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LEADERSHIP

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CURRENT ISSUE: LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

August-September 2018

From the Editor

Nothing is more necessary in the church and its witness to the world than godly male leadership, including church officers, husbands, fathers, and any man in a position of influence. Nehemiah gives us a sterling example from God's Word of what faithful leadership looks like. I explore the principles and examples we as men may glean from Nehemiah.

Danny Olinger reviews the landmark publication of Geerhardus Vos's *Dogmatic Theology* in "Vos the Systematician." It may be news to some that Vos was a systematic theologian before he was a biblical theologian. He always saw these two disciplines as necessarily complementary and not mutually exclusive. One cannot do without the other. This five-volume set is a theological treat no one should miss.

In the department of historical theology Ryan McGraw reviews *Doctrine in Development: Johannes Piscator and Debates over Christ's Active Obedience*, by Heber Carlos de Campos Jr. This book explores the early discussions on the critical doctrine of Christ's active obedience. The review is a lesson in careful scholarship and also reminds us of Machen's dying praise, "Thank God for the active obedience of Christ."

There is no better way to learn to pray than to use the prayers of God's Word. Candyce Magee reviews Gordon Keddie, *Prayers of the Bible*, a very useful daily devotional that stands out among the multitude of devotional options.

Finally, James Ryan Lee offers a thoughtful poem, "Bonfire."

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

Cover picture: Statue of General John Stark, Stark Park, Manchester, New Hampshire. Gen. Stark won the Battle of Bennington (August 16, 1777) against all odds, which proved to be a turning point in the War for Independence.

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

Servant Thoughts

Lessons in Leadership from Nehemiah

by Gregory E. Reynolds

Introduction

Nothing is more necessary in the church and its witness to the world than godly male leadership, including church officers, husbands, fathers, and any man in a position of influence. Nehemiah gives us a sterling example from God's Word of what faithful leadership looks like. He oversaw the temporary restoration of the City of God, looking forward to the ultimate heavenly city described in Hebrews 11:16: "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."

The Problem Faced by Nehemiah

The temple worship, law, and city of Jerusalem needed to be restored. The walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed in 586 BC at the beginning of the exile, and again in 446 BC, ninety years after the return from seventy years of captivity in Babylon. High priest Joshua and ruler Zerrubabel restored the Temple; Ezra re-established the authority of the Mosaic Covenant and God's law; and Nehemiah restored the City of Jerusalem as the center of God's kingdom. After Ezra's reform, the Jews in Jerusalem had begun to rebuild the walls, but the Samaritans agitated to have King Artaxerxes (464–424 BC) of Persia order the rebuilding halted.

Nehemiah: Priest and Cupbearer

Nehemiah was the son of Hacaliah (Neh. 1:1) and one of his brothers was called Hanani (Neh. 1:2; 7:2). He was probably a priest, since Nehemiah 10:1–8 lists him first in list of names ending "these are the priests." In 2 Maccabees 1:21 he is called "Nehemiah the priest," (DRA)¹ and possibly by 2 Maccabees 1:18, where it is said that Nehemiah "offered sacrifices, after that he had builded the temple and the altar" (KJV). He must have been raised by godly Jewish parents in exile in Babylon. His integrity and giftedness lead to his being appointed by Artaxerxes to the responsible position of cupbearer to the king.

Cupbearer to the king was an office of "no trifling honor."² One of the chief duties was to taste the wine for the king to see that it was not poisoned. He was even admitted into the king's presence while the queen was present (Neh. 2:6). "It was on account of this position of close intimacy with the king that Nehemiah was able to obtain his commission as governor of Judea and the letters and edicts which enabled him to restore the walls of Jerusalem."³ So he was not only a sommelier, but a trusted counselor.

¹ Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition.

² *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (1939), s.v. "Nehemiah," from Herodotus iii.34.

³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (1939), s.v. "Nehemiah."

Nehemiah: Governor of Judea⁴

Hanani and other men of Judah visited Nehemiah in Susa in the ninth month of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (445 BC). They told him that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates burned. The Jews were enduring a great trial. So, Nehemiah grieved, fasted, and prayed that the Lord would grant him favor with the king in order to engage in restoration. In the first month of the following year (444 BC) Nehemiah was granted permission to go to restore Jerusalem. In order to do this he was given letters of introduction to the governors of Syria and Palestine and especially to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, who provided materials for rebuilding. He was also appointed governor, and given authority over the province of which Jerusalem was the capital.

As Nehemiah began the restoration of the walls he was opposed by Sanballat, the governor of Samaria. Eventually, with God's help and the exercise of faith and diligence, the restoration was completed.

He then instituted a number of social reforms among God's people.

