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From the Editor

Confronted daily with the growing presence of Islam in the Western world, it is incumbent upon Christians to understand Islam in all its complexity through serious study of accurate sources. As John Muether reminds us in the lead article this month, “The Reformed Faith and the Challenge of Islam,” unless we read more widely our view of Islam will be formed by the militant Muslims constantly in the news. Muether’s goal is to “supplement Dr. Estelle’s helpful article [“How Should the Reformed Church Respond to Islam?” published in *Ordained Servant* in 2008] by pointing out some strategies that are popular but may be counterproductive and even a hindrance to faithful Christian witness to the Muslim world.” Muether demonstrates the importance of the Reformed faith in missions to Islam by quoting missionary and Princeton Theological Seminary professor Samuel Zwemer (1867–1952), “only the Reformed faith can witness effectively to Islam.”

Bryan Estelle reviews two important new books on Islam: Mindy Belz, *They Say We Are Infidels* and Darío Fernández-Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise*. Belz presents a heart-rending, first-hand picture of the situation of Christians in Iraq and Syria. Fernández-Morera’s primary goal is to

debunk the myth that has arisen in the modern world that the Muslim world in Medieval Spain, . . . was a space where Jews (mostly Sephardic), Christians, and Muslims lived in mutual tolerance and peaceful multiculturalism under Islamic rule.

Danny Olinger presents the final chapter of his biography of Geerhardus Vos, “Appreciation, Legacy, and Posthumous Publications.” This work should bring a new appreciation for the breadth and depth of Vos’s biblical theology, as he rescued the discipline from the hands of those who did not respect the inspiration of Scripture, and transformed it into a distinctly Reformed enterprise. A print edition is planned.

Jeffrey Waddington reviews a long-awaited volume, *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, edited by Harry S. Stout. It contains over 400 entrees written by over 175 contributors.

Finally, our poem this month is by one of the founders and first governors of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Harvard College. Thomas Dudley (1576–1653) was a Puritan, and his daughter was the first American poet of note, Anne Bradstreet.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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

Servant Witness

The Reformed Faith and the Challenge of Islam

by John Muether

When the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was founded in 1936, there were few Islamic mosques in America. The first one was established only 21 years earlier in Biddeford, Maine. A century later, there are now over two thousand. One of the newest opened last fall just north of Orlando, Florida. The Masjid Al-Hayy is a 43,000-square-foot domed building with a 130-foot-tall minaret. The \$16 million building includes three million pounds of white marble from Greece. Its elaborately carved doors are made from Honduran mahogany, and Italian mosaic tiles grace the hallways. Thick silk carpets accommodate worshipers who kneel below custom-made chandeliers from Egypt in the prayer room.¹

Ambitious construction plans are necessary to accommodate the sky-rocketing growth of Muslims in America, from 200,000 in 1950 to 3.5 million today (and more than doubling since 9/11). It will double again, by 2050, when it will become the second largest religion in the United States, surpassing Judaism. Orthodox Presbyterian ministers today serve in a very different world from the denomination's founders, and the very public face of American Islam is a reminder that it is not just a subject for foreign missionaries anymore. Orthodox Presbyterian pastors, elders, and deacons need to reckon with a basic understanding of Islamic faith and practice to minister effectively in America today. Ten years ago in the pages of *Ordained Servant*, Dr. Bryan Estelle suggested ways in which the OPC should respond to the challenge of Islam.² I wish to supplement Dr. Estelle's helpful article by pointing out some strategies that are popular but may be counterproductive and even a hindrance to faithful Christian witness to the Muslim world.

While many Christians perceive Islam as a relatively recent threat to the Christian West, this is a great misunderstanding. If the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I prompted a brief dormancy in Islam's public face, the threat to the West was well established long before. The Reformers of the sixteenth century, for example, were keenly aware of the threat of the Turks on the eastern border of Europe. Protestants and Catholics, Popes and Emperors alike, were nervously looking at the eastern border of Europe, where Turks were making menacing threats. Even after the Turks were repelled at the gates of Vienna in 1529 the threat was not over. In 1541 Luther wrote his "Appeal for Prayer against the Turks," in which he expressed the fear of imminent invasion by the

¹ Susan Jacobson. "New Mosque Highlights Growth of Muslim Community in Central Florida," *Orlando Sentinel*, November 10, 2017, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/religion/religion-world/os-mosque-sanford-masjid-al-hajj-20171031-story.html>.

² Bryan D. Estelle, "How Should the Reformed Church Respond to Islam?" *Ordained Servant* 17 (2008): 48-54, http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=84&issue_id=27.

Turks. This was a just chastisement of God for the sins of the German people, he wrote in a tone that was grim and gloomy, even while he regarded it as his pastoral duty to prepare Germans for a likely invasion.

To ignore centuries of Christian reflection on Islam is not only an exercise in historical myopia; more seriously, it is to cut ourselves off from the wisdom and insight of voices in our Reformed past. Few today have studied the Islamic world in a more sustained and systematic way than Samuel Zwemer (1867–1952). Zwemer was a pioneering Reformed missionary to Arabia and Egypt for twenty-eight years and later Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary.³ He earned the nickname, “Apostle to Islam” for his devotion for carrying the gospel of Christ to the Muslim world, even though his labors witnessed only a small handful of converts to Christ. His devotion to the study of Islam included his thirty-five-year tenure as editor of *The Muslim World*. Zwemer urged that Christian workers devote themselves to the study of Islam:

Ignorance of the Koran, the traditions, the life of Mohammed, the Moslem conception of Christ, social beliefs and prejudices of Mohammedans, which are the result of their religion— ignorance of these is the chief difficulty in work for Moslems.”⁴ Toward the end of his life, Zwemer was fond of telling students that “only the Reformed faith can witness effectively to Islam.”⁵

Acknowledging the Diverse Expressions of Islam

One popular misconception today is to imagine Islam as a unified and monolithic religion. The Islamic world is remarkably diverse. How can diversity not characterize a religion of 1.6 billion adherents? For comparison’s sake, consider this diverse list of religious groups:

- Roman Catholics
- Unitarians
- Charismatics
- Seventh Day Adventists
- Mormons
- Jehovah’s Witnesses
- Mainline Protestants
- Confessional Presbyterians

What do these all have in common? Precious little, we might imagine. But they share at least this much: all of them are lumped together as “Christian” by demographers of world religions. They and many others comprise the 2.1 billion who are numbered among

³ Samuel M. Zwemer, *Islam and the Cross: Selections from “the Apostle to Islam,”* ed. Roger S. Greenway (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002).

⁴ Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ: an Essay on the Life, Character, and Teachings of Jesus Christ According to the Koran and Orthodox Tradition* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1912), 118.

⁵ I have never found this quote in print, but I was told this by John Hesselink, former President of Western Theological Seminary (Holland, MI), who remembered Zwemer saying this frequently in addresses to college groups.

the total world population of Christians. We might object to such broad-brush use of the term Christian; its vague description seems hardly useful.

But if we insist on distinguishing ourselves from others who claim the term Christian, we owe the same courtesy to the Muslim world. Most of us are at least aware of the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam. The two sects diverged soon after the death of Prophet Muhammad over who should succeed him. But that does not begin to account for the diversity in Islam. Muslims express their faith in many ways, including:

- Folk Islam
- Orthodox Islam
- Secular Muslims
- Ambivalent Muslims
- Mystics
- Fundamentalists
- Militant Fundamentalists

The last category consists of less than 7% of the world-wide Islamic population by informed estimates, but most Western Christians struggle to imagine any other form of Islam. Diversity of contemporary Islamic faith and practice serves to warn us of the danger of approaching this subject in simplistic or reductionistic terms. It is vital that we neither romanticize nor demonize the challenge of Islam. Islam is not inherently peaceful, and Islam is not inherently violent. Rather, Islam is complex in its diversity of expressions, and Christians must not let radical Islam radicalize their response.

How then ought we to regard the peaceful overtures from many quarters of the Muslim world? Samuel Zwemer did not hesitate to read these as signs of the work of the Holy Spirit among Muslims, and he attributed this to the Reformed doctrine of common grace:

Whatever be the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Islam, we know that for those in contact with Islam, as missionaries, every virtue these [pious Muslims] possess, every victory won, every thought of holiness, every deed of kindness, every ministry of love, is his alone. It is God's common grace that enabled them, as even Calvin taught.⁶

Here Zwemer demonstrates that Calvinism can account for the diversity of Islam, both in its peaceful and violent expressions.

Abrogation: Muslim and Christian

When my students at Reformed Theological Seminary read sections of the Qur'an, they are surprised at several unusual features. Sometimes they encounter beautiful sections of sublime poetry such as the following:

⁶ Zwemer, *Islam and the Cross*, 32.

God: there is no god but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. All that is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him. Who is there that can intercede with Him except by His leave? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, but they do not comprehend any of His knowledge except what He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth; it does not weary Him to preserve them both. He is the Most High, the Tremendous. (2:255)

If that vaguely resembles the Psalms, it is not coincidental. Islam considers the Torah, the Psalms, and parts of the Gospels as revelations from Allah. This is what Zwemer described as “borrowed elements” in the Qur’an. It is comprised of Jewish, Christian, and pagan sources (although the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament are regarded by Muslims as defective and corrupt versions of revelation).

There are parts of the Qur’an that seem to portray Muslims as the champions of religious liberty. “There is no compulsion in religion,” we read in 2:256. On the other hand, there are so-called “sword verses” that deny any form of tolerance:

Believers, those who ascribe partners to God [i.e., Trinitarians] are truly unclean: do not let them come near the Sacred Mosque after this year. If you are afraid you may become poor, bear in mind that God will enrich you out of His bounty if He pleases: God is all knowing and wise. Fight those of the People of the Book who do not truly believe in God and the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, who do not obey the rule of justice, until they pay the tax and agree to submit. (9:29)

So which is it: does the Qur’an teach a peaceful or violent encounter between Muslims and other “People of the Book?” How can these passages be reconciled? Muslims appeal to the doctrine of “abrogation” to explain many of these apparent contradictions. Simply put, some of Allah’s commands are marked for expiration; that is, later revelation replaces earlier revelation. “Any revelation We cause to be superseded or forgotten, We replace with something better or similar” (2:106). Similarly, “When we substitute one revelation for another—and God knows best what He reveals—they say, ‘You are just making it up,’ but most of them have no knowledge” (16:101).⁷

Christians may dismiss the principle of abrogation as an awkward feature of the Qur’an that reveals its patchwork, human origins. But is there a similar hermeneutic of abrogation from Christians voices? Dispensationalism can sound a very similar note: God had a plan for Israel, the rejection of which led to his offering a “Plan B” to the Gentiles. Sometimes this goes by the term “replacement theology,” and it is a reading of Scripture that plays right into the Muslim doctrine of abrogation.

