

Ordained Servant

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CURRENT ISSUE: SERVANT LEADERSHIP—THE EDITOR'S FAREWELL

November-December 2026

From the Editor

Last fall I determined to step down from my membership on the Committee on Christian Education after twenty-five years of service. This included my retirement as editor of *Ordained Servant* at the end of this year. Thus, I conclude my editing work for the Committee on Christian Education with this issue. This had been determined in the fall of 2025. At age seventy-seven it is time to move on to other things. I am grateful for the privilege of serving on this committee, serving the officers of our church.

I will continue to publish on the web and in print. Many have expressed interest in keeping up with my work on media ecology and poetry. For those interested, my Substack site, *Pilgrim Crossings*, will be launched soon. Also, Meredith M. Kline and I have recently published *Wisdom for Living in a Wacky World: The Biblical Realism*.

In my "Servant Leadership: The Editor's Farewell" I reflect on the title of this journal and its call to a kind of leadership in church and home that is markedly different from the world's understanding of leadership. I also republish a meditation on Helmut Thielicke's famous cautionary piece, "A Little Exercise for Young and Old Theologians Revisited."

J. Gresham Machen has been a model for my ministry as a leader, pastor, thinker, and writer. So during this season when we tend to think of the Incarnation of our Lord, I thought it appropriate to publish his 1924 article "The Virgin Birth of Christ." I have rarely republished material in *OS.* I do so here as a tribute befitting the season and the greatness of J. Gresham Machen, a model servant-leader. This lecture fortifies the faithful and challenges the unbeliever. His brilliant intellect was harnessed to the service of his Lord and his church. His historical polemic cogently demonstrates the historicity of this unique birth of the God-man, our Redeemer and Lord. I hope that this will be a great encouragement to my readers in our fallen and challenging world.

Brian Wingard defends Scriptural authority by rehearsing his own fascinating and instructive journey from doubt to certainty. Years ago, the late Charlie Dennison told me he believed one of the weaknesses of recent generations of OPC ministers was not knowing the arguments of liberals against historic Christianity. This article, along with Machen's on the virgin birth, should encourage us to remember the fundamental principle of polemics for the Christian scholar is to accurately understand and represent the opposition before differing and offering a critique.

Scott Meadows encourages officers to remember the theological fountains of confessional orthodoxy in "Important Books for Confessional Churches." If some think that this is preaching to the choir, we should remember that the choir needs the message as well as anyone else. Any officer who has not spent time with Francis Turretin or

Richard Muller is missing out on the treasure of Post-Reformation theology. I have provided a list of "Post-Reformation, Reformed Scholastic Theologians" based on Richard Muller's list.

T. David Gordon presents a thorough argument against requiring ministers to break the bread in administering the Lord's Supper as if the fraction were sacramentally significant, since it was simply a dining custom in the ancient world. "Is It Sacramentally Necessary to Break Bread When Celebrating the Lord's Supper?" is a deep dive into this topic. It also highlights the importance of the more recent discoveries of ancient biblical manuscripts beginning in the late nineteenth century.

On Christmas Eve, 2013, a sermon by Lancelot Andrewes from Christmas 1616 was read by Elder Douglas Giebel, at Covenant (now Cornerstone) Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Rochester, New York. Mr. Giebel first became acquainted with Lancelot Andrewes' sermons while reading T. S. Eliot's *Essays Ancient and Modern* as a freshman fine arts major at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, in 1967. In the opening essay of this volume, Eliot commends the personal devotion Andrewes expresses in his *Private Prayers*. Of Andrewes' sermons Eliot says, "They rank with the finest English prose of their time, of any time." Mr. Giebel summarizes the sermon in "Notes on a Sermon by Lancelot Andrews on Psalm 85."

For years in the first decades of my ministry, I climbed mountains and skied but did not make time for daily exercise. In my mid-fifties my doctor told me that to keep blood pressure and cholesterol under control I should walk three times a week getting my heart rate above 105 bpm. My first attempts were excruciating, but in a short while I realized that I no longer needed naps and looked forward to the invigorating benefits of regular exercise. I have found that while walking I can memorize psalms and other poetry. Regular exercise has also enhanced my prayer life and my planning. It clears the mind for creativity. Now at age seventy-seven, I find that if I do not walk, ride my bike, or ski, I feel that I have missed an important part of my day. I say all this as an introduction to Shane Lems's insightful article "Exercise for Christian Caregivers." Pay attention to this useful advice.

I was recently deeply touched by a daily devotion written by the mid-twentieth-century, Norwegian Lutheran minister Ole Kristian Hallesby, "Growing Old." There are enough of us baby boomers around to benefit from this sweet encouragement. Younger ministers will find it useful in ministering to older folks. Hallesby's book on prayer is a classic, reviewed by Alan Strange in *OS* in March 2012.

Late nineteenth-century contemporary of C. H. Spurgeon, Octavius Winslow, devoted two days' devotions to "Prayer for Ministers." Winslow emphasizes the importance of prayer for the ministry of ministers, especially for the effectiveness of their preaching. These should be distributed by sessions to members.

Since I entered the ministry in 1980, the question of weekly celebration of the Lord's supper has been in the air. John Calvin and T. David Gordon have been a major influence on my thinking, and I was finally able to implement what I had long believed upon planting a church in Manchester, NH, in 1998. I incorporated the same weekly Supper in Jaffrey and Dover, New Hampshire church plants. No one has ever complained, and many have expressed great pleasure in the practice. It is fitting that Gordon should review Harrison Perkins's *Take and Eat: Recovering the Regular Celebration of the Lord's Supper*. This winsome, pastoral, and thorough apologia for the weekly Supper should be read and discussed by every session.

In “When Words Enchant,” I review *Poetry as Enchantment and Other Essays* by my favorite contemporary poet and critic, Dana Gioia. Gioia is a member of the school of New Formalism. This new quest for formal poetic discipline seeks to bring traditional verse forms back to the fore, standing in stark contrast to much of the modernist poetry that dominated the twentieth century. He is also an enthusiastic promoter for the new forms of poetry recitation that have emerged, especially among the young in recent decades. His work as a teacher and critic is equal to his poetic craftsmanship and expertise, all of which shine in *Poetry as Enchantment*.

My interest in media ecology, or the stewardship of media in the electronic environment, has never abated since I encountered Joel Nederhood, Neil Postman, and Marshall McLuhan in 1990 while matriculating in my doctoral program at Westminster Seminary California. I was elected to the Committee on Christian Education the same year *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* was published (2001). This was timely because opc.org was still in its nascent stages of development. I enjoyed project managing the design and redesigns in 2006, 2014, and 2018. The Subcommittee on Internet Ministries (SIM) was established in 2004. We developed the “OPC Website Protocol: Procedure and Guidelines for opc.org.” We faced the challenge of navigating the Worldwide Web to take advantage of this new communication technology without compromising our deep commitment to God’s Word, the local church, in person worship, and Christian education and learning. This is a challenge that we must not abandon. So I leave my readers with a sample of three significant books, briefly noted, because I have run out of time and space.

Mark Green graciously sent an unsolicited sonnet he dedicated to me on the occasion of my retirement, “The Hidden Harvest.” The traditional volta, or turning, in the ninth line, “The ache of years has made his steps less sure,” perfectly introduces the denouement.

This month I also offer three of my own poems as part of my adieu; the first is “The Cartouche of the Savior’s Life.” A cartouche is a carved tablet or drawing representing a scroll, used ornamentally or bearing an inscription. In Egyptian monuments it was an oval enclosing a sovereign’s name. For Jesus in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, European art cartouches enclosed portraits or monograms of Jesus Christ. I use this as a metaphor in my poetic portrait.

The two final poems are reflections on Christmas. “My Boyhood Christmas” is in free verse, reflecting the imagination of a young boy. The second, “Ornaments of Childhood,” is a more formal structure with two quatrains with *abab* end rhymes, a sestet with *ababab* end rhymes, concluding with a rhyming couplet to make the point.

The cover picture this issue is the main entrance to the offices of *Ordained Servant* for the past twenty-one years. It is also Chestnut Cottage where I have lived for thirty-four years. We came to New Hampshire from my first ministry in New Rochelle back in 1992. We had three very active young children and very little money, but just barely enough to afford the ramshackle cottage that we loved from the moment we set eyes on it. We have reason to believe that it was a hay barn on the estate of General John Stark. It had been owned by a woman who was first violin in the New Hampshire Philharmonic, but as she was an elderly person, the cottage had been left in serious disrepair. Had this not been the case in God’s providence, we would not have been able to afford to buy the house. But we knew it was God’s gift, because on the baby grand piano that came with the house, there was a single sheet of music for “Amazing Grace.”

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 Leadership: The Editor's Farewell

by Gregory Edward Reynolds

I was born serving, serving myself. But God's intrusion into my life freed me from serving myself through the folly of Zen Buddhism and I began the long journey of learning to be a servant. Ordination as a servant-leader was another step in the divine school. At age seventy-seven I am still under the tutelage of the Lamb. My journey of servant-leadership would not have been possible without the freedom the Lord gives through the gospel. This freedom is reflected in the Bible verse I wrote on my backpack in 1971: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31–32). When the truth of the gospel and the entire Bible sets you free, the modern idea of freedom bears little resemblance to what our Lord calls us to. "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Rom. 6:22).

New Testament Believers Are Always Servants

As I complete twenty-one years of editing *Ordained Servant*, I want to reflect on the nature of what I believe this journal and our church represent. I know I have done an imperfect job as editor, but my passion for the biblical servant leadership of the title of this journal has not abated. I have included Helmut Thielicke's (1908–86) "A Little Exercise for Young (and Old) Theologians" again because I believe that a regular reading of this important essay will help in forming us as servant-leaders.

I recently attended the graduation exercises at Phillips Exeter Academy where my grandson graduated last June. I have never experienced speeches like I heard that day. The class president spoke of the importance of suffering and perseverance; the principal spoke of the need for humility and service. This came from the legacy of the eighteenth-century founders of the Academy, John and Elizabeth Phillips. The Latin term "*Non Sibi*," or "Not for Self," adorns the Academy seal. The sentiment comes from the 1781 "The Deed of Gift," a legally binding document establishing the Academy. Phillips was a Calvinist congregational believer who gave up preaching to work as a businessman in order to found Christian educational institutions. In the Deed we find this: "Goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble, yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous, and that both united form the noblest character, and lay the surest foundation of usefulness to mankind." This noble sentiment is not expressed in isolation, although that context is eclipsed by the school's present secularism. The Deed expresses a robust Christian faith which is the root and origin of *non sibi*.

An interesting secular example of servant leadership is the Roman military leader Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus. The reality of everyone being made in God's image is sometimes evident in a non-Christian's behavior. In the mid-fifth century BC, Cincinnatus had retired from being dictator of the Roman Republic to live on his family farm. Subsequently, he was called back by Roman leaders to fend off enemy attacks. He accomplished this in a little over two weeks. He again relinquished power and returned to

his farm. He became a symbol of humble servant leadership seeking to serve others before himself. General George Washington followed Cincinnatus's example and returned to Mount Vernon after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783. He refused the suggestion of some that he should be king. The Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828) statue of him in the Virginia State Capitol displays him in his military attire, but his right hand holds a gentleman's cane and on his left a humble plow.[1]

Sin has corrupted the human instinct for self-sacrifice as God's image bearers; that instinct is often replaced by tyranny. Christ came to overcome our native selfishness. The proper paradigm for leadership in the church and home is the cross of the crucified Christ. Several important passages explain the servant leadership instituted by the cross.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). In John 13 Jesus does not cease being Lord and Teacher but shockingly does what no worldly leader would be inclined to do—he washes his disciples' feet. The incarnate Lord of the universe washed the filthy feet of his disciples. Let that sink in, fellow church officers.

The beginning of servant leadership, and at its heart, is brokenness. In his superb defense of orthodox Christianity, *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen insisted that "Christianity is the religion of the broken heart."[2] He exemplified this as he set aside his Princeton prestige and served a tiny new denomination of serious Christians. Psalm 86:1 should be our posture, "Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy." Servant leadership is a mindset rooted in the cross, in the character of the crucified God-man Jesus:

> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil. 2:5–8)

Far from undermining authority, servant leadership enhances authority. We see this in the life of David. Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel'" (2 Sam. 5:1–2). When Solomon's son Rehaboam rejected the spiritual wisdom of the elders and heeded the harsh counsel of his peers, he lost the confidence of ten of the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Kings 12:1–24). As the exemplar shepherd-king, Jesus tells us what such leadership looks like, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

In a classic passage on servant leadership, Jesus gives earth-shaking imperatives rooted in the ultimate reconciling sacrifice of the Lamb of God:

> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do

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[1] Collin Garbarino, "The Story He Told about Himself," *World* (July 2026): 62–3.
[2] J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Macmillan, 1923), 65.

> you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:35–45)

These would have been startling words to the disciples, who took their cue from worldly leadership models: "Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (vv. 44–45). Even the Lord of the universe gave his human life to serve his people. Note again that servant leadership is true leadership, leading by being a blessing to others—by bearing the burdens of others. This is the authority of the cross.

For church officers, Peter gives divine wisdom crafted by the crucified Christ:

> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1 Pet. 5:1–5)

Notice that Peter uses the self-sacrificing image of the shepherd, "not domineering over those in your charge." Overbearing authoritarianism has no place in Christian leadership in Christ's church.

Nor does it have any place in the Christian home. Paul understands the sinful tendency of husbands and fathers when he counsels, "Husbands, love your wives, and *do not be harsh* with them. . . . Fathers, *do not provoke* your children, lest they become discouraged" (emphasis added, Col. 3:19, 21).

Husbands are explicitly called to imitate the crucified Christ in their marriage and home leadership.

> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25–27)

All Christians are called to have servant-like lives by donning the attributes and attitudes of our crucified Savior:

> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Col. 3:12–15)

Fellow officers, please strive with me to crucify all domineering attitudes and ways that remain in us; let us exemplify the humble heart and service of our Lord. Biblical servant leadership navigates between the Scylla of authoritarian harshness and the Charybdis of egalitarian tyranny.

New Testament Believers Are Always Pilgrims

I have a few suggestions as to how we might put this servant leadership model into practice. Let me put it simply: We must avoid promoting an over-realized eschatology that almost erases the fourth state of man, consummation. In the secular world this is precisely what progressivism, socialism, and communism have always promoted in secular terms: a perfectly ordered state-controlled society, controlled by an elite who believe that they know best how everyone should live. This has led to untold disaster, and in the case of communism, to millions of lives lost or impoverished. In God's Providence our particular constitutional republic takes into account the imperfection of humankind—thus its complex of checks and balances. And while it is true that probably only a few of the founders of our great republic were Christians, it is also true that there was a Christian moral consensus that understood the sinfulness of human beings, thus the founders created a system that seems to have kept wickedness in check for a quarter of a millennium.

Martin Luther's way of understanding the pilgrim stance of servant leadership was to distinguish between a theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*) and a theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*).[3] He dealt with various political realities in his day by articulating this basic distinction. In our own tradition we have Geerhardus Vos, Meredith G. Kline, and Richard Gaffin emphasizing the Pauline eschatology of the "now and not yet." With the wickedness of this present evil age, it is so tempting to want the not yet, now. But we must not hitch our wagon to a political party or system other than the eschatological plan of God. He calls us to be pilgrims. Our citizenship has been transferred from the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of God:

> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. (Eph. 2:19)

Thus, while we are no longer aliens from God's kingdom, we have become aliens and exiles from the kingdoms of this world.

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[3] Luther expounded this doctrine at the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518.

> For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. . . . These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Heb. 11:10, 13)

> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (1 Pet. 2:11)

> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. . . . And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile. (1 Pet. 1:1, 17)

Keep the Lord Jesus Christ central in your thinking, living, and preaching as the one who has been sent by our triune God into history to save us from sin and from death, remembering that the consummation of this redemption is yet future in the coming glory:

> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16–18)

This implies keeping secondary issues in their place, not that they are unimportant but certainly not the most important things. It also means that the church has a single mission, the worship of God, the spreading of the gospel, and means of grace ministry. PERIOD.

When it comes to culture and politics, it is tempting, given the moral and spiritual mess our culture is in, to seek secular control. But servant leadership calls us to resist such a temptation and follow the inherent call of pilgrims, which is a willingness to suffer. The nature of our office is entirely spiritual and ministerial, and it relies on the power of heavenly rule in the circumstances of our lives. The quest for worldly power to usher in God's kingdom leads only to corruption and also, as seen in the theocracy of early New England, leads to hypocrisy. Seeking the powers of this present evil age is a dangerous project. We must not be seduced by it. Christians who are gifted for public service in civil government should seek political office, but not for the establishment of Christianity. They should exemplify humble service to the citizens of our country.

Amidst a fallen world with all its temptations and troubles, do not forget to enjoy God's temporary blessings. They are temporary, but they are real, a balm for struggling pilgrims. Ecclesiastes has taught me this. Kohelet the preacher seasons his *hebel* teaching about the injustices, frustrations, and challenges of living in a fallen world under the sun with the counsel that we should eat and drink and take pleasure in our work and have joy before God, who is the giver of these things (Eccl. 2:24–26, 3:12–13, 5:18–20, 8:15, 9:7, 11:7–10). Despite the certainty of death, the believer's hope in the resurrection is our ultimate encouragement as Paul reminds us: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be

steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

We must follow the Servant who turned the world upside down through his cross. Follow the *Via Crucis*, the theology of the cross, not the theology of glory. Our glory is not found in this world but in the world to come, in the world above. Men who are ordained servant-leaders have real authority, but it is the authority of serving God and others, rather than ourselves. It is the authority of our crucified Lord.

* * *

I shall miss you, my dear readers. Your encouragements over the years as officers, and members, including a number of women, have been part of my spiritual sustenance. There has never been an endeavor in my life quite like this one. Many of you I do not know very well, but I sense that we have a camaraderie, that part where it means members of the body of Christ. I deeply appreciate the talented reservoir of godly writers that have graced the pages of *Ordained Servant*.

I bid you farewell.

ServantThoughts

A Little Exercise for Young and Old Theologians Revisited

Gregory E. Reynolds

When I think back on my brashness as a young theologian, I shudder; and whenever that same brashness rears its ugly head today, I shudder still; but age and Christian experience have at least taught me to recognize this monster within.[1]

Very early in my Christian life, while still considering a call to the ministry, I came across a little booklet first published in 1962 by Eerdmans entitled *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*.[2] I recognized the author, Helmut Thielicke (1908–86), from my reading of his *Encounter with Spurgeon*[3] in Bible school in 1972. I have exercised myself with this sage booklet at least once a decade ever since, and never without profit, since the demon of pride is ever in need of being exorcised.

While avoiding the dangerous dichotomy of setting the Christian life over against doctrine, Thielicke does not confuse the two by eliding doctrine into life. One without the other is a sign of spiritual illness. Thus, he addresses his seminary students like a wise father:

> You can see that the young theologian has by no means grown up to these doctrines in his own spiritual development, even if he understands intellectually rather well the

[1] This editorial originally appeared in digital form on OPC.org in February 2012. It appears in the 2012 printed annual: "A Little Exercise for Young Theologians" (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 21 (2012): 12–14. This version has some added material.
[2] Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, trans. Charles L. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).
[3] Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963).

> logic of the system . . . There is a hiatus between the arena of the young theologian's actual spiritual growth and what he already knows intellectually about this arena.[4]

Thielicke goes on to liken early theological training to puberty, during which it is as unwise to unleash the novice on the church as a preacher, as it would be to let the young singer sing while his voice is changing.[5]

Furthermore, time spent in the lofty realms of truth makes the novice susceptible to the "psychology of the possessor," in which love is sadly absent. "Truth seduces us very easily into a kind of joy of possession."[6] "But love is the opposite of the will to possess. It is self-giving. It boasteth not itself, but humbleth itself." But when "truth is a means to personal triumph,"[7] the young theologian returns home with a keen sense of membership in an esoteric club, displaying his rarefied tools to the annoyance of all and the hurt of some. Thielicke observes, "Young theologians manifest certain trumped-up intellectual effects which actually amount to nothing."[8]

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[4] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 10.
[5] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 12.
[6] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 16.
[7] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 17, 19.
[8] I Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 11–12.
[9] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 23.
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[11] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 29–30.
[12] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 33.
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Of course, there is a gray area when it comes to sermon preparation. Most of us use commentaries and even sermon series in our development of sermons. Developing our own outlines from careful exegesis first, will help us to flee the seduction of plagiarism. When we make the ideas or many thoughts and even applications found in print our own, plagiarism is not engaged in. But copying someone else's outline or using verbatim sentences and phrases without acknowledging their sources is plagiarism.

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No exercise in the young theologian's or minister's life is better calculated to keep him humble than regular contact with God himself. Warfield cautions his students:

> I am here today to warn you to take seriously your theological study, not merely as a duty, done for God's sake and therefore made divine, but as a religious exercise, itself charged with religious blessing to you; as fitted by its very nature to fill all your mind and heart and soul and life with divine thoughts and feelings and aspirations and achievements. You will never prosper in your religious life in the Theological Seminary until your work in the Theological Seminary becomes itself to you a religious exercise out of which you draw every day enlargement of heart, elevation of spirit, and adoring delight in your Maker and Savior.[18]

We are, after all, called to be warriors; but the kind of spiritual warrior that Scripture calls us to be is not the gladiator seeking personal victory and glory, but rather the soldier of the cross who seeks to magnify the person of his Savior and Lord. J. Gresham Machen captured this spirit well in his sermon "Constraining Love." Christian militancy should never be confused with sectarian belligerence, hubris, or meanness of spirit. But pride can also move us to shrink in cowardice from defending the truth of the gospel. Machen made this clear in his sermon to the second general assembly of our, then, new church. "How many movements," he asked,

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If Christianity teaches us nothing else, it must teach us the value of the cross—the chief expression of God's constraining love for sinners. If we learn nothing else from the

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[16] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 412.
[17] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 416.
[18] Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 417.
[19] J. Gresham Machen, "Constraining Love," in *God Transcendent and Other Sermons*, ed. Ned Bernard Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 141.

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ServantThoughts

A Little Exercise for Young and Old Theologians Revisited

Gregory E. Reynolds

When I think back on my brashness as a young theologian, I shudder; and whenever that same brashness rears its ugly head today, I shudder still; but age and Christian experience have at least taught me to recognize this monster within.[1]

Very early in my Christian life, while still considering a call to the ministry, I came across a little booklet first published in 1962 by Eerdmans entitled *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*.[2] I recognized the author, Helmut Thielicke (1908–86), from my reading of his *Encounter with Spurgeon*[3] in Bible school in 1972. I have exercised myself with this sage booklet at least once a decade ever since, and never without profit, since the demon of pride is ever in need of being exorcised.

While avoiding the dangerous dichotomy of setting the Christian life over against doctrine, Thielicke does not confuse the two by eliding doctrine into life. One without the other is a sign of spiritual illness. Thus, he addresses his seminary students like a wise father:

> You can see that the young theologian has by no means grown up to these doctrines in his own spiritual development, even if he understands intellectually rather well the logic of the system . . . There is a hiatus between the arena of the young theologian's actual spiritual growth and what he already knows intellectually about this arena.[4]

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[1] This editorial originally appeared in digital form on OPC.org in February 2012. It appears in the 2012 printed annual: "A Little Exercise for Young Theologians" (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 21 (2012): 12–14. This version has some added material.

[2] Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, trans. Charles L. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

[3] Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963).

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ServantTruth

The Virgin Birth of Our Lord

by John Gresham Machen[1]

ACCORDING to a universal belief of the historic Christian Church, Jesus of Nazareth, a man who lived in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago, did not come into the world as other men do; but was born without human father, being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin Mary.

How is it that so many millions of the human race have come to believe so strange a thing as that?

Two answers to that question are conceivable. In the first place, it may be held that the Church came to believe in the virgin birth for the simple reason that the virgin birth was a fact. In the second place, it may be held that the belief in the virgin birth was based upon some kind of error—that, although Jesus was really born by ordinary generation, the Church for some reason came falsely to believe that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Which of these two answers is correct? Is the Christian belief in the virgin birth derived from fact or from some kind of error?

In favor of the former alternative may be urged, primarily, the direct attestation of the virgin birth which is found in the New Testament. That direct attestation appears in the First and Third Gospels.

The Third Gospel

The Third Gospel is said by an early Christian tradition to have been written by a certain Luke, who is mentioned in three passages in the Pauline Epistles and there appears as a physician, as a Gentile, and as a trusted companion of Paul.

This tradition is supported in a peculiarly convincing way by the book itself; for admittedly the Third Gospel was written by the same man who also wrote the Book of Acts, and the Book of Acts contains striking evidence as to its authorship.

The evidence is found in the so called "we-sections" in the book, where the author says "we" instead of "they" in narrating certain parts of the missionary journeys of Paul and thus introduces himself as an eyewitness of the events there narrated. So, at least, the plain man regards the matter; and the opinion of the plain man at this point is not contradicted, but strikingly confirmed, by a careful examination of the relation between the "we-sections" and the rest of the great double work.

