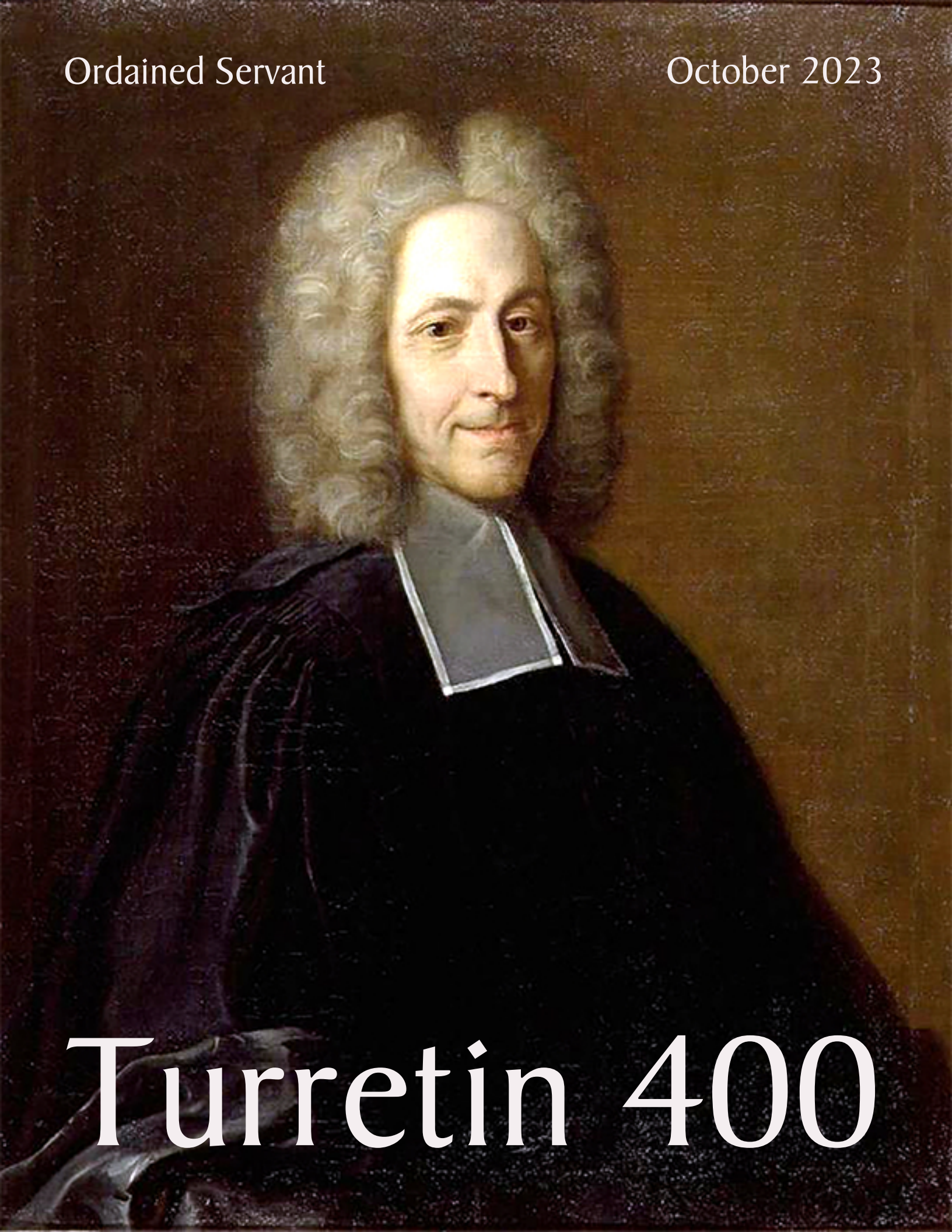


Ordained Servant

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Turretin 400

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From the Editor

This month we celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of François Turretini, known to us as Francis Turretin, author of the *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, on October 17, 1623. This three volume work was only replaced as the text for systematic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in the late nineteenth century by Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (1871). Thanks to the superb editing of the translation of Princeton (College of New Jersey) professor George Musgrave Geiger (1822–65) by James T. Dennison, Jr., Christians and church officers have had access to this important work for three decades.¹ Professor Mark Beach convincingly expands upon the importance of Turretin's work in "Francis Turretin (1623–1687): A Commemoration and Commendation."

The printer's device on the title page of the first edition of Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* reads QVOD TIBI FIERI NON VIS ALTERI NEFECERIS (What you do not wish to happen to yourself, do not do to another). Here is the title page of my first edition (1688) of the *Institutes of Elenctic Theology (Institutio Theologiae Elencticae)* ([Turretin, Institutes.jpg](#) or [Turretin, Institutes.psd](#)).

I offer chapter 7 of my homiletical work *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, "God's Direct Address: Divine Presence." In contrast to our device-mediated, electronic environment, I emphasize the importance of the personal presence of the Lord in the preaching moment, the personal presence of the pastor-preacher, and the personal presence of church officers and church members in one another's lives.

Our series on the tertiary standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church continues with Alan Strange's penultimate commentary on the Book of Discipline, chapters 7 and 8. David Graves, Brett McNeill, and John Mahaffy tackle the controverted question "Cross-Presbytery Complaints: Does the Book of Discipline Allow a Session to Complain against a Session in Another Presbytery — And Should It?"

An Older Elder offers more advice to younger elder James in "The Ruling Elder among the Flock." Many sessions read and discuss these letters at their monthly session meetings.

William Edgar reviews the new, and I believe first, biography of Tim Keller: *Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation* by Collin Hansen. Keller's ministry is

¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, transl. by George Musgrave Giger, James T. Dennison, ed., Jr.; 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992–1997).

worth careful observation since he ministered in one of the most secular cultures in America: New York City. As an adjunct professor of apologetics, Hansen is especially sensitive to the challenges Keller faced. The idea of intellectual preparation for ministry is one that evangelicals tend to shy away from. In this we are reminded of Machen's similar emphasis. I first met Tim in New Rochelle in the 1980s. His character and work have grown on me over the years. I hope many of my colleagues will read this biography.

Andy Wilson reviews Michael Horton's latest, *Recovering Our Sanity: How the Fear of God Conquers the Fears that Divide Us*. Wilson helpfully explores differing views among us on how to engage our cultural moment.

Our poetry this month is a little unusual. I recently reread Wallace Stevens's famous poem "Sunday Morning." It is considered one of the greatest poems in English of the twentieth century. Harold Bloom declared *Harmonium*, in which "Sunday Morning" appeared, to be the most original debut volume of poetry since Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855). "Sunday Morning" was written when Stevens was 36. It is a linguistically rich poem with an existential message about Sunday morning, so true to twentieth century America that I knew. It spurred me on to compose an answer. Stevens's is eight fifteen-line stanzas; mine is eight twelve-line stanzas. O that Sunday morning would be restored as a day of worship, hope, and joy.

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.

ServantHistory

Francis Turretin (1623–1687): A Commemoration and Commendation

By J. Mark Beach

Turretin and His *Institutes*

Francis Turretin (François or Francesco Turretini or Franciscus Turretinus) was one of the most distinguished Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century, being a notable representative of the “school theology” characteristic of that period. He was born on October 17, 1623, in Geneva, Switzerland. This year and this month, we arrive at the four-hundredth anniversary of his birth. It is fitting on this occasion to reflect a bit on his life, and particularly to ask the question about his importance for Reformed theology today.

Turretin was a pastor-theologian who zealously served the Reformed churches, particularly the Reformed cause in Geneva until his death on September 28, 1687. He completed his studies at the Genevan Academy in 1644. Given his giftedness as a student, he pursued further studies in theology at Leiden, Utrecht, Saumur, Montauban, and Nimes (1644–48). He also studied philosophy with the Roman Catholic Pierre Gassendi in Paris (1645–46). From 1648 he served as minister to the Italian congregation in Geneva, and from 1653 until his death he labored as pastor of the French congregation in Geneva and as professor of theology at the Academy in Geneva. In 1650 he also served for a year as interim pastor at Lyons.¹

During his life, Turretin produced a number of significant theological disputations, a couple of which have been translated into English. Turretin also published two volumes of collected French sermons, a few of which have also become available in English

¹ See J. Mark Beach, “Reading Turretin: Some Observations on Francis Turretin’s *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 27 (2016): 67–84; idem, “Francis Turretin’s *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*,” *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, eds. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 280–294. For biography on Turretin, see “Funeral Oration of Benedict Pictet concerning the Life and Death of Francis Turretin,” trans. David Lillegard, in Turretin’s *Institutes*, vol. 3, 659–676; E. de Bude, *Vie de François Turretini, théologien genevois (1623-1687)* (Lausanne: Bridel, 1871); G. Keizer, *François Turretini. Sa vie et ses oeuvres et le Consensus* (Lausanne: Bridel, 1900); and James T. Dennison, Jr., “The Life and the Career of Francis Turretin,” in Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed., James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1992–1997): III: 639–658; Nicholas A. Cumming, *Francis Turretin (1623–1687) and the Reformed Tradition*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History, ed. Bridget Heal (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020); and Zachary Purvis’s “Introduction” in *Justification by Faith Alone: Selected Writings from Theodore Beza (1519–1605), Amandus Polandus (1561-1610), and Francis Turretin (1623–1687)*, trans. Casey Carmichael, Classic Reformed Theology, vol. 6, ed. R. Scott Clark (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2023), xxxvi–xliii.

translation.² His chief and most renowned work—indeed, his longstanding theological contribution—remains, however, his three-volume *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*, which appeared in 1679, 1682, and 1685.³ This work, contending for Reformed orthodoxy against all rival theologies, served as a textbook in theology during that time and subsequently. It was republished in 1847–48, along with a volume of his disputations, which revived its life as a theological textbook during the nineteenth century.⁴ More recently, Turretin’s *Institutes* found new life serving a new generation of Reformed students since its publication into English in the 1990s. This multi-volume work comes from an earlier produced handwritten translation by George Musgrave Giger a century earlier, which James T. Dennison subsequently edited and presented for publication.⁵

Among the most prominent dogmatical works in the history of Reformed theology, Turretin’s *Institutes* merits attention as expressing the consensus of Reformed orthodoxy that prevailed at that time, while also well displaying the scholastic method that shaped much of the dogmatical theology of the era. These two features of his work reveal the abiding importance of Turretin the theologian for today’s Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Turretin’s Scholasticism and Elencticism

Turretin’s theology builds on the foundation laid by earlier codifications of Reformed theology, employing scholastic methodology to defend that theology from its multiple opponents.⁶ This scholastic theology, commonplace then, was pointedly academic in character. On a formal level, it is best understood as a method and approach to theological topics, using *quaestiones* to form theses or propositions that defend a staked-out position pertaining to those topics, seeking to defend against the many foes to the Reformed movement and to present this faith with intellectual vigor and biblical warrant. Turretin’s concern was to guard evangelical truth against error in its various guises and thereby safeguard confessional orthodoxy—specifically Dortian orthodoxy (see the Canons of Dordrecht in 1618–1619). Turretin’s most immediate field of concern was the Swiss and French Reformed churches. These churches were under increasing Roman Catholic threat, including the menace of armed attack. Turretin’s project, however, was targeted to assist the Reformed cause throughout Europe. Although Turretin labored during a period of high orthodoxy, the climate of change was already in the air, and his

² See, for example, the recent translation of Turretin’s “The Harmony of Paul and James on the Article of Justification,” in *Justification by Faith Alone: Selected Writings*, 183–216; also “Francis Turretin’s Seventh Disputation: Whether It Can Be Proven the Pope of Rome Is the Antichrist,” trans. Kenneth Bubb, ed. Rand Winburn (Forestville, CA: Protestant Reformation Publications, 1999). Turretin’s French sermons are *Sermons sur divers passages de l’Ecriture Sainte* (Geneva, 1676) and *Recueil de sermons sur divers texts de l’Ecriture Sainte* (Geneva, 1686). In certain disputations and sermons Turretin can be sharply polemical.

³ For the publishing history of Turretin’s *Institutes*, see Beach, “Reading Turretin,” 67, fn. 1.

