

ordained servant

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# Jonah's Baptism



# Ordained Servant Online

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**CURRENT ISSUE: JONAH'S BAPTISM**

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### *From the Editor*

It is not a call to the ministry of the Word to be envied—swallowed by a great fish and spit onto land. But Jonah's experience is a reminder that when God calls us to this office he means business. Robert Mossotti explores the relationship between Jonah's baptism into ministry and the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in his article "Jonah's Baptism"—a typological connection that is given to us explicitly by the Lord Jesus himself.

For reviews this month we have Carl Trueman reviewing David VanDrunen's significant contribution to the Reformed theory of natural law in *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*. Embedding the Reformed doctrine of natural law in extensive biblical exegesis makes a strong case for this recently forgotten post-Reformation teaching. Please note that a clarification was added three days after the initial online publication of this review. Carl Trueman graciously agreed with the clarification.

Ted Turnau reviews Os Guinness's latest contribution to worldview apologetics *Fool's Talk* in "Insightful Fool's Talk." Guinness makes a plea for the revival of the art of persuasion, and Turnau brings Van Tilian insights to bear on the book.

Sherif Gendy critically reviews Aaron Chalmers's *Interpreting the Prophets* by contrasting the difference in interpreting the prophets from a canonical perspective and the more tenuous view of assumed historical contexts.

Richard Gamble briefly reviews Larry Siedentop's *Inventing the Individual*, disapproving of Siedentop's coopting of Christianity "for the purposes of present action and not for the purposes of cultivating historical consciousness."

I review two homiletical books: R. Larry Overstreet's *Persuasive Preaching* and Duane Litfin's *Paul's Theology of Preaching* in a review article, "To Persuade or Not to Persuade," comparing two very different assessments of the concept of persuasion in Paul's homiletical theology. Litfin's book is a revision of his 1994 *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation* and a major contribution to our understanding of Paul's defense of his preaching in the Corinthian church.

Our poem this month is Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Cowper's Grave." This double couplet quatrain in iambic heptameter ("a fourteener," fourteen syllables in seven iambic feet) is a serious meditation on the mixture of hope and gloom in the life of poet William Cowper (pronounced Cooper). Neither Browning nor Cowper are read much today—a pity, especially in the case of Cowper. The demanding critic Harold Bloom considers

Cowper's poem "The Task," written shortly after his conversion, to be one of "considerable aesthetic merit." Fortunately we have six Cowper hymns in the *Revised Trinity Hymnal* (128, 145, 253, 377, 534, 621). Bloom laments that Browning, whose poetry he thinks aesthetically inadequate, has recently eclipsed her husband Robert's poetic genius due to feminist prejudice. I'll leave it to the reader to decide.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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- Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861), "Cowper's Grave"

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

# Servant Truth

## Jonah's Baptism

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by Robert Mossotti<sup>1</sup>

“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead’ ” (Luke 24:45–46).

Nowhere in the Old Testament is it “written” that the Christ should suffer death only to rise again on the third day—at least no where is it written explicitly. It is only by following Jesus’s own hermeneutics that we can find this idea in the OT.<sup>2</sup> Since Christ is the new and true, that is, the antitypical, Israel, his death and resurrection are foreshadowed in Hosea 6:2; thus, vindicating, humanly speaking, this use of the OT by Jesus. However, for all the merits this text from Hosea has as being the OT “writing” to which our Lord here refers, he was at least additionally referring to the second chapter of the book of the prophet Jonah. After all, it was the clear intention of Christ that we find a direct (“as . . . so”) correlation between his death, burial, and resurrection and the experiences of Jonah poetically related in that chapter. “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40). But before we can explore those correspondences in any depth, it must be shown that there is a thematic connection, namely, the theme of baptism, that connects the experiences of the prophet Jonah and those of the Christ. In what way can it be said that both Jonah’s and Jesus’s experiences can be understood in terms of baptism?

In brief, Jesus directs us to think of his death and burial in terms of a baptism in Luke 12:50. His passing under the judgment of Calvary and the trial of the tomb is revealed in that verse to be akin in his mind to a water ordeal calculated to establish juridically his guilt or his righteousness.<sup>3</sup> To be baptized then is to pass under the judgment of God (cf. the Red Sea crossing<sup>4</sup> and the Flood, in which the wicked are destroyed and the righteous are saved/justified<sup>5</sup>). Likewise, it was God’s judgment upon Jonah’s disobedience that brought the calamitous storm and resulted in Jonah’s being cast down into the water to undergo his ordeal. These associations being sufficient to find a baptismal theme in the ordeals of both Jesus and Jonah, and also appreciating the explicit direction from our Lord to see in Jonah’s water experience a correspondence to his own judgment ordeal, let us now explore what may be found by way of material connections between Jonah 2 and the suffering, entombment, and resurrection of our Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was adapted from a sermon preached by him at Mid Cities Presbyterian Church (OPC), in Bedford, TX, during the summer of 2014.

<sup>2</sup> See passim, R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Vancouver: Regent, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See passim, Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 10:2.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. 3:20–21.

The Book of Jonah is a work of prose that narrates the experiences of a rather colicky Hebrew prophet who prophesied in the eighth century BC. But in chapter 2 of this four-chapter narrative, one is suddenly confronted with several lines of poetry. The sudden appearance of poetry is so jarring that it has caused some critics to suggest that this chapter belongs to a later hand.<sup>6</sup> Could it be that this abrupt shift from prose to poetry, from history to verse, from chronicle to song, serves as a formal signal to the reader that the tale is departing from the relation of facts about the protagonist's experiences and is shifting to portraying the experiences of the coming Messiah? This chapter in Jonah is in fact a blend of quotations from and allusions to the Psalter,<sup>7</sup> which according to Edmund P. Clowney should be seen as the personal songbook of our singing Savior.<sup>8</sup> Such a sudden formal diversion in chapter 2 from simple narrative to the songbook of the Christ is accompanied by a change in the substance of what the book communicates about its subject. These together serve to alert the reader that the book is no longer discussing Jonah's experiences but has paused to relate the descent of the Righteous One into the underworld and his ultimate deliverance.

After Jonah has been cast into the sea, the attentive reader will see that the imagery is ill-suited to depict a man who has been placed in the belly of a great fish. Indeed, once the lines switch from prose to poetry in verse 2, the speaker is seen to be no longer speaking "from the belly of the fish" as in verse 1, but "from the belly of *Sheol*." Verse 2 is in fact a summary of the entire experience of the singing subject, while verse 3 begins the relation of the entire experience in full. The subject is first cast into the deep—he is far from dry land, the abode of men. In verse 4, the subject relates his feelings in these terms: he is driven away from God's sight. With this he is saying that he is forsaken of God. Then he reveals in verse 4 a note of confidence that he shall come out of his predicament, he will yet again look on God's temple. In verse 5 he has gone under the surface. The waves and billows that had battered him in verse three are now above him. He's gone under, and the waters have closed up over him and are drowning him. He begins a free fall. The dark and the deep are all about him. This is how "Jonah's" experience is cast—in terms of first being thrown into the sea by God, the waves and billows beating him, his dropping below the surface of the waters, and then his falling—down, down, down, into the black abyss. These descriptions are not consistent with being inside the belly of a fish.

The prayer then asserts in verse 6 that his descent did not halt until he had reached the very bottom of the sea, where, as it says in the last half of verse 5, weeds wrapped around his head, holding him fast. And, he adds in verse 6, this took place at the root of the mountains. Then he even declares that he went down to the land whose bars closed upon him forever. How could the man in these verses hit the bottom of the sea where he touched the roots of the mountains, where he was even ensnared in the weeds growing there, if he was in the belly of the great fish? Does this suggest that the fish was a literary device, a personification of the sea, perhaps; that Jonah was never actually swallowed by a great fish?

The answer to that question is that although Jonah was swallowed by a giant fish especially appointed for this task by God—for Jesus says in Matthew 12 that Jonah was in

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<sup>6</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *Jonah and Micah*, Reformed Expository Commentary, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Ryken (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), 72.

