

*A Place among the Stars*

*Ordained  
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# Ordained Servant Online

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### CURRENT ISSUE: A PLACE AMONG THE STARS

December 2018

#### From the Editor

Harold Dorman was a kind of Shamgar among ministers—easy to overlook, not well known outside of his presbytery and local church. He was a quiet and unassuming man who served his Lord and his Lord's church as a pastor for fifty-six years since his ordination in 1958. He is, thus, a sterling example to us all.

"A Place among the Stars" is a presentation I prepared for New Hampshire Public Radio for Christmas in 1996. It is an example of a kind of Christian witness we may offer to a secular audience in our cynical age. Please play the Scarlatti music at the point designated in the article. It is a stunning cantata, worthy of the astonishing good news it heralds.

David Noe translates the second in our series of Servant Classics with "Beza on the Trinity." His translations are *sui generis*, and this uniqueness is a real treat for *Ordained Servants* readers. There is nothing more important than the doctrine of the Trinity.

It may seem a strange thing to review a book about Mary Shelley's famous horror story, or perhaps the first science fiction novel, in a journal for church officers; but if we are to minister in a world of extraordinary technological inventions we must be aware of the dangers, the unintended consequences, of our creations. The difference between friend and fiend is slight in print, but dramatic in reality. This year marked the two-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Mary Shelley's publication of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*. James Gidley offers an important theological perspective on *Frankenstein* with his article, "The Theology of *Frankenstein*: Deism and Biblical Theism," in which he demonstrates that *Frankenstein* is based on a deistic concept of creation. In "Frankenstein 200, Our Creations: A Cautionary Tale," I review *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, annotated for scientists, engineers, and creators of all kinds. As Gidley concludes, it tells "the horror of unbridled human reason let loose in the world."

Ryan McGraw reviews Albert Martin's magnum opus, *Pastoral Theology: The Man of God, His Calling and Godly Life*, vol. 1. Martin's work is borne of decades of faithful Reformed ministry and interaction with numerous ministerial candidates.

Gordon Cook reviews Douglas Taylor, *I Shall Not Die, But Live: Facing Death with Gospel Hope*. This is a poignant devotional to help Christians face death, written by one facing death, determined to die well in Christ.

Don't miss our poem for the season, reminding us of the seemingly insignificant Shamgar, "Unlikely Savior."

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 Tribute

## Harold Leonard Dorman: Spokesman for Almighty God

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Gregory E. Reynolds



July 4, 1917–December 27, 2017



Wedding September 2, 1950

Harold Leonard Dorman was born in Hamden, Connecticut, on July 4, 1917.<sup>1</sup> He first joined the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a member in June 1938 at age twenty-one. The church was Westminster OPC in Hamden, Connecticut. After thirty-eight months in the army he went to Calvin College, where he received the bachelor of arts degree in 1950. Better yet, Harold met Marjorie VanDerWeele at Calvin, and they were married on September 2, 1950. They have four grown children: Gerald, Ronald, Laurel (Trundy), and Leonard.<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 1950 Harold attended Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he received his bachelor of divinity (BD) in 1953. He studied under professors Edward J. Young and Meredith G. Kline in Old Testament, Ned B. Stonehouse and John H. Skilton in New Testament, John Murray in systematic theology, Paul Woolley in church history, Cornelius Van Til in apologetics, and R. B. Kuiper and Edmund P. Clowney in practical theology. To support himself Harold worked as a handyman for most of the professors; he even helped Dr. Kline build his house.<sup>3</sup>

He began preaching in the Cornville Orthodox Presbyterian church in 1954 and was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of New York and New England as pastor of

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory E. Reynolds, "Harold Leonard Dorman: Spokesman for Almighty God, an Interview" *Ordained Servant* 20 (2011): 29–34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

Skowhegan Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Skowhegan (formerly Cornville), Maine on April 10, 1958, where he served as pastor until 2014.

That congregation had been received as a particular congregation in 1941. They met in the Union Church in Cornville, Maine, built in 1850. The church was heated by a wood stove, just right for those hearty New Englanders. After two pastors, Harold Dorman became stated supply in 1954. He was paid the handsome sum of \$8.00 a month. He supplemented his income with “odd jobs such as carpentry, cabinet making, plumbing, heating, and electric wiring. He also served for six years as treasurer and thirteen years as overseer of the poor for the Town of Cornville.”<sup>4</sup> Pastor Dorman was also a chaplain for the Redington-Fairview General Hospital in Skowhegan since 1972.<sup>5</sup>

On May 8, 1977, the first worship service in a new building in Skowhegan was held. It had been a laundromat. Pastor Dorman reflected, “The congregation is fully committed to the preaching and teaching of the Reformed Faith. Their trust for the future and present rests solely in the sovereign God of grace. Their desire is to live, witness, and worship for the glory of our triune God.”<sup>6</sup> He preached for sixty years to the same congregation in two locations.

Harold remembered Professor Murray visiting to help with the work of preaching and evangelism. “Professor Murray impressed me very much with his sincerity.”<sup>7</sup> Pastor Dorman was a dead-earnest preacher of God’s Word.

When I interviewed Harold in 2010 for *Ordained Servant*, the article was titled “Harold Leonard Dorman: Spokesman for Almighty God.”<sup>8</sup> That nicely sums up his ministry in Maine. When asked what advice he had for young men entering the ministry, he said: “I would tell them to study as much as you can for each sermon, because the more you know the better it is. Because you’re God’s spokesman, and that’s a tremendous responsibility—to be a spokesman for Almighty God.”<sup>9</sup>

Harold Dorman was a living exemplar of the ordinary, faithful ministry of the Word of God. Such persistent, enterprising labor is rare today. I remember as a student coming under care in the Presbytery of New York and New England in 1978 that Harold was always in the front row at presbytery meetings. He was always hard of hearing, and he was interested in what was going on. He didn’t want to miss a thing. He loved his Lord and his Lord’s church. I was impressed with his down-to-earth, quiet faithfulness.

On his last visit to presbytery in Bangor, he was asked what was most important for younger ministers. He said, “to preach the Word.” Sounds ordinary, but God does extraordinary things through the ordinary means of grace and his ordinary servants. The apostle Paul saw his ministry in the same light: “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). Pastor Dorman took seriously the words of Paul to Timothy: “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2).

In the end I am certain that Harold would want all that he was able to accomplish as a Christian and as a minister to be attributed to the goodness and grace of his Lord. We will miss him.

**Gregory E. Reynolds** serves as the pastor emeritus of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire, and is the editor of *Ordained Servant*.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church: 1936–1986*, Charles G. Dennison, ed. (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian, 1986), 166.

<sup>5</sup> Reynolds, “Harold Leonard Dorman,” 32.

<sup>6</sup> *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 167.

<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, “Harold Leonard Dorman,” 31, 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–34.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

# Servant Witness

## A Place among the Stars

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

This presentation was prepared for New Hampshire Public Radio for Christmas in 1996. I present it here as an example of Christian witness to a secular audience in a cynical age. Below is a slightly edited transcript of that radio segment.

