

# Gender Identity



Ordained Servant

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### CURRENT ISSUE: GENDER IDENTITY

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#### *From the Editor*

As Paul tells us in Romans 1, abandoning the worship of the true and living God always ends up distorting our humanity as God's image bearers who are in need of redemption. In the Western world the nature of our humanity is up for grabs. From designer babies to sex change operations, we are surrounded by the folly of seeking to redefine human nature. There is no more controversial topic in our culture than gender identity. Its practical implications physically, mentally, and spiritually are far reaching. Andy Wilson offers a thoughtful examination of a passage in the ESV that could be used to promote the notion that homosexual orientation is a legitimate category of identity.

David Noe and Joseph Tipton present the second of five parts of a new translation of "Chrysostom's Commentary on Galatians." Chrysostom's sharp logic and terse challenges to opponents display a fine pastoral intention. He defends the two natures of Christ and the essential goodness of God's creation, especially the goodness of our creaturely existence, apart from the corruption due to sin. Always a pertinent message.

Charles Wingard's review article, "Pastors Need Pastoral Care, Too," is a review of Brian Croft and Jim Savastio, *The Pastor's Soul*. The emphasis on self-care is especially necessary in the modern situation of caring for a pastor.

Shane Lems reviews a book of essays for elders and deacons, *Faithful and Fruitful*. As Reformed churches have become more faithful in the training of elders and deacons, more resources have become available. This book sounds like a practical aid in several areas of ministry not covered by other similar works.

Allen Tomlinson reviews Ryan McGraw's *The Ark of Safety: Is There Salvation Outside of the Church?* Amid the atmosphere of radical individualism in which we live and breathe the doctrine of the church is an essential antidote to this poison.

This month we have another Milton sonnet: "Sonnet 7: How Soon Hath Time." This poem was composed around Milton's twenty-third birthday. As Leland Ryken notes, the first eight lines (octave) present the problem, in this case senior panic about the future and the rapid passage of time. The last six lines (sestet) resolve the problem with "an explicitly Christian consolation,"<sup>1</sup> which stands in sharp contrast with a famous twentieth-century poem by Dylan Thomas, "Poem in October." It begins, "It was my thirtieth year to heaven," and ends with the foreboding line, "though the town below lay leaved in October blood."<sup>2</sup>

Blessings in the Lamb, Gregory Edward Reynolds

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<sup>1</sup> Leland Ryken, ed., *The Soul in Paraphrase: A Treasury of Classic Devotional Poems* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 120–21.

<sup>2</sup> Dylan Thomas, *Collected Poems: 1934–1952*, Everyman's Library, vol. 581 (London: Dent, 1966), 95–97.

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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 Truth

## The ESV and Homosexual Identity

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by Andy Wilson

In recent years, a controversy has emerged in evangelical and Reformed circles over the manner in which some of those who belong to these traditions are dealing with the issue of homosexuality. These Christians contend that a homosexual orientation is something that is fixed, innate, and given by God, and that same-sex attraction (SSA) is not sinful in and of itself but is a result of the fall akin to a physical disability. In their view, those who experience SSA are not morally culpable for being sexually attracted to members of their own sex but are simply responding to beauty as they were created to respond to it. This position has come to be known by the designations “Spiritual Friendship” and “Side B.” It is distinguished from the much more liberal stance advocated by what is known as “Side A,” which says that homosexual practice is morally acceptable for professing Christians. Proponents of Side B are not willing to go that far, as they maintain that homosexual behavior is prohibited by God. Nevertheless, they insist upon seeing homosexual orientation as a legitimate category of identity, and they encourage those who experience SSA to express their orientation without engaging in homosexual intercourse. As Wesley Hill, an advocate for Side B, explains,

In my experience, at least, being gay colors everything about me, even though I am celibate. It’s less a separable piece of my experience, like a shelf in my office, which is indistinguishable from the other shelves, and more like a proverbial drop of ink in a glass of water.”<sup>1</sup>

Hill adds, “My question, at root, is how I can steward and sanctify my homosexual orientation in such a way that it can be a doorway to blessing and grace.”<sup>2</sup> It certainly resonates with the prevailing thinking in our culture to embrace homosexual orientation as a classification of personhood. In this way, proponents of Side B display one of the key traits of contemporary evangelicalism: the tendency to look for ways to affirm things that are culturally popular while downplaying aspects of Christian teaching that are culturally offensive.

It is not surprising that the Bible translation of choice for many evangelicals, the English Standard Version (ESV), shows signs of being influenced by the idea that homosexual orientation is a legitimate category of identity.<sup>3</sup> This is evident in the ESV’s

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<sup>1</sup> Wesley Hill, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015), 80.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, 78.

<sup>3</sup> I am not suggesting that the ESV is a full-blown endorser of Side B thinking. The point under consideration is that the ESV’s rendering of certain passages suggests that it affirms the validity of the

handling of two New Testament passages that deal with the subject of homosexuality: 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. In 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth of their calling to live holy lives, saying,

<sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

In verse 9, the ESV translates two Greek terms *μαλακοὶ* (*malakoi*) and *ἀρσενοκοῖται* (*arsenokoitai*) with the single phrase “men who practice homosexuality,” explaining in a footnote that “The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts.” Other major English versions translate these two terms as: “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” (KJV); “sexual perverts” (RSV); “effeminate” and “homosexuals” (NASB); and “men who have sex with men” (NIV).<sup>4</sup> The first term, *μαλακοὶ* (*malakoi*), occurs with some frequency in ancient Greek literature and has a broad range of meaning. In his comprehensive volume on the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality, Robert Gagnon argues convincingly that in 1 Corinthians 6:9 *μαλακοὶ* (*malakoi*) “should be understood as the passive partners in homosexual intercourse, the most egregious case of which are those who also intentionally engage in a process of feminization to erase further their masculine appearance and manner.”<sup>5</sup>

As for *ἀρσενοκοίταις* (*arsenokoitais*), this term appears again in 1 Timothy 1:10 in a list in which Paul is summarizing the sins that are condemned by the Decalogue. As in 1 Corinthians 6:9, the ESV translates *ἀρσενοκοίταις* (*arsenokoitais*) in 1 Timothy 1:10 as “men who practice homosexuality.” Other major English versions translate it as: “them that defile themselves with mankind” (KJV); “sodomites” (RSV); “homosexuals” (NASB); “those practicing homosexuality” (NIV).<sup>6</sup> There are no known occurrences of *ἀρσενοκοίταις* (*arsenokoitais*) prior to Paul, so it is likely that he coined this word himself. It is a compound of *ἄρσεν* (*arsēn*; “man”) and *κοίτη* (*koitē*; “bed”), which are used in conjunction with each other in the condemnations of homosexuality in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 (LXX). The background, etymology, and immediate context for Paul’s uses of *ἀρσενοκοίταις* (*arsenokoitais*) in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 indicate that he uses it broadly to refer to men who have sexual intercourse with other men.