Consider how Muslims regard the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, where Jesus describes morning, noonday, and evening laborers, and draws the conclusion that “the last will be first, and the first last.” Muslim interpretation points to Judaism as the

⁷ Here as in other parts of the Qur’an Allah speaks to Muhammad in the first person plural. Readers should not conclude that this is an implicit expression of either Trinitarianism or polytheism. Rather, Allah is so high and exalted that the singular voice cannot always capture his magnificence.

morning laborers, the apostles of Christ the noonday laborers, and Muslims as the evening laborers, the last who are now first. Similarly, when Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the hour was approaching when God will be worshiped “neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem” (John 4:21), Muslims insist that he was really demonstrating that Allah’s true followers would worship him in Mecca.

In other words, if Plan B is God’s response to Jewish stubbornness and rebellion, is it too much of a stretch to conceive of Islam as Plan C? A dispensational hermeneutic of discontinuity cannot display to the Muslims the beauty of Scripture in its unfolding of redemptive history. It is essential for Christian apologetics to the Muslim world to advance the hermeneutic of promise and fulfillment. The living and true God is a covenant-keeping God. He does not change his mind; rather, he keeps his promises. There is one plan of salvation and one people of God. The work of Christ is portrayed by the patriarchs and predicted by the prophets, and all of God’s promises to his people are fulfilled in Christ.

The Folly of the “Outsider Movement”

Can converts to Christ in Muslim-dominated cultures remain in their Muslim world and even maintain many of the practices of Islam? A growing trend in Christian missions today encourages Muslim converts to do just that. This is known as the insider movement: Muslim converts to Christ are “completed Muslims” (just as Messianic Jews are “completed Jews”), who should find it possible to remain in their Muslim culture. Some missiologists go so far as to claim that such converts can still accept Muhammad as their prophet. After all, he led them to the one true God and he spoke highly of Jesus in the Qur’an.

We dare not make light of the sacrifices required of Muslims in coming to Christ. Converts to Christ in Muslim majority countries can experience the demand to “let goods and kindred go” in painful ways that Western Christians can barely imagine. But many Muslim background believers know that they cannot have Christ in any other way: a Christianity that does not offend is not a gospel that will impact the Muslim world.

This view might be more accurately described as the *outsider* movement, because it consigns Muslim converts to a Christian life without the church, *outside* of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation (WCF 25.2). By withholding from converts the privilege of numbering among the people of God, in fellowship with God and his people, the Christian missions are keeping from them the joy of communion of saints and the means of God’s appointment for their growth in grace.

The objection may be raised: Isn’t the effort to contextualize simply a way to follow Paul’s command and be “as Muslims to the Muslims?” Here we can turn again to Zwemer, who anticipated this argument a century ago. “We must become as Moslems to the Moslem if we would gain them for Christ,” he insisted. But then he went on to add: “We must do this in the Pauline sense, *without compromise*, but with self-sacrificing sympathy and unselfish love” (emphasis added).⁸

Moreover, upon closer inspection, some of these efforts at contextualization do not involve being Muslims to the Muslims but being evangelicals to the Muslims. That is, they display more evangelical biases than sensitivities to the Muslim community.

⁸ Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ*, 118.

Specifically, what is at work here is a low view of the church and a disregard for its shepherding and discipline in the Christian life that is all too common among contemporary evangelicalism.⁹

Disguising the Trinity

The concept of the Trinity is an abomination to Islam, and the Qur'an is unrelenting in its condemnation of this heresy, in passages such as this:

People of the Book, do not go to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His word, directed to Mary, a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not speak of a 'Trinity'—God is only one God, He is far above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him. (4:170-71)

In light of these texts, should we present Christ to Muslims in a more accessible way than to call him the “Son of God”? Should we describe the Christian Godhead in more subtle ways that will prompt less offense to the radical monotheism of Muslims? Some Bible translators are doing just that, and here are a few examples.

- Matt. 28:19 – “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” becomes “in the name of God and his Messiah and the Holy Spirit.”
- Luke 1:32, 35 – “Son of the Most High” and “Son of God” become “the awaited Christ.”
- Luke 4:3, 9 – “the Son of God” becomes “the Messiah of God.”
- Luke 6:36 – “your Father is merciful” becomes “God is merciful.”
- Luke 11:2 – “Father” in the Lord’s Prayer becomes “Our loving heavenly Lord.”

Samuel Zwemer refused to disguise the Trinitarian character of the Christian faith:

Islam is proud to write on its banner, “the Unity of God;” but it is, after all, a banner to the Unknown God. Christianity enters every land under the standard of the Holy Trinity—the Godhead of Revelation. These two banners represent two armies. There is no peace between them. No parliament of religions can reconcile such fundamental and deep-rooted differences. We must conquer or be vanquished. In its origin, history, present attitude, and by the very first article of its brief creed, Islam is anti-Christian.¹⁰

Here again, the call to contextualization is robbing missions of its greatest weapon to reach Muslims, the fullness of God’s love for them as centered in the Trinity. Robert

⁹ A very helpful critique of the Insider Movement is the 2014 study report of the PCA Ad Interim Study Committee on Insider Movements (SCIM), *A Call to Faithful Witness, Part 2: Theology, Gospel Mission, and Insider Movements*, http://pcahistory.org/pca/scim02_2014.pdf.

¹⁰ Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God: An Essay on the Character and Attributes of Allah According to the Koran and Orthodox Tradition* (New York: Young People’s Missionary Movement, 1905), 119–20.

Letham explains: “The Trinity is a crucial element in outreach to Muslim people. It is often avoided because objections immediately arise. However, the implications of the Islamic view of Allah are far-reaching.” At its heart, Letham explains, love is something a person has for another person. He concludes: “Only a God who is triune can be personal. Only the Holy Trinity can love. Human love cannot possibly reflect the nature of God unless God is a Trinity of persons in union and communion.”¹¹ Muslims cannot experience the love of Allah, nor can they love Allah in return; all they can offer is their submission to Allah’s will. When the stakes are this high, dare we strip the Bible of its testimony to the triune God?¹²

Conclusion

There are other examples of where the Reformed faith serves the cause of Muslim evangelism most effectively. Zwemer has argued that the doctrine of total depravity addresses the functional Pelagianism in the Islamic doctrine of sin, and predestination offers an alternative to Islamic fatalism. This is not to claim that Reformed witnesses are alone wise in their approach to Muslim apologetics and evangelism. But we must not imagine that this is a “new threat” that demands new approaches, and we cannot abandon the rich resources of our tradition in the interest of theological trends that promise greater efficiency or claim to reduce the offense of the gospel.

Reflecting on Paul’s commendation of the “work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope” of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:3), Zwemer wrote: “How accurately these three short phrases depict the real task of carrying the good news to Muslims.”¹³ “For thirteen long centuries,” he continued (and which we must now change to fourteen centuries),

whether by neglect or by the pioneer adventure of loyal hearts, this part of the non-Christian world has tested the faith of Christendom as by fire. It has demanded a measure of love utterly impossible except to those who had learned from Christ to love their enemies and his; and again and again Islam has deferred the fruition of hope and left for those who waited on and on, as their only anchor, the patience of unanswered prayer.¹⁴

As we engage with our growing number of Muslim neighbors in North America, the Reformed faith equips us to wait on the patience of God even as we anticipate the coming of his kingdom. Zwemer’s calls to faith, love, and hope in witness to the Islamic world find vivid expression in this prayer by the Apostle of Islam:

¹¹ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 443–44.

¹² Here again I would commend the PCA Study Committee on Insider Movements, in its 2012 report, *A Call to Faithful Witness, Part 1: Like Father, Like Son: Divine Familial Language in Bible Translation*, http://pcahistory.org/pca/scim01_2012.pdf.

¹³ Zwemer, *Islam and the Cross*, 64.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who has made of one blood all nations and has promised that many shall come from the East and sit down with Abraham in your kingdom: We pray for your prodigal children in Muslim lands who are still afar off, that they may be brought near by the blood of Christ. Look upon them in pity, because they are ignorant of your truth.

Take away pride of intellect and blindness of heart, and reveal to them the surpassing beauty and power of your Son Jesus Christ. Convince them of their sin in rejecting the atonement of the only Savior. Give moral courage to those who love you, that they may boldly confess your name.

Hasten the day of religious freedom in Turkey, Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and North Africa. Send forth reapers where the harvest is ripe, and faithful plowmen to break furrows in lands still neglected. May the tribes of Africa and Malaysia not fall prey to Islam but be won for Christ. Bless the ministry of healing in every hospital, and the ministry of love at every church and mission. May all Muslim children in mission schools be led to Christ and accept him as their personal Savior.

Strengthen converts, restore backsliders, and give all those who labor among Muslims the tenderness of Christ, so that bruised reeds may become pillars of his church, and smoking flaxwicks burning and shining lights. Make bare your arm, O God, and show your power. All our expectation is from you.

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son in the Muslim world, and fulfill through him the prayer of Abraham your friend, "O, that Ishmael might live before thee." For Jesus' sake. Amen.¹⁵

John R. Muether serves as a ruling elder at Reformation Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Oviedo, Florida, library director at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, and historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Among the courses he teaches at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando is *Christian Encounter with Islam*.

¹⁵ Ibid., 153–54.

ServantHistory

Geerhardus Vos: Appreciation, Legacy, and Posthumous Publications

by Danny E. Olinger

“He was probably the best exegete Princeton ever had,” Benjamin B. Warfield once told Louis Berkhof about his friend and colleague Geerhardus Vos.¹ And yet when *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* printed a two-page memorial for Vos in the winter of 1950, the *Bulletin* misspelled his first name as “Gerhardus” in the title of the memorial.² The correct spelling “Geerhardus” then appeared in the opening word of the lead paragraph of the article.

