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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

It is with great thankfulness to God that we present to you the first issue of the second volume of The Heritage Journal.

Many may remember our original plan to produce one issue of the journal every quarter. Due to several factors, this regrettably did not occur last year. However, the Lord's mercies are new every morning; how much more every year. He has been pleased to give us renewed vigor for 2021.

Our last issue was themed around creeds and confessions. In following the pattern of the Westminster Confession of Faith, our intent moving forward is to use each consecutive issue of The Heritage Journal to expound upon various sections of this great confessional document. This issue, therefore, is on the doctrine of Scripture, the subject of the first chapter of the Westminster Confession.

We pray that you, dear reader, are edified and encouraged by what you read herein. May the only wise God strengthen you and sanctify you by his Truth, which is his Word (John 17:17).

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor Sexton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Taylor Sexton, MDiv

Co-Editor and Member of Heritage Presbyterian Church

February 2021 – Royston, GA

Ancient Paths

“Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.”

— Jeremiah 6:16



“Ancient Paths” stands at the beginning of every issue of The Heritage Journal. It contains an excerpt from an old writer that either has been notably impactful for the editors or is relevant to the theme of that particular journal issue.

Be much in the perusal of the Holy Scriptures, and strive to obtain clear and consistent views of the plan of redemption. Learn to contemplate the truth in its true nature, simply, devoutly, and long at a time, that you may receive on your soul the impression which it is calculated to make. Avoid curious and abstruse speculations respecting things unrevealed, and do not indulge a spirit of controversy. Many lose the benefit of the good impression which the truth is calculated to make, because they do not view it simply in its own nature, but as related to some dispute, or as bearing on some other point. As when a man would receive the genuine impression which a beautiful landscape is adapted to make, he must not be turned aside by minute inquiries respecting the botanical character of the plants, the value of the timber, of the fertility of the soil; but he must place his mind in the attitude of receiving the impression which the combined view of the objects before him will naturally produce on the taste. In such cases the effect is not produced by any exertion of the intellect; all such active striving is unfavourable, except in bringing the mind to its proper state. When the impression is most perfect, we feel as if we were mere passive recipients of the effect. To this there is a striking analogy in the way in which the mind is impressed with divine truth. It is not the critic, the speculative or polemic theologian, who is most likely to receive the right impression, but the humble, simple-hearted, contemplative

Christian. It is necessary to study the Scriptures critically, and to defend the truth against opposers; but the most learned critic and the most profound theologian must learn to sit at the feet of Jesus in the spirit of a child, or they are not likely to be edified by their studies. ♦

Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 161-162.

Articles



God Has Spoken

The Rule of Faith and Life

Rev. Michael Myers

In early 2008, some of my college roommates and I spent our Spring Break hiking through a beautiful section of the Appalachian Trail. During our first night in the mountains of western North Carolina the biting cold awakened me. I still remember my discomfort and uncontrollable shivering, but I recall more vividly the brilliant view that delighted my eyes and heart in the morning's early hours. I had never seen such brilliance in a night sky. As I gazed into the cloudless heavens, thousands of stars gleamed in stark contrast against the blackest canopy imaginable. Those glorious celestial bodies were singing their wordless song in unique beauty that night, declaring from the heavens the glory of their Creator who alone knows their number and calls each by name (Psa. 19:1-4, 147:4).

That scene was just one part of a vast creation that ceaselessly displays the goodness, wisdom, and power of God (Westminster Confession of Faith [WCF] 1.1). Such beauty and glory, however, cannot change the heart. In fact, apart from the regenerating work of God's Spirit, sinful man will be condemned and without excuse, due in part to the testimony of these mute witnesses. How wonderful that in his great kindness the Lord has spoken, personally and powerfully revealing something far more glorious than all creation put together—himself.

When you open your Bible and read the ancient stories God has preserved for his people, you will not find the same stunning view that I did in that cold March night. What you will find is the Truth of God written in ink, standing unchangingly as the only rule of faith

and life (WCF 1.2). The apostle Peter exhorted his fellow believers to cherish the prophetic Word, which we all must “heed as a light that shines in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19 NKJV¹). It is vital that God’s people remain firmly and faithfully committed to his written, inspired Word. This article will examine some basic reasons why Christians must be people of God’s book and what kind of lives we should live as a result.

The Authority of the Word of God

God has the eternal, divine, inherent right to tell his creatures what to believe and how to live. He does not derive his authority from any external source, he asks permission from no one, and has never consulted a counselor to help him make decisions (Isa. 40:13-14). Hebrews 6:13 teaches us that when he wanted to confirm his promise to Abraham, God swore by himself. There was and is no higher court of appeal, for “God’s Word is the ultimate authority, and as such it can be authorized only by itself” (Bahnsen, 199-200). The Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, declared as he prayed to the Father, “Your Word is truth” (John 17:17). Therefore, God’s written Word stands as the fixed and absolute standard by which we judge all things. This is why the Westminster Confession refers to Scripture as the “supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are determined” (WCF 1.10). All other words and opinions are secondary.

In contrast, the words of man are nothing in themselves compared to the Words of God. The prophet Jeremiah provided a graphic description of this difference during his tearful and controversial ministry in Judah. “‘The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?’ says the LORD” (Jer. 23:28). Chaff is as weightless as it is worthless, good for nothing except being driven away by the wind or burned with fire (Psa. 1:4; Luke 3:17). But wheat has weight, substance, worth, usefulness. It nourishes the needy, sustains the weak, and fills the hungry. So too does God’s Word. It is not like the dream that fades as soon as the

head leaves the pillow, but rather that which stands forever settled in the heavens (Psa. 119:89).