But if the author of the whole of Luke-Acts was thus the man who said "we" in his own name in the "we-sections", his movements can be traced by an examination of the places where the "we" occurs. One of the "we-sections" brings the "we" right into the

[1] *Revelation*, vol. 1, no. 12 (December 1931): 399–400, 426, 428. *Revelation* was a monthly magazine edited by Donald Grey Barnhouse and published by the American Bible Conference Association, Inc., based in Philadelphia.

presence of the Jerusalem Church and of James the brother of the Lord (Acts 21:18). That passage refers to a time which may with some probability be about A.D. 58. The "we" appears again two years later at Caesarea, at the beginning of Paul's "shipwreck journey" to Rome. Thus the author was in Palestine at the beginning of that two-year period which Paul spent in prison at Caesarea, and he was also in Palestine at the end of it; so that it is natural to surmise that he was in Palestine during the interval. If so, he would have had abundant opportunity at that time to gather information about events in Palestine, and particularly about the events that concern the birth and infancy of our Lord. Since the author of Luke-Acts was in Palestine and actually saw the brother of Jesus, a favorable presumption arises with regard to what he tells us in Luke 1:5–2:52.

'l'hat section, Luke 1:5–2:52, is plainly an original part of the Gospel of Luke. Not only is the manuscript evidence unbroken, but careful research has detected in the language of the section plain marks of the hand of the author of the whole book.

Although, however, the birth narrative is clearly an integral part of the Third Gospel, not a later addition, it is a very peculiar part. In marked contrast with the elaborate Greek sentence which constitutes the prologue of the Gospel (Luke 1:1–4), the following section (Luke 1:5–2:52) is a strikingly Jewish narrative which breathes the atmosphere of Palestine and is like the most beautiful narrative portions of the Old Testament.

The Palestinian character of the section is shown, in the first place, by the style, which reflects in a very striking way the characteristics of the Hebrew (or the Aramaic) language. But it is also shown in the contents. The narrative exhibits the most intimate knowledge of Palestinian conditions at every turn; and in particular the Messianic hope appears here in a clearly primitive and Palestinian form, as unlike as possible to what a Gentile writer would have imagined if he had been composing the narrative in the light of later conditions in the life of Jesus and of the Christian Church.

Thus the attestation of the virgin birth appears in the Gospel of Luke in a narrative which is deeply rooted in Palestinian soil and gives every evidence of having come to the author of the Gospel in a form that was produced at an exceedingly early time. Such a narrative is exactly the kind of narrative in which correct information about the birth and infancy of Jesus might be expected to be preserved.

But is the virgin birth really attested by this Palestinian narrative? A really prodigious effort has been made by certain scholars to show that it is not—to show that the Palestinian narrative underlying Luke 1:5–2:52 did not in its original form contain any reference to the virgin birth, and that the verses attesting the virgin birth have come into the narrative by interpolation.

This effort, however, has resulted in failure. It may be shown in the most decisive possible way not only that the arguments in favor of the interpolation theory are insufficient, but that that theory may positively be refuted. The whole of the narrative really finds its climax and its point in the super-natural conception of our Lord in the womb of the virgin Mary. Thus it remains clearly a fact that the virgin birth is attested in the Gospel of Luke in a strikingly Palestinian narrative.

The First Gospel

The other narrative attesting the virgin birth (Matt. 1–2) is also Jewish and Palestinian in character, as indeed the whole Gospel of Matthew is generally regarded as being intended primarily for Jews. This narrative is not really contradictory to the narrative in Luke, but the two are clearly independent of each other. Matthew is not dependent upon

Luke, nor is Luke dependent upon Matthew. We have, therefore, a double attestation of the virgin birth of our Lord.

But, it is said, the rest of the New Testament is silent about the virgin birth, and this silence shows that the virgin birth was no part of the original tradition of the apostolic Church.

With regard to this objection, it may be admitted at the start that according to the four Gospels the contemporaries of Jesus during His public ministry in all probability knew nothing about the virgin birth. But what of it? Even if the virgin birth was a fact, the last thing in the world that Mary would do would be to tell about it and thus expose herself and her child to unjust suspicions.

As for the Evangelists themselves, as distinguished from the men and women depicted in their narratives, it may simply be said that two of them. narrate the virgin birth plainly at the beginning of their Gospels and that any narration of the birth of Jesus lay outside the scope and plan of the Gospels of the other two. Mark depicts Jesus as He made a public impression, and so begins naturally with the public ministry; John is giving his own testimony as an eyewitness, and so begin at the point where he, with several other disciples of John the Baptist, began to follow Jesus.

The virgin birth finds no place in the brief account which the Book of Acts gives of the first preaching of Peter and the other apostles in the early days of the Jerusalem Church. But who could possibly expect that it would have such place even if it be a fact? Public proclamation of such a mystery, before the hearers had come to believe even in the resurrection of the Lord, would lead te nothing but reproach.

Moreover, supposing the virgin birth to be a fact, when shall we suppose that Mary made it known? The Gospel of Luke describes her as being of a quiet and meditative disposition, and therefore as being very unlikely to talk lightly about a holy mystery which naturally would meet with unbelief. Only after the resurrection, we may suppose, would Mary speak of this mystery and then perhaps only to the sympathetic ears of woman friends. It is no wonder that the story came only gradually—if it did come only gradually—into the public preaching of the Church.

Paul's Silence

But how is it with Paul? Does not his silence, at least, show that the virgin birth is a very late accretion to the early account of Jesus?

With regard to this objection, it may be said that there are few writers in whose case the "argument from silence", usually precarious, needs to be employed with greater caution than in the case of the Apostle Paul. Paul mentions only once in his Epistles the appearances of the risen Christ to Peter and to others in the Jerusalem Church, and then only because of errors that had "happened"—using the word from the worldly point of view—to have arisen at Corinth. If those errors had not arisen and Paul had not reproduced that tradition of the Jerusalem Church, we almost shudder to think of the far-reaching conclusion which would have been drawn from his silence by modern scholars. Yet plainly that account of the appearances of the risen Christ was everywhere fundamental in the teaching that Paul gave to his churches. Does not that example indicate, among other examples, that there are many, many things which Paul regarded as quite fundamental about Jesus, but which yet he did not find occasion to mention in his Epistles? Moreover, the teaching of Paul, like the teaching of John, is profoundly

congruous with the virgin birth and profoundly incongruous with the view that Jesus was the child of Joseph and Mary by ordinary generation.

What we can say, then, is that the "silence" of the rest of the New Testament does not refute the plain testimony of Matthew and Luke. The testimony to the virgin birth of our Lord, though of course far less abundant, at least so far as direct testimony is concerned, than the testimony to an event like the resurrection, to which in the nature of the case there would be many witnesses; is at least as abundant as we could reasonably demand on the assumption that the virgin birth is a fact.

But if this attestation be rejected, if it be held that the belief of the Church in the virgin birth originated not in fact but in error, the question arises how the error was produced.

The most natural suggestion is that it was produced on Jewish Christian ground, since we have seen that the narratives attesting the virgin birth, particularly the one in the Third Gospel, are of a strikingly Jewish and Palestinian character. So some of those who have denied the fact of the virgin birth have held that the belief in the virgin birth grew out of Jewish ideas and particularly out of a desire to show fulfilment of the prophecy, "Behold the virgin shall conceive", in Isaiah 7:14. With regard to this latter point, it must be said that although Isaiah 7:14 is really a true and very precious prophecy of the virgin birth of the Messiah, there is no real evidence to show that the Jews interpreted it in that way. Indeed, in general, the whole current of late Judaism, so far as all our information leads us to judge, was quite hostile to an idea like that of the virgin birth.

At this point we meet with agreement on the part of most modern scholars. The overwhelming majority of those who today deny the fact of the virgin birth admit that the idea of the virgin birth did not arise on Jewish or Jewish Christian ground and on the basis of Jewish or Jewish Christian ideas.

The idea must, then, from the point of view of such scholars, have been originally a pagan idea.

At this point, two preliminary questions arise. In the first place, how did this supposedly pagan idea—particularly since it came, in accordance with this hypothesis, as we shall see, from just the most degrading parts of pagan mythology—ever get into the. early Church at all, even into the Gentile part of the Church? In the second place, supposing it did get into the Gentile part of the Church, how is it that it found a place in Jewish Christian narratives like the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke, and particularly in Luke 1:5–2:52, which is perhaps the most strikingly Palestinian narrative in the whole New Testament?

It is as an attempt to answer this latter question that the "interpolation hypothesis", which we mentioned above, has attained its chief importance. The verses attesting the virgin birth, it is said by the advocates of this hypothesis, do not really belong to the Palestinian narrative underlying Luke 1:5–2:52, but are a Gentile Christian addition to that narrative. But this hypothesis, as we have already observed, can be refuted in the most decisive way. As a matter of fact, the virgin birth is no mere later addition to Luke 1:5–2:52, but belongs to the inmost structure of that narrative. The question then remains, and remains with crushing force against the whole theory of pagan derivation of the idea of the virgin birth: "How did a pagan idea, such as the virgin birth is thought to be, ever come to be attested by this strikingly Palestinian narrative?"

In answer to this question, some recent scholars have suggested that the supposed pagan idea had become so thoroughly naturalized in pre-Christian Judaism that in the first century after Christ it was no longer felt to be a pagan idea and so could appear in a

Palestinian narrative like Luke 1:5–2:52. Back of the Jewish Christian belief in the virgin birth of Jesus, these scholars suggest, there was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in the virgin birth of the coming Messiah, which belief came ultimately from pagan notions.

But the trouble is that there is no real evidence for the existence of such a belief in pre-Christian Judaism; indeed it runs counter to all that we know of pre-Christian Jewish thought.

Thus it is only with a very serious hostile presumption that we examine the supposed pagan parallels to the virgin birth of Christ; for even if those parallels were far closer than they actually are, we should still have difficulty in understanding how the supposed pagan idea could have entered into the early Church and particularly into such strikingly Jewish narratives as Matthew 1–2, Luke 1:5–2:52.

As a matter of fact, the supposed "parallels" are not close at all; indeed an examination of them serves only to reveal with new clearness how utterly unique is the New Testament account of the virgin birth of our Lord. In the present writer's book on *The Virgin Birth of Christ* the pagan "parallels" have been passed in review in detail. Here it may suffice to say that the pagan stories in question are not stories of virgin births at all, but very degrading stories of carnal unions between gods and womankind. When one comes from such stories, with their low conception of the gods as simply more powerful men, possessing human passions and human lusts, to the lofty monotheism that runs through the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke and to the story of the virgin and her Child, one is entering into an entirely different world.

Thus we have observed, first, that the attestation of the virgin birth is rooted deep in that Palestinian soil in which we should expect it to appear on the assumption that it is true, and that it is as abundant as we have any right to demand; and we have observed, second, that if the virgin birth is not a fact the attempts to explain the origin of the belief in it in the Church have so far resulted in failure, advocates of one theory of derivation being often the severest critics of the advocates of another.

What, then, is our conclusion? Is the belief of the Church in the virgin birth based on fact or on some kind of error? Was Jesus conceived by the Holy Ghost, or was He by ordinary generation a child of Joseph and Mary?

In answering this question, it is supremely important to observe that what we are discussing is not the virgin birth of some person of whom otherwise we know nothing, but the virgin birth of Jesus. There is an enormous presumption against the virgin birth of any ordinary man, but a great weight of evidence shows that Jesus was such an One as that in His case the presumption is overcome, and as that a virgin birth is in profound accord with all that we know of Him.

That does not mean at all that the virgin birth hangs as a dead weight upon the other evidence for the supernatural character of Jesus' person; it does not mean that if we have already been convinced on other grounds that Jesus is a supernatural Person, we may perhaps reluctantly admit that He was born of a virgin: but it means that the positive testimony to the virgin birth contributes its quota to a grand sum of convergent evidence to show that Jesus of Nazareth was in very truth no mere product of the human race but a supernatural Redeemer come into the world to save mankind from the guilt and power of sin.

John Gresham Machen *a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary. He went to be with his Lord on January 1, 1937.*

Intellectual Gymnastics: A Defense of Scripture's Authority

by Brian T. Wingard

Becoming Awakened to the Issue

In the fall of 1969, when I entered Belhaven College, my grip on the authority of Scripture was loosening. I had spent the previous season continuing under the preaching of a pastor who proclaimed his politics—especially his anti-war convictions—more fervently than the gospel. At the same time, I was being influenced by a Neo-Orthodox intern from Columbia Theological Seminary who dismissed evangelicals as mere "Bible-thumpers." Under that pressure, my confidence in Scripture began to erode.

But once I arrived at Belhaven, I discovered something unexpected: The "Bible-thumpers" could defend their position far better than I could defend my doubts. Slowly, my hold on Scripture tightened again. Yet I still carried a lingering awe for the supposed erudition of liberal scholarship. God, in his Providence, cured me of that awe.

One of the great strengths of my professors at Belhaven was their insistence that we read liberal theologians directly, so that we would not argue against straw men. J. Knox Chamblin assigned J. A. T. Robinson's *In the End, God* in a course on apocalyptic literature. In that curious book, Robinson claimed that Paul was uncertain about the resurrection because he wrote, "If Christ is not risen from the dead . . ." (see 1 Cor. 15:14).[1] I remember thinking that even a child can see Paul is using a contrary-to-fact conditional—an argumentum ad absurdum—which he immediately resolves with the triumphant declaration: "But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of them that sleep." I thought to myself, "A man who reasons like this is not a man whose reasoning I need to fear."

Rudolf Bultmann gave me another such moment. In his *Theology of the New Testament*, he argued that demythologizing is necessary because no modern journalist would attribute an unusual occurrence to a supernatural cause—as though the contemporary newsroom were the standard of truth and right thinking.[2] I remember reading that and thinking, "This is not argument; this is fiat decree." The entire edifice of his method rested not on exegesis but on the unexamined assumption that the modern world is closed to divine action.

Those two encounters—Robinson's misreading of Paul and Bultmann's appeal to the journalist as epistemic gatekeeper—did more to free me from the intimidation of liberal scholarship than any apologetics text could have done. God used their very arguments to show me that the authority of Scripture does not tremble before the cleverness of its critics.

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[1] John A. T. Robinson, *In the End, God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things* (Fontana, 1968), 32–35.

[2] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 38–40.

The value of these moments extends beyond the individual lessons they taught. They revealed a pattern of reasoning that, for lack of a better term, I can only describe as *intellectual gymnastics*—the elaborate lengths to which doubting scholars will go to avoid bowing to the authority of the Word of God. Red flags appear whenever reasoning becomes circuitous, strained, or evasive in order to prevent the Holy Spirit from speaking in the way he plainly intends to speak.

The Modern Impulse to Rehabilitate the Ethics of Scripture

A recurring feature of modern biblical scholarship is the quiet but persistent confidence that contemporary ethical norms—whatever their source—are more reliable than the ethics of the inspired authors of Scripture. When a biblical narrative portrays God speaking or acting in ways that trouble modern sensibilities, the instinct is not to question the sensibilities but to reinterpret the text. The biblical writer must be "rescued" from the moral embarrassment he would cause if his words were taken at face value. The scholar becomes the moral arbiter; the prophet becomes the one in need of rehabilitation.

This dynamic is evident in Donald J. Wiseman's treatment of the destruction of the first two captains and their fifties in 2 Kings 1:1–16. Wiseman rightly rejects the charge of "inhumanity," yet he does so in a way that leaves the reader unsure whether he regards the event as historical or merely theological drama. His language subtly shifts agency away from God and toward Elijah. He writes, for example, that Elijah was "protecting the Name of God," as though the prophet—not the Lord—were the active cause of the consuming fire, however one wishes to picture it.[3] The narrative itself, of course, attributes the fire explicitly to the LORD. By framing Elijah as the one who safeguards God's honor, Wiseman unintentionally blurs the line between prophetic obedience and divine action. The effect is to soften the force of the text by making Elijah the moral agent and the fire a symbolic vindication rather than an act of God in history. This is precisely the kind of interpretive move that reveals a deeper discomfort with the biblical portrayal of divine judgment. His reluctance is understandable once one recognizes the scholarly tradition he is interacting with. James A. Montgomery, in his influential commentary, explicitly labels the episode morally problematic and historically doubtful. For Montgomery, the severity of the narrative reflects the prophet's zeal or the narrator's ideology rather than the actual action of God. The "problem" is shifted from divine justice to human imagination.[4]

This move is not isolated. It reflects a broader hermeneutical reflex: When the biblical text attributes judgment to God, the modern scholar attributes it to the narrator. When the

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[3] Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP Academic, 1997), 208. Wiseman exhibits a similar tendency later in his commentary when he treats Elijah's ascension as though it were analogous to the death and hidden burial of Moses (2 Kings 2:1–14). He suggests that the narrative may reflect a tradition of Elijah's disappearance rather than a literal ascent, despite the text's explicit statement that Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (*hashamayim*). This interpretive move mirrors his earlier hesitation in 2 Kings 1, where he speaks of Elijah "protecting the Name of God," a formulation that subtly shifts agency from the Lord to the prophet and leaves the historicity of the consuming fire ambiguous. In both cases, the narrative's plain affirmation of divine action is softened in favor of a more symbolic or literary reading.

[4] James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, International Critical Commentary (T&T Clark, 1951), 146–47.

text presents divine wrath, the scholar speaks of ancient Near Eastern conceptions of deity. When the text depicts God acting decisively, the scholar speaks of prophetic interpretation. In each case, the inspired author is treated as ethically primitive, and the modern interpreter as ethically enlightened.

The selective appeal to Jesus often reinforces this pattern. Wiseman, for example, cites Jesus's rebuke of James and John for wanting to call down fire on a Samaritan village, as though this rebuke invalidated all divine judgment.[5] Yet he overlooks the far more severe woes Jesus pronounced on Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—judgments that make Elijah's fire look mild by comparison. Jesus rebuked misdirected judgment, not divine judgment. To invoke Jesus selectively is not to follow him but to filter him.

Underlying all of this is a deeper issue: the assumption that modern ethical intuitions are the standard by which Scripture must be judged. But this assumption is not only theologically misguided; it is logically self-defeating. Today's ethics will inevitably be judged inadequate by tomorrow's. The generation that rehabilitates Elijah today will be rehabilitated by the next generation in turn. A morality that shifts with cultural winds cannot serve as a judge over the Word of the living God. If Scripture must be corrected by contemporary ethics, then Scripture will be endlessly corrected—and never authoritative.

The biblical writers, however, operate from a different premise. They assume that God's character—not human intuition—is the standard of righteousness. They assume that God's judgments are true, his actions just, and his words trustworthy. To treat divine action as the narrator's projection is to reverse the relationship between God and his creatures. It is not humility before Scripture but moral paternalism toward Scripture.

Implications for the Church

The church must resist this impulse. Our task is not to rehabilitate the ethics of the inspired authors but to receive them. The God who spoke through Elijah is the same God who spoke through Christ. The God who judged the captains is the same God who judged Capernaum. The God who acts in 2 Kings 1 is the God who still acts in history. To read Scripture faithfully is to let God's Word judge our ethics—not to let our ethics judge God's Word.

If ministers are to help congregations read the Scriptures faithfully, they must resist the modern instinct to blush at the judgments of God. Embarrassment is not a fruit of the Spirit; it is the reflex of a culture that has forgotten both the holiness of God and the weight of sin. The task of the pastor is not to soften the text but to shepherd God's people into a deeper confidence that the Lord is righteous in all His ways. Judgment narratives are not moral embarrassments to be explained away; they are revelations of the God who is both just and merciful.

Pastors can begin by reminding their people that divine judgment is never arbitrary. It is always measured, purposeful, and consistent with God's character. The fire that fell in 2 Kings 1 is not a divine tantrum but a divine testimony: The Lord will not be mocked, and his Word will not be defied with impunity. When congregations see that judgment

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[5] Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 206.

flows from God's holiness rather than from human cruelty, they are freed from the need to apologize for Scripture.

Second, ministers must help their people see that the God who judges is also the God who saves. Judgment narratives are never ends in themselves. They expose the seriousness of sin so that the grace of God might be seen in its true brightness. The humility of the third captain in 2 Kings 1 is a reminder that God delights to show mercy to the contrite. The same Lord who consumed the arrogant spared the humble. This pattern runs through all of Scripture and finds its climax at the cross, where judgment and mercy meet in perfect harmony.

Finally, pastors must teach their congregations to trust the ethics of Scripture more than the ethics of the age. Modern moral sensibilities shift with remarkable speed, and what seems humane today may be condemned tomorrow. But the righteousness of God does not change. When believers learn to anchor their moral instincts in the character of God rather than in the fashions of the moment, they will no longer feel the need to rehabilitate the biblical authors. Instead, they will receive the Word of God with reverence, confidence, and gratitude.

In this way, ministers can help the church read judgment narratives, not with embarrassment or evasion, but with the humble recognition that the God who judges is the God who saves—and that his Word, in all its severity and all its mercy, is good.

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Important Books for Confessional Churches

by D. Scott Meadows

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

By confessional churches I mean churches that formally bind themselves to one of the great Protestant confessions of faith, such as the Belgic Confession (1561), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646; hereafter, WCF) or one of its later revised forms, the Savoy Declaration (1658), or the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1677/1688–89; hereafter, 2LCF). In this article, I commend two works to readers who desire a better understanding of our confessions and the old Reformed theology.

What constitutes confessional subscription with integrity in our day is a difficult and disputed question. But we must first understand the original public meaning (OPM) of these historic summaries of our venerable Reformed tradition. Given the richness of the sources, pursuing that OPM can greatly edify students of historical theology. Any attempt to interpret centuries-old confessions as if they were modern documents, without knowledge and appreciation of the times, the controversies which occasioned them, and the Reformed consensus they represent, makes one liable to import modern notions foreign to the framers' intent. It pours new wine into old wineskins, and thus ruins everything.

We agree that the church of Christ, broadly speaking, advances in her grasp of biblical truth; yet such advances do not undermine truths she has already recognized nor overturn established orthodoxy. Much of modernity is incongruent with, and even opposed to, the biblical and glorious orthodoxy that our venerable historic confessions hold forth. At some points, moderns—even with good intentions—are in error, whereas an excellent confession may be materially free from doctrinal error.

Several years ago I plowed through the multi-volume sets that are the focus of this article. They sharpened my grasp and increased my appreciation for the aforementioned confessions even more than I hoped. I sincerely wished that someone had introduced me to them in seminary, or at least, that I had read them decades earlier in my pastoral ministry. Now I frequently recommend the sets with zeal. I sincerely believe that attention to these and other comparable tomes would go a long way toward rekindling and preserving our love for the old Reformed theology. My advocacy of these volumes in particular is selective and the fruit of my personal experience. My learned readers will doubtless appreciate the value of many other authors and their worthy contributions.

BOOKS FOR CONFESSIONAL UNDERSTANDING

We need books containing the original texts of historical confessions to establish baselines for what those confessions actually say. To discern the OPM of any historic, public document, we must have the publicly known and definitive text.

Beyond books with the original confessional wording, countless others are helpful for confessional understanding. Chief among these are books about the period in which the confession appeared (e.g., the seventeenth century), or primary source materials related to the confessions and their theology in that period.

Two stellar titles that meet these criteria and earn my warm recommendation to you are the following:

Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics (4 vols.) by Richard A. Muller (hereafter, PRRD).[1] This is a modern work describing historical theology in the context of the confessional era, especially the seventeenth century. Its subtitle is "The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725."

Institutes of Elenctic Theology (3 vols., published between 1679 and 1685; hereafter, IET) by Francis Turretin (1623–87).[2] This is not a systematic theology in the modern sense, but rather a course of instruction that Turretin designed especially to help young ministers recognize error and defend orthodox theology against sophisticated threats from Socinianism, Fanaticism, Arminianism, and Romanism.

I realize that these works are not sources from which the confessions themselves drew. Nevertheless, Turretin's teaching circulated widely and enjoyed considerable esteem among the Reformed not long after the confessions appeared. Muller's incisive modern books explain the theology and history surrounding the composition of these confessions and the period soon afterward. They serve us as secondary literature. He lucidly expounds the doctrines the confessions proclaim, especially in theology proper and Trinitarianism. We proceed, then, to examine Muller's PRRD and Turretin's IET.

MULLER'S PRRD

Richard Muller has written some of the most praiseworthy and helpful books in this sphere. Dr. Muller (b. 1948; Scholar-in-Residence at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary) is a leading scholar of his particular academic interests. I read all four volumes over the course of 2018, and I can honestly say that studying them was one of the most important parts of my theological education since my ordination in 1989.

The danger of relative ignorance of the subjects Muller presents is that we imagine we understand our confessions well while holding modern notions that are anachronistic and incompatible with their original, historic sense. My observations suggest this is a widespread problem among confessional churches, including, in many cases, their pastors.

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[1] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Baker Academic, 2003).

[2] Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols. (P&R, 1992–97).

It is important to appreciate the specific project Muller has undertaken in this work. It is not to produce another multi-volume Reformed systematic theology, although it resembles that in a limited way. Muller does not treat most of the standard loci; he treats only prolegomena to theology (literally, "things spoken beforehand"), Holy Scripture, the divine essence and attributes, and the Triunity of God (the four volumes, respectively). For the same reason, calling it a historical theology of the period in the Reformed tradition does not adequately describe it. Its aim is far more ambitious: to trace the development of doctrinal thought among the Reformed from the early Reformers through the period of Reformed orthodoxy spanning roughly two centuries. Muller demonstrates that this development is an organic whole—not an establishment followed by a departure, pitting the magisterial Reformers against the Post-Reformation theologians.

