



Benedict Option?

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CURRENT ISSUE: THE BENEDICT OPTION?

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From the Editor

Rod Dreher's popular new book, *The Benedict Option*, has stimulated some healthy discussion about the church's response to an increasingly hostile culture. John Muether reviews the book, the subtitle of which is *A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. Despite his helpful portrait of what a healthy Christian community should look like, Dreher lacks the biblical ecclesiology to support his proposal. My Essay, "The Shape of Ministry in the OPC," offers the contours of one central aspect of a sound doctrine of the church: ministry of the Word. This is based on my annual lecture to the students of the Shiloh Institute.

OPC historian John Muether completes his series of sketches of the great Reformed confessions with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. This brings the celebration of Reformation 500 to a fitting conclusion with the crowning confessional achievement of the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras.

Danny Olinger offers us the eleventh chapter of his rich biography of Geerhardus Vos: "Geerhardus Vos: Changes at Princeton, the Reconstruction Movement, Departed Friends, and Family Life," the challenges of life in ministry, both personal and ecclesiastical.

Darryl Hart reviews a book of essays on *Wendell Berry and Higher Education*, exploring the gigantic challenge American academia presents to serious Christians who locate their lives in church, family, and community.

Have you ever heard of Lord Mackay? I review Westminster classmate Cameron Fraser's fascinating account of a great British Christian of whom few Americans are likely to have heard in *Learning from Lord Mackay*.

Finally, a poem cutting through the schlock of Christmas: "Yuletide Hullabaloo."

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 Thoughts

The Shape of Ministry in the OPC

by Gregory E. Reynolds

The shape of something is its form, outline, or contours. It gives one a good idea of a large subject, but it does not get into depth on any one issue. That is what I hope to do in this essay: present a portrait of the office of minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.¹

Ministry in the OPC is essentially ministry of the Word (*Verbi divini minister*). As ambassadors of Christ, ministers must exegete and proclaim the message of their King. Understanding the text of Scripture and the culture in which the embassy of the church is established is necessary in order to be faithful ambassadors. All aspects of the ministry flow from the ministry of the Word. This ministry is confessional, means-of-grace focused, and pastoral in execution. The narrower—that is, more biblical—the job description, the deeper the ministry of the Word. That description must be rooted in Scripture, which is clear in our Form of Government:

Chapter VI² Minister or Teaching Elders

2. Every minister of the Word, or teaching elder, must manifest his gifts and calling in these various aspects of the ministry of the gospel and seek by full exercise of his ministry the spiritual profit of those with whom he labors. As a minister or servant of Christ it is his duty to feed the flock of God, to be an example to them, to have oversight of them, to bear the glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing and beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, to exhort and convince the gainsayer by sound doctrine, and to dispense the sacraments instituted by Christ. Among those who minister the Word the Scripture distinguishes the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher.

3. He who fills this office shall be sound in the faith, possess competency in human learning, and be able to teach and rule others. He should exhibit holiness of life becoming to the gospel. He should be a man of wisdom and discretion. He should rule his own house well. He should have a good report of them that are outside the church.

Chapter VIII

¹ Originally “The Shape of Ministry in the OPC,” was a lecture given each June since 2010 at Camp Shiloh to the students gathered at the annual Shiloh Institute, introducing aspiring ministerial candidates to ministry in the OPC. This, of course, is my perspective over four decades of OPC ministry, but not the only perspective.

² The Form of Government, The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church Containing the Standards of Government, Discipline, and Worship (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education, 2011), VI.2–3; VIII, p. 9–11.

Pastors

Christ's undershepherd in a local congregation of God's people, who joins with the ruling elders in governing the congregation, is called a pastor. It is his charge to feed and tend the flock as Christ's minister and with the other elders to lead them in all the service of Christ. It is his task to conduct the public worship of God; to pray for and with Christ's flock as the mouth of the people unto God; to feed the flock by the public reading and preaching of the Word of God, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, comfort, and evangelize, expounding and applying the truth of Scripture with ministerial authority, as a diligent workman approved by God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God; to shepherd the flock and minister the Word according to the particular needs of groups, families, and individuals in the congregation, catechizing by teaching plainly the first principles of the oracles of God to the baptized youth and to adults who are yet babes in Christ, visiting in the homes of the people, instructing and counseling individuals, and training them to be faithful servants of Christ; to minister to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and to make known the gospel to the lost.

There are sadly many misconceptions of what the Christian minister is. He is not a celebrity seeking to influence people through the force of his personality; he is not a chief executive officer or social organizer developing and directing a program; he is not a motivational speaker who influences people through stories and moral lessons, promoting a more successful life in this world. A proper job description comes from God's Word. It is the ordinary ministry of Word, sacrament, and prayer. It is through ordinary men called to minister God's Word that God's extraordinary redemption in Jesus Christ is revealed.

An OPC Minister is:

A Minister of the Word

1. A Preaching-Centered Ministry “*Verbi divini minister*”

The centrality of live pastoral preaching is the heart and soul of pastoral ministry.³ Nothing digital or virtual can replace this spiritual reality. The ministry of the Word of God—the reading, preaching, and hearing of Scripture—is the supreme act of worship. All else in the life of the church flows from this.

The Bible, not the culture, defines the office of minister of the Word:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:1–5)

³ This is the burden of my book, *The Word is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Tim. 4:1–2)

The ministry of the Word must be protected from the latest fads in worship. Ways of worship are not different “styles” that suit different people. They must be conducive to worshipping a holy God with reverence and awe. “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28–29). For example, the use of PowerPoint misses the point of God addressing himself to his people face to face through the mediation of his Son via the personal presence of his servant, the minister of the Word. Screens distance us from people and the churchly context of preaching.

Preaching demands explaining and applying the text of Scripture, the “whole counsel of God.” The preacher must “handle the Word of God correctly.”⁴ This means preaching the Christ of Scripture in the fullness of his mediatorial office as the God-man and head of the visible church: prophet, priest, and king; preaching the whole range of his benefits: justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification.⁵

In Luke 24:44–46 Jesus reveals his Old Testament hermeneutic to his disciples on the Emmaus Road, demonstrating that he is revealed in all of Scripture, the TANACH (Torah, Neviyim, Ketuvim); Christ is the eternal purpose of the history of redemption from the beginning. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8, NKJV)

. . . making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph. 1:9–10, cf. Rom. 8:28–30)

Paul’s conception of the preacher is a herald, not a persuader.⁶ In 1 Corinthians 1:21 the ambiguity of the KJV translation best captures the range of meaning of Paul’s phrase “the folly of preaching” (*mōrias tou kērugmatos* μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος). It is important to appreciate the proper semantic range of the κηρύξ (*kēruξ*) word group. Both the message and the method are foolish. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” The ESV, NKJV, NIV, unfortunately all opt for the message being foolish.

⁴ The Directory for the Public Worship of God, The Book of Church Order of the OPC Containing the Standards of Government, Discipline, and Worship (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education, 2011), II.A.3.a, p. 134.

⁵ The Westminster Shorter Catechism, The Confession of Faith and Catechisms as Adopted by the OPC, Q.23–26; 33–38.

⁶ I have explained this in greater detail in “A Medium for the Message: The Form of the Message Is Foolish, Too,” in *Confident of Better Things: Essays Commemorating Seventy-Five Years of the OPC*, John Muether, ed. (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee for the Historian of the OPC), 2011, 311–34.

“Unlike the orator,” a herald of the exalted King “was not results-driven; he was obedience-driven.”⁷ He is an executive instrument of the Lord, declaring a message with the authority of Christ. He comes with an announcement from heaven; he is not audience-driven, meeting audience expectation as the persuader. This is why the Second Helvetic Confession makes this startling statement: “the preaching of the Word of God *is* the Word of God.” The power of the message is given to the herald by the King himself; it is not determined by audience expectation. As Paul says in Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Elsewhere he asserts the nature of his ministry with a different but equally humble metaphor, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1).

So, the message, the medium of proclamation, and the messenger as a simple herald, are perfectly suited to the Gospel of the suffering and crucified Christ. The preacher is utterly dependent upon the persuasive power of the Spirit of the King. As even the Apostle Paul says,

praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly (confident, not brash) to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph. 6:18–20)

Trusting God in the preaching moment in the power of the Spirit of Christ is where the oral nature of preaching comes into its own. The notes are not a sermon, neither is the mere memory of a text. The sermon is the communication of God with his people through his messenger.

2. A Confessional Ministry (confessional mindset)

Ministry of the Word is rooted in the ancient historical traditions of biblical interpretation. We stand on the shoulders of our fathers in the faith, especially as theology has been articulated in the confessions of the church, beginning with the ecumenical creeds of the ancient church. To shun confessions is the folly of starting over when mapping the complex terrain of biblical revelation. As C. H. Spurgeon once wisely eschewed such Biblicism:

Of course, you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound Scriptures without assistance from the works of divines and learned men who have labored before you in the field of exposition. If you are of that opinion, pray remain so, for you are not worth the trouble of conversion, and like a little coterie who think with you, would resent the attempt as an insult to your infallibility. It seems odd that certain men who talk so much about what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves should think so little of what He has revealed to others. My chat this afternoon is not for these great originals, but for you who are content to learn from holy men, taught of God, and mighty in Scriptures.⁸

⁷ Duane Litfin, “Swallowing Our Pride: An Essay on the Foolishness of Preaching,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 119.

⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 1876 (repr., London: Banner of Truth, 1969), 1.

The confession and catechisms are time-tested road maps of the Bible. While they are not infallible they represent the work of thousands of pious minds seeking to accurately portray the terrain of Scripture in summary fashion.

Remember also that these confessional statements are compromise documents. Where men of orthodox faith disagreed, they agreed that these matters could not be the confession of the whole church. We confess what we agree the Bible clearly teaches. This is the confessional mindset.

3. An Ordinary Means of Grace Ministry (52 Holy Days)

Public worship is the vital center of Christian life. Preaching, the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, and prayer, enjoyed corporately, undergird and shape all aspects of the ministry and life of the church. This is the ordinary, or regular, way that God disciplines his people. This takes place primarily on the only holy day of the new covenant era, the Lord's Day.

Attention should be paid to what we might call "covenantal liturgy." That is the form of worship that is shaped by the attitude of worship "with reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:28). Our directory defines worship: "An assembly of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other but is, before all else, a meeting of the triune God with his covenant people."⁹ The content, or elements, of public worship are not only to be clearly warranted by God's Word, but also ordered by that same Word. For example, while that order will vary from church to church, God must be approached through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ with prayer for forgiveness and blessing before the other elements of worship can be engaged in.

This order, or liturgy, then forms the life of the church in this world. We are told by some that we must imitate popular culture in our "worship style" or young people will not come. But that stance shirks the responsibility of teaching a better way—the folly of imitation supplanted by the beauty of Reformed worship, formed according to the Word of God. Ministers and elders have a pedagogical responsibility to teach that worship must be regulated by the Word of God, that is the "regulative principle." The forms of worship must be suitable to the content of worship.

4. A Church-Centered Ministry

A ministerial oath from Genevan *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1561 demonstrates the Reformed commitment to the centrality of the church:

I promise and swear that in the ministry to which I am called I shall serve God faithfully, bearing his word with purity for the edification of this Church to which he has obligated me. I further promise and swear that I shall not misuse his doctrine to serve any human inclinations or to please any living man, but that I shall employ it conscientiously to serve his glory and for the use of his people, to whom I am debtor.¹⁰

⁹ The Directory for the Public Worship of God, I.B.1, p. 125

¹⁰ Pierre Ch. Marcel, *The Relevance of Preaching*, ed. William Childs Robinson, trans. Rob Roy McGregor (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 110.

An Ambassador of Christ

1. Living in our Culture with the Church as a Counter-Environment: “Spirituality of the Church”

Being the church is the best thing Christians can do for our lost world. The doctrine of “the spirituality of the church” distinguishes the church as a uniquely spiritual institution bounded by the parameters of the Great Commission. In other words, the Bible defines the church’s mission. The visible church, structured according to the Word as an embassy of the risen Lord, announces and embodies *his*, not *our*, message to a lost world. Paul reminds us of his position in a pagan culture, preaching “the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:20). The apostolic identity and mission of the church is clearly defined, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

Ken Myers wittily reminds us of the danger of seeking to win the world by adopting its methods and media: creating a kind of parallel popular culture in which the church is “of the world but not in the world.”¹¹ *Terroir* in viticulture is the climate, soil, and farming techniques, the environment in which good grapes are grown for winemaking. The *terroir* of Christian discipleship is not the culture but the Word that forms the life of the church. The uniquely transcendent reality of the gospel is the church’s authentic environment. The realm to which we invite people from the world is a domain antithetical to the world’s environment. They don’t need more of what they already have.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1–2)

World conformity is the default position of every sinner born into the world. The church, formed by the preached Word, is the only environment that transforms lives that glorify God and enjoy him forever.

2. Living in our Culture as Ambassadors of Christ

Being an embassy requires understanding of the surrounding culture to which one comes as an emissary of another country. This means cultural participation along the lines of the Lord’s advice to the exiles in Jeremiah 29:7 “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” But proper exegesis of the culture demands understanding and interpretation from a biblical perspective, through the lens of Scripture.

It is significant that Princeton Theological Seminary is embedded in a university. Reformed ministry is to be well-rounded in the context of the liberal arts. That is the Princeton

¹¹ Kenneth A. Myers, *All God’s Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989), 18.

tradition in which we stand. Properly understood this does not compromise the antithesis of the church. Thus, OPC ministry seeks to avoid cultural compromise, which imitates the world, and cultural separatism, which seeks to create a culture all its own. The believer is to be spiritually separate in the midst of the world, as Paul reminded the Corinthian church, “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:9–10). So, Jesus prayed for the church in his petition to the Father: “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15).

Another temptation among Christians is the quest for cultural dominance, often referred as redeeming or transforming culture. That healthy churches will have a salutary effect on a culture, no one should doubt; but it will only do so if the church pays attention to its biblical job description—to being the church.

So, respectful engagement with our culture retains the antithesis, while enjoying the presence of natural law and common grace in the world. After all, God is the Lord of both the church and culture. Peter addresses this engagement:

In your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Pet. 3:15–16)

3. Living as Pilgrims Preaching of Another World to Mortals

Modern people, by and large, live for the world, believing that the present evil age is all there is. Foreign to this mindset is the idea that here we have no continuing city, but in Christ there is a glorious city on the horizon. This perspective is coupled with the present access that Christians enjoy through the unique mediation of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, connecting us with transcendent heavenly reality, experience of the new creation now. The future is already partly present in the true church. The writer of Hebrews captures this “now and not yet” perspective:

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. . . . For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. (Heb. 11:9–10, 13–16; 13:14)

As citizens of heaven, the church is tasked with making the invisible visible to a lost and dying world. Jesus makes this clear in his high priestly prayer:

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:22–23)

An Undershepherd of Christ

1. Pastoral Work: Shepherd-Leaders, not Defined by the Culture

An OPC minister shares pastoral oversight of the church in every arena—local, regional, national, and international—with ruling elders. The biblical model of Presbyterian governance fosters corporate wisdom among leaders in planning and spiritual warfare:

Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety. . . . Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed. . . . for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory. (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 24:6)

The minister must not allow secular concepts of leadership (mentioned in the introduction) to subvert his biblical calling. God’s Word gives the minister his job description. So you are not a business manager, a psychologist, or an entertainer. Also certain tasks, which may be legitimate in their place, must not be allowed to compromise the time devoted to local ministry. OPC ministers are not called primarily to be conference speakers, perpetual bloggers, blog readers, or even authors.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Tim 4:1–2)

2. Implications of Media Stewardship for our Ministry in the Church

In the midst of our so-called “communications revolution,” the electronic environment is seriously undermining face-to-face encounters in our culture and in the church. Thus, for the ministry the centrality of personal presence, once assumed, has now become imperative as a healthy corrective to the loneliness and alienation of our culture. An all-round ministry means the pastor preaches and leads the people in worship, together with the elders personally overseeing the life and ministry of the church.¹²

But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, . . . Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. (1 Thess. 2:17; 2 John 1:12)

¹² See Gregory E. Reynolds, “Face to Face: The Importance of Personal Presence in Ministry and Life,” *Ordained Servant* (2012): 20–26; *Ordained Servant Online* (Dec. 2012), http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=340.

Ministers should consider their personal presence with those to whom they minister in the church essential to effective ministry: “As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. . . . continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it” (2 Tim. 1:4; 3:14).

It is the duty of the minister and the elders to be aware of and seek to correct some of the most deleterious effects of the social media: they may undermine ecclesiastical authority, foster gossip, and lead to depression among adolescents, among other things. OPC ministers are called to teach media wisdom and stewardship (media ecology), along with technological etiquette. When we know people well face to face, then texting, email, and phone calls can be effective supplements—in that order, from the least personal to the most. But they never replace personal, face-to-face presence.

There are many dimensions to this pedagogical need. Ministers should encourage people: to read good literature deeply, especially the Bible; to have a “cool spot” to eliminate distractions. They should discourage people: from coming to doctrinal and ethical convictions on the Internet; from gossiping; and from making decisions about the church on Facebook. Encourage them to seek out church officers with questions about doctrine and church life. Encourage them to spend time with their families, developing the art of conversation. Emphasize the importance of Sabbath keeping and family and personal devotions. This is the day the Lord has set aside for us to enjoy the Lord’s presence in the presence of his people. This is what forms the Christian life. Be ready to instruct people about why we worship the way we do.

3. Fathering a Spiritual Family

An OPC minister cares for all kinds of people. “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all” (1 Thess. 5:14). This means a ministry of humility and gentleness (church militant is not to be confused with the church belligerent).

And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24–26)

Paul describes his ministry to the Thessalonians in the most tender parental terms: But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thess. 2:7–8)

The minister should be cultivating the full range of church ministry in congregational life:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Rom 12:14–18).

4. Maintaining the Unity of the Church

An OPC minister is institutionally and personally connected with the larger church, regionally in the presbytery, and nationally in the general assembly. This connectionalism is a vital part of Presbyterian government.