Despite the ominous start to the memorial, it noted Vos’s opposition to the Presbyterian Church’s revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith and his distinct contributions in the field of biblical theology. “In the special field of Biblical Theology, Dr. Vos emphasized process and progress within the Bible—but it was a process which had objective, and not merely subjective, religious validity.”³ This meant that the Bible was not primarily a story of human progress and discovery in religion. Rather, Vos believed that “God was the active agent who revealed Himself in Biblical events and in the Biblical interpretation of these events.”⁴

Recalling the events that surrounded the reorganization of Princeton Seminary in 1929, the memorial stated that “in matters of theological and religious principles Dr. Vos was unyielding in conviction, but charitable in spirit.”⁵ Vos “had, both in the home and in the classroom, a refreshing, at times almost an irrepressible, sense of humor which was often whimsical and always kindly.”⁶ Even so, Vos “was one of the most learned and one of the most devout in Princeton Seminary’s long line of teachers.”⁷

The memorial concluded with lines of poetry that Vos had written about the resurrection hope set before believers at their death because of Christ’s resurrection.

Our Easter should have flowers

¹ Letter, Louis Berkhof to Ned B. Stonehouse, December 21, 1954. Archives of Westminster Theological Seminary.

² “Gerhardus Vos, PH. D., D.D.,” Faculty Memorial Minutes, *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, no. 3 (Winter 1950): 44–46.

³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* Although the memorial appeared without an author listed, the copy used for publication, located in the Geerhardus Vos Special Collection at Princeton Seminary, indicates that Princeton Seminary church history professor Lefferts A. Loetscher was the author. Loetscher was uniquely qualified to write about Vos. The son of Frederick W. Loetscher, professor of homiletics and church history at Princeton Seminary from 1910–1945, Lefferts grew up in the neighboring house and was a playmate with the Vos children. With Johannes Vos as a classmate, he attended Princeton High School, Princeton University, and Princeton Seminary. His observations about Vos’s manner at home and in the classroom, were not mere niceties, but the testimony of someone who had spent his formative years in the presence of Vos.

⁷ *Ibid.*

From fields where nothing dies,
Transplanted from the life-streams
Of God's new paradise.
Thou sayest: this were a wonder
Such as no memory knows;
Was it a lesser wonder
That Christ from Hades rose?

Before and after Vos's thirty-nine year stay at Princeton, he lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was well known in Dutch Reformed circles. Hope College professor Nicholas Steffens shared his judgment of Vos with Abraham Kuyper in 1891. He said, "I agree, he is not a leader in public affairs, but he is a scrupulous scholar and a meticulous worker. And there is nothing to be said against his principles. I love him."⁸

Jacob Vanden Bosch knew Vos during the period when Steffens wrote Kuyper. Vanden Bosch recalled that such was Vos's reputation among churchgoers that every seat was filled to hear him preach. Vanden Bosch himself came away "impressed with the prayers which to me were tender and beautiful rather than his sermons which were too profound for my young mind."⁹

Vanden Bosch predicted that no biographer was likely to do justice in writing about Vos. "Every account of him is sure to omit some less outstanding trait or to stress it out of its correct proportions."¹⁰ Part of the complexity was Vos's modest nature. He preferred the quiet of his study and never sought public applause. His inner life was kept a closed domain and curiosity mongers were repelled. But, when Vos was with others, he was unfailingly courteous and left a lasting impression. "One could not be in the presence of Dr. Vos and converse with him without being impressed with his learning, his incisive thinking, and his subtlety of mind."¹¹

Vanden Bosch acknowledged that, while many in Grand Rapids lamented the loss of Vos to Princeton in 1893, Vos at Princeton had influenced Christendom in a greater fashion than he could have if he had remained. "In a world in which theological scholarship was increasingly dominated by the forces of unbelief and of liberalism Dr. Vos was in his gentle way a hero of faith."¹²

Westminster Seminary

Still, it would not be at Princeton or Grand Rapids, but at J. Gresham Machen's Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia where Vos's legacy would grow. Cornelius Van Til in apologetics and systematic theology (1929–1976), John Murray in systematic theology and biblical theology (1930–1966), and Ned Stonehouse in New Testament theology and biblical theology (1929–1962) each expressed a deep appreciation for Vos.¹³

⁸ Letter, Nicholas Steffens to Abraham Kuyper, January 25, 1891, in George Harinck, "The Poetry of Theologian Geerhardus Vos," in *Dutch-American Arts and Letters in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert P. Swierenga, Jacob E. Nyenhuis, and Nella Kennedy (Holland, MI: Van Raalte, 2008), 74.

⁹ Jacob G. Vanden Bosch, "Geerhardus Vos," in *Reformed Journal* 4, no. 10 (November 1954): 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14.

¹³ John Frame writes, "Many Westminster professors also advocated the 'biblical theology' of Geerhardus Vos, a Princeton professor who was too much neglected during his years at Princeton." John M. Frame,

Van Til biographer John Muether argues that when Van Til officiated Vos's burial service on August 17, 1949, in Roaring Branch, Pennsylvania, the torch was passed from Vos to Van Til with respect to defending the self-attesting Christ of Scripture. Muether states, "Van Til's goal was to preserve Vos's memory as much as that of Machen."¹⁴

According to Muether, Vos stood behind Van Til's rejection of Kant's autonomous interpreter of reality and his insistence that revelation was required for the human mind to interpret reality. "Vos taught that humanity, as the image bearer of God in covenant with God, was always subject to God's revelation. Taking his cue from Vos, Van Til argued that there was no human knowledge that was not revelational."¹⁵ Muether concludes:

It may not be too great a stretch to imagine, therefore, that Vos provided Van Til with the tools to comprehend not only redemptive history but also the story of Western philosophy. In neither soteriology nor epistemology is neutrality possible.¹⁶

Van Til also shared Vos's doctrine of the spirituality of the church and an amillennial eschatology. Muether observes:

Van Til wrote little about millennialism because he regarded the matter as settled. The eschatological focus of Geerhardus Vos, implicit in much of Van Til's work, pointed to a covenant relationship with God, a story of life that was hid in Christ in the heavenlies, not seeking cultural advancement in the present evil age.¹⁷

In 1967 Charles McIlhenny, then a student at Moody Bible Institute, wrote Van Til to ask about his eschatological views. Van Til replied, "I am of the opinion that careful exegesis favors the amillennial position." He went on to recommend Vos's *The Pauline Eschatology*, adding, "I really do not see how I can say anything that has not already been said many times over in defense of amillennialism."¹⁸

Richard Gaffin Jr. states that Van Til was "not only knowledgeable in but thoroughly committed to the kind of biblical theology fathered by his Princeton Seminary professor and friend, Geerhardus Vos."¹⁹ John Frame declares, "Many critics are unaware of the fact that Van Til's favorite professor at Princeton was Geerhardus Vos, the brilliant biblical theologian. The influence of Vos upon Van Til is profound, though rarely seen on the surface of Van Til's writings."²⁰ William Dennison believes that "as long as Van Til's students fail to wrestle with Vos's influence upon this great Reformed apologist, they will never comprehend fully the depth and uniqueness of the person of Christ in Van Til's entire

"Preface," *Redeeming the Life of the Mind: Essays in Honor of Vern Poythress*, ed. John M. Frame, Wayne Grudem, John J. Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 13.

¹⁴ John Muether, *Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008): 131.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁸ Letter, Cornelius Van Til to Charles McIlhenny, February 24, 1967. Archives of Westminster Theological Seminary. McIlhenny would become ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and serve as pastor of First Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Francisco from 1974 to 2005.

¹⁹ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor 2:6-16," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57, no. 1 (1995): 103.

²⁰ John Frame, *Van Til: The Theologian* (Chattanooga, TN: Pilgrim, 1976), 27.

apologetic system.”²¹ His brother Charles Dennison argued that, “because of Van Til’s great dependence upon Vos, Van Til never lost sight of the eschatological end to which, we, as God’s creatures, were pressing.”²² Charles Dennison also contended that Vos’s biblical theology “tremendously influenced” Van Til’s thought through a biblical philosophy of history.²³

But, it was not just Van Til who promoted Vos at Westminster. Murray’s teaching also showed the influence of Vos’s biblical theology, and he did not hide his admiration of Vos.²⁴ When Banner of Truth reprinted Vos’s *Biblical Theology* in 1974, Murray contributed to the promotion of the book. He said, “Dr. Vos is, in my judgment, the most penetrating exegete it has been my privilege to know, and I believe, the most incisive exegete that has appeared in the English-speaking world in this century.”²⁵

Murray biographer Ian Murray surmised that it was probably Vos’s influence upon Murray that instilled in him the conviction that doctrine must be arrived at through the examination of the Scriptures in the original languages.²⁶ Lawrence Eyres, a student under Murray at Westminster, said:

I believe that it was in my class of 1938 that biblical theology first became a required course in Westminster’s curriculum. Murray leaned heavily on Geerhardus Vos, but the biblical theological method was part and parcel of his thinking from the very beginning.²⁷

Clowney explained the connection between Vos and Murray and Murray’s teaching at Westminster.

Before Geerhardus Vos at Princeton Theological Seminary brought into American Calvinism the history of redemption and of revelation, classical Reformed theology used separate proof-texts to establish biblical doctrines. John Murray at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, however, had studied under Vos at Princeton. Murray taught a course in biblical theology. He proceeded through the periods of the history of redemption: creation to fall; fall to flood; flood to the call of Abraham; Abraham to

²¹ William D. Dennison, “A Review of Greg Bahnsen’s *Van Til’s Apologetic*,” in William D. Dennison’s *In Defense of the Eschaton*, ed. James D. Baird (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 158.

²² “An Interview with Charles G. Dennison,” in *History for a Pilgrim People*, ed. Danny E. Olinger and David K. Thompson (Willow Grove, PA: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church), 218.