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When you hear the word “Christian” what is your reaction? Perhaps you think: “There go those right wingers flying off the handle again. They always seem to be saying *no* to something.” You may have the impression that Christianity is largely negative: A giant “NO” to life. Christians may be largely responsible for creating this impression; but I would like to offer a different view.

Shortly before the new year, I was listening to Alessandro Scarlatti’s “*O di Betlemme altera*, Pastoral cantata for the birth of Our Lord.”<sup>1</sup> In this magnificent piece Scarlatti celebrates the good fortune of the shepherds as they witness the first breath of Jesus the Christ. In the final aria, the *Pastorale*, this master of Italian Baroque vocal music offers this stupendous thought:

The greatest fortune was yours, shepherds,  
For Jesus has become the Lamb of God.  
Offer your hearts at his cradle,  
See how pretty he is, and how beautiful!

Leave your flocks and huts,  
Yes, forsake your sheep.  
He embodies a hope that does not deceive you  
And can give you a place amongst the stars.

—play the music here—

In the sixties I was captivated by the enchanting lyrics of Crosby, Stills, and Nash, The Grateful Dead, and The Incredible String Band. I made my sojourn to Oregon and the Red Wood Forest to live out the dream they so compellingly depicted. I devoted myself to the texts of the counterculture: *The I Ching*, *The Bagavad Gita*, and *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. I devoured the meditations of Alan Watts, the poems of Kenneth Patchen, and the philosophy of Herbert Marcuse. I lived communal life to the

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<sup>1</sup> Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725), “O di Betlemme altera, Pastoral cantata for the birth of Our Lord,” Choir of the English Concert, Trevor Pinnock conducting from organ and harpsichord, Nancy Argenta, soprano. CD “Gloria” Archiv Produktion, D104904, 1993, Deutsche Grammophon.

full. Yet the longings of my soul continued unsatisfied. Death, sin, and guilt hounded me back to the East Coast. Then Janis Joplin and Jimmy Hendrix died too young of drug overdoses. The promise of a place among the stars had proved empty. I felt deceived.

In Cambridge I opened the one sacred text I had studiously avoided: the Bible. Like English author and Oxford professor C. S. Lewis, I was “surprised by joy.” Instead of the “dos and don’ts” of my childhood church experience, I discovered God Incarnate come to rescue a hopeless mankind. I found the “eternal weight of glory” of which the apostle Paul writes so passionately. I found a God who came into history to forgive me for my selfishness and teach me a better, and ultimately glorious, way of life.

The world is full of disappointed hopes and dreams that have been dashed on the rocks of reality. Here was hope for lowly shepherds, that transcended national and racial boundaries. Here was a happiness not rooted in temporary things. My intellectual and spiritual longing finally found a place of rest, actually an infinite personal God in whom I could trust without disappointment and who could guide and enable me to be of some use in this poor world. Like Scarlatti’s shepherds I found “a hope that does not deceive and can give you a place amongst the stars.”

Amidst the cynical confusion and meaninglessness of postmodern culture, there is a narrative that is true for all people in all places and for all time. You see Christianity is really a giant “YES” to life.

**Gregory E. Reynolds** *is pastor emeritus of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire, and is the editor of Ordained Servant.*

# ServantClassics

## Beza on the Trinity

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by David C. Noe

The following excerpt was translated from Theodore Beza's *The Unity of the Divine Essence and the Three Persons Subsisting in It, Against the Arians' Homoiousios*, published in Geneva, March 19, 1565 (the fourteenth day before the calends of April). It is a five-page introduction to his *Theses or Axioms on the Trinity of the Persons and Unity of the Essence*, with which it was published. The text is from *Tractationes Theologicae Bezae*.<sup>1</sup>

A letter to the most illustrious Prince Nicholas Radzvilas,<sup>2</sup> the supreme Marszałek<sup>3</sup> of the great Duchy of Lithuania.

Most illustrious Prince, I received two letters from your Excellency at the same time: one addressed to Mr. John Calvin of blessed memory, and the other to myself. Both of them were written beautifully and with refinement. Because I am replying so tardily, I ask your Excellency not to think this is due to any disregard, nor to any other reason than that there was a shortage of couriers traveling from here to Tubingen, the place where your letters to us originated. These are the reasons why my reply is so brief even though this is a quite serious and urgent matter.

I have read, and not without absolute terror, some comments which Gregorius Pauli,<sup>4</sup> Casanionius, and several others who have been enchanted by Biandrata and Gentile,<sup>5</sup> wrote in different treatises. They are converting<sup>6</sup> the three persons or ὑποστάσεις into three numerically distinct<sup>7</sup> οὐσίας or essences. In their writings I have found so many things that are both opaque and even contradictory that not even at present do I have full clarity as to their doctrinal positions and arguments.

But your letters, although they were written far more lucidly, nevertheless—if I may speak frankly with your Excellency—do not fully make up for my simple mindedness.<sup>8</sup> This is especially the case in your explanation of that third conciliatory

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Beza, *Tractationes Theologicae Bezae, Volumen I* (Jean Crespin, Geneva 1570), 646–50.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (Yale University Press, 1994), 47–8.

<sup>3</sup> This is the title of a very high-ranking official in the Polish court, a top adviser to the king.

<sup>4</sup> d. 1591.

<sup>5</sup> Giorgio Biandrata (1515–1588) and Giovanni Valentino Gentile (c.1520–1566), two famous Italian-born anti-Trinitarians.

<sup>6</sup> *Transformantes*.

<sup>7</sup> *Numero*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ruditati*.

statement which, if I understand it correctly, I think is hardly at all different from the position of either Gentile or Pauli.

And so, because there is not yet much agreement between us concerning the substance of these issues, and far less even with respect to the arguments of our opponents, we can't help but be legitimately afraid that we could seem to be working in vain over these much-disputed topics.<sup>9</sup> Or that we are not adequately precise in attacking our opponents' position. This circumstance could inflame these already unfortunate debates rather than extinguish them. And furthermore, even the debate itself shows, with so many written documents flying back and forth, that the controversy is increasing rather than diminishing, while each man does not allow what he has just written to be adequately grasped.

Therefore, before I publish a fitting answer to the individual arguments, I demand<sup>10</sup> this from you, your Excellency, in the name of Christ: you must compel<sup>11</sup> those who do not agree with this proposition—Father, Son, Holy Spirit<sup>12</sup> are one and the same God—to do as follows. They must write out, point by point, clearly and distinctly, their own entire dogma both on the essence and on the hypostases,<sup>13</sup> in definite and clear theses. Then they must provide their own positions as derived both from the word of God and from the writings of the Greek and Latin fathers. Finally, if you have no objection, they must supply refutations of our arguments, which they know full well.

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<sup>9</sup> The syntax here is deliberately convoluted as Beza seeks to come to the point without offending the Prince. I have broken up a very long and hypotactically beautiful sentence into manageable English portions.

<sup>10</sup> *flagitamus*, a very strong word.

