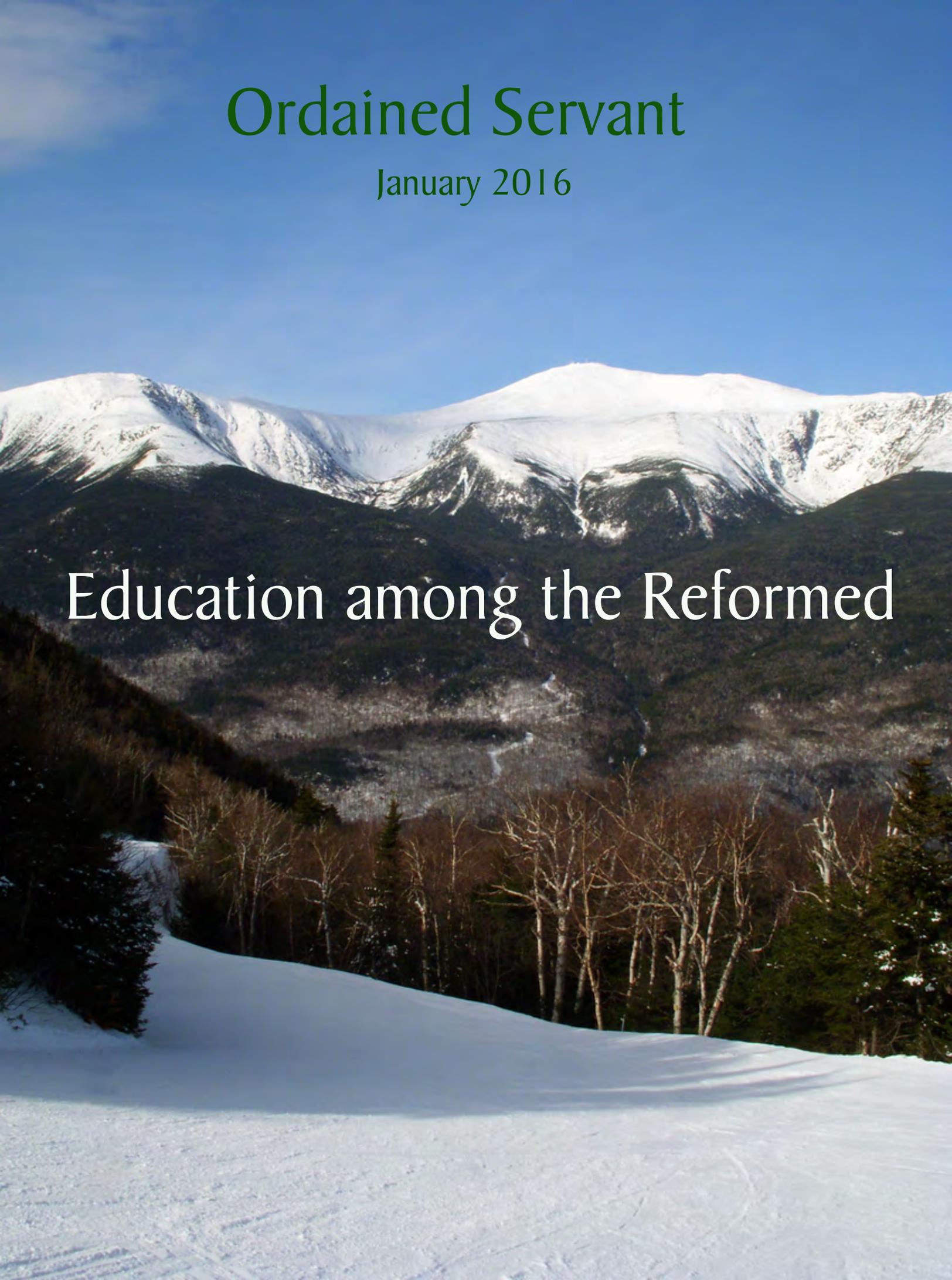


# Ordained Servant

January 2016

A scenic winter landscape featuring snow-capped mountains, a forest of bare trees, and a snowy foreground. The mountains are covered in a thick layer of snow, with some rocky outcrops visible. The foreground is a smooth, snow-covered slope with some faint tracks. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

Education among the Reformed

# *Ordained Servant Online*

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**CURRENT ISSUE: EDUCATION AMONG THE REFORMED**

**January 2016**

### *From the Editor*

*Ordained Servant* now enters its twenty-fifth year of publication. Please pray for its continued faithfulness and usefulness to the officers of Christ's church.

Education has been a hot topic among serious Christians for many decades, especially in light of the secularization of American public schools. Historian Darryl Hart explores the variety of ways that Reformed Christians have approached education outside of the visible church. He brings Abraham Kuyper's insights from his famous 1898 Princeton lectures, *Lectures on Calvinism*, to bear on this important topic.

Sherif Gendy brings us another helpful review of a biblical theological theme in Gregory Smith, *The Testing of God's Sons: The Refining of Faith as a Biblical Theme*.

Jeffrey Waddington reviews John Fesko's insightful new book, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights*.

Paul Helseth reviews two books by Owen Anderson in the Princeton tradition: *Reason and Faith at Early Princeton* and *Reason and Faith in the Theology of Charles Hodge*. Helseth is the author of *Right Reason and the Princeton Mind: An Unorthodox Proposal* (2010).

On the subject of preaching I review an important new book by Timothy Keller titled *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* in which he covers some standard homiletical topics from the perspective of reaching the late modern mind.

Finally don't begin the new year without meditating on Christina Rossetti's "Old and New Year Ditties 2."

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES “EDUCATION”

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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.