He appointed the officers necessary for better government, caused the people to be instructed in the Law by public readings, and expositions; celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles; and observed a national fast, at which the sins of the people were confessed and the covenant with Yahweh was renewed. The people agreed to avoid marriages with the heathen, to keep the Sabbath, and to contribute to the support of the temple. He also provide for the safety and prosperity of the city.⁵

In this work of reformation he was assisted by Ezra, who had gone up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (458 BC).

The Covenantal Context

In the Mosaic covenant, as an administration of the covenant of grace, Israel's continuance in the promised land was conditioned on their obedience to the law. The exile resulted from disobedience (Neh. 1:8–9; Neh. 9:26–27). In Ezra the Levites took an oath to keep the law of Moses (Ezra 10:3–5). So, Nehemiah was a believer in exile, seeking faithfulness to the Mosaic covenant, undergirded by the covenant of grace and looking forward by faith to the new covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. (Jer. 31:31–32)

This new covenant would be different in the way Paul explains in Romans:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Rom. 10:1–9)

So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. (Rom. 11:5–6)

Principles of Leadership

From Nehemiah we learn the nature of the covenant commitment that fortified him to perform his God-given task in restoring the walls of Jerusalem and restoring integrity to the government of God’s people according to the law of God.

Nehemiah’s Covenant Commitment

Because of Nehemiah’s covenant commitment, graciously given to him by Yahweh’s commitment to his people, based on the underlying covenant of grace, he learned to overcome fear with faith. Not that he didn’t struggle with fear, “Then I was very much afraid” (Neh. 2:2), but he overcame it by faith.

1. Nehemiah Had Trusted God’s Agenda

God’s agenda was Nehemiah’s agenda. Nehemiah was thoroughly committed to the building of God’s kingdom. This was his chief motivation: to glorify his Lord. Nehemiah practiced the answer to Shorter Catechism question 1. He knew how to genuinely motivate God’s people to assist in following God’s agenda because he knew that God was at work: “I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. . . . the God of heaven will make us prosper” (Neh. 2:17–20). He was not afraid to confront the sin of God’s people, because he feared God more than men. “You are exacting interest, each from his brother. . . . The thing that you are doing is not good” (Neh. 5:6–13).

2. Nehemiah Believed in the Power of Prayer

Nehemiah regularly availed himself of his connection with heaven via prayer. He recognized that the LORD dwells in the invisible heavenly realm to which he had access by grace through prayer. He made all his plans to rebuild Jerusalem prayerfully, depending on the Lord to bring his plans to fruition (Neh. 1:4–11; 2:4). His example was followed by others around him (Neh. 4:9). He had a healthy sense of his own inadequacy and God’s adequacy. As he planned to protect the city against God’s enemies he reminded the people: “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome” (Neh. 4:10–17).

3. Nehemiah Had Faith in God’s Sovereignty

Nehemiah trusted God's sovereign control of history. Nehemiah respected God's providential authority structure in the common grace order. He knew that ultimately God controls the "powers that be" since they are, wittingly or unwittingly, his "ministers," as Paul teaches in Romans 13:1-7.

4. Nehemiah Trusted God's Word and Worship

Nehemiah called God's people to return to the Mosaic covenant. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra read the law at the Feast of Tabernacles and the people repented and renewed their commitment to the LORD and his covenant. This was the first such renewal since Joshua's day. Covenant renewal looks forward to the new covenant. Meanwhile, Nehemiah promoted the means of grace by restoring true worship according the Mosaic regulations (Neh. 9:1ff), so the people "made confession and worshiped the LORD their God" (v. 3b). Their worship was heartfelt: "they cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God" (v. 4b). Repenting of idolatry, they acknowledged their covenant LORD as the Creator and only true God: "You are the LORD, you alone" (v. 6).

Nehemiah's Covenant Practice

5. Nehemiah was Wise and Careful in his Decision-Making and Communications

Nehemiah was wise and thoughtful in decision-making, unlike Moses, who was hasty in defending God's people in murdering an Egyptian. God sent Moses for Shepherd training in the wilderness for forty years. He learned patience and covenantal deliberation.

Nehemiah understood the need to consult wise counselors, so, he worked with a group of trusted leaders, not independently. As Proverbs teaches, "in an abundance of counselors there is safety. . . . victory" (Prov. 11:14, 24:6).

But Nehemiah was careful not to reveal his plans until he could identify trustworthy people. He did not broadcast his plans to everyone, but was wise in his communications. Early on, only the king knew of his plans in Jerusalem. He wanted to survey the situation prior to making his plans known to the Jerusalem leaders (Neh. 2:11-16).

Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. . . . And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work. Then I said to them . . . (Neh. 2:11, 16-17a).

Later he took the same approach regarding the problem of usury mentioned above: "I took counsel with myself" (v. 7a).