<sup>11</sup> *adigas*

<sup>12</sup> The conjunction here is omitted, a figure of speech called asyndeton, to stress the unity of the persons in the Godhead.

<sup>13</sup> Here Beza uses the Latin instead of the Greek, which he employs interchangeably.

# Servant Truth

## The Theology of *Frankenstein*: Deism vs. Biblical Theism

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by James Gidley

Mary Shelley used a quotation from Milton's *Paradise Lost* as the epigraph on the title page of *Frankenstein*:

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay  
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee  
From darkness to promote me?<sup>1</sup>

These lines, spoken by Adam after his fall into sin, imply that *Frankenstein* will be about Creation and Fall. In this paper, I will focus only on Creation. The evidence supports the thesis that *Frankenstein* is an essentially Deistic creation story, in deliberate contrast to the biblical creation narrative as reflected in *Paradise Lost*.

In assessing the creation theology of *Frankenstein*, it is first necessary to clear away an abiding misconception. It is commonly assumed that Frankenstein created his creature by stitching together parts of various dead bodies. Further, it is commonly assumed that these parts were relatively large, consisting of entire organs or organ systems: a head (or a brain), legs, arms, torso, etc. The novel itself, however, while never explicit about the process of creation, strongly suggests that Frankenstein did not use dead organs and organ systems, but manufactured tissues and organs from more basic constituents.

There are at least four strands of evidence for this view. First, Frankenstein says:

I thought, that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although now I found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.<sup>2</sup>

He contrasts “lifeless matter” to that which was once alive and had died. And how could he reanimate dead body parts any more than a whole dead body? Of course, Frankenstein's disclaimer here is essential to the plot, since an ability to raise the dead would have allowed him to reverse the murders perpetrated by his creature. But this disclaimer has a much deeper meaning, as I shall argue later.

Second, Shelley's own description of the genesis of *Frankenstein* suggests a contrast between the resuscitation of a corpse and the manufacture of a creature. In her preface to the 1831 edition of the novel, she says:

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<sup>1</sup> Milton, John, *Paradise Lost*, book X, lines 743–45.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*, J. Paul Hunter, ed., Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1996), 32.

Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth.<sup>3</sup>

Note that in the latter process the component parts are not taken from dead bodies but *manufactured*. That Shelley intended the latter process to describe what her Victor accomplished is plain from her later statement, where her “pale student of unhallowed arts [kneels] beside the thing he had put together.”<sup>4</sup>

Third, Frankenstein states:

As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved . . . to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large.<sup>5</sup>

If he were stitching together *large* parts of dead bodies, why would the minuteness of the parts be a hindrance? If he were stitching together parts of dead bodies, how could he make them add up to a figure “eight feet in height, and proportionably large?” He must either find gigantic corpses or add extra body parts, neither of which is plausible within the novel’s setting.

Fourth, when Frankenstein sets out to manufacture the female creature, he relocates to the remote and sparsely populated Orkney Islands, where it would be impossible to find a sufficient supply of recently deceased bodies to stitch together. In describing his preparations for his second act of creation, Victor Frankenstein says:

I packed my chemical instruments, and the materials I had collected, resolving to finish my labors in some obscure nook in the northern highlands of Scotland.<sup>6</sup>

Shelley would understand, perhaps better than we do today, how impossible it would be to conceal the smell of rotting flesh. She does not, therefore, suggest that Frankenstein packed up dead bodies, but inanimate *materials* for manufacture. Another detail of importance is that he packed *chemical* instruments. Victor Frankenstein had been educated as a chemist, not as a medical doctor, though he does later study physiology.<sup>7</sup> His mentor, M. Waldman, first impressed Frankenstein with a lecture on the history of chemistry.<sup>8</sup> Victor states, after his illness following the creation of his creature, “the sight of a *chemical* instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms.”<sup>9</sup> Frankenstein’s creation is a triumph of chemistry, not medicine or biology, suggesting that Shelley conceived of life in purely materialistic terms.

The primary evidence for the common view that Frankenstein stitched together the parts of dead bodies is twofold. First, Frankenstein’s studies led him to investigate the process of decay in corpses in churchyards and charnel houses: “To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death.”<sup>10</sup> But these activities were not for the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 171–72.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 31–32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 109–10.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 42, emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 30.

purpose of manufacturing the creature, but for the purpose of understanding death and life:

After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and of life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.<sup>11</sup>

While the concluding statement in the above quotation comes close to stating that he could reanimate the dead, it must be read in connection with his explicit disavowal of such an ability a page or two later, which I have already cited.

Second, when Frankenstein describes his materials of creation, he does refer to dead bodies:

I collected bones from charnel houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame.<sup>12</sup>

Even here, however, he does not explicitly say that these collected bones were raw materials for manufacture, though it seems to be implied. He may have taken them for further study, or as models to be copied in other materials. When he does a few sentences later explicitly mention materials, he says, “The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials.”<sup>13</sup> Taking this evidence in the context of the narrative as a whole, the most that seems to be implied is that Frankenstein used some tissues from dead bodies, animal as well as human, for the construction of his creature.

So what? How does this absorption with the technology of Frankenstein’s achievement bear on the meaning of the novel? In particular, how does it bear on the theological themes of the novel? In a nutshell, *Frankenstein* is a creation story, not a resurrection story.

The possibility of raising the dead, even if only dead body parts, introduces the biblical theme of resurrection. There can be no resurrection theme in the novel without at least implicitly introducing the theme of redemption, and there is no redemption in *Frankenstein*. This is the deeper meaning of Frankenstein’s inability to reanimate corpses.

If this analysis is well-founded, then a general conclusion about the theology of *Frankenstein* emerges. The main themes of biblical religion are creation, fall, redemption, resurrection, judgment, and eternal life or eternal punishment. The theology of *Frankenstein* truncates this to creation, fall, and judgment. As a corollary, there can be no Christ figure in *Frankenstein*. If there is no redemption, there can be no Redeemer.

If *Frankenstein* is a creation story, what sort of creation doctrine does it espouse? Frankensteinian creation exhibits a number of contrasts with the biblical narrative.

First, the biblical creation of man was a consultative act: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness’” (Gen. 1:26). At least since Augustine, Christian theologians have regarded this statement as revealing the Trinitarian nature of God. There is but one God, but he exists as three persons. God is never alone, for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three persons who are cognizant of each other and can converse and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

commune with each other. In contrast, Frankenstein's act of creation is the act of a solitary individual.

Second, the Triune God creates man male and female: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). The Triune God has within himself both unity of essence and diversity of persons. This provides the basis for creating a humanity with a diversity of individuals, particularly the diversity of male and female, and yet a unity or community. In contrast, Victor Frankenstein as a solitary creator can only create a solitary creature.

Third, the complementary account of creation in Genesis 2 adds to the contrast with *Frankenstein*: "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). Man is made of two parts, the dust of the ground, and the breath of life. The two parts proceed from two realms: the dust from the earth, the breath of God from heaven. The biblical creation account is inescapably dualistic. In contrast, Frankenstein creates entirely from the earthly realm. His "spark of life" is just another earthly element or force, probably electricity. Biblical man is soul and body; Frankenstein's creature—indeed Frankenstein himself—is only body.