# ServantHistory

## The Good, the Bad, and the Neutral: Calvinism and the School Question

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by Darryl G. Hart

In 1898 when Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch Reformed minister, institution builder extraordinaire, and soon to be prime minister of the Netherlands, spoke at Princeton Seminary about the virtues of Calvinism, he discussed schools in ways that may have left his listeners scratching their heads. On the one hand, Kuyper complimented his hosts for living in a country where Calvinism was still vigorous. One sign of such health was a “common school system” which began each day with Bible reading and prayer. Although such tepid religious exercises suggested a “decreasing distinctness” of Calvinistic convictions, they still reflected the genius of the American founding and its debt to the “Pilgrim Fathers who gave the United States, as opposed to the French Revolution, a decidedly Christian character.”<sup>1</sup> For those paying careful attention to the series of six lectures, such praise of America’s public schools was at odds with Kuyper’s remarks about Calvinism and science. In that lecture he contended that educational institutions needed to reflect distinct outlooks. Instead of implementing a common university or school system, as liberal governments in the Netherlands had tried, Kuyper argued for institutional pluralism so that Roman Catholics, Calvinists, and “Evolutionists” might have their own schools and universities. The idea of “*one Science* only,” Kuyper asserted, was “artificial” and its days were “numbered.” A better approach was for intellectual endeavor to “flourish in . . . multiformity.”<sup>2</sup>

As much as Kuyper and his hosts from the Presbyterian Church’s original seminary shared in their understanding of Calvinism, the Dutchman’s praise for a “common” educational system in the United States and advocacy of academic institutional diversity in the Netherlands was just one indication of differences between American and European Protestants about education. Those divergences in turn stemmed from political developments that played out differently in Europe and North America after the revolutions of the eighteenth century in the United States and France. What follows is an effort to place Presbyterian and Reformed Protestant ideas about education within a wider historical and cultural context. That larger perspective may well indicate that Calvinists, instead of carving out a distinct and high view of education, were much more dependent on the accidents of history in their approach to education. The heirs of a longer lasting

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 14–15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

pattern of church-based and church-sponsored education during the Middle Ages, the Reformers perpetuated schools that made religion central to learning. When civil governments in the modern era of liberal politics took over the responsibilities of universal education, Reformed Protestants had to adjust and they did so largely on terms set by their churches' relationship to the national government.

## The Reformation of Learning

For good reason, historians credit the Protestant Reformation with an emphasis on education that had significant consequences for the expansion of formal learning beyond the confines determined by medieval Europe. Prior to the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church was largely responsible for education. After the demise of the Roman Empire, the burden for education fell on bishops and religious orders. Cathedral schools and monasteries taught the trivium and quadrivium to young men and boys mainly for the purpose of training future priests. The recovery of Roman and Greek antiquity with the Renaissance provided an alternative model of education, but formal learning remained largely in the hands of the church. The Reformation set into motion a new set of expectations for education. Protestants not only set high standards for a learned ministry but also advocated literacy for the laity so that average Christians could fulfill their obligations for Bible reading, learning catechisms, and worship in the home. For instance, John Calvin in the early stages of his reform of church life in Geneva took steps to establish an academy (the initial stage of a university) for the education of pastors and called for the institution of schools that would train boys at an early stage for future education either as clergy or civil servants. In the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541, Calvin wrote:

But since it is possible to profit from such teaching (of theology) only if in the first place there is instruction in the languages and humanities, and since also there is need to raise up seed for the future so that the Church is not left desolate to our children, it will be necessary to build a college for the purpose of instructing them, with a view to preparing them both for the ministry and for civil government.<sup>3</sup>

Calvin's reforms in Geneva inspired the Scottish Reformer John Knox, who sought a similar expansion of educational opportunities for children and improved training for pastors. The Church of Scotland's First Book of Discipline provided the rationale for the reform of the nation's educational institutions:

Seeing that men are born ignorant of all godliness; and seeing, also, that God now ceases to illuminate men miraculously, suddenly changing them, as that he did his apostles and others in the primitive church: of necessity it is that your honours be most careful for the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this

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<sup>3</sup> Calvin quoted in Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, ed., "1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 41.

realm, if either ye now thirst unfeignedly [for] the advancement of Christ's glory, or yet desire the continuance of his benefits to the generation following.<sup>4</sup>

Funds for a system of schools in each parish were difficult to find at first, and Knox's call for an improved education required using the existing institutions created before the Reformation and adapting them as much as possible. But by the seventeenth century, Scottish parliament had taken steps to provide education in each parish and to implement curricular reforms at Scotland's universities that dovetailed with training for Protestant ministers.

## **The Problem of State Schools**

Because the Reformation was magisterial—meaning it relied on the support and patronage of civil authorities—the educational programs for which Protestants called were also heavily dependent on the approval and funding of the state. In fact, the experience that governments in Protestant nations gained from the Reformation's expanding educational opportunities led by the nineteenth century to the creation of state-run educational systems designed more for national unity than for religious fidelity. After the French Revolution as European governments centralized and consolidated social affairs for the sake of strong national identities, public education became an important vehicle for nurturing a unified citizenry. On the one hand, the expansion of state control of schooling brought more children into the system and so increased literacy. On the other hand, religion became a potentially divisive matter. In which case, national school systems might still include religion but did so in generic ways that included Christian morality without theology. In other words, state control of education inevitably involved a weakening of overtly Christian teachings and practices.

Examples of state involvement in education varied but also indicated the dilemma that Reformed Protestants faced after having been stakeholders in the early modern reform of schooling in the West. In a nation such as France, at one end of the spectrum, the ideology of the republic was hostile to religion and so state schools removed any vestiges of church influence. In Scotland the demands of a modernizing economy and politics required a gradual abandonment of the old parish model of local schools and the adoption of a public system in which religion supported national ideals. Churches responded by turning to voluntary institutions such as Sunday schools where children might receive a religiously based education. In the Netherlands, the state adopted a liberal system of education that included a bare minimum of Christian influence designed not to offend either Protestants or Roman Catholics. Abraham Kuyper protested this “neutral” educational system and advocated instead a pluralistic model where parents might receive state funding for schools true to religious convictions—Roman Catholic schools for Roman Catholics, Calvinists schools for Calvinists. In the United States where political institutions were weak and decentralized, public schools often served community interests instead of a national agenda. Even so, the public school system involved the assimilation of children to American ideals about God and virtue; as a result, common

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<sup>4</sup> From “The Book of Discipline” (1621) reprinted in John Knox, *The History of the Reformation in Scotland* (New York: Revell, 1905), 382.

schools included prayer and Bible reading in ways that seemed too Protestant for Roman Catholics. School controversies in the 1830s and 1870s led some bishops to implement parochial school systems for Roman Catholic children. Some American Presbyterians also entertained the idea of establishing a system of church schools out of frustration over the thin character of religious instruction in the common schools. Not until the 1960s, however, when the US Supreme Court ruled that prayer and Bible reading in public schools were unconstitutional, did the bulk of American Protestants become alert to the kind of arguments that Abraham Kuyper had made about the problems of a state-run education devoid of religion.

