

# ADFONTES

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## VER ERAT AETERNUM

BY E. J. HUTCHINSON

In Michigan, fall has just passed us. Nights are cooler; leaves have finished changing from green to red, yellow, and orange, and they now litter our yards or are gone altogether.

When I was younger, fall was my favorite season, in part because of its apparently Romantic-emo aesthetics, as the time when, in Shakespeare's phrase, the trees are "bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."<sup>1</sup> "Isn't it," I thought, "like, *poetic*—the death and decay? A symbol of, like, life?" It was, for me, like the second verse of "Abide with Me," only without any of the things that make that verse good—maturity, for instance.

Having experienced some of the things that my younger self romanticized, and having aged significantly, I no longer count fall as my favorite season. I like it well enough, but now I join Chaucer—with apologies to T. S. Eliot, who thought little of April<sup>2</sup>—as a spring man, an April man: "proud-pied

April, dressed in all his trim,"<sup>3</sup> which, as Shakespeare again has it, puts "a spirit of youth in everything."<sup>4</sup> As spring waxes and April turns to May, Shakespeare's trees receive new life and address creation:

Last year is dead, they  
seem to say,

Begin afresh, afresh,  
afresh.<sup>5</sup>

If, like spring, it would not be intemperate, I would suggest that there is a supernatural logic to my natural preferences, one embedded in the structure of the world and so deeply fixed in the human consciousness that awareness of it transcends the divide between pagans and Christians: spring is the originary state of the

world. Fall, on the other hand, comes from the Fall.

We see this recognition in particularly acute fashion in the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a Heraclitean poem about stability and



PRIMAVERA, BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI (1482)

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1. William Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 73.4.  
2. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* 1.

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3. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, "General Prologue," line 1.  
4. Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 98.2–3.  
5. Philip Larkin, "The Trees," lines 11–12.

change. The poem begins with an account of the *prima origo mundi*, the “first origin of the world,” which culminates in the creation of man, fashioned by Prometheus “in the image of the all-governing gods” (*finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum*). The earth used in man’s creation, previously “unformed and without image” (*fudis et sine imagine*), takes on human shape: the first metamorphosis.

As Ovid details man’s degradation—another metamorphosis—he utilizes the ancient myth of ages, most famously preserved in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*; in it, a primal Golden Age gives way to Silver, and then Bronze, and then Iron (the current state of the world). Though all save the first are flawed in some way, each successive age is worse than its predecessor and increases the evil in the world.

But the first age, the *aurea aetas*, was a state of idyllic perfection. Man was good without law and without the fear of punishment. He was content; the restless wanderlust to see new places, and to undertake the unnatural journey on the sea to do so, troubled no one. Towns had no need of fortification, for there was no war. The earth brought forth its fruits of its own accord, without the sweat of man’s brow.

The season was spring. It was always spring, for “spring was eternal”: *ver erat aeternum*. And in this seasonless season—for where there is no change, there are no seasons—rivers flowed with milk and nectar.

But it did not last. In the pagan story, there was war among the gods. Saturn, who reigned in the Golden Age, was overthrown by his son, and this cosmic upheaval coincided with a change from gold to silver, “worse than gold, more precious than yellow bronze” (*auro deterior, fulvo pretiosior aere*). It is suggestive that the pagan myth gives no clear justification for why this had to be the case, an omission that justifies the contention of Protestant Reformers of the Philippist stripe that the ancients were able to ascertain *that* something had gone wrong with man, though they were unable rightly to understand *why*.<sup>6</sup> So powerful, in fact, was the myth of decline, and so mysterious the omission of a reason for it, that “the story of Saturn,” who devoured his own children and was revenged by Jupiter, “was understood by [Renaissance England] as an allegory of the fall.”<sup>7</sup> In *The History of the World*, Sir Walter Raleigh tells us that, “as Adam was the ancient and first Saturne, Cain the eldest Iupiter, Eva Rhea, and Noema or Naamoth the first Venus: so did the fable of the dividing of the world betweene the three brethren

6. Cf. Niels Hemmingsen, *On the Law of Nature: A Demonstrative Method*, trans. E. J. Hutchinson (Grand Rapids, MI: CLP Academic, 2018), 21–22.

