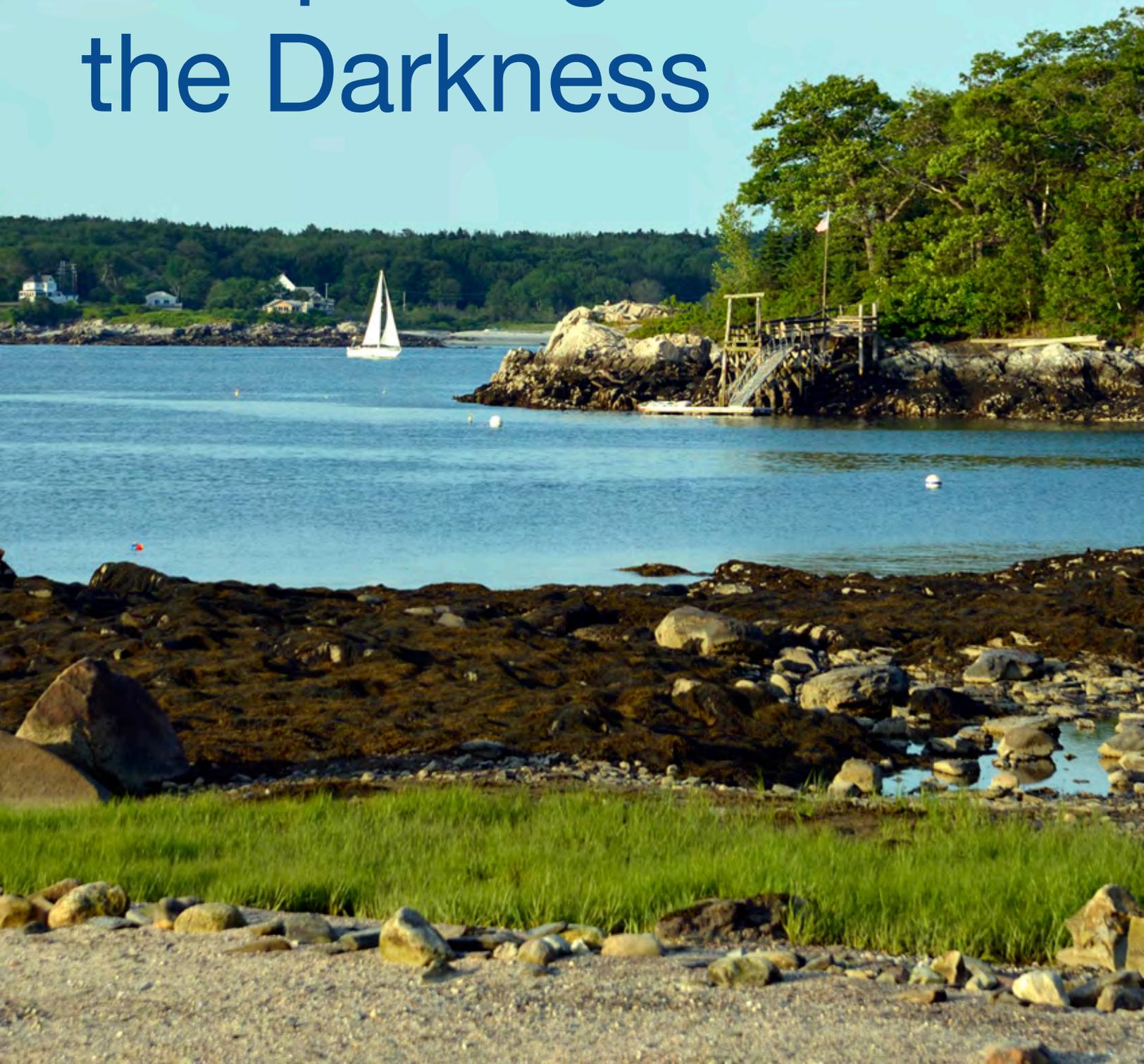


ordained servant

June-July 2016

# Exposing the Darkness



# *Ordained Servant Online*

## *A Journal for Church Officers*

E-ISSN 1931-7115

### **CURRENT ISSUE: EXPOSING THE DARKNESS**

**June-July 2016**

### *From the Editor*

In this issue we continue to explore the much neglected science and practice of elenctics with part 2 of Brian De Jong's "Exposing the Darkness." In this concluding part De Jong makes the biblical foundation for elenctics explicit, urging us to take the offense in our apologetics and evangelism by shining the light of God's Word on the problem of sin and rebellion in each unbeliever's life.

