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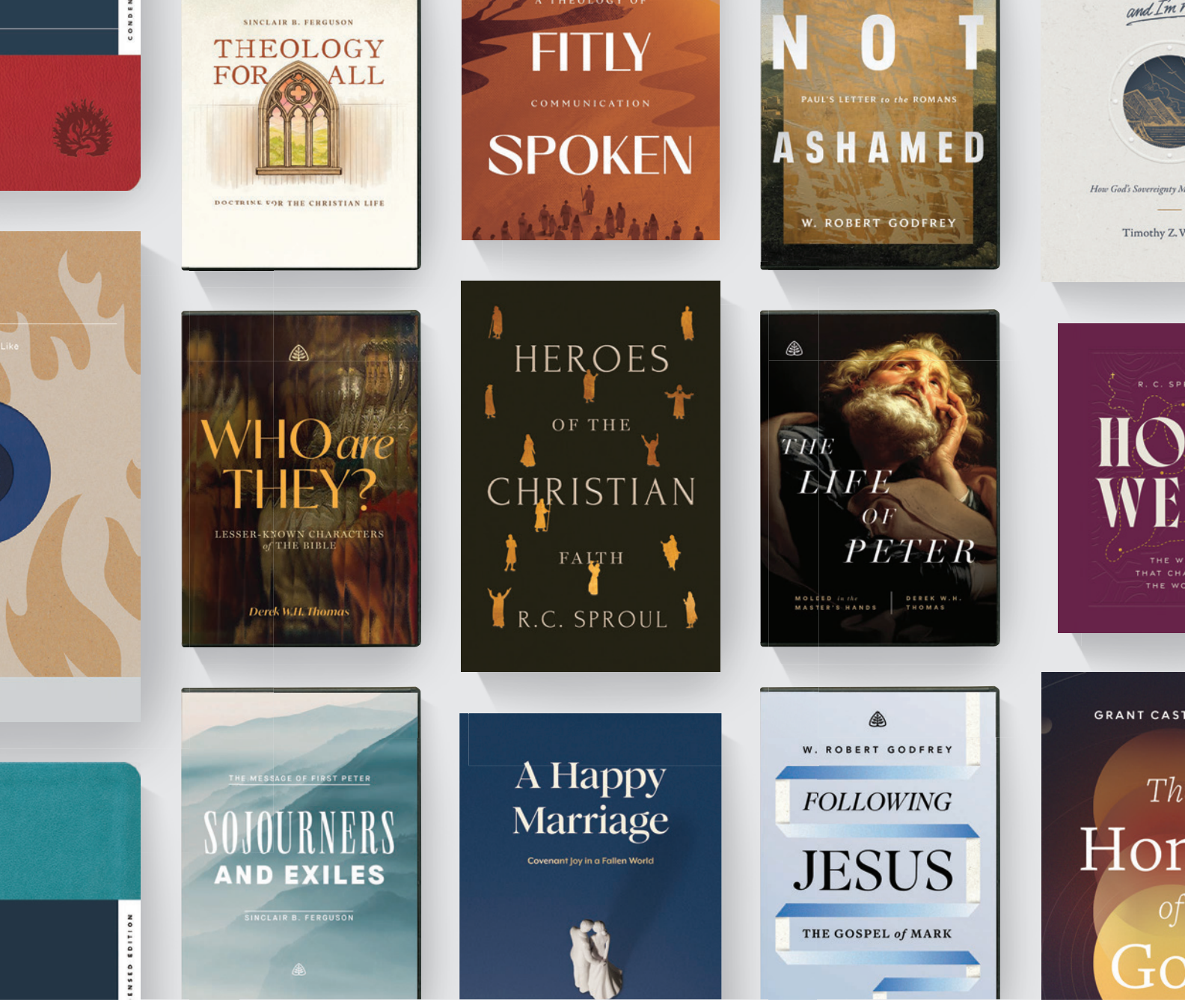


COVER STORY

Where is the next generation of pastors?

THE WEST IS FACING A LACK OF MEN TRAINING FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY. *HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH RESPOND?*

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EDITOR & ART DIRECTOR Janice Van Eck
EDITORIAL ADVISORY TEAM Dale R. Cogswell, Daniel Morden

CONTRIBUTORS Danielle Gignac, Roger Fellows, Bill James, Dale Nevilizer, Owen Pikkert, Don Theobald
PROOFREADER Karen van Zanden

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR We welcome your feedback. Send your letters, comments or suggestions to janicevaneck@rogers.com.

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sgfcanada.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 27, 2026
TBS OPEN HOUSE
Interested in pursuing theological education? See what TBS has to offer at their open house.
Held at Toronto Baptist Seminary, Toronto, ON
tbs.edu/open-house

DECEMBER 20, 2026
JARVIS STREET CHRISTMAS CANTATA
Join Jarvis Street Baptist for their annual Christmas Cantata. Details on website.
Held at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, ON
jsbc.org

2027

JANUARY 10, 2027
TBS 100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE WORSHIP SERVICE
Theme: Glory to God
Speaker: Bill James (London Seminary)
Join with Toronto Baptist Seminary as they kick off their 100th anniversary year!
Held at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, ON
tbs.edu

FEBRUARY 27, 2027
GOSPEL COALITION CANADA YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE
Theme: By Faith: Living Faithfully in Exile
Main speakers: Paul Vanden Brink, Ezra Okoti, Dwayne Cline, plus breakouts.
For young adults ages 18–30, this conference is a time for gospel-centred teaching, food and fellowship.
Held at Heritage College & Seminary, Cambridge, ON
ca.thegospelcoalition.org/byfaith2027

MARCH 2, 2027
HERITAGE MINISTRY LEADERSHIP DAY
Speaker: Mark Dever
An event to equip and encourage pastors and other ministry leaders with the tools needed to sharpen their skills to serve their congregations.
Held at Heritage College & Seminary, Cambridge, ON
heritagecs.edu

MARCH 9, 2027
TBS 100TH ANNIVERSARY PRAYER MEETING
Thanksgiving for TBS
Held in Greenway Chapel at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, ON, & online
tbs.edu

