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PUBLISHER

Steve Watters

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Aaron Cline Hanbury

EDITOR

Andrew J.W. Smith

COPY EDITORS

Annie Corser
RuthAnne Irvin

NEWS WRITER

Myriah Snyder

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Daniel Carroll

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Gabriel Reyes-Ordeix

PHOTOGRAPHER

Emil Handke

CONTACT INFO

Phone (502) 897-4000

E-mail towers@sbts.edu

Web towers.sbts.edu

The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary
2825 Lexington Rd.
Louisville, KY 40280

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Hidden Idols: Unseating the seductive power of sin in seminary

The reality of sanctification in a fallen world is that we have to fight sin the rest of our lives. In seminary, our sins just tend to hide more. Academic performance, pornography, and pride are three of the most seductive.



FROM THE EDITOR

Most Americans, religious or not, know they're sinners. A recent survey by LifeWay Research found that 67 percent of Americans admit they're sinners,

and 34 percent of Americans said they're dealing with that by working hard to stop.

Sin is common to man. And the impulse to recognize your sin and promise to "do better" is just as common, but it's not the gospel.

The gospel is that the Lord Jesus meets us where we are. He "first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The beginning of true change is admitting that we can't.

This issue of *Towers* is important to me, as a

former seminary student. I remember Dr. Whitney urging us in *Personal Spiritual Disciplines* not to get so caught up in the academic world that we neglect the state of our souls. That was sage advice — and advice I wish I had taken more seriously.

Whatever your life situation this semester, remember the first thesis Luther wrote 500 years ago: When Jesus called us to repent, "he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."

04

Classical education minor will further equip Boyce grads

A resurgence in classical education means the world needs more classical educators. Boyce College is set to train them.

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The Old Testament prophets, clarified

Old Testament professor Peter J. Gentry discusses the challenges of reading the biblical prophets.

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Theology prof returns to SBTS

New theology professor Tyler Wittman discusses his passion for helping students think well.

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Introducing the Theology Forum

The Theology Forum is a monthly feature exploring major theological topics. This semester, SBTS professors weigh in on key Reformation doctrines.

Our mission is to use our time, resources, and talents to tell the Southern story in an accurate, timely, and creative manner to the glory of God.

Newslog



Boyce College now offers a minor in classical education

By SBTS Communications

With classical education on the rise and virtually no colleges preparing their education students to teach it, Boyce College will provide a minor in classical education, starting in the 2017-2018 academic year. Boyce professors Melissa Tucker and Tyler Flatt are at the forefront of the new program, which will be an emphasis within the teacher education program and a minor available to all other Boyce students.

“The resurgence of classical education is one of the most promising developments on the broader American education landscape in quite some time,” said Matthew J. Hall, dean of Boyce College. “Christian institutions are rightly at the forefront of this recovery of ancient wisdom, answering basic questions about what it means to be human, what it means to truly learn, and the very essence of education itself. However, few Christian colleges have taken on the task of preparing graduates to teach this way. This is the right kind of minor for Boyce College at precisely the right time.”

Tucker, who serves as chair of the teacher education program at Boyce, will work with education professor Kevin Jones and humanities professor Flatt to equip Boyce education students to teach the classics. Only two schools in the United States offer a minor in classics education, according to Tucker, and Boyce students will be uniquely prepared to teach it.

“At Boyce, we already have the resources in place to get out on the leading edge of this movement and start supplying that need pretty rapidly,” Flatt said.

Southern Seminary adds ‘promising young theologian’ to faculty

By SBTS Communications

A two-time graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is joining its faculty, President R. Albert Mohler Jr. announced this summer, appointing Kyle Claunch as assistant professor of Christian theology.

“Kyle Claunch is a bright scholar who has already emerged as one of the most promising young theologians of his generation,” Mohler said. “We are proud of his appointment to the theology faculty of Southern Seminary. He will be joining a department of great strength and international reputation, and he will now make his own contribution, both in the classroom and in the world of scholarship.”

Claunch joins SBTS after recently earning his doctorate of philosophy from the school in May 2017. He earned his advanced master of divinity from Southern in 2011, after graduating from the University of Mobile in Mobile, Alabama, in 2003. In the intervening years, Claunch served as associate pastor of youth at College Park Baptist in Mobile and later as senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Springfield, Kentucky. Currently he serves as lead pastor of Highland Park First Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

“Kyle exemplifies the combination of theological acumen with pastoral wisdom for which I encourage all of our students to strive,” said Randy L. Stinson, SBTS provost and senior vice president for academic administration.

Claunch’s scholarly work has appeared in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, and he contributed chapters to the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* and *One God in Three Persons*, edited by John Starke and Bruce A. Ware.



New associate dean of students joins Southern Seminary community

By RuthAnne Irvin

The Seminary’s first-ever associate dean of students is Tyson Ziegler, effective August 2017. Ziegler and his family moved from the Cincinnati area to Louisville, Kentucky, in 2014 for Ziegler to pursue an M.Div. in Christian ministries.

“What excites me about this position is the opportunity to invest in students through personal interactions and regular events that will help give them the best seminary experience possible,” Ziegler said.

“I am so grateful for Tyson coming to help our vision to engage students on all levels,” said Jeremy L. Pierre, dean of students. “He brings years of pastoral and administrative experience, but more importantly a heart that loves people and is confident in the power of Jesus to change them.”

More information about Southern Seminary’s Student Life is available at sbts.edu/students/student-life/.

Reasons to contact Ziegler or the Student Life office staff:

- Counseling needs
- Discipleship
- Student care
- Student Life inquiries
- Residence life questions or concerns

Pastors: ‘Church revitalization takes endurance’

By Andrew J.W. Smith

Pastors should endure amidst ministry challenges, said leading voices in church revitalization at the summer Alumni Academy, August 3-4 at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Despite the challenges and trials involved in church revitalization, ministers who are turning around congregations should maintain their vision for a healthy, biblically sound local church. They need to focus on God’s plan instead of being discouraged when people scowl at biblical preaching, said Andy Davis, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Durham, North Carolina and author of *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*.

“The Word of God is going to lead you to places that are going to be unpopular and controversial,” he said.

Brian Croft, senior pastor of Auburndale Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and Senior Fellow of the Mathena Center for Church Revitalization, said church structure is important for the life of the congregation, and is built on proper authority and leadership.

Undertaking this care of the flock is a difficult task, Croft said, and it becomes more difficult when the authority structure given by God breaks down. God also designed the church to have authority imparted to an autonomous, local church, rendering church membership essential. When a church is healthy, congregationalism is beautiful and life-giving, but a “trainwreck” when it goes wrong, he said.

Timothy K. Beougher, professor of evangelism and church growth and associate dean of the Billy Graham School for Missions, Evangelism and Ministry at SBTS, said pastors should help their congregations recognize their need for change. Beougher also has undertaken two church revitalizations, including most recently as senior pastor at West Broadway Baptist Church.

Alumni Academy provides free ongoing instruction for alumni and prospective students of Southern Seminary. To find out more about the program, visit sbts.edu/alumni.



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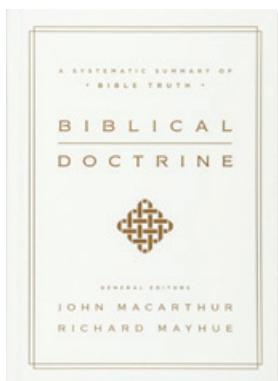
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Book Reviews



(Crossway 2017, \$60)

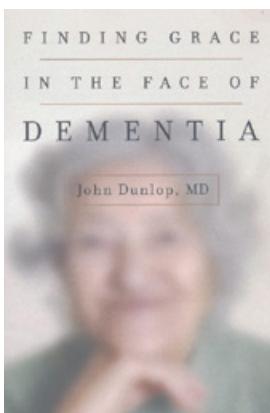
Bible Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, editors Review by Gabriel Reyes-Ordeix

Different from most systematic theologies, *Biblical Doctrine* opens with the doctrine of God's Word, only preceded by a Prolegomena. In doing this, John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue establish one of the major themes in this book: Bibliology is "fundamental and essential" to theology. After a detailed study of Scripture as "the only true source for all Christian truth," the reader can be certain that the doctrines like Christology, Anthropology, Soteriology and Eschatology stem from no other place than Scripture.

Biblical Doctrine is not meant to be a mere summary of truths, but its purpose is fundamentally doxological. The application of the truths of Scripture to personal devotion and corporate worship is at the center of this book's purpose—this is why the book is filled with hymns, prayer, and practical application.

