

# Mayflower 400

# Pilgrims



Ordained Servant October 2020

# *Ordained Servant Online*

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**CURRENT ISSUE: MAYFLOWER 400: PILGRIMS IN THE NEW WORLD**

**October 2020**

### *From the Editor*

The Mayflower Compact was signed by forty-one men aboard the Mayflower on November 11, 1620, four hundred years ago next month.

Haveing undertaken, for ye glorie of God, and advancemente of ye Christian faith and honor of our king & country, a voyage to plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly & mutually in ye presence of God, and of one another, covenant, & combine ourselves together into a Civill body politick; for our better ordering, & preservation & furtherance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte, constitute, and frame such just & equall Lawes, ordinances, Acts, constitiutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be tought most meet & convenient for ye generall good of ye colonie: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

Clearly, for all of their imperfections, the Pilgrims that landed mistakenly on Cape Cod four centuries ago desired to glorify God in their dangerous endeavor.

As Darryl Hart reminds us in his review article, “The Pilgrims: Forgotten, Remembered, Celebrated,” the first Reformed Christians to arrive in seventeenth century New England were different in some significant ways from the Puritans who began to arrive in far greater numbers a decade later.

I have attached a booklet with some history of Thanksgiving, beginning with the first. It has been our tradition for many decades to read Psalm 136 and portions of the attached selection of historical proclamations. Printed on both sides of one sheet of nice quality paper it may be folded and handed out at Thanksgiving.

Hart also reviews a significant addition to Puritan history in David D. Hall’s *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History*, which clarifies the relationship between Puritanism and Presbyterianism, showing the “sustained and comprehensive account of the effort to reform further the English-speaking churches.”

In “Imago Hominis: Our Brave New World,” I review the arresting work of Jacob Shatzer, *Transhumanism and the Image of God: Today’s Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship*. His accurate analysis of the amalgam of transhumanism and technology forms the basis for an alarming description and a penetrating critique of that complex movement, along with a useful roadmap for navigating it faithfully as Christians.

Ann Hart reviews Robert Andrews, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* as an example of one who, despite all of his flaws, heroically led England through the European crisis of German Naziism. Despite all of the prior material written about Churchill this biography

stands out due to its author's access to unique, newly available correspondence, as well as his charmingly written narrative.

Charles M. Wingard reviews Alan Strange's *Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Westminster Standards* emphasizing the critical importance of Christ's active obedience in pastoral ministry, reinforcing Machen's dying words, "I'm so thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without it."

Two poems remember the importance of thanksgiving and the landing of the Mayflower—each nearly four centuries apart, one a poem of thanks and the other a historical reflection.

The cover picture is one I recently took of the newly restored Mayflower II, which has returned to its dock in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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[http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject\\_Index\\_Vol\\_1-28.pdf](http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-28.pdf)

- "The Puritan Theological Method." (John V. Fesko) 17 (2008): 17 (2008): 93–98.

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

# ServantHistory

## The Pilgrims: Forgotten, Remembered, Celebrated A Review Article

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by Darryl G. Hart

*They Knew They Were Pilgrims: Plymouth Colony and the Contest for American Liberty*, by John Turner. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020, x + 447 pages, \$30.00.

Most Americans, if they know anything about the Pilgrims, think of this small group of Protestant settlers in connection with Thanksgiving. That may also be true for American Protestants who are as likely to associate the settlers of the colony at Plymouth Plantation with the rest of New England Puritanism. In 1999 residents of Southampton, New York, for instance, objected to the town's official seal which featured a man in Pilgrim attire and claimed, "First English Settlement in the State of New York." The chairperson of the town's Anti-Bias Task Force explained that the seal assumed the area's history began in 1640 and neglected the presence of native Americans who had lived in the region for thousands of years. The revelation that "our heroes were other people's oppressors" was more important than distinguishing Pilgrims from Puritans. The real problem was not variety of English Protestantism, according to the *New York Times*, but the divide between whites and people of color.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a follow up story in the *Times* returned to the distinction between Pilgrims and Puritans. The newspaper clarified that not Pilgrims but Puritans were the original English settlers in Southampton. The region of Long Island that includes Southampton, Southold, East Hampton, Oyster Bay, and Huntington "was established as an outpost of the New Haven Colony," a branch of Puritanism.<sup>2</sup>

If Americans pay attention to the presidential proclamations of Thanksgiving as a national holiday—arguably the best of the annual bunch—they will likely hear reminders about courage in the face of adversity, cooperation with native peoples, and a meal of fall produce and wild fowl. In 1961 during his first year in the White House, John F. Kennedy declared, "more than three centuries ago, the Pilgrims, after a year of hardship and peril, humbly and reverently set aside a special day upon which to give thanks to God for their preservation and for the good harvest from the virgin soil upon which they had labored." He added that "by their faith and by their toil they had survived the rigors of the harsh New England winter" and so rested from "their labors to give thanks for the blessings that had been bestowed upon them by Divine Providence."<sup>3</sup> In 2010 when President Barack Obama

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Kiggin Miller, "Anti-Bias Task Force Says No to a Pilgrim," *New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/10/nyregion/anti-bias-task-force-says-no-to-a-pilgrim.html> accessed August 10, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Parnel Wickham, "Separating the Pilgrims from the Puritans," *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/24/nyregion/l-separating-the-pilgrims-from-the-puritans-080128.html>, accessed August 10, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, "Proclamation 3438—Thanksgiving Day, 1961," <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-3438-thanksgiving-day-1961> accessed August 10, 2020.

declared a national holiday, he mentioned both the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag tribe, and asked Americans to “reflect on the compassion and contributions of Native Americans” who helped the English colonists survive.<sup>4</sup> Last year, Donald Trump found a middle way between Kennedy and Obama. He underlined the Pilgrims’ great hardships and tribulations, and their “unwavering” faith and foresight. Yet, through divine providence, the Pilgrims forged a “meaningful relationship” with the Wampanoag that led to a bountiful harvest. The meal the Pilgrims shared with the native people not only captured a spirit of “friendship and unity,” but also “provided an enduring symbol of gratitude that is uniquely sewn into the fabric of our American spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

The irony buried deep in this annual appropriation of the English people who came to North America in 1620 on board the *Mayflower* is that Thanksgiving honors the Pilgrims, a group that most Americans assume were Puritan, who came almost a decade later. And because the Puritans went on to establish institutions such as Harvard and Yale, most Americans think the celebration of Thanksgiving looks back to the New Englanders who left an important heritage for American politics, intellectual life, and higher education. Even the name, “Pilgrim,” obscures as much as it distinguishes one group of New England Protestants from another. The word derives from William Bradford, Plymouth Colony’s governor, who wrote a history of the settlers. When he asserted, “they knew they were pilgrims,” Bradford was not distinguishing the Protestants in Plymouth from the ones in Boston. He was acknowledging that these Protestants were keenly aware that this world was not their home, that their ultimate residence was a heavenly country.