*Frankenstein* thus raises the issue of vitalism vs. materialism, and comes down strongly on the side of materialism. Marilyn Butler, literary critic and scholar of the Romantic movement, outlines the contemporary debate over vitalism between Dr. Abernethy and Dr. Lawrence, Percy Shelley's physician and a champion of materialism. Abernethy, though putatively a vitalist, described the vital force as "some 'subtle mobile, invisible substance,' analogous on the one hand to soul and on the other to electricity."<sup>14</sup> Lawrence astutely rejoined that "'subtle matter is still matter; and if this fine stuff can possess vital properties, surely they may reside in a fabric which differs only in being a little coarser."<sup>15</sup> To describe the vital force as a material substance or physical force is to concede the whole debate to the materialist position.

Butler goes astray, however, in identifying Victor Frankenstein as a bungling vitalist like Abernethy.<sup>16</sup> If Frankenstein were a vitalist, he vindicates vitalism by his success in animating his creature. But in fact, Frankenstein is a materialist, for he succeeds in creating his creature entirely with natural materials and with the aid of natural forces alone. His long nights in the churchyards and charnel houses were not prayer vigils, mystical ecstasies, or supernatural revelations; they were times of painstaking scientific observation. If the debates between Abernethy and Lawrence affected Mary Shelley, it seems more likely that they impressed upon her the idea that materialism was the only possible scientific alternative. *Frankenstein* is after all the tale of the modern Prometheus. In 1818, to be a modern scientist was to be a materialist.

Thus *Frankenstein* stands in resolute contrast to the biblical account of the creation of man. In Shelley's crucial account of the creation,<sup>17</sup> she does not so much as mention the soul, whether to affirm or deny its existence. Whenever the word "soul" does appear in the novel, it can be readily understood as a reference to the inner feelings, and carries no

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<sup>14</sup> Butler, Marilyn, "Frankenstein and Radical Science," in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*, J. Paul Hunter, ed., Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1996), 304.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>17</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 34–38.

ontological weight.<sup>18</sup> No one in the novel ever warns Frankenstein that his soul is in danger or that he might lose his soul. I conclude that Shelley meant us to understand that Frankenstein himself did not have a soul, in the orthodox, Christian, ontological sense. And this is not because Victor is especially monstrous or demonic. In *Frankenstein*, humans simply do not have souls in the ontological sense; such a view is ancient myth, unbecoming of the modern, scientific Prometheus.

A fourth contrast between Frankensteinian creation and the biblical narrative arises because the inbreathing of the breath of life in Genesis 2:7 speaks not only of the soul, not only of the origin of the soul in the transcendent realm, not only of contrast with the earthly realm which gives rise to the body, but also of the possibility and reality of communion between the Creator and the creature. God's breathing in the breath of life is an intimate act of communion, a loving impartation of his own image. Therefore, Adam and Eve are not left to themselves, but God speaks with them. In both Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Old and New Testaments, the same word is used for "breath" and "spirit." Therefore, the breathing of the breath of life into Adam suggests the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God creates the intimate communion between God and man.

Victor Frankenstein, in contrast, never has any communion with his creature. He does not have a spirit to impart to his creature. He never seeks his creature to speak to him; the creature must find him and can never be anything but an enemy to him. The creature himself recognizes the contrast with the biblical creation account as mediated through Milton:

Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone.<sup>19</sup>

Fifth, the theme of communion is worked out in the biblical narrative in the creation of Eve. "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" (Gen. 2:18). God himself recognizes Adam's need and takes steps to meet it. In contrast, Frankenstein's creature must accost him and demand a female companion, and Frankenstein, after reluctantly agreeing to create one, destroys the female creature before animating her.

In the biblical account, God creates Eve from Adam's rib (Gen. 2:21–22); this insures that she will be a suitable companion for him, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23), as none of the other creatures of God could have been (Gen. 2:20). In contrast, Frankenstein cannot form a female creature from his male creature's rib, or from any other part of him. His process of manufacture leaves open the possibility that every creature he makes will be *sui generis*, a new species, unrelated to any previous or subsequent creature he might have made or could make. Therefore his forebodings about the creation of the female are not sophisms but plausible:

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<sup>18</sup> For example, Frankenstein says of the glacier of Montanvert: "It had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul, and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy." Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 64.

<sup>19</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 87.

she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. They might even hate each other; the creature who already lived loathed his own deformity, and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form? She also might turn in disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him, and he be again alone, exasperated by the fresh provocation of being deserted by one of his own species.<sup>20</sup>

Though he speaks of her as of the same species as his male creature, his forebodings are founded on a deeper recognition that she might not be. But whether one species or two, he cannot effect communion between his creatures. In contrast to the God of the Bible, Frankenstein cannot create diversity in unity, or unity in diversity.

*Frankenstein*, thus, does not fit the historic, orthodox, Christian view of creation. What does it fit? Deism.

Deism is a form of Christian heresy that purports to replace the supernaturalistic outlook of the Bible with a naturalistic view. For example, Deism requires no supernatural revelation. The Bible can only state truths that are derivable independently by the use of human reason, providing at best only a short-cut for lesser or lazier minds.

The Deistic view of creation is illustrated by the classic example of the pocket watch. The universe is like an exquisite watch that the Creator has made and wound up. It is now unnecessary for the Creator to have anything further to do with the universe, since he has wisely created it to run well without him.

Deism fits Frankenstein's creative act closely. He creates, and then abandons his creature. His creature is able to discern what he needs to know about his creator without any revelation. He learns to speak, not because he is spoken to, but because he overhears others speaking. He learns from books, not because they were taught to him, but because he stumbles upon them accidentally. That is, he discovers language, it is not imparted to him.<sup>21</sup>

Thus Shelley's depiction of the creature's self-education, early regarded as the most original and effective part of the work, is a concrete depiction of the Deistic view of the universe. The creature's self-education is thus a microcosm of the education of mankind over countless generations; "it can be read as an allegorical account of the progress of mankind over aeons of time."<sup>22</sup>

There is a clinching argument that Shelley is writing a Deistic account of creation, which arises from the story of how the creature learns language. From his hovel on the side of a cottage, the creature observes the family in the cottage speaking to each other. Thus he begins to acquire the rudiments of language. His progress accelerates when an Arabian woman joins the family, and they assist her to learn French by reading to her from Constantin Volney, *The Ruins of Empires*. Volney describes the creation of mankind as follows:

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>21</sup> For a fuller discussion of the creature's education and its implications, see the author's "The Education of Monster," *Ordained Servant* 21, June-July 2012, [http://www.opc.org/os.html?article\\_id=314](http://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=314).

<sup>22</sup> Butler, "Frankenstein and Radical Science," in Shelley, *Frankenstein* 309.