²³ *Ibid.*, 217. Muether and William Dennison make the same point as Charles Dennison. Muether writes, “Most of Van Til’s readers have come to understand that the controlling principle in his philosophy of history is the principle of the covenant, and that his work reveals the influence of Geerhardus Vos.” Muether, *Van Til*, 172. William Dennison argues, “For Van Til and Vos, the primary issue in understanding biblical revelation and redemption is not an analysis of what literary genre is confronting us; rather, it is a confrontation with facts that presuppose a philosophy of history, which in turn presuppose the interpositions of the triune God of the Bible.” William D. Dennison, “Analytic Philosophy and Van Til’s Epistemology,” in *Westminster Theological Journal* 57, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 53.

²⁴ Edmund P. Clowney, “Professor John Murray at Westminster Theological Seminary,” in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 38.

²⁵ Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Introduction,” in Geerhardus Vos, *Grace and Glory* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), ix.

²⁶ Ian Murray, “The Life of John Murray,” in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 29.

²⁷ Lawrence Eyres, “Reflections on Professor John Murray,” in *Pressing Toward the Mark*, ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 441.

Moses; Moses to Christ. Murray summarized the theology of each period and showed how each prepared for and pointed toward the full range of systematic theology in the New Testament.²⁸

Gaffin agrees with Eyres and Clowney that Murray advanced systematics at Westminster in a Vos-like manner. He argues that Murray, building upon Vos's insights, stands out in Reformed orthodoxy for the development of the relationship between biblical theology and systematic theology.²⁹

When Murray himself explained the relationship between biblical theology and systematic theology, he pointed to Vos:

Biblical theology deals with the data of special revelation from the standpoint of its history; systematic theology deals with the same in its totality as a finished product. The method of systematic theology is logical, that of biblical theology is historical. The definition of Geerhardus Vos puts this difference in focus. "Biblical Theology is that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible." The pivotal term in this definition is the word "process" as applied to God's special self-revelation. Or, as Vos says later, when taking account of the objections to the term "biblical theology," the name "History of Special Revelation" is to be preferred.³⁰

When Murray died in 1975, his longtime friend and colleague Van Til praised Murray by equating him with Machen and Vos. He said, "His reputation as a scholar was never of primary concern to him, so long as by his work, the triune God of Scripture was magnified. In both of these respects he resembled Dr. Machen and Dr. Vos."³¹

The promotion of Vos on the campus of Westminster, however, was not limited to Van Til and Murray. Stonehouse recommended to students going into the pastoral ministry that they should read Vos's *The Kingdom of God and the Church* on a yearly basis.³²

²⁸ Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL; Crossway, 2003), 17.

²⁹ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *Westminster Theological Journal* 38, no. 3 (Spring 1976): 288.

³⁰ John Murray, "Systematic Theology: Second Article," *Westminster Theological Journal* 26, no. 1 (November 1963): 33.

³¹ I. Murray, "Life of Murray," 157. Regarding Murray's eschatological views, Gaffin argues that Vos "decisively influenced" Murray's "Structural Strands in New Testament Eschatology," a paper read at the seventh annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in December 1954. See, Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Theonomy and Eschatology: Reflections on Postmillennialism," in *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*, ed. William Barker and W. Robert Godfrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 199.

³² When he reviewed Herman Ridderbos's *The Coming of the Kingdom* in 1952, Stonehouse declared that while Ridderbos's book was outstanding, Vos's *Kingdom of God and the Church* had anticipated many of the insights. In August 1949, Stonehouse, in the Netherlands as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's representative to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, had visited Ridderbos in Amsterdam. Whether the two talked about Vos, we do not know. The review did not indicate that Ridderbos was aware of Vos's contributions, but Ridderbos himself testified of Vos's influence a quarter of a century later. In 1975 Ridderbos travelled to America and was honored at Calvin College with a dinner celebrating his theological contributions. At the event, Ridderbos was informed that Vos's daughter, Marianne Radius, a faculty member at Calvin, was in attendance. He greeted her with a warm handshake and confessed his dependence upon her father in his own thinking. See, James T. Dennison Jr., "The Life of Vos," in *Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 81. Twenty-nine years later, Ridderbos contributed a personal word to open *Resurrection and Redemption*, a festschrift for Richard B. Gaffin Jr. Ridderbos honored Gaffin by tying him directly to Vos's methodology. Ridderbos said, "The line of [Gaffin's] investigations

Stonehouse's books the *Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ* and the *Witness of Luke to Christ* evidenced a Vosian recognition of unity and diversity in special revelation.³³

But, perhaps the strongest indication of his appreciation for Vos was his June 7, 1962, letter to K. Lavern Snider of the Free Methodist Seminary of Japan.³⁴ Snider had asked what books Stonehouse would recommend for background study in teaching a course on New Testament biblical theology. Stonehouse replied that there were an almost endless number of books in this general area, but unless the authority of the Scripture was maintained, the books should not be described as biblical theology. Stonehouse continued that there was "one man who sought to develop a biblical theology on a thoroughly scriptural basis, and that is my old Professor Vos who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary for many years." He then detailed his own dependence upon Vos.

In my own courses I do not follow a strictly textbook method but continue to assign the reading of substantial portions of Vos' works. These books include especially one called *Biblical Theology* which was published posthumously . . . , a work which contains a good deal of material relating to the Old Testament and a briefer section on the New. One of the most useful of Vos' books in this field is his *Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*. To an extent indeed there is an overlapping between the contents of this book and certain sections of the larger book just referred to, but the little book is distinguished by the clarity of its presentation and serves better than any of his publications as a textbook. The broad work on biblical theology is supplemented also by a volume entitled *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*. Besides there are works on Pauline eschatology and the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews.³⁵

Stonehouse then gave Snider the address of the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company in Grand Rapids and encouraged him to purchase Vos's books. "Vos," in Stonehouse's judgment, "displayed ability of a superior order."³⁶

In addition to Van Til, Murray and Stonehouse, two junior members of the Westminster faculty in the 1950s, Edmund Clowney and Meredith Kline, advanced the Vosian teaching they had received as students at Westminster. Kline maintained that his book *Kingdom Prologue* sought to unfold and develop the infrastructure found in Vos's *Biblical Theology*.³⁷ In his book *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, Clowney argued that when the

remember to those of Geerhardus Vos, in the sense of what we may call the "heilshistorische" way of exposition of the New Testament: an indication on the one side of a real difference of the *dogmatic* method of exposition, on the other side of the far more biblical approach than that of the consequent historic-critical school." Herman Ridderbos, "A Personal Word from Herman Ridderbos," in *Resurrection and Redemption*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), xix.

³³ N.B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ* (London: Tyndale Press, 1944), and *The Witness of Luke to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953). Stonehouse wrote that his aim with both books was to encourage Christians who were assured as to the unity of the witness of the Gospels to take greater pains to do justice to the diversity of the expression of that witness. See, Stonehouse, *Luke*, 6.

³⁴ Letter, Ned B. Stonehouse to K. Lavern Snider, June 7, 1962. Geerhardus Vos, Special Collection at Princeton Theological Seminary.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Kline wrote, "Our main focus is on the historical drama of the covenantal kingdom with its epochal events of covenant transaction and kingdom establishment. What is in Vos's *Biblical Theology* the infrastructure, the particular historical pattern in which the periodicity principle gets applied, becomes here the surface structure." Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (S. Hamilton, MA: Meredith Kline, 1991), 5.

interpreter allows the claims that the Bible makes about itself to stand, as Vos did, “biblical theology is both proper and rewarding,” not simply descriptive, but “a labor of worship.”³⁸

Richard Gaffin Jr.

The greatest promoter of Vos at Westminster, however, would be Richard Gaffin Jr. According to Gaffin, his high regard for Vos was cultivated by his teachers at Westminster.³⁹

Still, the breakthrough for Gaffin regarding Vos’s thought came as Gaffin, under Murray’s supervision, began to work on his master’s thesis, *Calvin and the Sabbath*. The study raised questions for Gaffin regarding protology and eschatology. In reading Vos’s *Biblical Theology*, Gaffin realized that Vos had anticipated and answered the questions in Vos’s treatment of the Sabbath.⁴⁰ In Gaffin’s own words, “The theological genius and unparalleled biblical insight of Geerhardus Vos began to dawn on me.”⁴¹ Gaffin’s self-appraisal of his own theological writings is that he is among those who consider themselves Vos “enthusiasts.”⁴² That is, he is enthusiastic about a redemptive-historical interpretation of Scripture (biblical theology) and understands himself as building upon the insights of Vos, “that prince of Reformed exegetes.”⁴³

Gaffin sees Vos, “the father of a Reformed biblical theology,”⁴⁴ as providing a valuable “alternative to the biblical theology resulting from the Enlightenment and the historical-critical method of interpretation with its controlling commitment to the rational autonomy of the interpreter (e.g. J. Gabler).”⁴⁵ This valuable alternative is not limited simply to drawing attention to the historical nature of revelation. It also reflects the interface between the historical progress of special revelation and the absolute character of revealed truth.⁴⁶

³⁸ Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 18–19.

³⁹ Gaffin commented, “Teachers that I had—Ned Stonehouse, Edmund Clowney, John Murray, Meredith Kline—they were all very much influenced by Vos’s biblical theological approach.” Interview with Richard Gaffin by Peter Lillback, May 10, 2016, <https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/an-interview-with-richard-gaffin/>.

⁴⁰ See, Danny E. Olinger, “The Life and Writings of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.,” (tentative title) in *Word and Spirit: The Shorter Writings of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.*, ed. David B. Garner and Guy P. Waters (forthcoming).

⁴¹ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Preface” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), vii.

⁴² Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards,” in *The Practical Calvinist*, ed. Peter A. Lillback (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2003), 425. In 1980 Gaffin brought back into public view many of Vos’s forgotten addresses, articles and reviews in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*.

⁴³ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Contemporary Hermeneutics and the Study of the New Testament,” in *Studying the New Testament Today*, vol. 1, ed. John H. Skilton (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1974), 18.

⁴⁴ “In a word, Vos is significant because he is the father of a Reformed biblical theology, or, as he much prefers to describe the discipline, “History of Special Revelation.” Gaffin, “Introduction,” in Vos, *Shorter Writings*, xiv.

⁴⁵ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949),” in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald McKim (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 1017.

