessness, presently exists invisibly and corporately in the false teachers and persecutors of the church. Yet this latter-day tyrant has not come in bodily form since his coming will precede Christ’s return. The two-staged arrival of the antichrist fulfills the prophecy of Daniel 11 mysteriously since “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.”

Mystery in 1 Timothy is discussed in chapter 9 where the hymn in 1 Timothy 3:16 constitutes the content of the mystery. This content includes Christ being made known as the object of faith and trust, and the revelation of his new-creational state of existence through his physical resurrection body.

Chapter 10 covers the book of Revelation and how it contributes to the study of mystery. Rooted in the apocalyptic book of Daniel, the use of mystery in Revelation is either an unexpected timing of fulfillment (Rev. 10:7) or an unexpected manner of fulfillment (Rev. 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7) for that which was apparently prophesied in Daniel.

After covering mystery exegetically through biblical texts, the authors in chapter 11 explore mystery theologically as it relates to New Testament topics including resurrection, Christological understanding of the Old Testament, Jesus’s relationship to the temple and new creation, inaugurated eschatology, and the gospel.

Chapter 12 compares and contrasts the Christian mystery to pagan mystery religions to show how conceptually they do not have a lot in common. The mystery religions are marked by extreme secrecy, since mythical rituals and rites remain sealed from outsiders. Biblical mystery, however, has a strong public and evangelistic component.

The last chapter (13) is a conclusion summarizing the authors’ survey of the biblical theology of mystery. Some hermeneutical implications of the New Testament use of the Old Testament are highlighted including the hiddenness of meaning and the Old Testament authors’ intended meaning. Significant practical implications are also provided, for mystery involves living a cruciform lifestyle that entails mirroring Christ’s life.

Finally, Beale includes as an appendix his essay on the cognitive peripheral vision of the biblical authors for a further hermeneutical reflection on how mystery functions in the New Testament use of the Old Testament.

Rich in its footnotes, this book covers many biblical topics related to the concept of mystery and provides hermeneutical principles for biblical theology that take into consideration the full witness of the Scripture's two testaments especially in the area of the New Testament use of the Old Testament. The authors do an adequate job in showing how the New Testament writers, without exception, use the Old Testament contextually by respecting the Old Testament writers' meaning in the original context. The excursuses provided at the end of chapter discussion present further insights into the chapter's subject by connecting it to other related contextual texts, Old Testament background, or early Judaism.

Beale and Gladd make a distinction between the two levels of hiddenness that mystery appears to possess: "temporary hiddenness" and "permanent hiddenness." By "temporary hiddenness" they mean the partially hidden nature of revelation that is undisclosed over a period of time and that eventually gives way to a final, more complete form of revelation. "Permanent hiddenness," on the other hand, is more concerned with the ongoing hidden nature of mystery. While this distinction is helpful, the authors argue that "permanent hiddenness" entails that which will never be removed for intractable nonbelievers. Believers, since they are indwelt with the revelatory Spirit, are able to perceive and understand the content of the revealed mystery. The Scriptures, however, seem to teach that there are revealed mysteries or secrets the significance of which is known only by the Lord, and they remain hidden even to believers (Deut. 29:29). Paul's knowledge was in part as he declares that believers see in a mirror dimly, as in a *αἰνίγματι* "riddle" (*ainigmati* 1 Cor. 13:12). When the disciples asked Jesus about the time he will restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:6–7). Certainly no one knows the hour of Christ's return, not even believers, nor the angels, nor the Son (Mark 13:32; cf. Job 36:26).

Other than a footnote on page 94, what is lacking in this study is a more comprehensive discussion on relevant terms like "secret" and that which is "concealed" and their uses in the Bible in places like Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 10:26; Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17; 12:2; John 7:4; Romans 2:16; Ephesians 5:12–13.