APRIL 1–3, 2027
2027 LIGONIER NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Theme: The Glorious Attributes of God
Various speakers
Gather with Christians from around the world to hear teaching on God's divine attributes, sing his praises, and draw strength from his promises.
Held in Orlando, FL
ligonier.org/events

APRIL 9–10, 2027
SGF LADIES' RETREAT
Speaker: Danielle Strickland
Theme: Psalm 23: Life with the Good Shepherd
Join ladies from other churches for a rich time of study, prayer, fellowship and great food. Registration opens March 1st.
sgfladiesretreat@gmail.com
Held at Guelph Bible Conference Centre, Guelph, ON
sgfcanada.com/ministries

APRIL 25, 2027
TBS GRADUATION
Theme: "Here I am, Lord, send me"
Held at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, ON
tbs.edu

MAY 24–26, 2027
2027 GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP RETREAT
Join pastors from other SGF churches for a time of study and fellowship.
Held at Countryside Camp & Conference Centre, Cambridge, ON
sgfcanada.com/gpf

MAY 28–29, 2027
GOSPEL COALITION CANADA YOUTH CONFERENCE
Theme: The Spirit has Come
Main speakers: Paul Carter, Joshua Tong, Ian Wildeboer
Stop relying on yourself. Start abiding in Christ and depending on the Spirit's power. Registration opens mid January.
Held at Redeemer University, Ancaster, ON
tgccy27.ca

MAY 29–30, 2027
DOORS OPEN TORONTO
Theme: Reaching the community
Jarvis Street Baptist Church opens its doors for this neighbourhood event, sharing its history, building and mission with people.
Held at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, ON
tbs.edu

AUGUST 14–20, 2027
CANADIAN CAREY FAMILY CONFERENCE
Main speaker: Steve West
Theme: TBD
Save the date for the SGF's annual Canadian Carey Family Conference. Days of fellowship, sessions, kids activities, campfires and sports. A.J. and Jessica Whitehead are the new directors for the conference.
Held at Braeside Camp & Conference Centre, Paris, ON
sgfcanada.com/carey

SEPTEMBER 25–26, 2027
BAUMAN LECTURES / TBS CONVOCATION
Theme: History of TBS
Speaker: TBD
Held at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, ON
tbs.edu

NOVEMBER 26, 2027
TBS CENTENNIAL BANQUET
Theme: "Go with us"
Speaker: Glendon Thompson, President of Toronto Baptist Seminary
To register, please contact TBS or see their website.
Held at The Old Mill, Toronto, ON
tbs.edu

PLANNING OR HOSTING AN EVENT? LET BARNABAS KNOW. EMAIL JANICEVANECK@ROGERS.COM

NEWSBYTES



+ 2026 SGF Annual Assembly

On October 16–17, 2026, Tilbury Regular Baptist Church opened its doors and hosted the 25th annual Sovereign Grace Fellowship Assembly. They were blessed to hear updates from SGF ministries, Carey International Pastoral Training, Toronto Baptist Seminary, a presentation from Galcom, various church reports and conducted SGF business. They also enjoyed the ministry of the Word from Don Theobald.

A.J. and Jessica Whitehead were announced and affirmed as the new directors for the Canadian Carey Family Conference. The SGF looks forward to their leadership and working alongside them. A big thanks to Cliff Linnard for his sacrificial leadership in giving direction to the Carey for the past five years.

The hospitality of Tilbury Regular Baptist Church was a blessing over the weekend as they made everyone feel welcome. The churches pray the spirit of unity and fellowship of the SGF would continue to grow and expand.



+ Tilbury Regular Baptist Church, Tilbury, ON

On October 18, 2026, Tilbury Regular Baptist Church gathered together to ask the Lord's blessings at its 77th anniversary service. They were blessed to have Don Theobald ministering the Word at both the 10 a.m. Bible School and the 11 a.m. worship service. They were then treated to our anniversary harvest luncheon. They give thanks to God for the past and ask that he would continue to guide them by his grace and for his glory.

PHOTOS: DALE NEVELIZER; JANICE VAN ECK

SAVE THE DATE

SGF LADIES' RETREAT



Be sure to save the date—**April 9–10, 2027**—for the upcoming retreat for women being held in Guelph at the Guelph Bible Conference Centre.

Danielle Strickland will be the guest speaker, delivering messages on Psalm 23: Life with the Good Shepherd. This is always a rich time in the Word, full of opportunities for deepening fellowship among our women and a great break! *Registration opens March 1st.* **sgfcanada.com/ministries**



2027 SGF LADIES' RETREAT: The retreat will be held again at the Guelph Bible Conference Centre.

+ Sovereign Grace Community Church, Sarnia, ON

On July 12, Pastor Glenn Tomlinson announced his retirement to the congregation at SGCC to take effect no later than August 31, 2027.

Please be in prayer for the search committee and the church as they seek the next man of God's choosing. Please also be in prayer for Glenn and Sonja as they continue to use their gifts for the Lord in another sphere of gospel service.

The full job posting can be found on the SGF website at: sgfcanada.com/job-opportunities

Do you have news to share of what God is doing in your church?
Please email your news to janicevaneck@rogers.com.

Understanding propitiation

Jesus bore the wrath of God so we don't have to. **BY ROGER FELLOWS**

Read Romans 3:21–26

Propitiation is a long word. It means *the turning aside of wrath or anger*. In the New Testament, this word is used four times, always meaning the turning aside of *God's* wrath (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). We do not enjoy facing an angry person, but what would it be like to face an angry God? This word has some serious implications.

1. There is such a thing as the wrath of God.
The wrath of God is denied by some, while others make a distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. Most will acknowledge that in the Old Testament God sometimes showed his wrath, such as in the Flood and in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but say that in the New Testament God displays nothing but love. Is that true? Certainly not. He is a God of love, but he is also "a consuming fire," as the writer of Hebrews tells us (Hebrews 12:29).