On every session confidentiality and unanimity are essential in order to preserve the peace and unity of the church (Eph. 4:1-6). In Acts 15 an important issue was debated by the church leaders at the Jerusalem Council; after debate the decision was supported by all.

6. Nehemiah Made Definite Plans Prayerfully

Prayer is the most fundamental exercise of faith. Nehemiah knew that he needed to use this essential means of grace to rebuild the City of God. But this did not preclude planning. He planned prayerfully. But he never wavered in his God-given purpose. He was not hasty in

making his plans or presenting them to the king. Once prayerfully planned, he was deliberate and unwavering in his execution. He knew how to organize God's people to achieve godly plans. Human planning and God's purposes work together in Scripture: "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. . . . Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established. . . . The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps" (Prov. 16:1, 3, 9).

7. Nehemiah Faced Opposition with Spiritual Weapons

Nehemiah's determination can only be explained because, like Paul, he employed spiritual weapons, understanding that his God-given enterprise involved spiritual warfare. "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

So, Nehemiah was willing to risk his life in seeking the king's aid and in facing down the enemies of the kingdom.

But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel. . . . But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem." (Neh. 2:10, 19–20)

And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes." (Neh. 4:14)

Nehemiah was not intimidated by the threats of these enemies of the kingdom (Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem). He did not give in to the counsel of fear and the opposition of the enemy. He responded to their intimidating letters: "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" (Neh. 6:3).

Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands. (Neh. 6:8–9)

Nehemiah was unflustered by leaks (Neh. 6:1) and false accusations that he was seeking to be king, usurping the authority of King Artaxerxes.

What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king? . . . And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, "There is a king in Judah." And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together." (Neh. 2:19, 6:7)

Nehemiah responded affirming God's power to rebuild and a wise assessment of the nature of their plot:

Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem." . . . Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." (Neh. 2:20, 6:8)

He dealt firmly and gently with internal complaints (5:1–14). The rich had caused some Jewish debtors to sell children into slavery; to sell possession; and take out equity loans to pay their debts. Nehemiah confronted the rich with God's law (Neh. 5:6–13). He was not afraid to deal with those who were divisive or sinful. This was also Paul's approach and should be ours.

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (Rom. 16:17–20)

Nehemiah promoted godly discipline (Neh. 13:1ff; cf. Gal. 6:1, Matt. 18).

He did not quit under pressure. This is a great temptation in the midst of spiritual battle. But, he persevered as a good soldier of Christ as Paul did: "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him" (2 Tim. 2:3–4, Neh. 4:1ff.). Only the employment of spiritual weapons and the wisdom of God's Word and patient, pleading prayer will keep leaders from quitting.

8. Nehemiah Trusted God to Provide all of the Resources for His Plan

Nehemiah trusted God to provide all human and material means to fulfill his plans. Prayer and faith are not incompatible with ordinary means. He used wise planning in gathering people and materials (Neh. 2:7–8); and in taking precautions in all of his activities, such as the king's escort (2:9), and guards (4:22–23, 7:3) on the walls.

9. Nehemiah Made His Trust in God and His Plans Known in All of His Communications

Nehemiah took responsibility for God's declared mission: "what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem" (Neh. 2:12b). So, in the new covenant, leaders must take responsibility for the mission of the whole church: local, presbytery, national, international. We must take to heart God's revealed will in the commission of our risen Lord to us (Matt. 28:16–20).

10. Nehemiah Exemplified Jesus Christ as a Self-sacrificing Leader of God's People

Nehemiah pleaded his own righteousness. “Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people” (Neh. 5:19). Thank God that Nehemiah and we are united to an obedient Christ, whose active obedience has been imputed to us: “just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works” (Rom. 4:6). He recognized that God would achieve the ultimate victory over sin and death: “by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Col. 2:14–15).

Nehemiah possessed Christ-like character as set forth in the qualifications/qualities of the elder (1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1). Nehemiah entered into the experience of his Savior, suffering for the sake of God’s people. Paul says, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col. 1:24). Nehemiah denied himself by refusing remuneration and spending his own allowance (Neh. 5:14–19).

He faced the enemy with calm trust in God’s deliverance and determination to fulfill his plan. Ultimate deliverance was always within Nehemiah’s purview: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:25–26).

Only Christ can keep the promises of covenant obedience in Nehemiah 8.

For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 5:19–21)

Nehemiah as a type of Christ restored the ruins of people and places, of bodies and souls. He helped the poor, and called for reformation and discipline in Sabbath keeping, mixed marriages, and tithing.

Nehemiah trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. “Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love” (Neh. 13:22). He knew himself to be a sinner in need of God’s grace. He confessed his own sin in 1:6, “Even I and my father’s house have sinned.” God’s tenaciously faithful love was his ultimate hope (Neh. 1:5, 9:17, 32, 13:22).