Because we are united doctrinally by our secondary standards, the confession and catechisms, we keep extra-confessional agendas in check. It should be remembered, as stated above, that those standards seek to enumerate the doctrines we all agree are biblical. Our own personal opinions about a wide range of issues must take a back seat to the maintenance of the peace and unity of the church.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1–3)

5. Suffering in the Cause of Christ

The OPC is mostly made up of small congregations. While smallness is not a virtue, Scripture reminds us not to despise the day of small things (Zech. 4:10). There are times in the history of the church and circumstances in various communions when the Lord uses small things for his own grand purposes. This is often humbling. The stories of Paul and one of his best twentieth-century interpreters, J. Gresham Machen, remind us that the gospel of a crucified Christ will require the suffering of his disciples and leaders. While few will suffer to the degree that Paul did, the soft persecution of cultural rejection, humble church building, modest budgets and salaries, all call for an unwavering commitment that only our Lord, who gifts and calls men into his ministry, can give.

But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? (2 Cor. 11:21–29)

So, an OPC minister is: a minister of the Word, an ambassador of Christ, and an under-shepherd of Christ. May he bless us in each new generation of ministers with men willing to forsake all for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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ServantHistory

Reformed Confessions: Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (1643)

by John R. Muether

On July 1, 1643, in the midst of a civil war, a group of 121 “divines” or ministers gathered in London’s Westminster Abbey, eventually joined by six influential (though non-voting) Scottish commissioners. Parliament had convened the Westminster Assembly of Divines with the task of reforming the religion of the Church of England, clearing its doctrine from “all false aspersions or misconstructions,” in order to make it “more agreeable with the Word of God.” Strictly speaking, this was not a church court; it was empowered with no ecclesiastical authority. In its advisory role it would compose three doctrinal formularies, a Confession of Faith and two catechisms, as well as a directory for worship and a form of church government.

Covering thirty-three chapters from Holy Scripture to the last judgment, the Westminster Confession is lauded for its breadth and scope as well as its concision of language. The Shorter Catechism’s first answer is the most famous of all Reformed catechisms: “man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” By far the least familiar of the three is the Larger Catechism, and this to the great detriment of churches today. It is distinguished by its fine summaries of doctrine, its elaborate exposition of the Ten Commandments, and its emphasis on the visible church.¹ (See the excerpt below for the careful way in which the Larger Catechism affirms the personal properties of the Trinity, including the eternal Sonship of Christ.)

John Murray summed up the work of the assembly in this way:

The Westminster Confession and Catechisms, are . . . the mature fruit of the whole movement of creed-formation throughout fifteen centuries of Christian history, and, in particular, they are the crown of the greatest age of confessional exposition, the Protestant Reformation. No other similar documents have concentrated in them, and formulated with such precision, so much of the truth embodied in the Christian revelation.²

Regarding the first (and longest) chapter on Scripture, the great Princeton theologian Benjamin B. Warfield wrote: “There is certainly in the whole mass of confessional

¹ W. Robert Godfrey summarizes well the value of the Larger Catechism in his introduction to J. G. Vos’s *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, ed. G. I. Williamson (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), ix–xx.

² John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray, Volume 1: The Claims of Truth* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 313.

literature no more nobly conceived or ably wrought-out statement of doctrine. . . . It has commanded the hearty admiration of all competent readers.”³

The Westminster divines labored for five and a half years in 1,163 regular sessions. “It is a savage irony,” writes Robert Letham, that the assembly was “a total failure” in its goal to reform the Church of England.⁴ But it produced a body of work that would change the course of Reformed Protestantism forever, far beyond the “three kingdoms” of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

As we draw this series to a close, it is important to underscore the assembly’s use of its rich Reformed confessional antecedents. Despite claims (now largely discredited) that the theology of Westminster was a scholastic departure from the spirit of the Reformation, the divines saw themselves in continuity with the sixteenth-century confessions we have surveyed. “Their doctrine of Scripture in no way precluded appeal to the tradition of the church,” noted Letham, a reliance that extended even beyond the Reformed confessions to the Apostles’ and Nicene creeds of the early church.⁵

An Excerpt: Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/A 7-11

Q. 7. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

Q. 8. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

Q. 9. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

Q. 10. What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead?

A. It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity.

Q. 11. How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father?

A. The Scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the

³ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), 155.

⁴ Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Readings in its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 47.

⁵ Letham, 92.

Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.

The Sequence of Confessions

Sixty-Seven Articles of Ulrich Zwingli (1523)

Tetrapolitan Confession (1530)

First Helvetic Confession (1536)

French Confession of Faith (1559)

Scots Confession (1560)

Belgic Confession of Faith (1561)

Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

Second Helvetic Confession (1566)

Canons of the Synod of Dort (1619)

Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (1643)

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ServantHistory

Geerhardus Vos: Changes at Princeton, the Reconstruction Movement, Departed Friends, and Family Life

by Danny E. Olinger

During his first twenty years teaching at Princeton Seminary, Geerhardus Vos supported the leadership in place. William Green, the senior faculty member who had recruited Vos to Princeton, ran the faculty meetings until his death in 1900. Two years later in 1902, the Board of Directors appointed Francis Patton as the first president of Princeton Seminary. Vos respected Patton's stand for historic Presbyterianism, but in 1913 Patton announced his retirement.

Two leading candidates to replace Patton as president were Benjamin Warfield, the senior member of the faculty, and J. Ross Stevenson, pastor of Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church in Baltimore and a member of the board of directors. The board, whose chairman was Ethelbert Warfield, Benjamin's younger brother, elected Stevenson by a single vote.¹ The determining factor in the Board's choice of Stevenson was his desire that the seminary, known for its conservative theological stance, be brought into a closer relationship to the life of the broadening Presbyterian Church.²

Once installed as president, Stevenson immediately sought changes. The first item in enacting his agenda was to revise the seminary's curriculum.³ He persuaded the Board of Directors to erect a five-member faculty Committee on Curriculum. The majority, professors John Davis, Charles Erdman, Frederick Loetscher, and J. Ritchie Smith, recommended a reduction of the required number of hours and a greater flexibility in the use of elective courses in the program of instruction.⁴ Warfield, in the minority, opposed both proposals. He argued that the greater use of electives undermined the theological-exegetical basis that

¹ See, William K. Seldon, *Princeton Theological Seminary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 86, and Edwin H. Rian, *Presbyterian Conflict* (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1992), 40.

² Lefferts Loetscher, *The Broadening Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1954), 138. The popularity of Stevenson's election as president in the Presbyterian Church was seen in his being elected the next year as moderator at the 1915 General Assembly held in Philadelphia.

³ William Weston, *Presbyterian Pluralism* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee, 1997), 33.

⁴ "Report of the Faculty Committee on Curriculum," Princeton Theological Seminary, in the Minutes of the Board of Directors, December 5, 1914.

undergirded the faculty's teaching.⁵ He also pointed out that the suggested reduction in required hours was the equivalent of removing a half-year of instruction.⁶

The majority put the proposed changes before the faculty for adoption at its meeting on December 12, 1914. The first resolution, the reduction of curriculum hours, was amended so that the faculty would not act until a concrete schedule was established. Vos, Warfield, William Greene, and Casper Hodge opposed the amendment. Stevenson, Davis, Loetscher, Erdman, Smith, J. Gresham Machen, William Armstrong, and Robert D. Wilson voted for the amendment, and it passed.

The second resolution, the greater use of electives, was amended so that a student's faculty supervisor would have authority in approving the electives of that student. The amendment passed, although Vos, Warfield, Greene, Hodge, and Wilson voted against it.⁷

When the faculty reconvened on January 9, 1915, the majority put forth the revised curriculum. The recommendation ended in a tied vote. Vos, Warfield, Hodge, Greene, Armstrong, and Machen voted negatively. Stevenson, Davis, Loetscher, Smith, Erdman, and Wilson voted positively.

A week later, at the January 16, 1915, faculty meeting, Machen and Armstrong changed their votes and the recommendations passed.⁸ Vos, Warfield, Hodge and Greene registered a protest to the action in the faculty minutes. They wrote:

We beg to leave dissent from the action of the Faculty on the ground that the resolutions proposed on the number of hours allotted to the several departments of instruction reduce the time allotted to the fundamental departments of instruction below the amount required for effective teaching and tend, therefore, to make the whole instruction of the Seminary fatally superficial.⁹

Warfield's displeasure with the changes and with Stevenson's presidency led him to cease attending faculty meetings when Stevenson was present. When Stevenson took a six-month leave of absence to serve the Armed Forces in World War I, Warfield attended every faculty meeting. When Stevenson returned, Warfield stopped attending.¹⁰

Vos did nothing so dramatic, but he had no confidence in Stevenson. He believed that Stevenson leaned liberal and was an unfortunate choice as president for the seminary. The

⁵ Ronald Cutter argues that the move to greater use of electives was a re-fighting of the battle at Princeton over the place of the "practical." He writes, "This point carried on the conflict between the practical emphasis and the theological-exegetical one. It was the continued contention of Warfield, and Machen after him, that the students should take the courses which the Princeton tradition had understood to meet the needs of theological education rather than take what they might wish." Ronald T. Clutter, *The Reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary 1900-1929*, ThD Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1982), 97.

⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁷ Ibid., 99.

⁸ Ned B. Stonehouse maintained that Armstrong and Machen changed their votes after being assured the seminary's New Testament Greek requirement would not be changed. See, Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen* (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2004), 184.

⁹ Minutes of the Faculty of Princeton Seminary, January 16, 1915; Cutter, *Reorganization*, 100.

¹⁰ Cutter, *Reorganization*, 103. Although Machen with Armstrong cast the vote that broke the tie to change the curriculum, he was sympathetic to Warfield. Ned B. Stonehouse wrote, "Still, when Warfield ceased attendance at the faculty meetings in disgust at the course developments were taking, Machen could not but be sympathetic with and sorry for him" (184).

seminary had a long history of “orthodox Presbyterianism” that Stevenson sought to amend.¹¹

Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations

When the United States entered the Great War in April 1917, the American president, Woodrow Wilson, was Vos’s old acquaintance from Princeton. The two men had been on friendly terms ever since Woodrow and Ellen Wilson were the first social callers visiting the newlywed Geerhardus and Catherine after their September 7, 1894, marriage. While at Princeton, both families attended First Presbyterian Church from 1905 to 1912. Bernardus Vos was baptized at First Church on the Lord’s Day of October 25, 1905.¹² Five weeks later Woodrow and Ellen were received as members at First Church on the Lord’s day of November 29.¹³

Despite Geerhardus and Woodrow’s friendship and the two families’ familiarity at Princeton, Vos did not support Wilson’s politics. Bernardus Vos stated, “My father was never an advocate of President Wilson’s political or international policies.”¹⁴

Stevenson was also friends with Wilson, but unlike Vos, he supported Wilson’s policies. In 1909 Stevenson, as a member of the board of directors, wrote Wilson, then President of Princeton University, for his advice after the “student rebellion” at the seminary.¹⁵ Stevenson asked Wilson if the trouble had occurred because the seminary was more concerned with preserving the past than serving the future? Wilson replied, “There can be no doubt that the seminary does in some large degree deserve the reputation which it has for resisting in an unreasonable degree the liberalizing tendencies of the time.” He then added, “It is, nevertheless, a noble institution which needs nothing so much as new blood and to which it is quite conceivable that new blood may bring a broader life.”¹⁶

Once Stevenson became president of the seminary, he followed Wilson’s advice. He sought to inject newness into the seminary through the revision of the curriculum. But, Stevenson didn’t stop there in following Wilson. In January 1918 Wilson articulated his vision of a “league of nations to insure peace and justice” in his Fourteen Points. Wilson stated that “Christian principles” were the “solid foundation” of the coming League of Nations, which would enable social gospel believers to “Christianize the world.”¹⁷

¹¹ This testimony is according to Vos’s daughter Marianne. Interview, Marianne Vos Radius by Charles G. Dennison, February 27, 1992, at the Raybrook Assisted Living Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

¹² James T. Dennison Jr., “The Life of Geerhardus Vos,” in *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 43.

¹³ The Wilsons transferred from Second Presbyterian Church in Princeton where Woodrow had been ordained and installed as a ruling elder in 1897. In 1905 he urged the merger of Second Church with First Church, but the attempt failed. See, Robert R. Cawley, “Bridging the Centuries,” in *The First Presbyterian Church of Princeton*, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: First Presbyterian Church, 1967), 86, and John M. Mulder, *Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 113.

¹⁴ Letter, Bernardus Vos to Roger Nicole, August 3, 1967. Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

¹⁵ The students rebelled over the perceived hardness of the Greek New Testament courses of Patton and Armstrong and the Hebrew Old Testament courses of Davis. In their place, the students wanted the seminary to provide more English Bible courses. For a helpful summary, see Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 120–24.

¹⁶ Seldon, *Princeton*, 89.

¹⁷ Markku Ruotsila, *The Origins of Christian Anti-Internationalism: Conservative Evangelicals and the League of Nations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008), Kindle edition, location 210. Ruotsila adds, “Whether he believed it himself or was using it as a tool of persuasion, Wilson enunciated the very case that liberal theologians had been making ever since they had first discovered the global implications of the Social

That same year, the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church recorded its “profound conviction that the time had come for the Organic Church Union of the Evangelical Churches of America.”¹⁸ The assembly appointed Stevenson and Erdman from the Princeton faculty to the Committee on Church Co-operation that had the the task of constructing the Plan of Union.

On May 15, 1919, at the following assembly, the Presbyterian Church endorsed the League of Nations proposal. Many theological liberals saw the propositions of the League of Nations as the practical fruit of the Social Gospel movement.¹⁹

Eschatology of the Psalter

Historian Markku Ruotsila believes Vos came to the same conclusion, though he did not rejoice in it. Ruotsila argues that Vos had in mind the Presbyterian Church’s endorsement of the League of Nations, and probably the proposed Plan of Union, when he penned his January 1920 article, “The Eschatology of the Psalter.”²⁰ Ruotsila acknowledges that the words “League of Nations” did not appear in the article. Nonetheless, Ruotsila argues that Vos addressed “the core ideas, paradigms, and set of goals that churchly and political internationalists had set for that organization, and he offered a cogent Calvinist counter theology.”²¹ When Vos spoke of the dangers of “reconstruction” and “world-reconstruction,” he was taking to task those in the church who interpreted the church’s mission in terms of social and political reform and saw the League of Nations as a help to achieve those goals.²²

In the first four-fifths of the article, Vos surveyed the eschatology of the Psalter. He stated that in the orthodox understanding of Scripture, redemption, and eschatology are of the same age in biblical history. “A redemptive religion without eschatological interest would be a contradiction in terms.”²³ But, “in so far as the covenant of works posited for mankind an absolute goal and unchangeable future, the eschatological may be even said to have preceded the soteric religion.”²⁴

The Psalter shares this eschatological goal and assigns the central, dominating position to Jehovah in all that pertains to the coming change. “The Psalter is wide awake to the significance of history as leading up to the eschatological act of God. It knows that it deals with a God who spake and speaks and shall speak, who wrought and works and shall work,

Gospel and of the immanentist theology. His was an argument for perpetual peace and social alleviation born out of an organized humanity activity from a set of universally shared ethical values” (Kindle location 681). Wilson biographer Arthur Link wrote, “[Wilson] created the League of Nations in part because he thought it would be the instrumentality of America’s redemptive work in the world.” Arthur S. Link, “Woodrow Wilson: Presbyterian in Government,” in *Calvinism and the Political Order*, ed. George L. Hunt (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 173.

¹⁸ Moorhead, *Princeton*, 348.

¹⁹ Ruotsila, *Origins*, Kindle edition, location 345.

²⁰ Ruotsila argues convincingly that Vos and Machen represented the confessional Calvinist opposition in the Presbyterian Church to the League of Nations ideal. Regarding Vos, Ruotsila states, “Few Princetonian Calvinists were as capable of arguing a strictly theological, strictly God-centered case against the League of Nations, and few did this in as uncompromising and coherent terms as Vos.” Ruotsila, *Origins*, Kindle location 1009, and Markku Ruotsila, “Conservative American Protestantism in the League of Nations Controversy,” in *Church History* 72, no. 3 (September 2003): 603–8.

²¹ Ruotsila, *Origins*, Kindle Location 970.

²² *Ibid.*, 975.

²³ Geerhardus Vos, “Eschatology of the Psalter,” in Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 325.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

who came and is coming and is about to come.”²⁵ Faith sings its supreme song when face-to-face with the supreme act of God, whether in anticipation or reality.

In the last one-fifth of the article, Vos contended that understanding the Psalter’s eschatology had practical significance in understanding “the landscape in the religious and social world” and that it could be “of some help to us in taking our bearings in the midst of the loud and universal demand for what is called ‘reconstruction.’”²⁶ Vos proposed that the Psalms offered a test case for whether or not the modern movement for world-reconstruction was biblically based.

Here, then, an opportunity is afforded for testing, and, if necessary, correcting the ends and methods with which the modern movement for world-reconstruction occupies itself. This is all the more timely, since the Church herself is invited to lend a helping hand in the making over of things, and to let herself be registered as one of several coequal and cooperative forces making ready for this gigantic enterprise.²⁷

In seeking to answer the question, Vos argued that the Psalter taught that the church already had an outlook and a program geared towards the future. The principle that governed this outlook and program was the belief that the end of existence for all things is in God. What the Presbyterian Church was in danger of doing was working “for the amelioration of the world without putting at the top of its program the bestowal upon this world of the baptism of religion as the primal requisite.”²⁸ For the church to indulge in the advocacy of social and economic programs without regard to her religious root-consciousness endangered her true authority.

Conversely, Vos maintained that it was when the church kept her true religious mission in view that she was of the most help to the world.

The by-product of the genuinely-religious activity will be more abundant and more valuable, than any scheme to substitute it for the main product could possibly make it. For the Church, to keep this in mind is not to be indifferent to the lesser and secondary needs and distresses of mankind; it is in reality to obey the conviction that in no other way her deep solicitude for the sinful world, and the resources she carries within herself for its healing, can be successfully brought to bear upon it.²⁹

When measured by the biblical standard of a genuinely religious and God-centered consciousness, “the modern reconstruction-movement is sadly deficient.”³⁰ Vos concluded that it was more “humanistic than religious,” and sought “to derive its motives and ideals from man rather than from God.”³¹

If the Presbyterian Church continued down this humanitarian path, the result would mean not merely the death of God-ward religion, but also the sterility of religion. “Christianity can

²⁵ Ibid., 335.