On occasion the authors of books reviewed in *Ordained Servant* wish to respond to the reviews. In such cases I always allow the original reviewer to respond with a rejoinder. Owen Anderson responds to Paul Helseth's review of his two books on the Princeton theology.

Ryan McGraw reviews two books, Stephen Casselli's *Divine Rule Maintained* and Michael Kibbe's *From Topic to Thesis*. Casselli deals with the complex subject of Puritan Anthony Burgess's covenant theology and the place of the law in post-Reformation dogmatics. Kibbe offers a practical guide to theological research.

I review poet Larry Woiwode's evocative chapbook of poetry, *Land of Sunlit Ice*. This letterpress book is a treat for anyone who loves poetry, especially those familiar with Woiwode's fiction as a Christian writer.

Finally, don't miss seventeenth-century poet-politician Edmund Waller's "Of the Last Verses in the Book," reflecting death and the Christian hope in a form antithetical to the metaphysical poetry of his day.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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

# Servant Witness

## Exposing the Darkness: The Biblical Theological Foundation, Part 2

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by Brian L. De Jong

In my first article on the science of elenctics, I proposed a definition of this much neglected practice. I also sketched the main characteristics of elenctics, and proposed a model for ministry. That article was implicitly resting on a biblical theological foundation. In this second installment, I will attempt to make this foundation explicit. This will enable us to think more thoroughly and carefully about the practice of elenctics in ministry, as well as shedding light on a variety of scriptural passages and themes.

The cornerstone of a biblical theology of elenctics should be Christ himself. Jesus's earthly ministry is summarized in John 3:19–21:

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.

Jesus came into the world as the Light of the world. His very presence had an elenctic quality to it. He exposed things simply by being who he was. As he shined upon men, there were two distinct reactions to his presence. On the one hand, the men of the world loved the darkness rather than this newly arrived Light. Their deeds were evil and they instinctively knew he would expose them for who and what they were. Because they practiced evil, they hated the Light and refused to come near to the Light, lest he elencticize them for all to see. This establishes the important role of elenctics toward unbelievers.

The other reaction also involves exposure. The Light also shines on those who practice the truth. They have no fear, so they gladly approach the Light. As the Light shines upon them, it is plain to all that their good deeds have been wrought in God. God's grace has had its effect, and these justified persons are now bearing the fruit of righteousness. When Jesus elencticizes them, it is altogether positive. Praise is given to God for his great salvation and its impact upon the righteous of the earth. So we see that elenctics is also practiced toward believers, though with much different purposes and results.

No matter where he went, or what he did, Jesus constantly practiced elenctics. As the Light, he could no more cease exposing men than could the physical sun stop illuminating the earth.

Another important passage is John 16:8–11. In teaching about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says this:

And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

An overlooked area of the ministry of the Spirit is his work among unbelievers. His impact upon Christians is widely appreciated, but what does he do among the unbelieving men of this world? First and foremost, he convicts them. In other words, the Holy Spirit is elenctizing unbelievers in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. In this usage the verb ἐλέγχω (*elengchō*) carries the connotation of condemning what is exposed. This is not a dispassionate exposé of unbelief, but rather a passionate demonstration of the guilt of sin in the sinful world, together with God’s negative judgment against it.

The elenctic ministry of the Spirit has three aspects. First, he is convicting the world concerning sin because they do not believe in Christ. Here is the chief sin of the ungodly man—his failure to believe Jesus to be all that he claims to be. From this serious sin of unbelief flow all sorts of other evils, but failure to believe in Jesus is the fountainhead of their many soul-damning corruptions. Unbelief is everywhere exposed and condemned by the Holy Spirit.

In his commentary on John, D. A. Carson says:

The Holy Spirit presses home the world’s sin *despite* the world’s unbelief; he convicts the world of sin *because* they do not believe in Jesus. This convicting work of the Paraclete is therefore gracious: it is designed to bring men and women of the world to recognize their need, and so turn to Jesus, and thus stop being “the world.”<sup>1</sup>

The second component of the Spirit’s elenctic work is more obscure—“concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see me.” Carson argues that the righteousness in view is the world’s righteousness—a righteousness of their own making. Just as Jesus frequently exposed the utter inadequacy of the so-called “righteousness” of the Jews, Carson asks:

Is it not therefore thematically appropriate that the Paraclete should convict the world of its *righteous*? . . . The reason *why* the Paraclete convicts the world of its righteousness is because Jesus is going to the Father. As we have observed, one of Jesus’ most startling roles with respect to the world was to show up the emptiness of its pretensions, to expose by his light the darkness of the world for what it is. But now Jesus is going; how will that convicting work be continued? It is continued by the Paraclete, who drives home this conviction in the world precisely *because* Jesus is no longer present to discharge this task.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 537.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 538.