⁴ The four-volume work was published in Edinburgh and New York. This edition has been reprinted as recently as 2010 (Nabu Press, Charleston, South Carolina).

⁵ See bibliography in footnote 1.

⁶ On Reformed orthodoxy and scholasticism, two important sources are Willem J. van Asselt, et al., *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); and Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3–102.

work, grounded in scholastic methodology, could not finally fend off the gradual demise of orthodoxy in Geneva or throughout Europe.⁷

Like John Calvin, his most renowned predecessor in Geneva, Turretin called his work an *Institutio*. The term refers to fundamental or foundational instruction. In adding the phrase *theologia elenctica*, Turretin reveals his intention to pursue the instruction of theology in an elenctic manner—for the latter term, “elenctic,” is derived from the Greek word ἔλεγχος, which means to expose error. An elenctic theology, then, seeks to teach truth by way of contrast to and in refutation of error. For Turretin, and for his Reformed orthodox comrades, theology has the task to oppose heretical views or otherwise harmful theological opinion in the defense of the received catholic faith of the church, and specifically of the distinctive Reformed understanding of that faith. In the labor of theological education at Geneva, Turretin sought to expound Christian doctrine using the foil of error and heresy to explain and defend what he judged to be biblical truth. Thus, Turretin’s elenctic *Institutes* is deliberately disputative and polemical in form, zealously and soberly championing the Reformed confessional position while coupled with much positive exposition of theological topics as part of that project. However, neither the scholastic character of Turretin’s three-volume work nor its elenctic character embraced the emerging Christian rationalism of the late-seventeenth century. Rather, Turretin argues that “the theology of revelation”—being grounded in divine revelation of the supernatural sort—is a theology that transcends human reason and depends upon God’s grace as revealed in his Word (I.Q.2.7).⁸

Six Commendations of Turretin’s *Institutes* for Today

If readers are new to Turretin’s *Institutes*, they immediately discover that his writing does not have the rhetorical appeal of Calvin’s. Turretin’s argumentation is tight, his sentences long, and his vocabulary technical, with almost no rhetorical flourish. The learning curve is steep. Many give up rather than venture ahead, figuring they might do better to read a more contemporary source that is easier to digest. Certainly, that is an option, but there is no alternative to a work like Turretin’s for a student of Reformed orthodoxy (well, not unless the reader is fluent in theological Latin). Readers are amply rewarded by pressing on; and there are resources available that enable them to gain access to Turretin’s methodology and vocabulary, rendering the learning curve more manageable—such as Richard A. Muller’s *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 2nd ed., and Johannes Maccovius’s *Scholastic Discourse*.⁹

I venture to offer six commendations of Turretin’s *Elenctic Institutes* for today’s students of Reformed theology.

⁷ M. I. Klauber, “Reformed Orthodoxy in Transition: Benedict Pictet (1655–1724) and Enlightened Orthodoxy in Post-Reformation Geneva,” in W. F. Graham, ed., *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, vol. 22 (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 93–113.

⁸ References to Turretin’s *Institutes* are according to topic, question, and paragraph.

⁹ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, 2nd ed (1985; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017); Johannes Maccovius, *Scholastic Discourse: Johannes Maccovius (1588-1644) on Theological and Philosophical Distinctions and Rules*, eds. Willem J. van Asselt, et al. (1652; Apeldoorn: Instituut voor Reformatieonderzoek, 2009).

Commendation #1—Turretin’s Methodology Enables a Proper Engagement of Theological Controversy

For starters, Turretin teaches us how to engage in theological controversy. His *Institutes* are marked by a deliberate methodology that engages the many topics of the theological enterprise in a consistent manner. He employs the question-structure, somewhat modeled after the medieval scholastic *Summas*, as the principal format to address theological topics and subtopics, functioning as a textbook of theology for the benefit of students.¹⁰ Even when the question-structure is not followed explicitly, the techniques of definition, distinction, logical reasoning, and refutation of objections are typical of Turretin’s scholastic discourse. In following the model of “questions,” Turretin’s *Institutio* addresses most theological topics in a discernable order, presenting specific topics of theology (*loci*) in a clear alignment. Therefore, in each of the twenty *loci* that comprise his *Institutes*, Turretin subdivides the specific topic into its requisite distinct questions. In outline form, the topics are (usually) set forth as follows: (1) He begins, in most instances, with a question or questions, with an affirmation or denial or even a reply of distinguishing to properly answer the issue in dispute, which often names specific opponents, including who they are and what they specifically believe. If opponents are not directly mentioned, Turretin will usually define the doctrine under dispute succinctly and note where disagreement resides. Thus, it is not unusual for Turretin to attach general introductory remarks after the question. These remarks take up the subject under discussion and can consist of a paragraph or two, but sometimes are much extended.

(2) Having accomplished the above, Turretin proceeds to delineate the question or questions at issue—thus follows the *status quaestionis*, wherein Turretin seeks to articulate the exact point needing exposition or that is under contest. The analysis of the exact question at hand reveals both what the question is and what it is not. The “state of the question,” then, results in a clarification of where there is agreement (what is not in dispute) to arrive at the nub of disagreement—that is, where parties split into diverse camps. A further observation here is that it is not uncommon for Turretin, under the “state of the question,” to enunciate the orthodox position by differentiating two extremes: those who err in excess and those who err in defect.

(3) Next, Turretin expounds his own stated position, presenting positive arguments in support of his view, though this is often done in light of an opponent’s position. This section can be brief or quite elaborate, depending on the nature of the issue under discussion. Turretin’s positive argumentation at this point, then, can be as short as a paragraph or extended for many pages.

(4) Last, there is a consideration and rebuttal of counterarguments, called “*fontes solutionum*” (often translated as “sources of solution” or “sources of explanation”). This section principally meets the counterarguments of opponents but may include a succinct summary of Turretin’s own views, and it can serve as a “handy check for the reader to see if the discussion is understood.”¹¹ Oftentimes Turretin does not so much state the

¹⁰ Turretin, “Preface to the Reader,” in *Institutes*, I, xl–xli.

¹¹ Willem J. van Asselt, et al, *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 172.

counterarguments explicitly as he meets these objections as suppositions, which he then refutes.

We need hardly be reminded that much contemporary theological dispute would benefit from the disciplined and precise approach that Turretin practices in his *Institutes*.

A further observation regarding Turretin's method is that he always seeks to ground his staked-out position in Scripture and to present biblical arguments for his view. Yet, besides bolstering his argument with the relevant Scriptural materials, he sometimes seeks support from the Church Fathers and medieval scholastic writers.¹² Although Turretin appeals to Reformed writers by name from time to time, he generally avoids dependence on them to make his case. In his *Institutes*, if not always in his sermons and disputations, he shuns heated polemics in treating disputed issues, especially with other Reformed authors. Given the precarious nature of the Reformed churches in France, for example, it hardly would have helped the Reformed cause to assist Roman Catholic opponents by engaging in denunciatory polemics against the Amyraldians. It is noteworthy, too, that in dealing with those who oppose the Reformed position, Turretin is uninhibited in specifying their names or their writings.

Commendation #2—Turretin Is a Reliable Expositor of the Views of Opponents

The second reason to commend Francis Turretin is that his work well instructs us regarding the views of those who opposed Reformed theology. Since theological opponents figure prominently in his work, the views of these opponents (principally Roman Catholics, Socinians, and Remonstrants, along with various Lutherans, Anabaptists, and others) needed to be fairly and accurately presented in order to contest fairly and accurately the same. Turretin's scholastic theology, therefore, sought to defend the hard-wrought gains of the earlier codification of Reformed theology achieved by Calvin and his Reformed contemporaries, particularly against what was perceived to be the "Pelagianizing" acids that dissolved the primacy of divine grace and transgressed the right teaching of "catholic" Augustinianism (e.g., IV.Q.10.1; X.Q.1.1; XV.Q.51.). As such, Turretin is not interested in contending with marginal points of doctrine. His mission is to defend the Reformed confession of divine grace (*sola gratia*) robustly. In this regard, he is prepared to make common cause even with particular Roman Catholic thinkers who, with him, reject Jesuit deviations from the sovereignty of God's grace; he appeals to the tradition of the church and to scholastic Roman Catholic authors in order to help make his case.¹³ Certainly, Turretin's polemic against Pelagianizing tendencies is a constant refrain in his *Institutes*.

As a general observation, Turretin engaged in polemics in an irenic spirit and treated his theological rivals equitably. In fact, he was rather scrupulous to present the views of opponents correctly if only to refute their position more persuasively. In doing so, Turretin was predisposed to be "mainstream" in his Reformed convictions; he also sought, at times, to play the role of mediator between parties, i.e., to effect reconciliation (or at least understanding) among the Reformed where theological debate had become over-blown or otherwise misconceived. An example is his treatment of conditionality in

¹² See E. P. Meijering, *Reformierte scholastic und patristische theologie* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1991).

¹³ van Asselt, et al, *Reformed Thought on Freedom*, 171–73.

the covenant of grace (see, e.g., XII.Q.3.15). To his credit, then, Turretin excels at stating opponents' views even-handedly and properly, and he resists *ad hominem* comments.¹⁴ This "school theology," with its polemical thrust, was no more fanatical or reactionary or intolerant than an earlier, less scholastic codification of Reformed theology. These negative traits mark personalities, not theological method. Once more, Turretin presents himself as an able example of how to engage in theological discussion and disputation.

Commendation #3—Turretin Is a Theologian's Theologian

Third, Turretin treats the foundational questions of theology in a classically Reformed manner—that is, before the onset of Christian rationalism, which was followed by the Enlightenment. Although Turretin's theology is obviously dated in certain respects and, just as obvious, does not address certain contemporary issues and errors, it often supplies the requisite materials to better construct answers to contemporary questions. Turretin is a fine resource for treating foundational questions, like the relationship between faith and reason, the role and limitations of human reason for theology, and circumscribing natural theology and natural law. In fact, he handles with great care a host of theological questions. For example, he expositis with finesse and insight the question concerning the nature of the moral law, its several uses, and its abrogation in opposition to the Antinomians (XI.Q.2.1–34.; Q.22.1–18 and Q.23.1–15). It is fitting also to mention his treatment of the question regarding the first moment of conversion and whether humans take any kind of active role in such an event, such that the human will cooperates in some way with divine grace (see XV.Q.5.1–21). Likewise, he handles the question of creaturely merit before God in a superb fashion (XVII.Q.5.1–45, esp. 6–7). Although such commendations are selective, they serve to alert readers that Turretin proves himself to be a theologian's theologian, and anyone who wrestles with his technical reasoning will be better for the effort. There is not a topic in which Turretin fails to stimulate and educate the reader. Thus, to offer another example, his treatment of the sacraments, from a Reformed perspective, is sterling, though the Giger translation has the unfortunate penchant to translate the Latin word *anima* too often as "mind" rather than "heart" or "soul," which has a way of coloring Turretin's presentation in an intellectualistic direction.

Commendation #4—Turretin Is a Potent Defender of Dortian Orthodoxy

A fourth reason why we commend Turretin's theology centers on, as adumbrated above, the way it defends the reformational concern for the doctrine of grace alone. Turretin persistently argues against Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian doctrines, even as he promotes the findings of the Synod of Dordrecht against the Remonstrants. Turretin's work, then, constantly champions divine initiative in the face of human inability, divine mercy in view of human guilt and demerit, and God's sovereign accomplishment of salvation—persevering to the end—considering human instability and impotence. All the main canons of the Synod of Dort are discernably defended in Turretin's *Institutes*; he expounds upon the doctrine of predestination, including unconditional election (even lining up with Dort's infralapsarian orientation) (IV.Q.11); human free choice and its

¹⁴ van Asselt, et al, *Reformed Thought on Freedom*, 172.

limitations (X.Qs.1–5); and effectual calling (XV.Q.4). He likewise explicitly takes up the topic of Christ’s penal substitutionary atonement, the scope of that atoning work (XIV.Q.14), as well as the doctrine of the perseverance of faith (XV.Q.16).