²⁶ Ibid., 357.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 358.

²⁹ Ibid., 358–9.

³⁰ Ibid., 359.

³¹ Ibid.

make the world better in the sign of religion; that standard abandoned she will not only fail of success, but face actual defeat.”³²

The Psalms taught that the agent of change is God and not man. The bringing in of the kingdom of heaven was his supernatural violent, cataclysmic work. What “reconstruction” did was to secularize the eschaton. This approach shared Israel’s error of making eternal that which was meant to be temporary. The result would be the misdirection of the church’s mission and the destruction of her spirituality.

Vos feared that the Presbyterian Church, in her pragmatic desire to accomplish concrete and speedy results through humanitarian efforts, was abandoning her privileged position as the prophetic voice of God. In summary fashion, he stated:

The gauge of health in the Christian is the degree of his gravitation to the future, eternal world. The Christian train of thought in this respect is the reversal of that of the Old Testament: the eternal is not so much a prolongation of the temporal, but the temporal rather an anticipation of the eternal. And what is true of life is true of the ministering and self-propagating function. The Church of Christ in all its complex service to the world can never forget that its primary concern is to call men and to prepare them for the life eternal.³³

If Christianity was the transformation of the world into a human brotherhood through social structures, then the purpose of the church would no longer be connected to the atoning death of Christ on the cross. The Presbyterian Church with its strategic concession to the demand of the age was in danger of “an actual compromise that would secularize and terrestrialize Christianity at its very essence.”³⁴

Plan of Union

The League of Nations Covenant was defeated by the United States Senate on March 19, 1920, but the Plan of Union proposal went forward at the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church, meeting a little over two months later in Philadelphia. At the assembly, Stevenson presented the majority report recommending adoption of the Plan of Union that would unite the Presbyterian Church with over twenty other Protestant churches.³⁵ Stevenson’s advocacy sounded much like Wilson’s political contention that America had entered a new social age, a new era of human relationship, a new stage for the drama of life. The assembly adopted the plan and sent it down to the presbyteries for approval.

Despite Stevenson’s promotion of the Plan of Union, most of the seminary faculty believed that the distinctiveness of historic Christianity had been laid aside to make broad cooperation possible. Warfield, Greene, Hodge, and Allis published articles that condemned the proposed plan, but the most outspoken critic was Machen. Publishing three articles in the *Presbyterian* that would become the basis for his book *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen

³² Ibid. At the beginning of the article, Vos observed that because pagan eschatologies “have their origin within the present world-process, they cannot lead to anything beyond it” (334). This consistent line of argumentation from Vos is why Ruotsila concludes that for Vos (and Machen) “the crux of the matter was that only the Church and only the Gospel had the potentiality, indeed the ever unfolding promise, of improving the world.” Ruotsila, *Origins*, Kindle 608.

³³ Vos, “Eschatology of the Psalter,” 363.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Stonehouse, *Machen*, 261.

believed many in the post-war Presbyterian Church had a misplaced confidence in human goodness and the ability to perfect the world.³⁶

At the 1922 General Assembly it was announced that the plan was defeated. Of the 250 presbyteries of the PCUSA, 150 voted against it.

Low Attendance

Vos did not hide his disapproval of the changes that were taking place at Princeton under Stevenson's leadership. But, at the same time, the students during the Stevenson years did not hide their lack of enthusiasm for enrolling in the courses that Vos taught. Vos taught the required two-hour courses in Old Testament Theology and New Testament Theology, and a one-hour course in Missions in alternate years. Attendance, however, in his elective course offerings, Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Teaching of the Eighth-Century Prophets, Petrine Teaching in Acts, and Teaching of Paul in Survey, plummeted.

One reason for student disinterest seems to be that it was deemed unpatriotic by many from the World War I years forward to take classes with a "German" professor. Even being Dutch did not spare Vos from such criticism. Abraham Kuyper, arguably the most famous person in the Netherlands at the time, accepted the congratulations of the German government for his eightieth birthday on October 29, 1917. As a result, many viewed the Dutch settlements in America as disloyal.³⁷ What applied corporately to many Dutch-Americans, applied individually to Vos teaching at Princeton.³⁸

Others believed the low attendance was due to Vos's lecture style. Some found his lecturing slow and deliberate.³⁹ Others found his lecturing style rapid and non-distinct, clouded as it was with his German accent. One student, J. B. Carpenter, wrote in his journal, "Dr. Vos, being a foreigner, spoke with a decided accent, (German?); he also spoke rapidly and—to me—none too distinctly. I think therefore that I made such a poor success at taking down 2 or 3 of his lectures."⁴⁰

³⁶ Although Vos did not officially comment upon Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*, Vos shared Machen's view regarding the destructiveness of theological liberalism. As an example, Vos declared in print in 1906, the first year that Machen served on the Princeton faculty, his belief that historic Christianity and liberalism were two different religions that could not be reconciled. Vos said, "We, for our part, believe, and we say it deliberately, that it were a thousand times better for the church to be torn and shaken for many years to come by the conflict with criticism than to buy a shameful peace at the stupendous doctrinal sacrifice which such a position involves." Geerhardus Vos, "Christian Faith and Truthfulness of Bible History," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 468.

³⁷ James Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 87. Jan De Bruijn states that despite Kuyper's public statements, he personally held strong pro-German and anti-British sympathies during the War. Kaiser Wilhelm sent a portrait of Martin Luther to Kuyper on February 13, 1917, to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of Luther's nailing of his theses at Wittenberg. See, Jan De Bruijn, *Abraham Kuyper: A Pictorial Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 376.

³⁸ James T. Dennison Jr. rhetorically asks, "Was Vos marginalized because of his thick Dutch accent and his intricate Germanic style? Was Vos isolated even at Princeton after 1918 because of his sympathies for the German Kaiser during World War I?" James T. Dennison Jr., "Life between Two Worlds," *Kerux* 14, no. 2 (September 1999): 19.

³⁹ David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary, Vol. 2: The Majestic Testimony, 1869–1929* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 208.

⁴⁰ Marion Ann Taylor, *The Old Testament in Princeton School, 1812–1929* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 358.

Another student, Charles Wiggins, said, “Vos was a klutz, an eccentric, a constant source of student amusement. His words were buried beneath his Dutch accent and you could not understand him.”⁴¹

Princeton historian James Moorhead summarizes the overall perception of Vos as a teacher. He writes, “Although some students found him extraordinarily stimulating—the very model of a complete scholar—others saw his instruction as ponderous and, when not required, avoided his classes.”⁴²

Cornelius Van Til and John DeWaard

An unexpected benefit of the low attendance was that motivated students could draw closer to Vos than to the typical seminary professor and develop a personal relationship. Such was the case with Cornelius Van Til. Louis Berkhof, professor at the Theological School in Grand Rapids, had stirred Van Til’s interest in coming to Princeton to study under Vos.⁴³ In May 1921 Vos had been in renewed contact with Berkhof about the arrangements for his serving as a future speaker at the Princeton Stone Lectures.⁴⁴

Van Til in turn encouraged John DeWaard, his close friend and classmate in preparatory school and college, to join him at Princeton. DeWaard wrote his bride-to-be, Hattie Smitter, “Tuesday evening Van Til was here. He is absolutely going to Princeton and I am as surely going with him.”⁴⁵

Once the two friends were on the Princeton campus, the first man that Van Til remembered meeting was Vos.⁴⁶ He impressed Van Til as a “remarkably erudite man.”⁴⁷ Van Til also believed that Vos was a kind professor with a sense of humor in the classroom.⁴⁸ From an interview with Van Til about Vos, Ransom Webster wrote:

Commenting on Vos, Dr. Cornelius Van Til, a student of his for three years and a colleague for one, has said that he was the most “many-sided man” he has ever known. Vos enjoyed brief walks, was extremely well-read, loved poetry and painting. He himself wrote a number of poems. He was quiet and reserved, able to hold his temper, even during some very disturbing faculty meetings at Princeton having to do with the intrusion

⁴¹ Charles G. Dennison, “Geerhardus Vos and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,” in *History for a Pilgrim People*, eds. Danny E. Olinger and David K. Thompson (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church), 69.

⁴² James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 295.

⁴³ John Muether writes that Louis Berkhof “especially whetted Van Til’s appetite for Vos, frequently remarking that Vos was the greatest influence in the shaping of his theology.” John R. Muether, *Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 51. Regarding Berkhof, Henry Zwaanstra wrote, “H. Henry Meeter, professor of Bible at Calvin College and for many years a close personal friend of Berkhof, reported that Berkhof frequently said that he owed more to Vos than anyone else for his insights into Reformed theology.” Henry Zwaanstra, “Louis Berkhof,” in *Reformed Theology in America*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 156.

⁴⁴ Letter, Geerhardus Vos to Louis Berkhof, May 21, 1921, in “More Vos Letters,” *Kerux* 25, no. 1 (May 2011): 29.