What exactly is wrath? We can get angry at all sorts of things, but God's anger is always against sin. Note Paul's statement:

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18).

Ungodliness is sin that is religious in nature, whereas unrighteousness refers to general immorality—that which contravenes the last five or six of the commandments. It is very easy to overlook our own sin or to compare ourselves favourably with others. But God is angry with us as a result of our sin, and this cannot be ignored. We must never divide the character of God. We must accept the *whole* teaching of the Bible regarding God's character. We must believe in all God's attributes—not only his power, his wisdom and his love but also his holiness, his wrath and his judgement.

We have some shocking examples of God's wrath in the Old Testament, for example where Uzzah was struck dead for touching the ark (2 Samuel 6:5–8). But we have a similar shocking event in the New Testament when Ananias and Sapphira are struck dead for lying (Acts 5). How would we feel if every example of lying was punished in that way? God is a God of wrath, and if we are not true believers, we will face that wrath at the judgement, for "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). That includes not only physical death but spiritual death, which means hell—everlasting torment in the lake of fire. God's wrath is indeed a terrible thing.

2. Jesus bore God's wrath.
There are three things we should note:

a) *Jesus died on the cross.*
This is denied by some, particularly Muslims, but if we believe God's Word, we know Jesus himself spoke of his coming death, and there are numerous references to that death in both the gospels and the epistles.

b) *Jesus bore the sins of his people.*

> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

Jesus was our substitute; he took our place, suffering what we deserved.

c) *Jesus bore the full wrath of God.*
This surely is what he shrank from in Gethsemane when he asked that, if possible, the cup might pass from him (Matthew 26:36–46). That cup was the wrath of God in full measure (Revelation 14:9–10). It also included being forsaken by God. Perhaps the most terrible statement in all of Scripture is: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

3. God's wrath is now turned aside. He is propitiated.
God's wrath is turned aside not because God has simply changed his mind and decided not to punish sinners. No, God is just and *must* punish sin. Any forgiveness must be on a *just* basis. His wrath is turned aside *because of* Jesus' work. Here is where the cross looms large. Jesus, as we have seen, bore the wrath of God, and because of that, his wrath is turned away *from us*. Justice is satisfied so that God can be just and the justifier of those who have faith (Romans 3:26). Instead of an angry God, we face a merciful one; instead of a wrathful countenance, a smile. Instead of being under a curse, we are blessed beyond measure.

Is this true for everyone? Some say it is and that eventually everyone will be saved. If this were true, hell would be empty, and we know that is not true. There *is* a hell and many are already there; Christ's death does not deliver them (Luke 16:26).

How then do we benefit from Christ's work? We simply believe (Romans 3:22–25). We believe all that the Scripture teaches concerning Jesus' work and that faith must involve our whole being—mind, heart and will. We believe him; we trust him; we love him; and we obey him. If our faith does not result in a transformed life, it is not genuine.

4. The benefits of propitiation, indeed, of salvation, are immense.
Here, we must be brief. Most fundamental is the forgiveness of sins. There are many pictures of this: our sins are blotted out (Isaiah 44:22); removed as far as east is from west (Psalm 103:12); cast behind God's back (Isaiah 38:17); hurled into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19); remembered no more (Jeremiah 31:34).

Closely linked with propitiation is *justification*. Justification includes forgiveness, but also signifies that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us—we are seen as righteous as our Saviour. We are also adopted into God's family (Ephesians 1:5). We are given eternal life, with the prospect of being with Jesus forever, and being like him (1 John 3:2).

We are also given all the blessings of the means of grace. Not only can we pray and read God's Word privately, but we can enjoy the preaching of the Word, corporate prayer, fellowship and the blessings of the ordinances. This is a good reason for not neglecting meetings (Hebrews 10:25).

Are these blessings yours? They can be. They are offered to all. By God's grace we can receive them and enjoy them. We urge you to do just that. B

Roger Fellows is a retired pastor and continues to minister at churches throughout Ontario. He is an elder at Providence Baptist Church, Burlington, ON.

Christian friendships



BY DALE NEVELIZER ›› Anne Murrary's song "You Needed Me" rose to the top of the charts in 1978, reminiscing that "you even called me friend." Prior to Anne Murrary, Solomon stated in Proverbs 18:24: "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

The apostle John, who identified himself as the elder, wrote 3 John to encourage the people of God to practice hospitality to travelling evangelists who were faithful to the Word of God. He mentions three individuals in his letter: Gaius, whom he mentions four times as a "dear friend"; Diotrephes, who is a foe to the gospel; and Demetrius who is a faithful servant. How do *we* forge Christian friendships in the body of Christ?

1. *Christian friends love each other*. John declares his love for Gaius in verse one, "The elder, to my friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth." John referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved and who was leaning on Jesus at the Passover meal (John 13:23, 25). John was not afraid to express his affection for his friend Gaius, who may have been a leader in the church that John is addressing. Our love for one another is rooted in our union in Christ and should find expression in our words and deeds.

Our love for one another is rooted in our union in Christ and should find expression in our words and deeds.