The reader does not need to agree on all accounts with MacArthur and Mayhue to recognize the great value of this book to the church of our time, and to future generations.



(Crossway 2017, \$18.99)

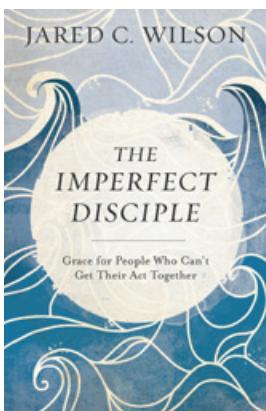
Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia

John Dunlop, M.D. Review By Caleb Shaw

John Dunlop, a geriatrician, brings his years of medical experience and biblical wisdom together to address dementia in his book, *Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia*. Dunlop covers dementia from diagnosis to death. The pastoral love with which he approaches this subject is evident as he recounts caring for his mother and offers advice for those diagnosed with dementia. He also suggests excellent ways to care for the spiritual well-being of dementia patients.

"God's love for us does not depend on our response to him," Dunlop writes. "Though we may forget him, he will never forget us. How comforting for all of us to know that 'if we are faithless, he remains faithful.'"

I have had the privilege of living with four of my grandparents who struggled with dementia during their latter years. I wish my family would have had a biblical, wise, and helpful resource like this book as we sought to honor and care for our grandparents well. You should pick up this book because it is likely you too will face this disease through a member of your family or church. Dunlop will help you think biblically about this disease so that you can best serve your afflicted brother or neighbor.



(Baker 2017, \$14.99)

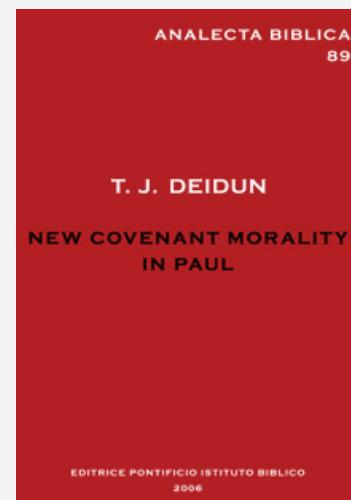
The Imperfect Disciple

Jared C. Wilson Review by Andrew J.W. Smith

Jared Wilson is one of my favorite writers in the evangelical corner of the publishing world. Not only because his writing style is fresh and original, clearly born out of a lot of hard work developing his craft, but because he will tackle difficult and controversial topics.

Now, in *The Imperfect Disciple*, Wilson writes the discipleship book for the Christian who feels like they don't measure up — aka, probably you. This is the book for the believers who feel like they haven't grown enough, like God is angry with them, and that they are inconsistent in their enthusiasm for the Christian life.

Wilson shows that our churches are full of people who are tired, burned out, anxious, or doubtful. He shows Christians that the gospel is for them too, and by pointing to Jesus' love for his disciples, offers a balm for the worn-out soul.



New Covenant Morality in Paul

(Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2006)

T. J. Deidun

"I had an opportunity to read this during my last sabbatical. It is one of the best and clearest expositions on how the New Covenant operates in the daily life and behaviour of the believer. It is among the best 20 books I have ever read."



PETER J. GENTRY
Professor of Old Testament Interpretation

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Covenant and God's Purpose for the World

Thomas R. Schreiner

Review by Miles Morrison

Thomas Schreiner's *Covenant and God's Purpose for the World* shows that God's redemptive plan, from Genesis to Revelation, can be seen in the way he has been covenanting with his people since the garden of Eden. Schreiner's approach provides a broad narrative for Scripture that shows both the continuity and discontinuity between the covenants.

Covenant and God's Purpose for the World is

an accessible resource that manages to find a balance between scholastic commentary and pastoral devotion. He takes the time to explain historical background like suzerain-vassal parallels with Israel's covenant, but also shares encouraging insights, like the fact that when David desired to build a house for the Lord, God responded by promising to build a house for David instead.

While each of the covenants share some basic characteristics, like being built on a relationship and involving binding promises, they also have unique circumstances and elements that set them apart. Schreiner demonstrates how these differences

and similarities actually serve to highlight God's purpose in ultimately fulfilling them in Jesus Christ.

"The covenant with Abraham was never focused solely on Israel; from the beginning there was concern that the entire world would experience blessing," Schreiner writes. "The promise of Genesis 3:15 would reach the entire world through a child of Abraham, and the New Testament clearly teaches that this promise was realized in Jesus Christ. Still, we need to examine the Davidic and new covenants to trace this theme in all its richness." (Crossway 2017, \$14.99)

How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets

Peter J. Gentry

Review by Andrew J.W. Smith

Among the most potentially perplexing and confusing parts of the entire Bible is the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. The metaphors are complex, the precise intention of the author is often opaque, and there are lengthy oracles to foreign empires that were destroyed millennia ago — not to mention the repetition and some of the confusing ways the prophets are cited in the New Testament. For the 21st century American reader, reading the prophets is a difficult task.

Peter J. Gentry, Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary, offers his concise guide on reading this literature in *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*. Based on lecture material from his Old Testament II course, the book gives basic instructions and suggestions for interpreting and applying the prophetic literature. Most of Gentry's writing has been academic and technical, but this book is a popular-level treatment intended for laypeople.

"Reading and studying the Bible, especially the Old Testament prophets, may not be straightforward for readers with a *modern* and *Western* background in culture and language," Gentry writes. "The biblical texts are *ancient* and *Eastern* in origin — they come

from a different culture and a different time."

Gentry helpfully discusses the genre of the prophets, noting that while the books don't seem to fit neatly into a specific literary category, they actually exhibit the traits of apocalyptic literature — a genre entirely foreign to Westerners. The apocalyptic genre is concerned with depicting the future through complex metaphors and imagery, and only when one grasps the nature of the apocalyptic can he or she accurately interpret the text, Gentry argues.

Repetition is another problem for American readers. In Hebrew literature, repetition is a literary and poetic technique that brings a three-dimensional quality to the text, Gentry writes. While it is often confusing or tiring for us to read, Gentry uses a speaker system (a left speaker and a right speaker) as an illustration of how Hebrew repetition functions to convey meaning.

"Repetition is at the heart of Hebrew discourse," he writes. "The normal pattern in Hebrew literature is to consider topics in a recursive — in other words, progressively repetitive — manner. This approach is boring, frustrating, and monotonous to those who do not understand that this approach was a purposeful way of communicating the content."

The book argues that the prophets were designed to point the Israelites back to the covenant, or the permanent, unbreakable relationship between God and his chosen people. This covenant calls the people of Israel to be completely and comprehensively devoted to Yahweh. Throughout Israel's history, however, the people turned from the one, true God and

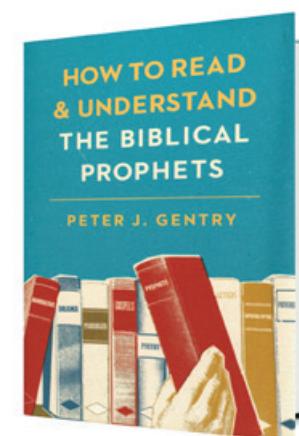
hedged their bets with other, inferior deities. The prophets sought to dramatically turn their attention back to Yahweh, and urge the people to remember their covenant agreement with him.

Gentry also deals with the nature of predicting future events — a particularly hot-button topic in the United States since the popularization of "end times" foretellings during the 20th century. He argues the way American Christians think of eschatology differs dramatically from the way an ancient Hebrew would have thought about it. What's more, the debate surrounding the literal interpretation of Scripture misses the point of the author's intent — attention to which truly makes an interpretation "literal".

"In the past one hundred years and more, Christians have hotly debated eschatology — what the Bible teaches about future events. The biggest problem in all this is that we have not known the rules and strategies used by the biblical prophets for communication, and we do not understand the texts they have written," Gentry writes. "The debate between literal interpretation and spiritual interpretation is entirely bogus. When the Reformers talked about the 'literal sense' of the text, they meant the meaning intended by the author according to the rules of the genre of literature being used to communicate the message."

How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets is a helpful guide for reading this puzzling section of the Bible, and offers the reader many useful tools for digging through the rich soil of the Word of God.

(Baker Academic 2017, \$32.99)



"Reading and studying the Bible, especially the Old Testament prophets, may not be straightforward for readers with a modern and Western background in culture and language. The biblical texts are ancient and Eastern in origin — they come from a different culture and a different time."