<sup>7</sup> Psalms 3, 5, 16, 18, 31, 42, 50, 65, 69, 88, 118, 120, 142.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 144–50.

the belly of a fish for three days—the record of experiences we see in this chapter are actually meant to relate not Jonah’s experiences poetically but Jesus’s. Jonah did say these words—the text says he prayed these words—but as with other prophets, what he spoke had reference more to Christ than to himself.<sup>9</sup> Note how the singer says that the bars of the deepest point of the underworld were closed upon him . . . forever. Then in the very next line he says: “yet you brought up my life from the pit.” No ordinary man’s experience could make this apparent contradiction work: “bars closed upon me in the prison of *Sheol* forever, yet you brought me up from the pit.” This combination of ideas shows that this is a portrayal of the person and work of the Christ, who alone as the God-man could bear the eternal consequence and the infinite weight of sin down into *Sheol* and still rise up after the fact. As the sin bearer, the Messiah’s descent to the deepest pit of the underworld was final. The sin he bore there remains there, in the depths of the sea of divine judicial forgetfulness. That weight of sin would have held him fast there forever, too, but the Messiah was not in fact guilty. He had kept his hands clean, so the Father had to deal with him according to his righteousness, as we find in Psalm 18:4–24; Romans 1:3–4; and 1 Timothy 3:16. The Father had to bring him up again, for he was personally just, but the sins he had borne there for his people he left down there, never to be remembered again. Note also that there is no hint of repentance in Jonah 2. This chapter of Jonah is instead a prayer of thanksgiving to God, a prayer of deliverance from God’s abandonment. It is ultimately a poem about Christ’s fall into *Sheol*, his descent into the underworld, the realm of the dead. But on the third day the singing Savior is brought up again with a psalm of thanksgiving on his lips—that salvation is of the Lord!

The second chapter of Jonah can be seen as Jonah’s baptism because of the typical relationship asserted by Christ to exist between the prophet and himself and between their respective experiences, in addition to the clear associations in that chapter to “Jonah’s” passing under God’s judgment by means of a water ordeal. In Romans 6:4–5 we read:

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

By faith in the person and work of the Lord’s Anointed, both we and the prophet Jonah have survived that antitypical judgment ordeal at Calvary’s cross “in him,” and so have come out the other side, up from the waters of the divine wrath for sin, reckoned with him as having clean hands, blameless before God. The songbook of the singing Savior, as Jonah’s prayer anticipates, has become the songbook of his people.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Psalm 22, in which the psalmist relates that his enemies have pierced his hands and feet, which has less to do with the literal experiences of David than it has to do with the experiences of Christ.

# ServantReading

## Divine Covenants and Moral Order

by *David VanDrunen*

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by **Carl Trueman**

*Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*, by David VanDrunen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014, 594 pages, paper, \$45.00.

David VanDrunen's *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* is a dense work of great learning and significance. One of the obvious implications of the collapse of (for want of a better term) "Christian values" in wider society is that the world in which we live is increasingly set in opposition to the traditional teaching of the Christian churches. This means that churches will have to better justify to their own people the ethical stands they take, and that means that pastors will need to be much better versed in ethics than has previously been the case. Setting aside the chaos created by the politics of sexual identity, on any given day a pastor could be confronted with an ethical question of a complexity unknown to previous generations.

VanDrunen is well known both as an advocate of a Reformed version of natural law theory and as a proponent of Two Kingdoms theology. Both play their role in this book, which functions as the biblical-theological sequel to his earlier historical study of natural law in the Reformed tradition.

In Part One of the work, he looks at natural law in the covenant of creation and in the Noahic covenant. This provides the basis for what are, in effect, biblical case studies: the judgment meted out on Sodom and the justice in Gerar relative to the incident of Abimelech and Sarah; judgments against the nations in the prophets; and then natural law in Rom. 1:18–2:26. In Part Two, he examines natural law in the Abrahamic covenant, Sinai, the Wisdom literature, and the new covenant people of the church.

Perhaps the most vital foundation of VanDrunen's case is his interpretation of the Noahic covenant, a point that marks his special contribution to natural law theory. For him, this covenant is not salvific and thus not part of the overall economy of the covenant of grace. Instead, it is a covenant designed to preserve the human race via a minimalist ethic. One might say that it is, humanly speaking, a pragmatic move on the part of God to provide a basic framework for ethical behavior within fallen creation. This then allows human beings to coexist, to survive, and thus provide a context within which God's special people might operate and his larger purposes might be brought to fruition.

In rooting general human ethics in the Noahic covenant, VanDrunen does two things. First, he avoids making himself vulnerable to accusations of allowing ethics to stand somehow independent of God and his revelation. The image of God and the Noahic covenant both serve to underscore the fact that human beings are at no point to be considered independent of their creator. Second, VanDrunen considerably narrows the basis for what we might call social ethics. Far from a theonomic imposition of even the

case law of the Old Testament, there is here only a very slim ethical obligation. VanDrunen sees the three explicit Noahic obligations as a recapitulation of the terms of the original covenant of creation, and thus as connecting to the law of creation.

I find the case for the Noahic covenant as standing outside of the economy of grace to be persuasive. The connection with the creation mandate seems sound. The purpose is clearly preservation, with no reference, either explicit or even implicit, to any kind of eschatological consummation. Certainly God has saved Noah from the flood, and thus saved the human race, but there are no connections to any greater salvation. Its universal scope makes it a lasting ethical mandate.

Where many readers may find that they differ with VanDrunen is in his argument in Part Two that the Mosaic covenant is to be understood as the republication of the covenant of creation, specifically designed so that Israel might fail and thus to underscore the significance of the fall of Adam.

This is where I sense my own lack of contemporary systematic and biblical competence. I am not sure as to why Sinai needs to be reduced to republication, which VanDrunen seems eager to do. Certainly one function of the Sinai law is to bring Israel to its knees in humility before God; but it also seems that the law fulfills other functions. It is promulgated in the context of redemption from Egypt and against the background of the LORD carrying his people through the wilderness as a man carries his son (Deut. 1:31). Further, the use of the law in the New Testament as giving shape to the applications which Paul, for example, draws from the indicatives of Christ's life and work would seem to me at least to require that Sinai is not reduced simply to a recapitulation of the mandate in the Garden and Israel to yet another piece of evidence of human depravity and failure.

In the final chapter, "The Natural Order Penultimized," VanDrunen develops his positive ethical thinking within the context of a Pauline "now and not yet" structure. He argues that in Christ the church is freed in an ultimate sense from the natural law. However, because Christians live in two worlds—the world to come and the world as it is now—their lives must inevitably exhibit a certain tension.

It is within this tension that VanDrunen sketches out a basic ethic for Christians living in a non-Christian world. Heterosexual marriage is affirmed, as are the basic principles of justice, civil authority, the need to work as a member of society and to show a certain respect for the moral judgments of pagans. While some may find the latter theoretically shocking, it is surely the pragmatic reality of much of life. Christians do share a lot of moral convictions with, say, the common and Roman law codes and with many of our unbelieving neighbors. In addition, VanDrunen points to biblical foundations in Paul's thinking for such. This is not a naïve inclusivism or Pelagianism which he is proposing.

My one caveat in this is that the world in which we live is growing ethically ever more diverse and complicated. It does seem that each year brings less and less consensus on what might be deemed moral absolutes, or even moral preferences. In addition, ethical thinking today seems to have a profoundly aesthetic dimension to it where it has no need to offer any kind of publicly legitimate rationale but merely appeal to taste—taste which is so often shaped more by the narratives presented in the televisual media than in anything approaching rigorous moral discussion or dialogue with longstanding moral conventions and traditions. In this new world of moral discourse, VanDrunen offers the Christian reader a good starting point, but I wonder whether the combination of the

complexity of moral choices and the collapse of moral discourse will mean that the natural law and the Noahic covenant will prove too slender a foundation for believers to operate with confidence in the growing moral anarchy of the public sphere. Not that they are inadequate in themselves, but that the move from them to knowing how to respond to many modern ethical questions is not particularly straightforward.

This is an important book with which I have much sympathy. Anthropology and ethics are set to be the two most pressing issues of the next twenty years for Christians, especially pastors and elders. VanDrunen is to be thanked for offering a profound contribution exemplifying one way of approaching these topics.

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# A Clarification of the Review of *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* by David VanDrunen

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by David VanDrunen

Carl Trueman had this gracious response to David VanDrunen's Clarification of Trueman's review.

I am grateful to my good friend David for his critique of my review and for the clarification of his position. It seems evident to me that I did not present his view with the balance it requires and I am most happy to concede the point. The difference between us is rather one of emphasis than substance, it seems, and there is no real distance between friends here. I thus find myself in the oddly pleasurable position of being happy to acknowledge that I was wrong on the points concerned.

This is a model of how Christians ought to deal with misunderstandings and differences.

The editor

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I am grateful for Carl Trueman's thoughtful and generous review of my book, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*. In most respects an author couldn't ask for a better critically appreciative review of a long and serious work.

I am writing this brief note of clarification, however, to correct a few of Trueman's comments describing my view of the Mosaic covenant. If this concerned a small matter of little interest to people I would not bother following up in this way. But since *Ordained Servant* is a publication of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (of which both of us are ministers) and the General Assembly of the OPC has appointed a study committee to report on issues related to the Mosaic covenant, I believe I should make clear that I unambiguously disavow certain views attributed to me in the review.