Although mystery is a key component of apocalyptic genre, it is also closely related to wisdom literature. Therefore, another missing discussion in this book is the concept of mystery in relation to biblical wisdom literature. Even though the technical term may not be used, the concept and its significant implications are found in books like Job and Proverbs.

Comprehensive and accessible, this book is a model of intertextual exegesis and hermeneutics for the sake of biblical theology. Much of the argument is conducted by demonstrating verbal and conceptual similarities to show that a particular allusion is intended by an author and therefore is theologically significant. Inevitably, some are more convincing than others, and so minimalists may find a cumulative argument based on the sheer number of allusions sometimes does not ring true. In sum, serious Bible students will find in *Hidden but Now Revealed* helpful detailed intertextual analysis of the way in which mystery in the book of Daniel is interpreted, adapted, and revealed in the New Testament.

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# ServantReading

## Evangelical versus Liturgical? *by Melanie C. Ross*

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by Matthew W. Kingsbury

*Evangelical versus Liturgical? Defying a Dichotomy*, by Melanie C. Ross. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014, xv + 149 pages, \$17.00, paper.

In *Evangelical versus Liturgical?* Melanie C. Ross proposes to defy the commonly assumed dichotomy between evangelical churches and those that employ a high-church liturgy drawn from the historic Christian tradition. This project of challenging ecclesiastical categories, at least in theme, will be familiar to Orthodox Presbyterians who have been following our own D. G. Hart, especially his *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*.<sup>1</sup> It may also challenge some of the dichotomies, and liturgical assumptions, of many OPC pastors.

In her introduction, Ross, a liturgical scholar at Yale Divinity School, references Gordon Lathrop's formulation of the dichotomy: the liturgical fourfold *ordo* of word, bath, table, and prayer versus the evangelical threefold *ordo* of warm-up, sermon, conversion (3).<sup>2</sup> Through a historical comparison of Charles Finney and George Whitefield (chapter 1), two case studies of evangelical congregations (chapters 2 and 5), and putting liturgical scholars in dialogue with evangelical theologians (chapters 3 and 4), she questions whether this formula, while convenient, accurately describes the lived experience of modern churches. Along the way, the reader quickly observes it is also shorthand for a number of other assumptions, and these together create the challenge to today's confessional Presbyterian in America.

In fact, Ross explores less a dichotomy than a collection of overlapping dichotomies: evangelical vs. liberal (48ff); an emphasis on theological content over liturgical shape (55); fundamentalist/evangelical vs. ecumenical (56); gnostic (or non-sacramental) vs. canonical (i.e., the visible church as divinely instituted by the means of grace, 88);<sup>3</sup> evangelical vs. mainline (126); evangelical vs. critical biblical scholarship (132ff). Ross writes as a liturgical scholar for liturgical scholars, and these categories reflect the assumptions of the camp, which (unsurprisingly) are somewhat hostile to evangelical faith and practice. With varying degrees of success, Ross subverts and challenges these categories in an attempt to promote dialogue and mutual edification between the liturgical and evangelical camps. In this sense, Ross effectively defies the dichotomy and gives liturgical scholars reason to critically explore, rather than dismiss, the worship theory and practice of American evangelicalism. As this is the latest in the prestigious *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies*

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<sup>1</sup> Which work is cited by Ms. Ross; Hart also gets a block quote on page 10.

<sup>2</sup> Which, in chapter 1, she traces to the Second Great Awakening and Charles Finney (12–19).

<sup>3</sup> This comparison is the subject of all of chapter 3 (77–103).

series, she may even persuade some to do so.

If the OPC has liturgical scholars, they are the ministers of Word and sacrament serving our congregations, and those may struggle to orient themselves within the dichotomies listed in the preceding paragraph. That struggle, and its implicit challenge to our interpretive paradigms, offers a great help to pastors ministering within the context of American confessional Presbyterianism: “help” in the sense of at least three ways to reconceive our ministries and our place in the American ecclesiastical context.

