

Ordained Servant

May 2014

# Local Evangelism



# *Ordained Servant Online*

## *A Journal for Church Officers*

E-ISSN 1931-7115

**CURRENT ISSUE: LOCAL EVANGELISM**

**MAY 2014**

### *From the Editor*

Do evangelism and politics have anything to do with each other? Yes, more than you might think. John Shaw's article "Evangelism and the Local Church" taps deeply into OPC history by referring extensively to an important Committee on Christian Education publication titled *Biblical Evangelism Today*, edited by John Murray and Calvin K. Cummings in 1954, as well as R.B. Kuiper's *God Centered Evangelism* (1961). Large or small congregations, sessions, and ministers of the Word must never forget this vital aspect of the church's identity—what John Nevius identified as one of three indispensable characteristics of a particular congregation: "self-propagating."

The way we view culture, and in particular, politics, has a lot to do with our witness to the lost world in which we live. Cale Horne's "How Scripture Speaks to Politics," ends with his essential apprehension, "I am deeply concerned that many sincere, Bible-believing Christians today are harming themselves and the witness of the church as a whole with unbiblical *attitudes* toward the state." His excellent article explains why.

David Booth reviews a collection of addresses from the 2009 conference "Renewing the Evangelical Mission," held at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in honor of David Wells. Booth's take on the present state of evangelicalism is very stimulating.

For ministers who want to brush up on their biblical Greek, Allen Tomlinson's review of William Mounce's *Greek for the Rest of Us* may suggest a good way to do that. Interestingly he does not recommend this book for beginners.

Finally, Rossetti's "A Harvest" reminds us of the importance of the present harvest in preparation for the final harvest.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

## CONTENTS

### ServantWitness

- John S. Shaw, “Evangelism and the Local Church”

### ServantWorld

- Cale Horne, “How Scripture Speaks to Politics”

### ServantReading

- David Booth, review of Lints, *Renewing the Evangelical Mission*
- Allen Tomlinson, review of Mounce, *Greek for the Rest of Us*

### ServantPoetry

- Christina Rossetti, “A Harvest”

## FROM THE ARCHIVES “EVANGELISM”

[http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject\\_Index\\_Vol\\_1-20.pdf](http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-20.pdf)

- “Ambassadors of the Heavenly King.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 18 (2009): 17–19.
- “Evangelism and the Church.” (Charles G. Dennison) 18 (2009): 42–51.
- “Evangelism in the Local Church.” (Ralph A. Pontier) 8:3 (Jul. 1999): 56–58.
- “Evangelistic Responsibility.” (T. David Gordon) 18 (2009): 34–42.
- “Reply to R. Fowler White’s ‘Critique and Alternative.’” (T. David Gordon) 19 (2010): 96–100.
- “T. David Gordon’s Essay ‘Evangelistic Responsibility’ in *Ordained Servant Online: A Critique and an Alternative.*” (R. Fowler White) 19 (2010): 92–95.
- “Van Til the Evangelist.” (K. Scott Oliphint) 17 (2008): 54–59.

---

*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 Reading

## Evangelism and the Local Church

---

by John S. Shaw

Orthodox Presbyterian congregations, presbyteries, and assemblies regularly sing a hymn that closes with these words:

We long to see your churches full,  
That all the chosen race  
May, with one voice and heart and soul,  
Sing your redeeming grace.<sup>1</sup>

We love to sing this hymn because the desire reflects the stated plan of God. The Lord seeks true worshippers who “will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). The Lord pursues true worshippers through the ministry of his Word and Spirit. And the Lord sends the church to gather true worshippers by the means of evangelism.

God gives the ministry of evangelism to the church as a primary responsibility. This article considers that responsibility, especially as it applies to local congregations. We will consider evangelism through the local congregation in three parts: first, the agent of evangelism; second, the theology of evangelism; and third, the practice of evangelism.

### The Agent of Evangelism

The Lord gives to the church as a whole the responsibility of evangelism. Jesus Christ proclaimed this responsibility to the apostles, and the Scriptures record the specifics at both the end of Matthew (28:18–20) and the beginning of Acts (1:8). As the Lord providentially scatters his fledgling church, believers carry the Word wherever the Lord sends them (e.g., Acts 8:4). The growing church of the New Testament displays a commitment to the work of evangelism and outreach, and the Lord blesses their labors by gathering many new converts into the worshipping community. As R. B. Kuiper observes, the evangelistic responsibility of the church is clear and undeniable:

Beyond dispute, the Christian church is the God-appointed agent of evangelism. . . . Both the church as an organization, operating through its special offices, and the church as an organism of believers, each of which holds a general or universal office, are God-ordained agents of evangelism.<sup>2</sup>

While God calls all believers as agents of evangelism, he specifically and uniquely calls ministers to this work. Paul tells Timothy the work of the minister includes the responsibility to preach the Word to a sinful people in a rebellious age (2 Tim. 4:1–3). He

---

<sup>1</sup> *Trinity Hymnal* (Atlanta: Great Commission Publications, 1990), no. 469, “How Sweet and Awesome Is the Place.”

<sup>2</sup> R. B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002), 118.

brings that particular instruction to a conclusion by writing, “As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (4:5).

Men called to the ministry of the Word must make evangelistic ministry a priority, for they are set apart by the Lord to carry the Word to the lost. Geerhardus Vos emphasized this responsibility in a sermon preached to the students at Princeton: “Pitiable indeed is the plight of the steward of Christ, who cannot say from a conviction as profound as the roots of his spiritual life itself, that he came into the kingdom for the very purpose of seeking and of saving that which was lost.”<sup>3</sup> Pastors must proclaim the promises and demands of the gospel, calling sinners to repent and believe. In his book concerning the pastoral ministry, Martin Bucer summarizes “the first task of the pastoral ministry and care of souls [as] that of seeking Christ’s lost sheep and bringing them into the flock and sheep-pen of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet the minister along with the elders must also lead the congregation in the work of evangelism. According to our Form of Government (FG), the local session “shall concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual growth and evangelistic witness of the congregation” (13.7).<sup>5</sup> While the FG also gives responsibility to presbyteries and the general assembly for evangelism and witness (14.5 and 15.6), the liberty of the local congregation remains protected. Local congregations play a significant part in the witness of the whole church, therefore sessions must lead and promote the effective witness of the body they serve.

