



REFORMED FAITH & PRACTICE

Volume 4 Number 1 April 2019

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REFORMED FAITH & PRACTICE
THE JOURNAL OF REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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REFORMED FAITH & PRACTICE is published three times per year and is distributed electronically for free. It is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database.

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REFORMED FAITH & PRACTICE

1231 Reformation Drive

Oviedo, FL 32765

ISSN 2474-9109

Reformed Theological Seminary

Atlanta · Charlotte · Dallas · Houston · Jackson

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In This Issue

We feature three extended review essays in this issue, two of which are on particularly timely subjects. Dr. Gregory Lanier evaluates the latest (fourth) edition of fourth edition of William D. Mounce's *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, with particular attention to the changes from the previous edition. Dr. Donald Fortson assesses Jemar Tisby's analysis of the complicated story of American evangelicalism on race relations in his new book, *The Color of Compromise*.

We are pleased to announce that *REFORMED FAITH & PRACTICE* is now indexed in the Religion Database produced by the American Theological Library Association. This is the main bibliographic source for scholarly periodical literature on religion, and we are encouraged that this will broaden the reach of our articles and reviews.

JRM

**The Laws of Nature and of Nature's God:
The Theological Foundations of Modern Science**

**James N. Anderson
Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte**

The following is an edited version of the 2018 Tarwater Lecture, delivered at Queen's University of Charlotte on October 29, 2018. Dr. Anderson wishes to express thanks to Michael and Ann Tarwater for their generous sponsorship of this lecture series designed to explore the intersection between faith and the sciences.

As you may have surmised from the title of this article, I wish to begin by quoting from the United States Declaration of Independence. Recall the famous opening sentence:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

One of the many fascinating aspects to the Declaration of Independence is its reference to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." In context, this is a reference to what philosophers and theologians have called "natural law." The idea is that there are moral laws that are grounded in the natural order of things, including human nature and human societies. Moreover, these laws have a divine author or legislator because *nature itself* is understood to have such an author. Consequently, there are moral laws or principles—including those we would now recognize as universal human rights—that are grounded not merely in nature but in "nature's God": the transcendent creator, sustainer, and governor of the natural world.

In our day, however, the term "laws of nature" tends to give rise to a very different notion. By "laws of nature" we typically mean *scientific* laws rather than *moral* laws. We think perhaps of Newton's laws of motion, Boyle's gas law, Maxwell's equations, or the four laws of thermodynamics. We think of laws that govern how events in the natural universe proceed from one moment to the next in regular, orderly, predictable ways.

In this article I proposed to focus upon the laws of nature in *that* sense. It's clear that the authors of the Declaration of Independence believed that the laws of nature in the *moral* sense should be credited to nature's God. My argument here will be that the laws of nature in the *scientific* sense should also be credited to nature's God, and more broadly that modern science has *theological foundations* (and necessarily so).

I. A Tall Story

Before we get to that main argument, however, some stage-setting is needed. I'm going to begin by telling a story—a story you most likely have heard before.

Once upon a time—around 13.8 billion years ago, to be more precise—a space-time universe came into existence. Within an unimaginably short space of time, the basic laws of physics were established, and the universe rapidly expanded from an extremely high-density, high-temperature state (an event popularly known as the “Big Bang”). As the universe cooled, subatomic particles formed, followed by atoms and molecules of the basic chemical elements (hydrogen, helium, and so on). By the force of gravity, physical matter collected into lumps, eventually resulting in stars, solar systems, and galaxies.

On a “pale blue dot” circling one particular star—blue because of its large water masses—a very remarkable and fortuitous thing happened, some 4 billion years ago. By processes that remain entirely mysterious, chemicals in those water masses produced some basic organic molecules: perhaps amino acids, perhaps even a rudimentary form of RNA. Whatever exactly these molecules were, they supplied the building blocks of organic life, with the power of replication.

Once self-replicating lifeforms had appeared on the stage, Darwinian processes took over and performed their magic. Over thousands of millions of years, by the force of natural selection acting on the physical variations resulting from random genetic mutations, single-celled organisms evolved into multi-celled organisms, asexual organisms evolved into sexually differentiated organisms, water-bound organisms evolved into land-bound organisms, and eventually primitive mammals appeared on the scene, which became the ancestors of primitive apes, which became the ancestors of primitive humans—which is to say, *our* ancestors.

At some point in this long evolutionary story, *consciousness* appeared on the scene, which laid the foundations for observation, reasoning, and creativity. This

ignited the blue touch-paper of *cultural evolution*: the development of language, social organization, art, music, rudimentary technology, and religion.

Ah, yes: *religion*.

Religion—so the story goes—evolved as a psychological coping mechanism. It developed not because of its *veracity* but because of its *survival utility*. Religion served to explain the unexplained, and thus to comfort the discomfited.

Religion was, in a sense, the first attempt at science. It was the first attempt to identify *causal explanations for natural phenomena*. But it was a very bad first attempt, because it wasn't based on a rigorous methodology of reason and observation. It was essentially a stopgap until the true hero of the story arrived.

Admittedly, some progress toward real scientific knowledge was made by the ancient Greek thinkers, such as Thales, Pythagoras, Archimedes, and Aristotle. They sought to explain things in natural and mathematical terms, without resorting to arbitrary supernatural explanations. However, modern science didn't really get off the ground until the time of the Renaissance, following the so-called Dark Ages. It was only at this time that intellectuals finally cast off the shackles and blinkers of religion and adopted a rigorous empirical methodology. *Natural reason* was applied to *empirical observations* in order to formulate and test genuine scientific hypotheses.

Francis Bacon was one of the pioneers of the modern scientific method. He was followed by trailblazers such as Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle, who uncovered the basic laws of physics and chemistry, allowing us to make reliable predictions and to harness the natural world in the service of technology.

A second scientific revolution occurred in the nineteenth century with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, which finally disposed of the idea of final causes in nature, offering instead an explanation of biological design—or rather *apparent* design—without the need for a divine intelligence.

A fully naturalistic account of the world was finally coming into view.

Some further important pieces of the puzzle were put into place in the twentieth century with Einstein's relativity theories and the development of quantum mechanics. The last chapters of the story have yet to be written, but it's only a matter of time before a "Theory of Everything" is developed that provides a unified account of all the natural laws of the universe. At any rate, we can at least say now that science has slipped the chains of superstition that held it back for so long. Science has discredited religion and supplanted it as the favored explanation of what we are and where we came from.

Here endeth the story—at least the latest chapters of it.

Undoubtedly this is a very popular and widely propagated story. It is, as they say, the received wisdom in academic circles. It is the story told by the secular intelligentsia of our day. It is the story told (or at any rate assumed) by Steven Pinker in his recent book *Enlightenment Now*—a story of the triumph of science and reason over religion and superstition.¹

It's such a dominant story that I will henceforth refer to it simply as *The Story*.

One important theme in *The Story* is that of a longstanding conflict—an implacable opposition—between science and religion. Science is based on reason, evidence, and openness to correction. Religion is based on revelation, faith, and an incorrigible dogmatism. This conflict is epitomized by the so-called “Galileo controversy.” Galileo was opposed by the Church, we're told, because his scientific theories collided with religious dogmas. Galileo may have lost that battle, but the spirit of Galileo won the war!

Such is *The Story*—and it's certainly a stirring one.

But is it a *true* story?

In reality, the historical thesis that there has been a long and bitter war between science and religion, and that this conflict was inevitable due to some inherent opposition between science and religion, has been largely discredited.² However, my concern here is not to oppose or defend any historical thesis. Instead, I want to explore a strictly philosophical thesis. Leaving aside the issue of the *historical* relationship between science and religion, I want to consider the question of whether there is any necessary *philosophical* relationship between the two.

Are science and religion independent agents, so to speak, or is one being bankrolled by the other?

I propose to argue for the second option. I contend that science as we understand it today rests necessarily upon theological foundations. Specifically, I will offer three separate arguments in support of that thesis. In each case, I will identify a

¹ Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018).

² For one recent debunking, see Michael Newton Keas, *Unbelievable: 7 Myths About the History and Future of Science and Religion* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2019).

philosophical presupposition of modern science, and then argue that we need a *theistic account* of that presupposition.³

II. Argument from Cognitive Reliability

If science is concerned with anything at all, it is concerned with *truth*. Science aims to uncover the *truth* about the natural world. Science aims to develop *true theories* that describe and explain natural phenomena. As Albert Einstein observed, a respectable scientist should be “a real seeker after truth.”⁴

In order to discover the truth, however, we have to employ our cognitive faculties. We have to use our *sensory* faculties, our *reasoning* faculties, our *memories*, and our *imaginings*. But in so doing we're taking for granted that our cognitive faculties are reliably truth-directed. In other words, we have to assume that our cognitive faculties generally lead us *toward truth* and *away from falsehood*. We have to assume that our cognitive faculties produce mostly true beliefs.

But let's return to *The Story* summarized in the previous section. According to *The Story*, human beings—including our minds, our cognitive faculties—are the product of undirected, naturalistic, evolutionary processes. We are the product of millions of years of natural selection, driven by the need to survive and reproduce.

At first glance, perhaps, this suggests a promising explanation. Wouldn't evolution tend to hone our intellectual faculties over time? Wouldn't nature select for *more* reliable rather than *less* reliable faculties? On closer examination, however, this isn't so obvious at all. There are several serious obstacles faced by a naturalistic evolutionary account of human cognitive faculties.

In the first place, truth is a property of *thoughts* or *beliefs*, not physical states. A conscious mind is needed in order to entertain thoughts or beliefs. According to *The Story*, mind emerged over time out of matter. Our minds are a product of underlying lower-level material states and processes. Consciousness is an emergent feature of the material brain. If that's the case, then everything that takes place in the mind is wholly explained by the underlying material structures and processes of the brain.

³ I do not mean to imply that one must be a Christian, or even a theist, in order to do good scientific work. Clearly that's not the case. I do contend, however, that one cannot *account* for good scientific work apart from a biblical theistic understanding of the universe and our place in it.

⁴ Letter to Robert A. Thornton, December 7, 1944 (Albert Einstein Archives, 61-574).

Now, leave aside the fact that we have nothing close to a serious explanation for how this is possible.⁵ The problem is that this account only supports *one-way causation from the physical to the mental*. Physical events can be the causes of mental events, but mental events can't be the causes of physical events. On this account, there can be "bottom up" causation from the material to the mental, but not "top down" causation from the mental to the material, simply because mind and consciousness are nothing more than a higher-level feature of material structures and processes. Mental phenomena would be like the foam that forms on river rapids: the churning of the water generates the foam, but the foam does nothing to determine the movement of the water. It's just along for the ride!

If that is so, the content of our beliefs and thoughts cannot make any *causal contribution* to evolutionary development. Our beliefs and thoughts can't contribute to any causal explanation of our physical behavior. Yet natural selection acts solely upon the basis of *physical* fitness. What this means is that if *The Story* were true, our minds and their contents would be strictly invisible to natural evolutionary processes. Evolution must be blind with respect to our beliefs, including whether those beliefs are true or false. And if that's the case, natural evolutionary processes cannot explain why our cognitive faculties would be *reliably directed toward truth*.

But let's just wave away this problem for a moment. Let's grant that somehow consciousness *could* exert a causal influence over the physical realm, that somehow the *beliefs* of an organism could make a causal contribution to the physical *behavior* of that organism. It still wouldn't follow that evolution would select for true beliefs. The reason for this is that natural selection itself *doesn't care about truth*. It cares only about the fitness of the organism for survival and reproduction, and false beliefs can promote survival and reproduction just as effectively as true beliefs.

This problem could be illustrated in various ways, but to make the point let's return once again to *The Story*. According to *The Story*, religious beliefs have an evolutionary explanation. Religion developed as a kind of psychological coping mechanism and thereby promoted the survival of the species. But of course, *The Story* also says that religious beliefs are predominantly *false*. So according to *The Story*, evolution was quite content to foist a whole host of false beliefs on the human race

⁵ The seemingly intractable problem of explaining how the distinctively subjective, experiential aspect of consciousness could arise from a purely physical substratum has been dubbed "the hard problem of consciousness" by the philosopher David Chalmers.

because they had biological benefits. Just consider for a moment where the highest birth rates are found today. Which societies are reproducing most effectively: the religious or the non-religious?⁶

The Darwinian philosopher Stephen Stich puts the matter bluntly: “[N]atural selection does not care about truth; it cares only about reproductive success.”⁷ That being so, there’s no reason to think evolution would tend to select for *true* beliefs over *false* beliefs, and thus no reason to think evolution would furnish us with cognitive faculties that are reliably truth-directed.

But let’s wave away this second problem as well. Suppose we grant that evolutionary processes *would* tend to favor true beliefs. We can’t assume that would apply to just any kind of beliefs. At best, evolution would be sensitive to low-level beliefs immediately connected to survival: securing food, finding a fertile mate, fighting off predators, and the like. Why on earth would evolution be sensitive to the sort of high-level, complex, abstract truths that scientists regularly trade in?

Suppose we grant that evolution would furnish us with cognitive faculties that are reliable when it comes to everyday tasks involving our immediately observable environment. Even then, it’s not the least bit plausible to think that the same evolutionary processes would furnish us with cognitive faculties that are reliable when it comes to advanced calculus, trigonometry, relativity theory, or quantum mechanics. Not to put too fine a point on it: proficiency in particle physics doesn’t confer the slightest reproductive advantage. (If anything, it’s more likely to be a hindrance to reproductive success.)

In sum, *The Story* cannot provide a plausible account of why our cognitive faculties are reliably truth-directed, particularly with respect to the highly complex and abstract truths that modern scientific theories depend upon.

We should note that the general problem I’ve outlined here isn’t one that arises from the idea of evolution as such, but from the idea of *undirected* or *unguided* evolution. It appears that the only way one can justifiably assume that human cognitive faculties are reliably truth-directed is by presupposing that whatever or

⁶ For recent projections of religious and non-religious populations: “The Changing Global Religious Landscape,” Pew Research Center, April 5, 2017. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/>

⁷ Stephen P. Stich, *The Fragmentation of Reason: Preface to a Pragmatic Theory of Cognitive Evaluation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 62.

whoever produced or shaped those faculties is concerned about truth or is somehow truth-oriented. Mere *physical* causes won't be sufficient. There need to be *mental* or *rational* causes. There has to be a prior, higher intelligence of some kind.

But the moment we suggest that our ability to discover scientific truths depends on a prior, higher intelligence, we've stepped decisively into the realm of *theology*.

III. Argument from the Uniformity of Nature

One of the most important types of reasoning in science is *inductive reasoning* (or simply *induction*). Induction is the process by which we draw a general conclusion—typically in the form of a universal law or principle—from a sample of particular observations.

Induction is usually the means by which we discover laws of nature. For example, take Newton's second law of motion: $\mathbf{F} = \mathbf{m} \times \mathbf{a}$. How do we *know* that such a law holds in nature? Put simply, we do a series of experiments by applying different *forces* to objects of various *masses* and we measure the resulting *accelerations*. We end up with a sample of experimental observations and we draw an inductive conclusion by extrapolating from those particular observations. So the inductive argument looks something like this:

1. In the *first* instance, the force was equal to the product of the mass and the acceleration.
2. In the *second* instance, the force was equal to the product of the mass and the acceleration.
3. In the *third* instance, the force was equal to the product of the mass and the acceleration.
4. And so on and so on, for a large number of instances...
5. Therefore, the following *general law* holds: **Force = mass × acceleration**

Inductive reasoning isn't only used in science. We apply it all the time in our everyday experience. How do you know that the kettle will boil water when you switch it on? Simply because you've observed it (and probably other kettles) doing so in the past under similar circumstances.