When reading the review (which I saw only after it had been posted on [opc.org](http://opc.org)), I was initially disappointed to see it claim that I understand the Mosaic covenant "as" the republication of the covenant of creation. As a general rule, I avoid *identifying* the Mosaic covenant with such a republication, emphasizing that in its essence the Mosaic covenant is an administration of the covenant of grace. Thus I made this point a number of times in *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* (e.g., pp. 12, 266–68, 284–85). I write, for example: "I consider the Mosaic covenant a covenant of grace (or, specifically, as an administration of the one covenant of grace spanning redemptive history), along the lines

of the Westminster Confession of Faith (7.5–6)” (pp. 284–85). In fact, I purposefully did not use the term "republication" in *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* to describe the relationship of the covenant of creation and Mosaic covenant. Instead I described a "recapitulation" of Adam's probation and fall as part of the larger purposes of the Mosaic covenant.

Of greater concern to me, the review states that in my book Sinai is "reduced to" republication and "reduced simply" to a recapitulation. I heartily reject such a view, and in *Divine Covenants and Moral Order* I tried to emphasize that fact. For example, on the first two pages of my chapter on natural law and Mosaic law (pp. 282–83) I use italics twice to add emphasis: "I argue that *one* of the chief purposes of the Mosaic covenant was to make Israel's experience a recapitulation..." and "The Mosaic law served, *in part*, to govern Israel's existence in a way that mirrored how the natural law governs all the peoples of the world in their identification with Adam." My extended discussion on p.284 argues strongly against a reductionistic view of the Mosaic covenant. On the top of p.285 I say again that I understand the recapitulatory aspect of the Mosaic covenant to be in service to the gracious work of redemption administered in this covenant. I quote the helpful statement of Geerhardus Vos, who summarized a prominent view in the Reformed tradition (with which I am in sympathy): "At Sinai it was not the 'bare' law that was given, but a reflection of the covenant of works revived, as it were, in the interests of the covenant of grace continued at Sinai" (*Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, p. 255). While I understand that this view is disputed among Reformed theologians, it is anything but a reductionistic approach to the Mosaic covenant.

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# Insightful Fool's Talk

## A review article

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by **Ted Turnau**

*Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*, by Os Guinness. Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2015, 270 pages, \$29.95.

Apologist, cultural analyst, and prolific Christian author Os Guinness tells us that *Fool's Talk* was forty years in the making. As a young man, he made a promise to God that he would actually *do* apologetics before writing *about* apologetical method (38). And so he has (see his *Long Journey Home* and *Unspeakable*<sup>1</sup>). He is best known for his incisive cultural and social critiques (he was a student of sociologist Peter Berger), and the reader will find plenty of interesting cultural critique here, especially how modernity and postmodernity shape the ways we see reality. As always, Guinness's prose is crisp, colorful, and bristling with practical insights. At one point, he labels the theological revision of the gospel the "Gadarene plunge" (217). Emphasizing the passion of apologetics, he asserts, "Christian advocacy is a lover's defense" (57). The man certainly can turn a vivid phrase. He is also ridiculously well read, always ready with an illuminating quote from thinkers as diverse as Plato, Bertrand Russell, Augustine, Camus, C.S. Lewis, and Japanese Haiku master Issa. The overall effect is to make one feel as if he's overhearing a sparkling after-dinner conversation with a brilliant raconteur.

But such a characterization risks trivializing his work. Guinness has a heart as well as a brain, and he is passionate about apologetics (what he calls "creative persuasion") and about repairing the shabby state of the church's witness in the world today. It has been replaced by "just evangelize" on the conservative side or "just dialogue" on the liberal side (212–17). Or worse, it has been turned into a sterile, intellectual game by the apologetics wonks, and it has been drained of its humanity, its creativity, its compassion, and its focus on the cross. These critiques, and his holistic definition of apologetics that resists scripts and "the imperialism of technique" (46), are well-worth heeding.

The title of the book refers to both the foolishness of unbelief that we must answer (gently and with respect), but also the "foolishness" of God that subverts the cleverness of the wise through the apparent folly of the cross (41). By aligning ourselves with the Jesus who was mocked, we become "holy fools" who paradoxically have tapped into the wisdom of God that exposes the pretensions of modern unbelief (ch. 4, "The Way of the Third Fool") and shows a better way. This is the work of apologetics.

The style of apologetics that emerges is a type of worldview critique that will feel familiar to those familiar with Reformed apologetics, and with the works of Francis

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<sup>1</sup> Os Guinness, *Long Journey Home: A Guide to Your Search for the Meaning of Life* (New York: WaterBrook, 2001); *Unspeakable: Facing Up to the Challenge of Evil* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

Schaeffer in particular (it was at L'Abri that Guinness caught a vision of cultural apologetics). And through Schaeffer, one can feel the indirect influence of the apologetics of Cornelius Van Til, especially in his advocacy of the *reductio ad absurdum*, where the unbeliever is asked to think through the implications of his presuppositions to their logical (and disastrous) conclusions (see ch. 6, "Turning the Tables"). This negative, or critical, movement in apologetics must be accompanied by a positive movement of turning the unbeliever's attention to the clues and whispers of God's existence, or what Berger called "signals of transcendence" (see ch. 7, "Triggering the Signals"). In addition, Guinness emphasizes the need to go beyond simply bare, logical argumentation to use story, humor, and irony. And he devotes whole chapters to the attitude and demeanor necessary to engage unbelievers with compassion and grace, and the necessity for apologetics *within* the church in order to battle theological drift. All in all, this book counts as welcome guidance in worldview apologetics from a seasoned veteran.

So let me be clear: I think this is a great book that will benefit the church. If you feel a bit at sea when thinking about apologetics, this book will serve as a good orientation. For those who have some apologetical experience, this book will serve to put some of the debates in historical context, as well as to provide helpful advice and correction.

However, I do have four criticisms.

### **1. The book needs some practical examples.**

I wish that the book had more practical applications for the novice. At times, Guinness's erudition may be off-putting to the beginner. "Good insight!" he may say, and then scratch his head and wonder, "How do I use it?" No doubt Guinness wanted to avoid like the plague any scripts or any easy, step-by-step, how-to instructions. After all, his second chapter is entitled "Technique: The Devil's Bait." In an age of cookie-cutter apologetics, such a warning is laudable and needed. To riff on Schaeffer, there are no cookie-cutter people. Each person's needs, the configuration of their particular pattern of unbelief, demands a flexible, personal approach that seeks to reach that person's unique heart. I get that and give a hearty "Amen!" Still, for the sake of the newbies, I would have welcomed a few times when the illustrations were drawn not from literary, philosophical, sociological, or classical Greek sources, but rather from actual conversations Guinness has had with non-Christians. I think he could have thrown out a few of those lifelines without being accused of caving in to the "imperialism of technique" (46).

### **2. The book should have responded to worldview-discourse skeptics.**

A second criticism has to do with the worldview-centric orientation of his apologetic. I have no problem with worldview apologetics; the apologetics of Schaeffer and Van Til is powerful and has helped many, and Guinness follows in their footsteps. But there are those even in Reformed circles who question the need for engagement at the level of worldview. James K. A. Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom* comes immediately to mind. For Smith, the real story of faith happens precognitively, in the imagination as it is shaped by action. Worldview is merely a retrospective articulation of our habits of the heart. Worldview is not where the real action is.

Though Smith has many interesting insights, I wonder where such comments leave apologetics. Is it worth doing anymore? Does anyone benefit from worldview discussions? Or should we just include non-Christians into our rituals and wait for the change to happen as their repeated actions slowly change their imaginations (which will later be reflected in a different articulation of worldview)? Given the radical challenge to worldview thinking and discourse coming from Smith and others, I

would have appreciated some engagement on that topic from Guinness. I think Guinness's push-back would have been incisive and insightful.

**3. There is a problem with the dilemma/diversion polarity (missing the dilemma in the diversions).**

A third criticism has to do with his analysis of unbelief and the scope of apologetics. At the very beginning of the book, Guinness lays out the true ambition of persuasive Christian witness: not just to reach the open and interested, but to engage those who are "closed," those who are "indifferent or resistant to what we have to say" (18). In these days in North America that's a lot of people. In chapter 5, the "Anatomy of Unbelief," Guinness gives a masterful reading of Romans 1 (though not without problems—see below) in terms of self-deception. Unbelievers are made in God's image, live in God's world, but believe otherwise. That creates an indefatigable tension within. Guinness further analyzes the unbeliever's response to this tension in terms of a polarity: dilemma versus diversion (96–98). Those at the dilemma end of the pole seek to live out their unbelief more consistently, and so they feel the tension more acutely. Those at the diversion end of the pole seek the comfort of inconsistency: they believe in things (like the value of human beings) that they have no right to, given their God-denying worldview. But they simply ignore the tension: they try to drown out the tension by distracting themselves, understanding the world as if God were there, even while denying him.