The final prong of the Spirit's elenctic ministry is concerning judgment. The world has weighed Christ in the scales and found him wanting. Their judgment is wrong and wicked, and the Spirit will demonstrate this fact. In reality, the world willingly links arms with the devil and joins his cause. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, the prince of this world was exposed and condemned. The Spirit would therefore expose and condemn all of Satan's allies for their part in this cosmic rebellion against God the Son.

A third passage that deserves our attention is arguably the single-most important statement in Scripture about Scripture. The bedrock for our understanding of the inspiration of the Bible is 2 Timothy 3:16–17. Those familiar verses say this: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." In this passage the elenctic work is focused upon the believer—the "man of God."

The second function of "all Scripture" in that text is "elenctics"—for reproof and the rebuking of the sinner. This is a necessary step in the sequence outlined in these verses. Scripture is profitably taught in a broad and general sense, but it is also profitable for zeroing in on the specific misdeeds of men. As sin is exposed and rebuked, then Scripture can be applied for correction. In other words, before the cure can be applied, the wound must be opened and cleansed. Scripture opens up and cleans out the wound, and then applies the healing ointment so restoration can proceed. Finally, Scripture trains a man in righteousness so that he will not fall back into the same trap again. Thus is the man of God made adequate, equipped for every good work.

What Paul records in 2 Timothy 3:16 provides the important complement to Jesus's words in John 16. Elenctics is the work of the Holy Spirit, and he sovereignly and graciously employs the Scriptures in this work. Since the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, it makes sense that he would employ his own sword in this necessary ministry.

Next, reflect upon Paul's words to Titus:

For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. (Titus 1:7–13)

Here Paul spells out qualifications for an overseer. These instructions relate especially to ministers. A minister is to hold fast the faithful word in accordance with the teaching. He must be theologically sound and biblically orthodox. His commitment to the word of God is for two purposes. First, so that he will be able to exhort believers in sound doctrine. Through a ministry of preaching and teaching, he must expound and apply the Scriptures to the minds, hearts, and lives of Christians.

The second purpose for holding fast to the faithful word is so that he can elencticize those who contradict the truth. This may include members of the visible church, or those critics from outside the church. In this instance the verb ἐλέγχω (*elengchō*) emphasizes the exposing, contradicting, and refuting of false doctrine, together with an explanation of what the truth actually means. Ministers who preach must be equipped to identify heresy, to dissect it and to use the word to refute whatever is erroneous.

Often when rebellious men inject their influence into the church, they gain a hearing from well-meaning but gullible Christians. Such deceivers were at work in the first century, and they inflicted profound damage. They were upsetting whole families by teaching things they should not. To top it off, they did so for the sake of sordid gain. How should Titus respond? Paul prescribes elenctics. Reprove them severely, he says. The severity of this elenctic encounter is needed because of the persuasive strength of the opposition. Later Paul underlines this when he says in Titus 2:15, “These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” Reproving is elencticizing. Speak and exhort and elencticize with all spiritual authority, and allow no one to disregard you!

When it comes to the duty of ordinary believers, we look to Paul’s words in Ephesians 5:11–14, where he writes:

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Here the Apostle exhorts believers to refuse participation in the “unfruitful deeds of darkness.” To be involved in such sins would constitute hypocrisy and would blunt any criticism offered by the believer against pagan practices. Paul’s warning does not stop there. He does not merely counsel Christians to steer clear of those deeds of darkness. Instead Paul advises that Christians should even expose those pernicious practices. Here is the command to “elencticize” the unfruitful deeds of the sons of darkness. Such wickedness must be exposed for what it is so that everyone can see the disgraceful nature of such conduct. In verse 13 Paul expands the thought by saying that all things become visible when they are exposed by the light. This again shows us the nature of elenctics—it is the exposing of all things to the light, so that those things might become visible to everyone—believer and unbeliever alike. Shining the light on sin displays the true corruption and ugliness of sin. So long as it lurks in the shadows, and operates under the cover of darkness, no one can actually see what sin looks like. Only in the blazing brilliance of the light of Christ can these actions and motives be shown for what they truly are. In verse 14 Paul then draws together various ideas and phrases from Isaiah to call the sleeper to awake “and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Now we see the function of elenctics in calling the exposed sinner to repentance and faith—to new life in Christ.

As this falls in the midst of a chapter of ethical imperatives for believers, the duty to practice elenctics is not restricted or limited to ordained ministers or professional apologists. Elenctics is a duty of each and every Christian. No Christian should ever

participate in unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead every follower of Christ should expose the disgraceful deeds done by evil men.