Now, it has long been noted that inductive reasoning will be reliable only if a certain assumption holds, namely, that *nature is generally uniform in space and time*. In

other words, induction assumes that the way nature operates *tomorrow* will be much the same as the way it operated *yesterday*. Similarly, induction assumes that the way nature operates *here*, at this location in the universe, is the way it operates in *other* locations. If we're going to extrapolate from *past* events to *future* events, and from *local* events to *non-local* events, we have to presuppose the uniformity of nature.

This raises a tricky question, however: *What justifies that assumption?* How do we know that nature is uniform across space and time? After all, none of us has *observed* all of space and time. We've observed only a minuscule fraction of it, which is precisely why we have to rely on induction! The challenge of justifying this crucial assumption has been called "the problem of induction," and it remains one of the major conundrums in the philosophy of science.⁸ For if inductive reasoning isn't reliable, then our conclusions about the laws of nature are unwarranted. They're no better than leaps of blind faith.

Those unfamiliar with the history of this problem tend to think it has a really easy solution, which runs like this:

We know that inductive reasoning is reliable *because it works!* Its reliability has been confirmed over and over again. The conclusions we've drawn by induction in the past have turned out to be correct; they've been confirmed by subsequent observations. So we know that nature is uniform because when we've made predictions based on that assumption, those predictions always—or nearly always—turn out to be right.

Unfortunately, as David Hume famously pointed out, that's circular reasoning: it's *using* inductive reasoning to *justify* inductive reasoning. It's saying in effect that induction will be reliable in the future because it's been reliable in the past—but that reasoning itself assumes the uniformity of nature. Hence, it begs the question.

More generally, it turns out that one cannot justify the assumption of the uniformity of nature on an empirical basis. What that means is that the scientific method relies on a form of reasoning that *the scientific method itself cannot prove*. Science depends on a philosophical presupposition beyond the reach of science.

Of course, if any one of us were a transcendent omniscient being enjoying a direct knowledge of every point in time and space, there would be no problem here. But human beings are neither transcendent nor omniscient. So it seems that a transcendent omniscient being would be a very useful ally to lean on when it comes to

⁸ Leah Henderson, "The Problem of Induction," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2019. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/induction-problem/>

inductive conclusions about the laws of nature. Once again, however, that puts us firmly in the realm of *theology*.

One further comment before moving on. It might be pointed out that we all *believe* that nature is uniform, and perhaps we can't *help* but believe it. It's just a built-in assumption, we might say. True though that may be, it's important to recognize that's not the issue here. The issue is not whether we can avoid the assumption, but what would make it a *rationally well-grounded* assumption. If it's a built-in assumption, it matters a great deal *who* or *what* built it in!

Naturalistic evolution is blind and stupid. It has neither consciousness nor intelligence. It has no knowledge at all, never mind knowledge of the entire universe. In contrast, as the creator of the natural universe and the architect of the human mind, God has (1) knowledge of the uniformity of nature and (2) the means to implant that knowledge in human cognitive faculties, specifically, the faculty by which we reason inductively about the laws of nature. On this view, our inductive knowledge of nature's laws has to be underwritten by a *higher, non-inductive* knowledge.

IV. Argument from Mathematics

Modern science depends on *mathematics*. Modern science couldn't exist *without* mathematics. The laws of nature are typically formulated in mathematical terms, as mathematical relationships or equations. This is undoubtedly true of physics and chemistry, and it's largely true of modern biology as well. Computer science, medicine, astronomy, psychology—whichever scientific field you care to name, it has to deal with the quantification of natural phenomena and mathematical relationships between those quantities.

But mathematics itself is a very odd thing when you think about it. Consider this statement about two *physical* objects: "The tree is taller than the house." What's that statement *about*? What does it refer to? It's about two concrete, material, visible things: a tree and a house.

Now consider this *mathematical* statement: "7 is greater than 6." That's a meaningful statement; indeed, it's a true statement. But what's it *about*? What does it refer to? It's about *something*, but it's not about any *physical* things. It's about two numbers—what are technically known as *mathematical objects*.

Numbers, however, are not concrete, material, visible things. We can't observe them with the senses. They're abstract rather than concrete objects. Even so, we can

make *objectively true* statements about them, which indicate that they are *real* in some sense.

In fact, mathematical truths are typically quite different than material truths. Not only are they abstract, they are *necessary* truths. They couldn't be otherwise. The first statement I made (about the tree and the house) didn't have to be true. The tree could have been *shorter* than the house. But 7 couldn't have been *less than 6*. Furthermore, mathematical truths aren't known empirically, by observation. They're known by a combination of *a priori* intuition and deduction.

So here's the truly remarkable thing. On the one hand, there is a realm of *material, concrete things*: stars, planets, rocks, trees, and so on. On the other hand, there is a realm of *non-material, abstract things*: numbers and other mathematical objects. Somehow there is a deep connection between these two realms, insofar as things in the *first* realm are conformed to and governed by things in the *second* realm.

If there were no numbers there would be no mathematics, and thus no scientific understanding of the material world. But numbers themselves are *not* objects in the material world. They are, in a real sense, *other-worldly*.

Eugene Paul Wigner, the Hungarian-American physicist and mathematician who received the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1963, published an article in 1960 with the title "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences."⁹ In that paper he observed that mathematics has proven incredibly productive as a tool for the natural sciences, and yet its effectiveness is utterly mysterious. Indeed, the word he used was 'unreasonable'. It's unreasonable in the sense that there's *no natural explanation* for it. There's no *a priori* reason why the material world would be so amenable to mathematical analysis. We take it for granted, but it's quite astonishing on reflection.

What's more, it's not merely that the physical universe is mathematically structured. It's that its mathematical structure is *very orderly and relatively simple*. The mathematical structure of the world has a striking elegance and beauty to it.

Perhaps like me you're a fan of Gary Larson's *Far Side* cartoons. One of my favorite *Far Side* cartoons depicts Albert Einstein in his office. He's been scribbling equations on the blackboard:

$E = mc^3$ — crossed out!

⁹ Eugene Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," *Communications in Pure and Applied Mathematics* 13 (1960): 1-14.

$E = mc^4$?

$E = mc^5$ — crossed out again!

$E = mc^7$?

As Einstein leans against the blackboard in desperation, he stares back at a cleaning lady in the foreground, who's been dusting his desk. "Now that desk looks better," she's saying to herself. "Everything's *squared* away, yessir, *squaaaaared* away!"

$E = mc$ *squared* of course!

That number 2 — c to the power of 2 — is pretty important. But why? There's no apparent reason why it had to be that way. Why not c to the power of 2.179635, to take just one possibility? That wouldn't be very neat, to be sure. But why did nature have to be neat? Why *should* it have the mathematical order and elegance that it *does* have?

Here's the point. If we follow *The Story*, there's no explanation for it. It's unreasonable. It's inexplicable. It's a brute fact—albeit a very convenient one!

But that's not what the pioneers of modern science believed at all. They believed that the mathematical order of nature had a *theological* basis. Galileo famously declared that "the book of nature is written in the language of mathematics." That certainly appears to be the case. Mathematics is a kind of language; the orderliness of the natural world is expressed in that language, and scientists are in the business of reading the book of nature using that language. The better we know the language, the better we're able to read the book. But if nature really is like a book written in a kind of language, that book must have an *author* who is fluent in that language.

In short, the applicability of mathematics to nature is unexplainable only if one refuses to countenance the most obvious explanation.

V. Kicking Away the Ladder

I began by quoting the Declaration of Independence and its famous reference to the "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." That document was a *political* document, but those who wrote and signed it understood their political arguments to have *theological* foundations. They appealed to the idea of natural laws, in the sense of natural rights, but they understood that such laws need a lawmaker or lawgiver.

The same basic idea of natural rights persists today in the form of *universal human rights*, but any theological foundations for such rights have been largely abandoned. The "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," adopted by the United

Nations in 1948, speaks of the “equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family,” but provides no account of where these rights come from or why they exist.¹⁰ It is by design a thoroughly secular document, even though its ideals are historically rooted in a *theological* worldview. Every time we appeal to human rights, we’re resting on theological foundations, whether we acknowledge it or not, whether we like it or not.

I want to suggest, no doubt provocatively, that the same goes for modern science. Every time we appeal to modern science—to the scientific method and to the fruits of scientific investigation—we’re resting on theological foundations, whether we acknowledge it or not, whether we like it or not.

To claim as some do that these theological foundations are dispensable—worse still, that they’re now a *hindrance* to science—is an exercise in denial. Repudiating the theological foundations of science is like using a ladder to climb onto the roof of your house, then kicking away the ladder and only reluctantly admitting that you relied on it, insisting instead that it you never needed it anyway because *you could have just jumped straight up onto the roof*.

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

The Care of Wounded Souls: The Pastoral Heart of the Reformation

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There is an important bit in the 2003 film, *Luther*, starring Joseph Finnes. Johann Tetzel has come to Juterbog, preaching his revival message of hell-fire and brimstone for those who remain in purgatory. However, Tetzel noted, there is a way out for German loved ones: purchase an indulgence, which will set them free. Tetzel applies his sermon to a German woman named Hanna, who has her handicapped daughter on her back. “Gentle mother,” Tetzel says, “will your daughter run to Jesus on her dying day?” The implication is that if Hanna buys the indulgence, her daughter will skip purgatory and go straight to Jesus’s presence.

The next day, Hanna takes the indulgence to Luther. She is thrilled that she has done something for her daughter, until she sees Luther’s face cloud over. “This is just a piece of paper,” he grimaces. He takes two coins out of his pocket and says to her, “Take this money and use it for Greta.” As she turns away, Luther crumbles the paper with a furious look; the next scene is Luther nailing the ninety-five theses to the Wittenberg church door.

Of course, the scene is fictionalized but it represents an important truth that far too many Protestant historians, theologians, pastors, and lay leaders have missed in thinking about the Reformation: the doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and ritual reforms that made up the Reformation ultimately had a pastoral goal. What drove Luther—and each of the reformers after him—was the care of wounded and terrified souls whom he saw as bound and manipulated by the Roman Catholic penitential system. Any account of the Reformation that neglects this overarching pastoral focus and goal will ultimately produce a lopsided historical understanding with an equally unbalanced contemporary application.¹

Dr. Lucas also serves as senior pastor at Independent Presbyterian Church (PCA), Memphis, TN. This paper was given at the 2017 Francis Schaeffer Institute Lectures at Covenant Theological Seminary.

¹ While Ronald Rittgers observes that “it is a commonplace in contemporary Reformation research that Luther’s efforts to reform the church began with an attempt to reform the care of souls,” that commonplace hasn’t trickled down to mainstream Protestantism: Ronald K. Rittgers, “How Luther’s

Pastor Martin Luther

Historian Timothy Wengert had to emphasize this point twice in his introduction to his edited book, *The Pastoral Luther*: “Again: Martin Luther was, more than anything else, pastor and preacher for his Wittenberg flock. This simple, almost innocuous commonplace holds one of the most important, yet virtually unexplored, keys to understanding Luther’s impact on the history of the Christian church.” This oversight does not extend to Luther alone, of course; there have been relatively few studies of John Calvin or Jonathan Edwards as pastors. Still, the oversight for Luther is especially significant because it causes a distorted understanding of his own theological contribution as well as the Reformation that developed from his ministry.²

Of course, Luther’s concern to minister the Gospel to wounded souls arose out of his own experience. In his *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses*, he reflected on his own spiritual struggle:

I myself “knew a man” who claimed that he had often suffered these punishments, in fact over a very brief period of time. Yet they were so great and so much like hell that no tongue could adequately express them, no pen could describe them, and one who had not himself experienced them could not believe them. And so great were they that, if they had been sustained or had lasted for half an hour, even for one tenth of an hour, he would have perished completely and all his bones would have been reduced to ashes. At such a time, God seems terribly angry, and with him the whole creation. At such a time there is no flight, no comfort, within or without, but all things accuse...All that remains is the stark-naked desire for help and a terrible groaning, but it does not know where to turn for help. In this instance, the person is stretched out with Christ so that all his bones may be counted, and every corner of the soul is

Engagement in Pastoral Care Shaped His Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb et al (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 462.

² Timothy J. Wengert, “Introducing the Pastoral Luther,” in *The Pastoral Luther*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2.

filled with the greatest bitterness, dread, trembling, and sorrow in such a manner that all these last forever.³

This was Luther's *Anfechtung*, a word that often defies English translation, but stands for "all the doubt, turmoil, pain, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man." And while Luther experienced this sense of woundedness or agonizing struggle in degrees that seemed unusually intense, he also believed that his experience was common to being human. That meant, then, that the wounded conscience was the human condition to which the Gospel spoke, both at the initial moment of faith, but also the whole life long.⁴

Toward the end of Luther's life, he still remembered his conscience's agony in those early days. "Though I lived as a monk without reproach," he observed, "I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction." He "raged with a fierce and troubled conscience" at this "righteous God who punishes sinners." It was not until he fully understood the Gospel from Romans 1:17 that Luther's conscience was quieted. "There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith," he wrote. "And this it he meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith...Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates." The great master narrative for Luther himself was an agonizing struggle with the Law but relief and comfort through the Gospel.⁵

The Gospel for Wounded Souls

Luther translated his own experience of comfort from the Gospel of free justification to others through a robust pastoral theology. Central to Luther's theological understanding for pastoral practice was the continuing effects of the fall in Adam's children. Though human nature has an aspect of goodness as a creation of

³ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*. American edition. 55 vols. Ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-86), 31:129 (hereafter, LW).

⁴ Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 26.

⁵ LW, 34:336-337.

God, yet “from birth they are full of evil lust and inclination and cannot by nature possess true fear of God and true faith in God.” Indeed, human beings are bound by sin; they cannot choose the good, but only choose to satisfy themselves by having other goods before God.⁶

Human beings do not really understand themselves and do not recognize their lost condition and their bound wills apart from the preaching of the Law and Gospel. But as the Law of God comes to bear on the conscience, with its threatening and warnings, the conscience begins to know terror and agonizing struggle. For Luther, the conscience was an independent judging function within every human being: “its proper work...is to accuse or to excuse, to cause one to stand accused or absolved, terrified or secure. Its purpose is not to do, but to speak about what has been done and what should be done, and this judgment makes us stand accused or saved before God.” Left to itself, the conscience sought to excuse through self-motivated, self-created works that it might trophy before.⁷

Likewise, the conscience might be manipulated by other (false) standards, bringing terror not according to God’s Law, but through false teaching. According to Luther, this is what was happening during the Indulgence Controversy. In Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), he accused indulgence preachers, like Tetzl, of playing upon the “great fear” and “horror” that purgatory offered to the religious faithful (no. 14, 15). And yet, the indulgences themselves could not actually resolve the real problem of purgatory: namely, the holiness required to enter heaven. All the indulgences could do was take away temporal penalties; they could not increase holy love itself (no. 21, 22).⁸

Even more, indulgences did not supply anything to the Christian that genuine repentance itself did not give: “Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters” (no., 36, 37).

⁶ *Augsburg Confession*, Article II, in *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 36.1-3 [hereafter, BC]; *Formula of Concord*, Article I, BC, 488.

⁷ Notger Slenczka, “Luther’s Anthropology,” in *Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 218; cf. *Smalcald Articles*, 3:1, BC, 311; LW, 44:298. See also Randall C. Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 19-39.

⁸ For this and the next paragraph, I am using the version of the Ninety-Five Theses found in LW, 31:25-33. Citations in the text are to the thesis number.