The study of English Protestants who wanted further reformation in the Church of England has received of late remarkable attention from historians working in the United States. First came Michael Winship’s *Hot Protestants*, then David H. Hall’s *The Puritans*, and now John G. Turner’s, *They Knew They Were Pilgrims*. The latter book is about almost exclusively the Protestants who boarded the *Mayflower* and landed in 1620 at Plymouth Rock. These “Pilgrims” were responsible for Plymouth Colony, a territory that today comprises Boston’s South Shore and Cape Cod. It was distinct from Massachusetts Bay Colony of John Winthrop fame, though adjustments in Britain’s administration of the colonies in 1691 made Plymouth part of Massachusetts. The key religious difference between Puritans and Pilgrims was separatism. Although “Puritan” did not stand for one coherent set of convictions, Puritans generally sought further reform of the Church of England (in Scotland Puritans desired and had greater success with the Kirk). As such, they mainly stayed inside the religious establishment (until forced out). Puritans could be friendly to Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, or Independency; Congregationalists in Massachusetts Bay still regarded themselves as part of the English religious establishment.

In contrast, Plymouth’s Pilgrims were separatists and refused to tolerate imperfections in the Church of England. They left England as early as 1610 to settle in the Netherlands which had fewer hopes for religious uniformity. The Dutch setting gave the Pilgrims a chance to set up congregations according to their beliefs. Economic considerations and a desire to retain English identity in their young were important factors that prompted migration to the New World. Perry Miller, the Harvard scholar who resuscitated Puritanism in the mid-twentieth

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<sup>4</sup> Obama, “Presidential Proclamation--Thanksgiving Day,” <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/23/presidential-proclamation-thanksgiving-day> accessed August 10, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Trump, “Presidential Proclamation on Thanksgiving Day, 2019,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-proclamation-thanksgiving-day-2019/> accessed August 10, 2020.

century in American studies and history departments, deemed the Pilgrims far inferior to the Puritans. His dismissal has largely been responsible for American scholars' more general disregard of Plymouth colony.

Turner's account pushes back against Miller and company but is not an attempt to show that the Pilgrims are intellectual and institutional rivals to the Puritans. Not only did Plymouth eventually become part of Massachusetts, but the Pilgrims did not come anywhere near the Puritans in establishing institutions that could transmit their convictions. That was even true for Pilgrims' church history where their quirky beliefs posed a challenge to calling ministers and starting congregations. The colony's first minister, John Lyford, arrived in 1624 but under the warning that ordination required a call from a congregation (even though he had already ministered in Ulster). After receiving approval, Lyford ran afoul of the colonists for not being willing to renounce his former attachment to the Church of England. The pastor retaliated by sending negative reviews of the colony to authorities back in England. In turn, he started his own parish within the colony which attracted some of the settlers but also merited the disapproval of Plymouth's leaders. The colony finally banished Lyford who settled and began to minister in Massachusetts. (He finished his career in Virginia.)

That challenge of finding pastors and creating structures to nurture "the Pilgrim way" was repeated throughout the colony's seven decades. Roger Williams ministered for a time as an unpaid assistant in Plymouth. His tenure came in between a rocky pastorate at Salem where he first challenged Massachusetts' established church and his later banishment and establishment of Rhode Island. Another instance of the Pilgrim's difficulty in cultivating a reliable ministry was Samuel Gorton, a layman from London, who migrated in the late 1630s and began his own congregation. His reason was that the Pilgrims had departed from their own religious principles. He too ran afoul of Plymouth's authorities and wound up in Rhode Island with Williams and other spiritual rejects from both Massachusetts and Plymouth. Charles Chauncy (not to be confused with the eighteenth-century opponent of the Great Awakening) was a pastor who arrived in Plymouth and ministered at Scituate. He was well trained with degrees from Cambridge and also taught at the English university. But he also had odd views about the sacraments—such as only administering the Lord's Supper after sundown and immersing candidates for baptism rather than sprinkling. His departure from Pilgrim expectations prompted him to start a rival congregation in Scituate to the one that Pilgrims had founded. For Chauncy all ended well. His academic qualifications earned him a call in 1654 to be Harvard College's second president. But his time in Plymouth was typical of the colony's religious instability thanks to high standards, few followers, and no institutional support.

Piecing together the church history of the Pilgrims is a challenge not only because the colonists themselves were demanding but also because Turner's book is a broader history of the colony. That voyage and its resulting settlement did begin as an explicitly religious enterprise. But the early colonists knew that they could not live by piety alone, hence the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving fame for enduring the first winter, enjoying their first harvest, and dining with native Americans. Turner organizes his material around changing conceptions of liberty—religious, political, economic, soul—throughout the seventeenth century. But his narrative extends to biographies of most of the colony's leaders, settlement patterns, the economic conditions that sustained the English colonists' existence, and especially their contested relations (and wars) with native American tribes. In many ways Turner's book is as

much a history of the place and its people as it is of a religious movement. Beliefs may have inspired the original Pilgrims, but work, politics, and warfare sustained Plymouth.

Of course, this is a similar narrative to that of many “hot” Protestants—from Puritans in Boston to Quakers in Philadelphia—who looked to the New World as a place to implement their beliefs and create a society based on them. In one sense, all of these stories are narratives of declension or secularization. The demands of physical existence (including how to assimilate younger generations that did not make the original step to be part of a godly community) soon overwhelmed religious ideals. Pilgrims did not abandon their Protestant convictions. But they maintained them (usually awkwardly) in the context of creating and nurturing a society that could last beyond the initial settlement.

What that part of North America (southeastern Massachusetts) became was distant both economically and religiously from what Plymouth Colony was originally. As it happens, this reviewer was reading Joseph E. Garland’s history of Boston’s North Shore while also reviewing *They Knew They were Pilgrims*. Garland’s book, published in 1978 and a New York Times bestseller, follows the development of resorts and vacation properties during the nineteenth century as Bostonians looked for escape from the city’s heat, congestion, and disease.<sup>6</sup> Of course, locals know that the North Shore (and Cape Ann) is distinct from Boston’s South Shore (and Cape Cod). At the same time, the terrain is similar on both sides of Boston and the proximity to the sea dominated economic development, real estate, and recreational activities such as sailing, swimming, and horseback riding. What Garland’s book shows is that the original English Protestant settlers in Massachusetts and Plymouth grew up to be sufficiently prosperous to build any number of resort properties that later turned into year round communities.

Although Garland devotes only a few pages to religious institutions, in a sense his book is an extension of Turner’s. The Pilgrims did not intend to become middle-class Americans who were nominally Protestant. But that is what became of most of the original English settlers in North America. The religious enterprise was an activity that settlers performed alongside hard work which in turn generated economic conditions that attracted other immigrants and allowed the United States to develop into a prosperous society. To be sure, America’s wealth also sustained a vigorous church life for its citizens. But as states such as Massachusetts matured, religion played less and less a role in ordinary affairs. That was already becoming true for the Pilgrims in the seventeenth century as Turner indirectly shows. That reality became obvious, however, when in the nineteenth century towns from Nahant to Gloucester (north) and Quincy to Chatham (south) became summer homes for the descendants of Puritans and Pilgrims.