7. A. C. Hamilton, “*Titus Andronicus*: The Form of Shakespearian Tragedy,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 14 (1963): 203, to which I also owe the reference to Raleigh.

the sonnes of Saturne arise, from the true story of the dividing of the earth between the three brethren the sonnes of Noah.”<sup>8</sup> If Saturn is Adam and Jupiter is Cain, it is easy enough to see how Saturn presides over the Fall that simultaneously marks the end of his rule over the idyllic, primordial garden.

Suggestive, too, is what occurs next in Ovid’s account. When the Golden Age ceased under Jupiter ascendant, eternal spring ceased as well: the second metamorphosis.

*Iuppiter antiqui contraxit tempora veris,*

*perque hiemes aestusque et inaequales autumnos*

*et breve ver spatii exegit quattuor annum.*

Jupiter drew up short the time of ancient spring,

and, through winters and summers and unequal autumns

and brief spring, he drew out the year in four seasons.<sup>9</sup>

Notice the contrasts: fall is unequal (perhaps “too long,” but with the attendant connotation of “not right”), while spring has been cut short. Paradoxically, this contraction of time (*contraxit*) gives a sense of uncomfortable lengthening to time (*exegit*). The seasons are an index of our experience of time as both repetitive duration and onrushing impermanence.

Several centuries later, Augustine, though not commenting on man’s fall, gave a lucid account of the conundrum of time in *Confessions* 11. He writes:

What, then, is time? If no one ask of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not....[S]hould the present be always present, and should it not pass into time past, time truly it could not be, but eternity. If, then, time present—if it be time—only comes into existence because it passes into time past, how do we say that even this is, whose cause of being is that it shall not be—namely, so that we cannot truly say that time is, unless because it tends not to be?...For the past is not now, and the future is not yet....Let us therefore see, O human soul, whether present time can be long; for to you it is given to perceive and to measure periods of time....For twelve months make the year, of which each individual month which is current is itself present, but the rest are either past or future. Although neither is that

8. Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* 1.1.6.4.

9. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.116–18. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.



FRONTISPICE, SANDY’S *OVID’S METAMORPHOSES ENGLISHED* (1632)

## THE SEASONS ARE AN INDEX OF OUR EXPERIENCE OF TIME AS BOTH REPETITIVE DURATION AND ONRUSHING IMPERMANENCE.

month which is current present, but one day only: if the first, the rest being to come, if the last, the rest being past; if any of the middle, then between past and future. Behold, the present time, which alone we found could be called long, is abridged to the space scarcely of one day. But let us discuss even that, for there is not one day present as a whole. For it is made up of four-and-twenty hours of night and day, whereof the first has the rest future, the last has them past, but any one of the intervening has those before it past, those after it future. And that one hour passes away in fleeting particles...When, therefore, time is passing, it can be perceived and measured; but when it has passed, it cannot, since it is not.<sup>10</sup>

This fragmented experience of time, then, is directly connected to change—to metamorphosis—and it sets us apart from what is eternal. As Augustine puts it elsewhere, “[T]hat is not properly called eternal which undergoes any degree of change. Therefore, in so far as we are changeable, in so far we stand apart from eternity.”<sup>11</sup>

The use of the Christian Augustine to elucidate the pagan Ovid is not frivolous. For Christian poets in subsequent centuries saw an Edenic quality in Ovid’s Golden Age that was lost by man’s Fall into sin and time’s fissure. The opening of Carol Ann Duffy’s 2018 Armistice Day poem, while commemorating the First World War, could almost be repurposed to describe man’s declension into sin, an original disaster that is the archetype and spring of calamities like the First World War:

It is the wound in Time. The century’s tides,  
chanting their bitter psalms, cannot heal it.  
Not the war to end all wars; death’s birthing place...<sup>12</sup>

Before this wound, there was peace. A shadowy fifth-century poet in Gaul, Claudius Marius Victor, uses Ovid’s words to describe it in the first book of his poem on Genesis, the *Alethia* (*Truth*). Paradise is

*hic, ubi iam spatiis limes discernitur aequis  
solis et aeternum paribus ver temperat horis...*

here, where a boundary is already marked off with equal spaces  
and **eternal spring** passes temperate time under the sun’s con-  
sistent light...<sup>13</sup>

Later Christian poets took up the theme. When Dante comes to the Garden of Eden in *Purgatorio* 28, Matelda tells him:

*Quelli ch’anticamente poetao  
l’età de l’oro e suo stato felice,*

10. Augustine, *Confessions* 11.14–16, trans. J. G. Pilkington, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110111.htm>.

11. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 4.18.24, trans. Arthur West Haddon, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130104.htm>.

12. Carol Ann Duffy, “Armistice Day,” lines 1–3, <https://www.pagesofthesea.org.uk/the-wound-in-time/>.

13. *paribus...horis* (“equal hours”) may imply that it was not only permanent spring in Paradise, but permanent equinox.

*forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro.*

*Qui fu innocente l’umana radice;  
qui primavera sempre e ogne frutto;  
nettare è questo di che ciascun dice.*

Those who in ancient times called up in verse  
the age of gold and sang its happy state  
dreamed on Parnassus of perhaps this very place.

Here the root of humankind was innocent,  
here it is **always spring**, with every fruit in season.  
This is the nectar of which the ancients tell.<sup>14</sup>

The Ovidian borrowings are not limited to the words in bold; they extend also to the “age of gold,” as well as to the presence of nectar (the classical drink of the gods) in the Garden.

The tradition continues three centuries later in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Describing the Garden of Eden, he writes:

The birds their choir apply; airs, vernal airs,  
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune  
The trembling leaves, while universal Pan  
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance  
Led on **th’ eternal spring**. Not that fair field  
Of Enna, where Proserpine gath’ring flow’rs  
Herself a fairer flow’r by gloomy Dis  
Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain  
To seek her through the world; nor that sweet grove  
Of Daphne by Orontes, and th’ inspired  
Castalian spring, might with this Paradise  
Of Eden strive...<sup>15</sup>

Theologians sometimes say that “eschatology is protology”—that is, the Last Things recapitulate the First Things.<sup>16</sup> Poets have said this, too: “In my end is my beginning.”<sup>17</sup> The inverse is true as well. Protology is eschatology.<sup>18</sup> If eschatology is protology realized, protology is eschatology anticipated. The First Things are already pregnant with the Last Things.

14. Dante, *Purgatorio* 28.139–44, trans. Jean and Robert Hollander.

15. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 4.264–75. Milton lets us know he has Ovid in mind via an introductory “reflexive annotation,” a *recherché* hint for readers in the know. In this instance, it is the adjective “vernal” in line 264, intended to conjure Ovid’s *ver erat aeternum*. Cf. Stephen Hinds, “Reflexive Annotation in Poetic Allusion,” *Hermathena* 158 (1995): 41.

16. Cf., e.g., G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Baker Academic, 2011), 177–8.

17. Eliot, “East Coker,” line 209.

18. Again, Eliot says the same: “In my beginning is my end” (“East Coker,” line 1).

It is thus not altogether surprising that spring is the season of the Cross. Temptation is resisted; the autumnal curse of death and corruption is undone; the way to the Tree of Life is reopened by the Tree of the Cross—or, better, the Tree of the Cross becomes the Tree of Life.

And yet we remain, at present, creatures of time. Here faith comes to our aid. Faith—"the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"—is, for traveling man (*homo viator*), the temporal road to eternity.<sup>19</sup> In a state of change, it unites us to the Unchanging. As is so often the case, Augustine has already said what needs to be said:

Since, then, we were not fit to take hold of things eternal, and since the foulness of sins weighed us down, which we had contracted by the love of temporal things, and which were implanted in us as it were naturally, from the root of mortality, it was needful that we should be cleansed. But cleansed we could not be, so as to be tempered together with things eternal, except it were through things temporal, wherewith we were already tempered together and held fast. For health is at the opposite extreme from disease; but the intermediate process of healing does not lead us to perfect health, unless it has some congruity with the disease. Things temporal that are useless merely deceive the sick; things temporal that are useful take up those that need healing, and pass them on healed, to things eternal. And the rational mind, as when cleansed it owes contemplation to things eternal; so, when needing cleansing, owes faith to things temporal.<sup>20</sup>

Or, more concisely: "Only through time time is conquered."<sup>21</sup>

Contrariwise, faith is the means by which time ascends into the eternal order. Later in the same passage in *On the Trinity*, Augustine glosses the relation of time to eternity as analogous to the relation of faith to truth. Faith is the vehicle of changeable creatures subject to death to unchanging beatitude and life.<sup>22</sup> As faith points to truth, it is fulfilled by—changed into—sight. In the same way, the Cross points to, and is fulfilled by, the Resurrection, which is new life, spring's first and final truth.