Those two centuries exhibited not mutation but maturation, and not a contest of opposing ideas but a basic continuity. Long ago, the scholarly consensus turned against an old view called the "Calvin versus the Calvinists" thesis. According to this thesis, Calvin's own theology stood in strong discontinuity with the theological systems of those in his debt a century or two later. If I may speak in broad terms, Calvin's own "Calvinism" was supposedly more biblical and softer than the Calvinism of later Protestant scholasticism represented by men like Girolamo Zanchi and Puritans like John Owen. Richard Muller was one of the scholars exposing this as a serious misunderstanding. Joining Muller in this judgment are Carl Trueman, Willem van Asselt, J. V. Fesko, and Michael Haykin.

Muller's PRRD ranges beyond Calvin and Calvinism, both in the theologians it discusses and in the subjects it explores beyond soteriology. He demonstrates that those important centuries in the development of expressions of Reformed theology, culminating in the seventeenth-century confessions, are the growth of the same Reformed tree in doctrine, method, and theological intent. There is a fundamental continuity from beginning to end.

The popular assumption that the early Reformers were biblical, dynamic, and pastoral, while later Reformed scholastics were rigid, speculative, and merely philosophical, is not fundamentally sound.

One great benefit of Muller's work is the breadth of his survey. Instead of focusing on Calvin alone as the representative of early Reformed thought, it rightly considers many other voices among the early Reformers and continues this more comprehensive approach through the entire period under consideration. Though admittedly important, Calvin was not the only theologian, nor necessarily the best or most representative, in his day. Likewise, we must consider many theologians working together internationally if we would gain an accurate understanding of Reformed theology's development in those days. This will not only edify us as students of historical theology, but also it will educate us in the doctrinal and philosophical entailments of our beloved confessions as documents that appeared especially in the period of High Reformed Orthodoxy. Modern notions foreign to their thinking, in many cases where they are dissonant rather than consonant, will become conspicuously suspect once we gain that knowledge. We stand to gain the discernment to reject errors that are actually incompatible with our subordinate doctrinal standards, rather than letting them remain hidden beneath the cloak of our ignorance.

Muller's first volume could stand by itself as framing the entire treatment that follows in volumes 2 to 4. In volume 1, Muller describes how, historically speaking, Reformed theology thinks; in volume 2, he presents its conclusions about Scripture as the principal cognitive foundation for revealed truth; in volume 3, he explores God's essence and attributes; and in volume 4, he describes the Triune God. We will focus on volume 1 as most relevant to our article topic.

Muller explores Reformed orthodoxy and scholasticism. Orthodoxy denotes the broad consensus among the Reformed which took formal shape in confessions throughout that period. Scholasticism refers to a theological method, not any particular doctrinal positions, that draws good and necessary conclusions from Scripture, employs detailed and precise formulation, contrasts its conclusions with competing notions and defends against their errors, and organizes its materials in a systematic and rational manner. The scholastic method was useful for forming clear doctrinal positions, for instructing men for the ministry, and for framing things in a manner inherently resistant to the challenges of heterodoxy and heresy. The modern assumption that "scholasticism" has necessarily objectionable associations such as detachment from Scripture, rationalistic dependence on the sinful mind of man, and a lack of warmth and zeal is unfounded within the best of the historic Reformed tradition.

Muller shows how the historic Reformed inherited, refined, and developed the Christian thought of earlier centuries. The Reformers indeed received theological riches from the church fathers and medieval scholastics, though not without critical assessment. Their posture was respectful, eclectic, and collaborative. Their literature demonstrates a broad familiarity with historic authors in the Great Tradition. The Reformers often cite them favorably, and their occasional disagreement is typically respectful.

The early Reformers embraced and passed on to the later Reformed scholastics several major ideas, including the distinction between archetypal theology (God's knowledge of himself, identical with his essence) and ectypal theology (our creaturely, partial, analogical, yet true knowledge of God, patterned after his own).

The historic Reformed also broadly agreed on a doctrine of natural revelation and theology, which they distinguished from supernatural revelation and its theology. Natural theology consists of what we can know through natural revelation coupled with human reflection upon it. It testifies to God's existence and something of his nature and includes God's moral law written on the heart of all men; sinners universally suppress it, and it is inadequate for salvation. Supernatural revelation is therefore necessary, for it reveals more of God than we could otherwise know, such as the mysteries of the Trinity, the incarnation, and the gospel. It never contradicts what God truly reveals in nature, since both forms of revelation have the same divine source.

Muller also demonstrates that in keeping with the best of Christian tradition before them, the Reformed made an eclectic use of philosophy. Plato and Aristotle, pagan Greek philosophers, represent sources of concepts that Christian thinkers found useful in the articulation of biblical, doctrinal substance. The Reformed received and built upon early creedal language rich with technical, philosophical terms such as essence, subsistence, and hypostasis, for example—extra-biblical language in the service of biblical truth.

Much of the Reformed tradition, as Muller shows, stands in sharp contrast to modern conceptions of these matters that we encounter even within the Reformed community.

But without a close familiarity with the tradition, a pastor or church may be far more removed than they realize, and even unknowingly antagonistic to it.

The irony is that the very confessions to which many of these subscribe remain monuments to pre-critical Christian conviction, prior to various corruptions of thought that Rationalist and so-called Enlightenment philosophies introduced.

Well might we hope and pray for a return to the excellence of the highly developed and codified Reformation orthodoxy that the best historic confessions of faith represent. Reading Muller can help us recover an informed appreciation for that orthodoxy.

When a man in shabby clothes lives among similarly clad neighbors, he may think nothing of his appearance. But imagine his discomfort if he suddenly finds himself among wedding guests in their finest apparel. In their company, he sees how poorly he is dressed. While the church has learned to express biblical truth more amply in some respects over the last few centuries, much of what passes for doctrinal progress looks shabby beside the beautiful attire of historic, confessional theology.

Muller has prepared the ground. Next we turn to a man who worked that ground. In our second section, we will examine Francis Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, a masterpiece of seventeenth-century Reformed scholasticism. There we will encounter High Reformed Orthodoxy in the teaching of one of its foremost exponents.

TURRETIN'S *INSTITUTES OF ELENCTIC THEOLOGY*

In the last section, we considered the importance of discerning the original public meaning (OPM) of our confessions in their historical setting and examined Richard Muller's magisterial work *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*. Muller helped us understand the history, philosophy, and theology of the world in which the framers composed our historic confessions. Now we turn from a modern scholar describing that world to a primary source that takes us directly into it: a great work by Francis Turretin.[3]

Turretin's three-volume *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* is especially valuable for understanding the confessions' OPM. Born in Geneva, Turretin served as professor of theology at the Academy of Geneva from 1653 until his death in 1687. He also served as one of the ministers of the Genevan church. He held a prominent place among the Reformed theologians of his day.

The three volumes appeared in 1679, 1682, and 1685, roughly three to four decades after the Westminster Confession of Faith and between the first publication of the Second London Baptist Confession in 1677 and its endorsement by the General Assembly in 1689. Turretin therefore wrote within the same broad confessional era and represented a major stream of Reformed theology. Turretin enjoyed considerable esteem during his lifetime. Afterward, this three-volume work became a standard text for many generations of Reformed ministers. The

[3] J. Mark Beach, "Francis Turretin (1623–1687): A Commemoration and Commendation," *Ordained Servant* 32 (2023): 58–64, https://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=1071.

English translation, published in 1992–97, has made this work accessible to a new generation of readers.[4]

According to Dr. Muller, Turretin stands among the clearest and most mature representatives of Reformed scholastic theology during the period of High Reformed Orthodoxy (c. 1640–1720). Muller consistently treats Turretin as one of the central representatives of the period, alongside figures such as Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1776), Herman Witsius (1636–1708), and Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706). As we noted in the first section, scholasticism concerns method. Muller explains: "'Scholastic' indicates an academic style and method of discourse, not a particular theology or philosophy."[5] Theologians who differed widely in doctrine nevertheless used the same sound scholastic method. Similarly, scholars equally competent in biblical Hebrew and Greek sometimes reach different exegetical and doctrinal conclusions. Such disagreements no more discredit scholastic method than they discredit the study of Scripture in its original languages.

Turretin's title uses a rare word unfamiliar to many: *elenctic*. It comes from the Greek verb *elenchō*, meaning to expose or refute. Turretin's *magnum opus* therefore employs biblical reasoning to refute error and establish truths that Scripture teaches either expressly or by good and necessary consequence. This purpose accords with Paul's description of an elder's qualifications in Titus 1:9: "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." The word "convince" translates ἐλέγχειν (elenchein), an infinitive of ἐλέγχω (elenchō), the verb related to our word "elenctic." An elder must be able to refute those who contradict sound doctrine. Turretin's work is a comprehensive handbook equipping pastors and theologians to fulfill precisely this biblical mandate.

Turretin's main interlocutors are Roman Catholics exalting papal authority, Arminians arguing for a libertarian view of man's free will, Socinians advocating unitarianism and other serious errors, Amyraldians striking at the Reformed doctrine of definite atonement, and Cartesians or Rationalists who relied upon human reason more than divine revelation. These systems threaten Christian orthodoxy wherever the church fails to recognize and refute their errors. Thankfully, Turretin has rendered a great service to the church by his labors.

Turretin arranges his work systematically, but his particular concern is to defend Reformed doctrine against objections. His purpose helps explain why he treats some subjects more fully than others. Opponents have not subjected every doctrine to equally elaborate attacks. Ministers need to be competent to "convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9, KJV). Here, "convincing" means demonstrating their error, whether or not they acknowledge it. The church's formal teachers must

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[4] Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (P&R, 1992–97).

[5] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725, 2nd ed., vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology* (Baker Academic, 2003), 30.

recognize doctrinal error, understand opposing positions well enough to represent them fairly, and demonstrate where those positions contradict Scripture and sound reasoning.

To this end, Turretin organized his work under twenty principal topics. A brief survey will show its scope. The *Institutes* ranges from the nature of theology to the last things. Turretin begins with theology itself, defining its nature, method, and authority. He grounds theology in Holy Scripture and defends Scripture's inspiration, canon, purity, authority, and sufficiency. He then expounds the doctrine of the one and triune God, the divine decrees and predestination, creation, providence, and angels. From there he considers man before the fall, sin and its consequences, and free will in the fallen state, followed by God's law and the covenant of grace in its Old and New Testament economies. Turretin next treats the person and state of Christ and his mediatorial office. His treatment of the application of redemption includes calling and faith, justification, sanctification, and good works. He devotes substantial attention to the church, including its ministry, discipline, and authority, before turning to the sacraments. He concludes with the last things, treating resurrection, judgment, hell, and eternal life.

Throughout the work, Turretin defines the doctrines under discussion, defends them from Scripture, and answers Roman Catholic, Socinian, Arminian, and other objections. His treatment shows Reformed orthodoxy defending its claims against its principal opponents. Turretin divides these twenty major topics into hundreds of questions across the three volumes. His treatment of these questions generally displays the scholastic method described in the first section, with these characteristic features.

First, Turretin carefully states the question itself, often clarifying what he is not asking as well as what he is asking. This precision prevents confusion and ensures everyone understands exactly what is at stake.

Second, he identifies the *status quaestionis*, or precise point at issue, distinguishing what both sides concede from what they dispute. We will see him engaging Roman Catholics, Arminians, Socinians, Amyraldians, and sometimes Lutherans or Anabaptists. He takes care to answer his opponents' actual arguments.

Third, he presents his opponents' objections to the orthodox position fairly and thoroughly.

Fourth, Turretin gives his response, that is, the Reformed, orthodox answer to the question. He supports his answer with careful exegesis of Scripture, appeals to the church fathers where relevant, and rigorous logical argument.

Fifth, he refutes the objections systematically, showing where the opposing arguments fail biblically, logically, or both.

Throughout this process, Turretin employs careful distinctions. The use of precise distinctions is one of the hallmarks of scholastic theology. Turretin will distinguish between different senses of a term, different kinds of a thing, or

different aspects of a doctrine. These distinctions help us avoid confusing different senses of the same term.

These habits of theological definition and argument help us understand the language of our historic confessions. Muller describes their theological setting; Turretin shows us how a leading theologian within that setting reasoned.

Consider this: When the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Second London Confession of Faith speaks of God as "without body, parts, or passions," Turretin helps us understand what those words meant to seventeenth-century Reformed theologians. When our confessions discuss predestination, the divine decrees, the covenant of grace, or the perseverance of the saints, Turretin helps us understand the biblical arguments, distinctions, and controversies that belong to their theological setting.

Reading Turretin is like having a master teacher from the seventeenth century explain what our confession actually means, not by speculation or modern reconstruction, but by direct access to the theology that produced it. Turretin broadly represents the mature Reformed orthodoxy that the Westminster and Savoy divines and the framers of the Second London Confession sought to express.

Turretin also equips us to examine contemporary teaching with greater discernment. His treatments of the Trinity, the incarnation, and God's knowledge supply biblical arguments and careful distinctions with which to test modern proposals.

For those of us who are ministers, Turretin serves several vital functions.

First, he trains us in careful theological method. We learn to define terms precisely, make necessary distinctions, present opposing views fairly, construct biblical arguments systematically, and refute error charitably but firmly.

Second, he deepens our understanding of Scripture. Turretin's work is saturated with biblical exegesis. He does not simply assert doctrines; he demonstrates them from the text of Scripture through careful grammatical, historical, and theological interpretation.

Third, he connects us to the Great Tradition of Christian orthodoxy. Turretin regularly cites church fathers, medieval theologians, and Reformation-era scholars. He shows us that Reformed theology is not a novelty but stands in continuity with catholic Christianity rightly understood.

Fourth, he equips us for spiritual warfare. The errors Turretin refuted in the seventeenth century often reappear in new forms today. By learning how he engaged them biblically and logically, we become better equipped to guard our flocks from similar threats in our own generation.

We must be honest: Turretin is not easy reading. His sentences are long, his vocabulary is technical, and his arguments require careful attention. The English translation we have, while excellent, reflects the complexity of the original Latin. We will need patience and perseverance.

But the reward is worth the effort. Patient readers can learn much from Turretin's theological method and clarity of expression. His work displays the biblical depth and precision of mature Reformed orthodoxy and gives us grounds for testing claims of doctrinal progress today.

Keep Richard Muller's *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*[6] nearby when reading Turretin. It will help us understand the technical vocabulary. I also recommend reading slowly and carefully, perhaps tackling one question at a time rather than trying to read large sections quickly.

Most importantly, we should read Turretin with confessions of faith open beside us. We may consider how the doctrines he defends correspond to the statements in those confessions, see how the careful distinctions he makes illuminate the precise language they use, and observe how, in many cases, the errors he refutes are the same ones they were designed to exclude.

Much as we esteem Muller as our modern guide and Turretin as our teacher from the past, their authority is not the ground of our confessional subscription. We subscribe because we find in our confessions faithful summaries of the things most assuredly believed among us, doctrines that Scripture teaches expressly or by necessary consequence.

Neglect of the historical theology that Muller and Turretin help us understand leaves us liable to profess doctrines we misunderstand or to read into our confessions notions their framers would not have recognized or affirmed.

Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). Apollos was already eloquent, competent in the Scriptures, and fervent in spirit, but his understanding was incomplete. So these faithful teachers brought him to a fuller, more accurate grasp of Christian truth.

In a similar way, many of us who subscribe to historic confessions may be eloquent, scripturally competent, and fervent, yet our understanding of what we have subscribed to may be incomplete or even distorted by modern assumptions.

We need teachers from the past, such as Turretin, and contemporary scholars such as Muller who introduce us to them, to expound unto us the way of God more perfectly, not to replace Scripture, but to help us understand what Scripture teaches and what our confessions, rightly understood, confess.

Therefore, with such praiseworthy resources before us, let us pursue "the way of God more perfectly." May God help us to be faithful to the pattern of sound words, to guard the good deposit entrusted to us, and to convince the gainsayers with the elenctic skill of ministers well taught in the whole counsel of God. Amen.

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[6] Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2017).

ServantHistory

Post-Reformation Reformed Scholastic Theologians

Magisterial Reformers [1st generation][1]
Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) *de Vera et Falsa Religioni Commentarius*
Martin Bucer (1491–1551) *Ein Summarischer Vergriff der Christlichen Lehre und Religion*

Codifiers [2nd generation of Magisterial Reformers) died out by 1565 (Bullinger 1575)]
Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) *De Testamento seu Foedere Dei Unico and Aeterno* (1534)
John Calvin (1509–1565) *Institutio Christianae Religionis*
Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563) *Loci Communes* (1560)
Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500–1562) *Loci Communes* (1576)
Andreas Hyperius (1511–1564)

Early Orthodoxy [1565–1640 confessional solidification]
1st Phase [1565–1618]
Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583) *Summa Theologiae* (1562)
Casper Olevianus (1536–1587)
Jerome Zanchi (1560–1590)
Lambert Daneau (1530–1595)
Theodore Beza (1519–1605)
Francis Junius (1545–1602)
Robert Rollock (1555–1599) *Tractatus de Vocatione Efficaci* (1597)
William Perkins (1558–1602)
Amandus Polanus (1561–1610) *Syntagma*

2nd Phase [1618–1640]
Antonius Walaeus (1573–1639)
Johann Polyander (1624–1698)
Sibrandus Lubbertus (1555–1625)
Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641)
John Diodati (1576–1649)
Johannes Maccovius (1588–1644)
John Davenant (1572–1641)
William Ames (1576–1633) *The Marrow of Theology* (1629)

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[1] from Richard A. Muller *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: Volume One, Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2003) with some additional names and works added by Gregory Edward Reynolds 2008. On Calvin and the Calvinists see Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

J. H. Alsted (1588–1638)
John Cameron (1579–1625)
John Ball (1585–1640)
Johannes Cloppenburg (1592–1652) *Exercitationes Theologicae*
Moise Amyrault (1596–1664)
Johannes Buxtorf (1599–1664)
Louis Cappel (1585–1658)
Johannes Wollebius (1586–1629) *Compendium of Christian Theology* (1626)

High Orthodoxy [1640–1725]

1st Phase [1640–1685 broad, explicit exposition of Reformed tradition]
Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)
Samuel Maresius (1599–1673)
Francis Roberts (1609–1675)
Andreas Essenius (1618–1677)
Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676)
Friedrich Spanheim the elder (1600–1649)
Thomas Goodwin (1600–80)
Marcus Friedrich Wendelin (1585–1652)
Franz Burman (1632–1679)
Francis Turretin (1623–1687) *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* (1679–85)
Edward Leigh (1602–1671)
Matthew Poole (1624–1679)
John Owen (1616–1683)
Stephen Charnock (1628–1680)
George Gillespie (1613–1648)

2nd Phase [1685–1725 losing intellectual dominance in church] *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (4 profs of Leiden?)
Benedict Pictet (1655–1724)
Jacques Saurin (1677–1730)
Pierre Jurieu (1637–1713)
David Martin (1639–1721)
Claude Brousson (1647–1698)
Jacques Basnage (1653–1723)
Jacque Abbadie (1654–1727)
Daniel de Superville (1657–1728)
Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711) *Redelijke Godsdienst*
Louis Tronchin (1629–1705)
Leonhardus Rijssenius (ca.1636–1700)
Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706) *Beschoowerde en Practicale Godgeleerdheit*
Herman Witsius (1636–1708) *Over de Vorbonden*
Salomon van Til (1643–1713)
Johannes Marckius (1656–1731) *Compendium Theologiae Christianae Didactico–Elencticum* (1686)
John Edwards (16??–17??)
Thomas Ridgley (ca. 1667–1734)
Thomas Boston (1676–1732)
Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722)
Johannes van der Kemp (1664–1718)

J. A. Turretin (1674–1737)

Late Orthodoxy [1725–"deconfessionalization"]
Daniel Wyttenbach (1746–1820)
Johann Friedrich Stapfer (1708–1775)
Herman Venema (1697–1787)
John Gill (1697–1771)
Alexander Comrie (1706–1774)
John Brown of Haddington (1722–1787)
Bernhardus de Moor (1708–1765, 80?) *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium theologiae Christianae didactico–elencticum I–VII* (1761–71)

Latin Theological Terms
Principium cogniscendi externum – God's revelation in Creation (general) and Scripture (special)
Principium essendi – God
Principium cogniscendi internum – the work and witness of the Holy Spirit producing faith

Is It Sacramentally Necessary to Break Bread When Celebrating the Lord's Supper?

by T. David Gordon

It has been common in some circles within the English-speaking liturgical heritage to require that the minister break the loaf of bread before distributing it to the communicants, implying that there is sacramental symbolism inherent in the act of breaking, and sometimes therefore requiring the minister to break the bread:

> The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and *break the bread*, to take the cup . . . (WCF 29.3, see also WLC 169)

The Westminster *Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, along with other constitutions, also required this fraction:[1]

> There the minister, who is also himself to communicate, *is to break the bread*, and give it to the communicants;
>
> OPC Directory for Worship 13.C.1, "The physical elements, *representing the broken body* and shed blood of the Saviour";
>
> PCA BCO 58:5, "The bread and wine being thus set apart by prayer and thanksgiving, the minister is to take the bread, *and break it*, in the view of the people";[2]
>
> Book of Common Prayer, "The Celebrant *breaks* the consecrated Bread."[3]

R. L. Dabney writes in *Systematic Theology*, (801–02):

> The sacramental acts, therefore, warranted by Christ are, the taking, *breaking*, and distributing the elements, on the administrator's part. . . . The *breaking of the bread is plainly one of the sacramental acts*, and should never be done beforehand, by others, nor omitted by the minister.

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[1] "Fraction" is the technical liturgical term for the ministerial act of breaking the bread before distributing it.
[2] The PCA took a step in the right direction in 2004, when the General Assembly adopted my overture to change 58:5 by removing the requirement of employing the KJV's "broken for you," and expressly saying "some other biblical account of the institution" could be used at this point. It would be a small step now to go further and remove the requirement of fraction altogether, on the same logic.
[3] The Lutheran Common Service Book differs; its rubric merely reads, "Here he shall take the Paten, with the Bread, in his hand," and when distributing the bread, the minister says, "Take and eat, This is the Body of Christ, given for thee." As we will see below, this is because Luther's (and subsequent) translation of 1 Cor. 11:24 did not say "broken," but, by attraction to Luke's account, said "given for you" (*der für euch gegeben wird*).

Charles Hodge also expounds in *Systematic Theology*, iii, 619: "The bread is the symbol not merely of Christ's body, but of his body *as broken for us*."

Note especially how strong the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith is, when one elides some words: "The Lord Jesus hath . . . appointed his ministers to declare . . . ; to pray, and bless . . ., and . . . to set them apart . . .; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, . . . and . . . to give both to the communicants . . ." Westminster here says that Christ "appointed" his ministers to do seven things (one repeated, so actually six), to "declare, pray, bless, set apart, take, break, take, and give." By the plain language of the confession, a minister is not permitted to omit any of these six/seven things, because the minister is "appointed" to do them. Note also how precisely it requires communion in both species ("to give both to the communicants"), which was one of the very significant Protestant objections to the then-Roman Catholic practice of withholding the chalice from the laity.[4] One can be sure that, if an OPC or PCA minister omitted this giving of the cup today, charges would be filed against the responsible minister. Yet many of us ministers in the PCA (and other NAPARC communions) violate our confessional standards nearly every Sunday by not breaking the bread; yet, as I will argue, our confessional standards have no biblical ground to require this of us.[5]

The purpose of this paper is to question whether this English-speaking consensus is biblically grounded.[6] The question is not whether it is *lawful* or *permissible* to break the bread, but whether it is sacramentally and symbolically *necessary* to do so. My opinion is that it is lawful and permissible to break the bread before distributing it, and the option, therefore, of doing so, should be retained. The only question is whether it is sacramentally and symbolically *necessary* to the integrity of the rite to break the bread before distributing it.[7]

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[4] The Augsburg Confession even has a separate section (XXII) entitled "Of Both Kinds in the Sacrament."

[5] The other major Reformed standards (Scots, Belgic, Dort, Second Helvetic, Heidelberg) do not require this language of breaking, or that the minister break the bread; the closest they come is Lord's Day 28 in the Heidelberg Catechism, which merely cites Paul: "This promise is repeated by Paul where he says: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?"

[6] And it is indeed merely an English-speaking consensus. The Second Helvetic Confession and The Canons of the Synod of Dort were written in Latin, The Belgic Confession was written in French, and the Heidelberg Catechism was written in German. The Scots Confession of 1560 was written in English, but does not require fraction. The German liturgies do not require fraction because Luther's translation of 1 Cor. 11:24 does not contain the disputed participle. Luther used Erasmus's second edition Greek text; whereas the King James was translated from his third edition. Possibly the difference is due to this. Somewhat curiously, the Roman Catholic Mass does indeed contain a separate liturgical moment called "The Fraction" that occurs after "The Lord's Prayer" and "The Peace," despite the fact that the Vulgate omits the participle (κλωμενον) in question, and instead has the Lucan *tradetur,* "given." As is my ordinary custom in matters theological, I prefer the Lutheran to the Roman Catholic practice, even though the Westminster Standards (probably unwittingly) require the Catholic practice here.