Our Need for the Word of God

As sinful creatures in a world subjected to futility, we face a host of needs every single day. We need food and drink, clothing, shelter, transportation, health, breath, and light. These things are vital for vibrant living, but none of them begin to approach our need for the Word of God. The Bible abounds with imagery of how necessary God's Word is to his people. The eminent saint Job knew this, for he said, "I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). It is as needful for the sinner trekking through this world of darkness as a light is for the hiker on a treacherous path on a moonless night (Psa. 119:105). If you have ever been hopelessly lost, then you will know how precious those words are that point you in the right direction. God's true and authoritative Word directs His children as surely as the Pillar of Cloud guided Israel by day and the Fire by night. This guidance that God's Word provides is a certain aid for those who ask. In any and every situation, the desperate sinner can turn to the Word for wisdom, and "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'" (Isa. 30:21; cf. Prov. 6:22-23).

Our gracious God has provided both written Scripture and public proclamation, inviting us to stand and look for the old paths where the good way is. There he promises that we will find rest for our souls. How sad that so frequently we respond as the people in Jeremiah's day, saying "We will not listen" (Jer. 6:16-17). So many of the sorrows of life flow from the folly of not heeding the Word of the living God. Are we not so often like the crowds of Jesus' day, who flocked to him to fill their bellies, seeking after food that perishes (John 6:27)? When he offered them his flesh to eat and His blood to drink, the vast majority left in bewilderment and unbelief. By the grace of God, however, some stayed, for they knew that Jesus possessed the Words of eternal life (John 6:67-68). How about you?

Do you find the need for the Words of eternal life more pressing than all your earthly necessities? Are God's Words to you more precious than all your worldly possessions (Psa. 119:127)? Here we are entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit to stir up our affections and to give light to our eyes. Only then will we be able to see the wondrous things from his law (Psa. 119:18).

The Effect of the Word of God

Every humble soul committed to the authority and necessity of the Word of God will experience the gracious influences of his work in their lives. The Holy Spirit has been pleased to use the Word as his primary means for imparting wisdom unto life and for life. As the product of the Spirit's inspiration, the Scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Elsewhere we learn that saving faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). While man spends his days turning the earth inside out looking for shiny pieces of metal to enrich himself, God has a treasure trove of wisdom free for the taking unto eternal life (Job 28).

The wisdom of God's Word holds great benefit for the present life as well. A faithful student of the Word will find that divine revelation provides more understanding than many teachers (Psa. 119:99). Seeking wisdom and understanding will yield the Spirit's blessing of walking in right paths and avoiding devastation (Prov. 4:11, 26-27). The most precious blessing of the Word's wisdom is that it is the directory into a life of joyful communion with the One who is the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. As Paul instructed Timothy, the nourishing effect of that Word brings sinners into a close acquaintance with "the promise of life which now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:6-8). Dear friend, the proof of true wisdom is to hear the sayings of the Lord, to do them, and to build your house upon the rock of his truth (Matt. 7:24-25).

The Requirement of the Word of God

We have considered the authority, necessity, and gracious fruit of wisdom that the Word of God produces in the heart of a believer. We now turn to consider what this Word requires of its readers. The first and the most fundamental requirement of God's Word is the response of faith. The Lord of glory looks with great kindness and care upon those who are humble, contrite of heart, and who tremble at his Word (Isa. 66:2). This means that our posture as those reading the Word of God is one of humble belief, inquiry and reverent investigation, not arrogant presumption. The great theologian Anselm once wrote, "I believe that I might understand." He knew that to attain any true knowledge, he needed the faith-filled fear of God as the starting point (Prov. 1:7).

We cannot stop there, however, for while God's people are saved by faith alone, true faith will never remain alone. James teaches that faith without the works of obedience is a dead, disingenuous sham (Jas. 2:17). Faith leads to the works of obedience in a Christian as surely as breath leads to life and growth in a newborn baby. A life of faith enabled obedience to God in Christ is a life of true fruitfulness to his praise and glory (Phil. 1:11; 2 Pet 1:8-11).

Obedience is the proof of life for a believer, but what is the heart of obedience? What motivates and sustains a life in the service of God? The answer is love. "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 10:12). A Word and Spirit driven Christianity is not based upon outward profession, but "only faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6), and there is no better way to live. Are you daily reading this precious Word? Is this what you found your lives upon as individuals and/or as families? Oh, do not be like the fool of Proverbs 1 who would not heed and whose complacency destroys him. Instead, listen, dwell in safety, and walk in the path of the righteous which grows ever brighter unto that great day (Prov. 1:29-33, 4:18).