Conclusion

Nehemiah faithfully used God-provided resources, worked with God’s people in community, and trusted God to bless every activity in his service. As leaders and officers in the church of Jesus Christ we are called to be kingdom builders, waging spiritual warfare to build the church with trust in God, prayerfully, wisely, and with moral integrity.

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ServantReading

Vos the Systematician

A Review Article

by Danny E. Olinger

Reformed Dogmatics, by Geerhardus Vos, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., et al., 5 vols. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014–2016, 1,269 pages, \$39.99 per volume, Kindle \$5.99 per volume. Also available through Logos Bible Software.

When Louis Berkhof was born on October 13, 1893, in Emmen, the Netherlands, Geerhardus Vos was an eleven-year-old living with his parents twenty miles west in the city of Lutten. Living twenty miles to the southwest of Vos in the city of Zwolle was eighteen-year-old Herman Bavinck. All were sons of families devoted to the small and disenfranchised Christian Reformed Church (*Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*) in the Netherlands. As adults, each would end up teaching at Reformed institutions connected with the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands and in North America. Bavinck taught at Kampen (1883–1902) in the Netherlands, and Vos (1888–93) and Berkhof (1906–44) at the Theological School (renamed Calvin Seminary) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Each would also publish a dogmatic or systematic theology. Bavinck’s four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics* (1895–1901) and Vos’s five-volume *Reformed Dogmatics* (hand-written, 1896; transcribed, 1910) were published in Dutch. It is likely that, when Bavinck and Vos were together for the summers of 1886 and 1887, they shared with each other their views of dogmatics. Bavinck had already been teaching dogmatics at Kampen, and Vos was scheduled to teach the same subject at the Theological School. After Bavinck published his *Dogmatics*, Vos, by then at Princeton Seminary, wrote two glowing reviews in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*.¹

Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology* was published in English in 1932. In his introduction to the volume, Berkhof voices his gratitude and indebtedness to Bavinck and Vos and the teaching of their dogmatics. Little did he know at the time that it would not be until the twenty-first century that both Bavinck and Vos were translated into English. A complete English version of Bavinck’s *Dogmatics*, edited by John Bolt and translated by John Vriend, appeared from 2003–8.

Now, through the editorial and translating efforts of Richard B. Gaffin Jr., and the financial backing of Logos Bible Software and Lexham Press, Vos’s *Reformed Dogmatics* in English has finally appeared online and in print. Together, Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology*, Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vos’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, and Cornelius Van Til’s *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (1936)—another theologian born in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century with Christian Reformed sympathies—put forth a treasure trove of Reformed systematics. On a cursory reading, the common thread running through each is a commitment to Reformed confessionalism combined with piety built upon sound biblical exegesis. A

¹ Geerhardus Vos, review of *Gereformeerde Domatiek*, vol. 1, by Herman Bavinck in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 7, no. 26 (1896): 356–63, and review of *Gereformeerde Domatiek*, vol. 2 by Herman Bavinck in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 10, no. 40 (1899): 694–700.

stimulating question for Reformed scholars going forward will be to investigate the similarities and contrasts in Bavinck's and Vos's dogmatics, and their influence on Berkhof and Van Til.

Van Til's high esteem for Vos and his *Reformed Dogmatics* was seen in a 1941 letter. A friend, probably H. Evan Runner or John DeWaard, had shared an observation about Vos and Turretin on the doctrine of the covenant. Van Til replied:

What you say about Vos and Turretin is interesting. Vos once told me that he had studied the covenant question at that early period because of the sick ideas on the subject prevailing at the time in Grand Rapids. But whether he depended on Turretin I do not know and am inclined to doubt. Turretin does not impress me very favorably, and at any rate if there is any trait that stands out in Vos it is the originality of statement and boldness of position. To think that he was able and dared to take the position he did that is revealed in his notes on Dogmatics is nothing short of amazing. Incidentally, I hope someone will give his life and labors a worthy write-up. But I do not know anyone who has the sweep of interest that he had. I know of no one who combined linguistic, philosophic and systematic interpretation as he did. *Hy komt misschien niet tot aan de eerst drie*, but he runs close after them, I feel.²

The Dutch phrase that Van Til used to communicate his exalted opinion of Vos as a theologian is from 2 Samuel 23:19 and 23, a text about David's mighty men.

Van Til often shared his appreciation of Vos with Gaffin, his Westminster Seminary colleague, who in turn has spent the last half century promoting Vos and his theological contributions. Still, Gaffin states that had he known that the translation project for Vos's *Dogmatics* would take as long as it did (five years), he might have hesitated to take on the job. But, he quickly adds, "There is no question that it was a project well worth doing and for me personally, for all that I learned from Vos over the years about Scripture and devotion to the God of Scripture, a labor of love."³

According to Gaffin, his editorial goal for Vos's *Reformed Dogmatics* was to prepare a careful translation. Since the origin of the material was Vos's lectures, the oral aspects, such as an occasional elliptical style or Vos's brief referrals to authors and titles, have been retained. Vos used a question and answer approach and followed the outline of the traditional *loci*.