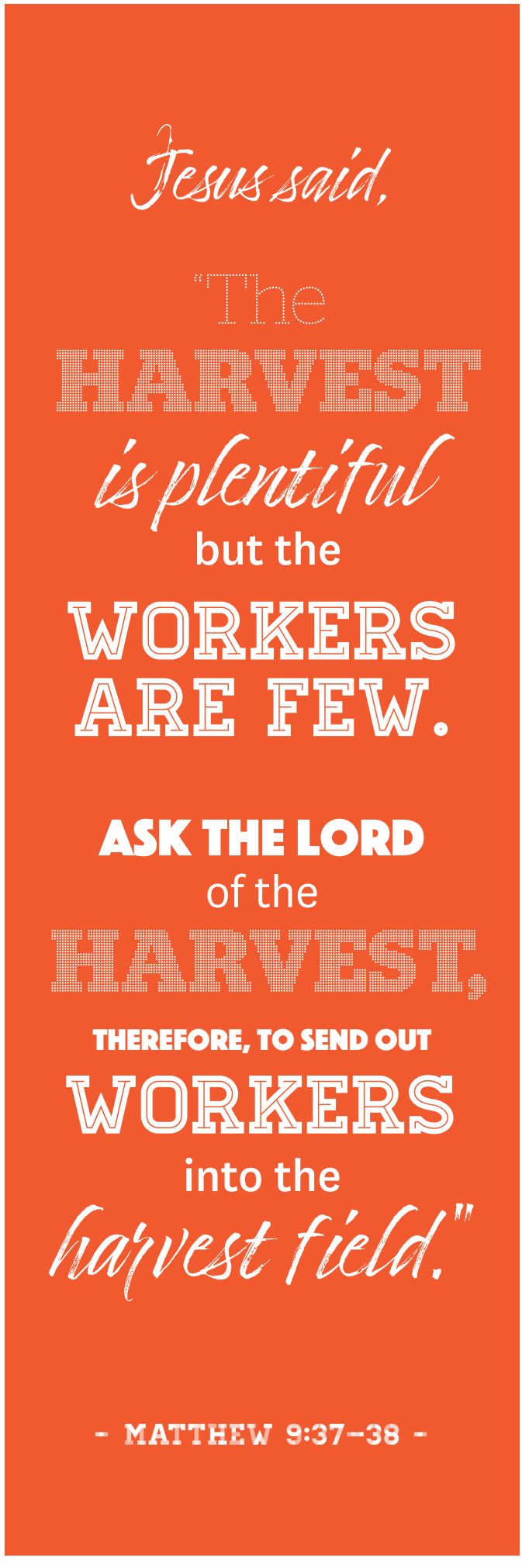
2. *Christian friends pray for each other*. John assures Gaius in verse 2, "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." We are to pray for each other's physical and spiritual well being as we pray for and with one another.

3. *Christian friends rejoice with each other*. John rejoices with Gaius in verses 3–4, "It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." We not only greatly rejoice but we have no greater joy than to see our friends faithfully continue to walk in the truth.

4. *Christian friends are faithful to each other*. John encourages Gaius in verses 5–8, "Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth." These strangers were brothers in Christ who were travelling missionaries. Since they took no money from the lost they were trying to reach, the church was to provide for them and thus be coworkers together for the gospel.

Though not everyone will be our "bestie," our deepest friendships should be forged in our church family. Those friendships should extend to other churches as well. But ultimately the Christian's friend is Jesus who demonstrated: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). B

Dale Nevilizer is pastor of Tilbury Regular Baptist Church, Tilbury, ON.



The need for labourers for the harvest

AS THE NUMBERS OF PASTORS AND MISSIONARIES REACHING RETIREMENT CLIMBS, BIBLE COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES IN THE WEST ARE FACING A LACK OF MEN TRAINING FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY. *HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH RESPOND?*

BY BILL JAMES

In recent years there has been a reduction in the number of men coming forward for vocational pastoral ministry in evangelical circles in the UK. Similar trends are evident in North American churches.

This shortage has precipitated something of a crisis in training institutions which lack students, and indeed some colleges and seminaries have not survived. More importantly, it means that churches looking for pastors are finding a shortage of good candidates. Questions have been raised: Where are the men? Why are men not coming forward to train for ministry?

We need more men for ministry not only to meet current needs, but also to plant new churches in areas which lack a strong Gospel testimony.

But the need is not just for more pastors. We need gospel workers of every kind. We need evangelists, women workers and youth workers. So, the question is: *How should churches respond to this need?*

Multiplying pastors

The Lord Jesus, seeing the spiritual needs of people commands us to pray that the Lord would raise up labourers for his harvest field (Matthew 9:38). Prayer must be our first action, because it is the Lord who gives gifts to the church. That is plain in Ephesians 4, where we are told that Christ gives apostles and prophets (foundational ministries) and evangelists, pastors and teachers (verse 11). There is a similar emphasis in Romans 10:15: "… how are they to preach unless they are sent?" It was the Lord who appointed Paul and Barnabas for their missionary labours (Acts.13:2). The church sent out Paul and Barnabas because it was clear to them that the Lord had called them to ministry.

So, how are we to recognize whether the Lord is calling men in our churches to ministry? The Scriptures are clear that if a man is called to eldership, he needs to be of godly character (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). All elders must be "apt to teach", but if someone is being called principally to "labour in preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17) then we expect to see greater gifts.

Elders are to be looking for those whom the Lord is calling; indeed this is one of their responsibilities. They should be proactively concerned to "pass the baton" on to the next generation (2 Timothy 2:2). If a young man is converted he will be discipled, and then perhaps a brother will meet up with him one-to-one to read the Scriptures together. He will be encouraged to read good books and be involved in a small group Bible study. We look to see if he has enthusiasm for evangelistic work. He may be encouraged to lead Bible studies for

PHOTO: JOEL MUNIZ



Pastors should be proactively concerned to "pass the baton" on to the next generation.

the youth group, or the Sunday school or the home group, and we should be looking to see if he has any aptitude in that.

Perhaps in time we will want him to study the Bible in more depth, or join a preaching class, or a group for developing young leaders. We need to evaluate this man's gifts, and evaluate the impact of his ministry upon the congregation.

At any point, we may find that he does not have the spiritual gifts for pastoral ministry. Perhaps he has neither the appetite nor the capacity to be a preacher. He wants to serve as a deacon, or to help in leading a small group Bible study but nothing more. Perhaps he is more inclined to pursue his career, or his family life becomes very demanding. But the point is that we are always giving opportunities to men and encouraging them to serve, and wanting to give them responsibilities.

There is no suggestion that we are to be passive. We are not simply waiting for a new preacher to drop out of a clear blue sky. We are encouraging and discipling and giving opportunities so that we can see if the Lord is calling this man to ministry.