In addition, in advocating for the doctrines of Dort against Remonstrant objectors, Turretin similarly combatted some in the Reformed camp (whom he considered “our men”), primarily the Amyraldians, the name being derived from Amyraldus, the Latinized name of Moïse Amyraut (1596–1664). Here we observe that Amyraldianism, Cocceianism, and Cartesianism form three chief aberrations that emerged among the Reformed in the seventeenth century. The philosophical program of Rene Descartes (1596–1650), with its subjectivistic method, became hotly debated in the Netherlands and beyond. However, Descartes’s thought did not immediately impact Turretin and his work in Geneva, so he does not address this movement. Meanwhile, only with moderation does he take on controversy with the Amyraldians and Cocceians. Turretin particularly disputes Cocceius’s views regarding Christ’s suretyship vis-à-vis Old Testament believers (XII.Qs.9–10).

It was the Amyraldians, however, who were Turretin’s topmost concern among Reformed writers, in part because some of Turretin’s theological colleagues at the Academy were sympathetic to Amyraldian views. Although the Swiss Reformed churches explicitly rejected distinct Salmurian doctrines in the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (1675) (see especially Canons VI, X, XVI, XXV), that document’s life was short-lived in the Swiss churches, being set aside in 1725. For his part, Turretin rebuts Amyraldian teachings, for example, in IV.Q.17, IX.Q.9.4–6, XII.Q.12, and XIV.Q.14.6.

Commendation #5—Turretin Is a Trustworthy Expositor of Reformed Federal Theology

Fifth, Turretin should be studied because he is a fine exhibit of Reformed federal theology, sifting through intramural debates characteristic in the seventeenth century, and doing that with an irenic spirit.¹⁵ Although Turretin was a Reformed scholastic theologian, he was simultaneously a federal theologian. That designation is warranted since he developed his theology in the way of the twofold covenant scheme—namely the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, the latter being grounded in the intratrinitarian covenant of redemption or *pactum salutis* (see VIII.Qs.3–6; XII.Qs.1–12). For Turretin, the covenant of grace, Christ being the substance of the promise, included all the blessings of salvation (see XII.Q.2.18–25). All subsequent theological exposition detailing that redemptive work is really expounding features and dimensions of that gospel covenant. In other words, federal theology is woven into the whole fabric of Turretin’s work and is presupposed even when not specifically mentioned.¹⁶ Turretin proves to be an able teacher and a careful theologian in treating disputed questions surrounding the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. For example, he well presents the Sinaitic economy as being, in substance, one with and an expression of the covenant of grace (XII.Q.12.1–25).

¹⁵ See J. Mark Beach, *Christ and the Covenant: Francis Turretin’s Federal Theology as a Defense of the Doctrine of Grace*, Reformed Historical Theology, vol. 1, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis, et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). For an analysis of diverse interpretations of federal theology, see 22–73.

¹⁶ See Beach, *Christ and the Covenant*, 316–39.

Commendation #6—Turretin Is an Evenhanded Codifier of Reformed Theology

Sixth, we warmly commend Turretin, indeed, make much of him as a theologian, inasmuch as he labored deliberately in the role of codifier of Reformed orthodoxy and wrote as a defender of the Reformed consensus. In doing so he aimed to bring Reformed thinkers into agreement with one another where possible. Although his theology is not marked by innovation, neither is it merely rote. He writes with clarity and acumen on each topic under his purview, treating subjects with erudition and insight. James T. Dennison Jr., the editor of the English translation of Turretin's *Institutes*, "extracted more than 3,200 quotations from classic, patristic, medieval, Jewish, Socinian, Lutheran, Arminian, Anabaptist and Reformed authors," which further commends its abiding value even as it alerts readers to many important sources. Given the elenctic form of Turretin's theological exposition, his *Institutes* was and remains a pinnacle achievement in the development of Reformed scholasticism in Geneva and throughout Europe; and it remains an outstanding specimen of Reformed dogmatical works. Following the *quaestiones*-format of instruction, Turretin's *Institutes* still exhibits its well-designed function as a textbook of theology; and its readers, upon mastering its scholastic vocabulary and method, at once discern that it is an effective pedagogical tool. Moreover, since Turretin was not given to embracing extreme views, refusing to color outside the lines of Reformed confessional orthodoxy, he set the benchmark of that orthodoxy, even as he persists as its standard-bearer. As such, his *Institutes* will endure as a work of interest to scholars of the early modern era and the history of doctrine. In its English translation, Turretin's *Institutes* will continue to occupy a highly influential place among the dogmatical works of Reformed theology.

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Servant Word

The Voice of the Good Shepherd: God's Direct Address: Divine Presence,¹ Chapter 7

By Gregory Edward Reynolds

*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.*

—2 John 1:12

*Students seem to have difficulty just engaging in a face-to-face interaction—
and I don't even mean normal eye contact. I mean engaging in an exchange. . . .
There are some fundamental skills they just don't have.²*

—Robert Duran

*Only the sense of hearing can do justice to the way
God is simultaneously with us and beyond us.³*

—Walter Ong

Preaching Is the Presence of the Great Shepherd

The presence of the Good Shepherd in preaching, an obvious excellence of preaching, is sometimes referred to as the “Incarnational Principle.” Unfortunately, this principle has often been associated with the immanentism of Liberal and Process theology—a call to social activism. Because the eternal Son came in the flesh, taking to himself a complete human nature, except without sin, the presence of a live preacher, called and commissioned by the Lord as his ambassador, is the most suitable medium for communicating God's Word. So the secular dilemma of coordinating transcendence and immanence is obviated, not only by the covenantal character of God's revelation but by the Incarnation. The One

¹ Adapted from Gregory E. Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 338–45.

² Nara Schoenberg, “Tips for Conversation in an Overwhelmingly Digital Age,” Reprinted from the *Chicago Tribune* in the *New Hampshire Sunday News*, June 14, 2015, F8. Robert Duran is a communications professor at the University of Hartford.

³ Ong quoted in Dave McClellan with Karen McClellan, *Preaching by Ear: Speaking God's Truth from the Inside Out* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014), 102n41.

who inhabits eternity becomes a man and enters history. Thus in preaching, the transcendent Lord is immanent through the living announcement of his gospel Word.

Joseph is the first type of the Shepherd in Scripture (Gen. 49:24). Moses and Joshua follow the pattern of the shepherd-leader. Just prior to his death Moses is concerned “that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd” (Num. 27:17). Israelite kingship is instituted after this model, and the great shepherd Psalms (Pss. 23; 80) are penned by the “sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:1), David, who prefigures the ministry of the Good Shepherd in his royal capacity (2 Sam. 5:2; 7:7). The great failure of Israel’s shepherd-kings points to the need for the true Shepherd of the sheep, as Israel’s kings serve themselves and leave God’s people without a shepherd (1 Kings 22:17). How glorious are the words of Isaiah’s prophesy of the coming of the Great Shepherd of the sheep: “He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young” (40:11). This Shepherd will build the temple of God (Isa. 44:28). He will feed the sheep of the Lord’s flock: “I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd” (Ezek. 34:23).

When he comes, he assures us: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). His words, which are the words of the entire Scripture (1 Pet. 1:10–11), are the food upon which his sheep feed. He appoints overseers to shepherd his people by the preaching of his Word: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The Great Shepherd calls his undershepherds to lead his people (1 Pet. 5:2, 4). The preached Word given to the apostles is the voice of the Good Shepherd after the ascension: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). At the heart of the ministry of his undershepherds, then, is the communication of the voice of the Shepherd to his sheep: “the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (John 10:4). This is the task of preaching, as the resurrected Lord emphatically told Peter: “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15).

The One who has visited his people in history continues to visit them through his Word and Spirit in the person of the preacher. Nothing can replace that personal presence and that living voice.⁴ The preacher ministers to a people whom he knows personally by name, even as their Shepherd knows them (John 10:3). He preaches the One who laid down his life for his sheep (John 10:15; 1 Cor. 2:2). He impresses them with the reality of the kingdom of God. In his famous treatise *The Religious Affections* (1746), Jonathan Edwards notes the importance of preaching in this regard:

And the impressing divine things on the hearts and affections of men is evidently one great and main end for which God has ordained that His Word delivered in the holy Scriptures should be opened, applied, and set home upon men, in preaching. And therefore it does not answer the aim which God had in this institution, merely to have good commentaries and expositions on the Scripture, and other good books of divinity; because, although these may tend as well as preaching to give men a good doctrinal or speculative understanding of the things of the Word of God, yet they have not an equal tendency to impress them on men’s hearts and affections.

⁴ This came home to me in a very concrete way when I was on a four month sabbatical from a congregation I had served for almost two decades. The people said that they felt like the life of the church came to a halt. The presence of their under-shepherd proved more important than I had anticipated.

God hath appointed a particular and lively application of His Word to men in the preaching of it, as a fit means to affect sinners with the importance of the things of religion, and their own misery and necessity of a remedy, and the glory and sufficiency of a remedy provided; and to stir up the pure minds of the saints, and quicken their affections, by often bringing the great things of religion to their remembrance, and setting them before them in their proper colours, though they know them, and have been fully instructed in them already.⁵

The living presence of the Good Shepherd in the preaching of the pastor, who is by the nature of his office an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ, is indispensable to the life of the church. The television preacher never knows his audience by name. His is not a living voice. Nor can he exemplify the self-denying love of his Master in the midst of his people, the church. How often Paul set himself forth as a model to be imitated: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; cf. Col. 4:16, 17; Heb. 6:12). We cannot imitate an image on a screen, much less feel accountable to the man behind the image as the shepherd or pastor of our souls. “If preaching ever loses the support of personal affection fostered by pastoral care and the human touch, it is doubtful if it can carry by what engineers—who always have a sound concern for foundations—call sky-hooks.”⁶

The importance of face-to-face encounter is clearly central to the Incarnation. The face, more than any other aspect of the physical nature, reveals the person. Thus, John wanted more than any other means of communication to see his spiritual children “face to face” (2 John 12; 3 John 14). Even writing a personal letter could not replace personal encounter: “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” (2 John 12).

The consummate reality for the Christian will be seeing the face of Jesus Christ in resurrection glory: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). Until then we see the reflection of that glory through the preaching of Christ from his Word, mediated by the revealing power of the Holy Spirit. Sinners cannot survive in the presence of the glorified Lamb (Rev. 20:11). Only when the believer is sinlessly perfected in the resurrection, will he be able to stand before the face of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2).

The face-to-face presence of the preacher is a reminder of what is coming (Rev. 22:4). It is a down-payment on eschatological glory. In commenting on Haggai 1:12, Calvin says: “We may then conclude from these words, that the glory of God so shines in his word, that we ought to be so much affected by it, whenever he speaks by his servants, as though he were nigh to us face to face . . .”⁷ Preaching is the primary means by which the Good Shepherd visits His people in the interim. Paul saw the preacher, not as a doctrinal lecturer, but as a pastor, who imparted his very life to the flock:

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 2. John E. Smith, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 115–16.

⁶ Gaius Glenn Atkins, *Preaching and the Mind of Today* (New York: Round Table Press, 1934), 30.

⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on Haggai* (1540-1563. Translation and reprint. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society. 1847. Reprint. vol. 15. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 343. I owe this quotation to my friend and colleague Stephen Doe.

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. For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (1 Thess. 2:8–9)

“It is the job of the preacher to make the Word of God, the Word of the prophets put into writing, a living reality for the congregation.”⁸

A word needs to be added about the *locality* of live preaching. The personal presence of the preacher among God’s people, the church, is accurately communicated by the English word for the local pastor: *vicar*. The word vicar comes from the root for *vicarious*, in the place of another. The pastor functions as an ambassador of his Master:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:18–21)

The purpose of his ascension was that from his exalted position he would send his Spirit (John 14:16ff; 16:7). This is the biblical means of Christ being present with his ecumenical body, i.e., the church among the nations. The World Wide Web and other forms of electronic communication have inverted this reality by seeking to transcend and, at points, even deny space and time. While these media may in one sense overcome the limits of space and time, they also forfeit the locality of personal presence which may never be transcended by creatures. In Acts we see the apostles employing what novelist Larry Woiwode calls the “footpower of the gospel.” Gospel witness is a personal matter:

In order to deliver that gospel in our age, you have to walk up to somebody, even if you’ve arrived earlier on a Concorde, and there is no proof that the spirit a Christian carries, or the Spirit who applies the gospel to a congregation, is transmitted over television. In *Acts* the delivery of the gospel is a personal act.⁹

D. Martin Lloyd-Jones put it well:

There is a unity between preacher and hearers and there is transaction backwards and forwards. That, to me, is true preaching. And that is where you see the essential difference between listening to preaching in a church and listening to a sermon on the television or on the radio. You cannot listen to true preaching in detachment and you must never be in a position where you can turn it off.¹⁰

⁸ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume 1 - The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 59.