## **Who Is Responsible for Education?**

Christians from a variety of backgrounds often look at school curricula or daily school exercises for religious elements to discern whether public schools are congenial or hostile to faith. Often missed, however, is the much more basic and equally difficult question of who is responsible for educating children. If the state does not take the lead for education, if schooling is in the hands of churches or families, will schooling be divisive and upset a shared understanding of public life? Will such an education even contribute to inequality as families send children to schools according to available financial resources? But what is a state-sponsored education supposed to do with religion? Especially in a religiously diverse environment, excluding questions about faith that could readily cause disagreements both in the classroom and at parent-teacher meetings, looks like a plausible alternative. But if religion is important at least to cultivating the morality of students and as a piece of historical development, how can schools meaningfully exclude religious perspectives and subjects?

For a century or two after the Reformation, when churches and civil authorities cooperated in a common enterprise, such questions were not pressing. But since the expansion of religious freedom and public education with the modern state after the political revolutions of the eighteenth century, such questions have haunted considerations of primary and secondary education. What individual Christians, families, or churches may decide about such matters is of course impossible to predict. But looking beyond the curriculum or religious exercises during the school day to much more basic theological and political reflections about who is responsible for education, as Abraham Kuyper communicated to his American audience at Princeton, may help to clarify what is at stake in these difficult decisions.

**Darryl G. Hart** *is distinguished visiting assistant professor of history at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan, and an elder in Hillsdale Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hillsdale, Michigan.*

# ServantReading

## The Testing of God's Sons *by Gregory S. Smith*

A Review Article

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by Sherif Gendy

*The Testing of God's Sons: The Refining of Faith as a Biblical Theme*, by Gregory S. Smith. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2014, 240 pages, \$24.99, paper.

In this book Gregory S. Smith explores the theological theme of testing the faith, which emerges in the Old Testament and stretches across the New Testament. Written with a pastoral voice, yet in a scholarly manner, this book deals with tests of faith involving suffering and hardship for the sake of refinement. Smith encourages believers who experience suffering to embrace the testing of their faith. He rightly recognizes the covenantal function of testing since it reveals God's concern for the faith of his saints, and through it God responds to the rebellion of his people. This book is divided into five chapters followed by a helpful bibliography. Here is a summary with assessment for each chapter.

### 1. THE LANGUAGE OF TESTING

In this chapter Smith focuses on the language of testing and explores its semantic range, drawing from both the biblical context and the world of the ancient Near East. He examines three primary biblical terms: נָסָה (*nasah*) for testing as revealing, בִּחָן (*bohan*) for testing as authentication, and צָרַף (*saraph*) for testing as refining. These terms share a range of meaning that includes test, try, prove, examine, and scrutinize. Smith shows how the biblical idea of testing stems from a metallurgical background in relation to the use of the ancient touchstone for the examination of the quality of precious metals like gold. As such, testing ranges in degrees of intensity from mild, to medium, to hot.

Smith engages the concept of testing in the ancient world through some Akkadian texts. He observes a variety of categories for testing including testing by examination, verification, lifting one's head, and refinement. In the ancient world, testing was primarily for the judgment of angry gods. Thus, the biblical portrayal remains unique as Yahweh acts as a covenant suzerain to call for and cultivate the faith and fidelity of his people.

Smith demonstrates that testing has pastoral implications since the Lord is obligated by covenant relationship to test his people. The intersection of covenant relationship with a fallen world demands it to be so. While the notion of covenant testing is comforting, one wonders how it relates to the idea of temptation. Except for a footnote in the book's introduction, Smith does not elaborate on the concept of tempting and its relation to testing.

### 2" TESTING IN THE JOSEPH NARRATIVE

Here Smith focuses on the Joseph narrative and its unique contribution to the theology of testing and Israel's understanding of her experience of testing that is presented throughout the rest of the Pentateuch. Smith discusses the works of some scholars, including Hermann

Gunkel and Gerhard von Rad, regarding their treatment of the meaning of the fear of God and its relation to testing. He notes that the intent of Joseph's testing was to illustrate the quality of faith and loyalty that would have been vital for success in the Promised Land. This intention is realized when Joseph recognizes that the testing he endured was meant by God for his good and for the good of his family. Smith reads Joseph's experience, which anticipates Israel's wilderness experience, in parallel with Abraham's testing in Genesis 22, since both model covenant fidelity for Israel. Although Smith is open to reading Joseph's narrative as a model for Israel and a type for their wilderness experience, he does not discuss its relation to Christ's suffering and his enduring of hardship.

### **3" TESTING AS A UNIFIED PENTATEUCHAL THEOLOGICAL THEME**

Smith examines the Pentateuch's presentation of testing, which involves two kinds of testing. First, aural tests authenticate and check for faith as in the experiences of Abraham, the Israelite midwives, Moses, and Israel at Sinai. Second, experiential tests refine and enhance faith as seen at Shur and Sin, Massah, the wilderness wanderings, and the events noted in the book of Deuteronomy. Smith argues that the Pentateuch as a whole shares an internal consistency with regard to its presentation of this significant biblical theme as a basis for Israel to remember the covenant relationship she has with Yahweh. This relationship requires faith and loyalty and therefore necessitates testing as a means for quality check and quality improvement. Smith highlights the significance of Abraham's experience for Israel by showing how Abraham functions as a model of covenant obedience who fulfills the necessary mediatorial role in Israel's history.

Smith rightly highlights the consistency of Yahweh's fidelity despite the inconsistency and repeated failure of his covenant people. He notices the relationship between fear and testing that occurs in testing contexts.

### **4" TESTING OF GOD'S SONS**

This chapter demonstrates that God tests his sons—Adam, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Job, Israel, Jesus, and the church. Starting with Adam, Smith shows how testing has been an element of God's interaction with his creation from the very beginning. The connections Smith makes between Adam and Israel's testing and refinement of their own loyalty and fidelity to God's commands are significant. Smith rightly describes God's activity in Genesis as a suzerain who commands and creates a world where covenant relationship is the desired outcome. Adam's violation of his relational status with God activates the terms that require exile in a world subjected to futility. Adam's shattered image works with this futility as the means to further amplify humanity's experience of refinement. Israel's long covenant history illustrates how God works through this futility to refine the faith and fidelity of his people. It is through the experience of God's tested sons that the church is invited to more fully and deeply understand her own experience of testing. Through testing we learn that God demands the exclusive loyalty, dependence, faith, and obedience of his people.