Returning to the covenant

GENTRY'S NEW BOOK SHOWS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROPHETS

By Andrew J.W. Smith

EDITOR'S NOTE: Below, Peter J. Gentry, Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, talks with Towers editor Andrew J.W. Smith about this new book, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*.

AJWS: How does one go about finding a genre for the prophets? How do you build a framework for interpreting them?

PG: The prophets, you could argue, are not a specific genre because they use every communication trick in the book to get their message across, including acting. Jeremiah hides his underwear in the rock, Isaiah goes naked and barefoot, Ezekiel cuts off his hair and throws it out the window. But part of prophetic literature in particular is what we would call apocalyptic literature, which uses highly colored metaphors and

symbols to describe future events. Some people have not figured out that this is a way of speaking among the prophets. It really comes out of their belief in the doctrine of creation because that's the central teaching in the Old Testament, that there is one God who created everything. So when your whole world is going to be turned upside down, they talk about it like an anti-creation event. The sun will be darkened, and the moon will be turned to blood. So this apocalyptic language comes out of their belief in the creator God and their understanding of creation.

AJWS: What is a covenant?

PG: A covenant is a serious and permanent commitment to a relationship that is characterized by loyalty, love, faith, trust, and obedience. Family relationships are considered covenantal relationships. A lot of covenant language in the Bible uses family language. When God makes a covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, he says, "I will be a father to you, and you will be like my son." So there's going to be a relationship of faith. You're going to have to believe what I say. You're going to have to obey what I say. I'm looking for complete devotedness

and loyalty and faithfulness in this relationship. And of course children are supposed to serve their parents. So an obedient son and a servant king is really the idea that is carried through each one of the Adamic figures as we show in *Kingdom Through Covenant*.

AJWS: How does prophecy as we often think of it — foretelling the future — function throughout the Scriptures?

PG: I would summarize the covenant relationship very simply by saying being completely devoted to the Lord as the only true God, to treat others in a genuinely human way, and to be good stewards of the earth's resources. So as Jesus said, love God and love your neighbor as yourselves. So that's a summary of the covenant. So one of the problems is the Israelites are not completely devoted to Yahweh as the only true God. They're farmers, they're shepherds, and they're hedging their bets with Baal at the same time that they're going to the temple in Jerusalem. They're putting their eggs in a number of baskets, and they're not putting their total devotion, their total loyalty, and their total trust in Yahweh. So you've got a problem: how do you prove Yahweh is the only true God and Baal is a false god? There is only one true test of deity. That is the being who is God is someone who not only knows but determines and controls the future. If we think about it, this is the one thing in spite of all the greatness of our human technology that we cannot do. If you look, the weather channel is the most-watched channel in America, which shows that we want to know what's going to happen. And nobody does know for sure what's going to happen. So prediction of the future becomes part of the prophets' message to prove two things: first of all, if a prophet makes a prediction and it comes true, then you know according to Deuteronomy 18 that he's a true prophet. Then when he makes a prediction that occurs beyond the hearer's lifetime, you believe that because he is now tested as a true prophet by his own contemporaries. So they make predictions of the future to prove first of all that they are genuine, authorized agents. Then they make predictions that demonstrate that Yahweh is the only one who not only knows but controls the future and determines it.

AJWS: How can we rightly identify something as a messianic prophecy?

PG: Well, I show in the book that there are basically three different ways in which the prophets talk about the future. Number one, you could actually simply make a prose statement. Here is what is going to happen without any figures of speech, just straight prediction. And I think there are examples of that al-

though liberal scholarship does not accept them, the prediction of Cyrus the Great as coming to deliver them from Babylon. You can use what's called typology, and that is very simple. Because God is in control of history and because he is consistent in his character, there will be patterns in events. So certain things in the past are actually patterns or foreshadow events that will happen in the future. Another way you can describe the future is using types. In the Old Testament, God's great act of deliverance in the past is the Exodus, so the prophets talk about how after the time of judgment God will rescue them, he will deliver them, he will save them — and people like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel use language from the Exodus to describe the coming salvation. And the other way they do this is by very colorful metaphors and symbols in what we call

“A covenant is a serious and permanent commitment to a relationship that is characterized by loyalty, love, faith, trust, and obedience. Family relationships are considered covenantal relationships. A lot of covenant language in the Bible uses family language.”

apocalyptic language, and it's very easy to understand. So we shouldn't be surprised by the different methods that are used to describe the future, because if God is predicting something that's 700 years in advance or 2000 years in advance, a literal description is not going to be useful.

AJWS: Take students who are reading through the Bible in a year: they get through Genesis and Exodus just fine. They work their way through Leviticus and Deuteronomy and do their best. Then they do the Psalms. Then they get to the prophets, they get to Isaiah and Jeremiah

and then they start to slow down because there's all this complicated material in there. There's oracles about foreign nations and all these other things going on, and so their reading plan falls apart. What are some reasons that happens?

PG: The idea of repetition, of course, is basic to all Hebrew literature, so they're going to see this in Genesis. Even in prose you'll have large sections that involve repetition. Hebrew literature also uses pairs of words, which you can't get the idea from each word individually, but together they communicate something, so with poetry and with word pairs you get the minimum version of the left speaker and the right speaker. So they're going to have a lot of experience, they're going to see this throughout. In Exodus 14 you have a prose version of the crossing of the Red Sea, in Exodus 15 you have the poetry version. Judges 4 is the battle with Sisera described in prose. Chapter 5 is the battle described in poetry. You see other things like long sections that deal with the foreign nations. Those are really connected to the covenant in Deuteronomy, in particular to Deuteronomy 32 because Moses already knows that the people do not have a faithful heart. He says their heart is not circumcised, and it's just a way of saying, you're not completely devoted to the covenant. God wants them to realize that he's not just the tribal deity, but he's the creator-God of the whole world. He governs all the nations, and his plan through Abraham is to bring blessing to all the nations through Israel. So God is bringing Israel back to himself so Israel can bring a blessing to all these other nations. Israel as a nation never really grasped the purpose of why God had called them and given them special blessing in Abraham. The blessing to Abraham was not for themselves but to be the instrument of blessing and salvation for the whole world. So that's why you have these kinds of sections.

AJWS: How do we recognize the Bible does go into great detail about this and does have truth that can be applied to our lives while also being open-handed about it?

PG: Well, that's why I wrote the book. I'll be honest, most of my writing over the last 40 years has been extremely technical, so I tried to write something that was as popular possible. I'm hoping this will help people know how to read these texts for themselves. I can teach people what I think the Bible is saying, but I'm more interested in them actually learning to read the text for themselves and coming to the right conclusions.

HIDDEN IDOLS: UNCOVERING THE SELECTIVE POWERS OF SIN IN CONSUMERY



UNSEATING THE IDOL OF PERFORMANCE

BY JEREMY L. PIERRE

I've been around Southern Seminary as a student, a professor, and now as dean of students for long enough to notice patterns. There are certain sins that people in our community struggle with most, disordered ways of living that are particular to men and women training for ministry.

One of the major sins I consistently encounter is what I would call a "performance identity" in academic pursuits. It manifests itself in many forms: plagiarism, lying on reading reports, dishonesty, and cutting corners academically. But those actions are just the behavioral manifestations of a deeper problem. A heart problem.

That's why I call it a performance identity: We try to ground our personal significance and meaning in our performance, and we need our grades — the gauges of that performance in an academic environment like Southern Seminary — to be as high as possible.

Most of the time, we aren't intending to do this when we take on the noble task of ministry training. But we always take on noble tasks

with mixed motives. There are many good and virtuous reasons why people come to seminary — we want to engage our minds with the truth, to serve the church well, to reach out to unbelievers, and to do all these things with excellence. Of course this is important and necessary, and the desire to know the truth, serve the church, and present the gospel is a genuine motivation for virtually everyone I meet at this institution.

But we are often less aware of the many self-serving motivations that drove our decision to come to seminary and continue to drive us to excel. We experience a deep need to be recognized, and we want to feel like we are doing something meaningful. Particularly in the millennial generation, we have been taught to think that we should be immediately aware of the significance of our work. We want to do something great, and to know it's great while we're doing it. We aren't satisfied with the quiet growth of a mind over time. We want more immediate indicators of significance. The closest thing we have to this are grades.