Guinness says neither the dilemma folks nor the diversion folks are necessarily closer to God (96), and yet it is clear to me that Guinness feels drawn to the dilemma people. Indeed, his apologetic method is designed to provoke and invite those who feel the dilemma. They bear a striking resemblance to what he later calls "seekers," those who have taken the first tentative step away from false faith and (perhaps) toward genuine faith in God (see 233–37). By contrast, though he says that the diversion pole is "more crowded, but less understood" (99), and though he gives a lengthy biblical analysis of diversion (99–105), he ends up giving very little guidance about how to engage with the diverted, except to point out the triviality and banality of diversion itself. I was hoping for more, especially in light of his challenge that we need to engage the indifferent. Doesn't that include the diverted and distracted?

It seems to me that "diversion" is perhaps an altogether flat category, especially if you are going to consign the majority of non-Christians to it. And that flatness has to do with a dismissive attitude towards popular culture that perhaps stems from culture critics like Kenneth Myers and Neil Postman. If you want to engage the diverted, perhaps you need to engage their diversions. And then you might discover that even diversions house dilemmas, that the stories, images, songs, and games that we label "diversions" themselves bear witness to the tension of being a rebellious, idolatrous human made in God's image and living in God's world. But Guinness never gets there. He cites one film, but apart from that, writes as if the only culture worth engaging is written in books, and written some time ago. In short, I think his apologetic is strengthened and broadened by a close examination of contemporary entertainments, seeing them as something more than diversions and distractions.

**4. Guinness's method would benefit if he self-consciously couched his terms in the context of revelation.**

My final criticism: certain key terms such as "truth," "reality," and "signals of transcendence" contain ambiguity and require definition in terms of their theological weight. This is more than a semantic problem, for such ambiguity can lead to

inconsistencies. “What is truth?” asked Pilate. Certain apologists say that truth is correspondence with reality, that is, states of affairs that actually pertain. In other words, “truth” and “reality” are neutral terms that can be used unproblematically with anyone. And sometimes Guinness seems to use these terms that way (84, 115). On the other hand, a biblical definition of “truth” and “reality” would have to say that truth and reality are what conforms to God’s revelation, that there is no neutrality to truth. And sometimes Guinness seems to go this path as well, in affirming that “all truth is God’s truth” (40), that is, tied to his revelation (especially in Christ, see 67).

Without a precise grounding in the context of revelation, sometimes Guinness’s formulation of the unbeliever’s knowledge is less than accurate. For instance, reflecting on Paul’s assertion in Romans 1 that the unbeliever suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, Guinness talks about how the unbeliever creates worldviews that deny God: “they are philosophical or sociological fictions—or *worlds within the world that provide a world of meaning apart from God and against God*” (94, emphasis his). This is actually a brilliant characterization of unbelieving thought. But then he later applies Romans 1 to say that the unbeliever has a worldview that is “partly true and partly false” (112). That’s not exactly what Paul said. Non-Christians don’t have a half-true worldview that simply needs completion; they’ve mangled truth beyond recognition and need a whole worldview renovation. They don’t have a half-true interpretation of reality; they have a wholly false interpretation of reality that they use to suppress the wholly true revelation of God’s being and character. The “partly true” part of their worldview isn’t, properly speaking, their worldview at all. It refers to the places where non-Christians are inconsistent with their own worldviews to accommodate God’s wholly true revelation of himself (seen, for instance, in a non-Christian’s valuing of human rights). In other words, it would have been more accurate to say that the non-Christian’s perspective contains God’s truth held captive by unbelieving worldview assumptions.

The same ambiguity plagues Guinness’s use of Peter Berger’s “signals of transcendence” in chapter 7. Obviously Guinness knows that these signals come from God to reveal him. But, following Berger, he characterizes these signals phenomenologically (that is, from the point-of-view of the non-Christian) as hints that whisper that there might be “something more” than visible reality (134). This “something more” can be explained using any number of interpretations, or it can be ignored entirely (144–47). I understand that Guinness is attempting to acquaint us with a phenomenology of unbelief and its inconsistencies, of what it must feel like to live in God’s world without acknowledging him. You’d just get whispers, hints, and so on. On the other hand, why not just come out (for his Christian audience) and label these “signals” as they really are: revelation stemming from common grace whose ultimate function is to turn the eyes to God?

What is the point of the fuss and theological nitpicking? What is the practical cash value of making such distinctions (for Guinness is nothing if not resolutely practical)? Simply this: the apologist ought to know where things stand vis-à-vis unbelief in terms of biblical and theological categories. The “signals” have a given theological vector: to draw sinners into the knowledge of God. The unbelieving worldview also has a certain theological vector: to draw sinners away from God, to smother and constrain God’s general revelation of himself as much as possible. By paying attention to those common grace, general revelational elements suppressed in unrighteousness (and knowing that’s what they are), the Spirit can use us to fan those embers into a flame that can (potentially) burn through the cage the unbeliever has put that revelation in.

Guinness knows all this, and it resonates throughout his system, but he never really comes out and uses those categories. Thus he leaves open interpretations of his method that would be more amenable to supposedly neutral terms like “truth in general” or “reality in general,” when in fact such generalities are chimeras. There is only God’s truth and God’s reality, and we’re either in agreement with him or in rebellion against him. Everything is revelation. It all points to God to inspire worship, or would do so if our own sin didn’t muck things up. That seems a much clearer (and more clearly biblical) picture of the shape of the unbeliever’s mind and heart: dealing with the pressure of God’s revelation, and doing his level best to shove it down and keep it down through his own twisted worldview.

Just to be clear, I still believe that this book makes a valuable contribution and that any budding apologist should have it and read it. It is bursting with insights, including some sociological insights into the structure of belief and unbelief (and unbelieving culture) that will enrich our own perspective on these matters. He raises issues that should be discussed in churches about how best to witness to people shaped by a deeply post-Christian society. This is a book worth having and savoring. No fooling.

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# Interpreting the Prophets

## *by Aaron Chalmers*

### A Review Article

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**by Sherif Gendy**

*Interpreting the Prophets: Reading, Understanding and Preaching from the Worlds of the Prophets*, by Aaron Chalmers. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015, 173 pages, \$20.00, paper.

In this book Aaron Chalmers looks at the nature of both the prophetic role and prophetic books in Israel. He considers three key “worlds” of Israel’s prophets—historical, theological, and rhetorical—which provide the basic context for interpreting these books. He concludes with a helpful chapter that provides guidelines for preaching from the prophets—including advice on choosing the texts, making appropriate analogies, and the potential problems and common pitfalls to avoid. The book is divided into six chapters with a bibliography and indices. Here is a summary with assessment for each chapter.

#### **1. What Is a Prophet and What Is a Prophetic Book?**

In this chapter Chalmers provides an overview of the role of the prophet in Israel as well as the nature of prophetic books. According to Chalmers, the prophets are members of the divine council. As such, they function as observers of the council, “advisers” to God, and envoys for the council. Fundamentally, the prophets were intermediaries, called by God to stand between him and human realms. They were communicators of the divine will. The prophetic book is the written record of the divine revelation mediated to the people of God through the prophet. For Chalmers, the process by which the largely spoken words of the prophets became the written books involves three distinct movements in the formation: 1) from oral words to written words; 2) from written words to collected words; and 3) from collected words to a prophetic book.

Chalmers is right in asserting that our primary focus should be on exegeting the text in its final form, rather than trying to explain the exact process behind the written text. At this point it is important to understand that what counts as history is not merely origins, but also effects. In other words, the prophetic witness as it stands within the canon presents a history on its own terms. Critical scholars assume that one could truly get at the Bible’s meaning by adopting a vantage point outside the Bible itself. There is a tendency to reconstruct the prophets historically and treat them in supposed temporal sequence instead of trying to understand them as they are within the biblical witness. What Chalmers neglects in this chapter is that the canonical presentation of the prophets is its own kind of theological and historical statement. It is a statement in its own form.

## **2. The Historical World of the Prophets**

Chalmers acknowledges that the historical context of a prophetic book may not be clear. He also recognizes as a challenge that a single book may address multiple historical contexts. He seems sympathetic to the critical view of the presumed Isaiah's three distinct historical horizons: pre-exilic or Proto-Isaiah (chaps 1–39), exilic or Deutero-Isaiah (chaps 40–55), and post-exilic or Trito-Isaiah (chaps 56–66). For Chalmers, one needs to seriously consider the secondary sources to gain understanding for the occasional nature of the prophetic literature and historical context. He calls for reconstructing the historical world of the prophets in order to obtain a richer, fuller, and more accurate understanding of the message of Israel's prophets.

The aim of the historical reconstruction of the prophetic book is seeing the text in its historical and cultural context (*Sitz im Leben*). The higher critical view of the prophets has given them a kind of distinctiveness that makes it difficult to relate them to one another or to understand them as an associated movement. Thus, higher critics have “decanonized” the prophets by placing them in a context other than the canon in order to get at their “real” meaning.