Vos cites John Calvin more than any other theologian. He references Augustine the second most, and, among English speaking theologians, John Owen receives the most citations. Interestingly, Vos rarely mentions Abraham Kuyper, despite maintaining a regular correspondence with him during the period that he was teaching at the Theological School and writing the *Reformed Dogmatics*.

In the opening volume, *Theology Proper*, Vos covers the knowability, names, being, and attributes of God, and the Trinity. He also treats the decrees of God, predestination and providence. Lane Tipton in his review, "Vos's Reformed Dogmatics," in the April 2018 issue of *New Horizons*, provides a penetrating analysis of the contributions Vos made in *Theology Proper*.⁴ Tipton notes that Vos put forth the proper relation between the triune God, who is absolute and unchanging, and an eschatologically oriented creation where man is made in the image of God. The absolute God remains immutably absolute and triune in the new relation that results from the act of creating his image bearers.

² Cornelius Van Til to unknown friend, December 25, 1941, in Archives of Westminster Theological Seminary.

³ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "The Reformed Dogmatics of Geerhardus Vos," *Unio Cum Christo* 4, no. 1 (April 2018).

⁴ Lane G. Tipton, "Vos's Reformed Dogmatics," in *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* 39, no. 4 (April 2018): 9–11.

Tipton then moves to the second volume, *Anthropology*, to show Vos's brilliance in arguing that the proper understanding of the new relation leads to a deeper Protestant conception. Vos maintains that God created man in his image so that men are "disposed for communion with God" and "can act in a way that corresponds to their destiny only if they rest in God" (2:13). The destiny is communion with God in full in glory, a movement from communion with God in the first estate of innocence in the garden to consummate communion with God in the final estate of heaven.

Tipton rightly understands what Vos is driving at from the opening of the *Reformed Dogmatics* in laying out the Bible's teaching on the nature and destiny of man. Vos believes that the Reformed faith puts forth the "deeper Protestant conception" (2:13) because it affirms the nature of man pre- and post-Fall and the destiny of man pre- and post-Fall.⁵

In laying out his contention that Rome's theological commitments renders it incapable of arriving at the eschatological goal set before Adam, Vos asks, "Why is this doctrine of the image of God of such great importance for theology?" He answers:

It is self-evident that by "image of God" is expressed what is characteristic of man and his relation to God. That he is God's image distinguishes him from animals and all other creatures. In the idea that one forms of the image is reflected one's idea of the religious state of man and of the essence of religion itself. (2:18)

Roman Catholicism, however, has no conception at creation of a personal relationship between God and man. It teaches that man was created with the image, a metaphysical correspondence of the human spirit with God, not the likeness of the image. In other words, Roman Catholicism believes that man is God's image bearer by nature, but he needs God to supply an additional gift (*donum superadditum*) after creation to make him a religious being. That is, God must raise man above his created state—irrespective of the Fall—to that of a religious being capable of communion. God gives original righteousness (*justitia originalis*) as gift so that man might be able to love and enjoy God. The result is that Roman Catholicism is externalist in its view of creation and denies the totality of the corruption of man when the Fall into sin occurs.

The Reformed believe that man was created upright, not deficient. But, coinciding immediately with the first sin was the total corruption of human nature. Related closely to this was the loss of the gift of fellowship with God through the Spirit.

This radical change for man was reflected in his accusing conscience that brought a fear of God and a sense of shame. In casting Adam and Eve out of the garden, God showed how the relationship between man and God had changed. "Because paradise and the tree of life had been images and seals of the blessings promised in the covenant of works, man must be deprived of the sight of them" (2:54). Vos continued, "Hence banishment from paradise, the cherubim with the burning blade of a sword, and the declaration that 'he may not reach out his hand and take of the tree of life.'" (2:54).

Vos's mention of the covenant of works in regard to the promised eternal blessings foreshadows his later work on eschatology. In fact, when Vos reviewed the first volume of Bavinck's *Dogmatics* for the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* in 1896, he drew attention to

⁵ Vos asserts elsewhere that Lutheranism's system of doctrine, while to be praised for affirming justification by faith alone over against Roman Catholicism, fails to understand the religious destiny of man as communion with God in the confirmed estate of glory. See, Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980) 241–47.

Bavinck's insight on this point. The Reformed believe that the translational hope from innocence to communion with God in full in glory—what Vos had labelled the “deeper Protestant” conception—was put before Adam in the covenant of works. Bavinck realized that there was no place for a covenant of works in Roman Catholic theology with its view of the creation of man, its denial that Adam was upright in the estate of innocence, and its commitment to the *donum superadditum*.