⁹ Larry Woiwode, *Acts* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 121.

¹⁰ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, “Knowing the Times: Extracts from an Important New Book by Dr. Lloyd-Jones,” *Banner of Truth Magazine* 317 (February 1990), 11–12.

Throughout the history of redemption, God has personally met his people locally in the embodied reality of their daily lives. His ultimate condescension in this regard is the Incarnation. While the modern world has never been better “connected” electronically, it seems to be starving nearly to death for lack of personal and local connectedness. Thus, the local church provides this reality in a way that no other institution can. At the center of this is God’s speech in the preaching and presence of his appointed vicars. “Sound unites groups of human beings as nothing else does. . . . human community is essentially a union of interior consciousnesses.”¹¹ The private reading of Scripture is always also a communal reading, because the Scriptures are a covenant document uniting God’s people in all ages. Preaching accents and cultivates this communion. The worst tendencies of mass culture will be overcome by the promotion of live pastoral preaching as the center of the church’s life. There is no better antidote to the electronic dispersion of our day.

Face to Face: The Importance of Personal Presence in Ministry¹²

Efficiency rules in the modern world. Advocates of electronic centralization can point to vast benefits, such as the availability of medical records to physicians. For members of the church it is a great benefit to disseminate prayer requests and other important information to the whole church through electronic means. But the downside of electronic centralization is usually framed in terms of concerns about privacy. As legitimate as this concern is, there is an even more important issue: the diminishment of local, face-to-face relationships in our churches—the privation of personal presence.

J. Gresham Machen was concerned in the early twentieth century with the tendency toward a vast expansion of federal power through bureaucratic centralization and its concomitant, the tyranny of experts. In the conclusion of his essay “Mountains and Why We Love Them,” Machen wrote:

What will be the end of European civilization, of which I had a survey from my mountain vantage ground—of that European civilization and its daughter America? What does the future hold in store? Will Luther prove to have lived in vain? Will all the dreams of liberty issue into some vast industrial machine? Will even nature be reduced to standard, as in our country the sweetness of the woods and hills is being destroyed, as I have seen them destroyed in Maine, by the uniformities and artificialities and officialdom of our national parks? . . . Will some dreadful second law of thermodynamics apply in the spiritual as well as in the material realm? Will all things in church and state be reduced to one dead level, coming at last to an equilibrium in which all liberty and all high aspirations will be gone? Will that be the end of all humanity's hopes? I can see no escape from that conclusion in the signs of the times; too inexorable seems to me to be the march of events. No, I can see only one alternative. The alternative is that there is a God—a God who in His own good time will bring forward great men again to do His will, great men to resist the tyranny of experts and lead humanity out again into the realms of light and freedom, great men, who above all, will be the messengers of His grace. There is, far above any mountain peak of vision, a God

¹¹ Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 122, 146.

¹² Adapted from Gregory E. Reynolds, “Face to Face: The Importance of Personal Presence in Ministry,” *Ordained Servant* 21 (2012): 20–26.

high and lifted up who, though He is infinitely exalted, yet cares for His children among men.¹³

Just as Machen warned of the tendency in our technological civilization for centralized tyranny to diminish the human spirit by undermining liberty, so ought we to be concerned with the increased power of our technologies to centralize and thus diminish human liberty and local face-to-face relationships in a similar fashion, especially in the church.

As we have seen, the Apostle John had a similar concern about the rudimentary communication technology of his day when he wrote: “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” (2 John 12). “I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face” (3 John 14).

Remember that Samuel Morse’s famous exclamation of astonishment at the wonders of electronic communication, “What Hath God Wrought!” should be turned by Christians into a question. In our day the magic continues apace. Our electronic connectedness has grown exponentially. Facebook users are a prime example, growing from over twelve million in late 2006, to over three billion today. Fifty percent of Americans use Facebook. Immersion in electronic technology seems inevitable. So it seems that we should all join, or we’ll be relegated to irrelevance. But, while it is second nature to recite the benefits of this pervasive technological environment, we are hesitant, and many are even very resistant, to recognize its liabilities. I believe this is a dangerous position for church leaders, especially since the rising generation has never known any other world. Preachers have a grave pedagogical responsibility in this area if we are to harness the tremendous potential of these technologies as good stewards of God’s world. This requires constructive criticism of the electronic environment.

A wonderful example of the power of constructive criticism is the story of what the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Dana Gioia, did by raising worrisome concerns about the state of literary reading in America. Building on an alarming trend signaled by reports in the 1990s, Gioia sounded the alarm in dramatic fashion in 2004 and 2007 with reports, “Reading at Risk” and “To Read or Not to Read.” He was often criticized as a doomsayer. But because parents and educators, including the NEA, did not simply accept this as a necessary and irreversible trend, the 20 percent decline in the youngest age group surveyed (ages 18–24) in 2002 was reversed to a dramatic 21 percent increase in 2008, as presented by Gioia in a subsequent NEA Report “Reading on the Rise.”

So instead of throwing up our hands and saying, “This is the way it is. We have to accept it,” we have a tremendous pedagogical opportunity to help this and the next generation of Christians to navigate the electronic environment as wise stewards of God’s providential gifts. Of course, we cannot escape the modern world; nor should we wish to. But we must live well formed lives, conformed to God’s self-revelation, in this world (Rom. 12:1–2). We must not miss this teaching moment.

When it comes to the electronic media, it is almost as if the church has taken the advice of Oscar Wilde seriously. When asked what he recommended in the face of temptation, he quipped, “Give in to it.”

But before we do, we must ask, Does the electronic environment diminish or threaten our face-to-face relationships? I believe it does. I believe we can and must do something

¹³ J. Gresham Machen, *Selected Shorter Writings: J. Gresham Machen* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 436.

about it. As leaders in Christ's church, we need to turn Morse's enthusiastic declaration, "What has God wrought!" into a question. As with all of man's inventions, we need to understand them, how they work, their effect on our perceptions and relationships, and then their benefits and liabilities, and rid ourselves of the dangerous notion that they are just tools!

It is our pedagogical responsibility to teach the church to be discerning in its understanding of and participation in the rapidly changing media environment.

Electronic media tend to dis-incarnate and distance people from their embodied lives. While excellent at disseminating information, electronic media tend to isolate us from face-to-face interaction. Since the pandemic, we see a dramatic increase in the epidemic of loneliness. Social media, in particular, cannot replace, and often even undermine, the fabric of personal relationships which strengthen fellowship with God and each other. Church officers need to encourage church members to ask themselves how their use of media fosters healthy relationships with God, his church, my family, my friends, my world.

Many secular researchers are sounding an alarm in this area. As we noted in chapter 1, Sherry Turkle has raised concerns about people preferring online life to real life.¹⁴ Chris Martin raises similar concerns about social media,¹⁵ reminding us that the internet is not just a technology, it is a philosophy of life, a worldview. At its heart is the Baconian idea that reality can be analyzed and manipulated for our own ends. The Christian is in the unique epistemological position to stand outside this way of thinking and living. Christians must not succumb to the illusion of Enlightenment dreams, that reality is ultimately manipulable and humans may take complete control. Social media not only tend to addict its users, but they also reorganize our social spaces and relationships. Romans 12:1–2 should lead us in the direction of leaving the lake whose water, as Martin begins and concludes the book, is toxic and enslaving.

Church leaders and parents are becoming aware of some of the dangers associated with online life. Mediated relationships open people up to deception about who they really are. This is a special temptation for teenagers, who are forming their identities and learning habits of human interaction. Things are expressed online that would never be expressed, or at least in the same manner, in face-to-face situations. In some cases social skills are so stunted that young people actually fear face-to-face interaction. The church has a definite advantage in this area because we believe in the vital importance of meeting together for worship, learning, and fellowship.

But as I have written elsewhere,¹⁶ the Internet tends to rearrange and undermine authority structures. The Presbyterian church is not exempt. Members and officers make theological and personal decisions, sometimes gossiping and even slandering others, outside, or beneath the radar of, legitimate church authority. Some people even leave the church or never connect with the church, mistakenly believing that social media are sufficient.

¹⁴ Turkle, *Alone Together*, xi.

¹⁵ Chris Martin, *Terms of Service: The Real Cost of Social Media* (Nashville: B&H, 2022). See my review Gregory E. Reynolds, "Global Pillage: Stealing Our Data, Our Intelligence, and Our Souls," *Ordained Servant Online* (August-September 2022): https://opc.org/os.html?article_id=988, *Ordained Servant* 31 (2022): 116–19.

¹⁶ Gregory E. Reynolds, "The Wired Church," *Ordained Servant* 16 (2007): 26–34; "On Being Connected," *Ordained Servant* 15 (2006): 13–15; "Princess Adelaide and Presbyterianism: The Death of Context and the Life of the Church," *Ordained Servant* 15 (2006): 16–18.

Hence disembodied life online can promote the tendency to avoid the messy business of life in a fallen world—of sinners, saved by grace, but with many remaining imperfections, learning to live together in truth, forgiveness, and love. This is why, for example, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has been careful to not unwittingly draw people away from local face-to-face existence by centralizing church interaction, especially through the use of social media. The Committee on Christian Education’s Subcommittee on Internet Ministries, on which I serve, often receives questions that should be addressed to local sessions or directly to individuals. We direct them back to those local face-to-face relationships with a gentle biblical admonition when appropriate. The Bible has a lot to say about the face and about face-to-face life in God’s world.

The tendency toward centralized power is a clear and present danger to the church. One of the great liabilities of mediated life is its tendency to erode the local life of face-to-face relationships.

What does the Bible teach us about the importance of personal presence? “Face” is used 382 times in the *English Standard Version*. In the Bible the face is most often referred to as a synecdoche representing the most intimate level of personal presence. The face is a revelation of the person, a window to the human soul. “Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed” (Eccl. 8:1).

Sin causes God’s face to turn away and our faces to hide from him in shame. Sin alienates. Electronic media may exacerbate this tendency. We may become electronic fugitives like Cain.

But for Cain and his offering he [God] had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? . . . Cain said to the LORD . . . Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” (Gen. 4:5–6, 13–14)

“And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God” (Exod. 3:6). Our sin, as in Israel’s case, causes God’s judgment: “I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies” (Lev. 26:17); “And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face” (Ezek. 20:35). “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12).

Serious confrontation in the Bible is done face to face. Festus defends Roman justice regarding Paul,

I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers *face to face* and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. (emphasis added, Acts 25:16)

So Paul in confronting Peter: “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned” (Gal. 2:11).

Face-to-face communication avoids the limits of mediated communication. Paul understood that distance increases the possibility for misunderstanding:

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away! — . . . I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. (2 Cor. 10:1, 9–11)

John appreciated the importance of personal presence that could never be replaced by the first century medium of written correspondence.

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. . . . I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. (2 John 12; 3 John 14)

Jesus is present with his people through the means of grace and the officers of his church. The living and true God has orchestrated the ultimate in personal presence with the incarnation of his Son. The Word took on a complete and perfect human nature in order to create a new humanity. Church officers represent his presence as his undershepherds until he returns (1 Pet. 5:1–5). The personal presence of God’s people in worship, focusing as it does on Word and sacrament, is essential to the meaning of our redeemed creaturehood.

Throughout the history of redemption, God has favored his people by his grace, characterized by the favor of his face. Now he smiles upon us through Christ. This was prefigured in the ministry of Moses and Aaron as mediators of the old covenant and consummated in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. “The LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you” (Num. 6:25). “And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10). “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

The one who has visited his people in history continues to visit them through his Word and Spirit in the person of the preacher. Nothing can replace that personal presence and that living voice. Pastors are called to follow Paul’s apostolic example, “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). We must know the sheep personally by name, even as their shepherd knows them (John 10:3).