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notion of homosexual orientation, which is at the root of Side B thinking. Homosexual orientation was being discussed in biblical scholarship long before the ESV was first published in 2001. For example, in BDAG’s entry for *ἀρσενοκοίτης*, the journal article that is cited in support of the decision to separate orientation from practice in the definition of this term was written by William L. Petersen in 1986.

<sup>4</sup> This is from the 2011 update of the NIV. The original NIV had “male prostitutes” and “homosexual offenders.”

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 312.

<sup>6</sup> This is from the 2011 update of the NIV. The original NIV had “perverts.”

The particular issue under consideration is the ESV's decision to give further specificity in its translation of these terms by employing the verb "practice."<sup>7</sup> Is this warranted? In the Greek text, neither passage contains a verb that could be translated as "practice." Both passages consist of lists of nouns (or adjectives used as substantives). It is true that most of the terms in these lists describe people who engage in certain sinful practices or behaviors, but the ESV does not render the other words in the lists with phrases like "those who practice idolatry," "those who practice sexual immorality," "those who practice thievery," etc. Why then does it do so with homosexuality? Why not simply say "homosexuals"? After all, this is the term that is used in our culture to describe people who practice homosexuality. More importantly, Paul explicitly condemns homosexual desire alongside homosexual activity in Romans 1, and Scripture consistently teaches that all inclinations towards sin are themselves sinful and are to be dealt with as such. (see Matt. 15:18–20; 18:8–9; Rom. 13:13–14; Gal. 5:16–17; Col. 3:5; James 1:14–15). These are the key factors that should be taken into account when translating biblical terms (one of which Paul probably coined) that describe homosexuality. But the ESV translates these terms in a manner that leaves room for the notion that the Bible does not condemn embracing a homosexual identity but only condemns committing homosexual acts. Perhaps this is not what the translators intended to convey. At the very least, they appear to have been influenced by the fact that our culture conceives of homosexuality not only in terms of sexual activity but also in terms of sexual orientation. The American Psychological Association defines sexual orientation as:

An enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors and membership in a community of others who share those attractions.<sup>8</sup>

The assumption that homosexual orientation is a legitimate category of identity is something that must be tested against the teaching of Scripture. When it is, it is found to conflict with the Bible's doctrine of sin, as is shown in the paragraphs below. The embrace of homosexual orientation as a classification of personhood stands as an example of how, in the words of David Wells, "We reject reality as [God] has defined it" and "redefine our world and ourselves in order to accommodate our rebellion."<sup>9</sup>

When a passage of Scripture uses terms that describe people who engage in sinful behaviors, these terms should not be translated or interpreted in a manner that appears to

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<sup>7</sup> Other recent translations, including the 2011 NIV update, the NLT, the NET, and the CSB, handle these passages in the same basic manner. Interestingly, the NET includes the following explanatory footnote for both passages: "Since there is a distinction in contemporary usage between sexual orientation and actual behavior, the qualification 'practicing' was supplied in the translation, following the emphasis in BDAG." While the NET cites BDAG for support, BDAG's entry for ἀρσενικοίτης simply follows William L. Petersen in assuming the validity of the contemporary notion of sexual orientation.

<sup>8</sup> "Answers to Your Questions: For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality," American Psychological Association, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.pdf>, accessed October 7, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> David F. Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Reformation Faith in Today's World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 70.

isolate the behaviors from the inward dispositions and thoughts that give birth to these sinful behaviors. This should be clear in light of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, where he says that a person can be guilty of murder or adultery without actually putting these sins into practice (see Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28). Any inclination towards sin is a violation of the law. This remains the case even when different variables intersect with each other and contribute to sinful predispositions. From the standpoint of Scripture, human sexuality is not merely a matter of biology and psychology but is first and foremost a matter of morality. The only sense in which there is such a thing as an adulterer, fornicator, or homosexual is in an ethical sense. Any inclination toward these sins is sinful, even if they are not put into practice. The fact that the Bible condemns both homosexual desire and homosexual activity means that it also condemns locating one's identity in a supposed homosexual orientation.

Some Side B proponents claim that support for the notion of a morally neutral homosexual orientation is found in Matthew 19:12, where Jesus says, "there are eunuchs who have been so from birth." The problem with this argument is that it equates a congenital defect, which is of a physical nature, with a disordered desire, which is of an ethical nature. Moreover, the claim that those who experience SSA are simply "born that way" is scientifically unfounded. A recent study of over 500,000 people found that it is impossible to predict same-sex behavior on the basis of genetic factors.<sup>10</sup> While there are a number of variables that can contribute to SSA, the bottom line for Christians is that the Scriptures consistently deal with homosexual desire and activity as a matter of ethical perversion.

It is true that salvation is offered to homosexuals every bit as much as it is offered to other sinners. But salvation is offered to homosexuals on the same terms that it is offered to other sinners: on the terms of faith and repentance. And as the Westminster Shorter Catechism explains, "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience" (WSC 87). To locate one's identity in a specific sin is to fail to turn from it to God in true repentance.

When Christians discuss homosexuality, the focus is often upon whether a homosexual orientation can be changed. To frame the issue in this manner is to beg the question. It is to assume that sexual orientation is a biblical category when it is not. The real issue is whether a person will let go of unbiblical ways of thinking and submit to God's Word so that he or she can be transformed by the renewing of his or her mind. The specific ways in which this transformation takes place will vary from believer to believer, and will never be without struggle. As with other sins, sexual sin can become deeply ingrained through habits of thought and behavior. This is not only true with regard to homosexuality. Those who have engaged in pornography use, sexual fantasizing, and masturbation often find that those sins cling so closely that the struggle against them seems unceasing. Nevertheless, every Christian is called, in reliance upon the promises of the gospel and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to persevere in putting sinful patterns of thought and behavior to death and to live to God. Some of those who come to

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<sup>10</sup> "Massive Study Finds No Single Genetic Cause of Same-Sex Sexual Behavior," Sara Reardon, *Scientific American*, August 29, 2019, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/massive-study-finds-no-single-genetic-cause-of-same-sex-sexual-behavior/>, accessed September 24, 2019.

Christ out of a homosexual background will live to God in heterosexual marriages. Others will live to God as singles. The common denominator is that both groups can testify that they are no longer what they once were. They were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. Of course, like all Christians, they still have to struggle against temptation. But even when temptation arises from inside themselves, it does not define who they are. Their identity is now in Christ. Temptation is evidence of the unwelcome presence of indwelling sin in “this body of death,” in which we groan as we await the consummation of our redemption (see Rom. 7:15–8:25). The way to respond to this is not to try to excuse our sin, but to let God’s law expose it so that we may be continually driven out of ourselves to Christ.<sup>11</sup>