*“RATHER THAN PURSUING COMMUNION
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THE PROBLEM WITH GOOD GRADES

Now, satisfaction and fulfillment does indeed come from what we do and how we perform in our work. That is a good and God-designed reality, but it is not an ultimate one. Some students at Southern have left careers that were very lucrative — working as lawyers, doctors, or tradesmen— in order to pursue God’s calling in ministry. Others are fresh out of college and they’re just trying to establish a career for the first time.

For both, grades often become the ultimate barometer of the wisdom of that decision. Students want to know they made a wise choice to attend seminary, and they want to meet the objective standard that measures their success. Sometimes the grade becomes the main objective instead of the knowledge of God. Rather than pursuing communion with the living God through an honest grasp of the material in their courses, sometimes students pursue the recognition of a high GPA.

This principle can be well summarized with a biblical phrase that the Apostle Paul uses in Philippians 3:

We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh — though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ (Phil 3:3-7, ESV).

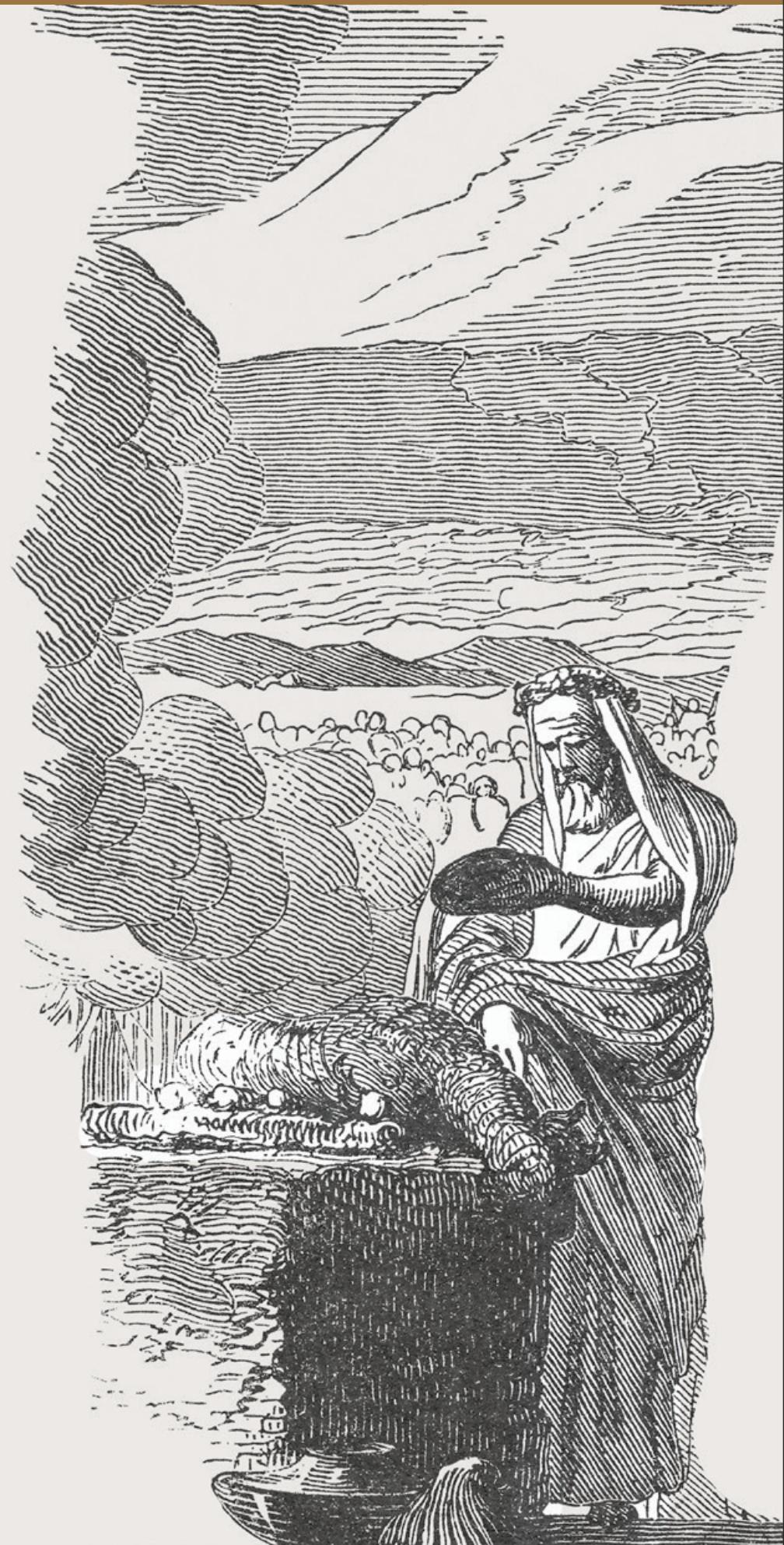
In many cases, we are pursuing what Paul calls a “confidence in the flesh.” For Paul, his “confidence in the flesh” before his conversion was made up of things like being circumcised on the eighth day or being a Hebrew of Hebrews — but for us it’s an “A” in Tom Schreiner’s New Testament Theology class or finishing in the top 10 percent of students in our language courses. There are all sorts of ways to measure our success academically, and we can place our confidence in our achievements rather than in God and his call on our lives. If you read over Philippians 3, you’ll see that confidence in the flesh is anti-confidence in Christ. Part of what Paul had to learn is that all those things are rubbish — they are nothing to him because they can’t compare with the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord and being found in him.

ROOTING OUT DISORDERED MOTIVATION

I encourage students not just to fight at the level of knowing what plagiarism is and avoiding the procrastination that makes it attractive. That’s important, but what’s far more important is committing to the regular heart assessment of confessing the sin of being motivated by confidence in the flesh. It’s a daily responsibility to confess and repent. As we study the Bible and discover such motivation lurking in our hearts, we must repent — even while reading.

Every time we step in the pulpit, every time we care for people, every time we write that paper, we must be aware of why we do it. If students can learn now to give to Jesus their desire for significance in their performance, they will establish good patterns for when they get into ministry, and the pressure to do this grows even greater. When we entrust ourselves to Christ in the labor of study, we will not measure our significance in grades. And all of a sudden, we find academic dishonesty less tempting. It doesn’t make as much sense to cheat when you don’t need the grades so desperately.

None of us will carry our academic transcripts into the presence of God. We wouldn’t dare think of it. The only factor that determines the significance of our lives is the love of God in Jesus Christ for us. One day, we will know this entirely.



XXX

UNSEATING THE IDOL OF PORN

SURRENDERING IN SIMPLE FAITH: NATE LARKIN'S STORY

BY ANDREW J.W. SMITH

Nate Larkin went to a different seminary at a different time, but despite his story he's not all that different from many of today's seminarians. He took the biblical languages and systematic theology. He was an excellent student and expositor. He won the preaching prize. He pastored a small independent church while he was in school. He sincerely wanted to follow the Lord's calling on his life. He seemed, from the outside, enormously successful. Ideal, even. But inside, he harbored pain and guilt from something deep and hidden. Over time, it metastasized.

"When I was in seminary, I felt like I had joined the Marines and that I was the designated hero," he says now. "I would be the guy who would have the answers for everybody else. I would be a repository of wisdom, I would be the tip of the spear.

"But that's a concept that militates against much of what the New Testament tells us about the interdependence of all the members of the body of Christ."

Larkin started looking at pornography long before seminary. But it was during that period that it became truly addictive. At the time, the early 1980s and long before the internet, glossy men's magazines were the entry point for porn users, and the next stage was adult bookstores. Larkin says he can still hear the sound of a clattering film projector behind him from the first time he visited such a place. One bookstore was halfway between the seminary and his church, and he recalls on many occasions feeling like the car turned into the bookstore of its own volition.

After a post-seminary men's retreat, he promised himself he would get serious about his sin, even opening up to his wife for the first time and vowing never to do it again. He experienced a

period of "abstinence," as he calls it, and even decided he had recovered enough to plant a church, but he never dealt with his sin at the root or was truly honest with others about the condition of his heart. Eventually, it grew worse.

Larkin describes driving to church one rainy night, where he was going to preach at the Christmas Eve service. He saw a young woman on the street, and deciding he would be a gentlemen and get her out of the rain, offered to give her a ride. But she was not there by accident, and the \$100 bill he had in his wallet for the church Christmas offering never made it to the offering plate. It was not the only time, even after he quit the ministry in a desperate attempt to kill his addiction. As best as he can reconstruct it now, during those dark years he spent as much as \$300,000 illicitly.

His wife caught him one night, and spoke two words that would finally spark change his life.