⁴⁶ For a detailed reflection on Gaffin’s defense of Vos’s teaching regarding the inseparability of the history of special revelation and absolute character of revealed truth, see Lane G. Tipton’s “Jesus in the Old Testament: The History of Apostolic Imagination or the History of Redemption,” in *No Uncertain Sound* (Philadelphia: Reformed Forum, 2017). Tipton believes Gaffin’s implementation of Vos has significant implications for enriching the grammatical-historical method of exegesis in the service of the history of a Christ-centered revelation. Tipton declares, “To sum up, Vos’s formulation yields a view of Christotelism (Christ as consummate *telos*) that depends at this very point on Christ being the central redemptive subject matter of the Old Testament in its own terms (Christocentrism).” *Ibid.* 16.

For Gaffin, Vos's distinctive contributions in his pioneering work of Reformed biblical theology included:

1. A recognition of the orientation of revelatory word (history of revelation) to redemptive act (history of redemption).⁴⁷ Gaffin writes, "His (Vos's) point is not that by far the largest part of Scripture or its main emphasis concerns the redemptive work of Christ while the other, less prominent portions are basically independent of this concern, related to redemption only indirectly or not at all."⁴⁸ Rather, the entirety of biblical revelation is oriented to salvation in Christ. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption.⁴⁹
2. A working out of the belief that inscripturated revelation is not a school but a covenant. In Vos's words, "The Bible is not a dogmatic handbook but a historical book full of dramatic interest."⁵⁰ According to Gaffin, "Vos is the first in the Reformed tradition, perhaps even the first orthodox theologian" to draw repeated attention to the fact that "redemptive revelation comes as an organically unfolding historical process and to begin working out the methodological consequences of this insight."⁵¹
3. The view that believers, even living in the post-Apostolic age, are engaged in a common theological enterprise with the Apostle Paul.⁵² Gaffin observes, "Vos's work reflects a marked sense of continuity between himself, the contemporary interpreter, and the writers of the New Testament."⁵³

⁴⁷ Gaffin writes, "Recognition of the orientation of revelatory word to redemptive act or, more broadly, of the history of revelation to the history of redemption has become a theological common place. It was introduced into Reformed scholarship, primarily, and most effectively by Geerhardus Vos." Gaffin, "Contemporary Hermeneutics," 16.

⁴⁸ Gaffin, "Introduction," in Vos, *Shorter Writings*, xvi.

⁴⁹ One of Gaffin's favorite citations from Vos concerns this point. Vos writes on page 24 of *Biblical Theology*, "Revelation is so interwoven with redemption that, unless allowed to consider the latter, it would be suspended in the air." Gaffin references the quotation in such articles as "Geerhardus Vos and the Interpretation of Paul," in *Jerusalem and Athens*, ed. E.R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 468; "Introduction," in *Shorter Writings*, xvi; "The Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics," in *The Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. J.M. Batteau et al. (Kampen: Kok), 26; "A Cessationist View," in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 54; "Paul as Theologian," in *Westminster Theological Journal* 30, no. 2 (May 1968): 224; and "Vos, Geerhardus (1862–1949)," *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, 1017.

⁵⁰ Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology," in *Shorter Writings*, 23.

⁵¹ Gaffin, "Introduction," in Vos, *Shorter Writings*, xv.

⁵² Gaffin writes, "In the days in which we find ourselves it is necessary more than ever that every believer has a sense of history—a sense of redemptive history. But it is especially demanded of the minister of the Word in whatever capacity that he understand himself in his labors as one together with Paul, "upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). There is need that in his methods, as in all else, everyone involved in the theological enterprise—not just the New Testament scholar—seek to make good his status, shared with the apostle, as "minister of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:6). This, it seems to me, was the approach of that prince of Reformed exegetes, Geerhardus Vos." Gaffin, "Contemporary Hermeneutics," 18.

⁵³ Gaffin, "Introduction," in Vos, *Shorter Writings*, xix. Gaffin draws attention specifically to Vos's statement on pages 325–26 of Vos's *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), "Still, we know full well that we ourselves live just as much in the New Testament as did Peter and Paul and John." In his article, "Geerhardus Vos and the Interpretation of Paul," Gaffin references the above quotation and then adds, "In the same context Vos makes the perceptive and highly suggestive observation that the seeming disproportion in chronological extent of the Old Testament and the New Testament 'arises from viewing the new revelation too much by itself, and not sufficiently as *introductory* and *basic* to the large period following'" (469).

4. A belief that the roots of the theological enterprise are in the text itself. Gaffin concludes that Vos taught, “Scripture must determine not only the content but also the method of theology.”⁵⁴
5. A conviction that seeing Paul as a theologian helps to pinpoint the fundamental task of Pauline interpretation. Gaffin writes that “one could hardly do better than to formulate with Vos” that the task of the interpreter, in Vos’s words, “consists of ascertaining the perspective of thought in the revealed Gospel delivered by the Apostle.”⁵⁵
6. A belief that “the Reformed confessions, and the theological framework they entail, particularly thinking on the covenant, far from being hostile, are quite hospitable toward—in fact, they anticipate—giving greater, more methodologically self-conscious attention to the redemptive-historical substance of Scripture.”⁵⁶
7. A belief that the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption and eschatology are inseparable.⁵⁷ Vos shows, “with a clarity unmatched by his contemporaries,” that “Paul’s eschatology and his teaching concerning the Spirit may not be isolated from or opposed to each other, but also that for Paul the work of the Spirit, including ethical renewal, is itself the realization of the eschaton.”⁵⁸

Gaffin describes Vos’s *Biblical Theology* as “the most instructive single summary treatment of issues related to biblical-theological method.”⁵⁹ He states that Vos’s *Pauline Eschatology* “has abiding worth and timeliness because Vos saw himself, in continuity with Paul, as following in the footsteps of him who ‘may justly be called the father of Christian eschatology.’”⁶⁰ Vos’s “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit,” represents “a milestone in the history of Pauline studies and shows him as a scholar well in advance of his time.”⁶¹ Even Gaffin’s book *Resurrection and Redemption* is “an attempt to develop and put in a somewhat broader setting the brief, but exceedingly rich and provocative, sketch that Vos has given of Paul’s resurrection theology.”⁶² Gaffin testifies, “Anybody that knows me at all knows my high regard for Vos, which I share with many, many people.”⁶³

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Westminster professors Machen, Van Til, Murray, Stonehouse, Clowney, Kline, and Gaffin were also Orthodox Presbyterian ministers. Therefore, it is no surprise that Vos’s

⁵⁴ Gaffin, “Geerhardus Vos and the Interpretation of Paul,” *Jerusalem and Athens*, 235.

⁵⁵ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 28–29. Gaffin explains, “The interpretation of Paul above all involves careful attention to underlying structure. In [Paul’s] writing and teaching we encounter a mind of unusual constructive energy with an unparalleled capacity for synthetic thinking, in a word (again with Vos), a ‘master-mind’” (29).

⁵⁶ Gaffin, “Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards,” *Practical Calvinist*, 427.

⁵⁷ “Noteworthy historically is the fact that among the first to perceive the significance of this point, especially in Paul, was Geerhardus Vos, Warfield’s (cessationist) Princeton Seminary colleague (and regular walking companion for over two decades.” Gaffin, “A Cessationist View,” *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* 29.

⁵⁸ Gaffin, “Paul as Theologian,” 209.

⁵⁹ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Redemption and Resurrection: An Exercise in Biblical-Systematic Theology,” in *A Confessing Theology for Postmodern Times*, ed. Michael Horton (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 245.

⁶⁰ Gaffin, “Paul as Theologian,” 227.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁶² Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 16.

⁶³ Interview with Richard Gaffin by Peter Lillback, May 10, 2016.

influence has also been felt in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In his article, “Geerhardus Vos and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,” Charles Dennison remarked:

It could be that the most important theologian to the OPC in its formative days was Geerhardus Vos. Even though he never joined the new church or even sought to influence it, Vos could be as much the OPC’s fundamental counselor and as essential to OPC identity as any of the people usually mentioned.⁶⁴

Dennison maintained that Vos’s interest in being true to the character of God’s self-revelation had an impact upon this remnant body. Vos taught that the church is bound to the Word of God, but he also taught, according to Dennison, that “the circle of revelation is not an academy for the consideration of religious ideas, be they metaphysical, ethical or practical.” Rather, “It is a covenant, a relational bond, established in eternity, coming to expression on the plan of history in and through God for ends He has sovereignly predetermined.” Dennison concluded, “Vos was a thorough Calvinist.”⁶⁵

In Dennison’s judgment, Vos’s teaching came to expression in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church through Van Til. The antithesis between the present evil age and the age to come in Vos’s thought serves as the foundation for the antithesis between the unregenerate and regenerate mind in Van Til’s thought.⁶⁶ Vos also taught Van Til that to grasp a religion’s hope, or eschatology, is to penetrate that religion at its center and in its deepest significance.⁶⁷

John Muether, who succeeded Dennison as Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and Darryl Hart, agree with Dennison regarding Vos’s impact: “It can be fairly said that no non-OPCer this century has influenced the denomination as much as Geerhardus Vos.” According to Muether and Hart, Vos embodied the hybrid between Old Princeton and Dutch Calvinism that has marked Orthodox Presbyterians. “More than anyone else, Vos’s long career at Princeton forged links between American Presbyterianism and Dutch Calvinism that were to shape the character of the OPC.”⁶⁸

Muether and Hart also argue that “Vos’s biblical-theological identification of the church as a pilgrim people has made the most indelible imprint on the OPC, even while it has provoked some of the OPC’s strongest critics.”⁶⁹ This influence has impressed upon Orthodox Presbyterians a different standard when judging success. American Christians often judge the success of the church in terms of its influence in the world. Consequently,

⁶⁴ Charles G. Dennison, “Geerhardus Vos and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,” *History for a Pilgrim People: The Historical Writings of Charles G. Dennison*, eds. Danny E. Olinger and David K. Thompson (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2002), 77.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 73. For an extended defense of this thesis, see William D. Dennison, *Paul’s Two Age Construction and Apologetics* (New York: University Press of America, 1985), 89–98.