Having looked at a number of key passages from Scripture about the practice of elenctics, let us briefly survey some historic examples of elenctics in practice. Perhaps the most memorable instance of elenctics in the history of Israel is found in 2 Samuel 12. King David had sinned grievously in his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite. David hid his sin, but God saw what his servant had done. Hence the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to King David. While Nathan wove his tale about injustice and arrogance, David was caught up in the narrative. David's anger burned against the main character, and he demanded justice and fourfold restitution. Nathan then uttered those immortal elenctic words, "You are the man." Nathan exposed David's sins and crimes for the king to see, and David was broken by it. After Nathan details the offenses of David against Bathsheba, Uriah, and the Lord himself, and pronounces God's judgment on the wayward monarch, David replies, "I have sinned against the Lord." Psalms 51 and 32 detail David's confession, repentance, and restoration, which flowed from Nathan's effective elenctic ministry.

Another Old Testament instance of elenctics is the confrontation of Elijah with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. Before the eager eyes of the watching Israelites, this is what Elijah said about Baal in 1 Kings 18:27: "And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.' "

This exposé was the necessary prelude to Elijah's humble prayer before a waterlogged altar. When the fire fell from heaven and consumed everything, then the people realized that Yahweh is God and Baal is not. Before they could be brought to their senses, they had to see convincingly that Baal was no god at all, and that the prophets of Baal were religious charlatans. Having exposed the bankruptcy of Baal worship, the compelling scene at Elijah's altar had a decisive effect. Before men can know that the Lord, he is God, they must be convinced that Baal, he is no god at all.

Moving to the New Testament, among the first figures we meet is John the Baptizer. When John saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized, he said this in Matthew 3:7-9: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham."

When tax collectors came to be baptized, John exposed their sins of greed: "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to" (Luke 3:13, NASB). To soldiers he said, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14, NASB). In saying this he exposes three failures of the soldiers: (1) their thievery; (2) their bearing false witness; (3) their discontentment with their wages. John's elenctic ministry came to a zenith when he reprimanded Herod the tetrarch for unlawfully taking Herodias, his brother's wife—an elenctic encounter that led to imprisonment and death.

No better practitioner of elenctics ever existed than our Savior himself. Examples abound in the gospels, including the clear instance recorded in John 10:24-26:

So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.”

The Jews were disingenuous in their demand. Jesus had told them plainly, as well as demonstrating the truth of his claim by his works. Jesus therefore calls them on their hypocrisy and then exposes their essential problem—unbelief. Twice he convicts them of sin because they did not believe in him or the works he had done. On an even deeper level, he exposes the true cause of their refusal to believe—“you are not my sheep.” These were the recognized religious elites of their day, but Jesus was showing them for what they truly were—blind guides and false professors.

The quintessential elenctic chapter is Matthew 23. There Jesus exposes the scribes and Pharisees for their high handed hypocrisy. Observe how Jesus blisters them:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! . . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. (Matt. 23:23, 25)

The Apostles also carried out elenctics in their ministries. Peter’s Pentecost sermon ended on this note: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). That last phrase—“whom you crucified”—tore the iron mask off the audience. They were faced with their sin, and their hearts were pierced.

In Acts 3 Peter struck the same chord again, saying “But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead” (Acts 3:14–15).

Likewise Stephen’s defense before the high priest was a piece of strong elenctic preaching. He concluded in Acts 7:51–52 with these words:

You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.

On Paul’s first missionary journey, he encountered Elymas the magician. Paul exposed that deceitful man’s heart with strong words: “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?” (Acts 13:10).

Preaching in Pisidian Antioch, Paul rebuked the envious Jews. He said in Acts 13:46, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.”

Paul's ministry among pagan Gentiles was no less pointed. Speaking in Athens to the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill, Paul showed them that they worshiped in ignorance. Since the Greeks boasted in their wisdom, Paul's insistence on their ignorance would be galling to their selfish conceits. Moreover, as Paul critiqued the rampant idolatry of that society, and illustrated its obviously ridiculous nature, he was proving that the philosophers of Athens were not as insightful as they supposed. He drove his point home by announcing that God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent—including the philosophers in his audience that day.

Not only did Paul use elenctics in his preaching, but he employed this approach at times in his epistles. He chided the Corinthians for their divisions and disunity. He called them arrogant, and suggested that their tolerance of sexual immorality in their congregation was something even the pagans of that day wouldn't condone. Likewise he had sharp words for the "foolish" Galatians. Other New Testament writers are equally scathing at points, such as the scorching section in James 4:1–4.