"SATAN DOESN'T PLAY TEAM BALL; HE PLAYS ONE-ON-ONE, AND HE'S ONLY BEEN BEATEN THERE ONCE. IF HE CAN TRAP US FOREVER INTO HIS GAME, HE WILL WIN."

I'm done. She said she still loved him, but she didn't like him, didn't respect him, and didn't think he could ever change.

Desperate to save his relationship with his wife — the one friend he still had, he says — Larkin started attending 12-step recovery and at last began being honest about his sin.

"It was there that I encountered Jesus in a whole new way," he said. "It was there that doors and windows were opened on the gospel for me, and I began to see that Jesus was always unfailingly kind to the sexually broken. He never himself endured sexual sin, but he was always unfailingly kind and gracious."

He started developing close friendships, which forced him to stop minimizing his sin and get serious about it. *This is not sin management*, one friend told him. They would work hard to confront the behavior, but they would

also drill deeper into the heart issues that drove his actions. *You have a lot more repenting to do than you know*, he told Larkin.

The work took years, like the sprouting of a sapling or the glacial drift of an ice flow. A member of Christ Community Church in Franklin, Tennessee, Larkin began to grow under the preaching of founding pastor Scotty Smith and honest, deep friendships and openness with other Christian men. The change itself, however, was supernatural. It was the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Eventually, either we surrender to a power greater than ourselves and our addiction, or we lose."

The friendships Larkin formed during that phase of his life have lasted decades. He has been in recovery for more than 25 years and has used his story to mentor countless men struggling with pornography and sexual sin. Scotty Smith watched Larkin and his ministry flourish during that time, and calls him "one of my favorite people in the entire world."

Larkin feels burdened to help men with stories like his, and believes the best way to cultivate long-term change is through honesty and companionship. Sanctification is pursued in community, isolation is a breeding ground for sin — and he recognizes few Christians are as isolated as men training for or in the ministry.

"To me, one of the greatest tragedies of contemporary American religious life is that, in the typical American church these days, the pastor is the most isolated guy in the congregation," Larkin said. "We face a very wily foe, whose game is one-on-one. He is a master of it. He doesn't play team ball; he plays one-on-one, and he's only been beaten there once. If he can trap us forever into his game, he will win.

"The most successful pastors I know have managed to construct for themselves a brotherhood. We have to be vulnerable to somebody, and that takes courage."

Larkin is a writer, speaker, and founder of Samson Society, a men's ministry with church groups across the United States. Read more about his story and ministry in his book, Samson and the Pirate Monks.



WHAT IF I'M STRUGGLING WITH PORNOGRAPHY USE?

BY ANDREW J.W. SMITH, FEATURING ERIC L. JOHNSON, LAWRENCE AND CHARLOTTE HOOVER PROFESSOR OF PASTORAL CARE

AJWS: In your experience, what factors are involved in a young man's ongoing pornography addiction? What drives him back to it time and time again — despite negative consequences (getting caught, spiritual lifelessness, relational separation, chronic guilt, etc.)?

EJ: We are born in sin and all of us are inclined to live for ourselves. That is the nature of original sin. How that ends up getting manifested distinguishes people. Original sin is expressed through our bodies and through our personalities. It gets organized in our brains and in our personalities based on biology and our social experiences.

The fact of the matter is that men are more likely to engage in pornography use than women, and that's partly because of the way men are wired biologically. That is not an excuse. We are embodied creatures;

our sin is embodied — Paul's use of the word *flesh* is profound on this matter. So, because of the release of testosterone in teenage years and early adulthood, that's actually the time when the drive is the strongest for sexual activity — and of course that's great when you're married and you're going to have kids, but it creates problems when marriage is delayed into the late 20s, as it often is in our day. It becomes an incredible burden.

Now, every exposure to pornography binds the brain and the mind and the imagination to a particular cycle that is powerful — one of the most powerful kinds of cycles that humans have. When you do that repeatedly, it locks it into a kind of sequence that makes it extremely difficult to break out. It becomes an addiction. Again, there is no excuse here — we are responsible before God for the state of our brains as young adults. That's a part of our responsibility before God. But it also creates a level of urgency that we not continue the cycle. Every time a person goes back to the internet and re-engages that cycle, it debilitates them that much more.

Part of the recovery process is to do everything we can to help people prevent another cycle. Pluck out the eye, cut off the hand, throw out the computer. Make it impossible for you to have access. Do whatever you need to do.

AJWS: When you counsel a man struggling with pornography, what does a map toward recovery look like? What process do you lead him through?

EJ: We want to help people develop the optimal amount of contrition, and contrition is a painful emotion. Most conscientious Christians, after they have engaged in pornography use, are going to feel bad. We want to encourage them to learn how to do that in a Christ-centered way, and that means taking it seriously, but it also means not jumping into Doubting Castle and getting beat up by Giant Despair every day. That actually crushes the Christian spirit and it aids Satan in tormenting the believer, saying, "You see, you're outside the pale. You're irredeemable. You can't be a Christian."

I define pornography addiction as regular, ongoing use. It's not good to engage in any pornography use at all, but when addressing the problem, we need to distinguish a one-time fall from somebody who is engaging in that behavior every week.

When dealing with someone who is addicted, we have to help them break the cycle. That is pivotal. Because if a person is in despair, they don't feel like they can even go to Jesus for healing. We have to break the cycle, because when you're in that despair mindset, you can't do the redemptive steps that are necessary to get clean. You feel dirty, you feel unworthy, you feel distant from Jesus, and so there has to be some break there. So as soon as possible, we want to get people to go before the Lord through a sequence of cleansing. That is a process of going before the Lord and engaging in confession — a conscious and verbal acknowledgment that I have sinned.

There should also ideally be a certain amount of contrition, and that means staying in that state for several

minutes before the Lord and doing what the Puritans called “loading the conscience,” or allowing their sin to weigh on them.

The next step is repentance, and repentance is making a conscious break from the behavior. It is saying: “I have done it, and I disavow that — I do not wish to do it ever again and Lord Jesus, help that to be true of me.” Finally, with a Christ-centered model of repentance, we want to help them — before they leave the presence of Lord — to “hear” him say, “Your sins are forgiven, go and sin no more.” Then, they experience the washing and cleansing of forgiveness so that they can stand before the Lord, not in the basement of Doubting Castle, but knowing that they are forgiven. It’s a miracle every time it happens, but it is a recognition that the Lord has forgiven them and they are making a break with that behavior pattern. The idea long-term is to help them internalize that redemptive process of death and resurrection

into the new creation again and again and again to build hope, no matter how many times they fall.

He doesn’t give up on his children and he never will. We need to keep going back to him over and over, and that process ends up changing our sense of our identity. The reason why all this is important is because, in Doubting Castle, the addict is actually more likely to go back to pornography. They don’t feel consolation with the Lord, so they are going to try and find a sick kind of consolation in their sin. This is so important: We have to help them find true consolation in Christ’s forgiveness and love and abiding with the Lord in that state.

AJWS: What is the most important thing a person needs to know, do, or experience in order to overcome a longstanding porn habit?

EJ: I think there are two things. The first is

contrition before the Lord. There has to be an acknowledgment of my sin before God, handled in a way that doesn’t crush the believer in a sense of failure and hopelessness. Second, I have to know that Jesus will take back the prodigal *every time*.

I think both those things have to be held in tension. We might say that it’s the balance of law and grace together. The challenge is that the person who ends up beating himself up is overwhelmed by law and has lost sight of grace; the person who is too casual about it doesn’t allow himself to take the time to hear the Lord say, “It’s not okay.” You can become too law-centered and you can become too grace-centered, in a strange way. It’s always both, and I like to think about it temporally: The Christian life is an ongoing movement from *death* to *resurrection*. My job as a counselor is to help people learn how to practice that death-resurrection cycle every time they sin.

THREE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES TO HELP YOU FIGHT PORN

WITH ROBERT D. JONES,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING

GENESIS 39:9

Joseph, being tempted by Potiphar’s wife:
“How then can I do this great wickedness
and sin against God?”

JONES: *What kept Joseph from sin?
“How could I do such a wicked thing and...”?
Contract an STI? Risk an unwanted preg-
nancy? Jeopardize my seminary status
or my marriage or my church ministry?
Disappoint my mentors? While these are
legitimate concerns, nothing is higher than
Joseph’s answer: “... and sin against God?”*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:5

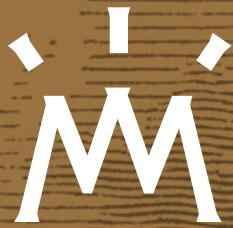
“For this is the will of God, your sanc-
tification: that you abstain from sexual
immorality; that each one of you know
how to control his own body in holiness
and honor, not in the passion of lust like
the Gentiles who do not know God.”