Orthodox Presbyterians seeking a mooring for their identity in this book between the Scylla of Finneyite evangelicals and the Charybdis of liberal liturgists may find themselves in Robert Webber’s distinction

between “separatist” and “ecumenical” evangelicals. The former . . . “define themselves over against Catholic, Orthodox, and mainline Protestant denominations. . . .” The latter are those who campaign for “a return to weekly Eucharist, a recognition of real presence, [and] the restoration of the church year.” . . . Ecumenical evangelicals, Webber observes, are often repentant separatists. . . . (3)<sup>4</sup>

Historically, the OPC, along with our friends in NAPARC,<sup>5</sup> is decidedly on the separatist side. However, as the three specific liturgical reforms Webber cites are gaining traction in our circles among (relatively) younger ministers who are at least, if not more, committed to robust confessionalism than their immediate predecessors, we may be ready to shed our separatist impulses.

This leads to a second way in which to reimagine ourselves in the ecumenical landscape. The liturgical renewal movement was an ecumenical force which swept through mainline Protestantism after the Second World War, allowing divergent ecclesiastical traditions to work together on the basis of liturgical commonalities.<sup>6</sup> In principle, there is no reason this type of cooperation must remain the provenance of the doctrinally declined. As the congregation that I serve has followed *The Revised Common Lectionary* for several cycles now, I have discovered a point of contact with brethren in conservative Lutheran and Anglican traditions.<sup>7</sup> While I believe the liturgical reforms mentioned above are driven primarily by pastoral concerns, they can also turn us outward toward the “separated brethren” in our local communities.

If we are to turn toward other confessional Protestants, we will, in the third place, have to turn away from our de facto embrace of evangelical liturgics. While the regulative principle of worship is a bedrock of confessional Presbyterianism, by itself it forms a rather weak practical foundation on which to build an order of worship.<sup>8</sup> Given the infrequency with

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<sup>4</sup> Ross here cites Webber’s “The Impact of the Liturgical Movement on the Evangelical Church,” *Reformed Liturgy and Music* 21, no. 2 (1987): 111. Webber (1933–2007) was a theologian who focused on worship.

<sup>5</sup> North American Presbyterian and Reformed Churches.

<sup>6</sup> To the extent that I grew up in the United Christian Parish in Reston, Virginia, a cooperative endeavor between five liberal denominations, beginning in 1973, which, during my youth, had three congregations served by pastors from three denominations but with one order of worship followed by all.

<sup>7</sup> And a means by which to speak both winsomely and evangelistically to Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox.

<sup>8</sup> How many of our ministers were required to take a class on liturgics in seminary? How many ordination trials include even one question on liturgics (as distinguished from defining the regulative principle of worship)?

which they celebrate the Eucharist or baptism, many of our congregations can hardly be said to follow the fourfold *ordo* of word, bath, table, and prayer. Instead, we come much closer to a threefold *ordo* of warm-up, sermon, and hymn. This is evidenced by congregations in which the first part of the service (which may contain a complex of formal elements such as an invocation, reading of the Law, confession, and declaration of pardon) bears no thematic relationship to the sermon itself.<sup>9</sup> Further, how many of our pastors deliver what is in effect a second sermon when celebrating the Lord's Supper because the sacrament is not perceived to be inseparably related to the Word preached? We would all do well to consider the examples of Eastbrook and West Shore churches (chapters 2 and 5), which, while they can justly be criticized on regulative principle grounds, nonetheless strive to make their worship services thematically coherent wholes out of a desire to both edify worshipers and glorify God.

To press the point home: what makes Christians into faithful lifelong disciples? For many of us, the answer would no doubt be personal appropriation of orthodox biblical doctrine, as taught in our confessional standards. However, Westminster Shorter Catechism 88 (but really through to 107) suggests disciples are formed primarily through the ordinary means of grace, especially as they are experienced in corporate worship: Word, sacrament, and prayer.<sup>10</sup> In other words, our own standards sympathize with liturgical concerns.