The early history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church shows a denomination committed to vibrant evangelistic ministry. Many of the first church plants began with a minister moving to a new community and starting the hard work of planting evangelistic seeds by knocking on doors and open-air preaching. Through the labors of these faithful men, the Lord raised up congregations. Yet the ministers didn’t work alone. They prepared and deployed their congregations to assist in these labors.

With a desire for evangelistic ministry to flourish, the General Assembly in 1942 appointed a Committee on Local Evangelism. The committee worked over a period of ten years and produced a document titled *Biblical Evangelism Today: A Symposium* that remains available on the denomination website.<sup>6</sup> In that document, the committee makes an important statement about personal evangelism and the necessity for the whole church to engage in such work:

Personal work is a very important aspect of evangelism. This method of presenting the gospel was widely used by our Lord. In the apostolic church this work was not only done by the ministers but by the laymen as well. This fact sheds light on its phenomenal growth. If the churches of our denomination are going to do an effective work of local evangelism then the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a whole must be roused to the need and instructed in this type of work.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Grace and Glory* (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2007), 65.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 90.

<sup>5</sup> *Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Form of Government [FG] 13.7).

<sup>6</sup> John Murray and Calvin K. Cummings, eds., *Biblical Evangelism Today: A Symposium* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1954), <http://www.opc.org/chm/BEToday.html>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, under chap. 5, para. 1.

Our love for the last stanza of “How Sweet and Awesome Is the Place” grows from a theological commitment to a ministry of evangelism that engages the whole church at some level. Yet that still leaves two questions to answer. First, what theological commitments undergird the work of evangelism through local congregations? Second, how should we practice evangelism in the local church?

### **The Theology of Evangelism<sup>8</sup>**

A quick study of our denomination’s early history reveals a commitment to labor-intensive, local evangelism. Some ministers made door-to-door evangelistic calling a regular part of their weekly (or even daily) ministry schedule. At first glance, one might consider that work to be a result of practical desperation. Many pastors moved into new communities to a church with few if any members. They needed more people in the church, so they had to knock on doors. Yet mere pragmatism never serves as a proper motivation for ministry.

These pastors were motivated by something greater than necessity. Their actions grew from biblical commitments. They recognized that the call to the gospel ministry necessarily involved a call to evangelistic ministry (2 Tim. 4:5). As the Committee on Local Evangelism explained, “The Great Head and King of the Church has solemnly commissioned the Church to proclaim the gospel in all the world, to every creature.”<sup>9</sup> They embraced their evangelistic responsibility with joy and vigor. The Lord is seeking worshippers, and these pastors recognized the church to be a mighty instrument in the hand of God to gather these worshippers. So they labored in evangelism.

With that in mind, we should answer an important question. What in particular about our theology presses the responsibility of evangelism? What do we believe about God and his Word that demands evangelistic ministry? Of course, there are many theological truths that relate to the evangelistic responsibility of the church, but let’s consider four.

First, local congregations engage in evangelism out of obedience to the clear commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. He sends out his church to disciple the nations and to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). Jesus promises a rich harvest for the church, and calls us to pray for (Matt. 9:37–38), to send (Rom. 10:14–15), and to support (1 Cor. 9:8–14) laborers to gather the harvest. The Lord calls pastors to a full ministry that includes the work of evangelism (2 Tim. 4:5). Faithful ministers lead their congregations in the work of evangelism and witness because the Lord commands the church to engage in this labor.

Second, local congregations engage in evangelism because our chief end is “to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”<sup>10</sup> We exist and live for the glory of God. That answer mirrors the words that Jesus speaks in John 4:23. The Lord seeks worshippers—people who are defined and named by their commitment to glorify God. Worshippers are gathered as people hear and believe the Word of God, and people hear the Word as the church sends those who speak the gospel (Rom. 10:14–15). Therefore, ministers lead their congregations in the work of evangelism and witness.

---

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the theological foundations for a ministry of evangelism and outreach, read the first three chapters of *Biblical Evangelism Today*.

<sup>9</sup> Murray and Cummings, eds., *Biblical Evangelism Today*, under Preface, first sentence.

<sup>10</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question and Answer 1.

Third, local congregations engage in evangelism because of the love of Christ. Paul tells the church in Corinth, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor. 5:14–15). The love of the crucified and risen Christ compels us to give our lives wholly to him. We are thereby compelled to share the good news. Machen, preaching on this passage to our Second General Assembly, said:

What a wonderful open door God has placed before the church of today. A pagan world, weary and sick, often distrusting its own modern gods. A saving gospel strangely entrusted to us unworthy messengers. A divine Book with unused resources of glory and power. Ah, what a marvelous opportunity, my brethren!<sup>11</sup>

The love of Christ compels, controls, and constrains us to proclaim the saving message of the gospel to a broken world. Once we know the love of Christ, we must not, indeed we cannot, remain silent. Ministers and congregations do the work of evangelism and witness because the love of Christ controls them.

Fourth, local congregations engage in evangelism because of compassion for the lost. God himself models the compassion for the lost that should characterize believers. The Lord reveals his compassion for sinners in the question that closes the book of Jonah.

You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle? (Jonah 4:10–11)

The Lord pitied that great and wicked city both because he created them but also because they were lost—a people who did not know their right hand from their left.