Against the critical view of Isaiah's authorship, the traditional view, which regards Isaiah son of Amoz (Isa. 1:1), the eighth-century prophet, friend, and confidant of Hezekiah, as the author of the entire book, seems more plausible. The superscription of the book bears Isaiah's name as the author. Moreover, the New Testament bears witness to the unity of the book. Isaiah is cited by name about twenty times in the New Testament, and such citations include references to the three parts of the book.

## **3. The Theological World of the Prophets**

In this chapter Chalmers discusses two key traditions that are particularly important for interpreting the prophets since they form the background to and provide the basic shape for much of the prophetic proclamation. Essentially, these traditions center on the two great mountains in Israel's story: 1) Sinai and the establishment of a covenant between the Lord (who is portrayed as a mighty suzerain) and the Israelite people (who are portrayed as the Lord's vassal) and 2) Zion and the establishment of a covenant between the Lord (who is portrayed as the great King) and the Davidic king (who is portrayed as the Lord's regent).

The second part of this chapter focuses on the exegetical implications of the prophets' use of pre-existing traditions. Chalmers analyzes theologically “loaded” words and phrases, utilizing tradition criticism, which seeks to discern what an author presumes, intends, and insinuates through the use of traditional language. Chalmers speaks of the prophets changing some pre-existing traditions found in the Scripture in order to communicate their message. He lists Amos 5:17 with possible allusion to the Exodus tradition and the events associated with the first Passover. It might be helpful to speak of the prophets invoking their audience's memory by using well-known traditions in different contexts to make their point clear. It is not a matter of changing traditions as much as using and applying traditions in different context.

## **4. The Rhetorical World of the Prophets**

In this chapter Chalmers discusses the rhetorical world of the prophets to enquire how they effectively used language to persuade and influence their audience, and how they

shaped their material to communicate their message in a compelling fashion. Chalmers's analysis of the rhetorical world of the prophets takes place on two levels. First, he considers the rhetorical structure of the individual prophetic units of speech. This process involves identifying the various units within a passage and focusing on the structure and movement within these (the forms include prophecy of judgment, salvation, prophetic lawsuit, vision reports, and symbolic action reports). Second, he analyzes the rhetorical features of Hebrew poetry (including parallelism and the use of images) and the various literary and rhetorical devices the prophets employ (including metonymy and synecdoche, irony and sarcasm, hyperbole, merism, and hendiadys). Chalmers understands the limits of approaching prophetic rhetoric in a scientific fashion and calls for a balancing approach that keeps the interpreters contemplative by ruminating over the text to enter into the experience of the text and allow it to capture their imaginations.

## **5. From Prophecy to Apocalyptic**

Here Chalmers focuses on interpreting the apocalyptic texts from the Old Testament. Although related to prophecy as a subset, apocalyptic is generally recognized as a distinct genre with its own emphases and set of literary "rules." An awareness of these can help the reader avoid some of the common interpretive mistakes associated with this challenging genre (including historicizing and decontextualizing). Chalmers suggests that when we read apocalyptic texts we need to focus on the big picture, interpret images within their original historical context, and focus on the paradigms the texts embody.

In an attempt to define apocalyptic literature and its literary features, Chalmers unpacks a few of the key ways in which apocalyptic texts differ from prophecy. Apocalyptic literature emphasizes a visionary mode of revelation. This revelation is often mediated by a third party—an angel. Moreover, apocalyptic texts often have a narrative framework and are literary compositions. These texts focus on the end of history by describing a decisive, climactic act of God which will bring a violent, radical end to history through the triumph of good and the final judgment of evil. The purpose of apocalyptic literature is to encourage its readers in the midst of their trials and during times of crisis. Finally, in apocalyptic literature the course of history is completely predetermined by God. These texts are more deterministic, with kingdoms and empires rising and falling by the sovereign will of God.

## **6. Guidelines for Preaching from the Prophets**

In this chapter Chalmers considers how to preach from the prophets in an authentic, faithful, and responsible fashion. He lays out some guidelines for bridging the "chasm" between the world of ancient Israel and the contemporary world. Chalmers calls for a focus on the theology of the text rather than a heavily didactic, morality-focused approach. He also wants to consider the witness of the New Testament.

There are two potential problems Chalmers identifies that we should avoid when preaching from the prophets. First, he cautions against the contemporary fulfillment approach, which assumes that the promises and warnings we find in the prophetic books must come true and be fulfilled in a literal sense. This hermeneutical method ignores the text's dynamics by flattening all prophecies into one time period (the now). Second, Chalmers rejects the promise-fulfillment approach, which sees Jesus as fulfilling various Old Testament prophecies. For Chalmers, this method fails to hear the prophetic word as

it was intended and renders the proclamation from the Old Testament irrelevant. Furthermore, due to its Christological emphasis, this approach leaves little room for the contemporary listener in the text.

Chalmers questions the typological interpretation and wishes to read the Old Testament prophets in a way that allows them to speak beyond the Christ event. He insists that by taking the Old Testament prophecies as being fulfilled in the person and work of Christ we fail to grasp their ongoing significance for our life. In making this argument, Chalmers sets up a false dichotomy. The New Testament bears witness to the centrality of Christ in the Old Testament as a whole (Luke 24:27, 44). In fact, Moses wrote of Christ (John 5:46). It is only by our union with Christ that the Old Testament prophecies have significance to us. The blessings of the Old Covenant, as well as the new, are mediated to us through Christ. Any application of the Scriptures for our contemporary life that does not find its root in the finished work of Christ is a superficial application to say the least.

Apart from Chalmers's rejection of typology as a valid hermeneutical method for interpreting the prophets, his suggested approach of considering the historical, theological, and rhetorical worlds of the prophets is unique. Chalmers's presentation of reading and preaching the prophets is comprehensive and organized. The "Going deeper" sections that Chalmers has throughout the book provide in-depth information related to the topic at hand. Although these sections are helpful, their position in the middle of the page may interrupt the flow of the discussion and disturb the main argument. Chalmers provides a list of books for further reading at the end of each chapter. In sum, this book could be used effectively as a seminary textbook for introductory classes on the prophets.

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# Inventing the Individual *by Larry Siedentop*

## Briefly Noted

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by **Richard M. Gamble**

*Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*, by Larry Siedentop.  
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, 434 pages, \$35.00.

The accepted narrative sees political liberalism as the triumph of Enlightenment secularism over reactionary Christianity. Over against this, Oxford historian Larry Siedentop argues in favor of the religion of Jesus and Paul as the true origin of human emancipation from the constraints of antiquity. Modern liberty owes its existence to *belief*, he argues, not to unbelief. Christian teaching of “individual moral agency” gradually produced our now-familiar world of human agency, rights, equality, the private sphere, the inner claims of conscience, and political and social democracy. These are achievements under assault by Islamic fundamentalism and the West needs a moral rearmament of the kind available through a renewed European and American “self-understanding” that recovers Christianity’s place as the source of liberalism and secularism. After the first century, the new faith slowly eroded and replaced the ancient world built on family, clan, status, and aristocracy with the modern world of the state and the individual.

Siedentop’s story of “becoming” requires him to reinvent Christianity into a revolutionary movement of a kind the Apostle Paul (who gets the credit) would never have recognized. Siedentop’s version of Christianity sets the West on the road to universal human freedom, the brotherhood of man, the fatherhood of God, and the “new self” of the autonomous human will. Although he mentions Immanuel Kant only once, Siedentop projects a Kantian reading of Christianity, the individual, and morality back across the centuries in his search for origins. This is an ambitious, sweeping, and dramatic survey of two thousand years of history populated with generations always standing on the “brink” of some great change. He tries, unsuccessfully, to preempt complaints about the deeply embedded Whiggism of his story. On page after page, he indulges in a reading of the past where precursors “lurk” and “foreshadow” the modern West, where “anticipations” of the future await their moment, where revolutions lie just around the corner. By approaching the past at every step as a place “pregnant with the future” and where “seeds” lay hidden except to the eye of the discerning philosophical historian, Siedentop guarantees that neither he nor his reader ever confronts Christianity or the past in general on its own terms. This is teleological history that instrumentalizes Christianity for the purposes of present action and not for the purposes of cultivating historical consciousness.

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# To Persuade or Not to Persuade

## A Review Article

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

*Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth*, by Duane Litfin. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015, 392 pages, \$40.00, paper.

*Persuasive Preaching: A Biblical and Practical Guide to the Effective Use of Persuasion*, by Larry R. Overstreet. Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014, xiv + 298 pages, \$24.99, paper.

Litfin and Overstreet address the idea of persuasion in the Bible's theology of preaching, but they are addressing very different issues, even though Overstreet offers several criticisms of Litfin. I will summarize the two books, compare them, and respond to Overstreet's criticisms of Litfin.

### Overstreet

In the first chapter of Part 1, "Issues Facing Persuasive Preaching," Overstreet tells us that he seeks to add to homiletical literature a "discussion of exactly what persuasion is" (13). Chapter 2 offers a brief description of what he believes are the problems that persuasive preaching faces in modern culture. Oddly, while he correctly identifies rationalism and relativism, he never mentions the electronic environment as a challenge.