⁴⁵ Mary Jo Miller, “Hattie DeWaard: Doing What’s Right,” in *Choosing the Good Portion: Women of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, eds. Patricia E. Clawson and Diane L. Olinger (Willow Grove, PA: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2016), 22.

⁴⁶ Muether, *Van Til*, 50.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ransom Webster, “Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949): A Biographical Sketch,” in *Westminster Theological Journal* 40, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 306.

of liberalism. Vos, Van Til recollects, possessed a “wonderful sense of humor.” On one occasion the pet dog of a certain student followed him into the classroom, at which Vos commented, “Please close the door; we must draw the line somewhere.” Van Til speaks also of Vos’s kindheartedness. When a student was unable to recite satisfactorily, Vos would frame his questions in such a way as virtually to provide the answers.⁴⁹

DeWaard also treasured his years studying under Vos.

His courses were commentaries on the Bible, his lectures were exegeses of the Word. I loved him when I studied there; I love him more now, not because he has given me a number of valuable interpretations of the Word, but rather because he has given me through his lectures a desire to study the Word itself.⁵⁰

DeWaard continued, “We did not leave class with four or five outlines for sermons we could use in the pulpit later, but we did leave class with the desire to show the people what joy and pleasure there is in the study of the Word.”⁵¹

While Vos met Van Til and DeWaard’s expectations, the student body at the seminary did not impress them. DeWaard said, “Dr. Vos was not a popular teacher. He was not appreciated by the students. They did not come in crowds to his class rooms.”⁵² That so few students took Vos’s courses agitated Van Til. According to Richard B. Gaffin Jr., Van Til told him more than once with exasperation, “There would be five of us in class listening to Vos on Hebrews, and down the hall there would be fifty students with Erdman in a class about next Sunday’s sermon, ‘Peter the Rock, the Stumbling Block.’”⁵³ The lack of interest in Vos served as a barometer for Van Til of the lack of theological interest exhibited by the students at Princeton in the 1920s.⁵⁴

Part of Van Til’s and DeWaard’s frustration that their fellow students were not interested in Vos’s teaching might have been attributed to the fact that the percentage of Presbyterians comprising the seminary’s student body was shrinking. When Vos graduated as a student in 1885, Presbyterians comprised nearly three-fourths of the student body. By 1915 only one-third of students enrolling were Presbyterians. When Van Til entered Princeton in 1922, as many students were Episcopalians as were Presbyterians.⁵⁵

The make-up of the student body at Princeton was not the only thing changing. Vos had also reached the point where many of his closest friends were departing this earthly life.

Abraham Kuyper, Benjamin Warfield, and Herman Bavinck

Throughout Vos’s adult life, three of his main confidants on religious matters had been Herman Bavinck, Abraham Kuyper, and Benjamin Warfield. All three died within a space of nine months. On November 8, 1920, Abraham Kuyper died in Hague, the Netherlands. On

⁴⁹ Ibid., 306–7.

⁵⁰ John J. DeWaard, “Higher Ground,” *Presbyterian Guardian* 3, no. 5 (December 12, 1936): 97.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² John J. DeWaard, “Love of the Truth,” 2 Thessalonians 2:10, preached at Memorial Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Rochester, New York, August 21, 1949. Archives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

⁵³ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., comments to author, November 28, 2017.

⁵⁴ C. Dennison, “Geerhardus Vos,” 73.

⁵⁵ Calhoun, *Princeton*, 485.

February 16, 1921, Benjamin Warfield died in Princeton. On July 21, 1921, Herman Bavinck died in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Vos last saw Kuyper in person in 1898 and Bavinck in 1908, but Warfield he saw daily at Princeton during the school calendar for twenty-seven years.⁵⁶ Together the two friends had set the tone for the seminary's rigorous academic reputation. Andrew Blackwood, who would join the Princeton Seminary faculty in 1930, was an undergraduate at Harvard University before studying under Vos and Warfield. He testified that the two were "intellectually the equals" of anyone who he had studied with at Harvard.⁵⁷

The impact upon Warfield in losing out to Stevenson as president of the seminary in 1914 paled in comparison to the impact of the death of his beloved wife, Annie, on November 18, 1915. The love that he had for Annie and the dignity with which he carried himself impressed young Marianne Vos. She recounted, "Dr. Warfield, we stood a little bit in awe of him . . . I was taken there occasionally for tea by my mother. Mrs. Warfield was an invalid. Dr. Warfield said that he would rather be married to her sick than twenty other women well."⁵⁸

Annie Warfield would remember the Vos children's birthdays and would make sure each received a birthday present. But, Benjamin Warfield also was known to the Vos children. When Marianne was around seven years old, she contracted scarlet fever. The fever left her weak and unable to keep down food. Warfield recommended quail, which was tender and easy to digest, as a food that she could eat without upsetting her stomach. He went hunting himself and returned with quail for her to eat. She ate it without difficulty and her strength returned.⁵⁹

On December 24, 1920, Warfield collapsed of a heart attack. On February 16, 1921, he suffered another heart attack and died that evening. James T. Dennison Jr. and Fred Zaspel both state that Warfield collapsed in the Vos's front yard. They differ on the date. Zaspel believes that Warfield collapsed in Vos's yard of a heart attack on Christmas Eve. Dennison believes that it was on February 16. Dennison writes:

Jerry and Bernardus Vos reported to friends and relatives that Warfield collapsed from a heart attack in the Vos's front yard at 52 Mercer Street on his way home from class on February 16, 1921. Warfield died that evening at his home. See *New York Times*, February 18, 1921, p. 11, for a brief obituary notice.⁶⁰

Zaspel writes, "On December 24, 1920, Warfield was walking along the sidewalk to the Vos home, just a few hundred yards across campus from his own home, when suddenly he grasped his chest and collapsed."⁶¹ Both Dennison and Zaspel agree, however, with

⁵⁶ Warfield biographer Fred Zaspel states that Vos was one of Warfield's closest friends. Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B.B. Warfield* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 35.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵⁸ Radius Interview, February 27, 1992.

⁵⁹ Interview, Marianne Vos Radius by William O. Harris, December 11, 1997, at the Raybrook Assisted Living Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Geerhardus Vos, Box 3, Special Collection at Princeton Theological Seminary.

⁶⁰ James T. Dennison Jr., "The Life of Geerhardus Vos," in *Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 49.

⁶¹ Fred Zaspel, *Theology of B.B. Warfield* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 35. Zaspel draws from the account of Warfield's death reported in the *Princeton Theological Review* 19, no. 2 (1921): 330, in which it was reported, "Dr. Warfield was taken suddenly ill on Christmas Eve. His conditions were serious for a time; but it improved very greatly and on the 16th of February he felt able to resume his teaching in part and met one of his classes in the afternoon. He apparently suffered no immediate ill effects from the exertion but died that evening at about 10 o'clock of an acute attack of *angina pectoris*."

Machen's words to his mother. Machen wrote that when they carried Warfield out at his funeral, Old Princeton went with him.

After Warfield's death, the logical conclusion of some would have been that Vos would have stepped into Warfield's place in a leadership role for confessional Calvinists at Princeton. Vos's retiring nature, however, was not well-suited to the spotlight. He deferred, and Machen assumed the leadership role.⁶²

Family Life

The same month that Warfield died, Johannes Vos turned eighteen years old and enrolled at Princeton University. While their older brother was off to classes, fifteen-year-old Bernardus, fourteen-year-old Marianne, and ten-year-old Geerhardus Jr. made themselves at home on the Princeton campus. Marianne recalled, "The campus was on a little bit of a hill and we roller-skated up and down the hill. Dr. Loetscher would come out of his classroom in Stuart Hall and ask us to be a little more quiet because the students couldn't hear what he was saying."⁶³

The Vos children also got to know the faculty from their interaction on Mercer Street. Oswald Allis lived next door. The Loetscher children were often playmates. The professor who played games with them, including tag, was Casper Wistar Hodge, whose daughter Lucy was the same age as Marianne.⁶⁴

Machen was also of special interest to the Vos children. They took great amusement in seeing him lost in thought, walking down the street. They would sneak up on him and say "hello," and he would always look up in great surprise.⁶⁵

In the 1922–1923 school year, Vos was given a sabbatical. Vos had planned to take the family to Europe,⁶⁶ but Catherine was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Instead, the family headed west to La Jolla, California.

Once in California, Vos purchased the family's first car. At the end of the sabbatical, the Voses decided to go camping throughout California and the Pacific Northwest before making their way back to Princeton. Catherine was an experienced camper. Geerhardus had never camped before. Bernardus, Geerhardus Jr., and Marianne slept on the ground under an umbrella tent. Geerhardus and Catherine slept in an army cot. When the family arrived in Seattle, Vos had had enough of the outdoor life. He boarded a train for Princeton, leaving it up to Catherine and the children to finish the adventure and drive the car back to Princeton.⁶⁷

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⁶² David Calhoun writes, "Gentle and naturally retiring, Vos avoided active participation in public life and controversy." Calhoun, *Princeton*, 258.

⁶³ Interview, Radius, 1992.

⁶⁴ Interview, Radius, 1997.

⁶⁵ Letter, Bernardus Vos to Roger Nicole, 1967.