⁶⁷ In a sermon preached on November 14, 1982, at Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, Dennison explained, “Have you ever read the end of a book before its beginning? . . . What is true about the books of the Bible is true about life and history. Over sixty years ago, Geerhardus Vos expressed this thought in regard to religion and philosophy. He taught his students at Princeton that to penetrate a system’s eschatology is to master it. In other words, analyze just how someone views the end, the goal, the destiny of life—analyze someone’s hope—and you will understand the deepest inner motivation of that person’s system of thought or religion.” Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

⁶⁸ John R. Muether and D. G. Hart, “Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949),” *Ordained Servant* 8, no. 3 (July 1999): 54.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

“many have dismissed the OPC as ‘irrelevant’ for its want of a social or cultural agenda.”⁷⁰ Seen from the eschatological perspective that Vos promoted and many in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have embraced, however, “it is more accurate to say that the OPC is committed to the ‘irrelevance’ of the world to the church.”⁷¹

In his address “The Sabbath and OPC Identity,” Muether furthers the argument. He says, “In maintaining a [Vosian] sense of the eschatological location of the church, the OPC has insisted that the church is not for hire, neither by the state nor by any other cause short of the hope to which it is called to testify.”⁷² Grasping the heavenly character of the church, as Vos taught, the corporate identity of Orthodox Presbyterians in this world has been that of a pilgrim people, disenfranchised and counter-cultural in character.

The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews

The growing appreciation of Vos over the decades has also led to posthumous publications. In 1956 Johannes Vos, then professor of Bible at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, put his father’s lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews into a single volume, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*.⁷³ Johannes noted that the book did not include the extended articles that his father had published in the *Princeton Theological Review*, “The Priesthood of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews” and “Hebrews, the Epistle to the *Diatheke*.”⁷⁴

Distinctive Character of the Epistle to the Hebrews

In *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews* Vos stated that the outstanding feature of Hebrews was its connection with the Old Testament. When the writer draws a comparison between the Old Testament and the New Testament, he does not use the comparison merely to warn the readers away from a false attachment to the Old, but to show the superiority of the New. Angels superintended the Old Testament economy, but Christ is superior to them (Heb. 2:2).

The original readers battled religious externalism that resulted in a deficient Christology. In particular, they wanted Christ’s glory to be present visibly. But, Christ was crowned with glory and honor because of his sufferings and death (Heb. 2:10).

The Priesthood of Christ

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² John R. Muether, “The Sabbath and OPC Identity,” in *Perspectives: A Pre-Assembly Conference Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, 1996* (Coraopolis, PA: Committee for the Historian, 1997), 75.

⁷³ Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. and re-written Johannes G. Vos (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), preface.

⁷⁴ Although the same topics are covered in chapters 2 and 4 in a combined 41 pages of *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, the two articles at a combined 107 pages contain Vos’s detailed argumentation. These articles should be consulted first for Vos’s teaching on the theology of Hebrews. See, Geerhardus Vos, “The Priesthood of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Shorter Writings*, 126–60, and “Hebrews, the Epistle of the *Diatheke*,” in *Shorter Writings*, 161–233.

The priesthood of Christ is a heavenly priesthood. “This had been foreshadowed in the Old Testament by the entrance of the high priest from the Holy of Holies, out of the sight of the people. So, Christ also ascended out of their sight into heaven.”⁷⁵

Hebrews 5:1 explains what a priest does: “he acts for man in things pertaining to God, and he brings both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”⁷⁶ Hebrews 4:15 emphasizes the sinlessness of Christ as a necessary qualification for his priesthood. Hebrews 2:17–18 teaches that Christ was made like his brethren and became a merciful and faithful high priest in order to make expiation for the people’s sins. The mercy Christ as high priest extends is not a reference to the sacrifice of Calvary, but to his intercessory work as priest which is now being exercised in heaven.⁷⁷

The high priest on the Day of Atonement slew the animal in the court before offering the sacrifice in the Holy of Holies. “This corresponds exactly with Christ’s priestly act, which He performed outside of the sanctuary, that is, outside of heaven, on Calvary.”⁷⁸ That Old Testament, horizontal act which was performed with reference to the Holy of Holies foreshadows the New Testament, vertical act of Christ on Calvary which has its ideal reference to the sanctuary in heaven.

The Epistle’s Philosophy of Revelation and Redemption

Hebrews teaches that believers have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). Vos said, “We miss the writer’s meaning of this if we regard this as a mere metaphor. Christians are in vital connection with the heavenly world. It projects into their lives as a headland projects out into the ocean.”⁷⁹

The Epistle’s representation of the two ages differs from Paul’s emphasis. Paul stresses the ethical contrast between this present age and the age to come. Hebrews presents a bisection of the history of redemption as the old covenant is the Old Testament period. This bisection results in a philosophy of redemption and revelation.⁸⁰ The covenantal focus in Hebrews is not on the evil character of the present age. It is on “the inadequate, preparatory character of the one as over against the perfect, final character of the other.”⁸¹

Vos explained the relationship through a metaphor. In artistic terms, the Old Testament possesses the preliminary outline or sketch, the New Testament possesses the real picture. But, both sketch and real picture are only representations of the heavenly reality which lies beyond both of them. In theological terms, Old Testament is the antitype. The heavenly type, of which the Old Testament is the antitype, was shown to Moses on Mount Sinai.⁸²

⁷⁵ Vos, *Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 22.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁷⁷ In support of Vos’s contention, Gaffin points out that in Hebrews 2:17, the verb form is a present indicative. He says, “That stresses then that the propitiatory activity in view is to be done repeatedly, and if we were to apply that to the death of Christ, then that would run aground just in terms of the writer’s own frame of argumentation in Hebrews 9 where he will talk about the once-for-all-ness of the death. So, it seems that what the writer has in view here is an activity of propitiation which is progressive or ongoing. As Vos suggests then, what we have here is not a reference to the death of Christ, but to a subsequent activity by which Christ continually applies the propitiatory power of his sacrifice.” Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *A Theology of Hebrews* [sound recording] tape 6, (Westminster Media, 1992).

⁷⁸ Vos, *Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 114.

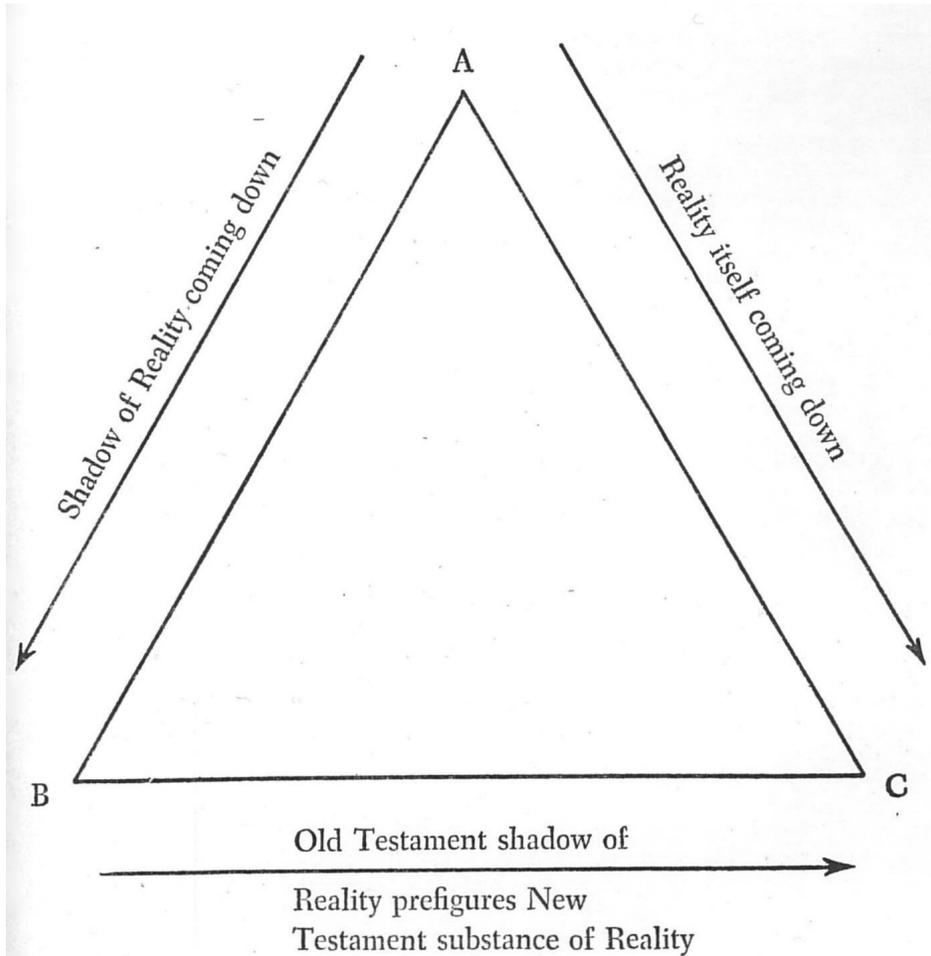
⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 58.

The New Testament is not merely a reproduction of the heavenly reality; it is “the Reality itself come down from heaven.”⁸³ Vos diagrammed the relationship:⁸⁴



In the above diagram:

- A represents the Heavenly Reality
- B represents the Old Testament which is a “shadow” of the Heavenly Reality
- C represents the New Testament which is the *substance* of the Heavenly Reality
- B prefigures C because B is the “shadow” of A and C equals A

Reviews

Fred Kuehner reviewed *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews* for the *Westminster Theological Journal*. Kuehner rejoiced that the Reformed Episcopal Theological Seminary, where Kuehner taught, would no longer have to utilize mimeographed copies of Vos’s lectures on Hebrews. He praised the content of the book’s teaching. “With these lectures on

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 57.