In Part 2, "Biblical Support for Persuasion," Overstreet provides much useful biblical material on the centrality of persuasion among the biblical prophets, writers, and preachers. Chapter 3 explores what Overstreet believes to be a challenge to persuasive preaching from Duane Litfin which I will analyze below. He quotes a number of homileticians, including Jay Adams and John Broadus, who favor Overstreet's thesis that we need a revival of persuasive preaching. In *Preaching with Purpose* Adams asserts, "The purpose of preaching, then is to effect changes among the members of God's church."<sup>1</sup> Broadus uses the word "urging" to describe what the preacher must effect beyond "mere exhortation"<sup>2</sup> (31).

Overstreet's survey of the biblical language of persuasion is usually quite helpful. In the second part of chapter 3 he explores the uses of the *πείθω* (*peithō*) word group in Greek literature and the New Testament. (Appendices A–C expand the coverage of Greek literature and Appendix D does so for the New Testament.) He emphasizes Paul's usage because he wants to make the concluding point that much of the present wariness about using persuasion in preaching, such as is found in Litfin, is a reaction to the manipulative character of contemporary advertising (39).

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 13.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed. Jesse Burton Weatherspoon (Nashville: Broadman, 1982), 214. Originally published in 1870.

In chapter 4 Overstreet zeroes in on persuasion in Paul's epistles under the categories of persuasion as "winning over, obedience, confidence, being convinced, faith or trust, and emphatic declaration." He concludes by taking on Litfin's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 2:4 where Paul says "my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," which I will evaluate below.

Chapter 5 seeks to develop "A Pauline Theology of Preaching" by an extensive analysis of the Greek words associated with preaching in Paul's letters. These word groups are ἀγγέλλω (*angellō*), καταγγέλλω (*katangellō*), εὐαγγελίζω (*euangelizō*), κηρύσσω (*kērussō*), μαρτυρέω (*martureō*), νοουθετέω (*noutheteō*), παρακαλέω (*parakaleō*), and παρρησιάζομαι (*parrēsiazomai*). He summarizes the results under the heading "Principles for Persuasive Preaching" (83): 1) maintain a didactic element, 2) proclaim with boldness, 3) keep the proclamation specific, 4) present the gospel, and 5) encourage believers.

Chapter 6 explores "Paul's Proclamation Exhortations" in terms of the credibility, integrity, or the *ethos* of the preacher. This was a major concern of all of the best ancient teachers of rhetoric, such as Aristotle, Cicero, Demosthenes, and Quintilian. Overstreet provides excellent and very useful expositions of 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12 and 2 Timothy 2:14–26, covering the godly minister's conduct and preparation.

In chapter 7 Overstreet attempts to sum up his biblical exegesis with a definition of persuasive preaching that seeks to revive what he says was the practice of homileticians until the mid-nineteenth century; trained in classical rhetoric, they taught preachers to be persuaders not merely explainers, consecrating ancient rhetoric for homiletical use (107). He then proceeds to explore five Old Testament Hebrew verbs for persuasion: בָּרַח (*bahrah*), חָזַק (*chazaq*), סוּחַ (*sooth*), פָּצַר (*pahtzar*), פָּתַח (*pahthah*). He insists in his conclusion that "persuasion can be accomplished" through logical argument, emotional appeal, personal character, style of speaking, and the message itself (114–15). He then sums up his explorations of persuasive preaching with a six-part definition:

Persuasive preaching is: (a) the process of preparing biblical, expository messages using a persuasive pattern, and (b) presenting them through verbal and nonverbal communication means (c) to autonomous individuals who can be convicted and/or taught by God's Holy Spirit, (d) in order to alter or strengthen (e) their attitudes and beliefs toward God, His Word, and other individuals, (f) resulting in their lives being transformed into the image of Christ. (115–16)

His section on the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching is a necessary corrective to the absence of this topic in many contemporary homiletics textbooks.

Part 3, "Structuring Persuasive Messages" is divided into four chapters dealing with: motivated sequence, problem-solution, cause-effect, and refutation. (Appendix E provides examples of various sermon types.) I found these suggestions about various types of persuasive sermons and examples less helpful than his lexical surveys. The "motivated sequence" is structured in the sequence: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action (122). This is based on Alan Monroe's original work which has

been updated in 2012 in *Principles of Public Speaking*<sup>3</sup> (122), which in turn is based on a similar sequence in ancient rhetoric as noted by Litfin: “attention, comprehension, yielding, retention, and action” (29).

Overstreet goes on to apply this sequence to the entire book of Romans in a way that is plausible, if not entirely persuasive. He concludes with a sermon example from Ephesians 1:3-6 comparing typical (instructing) approaches with a motivated sequence approach. He helpfully observes that what is lacking in each of the three typical approaches that he illustrates is an answer to the question “So what?” (127). His example of a motivated sequence outline for the same text is less convincing, although helpful in assisting the reader to think through the importance of application. He concludes this chapter with a section on audience analysis and adaptation in which he asserts that “for the persuasive preacher, the task is not only to communicate well, but to persuade the hearers to respond favorably to the message” (130).

Overstreet comes close to succumbing to a kind of contextualization which falls into the category of what Litfin calls “audience-driven” rhetoric, altering the message in the service of persuasion. In explaining audience adaptation Overstreet presents his modification of a chart by Raymond S. Ross in *Persuasion: Communication and Interpersonal Relations*.<sup>4</sup> The problem is that he fails to give an example of how this approach would apply to a biblical text. The perennial danger of compromising biblical truth through audience analysis and adaptation should, however, not lead us to forget the importance of understanding our audience. Clearly Paul preached differently to the Pagan Lystrans in Acts 14 than he did to the synagogue Jews in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. As a minister in a cosmopolitan culture, Paul also sets this principle before us in 1 Corinthians 9:22: “To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

Chapter 9 explores the value of a second approach to persuasive message structure: problem-solution, which proceeds in the sequence problem, cause, and solution (136–37). Overstreet points to 1 Corinthians as an example of Paul’s use of this approach. He concludes this chapter with a particular kind of problem-solution sermon: “Life Situation Preaching.” By beginning with the selection of a life situation problem he causes the reader to ask whether or not this is an example of the classic problem of using a text as a pretext for choosing an application of our choice rather than one that emerges from the text of Scripture itself.

Chapter 10 explores a third approach to sermon structure: cause-effect with biblical examples from Ephesians, Genesis, and Judges.

Chapter 11 is the final chapter in this part. It expounds the refutation approach to sermon structure with biblical examples from Acts 26: 24–29; Romans 6:1–14; and Jonah.

The final section of the book, Part 4, is made up of three chapters, and covers “Pertinent Applications in Persuasive Preaching,” the first two of which are very helpful. Chapter 12 contrasts “Persuasion versus Manipulation.” Overstreet insists that “since we

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<sup>3</sup> Alan H. Monroe, *Monroe’s Principles of Speech* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1945). Overstreet is confusing here since on page 122 he attributes this five-step sequence to Alan Monroe, whereas on page 29 he says that Litfin gets this sequence from William McGuire. It seems like a common usage in communication circles. Cf. fn 8.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond S. Ross, *Persuasion: Communication and Interpersonal Relations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 182.

believe the Bible to be the true Word of God, we must preach that Word regardless of the current mindset of our listeners” (163). He insists that, just as the best ancient rhetoricians taught and practiced persuasion without manipulation, so must we (164). The ends and the means must both be ethical in accord with Jesus’s summary of the law: love of God and one’s neighbor (166). Overstreet gives the eight principles of ethical persuasion from Hanna and Gibson’s *Public Speaking for Personal Success*,<sup>5</sup> and concludes by noting Aristotle’s insistence on ethical means for virtuous ends (168).

Chapter 13 is one of the best in the book, “The Holy Spirit in Preaching.” Overstreet observes that “only He can turn our ‘speaking’ into true preaching which will have a persuasive spiritual impact” (171). There is nothing new here for those in the Reformed tradition, but it is a timely reminder of one of the chief conceits, and thus temptations, of our age: that we can solve all problems given the proper technique.

It is thus ironic that Overstreet’s final chapter of the book is a defense of some form of visible invitation at the conclusion of sermons. This indicates Overstreet’s deep Fundamentalist training in this unbiblical form of persuasion<sup>6</sup> and perhaps contributes to his misunderstanding of Litfin’s thesis, to which I now turn.

## Litfin

Litfin’s book is a revision of his 1994 *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation* and a major contribution to our understanding of Paul’s defense of his preaching in the Corinthian church. The 1994 version is the one listed in Overstreet’s bibliography. The level of scholarship in Litfin’s book is of a higher caliber than Overstreet’s, due to Litfin’s research into and understanding of Paul’s rhetorical situation, as well as his exegetical skills in unpacking 1 Corinthians 1–4.