Face-to-face encounter is central to the Incarnation. Because the face reveals the person, the best means of communication for John was to see his spiritual children “face to face” (2 John 12; 3 John 14). This reminds us that the word “communicate” comes from the Latin *communicare*, to commune, or to live in intimate fellowship with others. For John, pen and ink could only supplement personal presence.

Paul also recognized that distance can only be overcome by personal presence: “Without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you . . .” (Rom. 1:9–11). He knew his ministry to the church was incomplete without such presence: “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face” (Col. 2:1). The most beautiful expression of this is found in Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians:

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. . . . 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. . . . as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? (1 Thess. 2:7–8, 17; 3:10)

Public worship is all about faces: God’s face and his people’s faces. We see this in the old covenant: “Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him . . .” (Gen. 17:3). “David sought the face of the LORD” (2 Sam. 21:1). It has always been the desire of his people to have the closest personal contact with their Lord: “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek’” (Ps. 27:8).

While the place of worship in the new covenant is no longer limited to a geographical location (John 4), this does not mean that location is unimportant. In the new covenant, the temple is the church, wherever it meets. “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’” (2 Cor. 6:16). The writer of Hebrews sounds like the wise real estate agent, location, location, location, when he exhorts, “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:25). The location of worship matters, because the personal presence of God’s people matters.

The goal of redemptive history involves Christ’s and our personal presence. The consummate reality for the Christian will be seeing the face of Jesus Christ in resurrection glory. The transfiguration foreshadowed the coming glory reflected in the face of Jesus: “And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light” (Matt. 17:2). Paul looks forward to the final glory: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12). There is no better antidote to the electronic dispersion of our day than the counter-environment of the church, created by the Word of the good and great Shepherd.

Ministers of the Word must teach God’s people media wisdom (media ecology). To be good stewards of the media we must understand not only the content communicated but the nature of each medium itself—its benefits and liabilities. Electronic media are best for information, and as a supplement, not a replacement, for face-to-face, personal communication. When we know people well face to face, texting, email, and phone calls can then be effective supplements—in that order, from least to most personal, but nothing replaces personal face-to-face presence.

Our teaching should include technological etiquette. Manners in general are in a state of decay. By enumerating some of the dangers of poor manners in electronic communication, officers can head off some of the worst tendencies in the electronic environment. So many words are sent into cyberspace that would never be said face to face.

We must also encourage people to spend time with their families, developing the art of conversation. This requires some self-criticism regarding the time we spend alone on our devices.

Finally, we need to emphasize 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. Worship should be a time apart, unique in the atmosphere of reverence and awe. This is the day for absorbing and being formed by God's Word. "Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it" (Jer. 6:19).

Preaching Is the Unique Power of a Living Voice

There is a concreteness and power to the voice that reflects the power of God's voice in his created image-bearer, man (*imago Dei*). We note the effectiveness of orality when we read a poem aloud instead of just reading it silently on the page. So in prayer we have a sense of the reality of our communication with God when we pray aloud. "With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD" (Ps. 142:1). The Bible has much to say about the power of human speech. "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Prov. 12:18). The old adage about sticks and stones is more at home in a materialistic age. Anyone who knows the pain inflicted by gossip will quickly prefer a stone.

William Graham in *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* examines the oral nature of Martin Luther's approach to Scripture and preaching. Walter Ong describes his conclusion: "Graham brings out the sensory immediacy of the oral and its communal effectiveness. Hearing a speech unites an audience, individual reading of the speech fragments them."¹⁷ Ong is at his best and most useful as an apologist for the oral in his book *The Presence of the Word* (1967). He begins: "Man communicates with his whole body, and yet the word is his primary medium. Communication, like knowledge itself, flowers in speech."¹⁸ He goes on to say, "The word is not an inert record but a living something, like sound, something going on."¹⁹ Despite Ong's often-too-negative assessment of the written, he rightly laments the absence of the "wingèd word" in modern life. Only by the living word may persons enter into the consciousness and life of others.²⁰ Ong hopes that electronic media will revive our appreciation for words as sound. It is not in literate culture, however, that we are imprisoned, as Ong suspects. We are rather imprisoned in our sinful propensity to pervert all media for idolatrous purposes. Only through preaching does the Word of God have wings to fly into the hearts of the people in our day.

There is in the power of the voice, of the spoken word, a mystery, which stands as a poignant testimony against the flatness and superficiality of late modernity. Horizontally, that mystery is accounted for by the spiritual dimensions of the human soul. Vertically, that mystery is accounted for by the omnipresence of God. The Word, which he promises will accomplish everything for which he sends it (Isa. 55:11), is the power behind the change of heart referred to by Jesus as the new birth (John 3). The gospel message is equated by Paul with God's creative word spoken in Genesis 1:

¹⁷ Ong, Review: *Beyond the Written Word*, 204.

¹⁸ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 1.

¹⁹ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 12.

²⁰ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 15.

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:5–6)

The staccato commands of Genesis 1 demonstrate the power of God's spoken Word in the miraculous immediacy of his creative acts. Paul links the effect of God's spoken Word in creation with the power of preaching in the new creation. This is the nature of the sound of the human voice as a replica of God's voice.

At just this point the warning of Ong should be heeded: Spatialized accounts of language which make it a phenomenon rather than a communication, tend to think of God himself as no longer a communicator, one who speaks to man, but as a Great Architect (a typical eighteenth century concept) . . .²¹

The Bible, of course, does not pit the idea that God is the craftsman of space over against his orality. The two go hand in hand. Proverbs 8:30 pictures the eternal Son in his relationship to the created order as a master craftsman (ἰδρυτὴς artificer or architect). He is the great Supervisor, Builder, who superintends his creation project from beginning to end. But his voice is the instrument of his control according to Psalm 29:4–5: "The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon." As Ong points out, the Kantian distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena*, intended to preserve scientific epistemology, as well as religion, has tended rather to focus attention on appearances, and thus on the visual. But sound alone, Ong maintains, penetrates surfaces.²² "One does not produce words in order to get rid of them but rather to have them penetrate, impregnate, the mind of another."²³ We are again brought face to face with the need not to pit space against time, sound against sight. God is the Author of them both. However, Ong's strength is found in his assertion of the primacy of speech. We wish to make a more specific and fundamental assertion of the primacy of preaching, which is rooted in the Original Preacher, who inhabits eternity and is incarnate in time.

The biblical concept of teaching, in its relation to the effect of the voice, is captured in the word catechize (κατηχέω to instruct). It literally means *to sound around* or re-sound: "to sound a thing in one's ears, impress it upon one by word of mouth."²⁴ This potency of voice is used to describe the activity of the teacher of the law (Rom. 2:18) and the preacher of the gospel (Gal. 6:6). The voice of the preached Word is effective, as God blesses it through the illuminating power of his Spirit. Ong maintains that "early man" experienced words "as powerful, effective, of a piece with other actuality far more than later visualist man is likely to do. A word is a real happening, indeed a happening par excellence."²⁵ "[T]he word as sound establishes here-and-now personal presence. Abraham knew God's presence when he heard his 'voice.'"²⁶ This is why we refer to the act of preaching as the

²¹ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 73.

²² Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 74.

²³ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 98.

²⁴ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853).

²⁵ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 111.

²⁶ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 113.

“preaching moment” or “event.” Despite all the imperfections of the human messenger, God is acting in the “acoustic event” of preaching.²⁷

Ong’s mistake in this context is to attribute “more reality” to the spoken as opposed to the written word, because the latter is visual.²⁸ He goes on to assert: “Sound is a special sensory key to interiority.”²⁹ Ong insists that “the book takes the reader out of the tribe.”³⁰ This dichotomy between written and spoken is contrary to what the Bible clearly teaches about the complementary relationship between the two.

David’s meditation on the Word in Psalm 1, among dozens of other similar passages, demonstrates that private reading may also be a powerful vehicle for interiorizing, as Sven Birkerts has pointed out of reading in general. Furthermore, as we have seen, the public reading and preaching of the written Word seals what is written on the corporate consciousness and memory of the church, which has been entrusted with the deposit of the written Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). As a normative covenant document, the Bible has a unique power to unite. Eric Havelock states that the Bible is unique among printed books in remaining immune to McLuhan’s critique of the printed word.³¹ However, Ong’s concept of the word as event is very important to the preacher as he approaches the preaching moment—what Ong calls “the moment of truth”³²—and considers the unique God-given power of the human voice, especially when it is used to communicate the message of God’s written Word. “No other speech has the public and yet private nature of preaching.”³³ As Dave McClellan warns: “So if revelation remains silent and visual, it loses personal force. It becomes mere information, dead with regard to its power to inspire reverence and personal presence.”³⁴

The concreteness of the spoken word has no peer among the media in general. It is the primary means of human communication, because it is God’s primary way of communicating. Thus, preaching is his chosen way to address people in all ages precisely because it is unmediated by technology. Furthermore, as we have noted, biblical preaching is God’s chief antidote to idolatry. A people of the Word will accept no substitutes. The Word of God preached has no peer among spoken words. It is God’s means of imprinting his Word on the hearts and in the lives of his people.³⁵

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²⁷ Clyde E. Fant, *Preaching for Today* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 157ff.

²⁸ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 111.

²⁹ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 117.

³⁰ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 135.

³¹ Eric Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 49.

³² Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 154.

³³ Gerald Hamilton Kennedy, *His Word Through Preaching* (New York: Harper, 1947), 8.

³⁴ McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 102.

³⁵ Cf. Fant, *Preaching for Today*, 162. Quotes Thomas Aquinas: “Therefore it is fitting that Christ, as the most excellent teacher, should adapt that manner of teaching whereby his doctrine would be imprinted on the hearts of his hearers.”

Servant Standards

Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapters 7 and 8

by Alan D. Strange

Chapter VII Appeals

1. An appeal in a judicial case is the removal of the case to an appellate judicatory by the filing of a petition asking that the final judgment of a lower judicatory be reversed or modified. An appeal may be taken by the accused, or by a judicatory whose judgment has been reversed or modified by an appellate judicatory.

Comment: The appeal described here has reference only to a judicial case. The appeal of a complaint is described in BD 9.3 and in the following sections of BD 9. In a judicial case, the judicatory of original jurisdiction announces to one adjudged “guilty” (either by trial, BD 4, or having come as their own accuser, BD 5) the verdict and the proposed censure. The convicted party may then appeal to an appellate judicatory, petitioning a presbytery or general assembly (as the case may be), to reverse or modify the judgment of a lower judicatory.

To reverse the judgment of a lower judicatory means to find specifications of error in the procedure of the lower judicatory that warrant a “not guilty” verdict. To modify the judgment of a lower judicatory means to find specifications of error in the procedure of the lower judicatory that warrant a lesser censure than the one proposed by the lower judicatory. An appeal may be taken, as already noted, by the accused. This would be in the case of a session dealing with a congregant or a presbytery dealing with a minister. Further, an appeal may also be taken by a judicatory (in this case a session) whose judgment has been reversed or modified by a presbytery. That session, in such a case, can appeal to the general assembly the presbytery’s reversal or modification of its judgment. Thus, appeal can be taken from the decision of either the court of original jurisdiction or an appellate body that overruled the court of original jurisdiction.

2. Decisions and rulings made by the trial judicatory during the course of the trial shall not be appealable but may be assigned as grounds of appeal from the final judgment of the judicatory.

Comment: During the course of a trial, an accused party may lodge numerous objections to various decisions and rulings made by the trial judicatory. The trial judicatory should note such objections and exceptions to its rulings taken by a defendant in its minutes and the response made to such, particularly as to whether such objections were sustained or overruled (and any other decisions made with respect to them on the part of the trial judicatory). Such objections and exceptions are not themselves appealable, as if the trial could be stopped or interrupted to take such matters on appeal to

a higher judicatory. Rather, all such exceptions taken by the defendant to the proceedings of the trial judicatory in the course of the trial may be assigned as grounds of appeal—typically cited by the defendant as specifications of error on the part of the trial judicatory—if the trial judicatory, in its final judgment, finds the defendant “guilty” and proposes censure.

3. Notice of an intention to appeal must be filed in writing, within ten days after the judgment has been announced, with the clerk or the moderator of the judicatory from which appeal is to be taken.