Hebrews now joining the company of Vos's exegetical volumes already lined up on their shelves, readers of Vos will be amazed, more than ever before, at the singularly profound grasp of the whole sweep of Scripture that was his."⁸⁵

Kuehner particularly appreciated Vos's treatment of the finality of Christology that appeared in the third chapter where Vos explained the Epistle's philosophy of revelation and redemption. Believers are said to taste "the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5) and participate now "in the good things to come" (Heb. 9:11; 10:1). Kuehner wrote, "Thus considered, Christianity, while constituting an historic epoch in time, actually marks the beginning of the future world."⁸⁶ He continued, "That which was the divine intent at the creation of man finds its realization in Christ. With Him, therefore, is ushered in God's new creation, His ultimate order."⁸⁷

Samuel Cartledge reviewed *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews in Interpretation*. He stated that, although Vos was thoroughly conservative in his conclusions, Vos had with "typical European thoroughness" made full use of historical criticism and was exceedingly careful in his detailed exegesis.⁸⁸

Eschatology of the Old Testament

In 1967 Bernardus Vos told Roger Nicole, then professor of theology at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, that the only major writing that his father had worked on but not published was his "Eschatology of the Old Testament." Bernardus reported that his father had been working on the manuscript, about five hundred double-spaced typed pages, when he retired from Princeton in 1932. Vos took it with him to Santa Ana and was even hopeful in 1936 that it might be mimeographed by Dr. Robert K. Rudolph in Philadelphia. When Bernardus contacted Rudolph years after Vos's death to see if his father had sent the manuscript to him, Rudolph could not find it. Bernardus then talked to his brother, Geerhardus Jr., who believed that the manuscript was inadvertently thrown away when their father moved from Santa Ana to Grand Rapids in 1939.⁸⁹

Almost a decade after Bernardus wrote Nicole, Marianne Vos Radius asked her brother Johannes to examine their father's papers and notes and to bring them to Toledo, Ohio, a halfway point between Grand Rapids, where Marianne lived, and Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, where Johannes lived. The materials that Johannes turned over to Marianne for deposit in the Heritage Hall Archive of Calvin College and Seminary in Grand Rapids included: 1) Vos's handwritten outline notes on the "Eschatology of the Old Testament"; 2) Vos's 1930–31 handwritten "Syllabus of the Eschatology of the Old Testament"; 3) An incomplete typescript "Some Remarks on Eschatology"; 4) Vos's handwritten "Questions in Eschatology of the Old Testament"; and 5) Henry Schultze's typewritten notes entitled "Old Testament Eschatology." In 2001 James T. Dennison Jr. gathered these sources and constructed what he believed was the most complete text possible of Vos's *The Eschatology of the Old Testament*.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Review of Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Johannes G. Vos, by Fred Carl Kuehner, *Westminster Theological Journal* 19, no. 1 (November 1956): 116.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Review of Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, by Samuel A. Cartledge, in *Interpretation* 10, no. 4 (October 1956): 478.

⁸⁹ Letter, Bernardus Vos to Roger Nicole, December 3, 1967. Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

⁹⁰ Geerhardus Vos, *The Eschatology of the Old Testament*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001).

The opening sentence of the *Eschatology of the Old Testament* presented the same view on eschatology that Vos had put forth in the *Biblical Theology* and *Pauline Eschatology*.

Etymologically, the term *eschatology* (*eschatos logos*) means “a doctrine of the last things.” Eschatology deals with the expectation of beliefs characteristic of some religions that: (a) the world or part of the world moves to a definite goal (*telos*); (b) there is a new final order of affairs beyond the present. It is the doctrine of the consummation of the world-process in a supreme crisis leading on into a permanent state. As such, it is composed of two characteristic elements: (1) the limited duration of the present order of things: (2) the eternal character of the subsequent state.”⁹¹

What Vos immediately added in the *Eschatology of the Old Testament* was that eschatology presupposes that God is the Creator. A denial that God created all things severs the beginning from the end.

A God who cannot create cannot consummate things because he is conditioned by something outside of himself that will not lend itself to him for the execution of a set purpose and for the plastic handling of what is antecedently given to him toward that end.⁹²

The correlate of eschatology is creation, but the goal of eschatology is not a return to the garden before the fall into sin. “Eschatology aims at consummation rather than restoration. Therefore, redemptive eschatology must be restorative and consummative. It does not aim at the original state, but at a transcendental state of man.”⁹³

Vos argued that the Fall into sin did not lessen this eschatological longing for consummation. He said, “It will be noted that the intervention of sin, so far from destroying the underground of eschatology, has on the contrary imparted to it an altogether new and more intensified religious significance.” Appealing to Paul’s words in Romans 8:22, he continued, “If an uncorrupted world already stretches itself out toward some goal of consummation, how much more will a creation fallen into sin and corruption.”⁹⁴ God built the plan of redemption so that it retains the principle of eschatological finality. “The biblical redemption aims at a new creation and nothing less than that. Therefore, all the threads of purposeful finality are made to run together in the redemptive revelation of grace.”⁹⁵

This was Vos’s touchstone in his biblical-theological teaching, the belief that “eschatology is the essence of true religion as it is shown by its pre-redemptive existence.”⁹⁶ The promised attainment, communion with God on a superlative estate, is not through evolution, but through a principle of action.⁹⁷ Before sin, it was natural to point to eschatology; after sin, it was natural to point to redemption. This redemption unto possession of eternal life is promised through the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. Vos explained,

⁹¹ Ibid., 1.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 74.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 73.

In sum, the original goal remains regulative for the redemptive development of eschatology by aiming to rectify the results of sin (remedial) and uphold, in connection with this, the realization of the original goal as that which transcends the state of rectitude (i.e., rising beyond the possibility of death in life eternal).⁹⁸

Reformed Dogmatics

Nearly seventy years after his death, interest in the teaching of Geerhardus Vos seemingly has never been stronger. In 2016 Richard Gaffin Jr. completed the translation and editing (with the help of others) of Vos's *Reformed Dogmatics* from Dutch into English in five volumes.⁹⁹ The volumes, which cover the entirety of systematic theology from theology proper to eschatology are *Volume 1: Theology Proper*, *Volume 2: Anthropology*, *Volume 3: Christology*, *Volume 4, Soteriology*, and, *Volume 5: Ecclesiology, the Means of Grace, Eschatology*.

In his review of the five volumes, Lane G. Tipton declared that Gaffin's "editorial oversight of the translation of Geerhardus Vos's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* has brought to light yet another theological treasure from perhaps the finest Reformed theologian since Calvin."¹⁰⁰ Tipton states that Vos combined a superb handling of traditional *loci* with the warmth of a theological reflection "pursued in vital communion with the absolute, triune God through Spirit-gifted, faith-union with Christ." In his judgment, this renders the five volumes ideal for both seminary instruction and devotional reading.

Denouement

The quiet scholar during his years at Princeton has become a theologian to whom Christendom pays attention. He is truly the father of Reformed biblical theology, which has blessed scholars, preachers, and those in the pew. Were he alive today, however, Vos would undoubtedly deflect the attention and point to the inscription he penned in the *Pauline Eschatology*:

DEUS CREATOR REDEMPTOR CONSUMMATOR
IN HIS TRIBUS RELIGIO NOSTRA UNIVERSA PENDET ¹⁰¹

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⁹⁸ Ibid., 74.

⁹⁹ Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., et al., 5 vols. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2012–2016). The volumes are also available in digital form from *Logos*.

¹⁰⁰ Lane G. Tipton, "Review of Geerhardus Vos's *Reformed Dogmatics*," *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* 39, no. 4 (April 2018): 9.

¹⁰¹ "God is our Creator, Redeemer, Consummator: on these three things our whole religion depends."

ServantReading

They Say We Are Infidels *by Mindy Belz*

by Bryan D. Estelle

They Say We Are Infidels: On the Run from ISIS with Persecuted Christians in the Middle East, by Mindy Belz. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016, xix + 321 pages, \$15.99, paper.

My father-in-law, Russell Lowell, MD, at the request of the American Medical Association for physicians to fill a need in South Vietnam, served as a civilian doctor there during the Vietnam War, since most of that country's doctors were conscripted into service in the military. I remember him recounting to me that he would never read an American newspaper relating foreign wartime events again in quite the same way after experiencing that war zone first hand. Reading this book by journalist Mindy Belz has left me with a similar conviction about events in the Middle East during the last couple of decades. Don't assume that what you read in our newspapers and magazines or watch on television accurately reflects events on the ground in the Middle East.

This is a deeply personal narrative of a journalist who has been covering the situation of Christians in the Middle East for years. The book is well-written English prose with a pleasing cadence. Although it is mostly about events in Iraq and Syria in the last twenty years, it's not merely about recent events. At times Belz easily segues into history as old as civilization, or as recent as the decades following World War I; nevertheless, her story is well constructed to demonstrate historical influences that had profound influence on current events. A map plotting all the important cities talked about in the book is found on page xi and proves helpful for those of us unfamiliar with the geography of this part of the world. Additionally, a time line of key events in Iraq and Syria from 1920–2015 will keep the reader from getting lost in this well-documented, detailed account (303–7). There is no glossary of important or foreign terms, something the publishers would have done well to include. Belz demonstrates just how hard life was under Saddam. However, despite his defeat, capture, and ultimate demise, she also showcases the complexities and hardships of what replaced Saddam and the former power of the Baath party. The situation, according to Belz, was not helped by the Americans' protracted de-Baathification policies either.

While the mainstream media has portrayed the narrative unfolding in Iraq as primarily a Shia-Sunni sectarian conflict, Belz relates through first-hand experience and many trips to the Middle East that the picture is much more complex than supposed. Her primary interest is the story about the persecuted Christian minority in Iraq. That story is important because it doesn't fit into the neat and tidy narrative most often told by the US government or the American news media. However, the evidence is overwhelming that Belz presents: many, many Christians between 2005–2011 and beyond were assassinated.

Although her book unveils the vast suffering of many Christians (and others) in the Middle East, it also recounts tremendous courage and sacrificial charity that Christians offered to others (not just fellow Christians), often taking on great risks (e.g., see page 291). As Belz shared her stories with Christians in the states, they too began to show charity—even in the form of cash—to help relieve the suffering and thirst of so many refugees, especially in Northern Iraq.

This book recounts extreme suffering, persecution, and exile. Often death. It is particularly engaging because the stories are frequently told from the perspective of real people, friends whom Belz made through years of reporting in Iraq and Syria. For example, the story is told through the eyes of Insaf, a mother like Belz, who years previously had to leave the country of Iraq and yet made many sacrificial trips back home to her Christian friends and relatives in order to deliver much needed aid and money to those left behind. The story is also recounted from the perspective of many displaced refugees (over a million from Iraq in 2014 alone) who had to flee for safety, often without shoes and with only the clothes on their backs.