The ESV’s popularity is well-deserved. Its “essentially literal” translation philosophy has produced a Bible in contemporary English that is highly readable and largely reflective of the wording of the original text. That being said, no Bible translation is beyond criticism. As this article has shown, the ESV’s rendering of the terms *μαλακοὶ* (*malakoi*) and *ἀρσενικοῖται* (*arsenokoitai*) has the potential to reinforce an idea that conflicts with the teaching of Scripture. Given our culture’s widespread acceptance of the unbiblical notion that homosexual orientation is a category of identity, it would be far better to render these words in a manner similar to the NASB, which translates *μαλακοὶ* (*malakoi*) as “effeminate” and *ἀρσενικοῖται* (*arsenokoitai*) as “homosexuals.” This more clearly conveys that the Bible not only declares homosexual practice to be a violation of God’s law, but also calls people to repent of homosexual desires and the false notion of homosexual identity. The church must not be ashamed of saying this. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Nothing can be more cruel than the tenderness that consigns another to his sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe rebuke that calls a brother back from the path of sin.”<sup>12</sup> Sin is not something that can be stewarded and turned into “a doorway to blessing.” Sin is something that must be daily put to death. This is why homosexuals are not helped when Christians try to minister to them by telling them that it is good for them to identify as homosexuals. As R.C. Sproul once explained,

The problem is that so many have bought the myth that they are intrinsically homosexuals. . . . What we must do in order to help them is begin with this fundamental thesis: Biologically, essentially, and intrinsically, there is no such thing as a homosexual. Let me say that again. Biologically, essentially, and intrinsically, there is no such thing as a homosexual.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This theme is developed at length in *The Marrow of The Marrow of Modern Divinity: A Simplification of Edward Fisher’s Seventeenth-Century Classic*, edited and revised by Andy Wilson, (Independently published, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), 107.

<sup>13</sup> “Homosexuality,” R.C. Sproul, Ligonier Ministries, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/homosexuality/homosexuality/>, accessed October 7, 2019.

# ServantClassics

## *The Commentary of John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople and our Father among the Saints, on the Letter to the Galatians*<sup>1</sup>

### Parts 1 & 2

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by David C. Noe and Joseph A. Tipton

#### **Part 1**

This introduction teems with much passion and great fervor. In fact not only the introduction, but indeed the whole letter, so to speak, is like this as well. For those who always speak calmly to their students, when the students require sternness, this is characteristic not of a teacher, but of a corrupter and an enemy. Consequently even our Lord, though he often spoke gently with his disciples, sometimes used a more rough style, at one time blessing, at another rebuking. So when he announced that he will lay the foundations of the church on Peter's confession, he said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah."<sup>2</sup> But not long after these words he said: "Get behind me, Satan. You are my stumbling block."<sup>3</sup> And in another passage, again, he said "Are you also so completely foolish?"<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he inspired them with such fear that even John said that when they saw him conversing with the Samaritan woman and reminded him about eating, yet: "No one dared to say to him, 'What are you looking for?' or 'Why are you talking with her?'"<sup>5</sup> Paul understood this, and following in the steps of his teacher he varied his speech with an eye to the need of his students, at one time cauterizing and cutting, and at another applying a gentle salve. Thus to the Corinthians he said: "What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod, or in love and the spirit of gentleness?"<sup>6</sup> Yet with the Galatians he took a different tack, "O you foolish Galatians."<sup>7</sup> And not just once but even a second time he employed this sort of threatening. He upbraided them at the end of the work, saying, "Let no one cause me troubles."<sup>8</sup> And again he seeks to minister

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<sup>1</sup> This translation is based on the text provided in *Sancti Patris Nostri Joannis Chrysostomi, In Divi Pauli Epistolam Ad Galatas Commentaria*, Oxford 1852, Field.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 16:17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., v. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 15:16.

<sup>5</sup> John 4:27.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:21.

<sup>7</sup> Galatians 3:1.

<sup>8</sup> Galatians 6:17.

gently as when he says, “My little children, whom I again bring forth with labor pains.”<sup>9</sup> There are in fact many such expressions as these.

But it is evident to all, even on a first reading, that this letter is full of passion. So we must explain what it was that had aroused Paul’s anger against his students. For it was no minor issue, nor something trivial, since Paul would not have employed such a marked thrust.<sup>10</sup> Becoming angry in the face of misfortunes is typical of cowardly, cruel, and miserable men, just as losing nerve at major obstacles is the habit of those more sluggish and duller. But Paul is not such a person. So then, what was the particular sin that had stirred him up? It was something great and excessive, and something alienating them all from Christ, as he himself said a little further on: “Look! I Paul tell you plainly that if you submit to circumcision, Christ will do you no good at all.”<sup>11</sup> And again, “Whoever of you seek to be justified by the law, you have disqualified yourselves for grace.” So what in the world was this sin? We must identify it rather precisely: those of the Jews who had come to faith were at the same time both holding to their former commitment to Judaism and inebriated by empty doctrine. And wanting to arrogate to themselves the prerogatives of teachers, going to the people of Galatia they began to teach that it was necessary to be circumcised, and to keep sabbaths and new-moons, and not to tolerate Paul who was removing such practices. “For Peter, James, and John (the first<sup>12</sup> of the apostles who were with Christ),” they say, “do not forbid such practices.” And truly they did not forbid them. Yet in doing this they were not presenting it as authoritative teaching, but rather accommodating the weakness of the believers who came from the Jews. But Paul, because he was preaching to the Gentiles, had no need of such accommodation. Therefore, when he was in Judea, he himself also employed this sort of accommodation. But his opponents, in their deception, were not stating the reasons why both Paul and the other apostles were making an accommodation. Instead, they deceived the weaker brothers in claiming that they should not tolerate Paul. For he had shown up “yesterday and a moment ago,” while they had been with Peter. He had become a disciple of the apostles, while they were disciples of Christ. And he was by himself, while they were many, and the pillars of the church. So they were casting at him the charge of hypocrisy, alleging that he was himself abrogating circumcision, “though he has clearly made use of such things elsewhere, and preaches one thing to us, but differently to others.”

Therefore when Paul saw that the whole gentile world was aflame, that a troubling fire had been lit against the church of the Galatians, and that the whole structure was tottering and ran the risk of falling, he was gripped on the one side with righteous anger, and on the other with despair. He made this very clear indeed when he said, “I wanted to be present with you then, and to change my tone.”<sup>13</sup> He is writing the letter to respond to all this. And from these opening comments he refers to that which they were saying while undermining his reputation, saying that the others were disciples of Christ, though Paul himself was a disciple of the apostles. Thus he began like this: “Paul, an apostle, not from

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<sup>9</sup> Galatians 4:19.

<sup>10</sup> The vivid metaphor Chrysostom employs here is military. *καταφορά* (*kataphora*), prevalent in the Roman historians Polybius, Josephus, and others, is typically used to describe the sudden downward stroke of a sword.

<sup>11</sup> Galatians 5:2.

<sup>12</sup> *πρῶτοι* (*prōtoi*) indicates both chronological priority and preeminence.