Indulgences manipulated the weak consciences of the laity by playing on their fears and selling them something that they really did not need. What the wounded, fearful consciences of the people needed was the preaching of the Gospel (no. 53, 54). Only through God's Word of Gospel would Christians "be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their head, through penalties, death, and hell; and thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations" (no. 94, 95). The terrified conscience of the Christian, stirred and fearful as a result of the preaching of the Law, needed Jesus gained through God's Word and repentant faith.

This emphasis upon the pastoral needs of the wounded conscience, bound by sin and terrified by judgment, would be consistent for Luther. It was evident in his next set of theses, those that made up the *Heidelberg Disputation* in 1518. The Law and human works cannot "advance man on his way to righteousness," but even more, the conscience knows this to be the case. The Law drives the human to despair of his ability, for "it leads him into hell and makes a poor man and shows him that he is a sinner in all his works." Such an individual, wracked in his or her own conscience, needs the comfort of the Gospel. Where will it be found? The theologian of glory points the individual to her own resources; the theologian of the cross points her to the suffering of Jesus on the cross. That is the place where the weak, wounded conscience goes: she "believes much in Christ."⁹

Thus, faith alone in Christ alone is the only hope for a struggling soul. Luther's teaching finds its place in the *Augsburg Confession*: while the unexperienced despise justification by faith alone, "devout and anxious consciences find by experience that it offers the greatest consolation." Works cannot calm the conscience; "only by faith when they are certain that they have a God who has been reconciled on account of Christ. As Paul teaches in Romans 5[1]: 'Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God.' This whole teaching must be referred to that struggle of the terrified conscience, and it cannot be understood apart from that struggle." Faith in Christ soothes the wounded and terrified conscience.¹⁰

This faith in Christ is a repentant faith. In fact, the weakness, woundedness, or terror of the believing conscience, produced by the preaching of the Law, is contrition. Melancthon observed that "contrition is the genuine terror of the conscience that feels God's wrath against sin and grieves that it has sinned." Contrition arises in

⁹ LW, 31:42, 51-52, 55.

¹⁰ *Augsburg Confession*, Article XX, in BC, 55:1-18.

response to the preached Word, especially as the Law shows individuals their sin and their just condemnation. But the preached Word also holds out the Gospel and faith in Christ is the appropriate response, “the second part of repentance.” Luther drove home the same points: in one sermon, he declared that “contrition, according to the Scriptures, is not partial...but it extends over the whole person with all its life and being, yes, over your whole nature, and shows that you are an object of God’s wrath and condemn to hell.” In such a condition, faith receives the forgiveness of sins and conscience is soothed and calmed.¹¹

Indeed, because faith is passive, it rests itself in God’s righteousness as its own hope. As Luther argued in his “Lectures on Galatians,” “the righteous of faith which God imputes to us through Christ without works...is a merely passive righteousness...For here we work nothing, render nothing to God; we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely, God.” As the Gospel holds out the promise both of forgiveness and right standing before God, faith rests upon that promise. And the Word of promise to which faith clings effects a wonderful exchange: our sins become Christ’s; Christ’s righteousness becomes ours. Only in this way do “terrified consciences” find rest; in fact, the result is “joy of conscience.”¹²

But the struggle of the Christian life is the continuous agonizing struggle to rest in the Word of promise, which promises passive righteousness and which produces an active righteousness that loves the neighbor. Even Luther despaired of this at times: “There’s no man living one earth who knows how to distinguish between the law and the gospel. We may think we understand it when we are listening to a sermon, but we’re far from it. Only the Holy Spirit knows this...Because I’ve been writing so much and so long about it, you’d think I’d know the distinction, but when a crisis comes I recognize very well that I am far, far from understanding.” Christians had to come back to the Word of God, active in their baptisms, sermons, and the Supper, which would renew faith that rested in Christ. That was the only way the wounded conscience might progress in this Christian life with a measure of peace.¹³

The Wounded Healer

¹¹ *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Article XIII, in BC, 191-92; Luther quoted in Zachman, *Assurance of Faith*, 43.

¹² LW, 26:4-5; LW, 31:189-91.

¹³ LW, 54:127.

Because of Luther's own experience of the Gospel bringing a measure of peace to his conscience and because of his pastorally shaped theological commitments, he was in regular demand as a spiritual counselor. In a real and regular way, Luther participated in the cure of souls as he sought to apply his reformational theology to the agonizing struggle of his parishioners.

As early as 1516, Luther was applying his reformational theology to wounded consciences of others. To George Spenlein, an Augustinian monk, Luther probed his condition by wondering, "I should like to know whether your soul, tired of its own righteousness, is learning to be revived by and to trust in the righteousness of Christ." For the weak conscience, tired of trying to satisfy the law by works of obedience, Luther urged, "My dear brothers, learn Christ and him crucified. Learn to pray to him and, despairing of yourself, say: 'Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, but I am thy sin. Thou hast taken upon thyself what is mine and has given to me what is thine. Thou hast taken upon thyself what thou wast not and hast given to me what I was not.'" Only by resting in faith upon Jesus in response to his promise could the wonderful exchange happen and someone "obtain a good conscience." Indeed, "the greatest gift is to have a conscience pacified by the Word. For this did God permit his Son to die, that we might have a good conscience."¹⁴

While the Gospel promised peace of conscience, that did not mean that life was free of agonizing struggle. As Luther observed at the table one day, "The Christian life is to be lived among sorrows, trials, afflictions, deaths." But those sufferings, trials, and temptations were meant to drive them to faith in Christ: "If Christians did not suffer temptations, what would be the purpose of the promises and consolations of the gospel and the preaching of grace?" Another day at table, someone noted that the devil flogged us with our sins at just the point to cause us most agony. Luther agreed with this: "[The devil] can fashion the oddest syllogisms. For example, 'You have sinned; God is wrathful toward sinners; therefore, despair.' Here it is necessary that we proceed from the Law to the Gospel and lay hold of the article of the forgiveness of sins."¹⁵

To another parishioner in 1532, who was struggling with "terror," Luther urged prayer and the Word of God. "Although I do not know what attitude you take

¹⁴ Luther to George Spenlein, 8 April 1516, in Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 110 [hereafter, LSC]; LW, 54:64.

¹⁵ LSC, 100, 124.

toward your terror, you should call upon God and pray, especially at the time when you become aware of the terror,” Luther counseled. However, “if you are unable to pray well, have something from the Psalms or the New Testament read to you in a clear voice, and listen attentively to the reading.” Through prayer and Scripture, the individual would be lead out of himself to rest his heart in Christ. Sometimes, though, when the devil attacked and terrorized the conscience, the Christian “must not believe your own thoughts, nor those of the devil. But believe what we preachers say, for God has commanded us to instruct and absolve souls, as Christ said, ‘Whosoever sins yet remit, they are remitted.’ This you must believe.”¹⁶

In fact, a kind of “divine logic” might be used in prayer as Christians wrestle with their consciences. Believers must start with the confession that “Christ is other and greater than Moses, pope, or all the world—indeed, that he is other and greater than our own conscience.” If the conscience compels assent to Law or church, “how much more must we believe Christ, the Lord of all things, who says, ‘Believe.’” As the individual used Word and prayer, there was a necessity to wrestle with one’s conscience in the light of the Gospel. For the Gospel grasped by faith is medicine for the struggling conscience.¹⁷

The Heart of the Reformation

Luther recognized how vital experience was in shaping Christians and especially pastors. But it was the experience of the Word of God, especially the promise of the Gospel, in the midst of one’s agonizing struggle that makes us theologians. Luther’s three rules for studying theology—prayer, meditation, and agonizing struggle—all point this direction. “As God’s Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor of you, and by his assaults [*Anfechtungen*] will teach you to seek and love God’s Word,” Luther observed. Indeed, such struggle “is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom.” And by God’s Word, Luther

¹⁶ Luther to Valentine Hausmann, 24 June 1532, in LSC, 121; Luther to Mrs. M., 11 January 1543, in LSC, 103.

¹⁷ LSC, 123.

especially means the promise of the Gospel, that faith alone in Christ alone gains forgiveness of sins and God's righteousness.¹⁸

Because this is the case, I think we need to rethink what the heart of the Reformation really was; or perhaps to put it different, we need to recast our approach to the Reformation doctrines that we affirm. For example, it has been a truism that justification by faith alone is the article upon which the church stands or falls. But Luther did not mean this simply as a mere propositional statement—that if we get justification wrong, the church will fall. Of course, that is true also, but why? Why was it important to get justification right? So that we can pass ordination exams? So that we can duel with those who get it wrong? For Luther—and I'd suggest that this would be the case for the other reformers as well—it was because justification by faith alone was the means by which the agonized, wounded conscience might find rest and peace. In other words, there was a pastoral *telos* in view: if wounded consciences remained restless, then the devil would destroy them and the church would fall. The Reformation's heart was to care for wounded souls.¹⁹

But if that was the ultimate end of the Reformation, then I wonder whether we have that same goal in mind as we study Bible, theology, history, and the rest. I fear that at times students and pastors enjoy the intellectual challenge of exegeting the biblical text or exploring theological dogmas without asking the question, "What is this all for?" If Luther (and by extension, the Reformers collectively) provide any example for us, it is that the Reformation's heart was the cure of wounded souls. All of our biblical and theological study ultimately has this pastoral focus—the relief of those who agonize through the Christ who comes near through the Word of the Gospel.

In addition, for those who preparing for the ministry of the cure of souls, there is a profound need to understand how to use the Gospel with one's own conscience. Luther admonished "those of you who are to become instructors of consciences...that you exercise yourselves by study, by reading, by meditation, and by prayer, so that in temptation you will be able to instruct consciences, both your own and others, console them, and take them from the Law to grace, from active righteousness to passive righteousness, in short, from Moses to Christ." If ministerial candidates do

¹⁸ Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 37; LW, 34:286-27.

¹⁹ Luther said this many times in different forms; for example, "If the doctrine of justification is lost, the whole of Christian doctrine is lost" (LW, 26:9).

not understand how to mine their own experience of the Gospel for others, they will do more harm than good in the parish. But even more, they will not be truly reformational, no matter how well they do in seminary or on their ordination exams.²⁰

Having begun this talk with a fictionalized account, I want to end with one. In the third novella of Bo Giertz's classic *The Hammer of God*, parish pastor Gosta Torvik had just picked up his pastoral colleague Olle Bengtsson from the train. Immediately, Bengtsson grilled the pastor on the failure of the revival that had occurred in the parish and traced it to a failure in knowing and applying the Gospel to oneself and one's people. Torvik had simply left people with terrified consciences driven by the Law, which they were trying to meet by good behavior and failing miserably.

Bengtsson observed, "You must know that when God's work gets started in a man, he will soon or later experience desperate need, the need that is created by God's Word."

Torvik responded, "But what, then, shall a man do?"

"And you ask that, you who are a pastor? What follows illumination by the law?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

Bengtsson made a complete halt and pushed his hat back in a gesture of astonishment.

"I thought so. When will they learn at Upsala not to send out people to shepherd souls until they have learned the ABCs of Christianity."

Bengtsson went on to explain what we have already heard from Luther: how the Law terrifies the wounded conscience, but only the Gospel can deliver: "His eyes are turned from his own miserable condition and he catches sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for just such black rascals as himself. And he hears that it is *faith* that makes righteous, and not works. That is the enlightenment through the gospel. Therefore, *everything* here in Odesjo depends on whether you can rightly preach the gospel and guide souls to the Redeemer. Answer me honestly: Are you not aware of this yourself? Yes or no?"²¹

²⁰ LW, 26:10.

²¹ Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God*, revised edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005), 247-50.

That is the same question for us today as those engaged in the care of wounded souls and as those who are heirs of this Reformation heritage. Everything depends on this.

**Upgrading to the Fourth Edition of Mounce's Greek Textbook:
A Review and Guide for Instructors**

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Given that I had just finished another round of Greek I–II, a palpable sense of dread came over me when I saw a late-2018 advertisement for a new edition of the course's textbook. Desiring to assess the damage that would be inflicted upon my lecture notes, quizzes, exams, and in-class examples by a revision to the decade-old textbook, I requested a copy and proceeded to assess things once it was in my hands.

What follows is a detailed comparison of the fourth edition of William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar* (Zondervan, 2019) with its predecessor, the third edition (Zondervan, 2009). The goal is to probe whether and how an instructor should adopt the updated edition (*BBG-4*) or continue using the third (*BBG-3*).¹

Any time a standard textbook is updated, numerous issues arise for instructors, so this is nothing new. However, Mounce's grammar is by far the most popular introductory *koine* Greek textbook in America (it appears less popular overseas), so the ramifications are more far-reaching.

I will provide a summary of my verdict up front. *BBG-4 is a well-conceived upgrade that redresses a large number of flaws in the prior edition, while avoiding comprehensive modifications that would force significant rework upon those upgrading. While it retains most of Mounce's distinctives—for better and worse—and may not be the 'best' grammar available, I can recommend that those already using Mounce can and should adopt the fourth edition.*

REVIEW

BBG-3 has been an effective textbook for hundreds of thousands of students, including myself. Yet, like any textbook of its scope, there have always been pluses and minuses to Mounce's grammar.

¹ I will not be assessing the supplementary DVDs or flashcards. The workbook appears essentially identical to the prior edition apart from updates to chapter names to match *BBG-4* (discussed below).

Its chief strength has always been how it targets an audience that likely has never learned another language and does not know English very well, either. Thus, it is masterful at easing students into the task of learning Greek.

But its limitations compared with other introductory grammars on the market are well-known: idiosyncratic sequencing,² weakness or over-simplification in certain grammatical areas,³ use of the primary-secondary grid of verb endings while still not really moving away from paradigms/principal parts,⁴ and (especially) less than accurate ways of teaching tense, aspect, and voice within the verbal system.

With *BBG-4*, all the things that make the approach distinctively “Mounce” are retained. It still follows the same sequence, makes use of the rule-based approach to the verb system, and so on. Thus, I will not spend time comparing *BBG-4* with other grammars on the market, for the features that made *BBG-3* different from others are still around. You either like it (and deal with certain limitations) or you do not. In other words, if someone already prefers, say, the grammars of Decker, Croy, or Black,⁵ there is probably little reason to switch to *BBG-4*. It is still Mounce.

However, *BBG-4* does make marked improvements over *BBG-3* in other areas. So I will focus on helping instructors decide whether to retain their heavily marked-up *BBG-3* or go through the pain of upgrading. It may be that the improvements made—particularly in the realm of tense, aspect, and voice (as we will see)—might persuade someone to switch from a different textbook to *BBG-4*. But that is not my focus.

To these ends, I will assume familiarity with *BBG-3* in what follows.

I. Strengths of the Fourth Edition

I will begin with a summary of the improvements made in *BBG-4* over *BBG-3*. In certain cases, some of these strengths will be counterbalanced with drawbacks (which I will cover here rather than in the subsequent section). I will focus on major items; details will be provided in the “Guide” that follows below.

² Including the delay of verbs longer than is necessary; covering “second aorists” first in order, etc.

³ Coupled with too much emphasis on the minutiae of morphology.

⁴ While the avoidance of unnecessary rote memorization is commendable (and a strength of Mounce on the whole), every user realizes that the principal parts ultimately have to be memorized at some level, especially for verbs with alternative stems.

⁵ Rodney J. Decker, *Reading Koine Greek* (Baker Academic, 2014); N. Clayton Croy, *A Primer of Biblical Greek* (Eerdmans, 2011); David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* (B&H Academic, 2009).