That change in the fortunes of Massachusetts and Plymouth left the religious zeal of Puritans and Pilgrims to take root in denominations such as the Congregationalists (latter the United Church of Christ). Margaret Bendroth’s *The Last Puritans* (2015) is a study of the way Congregationalists remembered, celebrated, and honored the legacy of both Puritans and Pilgrims.<sup>7</sup> Anyone familiar with the theological liberalism of mainline Congregationalism will not be surprised to learn that the piece of Puritanism (also true for Pilgrims) to which the UCC became most attached was congregational polity. The denomination has constantly

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph E. Garland, *Boston's North Shore: Being an Account of Life Among the Noteworthy, Fashionable, Wealthy, Eccentric, and Ordinary, 1823-1890* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Bendroth, *The Last Puritans: Mainline Protestants and the Power of the Past* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

debated the creation of national structures that threaten local autonomy of congregations even while showing little resistance to liberal theological trends.

Such loyalty to church polity also facilitated Congregationalist displays of patriotism. Throughout much of its history, the UCC was home to Protestants who tied American ideals of democracy and liberty to the original political and church structures of both Puritans and Pilgrims. Bendroth charts the popularity of celebrations and re-enactments of the Pilgrims' customs that peaked between 1890 and 1920. "By the time of the Pilgrim Tercentenary in 1920, the trend was reaching an apotheosis of sorts," she writes, "as Americans everywhere became participants in the historic landing at Plymouth" (123). By 1970, however, even the political significance of the Pilgrims became objectionable to mainline Protestants who wanted to address questions of justice for blacks, women, and pacifists. The past might provide "historical background" or context for the denomination, but as examples of liberty, courage, or piety the Pilgrims and their Puritan counterparts no longer served the interests of the UCC (187).

What is left of the Pilgrims (along with the "hot" Protestants with whom they shared space both in Old and New England) is a society largely indifferent to their beliefs and piety. They do pop up in the nation's imagination every year in late November while families dine on turkey and pumpkin pies. Tourists go to the town of Plymouth to see Plymouth Rock and other memorials. For Puritans, Salem seems to have cashed in best by turning the witch trials of the 1690s into a vehicle for tourists and merchandise. But the Pilgrims' major contribution to the United States was to transplant English ways in North America. Their social norms, with their distinct economic, political, familial, and legal structures were significant influences on the society that sprouted from the soil of British colonies. And without the Protestant zeal that motivated the likes of the Pilgrims to seek a home in the New World, the development of the United States would look very different.

In the larger scheme of things, however, Americans remember better the places that Pilgrims settled and the meals that they ate than the churches they formed. That may explain why the best Turner can do in his otherwise masterful "expansive and colorful history of Plymouth Colony," is to conclude enigmatically. The Pilgrims, he writes, "left behind both a complicated legacy of human bondage and unresolved debates about liberty" (365). Their governor, William Bradford, would likely have been disappointed to hear that this was the extent of the Pilgrims' contribution. Indeed, Turner's story is hardly inspiring for Protestants who may look back to the Pilgrims (or even the Puritans) as models of godliness and forming a righteous society. But Turner's judgment is arguably the correct one. After all, zeal for worship and holiness co-exists with needs to eat, sleep, and rear children. As the later history of Massachusetts shows, sustaining physical existence is arduous but much more manageable than instilling spiritual life.

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**First National Thanksgiving - October 20, 1864** for the fourth Thursday in November by President Abraham Lincoln. Each subsequent year the president followed his example.

“It has pleased Almighty God to prolong our national life another year, defending us with His guardian care against unfriendly designs from abroad, and vouchsafing to us in His mercy many and signal victories over the enemy, who is of our own household. It has also pleased our Heavenly Father to favor our citizens in their homes, as our soldiers in their camps, and our sailors on our rivers and seas, with unusual health. He has largely augmented our free population by emancipation and immigration, while He has opened to us new sources of wealth, and has crowned the labor of our workingmen in every department of industry with abundant rewards. Moreover, He has been please to animate and inspire our minds with fortitude, courage and resolution sufficient to the great trial of civil war into which we have been brought by our adherence as a nation to the cause of freedom and humanity, and to afford us reasonable hopes of an ultimate and happy deliverance from all our dangers and afflictions.

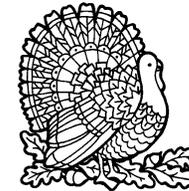
Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby appoint and set apart the last Thursday of November next as a day which I desire to be observed by all my fellow citizens, wherever they may be, as a day of thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God, the beneficent Creator and Ruler of the Universe. And I do further recommend to my fellow citizens aforesaid, that, on that occasion, they do reverently humble themselves in the dust, and from thence offer up penitent and fervant prayers and supplications to the Great Disposer of events for a return of the inestimable blessings of peace, union, and harmony throughout the land which it has pleased Him to assign as a dwelling-place for ourselves and our posterity throughout all generations.”

**First Act of Congress for an Annual Thanksgiving Day**  
**the fourth Thursday of November - 1941.**



# The First Thanksgiving

## Psalm 136



**Mayflower Compact - November 11, 1620**  
signed by 41 men aboard the Mayflower.

In Ye name of God Amen.

We whose names are underwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread sovereigne Lord King James, by ye grace of God, of Great Britaine, France, & Ireland king, defender of ye faith, & c.

Haveing undertaken, for ye glorie of God, and advancemente of ye Christian faith and honor of our king & country, a voyage to plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly & mutually in ye presence of God, and of one another, covenant, & combine ourselves together into a Civill body politick; for our better ordering, & preservation & furtherance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte, constitute, and frame such just & equall Lawes, ordinances, Acts, constituions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be tought most meet & convenient for ye generall good of ye colonie: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Capcodd ye-11-of November, in ye year of ye riagne of our sovereigne Lord King James of England, France, & Ireland ye eighteenth, and of Scotland ye fifie fourth. Ano Dom. 1620.”

### **First Thanksgiving Feast - October 1621**

“They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck a meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.” [Morrison, ed. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, p. 90]

“Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a more special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labours. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with little help beside, served the Company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king, Massasoit with some 90 men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted. And they went out and killed five deer which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our Governor and upon the Captain and others.” [Mourt's Relation, from a letter of Edward Winslow to an English friend dated 11 Dec. 1621, Morrison, fn. p. 90]

There were at this time 50 people and 7 dwellings [Byington, *The Puritan as a Colonist and a Reformer*, pp. 23-25].

“Governor Bradford says: ‘All ye somer there was no want.’ Their relations with the Indians had become so friendly that Winslow tells us they went about in the woods as safely ‘as in the hieways in England.’”

### **First Record of a Day of General Thanksgiving**

**November 25, 1668**, by appointment of the Governor.

**First Thanksgiving Proclamation - June 20, 1676** - by governing council of Charleston, Massachusetts, celebrated on **June 29, 1676**.