Formed naked in body and in mind, man at first found himself thrown as it were by chance, on a rough and savage land: an orphan, abandoned by the unknown power which had produced him.<sup>23</sup>

The description fits the Deistic paradigm exactly: a creature abandoned by his Creator. The description also fits the experience of Frankenstein's creature exactly. The parallel between the two accounts is reinforced by the context in both Volney and Shelley. The story of creation in *Frankenstein* is the story of mankind's creation—and it is a Deistic story.

Volney was writing from an Enlightenment perspective to defend the French Revolution. His account of creation is deliberately designed as a polemic against orthodox Christian teaching of any stripe. Deism was the “Religion of Reason,” fit for the philosophers of the Age of Reason.

It is deeply significant that Mary Shelley chose to model her creation story after a Deistic paradigm. The horror of the story is the horror of unbridled human reason let loose in the world.

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<sup>23</sup> Constantin F. Volney, *The Ruins, or, Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires: and The Law of Nature* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991), 22.

# ServantReading

## Frankenstein at 200 and Our Creations: A Cautionary Tale

A Review Article

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

*Frankenstein or, the Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Shelley, annotated for scientists, engineers, and creators of all kinds, edited by David H. Guston, Ed Finn, and Jason Scott Robert. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017, xxxv + 277 pages, \$20.00, paper.

It may seem a strange thing to review a book about Mary Shelley's famous horror story, or perhaps the first science fiction novel, in a journal for church officers; but, if we are to minister in a world of extraordinary technological inventions, we must be aware of the dangers, the unintended consequences, of our creations. The difference between friend and fiend is slight in print, but dramatic in reality.

The title, *Frankenstein*, usually makes us think of the monster, but the monster is never named by Mary Shelley, thus the annotators and essayists in this present volume refer to the monster as "the creature." Thus, the focus is on scientist Victor Frankenstein. Shelley's cautionary tale is a profound exploration of human nature and of the nature of the scientific enterprise. The potential hubris of those involved in the sciences is a theme of enormous importance to our contemporary situation. As James Gidley points out in his article in this issue, "The Theology of Frankenstein: Deism and Biblical Theism," a theology of creation is everywhere assumed in Shelley's work. The same is true of Shelley's assumptions about human nature. The subtitle of Shelley's book is revealing: "*the Modern Prometheus*."

In the Western classical tradition, Prometheus became a figure who represented human striving, particularly the quest for scientific knowledge, and the risk of overreaching or unintended consequences. In particular, he was regarded in the Romantic era as embodying the lone genius whose efforts to improve human existence could also result in tragedy.<sup>1</sup>

I toyed with including this review under the rubric, Servant Classics, because *Frankenstein* is a rich literary work that transcends the genres of horror story or science fiction. Although Mary Shelley in her 1831 introduction to a new edition of *Frankenstein* calls her tale a "ghost story" (191), written in response to the challenge of neighbor Lord Byron to write a ghost story during a period of gloomy Swiss weather, she notes that the story was written in the context of philosophical conversations with two notable nineteenth-century men of letters, Lord Byron and her husband, Percy Shelley.

The horror and drama in the story stand in stark contrast to the sensationalism of modern horror stories and the special effects of modern horror movies. Instead, *Frankenstein* presents us with a thoughtful series of reflections on the nature of the ethical responsibilities of scientists, especially when experimenting with human life (xiii).

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Prometheus," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Prometheus&oldid=870735499> (accessed November 28, 2018).

The book, published on January 1, 1818, reminds us that serious critical analysis of the effects of the Industrial Revolution were present, especially with participants in the Romantic movement, early in the nineteenth century. Several decades later Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) also used fiction as a vehicle to stimulate thoughtful criticism of the abilities of scientists to manipulate humanity and culture. Several years ago *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society* published a profound series of articles, along with eight of Hawthorne's stories, in a series entitled "Hawthorne: Science, Progress, and Human Nature" (2009–2012). Like Shelley, Hawthorne wrote stories exploring the moral meaning of modern science. Together they were exercising their moral imaginations to question the goals of science and explore the effects of seeking to alter the unalterable, or the givenness of creation, especially humankind.

Concentrating on the most obvious theme of the unintended consequences of our inventions, I underestimated the value of Shelley's exploration of the human in the creature's intelligent, moral, and aesthetic sensibilities. While the assumptions of the Romantic movement are largely Deistic, there are still strong strands of a biblical anthropology throughout this literary tale. It is this dimension of the work to which I will now turn.

Often unappreciated is the high literary quality of *Frankenstein*. The first volume begins with the mention of Homer's *Iliad*, Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1). There are beautiful descriptions of natural scenery, and towns and cities, a staple of Romantic literature and art. Large sections read like a travelogue. Mary Shelley, of course, was married to Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, so it is not surprising that she quotes William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" (132). She describes Victor's arrival in Oxford after mentioning some historical facts:

The spirit of elder days found a dwelling here, and we delighted to trace its footsteps. If these feelings had not found an imaginary gratification, the appearance of the city had yet in itself sufficient beauty to obtain our admiration. The colleges are ancient and picturesque; the streets are almost magnificent; and the lovely Isis, which flows beside it through meadows of exquisite verdure, is spread forth into a placid expanse of waters, which reflects its majestic assemblage of towers, and spires, and domes, embosomed among ancient trees. (135)

It is in the context of these Romantic sensibilities that the creature struggles with his own identity, but by secretly observing human beings and reading literature he enjoys the perception of natural beauty, human kindness and gentleness, reason, justice; and is pained by injustice and ultimately by being rejected by the humans around him, especially his creator, Victor Frankenstein. There is a supreme irony in the comparison of Frankenstein with his creature. The creature is more humane, at least at the beginning, than Frankenstein, who turns out to be a monster.

Victor Frankenstein has all of the benefits of high European culture. And yet, despite appearances, he behaves like a monster. Hints of this can be seen in the beginning of the story.

My life had hitherto been remarkably secluded and domestic; and this had given me invincible repugnance to new countenances. I loved my brothers, Elizabeth, and Clerval; these were "old familiar faces"; but I believed myself totally unfitted for the company of strangers. (28)

Then scientific hubris, with its god-like pretensions, takes over and provides a cloak for Frankenstein's selfishness. "After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life . . . What had been the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world, was now within my grasp" (34). Too late Frankenstein reflects on the lesson he should have learned from his father: "If a study to which

you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not fitting the human mind” (40). Upon being revulsed by the sight of the newly animated creature, Frankenstein selfishly abandons him—exactly the opposite of the biblical account of creation.

Victor Frankenstein refuses to take responsibility for the death of his youngest brother William; the death of Justine, who is falsely accused of killing William; then the death of Victor’s best friend, Clerval; and finally Victor’s fiancée, Elizabeth. But guilt haunts him, while he continues to cover up his evil deeds. “I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt” (71). Shelley explores this theme throughout the three volumes.

Frankenstein’s discourse on friendship, frequent in Romantic literature, rings hollow in light of his own monstrous disregard not only for the creature, but also for his dearest friends and family (132–33).