But alas, we have only scratched the surface. God's Word overflows with elenctics—it is a biblical theme impossible to miss!

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# ServantExchange

## Owen Anderson's reply to Paul Helseth's Review

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by Owen Anderson

I am thankful to Paul for taking the time to read my two books and write his review. The main thread of his review had to do with his claim that I raised questions about the orthodoxy of Charles Hodge and Early Princeton thinkers. I doubt that even liberal theologians who disagree with Hodge could successfully make such a claim. I make no such claim. Instead, my books are asking the question: what caused an alteration at Princeton from its founding doctrine, and why wasn't the theology of Princeton in the work of Charles Hodge lasting? What caused the change that we see today at both Princeton Seminary and Princeton University?

An example of two answers that I do not think are sufficient is the progressive answer and the pessimistic answer. The progressive answer says that Princeton Seminary and Princeton University have grown into more truth as they exchanged outdated opinions for what we see today. Perhaps they would argue this new understanding of truth is to be found in the theology of Karl Barth. The more conservative explanation tends to be a pessimistic answer saying that all human institutions must decline and decay and therefore nothing surprising happened in the changes we see at Princeton. A downward spiral, compromise with falsehood, and loss of vision in succeeding generations are the path of all man-made programs.

By way of contrast I suggest that challenges tend to reveal the places where our foundational presuppositions are not sufficient to give an account of the Christian claims about redemption. The particular claims of Christianity about the need for redemption through the atoning work of Christ presuppose that unbelief is inexcusable in the face of clear general revelation about the eternal power and divine nature of God. If we offer circular arguments that beg the question, or use fallacies like appealing to authority or testimony, and we are not taking thoughts captive, we are at least implying if not conceding that unbelief has an excuse.

My research about early Princeton and Charles Hodge is set in the context of asking why the original foundation of that institution did not last. Far from claiming that the answer is that they were not orthodox, or suggesting there is some new truth they must accept, I instead dig deeper into the Westminster Standards to ask if they were used to their fullest to respond to challenges. Specifically, the Confession begins by affirming that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence manifest the nature of God so that unbelief is without excuse. This is the basis for the redemptive claims of special revelation and the need for Christ. Christians should be eager and willing to show that the light of nature, reason, clearly reveals God and leaves no excuse. This foundational work is affirmed in the Confession, and is presupposed in the claims of Princeton about piety and the knowledge of God, but it was not firmly and explicitly set in place. Particularly, affirming the combined truths of WSC questions 1, 46, and 101 to say that the chief end of man is to know God in all that by which he makes himself known, in all the works of creation and providence.

My hope is to bring these foundational truths into greater focus and encourage the need for getting them into place for lasting work and fruit.

**Owen Anderson** is an assistant professor of philosophy at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, and an adjunct faculty member at Phoenix Seminary in Phoenix, Arizona.

# ServantExchange

## Rejoinder to Owen Anderson

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by Paul Kjoss Helseth

Professor Anderson's response to my review raises two important questions. The first has to do with the question of whether and to what extent it is possible to be orthodox in principle but not in practice. While it is certainly true that Professor Anderson does not explicitly call the orthodoxy of Hodge and his colleagues at Old Princeton into question, he does so implicitly. The central thrust of his argument is that Princeton's institutional integrity was finally compromised because the Old Princetonians' "foundational presuppositions" were "not sufficient to give an account of the Christian claims about redemption," and they were not sufficient precisely because they were not grounded in a faithful commitment to the full and clear teaching of the Westminster Standards. Indeed, Professor Anderson's explanation for why Princeton's "original foundation . . . did not last" is that the Old Princetonians failed to "firmly and explicitly set in place" the Standards' teaching about God's revelation of himself through "the light of nature" and in all his works "of creation and providence," and they failed to do so because they had accommodated assumptions that prevented them from bringing the full resources of the Standards to bear upon the "challenges" of their day, resources that would have ensured a more lasting foundation because they would have left unbelievers without an excuse for unbelief.

If this is the case, and if it is indeed true that the Old Princetonians failed to establish a lasting foundation because they had embraced assumptions that were derived from some place other than faithfulness to the full and clear teaching of the Westminster Standards, then how can we avoid the conclusion that for Professor Anderson, the Old Princetonians failed to establish a lasting legacy because they were committed—in practice even if not in principle—to a doctrine of the knowledge of God that was finally grounded in something distinct from the Confession, something that by its very nature would indicate that they were—at least with respect to this critically important doctrine—less than orthodox in the most elementary sense of the term? This is the basic point that I was trying to make, especially in the conclusion of my review, and it is a point that I still think holds at least a little bit of water.