⁶⁶ Interview, Radius by Dennison.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

ServantReading

The Benedict Option *by Rod Dreher*

by John R. Muether

The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation, by Rod Dreher. New York: Sentinel, 2017, 262 pages, \$25.00.

Rod Dreher, senior editor of *The American Conservative*, writes an engaging and thought-provoking appeal for American Christians to rethink their calling amid an increasingly hostile post-Christian world. The church can no longer sleep, as it has, through cultural revolutions—social, sexual, and technological. Many of the dislocating effects of modernity seemed unthreatening as long as they were championed as progress. But the culture wars have been lost, and the Judeo-Christian worldview now faces stiff opposition. We must now prepare for what’s coming (77), beyond cultural marginalization to conditions that might invite persecution.

The title invokes the story of the eighth-century saint, Benedict of Nursia, whose withdrawal into monastic seclusion in the wake of the barbarian invasion of Europe proved improbably to be the means by which the church was preserved and Western civilization rebuilt. We are facing barbarians today, warns Dreher, both in the overt expressions of opposition and the “sneaky” forms of secularism such as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (10). Dreher recommends that Christians revisit this “Benedict option,” because “the humble Benedictine way is such a potent counterforce to the dissolving currents of modernity” (23). Some critics challenge a call to retreat into a Christian ghetto, but there is actually little of that rhetoric in the book. The task of the church to be both a sign of contradiction to the world and a sign of hope does not necessarily entail withdrawal. Rather, Dreher urges engagement in local culture and faithfulness in small ways, while waiting for God to produce fruit in his time.

Here is where conservative Protestantism comes up short for the author, a former Methodist who converted to Eastern Orthodoxy. The Protestant Reformation did its part in the rise of modern fragmentation and unbelief. Dreher leans on the work of Brad Gregory (in *The Unintended Reformation*, 2015), and he repeats the standard Roman Catholic charges of the interpretive chaos of Protestantism: “No Reformer believed in private interpretation of Scripture, but they had no clear way to discern whose interpretation was the correct one” (32). But of course, that is what confessions serve to provide. Having succumbed to individualism, modern evangelicalism is especially unable to witness to a post-Christian culture, because “you cannot give what you do not possess” (102). Dreher even describes a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America that is beset by vast biblical illiteracy with few signs of a culture of discipleship.

Chapter five outlines a starter set of practices that shape discipline for the life and witness of the church, such as prayer, catechesis, liturgical worship, self-denial, and hospitality, altogether a very ordinary list that will produce healthier communities of faith. Later in the book there are additional suggestions oriented around the challenge of media ecology, including the practice of a “digital Sabbath” and keeping social media out of public worship. Aside from non-Reformed expressions of piety here and there (“fasting according to the church calendar”), these are means of shaping hearts heavenward.

The longest chapter in the book is on Christian education. Dismissing public schools as wastelands of progressive sexual ideology, Dreher commends particularly the “new

counterculture found in classical Christian schools” (173). Here the author tends to tip the scales by comparing the ideal of classical education with the messy history of other forms of Christian schooling. (Where classical education is not available, Dreher gives a nod to homeschooling.)

But why is the Benedict Option so urgent for us now? Do our uniquely desperate times call for these measures? The main flaw in Dreher’s argument for his “church in exile” lies in misuse of the biblical metaphor of homelessness. In the chapter on politics we read that the church’s cultural powerlessness demands a “new politics,” one particularly suited for our fragile and fragmented age (83). It should be prudent and subtle, polite and respectable, and focused on the local church and community. Purging ourselves of consumerist distortions of corporate life, the church needs “forms of living” that reinforce our distinctiveness as “strangers in exile.” But only *now*, to cope with these dark times? Shouldn’t the new covenant community always aspire to those virtues?

It is not true that the church in the West is now suddenly entering life in Babylon. As citizens of the kingdom, we are always and everywhere called to be strangers in a strange land, living under ungodly regimes that sometimes subject God’s people to persecution. The biblical term for that is Babylon. Our calling is to seek the welfare of Babylon, and so Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles (29:4–7) is his letter to new covenant exiles. Peter makes this clear (1 Peter 1:1, 2:11), whether the conditions of exile are friendly, indifferent, or hostile to the Christian way of life. If our city of exile prospers, we have helped to build a better Babylon, but it remains Babylon, and we are still homeless. We dare not imagine we can turn it into Jerusalem.

Exile, then, is not a cultural condition that yields a unique strategy. It is a redemptive-historical category that invites us to find our life hidden in Christ in the heavenlies. Still, this book remains a worthwhile read. Its real value is found in Dreher’s reminder of the character of a community of faith necessary to conduct the task of Christian formation in all ages. It must be a close community (although Dreher weakens his case, it seems, by his appeal to thin expressions of ecumenicity, such as the 1994 “Evangelicals and Catholics Together”). Thickness demands order, which he rightly identifies as a fundamental act of cultural resistance.

In describing the church as an island of sanctity and stability in the raging sea of modernity, Dreher could have made his appeal instead by turning to John Calvin, whom he does not cite. For Calvin, the cursed world has lost the order with which it was endowed at creation, and a battle now rages between rest and restlessness, between tranquility and confusion, or between the permanent glory of the world to come and the transitoriness of this passing age. Order can only be found in one place: “There is no stability in the whole of the universe,” wrote Calvin, “except for the church, which is built on the foundation of God’s word.”¹ The church disciplines us by reshaping our desires and our loves, and far from anti-worldly escapism, the church enables us to see the world as it truly is.

We can follow a sixteenth-century Reformer just as much as an eighth-century monastic to find the church which Dreher yearns to see, that “will live in small circles of committed believers who live the faith intensely, and who will have to be somewhat cut off from mainstream society for the sake of holding on to the truth” (4).

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¹ Cited by Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 67, where he offers a particularly helpful analysis on Calvin’s teaching on order.

ServantReading

Wendell Berry and Higher Education *by Jack R. Baker and Jeffrey Bilbro*

by Darryl G. Hart

Wendell Berry and Higher Education: Cultivating Virtues of Place, by Jack R. Baker and Jeffrey Bilbro. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2017, xiii + 247 pages, \$49.98.

The question to which I kept returning while absorbing this book was—“can you put lightning in a bottle”? Wendell Berry, a poet, writer, cultural critic, farmer, and leading contemporary voice for agrarianism (a defense of farming that includes a critique of industrialism), is the lightning. As mild-mannered a person as he is in real life, and as soothing as his poetry and fiction can be about the ways of nature and the virtuous people who work the land, Berry also has a radical side (at least for a society that takes its cues from the rhythms of big corporations and cities). Berry has at times left the farm to protest American society and as early as 1968 protested US policies with this remark about the Vietnam War:

We seek to preserve peace by fighting a war, or to advance freedom by subsidizing dictatorships, or to “win the hearts and minds of the people” by poisoning their crops and burning their villages and confining them in concentration camps; we seek to uphold the “truth” of our cause with lies, or to answer conscientious dissent with threats and slurs and intimidations. . . . I have come to the realization that I can no longer imagine a war that I would believe to be either useful or necessary. . . . I would be against any war.¹

The authors responsible for trying to tame Berry are both professors of English at Spring Arbor University in Michigan. To notice that their own prose does not achieve the vigor or elegance of Berry’s is not necessarily a major fault since very few writers—let alone academics—can match Berry’s gifts as a writer. Still, the problem of taking the sting out of the jolt that usually comes from reading Berry is doubly pronounced in this book since the authors try to imagine what higher education might be if its procedures, aims, and ethos conformed in any sense to Berry’s ideas. This is where the opposition between Berry’s radicalism and higher education’s unreflective attachment to wealth, status, convenience, and nationalism is most evident. Is it really possible to take a set of institutions and a culture of professionalism and turn it in the direction of limits, place, and reduced expectations? To try to apply Berry’s brief for small-scale farms to a system that ranks Harvard and Yale as models of educational and organizational achievement appears almost as impossible as propelling an aircraft carrier by sails.

Baker and Bilbro are not naive about the herculean nature of their task. For instance, in his 2004 novel, *Hannah Coulter*, a story about an older farming widow who reflects on the changes in her community since the 1930s (the authors use Berry’s novels throughout to frame

¹ Wendell Berry in a quote from Bill Kauffman in “Bill Kauffman: American Anarchist,” by Laurence M. Vance, December 4, 2006, <https://www.lewrockwell.com/2006/12/laurence-m-vance/american-anarchist/>.

their critique of and proposals for higher education), Hannah laments the affects of universities on her children. “After each one of our children went away to the university,” she recalls, “there always came a time when we would feel the distance opening to them, pulling them away. It was like sitting snug in the house, and a door is opened somewhere, and suddenly you feel a draft” (2). In other words, universities and colleges thrive on Americans’ ambition for getting ahead and for social mobility. These institutions do not educate students in a manner that encourages them to appreciate families and home or that rewards them for returning to the communities that shaped them. Rather, American higher education becomes a vehicle for escaping the constraints of local life and for acquiring skills that will reward students with a “better” way of life—one with greater wealth and convenience, and that is less limited by the demands of work that is necessary (production of food, maintenance of land and structures, elimination of waste). The tension between agrarianism and the ideals of contemporary higher education are downright enormous. At one point, Baker and Bilbro concede that the modern university may be beyond “hope of recovery” (17).