<sup>13</sup> Galatians 4:20.

men nor through men.”<sup>14</sup> For those cheats were saying (as I mentioned before) that he was the last of all the apostles, and had been taught by them. For Peter and James and John were called first, and were the main leaders of the disciples. They received their teaching from Christ, and thus more obedience was owed them than him. They, moreover, did not forbid circumcision nor keeping the law. Thus making these claims and others like them, Paul’s opponents were seeking to diminish him, and were at the same time exalting the glory of the other apostles. This they did not in order to extol them, but that they might deceive the Galatians by inappropriately persuading them to pay attention to the law. So naturally he began in this fashion. For because they were treating his teaching with contempt, saying that it was from men, while Peter’s was from Christ, he immediately, from the introduction, set himself against this notion, stating that he was an apostle “not from men, nor through men.” For Ananias baptized Paul,<sup>15</sup> but he had not freed him from error, and did not lead him to faith. Instead, Christ himself after ascending sent that astounding voice to him, through which the Lord caught him like a fish. For while Christ was walking along the sea, he called Peter and his brother, and John and his brother. But Paul he called after ascending to heaven. And just as the other men did not need a second voice but immediately, dropping their nets and all their other affairs, followed him, so Paul also from that first call ascended to the most important position, was baptized, and undertook an implacable war against the Jews. And it was in this respect most of all that he surpassed the other apostles. “For I labored more than they,” he said.<sup>16</sup> But for the time being he does not argue this. Rather, Paul is content in claiming equality with the other apostles. For he was eager not to show that he surpassed them, but to refute the premise of the error. Thus his first statement, “not from men,” was common to all men. For the gospel has its origin and root from above. But the second statement, “not through men,” is particular to the apostles. For Christ did not call them “through men,” but of his own accord “through himself.”

Why did he not mention his call and say “Paul, called not from men,” but instead mentioned his apostleship? It is because his whole argument concerned this point. For his opponents said that the apostles had been entrusted with this teaching by men, and thus it was necessary for him to follow them. But Luke made clear that it was not delivered to him “from men” when he wrote: “And while they were worshipping and fasting before the Lord, the Holy Spirit said ‘Now set apart for me Paul and Barnabas.’”<sup>17</sup> From this it is clear that the authority of the Son and the Spirit is one. For Paul says that in being sent by the Spirit, he was sent by Christ. And it is clear from elsewhere that Paul attributes the things of God to the Spirit. Thus when he is speaking to the elders of Miletus he says, “Keep watch for yourselves and for the flock over which the Holy Spirit has set you as pastors and overseers.”<sup>18</sup> And yet he says in another letter, “Those whom God has established in the church, first apostles, second prophets, then pastors and teachers.”<sup>19</sup> So

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1:1a.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 9:18.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:10.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 13:2.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Acts 20:28ff.

<sup>19</sup> Chrysostom has here conflated, whether deliberately or as a consequence of quoting from memory, two different passages: Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. From the latter he took the words οὗς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, (*hous men etheto ho theos en tē*

he uses this expression indiscriminately, saying that the things of the Spirit are of God, and those of God are of the Spirit. And in another way, he also stops up the mouths of heretics, saying “through Jesus Christ and God his Father.”<sup>20</sup> For because heretics say that this word was attributed to the Son as though he were lesser, see what Paul does: he uses the word in the case of the Father, thereby teaching us not to apply any principle whatsoever to an inexpressible nature, not to establish measures or degrees of divinity between the Son and the Father. For after he said “through Jesus Christ,” he added “God the Father.” If in mentioning the Father by himself he had said “through whom,” then they would have devised some sophism,<sup>21</sup> saying that this expression “through whom” is applied to the Father, since the works of the Son reflect on him. And yet Paul mentions the Son and the Father at the same time; and in applying this expression to them jointly he no longer allows their argument any place. For he does not do this as though attributing now the deeds of the Son to the Father. No, he shows that this expression admits no difference in substance whatsoever. And what then would those say who, with respect to baptism, consider it somehow lesser because one is baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit? For if the Son were lesser than the Father, then what would they say now that the apostle here begins with Christ then moves on to the Father? But we shall speak no such blasphemy. We must not in contending with them depart from the truth. No, even if they should rage ten thousand times, we must keep our eyes on the standards of piety. Therefore, just as we would not say that the Son is greater than the Father simply because he mentioned Christ first—for that would be the very height of absurd foolishness and consummate impiety—so neither would we say that because the Son is placed after the Father, we must suppose that the Son is lesser than the Father.

Next we read “who raised him from the dead.”<sup>22</sup> What are you doing, Paul? Though you desire to lead the Judaizing men to faith, you do not bring before them any of those great and brilliant expressions such as you wrote to the Philippians. You said, for example, “Though being in the form of God he did not consider equality with God something to be laid hold of.”<sup>23</sup> You also later said to the Hebrews that “He is the radiance of God’s glory, and the express image of his nature.”<sup>24</sup> And then the son of thunder in his introductory words shouted forth that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”<sup>25</sup> Many times Jesus himself, when discussing<sup>26</sup> with the Jews, used to say that he is as powerful as the Father, and that he

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*ekklēsia prōton apostolous, deuteron prophētas*), while he finished the quote with a portion from Ephesians 4, namely ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους (*poimēnas kai didaskalous*).

<sup>20</sup> Galatians 1:1b.

<sup>21</sup> Chrysostom uses here the verb σοφίζω (*sophizō*), “to act like a sophist.” In this he alludes to a long tradition stretching back to Gorgias, Prodicus, and other opponents of Socrates in the Platonic dialogues who made the weaker argument the stronger.

<sup>22</sup> Galatians 1:1c.

<sup>23</sup> Philippians 2:6.

<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 1:3.

<sup>25</sup> John 1:1.

<sup>26</sup> Chrysostom uses here the somewhat unusual participle φθηγόμενος (*phthengomenos*). This is done apparently *variationis causa*, since he has in previous sentences made use of a range of synonyms including γράφω (*graphō*), λέγω (*legō*), ἀναφωνέω (*anaphōneō*), and ἀναβοάω (*anaboāō*).

possesses the same authority.<sup>27</sup> But do you, Paul, not say here any of those things? Instead, omitting them all, do you mention Christ's dispensation according to the flesh, making his cross and death the main point? "Yes," he says. For if Paul were addressing people who had no grand conception about Christ, then saying those things would be called for. But since those who believe that they will be punished if they depart from the law are opposing us, Paul thus mentions the acts through which Christ abolishes the need of the law. I mean, to be precise, the benefit that arose for all from his cross and resurrection. For the statement "in the beginning was the Word," and "He was in the form of God" and "making himself equal to God" and all such—these would suit someone demonstrating the divinity of the Word, not someone adding anything to the present topic. But the statement "who raised Him from the dead" is characteristic of someone calling to mind the chief point of the kindness on our behalf, the very thing that serves Paul's purpose for the question under discussion. For many people are in the habit of not attending to words that represent God's majesty as much as they are to those that manifest his kindness toward men. Therefore, declining to say those kinds of things he spoke about the kindness that was done for us.