A discussion of how testing works in the life and ministry of Israel's prophets is missing in this chapter. Another discussion on the testing of the disciples and apostles would have been helpful. Smith's treatment of Christ's testing is very brief, and he limits it to the wilderness account in Matthew 4. Moreover, while Smith makes the connection between Christ's testing and Israel's in the wilderness, he does not relate the testing of Christ to that of Adam.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Here Smith summarizes his study of the biblical theme of testing, highlighting his conclusions. The two categories Smith suggests for understanding testing in its biblical context are the aural test (quality check) and the test of experience (quality improvement). His investigation of the Joseph narrative, through these categories of meaning, leads him to recognize the retrospective and prospective theological vantage point for Israel. For Smith, Joseph's testing functions as a theological link between the patriarchal narratives and the rest of the Pentateuch. The individual testing of the patriarchs functions as an example for the corporate experience of Israel's testing as a nation. By looking at Christ's testing through suffering, Smith is able to articulate the value of God's love established through the suffering of the saints and authenticated through testing.

Smith provides two appendices to his book. The first appendix, "Testing as Touchstone," provides further discussion on the relationship of the Hebrew term בֹּחַן (*bohan*) and its basic meaning of "touchstone." Based on this comparison study, Smith sees a link between the stages of authentication and refining in the ancient processing of gold and the early meaning of בֹּחַן (*bohan*). The second appendix, "Covenant Good as Functional Good," explains how the creation terms בָּרָא (*bara*) and טָבַח (*tub*) work together in covenant context to emphasize the functionality of the created order.

This book attempts to develop a biblical theology of testing. It shows how God, in the context of a fallen world, is primarily concerned with the refining and authentication of the faith of his people. Smith limits the intent of the testing narratives in the lives of Adam, Abraham, and Joseph to providing Israel with a window of understanding and insight into her own experience. While this might be true, it is not the full and complete purpose and intent of such narratives. The canon provides the context for such narratives to be understood. In canonical hermeneutics, the narratives' intent is not bound up with what the original audience might have understood—something that always renders speculations. Rather, the intent lies within the canonical presentation as the narratives take their final shape within the canon. For this reason, testing in the lives of these biblical characters serves a larger, theological purpose that is accessible when one considers the whole counsel of God in the Scriptures as it reaches its climax in the person and work of Christ.

From a pastoral perspective, proper understanding of testing helps us see how hardships, difficulties, and sufferings are necessary means by which God refines the believer's faith. Smith reminds us that through suffering we share in the suffering of Christ and will ultimately share in his glory in eternity. As the perfect high priest, Christ identifies with the suffering of his people to assist those enduring testing through suffering. He offers mercy, grace, and help in the believer's time of greatest need.

This biblical understanding of testing offers a theological basis for encouragement and hope to the faithful who struggle—even suffer—in their demonstration of fidelity both to God and to others in the community of faith. James exhorts us to consider it all joy when we encounter testing (1:2). Testing through suffering is an essential part of God's obligation to keep his covenant promises. The sufferings we endure are part of our redemption as they serve our Spirit-wrought sanctification in our lives.

**Sherif Gendy** is a licentiate in the Presbytery of the Midwest (OPC), a PhD candidate at Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, Pennsylvania, and serving as Arabic Theological Editor for Third Millennium Ministries in Casselberry, Florida.

# The Theology of the Westminster Standards

by *J. V. Fesko*

## A Review Article

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by Jeffrey C. Waddington

*The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights*, by J. V. Fesko. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014, 441 pages, \$28.00, paper.

It is a good time to live and be a student of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. The outstanding work of Chad Van Dixhoorn and associates has greatly added to our understanding of the political and religious contexts for the calling and operation of the Westminster Assembly (the “synod of London,” as it is also known). Van Dixhoorn’s high level of scholarship is beginning to filter down to the pews. John Fesko, academic dean and professor of systematic and historical theology at Westminster Seminary California, has provided the church with a fine study of our secondary standards with his *Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights*.

Fesko’s study is appropriately titled since he provides helpful and fascinating background detail, opening up for the reader broader vistas of understanding. The author does not merely provide background information of the political circumstances that gave rise to the assembly’s work (i.e., the English Civil War and the rise of antinomianism in the greater London metropolitan area), he explains the issues that mattered to the assembly divines and concepts and methods that were perhaps second nature to the divines but are no longer so for us. We think we know the standards, but Fesko sheds warm light on the chapters of the confession and the questions and answers of the catechisms. Once we have read this volume, we will not want to read the standards in an ahistorical sense ever again.

The book is made up of thirteen chapters preceded by a preface, acknowledgements, and table of abbreviations and followed by a select annotated bibliography and three indices. Unfortunately, we can only give a passing sense of the book here. In the introductory chapter (23–31) Dr. Fesko outlines the present circumstances that have given rise to the writing of this study. The author explains the importance of being familiar with the original historical context of our doctrinal standards, of reading the confession and catechisms as highly nuanced consensus documents, of emphasizing primary over secondary sources, and he explains the plan of the book. All of this is helpful to let the reader know what he is in for.

In the second chapter Fesko gives a brief but clear overview of the historical and theological setting of the assembly (33–63). As many of our readers no doubt already know, in the Reformation politics and religion were intimately and inextricably intertwined. This was still the case more than a century after the commencement of the English Reformation under Henry VIII. What may surprise us is the highly charged eschatological atmosphere of the assembly. Many thought the Reformation would usher in the end of the world. Additionally, theological pluralism was the rule of the day. The divines were widely read in these theologies and were intimately familiar with errors and heresies. Many of these are targeted without being explicitly named in the standards. Finally, the assembly is rightly

understood as a Reformed assembly that sought to be a functioning part of the larger continental Reformed community. Fesko points out that Calvin was one among a multitude of significant theological voices but by no means the only or even most important voice.