JONES: *Sexual sin for Paul is func-
tional atheism, living like a pagan who
does acknowledge God’s presence, fear
God’s judgment, or love him for sending
his Son to die for me.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-15

“For the love of Christ controls us, because
we have concluded this: that one has died
for all, therefore all have died; and he died
for all, that those who live might no longer
live for themselves but for him who for
their sake died and was raised.”

JONES: *There must be a conscious
belief in God’s constant presence with
you. No one would view porn if Jesus were
standing next to him, so to view porn one
must either ignore or marginalize the
Lord’s presence or devalue pleasing him.*



UNSEATING THE IDOL OF PRIDE

BY HERSHAEL W. YORK

Some deadly diseases often present no outward symptoms; they just lie within surreptitiously and imperceptibly until they unleash catastrophe. Deep vein thrombosis. Hypertension. Brain aneurism. Pride.

More than just a sin, pride is a category of sin because, though indeed a sin itself, it leads inevitably to more sin and other sin. Pride is particularly insidious because, unlike pornography, adultery, or thievery it remains socially acceptable — even in the Christian world, particularly in ministry, and especially in the artificial bubble of seminary. Insulated from the challenges of other world views, constantly graded and evaluated in ways that lend themselves to comparison, and surrounded by admirable and attractive people, a seminary student can easily forget that the call of God is to follow Christ alone. Pride can distort the entire experience and suggest that the cross to be taken up must be a designer model, carried in a top-grain leather case, and immortalized in an Instagram selfie.

THE ULTIMATE SECRET SIN

Perhaps pride persists so perilously because it has a certain utility in the world of the flesh, an expediency in gaining an invitation to sit in the chief seats at the table. It can masquerade as self-confidence in preaching and draw the admiration of others. It can fool a wife into thinking her husband is self-assured and confident when he is self-absorbed and conceited. It can pose as poise and leadership to a search committee or a potential employer who cannot perceive the insatiable appetite for prestige and lust for status lurking beneath the impeccably curated clothing.

Pride, however, has no single uniform. It can infect the seminary student nattily attired in Brooks Brothers, bow tie, and brogues, or equally the one who, just as proudly, refuses to wear anything but jeans and a t-shirt. It can dehumanize a wife into an ornament, and make children think more about maintaining the image of dad than reflecting the image of God. It can pervert a simple thing—like drinking a cup of coffee—into an act of idolatry and fountain of disdain for those with less educated palates. It robs the simplest pleasures of their simplicity and joy, and substitutes instead the convolution and complication of a sinful heart with the sneer of self-righteousness. Pride is so subtle and perverted that it can corrupt the good that we do, ostensibly in service of the kingdom, into deeds of the flesh that cannot please God.



Ultimately, pride robs God of his glory — the eternal — because it delights in self-glory — the temporal, transient, and meaningless.

That's why seminary is so dangerous. Unfortunately, seminary can become an incubator for nascent pride that, if not defeated by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, will grow into a disfiguring and destructive monster that makes even the most academically gifted seminary graduate of little use to the Kingdom of God. In one way seminary is no different than any other place because pride can grow in any climate and every heart. On the other hand, Satan's forces are working overtime at seminary because habits and attitudes established here will likely harden and endure throughout ministry — and cause great damage.

OVERCOMING AN INFLATED SENSE OF SELF

The key to defeating pride lies in truly believing what God's Word says about every one of us. The Bible is clear that we are all broken. We might be broken in different ways, but one cannot experience degrees of total depravity. When we deny the depth of our own desperate need we fail to see the enormity of God's grace and redemption in Christ. Not only is pride sinful, but also misplaced. We have nothing to be proud of. If everyone knew the truth about us we would only be ashamed. Apart from Christ, we certainly have no cause for boasting.

We must remind ourselves, therefore, that our salvation, our sanctification, and even our gifting, is all of grace. The more one appreciates and appropriates the grace of God, the less one feels either desire or ability to boast. Grace, after all, transforms mundane things in precisely the opposite direction of pride. Grace puts gratitude where pride once was. The discerning palate, for instance, becomes a heart filled with praise and gratitude for a God who designed taste buds and created coffee trees and different soils, climates, and altitudes so His creatures could enjoy the simple—or complex—pleasure of a cup of java. Clothes and appearance become a strategy to present the gospel and to express a sanctified and unique personality with a thankful heart. Beautiful pens become a way to write encouraging or comforting notes to others rather than a possession to fuel pride. Social media become a tool of discipleship and gospel impact rather than self-centered aggrandizement.

Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself, or even little of yourself; it's not thinking of yourself. A life filled with Christ and focused on others will not have room nor time for pride. A follower of Christ must evaluate his or her own spirit and attitude in every action with brutal honesty to bring every thought captive to Christ. We strive to be servants, not masters; to be least, not the greatest. We serve one who humbled and emptied Himself.

Southern Seminary is a wonderful place and a gift of God to His churches. I marvel at what God has done here. Our campus is the most beautiful I have ever seen. Our faculty is stunningly gifted and accomplished. Our students and alumni are used of God in great and inspiring ways. May none of that, however, be a source of anything other than gratitude to God with a sense of our own debt to the gospel. We have nothing that we have not received.





‘The God-ness of God’:

FOR TYLER WITTMAN, YOU NEVER GRADUATE FROM THEOLOGY 101

By Myriah Snyder

Even before Tyler Wittman studied much theology, he had a desire to be characterized as faithful. This desire followed him through his M.Div. and Th.M studies at Southern. In 2012, he and his wife, Jessie, packed up their five-week-old son and moved across the ocean to Aberdeen, Scotland, to study under world-renowned systematic theologian, John Webster. In his first meeting with his doctoral supervisor, Wittman posed the question, “What is it going to take for me to be as faithful as I can be where God has put me and with the kind of gifts he’s given me?” Webster’s response left a legacy for Wittman, that, “by God’s grace,” shaped his character.

Webster launched into a discourse, instructing Wittman to “avoid things like vain curiosity and pride” and “cultivate studiousness, humility, charity, justice, fortitude, longanimity and magnanimity,” Wittman shared.

“All these kinds of things were really profound for me to think through,” he commented. “It’s kind of like Theology 101 for some folks, but I don’t think I’ve gotten away from Theology 101. There’s a lot to be mined in Theology 101.”

“It really helped me focus on a lot of areas I needed to grow in,” he said.

Now, Wittman has returned to his alma mater, Southern Seminary, as associate professor of systematic theology. He has high hopes of instilling in his students a love for historic theology, John Owen, Thomas Aquinas, medieval classicism, Karl Barth, eschatology, Christology, soteriology and many more aspects of a well-rounded theological education. But his deep desire for his students is that they would grasp the “God-ness of God.”

As a student himself, he first began to take hold of the concept in Stephen Wellum’s Systematic Theology I class.

Wittman found comfort and awe in the fact that “God is not just a really big version of us,” he said. “He’s beyond quantity or comparison. And we can’t lock him up. He’s not a thing amongst other things.”

“As soon as I grasped that, it kind of wrecked all these silly views of God I had in my mind. I was like, ‘Whoa, he really is in charge. He really is God,’” he said. “The more I grasped that, the more I was fascinated by it and I still am. The idea that God is God — that continues to arrest my imagination. And I definitely want to impart to students a sense of that excitement.”

This is one of the many reasons he’s enthusiastic about teaching an elective on the Trinity alongside his systematic theology courses, along with others in the future.

Oren Martin, assistant professor of Christian theology at Boyce College and friend of Wittman is excited about his former classmate returning to Southern Seminary.

“It has been a joy to watch him over the years develop as a student of theology,” Martin said. “I truly believe he is one of the brightest theologians to come through Southern, so I consider it a great privilege not only to call him a friend, but also now a colleague.

“He has clearly honed his theological thinking as a result of studying with and learning from, until his untimely death, one of the greatest living theologians of our day, John Webster. His theological abilities, godliness, patience, and humility have only grown through his friendship and studies with Webster. I look forward to many fruitful years of laboring together in the task of training students to think rightly about, know and delight in, live before and proclaim the triune God of the gospel.”

Wittman offers two strains of advice to current Southern Seminary students: a *what* and a *how*.