We will also be asking this man about his convictions regarding ministry. We are told in 1 Timothy 3:1 that a man will "desire" or "aspire to" eldership. The apostle Paul says "… necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). In other words, there is a sense of irresistible compulsion to go into ministry. This matter of the "internal call" has been taken seriously throughout church history. The Puritan William Perkins wrote a treatise on the calling of the ministry. He makes clear that pastors are not to expect direct revelation, or a dramatic experience like that of Isaiah or Ezekiel or Paul on the road to Damascus, but nevertheless:

> …all true ministers, especially such as are deputed to the greatest works in his church, must be first of all stricken into a great fear in consideration of the greatness of their function, yea into an amazement and astonishment in the admiration of God's glory and greatness, whose room they occupy and whose message they bring. And the more they are afraid and shrink… the more likely it is that they are truly called by God, and appointed for worthy purposes in His church (*The Works of William Perkins*, RHB, 2020, 10:237).

In other words, a man who is called to ministry will at once desire ministry, but at the same time shrink back and be reluctant to put himself forward for this work. He will be conscious of the enormity of the calling. Spurgeon speaks of the internal call in similar terms:

We are not simply waiting for a new preacher to drop out of a clear blue sky. We are encouraging and discipling and giving opportunities so that we can see if the Lord is calling this man to ministry.

> In order to a true call to the ministry there must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls; …such as birds have for rearing their young when the season is come; when the mother-bird would sooner die than leave her nest (*Lectures to my Students*, Baker, 1977, 23).

John Newton agrees:

> I apprehend that the man who is once moved upon by the Spirit of God to this work will prefer it, if attainable, to thousands of gold and silver; so that though he is at times intimidated by a sense of its importance and difficulty compared with his own insufficiency…yet he cannot give it up ("Letters to Mr ___ One desiring a call to the Gospel Ministry," *The Voice of the Heart*, AP&A, 137).

And in the twentieth century, Martyn Lloyd-Jones says:

> You do your utmost to push back and to rid yourself of this disturbance in your spirit which comes in these various ways. But you reach the point when you cannot do so any longer. It almost becomes an obsession, and so overwhelming that in the end you say, "I can do nothing else, I cannot resist any longer."

Now, if a man testifies that he has this overwhelming desire to go into Christian ministry, we will need to interrogate what he means by that. What does he *actually* desire? There is a danger, of course, that he is misinterpreting his own experience. We might come to realize that actually he has an overwhelming desire to stand in the pulpit because he loves the sound of his own voice. We might find that he has an overwhelming desire to lord it over the flock, or to be the centre of attention. Or perhaps his overwhelming desire is in fact an obsessive love of books and of learning. In other words, experience must be tested. We need to discern: Does this man love people? Does he love the lost? More than that, does he love the Lord?

Postively, does he have a desire for the glory of God, and the advance of Christ's kingdom? Does he have a burden to preach the Word, and a sense that the Lord is calling him to this work? Has he considered that only those called by the Lord should set out on this ministry? Is this the great desire of his heart, rather than other vocations?

And does he feel a sense of his unworthiness, of the greatness of the calling, and a dependence on the Lord to fulfil it?

We would not want to hasten any man into ministry if the Lord has not called him. That could be disastrous for him, and ultimately for the church and the cause of the gospel. But we do pray that the Lord will call many more to ministry! And when that calling is evident, we want to do all we can to encourage and support this brother as he seeks to serve the Lord.

Multiplying ministries

You will notice the pattern in Ephesians 4 where first we are told of God giving word gifts to the church—pastors and teachers. Then we are told that as these men faithfully exercise their ministries, there is an extraordinary *multiplication* of other ministries. The Parable of the Sower teaches us that seed on good soil can multiply beyond our human expectations. This is speaking not only of conversions, but of growth in grace and gifts and godliness and of the vitality of church family life.

Pastors need not only to preach, but also to actively encourage and nurture the gifts and ministries of church members. That includes giving both opportunities for service and appropriate training. We want our children's workers to have a good grasp of the Bible and doctrine so that they are well equipped to teach. Elders and deacons need to be taught and trained so that they understand their responsibilities; this training may be not only before they take up their office but also through regular studies in elders and deacons meetings. If we are complementarian we will not have women elders, but we understand the vital



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

importance of ministries of women in the church. It is very often women who are the best evangelists, and those who are most effective in getting alongside those who are struggling, whether practically or spiritually. Women may be in the majority in the caring ministries of the church, and need to be encouraged to open the Scriptures and provide spiritual encouragement alongside practical help.

We need to have our eyes open to draw others into Christian service. While we might restrict teaching and leading to church members, even children of church families can be encouraged to be "helpers" in many ways. And so we develop a culture of service as essential in the Christian life. There is a virtuous spiral in Ephesians 4 of believers growing in their knowledge of Christ, being equipped for ministry, edifying and serving others so that they grow in their faith, and ultimately all growing together in spiritual maturity. The body "builds itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Growing the vision

Our focus thus far has been on pastors being called to lead local churches and then through their preaching and leadership multiplying other ministries. But we need to be concerned to lift our eyes to those *outside* the church family.

Within the Ephesian church there were tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul reminds the church of the unity we enjoy in Christ (chapter 2), and he opens up God's plan for the gospel to reach all nations (chapter 3). God's purpose is for all things to be brought together in Christ (Ephesians 1:10), and the church is a wonderful demonstration of the supernatural unity we enjoy amidst our diversity of nationality, ethnicity, background and culture. Paul prays that we might grasp the expansive reach of the love of Christ in all of its breadth and length and height and depth (Ephesians 3:18).

The ministries of the church are not to be just self serving, but to overflow into the service of others. We have been blessed to be a blessing to the world. As church families, we lift our eyes to see the needs of the world around us, whether that be our families and friends, our neighbours, our communities, our nations and the wider world. This bigger and broader vision is to be in mind in our church gatherings, in our prayer meetings and in our activities. It is to be our collective prayer that the Lord might raise up some from within our own number to be evangelists and missionaries to serve the spiritual needs of the world.

We might reflect on what opportunities, encouragement and training we are giving to those with a burden for evangelistic ministries. How are we encouraging the missionary vision of our church family, and are we praying that God might send out from our own church those who will serve the Lord overseas?