Chapters 3 through 12 cover the thirty-three chapters of the confession and the multitude of questions and answers in the two catechisms. Fesko expositis the doctrine of Scripture (65–93), God and the decrees (95–124), covenant and creation (125–167), the doctrine of Christ (169–205), justification (207–238), sanctification (239–266), the Law of God and the Christian life (267–297), the church (299–334), worship (335–362), and eschatology (363–394) all with historical sensitivity and added light that makes studying the standards seem like an exciting new adventure even for those of us who have known them for many years. The conclusion (395–397) provides a concise wrap-up of the study, briefly hitting on salient points.

Before concluding this review, I need to offer a few criticisms and observations. I need to confess up front that I do not write as an expert on the historical background of the Westminster Standards but as a minister who has subscribed to them *ex animo*. First, I make the general observation that the author builds upon the ground-breaking scholarship of Richard Muller and his school. This makes perfect sense as Muller and his associates have done a yeoman's service to the church and the academy by correcting multiple misunderstandings of the Reformed Scholastic tradition especially as it relates to the work of John Calvin. Muller has been right in challenging the so-called "Calvin versus the Calvinists" school of thought where Calvin is seen as the gold standard and all others in the Scholastic tradition as defectors from that high point.

The Westminster Assembly has been understood in that light as an egregious example of departure from Calvin at significant points. Fesko properly reminds us that Calvin was a brilliant theologian in his day, but he was one among many giants. We should not confuse the profound contemporary influence of Calvin with his having the same standing in his own day or at the time of the assembly. Point well taken. However, the author makes this point on multiple occasions. One gets the impression that Fesko is not only trying to correct a misapprehension about Calvin's standing and influence in his own day but that he is also trying to diminish Calvin's position in our day. There is a reason why Calvin is a classic. This is a theological verdict and not merely a historical one. Perhaps Calvin has had an outsized influence upon Reformed theology because he is theologically significant. On the other hand, it may simply be a matter of happenstance and what books have been translated out of Latin. Having said all this, it is undoubtedly correct that we ought to refer to ourselves as Reformed rather than Calvinistic since Calvin is one among a whole constellation of excellent and learned theologians within our heritage.

Second, Dr. Fesko offers a fascinating discussion of hypothetical universalism (187–205). It is a fact that there were members present in the assembly who held this view, and the author notes the complexity of the matter and the various views that fall under the label of hypothetical universalism. My concern is not with the details of the discussion. Muller has brought this issue to our attention as well so we are familiar with it. My concern is theological more than historical. As I have already noted, it is a fact that members of the assembly held to a variety of views that can be classified as forms of hypothetical universalism.

However, beyond doing us the favor of reminding us that at the time of the assembly hypothetical universalism was a live option, one gets the sense that there is also at work here a theological agenda. The contemporary view is too narrow perhaps. Church history hopefully involves an increasingly more precise and improved understanding of the

Scriptures and theology. In other words, should we try to turn back the clock and broaden our confessional views on this? Maybe so. Maybe not. That is a matter for exegetical, biblical, and systematic theology. Historical theology has done us the service of reminding us that at one point hypothetical universalism, at least in some of its variations, was acceptable. We can't unring the bell as they say. We know that there were pre-Nicene forms of Trinitarian theology and views of our Lord's hypostatic union that predate Chalcedon. Does that mean we want to resurrect them to offer them as legitimate alternatives to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and Chalcedonian Formula? We recognize that there is development in theology and that we need to be historically sensitive to this. Would it be right to judge earlier formulations by later standards? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that if a later development actually is an improvement and refinement and correction to earlier views, we would not want to revert to the earlier formulations. No, in the sense that we will recognize earlier formulations as defective but not necessarily erroneous or heretical.

Third, and finally, Fesko discusses the putative influence of the theology of Jonathan Edwards on the typical understanding of God's decree and the relation of God's sovereignty and human responsibility (97–99). Fesko affirms that Edwards denies contingency and secondary causality in creation which are in fact affirmed in the confession.<sup>1</sup> Fesko builds on a lecture recently given by Richard Muller at the Jonathan Edwards Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and later published in the online journal *Jonathan Edwards Studies*.<sup>2</sup> As an Edwards scholar myself, I remember listening to the Muller lecture and not being quite satisfied with its accuracy. More recently it has been demonstrated that Edwards in fact did hold to both contingency and secondary causality.<sup>3</sup> This is a minor point in the argument of the chapter, but since we are aiming for historical and theological contextual sensitivity, more work should be done in this area including a reading of a broader swath of Edwards's literary corpus.

None of the above criticisms vitiates the excellence of the book as a whole. I recommend John Fesko's work to church officers and congregants as well. Fesko's work now joins Van Dixhoorn and Letham on my bookshelf providing a historically and theologically sensitive study of the Westminster Standards.

**Jeffrey C. Waddington** is an Orthodox Presbyterian minister serving as stated supply of Knox Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the work of Scott Doherty and Michael Preciado for insights into the issue. Doherty has written an excellent as of yet unpublished analysis of Richard Muller and Paul Helm on Edwards's lack of agreement with the confession at this point. See his "Edwards Unflattened: The Rich Landscape of Causality in Jonathan Edwards' Freedom of Will: A response to Muller and Helm on Jonathan Edwards' View of Free Will." Preciado is currently working on a PhD dissertation on the subject as well.

<sup>2</sup> Richard A. Muller, "Jonathan Edwards and the Absence of Free Choice: A Parting of the Ways in the Reformed Tradition," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 1, no.1 (2012), cited in Fesko, 98n6.

<sup>3</sup> Related to this is undoubtedly Edwards's purported embrace of the doctrines of continuous creation and occasionalism. Continuous creationism is the idea that the universe is created anew every moment so that the standard distinction between creation and providence appears to be denied. Occasionalism is the view that God is the only causal agent at work in the universe. If this is so, then secondary causality is denied. These two distinct doctrines are often fused together in the secondary literature.

# Reason and Faith *by Owen Anderson*

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by Paul K. Helseth

*Reason and Faith at Early Princeton: Piety and the Knowledge of God*, by Owen Anderson. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, x + 151 pages, \$45.00 Kindle, \$67.50 paper.

*Reason and Faith in the Theology of Charles Hodge: American Common Sense Realism*, by Owen Anderson. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, xiv + 137 pages, \$42.45 Kindle, \$44.68 paper.