19. Hebrews 11:1 (ESV).

20. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 4.18.24.

21. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," line 89.

22. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 4.18.24.

Thus faith in time leads us to Paradise in eternity. The Garden was always the goal, and spring was to be the season—and it will be again. The medieval poet Hildebert knew this, and he alluded to Ovid to say so:



WHITTINGTON, STAFFORDSHIRE

*Me receptet Sion illa,  
Sion David urbs tranquilla,  
Cuius faber auctor lucis,  
Cuius portae lignum crucis,  
Cuius claves lingua Petri,  
Cuius cives semper laeti,  
Cuius muri lapis vivus,  
Cuius custos Rex festivus,  
In hac urbe lux solemniss,  
Ver aeternum, pax perennis.*

Let that Zion take me in,  
Zion, the serene City of David,  
whose builder is the author of light,  
whose gates are the wood of the Cross,  
whose keys are the confession of Peter,  
whose citizens are always happy,  
whose walls are the living Stone,  
whose guardian is the festal King;  
in this city there is solemn light,  
**eternal spring**, everlasting peace.<sup>23</sup>

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23. Hildebert, *Oratio devotissima ad tres personas sanctissimae Trinitatis*, lines 173–82.

# FEAR AND TREMBLING AND *STONER*

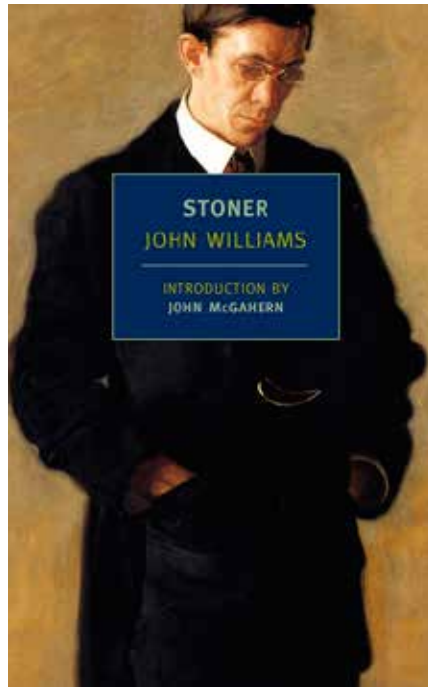
BY ONSI A. KAMEL

It is disorienting to realize one's sympathies lie with an adulterer. It is especially troubling when the man in question is such not by mere technicality—as though he had been unjustly denied an annulment or abandoned—but when, in the state of genuine wedlock, he takes up with a much younger graduate student. And yet, the protestations of the publicly upright notwithstanding, the honest reader of John Williams' *Stoner* finds precisely this sympathy within himself as he evaluates the titular character's actions. But why? Is Williams stoking our disordered desires or hoping to normalize betrayal, dishonesty, and immoral sexual conduct? Is our sympathy evidence of moral weakness or proof that the appetitive part of our souls is not yet rightly conformed to the rational?<sup>1</sup>

Rather than merely reject Williams'—and our own—sympathy out of hand, however, we should consider whether our affections have alerted us to a reality of which our reason was at first unaware. *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's extended meditation upon the binding of Isaac, distinguishes between the ethical and religious terms for Abraham's terrifying act: "The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he was willing to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he was willing to sacrifice Isaac; but in this contradiction lies the very anguish that can indeed make one sleepless."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the ethical expression of Stoner's act is that he committed adultery; but is there a religious expression? Although we can never justify Stoner's act—unlike Abraham's, for reasons which will become clear—is there an expression that is able to explain our involuntary sympathy with it? But before we examine the act itself, we must turn to Stoner's life, for acts find their meaning in lives.