“The Holy God having by long and Continual Series of his Afflictive dispensation in and by the present Warr with Heathen Natives of this land, written and brought to pass bitter things against his own Covenant people in this wilderness, yet so that we evidently discern that in the midst of his judgements he hath remembered mercy, having remembered his Footstool in the day of his sore displeasure against us for our sins, with many singular Intimations of his Fatherly Compassion, and regard; reserving many of our Towns from Desolation Threatened, and attempted by the Enemy, and giving us specially of late with many of our Confederates many signal Advantages against them, without such Disadvantage to ourselves as formerly we have been sensible of, if it be the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, It certainly bespeaks our positive Thankfulness, when our Enemies are in any measure disappointed or destroyed; and fearing the Lord should take notice under so many Intimations of his returning mercy, we should be found an Insensible people, as not standing before Him with Thanksgiving, as well as lading him with our Complaints in the time of pressing Afflictions: The Council has thought meet to appoint and set apart the 29th day of this instant June, as a day of Solemn Thanksgiving and praise to God for such his Goodness and Favour, many Particulars of which mercy might be Instanced, but we doubt not those who are sensible of God's Afflictions, have been as diligent to espy him returning to us; and that the Lord may behold us as a People offering Praise and thereby glorifying Him; the Council doth commend it to the Respective Ministers, Elders and people of this Jurisdiction; Solemnly and seriously to keep the same Beseeching that being perswaded by the mercies of God we may all, even this whole people offer up our bodies and soulds as a living and acceptable Service unto God by Jesus Christ.”

### **First Presidential Appointment of a Day of Thanksgiving**

**Thursday, November 26, 1789** by George Washington (also again in 1795).

# ServantReading

## Imago Hominis: Our Brave New World

### A Review Article

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

*Transhumanism and the Image of God: Today's Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship*, by Jacob Shatzer. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019, viii + 184 pages, \$22.00, paper.

I called to ask a question that the website of a particular company would not be able to answer. The artificial intelligence answering service asked, “How may I help you?” Unfortunately for me the reason for my call can only be understood by a person, not a machine. There is no “I” there, only a sophisticated computer known as artificial intelligence, and inadvertently diminishing the exceedingly complex idea of intelligence.

Shatzer’s book gives us an accurate analysis of the amalgam of transhumanism and technology, and forms the basis for an alarming description and penetrating critique of that complex movement, along with a useful roadmap for navigating it faithfully as Christians.

The introduction shows that Shatzer understands technologies in a McLuhanesque way, as extensions of man with the tendency to transform their creators, often in almost undetectable ways (2). This is not a new perspective. But Christians generally did not understand this until recently.<sup>1</sup> I began researching and writing on this topic over two decades ago. It is heartening to see many scholars are now writing from this deep critical perspective. Our inventions alter the way we perceive and thus experience the world.

Shatzer contends that “modern technology tends toward a transhuman future—a future created by the next stage of evolution (the posthuman), moving beyond what it currently means to be human” (10). The continuous and pervasive involvement with technology cultivates a mindset that assumes that humans are constantly upgrading (11). Transhumanism is the technological mechanism or technique that transforms humans into the next stage of humanity—the posthuman (12, 16).

In chapter 1, “Technology and Moral Formation,” Shatzer contends that because each tool has a governing logic, our technologies tend to shape us according to that logic (16–17). Technology, particularly electronic technology, changes not only our minds, but also our brains at the “neurological level” (19). Shatzer demonstrates the discipling power of communication technology due to “the speed of access and the immersion many experience” (21). The addictive, attention commanding genius of our digital devices alters behavior in significant ways. Shatzer tackles a very important question: “What is it

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<sup>1</sup> See Gregory E. Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

about humans that makes us ‘formable’?” He answers the question by referring to James K. A. Smith’s concept of “cultural liturgies.” Thus, he uses Smith’s metaphor, “liturgies of control,” throughout the book. Smith contends that we follow our loves in an effort to live out our perception of the good life.

I think that Smith tends to diminish the importance of thinking in relationship to desire. In highlighting the biblical emphasis on love, Smith at times comes close to eclipsing the important place of knowledge. But the point that proves valuable in cultural criticism is that love or desire is a habit that involves formation through the patterns or liturgies of life that orient and cultivate our desires.<sup>2</sup> Smith’s most compelling example is the mall; it “reflects what matters and shapes what matters.” It promises the good life achieved by consumption (27–28).

But what of ethics in particular? Here Shatzer turns to A. J. Conyers, *The Listening Heart*.<sup>3</sup> Conyers contrasts the Christian covenantal ideas of vocation or calling with the modern priority of power and control (30). Oddly Shatzer does not mention one of the Bible’s most prominent concepts by which to understand fallen culture: idolatry. Idolatry offers a liturgy of control in rebellion against the calling of the living and true God. But Shatzer is quite correct in observing that since technology offers control it lends itself to the idea that we are evolving toward a post-human future.

Morally, technologically, especially “online communities,” tend to undermine real communities.

If we want technology to serve the community, then, it must be useful to move people toward an ultimate good not defined by technology itself. . . . True flourishing is not found in a technological worldview but in subordinating our tools to truly human ends. (35)

Shatzer concludes this seminal chapter with a brief “Theological Framework for Human Flourishing” (37–38), pointing to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1–2 and Jesus’ great commandment to love God above all and your neighbor as yourself.

In chapter 2 Shatzer elaborates on transhumanism. It seeks to take control of humanity through technology moving it towards its evolutionary destiny (40). This assumes that human nature is extremely malleable.

The first enumeration of transhumanist principles in 1990, composed by the 1980 Extropy Institute, is optimistically entitled “Principles of Extropy.” Its seven principles may be summed up as a continuous effort by humans to improve intellectually, ethically, and physically (43). In 1998 the World Transhumanist Association (now known as Humanity+) published “The Transhumanist Declaration,” which asserted its ambitious mission:

Humanity stands to be profoundly affected by science and technology in the future. We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging,

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<sup>2</sup> See Gregory E. Reynolds, review of *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, by James K. A. Smith, in *Ordained Servant* 26 (2017): 107–109.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Conyers, *The Listening Heart: Vocation and the Crisis of Modern Culture* (Dallas TX: Spence, 2006).

cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth. (48)

Transhumanism “at its root is not a notion of perfection but one of progress led by personal autonomy” (48). One of this movement’s greatest weaknesses is its assumption that moral values may be derived through reason, science, and technology (51–52).

Chapter 3 deals with morphological freedom, the ability to alter our physical natures through technology. Shatzer makes the important distinction between therapy and enhancement (56). It is remarkable that he does not mention or interact with Leon Kass, whose 2003 book *Beyond Therapy* offers a penetrating ethical analysis by distinguishing between medicine’s true task, therapy, and the dangerous pursuit of human enhancement, or transformation.<sup>4</sup> Morphological freedom is essential to achieve transhumanism’s goal of self-actualization (59). Shatzer argues that this freedom lacks the true freedom of rejecting enhancement. His argument would be strengthened by observing that a Christian anthropology limits technology to therapy due to man’s fallen condition as mortal.

Shatzer concludes this chapter by contending that our involvement in technology, especially virtual reality, discloses us in the concept of morphological freedom, one of the major tenets of transhumanism (66). Social media’s tools for self-presentation foster the illusion that self-transformation is possible (68). These “liturgies of control” remind us of Peter Berger’s plausibility structures, those cultural assumptions that are so woven into the fabric of a culture that they sail under our perceptual radar.