Professor Anderson's response to my review raises another, perhaps even more foundational question, namely the question of what kinds of presuppositions in fact are sufficient to give "an [adequate] account of the Christian claims about redemption." According to Professor Anderson, the Old Princetonians failed to provide an adequate basis "for the redemptive claims of special revelation and the need for Christ" because their "foundational presuppositions" discouraged them from offering a rational account of precisely why unbelief "is inexcusable in the face of clear general revelation about the eternal power and divine nature of God." Indeed, they were not as eager as he thinks consistently orthodox believers would have been "to show that the light of nature, reason, clearly reveals God and leaves no excuse [for unbelief]," and for this reason they more or less conceded "that unbelief has an excuse." But did the Old Princetonians in fact not provide a sufficient foundation for the claims of special revelation, as Professor Anderson claims, or did they simply not do so in precisely the way that he thinks it can and must be done? Unfortunately, the answer to this question begs a theological discussion that is beyond the scope of this exchange.

**Paul Kjoss Helseth** is professor of Christian Thought at the University of Northwestern – St. Paul, St. Paul, Minnesota.

# ServantReading

## Divine Rule Maintained *by Stephen J. Casselli*

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by Ryan M. McGraw

*Divine Rule Maintained: Anthony Burgess, Covenant Theology, and the Place of the Law in Reformed Scholasticism*, by Stephen J. Casselli. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016, 188 pages, \$30.00.

The function of God's law in Scripture has always raised difficult theological questions. With the advent of modern exegesis and theological methods, the proposed options for understanding divine law have only multiplied. In this climate, historical theology often challenges contemporary assumptions and pushes us beyond the bounds of current proposals. Stephen Casselli's work on Anthony Burgess does all of these things and more. Since Burgess was a prominent member of the Westminster Assembly, this book helps explain the teaching of the Westminster Standards on God's law, bringing a vital strand of the Reformed tradition into contemporary debates.

Casselli's book is a useful introduction to Westminster's teaching on God's law. In six concise chapters, he introduces his topic, sets Burgess in his historical context, and then treats in order creation and law, the law in the Mosaic covenant, and the law/gospel distinction, followed by a conclusion. His findings include ideas such as the law as an expression of God's nature, natural law and moral law, the threefold division of God's law, the threefold use of God's law, the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of grace, and the law and the gospel as expressing primarily the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. He delves deeply and broadly into British Reformed theology, introducing English readers to a wide array of important resources. Though Casselli writes historical theology, he does so with his finger on the pulse of today's church by singling out law and creation (including the nature of natural law), law and covenant, and law and gospel (139–43). One of the most useful features of his analysis is his observation that Burgess distinguished between the law as a reflection of God's character and the law as a covenant (61). This distinction undoubtedly undergirds chapter 19 in the Westminster Confession of Faith ("On the Law of God"). The tendency in much modern theology to ignore or to deny this distinction renders this chapter in the Confession virtually unintelligible.

Though *Divine Rule Maintained* is well written and useful, some points require greater clarity. For example, Casselli treats natural law as virtually synonymous with moral law. Yet James Bruce shows helpfully in his recent work on Francis Turretin that natural law referred to natural relationships between God and people and between people and one another as created by God.<sup>1</sup> The content of moral law was identical with natural

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<sup>1</sup> James Bruce, *Rights in the Law: The Importance of God's Free Choices in the Thought of Francis Turretin* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen, 2013).

law, but the relationship between them is that of underlying principle and its outward expression.

A related issue is how Casselli classifies Reformed uses of law. Though he notes most of the vital components of Reformed teaching, such as the threefold division of law (moral, ceremonial, and judicial), the threefold use of the law, the law as a covenant of works, the law as the Old Testament, and the law as distinct from the gospel, he does not always distinguish these categories clearly. The most prominent example of this is his chapter on the law and the gospel, in which he states without explanation that Burgess treated the law as the Old Testament and the gospel as the New. While hinting at the fact that Lutherans dichotomized law and gospel regarding justification and showing that Reformed authors agreed with them on this point, he does not illustrate adequately how and why Reformed authors modified the law/gospel distinction. James Bruce has established elsewhere that Reformed authors treated the law as reflecting God's character, which led to natural law as reflecting God's relation to his creatures, which then led to moral law as its outward expression.<sup>2</sup> This moral law was the bedrock of the three divisions and three uses of law. The gospel created these uses and divisions of the law. This raises the related issue that in Reformed theology, law as opposed to gospel referred to various things. It could refer to the covenant of works as opposed to the covenant of grace. It could refer to the Old Testament versus the New Testament. Or, it could refer to the Mosaic covenant versus the new covenant. The complexity of treating the law in Reformed theology reflected the diversity of the uses of law in Scripture. What Casselli highlights rightly is the close relationship between the law and covenant theology. However, his study raises a number of unanswered questions regarding the above Reformed uses of law. This may result from the virtual absence of Latin Reformed dogmatic works, without which readers lose some of the precise distinctions within Reformed orthodoxy as well as its international character.