The Son of God, someone greater than Jonah (Matt. 12:41), displayed the same kind of love for the crowds of lost people who followed him through the cities and villages. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). Out of his compassion for the crowds, the Lord drew attention to the harvest and the need for laborers. He calls us to imitate his compassion for those who are lost. Ministers and congregations do the work of evangelism out of compassion for the lost, compassion modeled after the love of the Savior.

## **The Practice of Evangelism**

Having considered already the agent of evangelism and the theology of evangelism, we will now briefly consider the practice of evangelism. What are some practical steps to carry out a ministry of evangelism and witness in local congregations?

First, we need to train our ministers to do the work of an evangelist and to lead their congregation in a ministry of witness. The minister’s call includes the responsibility to do the work of an evangelist and to promote the evangelistic witness of the congregation (2 Tim. 2:5; FG 13.7). Any ministry of evangelism in the local congregation must begin

---

<sup>11</sup> Ned Bernard Stonehouse, ed., *J. Gresham Machen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002), 154.

with the pastor. Yet most Orthodox Presbyterian ministers have received limited training for this work. The typical Reformed seminary provides one or two classes on the ministry of witness. (Of course, any good preaching class will teach a man to proclaim the gospel since biblical preaching is evangelistic by nature. More of that in a little bit.) The typical class on evangelism involves hours of classroom instruction on the theology of evangelism with very little time for practical training concerning the “how” of evangelism. The result: many ministers recognize their responsibility for evangelism but feel ill-equipped to fulfill that responsibility.

As a denomination, we need to train and equip our ministers to do the work of an evangelist. Paul writes to Timothy about the necessity for training and modeling within the ministry. “Entrust [what you have heard from me] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:2–3). R. B. Kuiper drew pointed instruction from these verses:

One implication of that behest [2 Tim. 2:2] is that the church must make provision for the training of evangelists, particularly of such as have in mind the devoting of their entire life to the presentation of the gospel to the lost. . . . Far more attention should be paid to the specific preparation of evangelists.<sup>12</sup>

Young pastors benefit greatly from learning the ministry through the example of older men who spend time with them. While most of our ministers learn through internships, they would also benefit from coming alongside experienced ministers with evangelistic gifts. Young ministers in previous decades grew in their ministry of witness through visits with John Fikkert, Don Stanton, George Haney, and others. They learned by watching and serving together. We need to provide such opportunities for our pastors.

Second, ministers must grow in their ability to clearly communicate the whole counsel of God through biblical, Christ-centered preaching. The clear preaching of the Word, Sunday after Sunday, through which people hear the voice of Christ, is the primary means by which people believe (Rom. 10:15–16). As ministers, we labor to proclaim the promises and the obligations communicated in our text, and to proclaim those in a manner that is both clear and compelling. We must preach the gospel so that lost sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd; we must preach the gospel so that the sheep under our care know the Shepherd more deeply. This is not an article on preaching, so I will end with this simple instruction: preach Christ from all the Scriptures.

Third, local sessions should take time to develop a thorough Christian education program that teaches a congregation the whole counsel of God. Our Bible teaching should present a full theology of the Scriptures and the gospel, a full theology that includes training in our confessional standards. Our members should understand the claims of the gospel on their lives, and they should learn and rehearse the gospel again and again. The clearer understanding they have of the whole gospel and the whole Scripture, the better prepared they are to witness and give a reason for their hope.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism*, 123.

<sup>13</sup> Murray and Cummings, eds., *Biblical Evangelism Today*, under “Application to Evangelistic Method” chap. 3, para. 5: “Fourth, the whole Bible must be used in evangelism. The gospel is an absolute and complete answer to every need in the heart of the sinner, but the whole gospel must be employed. A portion

Fourth, we should be deliberate in teaching our children the whole Bible, putting before them the claims of the gospel again and again. At one point in my ministry, the adult son of a Baptist minister was preparing to bring his family into the membership of our congregation and to have his young children baptized. His father asked him, “Are you comfortable joining a church that doesn’t believe in evangelizing their children?” This question could mean many things, and we could offer many answers, but let me simply suggest this response. We should tell our children, again and again, the glorious story of the gospel. We should hold before them the glories of the Savior every day. We should rehearse the gospel message after every sermon preached, after every administration of the sacraments, after every reading of the Scripture. Our children should hear the gospel repeatedly because of, not in spite of, what we believe about the covenant promises. We promise to hold the gospel before them when we take vows at their baptism. Our children have been baptized as disciples, and we should teach them to observe everything that the Lord has commanded (Matt. 28:18–20; Deut. 6:4–9) so that they might believe and obey (Ps. 78:1–8; cf. v. 7). Local congregations, with parents, must teach the gospel to the children God has entrusted to us. This is a vital part of our ministry of evangelism and discipleship.

Fifth, local congregations should reach out to their neighbors with the gospel. This means that individual believers should be zealous to invite friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members to the regular gatherings of the local church. Our standards teach that there is no ordinary possibility of salvation outside the church.<sup>14</sup> If we believe that, then we should invite others to join us when the church gathers for worship every Sunday. But we should also invite others to join us for Bible study, for fellowship events, or to join us when others from church are also in our homes. We should look for opportunities to connect our church family with our neighbors, family, and friends.<sup>15</sup>

Pastors and sessions should lead in this regard. Here is one practical suggestion on how to evaluate the unique opportunities for witness within your local community. First, make a list of the talents, gifts, passions, interests, and places of influence among the members of your congregation. Second, make a list of the passions, interests, and gathering places within your local community. Then consider where those circles intersect. These points of intersection provide opportunities to build relationships which open doors of opportunity for witness.