1) *Stability in the essentials.* *BBG-4* does not make any major changes in the areas that would require instructors to make extensive changes to course materials. While there is fine-tuning along the way, the following elements are essentially unchanged:

- Sequence of chapters (though some are renamed)
- Sequence of vocabulary
- Approach to nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and prepositions (including parsing method and charts)
- Approach to verbs (including parsing method, rules, master chart of primary-secondary endings, sequence of the moods, coverage of participles)
- “Track One” and “Track Two” options
- Syncing of the textbook with the workbook

Thus, those who already use Mounce can breathe a sigh of relief: wholesale changes are not required, since the basic skeleton of the textbook has remained the same.

2) *Revisions to how verb tense and aspect are handled.* A key place where introductory grammars struggle is the task of explaining tense and aspect to those who are just beginning Greek. Tense/aspect has been a hotly debated topic within the field in recent decades. *BBG-3* is more or less middle-of-the-pack in how it explains the issues, especially with its use of “continuous,” “undefined,” and “completed (but with ongoing effect)” as aspect labels. Instructors who keep track of recent developments have, thus, found themselves needing to correct or essentially replace Mounce’s treatment with their own.

Fortunately, *BBG-4* makes good progress in becoming more current on tense and aspect. While Mounce still lands in the camp that holds that Greek does morphologize tense in the indicative, he has adopted different terminology for aspect and provides a longer and generally competent explanation in his overview of verbs (ch. 15).⁶ In place of the old labels are those that most will find unobjectionable or, at least, easier to accommodate to their preferred method of teaching:

⁶ He also cites Con Campbell and Buist Fanning at points; Stanley Porter is notably absent.

	<i>BBG-3</i>	<i>BBG-4</i>
Present / Imperfect	Continuous	Imperfective (Continuous)
Aorist	Undefined	Perfective (Undefined)
Perfect	Completed	Combinative (Completed)

Note that the primary labels have been updated, particularly in the chapter titles and headings. For instance, what previously was “Aorist (Undefined) Adverbial Participles” is now “Perfective (Aorist) Adverbial Participles” (ch. 28).

The old labels, however, still lurk in the parentheses, and this marks a weakness of *BBG-4*: the shift towards a better approach to verbal aspect is somewhat cosmetic and often inconsistent. Yes, the headers change, but “continuous” and “undefined” are retained (although grammarians decreasingly use those terms in describing aspect); in fact, in the detailed discussions they typically take preference.⁷ Regularly *BBG-4* will, for instance, describe an aorist verb as “undefined in aspect” even if the header for the section reads “perfective.” Moreover, while *BBG-4* adopts “combinative” for the perfect tense-form,⁸ it rarely engages in detail with its aspectual features and still falls back on “completed...ongoing” to describe it. *BBG-4* also does not even mention that there is debate about this third aspect, with some grammarians arguing that it is not distinct but, rather, should be folded into either perfective or imperfective. On balance the handling of the perfect continues to be a weak spot. Finally, *BBG-4* holds the line from *BBG-3* that aspect is basically irrelevant for the future tense-form, which remains a point of debate.

All told, the updates on tense and aspect are welcome and certainly will make teaching easier. One wishes, however, that they were more thoroughly applied and not (at points) a cosmetic change, which, due to inconsistent retention of past terminology, will still lead to confusion for students.

3) *Revisions to how “deponency” and the middle voice are handled.* Perhaps the biggest area in which *BBG-4* proves more up-to-date is in its treatment of the middle voice. Much to the chagrin of many instructors, *BBG-3* leans heavily in the pro-“deponency” direction and often treats the middle quite reductionistically as reflexive-only.

⁷ For instance, the new perfective/imperfective/combinative scheme is not used in the discussions of periphrastic constructions (p. 344) or infinitives (p. 368).

⁸ Another option would have been “stative,” but “combinative” is adequate. For more on these labeling issues, see Nicholas J. Ellis, Michael G. Aubrey, and Mark Dubis, “The Greek Verbal System and Aspectual Prominence: Revising Our Taxonomy and Nomenclature,” *JETS* 59/1 (2016): 33–62.

Fortunately, extensive revisions are made in *BBG-4* to redress this.⁹ In chapters 18 and 24, Mounce embraces the definition of the middle voice as “subject-affectedness,” mentions “deponency” as an option but clearly gives it a backseat, provides a helpful set of examples that flesh out the nuances of the middle, and even raises the possibility of *koine* functioning as a two-voice system (default vs. middle-passive). In contrast to the inconsistent application of updated aspect terminology, *BBG-4* does a great job employing this shift in understanding the middle (and passive) much more consistently throughout the textbook without getting bogged down in the minutiae. It is perhaps the book's best improvement.

4) *Refinements to the handling of glosses.* *BBG-4* does an admirable job in updating glosses for vocabulary words, particularly by introducing the use of semicolons to make more clear any differences in meaning or semantic fields for given words. In *BBG-3*, every gloss is separated by a comma; in *BBG-4*, many entries introduce a semicolon between meanings that are significantly different. Moreover, in select instances *BBG-4* rearranges glosses or removes unnecessary information. For instance:

	<i>BBG-3</i>	<i>BBG-4</i>
ἀκούω	I hear, learn, obey, understand	I hear; learn, obey; understand
ἄνθρωπος	man, mankind, person, people, humankind, human being	man; person, human being; people, mankind
πνεῦμα	spirit, Spirit, wind, breath, inner life	spirit, Spirit; wind, breath; inner life

At points *BBG-4* inserts semicolons between glosses where there is no clear rationale, or fails to insert them when would have made sense (e.g., ἀνὴρ reads “male, husband; man” when it would have been more logical to read “male, man; husband”). But such distinctions can be subjective, and on the whole these improvements will reinforce with students the idea of semantic domains and variations in word meaning.

5) *Improved handling of pronunciation.* Though Mounce still endorses the Erasmian pronunciation of *koine* for instruction, he introduces the (neo-)modern pronunciation system at the outset (ch. 3) and integrates it into the updated software

⁹ *BBG-4* even cites Rutger Allan and other scholars who have refined our understanding of the middle.

tools. This will make *BBG-4* much more usable for those who have adopted the latter system as (arguably) more accurate to the first-century time period.

6) *Introduction of “phrasing.”* Periodically in *BBG-4*,¹⁰ Mounce has introduced an exegetical tool called “phrasing,” which is a simple introduction to clause-level analysis. A rudimentary form is present in *BBG-3*, but the treatments have been expanded and refined in *BBG-4*. “Phrasing” is essentially a standard tab-based method of arranging main verbs, relative clauses, participles, prepositions, etc. in a visual way to expose the syntactical structure. An example in ch. 14 visualizes the structure of Rom 1:9a as follows:

μάρτυς γάρ μου ἐστὶν ὁ θεός,
 ὃς λατρεύω
 ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου
 ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ

It is very basic, of course, but it will serve instructors well in starting to introduce students to the analysis of Greek beyond the word level, preparing them for later coursework. The only major complaint is that “phrasing” shows up only a few times (in chapters on prepositions, relative clauses, and [sometimes] participles). It would be tremendously useful to include more of these discussions throughout.¹¹

7) *Miscellaneous upgrades of note.* While I will summarize several other changes below in the “Guide,” a few other small-scale but valuable improvements have been made in *BBG-4*. Gone, at last, are all references to the “definite” article—a strange inconsistency in *BBG-3*. Several additions/revisions will prove valuable, such as an adjective decision tree (substantive, attributive, predicative); the relocation of the discussion of transitivity for verbs from late in the book to earlier; and an improved discussion of verbal and adjectival dimensions of participles. The Greek typography is improved, including a switch to a tilde-style circumflex (e.g., ῥ) that will match

¹⁰ Sometimes as a standalone section (e.g., ch. 8), and sometimes in sections labeled “Translation Procedure” (e.g., ch. 14).

¹¹ For instance, it would make sense to include phrasing discussions that show how to relate an indicative clause with a ἰν + subjunctive clause; an indicative clause with an infinitive clause; a main clause with a genitive absolute; and so on.

students’ Greek Bibles more closely.¹² A higher number of Greek manuscript images have been peppered throughout, while some of the oddities (i.e. Greek bathroom signs and a “Mary Poppins” poster) of *BBG-3* have been removed. And other than a single cameo, the cartoon “Professor” has been shown the door.

II. Drawbacks of the Fourth Edition

Let us turn now to areas of weakness for *BBG-4*. As mentioned above, I am focusing here not on the general critiques of Mounce’s approach (in comparison to other grammars) but on “intramural” issues: namely, changes that are a downgrade from *BBG-3*, or changes that are not made but would have been beneficial.

1) *Less intuitive presentation of vocabulary*. Throughout *BBG-4* places more pronounced emphasis on roots and stems (especially for verbs). This, in turn, leads to subtle but impactful changes to how vocabulary words are displayed. In the new presentation, the lexical form appears to the left (as in *BBG-3*), but now on the same line to the right is not the list of glosses but, rather, the asterisked root or stem(s). The glosses appear below the stem/roots and are italicized. Let us compare the formats:

<i>BBG-3</i>	ἔργον, –ου, τό	work, deed, action (169; *ἔργο)
<i>BBG-4</i>	ἔργον, –ου, τό	*ἔργο (169) <i>work; deed, action</i>

This new arrangement unfortunately makes it more cumbersome to track the word to its gloss(es); the eye naturally moves left-to-right, but now it has to move down as well. The particular typography of the italics further causes the glosses to stand out less, not more. The impression is even worse for verbs, for which glosses are now sandwiched between two lines of Greek text (the asterisked root/stem on line 1, and the list of principal parts on line 3). This is yet further compounded by Mounce’s liberality in including sometimes lengthy side-discussions about morphology or other

¹² The use of the half-circle circumflex in *BBG-3* is often confusing for students, as it does not match UBS-5 or NA-28.

issues in-line under the glosses, rather than in a footnote.¹³ On the whole, the visual arrangement of the vocabulary lists has taken a step back, as the glosses—the information a student needs most—are now harder to find in the fray of details.

2) *Downgrades in certain elements of form-factor and overall presentation.* Users will immediately notice that the dimensions of *BBG-4* are strikingly different than *BBG-3*. Whereas its predecessor is 8.5 x 11 inches, the new edition is 6.5 x 9.5 inches.¹⁴ This reduction in form-factor yields a 21% increase from 419 pages (*BBG-3*) to 509 pages (*BBG-4*); however, due to changes in paper thickness, the new edition is 40-50% thicker. The workbook, however, remains the same size. The net effect is that *BBG-4* bears the same size profile as most other intermediate grammars and will, thus, look better on the shelf. There are tradeoffs, however: the thicker, smaller edition does not lie flat as readily as *BBG-3* (at least, not yet—presumably it will with repeated use), nor does it pair as well with the workbook.

Beyond the size change, other significant modifications have been made to the overall presentation. *BBG-3* features extensive margins on all sides—but especially at the outer edges (nearly two inches)—which are very useful for students and instructors. The margins have been dramatically reduced (to roughly 0.5 inches all around), leaving effectively no space on any given page for annotations. While this is fine for an intermediate grammar, it is a major loss for a beginner’s textbook.¹⁵

BBG-4 has also been reworked with a more contemporary style sheet, particularly in terms of headers. This yields a more polished product: gone is the chaotic mix of shaded headers, thick dotted lines, and so forth that gave *BBG-3* a bit of a 1990s feel. There is, however, a downside. In the attempt to render a more sleek product, certain visual aides have been lost or become strangely less consistent, not more. In particular:

¹³ This is also true in *BBG-3* and has not been improved in *BBG-4*. The choice to include ancillary details in a footnote (along with memory clues) versus the main text (below the glosses) continues to evince little discernible pattern.

¹⁴ This returns the grammar to the same basic dimensions of the first and second editions.

¹⁵ On the plus side, perhaps: instructors will not need to bother copying over their marginal notes, memory clues, and so forth from *BBG-3* to *BBG-4*, because there is basically no room for them!

- Noun and verb paradigms no longer have borders but rather are simply tabbed text; thus, they no longer stand out and get lost amid the prose—a disadvantage for students looking to review a chapter quickly.
- Review sections (“Halftime” and “Summary”) now blend in, whereas they stood out prominently in *BBG-3* and drew students’ attention.
- The formatting of tables, charts, diagrams, and other insets is now strangely inconsistent, whereas it was fairly uniform in *BBG-3*. Some are plain text (as with paradigms) with no borders or shading (e.g., p. 75). Some lack shading but come with a top/bottom borders (p. 103), black borders for all table cells (p. 173), or a blue border on the outside (p. 334). Others have gray shading and a top/bottom border (p. 200). This may seem like nit-picking, but the cumulative effect of these mixed visual cues is important: to what is the student supposed to pay heightened attention?¹⁶

Finally, while the production quality of *BBG-4* is solid on the whole, there appear to be significant issues in one particular area: the presentation of various noun/verb endings in blue font. The same practice was employed in *BBG-3*, with no issues. With *BBG-4* the quality has decreased, whereby the vertical and horizontal alignment of these blue sets of letters with respect to the base word (in black font) is very inconsistent.¹⁷ Let me illustrate with some examples:

Mild		Severe
λυόμεθα	ἐγράφημεν	λυόμενος, λυομένη
ἐλύθην	ἐγράφητε	λύοντες, λύοντα
ἐλύθης	ἐγράφησαν	λύουσαι
ἐλύθη		λυόμενος (ἐ) λάλυ μιν
πορευόμεθα		λυομένου (ἐ) λάλυ σο
πορεύσεσθε		λυομένω (ἐ) λάλυ το
πορεύονται		λυόμενον

¹⁶ Pages 226–227 are a particularly vivid example: the first two insets have black borders around every cell; the third and fifth insets are shaded gray with top/bottom borders; and the fourth inset is just tabbed text. The corresponding material in *BBG-3* had borders on all five insets (with two shaded).

¹⁷ This is, of course, not Mounce’s fault but, presumably, that of the printer used by Zondervan.

It is possible that these issues are localized (though I have confirmed with two copies of the textbook), and they might be rectified in future printings. But for those whose print copies are subject to this issue, the effect can be distracting.

3) *Missed opportunity to smooth out sequencing of material within chapters.* At several points (some of which are mentioned above), *BBG-4* makes good strides in improving the flow of various chapters. However, on the whole much more could have been done to foster a more consistent and logical sequencing of material within the main content chapters. While the chapters at a high-level follow a basic pattern—English, Greek syntax, paradigms/rules/charts, vocabulary, advanced information—the specifics vary quite a lot.

Some sections show up select chapters but not others (e.g., “Characteristics,” “Odds ’n Ends,” “Hints”). Sometimes a section is called “Translation” in one chapter but “Translation Procedure” elsewhere (and is completely relabeled “Six Basic Uses of the Infinitive” in ch. 32). Occasionally there is an “Exegesis” section in one chapter but not in others where you might expect one. The chapter on imperatives (ch. 33) includes a “Form” section that is called a variety of different things in other chapters. Some chapters have a “Meaning” section, while others sprinkle discussions of meaning throughout. In some chapters, nearly all the relevant information and paradigms are corralled into the section with the heading “Greek,” while in other chapters there is a short “Greek” section followed by a sequence of several sections with their own headings.

Granted, wooden repetition of the exact same substructure of each chapter is probably impossible. However, a bit more consistency in *BBG-4* would yield much better user experience. It is a missed opportunity in the updating of the book.

III. Verdict

Several of the drawbacks covered above are non-trivial, particularly the change in form factor (though, of course, some may like it) and printing issues, as well as the modification to the way vocabulary is displayed. Moreover, the incomplete manner in which changes to tense and aspect are worked out in the textbook—often becoming more a switch in labels than a true transformation of approach—is disappointing.