## Part 2

But then heretics counterattack, saying, "Look, the Father raises the Son." But now that they have become diseased, they are willingly deaf to lofty doctrines and select the lowly doctrines as well. And these statements were expressed this way: 1) for the sake of the flesh, 2) for the Father's honor, or 3) for some other purpose. The heretics, by selecting from among these and scrutinizing them one by one, disparage themselves (for I would not say that they succeed in harming the Scriptures). Such persons I would gladly ask, "Why do you make such claims? Do you want to prove that the Son is weak and not strong enough for the resurrection of a single body?" And truly, faith in him made even the shadows of those who believed in him raise the dead.<sup>28</sup> Then those men who were believing on Him, though remaining still mortal, by the mere shadow of their earthen bodies and from the shadow of the clothes that were attached to those bodies raised the dead.<sup>29</sup> And yet Christ was not strong enough to raise himself? So then how is this lunacy not obvious, and the intensity of this madness? Did you hear him saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up?"<sup>30</sup> And again, "I have the authority to lay down my life, and I have the authority to take it back again?"<sup>31</sup> Why then is the Father said to have raised him up? To show that the Father does all the same things as the Son. And yet this is especially said for the sake of the honor that is due the Father and for the weakness of the listeners.

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<sup>27</sup> In his use of the terms *δύναται* (*dunatai*) and *ἐξουσίαν* (*exousian*), Chrysostom registers the long-held distinction between ability and authority and ascribes both to Christ. This distinction is perhaps more common to students of the Latin language, where it is represented by the terms *potentia* and *potestas*. Though the two do not mutually entail the other, in the persons of the Trinity the distinction is not consequential.

<sup>28</sup> Acts 5:15.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 19:12.

<sup>30</sup> John 2:19

<sup>31</sup> John 10:18.

Paul says, “And all the brothers that are with me”<sup>32</sup> Why has he never once done this elsewhere in the course of his letter writing? In other places he provides only his own name, or that of two or three others by name. Here he speaks in terms of a whole group, and consequently does not mention anyone by name. So why does he do this? His opponents were slandering him as the only one who was preaching as he did, and that he was introducing something new into his doctrines. Thus, because he wanted to remove suspicion and show that he counted many who shared his opinion, he wrote the “brothers.” By this he makes clear that the very things he is writing, he also writes in accordance with their judgment.

Next he adds “to the churches of Galatia.”<sup>33</sup> For this fire of false teaching was spreading not just to one city, nor two or three, but to the whole nation of the Galatians. Look with me here how Paul felt so much indignation. For he did not say, “to the beloved,” nor “to the saints,” but “to the churches of Galatia.” This expression was indicative of someone irritated in spirit and exhibiting his distress, that is, not addressing them by their names with love nor with honor, but by their assembly only. And he does not address them as the churches *of God* either, but simply “the churches of Galatia.” In addition, he hurries to engage the rebellious element. Therefore, he also used the name “church,” shaming<sup>34</sup> them, and drawing them into unity. For since they were divided into many factions, they could not be addressed by this title. For the designation “church” is a designation of harmony and concord.

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>35</sup> Paul everywhere uses this tag by necessity, but he especially does so now when writing to the Galatians. Since they were in danger of falling from grace, he prays that it might be restored to them yet again. Since they made themselves God’s enemies, he beseeches God to lead them back again to that same peace. He says, “God our Father.”<sup>36</sup> And here the heretics again are easily caught. For they claim that when John in the introduction to his Gospel says, “And the Word was God,”<sup>37</sup> he says this clause without an article for this reason: so as to diminish the divinity of the Son. And again that when Paul says the Son is “in the likeness of God,”<sup>38</sup> he did not say that concerning the Father, because of the fact that this too is used without the article, what answer would they make here when Paul says, not, “from God”<sup>39</sup> but, “from God the Father”?

Then he calls God “Father,” not with a view to flattering them, but vigorously upbraiding and reminding them of the reason why they have become sons. For it was not through the Law, but through the washing of regeneration that they were counted worthy of that honor. Therefore, he sows the traces of God’s kindness everywhere, even in his introduction, as though he were saying, “How is that you, who were slaves and enemies and estranged from God, suddenly call him Father? Surely it is not the Law that gave you this kinship? Why then indeed, abandoning the one who has led you so close to him, are

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<sup>32</sup> Galatians 1:2a.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 1:2b.

<sup>34</sup> The word Chrysostom uses here, ἐντρέπων (*entrepōn*), Paul employs in a similar context in I Cor. 4:14.

<sup>35</sup> Galatians 1:3.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 1:4.

<sup>37</sup> John 1:1.

<sup>38</sup> Heb. 1:3.

<sup>39</sup> Here the article τοῦ (*του*) is used with θεοῦ (*theou*), while in the subsequent clause it is anarthrous.

you running back to your tutor?”<sup>40</sup> It is not only in the case of Father, but also in that of the Son that these titles suffice for demonstrating their benefaction. For the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when carefully examined, clearly shows all his kindness. Indeed, he shall be called Jesus for this reason, it says, “Because he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>41</sup> And the appellation “Christ” calls to mind the anointing of the Spirit.

We come next to the phrase “who gave himself for our sins.”<sup>42</sup> Do you see that he did not merely submit to the service of a slave nor a compulsory service, nor was he handed over by someone else, but rather “gave himself”? Consequently, whenever you hear John saying that the Father gave his only-begotten Son for our sakes, do not for this reason disparage the value of the Only-begotten, nor suspect anything merely human is meant. Even if the Father is said to have given him up, this is not said in order that you should consider his service that of a slave, but in order that you might understand that this was also acceptable to the Father. The very thing Paul here makes clear when he says, “According to the will of our God and Father.”<sup>43</sup> It is not “according to a command” but “according to the will.” For since the will of the Father and the Son is one, whatsoever the Son desired, these things also the Father willed.<sup>44</sup> Next we read, “For our sins.”<sup>45</sup> We pierced ourselves, he says, with a thousand evils, and were liable to the harshest punishment. And the law did not free us but condemned us in rendering our sin more manifest and not being able to free us or turn God away from his anger. But the Son of God both made possible that which was impossible – doing away with our sins and turning us from enemies to his friends – and gracing us with myriad other good things.

So Paul next says, “That he may free us from this present evil age.”<sup>46</sup> Other heretics again snatch at this phrase, casting aspersions on this present life and using Paul’s testimony to do so. “For look,” the heretic says, “Paul has dubbed the present age evil.” And tell me, then, what is an age? Time, measured in days and hours. So what? Is the mere passing of the days evil, and the course of the sun too?<sup>47</sup> No one would ever say that, even if he veers to the extremes of stupidity. “But he did not say ‘time’,” the heretic says, “no, he called the present life evil.” And to be sure the actual words do not say this. But you do not stop at those words which you twisted into an accusation: instead, you are hacking out a path for your own interpretation. You will therefore permit us also to interpret what has been said, all the more so since what we say is pious and reasonable. So then what should we say? That none of those evils would ever be responsible for good things, and yet this present life is responsible for thousands of crowns and such great rewards. The blessed Paul himself, at any rate, unmistakably praises this life when he says as follows: “If my living is in the flesh, this is for me fruitful labor; and as to what I shall chose, I do not know.”<sup>48</sup> And as he sets before himself the choice between living

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<sup>40</sup> Chrysostom here references Galatians 3:24, in which Paul compares the Mosaic Law to a tutor, leading the underage Israel to himself.