Comment: The guilty party has ten days to file notice of intention to appeal in writing. Such notice should be filed with the clerk or moderator of the judicatory from which the appeal is to be taken. The ten-day period begins when the proposed judgment/censure has been announced to the one adjudged guilty (when it is proposed as the verdict and censure of the trial judicatory). If he fails or declines to appeal, the judicatory may execute his proposed censure after the expiration of the ten days. If he files intention to appeal within the ten-day period allotted for such, the judicatory may not execute its judgment but must now wait until the appeals process has run its course in the particular case. For instance, if a session proposes a censure of indefinite suspension, and the party adjudged guilty (either by trial or coming as his own accuser) notifies the judicatory of an intention to appeal, the judicatory must wait until the appellant has stopped appealing to execute the censure and must do so only in light of what appellate courts may have determined. If an appellant chooses not to appeal the decision of a session beyond the presbytery, for instance, things may proceed once the presbytery has ruled on the appeal. If the appellant chooses, however, to take his appeal to the general assembly, then matters must await the determination of that body.

4. In order to perfect an appeal, the appellant must lodge the appeal and the specifications of error with the clerk of the appellate judicatory within thirty days after the filing of the notice of appeal. The appellant shall also serve a copy of the appeal to the clerk of the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken. The clerk of the appellate judicatory shall give the appellant and the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken reasonable notice of the time, date, and place fixed by the appellate judicatory for the hearing of the appeal.

Comment: A distinction is to be made between the notice of intention to appeal, for which an appellant has ten days and is filed only with the judicatory from which appeal is taken, and the actual document that contains the substance of the appeal, for which the appellant has thirty days (after filing the notice of intention to appeal). This latter document must contain the specifications of error that constitute the appeal; in other words, the appeal proper consists of those things that the appellant believes went wrong in the lower judicatory. If, for instance, someone is appealing the decision of a session that served as his judicatory of original jurisdiction, the appeal to the presbytery will contain what the appellant believed was amiss in the session’s handling of his case. It should be clear that the appellant does not have his case retried on appeal.

The presbytery, as an appellate court (in this example), is not to retry the case. Rather, the presbytery is to look at the process that the session undertook in hearing the case: was it fair, did it attend to due process properly, etc.? These are the questions to be considered by the appellate judicatory, certainly in the case of a charge(s) pertaining to life (ethics/morals), as opposed to doctrine. In a case of someone charged with moral failure (violating, say, the sixth or seventh commandment), the appellate judicatory wants to

assure itself that the trial judicatory properly attended to the case (to evidence, witnesses, direct and cross examination, etc.). In a case of a doctrinal charge, on the other hand, an appellate judicatory is quite concerned as to whether the alleged doctrinal divergence is, in fact, a censurable departure from sound teaching, i.e., whether what is alleged to be teaching contrary to the Scriptures and secondary standards is, in fact, a doctrinal departure as alleged.

Copies of the “perfected appeal” shall within the thirty-day period allotted be furnished both to the clerk of the judicatory to which the appeal is made and to the clerk of the judicatory from which appeal is taken. The clerk of the judicatory to whom appeal is made shall furnish the appellant and the judicatory from which appeal is taken, notice as to when the appellate judicatory will hear the appeal. Such notice shall include the time, date, and place of the meeting of the appellate judicatory to hear the appeal. The notice shall be reasonable, i.e., it should be given in due time for proper planning (not “the presbytery meets in three days to hear your appeal”).

5. The clerk of the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken shall submit the entire record of the case, including the chronology, to the clerk of the appellate judicatory.

Comment: This matter is important enough to warrant its own separate section, because all the records of a case are vital and need to be fully furnished to the higher judicatory when a judicial case is on appeal. The clerk of the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken is required to submit the entire record of the case, including the chronology prepared by the presbytery, or the clerk (or others) acting on its behalf, to the clerk of the appellate judicatory. Assuming that the clerk of the judicatory from which appeal is taken has been duly notified of such by the appellant (a crucial matter that must be attended to), the clerk of the appellate judicatory should not have to ask the clerk of the judicatory from which appeal is taken to furnish him with all these relevant documents. The clerk of the lower judicatory from which appeal is taken is required to furnish the entire record of the case and should do so with as much dispatch as possible.

6. If the appellate judicatory does not sustain any of the specifications of error, the judgment of the lower judicatory shall be affirmed. If the appellate judicatory sustains any specification of error, it shall determine whether the error is of such importance as to require a reversal or modification of the judgment. An appellate judicatory which decides not to sustain the judgment of a lower judicatory may remit the case to the trial judicatory for a new trial, may modify the judgment, or may reverse the judgment.

Comment: The appellate judicatory, in taking up the case on appeal, votes on each specification of error, the moderator preferably putting the matter in each case as, “Shall this particular specification of error be sustained?” If the appellate judicatory does not sustain any of the specifications of error alleged with respect to the proceedings of the lower judicatory, the judgement of the lower judicatory shall be affirmed. If, on the other hand, the appellate judicatory does sustain any single error, the appellate judicatory shall then proceed to determine whether the error is of such importance as to require a reversal or modification of the judgment of the lower judicatory.

The appellate judicatory may decide that the error is of such a nature (that it is insignificant, for example) that it does not warrant reversing or modifying the lower judicatory’s judgment. If it does decide that the error or errors warrant serious treatment, however, it may do one of three things, as noted in the last sentence: it may remit the case

to the trial judicatory for a new trial, it may modify the lower court's judgment, or it may reverse the judgment of the lower court.

A reversal of the judgment of the lower judicatory would involve a determination on the part of the appellate judicatory that the guilty verdict of the lower judicatory was improperly arrived at and that the accused is, in fact, not guilty (rather than guilty). A modification of the judgment of the lower judicatory would involve a determination on the part of the appellate judicatory that the censure of the lower judicatory was unduly severe and should be lessened (e.g., an excommunication should be reduced to an indefinite suspension).

It should be noted that appeals work only in the direction, respecting reversal or modification, of a guilty verdict being reversed to a not guilty verdict or of a more severe censure being lessened to a less severe censure. This is because all appeals in a judicial case are from the accused, and he would never be asking that a not guilty verdict become a guilty verdict (he would have simply pled "guilty" if he so desired) or a lesser censure to become a stricter one (he would not be appealing a censure unless he wanted a reduced one).

In addition to modifying or reversing the judgment of the lower court, the appellate judicatory may remit the case to the trial judicatory for a new trial. In such a case, the appellate judicatory would customarily give grounds to the court of original jurisdiction as to why a new trial is ordered and any special instructions for such that the appeal might be thought to have shown warranted. For example, the appeals court might instruct the trial court to disregard something that the lower court took as proper evidence at trial or to disqualify a witness that the appeals court deemed not to be competent. In any case, the appeals court can require a retrial that follows any instructions that it thinks necessary for the case to be fairly heard and handled.

7. When the judgment of a lower judicatory is before an appellate judicatory, neither the appellant, nor any member of the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken shall propose or second motions, or vote in any decisions concerning the case.

Comment: When the judgment of a lower judicatory is before an appellate judicatory (either at the presbytery or general assembly level), the involved parties, while having privilege of the floor, may not make or second any motions whatsoever pertaining to the case (whether procedural or substantive), nor may they vote in any decisions concerning the case. The involved parties would include the appellant and the judicatory from whose judgment the appeal is taken. This means that in the case of an appeal from a judgment of a session, neither those bringing the appeal, which includes counsel to the appellant(s), nor the session being appealed may make or second motions or vote in any decisions of the presbytery, the court of appeal, concerning the case. Similarly, when a presbytery's judgment is appealed to the general assembly, neither the appellants nor the presbytery whose judgment is being appealed to the assembly may perform any of the prohibited functions.

[Suggested forms to use when giving a notice to appeal or for the appeal itself are located on pages 172–73.]

Chapter VIII

Dissents and Protest

1. Any member of a judicatory who is entitled to vote on a question and who votes against the action or judgment of the judicatory thereon may request that his vote be recorded in the minutes of the judicatory.

Comment: Any member of a session, presbytery, or general assembly who has the right to vote on a question before the relevant body and who votes contrary to the action or judgment of said judicatory may request that his vote be recorded in the minutes of that body. This means that if he votes affirmatively, and the body defeats the motion in question by a majority “no” vote, said member may request his affirmative vote to be recorded in the minutes. Likewise, if the body adopts a matter, by a majority “aye” or “yes” vote, a member who stands in opposition to this may request that his negative vote be recorded in the minutes.

It is common courtesy for all judicatories to grant this request and to thus record affirmative or negative votes as the case may warrant, depending upon whether the affirmative or negative vote prevailed. This is generally viewed, taken in concert with section 2 of this chapter, as well as the next chapter on Complaints (Chapter 9), as the first step in registering disagreement with the actions of a body. For most, requesting that their votes be recorded ends the matter. For those that have greater, continuing, in short, unresolved concerns about the way a vote went, this may be, but certainly need not be, the first step in a process that may eventuate in a protest and/or a complaint. It is not the case that one may only complain when one has registered a contrary vote and protested. But it is the case that some start with this and, if unsatisfied, proceed to greater protests if they think that the case is serious enough to warrant such.

2. Any member of a judicatory may file a written protest stating his reasons for objecting to an action or judgment of the judicatory. A protest must be filed with the moderator or clerk within ten days after the judicatory has taken the action or announced the judgment, provided, however, that a protest against an action or judgment of the general assembly must be filed prior to the dissolution thereof. A protest shall be read to the judicatory and shall be recorded in the minutes.

Comment: This section addresses what may be a next level after recording one’s contrary vote (see comment on section 1, above). It is not necessary that the filing of a protest follow the recording of a vote contrary to the action of a judicatory: customarily it does not. Most leave their wish to make known their objection to some action of a judicatory at the level of the recorded contrary vote. It is also not required that the recording of a contrary vote precede the filing of a protest, as if one could not properly protest without having first recorded one’s contrary vote. But these things are sometimes linked, and some parties wish to get their vote recorded, file a protest, and file a complaint in cases where they wish to show that a course of opposition to the actions of a judicatory was carefully and deliberately taken.

Any member of a judicatory may file a written protest enumerating his reasons for objecting to some action or judgment of a judicatory. Note that he need not have been present when the judicatory took the action. This means that a minister on a session or an active ruling elder can protest an action of the session, even when he may have been absent from the meeting that took the action. Similarly, a ministerial member of the presbytery, whether present at the meeting or not (as well as any commissioned ruling elders at the meeting), would be eligible to file a protest.

Such a protest document would state the reasons for objecting to the judicatory's action(s) and must be filed with the respective moderator or clerk within ten days after the session or presbytery took the action to which the protesting party objects. In the case of a general assembly, any such protests that may be filed with that body must be filed prior to the dissolution of the general assembly. A protest is to be read to the judicatory and shall be recorded in the minutes.

3. The judicatory may, if it so desires, place in its minutes an answer to a protest.

Comment: A judicatory whose action has been protested may place in its minutes any such answer to the protest as it may deem appropriate. A judicatory is, of course, not required to place an answer to a protest but may "if it so desires." One of the good reasons for answering a protest is to show that the judicatory has heard and considered it. The answer could even accede in whole or part to the protest, as well as deny the reasons in the protest as valid, relevant, etc. If the judicatory in any measure accedes, it may well be the case that the judicatory reverses itself in some way, perhaps in reconsidering the question and voting as the protest preferred, declaring something null and void, etc.

Contrariwise, a judicatory may wisely take the occasion of an answer to defend its actions more thoroughly and cogently, perhaps convincing the protesters of the propriety of the judicatory in the actions protested and even staving off future complaints. An answer to a protest provides a record of the judicatory's rationale for the actions taken, as well as which ones were protested, both for the better informing of protesters (making for the purity, peace, and unity of the church) and the judicatory itself, including providing a good record of the judicatory's rationale, especially helpful in any potential appeals that might emerge in the event that protests develop into complaints.

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Servant Standards

Cross-Presbytery Complaints: *Does* the Book of Discipline Allow a Session to Complain against a Session in Another Presbytery—And *Should* It?¹

By David G. Graves, Brett A. McNeill, and John W. Mahaffy

Does the Book Allow It?