However, the positive changes from *BBG-3* to *BBG-4* on the whole outweigh the downsides. The revisions made to the discussion of voice (middle and passive,

especially) alone probably make the upgrade worthwhile, but several other changes are helpful as well, especially given that the basic skeleton of the textbook has not changed in such a way that would require extensive rework for those moving from the older version to the new one. Though one may feel, at points, like it is two steps forward and one step back, my ultimate verdict is that the upgrade from the third to the fourth edition is the right decision for those who are already using Mounce.

AN INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE TO UPGRADING

The following discussion is for those who (as suggested above) decide to upgrade from *BBG-3* to *BBG-4* in their coursework. With any change of a major textbook, instructors need to iron out a lot of details, not all of which can be covered here. I will instead address the big areas where an instructor would need to focus in order to update course materials in line with *BBG-4*.

I. Organization and Vocabulary

Perhaps the biggest area of concern for upgrading from one textbook to a new edition is the sequencing of material. Particularly for something like Greek that is cumulative, a seemingly small shift in chapter order or even arrangement of vocabulary words would throw off all lectures, quizzes, exams, etc. downstream. Fortunately, as discussed above, *BBG-4* makes no such substantial changes. But there are a few changes that instructors should note to ensure consistency.

1) *Titles of chapters*. In line with the shifts on tense and aspect described in the "Review," *BBG-4* has accordingly updated chapter titles. Other refinements to titles have also been made. Those that have been changed are as follows:

Ch.	<i>BBG-3</i>	<i>BBG-4</i>
6	Nominative and Accusative; Definite Article	Nominative and Accusative; Article
19	Future Active/Middle Indicative	Future Active and Middle Indicative
20	Verbal Roots, and Other Forms of the Future	Verbal Roots (Patterns 2–4)
22	Second Aorist Active/Middle Indicative	Second Aorist Active and Middle Indicative

Ch.	<i>BBG-3</i>	<i>BBG-4</i>
23	First Aorist Active/Middle Indicative	First Aorist Active and Middle Indicative
27	Present (Continuous) Adverbial Participles	Imperfective (Present) Adverbial Participles
28	Aorist (Undefined) Adverbial Participles	Perfective (Aorist) Adverbial Participles
30	Perfect Participles and Genitive Absolutes	Combinative (Perfect) Participles and Genitive Absolutes

It is worth noting that the ordering of material in the Appendix has been slightly changed in *BBG-4*. Also, as with *BBG-3*, the chapter names in the overall table of contents and at the start of each chapter do not fully match what is listed on the “Track One or Track Two” guide (p. 91).

2) *Changes to the vocabulary lists.* The larger changes in visual presentation have been covered above, so I will focus here on some of the details.

In terms of the vocabulary sets used for each chapter, I only found one possible change: ἄγιος appears to have been moved from chapter 10 to chapter 9 relative to *BBG-3*.¹⁸

In terms of actual glosses, updates to *BBG-3* have been made sporadically throughout (especially to introduce the “;” vs. “,” distinction, as described above). I will simply mention a few I found interesting:

Ch.	Modifications made in <i>BBG-4</i>
8	Principal parts are added for εἰμί, but the footnote instructs the student not to worry about it for now; alternate stems are added for λέγω, which at this stage might look confusing to students
11	The gloss for πίστις is modified to include “trust” as well as “teaching”; the explanation for the latter (“teaching’ in that what is believed”) is not especially clear
14	“Arm” and “finger” are removed from the entry for χεῖρ
18	Principal parts are added for δεῖ, and the glosses are slightly improved for ἔρχομαι and πορεύομαι

¹⁸ However, when working with students I have at times noticed that certain print-runs of *BBG-3* have marginal differences in vocabulary lists. Thus, this shift may only be relative to the specific printing I use. Either way, moving a word earlier in the textbook is far less a problem than moving it later.

Ch.	Modifications made in <i>BBG-4</i>
19	It would have been helpful to include a footnote on the debate concerning the meaning of Ἰουδαῖος, but none is provided
20	The digamma is added to the aorist stem of ὀράω
21	The root of διδάσκω is changed to *διδακ from *δακ in <i>BBG-3</i> ; the glosses are modified for both ἐρωτάω and ἐπερωτάω
24	Some of the details for φοβέομαι have been simplified

Furthermore, since *BBG-4* is now using NA-28 (p. xiii) rather than NA-27, the vocabulary frequencies are slightly updated to reflect the revised critical text. Finally, extra information is occasionally moved from the vocabulary listing to the footnotes (e.g., the spelling changes for ἔχω in ch. 16), but on the whole there remains a lot of commentary (as in *BBG-3*).

II. Inventory of Chapter Revisions

Major changes (both positive and negative) were covered at a high level in the “Review” above, but it is important for instructors to get down in the weeds to see how such changes play out in the actual text itself. To that end, I will provide a general summary of the significant revisions made to each chapter from *BBG-3* to *BBG-4* (apart from vocabulary). It is impossible to be comprehensive, so I will focus on alerting instructors to the most notable revisions.

Ch.	Modifications made in <i>BBG-4</i>
Intro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revises the overview of the online tools and apps (including a shift from teknia.com to billmounce.com), given that the apps have changed
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adds §3.2 introducing modern pronunciation Adds a column for modern pronunciation as well as capital letters to the alphabet chart Switches the order of the sections on breathing marks and diphthongs
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consequential changes
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consequential changes

Ch.	Modifications made in <i>BBG-4</i>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inserts a brief comment about “normal” Greek word order (V-S-O) • Introduces the skeleton of the <i>full</i> noun paradigm (including blanks for genitive and dative), whereas a partial version (excluding genitive and dative) is used in <i>BBG-3</i> • Revises the sequencing within the chapter to flow more logically • Renames “Definite Article” header(s) to “Article” • Instructs students that the theoretical stem/root of all vocabulary words “should be memorized as precisely as the lexical form” (p. 48); this certainly explains why they receive such prominence in the vocabulary lists, but the claim itself is perhaps a bit too strong
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inserts a short caveat that the genitive does not <i>only</i> mean “of” or “possession,” but one might wish for a more robust discussion • Adds a case ending chart for αὐτός to assist with exercises
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revises the “Translation” section to “Phrasing”
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifies the “anarthrous” and “articular” distinction • Revises the discussion about “first” and “second” adjective positions • Adds §9.14 containing a helpful decision tree for identifying the use of an adjective
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves details about voiced/unvoiced/etc. for the Square of Stops from the footnotes to the main text
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds μήτηρ and ἄνθρωπος to the third declension chart (p. 117)
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rearranges some of the sections in the discussion of the personal pronoun • Removes some of the more confusing footnotes from the αὐτός discussion (p. 123–125)
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More precisely identifies the attribute use of αὐτός as “identical” rather than just “same,” both in the text and the chapter summary
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renames the section on the form of the relative pronoun to “Hints” and moves it up in the chapter • Expands the translation discussion and incorporates “phrasing”

Ch.	Modifications made in <i>BBG-4</i>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds §15.3 on the principal parts for English verbs • Introduces revised terminology for verbal aspect, though retains some of the unclear definitions from <i>BBG-3</i>; for instance, it now reads, “This is called the perfective aspect. I will refer to it as an undefined action” (p. 151) • Adds §15.20 on <i>Aktionsart</i>, but it is only three sentences • Adds §15.22 on the basics of mood • Adds §15.24–25 clarifying the difference between “root” (“most basic form of a word and carries its basic meaning”) and “stem” (the form “used in a particular tense”) (p. 157) • Expands the discussion on personal endings and how they encode person and number • Adds §15.26 on the connecting vowel (formerly in ch. 16) • Adds §15.29 on “voice,” but only mentions active and passive • Adds §15.32 on the participial morpheme
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switches headings to “perfective” and “imperfective” • Expands the discussion of time and aspect in the present indicative, but the terminology is used inconsistently; for instance, the headers read “imperfective” but the text often reads “continuous (imperfective)” • Adds additional details on the nuances of the imperfective (e.g., “progressive,” “customary,” “instantaneous,” “descriptive”), which is a slight improvement but still confuses <i>Aktionsart</i> with aspect • Removes the “Gender” discussion from §16.12
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds §17.10 on transitive/intransitive (formerly in ch. 36)
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers the middle first (rather than passive, as in <i>BBG-3</i>) • Expands the discussion of the middle voice and “deponency” to three pages • Includes helpful examples showing when middle-ness is important and when it is largely indistinguishable • Updates the “Halftime Review” accordingly • Introduces the debate about the possibility of a Greek two-voice system • Adds a “Translation” section (§18.22–25) that draws out some nuances of the middle and passive with helpful examples • Adds §18.26 to introduce helpful categories of the middle voice (e.g., motion, emotion, grooming, spontaneous process, benefactive, reciprocal, reflexive)
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removes discussion of the English present/past/past perfect • Introduces more firmly the “root” versus “stem” distinction (formerly in ch. 20) • Rearranges several sections to improve the logical flow of the chapter • Relocates “Square of Stops” into the “Odds ’n Ends” section
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revises the diagram of verbal stem-change patterns to include “other stems” (thus accommodating aorist and perfect)

Ch.	Modifications made in <i>BBG-4</i>
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates the primary and secondary endings chart to read “mid / pas” for the present and imperfect (versus just “passive” in <i>BBG-3</i>) • Adds §21.25 on the “preparatory use of ‘there’” to help with translating εἶμι
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates the definition of the aorist as the tense that “describes a perfective action that normally occurs in the past” (p. 240), thereby retaining the position that Greek does (at some level) morphologize temporality in the indicative • Updates the “perfective” versus “punctiliar” discussion (but more precise <i>Aktionsart</i> distinctions would have been helpful here) • Switches between “perfective” and “undefined” regularly throughout • Updates the “Previous Words” discussion to add the verbal root and additional review columns
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds §23.19 on the liquid aorist middle (formerly in the Appendix) • Adds §23.20 on “middle-only or deponent” aorists • Updates the “Previous Words” discussion to add the verbal root and additional review columns; pattern 4 verbs are also added
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removes the tense formative chart (formerly §24.14) • Adds a lengthy section (§24.19–21) to discuss the use of the passive (θ) ending for aorists that are not semantically passive, but, rather, are middle; this continues the discussion introduced in ch. 18 on recent changes to our understanding of the middle/passive
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds §25.3 to introduce the “combinative” nomenclature for the aspect of the perfect, but does not show awareness of other terminology (e.g., “stative”) or some scholars’ rejection of this third aspect • Moves the “Halftime Review” earlier and revises the section now titled “Formation of the Perfect” • Removes the discussion of the middle (formerly §25.15), since it is now covered in more detail in previous chapters
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoroughly revises the discussions of adverbial and adjectival aspects of participles to read more logically and clearly
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds a footnote explaining the change in chapter title to “Imperfective” (p. 299 n 1)—but the description is still “continuous” regularly in the chapter • Lightly revises the discussion of aspect (§27.11), but fails to update the middle and passive discussion in line with the nuances introduced in earlier chapters • Adds §27.16 on “phrasing” with participles
28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightly revises the discussion of aspect, including a comment about how perfective views a verbal event “as a whole” (p. 316)—but elsewhere “undefined” is retained
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removes section on adjectival grammar (formerly §29.5) • Updates the participle decision tree to use updated aspect labels (p. 334)
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to update the periphrastic construction section to use new aspect labels
31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No consequential changes

Ch.	Modifications made in <i>BBG-4</i>
32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates the infinitive summary chart (§32.3) to use new aspect terminology, but the result is confusing: the “infinitive” column contains the “imperfective,” “perfective,” and “combinative” labels; the “aspect” column contains “continuous,” “undefined,” and “completed”; and the translation column retains the notion that the imperfective infinitive means to “continually” do something (which is not quite accurate) • Removes section on deponency (formerly §32.12) • Renames “Translation” section to “Six Basic Uses of the Infinitive” • Relocates “Indirect Discourse” discussion from “Advanced Information” to the main part of the chapter (§32.17)
33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightly revises the discussion on aspect, but still uses “continually” to describe imperfective imperatives • Removes section on deponency (formerly §33.13) • Reorganizes the “Prohibitions and Negations” section to be more clear
34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No consequential changes
35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No consequential changes
36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renames “Definite Article” section to “Article” • Slightly reorganizes the content to flow more logically

Though I did not mention the details in the table above, the major “Section Overviews” between groups of chapters have also been updated as needed based on revisions to the chapters themselves.

III. Key Steps Toward to Making the Upgrade

We will conclude with a few suggestions on how an instructor might go about revising course materials in the process of upgrading from *BBG-3* to *BBG-4* as expeditiously as possible. Much more can be said, but here is where I would focus:

- Update lectures and other materials to reflect title changes to various chapters.
- Revise materials (if needed) to adopt the new labels for aspect (perfective, imperfective, and combinative). Though not all instructors may be on board with “combinative” (e.g., I have begrudgingly used “stative”), it may be a worthwhile tradeoff in the long-term to keep terminology consistent with the textbook now that it has been updated. Instructors will, however, need to alert students regularly to *BBG-4*’s retention of “continuous,” “undefined,” “completed,” in order to mitigate student confusion.

- Review the extensive changes to the treatment of the middle voice and “deponency” (ch. 18) and adapt to course materials as needed.
- Review the chapters listed above where the material has been rearranged or expanded in significant ways, and update course materials as needed.
- Determine whether (and how much) to embrace the much stronger emphasis on “root” and “stem” throughout the verb chapters as well as in each vocabulary set. Moreover, while it was possible to use the two terms interchangeably in the past, because *BBG-3* did so, that will no longer suffice now that *BBG-4* draws a fairly firm distinction.
- Point out to students the “;” and “,” distinction in the glosses for vocabulary words, and review the glosses for updates to ensure they are consistent with course materials.

* * * * *

All told, the updated version of Mounce’s Greek grammar will likely solidify its position as the most widely-used (in America at least) for another generation. It is worthwhile, then, for Greek instructors to proceed with adopting *BBG-4* sooner rather than later. Hopefully this review and guide will be helpful in that regard.

Booknote: *Meditations on Preaching* by Francis James Grimké

**Charles Malcolm Wingard
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First year students at Reformed Theological Seminary Jackson are introduced to the remarkable life, ministry, and writings of Francis James Grimké through Thabiti Anywabile's *The Faithful Preacher: Recapturing the Vision of Three Pioneering African-American Pastors*.

Born in 1850 to a white South Carolina plantation owner and slave mother, Grimké lost his father at an early age and, along with him, the protective care that sheltered him from some of the inherent brutality of the slave system. After escaping the cruelty of a white half-brother, he was recaptured and sold to a Confederate officer.

After emancipation, Grimké proved himself a gifted and industrious student, graduating from Lincoln University and, later, Princeton Theological Seminary. At Princeton, he was among the last of Charles Hodge's students. Ordained in 1878, he would spend most of the next 50 years serving Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., where he distinguished himself as a vocal advocate for biblical Christianity and racial equality.

Thanks to Log College Press, second year students will now read Grimké's *Meditations on Preaching*, a gem of a book, full of biblical wisdom and common sense. Indeed, anyone interested in the faithful ministry of the word will want to purchase and read.¹

Grimké reminds ministers that their work "is a most serious business – the business of calling men to repentance and faith, of warning them against a life of sin, and of showing them the better way through faith in Jesus Christ" (15).

The minister must pay strict attention to his preaching. "The business of the preacher is to state the truth of God, clearly, fully, simply; the rest the Spirit will take care of. We need not trouble ourselves about the survival of Christianity. God will take care of that; what we need to be concerned about is that we faithfully preach it, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little" (33).

¹ The meditations in this volume are taken from *The Works of Francis J. Grimké*, vol. 3, ed. by Carter G. Woodson. Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1942.

The minister must not waver in his determination to preach the Bible. “It is God’s Word that the people need to hear, whether they wish to hear it or not, and it is the special mission of the minister to see that they hear it” (70).