Then ISIS came in 2014. When ISIS began its invasion of Qaraqosh, the inhabitants had to flee for safety. The descriptions of the “crawl of humanity making its way east, south, and north from Nineveh” (247) is heart rending to read. The vivid descriptions of flight to cities of refuge and Kurdistan will jerk tears from your eyes as will the well-documented slave trade of young girls and women by ISIS, especially those girls who committed suicide in order to escape their torment and their oppressors (269–74).

One of the greatest realizations of reading this book is that Americans have often been under-informed or just plain misinformed about the situation in the Middle East. No matter what your source of news is, this book will intelligently inform opinions about the political and religious realities that our brothers and sisters in Iraq and Syria have faced throughout history, but especially in the last fifteen years. I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to know more about the complex situation in the Middle East and for all Christians who want to learn how to pray more intelligently for persecuted Christians in that region of the world.

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ServantReading

The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise *by Darío Fernández-Morera*

by Bryan D. Estelle

The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain, by Darío Fernández-Morera. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2016, 358 pages, \$29.95.

In Germany, you have to write two dissertations (not just one) before you are considered for an academic chair as a professor. I can remember the “research realization” I came to when my own professor, Michael O’Connor, put me in touch with Walther Sallaberger, a professor of Akkadian in Munich, Germany. He had written his second dissertation on an analysis of Old Babylonian Akkadian everyday life letters with some special attention to how this Semitic culture construed politeness strategies in its everyday communication.¹ I realized the simple but profound truth at that point in my academic career that if one could engage the extant resources at an “everyday life level” (especially through everyday letters, which is not an easy task), then one may obtain a true picture of the ancient world despite the fact that a researcher may be separated by hundreds or even thousands of years of history. Such is the case in Fernández-Morera’s book.

Fernández-Morera’s primary goal is to debunk the myth that has arisen in the modern world that the Muslim world in Medieval Spain, which began with the Muslim invasion in the early eighth century, was a space where Jews (mostly Sephardic), Christians, and Muslims lived in mutual tolerance and peaceful multiculturalism under Islamic rule. How does he accomplish this? By appealing to the extant sources, primary and secondary, especially everyday life letters and legal transcripts. Quoting Edward Gibbon (95), “the laws of a nation form the most instructive portion of its history.” Therefore, Fernández-Morera avoids the biased narrative about a tolerant Andalusian Paradise that has snowballed in modern times. In short, he proves, based on the extant evidence, that Muslims, Christians, and Jews had a precarious coexistence in Medieval Spain, not a tolerant one as is often alleged. The author is obviously passionate about his subject since he thinks that few “periods in history have been more misrepresented than that of Islamic Spain” (239).

¹ Walther Sallaberger, „Wenn Du mein Bruder bist, . . .“ *Interaktion und Textgestaltung in altbabylonischen Alltagsbriefen*, Cuneiform Monographs 16 (Groningen: Styx, 1999).

This is a hard-hitting book with lots of citation, including over ninety-five pages of endnotes supporting the author's claims and an eleven-page select bibliography. Nevertheless, you don't have to be a specialist in order to understand this book; nor do you need to know any history about the Muslim conquest or Medieval Spain. Almost every single time Fernández-Morera introduces a technical term (which is frequent) he immediately translates and explains it (e.g., *jihad*, *jizya*, *dhimmi*, *sharia* law).

Rather than tolerant, the Muslim rulers were rapacious: there was rampant looting, wholesale ignorance among the conquerors (they really learned the treasures of Greece and Rome from Christian scholars), constant religious coercion, numerous beheadings, suppressive measures against women, and the list continues.

The Jews had suffered tremendously under the Catholic Visigoths before the Muslim invasion. So, it is not surprising in some respects that the Jews supported the Muslims, and such an attitude is visible in the sources. Even so, the sources also demonstrate that many pogroms and expulsions resulted in instability of Jewish life under Muslim rule, again, a notion that runs contrary to so much popularization of the myth of tolerance. However, the direction of intolerance was not unilateral. Sephardic Jews were very strict during this alleged "golden age" of Jewish culture, and the legal views of the great Jewish philosopher Maimonides made everyday interaction with non-Jews very difficult.

The seismic problem in Islamic Medieval Spain was the relationship between religion and culture. Whereas in Western Christianity, there had always been a notion among jurists and theologians that church and state existed as different institutions with a special set of terms to designate this relationship (e.g., sacred and profane, religious and secular), in Islamic-ruled Spain all such distinctions were erased and a unity of the religious and the sacred carried the day. It was a theocracy, or more precisely, a hierocracy—a "government of clerics" (85–86). Distinctions between civic and religious law disappeared and Islamic *sharia* law pervaded all levels of society. As the author notes:

Sharia . . . strictly speaking means not the Islamic legal system but a religiously inspired view of the world, a path of right conduct that Allah has given to men through his messengers and through The Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad: *sharia* was divine law. (86)

This mindset, so clearly exposed in this book, which ignores the sources (primary and secondary), seems to be driven (ironically) by mostly elitist academics from hierarchically organized educational institutions. Quotes from their books and articles are peppered throughout Fernández-Morera's book showing that he has not just set up a straw man but has become convinced of the need to overturn a false paradigm.

The book is recommended for many reasons. Although it seems as if there is an information overload because of the sheer quantity of evidence cited, it is a model of thorough and exhaustive research. This reviewer is convinced of the need to reevaluate the popular myth of an Andalusian Paradise. In an age when Islam, in its multifaceted expressions, is spreading throughout the globe, Fernández-Morera's book will help one understand a very important period of history under Muslim rule.

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ServantReading

The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia *edited by Harry S. Stout*

by Jeffrey C. Waddington

The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia, edited by Harry S. Stout. Foreword by George M. Marsden. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017, 647 pages, \$60.00.

The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia has been anticipated by many Edwards scholars and aficionados as well as interested intelligent laypersons. It is a handsomely designed volume with an interesting back story that I will be happy to share with readers. This *Encyclopedia* may be among the first of its kind—an Edwards scholarly community-sourced production. A few years back the project was announced on the website of the Jonathan Edwards Center (JEC) of Yale University website and a selection of relevant topics was posted. Members of the Edwards republic of letters were then encouraged to contact the JEC if they were interested in authoring entrees for the volume. The articles were vetted by the accomplished editorial staff connected with the JEC and the Yale University critical letterpress and online editions of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*. In its published form, there are over 400 entrees in the *Encyclopedia* written by over 175 contributors. Perusing the names and institutions reflected in the list of contributors one will find names familiar to students of Edwards like Oliver Crisp, Sang Hyun Lee, and Kyle Strobel, as well as lesser known scholars. In fact, one of the impressive and encouraging facets of this volume is the evidence it offers of a thriving Edwards scholarship. In the interests of full disclosure, I should note that I am one of the lesser known (not to say unknown) contributors to this tome and I am personal friends or an acquaintance with many others. No serious scholarship is a solitary effort. Having said all this I should say, as the editors do say, that this is not an exhaustive work. As a dedicated student of Cornelius Van Til as well as of Jonathan Edwards, I readily concede that no human project can be exhaustive of any facet of God's world. Only God himself has that kind of breadth and depth of knowledge. Nevertheless, this is as thorough a one-stop shopping experience of Edwards research as one can find.

The topics in the *Encyclopedia* cover a broad range of Edwardsean concerns. Of course, we have the expected theological topics such as union with Christ and justification, regeneration, and sanctification. Uniquely Edwardsean subjects include the sense of the heart, speculative and spiritual understanding/knowledge, and the nature of true virtue. Philosophical entrees focus on such topics as occasionalism and idealism and aspects of what now would be considered natural science. There are entrees on particular works of Edwards, as we might expect, such as "Original Sin," "Freedom of the Will," and the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God."

There are a plethora of articles on thinkers who influenced Edwards, including John Locke, Peter van Mastricht, Nicholas Malebranche, John Calvin, and Francis Turretin. Edwards's relation to Puritanism is discussed as are individuals who could be said to be influenced by or have interacted with the ideas of Edwards. Charles Finney, arguably stands in the latter category. Finney's connection to Edwards is real, but complex, and he himself fell under the influence of the New England theology movement rightly rejected by our Old School ancestors. I question whether Edwards would have recognized his so-called disciples among the proponents of the New Divinity. There are also entrees on historical events like Queen Anne's War and the Great Awakening, movements like Quakerism, and religions such as Islam.

As with any book written by fallen, even if restored, human authors, this volume undoubtedly possesses entrees that will be less than pleasing. Perhaps some of these will be the result of skewed perspective. Others will be problematic because they raise issues of complexity and concern in Edwards's thought (his idealism/immaterialism comes to mind). Some problems arise because theological topics are handled by non-Reformed believing Christian scholars or by liberal scholars or even by non-Christian scholars. This is not to say that none of these scholars can contribute to the learned discussion about Edwards. It is simply to recognize that not all scholars read Edwards for spiritual or spiritually uplifting intellectual edification. Many scholars read Edwards with various self-conscious or unself-conscious axes to grind, such as Marxist or feminist lenses to give but two (sometimes combined) examples. It is ironic that the theologian who stressed the distinction between speculative and spiritual understanding has been, and is currently, the subject of non-Christian scholarship.

Having said all this, I highly recommend *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*. You are not likely to find a better single source volume that covers so many of the issues related to Edwards. I envision this book providing the impetus for further Edwards research. That is a good thing. Even better would be that the Triune God of Edwards would be introduced to readers who might not otherwise come to learn of him.

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ServantPoetry

A New England Gentleman's Epitaph

by Thomas Dudley (1576–1653)

DIM eyes, deaf ears, cold stomach show
My dissolution is in view;
Eleven times seven near lived have I,
And now God calls, I willing die:
My shuttle's shot, my race is run,
My sun is set, my deed is done;
My span is measur'd, tale is told,
My flower is faded and grown old,
My dream is vanish'd, shadow 's fled,
My soul with Christ, my body dead;
Farewell dear wife, children and friends,
Hate heresy, make blessed ends;
Bear poverty, live with good men,
So shall we meet with joy again.

Let men of God in courts and churches watch
O'er such as do a toleration hatch;
Lest that ill egg bring forth a cockatrice,
To poison all with heresy and vice.
If men be left, and otherwise combine,
My epitaph's, *I dy'd no libertine.*