Litfin begins with a fascinating account in the preface of the scholarly journey that brought him to view Paul’s theology of preaching in a new way that has little precedent in New Testament scholarship. In the introduction he observes that while 1 Corinthians 1–4 is not a systematic treatment of Paul’s theology of preaching it functions as a *locus classicus* on the subject (41, 49). The recent explosion of rhetorical analysis of the New Testament text itself has overlooked a thorough investigation into the rhetorical *sitz im leben* especially of the Corinthian situation. What we have in 1 Corinthians 1–4 is nothing less than a “philosophy of rhetoric” (41) which distinguishes between a “natural paradigm” and a spiritual or “Pauline paradigm” (47). A problem arises when the natural gift of rhetoric, championed by the great rhetorical teachers of the ancient world, which clearly has an important place in law and politics, is uncritically advocated by preachers and homileticians. Augustine, in *de Doctrina Christiana*, the earliest manual of Christian rhetoric, baptized Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* as useful when employed in the interests of biblical truth as if Paul’s critics were manipulators or practitioners of bad rhetoric. According to Augustine, the preacher is called to instruct, charm, and persuade (52). Litfin is convinced that the “Pauline paradigm” is Paul’s alternative to the best ancient rhetoric, not because that rhetoric doesn’t have a place in the natural order of common culture, but because it is inappropriate for the message of the gospel.

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<sup>5</sup> Michael S. Hanna and James W. Gibson, *Public Speaking for Personal Success*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Dubuque, Brown, 1992), 359.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ian Murray, *The Invitation System* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967).

The book is divided into three parts: 1) Greco-Roman Rhetoric, 2) 1 Corinthians 1–4, 3) Summary and Analysis. Part 1 is a brilliant and extremely useful survey of ancient rhetoric, consisting of nine chapters.

Chapter 1 explores “The Beginnings.” Prior to Paul the study and practice of rhetoric had existed for centuries (57). The development of democratic civil order in Athens spawned the earliest consciously crafted forms of persuasive rhetoric. The sophists developed rigorous training in rhetoric (58–61). Plato’s opposition to the sophists was not so much due to their persuasive techniques as their relativistic epistemology (64). Litfin explores the development of rhetorical theory in Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.

Chapters 2–4 cover the goal, power, and reach of rhetoric. The art of persuasion developed as a democratic alternative to coercion (70). It is designed to produce belief in the listeners. Thus, orators must understand human motivation (73). Rhetoric was considered an almost magical power (*dunamis* δύναμις), like “a great torrent” according to Quintilian (75, 77). Thus “the people of the Greco-Roman world luxuriated in public speaking. Fame, power, wealth, position—all were available to the orator” (81).

Chapters 5–8 cover the genius, appraisal, hazards, and rewards of rhetoric. Audience adaptation was always a central concern for the orator, but, as Aristides asserted, the orator cannot please the people and convince them of his point of view (87). The orator must understand his audience thoroughly (89) and wisely adapt his oratory to them by implementing various techniques of persuasion (90). In the end the audience is the judge (95–96). Orators are always being evaluated by the audience (101). Thus, the audience is always feared by the orator since it is always suspicious of rhetoric (103). Hence the attitude of Paul’s Corinthians critics. The success promised to the ancient orator made him extremely ambitious. So Quintilian warned that the orator, especially in the court of law, must not let desire for applause interfere with the prosecution of his case.

According to chapter 9, “The Grand Equation of Rhetoric” involved “three primary parts: the audience, the desired results, and the speaker’s efforts (113). The high demands of rhetoric come to their fullest expression in Quintilian’s *Institutes of Oratory* (*Institutio Oratoria* ca. AD 95). Quintilian was a late contemporary of Paul (114). Encyclopedic knowledge on a wide variety of subjects was required. “First-century orators were required to be craftsmen of ideas and language” (115). Litfin concludes with a segue into Part 2:

These are high demands indeed. They are in fact demands the itinerant Apostle could not meet. Nor did he aspire to. As we shall see, Paul’s goals as a missionary preacher were not those of the Greco-Roman persuader. They were the goals of a simple herald, goals that were dramatically different from those of the polished orators of the Greco-Roman world of the first century. (116)

The first two chapters of this Part, chapters 10 and 11, explain the attitude toward rhetoric in Corinth and the setting of 1 Corinthians 1–4 in Corinth. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city at a major intersection of travel and trade in the empire.

The delight in rhetoric that characterized the rest of the Greco-Roman world characterized Corinth as well, and the association of eloquence with fame, power, status, and wealth was as obvious and deep-seated here as anywhere. (124–25)

Litfin states his assumptions about Paul’s letter clearly at the outset. 1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21 introduces the theme of the nature of Paul’s preaching that is foundational to the letter as a whole. This passage “is correctly, even if not exhaustively, to be characterized as an apology for Paul’s apostolic ministry” (131). Paul understood his ministry to be one of public speaking (133, 1 Cor. 1:17). He was entrusted with stewardship of a message from Christ (133). He accounts for the negative evaluation of his preaching by a significant segment of the congregation as a problem with “worldly standards of judgment” (134). Paul is frank in reporting the nature of the criticisms: “For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.’ ” (2 Cor. 10:10). “Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things” (2 Cor. 11:6). It is largely the form or manner of Paul’s preaching that is under attack (137). His lack of eloquence was an embarrassment. Thus, Paul is forced to explain his *modus operandi* as a preacher (141).

In one of thirty-three excursuses Litfin rejects the idea that the rhetoric which Paul opposes is the deceitful and self-aggrandizing sort.<sup>7</sup> Rather Paul was concerned that the persuasive techniques of good rhetoric, fine for natural purposes of the state, would produce merely natural rather than spiritual results in preaching (152). Paul’s alternative is the proclaimer or witness, rather than “the results-driven dynamic of Greco-Roman persuasion itself.” “The Corinthians were for the most part little people with mere pretensions of culture and status” (153). “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth” (1 Cor. 1:26).

Chapters 12–16 analyze Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 1–4 by working seriatim through the passage. This is very rich material.

“Paul argues that he could not pour the gospel into the mold of Greco-Roman eloquence without thereby emptying the cross of its power (1 Cor. 1:17)” (159). The results of his preaching were dependent not on his persuasive powers but the “power of God” (*dunamei theou* δυνάμει θεοῦ 1 Cor. 2:5). The Corinthians had not abandoned the message of the cross, they only failed to grasp its implications for preaching. The centrality of Christ stands in sharp contrast with the Corinthians’ personality centered approach. “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17). “It is precisely this human dynamic . . . that Paul is here disavowing” (177). The weight of the orators’ ability was for Paul shifted to the message and its application by the Holy Spirit. The theocentric nature of the gospel has “a persuasive dynamic of its own” (178). “Paul seemed to conceive of these two persuasive dynamics—that of the rhetor and that of the cross—as mutually exclusive” (179). Faith is not a human possibility open to the influence of the orator, but a divinely given ability dispensed by the Spirit through the hearing of the word of the cross (181).

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<sup>7</sup> There are three excursuses on this topic: “Good Rhetoric Versus Bad Rhetoric,” on pages 150, 260, 294.

God uses means that the world considers weak, foolish, and unimpressive—that is Paul’s *modus operandi* in preaching (182–83). Paul’s use of word groups to describe his preaching, such as εὐαγγελίζω (*euangelizō*), κηρύσσω (*kērussō*), καταγγέλλω (*katangellō*), and μαρτυρέω (*martureō*), “are decidedly non-rhetorical” (184). Paul’s task was not to create a message to persuade but to deliver a message already given—a decidedly humbler task (185).

Paul’s use of πείθομεν (*peithomen*) in his statement in 2 Corinthians 5:11 “Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others,” simply refers to the agency of the preachers, not their rhetorical strategies (189). In Acts 17:2–4; 28:23–24, we should observe that

Paul’s rhetorical approach drew not on the orator’s repertoire of persuasive strategies designed to engender πίστις, but on authoritative, Scripture-backed witness to the crucified Christ. (190)

In 1 Corinthians 1:21: “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of κηρύγματος (*kērugmatos*) to save those who believe” the ESV translates κηρύγματος (*kērugmatos*) as “what we preach” removing the dual emphasis of form and content in the word (193). This narrowing of the meaning of the word to refer to the message alone began especially with C. H. Dodd’s *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* published in 1936 (195).

This [the narrowing of the meaning] is why a lexicographer such as Gerhard Friedrich, in his article on κήρυγμα in *TDNT* (1965, p. 714), concludes that the word “has a twofold sense . . . , signifying both the result of proclamation (what is proclaimed) and the actual proclaiming. In other words, it denotes both the act and the content.” (200)

Litfin defines the persuader as one who implements “the discovery, shaping, and delivery of ideas so as to engender belief in one’s listeners” (205). The herald or proclaimer, on the other hand, is a “spokesman . . . bound by the precise instructions of the one who commissions him. . . . an executive instrument” (205). He had no control over the audience response. The Roman *praeco* or herald was an oral proclaimer who did not enjoy a high social standing (206–7). But the audience was “dethroned from its proud role as judge” (212). The root of the problem in Corinth was the pride of which Corinthian factionalism and the criticism of Paul’s preaching were merely symptoms (219). They were mistakenly judging Paul by the world’s public speaking standards. Christ and him crucified is the point of preaching, not the preacher.