William Stoner is born in the late-nineteenth century and poor, the son of farmers in rural Missouri. His family attends a Methodist

church once monthly, a habit Stoner easily falls out of as he grows up. His father sends him to the University of Missouri to study agriculture, but, like so many disappointing children, Stoner discovers something less useful but more valuable: the humanities, and, in particular, English literature. Shakespeare changes Stoner's life, and, as a result, the University becomes Stoner's home. The first World War disrupts the University of Missouri, but not Stoner. From duty or vainglory or just to see Europe, his friends enlist. Stoner stays, quietly dedicating himself to a life of scholarship as his friends return changed or not at all. After completing his dissertation, Stoner is hired by the University to teach—and so he lives out his days.



Like most marriages, Stoner's begins in hope and fear. Stoner meets Edith at a party sponsored by his university. He sees her across the room, "tall and slender and fair," and by the end of the night has obtained her permission to "call on her."<sup>3</sup> The first "call" is awkward: they are anxious, and Edith hardly speaks a word to Stoner. But at the end, the floodgates open and she tells of her life and thoughts for an hour and a half. Williams permits the reader no relief at Edith's sudden loquaciousness, however: "Years later it was to occur to him that... on that December evening of their first extended time together, she told him more about herself than she ever told him again."<sup>4</sup> A few weeks later, Stoner proposes. Edith, who comes from money, responds that she has a trip to Europe planned and doesn't want to cancel. Stoner, doubtless caught up in his passion, promises, "I'll take you to Europe. We'll see it together someday." Edith recoils: "You must give me time to think."<sup>5</sup> Stoner hopes, but the reader knows to fear.

Their wedding night is a failure. A portent of things to come, Stoner sleeps on the sofa. "Within a month he knew his marriage was a fail-

1. Plato, *Republic*, IV.442aff.

2. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling: Dialectical Lyric by Johannes De Silentio* (Folio Society UK, 1985), 26.

3. Williams, *Stoner*, 47, 49.

4. Williams, *Stoner*, 53.

5. Williams, *Stoner*, 56.

ure; within a year he stopped hoping it would improve.”<sup>6</sup> At first, Stoner works to salvage the marriage. He buys gifts, makes picnics, and takes Edith for walks. But after a dinner party gone horribly wrong, when Edith retreats to her room to cry, Stoner is overcome by his sense of inadequacy. He leaves her to her sadness.

They beget one daughter, Grace, whom Stoner raises alone for the first few years—Edith cannot handle the strain of a baby. As she grows, Stoner allows her to play on the floor of his study as he works and hosts students for tea. Eventually, he gets a small desk so that Grace can read while he grades papers or works on his book. From time to time, they break from work and speak easily with one another. One particularly pleasant day, the door opens, and, in a fit of jealousy, Edith takes Grace away from her father. Grace protests, but Edith insists that Stoner is busy, “trying to work.”<sup>7</sup> After this, Edith begins remaking Grace, buying her new clothes and finding her new friends. A bewildered Stoner remains in his study, resigning himself to his fate and leaving Grace to hers. As Grace grows more miserable, Stoner’s relationship to her becomes strained. On one occasion, he briefly tries to challenge Edith but fails. He does not try to intervene on Grace’s behalf again until, years later, she gets pregnant by a college classmate, is pressured by Edith to marry him, and has given up hope.

As Stoner loses his daughter, he returns to his first and faithful love: the idea of “the University.” He seeks to preserve her pure and unspotted, to keep intellectual dilettantes and bulls—rs at bay. The University, he rightly intuits, is meant to be “an asylum, a refuge from the world, for the dispossessed, the crippled.”<sup>8</sup> It is a hospital for those out of place in this world, a monastery dedicated to the best of what is human. Unlike for his wife and daughter, for the University, Stoner fights. He has hope that his ideal may yet be realized. He works to improve himself pedagogically, assists both undergraduates and graduate students with research, and tries to be collegial. But Stoner is outmaneuvered by a colleague in a crucial departmental fight. Thus, he begins to lose even his University, powerless to stop its transformation. Stoner’s hope for the University was

6. Williams, *Stoner*, 74.  
7. Williams, *Stoner*, 122.  
8. Williams, *Stoner*, 167.

far from foolish in the mid-twentieth century, but Williams, writing decades after the setting of his book, knew the bulls—rs would breach the walls.