Preaching “helpful” sermons should be the goal of every preacher. A sermon is helpful when it “awakens us to a sense of our condition, our failings, shortcomings, imperfections, and at the same time, so sets before us the higher, purer nobler, things that are open to us as to create within us a desire for them and to start us in the direction of them.” (85) “This thought of preaching helpful sermons is one that cannot be too strongly emphasized. If it is not to help people to be better, purer, nobler, more Christ-like of what value is it?” (86).

Before setting foot in a pulpit, wise ministers will put their labors in eternal perspective: “Before we speak again, we may be in eternity; before they hear again the message, they may be in eternity. Into every effort, therefore, we should put our best, we should enter with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.” (94).

The minister must pay strict attention not only to his preaching but also to his character, taking care to cultivate a life worthy of his calling. He “should be a man of brains, of sense, of high character, of piety. The ministry is no place for a fool, for a rogue, for a hypocrite, a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He must be a man of sense, of intelligence, an upright and God-fearing man” (42). Ministry is hard work, and “a man who is not willing always to make the proper preparation has no business in the pulpit, and the sooner he gets out of it the better” (43).

Although the minister must not ignore wrong, pointing it out should not become the chief part of his work. He must guard against a “scolding ministry,” which “is not likely to be a happy one or a helpful one. . . . People get tired very soon with that kind of ministry (49).” “Religion should be presented as an attractive, not as a repelling force” (74).

I found particularly moving Grimké’s reflection on 50 years of ministry, which is full of gospel trust. “I am fully aware of the fact that I am not now, and never have been all that [I] ought to be. All that I ought to be, however, I most earnestly desire to be. Fortunately, it is not in our own righteousness, that we are to stand at last, but in the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, imputed to us and received by faith alone” (40-41). Amen!

A Genealogy of the Hymnal: A Review Article

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Christopher N. Phillips. *The Hymnal: A Reading History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. xv, 252 pp. \$39.95. Cloth.

Mention the word “hymnal” in a church context and reactions will vary between those who lament its loss and wish to return to the “good old days,” those who hope never to hold one again, and the blank look due to indifference or, quite likely, unfamiliarity (after all, contempt is difficult without familiarity). Enter Christopher Phillips who makes the mundane remarkable by weaving scrupulous details into a compelling case for our indebtedness to the hymnbook – books of hymns with lyrics but not music. Phillips, Associate Professor of English at Lafayette College, reflects an awareness of the nuances of British-American Protestantism and its cultural milieu in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and leaves a number of issues for contemporary Protestants to ponder, regardless of whether they are traditional or contemporary in their musical preferences. His reach goes beyond that of music in worship to include lessons on how we think about private devotion’s relationship to singing in public worship, the relative influence of the clergy and the laity on the canon of church music, the relationship of skilled musicians and the congregation in worship, the influence of larger cultural/philosophical trends upon church music, and the interaction between literacy and church music which is the central theme of the book. Because of the value of Phillips’s work, this review goes beyond brief description and assessment to somewhat of a narration of each chapter with the hope that it can raise sufficient interest to “take up and read” as well as provide a guide to reading *The Hymnal* since Phillips covers territory unfamiliar to many. It concludes with a number of lessons and observations that Phillips prompts.

Phillips’s purpose is to trace the history of the “hymnbook” in Britain and the United States from Isaac Watts until the advent of the modern “hymnal” as we know it. But rather than a narrow study in hymnology, Phillips illumines the private, familial, ecclesiastical, and cultural contexts by applying “social practice” theory to demonstrate how the hymnbook both reflected and shaped these spheres, not only in spiritual practices but with a profound impact on literacy. Along the way he chronicles the ebb and flow of hymnody in the church, the rise and development of

poetry and its influence upon the hymnbook, as well as the hymnbook's influence upon classic nineteenth century poetry. For, as his subtitle suggests, the hymnbook as well as the hymnal has been as significant for its being read as being sung.

His twin aims are ambitious, written "for interested readers who may or may not have an academic or church professional background" while aspiring for scholarly readers to be "an intervention in the field of historical poetics that seeks to bring together the study of poetry, book history, and lived religions" (ix), aims which Phillips fairly achieves. This is done in three major sections of "Church," "School," and "Home," "the three most important spaces for the use of hymnbooks" (x) with four to five chapters on each and an interlude concluding each section.

Each chapter advances a particular thesis which contributes to the overall argument of the book. The prologue introduces the hymnbook as a personal and family possession utilized for devotional purposes as illustrated using several of prints of the time. While a family circle might show a single Bible in its midst, each adult and child of age might be holding their own hymnbook. The hymnal was small and affordable unlike its heavier, larger, and more expensive successor the hymnal which was kept in one's pew at the church. One significant conclusion reached is that the hymnbook was not only devotional but social. Of the prints provided in the prologue, "only one...actually depicts a solitary reader" (9). It was out of this domestic familiarity of the hymnbook that the "singing reformers" of the late nineteenth century successfully introduced the hymnal to those who "remembered a culture of reading that had followed them into many of their lives' most significant spaces and relationships." Yet "[b]y 1978, that memory was gone" (2). Chapter one retraces Isaac Watts' (d. 1748) influence in both the widespread adoption of singing hymns and paraphrased psalms in addition to psalms and the metering of music, such that the combined edition of Watts' *Psalms and Hymns* "by 1819 had largely replaced the older psalmbooks in Reformed Protestant churches and brought hymns into all but the most conservative Calvinist circles" (13-14). Most developments from the origins of the "Watts entire" can and must be measured in relation to him. Even though not all congregations went the way of full "Wattsing," it could be said in general that "Watts was one of the most important liturgical vehicles for the establishment of a congregational or denominational identity from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth" (14).

But as Phillips soon shows, Watts' influence was not in hymnody only, His *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* (1751) began the thread which ultimately led to *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1831), a stepped reader providing moral instruction. The

reading of hymns from the hymnbook, a common practice in the home, meant that hymn texts were widely used “in readers and spellers to teach literacy” (17) and hymnbooks “enabled these books to be read almost as if they were poetry anthologies” (19). Phillips illustrates the social importance of the hymnbook in the first of three interludes by tracing the role of a hymnbook in the 1850 play *The Wide, Wide World* in which the hymnbook has the virtual status of a character and whose intimacy with the main character obtained through reading enables “hymns to become a love language” for her and her household and memory to carry on when the physical hymnbook disappears from the narrative.

Chapter One, “How Hymnbooks Made a People,” begins Part One, “Church,” and the story of “how hymnbooks moved from the private to the public, even as they continued to inhabit and shape private spaces” (34). Various church traditions began to develop their own hymnbooks to reflect both their distinctives and how they engaged external developments in culture and belief. Numerous relevant details throughout the book provide added interest, such as the changeable status of John Wesley’s “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” traditionally the first hymn in the Methodist traditions, but “demoted” in some instances, especially as hymnbooks became organized more by topic. The development of these collections was the source of and reflected developing denominational identities. “As churches grappled with questions of cultural accommodation, the politics of their religion, and the role of emotion in worship, hymnbooks often became the sites for proxy battles in denominations, as well as the means of expressing the hopes and anxieties of a community in crisis” (43).

This trend is described further in Chapter Two, “How to Fight with Hymnbooks.” “The very creation, adoption, and promotion of these books often reflected, and at times drove, disagreements that often led to major schisms, particularly in American Protestantism.” Hymnbooks were “implicated and even weaponized in some of the most famous splits in American church history” (45). One Moravian compiler of the time lamented that the vast majority of their published hymns “are expressed to Jesus Christ alone” and “the hymns addressing the Trinity or the Spirit unduly emphasize the second person of the Trinity, so that ‘it may be fairly question[ed] of what use the Trinity is.’” As the compiler concluded, “It is impossible to read the hymns in this volume without perceiving that their general tendency [*sic*] inculcates Sabetianism & that Christ is the Sole Deity” (44).

Even the American Presbyterians, initially leaving the matter of a collection alone, established a study committee, chaired by Archibald Alexander of Princeton

Theological Seminary, to evaluate the state of psalmody and compile a hymnbook with separate psalm and hymn sections. (45) Yet the hymnbook as a book to be read as well as sung is indicated by its publication within “the burgeoning culture of annual gifts books,” at least partly an indication that the publishing industry as much as the church of the time drove the market (46). Even within the Old School and New School division among Presbyterians hymnbooks played a prominent role on each side (48). Nearly a hundred years after his death, the now broadly accepted “Wattsing” provided a basis around which the Old School could rally since “the metrical psalm had fallen on hard times (49). The 1843 hymnal “would be the last time a major American Presbyterian hymnbook would include a separate psalms section” (49). The New School was a different matter with its own internal diversity such that “in 1863 no fewer than fourteen different hymnbooks were in use across the denomination” (51). It is during this period that hymnals became organized according to the attributes of God and when American Methodists for only the second relegated “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing” from the first hymn to the section on Christian experience. The importance of the hymnbook as a personal possession is reflected in the efforts of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America to maintain a soldier’s pocket-sized pamphlet edition even as printing supplies grew scarce and expensive (56).

Chapter three, “Hymnbooks at Church,” gives account of personal notations in hymnbooks such as the dates on which they were sung as well as written conversations between parents and children, presumably when the sermon was being preached, and even passages of sentimental poetry, indicating “the thin line between sentimental poetry and devotional verse in the mid-nineteenth century” (63). The presence of children in worship being a given, the hymnbook provided a refuge for the young for whom the sermon was beyond their reach. “For children, privately reading a hymnbook in church held higher stakes, often used as a last resort to avoid punishment for public misbehavior” (64). One such child later reflected, “I was told to listen to the minister, but as I did not understand a word he was saying, I gave it up, and took refuge in the hymn-book, with the conscientious purpose of trying to sit still” (64-65). Phillips notes that this “pointed to a difficult fact of Protestant liturgical life”—that of the three parts of worship – prayer, sermon, and song – the first two belonged to the minister and only the third primarily to the people, “making it crucial for establishing worshipers’ sense of engagement and investment in their religious rituals as well as anxiety-inducing for those ministers who feared the power of unruly forces in their congregation” (66). The increasing number of graduates of “singing

schools” compounded this difficulty in that the music become commensurately more complex, “the general rule... [being] that the more musically adept the choir in early America, the quieter the congregation became. The clergy’s great liturgical problem of the nineteenth century became how to get the congregation singing again” (67-68). Hymns had gone from the material of private devotions to congregational song to the provenance of a few. Nevertheless, “the hymnbook lived not merely as a commodity or an individual keepsake but as part of the ties that bind in a community” as reflected in the practice of pulpit hymnbooks being placed as part of church dedications similar to the placement of the pulpit Bible (69).

Chapter four, “Giving Hymnbooks, and What the Hymnbook Gives,” recounts the gifting and re-gifting of hymnbooks, their bindings and inscriptions, and the archiving of important items within their pages (such as insurance coupons, bookmarks, ribbons, and embroideries) to indicate their important social role in addition to their devotional one. Hymnbooks “had a talismanic power for many owners, creating a bond through hand, eye, and voice to God, to worshiping communities, to friends and neighbors, and to family and departed loved ones” (70, 77). The passing down of a hymnbook from one generation to the next “was a material reminder of the communion of the saints through whom the present moment touched eternity.” (78) Their everyday and Sabbath day usage made them “an ideal carrier of memory” (81).

Part one concludes with Chapter Five, “Devotion and the Shape of the Hymnbook,” a description of how book design reflected the usage and development of the hymnbook with the addition of tables of contents, indices, and “crotchets” (brackets indicating optional verses of songs) as guides to their usage, enhancing both public and private use. Here Phillips mentions the concept of “hand piety,” evidence from surviving copies of the extent and the manner of their use both public and private, which reflected and helped shape their design. He traces the influence of Watts’ method in *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in America as embraced by Cotton Mather, the significant attention given to its use in the home, its spread by George Whitefield, and its adoption by Jonathan Edwards given his sympathies with revival. Like Mather, Edwards emphasized hymns as a source of devotional reading. However, when Edwards returned from an absence and discovered his congregation in Northampton had ceased to sing psalms in favor of singing Watts, according to Phillips the resulting compromise was the “first fault line to form between him and his congregation” which would end eventually in his infamous dismissal in 1750 (93-94).

Interlude two provides an account of the “hymnbook riots” in 1844 Philadelphia involving primarily Protestant/Catholic tensions which to the agreement of both confirmed the hymnbook as a pedagogical, not merely devotional, tool in schools. With that, Part 2, “School,” takes up the theme of “Hymnbooks and Literacy Learning” in Chapter 6. The hymnbook was often a school book, a purpose Watts foresaw in his *Divine and Moral Songs* (1715) and *The Art of Reading* (1721), works which included inspirational poetry as well as hymns. “Watts’ prominence in the blending of hymnody and literacy was no accident.” (106) Dissenters both in England and America “largely drove the culture of learning to read in the English-speaking world of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.” (106-107) Ownership fueled efforts in both adult and children’s literacy such that “one of the largest distributors of Watt’s text by the close of the eighteenth century was the Sunday school” both in Britain and the United States (108).

Many selections celebrated the power of reading. Slaves learned to read from Watts and would see possessing a hymnbook as a reward, as movingly related in the account of former slave Belle Myers who painstakingly wrote out the title to a favorite Watts hymn, “When I Can Read My Title Clear.” While these words in the hymn refer to heavenly citizenship, for Myers they also signified earthly personhood (105-106). Before his presidency at the College of New Jersey (which subsequently became Princeton University), Samuel Davies was among those who promoted literacy among black slaves through the use of hymns, at one point raising a special offering to obtain copies of Watts, noting the extraordinary singing capacity of the slaves and remarking “there are no books they learn so soon, or take so much pleasure in, as those used in that heavenly part of divine Worship” (110, 111). For Davies, Watts possessed a “double power” of literacy aid as well as a physical token to reward attaining literacy.

Chapter seven, “How Hymnbooks Made Children’s Literature,” is a tightly developed account of how “Watts’s humble little book gain[ed] the dress of Victorian children’s literature” (117). Hymns constituted children’s literature long before the recent past’s defining it by the presence of illustrations. Phillips understandably can’t resist noting that arguably the most successful children’s literature of recent times, the Harry Potter books, lack illustrations. While most studies of children’s literature begin with John Newbery’s *Goody Two-Shoes* (1765), Phillips asserts that the hymnbook filled that role much earlier, noting that Newbury, as secular literature, shifted the reward of morality toward financial success rather than religion (118). Newbury, Phillips argues, marked not the beginning of children’s literature, but the secularization of it and placed children in the role not of the receivers of gifts but as

active consumers (120). By contrast, Ann and Jane Taylor's *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1810) continued to weave hymn and poem as they "took children seriously as readers, thinkers, and souls, and...created poetry especially for them in ways that would eventually lead their elders to wonder what it was precisely that made a hymn a hymn and a poem a poem" (124). As Phillips reflects upon the Taylors' success he reflects, "the secularization of children's literature and the move from didactic to imaginative writing should lead to a reconsideration of the premises of what counts as children's literature and what shape literature has taken over time" (125).

Chapter eight, "How Hymns Remade Schoolbooks," traces the effect of the hymnbook from literacy in general to school books in particular. What has been regarded by others as the secularization process in the literature and culture of the time in which hymnbooks are replaced by readers fails to recognize the increasing presence of hymns in those readers, according to Phillips. "What the index of secularization misses is the remarkable persistence, even the increase, of hymn texts over the editions" (139). One such influential eighteenth century reader, *The New England Primer*, while borrowing from Newbury in celebrating the financial benefits of literacy, retained Watts' "Cradle Hymn," an expression of Christian salvation (134). An 1801 reader introduced poetry to its youngest readers using hymns "as a fundamental benchmark of aesthetic and moral excellence" (137). This chapter relates the publishing role of the Lyman Beecher family and the eventual publication of *McGuffey Readers* which exemplified the role of hymns and sacred poetry in early education. The chapter ends with the introduction of Lowell Mason who "had helped build the nation's first public school music program in Boston in the 1820s" and whose story continues into the next chapter.