Owen Anderson is an accomplished philosopher with an ongoing research agenda that focuses on the religious epistemologies of those who taught at Princeton College and Princeton Theological Seminary from the time of the college's founding in 1746 to the time of the seminary's reorganization in 1929. In these volumes, which form the two halves of a single, more comprehensive argument, Anderson advances that agenda by attempting to account for what he regards as the Old Princetonians' rather tenuous relationship to the Westminster Confession's doctrine of the knowledge of God. Whereas the Old Princetonians considered themselves to be confessional and were eager to defend orthodox commitments in the theological and philosophical controversies of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, nevertheless the doctrinal integrity of their efforts was undermined, he contends, by their accommodation of epistemological assumptions that led them to conclude—contra the Confession—that “for an entire and clear knowledge” of both God and the highest good, “special revelation alone will suffice” (*RFEP*, 122).

At the heart of Anderson's analysis in both volumes is his repeated insistence that even though the Old Princetonians in fact were not committed rationalists, as many commentators would have us believe, nevertheless their doctrine of the knowledge of God was compromised by an “unnoticed” and “undeveloped” dichotomy that subverted their ability not only to respond in an orthodox fashion to the more thoughtful challenges of informed skeptics, but also to sustain an approach to education that was robustly, distinctly, and enduringly Christian (*RFEP*, 28; *RFTCH*, 48). On the one hand, the Old Princetonians affirmed “that to bring glory to God means knowing him in all that by which He makes Himself known, in all His works of creation and providence,” but on the other they insisted “that the goal of life is to praise God in heaven while experiencing the beatific vision” (*RFEP*, 28; cf. *RFTCH*, 125ff.). The unnoticed “tension” (*RFEP*, 110; *RFTCH*, e.g., 5, 39, 126) at the heart of this dichotomy was problematic, Anderson contends, because it opened the door to an otherworldly tendency that, when embraced, encouraged the Old Princetonians not only to set aside the clarity and sufficiency of God's revelation of himself “through the light of nature (reason), and his works of creation and providence” (*RFEP*, 110; cf. *RFTCH*, e.g., 6, 40, 68), but also to insist that “full and clear” (*RFEP*, 126, 134; *RFTCH*, 6, 7) knowledge of both God and the highest good is found not through the thoughtful exploration of general revelation, but in “a

direct perception of God” (*RFEP*, 32), the kind of perception that is mediated by Scripture and fully and finally realized only in the new heavens and the new earth. In short, Anderson maintains that Old Princeton’s religious epistemology was less than orthodox because it was grounded in a “truncated” (*RFEP*, 136) view of knowledge that “minimized” (*RFEP*, e.g., 20, 32, 35, 41, 110, 136) the role of natural theology in knowing God. In so doing, it allowed more thoughtful skeptics not only to retain an excuse for unbelief, but also “to co-opt the name of reason” for the purpose of advancing relentlessly secular visions of truth, goodness, and beauty (*RFEP*, 123). This explains why the distinctly Christian commitments of Princeton’s founding fathers were eventually abandoned by their institutional descendants, Anderson contends. To prevent such a tragedy from happening again in other contexts, believing academics must recover a more orthodox—and therefore a more robust—understanding of the role of reason in knowing God in this—and not in the next—world.

While there are many things to commend about Anderson’s spirited defense of the clarity and sufficiency of God’s revelation of himself in the light of nature and in his works of creation and providence, it goes without saying that a number of the more thoughtful readers of *Ordained Servant* will find themselves wondering if he has fairly represented not just the epistemological commitments of Hodge and his colleagues at Old Princeton, but even more importantly those of the tradition that Hodge and his colleagues claimed to be defending. Were the Old Princetonians really less than orthodox because they insisted that the Bible reveals God more fully and clearly than general revelation? Were they really guilty of undermining the Confession because they were persuaded that the goal of human existence is not found in knowing God “through His works” (*RFEP*, 110, 127, 131; *RFTCH*, 118, 126) in this world, but in an immediate perception of God in the world to come? Since Anderson argues forcefully that they were, it may be the case that his volumes need to be thoughtfully considered not just by those who have an enduring interest in the theology and theologians of Old Princeton Seminary, but also by those who have a general and far more basic interest in the epistemological entailments of what the Westminster Confession teaches about the relationship between general and special revelation. Indeed, if Anderson is right and Hodge and his colleagues at Old Princeton really were less than orthodox because they wavered on matters relating to natural theology, then his analysis demands a wide reading precisely because of its wide-ranging and potentially paradigm-shifting implications for all those who are eager to subscribe to the Westminster Standards.

**Paul Kjos Helseth** is professor of Christian Thought at the University of Northwestern – St. Paul, St. Paul, Minnesota.

# Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism *by Timothy Keller*

A Review Article

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

*Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, by Timothy Keller. New York: Viking, 2015, 309 pages, \$19.95.

Keller's introduction begins with a discussion of three levels of the ministry of the Word. This made me wonder what I was in for, since I do have a few problems with some aspects of Keller's ecclesiology. Level one is one-on-one, every member Word ministry. Level two includes various teaching ministries in the church. Level three is the formal matter of "public preaching" (2). Immediately after this brief section Keller expands on "The Irreplaceability of Preaching," and this is what the vast majority of the book is really about. He clearly understands that the authority inherent in preaching is offensive to modern sensibilities and wisely states:

We live in a time when many are resistant to any hint of authority in pronouncements; so the culture's allergy to truth and the great skill that is required mean the church loses its grasp on the crucial nature of preaching for the ministry of the gospel. (5–6)

I was enthusiastic about reading the book due to the promise in the subtitle, "Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism," of adding something to the homiletical conversation. I was not disappointed.

The book is divided into three parts: 1) "Serving the Word," 2) "Reaching the People," 3) "In Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power."

Keller does not pick up on Duane Litfin's distinction in first-century rhetoric between persuasion and proclamation (the latter is Paul's choice in opposition to the Corinthian church's worldly expectations), but makes it clear that the use of the rhetorical arts will only result in spiritual eloquence if that use arises "out of the preacher's almost desperate love for the gospel truth itself and the people for whom accepting the truth is a matter of life and death" (14). His plea for preaching Christ as the "main theme and substance of the Bible's message" (15) is rooted in the main pericope for Litfin's thesis, 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5. This emphasis in turn is the impetus for preaching to the "cultural heart" (18–20), by identifying idolatrous aspirations and demonstrating how all good aspirations rooted in the *imago dei* are fulfilled in Christ. Relevance is not the aim of preaching because preaching must lay "bare the listener's life foundations" (21).