Sixth, local congregations should be active in prayer, and the prayer life of a congregation (in public, family, and private worship) should include a specific focus on evangelistic prayer. The Lord tells us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into a ripe and ready field (Matt. 9:37–38). That means we can pray with expectation, for we know the Lord of the harvest to be a faithful and powerful Savior. That also means we should pray regularly and persistently regarding the harvest. And we should pray specifically, with the names of particular people on our lips. What a tremendous privilege for a congregation to build a list of people about whom to pray that

---

of Scripture neglected in the evangelistic message may be the very portion of Scripture which will strike home to certain particular subjects of evangelism.”

<sup>14</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith 25.2.

<sup>15</sup> I considered making a separate point of hospitality, but understand that loving and serving our neighbor includes hospitality, and that hospitality and evangelism often intersect. For a beautiful example, read the story of Rosaria Butterfield, *The Secrets Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant, 2012).

the Lord might save them. To know that as you share the good news of the gospel with family or friends, a whole congregation stands behind you in prayer.

Our congregation in Saint Paul, Minnesota, built such a list, and we prayed every week (in our homes and from the pulpit) for the salvation of specific persons. We prayed for five years that the Lord might save one particular woman, and people in the congregation who had never met this woman prayed for her. Eventually, by the grace of God, we had the wonderful privilege of celebrating her conversion and baptism (and the baptism of her two children) together as a congregation. The relative of another member was converted and baptized in an Orthodox Presbyterian Church across the country, and we again celebrated together, but this time with another congregation who had also prayed for this woman. Evangelistic prayer as believers and as congregations builds a commitment to a ministry of witness that over time pervades the whole congregation. Evangelistic prayer trains our eye on opportunities for witness.

In conclusion, we possess a rich heritage in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. A heritage expressed in our theological commitment to a pure doctrine of salvation found in the Bible, and a heritage expressed in the practice of a ministry of evangelism and witness throughout the whole church. The Lord has blessed this evangelistic ministry, and he will continue to bless such a ministry as the whole church (including local congregations) faithfully takes the good news to the nations. Resting in the faithfulness of the Lord of the harvest, may we humbly and passionately serve God as his witnesses to a broken world.

**John S Shaw** *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church serving as general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.*

# ServantWorld

## How Scripture Speaks to Politics<sup>1</sup>

---

by Cale Horne

During periods of intensified partisanship when political sentiments run high, it is all too easy to lose sight of the freedom the Christian enjoys in our views of norms and forms of government, policy, and political engagement. While contemporary evangelicalism relentlessly presses the bounds of what the Bible says about politics, an appreciation that what the Bible *does not* say about politics is equally relevant. In fact, I would suggest that inattentiveness to the silence of Scripture—in the political sphere and elsewhere—harms the peace, purity, and witness of the church in ways we are not normally prepared to admit.

What does the Bible say about political things? The answer to this question depends on how we choose to interpret the Bible. If we look at the twentieth century alone, the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition has been pulled in a number of different directions on this question as theological liberalism, fundamentalism, and eventually broad evangelicalism all competed with historic orthodoxy for the soul of the church. Behind this competition stood very different sets of assumptions about the Bible itself. We might think that the only assumption about the Bible that really matters is whether or not we believe it is true: whether or not we believe it is the inerrant and infallible Word of God. After all, in a nut shell, liberalism rejected this assumption while American fundamentalism and evangelicalism upheld it. Yet liberals, fundamentalists and evangelicals have over the past century regularly come to the *same conclusions* on things political, all claiming justification from the Bible, regardless of what they believe the Bible to be.

An example will clarify what I mean. Patriotic services. Politically-themed messages trumpeting the virtues of the American system. An American flag displayed in one corner of the church auditorium. Sermons on national service and preparedness delivered in times of danger to the country. Perhaps a July Fourth extravaganza paired with an appeal for the spectator to turn to Christ. I could be describing a regular part of the life of today's conservative, broadly evangelical church where—despite whatever differences we may have—the Bible is *believed* and *presented* as God's Word. Or I could be describing the liberal, mainline church of the early twentieth century, where the Bible was increasingly regarded as an inspiring, if not inspired, text.

For the most part, theological liberalism as it entered the church did not look like liberalism as we think of it today. Ordinarily, sermons did not deny the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, or a literal resurrection from a literal death. Rather, sermons encompassed

---

<sup>1</sup> Originally presented as an address for the “Listening to Scripture” Chapel Series at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia, on 5 September 2012. I thank Bill Dennison and Paul Morton for comments on an earlier draft, and Henry Overos for editorial assistance.

themes of patriotism, civic virtues, the Golden Rule, and the value of individuals and freedom—and these sermons claimed biblical backing.

As it was preached on Sunday morning from the pulpit, and heard in the pew, this new Christianity was all about hope: hope for the future of individuals and societies, with a heaven that bore a striking resemblance to the American dream. Even the horrors of World War I could not undo this optimism in mankind. If the war made Europeans declare that “God was dead,” Americans—who had come to Europe’s rescue in the eleventh hour—could by contrast say that we have the cure for what ails the world. Our faith would be in ourselves, and mainline, American Presbyterianism—from the wartime, Presbyterian president Woodrow Wilson down—would be right at the center of this cultural exuberance.

However counterintuitive it may seem, theological liberalism’s prescriptions for American politics in the first half of the twentieth century bear the ideological hallmarks and outward symbolism frequently associated with conservative, evangelical churches today. In effect, assumptions about the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures in their original forms, though essential, do not necessarily lead to different thinking about politics.

The point here is not to decry the dangers of patriotism. The point is that regardless of whether pastors and church members believe the Scriptures to be true, these kinds of sermons and church experiences do not *require* you to believe the Scriptures to be true. Instead, the Bible can be read and preached just like Aesop’s fables—good stories about morality, with a focus on the right behavior of individuals, families, communities, and nations. Christ gave the example of the life well lived, and to emulate it is the road to salvation for individuals as well as cultures and states. Like today’s evangelicals, the well-intentioned and civic-minded liberals of the 1910s, 20s and 30s energetically asked, “What would Jesus do?”