[7] When I say "only question," I mean this is the only question I am addressing here. There are many other questions one could raise about the constitutional instructions. Why is it *necessary* (as per the PCA BCO) that the table be "decently covered"? WCF 29.7 says, "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the *visible elements*, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses." Why should we be constitutionally required to make the "visible elements" *invisible,* by covering them, whether "decently" or otherwise?

The answer to the question hinges largely, but not entirely, on the resolution of the text-critical question of 1 Corinthians 11:24, because the only place where "broken for you" appears in the New Testament (hearafter NT) is there, and because the earliest Greek manuscripts do not have the participle "broken" (*klōmenon*, κλωμενον) even there. Two other matters are also germane, however. Is it sacramentally necessary to employ the Pauline account of the institution of the supper, with whatever practical consequences flow from it; and does the mere fact that Jesus broke the loaf warrant our doing so? I will examine these three questions in inverse order.

Three Important Questions

First Question: Is it sacramentally necessary to break the loaf, simply because Jesus did?

How do we know which of the actions in the sacraments are symbolic of some other reality (and therefore sacramentally necessary)? For instance, the Supper was instituted at the time of the Jewish Passover, in the evening in an upstairs room, and Jesus "reclined at table with the twelve" (Matt. 26:20, cf. Luke 22:14). Do these historical facts necessitate either that we observe the Supper only once annually, or only during the Jewish Passover, or on the second floor of a building, or that we all "recline"? Obviously, the churches have answered these questions universally in the negative. The church has rightly attempted to distinguish what was merely historical incident from what was sacramentally symbolic. The calendar date, or even the fact that the Supper was instituted in the evening, or on the second floor, are all historical accidents; circumstances that actually occurred when the supper was instituted, but that are not sacramentally symbolic.[8] Therefore, though the meal was actually instituted in that particular fashion, the churches have not considered it necessary to the rite to duplicate these historical incidents.

The precise question before us, then, is whether Jesus's breaking the bread before distributing it was sacramentally symbolic, or merely a custom common to his time and culture.[9] While the English-speaking reformed churches have frequently believed that the fraction is necessary, the question must be raised as to how this determination might be properly made. Several lines of question might lead towards an answer: Was the action sufficiently distinctive, culturally, as to suggest by its very presence a distinctive sacramental symbolism? Was there some religious background to the practice that might have inclined the original participants to have deemed the action symbolic? Do the words of institution suggest that there is some representative/symbolic reality?

The first two of these questions are somewhat related, and the answer to them is negative. Breaking bread had no established significance in Old Testament scriptures or in Jewish (or Roman) practices in the first century. In the culture of the time, breaking a loaf was simply the common way of distributing it. Cutlery was uncommon, if not unknown, and people in the first century routinely "broke" bread, without implying anything symbolic in the act itself. The expression only appears once in the Greek Old Testament, where it plainly has no religious significance at all:

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[8] The Passover meal itself is profoundly symbolic (1 Cor. 5:7), but there is no symbolism to the time in the calendar when the event was observed.

[9] Analogous to "reclining" at table, Matt. 26:20, but also at Matt. 9:10, 26:7, Mark 2:15, 14:2, 16:14, Luke 5:29, 7:36-39, 11:37, 14:15. Why is breaking bread sacramentally necessary, but reclining at table not necessary?

> "Both great and small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them or cut himself or make himself bald for them. No one shall break bread (LXX *ou mē klasthē artos*, οὐ μὴ κλασθῇ ἄρτος) for the mourner, to comfort him for the dead, nor shall anyone give him the cup of consolation to drink for his father or his mother" (Jer. 16:6–7).

A similar (not identical) expression appears in the LXX at Lam. 4:4: "The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them (*nēpia ētēsan arton o diaklōn ouk estin artois*, νήπια ᾔτησαν ἄρτον ὁ διακλῶν οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς). Though ESV translates "gives," the original employs the participle of διακλάω (*diaklaō*), an evident derivative of κλάω (*klaō*). Neither text suggests anything symbolic about the act. In *TDNT*, Johannes Behm says,

> At meals, whether ordinary family meals, special meals with guests or ritual feasts, e.g., the Passover or the beginning of the Sabbath, the head of the house gives thanks, then breaks bread and hands the pieces to those who sit at table with him. The breaking of bread is *simply a customary and necessary part of the preparation* for eating together. It initiates the sharing of the main course *in every meal*. Thus Jesus faithfully follows the custom as head of the house and as host when He breaks bread for the multitude which is miraculously fed, for the disciples at the Last Supper, or for the two He joins on the way to Emmaus. Cf. also Paul in Ac. 20:11; 27:35; and cf. 1 C. 10:16. It is from this breaking of bread at the commencement of the common meal in Palestinian Judaism that the common meal of the members of the primitive community in Jerusalem receives its name, Ac. 2:42: ἡ κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου, v. 46, κλᾶν ἄρτον, also 20:7. . . . In the NT, as in contemporary Judaism, *the breaking of bread at the beginning of a meal is not a cultic act*, not even in connection with thanksgiving or praise . . . *the breaking of bread has no particular significance* as an isolated act; In these meals as in others it is simply a part of the accepted introductory process. (*TDNT* III, 728–29, emphases mine).

In a note, Behm adds, "The often repeated idea that the breaking of bread symbolises the slaying of the Lord's body is a theologumenon alien to the NT which appears for the first time in the *impossible* addition of κλώμενον τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (*klōmenon to sōma to huper humōn*), 1 Cor. 11:24."[10]

Similarly, the New Testament contains many instances of bread being broken in circumstances that are manifestly non-sacramental and non-ecclesial.

1. Matt. 14:19:
   Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke (*klasas edōken tois mathētais tous artous*, κλάσας ἔδωκεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς τοὺς ἄρτους) and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

2. Matt. 15:36:

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[10] *TDNT* III, 729, n. 14, emphasis mine. Though I agree with Behm (see below) that the κλώμενον (*klōmenon*) of 1 Cor. 11:24 is spurious, I would not call it "impossible," but "highly improbable."

He took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them (*elaben toud hepta artous kai tous ichthuas kai eucharistēsas eklasen kai edidou tois mathētais*, ἔλαβεν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς ἰχθύας καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς) and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

3. Mark 8:6, 19:
   And he commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks he broke them (*labōn tous hepta artous eucharistēsas eklasen kai edidou tois mathētais outou*, λαβὼν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ) and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd… When I broke the five loaves (*hote tous pente artous eklasa*, ὅτε τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους ἔκλασα) for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve."

4. Luke 24:30:
   When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it (*labōn ton arton eulogēsen kai klasas*, λαβὼν τὸν ἄρτον εὐλόγησεν καὶ κλάσας) and gave it to them.[11]

5. Acts 27:33-36:
   As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food. It will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves (*kai labōn eucharistēsas tō theō enōpion pantōn kai klasas ērxato esthiein. Euthumoi de genomenoi panteskai autoi proselabonto trophēs,* καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαρίστησεν τῷ θεῷ ἐνώπιον πάντων καὶ κλάσας ἤρξατο ἐσθίειν. εὔθυμοι δὲ γενόμενοι πάντες καὶ αὐτοὶ προσελάβοντο τροφῆς).

In each of these circumstances (and especially the circumstance in Acts, where the unbelieving Romans are transporting Paul to his trial), there is a group of Roman "soldiers" and "sailors" present that is manifestly of a religiously mixed nature. The gathering is not a gathering of a covenant assembly; it is what might have been termed in the nineteenth century "a promiscuous assembly," constituted both of members of the covenant community and non-members thereof, who also "ate some food themselves." Yet, each text records that the bread was "broken" before being distributed, employing the

[11] Some might think that this could have been the sacramental meal, but the evidence suggests otherwise. First, in the Matthean account of the institution of the Supper, Jesus expressly said that he would *not* partake of this fruit of the vine with his disciples again "until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). Second, contextually, this was neither an ecclesiastical meeting nor a meeting with Christ's disciples. Verse 13 merely says "two of them" (to whom Jesus had spoken on the way to Emmaeus) spoke to Jesus, verse 18 says that one was named "Cleopas," and verse 21 says that they "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." So when evening was coming on and they invited him to stay with them (verse 29), it appears that they were just gracious hosts, and that the meal was an ordinary meal.

same verb that is employed in the narratives of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Breaking bread was a common, non-symbolic and non-religious custom in the first century, unless and until Jesus, by his words of institution, invested the act with symbolic significance. That is, his *actions* alone, without some accompanying explanation in the words of institution, are simply the common actions of both religious and irreligious people in his culture, without any inherent symbolic meaning.

Second Question: Is it necessary to employ the Pauline account of the Supper, and any practices that might flow from that account?

Even if we were to establish that the original reading of Paul's account of the institution was "my body, broken for you," would it therefore be sacramentally *necessary*, as opposed to *permissible*, that the Pauline account be read, and inferences from his account be followed? Neither Matthew nor Mark qualify the body at all, merely referring to it as "my" body; but Luke's account qualifies it by saying "*given* (*didomenon*, διδόμενον) for you." Could it not be sacramentally permissible to read Luke's account, and emphasize that Christ was "given for" his people (as does the Lutheran liturgy)? And, if so, would it be therefore necessary to the essence of the rite to break the bread? To push this argument further, does not the requirement of breaking the bread suggest that the Matthean, Markan, and Lucan accounts of the Supper are inherently *defective*, by not describing the body of Christ as "broken?" We may presume that they were familiar with the event, since Matthew was present at the event and Mark would have been familiar with Peter's account of it. Luke (Luke 1:1–3) was aware of the "narrative" of those who "were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word," and claimed that those individuals "have delivered them to us," and claimed that he, "having followed all things closely for some time past," wrote an "orderly account" (*akribōs*, ἀκριβῶς ordinarily means not merely "orderly," but "accurately"). Surely, then, Luke had carefully consulted the apostolic eyewitnesses on this important matter, and yet he said nothing in his account of the Supper about Jesus having said that his body was "broken" for anyone. Matthew was present at the Supper; Mark and Luke had consulted with apostles who were present, and yet none of them recorded Jesus as having said anything about his body being broken for anyone. If Jesus had spoken these words, and if he had *intended* them to have had symbolic significance, why did his apostles not pass this information along?

Indeed, should any of the distinctive portions of the several accounts of the Supper be required in the observation of the rite? Luke, for instance, records Jesus as having said, "Take this, and *divide* it among yourselves" (*diamerisate*, διαμερίσατε Luke 22:17). Taken in its natural sense, this suggests that the cup should be passed from congregant to congregant, a practice that is quite permissible, but is it necessary? And is it necessary for us to cite these particular words of Jesus when we conduct the rite? If the other three accounts make no mention of this, then it is perfectly apostolic and biblical not to require it. Similarly, Matthew, Mark, and Luke (but *not* Paul) state that his blood is "poured out (*ekchunnomenon*, ἐκχυννόμενον) for you/many." If it is necessary to refer to the body as "broken," on the strength of Paul's (textually disputed) testimony alone, why is it not even more necessary to refer to the blood as "poured out" on the textually *undisputed* testimony of *three* accounts? And why is it not necessary for the minister actually to pour wine in the administration of the Supper? Why must the minister *break* the bread but not *pour* the wine, if the three Synoptic gospels record the *pouring* of wine but *not* the *breaking* of bread?

The mere act of breaking bread in the culture of the time was not inherently symbolic; and (therefore) the act of breaking bread is only invested with symbolic significance *if* the words of institution so invest it. But, if reading from one of the other biblical accounts is lawful, then the essence of the rite can be maintained without the fraction, and without any of the distinctive things recorded in only one or two of the several accounts. The other three accounts do not mention any words of Jesus that invest the broken character of the bread with any symbolic significance. The other accounts do *not* invest the breaking of bread with any symbolic significance. If anything, the other accounts invest "pouring" with significance, because three of them undisputably regard the words as dominical.

Third Question: Is the "broken for you" of 1 Corinthians 11:24 sufficiently adequately established to make the expression essential to the lawful administration of the Supper?

First, let us make sure we understand the importance of the question. None of the three gospel accounts of the institution of the Supper record Jesus as saying that his body was "broken." And, if we have established that there was no known convention in the culture that would have invested the mere breaking of bread with any symbolic significance, then the breaking has no such significance unless it can be established from 1 Corinthians 11:24. Therefore, unless the reading of the Authorized Version, "broken for you," can be established at 1 Corinthians 11:24, it cannot be established at all. We therefore turn to two considerations, in an effort to determine whether such a reading can be established there. In turn, we will consider the manuscript evidence for the Greek text, and other relevant exegetical considerations.

Alternative Versions of 1 Corinthians 11:24

First, we observe that 1 Corinthians 11:24 is obviously the most textually difficult of the various biblical accounts of the Supper. There are no significant textual variants in the other three accounts, but there are significant textual variants here, which, in my judgement, is reason enough not to frame our liturgy by its terms, *however* we resolve the text-critical question.

1. "Given for you"

The Vulgate, probably assimilated to the διδόμενον (*didomenon*) at Luke 22:19, reads "*given* for you" (*hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis tradetur*, "this is my body, which is given for you"), as do the majority of the extant Latin versions. The Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic versions also read "given," as do the Ethiopic versions. Both Luther and *Die Gute Nachricht* follow this tradition. Luther has the following: "*das ist mein Leib, der für euch gegeben wird"* (This is my body, which is given for you), while *DGN* reads: "*Das ist mein Leib, der für euch geopfert wird."* (This is my body, which is offered/sacrificed/given up for you). Interestingly, in both translations, a form of *brachen* does appear in the preceding clause regarding the bread itself, yet neither re-introduces the verb with regard to the "body/Leib." No Greek manuscripts (of 1 Cor. 11:24) read διδόμενον (*didomenon*).

2. "Broken for you"

Some manuscripts ($Å^{c}$ C^{3} $D^{b,c}$ G K P Y, and the majority texts) of 1 Cor. 11:24 do indeed read "broken (*klōmenon*, κλωμενον) for you," and there is even minimal evidence for the alternative participle θρυπτομενον (D^{gr*} *thruptomenon*). Since the AV was translated from the Erasmus (third edition) text, it understandably translated the passage

this way. Similarly, since many of the Presbyterian and Reformed constitutions were written before the discovery and publication of significant uncial and papyrus manuscripts in the late nineteenth century, it is quite understandable that they demonstrate no awareness of the textual problem.

3. "For you"

Some manuscripts and versions of 1 Cor. 11:24, including our oldest Pauline manuscripts ($\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ Å* A B C* arm Origen Cyprian), simply read, "This is my body, that is for you" (*to huper humōn*, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν). Excepting the NKJV, the recent translations overwhelmingly favor this reading, and omit "broken" (ASV, CEB, CEV, ESV, HCSB, NASB, NCV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, GNT, et al.). This is my preference also, because of the papyrus evidence for omission, and because of the principle that ordinarily a shorter reading is preferable to a longer reading.

Relevant Exegetical Considerations

Is there any established symbolic meaning to the expression "broken," that would make it theologically meaningful in the first century? There is no Old Testament evidence that the expression "broken" was used figuratively. Indeed, in the Septuagint, κλάω (*klaō*) only appears twice, once (Jer. 16:7) to refer to breaking bread, and at the apocryphal 4 Maccabees 9:14, where a young man had been put on the wheel until his bones were dislocated. It was then said that "though broken in every member (*kata pan melos klōmenos*, κατὰ πᾶν μέλος κλώμενος) he denounced the tyrant . . .". In neither of these cases is the verb used figuratively, but literally. There is no reason to believe, therefore, that the expression "broken for you," if used symbolically, would even have been meaningful to a first century audience.

Equally difficult is that John's record of the crucifixion includes the record of the Roman soldiers piercing Jesus's side with a spear, and *not* breaking his legs, as they did those on either side of him, in order to fulfill the Scripture, "Not a bone of him shall be broken" (John 19:36, citing the requirement in Exodus 12:46 that the passover lamb may neither be eaten outside the house nor a bone of it be broken). Thus, insofar as there is any theological significance to the specific nature of the sacrifice of Jesus's body, it is theologically significant that the bones were *not* broken. And if his bones were *not* broken, what on earth was?

The constitutional requirement that only one of the four biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper may be used is strange, under any circumstances. But under the present circumstance, where some constitutions require employing the one account whose text is the least well-established, the matter becomes stranger yet. It can only be accountable by recognizing the historical fact that the English-language constitutional documents that require this were written without knowledge that the text was disputed at this point.[12] In light of our greater information in text criticism, it seems responsible to

[12] Though I am probably too generous here, because even if the text were undisputed, why would a sacramental practice be grounded on a participle (*klōmenon*, κλωμενον) that appears only in *one* of the four biblical accounts, when another participle (*exchunnomenon*, ἐκχυννόμενον, "poured out") appears undisputably in *three* of them, yet no practice is based on this participle? To require a sacramental act that is grounded only in one of the four biblical accounts would still be improper. Proper liturgy at this point would only do and require what is common to all four of the biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper; it would not require what is found only in one account, in which the Greek text is disputed.

make appropriate adjustments. Those adjustments are two-fold: First, ministers should not be constitutionally required (though they should be permitted, if their judgment so dictates) to employ the textually disputed "broken for you" when administering the Supper; and second, they therefore should not be required to break the bread *as* a sacramental symbol, since, apart from that particular reading of a disputed Greek text of 1 Corinthians 11:24, there is no reason to believe there *is* any symbolic significance to the act.[13] If three textually *undisputed* accounts mention that the blood is "poured out," and only one textually *disputed* account says "broken," why would an undisputed and repeated detail be unrequired, while an unrepeated and disputed detail be required? To my knowledge, NAPARC ministers are *not* required to pour the wine (though three accounts mention the pouring), yet such ministers *are* required to break the bread, which only appears in one account, and in disputed manuscripts of that text. Could we possibly imagine thinner ice for a requisite liturgical practice?

Is There a Responsible Alternative?

While I am ordinarily conservative, not desiring to change an ecclesiastical tradition (or its constitutional documents) lightly or easily, it appears that the *status quo*, of the English-language churches in this case, is more problematic than the change. The *status quo* requires retaining a constitutional duty that is almost certainly based on ignorance of now-well-known facts about the text-critical data. The Westminster Assembly, the authors of nineteenth-century Presbyterian books of order, and nineteenth-century theologians such as Charles Hodge and Robert Lewis Dabney simply were unaware of the Chester Beatty papyrus (though some were aware of one or the other among Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Sinaiiticus, or Codex Vaticanus); those manuscripts were unavailable to them. They were probably unaware that the participle κλωμενον (*klōmenon*) was disputed in the existing Greek manuscripts of 1 Corintians 11:24. *Their* Greek text had the participle; some of our older and more reliable Greek texts do *not* have the participle κλωμενον (*klōmenon*).

For Protestant churches, professing allegiance to Scripture and expressly affirming that synods and councils may err (WCF 31.3), an issue such as this becomes a test of our principles, not merely a test of how we understand Scripture. Will our (English-speaking, based on the Erasmus text) tradition remain authoritative in the Church, even when its biblical basis is severely undermined? If we profess that our human documents are reformable in light of new understanding or discovery, how do we address the discovery of very ancient Greek manuscripts that differ from the later manuscripts and our tradition (dependent on those later manuscripts)? It is consistent with our confessional heritage to permit individual ministers to resolve text-critical questions as their judgment dictates, and/or to select which biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper to employ when administering the sacrament, and I concur with this generosity. What appears to be inconsistent with our confessional heritage is the requirement that only one text, and a text seriously disputed in the available manuscript tradition, be employed—or that a rubric

[13] I speak as a Protestant here. I assume for Roman Catholicism, fraction is indeed necessary, as a separate rubric as the Mass designates it, because of the understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice, and the Roman Catholic respect for Tradition as being equally authoritative as Scripture. But the various Protestant communions self-consciously reject this understanding, and understand the rite to be a meal, *not* a sacrifice. So there is nothing in Protestant theology that would require this fraction, and perhaps a good deal to require the contrary.

(requiring that the minister break the bread) based on a single, textually disputed account, be required (even though the pouring of the wine is textually sound in three of the four accounts, yet the minister is not required to do that). Indeed, it appears to me that if the constitution were to require a single text, it should require the text with the *least*-disputed manuscript evidence, which, in this case, would be any of the versions *other* than 1 Corinthians 11:24.

It is not my desire to prohibit ministers from breaking the loaf when adiministering the Supper, nor is it my desire to prohibit ministers from reading 1 Corinthians 11:24 from the Authorized Version, based on the Erasmus text. The resolution of text-critical questions, as well as the determination of which of the four biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper should be read, or which translation should be read, should be left to the judgment and discernment of individual ministers.[14] My desire, therefore, is not to exclude the currently-required practice from our churches; my desire is only to permit *other* practices, practices that enjoy equally biblical justification (or more).[15] It is indisputable that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all believed the Supper could be observed without anything being said about Jesus's body being "broken." Therefore, it cannot be unbiblical or un-apostolic to read any of *their* versions, versions that do *not* necessitate breaking the bread (symbolically or otherwise). Further, it *is* disputable that Paul's version says "broken," and therefore, it cannot be in the best interests of biblical churches to *require* the disputed text, or a practice based upon that disputed text.

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[14] By analogy, different ministers have different convictions about the authenticity of the "woman caught in adultery" in John 8. When I preached through the Fourth Gospel many years ago, I omitted this passage from my sermon series; others have included it in their series. Our constitutions require no resolution of the matter, and ministers are left to their own judgment on the matter. I merely suggest that the constitutions extend the same liberty when conducting the Supper. In a lifetime of ministry, a pastor might preach on John 8 once or twice; in rightly-ordered churches, he will adminster the Supper weekly. If we give him a break once or twice in his entire ministry, why not give him a break weekly?

[15] Note the liberty permitted in the OPC BCO: "The minister shall read the words of the institution and instruction of the Lord's Supper as found in 1 Corinthians 11:23–29 or one of the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–25, or Luke 22:14–20). In addition, he may read words of instruction from passages such as John 6 and 1 Corinthians 10." *DPW* Chapter III.C.1. Similarly, the ARP Directory of Worship says, "The words of institution are to be read and the service shall follow the New Testament pattern," and the footnote at that point reads: "Matt. 26:20–30, Mark 14:17–26, Luke 22:14–20, 1 Cor. 11:23–32," expressly permitting the reading of *any* of the four biblical accounts (V.B.8.c.(6)). In Form 1 of the Lord's Supper from the URCNA, the liturgy reads: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Note that, while the text is taken from 1 Corinthians, the translation employed does *not* contain the participial clause, "broken for you." Form 2, Short Form 1, and Short Form 2 all cite the same passage the same way, omitting "broken." To my knowledge, the only NAPARC church whose BCO requires the minister to use the 1 Corinthian text with the disputed "broken" is the PCA, in which I am haplessly ordained (haplessly for me *and* for them). If for no other reason than ecclesiastical relations, the PCA should alter our BCO on this point, still *permitting* the use of the present version that includes "broken," but also permitting the use of other versions of the Supper that exclude the disputed "broken."

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SERMONS OF THE NATIVITY

PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1616

Preached before King James, at Whitehall
Wednesday, December 25, MDCXVI

Transcribed by Dr. Marianne Dorman, 2001
Corrected by Stephen Pribble for *Ordained Servant*, 2026

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Psalm lxxxv: 10–11

Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace will kiss each other.
Truth shall spring out of the earth; and Righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Misericordia et Veritas obviaverunt sibi; Justitia et Pax osculatæ sunt.
Veritas de terra orta est; et Justitia de Cælo prospexit.

I have here read you two verses out of this Psalm, which is one of the Psalms selected of old by the primitive Church, and so still retained by ours as part of our office or service of this day, as being proper and pertinent to the matter of the feast, and so to the feast itself. For the meeting here specified was to be at the birth of the Messias: so saith Rabbi Moses, and others of the Jews. Was at the birth of our Saviour: so say the Fathers with uniform consent, and *eo nomine* have made this a Christmas-day Psalm.

As his manner is, the Psalmist in it under one compriseth the type and the truth both; by those things which befell the people of the Jews, the Church typical, shadowing out those things which were to befall the Antitype of it, Christ and His Church. For *primo et proprio intentione*, it cannot be denied but the Psalm was first set according to the letter upon the turning back of the captivity of Babel. But the Prophet knew well that was not their worst captivity, nor should be their best delivery. There was another yet behind concerned them more, if they understood their own state aright which was reserved to the Messias to free them from. To that he points. Even that the Apostle complains of wherein "the soul is led away captive under sin and Satan," the very true Babel indeed as which bringeth with it everlasting confusion, from which Christ, the true Zerubbabel, is to set us free—us and them both.

There is a meeting here. A meeting at a birth. A birth that did them in heaven, Righteousness by name, good to behold. The meeting, in *obviaverunt*, the birth in *orta est*, the pleasure to behold it in *prospexit de Cælo. Prospexit* is to see with delight, as when we look into some pleasant prospect.

A meeting qualified, for the manner. For they do not meet and pass by, but meet and salute as friends with an *osculate sunt*, a sign of love begun or renewed.