God's people must remain firmly and faithfully committed to his written, inspired Word. His Word attests to its own divine authority and meets us precisely where we need it most. His blessed truth fills our foolish hearts with wisdom and dark minds with light, calling us to respond in faith, obedience, and love. As glorious as the stars are, they cannot do this. They remain silently suspended in the unsearchable expanse, beckoning to us in celestial sign language to look past them with the eyes of faith to the glory and grace of their Creator. But we do not know sign language. What a blessing, therefore, that he has preserved and propagated his Word. Dear friends, take heed, hear, believe, and live, for God has spoken. ♦

NOTES

1. Throughout this article, Scripture is taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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The Use of Scripture in Apologetics

Scripture as Worldview

Taylor Sexton

The Westminster Confession of Faith begins, as many confessional documents and theological textbooks do, with an exposition on the identity, properties, place, and importance of Scripture. Those who have been born of God have an undying commitment to Scripture's authority as the very Word of God. Scripture has bearing for all matters of faith. It tells us how to be saved from the wrath to come. It instructs us as to how we are to conduct ourselves in the household of God. It informs us of how God is to be honored in public worship. In Scripture we learn how to pray, how to communicate with our brothers and sisters in the Lord, and how to think about God and his being. It also has bearing in all areas of life: how to honor the Lord in the workplace, how to live wisely before men, and how to relate to our neighbor in a way that is just and equitable.

However, one area that most often seems to fall off the wagon, as it were, is that of apologetics. How is Scripture to be used in evangelism and in defending the Christian faith against attack and opposition? Many Christians, although well-meaning, often dispense with Scripture when they seek to defend the Christian faith to unbelievers. They will say, "Let's find some common ground on which we can both stand, on which we both agree, and let's move on from there." That common ground could be sound reasoning, science, or a myriad of other things. But the common ground is never Scripture. And, to an extent, this is understandable. The unbeliever, after all, does not recognize Scripture as an authority. He does not place himself under the all-scrutinizing eye of the Spirit of God in his Word. He cannot, for he knows he will thereby be doomed. (This sense of impending judgment, by the way, is the image of God speaking within him.)

How, then, are we to utilize Scripture as Christians in our defense of the faith against unbelief? I posit that the place and use of

Scripture in apologetics is not *primarily* direct, but rather quite indirect. In other words, the main way a Christian should seek to use Scripture in an evangelistic scenario is not necessarily in a direct quoting of it (though that can be very useful), but in its utilization as the very foundation of all his knowledge and morality. I hope to demonstrate how this would work in the remaining portion of this article. Specifically, I will explore three philosophical frameworks that Scripture provides the Christian, each of which is indispensable for apologetics.

First, *Scripture provides for us the only worldview which can make sense of reality as we experience it.* We live in the world—every one of us, believer and unbeliever alike—as if it is ordered and logical. Take this well-known illustration of Dr. Greg Bahnsen. When you wake up in the morning, at some point you are going to brush your teeth. When you reach into the drawer to pull out your tube of toothpaste, you do not wonder to yourself whether the toothpaste will come out when you squeeze the tube. Such doubt never remotely crosses your mind. Why is that? It is simple. In our minds, albeit subconsciously, the toothpaste came out yesterday, so it is reasonable to expect it will come out today.

This seems simple and obvious, but have we ever stopped to think about *why* we would make such an assumption? And why does *everyone* make this assumption, although many of us have wildly opposing worldviews? Think of it this way. The materialist (which is arguably where atheism necessarily leads) believes that all there is is matter and motion. There is no overarching governing principle, except perhaps chance. Now, given *that* worldview, it would be actually entirely *unreasonable* for the materialist to expect that the toothpaste would come out today like it did yesterday. In a world of matter governed at best by chance, who is to say the universe will behave today the way it did yesterday, or tomorrow? In other words, the atheist's worldview does not and indeed *cannot* account for the reliable and intelligible order which his own day-to-day lifestyle assumes.

What about the believer? Well, according to Scripture, God made created and sustains the world in an orderly fashion. God demonstrates this when he tells Noah after the Great Flood, “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). This is speaking of God’s governing the universe in such a way that there are recognizable universal patterns, all of which are the very foundation of our ability to live our lives the way we do. If such were not the case, we would have no idea how the world would behave from day to day, or if we would even exist!

Second, *Scripture provides for us the only proper basis for all human knowledge*. Building upon the previous point, we can readily see how this would be the case. Even Scripture itself makes this claim: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). The word “beginning” refers not to time, but to place. The fear (or *worship*) of the Lord is the foundation—the starting place—of knowledge.

How is this so? Theologian Robert Reymond expresses it well: “It is an epistemological axiom that unless there is comprehensive knowledge of all things somewhere there can be no knowledge anywhere. This is because all knowledge data is inextricably interrelated” (Reymond, 111). To put it another way, to know anything requires knowledge of everything. Why? Because all facts by their very nature are interrelated. If a man possesses knowledge and understanding of “Fact A,” then how does he know that there is not a “Fact B” somewhere out there in the universe that renders “Fact A” invalid? If he is a materialist, then he cannot know this for certain. Materialism leads therefore, at very best, to total skepticism. Everything *could* be false, and therefore nothing can be *certainly* true. And we see the fruit of this worldview playing out in our world today, do we not? Everyone has their own truth. Something could be true for you, but not for me.

But, as we well know, nobody lives like this. Everybody, without exception, lives as if absolute certainty is not just possible, but real. Simply try to convince someone that they do not exist. They will

quickly—and rightly!—argue against such an assertion. Even the most hardened relativist, who believes there is no absolute truth, believes that there is *absolutely* no absolute truth. The position itself, then, is self-defeating. The philosophy is simply absurd.