Chapter 4 introduces augmented reality; eyeglasses would be a nonintrusive form of this. The intrusive is what is new. For example a cyborg is the result of adding material technology to the biological, extending normal human limitations by mechanical elements built into the body. “Wearable and embeddable technology can have major effects on the experience of reality, altering behavior and adaptation patterns” (73–75). The resultant “enhanced reality,” may be compared to viewing the world through rose colored glasses. Such human malleability stands against, and seeks unsuccessfully to alter, the givenness of reality itself. In his critique Shatzer notes the danger of avoiding “difficulty and pain” in life’s journey; human growth and development depend on facing these realities (84).

Having noted that the “soft self” is malleable Shatzer could have enhanced his critique by mentioning what we might call the hard self, that aspect of the *imago Dei* that cannot be altered. Scripture teaches that God is impinging on the consciousness and conscience of humans perpetually, while they are in the cognitive business of suppressing the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18-20; 2:14–15). This among other things, like the *sensus deitatus*, is unalterable. McLuhan maintained that “no matter how many walls have fallen the citadel of individual consciousness has not fallen nor is it likely to fall. For it is not accessible to the mass media. . . . Christianity definitely supports the idea of a private, independent metaphysical substance of the self.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Leon R. Kass, *Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003). Shatzer has also overlooked David VanDrunen, *Bioethics and the Christian: A Guide to Making Difficult Decisions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures*, 169.

Chapter 5 explores and critiques artificial intelligence (AI). This technological development is distinct from the biological and seeks to alter and replicate human thought (90). There are two types of AI: 1) narrow AI, focusing on specific tasks, and 2) artificial general intelligence (AGI), “functioning much like a human mind, which can learn and adapt to different scenarios” (91). While my automobile’s ability to sense oncoming headlights and turn my high beams down is an excellent safety feature of AI, AGI goes far beyond this by seeking to create a synthetic intellect in order to eliminate mundane tasks, overcome human cognitive limitations, and more (96). Breathtaking is the existence of the Christian Transhumanist Association, which claims “the intentional use of technology, coupled with following Christ, will empower us to become more human” (97). Christian transhumanists, like Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, tend toward open theism and process theologies, which see God as developing. Shatzer wisely responds, “we must resist liturgies of control, not because God is open and risky but because God is in control and we are not” (97).

The belief that software minds can be created by mindfiles, a digitized database of one’s life, in order to create a mind clone involves a serious misunderstanding and underestimation of human intelligence. But such is fallen man’s quest for immortality apart from the Christ of Scripture (102). Shatzer’s critique focuses on the danger of reducing human intelligence to digital technology. Transhumanism “and its views on artificial intelligence are built on materialist approaches on what it means to be human” (105). AGI assumes materialism and is thus doomed not only to failure but to causing much damage. To ignore the invisible or spiritual aspect of human intelligence guarantees that human intelligence can never be duplicated by AGI. Furthermore, depending on artificial intelligence, like Paro the robot companion for the elderly and Siri, will tend to disengage us from real human interaction (106).

Chapter 6 deals with determining what is real. In medicine the increasing reliance on technology distances physicians from the people they serve, treating them more like machines than human beings (110–12). Shatzer argues that the incarnation will provide a “better understanding of the proper place of virtual reality in the life of a disciple” (120). This section is one of the most theological in the book, calling us to embrace the reality of embodied life as central to Christianity (120–22). Our physical fallenness may lead us to think poorly of our bodies, but the resurrection should disabuse us of that misunderstanding.

Chapter 7 explores the changing notion of place. This is a fascinating chapter exploring what ought to be a truism: that cyberspace is not a place. I rarely use GPS because I like to cultivate a sense of place or location in the space-time continuum. Shatzer never mentions Joshua Meyrowitz’s profound treatment of this subject, *No Sense of Place* (1985).<sup>6</sup> He points out that even mapping alters our perception of place. Colonial powers used maps to control people and land. Such abstractions of place tend to obscure the particularities of places (130–31).

The technologies of transportation and communication have cultivated globalization; combined with the centralized administrative state and the autonomous individual, they weaken local community (133). Virtual reality undermines locality and tradition (134). Thus, Shatzer calls for “placemaking practices” such as gardening, homemaking, and the

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<sup>6</sup> Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

local church, where “public worship is significant and irreplaceable” (138). Shatzer is refreshingly insistent and clear on this topic:

There will certainly be ways of doing church using virtual technology, but to the degree that we neglect physical presence with other believers, we neglect the form of being the body of Christ that has shaped Christianity for the past two thousand years. (139)

Sadly, the present pandemic has exacerbated the church’s tendency toward the virtual as it has extended and instituted practices that foster discarnate Christianity—an oxymoron for sure. Shatzer concludes this chapter with a discussion of the necessity of place in relationship to the neighbor (140–41).

Chapter 8 explores the changing relationships engendered by robotics. Shatzer relies on Sherry Turkle’s germane research on this topic from her 2011 book, *Alone Together*.<sup>7</sup> Turkle offers a stark example in the relationship between robotics and the elderly, “We ask technology to perform what used to be ‘love’s labor’ taking care of each other” (144).

Robotics, the virtual, and social media have one thing in common, as Michael Harris astutely observes in his 2014 book *The End of Absence*:<sup>8</sup> These technologies blur the boundaries between what is real and what is not. “Every technology will alienate you from some part of your life. This is its job. *Your* job is to notice. First notice the difference. And then, every time, choose” (145). Choosing to avoid alienation from the real also means letting go of the control with which technologies tempt us, as they enable us to distance ourselves from what we find uncomfortable or difficult. Real relationships are messy and require negotiation, cooperation, humility, and sometimes, repentance.

Returning to Turkle’s next book *Reclaiming Conversation* (2015)<sup>9</sup> Shatzer makes a plea to reclaim solitude, self-reflection, and thus, conversation, which is irreplaceable (151). “Not only does time in the digital world take away from face-to-face social interaction, but it actually makes us worse at it” (152).

Shatzer closes this chapter with an excellent discussion of the cultures of the Lord’s Supper, the table, and friendship. The Supper connects believers with the covenant people of the past as well as “the present realities that are to shape the Christian community” (153). Communion, along with dining together and developing deep friendships, forms an effective antidote to the poisons of the digital world.

The final chapter, chapter 9, discusses changing notions of the self. Shatzer traces the ways in which technologies have historically altered self-perception. Neil Postman,<sup>10</sup> in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, noted that Plato observed that writing shifted the means of processing communication from the ear to the eye (159); Lewis Mumford, in *Technics and Civilization*,<sup>11</sup> observed that printing liberated people from the “domination of the immediate and the local” (160). But whatever negatives, like the weakening of memory

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<sup>7</sup> Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Harris, *The End of Absence: Reclaiming What We’ve Lost in a World of Constant Connection* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (New York: Penguin, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1934).

with writing and printing, and nationalism and individualism with print, the negatives connected with digital technology often seem to outweigh the positives.

I have observed that we are captivated by the immediate and thus tend to skim surfaces of texts, being guided by sound bites, thus undermining thoughtful public and private discourse. Our present social ferment is a tragic extreme example of this new cognitive environment. There is little place for a civil discussion of issues; due process, which demands thoughtful deliberation, is disappearing, and brief, out of context, smart phone videos lead us to immediate judgments.