The *what* is to “dig a deep well,” he said. “The resources of the Christian faith are incredibly deep, and if you are to sustain a lifelong ministry that will not grow stale and will not trade in platitudes, you must dig a deep well.

He wants all his students to apply themselves, do hard work, and “think long and hard about thorny issues like the immutability of God — think long and hard about issues of the Trinity and your Greek grammar,” he said.

“Don’t overlook these things. Trust your professors when they say these things are important. And let them lead you by the hand and show you things so that you then can do the same for others.”

This well of knowledge is discovered through deep reading — which in turn drives good communication. Communication is key, he says, because the Christian faith is “a communicating faith. God communicates to us through His word and we are tasked with communicating that same word to his sheep and having that word communicated to us. So we have to learn how to read and how to be read.”

This advice goes “back to square one,” as far as his passions for faithfulness and virtues, Whittman said. “You’ve got to become a certain type of person. Your character matters. You need to be formed in certain ways in Christian virtue. You need to be able to dig that deep well.”

“Words cannot adequately describe how excited I am about the addition of Dr. Wittman,” Martin said. “Only time will tell how much of an impact he will have on our students and churches, and I am confident that his impact will reach the nations as he leads students on a journey seeking to know and enjoy God in this world and the world to come.”

HISTORY HIGHLIGHT

Baptist preacher on sin and godly sorrow

Transcribed by Adam Winters

In 2012, the SBTS Archives acquired twenty-one volumes of manuscripts handwritten by Morgan Edwards (1722–1795), notable Baptist preacher and religious historian. Transcribed here are excerpts from his sermon on Psalm 51:4, “Against thee, thee only have I sinned”:

And did David then never sin against himself? Nor against his neighbor? Nor against any but against God? For so his words run against thee, thee only have I sinned. . . .

To which it may be replied, that the word only here is a note of comparison, and not of exclusion—his sins made against himself, his family, and neighbors—but their evil of sin was nothing in comparison of its being a thing against God. That consideration swallowed all others and made his grief so great that he counts it to be (comparatively) against none but God. From hence we are taught: (1) that sin is a thing against God, (2) that this consideration is the most grievous to a true penitent. . . .

He does not say against thy laws have I sinned, tho’ that were true; but against thee (personally)—looking rather at the drift of sin, than at the formal cause of it. To break the king’s laws is to act against him—but there is difference between this and striking at the king’s person. And thus does David consider sin in the text, and therefore he saith, against thee have I sinned. . . .

And sin is the same in every subject—the nature and drift of it is the same, tho’ allowance is to be made for degrees.

And accordingly it is called enmity against God (Romans 8:7). . . .

ingratitude of the sinner never appears so much as in offending God; for none has conferred so many obligations on him as God. . . .

And this is the reason why true repentance is called godly sorrow. Sin hurts us in this

damage that sin hath brought, or may bring upon you that trouble you? Is it the fear of losing heaven or going to hell that hinders your repentance? If you could but get pardon, viz. be sure that no harm or loss will accrue

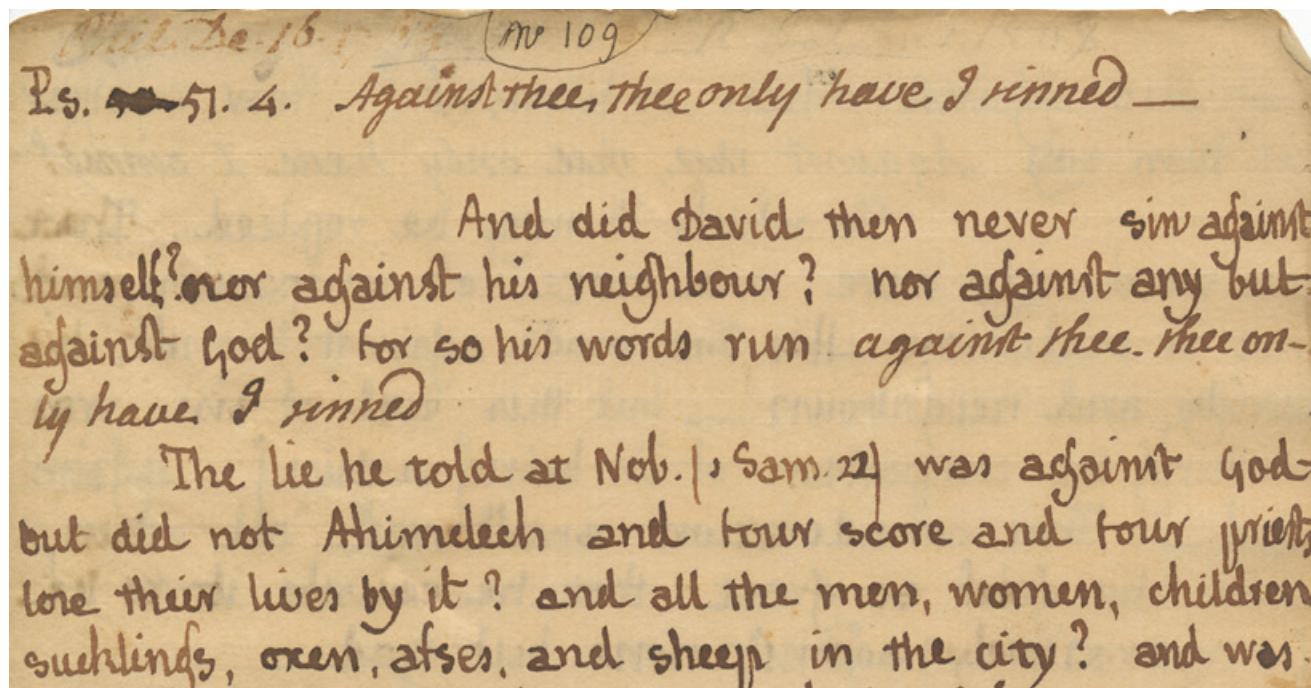
to you from your sins would you not all your troubles vanish? If so, you only say against ourselves, ourselves only have we sinned—and God is left out of the question.

But right repentance, does (in comparison) leave all those things out of the question, and is moved by the consideration of sin as a thing against God—against thee only have I sinned. Be sure therefore that this is the exciting cause of your repentance.

Consider how perfect God is, and how free from annoyance,

and yet Scripture authorizes us to say that sin grieves him to the heart—vexes his spirit—dishonors him—angers him—raises in him abhorrence and indignation—opposes him and makes him repent that he makes man. What a dreadful thing sin is therefore? What a pain must it give a considerate man to think that he has sinned?

But look to the Son of God. See him in his agonies in the garden—in his sufferings in the Sanhedrin, and in Pilate’s hall. See him in the excruciating pain of the cross. Was not your sin a thing against the Son of God? O look at him—and at the evil your sins did him, and you must say, Against thee, against thee O Son of God have we sinned.



David had his sins ever before him, we are told—that sin which destroyed good Ahimelech, and four score & four priests, and all their families—this cruel sin grieved him no doubt—that sin which destroyed 70,000 of his innocent subjects—O what grief he felt at this!—that sin which destroyed Uriah, and brought a sword into his family—this pained his heart at every remembrance of it. But how greatly soever these afflicted him, yet all were as nothing in comparison of the trouble he felt when he considered how the same sins were against God. . . . The greatness of God makes sins against him most tremendous things. The goodness of God makes their malignity great beyond all other. The

world—when that is the cause of our repentance it is but worldly sorrow. Sin hurts us in the next world—when the pains of hell make us repent it is selfish sorrow—but when the offensiveness of sin against God makes us sorry, that is godly sorrow. . . .

And I would have you now try yourselves and prove your repentance by this—Do you mourn and grieve for secret sins? And grieve for known sins rather because they are known to God than known to men? If you do, you sorrow after a godly sort. . . .

You think, no doubt, that you are true penitents, because it is said except ye repent ye shall perish—but try your repentance by the objects of it. Is it the shame or worldly

Theology Forum

CRITICAL TO THE LIFE OF ANY SEMINARY IS HEALTHY THEOLOGICAL CONVERSATION AMONG ITS STUDENT BODY. TO THAT END, THE STAFF AT TOWERS WILL REGULARLY SET ASIDE A SECTION OF THE MAGAZINE FOR A SHORT CONVERSATION ON A THEOLOGICAL TOPIC WITH FACULTY OF SOUTHERN SEMINARY. IF YOU HAVE ANY BURNING QUESTIONS FOR A PROFESSOR, EMAIL TOWERS@SBTS.EDU AND WE WILL TRY TO GET IT ANSWERED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.