The Christian overcomes this problem, however. Christians can reconcile the dilemma of a finite creature possessing absolute truth with certainty. This is because Scripture tells us, first, that there is a God who knows all things and, second, that this God has revealed himself to us. Therefore, it is not necessary for the Christian himself to possess all knowledge in order to know anything, *because he knows somebody who does*. This is a powerful tool in the hands of the Christian. It is only the Christian worldview, as presented in Scripture, that provides the possibility—and certainty—for human knowledge. Apologetically speaking, then, the Christian should be ready to point out to the unbeliever that a God who reveals is not just a fact, but a *necessary* fact. As Greg Bahnsen so powerfully put it (and I paraphrase), we do not believe in God because we can prove his existence; we believe in God because without him, we could not prove *anything*.

Third and finally, *Scripture provides for us the only meaningful foundation for human significance*. It should need no defense to posit that the materialistic worldview (which, again, is arguably the logical end of all atheism) provides no basis for human significance. If all human beings are is clumps of atoms floating around randomly in the ether, then there is nothing significant—or insignificant, for that matter—about love, values, goodness, violence, crime, and so forth. It is all just random nothingness. As Shakespeare put it, it is “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” What can the materialist say against inner-city gang violence? It is simply random clumps of atoms bumping into one another, albeit forcefully. To put it crassly, there is nothing wrong (in the materialistic worldview) with a clump of lead atoms we call a “bullet” slamming into a small clump of carbon atoms we call a “toddler.” It is just the blind and indifferent universe interacting with itself—just “star stuff,” as Carl Sagan liked to say. But, of course, this is not the way any atheist lives. Atheists shed tears over loss, complain about injustice, and get angry

when they are wronged. But, if their worldview is true, *why*? This is a crucial and, for them, an unanswerable question.

This, again, is a powerful tool in the hands of the Christian. And it does not take an expert in ethics to have this conversation. A simple question like, “Why do you find God’s actions in the Old Testament reprehensible?” would suffice. Be warned, however: this kind of scrutiny strikes at the very image of God in every man. They may say morality is relative, but they simply cannot *live* that way. Objections will abound; the heart will be pricked. “You mean you only believe murder is wrong because your God tells you? Are you seriously going to tell me that the only reason you do not kill me is because of the sixth commandment? That’s insane!” At the end of the day, however, it is *they* who must demonstrate why *their* worldview permits them even to make such objections. “Just be a decent human being” is not good enough. Who defines “decent,” and why is being “decent” preferable to being “indecent”?

Scripture’s role in apologetics, then, is not *primarily* in its direct quotation, but rather in the philosophical foundation it provides for the proper understanding and living of human life. (This language, by the way, need not frighten the Christian. The Bible indeed presents a *philosophy* of life. It is not a matter of whether or not Christians have a philosophy, but whether their philosophy is *biblical*.) Used in this way, the Christian is well-equipped to face any challenge presented by any unbeliever. Expertise in esoteric fields of study is unnecessary. Unbelief must be challenged at its root, not its fruit. Being familiar with the Christian worldview as presented in detail in Scripture will be a powerful weapon for Christ when used in the ways described above. ♦

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Christian Meditation

Enjoying the Treasury of Divine Truth

Rev. Michael Myers

“I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate your ways.”

— Psalm 119:15 NKJV¹

Reading through the Bible in a year is a good practice, but one can easily fall into the trap of reading merely for distance. While there is value in covering the vast mountain range of Scripture, one must not neglect the important work of Christian meditation. Some may balk at this term, since it often refers to pagan or new age disciplines (like yoga), but the Word of God clearly teaches that meditation has a vital place in the Christian life. In this article I will define, explain, and offer some helps for Christian meditation.

I propose the following definition: Christian meditation is *the focused contemplation of the renewed mind upon the treasury of divine truth*. The Old Testament uses two primary words that our English Bibles translate as meditation. The blessed man of Psalm 1 delights in the Lord’s Law and upon it “meditates (הָגָה, *hâgâh*) day and night” (Psa. 1:2). Most basically, this term means to murmur or ponder, that is, to mull over carefully. The word translated “meditate” in Psalm 119:15 (שִׁיחַ, *śîyach*) seems to refer a bit more to a preoccupation of the mind, often spilling over into speech. The NKJV translates the word as “pray” (Psa. 55:17), “complain” (Psa. 77:3), and even “talk” (Psa. 119:27). Psalm 143:5 includes both words in parallel, showing their close thematic relation: “I remember the days of old; I meditate (*hâgâh*) on all Your works; I muse (*śîyach*) on the work of Your hands.”

Practically speaking, meditation is to the soul as marination is to a fine cut of meat or as soil assimilation is for healthy crops. For the process to have its full and ideal effect, it simply cannot be rushed, skipped, or replaced. So how should we think about this discipline of Christian meditation?

The Work of Christian Meditation: *Focused Contemplation*

Psalm 119:15 says, “I *will* meditate,” which is a commitment in response to the Word of God and the God of the Word. To maintain focused contemplation on anything takes effort, but for the Christian, this effort is necessary. It is not reserved for monks, pastors, or published theologians, but for believers in every walk of life. And while one can be a Christian without a consistent discipline of meditation, one cannot be a maturing and vibrant Christian without it. Focused contemplation, nevertheless, is difficult. Robert Dabney once wrote, “To hold the thought fixed upon the same idea is the highest function of will; it is one to which none but the noblest souls are competent” (Dabney, 1:646). Have you ever considered why this is so difficult? Circumstantially, we are excessively busy, endlessly distracted, and constantly interrupted. Obstacles also lie in the heart. Often laziness, carelessness, and especially worldliness keeps us from this work. May the Lord grant us more Spirit-enabled discipline to plan our circumstances and repentance to purify our hearts! Finally, Christian meditation is extremely useful. God graciously blesses devoted meditation with vibrancy and fruitfulness (Psa. 1:3), prosperity and success in His service (Josh. 1:8), wisdom and safety (Prov. 6:20-24), and especially Christlikeness. Those who gaze at Him by faith now will be made like Him then (1 Jo. 3:2; cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).