This meeting is of four. Four which of themselves, *proprie loquendo*, are nothing but attributes or properties of the Divine nature, but are here by the Psalmist brought in and represented to us as so many personages. Personages, I say, inasmuch as they have here personal acts ascribed to them. For to meet, to kiss, to look down, are all of them acts personal. And look, how the Psalmist presents them so we treat of them, in the same terms the text doth.

At a birth, at *orta est*, these four meet here; at *orta est Veritas*, "the birth of Truth" *de terra*, "from the earth." For two *ortus* there were; and this, not His *antesæcularis ortus de cælo*, "His birth before all worlds from heaven," but His *ortus de terra*, "His temporal birth from the earth."

Lastly, the birth of this birth, as I may say it, the effect it wrought. Of which more there are in the neighbouring verses. Here in these, besides the meeting occasioned by it, there is but one; that such a spectacle it was as it drew Righteousness itself from Heaven to look at it. Time was when Righteousness would not have done so much, not have vouchsafed a look hitherward; therefore *respexit nos Justitia* is good news. That then and ever since she has beheld the earth and the dwellers in it with a far more favourable regard than before. And all for this birth's sake.

And when was all this? When He said of Himself, "I am the Truth," when He was born upon earth; for *orta est Veritas*, and *natus est Christus* will fall out to be one birth. What day soever that was, this meeting was upon

it. And that was this day, of all the days of the year. The meeting and the day of this meeting here all one, and the birth of Christ the cause of both. So being this day's work, this day to be dealt with most properly.

Onward we have here four honours of this day, every one of the four giving it a blessing. 1. It is the day of *ortus Veritatis*, "Truth's birth"; 2. and the same, the day of *occursus Miscericordiæ*, "the meeting here mentioned"; 3. and of *osculum Pacis*, "the kiss here expressed"; 4. and of *prospectus Justitiæ*, "righteousness' gracious respect of us." These from each of them in several. And generally, the day of reconciling them all.

Holding us to these, we are to speak of the 1. Meeting, the 2. Parties, the 3. Birth, and the 4. Effect here specified to come of it. I. Of this meeting in Christ; then II. in Christianity, not to be broken off by us but to be renewed, and specially this day.

Here is a meeting, and that is no great matter if it be no more. How many meet we as we pass to and fro daily, and how little do we regard it? But that meeting is casual.

Somewhat more there is in set meetings. It was not by hap, not *obviaverunt* simply but *obviaverunt sibi. Sibi* showeth they had an intent; they came forth on both sides, not to meet any fifth person, but to meet one another.

But not every set meeting is memorable; this is. I find a Psalm here made in remembrance of it. And lightly songs be not made, but *de raro contingentibus*; not of ordinary, but of some special great meetings.

The greatness of a meeting groweth three ways. 1. By the parties who; 2. the occasion whereon; and 3. the end whereto they meet. All three are in this. The parties in the first verse, the occasion and end in the second. The occasion a birth, an occasion oft of making great persons meet; and the end that comes of it, that Righteousness, who is to be our Judge and to give the last sentence upon us, beholds us with an aspect that promises favour.

The occasion and the end we shall touch anon. Now of the parties. If the parties great, the meeting great. The conjunction of the great lights in Heaven, the interview of great States on earth, ever bodes some great matter. Who are the parties here? Four as high, as excellent attributes, as there be any in the Godhead. Or, to keep the style of the text, four as great States as nay in the Court of Heaven.

These meet, and in what manner? Great states meet otherwhile in a pitched field. Not so here. This is an *obviaverunt* with an *osculatæ sunt*; they run not one at another as enemies; they run one to another, and kiss as loving friends. And that which makes it memorable indeed is, that these parties in this manner thus meet, who if all were well known were more like to turn tail than to meet. One to run from another; nay, one to run at another to encounter, rather than run one to another to embrace and kiss. Not meet at all; at least not meet thus, standing in such terms as they did.

Mercy and Peace, if they two had met, or Truth and Righteousness, they two, it had not been strange. But for those that seem to be in opposition to do it, that is it—that makes this meeting marvellous in our eyes.

Will ye stay a little and take a view of the Parties? Four they are. These four, 1. Mercy, and 2. Truth, 3. Righteousness, and 4. Peace. Which quaternion at the first sight divided itself into two and two. Mercy and Peace, they two pair well; they be *collectanæ*, as Bernard saith of them in one place, "bed-fellows," sleep together; *collectaneæ*, as in another place, "sucked one milk, one breast" both. And as these two, so the other two, Truth and Righteousness, seem to be of one complexion and disposition, and commonly take part together. Of these Mercy seems to favour us; and Peace no enemy to us nor to any (seeing we must speak of them as of persons) mild and gentle persons both. For Righteousness I know not well what to say: *gestat gladium*, and I fear *non frustra*. Nor of Truth, which is *vera* and *severa*, "severe" too otherwhile. These I doubt are not like affected. The reason of my doubt. One of them, Righteousness, it is told here for great news, that she but "looked down hitherwards from Heaven." Before then she would not have done that. A great sign it is of heart-burning, when one will not do so much as look at another nor endure his sight. We cannot promise ourselves much of her. No, nor of Truth. One was so bold in a place to say, *omnis homo mendax*, and feared no challenge for it. By that it seems all stands not well with her neither. So then two for us, two against us.

For their order. Mercy is first, and Peace last. With both ends we shall do well enough. God send us to do but so with the midst! Yet this is not amiss that they which favour us less are in the midst; hemmed in on both sides, closed about with those that wish us well; and they between us and them. On the one side, Mercy before; on the other, Peace behind.

Another; that in this double meeting Mercy sorts not herself, goes not to Righteousness; nor Righteousness to her, but to Peace. A kind of cross meeting, as it were, there is—the better hope of accord. Mercy and Righteousness have no symbolizing quality at all, no hope of them; but Truth with Mercy has. There is Truth as well in the promise of Mercy as in the threat of Justice.

And it stands yet better between the other two, Righteousness and Peace. Melchizedek, which is by interpretation "King of Righteousness," the same is "King of Salem, that is of peace." He that "is after the order of Melchizedek," King of both, like enough to set accord between them two—both of them His lieges. This for the view of the Parties.

These meet here; but what is *obviaverunt* without *osculatæ sunt?* Better they met here, they were parted the one from the other. For they that meet come from divers coasts. Before this meeting they have been in divers

quarters, one from the other, and not come together thus a good while.

Their distance in place grew from their distance in affection, estranged one from the other. That they meet not I will not say; but that they meet not thus, ever before. Else, what remarkable thing were there in this meeting, or worth the composing of a Psalm, if it had been familiar with them thus to meet every other, nay any other day?

How came they then asunder that it should be a marvel to see them meet? Since naturally they are not strangers, all four in the bosom of God from all eternity,—attributes all four of His undivided Essence. So, not divided of themselves; not of themselves then. That they were divided, it was about us; the quarrel ours, that made them part company. Thus I gather it: if at Christ's birth they met, at Adam's fall they parted; if when Truth was born on earth they came together, when Truth perished from the earth they fell in sunder. That was when the first lie was told, and believed—and that was *nequaquam moriemini*—by Adam, and thereby God much wronged. So that Adam's cause it was, and so ours that first divided Heaven, yea the very attributes in God we see, and so in a sort God Himself. So they parted first. It could not be said by the Apostle that Christ "pacified all things in Heaven and in earth," if there had not in Heaven been somewhat to be taken up.

For all this yet, I deny not but they might and did meet once before. But it was an *obviærunt* without an *osculate sunt*; never both these till now. Out of Christ and before His birth, they met in opposition; in Christ and at His birth, did these four lights come to meet and to be in conjunction now. They met before, *obviaverunt*, but instead of *osculatæ* it was *altercatæ sunt.* While Mercy and Peace would have Adam's and our case relieved, Righteousness and Truth would by no means endure it. The plea is drawn up and reported at large by Bernard in his first Sermon upon the Annunciation. Mercy began, for out of her readiness to do good she is here, she is ever foremost. Her inclination is, or rather she herself is an inclination, to pity such as are in misery, and if she can to relieve them, yes though they deserve it not. For, which is the comfort of the miserable sinner, she looks not to the party, what he is or what he has done or deserved, but what he suffers, in how woeful and wretched case he is. And her plea is, *nunquid in vanum?* "What has God made all men for nought?" "What profit is in their blood?" It will make God's enemies rejoice. Thither it will come, if God cast them clean off. What then "will He cast them off forever, will He be no more entreated? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" With these and such like *pii susurri,* as he calls them, did she enter into God's bowels, and makes them yearn and melt into compassion. And certainly, if there were none to stand against us, there were hope Mercy had prevailed.

But Truth must be heard too, and she lays in just matter of exception; pleads, *Deus erat Verbum*; What is God but His Word? and His word was—as to Adam, *morte morieris*, so to his sons, *anima quæ peccaverit*, "the soul that sinneth that soul shall die." God may not falsify His word; His word is the truth. Falsify the truth? That may not be.

And then steps up Righteousness and seconds her. That God as He is "true in His word," so is He "righteous in all His works." So, to *reddere suum cuique*, "to render each his own," to every one that is his due; and so to the sinner, *stipendium peccati*, "the wages of sin," that is, "death." God forbid, the Judge of the world should judge unjustly! That were, as before to make truth false, so here to do right wrong.

Nay, it went farther, and they made it their own cases. What shall become of me, saith Righteousness? What use of justice if God will do no justice, if He spare sinners? And what use of me, saith Mercy, if He spare them not. Hard hold there was, inasmuch as *perii nisi homo moriatur*, said Righteousness, "I die, if he die not." And *perii, nisi misericordiam consequatur*, said Mercy, "if he die I die too." To this it came; and in those terms brake up the meeting, and away they went one from the other. Truth went into exile, as a stranger upon earth: — *Terra Astræ a reliquit*, she confined herself in Heaven, where so aliened she was as she would not so much as look down hither upon us.

Mercy, she stayed below still. *Ubi enim Misericordia esset*, saith Hugo well, *si cum misero non esset?* "Where should mercy be, if with misery she should not be?"

As for Peace, she went between both, to see if she could make them meet again on better terms. For without such a meeting, no good to be done for us.

For meet they must, and that in other terms, or it will go wrong with us; our salvation lies a bleeding all this while. The plea hangs, and we stand as the prisoner at the bar, and know not what shall become of us. For though two be for us, there are two against us, as strong and more stiff than they.

So that much depends upon this second meeting, upon the composing or taking up this difference. For these must be at peace between themselves, before they be at peace with us, or we with God. And this is sure; we shall never meet in Heaven, if they meet no more.

And many means were made for this meeting many times, but it would not be. Where stayed it? It was not long of Mercy, she would be easily entreated to give a new meeting—no question of her. Oft she look up to Heaven, but Righteousness would not look down. Not look? not that? small hope she would be got to meet that would not look that way-ward.

Indeed, all the question is of her. It is Truth and she that hold off, but specially she. Upon the birth you see here is no mention of any in particular but of her, as much to say as the rest might be dealt with; she only it

was that stood out. And yet she must be got to meet, or else no meeting.

All the hope is, that she doth not refuse simply never to meet more, but stands upon satisfaction to her mind that so she may be content once more not to meet and argue as ere-while, but to meet and kiss; meet in a joint concurrence to save us, and set us free.

And indeed, *hoc opus*, "there lies all"; how to set a song of these four parts in good harmony, how to make these meet at a love-day, how to satisfy Justice upon whom all the stay is.

And this I say, no religion in the world doth or can do but the Christian. No choir sing this Psalm but ours, none make justice meet but it. Consequently, none quiet the conscience soundly but it; consequently, no religion but it. With all religions else at odds they be, and so as they are fain to leave them so; for means in the world have they none how to make them meet. Not able for their lives to tender Justice a satisfaction, that will make her come in. The words next before are, "that glory may dwell in our land." This glory doth dwell in our land indeed. And great cause have we all highly to bless God That hath made "our lot to fall in so fair a ground." That we were not born to inherit a lie; that we were born to keep this feast of this meeting. For bid any of them all but show you the way how to satisfy Justice soundly, and to make her come to this meeting; how God's word may be true, and His work just, and the sinner find mercy and be saved for all that—they cannot. The Christian only can do it, and none else. All beside for lack of this pass by the wounded man, and let him lie still and bleed to death.

Bid the Turk. All he can say is, Mahomet's prayer shall be upon you. Mahomet's prayer, what is that? Say he were that he was not—a just man, a true prophet; what can his prayers do but move Mercy? But God's justice, how is that answered? Who shall satisfy that? Not prayers;—Justice is not moved with them, hears them not, goes on to sentence for all them. He can go no farther; he cannot make Justice meet.

Bid the heathen. He says better yet than the Turk. They saw "that without shedding of blood" there was no satisfying Justice, and so "no remission of sin." To satisfy her, sacrifices they had of beasts. But "it is impossible," as the Apostle well notes, "that the blood of bulls or goats should satisfy for our sins." A man sin, and a beast die! Justice will none of that. What then, will ye go as far as some did, "the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Nor that neither. For if it were the first-born, the first-born was born in sin; and sin for sin can never satisfy. This meeting will not be there.

Bid the Jew. He can but tell you of his lamb neither. And while time was, that was not amiss; while it stood in reference to St. John Baptist's Lamb, "the Lamb of God" this day yeaned, as having the operation, the working, in the virtue of That. That being now past, there is no more in the Jews' than in the Gentiles' sacrifice. Beasts both; both short of satisfying. So for all that these can do or say, no meeting will there be had.

Only the Christian religion that shows the true way. There is One there thus speaketh to Justice, "Sacrifice and sin-offerings Thou wouldst not have; then said I, Lo, I come." He, "of Whom it was written in the volume of the book that He should do that feat," *corpus autem aptasdi Mihi*, "make Him a body to do it in," and He will do it. Give Him an *ortus est*, let Him be but born, He will make them meet straight;—Justice and all. For all the world sees, if order could be taken that He, that the Son of God, the Word and Truth eternal, would say, "Lo, I come"; would take our nature upon Him, and in it, 'lay down His soul an offering for sin'; there were good hope of contenting Justice, and that the meeting would go forward. *Deus sanguine in suo*, "God with His blood";—what sin in the world would not that serve for? What justice in Heaven or earth would not that satisfy? If ye speak of an expiation, a ransom, an *antallagma*—Christ's own word—a perfect "commutation," there it is. This had, Justice will meet, embrace, kiss Mercy, shake hands, join now friends; *Inveni enim in quo repropitier*, "I have found that now, wherewith I hold myself fully content and pleased." This way ye shall make them meet, or else let it alone forever.

Ver. 11. "Truth shall bud out of the earth; and Righteousness shall look down from Heaven."

And this is it the Christian religion sets before us; how the Son of the Most High God of Heaven and earth took on Him our nature, that in our nature, for our nature, He might make to God (even *stando in terminis justitiæ suæ*, as the schoolmen speak, "standing on the terms of His most exact strict justice,") a complete, full, every-way-sufficient satisfaction. And this, lo, makes the meeting. This honour hath the Christian religion above all other; this glory doth dwell in our land; that these four by Christ's birth in it are brought not only to *obviaverunt sibi*, but even to *et osculate sunt*.

And if this be the glory, be not the shame of Christian profession that cherish in their bosoms, and entertain with stipends such as are come to this frenzy I will call it, to say, what needs any satisfaction? What care we whether Justice meet or no? that is in effect what needs *Christ*? Cannot God forgive offences to Him made, of His free goodness, of His mere mercy, without putting His Son to all this pain? Fond men! if He would quit His justice or waive His truth, He could; but His justice and truth are to Him as essential, as intrinsically essential, as His mercy; of equal regard, every way as dear to Him. Justice otherwise remains unsatisfied; and satisfied it must be either on Him or on us. For with beasts or prayers it will not be, and it will hold off till it be. If Justice be not so met with, it will meet with them; and they had better "meet a she-bear robbed of her whelps," than meet Justice out of Christ's presence.

To us they meet this day at the Child-house. For these great lights could not thus meet but they must portend some great matter, as it might be some great birth toward. The astrologers make us believe, that in the horoscope of Christ's Nativity there was a great trigon of I wot not what stars met together. Whether a trigon or no, this tetragon I am sure there was, these were all men in conjunction, all in the ascendant, all above the horizon at once at *orta est* "the birth of" *veritas* "the truth" *de terro* "from the earth," the occasion of drawing these four together.

Veritas will fit Christ well Who of Himself said, *Ego sum Veritas*, "I am the Truth." So is He—not that of the former verse which is but *veritas prima*, "the first Truth" within. That depends upon this. Then are the words uttered true, when there is an adequation between them and the mind. So, "the first Truth" He is.

The first and last both. For now by His coming He is the adequation of the Word and the Work, the Promise and the Performance. That way He is Truth too, the truth of all types, the truth of all prophecies; for "in Him are all the promises yes and Amen,"—yea, in the first truth; Amen, in the last. That actual verifying is the truth when all is done, and that He is by His birth.

And as truth fits His nature, so does earth man. Of whom God, "earth thou art"; to whom the Prophet thrice over, "Earth, hear the word of the Lord"; by whom the wise man, *Quid superbis*? "Why should earth be proud?" *Germinet terra Salvatorem*, "Let this earth bring forth a Saviour"—be the *terra promissionis*, the blessed Virgin, who was in this the land of promise. So was this very place applied by Irenæus in his time, who touched the Apostles' times; so by Lactantius; so by St. Hierom and St. Augustine. Those four meet in this sense, as do the four in the text. *Quid est veritas de terro orta? est Christus de fœmino natus. Quid est Veritas? Filius Dei. Quid terra? Caro nostra*. "What the truth? Christ. What the earth? Our flesh." In those words they find this feast all.

For *orta est*, it is double; therefore *de terro* is well added. Another *ortus* he had *de Cœlo*; to wit, His heavenly Divine nature which as "the day sprung from on high," and He in regard of it called *oriens* by Zachary in the New Testament. But this here is *de terro*; for the word properly signifies "the shooting forth of a sprig out of the ground," and He in regard of this *ortus* called "the Branch" by Zachary in the Old.

2. And there is more in *orta*. For, it is Rabbi Moses' note, that is properly when it springeth forth of itself, as the field flowers do, without any seed cast in by the hand of man; so, saith he, should the Messias come, take His nature not only in, but *de*, "of" the earth. Not bring it with Him from Heaven, the error of the brain-sick Anabaptist, but take it of the earth; be "the woman's seed," "made of a woman," "out of the loins of David"; *Virga de radice Jesse*, "the root of Jesse" nothing more plain.

3. And yet more from *orta est*. For that truth, while it is yet unaccomplished but in promise only, it is but as the seed underground, hid and covered with earth, as if no such thing were: as soon as ever it is actually accomplished as this day, then does it spring forth, as it were, is to be seen above ground; then *orta est de terro*, in very deed.

Of the effect. Now births are and have been divers times the ending of great dissensions, as was this here. For by the birth took end the two great houses; an union of them by it.

First, by this Truth is gained; Truth will meet now. That truth will come to this Truth, *tanquam minus dignum ad magis dignum*, "as the abstract to the archetype." And Truth being now born of our nature, it will never we may be sure be against our nature; being come of the earth, it will be true to his own country; being made man, will be for man now all he can.

By this means one of the opposites is drawn away from the other; got to be on our side. It is three to one now. Righteousness is left all alone; and there is good hope she will not stand out long. For, lo, here is good news; first that *respexit de Cœlo*, "she yet looks down from Heaven now."

So as this birth in earth you see works in Heaven, and by name upon Righteousness there. For though there were none in Heaven but it wrought upon them, yet the Psalm mentions none but Righteousness. For of all, she the least likely; and if she be wrought on, the rest there is no doubt of. How can there? they are all won to us already.

With Righteousness it works two ways: first, "down she looks." Whether it was that she missed Truth, to see what was become of her, and not finding her in Heaven cast her eye to the earth. But there, when she beheld *Verbum caro factum*, the truth freshly sprung there where it had been a strange plant long time before, she looked and looked again at it. For a sight it was to move, to draw the eye; yes a sight for Heaven to be a spectator of, for the Angels to come down and look at, for Righteousness itself to do so too. Παρακύψαι is the Angels' word in St. Peter; διέκυψε is the Septuagint's word here. Both mean one thing. The Greek word is to "look," as we say, "wishly" at it, as if we would look *per id*, even "through it." The Hebrew word,—that is as if "Righteousness did beat out a window," so desirous was she to behold this sight.

And no marvel; for what could Righteousness desire to see and satisfy herself with, that in Him was not to be seen? A clean birth, a holy life, an innocent death; a Spirit and a mouth without guile, a Soul and a body without sin. In Him she beheld them all. Them, and whatsoever else might yield her full satisfaction. "Lay Judgment to the rule and Righteousness in the balance," nothing oblique

will be found in Him, nothing but straight for the rule; nothing *minus habens*, but full weight for the balance.

Thus when "Truth from the earth," then "Righteousness from Heaven." Then, but not before. Before, Righteousness had no prospect, no window open this way. She turned away her face, shut her eyes, clapped to the casement, would not abide so much as to look hither—at us, a sort of forlorn sinners;—not vouchsafe us once the cast of her eye. The case is now altered. Upon this sight she is not only content in some sort to condescend to do it, but she breaks a window through to do it. And then, and ever since this *orta est*, she looks upon the earth with a good aspect; and a good aspect in these celestial lights is never without some good influence withal.

But then within a verse after, not only "down she looks" but "down she comes." Such a power attractive is there in this birth. And coming, she doth two things. 1. Meets first; for upon the view of this birth they all ran first and "kissed the Son." 2. And that done, Truth ran to Mercy and embraced her; and Righteousness to Peace, and "kissed" her. They that had so long been parted, and stood out in difference, now meet and are made friends; howsoever before removed, *in ortu Veritatis obviaverunt sibi*; howsoever before estranged, now *osculatæ sunt.*

And at that birth of His well met they all, in Whom they meet all: the Truth He is, and *per viscera Misericordiæ* He came, "through the tender mercies of our God"; and He is made to us Righteousness, and He is our Peace. All meet in Him, for indeed all He is; that no marvel they all four meet where He is That is all four.

And at this meeting Righteousness she was not so off-ward before but she is now as forward, as forward as any of the rest. Mark these three.

1. Lets not Peace prevent her, as Mercy did Truth; but as Mercy to Truth first, so she first to Peace—as forward as Mercy every way.

2. Nay more forward than Mercy, for Mercy doth but meet Truth, and there is all; but she as more affectionate not only "meets Peace," but "kisses her." And indeed Righteousness was to do more, even to kiss, that it might be a pledge of forgetting all former unkindness, that we may be sure she is perfectly reconciled now.

3. And once more yet, to show her the most forward of them all, out of the last verse. At this meeting she follows not, draws not behind, she will not go with them; she is before, leaves them to come after and bear the train; she, as David, is before the Ark, puts St. John Baptist from his office for the time; Righteousness is his forerunner, "Righteousness shall go before," tread the way before Him, the foremost now of all the company. By all which ye may know what a look it was she looked with from Heaven.

Thus you see Christ by His coming "has pacified the things in Heaven." A peace of Hosannah is *pax in Cælis*; there cannot be *pax in terris* till there it be first. But no sooner there it is, but it is peace in earth straight, which accordingly was this day proclaimed by the Angels. So by the virtue of this birth, heaven is at peace with itself; and heaven with earth is now at peace. So is earth too with itself, and a fulfilling of the text by this meeting is there too.

The Jews, they represent Truth; to them it belongeth properly. For Truth was where were *eloquia Dei*, "the oracles of God"; and they were with the Jews. The Gentiles they claim by Mercy, that is their virtue. Where was Mercy but where was Misery? and where was Misery but with them that "lay in darkness in the shadow of death?" And that was the Gentiles' case before this *orta est*. But when "the partition wall was broken down" and the two met in one, then also in a sense Mercy and Truth together. So these two.

And so the other two likewise. For Righteousness she was where the Law was—for that Rule of Righteousness where the Covenant of the Old Testament was, "Do this and live," the very voice of Justice. But Peace was where Christ was, in the Gospel. *Ipse est Pax nostra*, for "He is our Peace"; Peace and Peace-maker both. *Qui fecit utrumque unum*, That hath made the Law and the Gospel, the Old Testament and the New, to be bound together now both in one volume.

Thus we have done with Christ. I would now apply this meeting to ourselves another while. For I ask, did this hold, did these meet only in Christ? Do they not in Christianity likewise? Yes, there too. With Christ came Christianity; look, what in His birth now, in the new birth of every one that shall be the better by it, even the same meeting of the very same virtues all.

Mercy and Truth first to meet. Truth of confession; confession of our sins; which if with fig-leaves we seek to cover and confess not, "there is no truth in us." And some truth there is to be, at least this truth, or no meeting with Mercy. But when this truth comes forth, Mercy meets it straight. Will ye see this meeting? *Peccavi*, said David—there is Truth. *Transtulit Dominus peccatum,* saith Nathan—there is Mercy; Mercy and Truth met together. *Homo in terris per Veritatem stimulatus peccosse se confitebatur, et Deus in Cælis per Misericordiam flexus confitentis miserabatur*. "Truth pricked man to confess his sins; and Mercy moved God to pity him confessing," and sends Mercy to meet Truth.