In recent discussions the two questions in the subtitle have, unfortunately, often been conflated. Although some argue that the “language of ‘session against another session’ in BD 9.1 is open to two incompatible interpretations” (Report of the Committee on Appeals and Complaints to the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly, Minutes, 288), two general assemblies have answered that question. Both affirmed that the book allows a session to bring a complaint against a session in another presbytery.

A committee reporting to the Seventeenth (1950) General Assembly observed: Particularly worthy of note is the provision of our Book of Discipline as to who may make a complaint and against whom a complaint may be made. Very few churches have a provision that even approaches this one in point of broadness. . . . [T]he provision of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church for complaints is broad indeed. Not only may complaints concern either administrative or judicial matters, but—what is extremely significant—complaints may in certain instances be made against judicatories to which the complainant is not subject. For example, one session may complain against another session and one presbytery against another presbytery. . . . Our Book of Discipline does not even restrict this right to sessions within the same presbytery. It simply says that a complaint may be brought “by one session against another session.”²

Note that membership of that committee included a member (R. B. Kuiper) of the committee that had earlier prepared the first Book of Discipline of the OPC—it understood the original intent of the document. Furthermore, the Seventeenth General Assembly urged the sessions and presbyteries “to apply in their instruction and discipline

¹ This is a slightly edited form of a paper given to Advisory Committee 10 of the Eighty-Ninth (2023) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and, with permission of that committee, distributed to the Assembly. The Assembly declined to adopt the proposed amendment to the Book of Discipline 9.1.

² Excerpted from the *Minutes of the Seventeenth General Assembly*, 27–31 (<https://opcgamminutes.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/1950-GA-17.pdf>).

the approach recommended in the report submitted to the Seventeenth General Assembly,”³ thus underlining the Assembly’s agreement with the committee.

More recently the Eighty-Seventh (2021) General Assembly sustained a complaint on appeal which argued that the Presbytery of the Northwest erred when it refused to allow a session from another presbytery to lodge a complaint against a session in that presbytery, requiring the presbytery to apologize to the session whose complaints it found out of order.⁴ Edited versions of arguments on both sides of the question, as they had been presented in the presbytery involved, can be found as part of Overture 3 to the Eighty-Eighth (2022) General Assembly.⁵

The question, does the book allow cross-presbytery sessional complaints, has been asked and answered in the affirmative by two separate General Assemblies of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. To limit the ability of one session to complain only against sessions within their own presbytery, therefore, would amount to a *change* of polity, not a *clarification*.

Should the Book Allow It?

The issue before the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly was whether the Book of Discipline 9.1 should be amended. We focus briefly on several important points.

The Grounds provided by the Committee on Appeals and Complaints made an argument from silence, suggesting that the explicit language of the BD 9.1, that a complaint can be brought “by one session against another session,” should be understood as being overridden by an implied, unstated principle of jurisdiction, prohibiting cross-presbytery complaints by sessions. The argument from jurisdiction seems not to have persuaded Advisory Committee 10 in 2021, which stated that “[e]very session in the OPC is subject to the jurisdiction of the General Assembly.”⁶

Original jurisdiction is important, but it does not create the water-tight compartments suggested in the Grounds for the proposed amendment. A member of the OPC has standing to bring judicial charges against someone subject to a different judicatory. When he does so, he is warned by the latter’s judicatory that he may be censured *by it* if charges may not be instituted (BD 3.6). In bringing charges against someone in a different judicatory, the one presenting charges subjects himself to that judicatory for that limited purpose. Similarly, if a session appeals a complaint brought against a session in another presbytery, it brings the appeal to the presbytery of the complained against session. That is the point of “the presbytery which has jurisdiction over it” in BD 9.5. If the book did not allow for cross-presbytery complaints, there could be only one presbytery involved and the phrase would be superfluous.

Cross-presbytery complaints appear to be rare in the OPC. We question whether the issue requires an amendment to the constitution of the church. The proposal seems to be a solution in search of a problem.

³ *Minutes of the Seventeenth General Assembly*, p. 31.

⁴ *Minutes of the Eighty-Seventh General Assembly*, §111, §112, 29 (<https://opcgaminutes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GA-Minutes-2021-without-CFM-Report-or-Ministers-List-10.30.21.pdf>)

⁵ Pages 57–66 (<https://opcgaminutes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GA-Minutes-Yearbook-2022-Digital-Edition-No-CFM-Report-or-Ministers.pdf>)

⁶ *Minutes of the Eighty-Seventh General Assembly*, §101, 28.

More to the point is to ask whether the current wording was intentional or just an inadvertent slip which ignored a basic Presbyterian principle, that of jurisdiction. When the Seventeenth General Assembly made its decisions on this matter, it was not acting in ignorance of the principle of jurisdiction. Its committee, which included a member who had been part of developing the first Book of Discipline of the OPC, reported to it:

*It is clear that in both the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and the Reformed Church in America one may complain only against the judicatory to which one is subject, and in the former a Complaint may be made only in a matter of administrative discipline, while in the latter it may be made also in a matter of judicial discipline. In comparison with these provisions, the provision of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church for complaints is broad indeed. Not only may complaints concern either administrative or judicial matters, but—what is extremely significant—complaints may in certain instances be made against judicatories to which the complainant is not subject. (emphasis added)*⁷

When the OPC adopted its own tertiary standards, while remaining thoroughly Presbyterian, it self-consciously modified certain things because of events that contributed to its founding. It explicitly prohibited a judicatory from depriving a defendant of the right to set forth arguments from Scripture. It stated that ownership of the property of a congregation lay with the local church. Similarly, as indicated in the quotation above, it broadened the standing of sessions to bring complaints against other sessions, self-consciously differing from the Presbyterian Church USA on this issue.

Why this broadening? Although Masonic membership may have been an issue at the Seventeenth General Assembly, that was not on the mind of our fathers in 1936. The burning issue, rather, was that of accountability in the church, seen in departures from Scripture and principles of Presbyterianism, including, perhaps, the well-known sermon “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” by Harry Emerson Fosdick on May 21, 1922. Fosdick was a Baptist, not subject to Presbyterian judicatories, and holding accountable the session that hosted the message was difficult. We would suggest that those who formed the OPC had seen their church drift away from Scripture, and they sought, where possible, to include ways of holding one another accountable. The PCUSA of 1936 was no longer the church of Charles Hodge, and the founders of the OPC were willing to modify *The Form of Government, the Discipline, and the Directory for Worship* used by Hodge in 1870.

Furthermore, it is helpful to keep in mind that jurisdiction and standing, while related, are different concepts. First, that is evident in judicial process—a member of the church does not have to be immediately subject to the jurisdiction of the body with which he has standing to file charges. Second, a session in one presbytery can be harmed by an administrative decision of a session in another presbytery and ought to be able to resolve the issue in the most direct way possible. Third, as the minutes quoted above indicate, the Seventeenth General Assembly explicitly recognized the standing of sessions to bring complaints even against judicatories to whose jurisdiction they were not subject, one session against another session, even if not in the same presbytery.

⁷ *Minutes of the Seventeenth General Assembly*, 28.

Conclusion

The question before this Assembly was whether, on the basis of an implied principle of jurisdiction, to amend BD 9.1 in a direction that makes mutual accountability on the part of sessions more difficult. In 2023 we are more distant in time from the founding of the OPC than our fathers in 1936 were from the book used by Hodge in 1870. The authors of this paper are deeply thankful that the Lord has preserved the OPC as a faithful church. Yet the danger of ecclesiastical drifting has not receded to the point of requiring less mutual accountability than our fathers built into the Book of Discipline. We are grateful that the Eighty-Ninth General Assembly decided *not to* propose an amendment to BD 9.1.

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Servant Work

The Ruling Elder among the Flock

Letters to a Younger Ruling Elder, No. 8

By An Older Elder

My dear James,

As I pulled into the driveway this afternoon, I met Don, our mailman, delivering your letter. I thanked him for his services. Don does not know the Lord. I sometimes ask him with a smile, “have you read God’s letter yet?” He keeps saying, “maybe someday.” Our sad world forgets that our days are numbered, and “someday” may be too late. I keep praying for Don, nonetheless. Speaking of numbered days, I do want to let you know something, James. My good doctor gave me the news that the tests came back, and it looks like cancer. I did not want to hide this from you, nor do I want you to worry about it. I am going to see a specialist, and in the meantime I am perfectly content to know that our times are in God’s hands (Ps. 31:15).

Thank you for the update on your meeting with that church member. I am glad you found that a casual, friendly conversation over a bite to eat after work between two Christian brothers can be profitable. You mentioned that you sometimes find it difficult during these talks to turn the focus to spiritual matters. That is a good topic for discussion. And this brings up a whole subject which we have not explicitly talked about yet, namely, *the ruling elder among the flock*. Allow me, therefore, to share a few thoughts on this subject, and hopefully I can try to answer your question in the process.

It is one of your responsibilities as a ruling elder to get to know the state of your flock (Prov. 27:23). You, along with the session, are to “take heed” to them (Acts 20:28, NKJV). That word, “take heed,” was sometimes used of *bringing a ship to land*. The idea is to *draw close* and to *bring near*. That is what we are to do with our dear people as elders: bring them near; draw them in. I did not appreciate this sufficiently in my early years as an elder. I think the most important chapter in the Bible on this is John 10. Allow me to share a few observations about our work drawn from this chapter.

First, and most basically, our people need to hear our voice. Jesus said of the true shepherd, “The sheep hear his voice (John 10:3).” This may be as simple as an email, a card, or a greeting after church. Even better is a phone call to check in, particularly if there are any matters of concern that your people have shared. Use your words to build your people up. Be a Barnabas, a son of encouragement. Encourage them with many words (Acts 20:2).

Let me only add a brief caution here, which I do not think you will need. Be careful in conversation of *talking too much*. I knew a dear elder once who was a great talker. But he would go on and on such that his unsuspecting victims, caught in his web of words, soon wished he would just eat them and be done with it.

Second, it is important to see and visit your people outside of the context of Sunday worship services, both formally and informally. I love the words of John 10:14: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” It is hard to get to know the sheep, and for them to know you, in a few minutes after worship. I wouldn’t be too prescriptive here about how this is done. Consistency is the key. Sessions and individual ruling elders must work this out.

Third, and this is really implied in *knowing* the sheep: practice asking questions. And this circles us back to the thing you asked me about in your letter. How do you turn the conversation to spiritual matters? Do what Jesus did. He asked questions. One I like is to ask something like, “So that I can be praying best for you, what would you say is the hardest thing in your Christian life right now?”

Another question I like is, “Tell me, do you find yourself to be growing spiritually at this point in your Christian life, and to what do you attribute this to?” Healthy Christians are growing Christians (2 Pet. 3:18). Gardiner Spring put it this way, “It is a distinguishing trait in the character of every good man that he grows in grace.”¹ So, ask about their growth. Ask what is most helping their growth right now. Is it a sermon series, a Bible study, their own time in the Word? Is it a spiritual book, or maybe a godly friend? Ask. Then listen.

James, if you prayerfully and humbly focus on doing these things, you will be both a blessing to your pastor and a blessing to the flock.

Your soul’s well-wisher,

An Older Elder

¹ Gardiner Spring, *The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), 64.

ServantReading

Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation, by Collin Hansen

by William Edgar

Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation, by Collin Hansen. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2023, xii + 306 pages, \$22.99.

My good friend,

You (foolishly) asked me what stood out for me in your splendid biography of Tim. That is a bit like asking an aging Swiss what he liked most about his country. In no particular order here are a few of my thoughts.

1) At the level of style, your prose is utterly readable. And your choices of stories and facts—you manage to pack so much in, within the limits of 272 pages, a feat few biographers have accomplished. They either err on the side of information overload or just hagiography. I thought I knew the man pretty well but you showed me aspects of his life I had little or no knowledge about. I think Tim has meant more to me than most friends; and he was a very good friend, though he may have thought it was a one-way street.