Keller makes a case for both topical and expository preaching, but recommends expository preaching as the best regular practice. But he also warns us that spending too much time on a particular book in a mobile society may actually rob people of the Bible's rich variety. Thus, he advocates using shorter books from a wider variety of genres (39–41).

However, this is not the case in more rural settings where the population is far less transient than in Keller's New York City environment.

One of Keller's strongest and most helpful themes in this book is the centrality of preaching the gospel in every sermon. Chapter Two, "Preaching the Gospel Every Time," is eloquent on this topic. He makes a careful and important distinction between law and gospel, and pleads for understanding their proper relationship so as to avoid both legalism and antinomianism (48–52). Both are enemies of God and undermine God's grace and its holy purposes. "God's costly love in Jesus Christ—who fulfilled God's righteous law in his life and death—must be lifted up and grasped in order to combat the toxic untruths of our souls" (55). Keller is skilled at showing how redemptive history centered on Christ avoids moralism (61).

Chapter Three continues to unpack the theme "Preaching Christ from All of Scripture," picking up on several contemporary works of biblical theology from Motyer, Dillard and Longman, and Clowney (71). There is a lot of very helpful advice here, illustrated with many specific examples, to show how we must preach Christ from every genre, theme, figure, image, and deliverance story. The book is very helpful in describing how to develop sermons. The appendix, "Writing an Expository Message," is exemplary in this regard. Keller hearkens back to many excellent traditional sources of homiletical wisdom, such as William Perkins (*The Art of Prophesying*, 1592), John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and Robert Murray McCheyne, as well as a host of modern luminaries.

One area where Keller clearly adds to the homiletical conversation is in addressing modern urbanites. This is homiletics for contemporary urban ministry with a strong flavor of apologetics for postmodern (what Keller prefers to call "late" moderns) people. The first two chapters of Part Two address preaching Christ to the culture and the late modern mind. Keller contends that, due to the "new situation" of secularism (94), the preacher must not assume much knowledge of Christianity. While the form of the sermon is not dead, the content must change to accommodate the late modern mind (95). We must confront the world in terms that it understands. Here Keller relies on P. T. Forsyth's superb book *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (1907). Forsyth insists that the church

did not lead the world, nor echo it; she confronted it. . . . The Christian preacher is not the successor to the Greek orator, but of the Hebrew prophet. . . . The orator stirs men to [action], *the preacher invites them to be redeemed.* (96)

The early church confronted a radically secular culture through expository preaching because the Bible diagnoses human problems and needs. The preacher needs to adapt to the culture by addressing it with concepts and language that it understands as John did with his use of *logos*, "a philosophically and culturally freighted word in that society" (97).

The early Christian communicators knew the culture intimately and spoke in terms that were never incomprehensible, no matter how startling. They reframed the culture's questions, reshaped its concerns, and redirected its hopes.

The concept of contextualizing always raises concerns for Reformed preachers. Keller seeks to put our concerns to rest:

It means to resonate with yet defy the culture around you. It means to antagonize a society's idols while showing respect for its people and many of its hopes and aspirations. (99)

Paul's ministry in Athens is a model of this method. In order to implement this Keller offers six practices: 1) Use accessible or well explained vocabulary; 2) Employ respected authorities to strengthen your theses; 3) Demonstrate an understanding of doubts and objections; 4) Affirm in order to challenge baseline cultural narratives; 5) Make gospel offers that push on the culture's pressure points; 6) Call for gospel motivation. On this latter point Keller responds to the objection that he is giving too much attention to the nonbeliever by asserting: "It is a mistake to think that faithful believers in our time are not profoundly shaped by the narratives of modernity" (118). The gospel is always essential to the Christian life.

When preachers solve Christians' problems with the gospel—not by calling them to try harder but by pointing them to deeper faith in Christ's salvation—then believers are being edified and nonbelievers are hearing the gospel all at the same time. (120)

Keller comes to the heart of his subtitle in Chapter Five, "Preaching and the (Late) Modern Mind." Keller has clearly thought deeply about this topic. He understands that modernity in its late modern manifestation is not to be sharply distinguished from postmodernity, "which is less reversal of modernity than an intensification of its deepest patterns" (123). Both modernity and its later expressions have human autonomy in common.

The entire chapter is a great summary of what constitutes the late modern mind. Keller relies heavily on the works of philosopher Charles Taylor, whose monumental analysis of modernity, *A Secular Age* (2007), along with *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), and *The Malaise of Modernity* (1991), offers some profound insight.

"In order to preach to the secular person, we must resist secularity's own self-understanding" (126). Keller then analyzes the narratives of late modernity. The "rationality narrative" claims that "the natural world is the *only* reality" (129–30). The "history narrative" claims that humanity is making progress, and thus the "new is automatically better" (130). The "society narrative" encourages radical individualism in which "choice becomes the only sacred value and discrimination the only moral evil" (131). The "morality or justice narrative" believes in universal benevolence based on humanly determined norms (131–32). The "identity narrative" seeks worth in self-created and self-evaluated identity (132–33).

The rest of the chapter explains how to engage the "sovereign self" in each of these narratives (133–56). The question of identity must be altered to ask not "who am I?" but "whose am I?" (138). The idea of unbridled freedom leads to raw selfishness, but is in itself an illusion (143). The aspiration of love is contrary to this secular sacred notion and makes marriage and all human relations impossible (145). Rebellion against God is the ultimate bondage, and only Jesus Christ can liberate us from such bondage and sin itself (145).

Modernity's quest for social justice should be engaged with a question: if we cannot ground morality in some external, objective source, why should we seek to reform the world? (146). Three problems arise in the areas of: moral motivation, obligation, and foundation. Unlike the Christian who is motivated by love for God and neighbor, the secularist is motivated by feelings of "satisfaction and superiority" and anger (147). While there are

clearly moral nonbelievers, locating moral obligation without God is impossible (148–49). Which brings Keller to the third problem of asserting moral standards without reason. What Taylor calls “the extraordinary inarticulacy . . . of modern culture” (150) is simply suppression of the source of many of our culture’s better moral instincts: Christianity (151).

Keller engages the history and rationality narratives in terms of “science as the secular hope” (153). The presence of unfounded optimism in the progress of science and technology together with numerous dystopian cultural expressions show that the world is in desperate need of the hope that only the resurrection can offer (154).