I argue that a set of older assumptions about the Scriptures, rooted in the historic Reformed tradition, offers a more satisfying view of both politics *and* the Bible. For many of you, these assumptions will not be new. I suspect, though, that few of us have considered how these foundational beliefs about the Scriptures can clarify our understanding of the relationship among our faith, the church, and politics.

Though there are others, for my purposes today, two of these foundational beliefs are most relevant. First, the Bible in all its parts is revealing to us God’s plan of salvation for his people, and second, this revelation of salvation is *organic* and *unfolding*. If we accept that the Bible in its entirety is an unfolding of the story of redemption, we are unlikely to be sidetracked by moralistic interpretations of biblical texts, or to go looking in the Bible for policy prescriptions that simply are not there. And if we accept that this salvation story is organic and unfolding, we can begin to understand how biblical texts that might seem to talk about politics actually fit into this long, coherent narrative.

Based on these assumptions, I want to argue to you that Scripture says far less about politics than many of us would wish for it to say. In fact, I want to argue to you that the Bible does not say much about politics at all. The Bible is no more a textbook on politics than it is a textbook on organic chemistry or accounting, and we should resist the temptation to read the Bible in this way. But second—and just as significant—what Scripture *does* say about politics is extremely important, and in fact far more important

than what we might be tempted to conclude about politics from the Bible if we didn't accept these assumptions about the text's redemptive and unfolding qualities.

Let's think about why, based on our assumptions at the outset, Scripture does not say much about political things. This statement flies in the face of much of what is being propagated in Reformed and evangelical circles today. A recent book by one of the most popular evangelical theologians alive—and one with Calvinistic sympathies—works its way through the gamut of contemporary political issues with commentary on how the Bible speaks to each issue.<sup>2</sup> The resulting book is actually a good deal longer than the Bible itself, and the alleged biblical answers to this wide range of political problems and puzzles invariably align with the platform of the political right wing in the United States. And as *theological* liberals and conservatives have begun to align with the *political* left and right (which is a story for another day), countless, equally tiresome books have been produced by theological liberals, who employ Scripture to argue for the causes of the political left.

Let's take models of economic organization as an example of this sort of flawed reasoning. Many political conservatives have looked at the Eighth and Tenth Commandments in Exodus 20 and found a biblical basis for free-market principles. The argument goes like this: The commands "Thou shall not steal" and "Thou shall not covet" presuppose the existence of private property. If there is no private property, there is nothing to steal or covet. And the fact that the theft and even coveting of this private property is condemned in the Decalogue should lead us to conclude that the existence of private property is God-ordained and good. The protection of private property mandated in the Eighth and Tenth Commandments requires laws and institutions designed to preserve the integrity of property. These laws and institutions are exemplified in the Old Testament in the form of rules of restitution. Today, no longer operating under the theocracy, free-market capitalism accompanied by democracy form the soundest institutional basis for the protection of property.

Christians on the political left have not taken this argument lying down. To justify their ideals for economic and social organization they turn to the model of the early church described in Acts 4:32–35:

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

This, many on the left tell us, is the Bible's model for social and economic organization. Private property is not the economic norm cultivated by followers of Jesus, but a surrender of private property to the collective. The norm upheld is redistribution of wealth: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

---

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

Based on our assumptions—that the Bible in all its parts is revealing to us God’s plan of salvation for his people, and that this revelation is organic and unfolding—we must conclude that these uses of Exodus 20 and Acts 4 are wide of the mark. This is not to say I don’t believe in private property, or that I don’t think capitalism and democracy are, broadly speaking, good—or at least the best anyone has thought up to-date. But the idea of private property and institutions designed to protect private property can best be thought of as insights of common grace: partial, imperfect, and temporally bound solutions to the problems of social and economic order generated by the Fall.

So, if not bases for biblical models of economic organization, what is going on in Exodus 20 and Acts 4? In the case of Exodus 20, we should remember that the explication of the moral law only becomes necessary in light of the Fall: to show us what we ought to do, our inability to do it and need for grace, and as a norm of conduct for those who are the recipients of this grace. In other words, the moral law is given in large part to impress upon God’s people the immeasurable distance between themselves and God, as a consequence of the Fall. In the case of the Eighth and Tenth Commandments, “Thou shall not steal” and “Thou shall not covet,” the commandments are needed to clarify behavior toward one another because we no longer understand our behavior in reference to God. Before the Fall, Adam is given the mandate to *steward* the creation. *There was no private property*; rather, Adam in his innocence understood all things to belong to God! He was commissioned as the caretaker of *God’s* property! The Eighth and Tenth Commandments are required because, by the entrance of sin, we no longer regard property entrusted to us as articles of our stewardship that are not our own.

In Acts 4, in the unfolding of God’s salvation, we see something of that original consciousness restored in the early church, where believers were giving and taking freely. We are witnessing here something of the Eighth and Tenth Commandment fulfilled because, in a way, the Acts church has returned to the Garden—property is again regarded as a thing *entrusted*, not a thing *owned*. But the Acts church (of which you, by the way, are a part!) is also moving *beyond* the life of the Garden. And this is as it should be, because even before the Fall, the Garden was never intended as the end. Faithful stewardship—tending the Garden—was Adam’s probationary task. The end was always Adam’s possession of God himself, and God’s possession of Adam. Adam failed this probationary task of stewardship because he sought the possession of other things—he coveted and stole. But God’s plan would not be undone, the Second Adam is faithful where the First Adam failed, and in Acts 4 we can almost taste heaven.

Consider the unique place of Acts in the canon: situated at the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New. Strange things are happening. The apostles are still entering the temple and synagogues, miracles are taking place, prophecies, tongues. Everything is in flux in Acts, and we see in its pages aspects of the church’s life under the Old Covenant, in the past, the church’s life in the present, which we experience today, and—every so often—we catch a glimpse of the future, of the perfected and glorified church. I think that’s what we catch a glimpse of—if only a glimpse—in these few verses of Acts 4. (And it is *only* a glimpse, because Ananias and Sapphira bring us back to the present in the verses that follow.)