In Part 3 Litfin presents a summary and analysis. He distinguishes between the model of the orator, the natural paradigm, and Paul’s model of the preacher, the Pauline or supernatural paradigm, by contrasting the two in terms of the audience + the speaker’s effort = the results (270–71). For both classical rhetoric and Paul the audience is a fixed given. But, whereas the speaker’s effort is variable for the orator, it is a fixed constant for the preacher as evidenced by Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 4:1–2: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.” The results are an “independent

variable” for the orator, since the audience shapes the speaker’s effort (262), but a “dependent variable” for the preacher, where the dependence is on the work of the Holy Spirit in commending the constant of the “word of the cross” to human hearts (270).

Appendix 3 is a brilliant summary of Paul’s epistemology. Appendices 4 and 5 provide useful implications for preaching as well as broader concerns exemplified by Litfin’s interaction with the Church Growth Movement.

### **A Response to Overstreet’s Criticism of Litfin’s Thesis**

Overstreet challenges Litfin’s work on the distinction between persuasion and proclamation. He uncritically advocates the best ancient rhetoric as a model for preachers and maintains that the rhetoric that shaped the Corinthian criticisms of Paul was from the Second Sophist movement (Overstreet, 52), implying that it was bad, or manipulative, deceitful rhetoric that Paul was opposed to in Corinth. Litfin, in contrast insists, “[I]t is not just the corruptions of this tradition that Paul calls into question for the purposes of preaching; it is the essence of the tradition itself” (Litfin, 273). While it is clear that Overstreet read the 1994 version of Litfin’s book, it seems that, due to the publication date, Litfin has not read Overstreet. Overstreet does not sustain a cogent engagement with Litfin’s work on the background of Paul’s controversy with the Corinthian church and thus his exegesis. He also fails to take Litfin’s apologetic goals into account. Despite Overstreet’s fine survey of New Testament uses of the *πειθῶ* (*peithō*) word group, it seems that he has misunderstood Litfin’s basic point about the dangers of persuasive rhetoric yielding a purely human or natural result. When Overstreet asserts that Litfin bases his critique of preaching as persuasion on three Scriptures (Zech. 4:6, Ps. 127:1, and 1 Cor. 2:4–5) one wonders if he has actually read Litfin’s book (Overstreet, 29, cf. Litfin, 280–82 “The ambiguity of ‘persuasion’”).

Overstreet’s assertion that Litfin limits Paul’s theology of preaching to 1 Corinthians 1–4 is unfounded. Litfin clearly states that he understands that this passage is not exhaustive on the subject of preaching.

We discover the principle (Paul’s insight that informed his preaching) at work throughout Paul’s preaching and writings, but it comes to its fullest expression in the passage we have explored at length: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and 1:17–2:5 in particular. (Litfin 131, 260)

When, as Overstreet critically quotes, Litfin asserts, the preacher “is not called upon to persuade the hearers to respond,” (30) Litfin is not saying there is no need to apply the truth of the proclamation to the lives of the hearers. Litfin insists:

We need not refrain from urging, entreating, exhorting or beseeching our listeners to follow Christ. The essence of the gospel is invitation, and some of the terms used in Scripture—for example παρακαλέω (Acts 2:40) and δέομαι (2 Cor. 5:20)—clearly portray this aspect of the preacher’s ministry. Nothing we have said is meant to deny the validity of straight forward encouragement or exhortation to receive the gospel. After all, invitation in and of itself can scarcely be viewed as a persuasive technique designed to induce, rather than simply be the agent of, *yielding*. (348)

Overstreet responds to an earlier version (1994) of this quote by complaining that Litfin doesn't demonstrate the difference between the exhortation he approves and the persuasion he opposes. First, Litfin reminds us that the issue Paul is "addressing in 1 Corinthians 1–4 is primarily the proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers" (339). But he goes on to say that "the insights of 1 Corinthians 1–4 remain relevant" as well to believers who already possess the Holy Spirit (Overstreet, 340). Litfin wants to stop after the first two steps in the process of persuasion (attention, comprehension, yielding, retention, and action)<sup>8</sup> because "yielding" is the internal work of the Holy Spirit (347). Overstreet insists that mere comprehension is not what Paul aims at, as if scholars like Litfin do not advocate yielding or action as the result of proclamation (41). He fails to distinguish between the actions of the agent of proclamation (the preacher) and the agent of yielding, retention, and action, which is the Holy Spirit.

Litfin is using persuasion in a technical way to describe the ancient audience-driven mode of rhetoric, which he sees appearing in modern form in preaching in, among other things, the Church Growth movement. He would also see it in Overstreet's own advocacy of the invitation system. Litfin distinguishes between two types of audience adaptation:

Training in ancient rhetoric was designed to help the speaker mold his efforts to the needs and values of the audience so as to produce the desired response. The Christian preacher, on the other hand, molds his efforts to his audience for a different reason: to ensure that they comprehend the King's message. The preacher should use all the techniques at his disposal to put the message in terms his audience can understand, to break through the hearer's defenses so as to confront him or her with the truth. (347–48, cf. 279)

Litfin gives a very helpful list of practices he believes Paul's theology of preaching would have us avoid:

- Gatherings centered on a charismatic, pseudo-celebrity communicator who revels in the spotlight.
- Styles of preaching or music that tend to rev up the emotions but short-circuit the listener's engagement with the gospel.
- Sentimental story-laden messages that captivate the audience but fail to direct them to Christ.
- Empty, anthropocentric pulpit therapy that draws the listener in by purporting to deal with life's issues while lacking the gospel's biblical and theological substance.
- Interminable invitations designed to wear down resistance until someone, anyone, responds.
- Such techniques as asking people to raise their hands to be prayed for and then urging all who raised their hands to come forward. (349)

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<sup>8</sup> Based on a modern analysis of human persuasion in William McGuire, "The Nature of Attitudes and Attitude Change," in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, vol. 3, 136–314, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 173. It may also be found elsewhere. Cf. fn 3.

After all Litfin *does* believe in persuasion, it's just that he attributes persuasion to the Holy Spirit, which is clearly the biblical emphasis (Overstreet, 30). But in Overstreet's discussion of persuasion in Paul's epistles he quotes Litfin's identification of the force of the persuasion verb in 2 Timothy 1:5, "Because Paul was persuaded that Timothy possessed true faith (v.5), . . . he urged the young minister to fan into flame (or perhaps, "keep at full flame") his God-given ability for ministry" (Overstreet, 45). His footnote indicates that Overstreet thinks this shows Litfin's inconsistency. Again, however, I think Overstreet misunderstands Litfin's more precise use of "persuasion" and confuses the use of persuasive verbs by the Apostle with his own theory that the persuasion comes from the preacher.

Overstreet's own emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching, and in particular persuasion, is precisely what Litfin aims at in limiting the kind of preaching Paul was advocating—proclamation—in contrast to the rhetorical expectations of the Corinthian church.

In the end both Litfin and Overstreet believe in the central importance of the Holy Spirit in the act of preaching and in its effect on the hearers. They both believe in the supernatural power of biblical preaching and its message. Litfin, however, gives a more consistently biblical account of Paul's theology of preaching.

The preacher is called, not to a results-driven, but an obedience-driven ministry (317).

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:20)

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)

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# ServantPoetry

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Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)

## Cowper's Grave

IT is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying;  
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying:  
Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence languish:  
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her anguish.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless singing!  
O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was clinging!  
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,  
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye were smiling!

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears his story,  
How discord on the music fell and darkness on the glory,  
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,  
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted,

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,  
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration;  
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,  
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon him,  
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven hath won him,  
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love to blind him,  
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could find him;

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic senses  
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences:  
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its number,  
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home-caresses,

Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses:  
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways removing,  
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and loving.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of that guiding,  
And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,  
He testified this solemn truth, while phrenzy desolated,  
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she blesses  
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her kisses,—  
That turns his fevered eyes around—“My mother! where's my mother?”—  
As if such tender words and deeds could come from any other!—

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending o'er him,  
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied love she bore him!—  
Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever gave him,  
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes which closed in death to save him.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can image that awaking,  
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him breaking,  
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,  
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—“My Saviour! *not* deserted!”

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in darkness rested,  
Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was manifested?  
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops averted?  
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should be deserted?

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather;  
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father:  
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—  
It went up single, echoless, “My God, I am forsaken!”

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,  
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation!  
That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar not hope's fruition,  
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a vision.