The Organ of Christian Meditation: *The Renewed Mind*

Christian meditation is only possible for those who are born again. The unrenewed mind loves the darkness and hates the light (John 3:19-20). Further, Psalm 10:4 informs us that the wicked simply do not think of God, for “God is in none of his thoughts.” I encourage you to pause for a moment and take a careful inventory of your thought life. If your mind rarely or never turns to God, His ways, His glory, and His grace, then you are either an unbeliever or are living as one. Repent, and stop being conformed to this world; instead, be transformed by the renewing of *your* mind. Learn to gaze lovingly and longingly at the altogether lovely one (Song. 5:16).

While the primary organ of meditation is the mind, this focused contemplation involves the activity of the whole man. There is the engagement of the soul, the exercise of the will, the ordering of the affections, and the exercise of self-control. This means that to be successful and fruitful in meditation, you will need to be intentional and thoughtful in planning (more on that below).

The Object of Christian Meditation: *The Treasury of Divine Truth*

Pagan versions of meditation “focus” either on emptying the mind or filling the mind with self; biblical meditation emphasizes filling the mind with truth. Just as a beautiful diamond is the object of the jeweler’s gaze, the truth of God is the grand object of the Christian’s thought. The Christian should humbly consider the unfathomable wisdom of God or the inscrutable righteousness of God. Take any attribute of God, turn it this way and that, all the while praying, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law!” (Psa. 119:18). While setting our minds upon the boundless treasury of divine truth, remember that Jesus Christ is the Arkenstone of those riches. He is the brightness of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3), the one transfigured on the mount (Luke 9:29), whose glory surpasses human description (Rev. 1:13-18). He is fairer than ten thousand (Song 5:10), riding forth in majesty for the cause of truth, meekness, and righteousness (Psa. 45:4). He is the Crucified One, the love gift of the Father to this wretched and sinful world (John 3:16-17). Those who see Him have seen the Father (John 14:9), for He has *exegeted* the Father to us (John 1:18). Dabney helps us here again: “Our adoration is assisted by having its object both softened and defined for us, so that its severer glories are veiled without observing them, and adapted to our feeble eyes” (Dabney, 1:652). Thinking of Jesus Christ is both the highest work of the Christian mind and the greatest delight of the Christian soul.

The Goal of Christian Meditation

As you think upon the truth of God in general, and the Son of God in particular, here are three goals for you prayerfully to pursue. First, from a heart of devotion, seek *the acquisition of the knowledge of God in truth*. Spend time focusing upon Jesus with the eyes of faith, learning from Him and storing up His riches in your heart. The spiritual knowledge you acquire will be of great value and of lasting impact upon your life. Second, with a view to joyful duty, seek *the application of the Word of God in power*. This is the intended fruit of all true Christian meditation. We are not after vain speculation, philosophical nuance, cold logic, or fanatical mysticism. Rather, God would have the observable and life changing effect of a will directed by His Word. Finally, with great delight of soul, seek *the apprehension of the glory of God in Christ*. The great minister and meditator Samuel Rutherford once wrote, “Go where you will, your soul shall not sleep sound but in Christ’s bosom. Come in to Him and lie down, and rest you on the slain Son of God, and inquire for Him. I sought Him, and now, a fig for all the worm-eaten pleasures, and moth-eaten glory out of heaven, since I have found Him, and in Him all I can want or wish” (Rutherford, Letter 127). May the Lord direct you to such delight in the One whom heaven adores (Rev. 5:12-13).

A Way to Christian Meditation

I will close with a few practical suggestions. First, make time. Busy schedules, “smart” phones, entertainment, and a host of other invaders constantly pillage your time. Be intentional about carving out sufficient minutes here and there for uninterrupted thought. Second, find quiet. This can be difficult, for moms especially. Wisely consider changes. Can going to bed earlier enable me to wake up a little earlier? In the evening, instead of gazing at a screen, try meditating on the Son. Third, prayer. Pray meditatively, meaning, talk to God about His glory and grace. Also, if you struggle, pray for help. The Spirit loves to illumine the Son! Fourth, use a pen, a literal pen. With paper. Charles Spurgeon once said that the pen is the scalpel of the mind. Write down your thoughts, mull over the words

on the page. Writing things by hand slows down your thought process and enables you to think more carefully. Finally, you need resolve. With God's help, commit yourself to this discipline. You will be richly rewarded.

David Wells once insightfully observed, "The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common" (Wells, 30). I believe that one of the underlying conditions causing this problem is the lack of Christian meditation. Let us, therefore, pursue the focused contemplation of the renewed mind upon the treasury of divine truth. ♦

NOTES

1. Throughout this article, Scripture is taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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Bleating Hearts

“My sheep hear my voice.”

— John 10:27



The “Bleating Hearts” section is for contributions from members of the congregation.