On the personal level Shatzer wisely concludes: “Virtual and social networking technologies provide the tools for constructing a self and presenting a self, both of which have consequences for how we consider ourselves and what we think identity is” (163). Such control leads us to believe that everything about ourselves is changeable (165) from our genders to our resumes. All of this supports the narrative of transhumanism. Shatzer concludes with a call to seek our true identity in Jesus Christ, the new identity which Christians have in him as he is the firstborn of a new humanity (168).

Shatzer’s conclusion sums up, and adds to, the practical advice he gives throughout the book. These nine pages are well worth pondering.

Transhumanists, like the supporters of the utopianism of the Green New Deal, know there is something wrong with humanity, but without acknowledging the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, they seek to transform creation and culture through merely human, deformed means, after the image of fallen humanity—*imago hominis*. The pilgrim kingdom of the church anticipates the coming heavenly reality of a new heavens and a new earth—this is the alternative reality, the only alternative, because it deals with the way things actually are in God’s world.

Shatzer’s book gives profound insight into the dangerous movement of transhumanism; but more than that it penetrates the technological context in which this movement was born. Written from a sound theological and ecclesiological perspective, I highly recommend it.

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# ServantReading

## The Puritans: A Transatlantic History *by David D. Hall*

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by Darryl G. Hart

*The Puritans: A Transatlantic History*, by David D. Hall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, v + 517 pages, \$35.00.

Historians of the Reformation in the English-speaking world struggle to juggle Puritanism and Presbyterianism in the development of British and American Protestantism. An easy resolution is to place the Puritans in England and New England, and Presbyterians in Scotland (and Ireland) and the Middle Colonies of North America (and eventually in nineteenth-century Canada). Perry Miller, for instance, the Harvard University scholar who almost single-handedly put the recovery of Puritanism as a field of study on his back, saw Puritanism as an effort to purify the Anglican church of elements that lacked a scriptural warrant. For some Puritans, removing bishops and replacing them with another form of church government was part of the call for purity.<sup>1</sup> But as these Reformed Protestants evolved, they went in different directions on church government, which explains why New England Puritans became Congregationalists. On the other side of the topic, historians of American Presbyterians usually regard their subject and Puritanism to be distinct—not siblings but cousins. For example, Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmeier observe that England Presbyterianism and Puritanism were “intertwined” but also “overshadowed by the Presbyterian successes in Ireland and Scotland.”<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Lefferts Loetscher’s survey of American Presbyterianism mentions New England Puritanism briefly and identifies the Puritans who went to Massachusetts Bay as those who remained with the Church of England.<sup>3</sup> By implication, Presbyterianism was an expression of Protestantism within the Church of Scotland.

What makes this national differentiation especially challenging is James VI of Scotland who in 1603 became James I of England as well. His dual monarchy meant that no matter what the difference between the two expressions of Protestantism, Puritans and Presbyterians would have to work their attempts at reform through the same monarch. The King of England and the King of Scotland may have been the same man, but the national churches in each kingdom had a distinct history. To the north, Presbyterians competed and eventually triumphed over bishops in Scotland while Puritans—put

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<sup>1</sup> Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630-1650: A Genetic Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 19–20.

<sup>2</sup> Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmeier, *The Presbyterians* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Lefferts A. Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978).

simplistically—either left for North America over frustration with the king’s archbishop or started a war with the crown (i.e. Charles I), only later to become dissenters after the Restoration.

Recent histories of Protestantism in the British Isles and England’s colonies in North America have clarified the relationship between Puritanism and Presbyterianism greatly. They also show how chaotic the entire historical process was that eventually produced the Anglican church, Presbyterianism in Scotland, and denominations such as Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the United States. These communions emerged as anything but well-defined institutions with roots in the Reformation. They were all part of what Michael Winship has called “hot” Protestantism,<sup>4</sup> believers who desired a complete reform of the church and its members according to the Word of God. All such “hot” Protestants, or Puritans, could be found on the spectrum of church government. Some favored bishops, others assemblies and synods, and still others congregations.

David H. Hall’s book extends the work of transatlantic perspectives on Puritanism that Winship accomplished by adding Scotland to the mix of England and New England. He does so in a way that is truly breathtaking for any scholar but all the more impressive for a retired scholar, already accomplished, and having nothing to prove. Instead of writing a book that builds on a life of scholarship and adds a few novel patches to an existing quilt of scholarly interpretation, *The Puritans* is a sustained and comprehensive account of the effort to reform further the English-speaking churches. It does for England, Scotland, and part of the colonial churches what Philip Benedict did for Reformed Protestantism in *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed*.<sup>5</sup> In that earlier book, Benedict covered the history of Reformed Protestantism between 1520 and 1650, from Poland to Ireland and everything in between. Hall, in effect, takes the English piece of Benedict’s book and devotes a book as big as *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed* to the subject. One indication of how vast Hall’s scholarship is, is its scholarly apparatus. The endnotes section of *The Puritans* is over 150 pages long and should be the basis for the reading list of any doctoral student undertaking study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Anglo-American Protestantism.

Hall’s story follows the rise of Protestants (Puritans) who desired a further reform of the state churches of England and Scotland, often inspired by Calvin’s Geneva. It is not a straightforward narrative. After three chapters on the reception of Protestantism in Scotland and Ireland and the politics of reformation before 1600, Hall devotes two chapters to practical theology (“practical divinity”) and Puritan efforts to reform manners in England and Scotland. In the remaining part of the book, perhaps the most complicated for any historian, Hall returns to the politics of Puritanism—meaning, how efforts to institute holiness among the clergy and laity were bound up with the structures of a national church overseen by a monarch. As such, the book follows developments in England, Scotland, and New England. He also explains the causes and motivations that led Presbyterians in Scotland and Puritans in England (through civil magistrates) to go to war with Charles I. The picture that emerges is anything but tidy or inspiring. A longing to see the churches of England and Scotland reformed according to the Word resulted in

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<sup>4</sup> Michael P. Winship, *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

war and even regicide (an act that in ancient Israel, David would not even consider in his contest with King Saul).

Throughout these developments emerges a set of proponents of Presbyterian government. Initially motivated by frustrations with bishops, English and Scottish Protestants argued for a form of church government that Calvin, French Protestants, and others on the continent were using—a system of rule by church assemblies (synods, councils, assemblies). A few examples show the sort of perspective that Hall's study of the wider phenomenon of Puritanism yields for the particular features of Presbyterianism. For instance, Hall explains in passing why opposition to the *Book of Common Prayer* and episcopacy took shape in the 1570s and 1580s in England and Scotland. One factor was militant anti-Protestantism in places such as France that indicated to a younger generation of pastors that for Reformed Protestantism to survive it would have to take institutional form outside the existing structures of bishops appointed by monarchs. What also helped encourage presbyterian polity was the experience of French Protestants who not only looked to Calvin's Geneva for instruction but also needed to run church life through structures different from episcopacy—which meant councils, synods, and assemblies.