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 1:21.

<sup>42</sup> Galatians 1:4a.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 1:4c.

<sup>44</sup> Chrysostom here varies the vocabulary in each clause, from ἐβούλετο (*ebouleto*) in the first to ἠθέλην (*ethelen*) in the second. Presumably this is to demonstrate both the unity and distinction of the will of the Father and Son in their intra-Trinitarian relationship.

<sup>45</sup> Galatians 1:4a.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1:4b.

<sup>47</sup> Chrysostom means here that by which the days are measured, i.e. the sun’s rising and setting.

<sup>48</sup> Philippians 1:22.

here and casting off this life to be with Christ, he prefers to pass through the present life. But if it were evil, then he would not have said such things in his own case, nor would anyone else be able to make use of it for the end of virtue, no matter how zealously intent on doing so. For no one could ever use wickedness and turn it to a good end. Such a person could not use prostitution as a stimulant to self-control nor envy as a goad to friendliness.

For indeed, Paul says about the presumption of the flesh that “it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it do so,”<sup>49</sup> he means this, that wickedness which remains wickedness cannot be virtue. Consequently, whenever you hear “wicked age,” understand that it means that its deeds are wicked, that its will has been corrupted. For neither did Christ come in order that he might kill us and lead us away from the present life, but that, when he has freed us from this world, he might make us ready to become worthy of dwelling in heaven. For this reason he said while speaking with his Father: “They are also in the world, and I am coming to you. . . I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one,”<sup>50</sup> that is, from wickedness. And if you are not content with these words, but still persist in holding that this present life is evil, you should not criticize those who commit suicide. For just as he who extricates himself from wickedness does not deserve reproaches but rather commendation, so also the man who ends his own life by a violent death as through hanging or other things like that would not, according to you, deserve to be blamed. But as it is God punishes such persons more than murderers, and all of us, quite appropriately, find such persons loathsome. For if it is not a good thing to destroy other persons, it is much more ignoble to kill oneself. Yet if the present life is evil, we ought to reward murderers, because they free us from that evil!

Still, apart from these things, they also trip themselves up because of what they themselves say. For when they claim that the sun is god, and after that the moon, and they worship these as the causes of many good things, they make mutually contradictory statements. For the use of these and other heavenly bodies does nothing else but contribute to the present life for us, which they call evil, sustaining and illuminating various objects and bringing fruits to their ripeness. So how then do those who are gods in your view introduce into the composition of an evil life such a great public benefit? But neither are the stars gods—heaven forbid; they are the works of God made for our use—nor is the world evil. But if you object to me that there are murderers, and adulterers, and grave robbers, I answer that these do not at all pertain to the present life. For such are not sins that come from life in the flesh, but from a corrupted will. Because if these were the deeds of the present life, as part and parcel with it, nobody would be free nor pure. Yet see how it is impossible for anyone to escape the peculiar qualities of life in the flesh. What are these? I mean things like eating, drinking, sleeping, growing, being hungry, thirsty, being born, dying, and all things similar to these. Nobody would be exempt from these things—not the sinner, not the righteous man, not a king nor private citizen—but we all are subject to the necessity of nature. Consequently, no one would escape the performance of even sinful acts, if such were apportioned to the nature of this life, as such actions are not.

Do not tell me that the those who succeed are scarce. For you will find that no one has ever overcome these natural necessities. So until even one person succeeding in being

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<sup>49</sup> Romans 8:7.

<sup>50</sup> John 17:11a, 15.

virtuous is found, your argument will not be at all diminished. What do you mean, you wretched and miserable man? Is the present life evil, when in it we have come to know God, in it we philosophize about the things to come, in it we have gone from being men to angels, and join in the chorus of the heavenly powers?<sup>51</sup> And what other proof will we look for that your understanding is evil and corrupted?

“Why then,” our opponent says, “did Paul say that the present age is evil?” He was using a common manner of speaking. For we are quite accustomed to say, “I had a bad day.” We mean by this not the time itself but lay the blame on what transpired or the circumstance. Thus, Paul used a common expression when he blamed acts of the wicked will. And he shows that Christ has both freed us from our former sins and secured our future. For by saying “who gave himself for our sins,” he made clear the former. And by adding “that he might free us from the present evil age,” he indicated safety for the future. For the law was weak compared to the one, but grace has proven effective against them both.<sup>52</sup>

Next we read, “according to the will of our God and Father.”<sup>53</sup> For because they thought that they were disobeying God, as the one who had given the Law, and they were afraid of abandoning the old covenant and come to the new, he also corrects this assumption of theirs by saying that these things also seemed good to the Father. And he did not say simply “the Father,” but “our Father.” So he uses that word immediately, reprimanding them by saying that Christ has made his Father our Father.

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<sup>51</sup> Chrysostom may have in mind such passages as Ephesians 2, where Christians are said to be “seated with Christ in the heavenly places.”

<sup>52</sup> Sc. present and future.

<sup>53</sup> Galatians 1:4c.

# ServantReading

## Pastors Need Pastoral Care, Too

### A Review Article

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by Charles Malcolm Wingard

*The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd*, by Brian Croft and Jim Savastio. Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2018, 160 pages, \$11.99, paper.

The good pastor lovingly looks after God's sheep; it's his duty, and he stands accountable to the Lord for those entrusted to his care. He finds satisfaction in his work as he becomes involved in the lives of his people. At times he rejoices with them—at other times, he weeps. He instructs the disciple, admonishes the erring, comforts the suffering, counsels the perplexed, and offers gospel hope to the despairing. Since God is for his elect people, the faithful pastor is for them, too.

But even the most faithful pastor is in trouble when he forgets that he is also a sheep—a man in need of the shepherding care of God's church. Sadly, the Christian landscape is strewn with ministers whose lives are in shambles. For many, it is an especially painful story because it is avoidable. Because in times of adversity, temptation, and discouragement, they chose to endure the hardship alone.

The pastor's self-care begins by remembering his need: he is a sinner. Like the people he serves, he is susceptible to temptation and falling, beset by weakness, and entirely dependent upon the grace of God in Christ. Knowing this, he takes refuge in the Great Shepherd who provides pastors to care for *all* his flock, including him.

My own personal experience has taught me the danger of being a pastor without a shepherd. Every year I read one or two books aimed at strengthening the pastor's self-care. This year, I read Brian Croft and Jim Savastio's *The Pastor's Soul*, and it was especially helpful.

Throughout this fine book, I found myself nodding my head in agreement with the authors. They stick to the basics, arranging their instruction and encouragement under four headings: "Biblical Commands Concerning a Pastor" (Savastio), "Pastoral Call of a Pastor" (Croft), "Spiritual Care of a Pastor" (Savastio), and "Physical Care of a Pastor" (Croft).

Part 1 exhorts the pastor to take heed to himself, and to his doctrine, and to his flock. The stakes are high: taking heed matters to God, to the pastor's conscience, to the pastor's flock, and to the world (55–59).