Vos immediately grasped the implications. If there is no covenant of works, then Christianity becomes a religion that aims at the elevation of man's nature, and that through the cooperative work of God and man. If there is a covenant of works, which has been broken by Adam's sin, then Christianity is a religion of grace in which God alone saves sinners.

In *Anthropology* Vos spells out how the covenant of works and the covenant of grace coincide and differ. They coincide in that the author of each is God; that the covenanting parties are God and man; that the purpose of each is glorifying God; and that the promise of both is heavenly, eternal blessedness.

They differ in the way in which God appears. In the covenant of works, God appears as Creator and Lord. In the covenant of grace, he appears as Redeemer and Father. God established the covenant of works to show his love and benevolence toward unfallen man. In the covenant of grace, God shows his mercy and particular grace to fallen humanity. In the covenant of works, there is no mediator; in the covenant of grace, there is one, Jesus Christ. The covenant of grace rests upon the obedience of Christ, the mediator, and is firm and certain. The covenant of works rested on the obedience of mutable man, which is uncertain. “Do this and live” marked the covenant of works, but the way of faith marks the covenant of grace.

Gaffin in the preface to the third volume of *Reformed Dogmatics, Christology*, rightly observes that at the heart of any sound dogmatics is its treatment of Christology. He observes, “Christ as the center of the entire saving self-revelation of the triune God finds full and rich expression in this present volume” (vii). Vos's treatment of the offices of prophet, priest, and king, that Christ fulfills as mediator, supports that conclusion. When the Apostle Paul speaks of how Christ has become to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption in 1 Corinthians 1:30, he is expressing Christ's fulfillment of the prophetic (wisdom), priestly (righteousness), and kingly (sanctification and redemption) offices. As prophet, Christ serves as God's authoritative representative to reveal by his Word and Spirit the counsel of God for the salvation of his people. As priest, Christ is appointed by God to represent men in bringing satisfaction to God through sacrifice and intercession. As King, Christ acts on behalf of God to rule and protect his church.

In volume 4 of *Reformed Dogmatics, Soteriology*, Vos examines the application of the merits of Christ by the Spirit in light of Christ's fulfillment of the covenant of grace. Vos asks, “Why does grace work from now on in the sinner from Christ and only in union with Christ?” (4:21). The legal basis for grace lies in being reckoned in Christ by the judgment of God, a relationship that is reflected in the consciousness of the believer when he believes. This is because by faith he acknowledges that there is no righteousness in himself, but that his standing before God is only because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him.

All that the sinner receives flows from the living Christ. The result is that the sinner not only knows as an idea that he will receive everything for Christ's sake but also *experiences in life* how everything comes from Christ. He is regenerated, justified, sanctified, glorified, but all this is in the closest bond with the Mediator. (4:23)

In volume 5 Vos addresses ecclesiology with comments on the importance of the Word of God and the nature of church power. According to Vos, believers are reckoned in Christ, regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, and implanted into Christ to form one body. The kingdom of God expresses the invisible spiritual principle of the church. “It is the lordship Christ exercises over our souls if we truly belong to Him, our submission to His sovereign authority, our being conformed and joined by living faith to His body with its many members” (5:8).

He continues, “The true church is a teaching church, a confessing church. Whoever comes in contact with its word also comes in contact with the root of its life, its holy walk” (5:26). Churches that abandon the Word of God or dispense with their confession are in a process of dissolution. These churches are no longer performing their main function, which is to carry out and to apply the Word of God. “Thus, insofar as the church itself is concerned, it is entirely a ministerial and not a ruling power” (5:37).

No authority may be exercised by the church unless it is derived from the kingship of Christ. The relationship of Christ’s kingship and the church carries with it the understanding that the church is more than a free association. Believers stand under the command of Christ, the King. Vos writes:

(The) kingly structure of Christ over the church is connected to the kingly word of Christ. Christ is in the church, and he rules over the church through his word. Therefore, no one can do anything in the church that would be right and conflict with that word. All believers owe unconditional obedience to the word of their king, and that obligation takes precedence before all other things. (5:37)

In answering the question, “What is contained in the term ‘eschatology?’” Vos presents the basis for the philosophy of history that would mark his later biblical theological writings. He answers that the history in which humans are situated will have a conclusion.

It is not an endless process but a genuine history that ends in a definite goal and so has a bounding and limits. As it had a beginning, it will have an ending. That ending will come as a crisis, and everything that has to do with this crisis belongs to the ‘doctrine of the last things.’ (5:251)

Vos closes the *Reformed Dogmatics* with what would become his biblical theological focus at Princeton, communion with God in heaven. “The enjoyment of heaven in fellowship with God is eternal life in all its fullness.” (5:310).