Another way that Hall illuminates Presbyterianism as merely one part of a larger story is in his account of the initial success that John Knox and Andrew Melville had in the Church of Scotland to the point of producing two books of discipline. These road maps to Presbyterian government were no match for James VI who was able by the late 1590s to place bishops back in the Church of Scotland and as King of England (as James I) send Melville into exile. That desire for reform of church government combined with resistance from the British crown explains, as Hall shows, why the Westminster Assembly did not include Presbyterianism in its affirmations about the church. Just as challenging to Presbyterianism, as the Scottish commissioners at Westminster discovered, were the Independents and their political leader, Oliver Cromwell, who from the side opposite bishops, insisted on congregational structures as the best form of rule in the church. The Independents, unlike Presbyterians, also opposed uniformity in the national church.

Although these episodes in Presbyterian history are minor episodes in Hall's history of Puritanism, that larger narrative is essential for understanding the legacy of rule by presbyters in the church. For anyone tempted to think of Presbyterianism's origins as the inspiring equivalent of the American Founding or the Glorious Revolution (1688), Hall's book will quickly disarm any reader of such optimism. At the same time, his judicious and extensive account of British Protestantism between 1550 and 1650 will help readers understand the power and appeal of Presbyterian efforts to recognize not bishops, nor king, but Christ the head of his church.

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# ServantReading

## Churchill: Walking with Destiny *by Andrew Roberts*

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by Ann H. Hart

*Churchill: Walking with Destiny*, by Andrew Roberts. New York: Penguin, 2018, xix + 982 pages, \$40.00.

Amid the war against the coronavirus, historian Jon Meacham encourages Americans to look to Winston Churchill during WWII and how he rallied his nation around a common enemy. Rather than seeking a U.S. antecedent for our current crisis, Meacham reminds Americans of the blitz when German planes were dropping bombs on London. In a September 11, 1940 radio address, Churchill said, “Every man and woman will . . . prepare himself to do his duty, whatever it may be, with special pride and care” (595).

To understand Meacham’s references in a complete way, one would do well to turn to Andrew Roberts’s biography, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*. Roberts had already written four books with “Churchill” in the title or subtitle before tackling this biography. Why another Churchill biography when more than 1,000 have been written already?

New archival material animated the author, including King George VI’s diaries from WWII recently opened by Queen Elizabeth II. Roberts relished his role as the first biographer to pour through the diaries (King George VI met with Churchill every Tuesday during WWII and kept detailed records of their conversations). The author has stated that there is some new material on virtually every page.

Roberts brings force and speed to his near 1,000-page narrative. While the book is a classic biography told chronologically, the pace is compelling. After gathering all his evidence, the author drafted the book in 100 days! It covers Churchill’s long life from his birth at Blenheim Palace to his death at Hyde Park Gate, shortly after his ninetieth birthday.

The book is divided into two major parts and thirty-four chapters. Part 1, “The Preparation,” includes twenty chapters covering the years 1874 to 1940. The long narrative is very accessible with its vivid writing, many photographs, maps, and family trees.

We learn quickly that Churchill’s paternal grandfather was a member of the aristocracy, a duke, but that Winston’s father was distant and hard to please. Churchill’s mother, an American beauty, was self-absorbed and inaccessible. Away at boarding school, Winston often wrote to her, begging her to correspond. Yet, it was his father’s approval that he sought throughout his life. This unfulfilled desire is a significant theme in this book.

Roberts summarizes large swaths of information concisely and memorably. Consider the close of the first chapter:

If there were ideal conditions for the creation of a future hero of the Empire, by the end of January 1895 Churchill had fulfilled all of them. A famous name, selfish and unimpressed parents, a patchy but patriotic schooling that taught him how great men can change history by great feats, a first-class military education, a schoolboy ambition to save the Empire, not enough money to become indolent, appreciation of English prose and a reverence for the British history that he felt ran through his aristocratic veins. (31)

Roberts resonates with his subject's love of words and history. He writes admiringly of Churchill's unpublished essay, "The Scaffolding of Rhetoric," where he outlined five elements that he would return to frequently in his rise to "the greatest orator of his age." Those five steps included "[W]ell chosen words; carefully crafted sentences, accumulation of argument, use of analogy; and deployment of extravagances" (50).

Roberts writes that, "Few have set out with more cold-blooded deliberation to become first a hero and then a Great Man" (31). For Churchill, becoming a hero meant demonstrating courage in battle. He joined the Queen's Fourth Cavalry and subsequently was shot at in Cuba, fought in what is now Pakistan, the Afghan border, Sudan; he escaped Boer captivity in South Africa. He recorded many of these episodes in newspaper accounts and jotted down notes for future books.

Becoming a great man, in Churchill's view, required proving himself as a politician. Always haunted by his father's early death at age forty-five, Winston entered politics and was elected to Parliament at age twenty-five as a conservative from Oldham.

"Churchill embarked on the Great War like a dynamo," (184) Roberts writes. He was the Minister in Charge of the Navy when war broke out. After success in many battles, he made a terrible error. He wanted to invade Turkey at Gallipoli after coming through the Dardanelles. He believed that if you could get the Royal Navy through the Dardanelles, you could seize Istanbul. Overruling the first lord of admiralty, Churchill attempted to invade Turkey at Gallipoli. However, Turkey had laid 350–400 mines in the strait; 157,000 men lost their lives.

After a time away from power, engaging himself in reading, writing, and soul searching, Churchill returned to government as a conservative and Chancellor of the Exchequer. When war broke out in 1939, Neville Chamberlain offered him job as First Lord of the Admiralty. Here begins Part II of Roberts biography, "The Trial." Churchill was one of the first politicians to recognize the threat of Adolf Hitler. In 1940, under extreme pressure and criticism from every side, Churchill stopped the British government from making peace with Hitler. More specifically, he prevented the foreign secretary Lord Halifax from making a peace deal with Hitler. The reader must stop to reflect on how different our lives might have been with a different decision.

But that courageous act was only the beginning of a long and grueling war which looked like Britain's David against Germany's Goliath. Churchill worked tirelessly to gather the right commanders around him. He approached President Franklin Roosevelt repeatedly to join the fight. Roberts meticulously describes the tick tock of these years: battles won and lost, mistakes made, deaths and casualties mounted.

In narrating the unfolding war, Roberts details Churchill's inner thoughts and powerfully captures points of view of those around him—from his military advisors, his top lieutenants, the king, personal aids, his wife, and many others. And when not in his personal war room, he is always thinking strategically.

Through it all, the author presents Churchill as a passionate, hardworking, romantic, and flawed figure full of strengths and weaknesses. Born an aristocrat of entitlement with a sense of *noblesse oblige*, he didn't care what others thought. He trusted himself to do the right thing. Yet his mistakes, like trusting Joseph Stalin, are acknowledged, and he is "redeemed" by admitting and learning from his mistakes.

Churchill was a lifelong nominal Anglican. Yet Roberts writes,

Although he did occasionally hint in later life that he believed in the existence of an Almighty—whose primary duty seems to have been to protect Winston Churchill—he did not acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ. Of all the five million words he uttered in his speeches, he never said the word "Jesus." (43)

Instead, Churchill's missionary zeal begins with his early pronouncement, "I shall devote myself to the preservation of the great empire and trying to maintain the progress of the English people" (949).