The creature, on the other hand, despite appearances, behaves like a highly civilized human being, until his rejection and isolation turn him into the monster he looks like. As Joey Eschrich observes regarding the “investments of time, wit, and emotional energy” in the correspondence that begins the story: “They contrast with the creature’s life and reveal precisely what he is missing. He has no one with whom to share his experiences and frustrations, so his life becomes unbearable, and he lashes out violently.”<sup>2</sup>

After the first two murders, Frankenstein encounters the creature in the Alps. The creature pleads with him to create a wife so he will have a companion:

I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Every where I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous. (80)

Then the creature tells Frankenstein his story.<sup>3</sup> It is a truly touching tale. After his creation and abandonment he finds a hut that is adjacent to a cottage, thus allowing him to observe the lives of the inhabitants without himself being seen.

The creature witnesses the struggles of the young couple, the old man, and a beautiful friend who visits the cottage; they are consigned to poverty from great wealth and a high position in society. As he observes their human virtues he concludes: “The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me” (91). He masters their language and reads their literature, including *Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch’s Lives*, and Goethe’s *Sorrows of Werter* (105). *Paradise Lost* affects him most deeply, as he feels like Adam, created at first without a companion, yet he relates more to Satan in his bitter rebellion (107). “I longed to discover the motives and feelings of these lovely creatures” (94). But, finally, rejection by the cottagers, whom he had so admired, is the turning point in the creature’s sad tale as he declares war on humanity (113–20).

The importance of human friendship and the perils of its neglect form a central theme in *Frankenstein*. In our world the irony is that our growing use of mediating technologies undermines our ability to establish and maintain human relationships, thus enchanting us with social networks and robots. *Frankenstein* warns us against the tendency of those in positions of power to ignore the consequences of their actions.<sup>4</sup> The company’s bottom line or, as in the case of Frankenstein, the fame accruing from scientific breakthroughs, tends to blind leaders to their larger human responsibilities.

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<sup>2</sup> 9–10n9, citing Eschrich, editor and program manager for the Center for Science and the Imagination at Arizona State University.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. 2, ch. 3, 83–120.

<sup>4</sup> 16n13, citing Mary Margaret Fonow, professor of women and gender studies at Arizona State University.

This is increasingly leading to a central problem for the elderly. My own state of New Hampshire is developing a “State Plan on Aging” to address this problem. Proverbs 18:1–2 warns us of the folly of isolation: “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.” For those who end up isolated through no fault of their own, we must exercise compassion. The church is well situated to lend a hand.

On the related topic of human compassion, MIT Sociologist Sherry Turkle’s latest book *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*<sup>5</sup> laments the increasing lack of empathy among those who are addicted to their digital devices. The combination of loneliness, caused at least in part by the increase in mediated relationships, that is electronic communication supplanting face to face conversation, and a lack of empathy does not bode well for this and future generations of the elderly.

Of course, the greatest human need is not human friendship, but rather divine friendship. This is absent in Shelley’s work. Shelley’s dependence on the writings of philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau leads to a dangerous conclusion about the origin of sin. Rousseau believed that society corrupts humans, who are otherwise good in their natural state.<sup>6</sup> This question-begging idea can be seen in the creature’s story.

The annotations by various scientists and writers, which are extensive, and printed as footnotes in small sans serif type, are often very helpful in providing context and explanations of the text, however tedious they may be at times.

The seven essays at the end of the volume provide a fascinating window into the thinking of contemporary academics and writers on the topic of bioethics.

Josephine Johnston,<sup>7</sup> in “Traumatic Responsibility: Victor Frankenstein as Creator and Casualty,” explores the nature of human responsibility.

Cory Doctorow,<sup>8</sup> in “I’ve Created a Monster! (And So Can You),” argues that the best science fiction both predicts and influences the future. This is a witty essay offering astute observations such as “*Frankenstein* [is] . . . a story about technology mastering humans rather than serving them” (210). And this:

A service like Facebook was inevitable, but how Facebook works was not. Facebook is designed like a casino game, where the jackpots are attention from other people (likes and messages) and the playing surface is a vast board whose parts can’t be seen most of the time. You place bets on what kind of personal revelation will ring the cherries, . . . As in all casino games, in the Facebook game there’s one universal rule: the house always wins. (212)

“Changing Conceptions of Human Nature” by Jane Maienschein and Kate Maccord<sup>9</sup> is an uninspiring account of the relationship of Aristotle’s fourfold causation to the scientific enterprise and the definition of the human. They conclude by pleading for a definition that demands viability, or the ability to live independently. The creature is seen as an example of

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<sup>5</sup> Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> 98n22, citing Ron Broglio, professor of literature and culture at Arizona State University.

<sup>7</sup> Johnston is an expert on the ethical, legal, and policy implications of biomedical technologies, particularly as used in human reproduction, psychiatry, genetics, and neuroscience.

<sup>8</sup> Doctorow is a Canadian-British blogger, journalist, and science fiction author who serves as co-editor of the blog *Boing Boing*.

<sup>9</sup> Jane Maienschein is a Regent’s professor in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University, specializing in the history and philosophy of biology and the way biology, bioethics, and bio-policy play out in society. Kate Maccord is program administrator and McDonnell Fellow at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, MA. The goal of the McDonnell Initiative is to bring historians and philosophers of science into collaboration with life scientists in order to transform the research of both fields.

this unsustainable argument. Because the creature cannot live independently, he is less than fully human.

Alfred Nordmann's<sup>10</sup> essay, "Undisturbed Reality: Victor Frankenstein's Technoscientific Dream of Reason," asserts that the science of *Frankenstein* is not modern science, but warns of the danger of using true science to ignore reality by creating monsters and animating material with artificial intelligence and electronics, what he calls technoscience. This essay requires pondering.

Sarah Wishnevsky's<sup>11</sup> essay, "*Frankenstein* Reframed; Or The Trouble with Prometheus," argues that "Victor's crime is not pursuing science but in failing to consider the well-being of others and the consequences of his actions." Shelley's "vener of Christianity" nonetheless portrays the need for compassion, an essential ingredient in Christian religious ethics, rooted in the passion of Christ (232).

Anne K. Mellor's<sup>12</sup> essay, "*Frankenstein*, Gender, and Mother Nature," is a feminist analysis of Victor Frankenstein. This has value because Mary Shelley's mother Mary Wolstonecraft was a strong and groundbreaking advocate for women's rights. Thus, Victor is portrayed as seeking to "control and even eliminate female sexuality." This ends up "not only as horrifying and finally unattainable but also as self-destructive" (243). She concludes her essay with an appreciation for the givenness of nature, albeit not in language that Christians could entirely endorse: "The novel implicitly endorses . . . a science that seeks to understand rather than to change the workings of Mother Nature" (244).

Finally, "The Bitter Aftertaste of Technical Sweetness" by Heather E. Douglas<sup>13</sup> explores the ethics of creating the atomic bomb. Despite the brilliance of the title, the essay leaves many unanswered questions.