Acts 4 is not about economic egalitarianism. We do not even know if there were poor people present in the scene it presents. That can probably be safely inferred from the text, but it is left for us to infer because it isn’t the main point before us. Though some think it

quite wooden, I love the language of the old American Standard Version: “and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own.” I assume there were plenty of materially poor believers present in this scene, but they would have known that they were not being made rich by this redistribution of goods, but because of the apostles’ witness of the resurrection of Jesus. They are rich because they possess God himself. The church’s provision for their material needs flows out of this reality.

These New Testament believers can give and receive so freely because they are beginning to see that this is not the end—a consciousness that stands in stark contrast to the life of God’s people under the law, where they begin to mistake *the land* as their end—they begin to conflate the possession of Canaan with a Promised Land yet to come.

The Acts church has come to understand the *reason* behind the imperative of the Eighth and Tenth Commandments: “Thou shall not steal or covet” because “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” We do not steal or covet because of who God is and what he has done for us: he takes us as his possession and, *strangely*, freely gives himself as our possession. *There is no possession that we want—nothing left to covet—other than God himself.*

That, I believe, is what is going on in Exodus 20 and Acts 4, in contrast to interpretations that use these texts for political ends. To seek to harness God’s Word to promote one political agenda or another—of the left or right—is to miss the point.

So far I have talked about what assumptions might guide our understanding of the relationship between politics and the Bible, and I have given some suggestions about what the Bible *does not* say about politics, but what *does* the Bible say about politics? I do not want you to think that the Bible says nothing about politics, or that what it does say is somehow disconnected from the redemptive, organically unfolding message of Scripture. I will not go so far as to say that this list is exhaustive but, in broad strokes, I believe the Bible speaks critically about the establishment of government, government’s role, and the Christian’s obligation toward government. I will discuss these briefly.

Reformed thinkers differ in understandings of the origin of government. Some, including many Dutch Reformed thinkers as well as the Scottish Covenanters, associate the establishment of government with life in the Garden; as intrinsic to the common mandate given to Adam, and embodied in his kingly role in Eden. Others place the establishment of government after the Fall, usually with that part of the Noachic covenant given in Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,” which seems to imply the establishment of a legitimate authority empowered to police, judge, and enforce against capital crimes. Others in the post-Fall camp (a minority position) identify the origins of the state with Babel in Genesis 11, with the scattering of people groups defined by common language. Whatever view we embrace, these all have something in common: it is God who establishes government. In other words, government is not intrinsically bad—though the rhetoric of some libertarians (who, incidentally, have become increasingly popular among the young adult demographic in recent years) seems to come close to saying so.

God’s institution of government is closely related to his purpose for it, and our obligation towards it. Christians on the political left emphasize the New Testament description of a government that “rewards good” to argue for an expansive role for the state, just as Christians on the right emphasize the same text’s description of government

as the punisher of evil to make their case for small government. What do these isolated quotes, taken from 1 Peter 2:14, really say? Verses 11–17 provide the immediate context:

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Peter addresses God's people as a pilgrim people—a people who know that their lives are wrapped up in the narrative of Scripture—which is to say that this world is not the end. We submit to government and honor the king—good or bad—*because* we are a pilgrim people. The same rationale underlies Jesus's own command to “render unto Caesar.” Peter goes on to explain that submission to earthly authorities is following in the footsteps of Christ: humiliation precedes exaltation. So much for so-called “Christian coalitions” demanding a seat at the table of political power. Indeed, in an age of color revolutions, it seems timely to note that the response of the New Testament church to official persecution was not political revolt in the style of the Maccabees, but perseverance.

I am deeply concerned that many sincere, Bible-believing Christians today are harming themselves and the witness of the church as a whole with unbiblical *attitudes* toward the state—even if the *policies* of the state really do fall far short of the mark. How do we speak about President Obama? Does our tone honor the king and reflect our pilgrim identity? Can you acknowledge him, in Paul's language from Romans 13, as “a minister of God to you for good”? What if the next president is, for example, a devoted follower and former bishop of a prominent religious cult?<sup>3</sup> Can we honor him in faith, believing that God causes princes to rise and fall as part of the unfolding drama of redemption, mysteriously moving us toward the consummation of all things?

A final thought. Nowhere in the Bible is this honor of the king more poignantly displayed than in the life of the Apostle Paul. When accused by the Jews before the Roman authorities, he makes appeal to be judged by Caesar, which is to say he takes full advantage of his rights as a Roman citizen. Yet if he had not appealed to Caesar, he could have been set free then and there in Caesarea, because he had not violated any Roman law. Eventually Paul's appeal would result in his death in Rome.

But Paul's appeal to his Roman citizenship—an appeal he made on more than one occasion—was inspired by the Holy Spirit. He is living out the life-pattern of Christ for the benefit of the fledging and persecuted church. His Roman citizenship is not irrelevant

---

<sup>3</sup> This address was originally given in the midst of the 2012 United States presidential campaign, when Republican nominee Mitt Romney's Mormonism was a campaign issue among politically conservative evangelicals.

to his pilgrimage, but is purposefully used in service to it. For Paul, Rome was never the end.

If you choose to become involved in government or politics, do so wholeheartedly and without reservation. Take common grace and general revelation seriously! Just as the Bible is not a textbook on politics, prudent and just policymaking is not the special reserve of Christians. But your faith does inform your political engagement. Even if you agree with the unbeliever on particular policy issues, you are not agreeing for the same reasons. For you, exercising the benefits and obligations of earthly citizenship is all done in the service of your citizenship that is in heaven. If the Garden was not the end, nor Canaan nor Rome, surely Washington, DC, is not the end, either.