Despite the strong admonition, taking heed to one's self is easily pushed aside. Why? It requires effort, strenuous spiritual effort. When a man is alone and before the Lord, no crowd is watching. It's just him and the Lord—and sadly, it's easy to try and avert his gaze.

But there is another reason why taking heed is overlooked: the busyness of ministry can be used as a way to avoid personal problems (18). It's so easy for a pastor who craves appreciation to use his congregation to fulfill that desire! His very service to the congregation becomes a form of self-gratification.

But whether the lack of spiritual energy or busyness is the culprit, the outcome is predictable: relationships erode along with the moral integrity necessary for godly ministry (36–40).

The book's applications are direct. We are warned, for example, that little sins, which, like the little foxes of the Song of Solomon, bring about great danger. Those little foxes like an extra lingering look, that seemingly innocent flirtation, checking a woman out on social media, that niggling bitterness or perceived slight, that anger over being unrecognized and underappreciated. (39)

Through mental gymnastics a minister may persuade himself that these are trivial sins. But make no mistake: they will pollute his soul, defile his conscience, and ruin his life and ministry. "All those who fall publicly have left off watching privately" (47).

Taking heed to the flock requires a deep affection for them. Therefore, the pastor must ask two probing questions: "Do the people to whom you minister know that they are dear to you? Have you made that obvious to them in your public and private interactions with them?" (50).

Affection matters. So does doctrine. In a time of accelerating moral decline, the warning is timely: "The Bible does not change because your son or daughter is living a certain sin. The Bible's demands for holiness are not rescinded because you yourself are failing" (44).

Part 2 sets forth the basics of a pastoral call, beginning with a review of the qualifications for elder found in 1 Timothy 3. Pastors must find the strength to minister in Christ's all-sufficient grace. That means embracing obvious, but easily forgotten realities: pastors are imperfect and physically frail. These realities are easy to acknowledge intellectually, but accepting their implications is another matter altogether. "Pastors love to declare the sinlessness of Jesus and that only Jesus is perfect, yet these same pastors are crippled by a fear of failure. Pastors are devastated because they do not measure up to the expectations they set for themselves and others set for them" (78). With ease, pastors slip into a crushing perfectionism, placing impossibly high demands upon themselves. Many readers will identify with the author Croft's own confession: "Perfectionism has been a strength killer for years in my life. It has been so freeing in the last several years to embrace this weakness" (79). An attractive feature throughout this book is the authors' honesty.

Part 3 explores the spiritual care of the minister. Pastors are reminded that *they* need a pastor and church. The author calls for self-reflection when he asks: "When was the last time you received a call from a brother or from one of your elders to see how you are doing?" (92).

Pastors who minister the Word need the ministry of the Word. The reason is simple: "Shepherds are sheep first. . . . The man of God who gives the word must also be a recipient of that word. The one who serves at the table also needs the nourishment of that communion" (94).

A pastor is blessed when he sits under the preaching of the word in his own congregation. Identify other men in your church who can preach, so that you can take your place in the congregation (94). I will add that joint evening worship services with another church in my community have provided a way for me to listen to a sermon *with* my congregation.

Like all faithful disciples, pastors must diligently attend to the public means of grace—and they must attend to private means as well. Personal Bible reading and prayer are a must. The author offers practical advice on “staying warm” before the Lord. Finding helpful devotional aids, changing Bible reading plans, confessing spiritual dryness to the Lord, and simple perseverance can all be used by the Lord to rekindle a flickering devotional life. (102–4).

Part 4 addresses the often-neglected issue of the pastor’s physical care. As a runner, I’ve been overly ambitious at the start of a race and found my energy nearly depleted by mile twenty. Fortunately, I’ve finished all I’ve started. But along the way, I’ve seen many give up. Marathons must be properly paced; they are not sprints.

Pastors must properly care for their bodies if they want to serve well over the long haul. Fail to take care of your body, and your body will fail you. Chapters are devoted to eating, sleeping, exercising, and resting—all of which are indispensable to the proper care for the body.

The pastor needs both friendship and silence. Ministry can be lonely, and ministers need the support of friends, both inside and outside the church. Through the years, I’ve heard warnings to pastors (and their wives) not to have close friends in the church. I believe this advice is misguided. The author takes time to address both the benefits and pitfalls of friendships within the church (127–28).

At a time when pastors can wake up and connect with their congregations through email and social media, there is a strong temptation to resist silence. The author acknowledges his own discomfort. Over time, he writes,

I learned if my emotions are the gateway to my soul, then it is silence that exposes the soul. I was not ready to face the ugly things that got exposed. But God in his amazing grace met me in a sweet, powerful way and began a healing journey that has brought a consistent peace in my soul. It was through silence in a quiet place, meditating on truth, and prayerfully asking the Lord’s help that I experienced this deeper level of God’s grace and presence within my soul. (131–32)

During my ministry, I have received two sabbaticals, one four months, the other two. I knew at the time how rare it was for a church’s leaders to make provision for a pastor’s sabbatical. In two appendices (that should be read by both pastors and elders), the author explains what a sabbatical is along with its benefits. Sabbaticals are not vacations. They allow the minister to lay aside his routine pastoral duties “to grow, learn, mature and excel all the more in his ministry upon his return” (147).

Pastor, do you desire to take good care of the souls entrusted to your care? Then you must take care of your own soul, too. *The Pastor’s Soul* will provide you with compassionate encouragement and valuable counsel as you keep a close watch over yourself.

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# Faithful and Fruitful: Essays for Elders and Deacons, *edited by William Boekestein and Steven Swets*

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by Shane Lems

*Faithful and Fruitful: Essays for Elders and Deacons*, ed. by William Boekestein and Steven Swets. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Fellowship, 2019, 328 pages, \$16.99.

Elders and deacons have important roles in the life of the local church, and Scripture is clear that these men need to carry out those roles in a godly, wise, and biblical way. Most men simply aren't born with elder or deacon intuitions, so training is a good and necessary part of becoming an elder or deacon. We should welcome Reformed resources that help local churches in training these men to carry out such important roles in Jesus's church. *Faithful and Fruitful* is one of those Reformed resources that is worth putting on the "officer training" book list.

*Faithful and Fruitful*—a companion to *Called to Serve*<sup>1</sup>—is a collection of essays on various aspects of the roles and services of elders and deacons in the local church. The essay topics include hospitality, ministering to the sick and dying, managing the tithes and offerings of a local church, knowing the congregation's needs, sabbaticals, how to be a clerk at meetings, catechesis, singing, and serving on a pastoral search committee. Some of the chapters are specifically for deacons (e.g. managing offerings), some are designed for elders (e.g. evaluating your pastor), but most are useful for both elder and deacon (e.g. avoiding burnout and serving as a clerk).

I appreciated several aspects of this book. Deacons should pay attention to the chapter that helps them learn to know the needs of the congregation. The chapter on a pastor's sabbatical is also a good one that will assist elders to figure out a wise way to give their pastor sabbaticals. Another beneficial chapter is the one on ministering to the sick and dying.