A very useful set of discussion questions (263–73) is given for each of the chapters in the three volumes of *Frankenstein* and for each of the seven essays.

The Romantic Deism assumed in Shelley's fiction offers a poignant caution, but sadly offers no substantial solution to the incipient problems of modernity. Because of her mother's early death, death was an irreparable evil for Mary Shelley. As a child she spent hours reading beside her mother's grave. So, Frankenstein's effort to create life is driven by his hatred of the evil of death.<sup>14</sup> But there is no resurrection. The creature experiences an inner life that cannot be accounted for by the mere animation of material human parts. Only a biblical account of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation will offer the foundation for solutions. I am reminded of Francisco Goya's etching, "The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters," in which the artist depicts a nightmare of his being attacked by bats and owls. This is an apt image of the dream of the Enlightenment. The guidance of God's special revelation in the Bible is jettisoned for the reason of fallen man, thus becoming a nightmare.

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<sup>10</sup> Nordmann is professor of philosophy and history of science and technoscience at Darmstadt Technical University and visiting professor at the University of South Carolina.

<sup>11</sup> Wishnevsky is an American author who works primarily in speculative fiction genres, writing under the name Elizabeth Bear.

<sup>12</sup> Mellor is a distinguished professor of English literature and women's studies at UCLA; she specializes in Romantic literature, British cultural history, feminist theory, philosophy, art history, and gender studies.

<sup>13</sup> Douglas is a philosopher of science best known for her work on the role of values in science, science policy, the importance of science for policymaking, and the history of philosophy of science. Douglas is associate professor in the department of philosophy at Michigan State University.

<sup>14</sup> 26n25, citing Joel Gereboff, professor in the religious studies department of Arizona State University.

# A New Multi-Volume Pastoral Theology

## A Review Article

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by Ryan M. McGraw

*Pastoral Theology: The Man of God, His Calling and Godly Life*, vol. 1, Albert N. Martin. Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2018, lvi + 456 pages, \$42.95.

Commending Al Martin's work on pastoral theology is like commending Richard Muller's work in historical theology. In either case, readers find themselves sitting at the feet of a master in his field whose work is its own best commendation. This set of books promises to be one of the most extensive, and likely most useful, pastoral theologies written to date. This material represents twenty years of teaching future ministers about this topic for two hours a week on a four-year cycle. What would the Spirit do in the church if more ministers had this kind of training?

Reviewing a volume like this one is difficult because all of the material is pure gold. While it aims primarily at ministers and men preparing for ministry, the content can benefit the church more broadly as it seeks to be faithful in calling ministers, in pursuing godliness, and in establishing realistic expectations for who ministers are and what God calls them to do. After summarizing the content of the book, I will highlight a few of its outstanding features.

The epigraph heading the opening pages of this book summarizes its content well: "The life of the minister is the life of his ministry." The book's subtitle indicates its two large-scale divisions. In the first section, Martin takes his readers from the nature of a pastoral call, through qualifications of gifts and character related to the ministry, to the process by which the church recognizes these things in a man. The second section shifts from calling to living by treating the man's spiritual and intellectual relation to God, his physical and emotional relation to God, how he relates to God's people, and how he manages himself, including his time and his family. The last four of these areas are likely as important as they are neglected in considering the call to the ministry today. Physical and emotional balance, coupled with time management and household management, speak volumes about a man's character. In a day when Reformed ministry can tend to exalt, as well as attract, men with an intellectual bent and love for doctrine alone, Martin reminds us that we really need more men who use their doctrine as a means of showing their love for Christ. He rightly places the graces of the Spirit above the gifts of the Spirit without neglecting either one. We need men who are godly rather than great and we need seminaries that are just as concerned with the character of the men whom they are training as they are with cultivating their minds and their gifts.

Four examples illustrate amply how this book addresses the needs of our times. First, as Martin writes, "Pastoral theology should be taught by pastors. The exclusive pursuit of academic theological degrees, while a good thing in itself, is not sufficient for understanding or teaching on this subject" (10). I cannot echo this point strongly enough, adding that this counsel should apply to more than the pastoral theology departments of our seminaries. If pastoral theology is an entry-level teaching position in a seminary rather than a vital part of the curriculum, and if every area of the curriculum is not ordinarily taught by men with pastoral experience, then we run the risk of becoming

theological degree mills rather than seminaries training future pastors. Far too many men desire to teach men to be pastors but have no desire to serve as pastors themselves. I have often been the first one to discourage such a course in the lives of many young men. If we applied this practice to the medical profession, then the results would be disastrous. It is past time that we realize pastors should train future pastors just like doctors should train future doctors.

Second, evangelistic zeal needs to characterize ministry in Reformed churches once again. Martin observes,

I find it disturbing, when attending evangelical and even Reformed churches where there is a robust commitment to confessional and biblical orthodoxy and expository preaching, and yet preachers find no avenue out of the text or subject to address the unconverted passionately and plead with them to be reconciled to God. . . . One has to question why men like that are in the ministry. Did they ever have a desire to be used in calling out God's elect? (61)

It is all too common in Reformed churches to treat the means of grace as machines through which the Holy Spirit effectually calls sinners to Christ as long as the right elect materials go into the machine. Faithful exegesis is enough to help us explain words and grammar, but it is ordinarily insufficient to be the Spirit's instrument to win souls to Christ. This usually comes through the Spirit working in the affections of the preacher as well as in the affections of those who hear him preach. We need to hear Martin on this point as we seek the sovereign Spirit's anointing on our ministries.

Third, ministers must preach Christ. Yet preaching Christ cannot be a technique; it must flow from devotion to Christ. Martin notes,

If Christ does not fill our hearts in our times alone with Him, in our walking with Him, so that for us to live is Christ, speaking about Him with glowing hearts will not be natural for us. We dare not attempt to artificially and insincerely insert Him into our sermons in an effort to hide our loveless hearts. (100)

Have our approaches to preaching become too technique driven? Is that one of the reasons why modern debates over preaching often oscillate between exegetical precision with application or retelling redemptive history while trying to steer clear of moralism? Whether expounding Scripture, unfolding the historical development of the gospel, applying biblical principles, or exhorting people to worship, preachers should preach Christ inescapably because they love Christ pervasively. A minister should not need to be told to extol the virtues of his Savior any more than an engaged couple should need to be told to look forward to their wedding day. This characterized Paul and the other apostles, as well as virtually every manual of pastoral theology that has stood the test of time in the history of the Christian church.

Fourth, ministers must prioritize their families above their ministries if they hope not to be disqualified from their ministries. The following citation illustrates his counsel on this important theme:

When an ordinary Christian chooses between an evening with his family and an evening at the local pub, the issues are quite clear, and his conscience should scream at him if he chooses the pub. On the other hand, when a servant of Christ makes the

choice between an evening of fun and games with his children or visiting a distressed saint, the issue is blurred. He can very easily justify neglecting the promised evening with the children because “the work of the ministry demands that I minister to this distressed sheep.” In this scenario, domestic competence is often sacrificed upon the altar of official ministerial duties. “I sacrificed that time with my family for the sake of the gospel ministry.” No, you did not. You set one duty against another, and you caused a ministerial duty to kill a domestic duty. God is not in the business of killing duty with duty. (424)

The church is still reeling from the fruits of nineteenth-century calls to abandon wives and children in the name of foreign and domestic missions. Martin’s exhortations can go a long way to setting ministers back on the right path with regard to making their families their first ministries.