**Cale Horne** *is an assistant professor of political studies at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia. He is a member of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Chattanooga, Tennessee.*

# ServantReading

## Renewing the Evangelical Mission

*edited by Richard Lints*

---

by David A. Booth

*Renewing the Evangelical Mission*, edited by Richard Lints. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2013, 282 pages, \$34.00, paper.

The paradox of evangelicalism is that it retains extraordinary vitality while its theological core is rotting away. The clash of these conflicting realities generates an endless stream of renewal movements and gives cause for both despair and hope about evangelicalism's future. It is therefore particularly fitting that David Wells, the keenest critic of Western evangelicalism, would be honored by a conference devoted to renewing the evangelical mission. This volume of essays arose from the lectures given at that conference.

The erudite article "Found Faithful" by Os Guinness can serve as a useful lens through which to view the book's twelve essays. Like several of the authors, Guinness draws our attention to the rise of global Christianity and the shift of the church's center from the West to the global South. He writes:

The churches in the global south are truly exploding, but most of the global South is pre-modern. They have yet to face what Peter Berger calls "the fiery brook" of modernity, in which we were so badly burned. This means that much of what we have to share with our sisters and brothers in the global South is a confession and a caution: "don't do what we did." (94)

The pessimism that this comment reveals about Western Christianity is striking. Yes, we must work and pray with our brothers and sisters in the global South in the hope that they will not repeat our mistakes. But where is the sense of gratitude that the Western church has been entrusted with important doctrinal insights gained through centuries of debate and reflection? Where is the sense of duty that, as stewards of this deposit, we have the privilege of contending for these truths while handing them on to those who are first and second generation Christians? This pessimism about the Western church can also be found in Professor Tite Tienou's article "Renewing Evangelical Identity from the Margins" which expansively treats the relationship between worldwide mission and evangelical identity. The primary concern of this article seems to be how Western Christianity marginalizes non-Western churches or perceives non-Western theologies "as threats to orthodoxy" (43). These are important themes for consideration, but what's odd in a series of articles designed to honor the author of *No Place for Truth*,<sup>1</sup> is that the authors in this volume seem utterly unconcerned with the possibility that such theologies

---

<sup>1</sup> David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

may in fact actually be a threat to orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to see what is distinctly evangelical about these discussions of global Christianity and why Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants couldn't say the very same things.

It would be unfair to conclude from the above that the essays in this collection are not concerned with truth. Dr. Guinness, for example, expresses a longing for God to send a modern day Luther to liberate us from our own Babylonian captivity (105–6). He even urges the church to recapture its prophetic voice in the tradition of Elijah on Mount Carmel (107). Yet, apparently unaware of the irony, Guinness is simultaneously calling evangelicals away from extremism (97–98). It is difficult to imagine a scholar of such wit and wisdom missing the incongruity of wanting a Luther or an Elijah but without the extremism. The only person unquestionably more extreme and divisive than Luther and Elijah is the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Guinness only wants to eliminate the bitter political divisions that have increasingly come to define American life. If so, who could demur? But the irony of wanting the results of a Luther or an Elijah without the extremism permeates the articles in this book and may be the central tension in this strand of evangelicalism. Indeed, it would be difficult to find anything in these articles that would offend anyone anywhere—and that seems to be the studied point. The vision of evangelicalism which emerges from these articles is one that seeks the results of reformation without the real world conflict that genuine reformation necessarily entails. It defines itself over against fundamentalism every bit as much as it does against liberalism. It seeks to engender a robust theological self-consciousness without throwing anyone out of evangelicalism's big tent or being called names by Christianity's cultured despisers. It seeks orthodoxy without borders. That is, it wants what never was and never will be.

Will this collection of essays on evangelical renewal be remembered as the last gasp of a dying coalition? Given the vitality of evangelicalism, that would be a premature conclusion to draw. Professor Lints wisely opens the book with the questions: "Whose evangelicalism? Which renewal?" (1). We should remember that the articles in this book reflect only the small slice of evangelicalism which is centered on parachurch educational institutions in North America.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, although this is only a slice of evangelicalism, these institutions are influential and Orthodox Presbyterians will want to consider the view through the window of these essays before entrusting these institutions with our financial resources or with the formal education of our children or future pastors. It is difficult to find any other compelling reason to read this book. Perhaps those who enjoy discussing the aesthetics of fire while watching a house burn down can happily wile away several hours perusing this work. Those willing to put on a helmet and actually rush into the fire will be far better equipped to do so by reading (or re-reading) David Wells's *The Courage to Be Protestant*.<sup>5</sup>

**David A. Booth** is an Orthodox Presbyterian minister serving as pastor of Merrimack Valley Presbyterian Church in North Andover, Massachusetts.

---

<sup>2</sup> For a brilliant work which seeks to integrate insights from global Christianity into a doctrinally orthodox Christianity see Tim Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Matthew 10:21–22, 34–39; Luke 14:26; 18:22.

<sup>4</sup> Trinity Evangelical Divinity School is the one significant denominational seminary in this evangelical coalition. TEDS promotes itself on its website as "pan-evangelical" with a "commitment to broad evangelicalism that welcomes voices from various denominational and theological traditions."

<sup>5</sup> David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

# ServantReading

## Greek for the Rest of Us

*by William D. Mounce*

---

by Allen Tomlinson

*Greek for the Rest of Us: The Essentials of Biblical Greek* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), by William D. Mounce. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, xviii + 293 pages, \$29.99, paper.

The purpose of this book on beginning New Testament Greek is for the reader to come to a working knowledge of some of the basics of the subject, so that he can make better use of Bible software programs, critical commentaries, and lexicons, as well as analyze a text both in the English and Greek (though not as exhaustively as would be true for someone who took traditional courses in Greek, such as a minister would take in preparing for the ministry of the Word). I am not convinced that this object is best served by Dr. Mounce's approach in this book, but let us begin with some very positive points about the book.