But they plow ahead. In the first part of the book, they make a case for each educational institution to become more aware of its own physical place—economic, political, historical. Paying attention to language and physical work are ways that professors can encourage students to heed their own institution’s surroundings (as well as the places from which they come). In the second part of the book, Baker and Bilbro reflect on ways in which colleges and universities can offer instruction that cultivates fidelity, love, gratitude, and memory—virtues the authors believe are crucial to making students aware of the importance of place and how to live in a manner that thrives less on ambition and more on becoming a member of a (preferably rooted) community. What their appropriation of Berry adds up to is a proposal that shifts the aim of education from “upward and lateral mobility, regardless of the costs to our ecosystem, communities, and souls” to one that instructs students through stories “about rooted, contented lives; about the grateful, loving pursuit of wisdom, about people who sacrificed their private ambitions to serve the health of their local places” (191). Some of the practical proposals include memorizing poems, observing the Sabbath (Berry wrote almost a half dozen collections of Sabbath poems), and working on school-sponsored farms or gardens while studying. Between studies in the classroom and work alongside study, Baker and Bilbro encourage readers to think of alternatives to the standard way we esteem higher education, careers, and success.

Whatever this book may mean for professors and students, its arguments are ones that Christians should appreciate. If parents and church officers want covenant children to grow up in the faith and stay in the church as adults, will this be achieved by sending kids off to the best university or college to acquire skills for a successful career? Will it result in a next generation that belongs to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and is willing to serve in some capacity in a local congregation? Ideally our churches are already instilling an understanding of the faith and attachment to the church that will affect our youths’ decisions about education and their ideas about success. But having a reminder about the dangers higher education poses to the pattern of handing on the faith from generation to generation is a worthwhile aid in the very challenging work of rearing covenant children. Readers of this book who have not read Berry will ultimately go to the original source. But in the meantime, Baker and Bilbro do admirable (if not always zesty) work of applying Berry to the Leviathan of higher education.

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ServantReading

Learning from Lord Mackay by *J. Cameron Fraser*

by Gregory E. Reynolds

Learning from Lord Mackay: Life and Work in Two Kingdoms, by J. Cameron Fraser. Lethbridge Alberta, Canada: SoS-Books, 2017, 128 pages, \$12.00, paper.

This is an unusual book written by a Westminster Theological Seminary fellow student and friend, Cameron Fraser. Until I read this book I had never heard of Lord Mackay, considered “one of the most brilliant Scottish scholars of all time” (38). I am very pleased to have made his acquaintance. Fraser was once the editor of *The Presbyterian Guardian*. In his subsequent career he has ministered in Canada, although he was raised in Scotland where he knew the subject of this book, Lord James Peter Hymers Mackay. The book explores the sterling character of Lord Mackay and how he navigated the two kingdoms of his British context.

The subtitle of the book, “Life and Work in Two Kingdoms,” is of special interest to Orthodox Presbyterians, as Fraser notes in his preface (7). So, after a foreword by Sinclair Ferguson, Fraser looks at the origins of the “two kingdom doctrine.” He begins with Andrew Melville’s (1545–1622) famous humiliation of King James VI, when he reminded the king that he was merely a member of the Church of Scotland (11). Fraser traces the development of the two kingdom doctrine through Luther, Knox, and Calvin, concluding with the enshrinement of many of their ideas in various Reformed confessions (12–17).

Fraser contrasts the British version of the Westminster Confession with the American revision, which took place prior to the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America (18). “The establishment of national churches, opposed by the Constitution of the United States and the American revision to the Westminster Confession of Faith, was the norm” (20). While the structures of establishment exist in England, “pluralism and secular values . . . hold sway. How is a Christian in the tradition of the Westminster Confession to conduct himself in such a context?” (20). Enter the story of Lord Mackay, one time Lord Chancellor of the British government, who outranks even the Prime Minister.

Born in 1927 in Edinburgh, Mackay was raised in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in which his father was an elder (25). After graduating from Trinity College, Cambridge, he went on to practice law in Scotland. He became Queen’s Counsel and leader of the Scottish bar (the Faculty of Advocates, 27–28). In 1979 Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher appointed him Lord Advocate of Scotland, “the chief legal officer of the government and crown in Scotland” (30–31). As part of his responsibilities in this position he represented the UK in the European Court of Justice. In 1985, he was

appointed Lord of Appeal in Ordinary of the House of Lords (32). His integrity and brilliance had brought him to a high place. This ascent culminated in Mackay's appointment in 1987, by Mrs. Thatcher, as Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain (34–35). His view of his role in this new position is seen in his first press conference: “‘If you are humane and compassionate at heart, and judges should be,’ he said, “it is an awesome responsibility to send [individuals] to prison knowing the conditions they will face when they arrive at the prison gate’ ” (37).

Mackay strongly favors the continued Union of Britain and Scotland (united since 1707) (41–42). He also opposed Brexit. On St. Andrews Day in 1996, he played a vital role in returning the Stone of Scone, on which ancient Scottish kings were crowned, to Scotland (40). He ended up leaving his beloved Free Presbyterian Church after being censured for attending the funeral mass of a dear friend and colleague (51). Cameron and his wife, Margaret, have enjoyed a long-term friendship with Lord Mackay. Despite criticisms for his unwavering stand on the Bible and the Christian faith, Mackay maintained a humble attitude.

The third chapter explores lessons to be learned from Lord Mackay. The first lesson is the effect that his consistent Christian character had on his legal associations. He treated everyone with respect, not the norm for lawyers when it came to reporters (59). “Lord Mackay has become known in the legal profession, in political circles and the media as well as in the church, for his unassuming humility, personal loyalty, and gracious character” (58). This character was cultivated by faithful Lord's Day observance (61).

In the public sphere Mackay became known for his advocacy in child and family welfare. In favoring no-fault divorce law he parted company with many Christians and conservatives. But he did so, not in order to make divorce easier, but in order to prevent the poisoning of the negotiations in a divorce. He believed that the acrimony created by the necessity of finding fault was damaging to the children and the couple (67, 105). His ideal, as stated in his speech in Parliament (Appendix 1, 1995), was marriage between a male and a female for lifetime (106). In dealing with law he always sought the most humane solution through principled compromise (73–74).

Chapter 3 concludes with Mackay's views on church establishment (cf. Appendix 2, a 2013 lecture). Fraser suggests that Mackay's views “are closer to the revised version adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States” (80). Mackay believed that it was the duty of the state to “protect the free practice of all faiths in this country” (80). However, he did not oppose church establishment entirely, as he said in his 2013 lecture:

Since both church and state receive their mandate from the God who is revealed in Christ, the provision of Establishment may be seen as providing valuable, God-given opportunities in furthering the church's vital task of bearing witness to the supreme kingship of Jesus before the principalities and powers of this present age. (124)

The fourth and final chapter locates Mackay's position on the two kingdoms in the contemporary context. Fraser quotes extensively and with approval from Tim Keller's *Center Church*,¹ which provides a helpful summary of the weaknesses of both the transformationalist and the two kingdom positions (84–89). One of Keller's criticisms of

¹ Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

the two kingdom position raises a good point that has always intrigued me. “Much of the social good that Two Kingdom people attribute to natural revelation is really the fruit of the introduction of Christian teaching—special revelation if you will—into world culture” (86). The problem is that I doubt that many two kingdom advocates would disagree with the reality of this influence. I certainly don’t. David VanDrunen weighs in on the charge of Docetism by simply saying that he doesn’t advocate everything articulated by those who claim to hold a two kingdom view (89–90). Fraser then mentions another two kingdoms advocate, Darryl Hart, by quoting a “sympathetic reviewer” to the effect that Hart holds to “two airtight spheres” (90). I wish Fraser had given Hart a chance to respond.

According to Fraser, Mackay

does not self-consciously operate on the basis of either model. But his concern for personal godliness coupled with his realistic view of what can be accomplished in a fallen political system seem to me to place him closer to the two kingdoms model. (93–94)

Fraser goes on to assert his own opinion: “All too often Christian involvement in politics seems to involve baptizing the political agenda of either the right or the left, whereas neither has a monopoly on biblical priorities” (94). While I agree with Fraser in principle, there may be a less polarized party system in the UK and Canada than in America presently.

I wish Fraser had commented on Mackay’s thoughts on Islam and Islamic terrorism in the context of participation in democratic societies.

The discussion of the relationship between church and state will no doubt continue until the end of time. This little book makes a nice contribution to the conversation. More importantly it provides an inspiring example of a serious Christian serving in church and state.

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ServantPoetry

G. E. Reynolds (1949–)

Yuletide Hullabaloo

Amidst the hullabaloo of Yuletide
the stelliferous parade prevailed
and the motley mediocrities of shopping
sprees did not win the day—the Day
hiding amidst the schlock
shone her own stars—and the Star
that hovered over an ancient
inn, also hid amidst the stable
stuff of the day—not
Enlightenment stuff, you understand,
but the ordinary junk *de jour*—
seen only by shepherds and magi—my God,
what contrast, what an unearthly anomaly,
with staffs and gold, frankincense, myrrh, and the
fragrance of sheep dung, all at once celebrating
the Word made flesh, made fresh—
an epiphany like no other.