At the present moment, the OPC is neither evangelical nor liturgical, with all that both of those terms imply. As Melanie C. Ross explores those traditions and their relationship, she invites us, with them (as she quotes D. G. Hart), to return to the riches of the Reformed, Lutheran, and Anglican traditions where these matters have been defined and articulated and where worship is the logical extension of a congregation's confession of faith and lies at the heart of the church's mission (10).

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<sup>9</sup> I was once a member of a PCA congregation in which the first part of the service followed the Shorter Catechism's exposition of the Law, while the sermon (longer than the rest of the service combined) was a consecutive exposition of Scripture.

<sup>10</sup> In other words, the fourfold *ordo*. See Ross's discussion of this issue on pp. 53-55, which summarize chapter 3's case study of Eastbrook Church in Wisconsin.

# ServantTechnology

## Logos 5, Reformed Platinum, Bible Program

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

When I began using a Mac in 2006 I moved from Bible Works to Accordance since Bible Works did not have a Mac platform at the time. Cost was an issue for me then. So I did not use the Bible program in the Logos 5 software under review. However, friends who use Logos software find it very useful for both Bible and related resources. One colleague commented, “I’m an enthusiastic and heavily-invested Logos Bible Software user. I have the top Platinum library plus other titles in the Logos collection I’ve acquired over the years. Five stars! Not cheap, but the Rolls Royce of Bible software as far as I’m concerned. . . . 5835 items in my Logos resource library, all searchable in seconds.”

While I find electronic resources helpful when writing articles, I find commentaries more accessible and useful in hard copy. Clearly one of the greatest strengths of Logos is the enormous number of old and new resources. You have the latest commentaries and the oldest Puritans at your finger tips. Logos also offers free digital resources monthly. I have found most of these very desirable. But the volume of these resources comes at a price.

The constant need for indexing the vast number of resources slows down some computers. It slowed mine down considerably, because it uses more than six times the RAM that Accordance uses. On the other hand the mobile app works from the cloud so doesn’t take up much space or take any time to load. This is one of the greatest strengths of Logos. So, I have found using my iPad for reference, while using the Bible software on my laptop, a very satisfying combination.

Accordance reminds me of BOSE and Apple products—haiku simplicity. That being said Logos Reformed Platinum is perfect for the pastor-scholar. The choice of Reformed resources makes this software option well worth the price. I am grateful for the opportunity to use and review such fine Bible software.

Here is a comparison chart to help you decide:

	Minimum Crossgrade	Starter	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum (reviewed)	Diamond	Portfolio
# of Resources	26	191	429	667	1,076	1,370	2,028	2,585
Estimated Cost of Equivalent Print Resources	\$549.32	\$3,500.00	\$8,000.00	\$13,000.00	\$21,000.00	<b>\$28,700.00</b>	\$52,500.00	\$78,000.00
Retail Cost	\$159.95	\$294.95	\$629.95	\$999.95	\$1,549.95	<b>\$2,149.95</b>	\$3,449.95	\$4,979.95
Custom Discount	\$135.00	\$186.08	\$488.58	\$651.51	\$954.95	<b>\$1,296.21</b>	\$1,762.90	\$1,929.71
The Price You Pay	\$24.95	\$108.87	\$141.37	\$348.44	\$595.00	<b>\$853.74</b>	\$1,687.05	\$3,050.24
Monthly Price with Payment Plan	\$0.00	\$20.55	\$20.71	\$34.04	\$54.58	<b>\$76.14</b>	\$98.72	\$132.09

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# ServantPoetry

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Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

## The Broad-minded Preacher (No. 1207)

He preached upon "Breadth" till it argued him narrow—  
The Broad are too broad to define  
And of "Truth" until it proclaimed him a Liar—  
The Truth never flaunted a Sign—

Simplicity fled from his counterfeit presence  
As Gold the Pyrites would shun—  
What confusion would cover the innocent Jesus  
To meet so enabled a Man!