The best use of this textbook, from my point of view, would be for those who have studied New Testament Greek in the past, to have a quick and easy review. Ministers who have grown "rusty" in their use of the language would be able to return to a former facility in their exegetical skills, which may have been dulled by non-use or by being out of the ministry for a time. Those who are not ministers of the Word, nor intend to be, but who have studied New Testament Greek at some point in their education, would find this a quick and fairly easy tool to sharpen those skills and to make better use of them than ever.

Those of us who studied our Greek in the somewhat distant past (due to being born closer to World War II than to the Gulf War), will also pick up some suggestions as to a somewhat clearer understanding of the language than was true in our earlier days. For example, I had been taught that often  $\mu\eta$  ( $m\bar{e}$ ) with the present imperative suggested a command to stop a process already in motion. However, in the course of over forty years in which I have been translating and working with the Greek New Testament, I had observed that more often than not this did not appear to be the case, or perhaps only half of the time. Often this construction is just commanding that something not be done, without necessarily suggesting whether it is being done and needs to stop, or it is not yet being done and should not be initiated.

"For many years it was believed that  $\mu\eta$  with a present tense imperative was a prohibition to stop something currently in progress.  $\mu\eta$  ( $m\bar{e}$ ) with an aorist tense imperative was a prohibition to not even start an action. Although you will find this distinction throughout the commentaries, grammarians today are for the most part agreed that this distinction is invalid" (226). Such information can be very useful for those who

need a “refresher” course that will help them stay abreast of some of the current conclusions by the scholars.

Mounce’s approach to helping a Bible student learn how to analyze a text is very good. By not using the language of academia, he makes wonderful suggestions that will be of great help to those who want to dig deeper into the biblical text but who do not have formal training in the language. He has exercises to help the reader learn to do this first in the English and then in the Greek. Though I question whether the average reader can actually do the Greek exercise, the exercise for the English text is great, and I believe the Christian of average intelligence can make very profitable use of this section.

However, this brings me to my concerns about the approach and object of this book. First, having examined Mounce’s more traditional method of teaching Greek on the internet, I found his more traditional approach extremely well organized and clear, and believe his traditional textbook with internet course is probably one of the very best ways for a layman to learn New Testament Greek, sufficiently to work with the Greek text in a profitable manner. The approach of *Greek For the Rest of Us* would not, in my opinion, work for the average layman, the audience for which the book seems to be intended primarily.

The book does not have the student learn the language from the “ground up”, as in traditional courses. The main conjugations for verbs and the declension forms for nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, for example, as well as a host of other important material, are not assigned to be memorized in a logical order. Instead they are covered as “bits and pieces” introduced along the way, with the view that the reader will pick up what is necessary. At first this would mean being able to make better use of commentaries, lexicons, and Greek software, and hopefully growing into an ability to analyze the Greek text itself. The first part of this might be true to a limited degree, but I fear most average English speaking people would find it confusing and the “bits and pieces” disconnected. When it comes to analyzing the Greek text (199 ff), the average reader would not have enough information to perform this task. I would recommend a more traditional approach, though not necessarily having to attend a school in person (though that is great for those who have such an opportunity), like Mounce’s or a similar program online.

Fearing that I am just being “an old fogey,” stuck to my ways (at least the way in which I learned the Greek language), I asked my much younger son-in-law, who has a year of New Testament and Classical Greek under his belt from Covenant College, to read through the book and evaluate it for me. I tried not to give him any strong impression of my own before he read. He is not a minister, has not made extensive use of his Greek over the years, and I think appreciated the review this was for him. However, he also came to the same conclusion as I had, without collusion between us. The stated purpose of the book he questioned, because the more traditional approach, teaching the language with all its parts from “the ground up” would be less confusing. He did not believe he could have learned the language in this format, though he appreciated the good review it would give to someone who had learned the language traditionally and needed a review and challenge to help make better use of that formerly acquired knowledge.

Since there are over twenty years difference between us, our personalities are dissimilar in many ways, and he is many times more proficient with computers and other modern tools than myself, I thought this agreement as to the best use of this book was significant. At least some of us could not learn the language in this way, not even enough

to significantly help us with the “tools of the trade.” We would be left confused rather than helped by the book, *if* we did not already know the language from a more traditional approach.

On a more positive note, Mounce has some terrific essays at the end of the book on textual criticism, translations, the choice of commentaries, etc. Though I hold to a different view of textual criticism, I found these articles extremely well written, fair to all sides, and gracious.

For those who need to sharpen their formerly acquired skills in New Testament Greek, this book is a helpful and quick read and provides a great review.

**Allen Tomlinson** *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church serving as pastor of the First Congregational Church of Merrimack, New Hampshire.*

# ServantPoetry

---

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

## A Harvest

O Gate of death, of the blessed night,  
That shall open not again  
On this world of shame and sorrow,  
Where slow ages wax and wane,  
Where are signs and seasons, days and nights,  
And mighty winds and rain.

Is the day wearing toward the west?—  
Far off cool shadows pass,  
A visible refreshment  
Across the sultry grass:  
Far off low mists are mustering,  
A broken shifting mass.

Still in the deepest knowledge  
Some depth is left unknown:  
Still in the merriest music lurks  
A plaintive undertone:  
Still with the closest friend some throb  
Of life is felt alone.

Time's summer breath is sweet, his sands  
Ebb sparkling as they flow,  
Yet some are sick that this should end  
Which is from long ago:—  
Are not the fields already white  
To harvest in the glow?—

There shall come another harvest  
Than was in days of yore:  
The reapers shall be Angels,  
Our God shall purge the floor:—  
No more seed-time, no more harvest,  
Then for evermore.