Will ye go on to the other verse? It holds there too, this. For where a true confession is by man made, Truth is budded "out of the earth." And so it must ere "Righteousness will give us a good look from Heaven." But will, as soon as it is: for when this truth springs freely from the earth to our condemnation, immediately upon it, Righteousness shows herself from Heaven to our justification. Will ye see this too? "Lord be merciful to me a sinner"—there is truth from the earth. *Descendit domum suam justificatus*, there is Righteousness from Heaven.

But will ye mark, here are two truths, and in either verse one. This latter is the truth of *veritas orta est*, of Christ's religion. And in this treaty it was an article of *Imprimis*, Mercy not to meet any bit them that profess the truth of Christ's birth from the earth. Both these were born together; by and by upon the birth of Christ the truth, the other birth also of Christian truth, did flourish and spread itself all over the earth. The whole world before given over, and even grown over with idolatry, quite covered with the mist of error and ignorance, began then to entertain the Christian profession, and by it to "worship God in spirit and truth"—the true religion which is never true, if it have not this meeting. And this meeting it cannot have, if it have not the means of it, *ortus Veritatis de terro.*

The same say we likewise for the "Righteousness which looked down" and showed herself. It was not that of the Law which never came past the top of Mount Sinai, but a new Righteousness cast in a new mould; a Heavenly one which never saw the earth nor the earth it before, before this birth—which is the righteousness of Christ revealed in His Gospel; when that truth sprang, this righteousness looked down upon it.

Now as this of Mercy and Truth enter us; so Truth—not Truth alone, but Truth with Truth's pair—with Righteousness, carry us forward to God. Truth is not enough; not the truth of religion never so known, never so professed; not without Righteousness. Truth is but the light to guide us, Righteousness is the way to bring us thither. A light is to see by; a way is to go in; so is Righteousness. It follows straight, *ponet gressus in vio*, "Righteousness shall set us in the way" of His steps. Steps, that is the course of life. For *scienti*, by knowledge of the truth and not *facienti* by the practice of righteousness, *peccatum est illi*, saith St. James; and *plagæ multæ*, saith St. James' Master. Sin in that man that serves these two is less pardonable, and more punishable than in any other.

And then, turn Righteousness to Peace, and they will not meet barely but more than meet, "kiss" in sign there is between them more than ordinary affection. *Fac Justitiam et habebis Pacem*; St. Augustine stands much on this. "Eschew evil and do good," saith he—there is Righteousness. And then "seek Peace," and ye shall not be long in seeking it. She will come forth herself to meet Righteousness and kiss her. And this he assures us as a certain sign to know on the one side true Righteousness, for that tends to Peace not to questions and brabbles whereof there never will be end; so on the other side true Peace that kisses Righteousness comes not together like Samson's foxes by the tails, by indirect means, but clearly and fairly; such means as all the world will confess to be right and good.

Now mark the order how they stand. Mercy leads to Truth and the knowledge of it; and Truth to Righteousness, and the practice of it; and Righteousness to Peace, and the ways of it "guides our feet" first "into the way of Peace." And such a way shall there always be, do all the controversy-writers what they can, a fair way agreed upon of all sides, questioned by none, in which whoso orders his steps aright "may see the salvation of our God," even the way here chalked out before us; to show Mercy, and speak Truth; do Righteousness, and follow Peace. And by this rule proceeding in the points whereto we are come already, even those truths wherein we are otherwise minded would in due time be revealed unto us.

This is Zachary's peace; and this of his well followed in the end will bring us Simeon's peace, *nunc dimittis in pace*; to be dismissed, "to depart hence in peace." And *pax in novissimo*, "peace at the latter end," is worth all. Peace in the end is a blessed end, and the beginning of a peace which never shall have end. Mercy our beginning, and Peace our end. This for the meeting; as in Christ, so in Christianity or the course of a Christian man's life.

Now a word for the continuance of this meeting. For I ask again, met they to part? By no means; but as they be together now, so to continue still. We had much ado to get them together thus. Now we have them so, let us keep them so in any wise. For as this meeting made Christianity first; so there is nothing mars it but the breaking it off again; no greater bane to it than the parting of these.

Let me tell you this: St. Augustine is very earnest upon this point of the keeping of Righteousness and Peace upon this Psalm and this verse, and of Truth and Mercy together in the next, upon *Misericors* and *Verax* against them that would lay hold on Mercy and let go Truth. O, saith he, that will not be; they met together, they will not part now; either without either will not be had. And so of the two to others. There be that would have Peace, and pass by righteousness. *Tu forte unam habere vis, et alteram non vis*, saith he, "you would gladly have one—Peace; and for Righteousness you could be contented to spare it. Ask any, would you have Peace? With all my heart, he will answer. There is no having one without the other; *osculantur hæ, amant hæ,* why they kiss, they love together." *Si amicam Pacis non amaveris, non amabit te Pax*, "if ye love not her friend, that is Righteousness, she will none of your love." Take that from St. Augustine.

Set this down then; Christianity is a meeting. One cannot meet. Two there must be, and they may. But it is not a meeting of two, but of two with two; so, no less than four. As Christ Himself was not one nature, so neither doth Christianity consist in any one virtue; not under four. There is a *quaternion* in Christ; His 1. Essence and His 2. Person *Ossia* and *Hypostasis, in Divinis*. His 3. Flesh and His 4. reasonable Soul *in humanis*. Answerable to these four are these here, these four to His four.

And as it is a meeting, so a cross meeting of four virtues that seem to be in a kind of opposition, as hath been noted. No matter for that. They will make the better refraction; the cool of one allay the heat, the moist of one temper the drought of the other. The soft virtues need to be quickened, the more forward to be kept from *altum sapere*. So are the elements of which our body, so are the four winds of which our breath doth consist which gives us life. And these in the text have an analogy or correspondence with the elements, observed by the ancients. 1. Truth as the "earth, which is not moved at any time." 2. *Quasi fluvius pax*, saith Esay, "peace as a water-stream, the quills whereof make glad the City of God." 3. Mercy we breathe and live by, no less than we do by air; and 4. Righteousness, she *ventura est judicare sæulum per ignem*, in that element.

You may happen to find one of these in Scripture stood much upon, and of the other three nothing said there, but all left out. Conceive of it as a figure, Synecdoche they call it. As ye have here man called earth; yet is he not earth alone, but all the other three elements as well. No more is Christianity any one but by Synecdoche, but in very deed a meeting of them all four.

It deceived the Gnostic, this place; "This is eternal life to know thee." Knowledge, saith he, is it, as if it were all; and so bade care for nothing else but to know, and knowing live as they list. The Encratite, he was as far gone the other way; he lived straightly, and his tent was, *Non est curandum quid quique credat, id curandum modo quod quique faciat*, "So that ye hold a straight course of life, it skills not what ye hold in point of faith." No meeting with these single virtues all.

Yes, it skills. For both these were wrong, both go for heretics. Christianity is a meeting, and to this meeting there go *pia dogmata* as well as *bona opera*—Righteousness as well as Truth. Err not this error then, to single any out as it were in disgrace of the rest; say not, one will serve the turn,—what should we do with the rest of the four? Take not a figure, and make of it a plain speech; seek not be saved by Synecdoche. Each of these is a quarter of Christianity, you shall never while you live make it serve for the whole.

The truth is,—sever them, and farewell all. Take any one from the rest, and it is as much as the whole is worth. For, as Bernard well observed, *non sunt virtutes si separentur*, "upon their separation they cease to be virtues." For how loose a thing is Mercy, if it be quite devoid of Justice? We call it foolish pity. And how harsh a thing Justice, if it be utterly without all temper of Mercy! *Summa injuria* then, that is, "injustice at the highest." Mercy, take Truth away, what hold is there of it? Who will trust it? Truth, take Mercy from it, it is severity rather than verity. Then Righteousness without Peace, certainly wrong is much better—better than perpetual brabbling. And Peace without Righteousness, better a sword far. This, if you sunder them. But temper these together, and how blessed a mixture! Set a song of all four, and how heavenly a melody!

Entertain them then all four. 1. hope in Mercy; 2. faith in Truth; 3. fear of Righteousness; 4. love of Peace; *O quam præclara concordia!* O how loving a knot! How by all means to be maintained! How great pity to part it!

A little of the time now, when this meeting would be. No time amiss, no day in the year but upon entreaty they will be got to meet. Yet if any one day have a prerogative more than another, of all the days in the year on this day most kindly; the day we hold holy to the memory of this meeting; the day of *orta est*, the occasion of it. In remembrance of the first meeting then, they are apt and willing to meet upon it again; forward ever to meet the day they first met of themselves. But Christ this day born, this day to meet of course. One special end that He was born was that at His birth this meeting might be. If to-day then they should not meet, that were in a sort to evacuate Christ's birth, if there should be a *Veritas orta* without an *obviaverunt sibi*; so that if we procure it not, we had as good keep no feast at all.

What is then the proper work of this day, but still to renew this meeting on it? For Christ's birth we cannot entertain, but all these we must too, necessary attendants upon it every one. They be the virtues of His Nativity, these. At His birth Christ bethought Himself of all the virtues which He would have to attend on Him then; and these He made choice of then, and forever, to be the virtues of this feast.

The sooner and the better to procure this meeting, the Church meets us, as Melchizedek did Abraham, "with bread and wine," but of a higher nature than his fare; prepares ever this day, a love-feast, whereat they may the rather meet. Where Truth from the earth may look up to Heaven and confess, and Righteousness from Heaven may look down to earth and pardon; where we may show Mercy in giving where need is; and offer Peace in forgiving where cause is; that so there may be a "meeting" of all hands.

And even so then let there be. So may our end be as the end of the first verse, in peace; and as the end of the second, in Heaven! So may all the blessings that came to mankind by this meeting, or by the birth of Christ the cause of it, meet in us and remain upon us, till as we now meet together at the birth, so we may then meet in a "perfect man in the measure of the fullness of the age of Christ"; as meet now at the Lamb's yeaning, so meet then at the Lamb's marriage; "be caught up in the clouds then to meet Him," and there to reign forever with Him in His Kingdom of Glory!

ServantHistory

Notes on a Christmas Sermon on Psalm 85 by Lancelot Andrewes

by Douglas Giebel

Psalm 85 from the times of the early church has been appointed to be read on Christmas Day. Thus, Saint Augustine in the fifth century preached Christ from this Psalm to the church in Carthage, North Africa; and more than a thousand years later the Rev. Lancelot Andrewes preached this text on Christmas Day 1616 to King James I of England.[1] James I is the same ruler who authorized the King James Version of the Bible, and he employed Lancelot Andrewes as one of the many biblical scholars to assist in that translation.

From the opening verses of the Psalm, we see that it was written after Israel's captivity in Babylon, but there is an appeal for a more perfect cleansing ahead for Israel. As a type of the church, Israel's captivity foreshadows that greater captivity of which the apostle Paul speaks in Romans 7:23, "bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (KJV), from which Christ alone can set us free. We find this message set forth in the Psalm's concluding verses (vv. 9–13 KJV):

> 9 Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.
> 10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.
> 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
> 12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good; and our land shall yield her increase.
> 13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

In verse 10 we see four virtues, "mercy and truth" and "righteousness and peace," personified as figures intentionally setting out to connect. The first pair, "mercy and truth," meet; the second pair, "righteousness and peace," kiss one another upon their meeting. This striking image forms the emotional climax of the Psalm, the fulfillment of the verses' longing for forgiveness and the gift of alien righteousness leading up to it. Their coming together appears to be the reason this celebratory Psalm has been written. But as we think about these virtues, we recognize that they should not be strangers to one another, as they are all excellent attributes of God, intimate reflections of his character. So why then should it be a marvel to see them meet? Have they somehow been rent asunder from that unity of their residing in God, within his undivided essence?

If we look to the next verse 11, we see that their coming together is to celebrate a birth, a budding forth of truth from the earth, and we recognize from the Gospel of John that this

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[1] A transcription of the sermon, made for *Ordained Servant*, may be accessed here; it is also available as a printable PDF. The digitized text was obtained here.

birth can be none other than of Christ, the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth, and indeed, later in John's Gospel (14:6), Christ will say, "I am the . . . truth." If at Christ's birth they are met together and reunited, then it must be that Adam's Fall was the cause of their parting. Among themselves they have no quarrel, but we in our sin have caused their separation. When Satan proffered a lie that was believed by Adam, and thereby God was much wronged, then truth and righteousness fled and became aliens from earth, dwelling together only within God's immutable character in heaven.

By contrast however, "mercy and peace" want to go where misery and strife dwell, even on an earth suffering under the Fall. As Hugh St. Victor has said, "Where should mercy be, if with misery she should not be?" Our joining pairs here are not naturally aligned. Mercy, or steadfast love, would plead the sinner's case, but truth would not hear it. God has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20 KJV), and God cannot falsify his Word. And righteousness would be quick to second truth. God is righteous in all his works and renders to each his just due, to sinners—the wages of sin, which is death. God forbid that the Judge of all the world should judge unjustly, that is to make truth false, or to do right wrongly.

As these attributes stand apart, our salvation lies bleeding, our plea before God hangs, we stand as prisoners at the bar, not knowing what shall become of us. But thanks be to God for the coming of Christ, whereby truth again buds forth from the earth.

The image of Christ's birth as a budding of truth out of the earth conforms well with the prophet Isaiah's description of the coming of the Messiah as "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse" (Isa. 11:1 KJV). Both images emphasize the supernatural aspect of this growth. This is not a humanly cultivated plant, but of divine origin alone, like wildflowers that spring up in the forest without human attention.

Verse 11 tells us: As truth buds forth on earth, righteousness looks down. She who previously would disdain to even look in the direction of sinful earth, now looks down with delight. The verb used here includes the idea of taking pleasure in what she sees. For indeed, what a desirous sight this truth is to behold, a clean birth, a holy life, an innocent death, a spirit and mouth without guile, a soul and body without sin. In him she beholds them all, in the One who is all in all. If righteousness appears to be the last or most hesitant to rejoin this union, her participation shows no reluctancy, her union with peace is described as more than just an embrace. For they kiss one another, a sign of deepest enthusiasm and intimacy. As our text proceeds in verse 13, righteousness not only looks down, but comes down, to go before truth.

So these celestial lights have been reunited, even on earth in our Savior Christ, through whom, the apostle Paul proclaims, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:19–20 KJV). And elsewhere Paul testifies, "Who of God is made unto us . . . righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30 KJV), and "he is our peace" (Eph. 2:l4 KJV).

It is well then that we should sing together this night in harmony, as in Christ these virtues are able to make harmonious music together again. But lest our religion be only ceremony and celebration, let us also notice in the concluding verse of our text that righteousness has a path that is to be trod by Christ, that we might follow in his steps. This text teaches us that Christianity is a meeting, or concord. Truth and righteousness cannot be separated without falling into falsehood. Lancelot Andrewes gives examples of two heresies that have continually tempted the church, the Gnostic for whom all is

knowledge, and here is no significance given to a godly life, or on the other hand, the ascetic, for whom all is about godly living with little or no significance given to knowledge of the truth. Let us by God's grace labor to keep truth and righteousness united in our lives. May God enable us to show forth the righteousness of Christ in our daily living, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to forgive one another, even as in Christ we have been forgiven by God. May the harmony of heaven and earth be played out in our lives.

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ServantLiving

Exercise for Christian Caregivers

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by Shane Lems

I know it is not normal. Running long distances is not a standard practice for most people. In fact, people who run a lot might be considered slightly weird, atypical, or just this side of crazy. I have thought about it quite a bit because I run quite a bit. I do not want to be considered weird or a little crazy. At the same time, I find running enjoyable and beneficial, so I run often and hope to keep doing so as long as I am able. And I am learning to embrace the weirdness of it. To be clear, I am only a mediocre, middle-of-the-pack runner. Most serious runners I know run much farther and more often than I do. You will not find my name anywhere near the top of the race results!

Although I am no superstar runner, I do want to highlight the excellent benefits of running because I believe others can enjoy these benefits through other physical activities as well. I am thinking about activities like walking, biking, hiking, rowing, kayaking, cross-country skiing, and weightlifting, to give a few examples. There are undoubtedly various benefits associated with routine cardiovascular and muscle-engaging activities.

I am also thinking specifically about the benefits of such athletic activities for pastors, elders, deacons, Christian counselors, medical workers, social workers, etc. I will call them "Christian caregivers"—Christians whose job it is to care for others in need. Regular athletic activities are especially beneficial for those of us who serve others by helping them through trauma, conflict, grief, sinful behaviors, and deathbed experiences. Those of us who care for others during trials and hardships are often deeply burdened by such interactions. Caring for those in need is often a challenging, emotionally draining, mentally exhausting, and incredibly stressful task. It is a labor that will destroy a person if he does not carry it out with wisdom, faith, hope, love, and self-discipline.

To be sure, those of us whom God has called to help others through trials need to pray often. We need to meditate on God's Word and be fed and led by his life-giving truth. Christian caregivers need to rest in Christ and his constant love for us. We need to be regularly refreshed in corporate worship, nourished by the Christian sacraments, and refreshed by a weekly day of rest. We need to take care of our spiritual lives so that we can give spiritual care to others. In a way, Christian care*givers* are also care*takers*—meaning we should also biblically take care of ourselves.

Christian caregivers should attend to the physical and biological aspects of our lives. It is in line with biblical wisdom to care for our bodies by getting enough sleep, taking days off, enjoying vacations, having breaks from caregiving, and so on. It is also biblically wise to have regular health checkups, eat properly, stay hydrated, limit screen time, avoid over-caffeinating, and steer clear of excessive alcohol, among other things. Healthy life habits are essential for Christian caregivers.

One of my pastoral philosophies is this: I need to care for myself well so I can take care of others well. If I am spiritually malnourished, physically run-down, and mentally drained, I cannot take good care of those whom God has put in my care. So I have learned to care for myself. This helps me better care for others. There is a balance here that requires wisdom, prayer, patience, and practice. I should not love myself *more* than God or my neighbor, but I should love my neighbor *as* I love myself. No one should hate their own body. It is proper to nourish and attend to our bodies (Eph. 5:29).

Part of my personal self-care is running. I vividly remember a two-hour run I did last fall on an abandoned Wisconsin railroad track near my house. I relished it because it was a warm November day on an excellent path lined with trees full of Autumn's colors. I enjoyed the run because I was alone, the weather was perfect, I felt strong, and my mind was clear. On that run, I thought: *Why do I run?* I came up with a few answers to that question and wrote them down after the run. I will share them here; they are in no particular order. Note: You can substitute the word "run" below for the physical athletic activity of your choice—hiking, walking, biking, skiing, rowing, spinning, etc.

I Run for the Mental Benefits

As a pastor, I have many things on my mind, including the stressful realities of counseling people through mental challenges, marriage conflicts, difficult life choices, and foolish decisions, to name a few. Those issues can cloud my mind and give me stress headaches. When I run without earbuds, it clears the mental clouds from my mind as the morning sun burns away the low-lying fog. When I run, it is good for my mind to wander from one thing to the next, without being pulled in by a screen, answering phone calls, or being distracted by media. I have read that creativity comes from letting your mind wander for long periods. I agree! It is hard to explain, but the more I run, the more my mind benefits. The "runner's high" is a real thing! After a marathon, although my body takes a few days to recover, my mind remains clear for days. The payoff is worth it. Pain is gain! I often say, "Running is my therapy." It is not even a joke anymore. Running is perhaps my number one stress-buster.

I just mentioned running without earbuds. I will occasionally listen to music or an audiobook if I am on a run longer than two hours. Most of the time, however, I like to keep free from such distractions so I can hear the sounds around me and keep my mind free to think, reflect, pray, and so on. Some people have told me they cannot let their mind wander long, or it turns out badly. I sympathize if that describes you. However, with practice, I am sure most people will be able to do their favorite athletic activity without always needing earbuds to distract their thoughts. Try an activity without earbuds for fifteen or thirty minutes first, and likely you will soon be able to go for long periods without music, podcasts, or audiobooks. Practice and be patient. After a few months, you will no doubt notice an improvement in your mental state.

I Run for the Health Benefits

I do not even need to cite sources because everyone knows that cardio activity is good for the heart, lungs, muscles, bones, and joints (etc.). Cardio activities like running can help lower blood pressure, regulate cholesterol levels, reduce the risk of heart disease,

increase mobility and metabolism, help maintain a healthy body weight, and so on. Running also enables me to eat a lot and eat well, which in turn gives me the energy to do my daily work—fueled and fed. A good run will also typically help me sleep better (as long as I finish before 4:00 PM). Running has definitely helped keep me in shape and has made me better able to perform my daily duties. For those interested, it is worth researching the health benefits of regular exercise.

I Run Because I Enjoy Being Outside

Although I enjoy studying and reading, I equally enjoy seeing the different parts and wonders of God's creation. Running slows me down so I can look around and see the creation God has made for us to enjoy. Running in the early-morning humidity of summer offers different views of God's world. I enjoy running trails along rivers because I sometimes see small schools of trout swimming frantically away from my clodding footsteps. Running on the rural Wisconsin roads in the spring is also a treat because I get to see the crops poke up through the soil, trees budding bright green, and small ditch flowers making their way towards the sun. Being out in creation also ties into the mental benefits listed above. There are plenty of scholarly reports today that prove being out in nature is good for mental health. In fact, I have heard of doctors prescribing outdoor time for their patients. That makes perfect sense to me, and I have encouraged some Christians to get outside for these reasons.

I Run Because It Increases My Thankfulness to God

I would never say running is a sacrament, or even close, but being outside on a long run has a deep spiritual dynamic for me. When I come around the corner of a solitary trail and scare up an eagle, I thank God for such a wonderful encounter. When I run at dawn on a cool, crisp fall day, I am always in awe at the beauty of the sunrises God paints. And when I finish another run, I say a prayer of thanks for the experience and ability to run once again (I do not take it for granted!). Sometimes I run with others, and I enjoy the fellowship and bond that comes from overcoming such an obstacle together.

I Run Because It Helps Me Write Sermons

I have told people that I do my best sermon writing when I am running. That statement might be a bit hyperbolic, but there is a lot of truth to it. If I study for a sermon all morning, many thoughts come together when I am on a run at lunch. It is hard to explain, but if I get four hours of study in the morning followed by a long run, during the run I have quiet time to think more deeply about the truths I have studied. I often finish the run with a sermon outline and various points of sermon application. Since I already admitted I am abnormal, I can also share that I talk out loud on my runs. I sometimes vocalize parts of my sermons while running to see how they sound out loud. This also helps me contemplate if the statements make biblical sense. And sermon-self-talk on runs sticks in my memory and often makes it into the pulpit on Sunday.

I Run Because It Helps Me Pray Better

When I am on a run with no distractions, I pray about things that come to mind. On a run, I can pray for people in the church family who are going through trials. Sometimes when I run, I pray for my family members by name. During a run, I will also reflect on some of my pastoral counseling sessions and end up praying for those people as well. There have even been times during a run when I have cried out to God with prayers of lament. I do not really plan my prayers, but running inevitably leads me to pray about different things in my Christian life and in my pastoral ministry.

I Run Because I Like Challenges and Goal-Setting

Some people like to set challenging goals and work to accomplish them. During my Army Basic Training at Fort Jackson some years ago, I found out that I am one of those people who like physical challenges and goal-setting. Although I am certainly not a fast runner, I do like to check my Garmin stats to see if I can beat my previous times, lower my VO_2 Max (maximum amount of oxygen during intense exercise), keep my average heart rate low during the run, or run farther than I did before. For me, such challenges and goals give me small things to work towards. Although in the big picture of life these goals are not very important, they do help me face challenges and set goals in other areas of life.

Conclusion

Those are some reasons why I run. Again, you can substitute "run" with other athletic endeavors and enjoy similar benefits. I also enjoy biking, walking, and multi-day hikes, and I can say those are beneficial as well. There are many activities with the above benefits, including rowing, tennis, kayaking, swimming, and paddleboarding, to name a few. I gravitate towards running because I am able to do it, I (mostly) enjoy it, and it is not a terribly expensive athletic hobby. For readers who are Christian caregivers, I encourage you to engage in regular physical activity to reap the benefits. Do not forget to care for your bodies as well as your souls.

Someday I may not be able to run, bike, or hike. Perhaps something will happen to me that prevents me from engaging in physical activities. If that time comes, I will have to seek God's help in finding other ways to care for myself in a Christian way. Perhaps I will need to lean on other Christian caregivers for help. Whatever the case, I pray for grace and for trust in God's providence when or if that time comes. For now, I will run. I know I should not find my identity or my life's meaning in physical activities, but they are not worthless. Paul's words to Timothy are never far from my mind: "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8 NLT).

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ServantLiving

Growing Old

God's Word for Today by Ole Kristian Hallesby (1879–1961)

September 8 "Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, according to thy word, in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Luke 2:29–30 (KJV)

IT is not easy to grow old.

Then one has reached the days of which it is written: "I have no pleasure in them." Old age is without a doubt the hardest class of all in the school of God. The trials of old age are both numerous and great.

My believing old friend, you who have reached this class, may I extend my good wishes to you? You have almost finished the course and kept the faith. What a victory!

Your life is moving in a small circle now, and your labors are not of far-reaching consequence. You are fortunate, you who have employed your powers unto the glory of God. You are doubly fortunate, you who submit graciously to God now also, when He permits old age to deprive you of your physical and mental powers.