The final chapter in this section deals with preaching to the heart. Keller relies on a biblical understanding of the heart that thinks and wills, “fundamentally, the heart puts its trust in things” (158). He launches into several sections based on Jonathan Edwards’s understanding of the affections. Rejecting the opposition of head and heart, Keller opts for “logic on fire” (163, 165). He goes on to show preachers *how* to preach to the heart: affectionately, imaginatively, wondrously, memorably, Christocentrically, and practically.

Finally, Keller suggests tools for the preacher to stay fresh in his preaching. First, converse with a diverse group of people so that you are challenged to read beyond those with whom you agree (180–82). Second, consider the variety of possible hearers as exemplified in the parable of the soils in Mark 4 (182–83). Here Keller offers an invaluable extended footnote (183n20, which should have been placed in the text in my opinion). Third, “weave application throughout the sermon” (183–85). Fourth, use variety in application, asking direct questions, suggesting tests for self-examination, and using a biblical variety of applications (185–86). Fifth, “be emotionally aware” by taking advantage of teachable moments and being “affectionate as well as forceful” (187).

The final part of the book has only one chapter, and it discusses the importance of the presence of the Spirit in preaching. This is an excellent corrective in the “age of technique” (195). Keller also focuses on the importance of the preacher’s own spiritual life, locating it in terms of three texts: the biblical text, the context of the worshippers, and the subtext of his own heart (200). He analyzes the latter in terms of several categories of preacher motivation, concluding with the only one that should count: the wonder of Christ. “[T]he temptation will be to let the pulpit drive you to the Word, but instead you must let the Word drive you to the pulpit. Prepare the preacher more than you prepare the sermon” (205).

Keller has been dealing with what he calls “late modern” people in the intensely secular urban environment of New York City for a quarter of a century. He has sought to answer the question: How do we engage late moderns with the gospel without compromising Scripture? He points to Paul’s approach in Athens, where he notices that they have a religious instinct, but it is misdirected (Acts 17:22–31). He quotes the Greek philosophers Epimenides and Aratus who say, “In him we live and move and have our being,” and “For we are indeed his offspring.” (Acts 17:28). He proposes the pattern of looking for the reflection of God’s image in the idolater’s thinking, then showing how Christianity challenges that thinking, and finally bringing the good news of the gospel as the perfect answer. We might summarize this so: Yes / No / Good News.

Here is a simple example: You believe that humanity can be perfected with artificial intelligence and/or robotics. I could agree with you that, yes, humanity is imperfect and in need of perfecting. However, the Bible shows that your solution will fail, since it is not according to the image of God. Robots at best cannot replace humans and will only reflect our imperfections. We need a model of true humanity from outside of the human condition.

You fail to take into account that the historic fall of mankind in Adam and Eve is the reason for our imperfection. Jesus Christ is the perfect model of a new humanity. The good news is that Jesus Christ came to save us from our imperfection. His substitutionary death pleases our perfect Creator and thus, when we turn from our sins, our imperfections, and trust Christ's righteous substitutionary sacrifice, which enables us to have a living relationship with him, we can know true perfection.

This book is full of enormously helpful advice. A recent book critiquing Keller's theology has contended that there is a lack of the doctrine of sin as lawlessness that offends God in Keller's published works.<sup>1</sup> Iain Campbell maintains that Keller's use of idolatry as the root of all sin is inadequate because idolatry is only one way in which sin is expressed. I would contend that Keller is correct when he says that idolatry is the root of all sin. I would also insist that we preach about specific sins and show how they relate to idolatry. I cannot comment on what Keller says on this topic in his other works. But, at least in this book, *Preaching*, while the offense that idolatry, and the specific sins that emanate from it, cause God, is not explicitly mentioned, Keller does speak of the importance of the "examination of inner motivations and desires" (134); putting off the old self and putting on the new self in Christ (139); and quotes D. A. Carson favorably when he says:

The ultimate bondage is . . . rebellion against the God who has made us. The despotic master is not Caesar, but shameful self-centeredness, an evil and enslaving devotion to created things at the expense of worship of the creator. (145)

Keller goes on to refer to biblical passages that deal with freedom from sin. Elsewhere Keller emphasizes the moral importance of Judgment Day "when all wrongs will be put right" (152). Finally Keller points to Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" to show that our good works cannot keep us out of hell (170).

I have one major formatting complaint: there are seventy pages of end notes. This is excessive, especially when they are located so inaccessibly—at the end and without page ranges. At least some of this material should have been part of the main text, but at least making it accessible at the bottom of each page would help immensely. To make matters worse, there is no index, so Keller's numerous references, and extended bibliographical notes, lie buried in the end notes. Penguin should know better.

There are many traditional emphases in this book, such as preaching to the heart and the Holy Spirit in preaching. But they are all aimed at ministry to late modern urbanites. Keller emphasizes faithfulness to the Word, preaching Christ from all of Scripture, and intelligent compassion for urban late modern people. This does not mean that the book will not be helpful to those in smaller rural and suburban settings, since the electronic media have spread the secular mindset everywhere.

One need not agree with Keller at every point either here or in his other books to benefit greatly from this book. I highly recommend it.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Iain D. Campbell and William M. Schweitzer, *Engaging with Keller: Thinking through the Theology of an Influential Evangelical* (Welwyn Garden City, UK: Evangelical Press, 2013).

# Servant Poetry

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## Old and New Year Ditties

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

2

Watch with me, men, women, and children dear,  
You whom I love, for whom I hope and fear,  
Watch with me this last vigil of the year.  
Some hug their business, some their pleasure-scheme;  
Some seize the vacant hour to sleep or dream;  
Heart locked in heart some kneel and watch apart.

Watch with me blessèd spirits, who delight  
All through the holy night to walk in white,  
Or take your ease after the long-drawn fight.  
I know not if they watch with me: I know  
They count this eve of resurrection slow,  
And cry, “How long?” with urgent utterance strong.

Watch with me Jesus, in my loneliness:  
Though others say me nay, yet say Thou yes;  
Though others pass me by, stop Thou to bless.  
Yea, Thou dost stop with me this vigil night;  
To-night of pain, to-morrow of delight:  
I, Love, am Thine; Thou, Lord my God, art mine.

*31 December 1858*