Christ in the Psalms

Boaz Davis

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

— Luke 24:44

How do we study the Old Testament in a way that honors Jesus’ words in this passage? In order to do what Christ requires us to do in this text we need to take Old Testament books and read them in light of what Christ has done and see how these play a part in the redemptive story. In this short essay I will explore the foretelling of Christ’s person and work in the book of Psalms. The Psalms are arguably the most messianic book in the Old Testament. The author, the themes, and the content of the Psalms are all Messiah (Christ)-centered, therefore, we need to read them with a direct focus on Christ. It is indeed appropriate that almost half the Psalms were written by King David. David is arguably the greatest type (i.e., prefigurement) of Christ in the Old Testament. He was king by divine anointing. He was ordained to feed, protect, and guide the people of Israel, just as our Lord and savior Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd. This book is copious in messianic foretelling and it points us to the perfect beauty of the Holy Spirit-inspired poems. Richard Sibbes tells us, “If the scriptures be compared to a body, the Psalms may

well be the heart; they are so full of sweet and holy affections and passions” (Smith, 453).

The first thing we often think of when considering the person of Christ is his deity. We see in the New Testament the equality of power and glory within the Godhead, which is foretold in the Psalms. Psalm 45:6 says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.” The Psalms tell of the eternal sonship of the Messiah, “I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you” (Psa. 2:7). This Christ is fully God, and yet he became man and was both God and man, and was made incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 8:5 says, “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.” In Hebrews 2:9, the author tells us who was made a little lower than the angels, when he says, “But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” It is by his being both God and man that Jesus is able to be our mediator.

As Mediator, Christ fulfills three distinct offices that exist in the Old Testament. The first is the office of Prophet, which has two main roles: to foretell and to proclaim the will of God for our salvation and edification. “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you” (Psa. 22:22). Second, Christ fulfills the office of a Priest by offering himself up on Calvary to satisfy the holy wrath of God. Psalm 110:4 says, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” In Hebrews 7 the author uses this passage to prove the superiority of Christ’s priesthood. Psalm 110:1 says, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Third and finally, Christ’s office of King is perhaps the most explicit mediatorial role in the Psalms. As our King, Jesus rules, defends us, and vanquishes his and our foes.

Not only do we see the person of Christ in the Psalms, but we also see his crucifixion, resurrection, and glorification in great detail. Christ said at the last supper, “I am not speaking of all of you;

I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me’” (John 13:18). In this passage Jesus is quoting the prophecy that David made in Psalm 41:9. In Psalm 35:11 David foretells the trial and rejection when he says, “Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know,” and Psalm 22:6 says “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads.” At the trial the crowds cried “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Matthew 21 quotes this verse from Psalm 118: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Psa. 118:22). “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” were the words of David that Jesus took upon his lips during his suffering on the cross (Psa. 22:1). In this Psalm David foretells the intense suffering and anguish of Jesus on the cross in Psalms 22 and 69 with a minute detail that nearly parallels the Gospels. At the close of Psalm 22, David renders the words, “It is finished,” which are the very same words Christ uttered before he died. Peter, after he had spoken the words of Psalm 16:9-11, said, “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:29-32). In Psalm 47:5 the sons of Korah prophesied the ascension of Christ: “God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.” Not only does the Psalter proclaim the life of Christ but it also proclaims the second coming. Psalm 50:4-6 says, “He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: “Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!” The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!”

In the book of Psalms we behold the glory, majesty, and beauty of our Mediator who is God and man, who was betrayed, rejected,

crucified, and rose again, who ascended on high, and who will come to judge the world on the last day. ♦

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Catechism Corner

“Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

— 2 Timothy 1:13



The “Catechism Corner” is a small section containing a short commentary on a portion of the Westminster Standards.

Thomas Watson on the Danger of Abusing Scripture

Is all scripture of divine inspiration? Is it a book made by God himself? Then this reproveth: 1. The Papists, who take away part of scripture, and so clip the king of heaven’s coin; they expunge the second commandment out of their catechisms, because it makes against images; it is usual with them, if they meet with any thing in scripture which they dislike, either they put a false gloss upon it, or, if that will not do, pretend it is corrupted. These are like Ananias, who kept back part of the money, Acts 5:2. So they keep back part of the scripture from the people. This is an high affront to God, to deface and obliterate any part of his word; by this they bring themselves under that *premunire*, Rev. 22:19., “If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.”—Is all scripture of divine inspiration?—2. It condemns the Antinomians, that lay aside the Old Testament as useless, and out of date; they call them Old Testament Christians. God hath stamped a divine majesty upon both Testaments; and till they can shew me where God hath given a repeal to the Old, it stands in force. The two Testaments are the two wells of salvation: the Antinomians would stop up one of these wells,—they would dry up one of the breasts of scripture. There is much gospel in the Old Testament; the comforts of the gospel in the New Testament have their rise from the Old. The great promise of the Messiah is in the Old Testament, “A virgin shall conceive and bear a