Chapter nine, "Singing as Reading: or, A Tale of Two *Sacred Harps*," tells the story of two "tunebooks," which fall between hymnbooks and hymns, with the music printed at the top of a page and the lyrics below. One was a more folk-like and British version, while the other more European/Bostonian version was the product of a partnership between brothers Timothy and Lowell Mason, associates of Lyman Beecher. Both tunebooks drew upon Watts and shared much else in common, yet the differences were notable, one of which was the absence of Christ-centered atonement-themed hymns in the Masons'. Revival hymns had a greater influence in the other. The commonality of these two *Harps* reflected "a larger, more ecumenical canon behind the canon, anchored by Watts, [which] shaped church collections of hymns, popular tunebooks, and the devotional exercise of a New Englander far from home" (152).

The third interlude, “Henry Ward Beecher Takes Note,” chronicles Beecher’s effort at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York to get the congregation to sing by placing the music in their hands. Up to that time worshipers largely preferred reading along in their hymnbooks while listening “in silence rather than attempt[ing] to follow those intended to lead them in song” (154). This effort produced several different formats, but the cost of a printing a large number of hymns with music on the page was very expensive and would be a very large volume. The fact that it “would take a generation for the modern style of hymnal to become established,” replacing the tunebook in the hands of the choir and the hymnbook in the hands of the congregation was partial testimony to “how tenacious earlier cultures of reading and living with hymnbooks were” (157).

Part three, “Home,” begins with “Did Poets Write Hymns?” in Chapter Ten. There Phillips resumes his earlier assertion that the widely-asserted secularization of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries doesn’t fully account for the place of the hymn in the literary history of that period nor gives full acknowledgement to both canonical (e.g. Cowper, Dickinson) and influential (e.g. Hemans, Hebers, Watts) poets. There were those such as Samuel Johnson who wished to strengthen the divide between hymns and poems by maintaining that the religious obligation of hymns precludes the inventiveness that is essential to poetry, although the appearance of William Cowper who successfully wrote both challenged that insistence (162-64). Discussions of Felicia Hemans, Rufus Griswold, and others who were fluent in both genres complete the chapter. Inserted into this discussion are attitudes toward the emergence of the women poets, such as Anne Steele, who were met with contempt by some (172).

Chapter eleven, “How Poems Entered the Hymnbook,” asks the question of whether a hymnbook can be a book of poetry. Samuel Longfellow, younger brother of Henry Wadsworth, and Samuel Johnson (not *the* Dr. Johnson) were Harvard divinity classmates and Transcendentalists who produced a hymnbook for a classmate’s Unitarian congregation which tested the boundary between hymn and poem and introduced theological innovations in keeping with the Romantic times. It and similar works reflect “a new spirituality of private communion with God,” placed a higher premium on aesthetic sensibility,” and reflected a greater focus on “nature and the goodness of God” and away from the penitentiary hymns and laments which were seen by some as not a suitable subject for gathered worship so much as for private devotion. “[T]he didactic and penitential hymns continued to fade through the nineteenth century until by the 1890s even Presbyterian hymnody, under the guidance

of hymnologist Louis Benson, was dominated by uplift, a trend that has only strengthened since” (182). This gave renewed weight to the hymnbook as a devotional work primarily for the home which is the subject of Chapter twelve, “The Return of the Private Hymnbook.” Given the continued tension of the dual use between public song and private devotion and the increasing influence of the de-historicizing of Christ, increasing proportions of inspirational poetry from the likes of George Herbert and John Donne made its way into hymnbook revisions in the late nineteenth century that returned it more and more to its private use, though substantially changed from its original form (185). Two primary influences that abetted this progression were the growth of the evangelical publishing industry and the Oxford’s movement whose high church sensibilities placed greater weight on aesthetics (186). As one’s faith became more privatized it facilitated the ecumenism that tended to flatten theological distinctives as they had been reflected in the denominational hymnbook traditions. “It was precisely the private domestic space that provided a more universal view of the church in a congregational book could, and materials drawn from many denominations and centuries came together to ‘tell that the Church is one’” (191). This led to the editing of many hymns which precipitated a corresponding interest in text criticism of hymns (192).

Chapter thirteen, “Emily Dickinson’s Hymnody of Privacy,” surveys how Dickinson was strongly influenced by her reading of hymns and poems by Watts, but much more in private reading at home than public singing in church. Dickinson liberally used the term “hymn” to refer to artifacts well beyond “Wattsing.” But in opposition to promoters of free verse poetry she and others steadfastly maintained that the form of the hymn with its metering was what made possible the freedom of poetry. Through examples, Phillips demonstrates how Dickinson excelled at the chief characteristic of both hymn and poem in which the horizon of the speaker and the reader collapse resulting in the “dramatic hymn” (200). As we read or sing the words of another, at a dramatic point we are voicing our own words. While her explorations of intense emotions lent themselves more to private reading, they also served to elevate Christian experience (201). “Dickinson understood the hymn as a form of hopeful communication, in which the lack of an evident audience is offset by faith in a spiritual reception. Hymns are not simply poems that are spiritually received; the reception is what makes the hymn.”

Phillips concludes with an epilogue entitled “The Hymnological Decade” (1860s). It is here that we come finally to the hymnal as we know it and the flowering of hymnology. Key factors were the rise of the private hymnbook, the development of

the idea of the hymn as a literary artifact, and the rise of the hymnal itself (207). The initial printing of music with the lyrics in the hymnal made it bulky and expensive, thus making it more of a property of the church than the individual. Phillips acknowledges that the hymnal did contribute to the improvement of congregational singing, though the relative size of the hymnal caused one reviewer to comment “It takes an able-bodied man to stand and hold the average modern hymn-book for the singing of a long hymn” (209). First produced in 1880, Austin Phelps’ and Edward A. Park’s *Hymns and Choirs* of this period became the reference point for all subsequent studies in hymnology. The development of hymnology is illustrated by the fascinating story of the disposition and curation of the extensive collection of Lowell Mason of Yale Divinity School. The eventual division of Mason’s collection between the Music Library for works with musical scores and the Divinity School and subsequently the Beinecke Library for works with words only illustrates the larger project of Phillips’s story of the relationship of the hymnbook and the hymnal. Phillips laments the typical university’s exclusive interest in literature to the neglect of hymns as literature and the divinity schools insufficient resources to properly curate music such that insufficient research has been done in the area of hymnology (211). The conclusions of the epilogue are a dividend for attending to Phillips’s scrupulous work, the principal one among them in his concluding sentence: “If we keep the Sabbath at home with our poetic ancestors, it is only because hymn books helped to teach us how to do so” (214).

Numerous issues Phillips addresses will be familiar to anyone around the contemporary church. Is sacred music something to be read as well as sung? A good test for the literary quality of a hymn or worship song is to read it aloud. This practice can sometimes reveal how inane some contemporary song lyrics are. Are Christ’s redemption and lament proper subjects for public worship? Theologically we may readily insist that both are, but it has been observed frequently of late that our practice says otherwise when it comes to lament.

The ebb and flow of hymnbooks and hymnals between denominations with their distinctive identities and publishers with their mass marketing interests can help us realize how music forms (or not) the social fabric our traditions. While confessions and creeds can form self-conscious ties that bind, it is habit of worship and music that have the capacity to sustain and reinforce those ties. Worship in general, and music in particular, is often where the theological rubber meets the road to enable faith communities to cohere.

How does the proportional roles of skilled musicians, clergy, and the people affect the nature, function, perception, and quality of music in worship? Is the congregation's role in worship to sing or to listen? Even as we live in a moment of greater appreciation for and understanding of the atoning work of Christ, our music often reflects a functional if not actual "Christo-monism." The categorizing of the music canon which took place with the addition of indices to the hymnbook can remind us to think about what we sing in relation to various movements of the worship narrative.

A sign of health in worship is the presence of sacred music – at least in lyrical form – in the home. Martin Luther sought to restore the music of worship to the people which had been "stolen" by the monastic choirs just as he restored the cup of communion taken away by the medieval priesthood. He proposed to do so by teaching the children to sing in the schools so that they might teach the adults to sing in worship. As music has proliferated in our day through digitization, we sing less and are less musical. But it is hard to hide one's voice around the family altar and it is a safe and happy place for children to first learn to sing.

Living in the midst, or shall we say the "wasteland," of the digital revolution, we are confronted with dualism in uniquely powerful degrees and forms. In a century or two what will be the artifact that testifies to the transmission of faith and family ties that the physical hymnbook speaks of the previous two centuries? The presentation page of the family Bible with its history of births, marriages, and deaths is gone with the ubiquity of smart phones. And without an artifact, did it or will it even happen? What can play the role of the hymnbook passed down for generations?

Phillips does us the favor of reminding us that our attendance to sacred music is much more than validating the theological integrity of the lyrics or the "excellence" of the aesthetic as written and performed. It is a major part of "the tie that binds," a sociological matter that demands greater awareness of all that is involved rather than minute focus on the details of the moment.

For those who follow the "American Bandstand" approach to sacred music – "it has a good beat and it's easy to dance to" – Phillips will hold little interest apart from his potential to awaken them to the wide implications of music practices. He will reward most at least two other kinds of readers. Those nursed from early years by Mother Kirk where the hymnal provided the soundtrack, a tangible artifact, and a symbol of the family of God will be touched, even moved, by familiar anecdotes reminiscent of squirminess in pews when the hymnal was the nearest distraction or provided a firm desk on which to color one's Sunday school papers or play hangman

with a sibling. For the open-minded skeptic it will pose the possibility of a balm for the ache of transience, a longing for the communion of the saints, especially with “those whose rest is won.”

The Color of Incomplete History: A Review Article

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Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 215 pages. \$21.99, cloth.

Given the contentious nature of discussions about race in our culture, I would like to begin this review article with a brief personal note. As a church historian, professional integrity requires that I always attempt to be as objective as possible in telling the story of the Church. Historians must candidly admit that no one is ever completely unbiased in interpreting historical texts as hard as one tries to get it right. This means that interpretations of the past must be offered in humility, recognizing that it's always possible that one has missed an important angle that a new scholar may uncover. History is an abyss, and no one will ever know it all, thus new generations of historians will always be necessary for the Church! Another observation: Church history is full of the good, the bad and the ugly, and we don't do anyone a favor by trying to hide any of it if historical honesty counts. The story of the American church's struggle with racism is a multi-faceted painful story and it needs to be told in its fullness as much as possible. It's important to remember that appropriating historical materials for theological, ideological or political purposes is tricky business. Utmost caution is necessary, lest one succumb to molding historical narratives to fit one's predisposition despite contrary evidence. If at any point, the reader thinks my review of Jemar Tisby's book is unfair, please do your own investigation into the primary sources. With these qualifications in mind, let me proceed to give you my take on this significant book.

The *Color of Compromise* attempts to paint a picture of white Christian recalcitrant race-based oppression of blacks over four centuries of America history. According to Tisby's narrative, this oppression has been perpetuated primarily because WCs (my abbreviation for white Christians, i.e. those in power) have consistently been indifferent to the plight of blacks. The book's thesis is that racism doesn't go away it adapts, thus despite significant progress, "racism continues to plague the church" (15). American WCs have encouraged white supremacy "which identifies white people and white culture as normal and superior" (16). But, this white

supremacy “was not inevitable” and WCs in the past could have chosen not to compromise with racism. Tisby is convinced WCs have not recognized “their failures and inconsistencies,” preferring to pass over the past to a “triumphalist view of American Christianity” which accentuates victories in race relations. To correct this, the book will provide a true history that “contradicts much of what you have been taught since childhood.” The author partially reveals his hand when he admits that one hopeful outcome for the book is to show “alternatives to political conservatism as the only Christian way” (21).

Before Tisby launches into his historical survey of WC racism, he issues a disclaimer acknowledging a “high degree of selectivity” (18) in the historical episodes discussed. Indeed his historical account accentuates the actors/events that substantiate his picture of WC complicity in racism, but he concedes, “Whenever there has been racial injustice, there have been Christians who fought against it in the name of Jesus Christ. Christianity has an inspiring history of working for racial equality and the dignity of all people, a history that should never be overlooked” (19). This side of the story gets almost no coverage throughout the book, but giving a full account of the history of white/black relations in U.S. history was not his purpose in writing the book. The chief end of the survey is to demonstrate WC unrepentant complicity with racism in America. The ultimate goal of the book, says Tisby, is more empathy for black pain, urging Christians to pray for racial reconciliation as a “reality we must receive” as believers, and a call for immediate action to “work for justice” and embrace “racial and ethnic diversity” (24).

The history chapters begin with the colonial period, arguing that a “racial caste system” was constructed in America as black heathen were captured and shipped to the New World. Blacks had captured and sold one another in Africa, and free blacks in the colonies would buy slaves, but it was the European slavers who bought or kidnapped Africans, shipping them across the Atlantic under inhumane conditions. The brutality of the middle passage has been well documented in American history books, museums, films, etc., throughout the twentieth century and thus is familiar territory, but an American story that must always be told. No one would question the barbarity of the trans-Atlantic slave trade which is the fundamental evil of African enslavement. Tisby underscores how colonists compromised by accommodating their faith to chattel slavery in the New World. He criticizes Awakening preachers Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield (both slave owners), who criticized the slave trade, and cruel treatment of blacks, but compromised with racism by permitting slavery to continue. It’s a fair judgment to see them as typical of WC slave owners of this era,

who tried to ameliorate slave conditions and preach the gospel to them, but were not advocates of abolition. Tisby claims that slaves were taught a paternalistic version of the faith identified with whiteness and superior European culture. Using a twenty-first century category of “white privilege” to evaluate eighteenth century WCs is a dubious allegation against persons who would not comprehend this classification in any meaningful way.

According to Tisby’s account, some WCs resisted slave evangelism because they worried that converted slaves would next want their freedom. And those who evangelized the slaves did so in hopes of making them more obedient. This is not what one finds in the writings of those who actually preached to the slaves. Their message focused on the good news of salvation, obedience to masters was considered a byproduct, not the purpose of evangelism. Presbyterian minister Samuel Davies baptized 200 blacks during his ministry, and always considered them his equals before the Lord. He wrote, “as to the affairs of religion and eternity, all men stand upon the same footing” with immortal souls in need of salvation. Christ gave himself for the Africans: “Did he live and die to save poor Negroes? And shall not we use all the Means in our Power, to make them Partakers of this Salvation?” Masters negligent in this duty to slaves, sin and have blood on their hands: “Do not let them sink into Hell from between your hands, for want of a little pains to instruct them. I hope you would by no means exercise barbarities upon their bodies; and will you be so barbarous, as to suffer their precious never-dying souls to perish forever; when thro’ the divine blessing, you might be the means of saving them? Sure you are not capable of such inhuman cruelty.”¹

When discussing the American Revolution, the author highlights how the U.S. Constitution tolerated slavery, and the founding fathers owned slaves, yet there is no mention of WC writers who adamantly insisted that a declaration of “all men are created equal” was an indictment of slavery. For example Dr. Benjamin Rush, who signed the Declaration of Independence, deplored the wickedness of the slave trade which had stolen the Africans from their kindred, and caused thousands to die by sickness and suicide in the voyages to America. In 1773 Rush wrote, “Slavery is a Hydra sin, and includes in it every violation of the precepts of the Law and Gospel.” Those who attempt to “vindicate the traffic of buying and selling of slaves ... to

¹ Samuel Davies, *The Duty of Christians to propagate their Religion among Heathens, Earnestly recommended to the Masters of Negro Slaves in Virginia. A Sermon Preached in Hanover, January 8, 1757* (London: J. Oliver, 1757), 18-27.

sanctify their crimes by attempting to reconcile it to the sublime and perfect Religion of the Great Author of salvation,” should seek some new religion to support it. How shall this evil be remedied? Rush calls for stopping the importation of slaves, and “Let such of our countrymen as engage in the slave trade, be shunned as the greatest enemies of our country.” Clergy who know all men are immortal and equal, must take opportunities “to put a stop to slavery ... declaring what punishment awaits this evil ... that it cannot pass with impunity, unless God shall cease to be just or merciful.”² In 1774 Rush helped establish the first American abolition society, the *Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage and for Improving the Condition of the African Race*.