Q: In one sentence, what was the most important idea of the Protestant Reformation?

SHAWN D. WRIGHT

“To God’s glory, a Christian could have assurance of salvation because of Christ’s work alone received by faith alone due to the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness.”



JAMES M. HAMILTON JR.

“**The Bible** is the Word of God, and the Bible is the final authority.”

GREGG R. ALLISON

“**God justifies** sinful people on the basis of his grace alone appropriated by faith alone in Christ alone.”

STEPHEN J. WELLUM

“At the heart of the Reformation was a consistent outworking of the Bible’s teaching that the glorious triune God is at the center of the universe, that humans are significant creatures but pervasively fallen, so that our only hope is that God alone acts in sovereign grace to redeem us in and through the all-sufficient work of Christ Jesus.”

MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN

“A sinner is declared righteous by the Triune God on the ultimate basis of undeserved divine grace that is bestowed on the sinner as a direct result of his or her belief in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for sinners.”



THOMAS R. SCHREINER

“**Salvation** is the Lord’s work.”

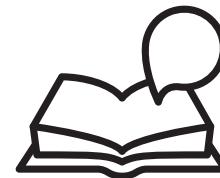


ROBERT L. PLUMMER

“The Scriptures are the **final authority** for Christian doctrine.”

DOUGLAS K. BLOUNT

“The single most important development was the Reformers’ commitment to **Scripture alone** as the final authority — Luther’s commitment in particular to Scripture over and above pope, council, and creed was revolutionary in his day and crucial in returning to the apostolic faith of the early church.”

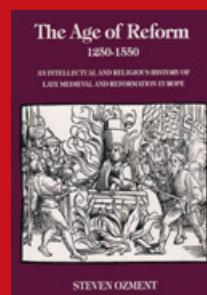


OREN MARTIN

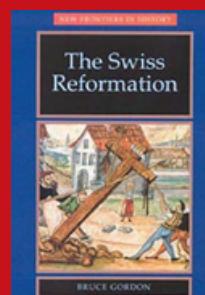
“**The gospel**, the announcement that God’s kingdom has broken into history to deliver sinners out of the domain of darkness and transfer them by faith (alone) in Christ (alone) into the kingdom of his beloved Son to the praise of his glory and grace (alone), which has been revealed to us in Scripture (alone).”

The Dean’s List

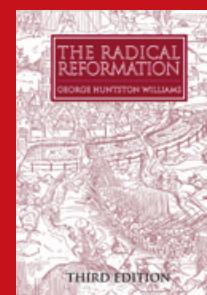
GREGORY A. WILLS, DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY, LISTS HIS FIVE FAVORITE BOOKS ON THE REFORMATION



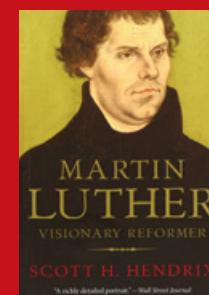
STEVEN OZMENT,
*THE AGE OF REFORM,
1250-1550*



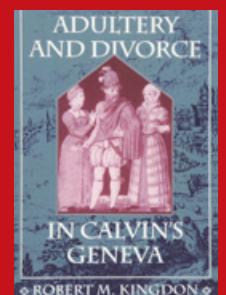
BRUCE GORDON,
*THE SWISS
REFORMATION*



GEORGE HUNTSTON
WILLIAMS,
*THE RADICAL
REFORMATION*



SCOTT HENDRIX,
*MARTIN LUTHER:
VISIONARY
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September 2017

THE SOUTHERN EXCHANGE IS SET TO REOPEN ON SEPTEMBER 6

The Southern Exchange is a collection of clothing, shoes, household goods, electronics, and furniture available to Southern Seminary and Boyce College students and their families. A grand reopening is planned for September 6 at 2 p.m.

SEMINARY CLINIC HOURS

Staff, students, and their immediate family members are provided a health maintenance program through the clinic, located on the second floor of the campus center, Honeycutt 213.

Monday-Friday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

More information and price listings are on the clinic website, sbts.edu/clinic.

MORNING CHILDCARE

Parents can drop off their children at the Health and Rec Center (second floor of Honeycutt) for morning childcare up to three days per week, 9 a.m. – noon, per federal law. The cost is \$10 per child, ages 6 weeks – 10 years.

SBTS LIST

SBTS Student Life, Campus Technology, and Communications are excited to bring you SBTS List, which allows students and student spouses within the seminary community to market items and services in a safe environment. Think Craigslist, but exclusive to the SBTS community. You must have either a student or faculty/staff email address or be the spouse of a student in order to create a profile and buy/sell items on SBTS List. Register at sbtslist.com.

SEWING CLASS

A sewing class led by Barbara Gentry is open for anyone connected to the seminary. The class meets in Fuller 34 every Monday from 6 – 7:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER

04

MONDAY

BOYCE COLLEGE
LABOR DAY COOKOUT

STUDENT-LED DORM MEETING

05

TUESDAY

CHAPEL, MATTHEW HALL
ALUMNI CHAPEL

07

THURSDAY

CHAPEL, R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.
ALUMNI CHAPEL

08

FRIDAY

FALL FESTIVAL
A SOUTHERN CIRCUS
6 P.M.

12

TUESDAY

CHAPEL, GREG GILBERT
ALUMNI CHAPEL

14

THURSDAY

CHAPEL, R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.
ALUMNI CHAPEL

15

FRIDAY

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
NOON
PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION ROOM

19

TUESDAY

CHAPEL, JIM ORRICK
ALUMNI CHAPEL

21

THURSDAY

CHAPEL, BEAU HUGHES
ALUMNI CHAPEL

JENKINS CENTER:
ACADEMIC LECTURES

22

FRIDAY

CHURCH PLANTING 101
NOON
PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION ROOM

BOYCE COLLEGE COFFEEHOUSE

DATE NIGHT
NEWLYWED EDITION WITH SOUTH-
ERN SEMINARY STUDENT LIFE

JENKINS CENTER:
ACADEMIC LECTURES

23

SATURDAY

JENKINS CENTER:
ACADEMIC LECTURES

05

TUESDAY

CHAPEL, R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.
ALUMNI CHAPEL

07

THURSDAY

CHAPEL, JIMMY SCROGGINS
ALUMNI CHAPEL

30

SATURDAY

GREAT COMMISSION RACE
9 A.M.



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3

Questions

– with –



TONY REINKE
Senior writer, *Desiring God*

1

How is the overuse of technology potentially damaging spiritually?

WE IGNORE OUR NEIGHBORS, our family, we ignore people around us. Social media isolates us to a set of people who are most like us in interests and age. So we lose sight of people unlike us. We are prone to ignore the needs at our feet because we have become enamored with all the possibilities out in the remoteness of the virtual world. So I coined the term “embodied placedness.” That’s neighboring. At root our phones push us to evade the limits of embodiment, to simply live in the cognitive and ethereal realm of a virtual world. Not to mention, Scripture exhorts us to celebrate the counter-cultural beauty of the flesh-and-blood church. But Jesus labors to show us that our neighbor is anyone who physically shares proximity with us, and we need to reclaim this.

2

What is one thing a student can do to become less reliant on technology?

WHAT DRIVES ME ONLINE? We need to ask this question. In a sense, social media is a mess right now. It’s political. It’s angry. It’s polarized. But it’s also a place to express and feed on an endless buffet of vanities and things totally inconsequential to our lives. We turn to social media to validate our lives online. We validate our travel by sharing it online. We show off what we know and what we have, online. But we’re awakening to the fact that 50 likes on an Instagram image today will not satisfy my soul. It never has. It never will. No matter how large our platforms grow, these ticks of validation never satisfy our souls, it’s like saltwater, it locks us in an endless thirst for social validation that, and if we continue to feed it, it slowly poisons and dehydrates our souls to death.

3

How should Christians view technology in relation to their faith?

WE DON’T HAVE SMARTPHONES by accident. Technology is not a replacement for nature. The long human story of technological advance was willed by the Creator from the beginning; he animates it all. The question then becomes what is technology for? And again Scripture tells us, it’s for the flourishing of humanity and for the care and cultivation of nature. In other words nature plays a vital role in giving us the gift of technology, which we then in turn employ in the caring of creation. Man was made to work, to make babies, to cultivate the earth, and technology goes wrong when we use it to usurp this human flourishing.