son.” Nay, I say more, the moral law, in some parts of it, speaks gospel, “I am the Lord thy God:” here is the pure wine of the gospel. The saint’s great charter, where God promiseth to “sprinkle clean water upon them, and put his Spirit within them,” is to be found primarily in the Old Testament, Ezek. 36:25, 26. So that they who take away the Old Testament, do, as Samson, pull down the pillars, they would take away the pillars of a Christian’s comfort.—3. It condemns the enthusiasts, who, pretending the Spirit, lay aside the whole Bible: they say the scripture is a dead letter, and they live above it. What imprudence is this? Till we are above sin, we shall not be above scripture. Let not men talk of a revelation from the Spirit; suspect it to be an imposture. The Spirit of God acts regularly, it works in and by the word; and he that pretends to a new light, which is either above the word, or contrary to it, abuseth both himself and the Spirit,—his light is borrowed from him who transforms himself into an angel of light.—4. It condemns the slights of scripture: such are they, who can go whole weeks and months and never read the word. They lay it aside as rusty armour; they prefer a play or romance before scripture, the *magnalia legis* are to them *minulta*. O how many can be looking their faces in a glass all the morning, but their eyes begin to be sore, when they look upon a Bible! Heathens die in the want of scripture, and these in the contempt of it. They surely must needs go wrong who slight their guide; such as lay the reins upon the neck of their lusts, and never use the curbing bit of scripture to check them, are carried to hell, and never stop.—5. It condemns the abusers of scripture: (1.) Who do mud and poison this pure crystal fountain with their corrupt glosses; who *wrest* scripture, 2 Pet. 3:16. The Greek word is, they set it upon the rack; they give wrong interpretations of it, not comparing scripture with scripture: as the Antinomians pervert that scripture, Num. 23:21., “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,”—hence they infer, God’s people may take liberty in sin, because God sees no sin in them. It is true, God sees no sin in his people with an eye of revenge, but he sees it with an eye of observation. He sees not sin in them, so as to damn them; but he sees it, so as to be angry, and severely to punish them. Did not David find it so, when he cried out of his broken bones? In like manner the

Arminians wrest scripture, John 5:40., “Ye will not come to me;” here they bring in free will. This text shews, 1. How willing God is that we should have life; 2. That sinners may do more than they do,—they may improve the talents God hath given them: but it doth not prove the power of free-will, for it is contrary to that scripture, John 6:44., “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” These therefore wring the text so hard, as they make the blood come; they do not compare scripture with scripture. (2.) Who do jest with scripture; when they are sad, they take the scripture as their lute or minstrel, to play with, and so drive away the sad spirit, as that drunkard I have read of, who having drunk off his cups, called to some of his fellows, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.” In the fear of God, take heed of this. Eusebius tells us of one, who took a piece of scripture to make a jest of, but was presently struck with a frenzy and ran mad. And, it is a saying of Luther, *Quos Deus vult perdere, &c.* “Whom God intends to destroy, he gives them leave to play with scripture.” ♦

Thomas Watson, *The Select Works of the Rev. Thomas Watson, Comprising His Celebrated Body of Divinity, in a Series of Lectures on the Shorter Catechism, and Various Sermons and Treatises* (New York, NY: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1855), 26–27.

Book Reviews

“Of making many books there is no end.”

— Ecclesiastes 12:12



Byrd, Aimee. *Housewife Theologian: How the Gospel Interrupts the Ordinary*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2013.

My interaction with the writings of Aimee Byrd began several years ago while sitting around my father’s dining room table in West Virginia. He had a copy of the pre-publication manuscript of Mrs. Byrd’s *No Little Women*, and if I am not mistaken, we were discussing what eventually became chapter 6, *Men Learning from Women?* For that reason, *No Little Women* was the first of Mrs. Byrd’s books that I eventually purchased and began to read. After a few chapters, I decided that I needed to go back to the beginning, so I embarked upon something of a comprehensive study of her books. What follows is my summary of Aimee Byrd’s writings taken chronologically. I will do my best to present her arguments fairly and concisely and then add my commendations and critiques as needed. Following my series of reviews, I intend to offer a final, overarching assessment of her work as a whole.

Mrs. Byrd published her first book *Housewife Theologian* (HT) in 2013. Overall, I found this book to be both helpful and useful. From the very beginning Byrd set an encouraging and wholesome tone. Her aim in this first volume is a noble one: encouraging women to be careful, vibrant, learned, astute theologians. I agreed with her wholeheartedly that in our culture, the term *housewife* has sadly become an object of scorn referring to “a married woman without a career” (HT, 11). The vocation of *housewife* and all it includes desperately needs to be lifted up from the mental gutters of our degraded society’s opinions and restored to the place of high honor that it deserves.

In her first chapter, Byrd discusses the absolute necessity of loving the truth of the Word of God, “As we can see from the story of Eve (and should know from our own experience) there are severe consequences for mishandling the Word of God. Even within the church we are constantly flooded with false teaching. Are we jealous to protect the truth of God’s Word?” (HT, 24-25). She also insightfully comments on the effects of the curse.

While I am focusing only on part of the curse here, I want to particularly address the aggravation introduced into the marriage relationship. Theologically, we learned that the governmental roles in marriage are to represent Christ and the church. Because of the effects of the fall, our roles can be easily subverted. Instead of joyfully serving in the vocation God has given us, our relationships become a power struggle of sorts. We want what we don’t have. Women become envious of their husbands’ leadership and men distort their responsibilities to a dictatorship or resign themselves to passivity (HT, 26-27).

Her observation on 1 Timothy 2:15 is also worth mentioning:

In the preceding verses, Paul is discussing submissiveness of women in reference to male eldership and pastoral authority in the church. He appeals to Eve’s being deceived by Satan. Remember, before the fall Adam was to be the leader, and here we have Eve taking up this supposed theological discussion all on her own. Did she adequately represent her husband in her radical decision to disobey God? Paul’s argument is not chauvinistic, rather it is lovingly showing forth the relationships God has ordained (HT, 33).