2) I share many of the personal and geographical influences which affected him and Kathy. But because I am from France and went to Westminster, these do not exactly match up. I have only encountered the full British influence recently. But several influences do match. I cannot enumerate all of them here. But certainly at the top of the list are John Stott, Ed Clowney, Harvie Conn, Kennedy Smartt, Jack Miller; the cities of Boston and New York (my family includes the founders); also ministries like L'Abri, where I became a Christian, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, which nurtured me and published my books, and the Gospel Coalition, which embodies many of the principles of outreach I believe in. Of course, all the aspects of the influence of Westminster Seminary converge with my own formation (a sixty-year involvement). I could say a lot more concerning the seminary (I thought you did an excellent job of describing the place and its personnel, its strengths and its weaknesses.) I was greatly interested in your descriptions of Gordon-Conwell. What a hard time they are going through!

3) Human stories. (a) Your depiction of Kathy and their “romance” is deeply moving. (b) I loved some of the inside line on Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Among the many accounts I enjoyed was that of Elizabeth Elliott. For years I struggled with (what I perceived to be) her fatalism. We had some unfortunate personal encounters. What changed my mind is Ellen Vaughn's *Becoming E. E.*—she helped me understand what I had not liked about her and gain great respect for her. (c) Your wonderful descriptions of Tim's soul: his struggles, his passions, his vision. (d) How he got to New York by process of elimination! (e) His disarming humility.

4) From cover to cover the book describes my own vision for the Christian faith. While it is all a bit intimidating (honestly confronting my very limited contributions compared to—ahem—brother Keller) it shows the glories of the gospel in its every aspect. It is for this I am most deeply grateful to you.

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ServantReading

Recovering Our Sanity: How the Fear of God Conquers the Fears that Divide Us, *By Michael Horton*

Andy Wilson

Recovering Our Sanity: How the Fear of God Conquers the Fears that Divide Us, by Michael Horton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022, xiv + 306 pages, \$24.99.

“I’m telling you, *this is the way modern society works*—by the constant creation of fear.”¹ While those words are spoken by a character in a work of fiction, Michael Horton agrees that fear is a dominant force in modern life. The fact that this is true should not sit well with us, because fearmongering is dehumanizing. In Horton’s words, God “did not design us to live in a perpetual state of emergency” (2).

After an introductory chapter that shows how life in today’s world can be described as “A Pandemic of Fear,” the main chapters of this book are divided into two parts under the headings “The Fear to End All Fears” and “Facing Our Fears with Eyes Raised to God.” The theme of part one is that cultivating and maintaining the fear of God keeps other sources of fear in proper perspective. Horton describes fearing God as “living with the grain of reality” (28), noting that “living against the grain of reality is the epitome of insanity” (50). Nebuchadnezzar’s experience of madness in Daniel 4 is used to illustrate this point. Horton reflects upon that episode by noting that “the illusion is that we are in charge. It’s autonomy that is the myth—and the sooner we raise our eyes to heaven, the sooner our sanity will be restored” (57). This is probably the book’s most important insight. Soundness of mind depends on our ability to be grateful for the world as it has been given to us, even with all the constraints of reality and in spite of all the havoc wrought by human fallenness.² And Horton reminds us that the deepest gratitude is cultivated in our hearts when we abandon our reality-denying attempts at self-justification and lay hold of the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

In part two, Horton applies the principles outlined in part one to the sources of fear that confront us in the world today. There are chapters dealing with death, suffering, work, the environment, politics, religious liberty, the LGBTQ+ movement, and racial matters. One of the best insights in this section comes in response to the way technology and social media incline us to live in echo chambers and view anyone who disagrees with us as the intolerable “other.” Horton is right to remind us that we are to see all people,

¹ Michael Crichton, *State of Fear* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 456.

² In connection with this, it is interesting to note that recent studies have shown that those who embrace progressive ideology, with its utopian vision that is uncongenial to gratitude, are especially prone to poor mental health. See Shaun Rieley, “Progressively Mental,” *The American Conservative* (Apr. 14, 2023): <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/progressively-mental/>, accessed April 15, 2023.

even those with whom we have sharp disagreements, as neighbors whom we are called to love.

In his chapter on politics, Horton takes on the hot topic of Christian nationalism, contending that it is inconsistent with our era of redemptive history and with our nation's founding principles. While this line of argumentation deals a significant blow to things like theonomy and an established church, there is still a measure of complexity to this matter. Many Christians, whether or not they identify as Christian nationalists,³ think that they should seek the welfare of their political communities by striving to order them according to the principles of right and wrong set forth in God's moral law. This is made especially challenging when the dominant social imaginary⁴ leads to grave misreadings of the light of nature. Confronted with such a situation, the notion of recovering the America that once embraced a generic Christian identity seems pretty desirable. That being said, it also seems that the only realistic way this might happen is if the church, as an institution, keeps its focus on its task of making disciples.

Horton begins this book by saying that his goal is "not to take sides in cultural and political debates" (17). In spite of this, the things that he says and the sources that he references concerning certain topics will likely alienate a number of readers who might otherwise have been open to considering his theological insights. I wish that Horton had been able to express more sympathy toward the concerns of Christians who take a different view than he does on matters like climate science, immigration, systemic racism, and Donald Trump. The book will appeal to Christians who prefer the kind of cultural and political engagement modeled by evangelicals like Russell Moore (who writes the forward in the book) and David French (whose writings are cited at several points). But many believers see serious deficiencies with that type of strategy.⁵ Horton could have had a broader readership if he had been more solicitous toward those who think that a different approach is needed.

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³ A number of astute reflections are being written about various aspects of this subject. On the benefits of some form of cultural Christianity, see Ben C. Dunson, "Cultural Christianity Is About Culture," *American Reformer* (Apr. 27, 2023): <https://americanreformer.org/2023/04/cultural-christianity-is-about-culture/>, accessed May 1, 2023. For a nuanced critique of one popular expression of Christian nationalism, see Kevin DeYoung, "The Rise of Right-Wing Wokeism," *The Gospel Coalition* (Nov. 28, 2022): <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/christian-nationalism-wolfe/>, accessed Dec. 7, 2022.

⁴ "Social imaginary" is a phrase coined by philosopher Charles Taylor to describe "the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings." Cited in Carl R. Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022), 27.

⁵ See the following articles: Carl R. Trueman, "David French and the Future of Orthodox Protestantism," *First Things* (Nov. 25, 2022): <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2022/11/david-french-and-the-future-of-orthodox-protestantism>, accessed Nov. 25, 2022; John Ehrett, "The Embarrassment Reflex: Evangelicals and Culture," *American Reformer* (Oct. 5, 2021): <https://americanreformer.org/2021/10/the-embarrassment-reflex-evangelicals-and-culture/>, accessed May 8, 2023.

Servant Poetry

Wallace Stevens (1879–1955)

Sunday Morning

I

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,
As a calm darkens among water-lights.
The pungent oranges and bright, green wings
Seem things in some procession of the dead,
Winding across wide water, without sound.
The day is like wide water, without sound,
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,
Dominion of the blood and sepulchre.

II

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?
What is divinity if it can come
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else
In any balm or beauty of the earth,
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?
Divinity must live within herself:
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;
All pleasures and all pains, remembering
The bough of summer and the winter branch.
These are the measures destined for her soul.

III

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.
No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave

Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind.
He moved among us, as a muttering king,
Magnificent, would move among his hinds,
Until our blood, commingling, virginal,
With heaven, brought such requital to desire
The very hinds discerned it, in a star.
Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be
The blood of paradise? And shall the earth
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?
The sky will be much friendlier then than now,
A part of labor and a part of pain,
And next in glory to enduring love,
Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

IV

She says, "I am content when wakened birds,
Before they fly, test the reality
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields
Return no more, where, then, is paradise?"
There is not any haunt of prophecy,
Nor any old chimera of the grave,
Neither the golden underground, nor isle
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured
As April's green endures; or will endure
Like her remembrance of awakened birds,
Or her desire for June and evening, tipped
By the consummation of the swallow's wings.

V

She says, "But in contentment I still feel
The need of some imperishable bliss."
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,
Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams
And our desires. Although she strews the leaves
Of sure obliteration on our paths,
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths
Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love
Whispered a little out of tenderness,
She makes the willow shiver in the sun
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.
She causes boys to pile new plums and pears
On disregarded plate. The maidens taste

And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

VI

Is there no change of death in paradise?
Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs
Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,
Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,
With rivers like our own that seek for seas
They never find, the same receding shores
That never touch with inarticulate pang?
Why set the pear upon those river-banks
Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?
Alas, that they should wear our colors there,
The silken weavings of our afternoons,
And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!
Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,
Within whose burning bosom we devise
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

VII

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,
Not as a god, but as a god might be,
Naked among them, like a savage source.
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,
Out of their blood, returning to the sky;
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,
The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills,
That choir among themselves long afterward.
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
Of men that perish and of summer morn.
And whence they came and whither they shall go
The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

VIII

She hears, upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay."
We live in an old chaos of the sun,
Or old dependency of day and night,
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,
Of that wide water, inescapable.
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail

Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

Notes:

This is the later and more definitive version of "Sunday Morning." [Read the first published version of this poem, which appeared in *Poetry* magazine, here.](#) In 1915, editor Harriet Monroe asked Stevens to cut several stanzas for *Poetry*, and Stevens would later restore these cut stanzas when he published the poem in book form in 1923.

Source: *The Collected Poems* (1954)

* * *

G. E. Reynolds (1949–)

Sunday Morning Revisited

For Wallace Stevens

I

The morning is a rush, whether
Or not I preach—well ironed
Shirts and Windsor knotted ties
With contemplation of the dignity
Of the day, and sometimes a close
Reading of a text and manuscript
As sunshine often streaks across the
Page to accent the meaning
Of the words, etching in my mind
The gravity and splendor of my task,
Fortified by crisp bacon and perfect
Eggs, only on Sunday morning.

II

Other days are oatmeal days
For cardiac strength, but my heart
On Sunday morning is buttressed
By the sheer and strenuous beauty
Of the penetrating Word of God
That recounts the ancient sacrifice
That illuminates this day of days,
Dissipating the evanescent world
With all its baubles and enchantments—

Vanity fair delusions with dreams
Of Paradise rooted in this
Present evil age—passing bliss.

III

On our way to worship we pass
The donut shop with Hopper essences
And plastic features accentuating
The ersatz dream that enthralls us
All, unless the darkness is impaled
By the cross's oblique victory,
Unearthly hope where despair
Seemed to hold the day. Then
Cloudy, stormy, or fair weather seems
Unimportant in light of the message
Overreaching the immanent day.
Bleakness does not win now.

IV

Then worship overshines the maelstrom
Of modernity—yes, the demon of
The day is mastered by the presence
Of the Lamb who comforts and
Condemns, at once intrudes his
Person to confirm that he
Is no longer dead as unbelief asserts.
Stevens assumes is he is still dead,
But witnesses affirm he is alive
Having stormed his tomb
And contradicted all his foes
With lustrous resurrection.

V

The suppliant has overcome
The sybarite as we celebrate
The wakening cues that energize
The pilgrims on our exodus from
This present life to the bliss that
Awaits each traveler in the wilderness
We now endure with its temporal
Blessings which we enjoy. I often
Look out to see the floating
Fields of hay as I worship
And see the glory of God

In this present fleeting world.

VI

Wallace, you had eight stanzas
Seeming to desire an imperishable
Bliss, some intangible hope
Of something more than this
Present field of temporary joys.
How can death be the mother
Of beauty when it goes down
To darkness in the end? How
Can this be a good Sunday morning?
No, you missed this in your youth,
For perhaps there was only
An austere remembrance for you then.

VII

Now I propose a different Sunday
Morning, not of mourning the chaos
Of the sun as you do—God help us,
For the picture He presents is
Of a coming morning of the Son
In which the birds of Paradise arise
Like larks at break of day to usher in
The hymns at heaven's gate
That bring the wealth of Gospel
News that heartens singers in the pews
To dampen all the darkened views
That this drear world imbues.

VIII

Here is the proffered Paradise
Of perfect peace of the Lords Day
Lord, when the marriage feast
Of the Lamb will be reality,
This is the swallowing of death
When all wrongs will be
Righted and the finest wine and
Wheat will be enjoyed by the poor and
The needy, and all crying will be
Quenched by the mercy of the Lord—
Bliss will be enjoyed by every
Follower of the Lamb slain for them.

And raised to bring bliss, not darkness
On the wings of the Sun of righteousness.