Tisby recounts the important story of the first permanent black denomination in America, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and its founder Richard Allen of Philadelphia. After coming to faith, Allen began preaching on his plantation and in Methodist churches, many were converted under his ministry, including his master. Purchasing his freedom, he was licensed to preach, and began an itinerant ministry. Returning to Philadelphia he joined St. George’s Methodist Church, and was instrumental in many blacks joining the church. The white leadership insisted on segregation during Sunday services which led to an exodus of black members who eventually founded the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1794. The author uses Allen’s story to affirm his assertion, “there would be no black church without racism in the white church” (52). The sad failure of WCs to treat blacks as equals was the catalyst for departure, but Tisby’s account omits a significant detail in Allen’s story. Absent is the role of American Methodist bishop Francis Asbury (a lifelong friend of Benjamin Rush) and his helping blacks establish their own denomination. Asbury despised slavery, petitioned George Washington to enact antislavery legislation, and it was Asbury who had dedicated Bethel Church in 1794 and ordained Allen as a Methodist deacon in 1799. Allen served as the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church when the denomination became independent in 1816.

The United States did outlaw the Atlantic slave trade in 1808, a tacit admission that American slavery had been evil from the beginning. Many WCs were onboard with this viewpoint. The Presbyterian General Assembly (“with entire unanimity”), issued a strong anti-slavery statement in 1818, calling for the abolition of slavery: “We

² Benjamin Rush, *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements on the Slavery of Negroes in America*, Second Edition (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1773), 13-26.

consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the laws of God, which requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ ... it is manifestly the duty of all Christians who enjoy the light of the present day, when the inconsistency of slavery, both with the dictates of humanity and religion, has been demonstrated, and is generally acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavours to correct the errors of former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot upon our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and if possible throughout the world.”³

According to Tisby, during the antebellum era white supremacy became more defined. This section does a respectable job of covering the basic history of political compromises to protect slavery, slave rebellions and southern reactions, the raping of slave women, the disruption of black families in the domestic slave trade, and WCs general attitude towards blacks as “perpetual children” (67). Tisby claims that blacks and whites worshipping together at this time was not an expression of “egalitarian aspirations” by WCs but “a means of controlling slave beliefs and preventing slave insurrection” (66). While a WC slave owner would care for his slaves, theoretically as a member of his household, the blacks would not be considered “full and equal human beings” (66). Undoubtedly, plantation owners wanted to control the slaves, but assuming the worst motives in all WC slave owners seems a stretch. The story of Nat Turner’s 1831 murderous insurrection is told, but remarkably there is no mention of William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist paper, *The Liberator*, which began publication that same year. Historians typically consider 1831 to be the turning point in increasing sectional division, due to both Turner’s rebellion and Garrison’s abolitionist papers that flooded the South, producing a hardened proslavery position.

The American Colonization Society, founded by a WC in 1816, initiated a movement to relocate free blacks to Africa. Tisby argues it was a paternalistic, racist scheme for WCs to “rid themselves of the endlessly troublesome racial issue” (67). Free black writers were opposed to the idea. Period documents however reveal that some WC abolitionist supporters of the colonization project genuinely believed that free blacks would have a better chance for flourishing in Africa, and gave of their resources

³ For full text of the 1818 statement see Albert Barnes, *The Church and Slavery* (Philadelphia: Parry & McMillan, 1857), 54-56.

to that end. Reading period texts, one discovers that some slave holders viewed the institution as an evil and curse, but didn't know how to undo what they had inherited. How can we educate the young slaves for freedom, take care of sick and elderly slaves, provide them with resources to provide for themselves? These were real problems with few easy answers. Of course, this was no excuse for passivity towards a speedy emancipation for all slaves, but it does help explain the dilemmas of the antebellum period.

A second Awakening came to the U.S. in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The prominent evangelist of the revivals was Charles G. Finney an outspoken abolitionist. Tisby argues that Finney, though an abolitionist who forbade slave owners from church membership, was “not a proponent of black equality” because “he did not see the value of the ‘social integration’ of the races” (68). In other words, Finney was still a white supremacist. To expect Finney to hold twenty-first century perspectives on racial integration is anachronism, a fallacy in historical analysis. The historian's task is not to evaluate the past based on modern assumptions but to drill down into a historic person's particular context to determine the meaning of his values for the day in which he lived. Judging Finney against the nineteenth century slave society in which he lived demonstrates just how extraordinary he was in exercising church discipline against persons who owned slaves. In the early decades of that century most WCs favored gradual emancipation, and Finney was considered a radical.

When Tisby arrives at his analysis of the Civil War, he insists on “two facts” – the war was over slavery, and “countless devout Christians fought and died to preserve it as an institution” (71). Both assertions are partially true, but of course history is always more complicated than simple interpretations may imply. The War Between the States was about sectional power – politics is always about power. “States' rights” was about losing power in Congress through ongoing conflicts over the political parity of the slave states and free states. Slavery was indeed the presenting issue in the states' rights power struggle. In terms of fighting to defend slavery, the answer would be “yes” on the larger political question, but “no” as far as numerous WCs were concerned. Multitudes of WC southerners opposed slavery, and thought talk about secession was foolhardiness. A conspicuous example would be Confederate General Robert E. Lee who opposed both secession and slavery, yet felt compelled to defend Virginia when the die was cast. Many southern soldiers resented the wealthy plantation owners, did not believe slavery was worth fighting over, and simply saw themselves as defending their communities against Union troops invading the South.

As in most wars, soldiers in the trenches (Union and Confederacy) thought all the killing was madness, and just wanted it to be over.

The book explains the “theological crisis” of WCs grappling with biblical teaching on slavery. Tisby touches on pertinent texts, and seems to appreciate the density of it all. He describes the division within three southern denominations over the slavery question – the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians. There is no mention of the abolitionist Wesleyan Methodist Church established in 1843 as a protest to the Methodist Episcopal Church’s toleration of slavery. In the Presbyterian section he concentrates on the Old School division in 1861. There is no mention of the large abolitionist New School Presbyterian Church which relentlessly pressured its southern congregations to discipline slave owners, nor does he reference the smaller Reformed Presbyterian Church (Covenanters) or the Free Presbyterian Church, both of which banned slave owners from church membership. The discussion of southern Presbyterian theologians surveys the well-known writings of Robert L. Dabney and James H. Thornwell, both supporters of the slave system in the South. Moderns read proslavery material with incredulity, but awareness of these ideas is crucial, and Tisby offers a helpful summary of their perspectives. Of particular interest for Tisby is the “spirituality of the church” doctrine which claimed that slavery was primarily a political question, for which the Church did not have responsibility. He asserts that this doctrine has been conveniently invoked on issues like slavery and segregation, but not for other social crises where Christians engaged the political process. That assertion is arguable, because significant numbers of WCs did choose to combat slavery and segregation, on the other hand, many WCs have chosen to remain disengaged on other social issues as well.

In “Reconstructing White Supremacy in the Jim Crow South,” the author explains the ongoing struggle for black equality. He writes, “White people in the North and South sought to limit the civic and social equality of black people across the country. They devised political and economic schemes to push black people out of mainstream American life. To keep power, white Americans used terror as a tool through lynching and rape, violently solidifying the place of people of color as second-class citizens” (88). While it was only a violent minority who perpetrated these reprehensible deeds, this perverse part of the American story must not be ignored. Tisby takes disparaging shots at southerners for attempting to find some meaning in it all when the war ended. He dismisses the “manly Christianity” (95) of Robert E. Lee, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, monuments to soldiers etc. – a distasteful invective against people whose lives had been devastated by war in their own backyard.

Under “Christianity and the KKK,” Tisby discusses the Klan’s use of the Bible and supposed ties to Christianity. Of course, folks claiming to be Christian may have no connection to reality; nominal Christianity has been multiform throughout American history. He contends that the KKK was not a marginal group, citing what seems like exaggerated statistics, including 40,000 members of the clergy. Whatever the accurate figures are, it is also true that many WCs found the KKK disturbing, and its use of the Bible sickening. Jim Crow policies were “new ways to reinforce racial hierarchy” (103) segregating blacks in American society and perpetuating myths about black inferiority and racial mixing. Tisby concludes, “The American church’s complicity with racism contributed to a context that continued to discriminate against black people” (110).

Next Tisby turns to the first half of the twentieth century and white supremacy among northern WCs. Blacks fled the South for other parts of the U.S., resulting in increased racial tensions and riots in multiple cities. Fundamentalists with “race-laced” conservative theology focused on converting souls, ignoring the plight of blacks in urban environments in contrast to Social Gospel advocates who addressed urban poverty. Residential segregation was facilitated by racist housing practices and “white flight” as neighborhoods became integrated. There is some discussion of the prolonged modernist/fundamentalist debates during the era which is crucial to understanding the Christian landscape of the early twentieth century. Conservatives were focused on defending historic orthodoxy versus a liberal Protestantism that increasingly abandoned biblical faith. To infer fundamentalists were driven by racism is a stretch. Tisby relates the amazing story of the 1906 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles under the black preacher William J. Seymour, a son of former slaves. Under Seymour’s humble leadership hundreds were converted and revived as Hispanics, Asians, blacks and whites worshipped together at the Azusa Street building for three years. As one eye witness declared, “the ‘color line’ was washed away in the blood” (114). It is good to see Seymour get some press as he is too often an unsung hero of twentieth century Christianity outside of Pentecostal/Charismatic circles. Eventually, as the Pentecostal movement expanded across the country, blacks and whites established their own Pentecostal denominations.

The book progresses to the Civil Rights movement of the 50s and 60s, using Martin Luther King Jr. and Billy Graham as foils for “two vastly different perspectives.” The chapter’s focus is “Christian moderates – mostly white and evangelical but also some black churches and ministers – who played it safe, refusing to get involved in the civil rights movement” (132). Tisby shows how some WCs attempted to support segregation and opposition to interracial marriage as consistent

with Christianity. Graham is characterized as a “racial moderate” on segregation, but Tisby admits he went further than many WCs in efforts to desegregate his crusades. He censures Graham’s view that an evangelist is simply “a proclaimer of the gospel” and not a social reformer. It’s certainly true that Graham believed genuine conversion was the key to changing racial attitudes. Graham invited King to share the platform with him at a 1957 crusade in New York. The author doesn’t tell the reader that King told Graham, “You stay in the stadiums, Billy, because you would have far more impact on the white establishment there than you would if you marched in the streets.” Graham was on solid biblical ground when he affirmed that the minister’s primary calling is preaching the gospel. The author rehearses King’s fearless personal story of peacefully fighting for black equality despite the opposition he faced from WCs criticizing the protests. Tisby highlights the eloquent “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and its indictment of white moderates, hailing the letter as “one of the greatest works of Christian political theology ever produced by an American” (138). WCs opposed to civil rights activists, demanded “law and order” as a response. He argues that WC complicity in opposing Civil Rights is partially responsible for some blacks turning to Black Power and the Nation of Islam. WCs were exercised about public education and started private schools (“segregation academies”). Of course, the Christian school movement was about more than racist attitudes. Parents were concerned about the secular world view taught in public schools (which has progressively worsened), and many private schools offered scholarships to minority students.

In the final chapters of the book Tisby arrives at his metanarrative on contemporary WC racism which is rooted in the “Religious Right” of the 70s and continues today. He chronicles the case of Bob Jones University and its racist policies. Current racial problems in America are attributable to conservative politics. The catalog of issues he characterizes as “racist” include: law and order politics, an aggressive criminal justice establishment, concerns about integrated schools, attacks on welfare, the war on drugs, racially segregated private schools, etc., – all of which were designed “to grant advantages to white people and put people of color at various disadvantages.” Tisby leans heavily on the analysis of *Divided by Faith*⁴ wherein the authors describe America as a “racialized” society in which racism is covert. Black and white Christians use different cultural “tool kits,” thus have differing views of

⁴ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

American life and government. Coming up to current times, the attention shifts to Black Lives Matter and the presidential election of 2016. Admitting that Black Lives Matter as an organization is not faith-based and has supported “advocate[es] for gay, queer, and transgender rights,” Tisby thinks there is value in the phrase itself which expresses a black “longing for others to recognize their full, unqualified humanity” (180). What follows is the author’s case for the president being a racist, and then he raises the question: why did so many white evangelicals support him “despite his obvious racist tendencies” (187)? Tisby answers: his pro-life stance and commitment to appoint conservative Supreme Court justices. WC complicity in twenty-first century racism is visible in dismissing Black Lives Matter, supporting a racist president, telling blacks that bringing up racial concerns is divisive, and unwillingness to discuss systemic solutions. He opines, “Perhaps Christian complicity in racism has not changed much after all. Although the characters and specifics are new, many of the same rationalizations for racism continue” (191). A concluding chapter offers a list of practical steps that will address America’s racism, including among other things – reparations, taking down Confederate monuments, learning from the black church, participating in the modern-day civil rights movement, making Juneteenth a national holiday, and publicly denouncing racism.

Throughout the book, one gets the impression that the historical survey is politically motivated. A number of his sources (see endnotes) are ideologically driven books opposed to conservative political perspectives. This ideological bias explains why Tisby’s account is so one-sided – he’s attempting to make a political argument, and scholarship that doesn’t fit the narrative he’s creating is excluded. For example, one prominent omission is the huge corpus of material from the abolition movement in the U.S. during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Failure to quote this material is disappointing, and exposes the author’s resolve to establish a narrative that WCs are intractable racists, and to support his thesis contrary evidence will be purposefully ignored. This is incomplete history, and not helpful for candid discussion of the full record of America’s dealing with slavery. Multitudes of antislavery texts affirm the full humanity and equality of Africans as divine image bearers. Were WCs complicit in slavery? Absolutely. Were there multitudes of courageous contrary WC voices? Yes!⁵ And both voices need to be heard if accurate

⁵ For example, Alice Dana Adams’ study of primary sources has demonstrated that popular sentiment in the South was opposed to slavery, and Anti-slavery Societies proliferated in several southern states. See Alice Dana Adams, *The Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery in America 1808-1831* (Williamstown, MA: Corner House Publishers, 1973).

historical accounts matter. The WC abolition story is well known to scholars, and choosing to disregard it for ideological purposes undermines credibility. A critical part of writing sound history is citing evidence of contrary perspectives from the era under review for an objective telling of the story. A complete history will acknowledge both the evil and the good. Historian Douglas Sweeney offers a balanced appraisal of evangelical history on race relations: "... despite such undeniable moral failure, God has used evangelicals to promote the gospel of grace among literally millions of African Americans. Ever since the Great Awakening, white evangelicals have engaged in Christian outreach to black people – never adequately but faithfully and consistently."⁶

⁶ Douglas Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 113.