This first chapter was full of solid theological truths, encouraging speech, and very deeply honoring language both for the Scriptures and for her husband.

In the next chapter, Byrd addresses the sadly distorted and perverted topic of beauty, rightly assigning part of the blame to the objectivizing, wretched, corrupt institution known as Hollywood. Her observations about a woman’s struggle with these ever present themes were honest and personal. Without discounting the physical element in beauty, she rightly grounded it in the virtues of grace, looking all the while to our Savior as the pre-eminent display of all that is beautiful and good. I found this one of the best chapters in the

entire book. Although I have not read it, I believe Owen Strachan and Douglas Sweeney's book *Jonathan Edwards on Beauty* would serve as a good follow-up study for any interested in this important topic.

As I read chapter three, I found myself constantly agreeing and encouraging her as she wrote. Here Byrd takes aim at the unnecessary and sadly prevalent folly of compartmentalizing our lives. How sad that we often fall into the pre-Reformation false dichotomy of harsh divisions between the "ordinary" and the "spiritual." Her warning about taking this kind of approach is dead on:

When we are not wearing our "faith hat," we think in terms of all the isms of our time—naturalism, capitalism, humanism, feminism, existentialism, conservatism, liberalism, and so on—unaware that we are thinking like Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, and other philosophic minds and believing that we are thinking "independently." Tragically, rather than functioning as independent thinkers we are really just parroting the spin-doctors who don't see life through the lens of God's special revelation in Scripture (HT, 59).

The only minor addition I would have liked to see in this chapter is when she discusses her own responsibility to avoid the sins of "those gullible women that Paul marks out" (HT, 67). While not at all taking away from a housewife's personal responsibility to grow spiritually, there is no mention here of the role the husband has in both encouraging and ensuring everything possible takes place to achieve this laudable goal (though she does touch on this theme on pages 30-31).

Chapter four helpfully addresses the struggle many women have with seeing the worth and value of their callings as women in general, and for those housewives in particular. She writes,

When asked what we do we may respond with something such as, "I'm a homemaker, but I also do such and such," as if our main calling as women is not good enough and does not speak to our value as a person. Especially in our feminist culture, it is not savvy to define ourselves through our marital relationship with a man. We may keep ourselves busy with numerous endeavors and projects

that appear to contribute more to society than managing a home or keeping children (HT, 73-74).

Precisely at this point I would like to add some encouragement to build upon what Mrs. Byrd rightly identifies. To my sisters in the Lord who are seeking to be faithful in that private sphere of the home: do not let anyone or anything feed you the lie that your work is anything less than immeasurably valuable, insofar as you do it in the Lord. Byrd encourages her readers to find the basis of their identity in Christ, and from that union to live in biblical submission (HT, 79-80) in a world screaming for them to do otherwise.

Through a warm and commendable presentation of both principle and anecdote, chapters five and six encourage women to careful discernment and godly hospitality. As a father of four boys who share a bathroom, I deeply empathized with her disdain for and struggle against things like “toothpaste-infested bathroom sinks” (HT, 123). In the next chapter, *My Two Pence Worth*, she makes the argument that the value of her work and influence is not measured by that which is visible, but rather in the quality of service she renders. I could not agree more. She writes, “Our vocation is not glorious. But we all have a circle of people in our lives whom we are influencing and teaching, whether the information we offer them is good or bad. We are in a position of power, and we need to look at it in this way.” Here is what I would change: this vocation *is* glorious, though very rarely *glamorous*. Many of us have heard that infamous line authored by William Ross Wallace, “*The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.*” How true. Housewives, mothers, your work may not be glamorous, but let no one dare to say it is not glorious.

Chapters eight and nine respectively address common struggles against sin and Mrs. Byrd’s account of bearing up through a difficult life-transition. Once again, I commend and appreciated her honesty and treatment of these issues, especially her exhortation toward the sufficiency of Christ (HT, 179). The next two chapters reflect on the place of the church and worship, and how they interact with everyday life. These two chapters were very clearly influenced by Dr. David VanDrunen’s “Two Kingdoms” outlook.

While a critique of Dr. VanDrunen's work falls outside the scope of my project, I have read Dr. VanDrunen's *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* and his more popular level *Living in God's Two Kingdoms* and largely disagreed with his approach. She cites Dr. VanDrunen frequently and largely adopts his thesis in applying it to her life. Here is one example of a deficiency of the application of these principles to life: "God doesn't equip Christians for cultural work any better than their unbelieving neighbors" (HT, 213; compare to Col. 3:17, 23). I found these two chapters the least helpful of the book.

Byrd concluded her work with reflections on discipleship and following Christ, drawing largely from John Calvin, Jeremiah Burroughs, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. She writes, "Stay-at-home moms still want the same things that moms who work outside the home do, and that is to feel that they are contributing to their homes and their communities. Sadly, for the most part I think both groups feel as if they are drowning as they try to pull this off" (HT, 237). In light of that, Byrd reminded me how important it is for husbands, churches, and society at large to encourage the wives and mothers among them to see the eternally significant value that their endeavors possess and produce. Finally, her admonition to singles (HT, 238) was outstanding, urging them not to live it up in selfishness, but rather to prepare for a life of service.

In summary, despite the Two Kingdoms flavor at the end, I found Mrs. Byrd's approach to be a winsome encouragement to godly femininity. As she stated in the beginning, this was a book for women, and my assessment is that it is a largely helpful one indeed.

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