Casselli's book on Anthony Burgess on the nature and function of divine law cannot solve today's theological difficulties. Scripture alone can serve this purpose. However, his work shows us that contemporary voices on the subject are not the only ones worth hearing. The church needs books like this one in order to help her read the Bible better by lifting her gaze from her current outlook to the horizon of church history. Though the church is not infallible, yet since Christ continues to direct her "by the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture" (WCF 1.10), we do well to hear what she has had to say.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

# ServantReading

## From Topic to Thesis *by Michael Kibbe*

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by Ryan M. McGraw

*From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*, by Michael Kibbe. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016, 152 pages, \$12.00, paper.

Theological papers and sermons often share in common that they hover around a topic without a clear aim in view. Both theological students and pastors need to develop the skill to tell people what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they plan to do it. This easy to read book by Michael Kibbe gives theological students needed help to do just that. It is a must read for theological students and for those seeking to write and to teach more effectively in the church.

Kibbe places theological research on the right footing. He asserts that those doing theological research must confess their unworthiness to know God, trust in the Spirit to help their labors, rest in God's self-revelation in Christ, and submit to God's authority (27–28). He also exemplifies focused writing in the flow and structure of his book. He breaks down the task of theological research into finding direction, gathering sources, understanding issues, entering discussion, and establishing a position (43–44). He illustrates his principles helpfully in light of widely differing sample research projects related to the kingdom of God in Mark and the doctrine of divine accommodation in John Calvin (e.g., 50–52). The appendices, which treat a range of research-related issues, are invaluable. This is true particularly of the sections on ten things not to do in writing a theological paper and in his introduction to the indispensable Zotero bibliographic software. He furnishes readers with much needed help to learn how to argue for positions rather than merely present information.

Kibbe overstates his case slightly at one point when he says that we must read the Bible as we do any other book and that one's view of the divine inspiration of Scripture has no bearing on hermeneutical methods (21). The primary difference that he overlooks is that, unlike human authors, the Lord is aware of every consequence of his words. While it is true that we should read the Bible grammatically and in its context, it is also true that we must piece together theological consequences from Scripture in order to conclude things such as God's Tri-unity and Christ's two natures. Such doctrines are revealed by God in Scripture as clearly as are express statements in particular texts, and they provide the backdrop without which the message of Scripture would unravel. While this principle does not allow for wild private interpretations of Scripture, it also distinguishes the Bible from any other book. While the methods of theological research overlap substantially with other disciplines, theology remains a unique discipline in these respects.

This book is precisely the tool that both seminary professors and students need to make the task of writing papers an exercise in developing a skill instead of completing an assignment. By teaching readers how to research and to write well, Kibbe teaches them how to think and to communicate better. The church needs men in the pulpit who are clear and interesting. While preaching sermons and writing papers are very different tasks, they are not unrelated, since they both require students to make a point clearly and persuasively. This reviewer hopes that this book will be useful to the church by teaching men how to think and to express themselves better in the seminary so that they might communicate more effectively in the pulpit.

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# ServantReading

## Land of Sunlit Ice *by Larry Woiwode*

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

*Land of Sunlit Ice* by Larry Woiwode. Fargo, ND: North Dakota State University Press, 2016, 32 pages, \$17.50, paper.

Who am I to review the poetry of the poet laureate of North Dakota? Well, I know Larry Woiwode as a man who loves the place he is from. As a student in Paris, Czesław Miłosz was dismayed at his fellow students who disdained their homelands with cosmopolitan condescension. He determined to never disavow the Polish village that he called home. Woiwode's prosodic engagement with his homeland is evocative of poetry's best uses—lyric reflections on the pain and beauty of one's home.

Woiwode is always aware that his Paradise is not located in North Dakota. But he pares this sensibility with a vision of the importance of this pilgrim life and the enchantment that still pervades his existence in his corner of God's world. So the first of thirteen poems, "Prolegomena," names the theme.

He covers the seasons of his life with the exquisite attention of a wordsmith in "Crystals," weaving the specifics of his embodied life among descriptions of family and friends. Each line break falls in a rhythmic cadence that begs for them to be read aloud. "Horses" exemplifies a life embedded in North Dakota. "Deserted Barn" is a metaphor of the poet's own experience.