It is grace from God to be permitted to use one's powers unto the glory of God. But it is twofold grace from God to be able to relinquish one's powers in faith and to say gratefully: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

There is a sacred halo of glorious beauty about those old folk who have gained the victory in the battle with old age and can pass their declining years in happiness. They have conquered! Not merely given in, resigned, to old age.

They are no longer offended when reminded of their age. Nor do they continually find fault with the times and with the young people. They realize that they cannot follow along with the times.

And still there is not the atmosphere of hopelessness about them.

They have been saved by the grace of God, and by the faithfulness of God they have been led from childhood to the gray hairs of old age. With courageous hearts they are prepared to meet the final enemy in His name.

And pass through death into life!

Prayer for Ministers

Morning Thoughts, or Daily Walking with God by Octavious Winslow (1808–1878)

August 1 “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” Romans 15:30 (KJV)

There are many weighty and solemn considerations which powerfully plead for the prayers of the Church of God, in behalf of her ministers and pastors. The first which may be adduced is- the magnitude of their work. A greater work than theirs was never entrusted to mortal hands. No angel employed in the celestial embassy bears a commission of higher authority, or wings his way to discharge a duty of such extraordinary greatness and responsibility. He is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ- an ambassador from the court of heaven—a preacher of the glorious gospel of the blessed God- a steward of the mysteries of the kingdom. Properly to fill this high office—giving to the household their portion of food in due season- going down into the mine of God's word, and bringing forth to the view of every understanding its hidden treasures- to set forth the glory of Emmanuel, the fitness of His work, and the fullness of His grace- to be a scribe well instructed, rightly dividing the word of truth- to be wise and skillful to win souls, the grand end of the Christian ministry- oh, who so much needs the sustaining prayers of the Church as he?

Secondly. The painful sense of their insufficiency supplies another affecting plea. Who are ministers of Christ? Are they angels? Are they superhuman beings? Are they inspired? No, they are men in all respects like others. They partake of like infirmities, are the subjects of like assaults, and are estranged from nothing that is human. As the heart knows its own bitterness, so they only are truly aware of the existence and incessant operation of those many and clinging weaknesses of which they partake in sympathy with others. And yet God has devolved upon them a work which would crush an angel's powers, if left to his self-sustaining energy.

Thirdly. The many and peculiar trials of the ministry and the pastorate ask this favor at our hands. These are peculiar to, and inseparable from, the office that he fills. In addition to those of which he partakes alike with other Christians—personal, domestic, and relative—there are trials to which they must necessarily be utter strangers. And as they are unknown to, so are they unrelievable by, the people of their charge. With all the sweetness of affection, tenderness of sympathy, and delicacy of attention which you give to your pastor, there is yet a lack which Jesus only can supply, and which, through the channel of your prayers, he will supply. In addition to his own, he bears the burdens of others. How impossible for an affectionate, sympathizing pastor to separate himself from the circumstances of his flock, be those circumstances what they may. So close and so sympathetic is the bond of union- if they suffer, he mourns; if they are afflicted, he weeps; if they are dishonored, he is reproached; if they rejoice, he is glad. He is one with his Church. How feelingly the apostle expresses this: “Then, besides all this, I have the

daily burden of how the churches are getting along. Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?" To see a Christian pastor, in addition to his own personal grief, borne often in uncomplaining loneliness and silence, yet bowed down under accumulated sorrows not his own- others looking to him for sympathy, for comfort, and for counsel- is a spectacle which might well arouse in behalf of every Christian minister the slumbering spirit of prayer. We marvel not to hear the chief of the apostles thus pleading, "Brethren, pray for us."

* * *

August 2 "You all are partakers of my grace." Philippians 1:7 Most true is it, that in the grace bestowed by God upon a Christian pastor all the members of the flock share. They partake of that which belongs to him. All the grace with which he is enriched—all the gifts with which he is endowed—all the acquirements with which he is furnished—all the afflictions with which he is visited—all the comforts with which he is soothed—all the strength with which he is upheld—all the distinction and renown with which he is adorned—belong alike to the Church over which God has made him an overseer. There is in the pastoral relation a community of interest. He holds that grace, and he exercises those gifts, not on account of his own personal holiness and happiness merely, but with a view to your holiness and happiness. You are partakers with him. You are enriched by his "fatness," or are impoverished by his "leanness." The degree of his grace will be the measure of your own; the amount of his intelligence, the extent of yours. As he is taught and blest of Christ, so will you be. The glory which he gathers in communion with God will irradiate you; the grace which he draws from Jesus will sanctify you; the wealth which he collects from the study of the Bible will enrich you. Thus, in all things are you "partakers of his grace." How important, then, that on all occasions he should be a partaker of your prayers! Thus your own best interests are his strongest plea. Your profit by him will be proportioned to your prayer for him.

To the neglect of this important duty much of the barrenness complained of in hearing the word may be traced. You have, perhaps, been wont to retire from God's house caviling at the doctrine, dissecting the sermon in a spirit of captious criticism, sitting in judgment upon the matter or the manner of the preacher, and bitterly complaining of the unprofitableness of the preaching. With all tender faithfulness would we lay the question upon your conscience, "How much do you pray for your minister?" Here, in all probability, lies the secret of the great evil which you deplore. You have complained of your minister to others (alas! how often and how bitterly, to your deep humiliation be it spoken); have you complained of him to the Lord? Have you never seriously reflected how closely allied may be the deficiency in the pulpit, of which you complain, to your own deficiency in the closet, of which you have not been aware? You have restrained prayer in behalf of your pastor. You have neglected to remember in especial, fervent intercession with the Lord, the instrument on whom your advancement in the divine life so much depends. You have looked up to him as a channel of grace, but you have failed to ask at the hands of Jesus that grace of which he is but the channel. You have waited upon his ministrations for instruction and comfort, but you have neglected to beseech for him that teaching and anointing, by which alone he could possibly establish you in truth,

or console you in sorrow. You have perhaps observed a poverty of thought, and have been sensible of a lack of power in his ministrations; but you have not traced it in part to your own poverty and lack in the spirit and habit of prayer in his behalf. You have marveled at, and lamented, the absence of sympathy, feeling, and tenderness in the discharge of his pastoral duties, but you have forgotten to sympathize with the high responsibilities, oppressive anxieties, and bewildering engagements inseparable from the office which your pastor fills, and in which he may largely share, often "under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life." Thus in a great degree the cause of an unprofitable hearing of the word may be found nearer home than was suspected. There has been a suspension of prayer and sympathy on your part, and God has permitted a suspension of power and sympathy on his.

ServantTruth

Is It Sacramentally Necessary to Break Bread When Celebrating the Lord's Supper?

by T. David Gordon

It has been common in some circles within the English-speaking liturgical heritage to require that the minister break the loaf of bread before distributing it to the communicants, implying that there is sacramental symbolism inherent in the act of breaking, and sometimes therefore requiring the minister to break the bread:

> The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and *break the bread*, to take the cup . . . (WCF 29.3, see also WLC 169)

The Westminster *Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, along with other constitutions, also followed the KJV in requiring this fraction:[1]

> There the minister, who is also himself to communicate, *is to break the bread*, and give it to the communicants;
>
> OPC Directory for Worship IV.C.1 (2005), "The physical elements, *representing the broken body* and shed blood of the Saviour";[2]
>
> PCA BCO 58:5, "The bread and wine being thus set apart by prayer and thanksgiving, the minister is to take the bread, *and break it*, in the view of the people";[3]
>
> Book of Common Prayer, "The Celebrant *breaks* the consecrated Bread."[4]

R. L. Dabney writes in *Systematic Theology*, (801–02):

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[1] "Fraction" is the technical liturgical term for the ministerial act of breaking the bread before distributing it.
[2] The 2011 revision of the DPW replaces "broken" with "crucified." "Broken" appears nowhere in the present revision. Breaking the bread is still required in III.C.6, "The minister shall then break the bread and give it to the people."
[3] The PCA took a step in the right direction in 2004, when the General Assembly adopted my overture to change 58:5 by removing the requirement of employing the KJV's "broken for you," and expressly saying "some other biblical account of the institution" could be used at this point. It would be a small step now to go further and remove the requirement of fraction altogether, on the same logic.
[4] The Lutheran Common Service Book differs; its rubric merely reads, "Here he shall take the Paten, with the Bread, in his hand," and when distributing the bread, the minister says, "Take and eat, This is the Body of Christ, given for thee." As we will see below, this is because Luther's (and subsequent) translation of 1 Cor. 11:24 did not say "broken," but, by attraction to Luke's account, said "given for you" (*der für euch gegeben wird*).

> The sacramental acts, therefore, warranted by Christ are, the taking, *breaking*, and distributing the elements, on the administrator's part. . . . The *breaking of the bread is plainly one of the sacramental acts*, and should never be done beforehand, by others, nor omitted by the minister.

Charles Hodge also expounds in *Systematic Theology*, iii, 619: "The bread is the symbol not merely of Christ's body, but of his body *as broken for us*."

Note especially how strong (would "prescriptive" be better?) the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith appears to be ~~is~~, when one elides some words: "The Lord Jesus hath . . . appointed his ministers to declare . . . ; to pray, and bless . . ., and . . . to set them apart . . .; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, . . . and . . . to give both to the communicants . . ." Westminster here says that Christ "appointed" his ministers to do seven things (one repeated, so actually six), to "declare, pray, bless, set apart, take, break, take, and give." The Confession does not appear to permit a minister to omit any of these six/seven things, because the minister is "appointed" to do them. Note also how precisely it requires communion in both species ("to give both to the communicants"), which was one of the very significant Protestant objections to the then-Roman Catholic practice of withholding the chalice from the laity.[5] Many of us ministers in the PCA (and other NAPARC communions) violate a strict reading of our confessional standards nearly every Sunday by not breaking the bread; yet, as I will argue, our confessional standards have no biblical ground to require this of us.[6]

The purpose of this paper is to question whether this English-speaking consensus is biblically grounded.[7] The question is not whether it is *lawful* or *permissible* to break the bread, but whether it is sacramentally and symbolically *necessary* to do so. My opinion is that it is lawful and permissible to break the bread before distributing it, and the option, therefore, of doing so, should be retained. The only question is whether it is sacramentally and symbolically *necessary* to the integrity of the rite to break the bread before distributing it.[8]

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[5] The Augsburg Confession even has a separate section (XXII) entitled "Of Both Kinds in the Sacrament."

[6] The other major Reformed standards (Scots, Belgic, Dort, Second Helvetic, Heidelberg) do not require this language of breaking, or that the minister break the bread; the closest they come is Lord's Day 28 in the Heidelberg Catechism, which merely cites Paul: "This promise is repeated by Paul where he says: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?"

[7] And it is indeed merely an English-speaking consensus. The Second Helvetic Confession and The Canons of the Synod of Dort were written in Latin, The Belgic Confession was written in French, and the Heidelberg Catechism was written in German. The Scots Confession of 1560 was written in English, but does not require fraction. The German liturgies do not require fraction because Luther's translation of 1 Cor. 11:24 does not contain the disputed participle. Luther used Erasmus's second edition Greek text; whereas the King James was translated from his third edition. Possibly the difference is due to this. Somewhat curiously, the Roman Catholic Mass does indeed contain a separate liturgical moment called "The Fraction" that occurs after "The Lord's Prayer" and "The Peace," despite the fact that the Vulgate omits the participle (κλωμενον) in question, and instead has the Lucan *tradetur,* "given." As is my ordinary custom in matters theological, I prefer the Lutheran to the Roman Catholic practice, even though the Westminster Standards (probably unwittingly) require the Catholic practice here.

[8] When I say "only question," I mean this is the only question I am addressing here. There are many other questions one could raise about the constitutional instructions. Why is it *necessary* (as per the PCA BCO) that the table be "decently covered"? WCF 29.7 says, "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the *visible elements*, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really,

The answer to the question hinges largely, but not entirely, on the resolution of the text-critical question of 1 Corinthians 11:24, because the only place where "broken for you" appears in the New Testament (hearafter NT) is there, and because the earliest Greek manuscripts do not have the participle "broken" (*klōmenon*, κλωμενον) even there. Two other matters are also germane, however. Is it sacramentally necessary to employ the Pauline account of the institution of the supper, with whatever practical consequences flow from it; and does the mere fact that Jesus broke the loaf warrant our doing so? I will examine these three questions in inverse order.

Three Important Questions

First Question: Is it sacramentally necessary to break the loaf, simply because Jesus did?

How do we know which of the actions in the sacraments are symbolic of some other reality (and therefore sacramentally necessary)? For instance, the Supper was instituted at the time of the Jewish Passover, in the evening in an upstairs room, and Jesus "reclined at table with the twelve" (Matt. 26:20, cf. Luke 22:14). Do these historical facts necessitate either that we observe the Supper only once annually, or only during the Jewish Passover, or on the second floor of a building, or that we all "recline"? Obviously, the churches have answered these questions universally in the negative. The church has rightly attempted to distinguish what was merely historical incident from what was sacramentally symbolic. The calendar date, or even the fact that the Supper was instituted in the evening, or on the second floor, are all historical accidents; circumstances that actually occurred when the supper was instituted, but that are not sacramentally symbolic.[9] Therefore, though the meal was actually instituted in that particular fashion, the churches have not considered it necessary to the rite to duplicate these historical incidents.

The precise question before us, then, is whether Jesus's breaking the bread before distributing it was sacramentally symbolic, or merely a custom common to his time and culture.[10] While the English-speaking reformed churches have frequently believed that the fraction is necessary, the question must be raised as to how this determination might be properly made. Several lines of question might lead towards an answer: Was the action sufficiently distinctive, culturally, as to suggest by its very presence a distinctive sacramental symbolism? Was there some religious background to the practice that might have inclined the original participants to have deemed the action symbolic? Do the words of institution suggest that there is some representative/symbolic reality?

The first two of these questions are somewhat related, and the answer to them is negative. Breaking bread had no established significance in Old Testament scriptures or in Jewish (or Roman) practices in the first century. In the culture of the time, breaking a loaf was simply the common way of distributing it. Cutlery was uncommon, if not unknown, and people in the first century routinely "broke" bread, without implying anything symbolic in the act itself. The expression only appears once in the Greek Old Testament, where it plainly has no religious significance at all:

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but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses." Why should we be constitutionally required to make the "visible elements" *invisible,* by covering them, whether "decently" or otherwise?

[9] The Passover meal itself is profoundly symbolic (1 Cor. 5:7), but there is no symbolism to the time in the calendar when the event was observed.

[10] Analogous to "reclining" at table, Matt. 26:20, but also at Matt. 9:10, 26:7, Mark 2:15, 14:2, 16:14, Luke 5:29, 7:36-39, 11:37, 14:15. Why is breaking bread sacramentally necessary, but reclining at table not necessary?

> "Both great and small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them or cut himself or make himself bald for them. No one shall break bread (LXX *ou mē klasthē artos*, οὐ μὴ κλασθῇ ἄρτος) for the mourner, to comfort him for the dead, nor shall anyone give him the cup of consolation to drink for his father or his mother" (Jer. 16:6–7).

A similar (not identical) expression appears in the LXX at Lam. 4:4: "The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them (*nēpia ētēsan arton o diaklōn ouk estin artois*, νήπια ᾔτησαν ἄρτον ὁ διακλῶν οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς). Though ESV translates "gives," the original employs the participle of διακλάω (*diaklaō*), an evident derivative of κλάω (*klaō*). Neither text suggests anything symbolic about the act. In *TDNT*, Johannes Behm says,

> At meals, whether ordinary family meals, special meals with guests or ritual feasts, e.g., the Passover or the beginning of the Sabbath, the head of the house gives thanks, then breaks bread and hands the pieces to those who sit at table with him. The breaking of bread is *simply a customary and necessary part of the preparation* for eating together. It initiates the sharing of the main course *in every meal*. Thus Jesus faithfully follows the custom as head of the house and as host when He breaks bread for the multitude which is miraculously fed, for the disciples at the Last Supper, or for the two He joins on the way to Emmaus. Cf. also Paul in Ac. 20:11; 27:35; and cf. 1 C. 10:16. It is from this breaking of bread at the commencement of the common meal in Palestinian Judaism that the common meal of the members of the primitive community in Jerusalem receives its name, Ac. 2:42: ἡ κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου, v. 46, κλᾶν ἄρτον, also 20:7. . . . In the NT, as in contemporary Judaism, *the breaking of bread at the beginning of a meal is not a cultic act*, not even in connection with thanksgiving or praise . . . *the breaking of bread has no particular significance* as an isolated act; In these meals as in others it is simply a part of the accepted introductory process. (*TDNT* III, 728–29, emphases mine).

In a note, Behm adds, "The often repeated idea that the breaking of bread symbolises the slaying of the Lord's body is a theologumenon alien to the NT which appears for the first time in the *impossible* addition of κλώμενον τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (*klōmenon to sōma to huper humōn*), 1 Cor. 11:24."[11]

Similarly, the New Testament contains many instances of bread being broken in circumstances that are manifestly non-sacramental and non-ecclesial.

1. Matt. 14:19:
   Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke (*klasas edōken tois mathētais tous artous*, κλάσας ἔδωκεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς τοὺς ἄρτους) and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

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[11] *TDNT* III, 729, n. 14, emphasis mine. Though I agree with Behm (see below) that the κλώμενον (*klōmenon*) of 1 Cor. 11:24 is spurious, I would not call it "impossible," but "highly improbable."

2. Matt. 15:36:

   He took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them (*elaben toud hepta artous kai tous ichthuas kai eucharistēsas eklasen kai edidou tois mathētais*, ἔλαβεν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς ἰχθύας καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς) and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

3. Mark 8:6, 19:

   And he commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks he broke them (*labōn tous hepta artous eucharistēsas eklasen kai edidou tois mathētais outou*, λαβὼν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ) and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd… When I broke the five loaves (*hote tous pente artous eklasa*, ὅτε τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους ἔκλασα) for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve."

4. Luke 24:30:

   When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it (*labōn ton arton eulogēsen kai klasas*, λαβὼν τὸν ἄρτον εὐλόγησεν καὶ κλάσας) and gave it to them.[12]

5. Acts 27:33-36:

   As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food. It will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves (*kai labōn eucharistēsas tō theō enōpion pantōn kai klasas ērxato esthiein. Euthumoi de genomenoi panteskai autoi proselabonto trophēs,* καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαρίστησεν τῷ θεῷ ἐνώπιον πάντων καὶ κλάσας ἤρξατο ἐσθίειν. εὔθυμοι δὲ γενόμενοι πάντες καὶ αὐτοὶ προσελάβοντο τροφῆς).

In each of these circumstances (and especially the circumstance in Acts, where the unbelieving Romans are transporting Paul to his trial), there is a group of Roman "soldiers" and "sailors" present that is manifestly of a religiously mixed nature. The gathering is not a gathering of a covenant assembly; it is what might have been termed in the nineteenth century "a promiscuous assembly," constituted both of members of the

[12] Some might think that this could have been the sacramental meal, but the evidence suggests otherwise. First, in the Matthean account of the institution of the Supper, Jesus expressly said that he would *not* partake of this fruit of the vine with his disciples again "until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). Second, contextually, this was neither an ecclesiastical meeting nor a meeting with Christ's disciples. Verse 13 merely says "two of them" (to whom Jesus had spoken on the way to Emmaeus) spoke to Jesus, verse 18 says that one was named "Cleopas," and verse 21 says that they "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." So when evening was coming on and they invited him to stay with them (verse 29), it appears that they were just gracious hosts, and that the meal was an ordinary meal.

covenant community and non-members thereof, who also "ate some food themselves." Yet, each text records that the bread was "broken" before being distributed, employing the same verb that is employed in the narratives of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Breaking bread was a common, non-symbolic and non-religious custom in the first century, unless and until Jesus, by his words of institution, invested the act with symbolic significance. That is, his *actions* alone, without some accompanying explanation in the words of institution, are simply the common actions of both religious and irreligious people in his culture, without any inherent symbolic meaning.

Second Question: Is it necessary to employ the Pauline account of the Supper, and any practices that might flow from that account?

Even if we were to establish that the original reading of Paul's account of the institution was "my body, broken for you," would it therefore be sacramentally *necessary*, as opposed to *permissible*, that the Pauline account be read, and inferences from his account be followed? Neither Matthew nor Mark qualify the body at all, merely referring to it as "my" body; but Luke's account qualifies it by saying "*given* (*didomenon*, διδόμενον) for you." Could it not be sacramentally permissible to read Luke's account, and emphasize that Christ was "given for" his people (as does the Lutheran liturgy)? And, if so, would it be therefore necessary to the essence of the rite to break the bread? To push this argument further, does not the requirement of breaking the bread suggest that the Matthean, Markan, and Lucan accounts of the Supper are inherently *defective*, by not describing the body of Christ as "broken?" We may presume that they were familiar with the event, since Matthew was present at the event and Mark would have been familiar with Peter's account of it. Luke (Luke 1:1–3) was aware of the "narrative" of those who "were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word," and claimed that those individuals "have delivered them to us," and claimed that he, "having followed all things closely for some time past," wrote an "orderly account" (*akribōs*, ἀκριβῶς ordinarily means not merely "orderly," but "accurately"). Surely, then, Luke had carefully consulted the apostolic eyewitnesses on this important matter, and yet he said nothing in his account of the Supper about Jesus having said that his body was "broken" for anyone. Matthew was present at the Supper; Mark and Luke had consulted with apostles who were present, and yet none of them recorded Jesus as having said anything about his body being broken for anyone. If Jesus had spoken these words, and if he had *intended* them to have had symbolic significance, why did his apostles not pass this information along?

Indeed, should any of the distinctive portions of the several accounts of the Supper be required in the observation of the rite? Luke, for instance, records Jesus as having said, "Take this, and *divide* it among yourselves" (*diamerisate*, διαμερίσατε Luke 22:17). Taken in its natural sense, this suggests that the cup should be passed from congregant to congregant, a practice that is quite permissible, but is it necessary? And is it necessary for us to cite these particular words of Jesus when we conduct the rite? If the other three accounts make no mention of this, then it is perfectly apostolic and biblical not to require it. Similarly, Matthew, Mark, and Luke (but *not* Paul) state that his blood is "poured out (*ekchunnomenon*, ἐκχυννόμενον) for you/many." If it is necessary to refer to the body as "broken," on the strength of Paul's (textually disputed) testimony alone, why is it not even more necessary to refer to the blood as "poured out" on the textually *undisputed* testimony of *three* accounts? And why is it not necessary for the minister actually to pour wine in the administration of the Supper? Why must the minister *break* the bread but not *pour* the wine, if the three Synoptic gospels record the *pouring* of wine but *not* the *breaking* of bread?

The mere act of breaking bread in the culture of the time was not inherently symbolic; and (therefore) the act of breaking bread is only invested with symbolic significance *if* the words of institution so invest it. But, if reading from one of the other biblical accounts is lawful, then the essence of the rite can be maintained without the fraction, and without any of the distinctive things recorded in only one or two of the several accounts. The other three accounts do not mention any words of Jesus that invest the broken character of the bread with any symbolic significance. The other accounts do *not* invest the breaking of bread with any symbolic significance. If anything, the other accounts invest "pouring" with significance, because three of them undisputably regard the words as dominical.

Third Question: Is the "broken for you" of 1 Corinthians 11:24 sufficiently adequately established to make the expression essential to the lawful administration of the Supper?

First, let us make sure we understand the importance of the question. None of the three gospel accounts of the institution of the Supper record Jesus as saying that his body was "broken." And, if we have established that there was no known convention in the culture that would have invested the mere breaking of bread with any symbolic significance, then the breaking has no such significance unless it can be established from 1 Corinthians 11:24. Therefore, unless the reading of the Authorized Version, "broken for you," can be established at 1 Corinthians 11:24, it cannot be established at all. We therefore turn to two considerations, in an effort to determine whether such a reading can be established there. In turn, we will consider the manuscript evidence for the Greek text, and other relevant exegetical considerations.

Alternative Versions of 1 Corinthians 11:24

First, we observe that 1 Corinthians 11:24 is obviously the most textually difficult of the various biblical accounts of the Supper. There are no significant textual variants in the other three accounts, but there are significant textual variants here, which, in my judgement, is reason enough not to frame our liturgy by its terms, *however* we resolve the text-critical question.

1. "Given for you"

The Vulgate, probably assimilated to the διδόμενον (*didomenon*) at Luke 22:19, reads "*given* for you" (*hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis tradetur,* "this is my body, which is given for you"), as do the majority of the extant Latin versions. The Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic versions also read "given," as do the Ethiopic versions. Both Luther and *Die Gute Nachricht* follow this tradition. Luther has the following: "*das ist mein Leib, der für euch gegeben wird"* (This is my body, which is given for you)*,* while *DGN* reads: "*Das ist mein Leib, der für euch geopfert wird."* (This is my body, which is offered/sacrificed/given up for you). Interestingly, in both translations, a form of *brachen* does appear in the preceding clause regarding the bread itself, yet neither re-introduces the verb with regard to the "body/Leib." No Greek manuscripts (of 1 Cor. 11:24) read διδόμενον (*didomenon*).