I am a Presbyterian, while Martin is a Baptist. This means that Presbyterians will expect me to say that I do not agree with everything in this book. While this is true, especially in relation to some aspects of church polity, his book strikes a nerve with me. Martin teaches rightly that men called to the ministry need both to wade through their sense of calling and to cultivate personal godliness with zeal and vigor. Ultimately, the man of God’s character is not special but common. God requires men holding office to show ordinary Christians what ordinary Christian living looks like in an office that not all ordinary Christians hold. Yet it is ultimately love for Christ, experiential piety, and spiritual balance that must envelop, and even consume, every true gospel minister. This is because this is the copy of Christ’s character that the Spirit is painting in the lives of God’s people through the Christian ministry. This means that we need to be as interested in Martin’s pastoral theology as many of us are in Muller’s historical theology, and likely even more so.

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# I Shall Not Die, But Live *by Douglas Taylor*

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by Gordon H. Cook, Jr.

*I Shall Not Die, But Live: Facing Death with Gospel Hope*, by Douglas Taylor. Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 2016, xxviii + 332 pages, \$22.00.

In our age of Twitter and YouTube, talking about death may be the last taboo. For many, apart from murder mysteries, death is a most uncomfortable and morbid topic, to be avoided if possible. The irony of this is that, because of the sin of our first parents, we are all dying. But thanks be to God, Christ Jesus, by his death and resurrection, has opened the way of eternal life for all who trust in him. Our standards remind us, “the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection” (WSC Q. 37). Thus Thomas Watson, in his *A Body of Divinity*, affirms that “those who can say ‘to me to live is Christ,’ may comfortably conclude that to die will be gain (Phil. 1:21)” (206).

In May 2011, Douglas Taylor, an assistant editor for Banner of Truth Trust, was diagnosed with inoperable liver cancer. In response, Taylor decided to spend his final energies writing “to glorify God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ” (xxvii). He developed a blog, “Words Worth Declaring,” to which he posted regularly. You can find this blog at [worksworthdeclaring.blogspot.com](http://worksworthdeclaring.blogspot.com). Banner of Truth has selected 248 of these blog posts, slightly edited, to include in the volume *I Shall Not Die, But Live: Facing Death with Gospel Hope*. This title, drawn from Psalm 118:17, came to Taylor’s mind after a night in which he thought he might die. They led him to meaningful ministry as he sought to exalt the Lord in the midst of severe affliction.

Taylor’s posts drip with grace and with the Word of God. Written in devotional style, each post shows a deep acquaintance with the Scriptures, and with Reformed literature and hymnody. Taylor quotes from and discusses more than forty different writers, most from the Scottish covenanting and Puritan traditions. His favorite authors, other than the writers of Scripture, appear to be Thomas Watson, Samuel Rutherford, and Charles Spurgeon. He also includes lines from more than twenty-five hymn writers, favoring Augustus Toplady, Charles Wesley, and Isaac Watts. These writers from generations gone by were no strangers to suffering and death, and provide mature and rich reflection on the subject as well as undaunted hope in the glories that await those who rest in Christ. Indeed, Taylor takes his place among them as one who thoughtfully and reverently reflects upon his faith and the Holy Scriptures as he approaches the end of his own earthly pilgrimage. Yet in all these reflections, there is nothing morbid or discouraging, but consistently a positive anticipation of the glories that await those who sleep in the Lord.

Taylor’s posts do not focus on the ups and downs of his physical struggle with cancer. Nevertheless, at times those struggles do enter into the material, as when, just a month before his death he writes: “I never intended this blog to report on my health, but to glorify Christ; however, I would request your supportive prayers concerning the [symptoms] which have hindered me recently” (330). Perhaps it is the chaplain in me that finds the scattered allusions to his personal health to be most poignant reminders that these are not abstract theological reflections but rather a personal wrestling with God’s Word as it applies to all of life.

Taylor begins his first blog by quoting Dr. Samuel Johnson: “Depend upon it, Sir. When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” He then adds, “Something similar may be said of a man who is diagnosed with an incurable disease which normally carries a prognosis of about six months” (1). His posts consistently reflect this clarity of thought and commitment to Christ.

Within Taylor’s postings there is an ambivalence that is also reflected in the apostle Paul in Philippians 1:18–26. Taylor shares this by way of a story from the Great Awakening, [George] Whitefield was emphasizing the comfort he felt that soon his labors would be over and he would be with Christ in glory. Those present generally agreed with Whitefield, but an older minister, William Tennent, Jr., dissented. “I have nothing to do with death,” he declared. “My business is to live as long as I can—as well as I can—and to serve my Lord and Master as faithfully as I can, until he shall think proper to call me home.” (30)

Both views are well reflected in Douglas Taylor’s final days, and in the writings he has left as a testimony to God’s grace during his journey.

On June 2, 2014, Douglas Taylor went home to be with his Lord and Savior. His final post, May 8, 2014 closes with the lines of one of Wesley’s hymns:

Jesus, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly.

And he concludes with a final quotation from God’s Word: “So he bringeth them unto their desired haven” (Ps. 107:30 KJV). Most certainly, our God has brought his servant home.

Taylor’s own summary of his blog and his personal struggle comes from the lines of the hymn, “The Sands of Time Are Sinking,” by Mrs. Anne Cousin, reflecting the dying words of Samuel Rutherford (298).

I’ve wrestled on towards Heaven,  
‘Gainst storm, and wind, and tide:  
Now, like a weary traveler,  
That leaneth on his guide,  
Amidst the shades of evening,  
While sinks life’s ling’ring stand,  
I hail the glory dawning  
From Immanuel’s land.

This excellent devotional is well suited to any who, like Douglas Taylor, are facing a terminal illness (and we all are), as well as to those who minister with such persons. But it is also a worthwhile devotional for anyone who desires to wrestle with the vicissitudes of living and dying with Christ.

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# ServantPoetry

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G. E. Reynolds (1949–)

## Unlikely Savior

Shamgar eviscerated six hundred well-armed  
Philistines with an unlikely ox goad, and he,  
Unlikely too, named for a goddess, and harmed  
By his lineage, yet set unworthy Israelites free.

The unpredictable God of Abram's people  
Entered history in so many surprising ways  
To confound our wisdom with his pull  
Against history's pattern of ordinary days.

Then a carpenter's son with his calloused hands  
Shocked all sensible sinners with his words  
And works that shook their lives from all lands  
As he hauled a cross, most powerful of swords,

More unlikely than Shamgar with his goad  
He went into the dark abyss to win us  
To his lovely ways, unlike our own road,  
To strengthen us against the serpent's crush.