How are we encouraging the missionary vision of our church family, and are we praying that God might send out from our own church those who will serve the Lord overseas?

Returning to prayer

We return to where we started, and the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

There are those who respond to current spiritual needs, and the shortage of workers by declaring that we must recruit as many gospel workers as possible. But while that zeal is commendable, it is not altogether wise. We do not want to send out those whom the Lord has not called; that would not be helpful to them, the church or the cause of the gospel. Nor do we want to give the message that those who are not called to vocational Christian ministry are in some sense "second class" Christians. The Lord calls us all to serve in a variety of ways. We need Christian plumbers and builders, lawyers and teachers, doctors and nurses, mechanics and shopworkers. We cannot send out missionaries unless there are others to support them at home; William Carey (considered the father of the modern missions) was willing to go into the pit only if others would hold the rope.

But the Lord commands us to pray earnestly. How often do you pray for labourers for the harvest field? How often does your church family pray in this way? We must pray, and then watch and see what the Lord will do. We trust that he might answer in greater ways than we could ask or imagine. B

Bill James is principal of London Seminary, UK (londonseminary.org). He and his wife Sharon are members of Kensit Evangelical Church, London.

A biblical work ethic



BY DANIELLE GIGNAC ››

In our time and place today, it is assumed that between certain ages, we will work. We meet someone new and so often ask, "What do you do for a living?" The middle class makes up the vast majority of North Americans, and the middle class must work to make ends meet. But is work something to begrudge and get through just to be able to retire one day, or is it something that allows us to grow and experience fulfilment as we go through life?

From the beginning, God intended for humankind to work, and for that work to be fruitful: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15) There was to be a direct correlation between effort and fruitfulness. Only when sin entered the world did that connection break and work became the "painful toil" (Genesis 3:17) we so often experience today. It's by God's grace that we *do* experience enjoyment and reward in work!

When we work, we reflect the image of God, who worked to create the universe. God worked for six days, and rested on the seventh (Genesis 1). In this model, he created a place for us to imitate him, in cultivating and stewarding the earth, and he gave us the Sabbath to rest. This proportion is the order he chose and modelled. As we work, we contribute to making the world better and more flourishing.

Looking at how we work today, I have a few observations in light of this biblical work ethic:

1. Our work is part of our identity.
There has been a shift from defining ourselves by our work to rejecting that work should *ever* define us. While the sentiment has merit, especially when so many available jobs may not align with our desired identity, the mentality that "I'm not what I do" can quickly lead to apathy about work itself or a disconnect between what we do and who we are. Since work is a part of being imagebearers of God, we *should* identify with what we do, and we should try to find employment that we are satisfied in being identified with. Sometimes this is hard, when the economy is bad and jobs are scarce. But I would argue that a school janitor who delights in serving others has more reason to find identity in their work than a CEO driven solely to accumulate personal wealth.



The solution to our discontent is not to work less or do easier work—it is to do meaningful work.

2. The idol of leisure cannot satisfy us.
Wendell Berry—who sadly passed away this summer—has left a legacy in expressing clearly a biblical ethic of work. In his essay "Discipline and Hope" he said, "The freedom from work must produce not leisure, but an ever more frantic search for something to do." The solution to our discontent is not to work less or do easier work—it is to do meaningful work. Our problem is not a lack of leisure time, but a lack of meaning and purpose in what we do. When we gain leisure, we so rarely use it purposefully. Instead, the result is "a frantic involvement with salesmen, illusions, and machines. It is an expensive imitation of [our] work—anxious, hurried, unsatisfying," writes Berry. When we think of our work as an occupation rather than a job, we reframe its place in our lives as integral and meaningful, and a way to glorify God, not just something to get out of the way.

3. Consumer culture vs. purposeful production.
Consumer culture is nothing new, and it extends to employees in the workplace as well, where a job is often seen as just a means to other ends—something to endure and extract as much out of as possible, put in the time, get the benefits and retire to spend it all in leisure. But true culture—development into greater potential as humans—comes through the effort of labour. Mindlessly consuming doesn't bring about growth, but purposefully producing does.

4. Who are we serving in our work?
While every generation differs, there has been a clear shift in work ethic among Gen Z. They want work to work for them, with greater autonomy and flexibility to accommodate their lifestyles. This is partly due to the huge percentage of Gen Z that say they experience mental health issues—far higher than any other generation. Yet it's worth asking if the way to counteract these issues is not isolation and self-focus, but meaningful contribution to a positive and uplifting workplace, with greater connectivity and broader purpose. We should be aiming to serve others and God, not ourselves.

Having a good work ethic means we don't constantly "kick against the goads" (Acts 26:14). We do our best to accomplish our tasks, and we do it with a good attitude, striving to improve and grow. When we seek promotion, we do so humbly and not solely for personal gain, simply recognizing that we can serve better in another role where our skills can be used more fully. Yet we don't work so much or so hard that we forget those we work with—people are more important than projects, and having a good work ethic means we bring others alongside to share in the work so that all are elevated. A good worker should inspire others to do the same, not create resentment or jealousy.

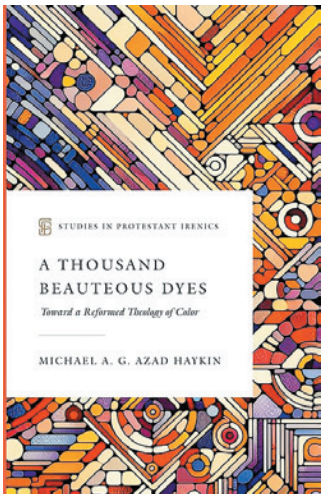
I want to end with an encouragement to seek out opportunities to do meaningful work that aligns with your values, abilities and strengths. It is a gift from God to be able to contribute to the flourishing of the world through our labour, whether physical or mental. Wouldn't you like to have someone ask you, "Why are you such a good worker?" and be able to answer with Paul's words in Colossians 3:23–24,

> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. FT

Danielle Gignac is an architect living in Guelph, ON. She attends Crestwicke Baptist Church.