2. "Broken for you"

Some manuscripts (Å^{c} C^{3} D^{b,c} G K P Y, and the majority texts) of 1 Cor. 11:24 do indeed read "broken (*klōmenon*, κλωμενον) for you," and there is even minimal evidence for the alternative participle θρυπτομενον (D^{gr*} *thruptomenon*). Since the AV was translated from the Erasmus (third edition) text, it understandably translated the passage

this way. Similarly, since many of the Presbyterian and Reformed constitutions were written before the discovery and publication of significant uncial and papyrus manuscripts in the late nineteenth century, it is quite understandable that they demonstrate no awareness of the textual problem.

3. "For you"

Some manuscripts and versions of 1 Cor. 11:24, including our oldest Pauline manuscripts ($\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ Å* A B C* arm Origen Cyprian), simply read, "This is my body, that is for you" (*to huper humōn*, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν). Excepting the NKJV, the recent translations overwhelmingly favor this reading, and omit "broken" (ASV, CEB, CEV, ESV, HCSB, NASB, NCV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, GNT, et al.). This is my preference also, because of the papyrus evidence for omission, and because of the principle that ordinarily a shorter reading is preferable to a longer reading.

Relevant Exegetical Considerations

Is there any established symbolic meaning to the expression "broken," that would make it theologically meaningful in the first century? There is no Old Testament evidence that the expression "broken" was used figuratively. Indeed, in the Septuagint, κλάω (*klaō*) only appears twice, once (Jer. 16:7) to refer to breaking bread, and at the apocryphal 4 Maccabees 9:14, where a young man had been put on the wheel until his bones were dislocated. It was then said that "though broken in every member (*kata pan melos klōmenos*, κατὰ πᾶν μέλος κλώμενος) he denounced the tyrant . . .". In neither of these cases is the verb used figuratively, but literally. There is no reason to believe, therefore, that the expression "broken for you," if used symbolically, would even have been meaningful to a first century audience.

Equally difficult is that John's record of the crucifixion includes the record of the Roman soldiers piercing Jesus's side with a spear, and *not* breaking his legs, as they did those on either side of him, in order to fulfill the Scripture, "Not a bone of him shall be broken" (John 19:36, citing the requirement in Exodus 12:46 that the passover lamb may neither be eaten outside the house nor a bone of it be broken). Thus, insofar as there is any theological significance to the specific nature of the sacrifice of Jesus's body, it is theologically significant that the bones were *not* broken. And if his bones were *not* broken, what on earth was?

The constitutional requirement that only one of the four biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper may be used is strange, under any circumstances. But under the present circumstance, where some constitutions require employing the one account whose text is the least well-established, the matter becomes stranger yet. It can only be accountable by recognizing the historical fact that the English-language constitutional documents that require this were written without knowledge that the text was disputed at this point.[13] In light of our greater information in text criticism, it seems responsible to make appropriate adjustments. Those adjustments are two-fold: First, ministers should not

[13] Though I am probably too generous here, because even if the text were undisputed, why would a sacramental practice be grounded on a participle (*klōmenon*, κλωμενον) that appears only in *one* of the four biblical accounts, when another participle (*exchunnomenon*, ἐκχυννόμενον, "poured out") appears undisputably in *three* of them, yet no practice is based on this participle? To require a sacramental act that is grounded only in one of the four biblical accounts would still be improper. Proper liturgy at this point would only do and require what is common to all four of the biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper; it would not require what is found only in one account, in which the Greek text is disputed.

be constitutionally required (though they should be permitted, if their judgment so dictates) to employ the textually disputed "broken for you" when administering the Supper; and second, they therefore should not be required to break the bread *as* a sacramental symbol, since, apart from that particular reading of a disputed Greek text of 1 Corinthians 11:24, there is no reason to believe there *is* any symbolic significance to the act.[14] If three textually *undisputed* accounts mention that the blood is "poured out," and only one textually *disputed* account says "broken," why would an undisputed and repeated detail be unrequired, while an unrepeated and disputed detail be required? To my knowledge, NAPARC ministers are *not* required to pour the wine (though three accounts mention the pouring), yet such ministers *are* required to break the bread, which only appears in one account, and in disputed manuscripts of that text. Could we possibly imagine thinner ice for a requisite liturgical practice?

Is There a Responsible Alternative?

While I am ordinarily conservative, not desiring to change an ecclesiastical tradition (or its constitutional documents) lightly or easily, it appears that the *status quo*, of the English-language churches in this case, is more problematic than the change. The *status quo* requires retaining a constitutional duty that is almost certainly based on ignorance of now-well-known facts about the text-critical data. The Westminster Assembly, the authors of nineteenth-century Presbyterian books of order, and nineteenth-century theologians such as Charles Hodge and Robert Lewis Dabney simply were unaware of the Chester Beatty papyrus (though some were aware of one or the other among Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Sinaiiticus, or Codex Vaticanus); those manuscripts were unavailable to them. They were probably unaware that the participle κλωμενον (*klōmenon*) was disputed in the existing Greek manuscripts of 1 Corintians 11:24. *Their* Greek text had the participle; some of our older and more reliable Greek texts do *not* have the participle κλωμενον (*klōmenon*).

For Protestant churches, professing allegiance to Scripture and expressly affirming that synods and councils may err (WCF 31.3), an issue such as this becomes a test of our principles, not merely a test of how we understand Scripture. Will our (English-speaking, based on the Erasmus text) tradition remain authoritative in the Church, even when its biblical basis is severely undermined? If we profess that our human documents are reformable in light of new understanding or discovery, how do we address the discovery of very ancient Greek manuscripts that differ from the later manuscripts and our tradition (dependent on those later manuscripts)? It is consistent with our confessional heritage to permit individual ministers to resolve text-critical questions as their judgment dictates, and/or to select which biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper to employ when administering the sacrament, and I concur with this generosity. What appears to be inconsistent with our confessional heritage is the requirement that only one text, and a text seriously disputed in the available manuscript tradition, be employed—or that a rubric (requiring that the minister break the bread) based on a single, textually disputed account, be required (even though the pouring of the wine is textually sound in three of the four

[14] I speak as a Protestant here. I assume for Roman Catholicism, fraction is indeed necessary, as a separate rubric as the Mass designates it, because of the understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice, and the Roman Catholic respect for Tradition as being equally authoritative as Scripture. But the various Protestant communions self-consciously reject this understanding, and understand the rite to be a meal, *not* a sacrifice. So there is nothing in Protestant theology that would require this fraction, and perhaps a good deal to require the contrary.

accounts, yet the minister is not required to do that). Indeed, it appears to me that if the constitution were to require a single text, it should require the text with the *least*-disputed manuscript evidence, which, in this case, would be any of the versions *other* than 1 Corinthians 11:24.

It is not my desire to prohibit ministers from breaking the loaf when adiministering the Supper, nor is it my desire to prohibit ministers from reading 1 Corinthians 11:24 from the Authorized Version, based on the Erasmus text. The resolution of text-critical questions, as well as the determination of which of the four biblical accounts of the institution of the Supper should be read, or which translation should be read, should be left to the judgment and discernment of individual ministers.[15] My desire, therefore, is not to exclude the currently-required practice from our churches; my desire is only to permit *other* practices, practices that enjoy equally biblical justification (or more).[16] It is indisputable that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all believed the Supper could be observed without anything being said about Jesus's body being "broken." Therefore, it cannot be unbiblical or un-apostolic to read any of *their* versions, versions that do *not* necessitate breaking the bread (symbolically or otherwise). Further, it *is* disputable that Paul's version says "broken," and therefore, it cannot be in the best interests of biblical churches to *require* the disputed text, or a practice based upon that disputed text.

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[15] By analogy, different ministers have different convictions about the authenticity of the "woman caught in adultery" in John 8. When I preached through the Fourth Gospel many years ago, I omitted this passage from my sermon series; others have included it in their series. Our constitutions require no resolution of the matter, and ministers are left to their own judgment on the matter. I merely suggest that the constitutions extend the same liberty when conducting the Supper. In a lifetime of ministry, a pastor might preach on John 8 once or twice; some ministers may even adminster the Supper weekly. If we give him a break once or twice in his entire ministry, why not give him a break more frequently?

[16] Note the liberty permitted in the OPC BCO: "The minister shall read the words of the institution and instruction of the Lord's Supper as found in 1 Corinthians 11:23–29 or one of the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–25, or Luke 22:14–20). In addition, he may read words of instruction from passages such as John 6 and 1 Corinthians 10." *DPW* Chapter III.C.1. Similarly, the ARP Directory of Worship says, "The words of institution are to be read and the service shall follow the New Testament pattern," and the footnote at that point reads: "Matt. 26:20–30, Mark 14:17–26, Luke 22:14–20, 1 Cor. 11:23–32," expressly permitting the reading of *any* of the four biblical accounts (V.B.8.c.(6)). In Form 1 of the Lord's Supper from the URCNA, the liturgy reads: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Note that, while the text is taken from 1 Corinthians, the translation employed does *not* contain the participial clause, "broken for you." Form 2, Short Form 1, and Short Form 2 all cite the same passage the same way, omitting "broken." To my knowledge, the only NAPARC church whose BCO requires the minister to use the 1 Corinthian text with the disputed "broken" is the PCA. If for no other reason than ecclesiastical relations, the PCA should consider altering our BCO on this point, still *permitting* the use of the present version that includes "broken," but also permitting the use of other versions of the Supper that exclude the disputed "broken."

When Words Enchant

A Review Article

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

Poetry as Enchantment: And Other Essays, by Dana Gioia. Paul Dry, 2024, 272 pages, $21.95, paper.

Poet Dana Gioia is a member of the school of New Formalism, a movement coinciding with Gioia's departure from the business world in 1992 to become a fulltime poet. This new quest for formal poetic discipline sought to bring traditional verse forms back to the fore, standing in stark contrast to much of the Modernist poetry that dominated the twentieth century. Although he occasionally writes in free and blank verse, he is known primarily for his formal work. He is also an enthusiastic promoter for the new forms of poetry recitation that have emerged in recent decades, especially among the young. His work as a teacher and critic is equal to his poetic craftsmanship and expertise, all of which shines in *Poetry as Enchantment*.

The initial essay, "Poetry as Enchantment," from 2015 is a stand-alone piece of critical brilliance. Gioia is addressing an aspect of poetic commentary that has been rarely discussed—enchantment.

The book is a collection of miscellaneous essays organized in three parts. One of its fascinating features is Gioia's penchant for discovering treasures that are unknown to readers or largely forgotten. Examples would be the narrative poetry of Robert Frost, the war poet John Allen Wyeth, and Jack Foley's *Visions & Affiliations: A California Literary Timeline: Poets and Poetry 1940–*2005.

Part 1, "Essays" on poetry, contains the lead essay which I will major on. Here Gioia discusses the place of enchantment in poetry, which has rarely been explored. The essay attempts to examine a current (2015) "misapprehension about the nature of poetry" (5). Poetry is the most ancient and thus primal form of all literature. Prior to writing and printing, poetry in its oral form remembered, preserved, and transmitted cultural identity (5). Robert Frost insisted that poetry is "a way of remembering what it would impoverish us to forget" (6). Poetry began as vocal music or verse (7). The bardic performance was meant to "cast a spell," affecting the audience to remember and pass the poem down to the next generation.

Virgil, Milton, and Yeats all understood the poet to be a tribal singer (8). The biblical psalmist David was a singer of poetry. Originally a *sonnet* denoted a song or a ballad in French. The Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke famously said, "Singing is being" (9). Accenting the orality of poetry Gioia observes, "The physicality of poetic speech separates it from the conceptual language of philosophy" (10). Due to the musical aspect of poetic language, "T. S. Eliot observed about Dante that 'Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood'" (11). Gioia sites William Blake's "The Tyger" as an example.

> Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
> In the forests of the night;

What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

While the "magical aspect of poetry does not diminish the value of critical scrutiny," the power of such a poem is in its vivid description of experience, not the explanation of a theory of experience (12).

"The Latin word for poetry, *carmen*, is also the word the Romans used for a song, a magic spell, a religious incantation, or a prophecy—all verbal constructions whose auditory powers can produce a magical effect on the listener." Our word *charm* is from the Norman French, meaning the power to enthrall (12). Poetry confined to the classroom underestimates the importance of this power. Academics often pan the amateur response to poetry, but, as Gioia observes,

> However conceptually incoherent and subjectively emotional, the amateur response to poetry comes closer to the larger human purposes of the art—which is to awaken, amplify, and refine the sense of being alive—than does critical commentary. (15)

In a statement reminiscent of Robert Frost, Gioia opines, "Poetry gave humanity the words to get through life" (16).

Poetry is a distinct kind of language, different from ordinary speech. Its meaning and pneumonic power are channeled through enchantment. Donald Hall said, "I came to poetry for the sound it makes" (17). Gioia's reflections in this essay are seasoned with the aphorisms of other poets and his own. Franz Kafka said poetry is "the axe to break the frozen sea within us." Poetry addresses the intellect, the senses, the intuition, and the imagination all at once, whereas analysis takes things apart (18).

In the fifth section of this seven-part essay, Gioia asks, "Why is poetry so unpopular today?" One explanation is that electronic media distance us from experience of the world and its inhabitants. Also, for centuries past, education meant to become "well versed." Poetry was taught for enjoyment. It reinforced every subject as the term "well versed" hints (20). "Longfellow, Byron, Tennyson, and Kipling were international figures who outsold their prose competitors" (21). Poetry was everywhere.

Now the New Critics such as Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, John Crow Ransom, and Yvor Winters sought to change the way poetry was taught and understood. But unwittingly their more sophisticated methods, in reaction to what they viewed as Victorian sentimentality, "reduced the appeal of the art." They had departed from the more "eclectic, performative, and auditory" pedagogy of a half century earlier (23). This radically academic turn made poetry "more remote from the actual holistic, intuitive experience of poetry" (24). While critical analysis has its place, students were missing the power of oral recitation since memorization had long ago disappeared from the classroom. Poetry had become imprisoned in the academy.

Gioia recounts his experience of asking students at Sarah Lawrence College to memorize Shakespearean sonnets. Initial resistance and awkwardness in recitation gave way to the realization that poetry was actually written to be spoken aloud (27–28). When Gioia became the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts in 2003, he sought to reignite interest in poetry by initiating local, state, and national poetry recitation competitions. State arts education experts resisted with four major objections. They claimed that students hated poetry (telling more about what the experts thought of poetry); memorization stifled creativity; competition has no place in the arts; and poetry is too intellectual for the average student (29).

The poetry recitation competition, "Poetry Out Loud was a huge and immediate success. . . . Students actually liked poetry once they took it off the page." Sound and performance provided the perfect introduction to the art (30). Half of the winners were first-generation Americans. "[M]emorizing and reciting poetry provided them with powerful means of assimilating and mastering English. Poetry proved educationally effective, just as it had for thousands of years when it was used to teach grammar, elocution, and rhetoric" (31).

Thus, Gioia makes the case for a better way of teaching poetry. Recognizing the power of enchantment through memorization and recitation engages student imaginations and lays the groundwork for analysis (32). Teachers also need to recognize

> non-conceptual forms of knowledge, which are fundamental to all literature, especially poetry. There are physical and sensory modes of meaning embedded in the rhythms, images, and verbal texture of verse, as well as emotional and intuitive movements in the structure of poetry (33).

Gioia concludes: "In poetry intellectuality without physicality becomes dull and barren, just as intuition untethered by intellect quickly becomes sloppy and subjective" (34).

I chose to review this book because Gioia has been on the vanguard of reviving a love of poetry in our time. He has been the best contemporary encouragement in my own poetic endeavors. This essay, in my opinion, is in line with the great apologies for poetry summed up in Gioia's concluding quote. Consider these worthy of your attention: *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) by John Dryden; *A Defence of Poetry* (*An Apologie for Poetry*, 1595 / 1581) by Sir Philip Sidney; "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" (1800 / 1802) by William Wordsworth.

I will only briefly touch on the contents of the rest of the book, which is a somewhat random collection of essays. I hope merely to whet your appetite.

"Class Struggle: *Donald Davie at Stanford*" explores Gioia's own early education and encounter with poetry. The professor at Stanford University who inspired him while Gioia was a business major was the now almost forgotten poet Donald Davie, considered one of the great poets of his twentieth-century generation. This nascent period in Gioia's development engendered the strong conviction that he would always write poetry for "the intelligent common reader," i.e., not for the academic specialists (37). As a fellow Christian, Davie offered a Christian rapprochement in the world of poetry. This was refreshing to Gioia.

The third of four essays in Part 1, "Robert Frost and the Modern Narrative Poem" (76–97), is outstanding, as Gioia demonstrates the brilliance of Frost's development of

narrative poetry, a tightly woven poem of common speech. He was an innovator with his *North of Boston* in 1914. This was prior to T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and others. Gioia observes that "*North of Boston* stands as one of the first fully achieved Modernist masterpieces in American poetry" (93).

Part 2, "Short Takes," is a brief analysis of individual poets. He looks at well-known poets: Elizabeth Bishop, Phillip Larkin, Seamus Heaney, and W. H. Auden. He also looks at lesser or almost unknown poets: Samuel Menashe, Weldon Kees, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, and concludes with an essay on "The Last of the Great Quarterlies: Frederick Morgan and the *Hudson Review*." Of Larkin, Gioia wisely concludes with an assessment that could be applied to many modern poets: "The reason to read Larkin is that his work, like all great poetry, transcends the virtues and vices of its creator and lives as a special form of language that invites and rewards sustained attention" (146).

Amongst Gioia's short takes is an anthologist of poetry, Garrison Keillor, whose comments on what makes good poetry suit Gioia's own ideal—poetry that makes everyman sing. "Heaney in Hades: *Seamus Heaney's Virgil*" explores poetic translation. The penultimate essay on great poetry quarterlies is a fascinating historical romp. The concluding essay of Part 2, "Auden at 100," is a Gioia *tour de force*. "Unlike other Modernists (the Apollonian Wallace Stevens, for instance), Auden's poems didn't seem forbiddingly literary. . . . They came through the ear and went to the heart. . . . As Robert Frost said, 'All the fun is how you say a thing'" (208–9). "Fun and musicality are essential virtues for poetry." The brilliance of Auden's great mind is evident because he "recognizes, investigates, and reconciles the evident contradictions of existence" (213). This reminds me of the biblical realism of *Ecclesiastes*.

Over the years when students would ask how they could begin to enjoy poetry, I would have them listen to the short YouTube, black and white documentary film "Night Mail." Auden's poem narrates the importance of human communication via the London, Midland, and Scottish Railway's postal train's trip from London's Euston Station to Scotland. It perfectly illustrates Gioia's main theme that poetry addresses the intellect, the senses, the intuition, and the imagination all at once. Students were always impressed.

Part 3 explores the West Coast influence on recent poetry and literature. He explores the reasons for the influence of Ray Bradbury, whose literary power was overlooked by the establishment for much of his life. Gioia observes, "They have forgotten that literature once had resonance outside the English Department" (228). They were unprepared for the resonant popularity of Bradbury.

Gioia reveals another almost unknown Oakland poet, Jack Foley. Not only was he a fine poet, but his two-volume chronicle of California poets from 1940 to 2005 is unique and invaluable. In my early days as a poet, I frequented the same Harvard Square bookstore that Gioia did, The Grolier Book Shop, run by the eccentric Gordon Cairnie. He would curtly shoo students away who were looking for textbooks. The shop was decorated with autographed black and white photos of all the modern great poets. On my honeymoon in 1973, Robin and I stopped in to say hello. Gordon gave us *The Modern Poets: An American-British Anthology* edited by John Malcolm Brinnin and Bill Read. My "Pocket Poets Series" copy of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* with an introduction by Williams Carlos Williams was purchased at The Grolier Book Shop, 6 Plympton Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Gioia's essay reminded me that many of my 1960s luminaries were from California or were published in California. Many of the poetry books I bought during that decade were published by New Directions Publishing, connected to the famous City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco founded by Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919–2021). So even if the poet was not from California, or even the twentieth century, the fact that their work was published or republished in California revealed the centrality of California's influence on the Beat and Modernist poets of the twentieth century.

The penultimate essay in the volume is a revealing portrait of Los Angeles as Gioia's literary home. For Gioia it was his home because of the presence of so many cultural giants, such as Igor Stravinsky, Aldous Huxley, Jasha Heifitz, and Thomas Mann; literary giants such as Ray Bradbury, Joan Didion, and Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss). He lists and counters five typical objections to the idea that LA has any cultural street cred.

Gioia concludes the volume with a reflection on the state of poetry in 2018. The young (ages eighteen–twenty-four) seem attracted to poetry more than other segments of the population (261). "As elite culture has less use for poetry, popular culture has embraced it" (265). I am working to be as enthusiastic as he is when he concludes, "The poetry scene isn't a cemetery; it's a crowded, noisy maternity ward" (269).

For an eclectic coverage of the contemporary poetic landscape stretching into the last century, there is no better book than this.

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ServantPoetry

by Mark A. Green (1957–)

The Hidden Harvest

For Gregory Reynolds, upon his retirement as editor of Ordained Servant

He cast the seed across the wide unknown
upon the broken fields that stretched around;
some sank in soil; some scattered and were blown;
the seed that died lay hid in groaning ground.

His hands grew calloused; tender grew his heart;
the Spirit schooled him through his joy and pain;
his fervent prayers fulfilled their unseen part;
his silent tears sustained the buried grain.

The ache of years has made his steps less sure
among the furrows carved by word and deed;
yet what he sowed in weeping will endure,
and thanks arise for all that God decreed.

Beneath these fields, the harvest lies concealed,
till God's own sons at last stand forth revealed.

Mark A. Green *is a retired minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and is a member of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic and attends Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Virginia.*

Poetry is born of human speech. It is of the essence of being human. The sound of sense and the sense of sound are inextricable from human consciousness and its expression in words. Poetry was formed out of the dust by the finger of God. To suppress the lyrical aspect of life, is to seek to suppress one of its most essential features. The naming of animals by Adam was the first expression of true lyricism as the names reflected the very nature of those being named. The psalms are a fundamental testimony to the centrality of poetry, especially in form of song, in human life. The entire fabric of the created order from the most distant stars to the tiniest flower is the expression of the

original Poet who brought all things into existence through the word of his power.

Poetry helps us see the world in greater detail and complexity. It urges us to locate and identify its transcendent referents, as Shakespeare tells it in *Midsummer Night's Dream* (lines 12–17).

> The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

The Cartouche of the Savior's Life

Gregory E. Reynolds (1949–)

The cartouche of your stable origin
Holds a double meaning as it framed
Your gentle and lowly earthly ministry
For your origin from eternity famed.

Nothing is more stable than the Covenant
Of Peace framed with the Father in eternity
Past and meted out in the nitty gritty
Of the earthly life you lived as a lambent

Intimation of the ignominious suffering
You would endure, Jesus, more humble
Than your stable incarnation, nailed
As if into dust you would soon tumble

As another disappearing hope of Israel.
But the initial cartouche also featured
Golden royal treasures that presaged
The glory of the soaring rise, pressured

By the ovine purity of the crucified One
Who could not be imprisoned by death,
Envisioned by the angel choir singing
To shepherds at the stable birth bequeathed

To all generations living in the same
Cartouche of dirty humility that framed
Your coming and prophesied a fame
That our fallen folly could not tame.

My Boyhood Christmas

I could not have explained
The magic of this season,
But the enveloping solstice
Darkness cast a shadow of mystery
Over my young life that lingers
To this day, something—dare I
Say it—holy. I would not
Have used or understood
That word, but I understood
That in the early darkness
There was light, something
Good in the air—angels,
Shepherds, magi, and a poor Mary
Bearing a child in a feed trough,
Admired as a king—
The King who would save people
From sin and death, things
About which I knew little.

But for all the tinsel and toys,
Something else shone through,
Even through those trifles—
Hope for something beyond,
Something better than the poverty
Of this worn-out world—oh
I knew little of that, too, but
I sensed a sadness in my
Little life as my uncle died
And my one-time soldier father sometimes
Screamed hopelessly in the night.

So the colored-bulb evergreen
In our living room signaled hope
For something terrifically better—
Which I would one day discover
Is the tree of life, guarded
By a wall of flaming angel swords,
Entered only by the conflagration
Of the cross on which that baby
Celebrated by king's counselors
And shepherds died as the man

Who was God enfleshed,
Whose sacrifice demolished
The indictment against me,
Which even as a boy I knew
Was ironclad—here was the hope
Of bright resurrection glory.

All this despite the schlock
Of modern Christmas—
Yes, the tinsel and the toys
Pointed to something wonderful
Beyond what I could see as a boy;
And even now as an old man
The muse of melancholy
Calls me to trust the One
Who rides on the wings of the wind—
The way and the truth and the life,
The One who set me free
Through the truth of his
Good news, news that I
Only tasted as a boy at Christmas.

Ornaments of Childhood

The fragrant balsam sent my sense
Of mystery into another sphere,
With ornaments hanging so dense
Among the branches, made to cheer

And hasten joy, bringing recompense
From the sorrows of a dreary year
And yet display such immense
Yuletide cheer to make grief disappear.

Thus, each glass sleigh, grape cluster,
Nutcracker, or orb, painted to enchant,
Draped with glistening tinsel luster
Seemed well designed to decant
The spirit I was meant to muster,
And in my childish way transplant

To a rare imaginary place
Where I thought to see God's face.

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