To be sure, if an elder or deacon is experienced or previously has had good training, much of the material in this book will be a review. These essays, however, will be very useful for inexperienced elders and deacons as well as for training would-be elders and deacons. And while for the most part the essays are aimed at elders and deacons in United Reformed Churches, elders and deacons in other confessional Reformed churches also will benefit.

I wish this collection of essays had more overall structure. It would have helped to have the book divided into sections. As presented, the essays don't seem to have any particular order. Some of the material in this book is found in other officer training resources in print and online (e.g. prayer, leadership, missions). Some essays, however, cover topics that haven't been frequently discussed, such as how to clerk a meeting and

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Brown, ed., *Called to Serve: Essays for Elders and Deacons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2007).

how to handle church offerings/tithes.

*Faithful and Fruitful* is not one of those trendy and fluffy Christian books. Nor is it a book with “celebrity” selling power. In fact, the men who have contributed to this collection of essays are pastors, professors, and missionaries of Reformed churches who are not well-known superstars. That is one of the strengths of this collection because the writers labor in typical churches with everyday issues. They are therefore qualified to write on elders and deacons serving in local churches.

*Faithful and Fruitful* is a good officer training resource for Reformed churches. It’s well worth putting on the church shelf!

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# The Ark of Safety: Is There Salvation Outside of the Church? *by Ryan M. McGraw*

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by Allen C. Tomlinson

*The Ark of Safety: Is There Salvation Outside of the Church?* by Ryan M. McGraw.  
Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2018, 125 pages, \$10.00, paperback.

This little book is part of *The Exploration in Reformed Confessional Theology* series, intended to “clarify” some of the more “controversial” confessional statements found in the Reformed doctrinal standards. These books look at controversial issues from four vantage points: textual matters dealing with the variations in confessional texts, the historical background to confessions and to the issues at hand, the theological doctrine and its biblical support, and the pastoral point of view as far as how the issue affects God’s people.

*The Ark of Safety* is concerned with Westminster Confession of Faith 25.2, The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

The very last part of article 25.2, “out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” is the particularly “controversial” part of the statement addressed by the author, Ryan M. McGraw. He is the Morton H. Smith professor of Systematic Theology at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

The Ark of Safety is the church. In an absolute sense, the invisible church. As a general rule with few exceptions, there is no salvation outside of the visible church. We expect very few outside of the visible church to be saved, in comparison with what the Bible would indicate is the “norm” for the vast majority of the redeemed. McGraw summarizes the historical development of the distinction between the invisible church (all true believers) and the visible church (all who profess the Gospel and their children). Bullinger, Ames, the Belgic Confession, Calvin, and Ursinus all recognized on some level, even if only a preliminary level, this distinction. All saw the necessity of the church, some emphasizing the invisible almost exclusively, and others more clearly speaking of both the invisible and the visible church. No one is saved outside the invisible church, and the necessity of the means of grace (particularly the preaching of the Gospel) is so critical that few are saved without the visible church. Owen, Turretin, à Brakel and Witsius are also examined as to their own statements regarding the necessity of the church, and how their views related to this visible and invisible distinction.

In the Westminster Confession provision is made for elect infants dying in infancy and those elect so mentally handicapped from birth that they are unable to comprehend

the Gospel intellectually (WCF 10.3). However, those in pagan lands are not included in this exception (WCF 10.4).

Part two of the book deals with theology. It asks the question, “Is WCF 25.2 Biblical?” First, the Old Testament is examined as far as a “church within the church,” that is, those within national Israel who manifested faith and repentance and not just adherence to outward ordinances only. Perhaps something of the distinction between the visible and invisible church can be seen in the old covenant in seed form. Both Isaac and Ishmael are in the visible church, if one considers circumcision. However, Ishmael is not the seed of the promise. Jeremiah 31:31–34 is seen as a prophecy of the coming new covenant and of the relative difference between “old and new covenants.” “The difference between the old and new covenants is more in degree than in substance” (66), which seems to be in accord with WCF 7.5–6. The percentage of those in the visible church who are also part of the invisible church is much higher in the new covenant than in the old covenant.

McGraw follows up with two chapters on the New Testament, “The Visible Church in the New Testament” and “The Invisible Church in the New Testament.” As far as the visible church, he demonstrates that the New Testament manifests an important expansion of the visible church, as the gospel is taken forth to all nations. He shows that baptism is the sacrament of admission to the visible church, dealing with the theological parallels between baptism and circumcision. As he concludes the chapter on the visible church in the New Testament, at the very least we see it is the visible church that brings the gospel to sinners. Baptism is part of our message, and baptism puts one into the visible church. He concludes this chapter with Westminster Larger Catechism 63, which stresses the place and importance of the visible church in the new covenant, and with Ephesians 5:25, which speaks of Christ loving the church and giving himself for her. The church is the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) and the members are the true circumcision (Rom. 2:28–29). “Since there is one church with visible and invisible aspects, we cannot undermine one without losing the other” (83).

In the chapter entitled “The Invisible Church in the New Testament”, the author especially works with Romans 9–11, and “the reality of hypocrisy and apostasy” in the visible church of both the old and new covenants, and how this distinction between “visible” and “invisible” helps us to understand this reality in light of promises that those in Christ will persevere. After a section reminding us that in the New Testament this invisible church manifests itself, at this time, in the visible church, this chapter concludes with a call to love Christ’s church both in its invisible and visible aspects (100). There is no salvation apart from the invisible church; therefore, ordinarily, salvation is not experienced apart from the visible church, which is the outward and physical manifestation of the invisible.

Part three of the book is “Practice: Why Is WCF 25.2 Important?” This final chapter summarizes the ordinary necessity of the visible church: a necessity of means (the church brings lost sinners the gospel according to Christ’s command and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment), and a necessity of precept. We are commanded to unite in worship, which leads to the perfection of the saints (e.g. Eph. 4:13 “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” . . .). We are commanded to love, serve, comfort, and reprove one another, and to express genuine unity in our worship and daily practice.

How can this be anything other than merely theoretical, except within the context of the visible church? “The church visible is necessary by divine command” (112). Chad Van Dixhoorn’s very useful illustrations are referenced:

A repentant thief on a cross, a Muslim convert to Christianity who has not yet discovered other believers, or a man stranded on the desert island with only a Bible, each has plausible reasons for not being a part of the church. But people who claim to be believers and refuse to join the church in the face of clear biblical instruction and providential opportunity to do so, should deeply worry us. They are like people who say they are in love but refuse to get married. (112)<sup>1</sup>

I highly recommend this little book as a scholarly and very readable explanation of WCF 25.2, cited above. For those outside of our tradition who question the biblical support for such a statement, or for our own folks who might wonder if this statement contradicts “salvation by grace alone,” this is an excellent tool.

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<sup>1</sup> Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith: A Reader’s Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2014), 341.

# ServantPoetry

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John Milton (1608–1674)

## Sonnet 7: How Soon Hath Time

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!  
My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom showeth.

Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth  
That I to manhood am arrived so near,  
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
That some more timely-happy spirits endueth.

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
It shall be still in strictest measure even  
To that same lot, however mean or high,

Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.  
All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.