ILLUSTRATION: ADAPTED FROM ALGHOZY

A QUARTERLY *review* OF NEW & RECENT *books*



A THOUSAND BEAUTEOUS DYES

Toward a Reformed Theology of Color

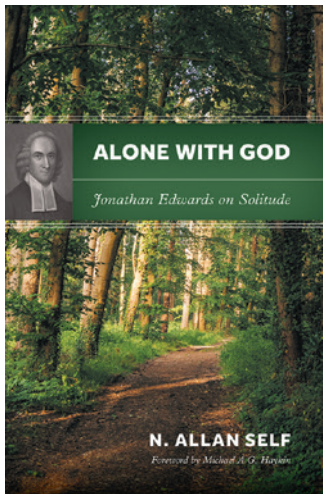
BY MICHAEL A.G. AZAD HAYKIN

The Davenant Press (2026); 125 pgs
ISBN 978-1949716870

This small book is a gem. Dr. Haykin's socio-cultural approach in his research on the way colour has been used to convey elements of the Christian faith throughout history is a truly refreshing read. While Haykin focuses on the Song of Songs, Anne Steele, Benjamin Beddome and Jonathan Edwards, the strength of the book is the way he moves effortlessly back and forth throughout church history—from the early church fathers through the Middle Ages to eighteenth century—highlighting the way theologians and hymnwriters approached the use of colour in their theological writings. The significance and meaning of various colours are explored and many examples are given.

Since our Creator God has made a universe of rich and diverse colours, it seems appropriate that the significance of colour is something on which his people should reflect and consider their significance from a divine perspective. The colours of the flowers of the field bear "witness to his existence and power. Nature's colours constitute divine speech to fallen humanity" (36–37).

—JANICE VAN ECK



ALONE WITH GOD

Jonathan Edwards on Solitude

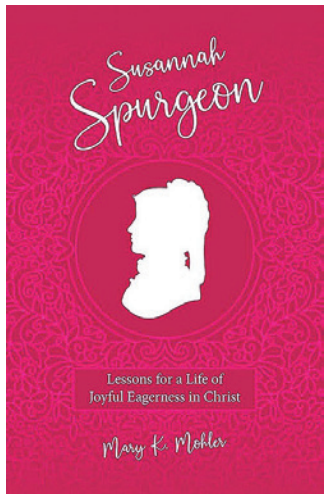
BY N. ALLAN SELF

Heritage Seminary Press (2026); 224 pgs
ISBN 978-1774841983

If you have ever read a biography of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), you know what a busy and accomplished pastor and author he was. As such, it is quite inspiring to realize that in a day such as ours, full of busyness and distraction, we can learn much from Edwards about prioritizing solitude. Indeed, in *Alone with God*, we discover Edwards viewed it as essential to the Christian faith.

In the early chapters, Allan Self explores the history of solitude through monasticism, the Reformers and the Puritans,. When he gets to Edwards, Self flushes out Edwards' views and experience by looking at his books and sermons, his autobiographical works and his biographical works. Through this exploration, we learn that the solitude Edwards was championing is a contemplative solitude that is purposeful and involves a regular set-apart time where spiritual formation and growth in Christ can be cultivated. For Edwards, this was pivotal to his Christian life and worship.

Despite the hurried pace of life today, it might be a good book to read as you consider ways to make time to spend with God. **—JANICE VAN ECK**



SUSANNAH SPURGEON

Lessons for a Life of Joyful Eagerness in Christ

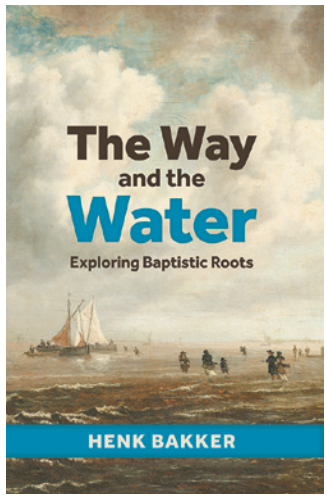
BY MARY K. MOHLER

Christian Focus (2023); 160 pgs
ISBN 978-1527109919

I was first introduced to the life, ministry and writings of Charles Spurgeon at Ontario Bible College in 1968. He was probably the greatest English speaking pastor in the world during the ninteenth century. Over time I became aware of Spurgeon's wife of thirty-six years, Susannah, and their twin sons, Charles and Thomas. Subsequently in 2003, I had the privilege of writing a short biography of Susannah that was published in the third volume of *The British Particular Baptists 1638–1910*.

Susannah Spurgeon is more than the average biography. Mary K. Mohler not only traces out the salient events of her life from her upbringing, conversion, wedding, married life, widowhood and death but she interjects reflections and thought-provoking questions, many practical applications for the reader and numerous quotations from Susannah's own writings. Mohler has written a book that is well-researched, interesting, informative, challenging and encouraging. I highly recommend this book for everyone, especially pastors' wives and their husbands.

—DON THEOBALD



THE WAY AND THE WATER

Exploring Baptistic Roots

BY HENK BAKKER

Heritage Seminary Press (2025); 312 pgs
ISBN 978-1774841716

First published in Dutch in 2008, Heritage Seminary Press has now released a version in English of the fascinating origins of Baptist polity.

As seventeenth century Europe rapidly changed, the Baptist movement was spreading. Whether from persecution or evangelism, Baptist-minded people were moving across Europe, intersecting at times with the Anabaptist movement of Menno Simons that was also developing at the time. These historical lines intertwined, especially in the Netherlands as men like John Smyth moved there from England to escape persecution. As Bakker writes, "The origins of early Baptists were dynamically interconnected, with different strands and traditions of English and continental backgrounds" (49).

The strength of Bakker's book is the historical complexity he navigates and the themes of church polity, baptism, nonviolence and freedom that he covers. If you are interested in the roots of the Baptist movement, and how Baptist churches came to be after the Reformation, you will find this a stimulating read.