I am a deserted barn,  
my cattle robbed from me,  
My horses gone,  
Light leaking in my sides, sun piercing my tin roof  
Where it's torn,  
I am a deserted barn.

"Migration" lovingly depicts the wonderful birth of a daughter. "Mid-fall Song" laments the passing life of the poet, with which every aging man can identify.

The longest of the thirteen poems, in seven parts, "*Ars Poetica* Conference," is like books-on-books for the book collector. It is a sage observation of the poet's struggle, with a special reflection on the marginalized Christian poet. Literary allusions warrant two footnotes, but they do not explain much. The reader encounters the formative tensions of influence from art, music, and poetry. Parts three and four are in the shape of a percolator (a pattern poem)—coffee being the stimulator of the conference. The dizzying atmosphere of such a gathering is loaded with temptations that the committed—read married—poet resists.

“The Interview” reveals the poet's love-hate relationship with the limelight, “A shrieking train articulates my state.” It reminded me of his poem, dedicated to his mentor *New Yorker* editor William Maxwell, in *Eventide* (No. 27).

Woiwode is, after all, a pilgrim, as revealed in “Dedication of Reiland Fine Arts Center.” Like Updike he is rooted in his place of origin, “the common / Act of art, an exercise in love, / Occurs.” And reminds us of his hope “of Calvary, Zion's reign,” finishing in Psalm-like phrase, “His blessing here forever on this day.”

“Capitol-Crowned” celebrates Jan Webb, retiring executive director of the North Dakota Council on the Arts, for her advocacy for the native land and lore of the poet's home. “Quasquicentennial” celebrates the land Woiwode loves best. How he adores that place and its first displaced inhabitants—“we with grace / That always should pertain ask forgiveness of you.”

The riches here before the rigs' reality  
Arrived. We are every day blessed with a host

Of transactions by endurance in a northland  
That we cherish as generations cherished  
It, it's rainbow grandeur and cloud-capped grand  
Range of rolling plains of greening wheat, its

Acres of azure flax, canola gold, white  
Safflower stands, miles of east-leaning  
Sunflower squares or blue-green oats right  
At morning's start—food supply its meaning;

There is a strong lament “as horsepower lost / Its primacy and turned to fueled machines.” Yet, with fracking's rich rewards “The earth remains a giving host that routes / Computer climate claims in scents of sage; . . . Blaze, Spirit, blaze, and set our hearts on fire.”

The final pattern poem, “Venerable Elm,” shows the poet's descriptive expertise, describing the lovely tree he is called to fell. “Hawk's Nest” completes the poet's encomium of his beloved land, passed on to generations:

All that remains here is Hawk's Nest  
This ship of rest, its mast tips red, and Indian lore  
No longer lore nor believed in, Lorna, Les,  
And this long hour of last light, Lord, and goodbye.

I hope this is not Woiwode's last poem. But North Dakota will be pleased with this tribute if it is.

The four pattern poems in this brief collection display the discipline of structure Woiwode has mastered.

Woiwode's only other collection of poems, *Eventide*, was published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 1977. The setting is the same in these forty-nine poems, but the thirty-nine years intervening show in maturity.

*Land of Sunlit Ice* is a slim, single signature letterpress, hand-bound chapbook, printed on a Chandler and Price press and sewn with a 1940's stitcher. The evocative cover is individually stenciled, with hand-set Garamond type printed on the platen press located at the Hunter Times, Bonanzaville. "The interior text—transferred to magnesium and mounted on a wood base to create sixteen wrong-reading engravings—is hand-letter pressed and assembled by publishing interns at the Braddock News Letterpress Museum, ND." This carefully executed craftsmanship exudes the local care with which the poems themselves have been created.

Dating each poem would have been illuminating. But I can find no fault, only praise for this compelling collection of Woiwode's late-in-life poems. A larger point-sized type would have enhanced the volume.

Lovers of poetry, and the God who enables its treasures, will find this a satisfying offering from the laureate.

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# ServantPoetry

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Edmund Waller (1606–1687)

## Of the Last Verses in the Book

When we for age could neither read nor write,  
The subject made us able to indite.  
The soul, with nobler resolutions deckt,  
The body stooping, does herself erect:  
No mortal parts are requisite to raise  
Her, that unbodied can her Maker praise.

The seas are quiet, when the winds give o'er,  
So calm are we, when passions are no more:  
For then we know how vain it was to boast  
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.  
Clouds of affection from our younger eyes  
Conceal that emptiness, which age descries.

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,  
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made;  
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become  
As they draw near to their eternal home:  
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,  
That stand upon the threshold of the new.