In the last paragraph, Vos states, “Heaven will not be a world of uniformity; diversity will rule there” (5:310). Referencing 1 Corinthians 15:41, he says that not all receive the same portion (“the one who has sowed much receives a rich harvest”), but diversity will not function in heaven as a cause of distress. This is because Christ is the head of a glorified humanity, which constitutes the body under him, and in the body, there are always different parts.

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Doctrine in Development: Johannes Piscator and Debates Over Christ's Active Obedience, by Heber Carlos de Campos Jr.

by Ryan M. McGraw

Doctrine in Development: Johannes Piscator and Debates Over Christ's Active Obedience, by Heber Carlos de Campos Jr., Reformed Historical-Theological Studies. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017, 304 pages, \$25.00, paper.

The imputation of Christ's active obedience to believers in their justification is an important contemporary theological issue. It was an important issue in historic Reformed theology as well, yet its development is somewhat complex. It is difficult, in writing historical theology, to set an adequate context and to avoid importing contemporary concerns into historical debates. In *Doctrine in Development*, Heber de Campos furnishes us with an exemplary model of contextual historical theology that illustrates the theological and exegetical development of what became a key issue in the Reformed doctrine of justification. His book is clearly argued and theologically nuanced enough to help readers understand why the imputation of Christ's active obedience was compatible with early Reformed theology and why it became so integral to later formulations. This review focuses both on how de Campos pursues his historical task in order to demonstrate the value of this book as a model for doing history, as well as on the content of his findings.

This book stresses the reasons why Johannes Piscator openly opposed the imputation of Christ's active obedience in justification. However, the author argues persuasively that if Piscator was the first Reformed theologian to reject the imputation of active obedience to believers, then Theodore Beza was one of the first to promote it (257). This nuanced study demonstrates that earlier Reformed authors did not oppose active obedience and that they left room for it without the teaching being embedded in their theologies (especially ch. 3). In order to understand Piscator's views and their historical significance in context, de Campos surveys the views of early Reformed theologians on the significance of Christ's obedience in relation to his work on the cross (chs. 1–3), he explores medieval precedents, he outlines Lutheran and Roman Catholic teachings on the subject (both in ch. 4), and he shows the relation of Piscator's views to later trajectories in Reformed thought (chs. 7–8). It is striking that only chapters five and six directly treat Piscator's arguments against the imputation of Christ's active obedience directly. In my opinion, this is how historical theology should be done. If historians fail to situate Reformed authors in their contemporary historical contexts, with an eye to Protestant, Roman Catholic, and medieval precedents, and with an aim to subsequent theological trajectories, then they run the risk of misinterpreting their subjects. This is why de Campos is a model of sound and thorough historical theology.

De Campos's corrections to Chad Van Dixhoorn's evaluation of Christ's active obedience in relation to the Westminster Assembly highlight the importance of setting

such a broad historical context. While Van Dixhoorn concludes that the explicit omission of “active obedience” or “whole obedience” in the Westminster Standards shows that these were consensus or compromise documents designed to encompass all parties present, de Campos shows the presence in these documents of language that was used for the preceding fifty years (drawing from medieval precedents) to affirm the imputation of Christ’s active obedience in opposition to Piscator. The fact that a historian of Van Dixhoorn’s quality missed this point is not so much a critique of his scholarship as it is a demonstration of how hard it is to write contextually informed history (Van Dixhoorn concedes the soundness of the correction in his endorsement of the book). De Campos has achieved a rare level of scholarship that exemplifies the kind of questions that we need to ask of the development of historical ideas.

In addition to exemplifying sound historical method, this book helps readers understand how the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s active obedience came about and why it became so important in Reformed thought. In contrast to earlier evaluations of Piscator’s denials of the doctrine, the author argues repeatedly that early Reformed and Lutheran authors were unclear on the question. However, being unclear neither meant that they taught active obedience by implication nor that they intended to oppose it. The real battle lines in this regard were drawn between Beza’s and Piscator’s views. Beza taught that believers need Christ’s righteous habits by virtue of his incarnation, the imputation of his righteous life by his active obedience, and the removal of the curse of sin through the cross (e.g., 65, 77, 93). Piscator taught that Christ’s obedient life merely qualified him for the cross and that removing the curse of sin was enough to constitute believers righteous in God’s sight (112). He shifted the emphasis of acceptance with God from the legal category of justification to that of adoption as sons by the Father (157–58). While other Reformed authors did not deny the importance of adoption, they increasingly located our acceptance with God in the imputation of Christ’s righteousness and the removal of God’s wrath and curse, which correspond to Christ’s righteous life and his cross respectively (240–47). Adoption then refers to the fact that we are heirs of God in Christ (246). While Piscator believed that in his humanity Christ owed obedience to God and that he could not obey in the place of others (146), most Reformed authors argued that Christ’s obedience was voluntary condescension on his part because his human nature had no distinct personal subsistence (247–55). De Campos shows masterfully Reformed authors overwhelmingly affirmed the imputation of Christ’s active obedience to believers in their justification (ch. 8) based on: the stability of divine law coupled with a developing Reformed covenant theology, the nature of justification in relation to the righteous requirements of the law and its penalty, and Christological reflections. Piscator thus represents, in part, the growing pains involved in clarifying Reformed doctrine in the context of seventeenth-century theological developments (262).