—JANICE VAN ECK

SKEPTICISM, CHRISTIANITY AND THE DEMAND FOR EVIDENCE



BY OWEN PIKKERT ›› Many of us know someone who, having formerly professed Christ, is now a skeptic. Once they were interested, even enthusiastic, about the Christian faith. But now they have more questions than answers. And these questions are not constructive. Instead, they are cynical and dismissive. The person who once asked questions to mature in their faith now asks questions to undermine it. They are not looking for further evidence, but are asking how anyone, their former selves included, could have believed in the absence of evidence.

To engage with such a skeptic can be a painful experience. It is especially painful when the skeptic is someone you deeply love: a close friend, perhaps, or your child. Most of the pain is emotional. For it tears at the heart to see someone you deeply love question something you deeply cherish. But some of the pain is intellectual. It is the pain of being mentally frustrated that you don't have good answers to their questions. Such frustration is often compounded by the fact that, though you have been a Christian for years, nobody has ever bothered to teach you the answers. You begin to blame your ignorance not merely on yourself, but on the system that made it possible.

It is especially painful when the skeptic is someone you deeply love: a close friend, perhaps, or your child.

Faced with such pain, Christians typically respond in one of two ways. The first is the way of *surrender*. It is to accept that one lacks answers to the skeptic's questions, and, consequently, to disengage with the skeptic altogether. Practitioners of the way of surrender become skilled at avoiding, diverting or diminishing the skeptic's questions. Alternatively, some Christians seek to answer the skeptic on the skeptic's own terms. This is the way of *accommodation*. It is to acquire a great deal of evidence that fulfils the skeptic's own standards for evidence, and then to present such evidence to the skeptic.

Both of these ways are problematic. The way of surrender offers no active resistance to what is, fundamentally, a spiritual undermining in the skeptic's soul. And the way of accommodation is out of reach for most. Very few people have the time, much less the intellectual capacity, to develop a deep knowledge of apologetics. Obviously, practitioners of both ways may supplement their strategies with various spiritual practices: prayer, acts of kindness and so on. Such practices must always be at the centre of any adequate response. But in addition to such spiritual practices, is there any intellectual response that avoids the problems of both the way of surrender and the way of accommodation?

I believe that there is. This is the way of *reframing*. It is to deny that one must play by the skeptic's rules, while reframing the rules so that the skeptic does not automatically have the advantage. For the skeptic has a habit of limiting what counts as acceptable evidence, and then, having drawn the boundaries so tightly, declaring themselves the winner.

Here are two ways skeptics limit the evidence. First, evidence must be publicly accessible. Thus evidence from, say, physics and archeology is acceptable, whereas evidence from intuitions and hunches is not. For anyone can in theory access evidence from physics and archeology, whereas an intuition or a hunch is only directly accessible to the person who has it. Second, evidence must come prior to belief. One must wait for the evidence to pile up, and, once the pile is big enough, one is justified in belief. As the skeptic sees it, the pile of evidence for Christianity is rather small, so no one should be a Christian.



Now the way of reframing proceeds as follows: it questions why, exactly, acceptable evidence must be limited to what is publicly accessible, and why, exactly, belief is only permitted after sufficient evidence is acquired. Since when did Christianity limit the evidence in these ways? To be sure, there is some evidence for Christianity that does fit within these limitations (the existence and complexity of the universe comes to mind). But nowhere do we find these limitations in the Bible itself. Quite the opposite: the chief evidence for Christianity, in my opinion, flagrantly violates the skeptic's limitations. This is the evidence provided by the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, convincing us of the things of God, and assuring us that we are children of God (eg., Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:6; 1 John 5:6–12). The inner testimony of the Holy Spirit is not publicly accessible to everyone. And the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, in the way I am describing, comes after belief in Christ, not before.

Does this seem a bit academic? Let's put it this way: the next time a skeptic asks you for evidence, don't scramble to come up with a bunch of fancy scientific proofs. There's a place for that, but that place is typically found amongst professional apologists. Instead, simply say, "The best evidence for Christianity is that the Holy Spirit confirms that it is true". And when the skeptic rolls their eyes at this response, simply ask, "And what, exactly, is wrong with that?" B

Dr. Owen Pikkert is associate pastor of discipleship at West Highland Baptist Church in Hamilton, Ontario.

PHOTO: DAIGA ELLABY

Is God calling *you*?

BY JANICE VAN ECK ›› In Matthew 4:18–22, we read the story of when Jesus called Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John to be his disciples:

> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.
>
> Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

First, what do you notice about Jesus' call? Well, the call of Jesus is clear. There is nothing confusing about it. He just says, "Come, follow me." God also calls you, just as clearly, today. He has given his own Son Jesus for your sins and he just says, "Come, follow me." Sometimes we think becoming a Christian is complicated—it's not. Do you know you are a sinner? Do you know you need a Saviour? Then come to Jesus!

Second, what do you notice about how these fishermen responded? Did they worry first about their fish, their nets, their boats, what people would think, anything like that? No, they just obeyed and followed Jesus. We can think we have to clean up our lives first before we come to Jesus, or maybe become a better person. No, Jesus calls us as we are and promises to make us new as we walk with him. It is in being with Jesus that we are transformed day by day. These fisherman—by faith—followed Jesus that day, and God made them into mighty men in his kingdom.

Is God calling you today? If so, repent of your sins and look to Jesus to make all things new in your life. B

Janice Van Eck is the editor of *Barnabas* magazine. She is a member of Crestwicke Baptist Church, Guelph, Ontario.

ILLUSTRATION: COLOR CONFETTI



DID YOU KNOW?

» *The Sea of Galilee is* 209 to 215 METRES *below sea level,* making it the LOWEST FRESHWATER LAKE on Earth.

» In the Old Testament, the Sea of Galilee was called the *Sea of Chinnereth* in Hebrew (Numbers 34:11; Joshua 13:27).

» *The most common type of fish in the Sea of Galilee is* TILAPIA (MUSHT). There are also KINNERET SARDINES, CARP, CATFISH and even EELS.



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