Andrew Roberts expresses zeal for his subject in the book's conclusion: he laments, "In a survey of 3,000 teenagers in 2008, more than 20 percent of them thought Winston Churchill was a fictional character" (982). However, he despises the "Black Legend" on the internet, which

has attached to Churchill's name, in which he is held responsible for the sinking of the *Titanic* and *Luisitania* . . . ordering the bombing and strafing of innocent Irish demonstrators, poison-gassing Iraqi tribesmen, promulgating anti-Semitism, . . . genocidally starving Bengalis during the Famine, and very much more. Mostly these arise from (sometimes willful) misreadings of the original sources or from taking them wildly out of context, though some are just entirely invented. (982)

The partial antidote, Andrew Roberts contends, is "a return to the original archives and documents" (982). This absorbing and illuminating biography is the fruit of those labors. It could fill the hours well during an unexpected time at home.

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# ServantReading

## Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Westminster Standards *by Alan D. Strange*

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By Charles M. Wingard

*Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Westminster Standards*, by Alan D. Strange. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019, xviii + 158 pages, \$7.79, paper.

The doctrine of the imputation of the active obedience of Christ in the justification of believers is vital to Reformed pastoral care. It is the desire of my heart that every sheep in my flock come to the assurance “that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (WCF 18.1).

Active obedience, correctly understood, is a joy and comfort to the believer, assuring him of his right standing before God. God is righteous and requires that all who come before him be righteous. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has satisfied the demands of divine justice for all who believe. By bearing the wrath of God due to us for our sin (passive obedience) *and* by perfectly keeping the commandments of God for us (active obedience), Jesus has secured our salvation. Christ died *and* lived for us. The Sovereign Judge of all the world credits the righteousness of Jesus to the one who, by faith, receives and rests in Christ alone as he is offered in the gospel (WSC, 33 and 86).

In this small volume Alan D. Strange offers a spirited defense of the doctrine of Christ’s active obedience. He convincingly demonstrates that the Westminster Assembly affirmed this doctrine from the start and never wavered in its commitment.

Before turning to the Assembly and its work, he surveys earlier witnesses to the doctrine. Although neither fully developed nor its articulators numerous, the doctrine appears in seed form early in Christian history (for example, in Irenaeus from the second century and his “recapitulation theory”).

The Reformation and the century that followed saw a broad consensus emerge among early and later Reformers affirming the imputation of Christ’s active obedience, either implicitly by the incorporation of its key elements into their theologies or by explicit affirmation.

Of special concern to the author is the Westminster Assembly (1643–1649). Critical to the author’s argument was the Assembly’s parliamentary mandate to revise the Church of England’s Thirty-nine Articles, and specifically article eleven on justification. Among the Assembly’s revisions to the Thirty-nine Articles, which the Assembly made but was never adopted by Parliament, was the addition of the word *whole* as a modifier of *obedience*:

We are justified, that is, we are accounted righteous before God, and have remission of sins, not for nor by our own works or deservings, but freely by his grace, only for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's sake, his *whole obedience* and satisfaction being by God being imputed unto us . . .

The entire Assembly understood *whole obedience* as “a shorthanded way of affirming active obedience” (53). Opponents to the revision were few but vocal. Among their concerns was that antinomians would twist the doctrine to support their position.

In the end, support for the revision exceeded 90 percent of the Assembly (63). Although the term *whole obedience* does not appear in the Westminster Standards, the author contends that there is no evidence that the Assembly later repudiated active obedience. By careful exposition of the Standards, he demonstrates that their teaching on justification is fully aligned with the doctrine of active obedience.

The author explores objections to active obedience by Johannes Piscator soon after the Reformation, from the doctrine's comparatively few opponents within the Assembly, and from contemporary proponents of the New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision.

Of special interest to today's presbyters is the author's reminder that in constitutional interpretation, not only is original intent to be considered (what did the Westminster Assembly affirm) but also the intent of the church judicatories who impose the standards upon its office-bearers (what do they understand the Westminster Standards to affirm). The church courts both of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America have affirmed that the doctrine of Christ's active obedience is grounded in the Scriptures and confessed in the church's standards.

I am grateful for this book. Only those pastors and elders who know and affirm this doctrine will be able to offer the full comfort of the gospel to their flocks. The dying words of J. Gresham Machen must be ours: “I'm so thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without it.”

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# ServantPoetry

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Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

## A Thanksgiving to God, for his House

Lord, Thou hast given me a cell  
    Wherein to dwell,  
A little house, whose humble roof  
    Is weather-proof:  
Under the spars of which I lie  
    Both soft, and dry;  
Where Thou my chamber for to ward  
    Hast set a guard  
Of harmless thoughts, to watch and keep  
    Me, while I sleep.  
Low is my porch, as is my fate,  
    Both void of state;  
And yet the threshold of my door  
    Is worn by th' poor,  
Who thither come and freely get  
    Good words, or meat.  
Like as my parlour, so my hall  
    And kitchen's small;  
A little buttery, and therein  
    A little bin,  
Which keeps my little loaf of bread  
    Unchipp'd, unflead;  
Some brittle sticks of thorn or briar  
    Make me a fire,  
Close by whose living coal I sit,  
    And glow like it.  
Lord, I confess too, when I dine,  
    The pulse is Thine,  
And all those other bits, that be  
    There plac'd by Thee;  
The worts, the purslain, and the mess  
    Of water-cress,  
Which of Thy kindness Thou hast sent;  
    And my content

Makes those, and my beloved beet,  
    To be more sweet.  
'Tis Thou that crown'st my glittering hearth  
    With guiltless mirth;  
And giv'st me wassail-bowls to drink,  
    Spic'd to the brink.  
Lord, 'tis Thy plenty-dropping hand  
    That soils my land;  
And giv'st me, for my bushel sown,  
    Twice ten for one;  
Thou mak'st my teeming hen to lay  
    Her egg each day;  
Besides my healthful ewes to bear  
    Me twins each year;  
The while the conduits of my kine  
    Run cream, for wine.  
All these, and better, Thou dost send  
    Me, to this end,  
That I should render, for my part,  
    A thankful heart,  
Which, fir'd with incense, I resign,  
    As wholly Thine;  
But the acceptance, that must be,  
    My Christ, by Thee.

# ServantPoetry

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Gregory E. Reynolds (1949–)

## When Bradford and Company Landed

When Bradford and company landed  
it was like today: not frigid, but not warm.  
The century of souls banded  
together against the native swarm.

The gray beauty persists to remind me  
they found liberty in Leiden,  
having been chased from Scrooby,  
but soon were on the run again.

Slowed by the Speedwell's leak  
they sailed their isolated odyssey,  
tossed by westerlies and tempest's peak,  
missed Manhattan's Hudson mouth at sea.

Halted by the Pollack Rip, and trapped  
between Nantucket and the Cape,  
their feet touched sand with a Compact  
in a place for food they had to scrape.

From P-town they saw the Mayflower leave  
a shallop behind to explore the coast;  
slid Indian corn from a grave up their sleeve,  
and almost died, themselves to roast.

To Plymouth Bay they retreated  
in the graveyard of abandoned Patuxet,  
with cannon on Fort Hill undefeated,  
building on Cole's Hill without debt.

The grim land took half a century of souls away  
before that first thanksgiving day.