Doctrine in Development is an important book. It clarifies a major component of the Reformed presentation of the gospel and it provides those writing and reading historical theology with a model of how things should be done. This book is academic in tone, but it is accessible to all who are interested in understanding this key doctrine better.

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Prayers of the Bible, 366 Devotionals to Encourage Your Prayer Life, by Gordon J. Keddie

by Candyce D. Magee

Prayers of the Bible: 366 Devotionals to Encourage Your Prayer Life, by Gordon J. Keddie. Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant, 2017, xi + 764 pages, \$18.00, paper.

The Christian worshiper seeking a guide for daily prayer and study does not lack options. Excellent works are available everywhere, including historic classics and more modern alternatives. However, it is unusual to find one that combines great theological depth with true accessibility for the contemporary reader. Gordon Keddie has achieved this excellent mix in his new book, *Prayers of the Bible: 366 Devotionals to Encourage Your Prayer Life*.

Keddie lists three practical goals that he hopes to achieve in each of his daily entries. The first is that “they are designed to be an encouragement to commit to the consistent exercise and enjoyment of prayer as a ‘means of grace’” (x). The second is to present the actual prayers of God’s people throughout the entirety of Scripture, as well as “many of the passages that teach us about prayer” (xi). The final objective is the one which really caught this reader’s eye:

The third goal is to connect personal devotion and the prayers of the Bible with the Bible’s own manual of praise, the five books of what we call the Psalms. Each day includes, for prayer and praise, a portion of a psalm from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*, also published by Crown and Covenant. Not every psalm is included, but most are represented, so that, in parallel with the prayers expounded here, you will find a fairly comprehensive presentation of the scope of biblical praise. (xi)

From the beginning pages of *Prayers of the Bible* until the final meditation for the year, Keddie brilliantly achieves his goals.

Each day begins with the scriptural prayer that is in focus (NKJV), ordered from Genesis to Revelation. Because context is so often crucial, there are always additional, and often substantial, numbers of verses to read before starting the actual reflections by Keddie. In addition to being theologically astute, the author weaves Scripture after Scripture within the body of his thoughts on each daily passage. Lastly, the reader is encouraged to read the Psalm that most exemplifies the essence of the actual prayer uttered by someone in the Bible. This framework is very effective in bringing the entirety of the biblical message to the reader. It should not surprise us that Scripture interprets Scripture, but when done well, it is lovely to behold.

Keddie also uses extensive references from other spheres of life: poetry (Robert Burns), fiction (Dickens, Sir Walter Scott), theology (Rutherford, Owen), and even politics and philosophy (Churchill, Bacon). This is just a very small sampling of the

breadth of applied knowledge that Keddie shares with his audience. (There are 725 endnotes listed on the final pages of the book.)

Because Keddie expounds nearly all the prayers of the Bible, there is no shrinking back in terms of topics covered. The range is varied and even surprising at times. Trivia aficionados will also appreciate some of the details that are noted. There are the obvious facts (such as the shortest and longest prayers offered up to God), as well as the more unusual observations (for instance, the first prayer meeting and the only recorded prayer of the Holy Spirit).

Keddie's thoughts on the importance of each prayer are succinct, yet thorough; simple, yet profound. After having pastored churches in Scotland, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, he has carefully studied the prayers of the Bible and listened to the heartfelt entreaties of his congregants. Trained at Westminster Theological Seminary, Keddie has the academic background and experience to bring the Reformed faith to bear on this essential Christian discipline. We would do well to reflect upon the inspired words of God's servants within Holy Scripture as we also cry out to the Almighty. Keddie aids us in this endeavor by showing us the incomparable benefit of contemplating the whole counsel of God as we do so.

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ServantPoetry

James Ryan Lee (1980–)

Bonfire

*“...To shine...to guide our feet into the way of peace.”
Luke 1:79*

After the party ended, I remained to burn
The leftover wood—an interval of silence
And warmth radiated against crashing surf
Up wind. I expected my wife soon,

But longer than I expected a shadow loomed
Some twenty yards away. I thought the man
Approaching was lost—so strange
And hunched over. With fear I nearly

Called out, only the fire separated us now.
Into the light, it was my father.
“I thought to join you,” he said.
What fear and love the child is given.

Lest I fear, let it be love that comes at last,
Oh Lord.