Stoner’s pattern of behavior—first with wife, then with child, then with University—is called by Kierkegaard the “movement of resignation.” The knight of infinite resignation reckons with the hopelessness of this-worldly bliss, and in this reckoning obtains for himself “peace and repose.”<sup>9</sup> Resignation is a movement of the will available to “anyone who wants it...[who] can discipline himself into making this movement, which in its pain reconciles one to existence.”<sup>10</sup> To illustrate the movement, Kierkegaard gives the example of a man who loves a princess, knowing she will never be his. The knight of infinite resignation forfeits the actual princess and transposes his love for her into a spiritual key: his love for *this woman* becomes an eternal love. Thus, “from the moment he makes this movement the princess is lost.”<sup>11</sup> The knight of infinite resignation keeps the love, but he forfeits the beloved. Such is the cost of his repose.

The knight of infinite resignation is a rational man, a stoic.<sup>12</sup> He does not war against the Fates, but neither does he hold out the fool’s hope that “perhaps, someday, things will be better.” No, the knight of infinite resignation sees the world as it is, faces its cruelty, masters himself, and makes his love invincible by moving it beyond earth’s reach. This movement insulates not only the love, but the lover. He becomes impervious to the vagaries of life. After all, the man who has already forfeited the princess cannot be disappointed when they are never united. But let us reckon clearly with what this means.

The knight of infinite resignation has no need for faith, for his love is a present possession; he has no capacity for hope, for he sees the world as it is; he has only love—immortal, impervious, objectless love. The knight of infinite resignation recognizes that his marriage is a failure and retreats into repose; he witnesses the ruin of his daughter and gives her up; he is routed by the head of his department and cedes his ground. “Now everything is lost,” says this knight. “He has felt

9. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 43.  
10. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 43.  
11. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 41.  
12. I owe this insight to Eric Hutchinson.

THE KNIGHT OF INFINITE RESIGNATION  
FORFEITS THE ACTUAL PRINCESS AND  
TRANSPoses HIS LOVE FOR HER INTO A  
SPIRITUAL KEY: HIS LOVE FOR *THIS WOMAN*  
BECOMES AN ETERNAL LOVE.



SKETCH OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD

the pain of renouncing everything, whatever is most precious in the world.”<sup>13</sup>

But Stoner does not *merely* resign himself. He does not only forfeit the objects of his love with stoic resignation, steeling himself against a relapse into the fool’s hope. Instead of transposing his love into the eternal, he believes that he will be happy in *this* life—and so begins his affair. By committing adultery with a graduate student, Stoner learns that “love is...a process through which one person attempts to know *another*.”<sup>14</sup> Stoner realizes that love requires an object in *this* world, a true beloved. Love must realize itself concretely; it is not meant to be transposed.

Stoner and his lover imagine possibilities for their future together which are more truly “a celebration of the life they [have] together now.”<sup>15</sup> Lost years before, Stoner’s appetite for research returns. He learns that the life of the mind and that of the body are not opposed, but interrelated. Stoner fashions a world for himself in which love’s object is a beloved and earthly happiness is within reach—despite every indication to the contrary.

This movement through infinite resignation into the confidence of earthly beatitude is called by Kierkegaard, appealing to Abraham as his model, the movement of faith. In accordance with God’s command, Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac. And despite every appearance that Isaac’s death was God’s true desire, Abraham nevertheless continued to believe in the divine promise: “My covenant will I establish with Isaac” (Gen. 17:21). He believed that Isaac would be his in *this* life. The movement of faith is “made continually on the strength of the absurd,” and “in such a way, be it noted, that one does not lose finitude but gains it all of a piece.”<sup>16</sup> The knight of faith makes the same movements as the knight of infinite resignation: he reckons with the world as it is, forfeits all false hope, and ultimately resigns. But “he makes one more movement... for he says: ‘I nevertheless believe that I shall get her, namely on the strength of the absurd.’”<sup>17</sup> Against any earthly possibility, the knight of faith moves through resignation and regains what he forfeited to

13. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 38.  
14. Williams, *Stoner*, 194; emphasis mine.  
15. Williams, *Stoner*, 194.  
16. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 35.  
17. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 45.

the world. Abraham believed: Isaac will be returned to me, namely on the strength of the absurd. While the knight of infinite resignation squarely faces the world under the sun and rightly sees resignation as the only rational response, the knight of faith, abjuring all false hope, moves through resignation and believes anyway.

By his adultery, Stoner nearly learns the meaning of faith, believing on the strength of the absurd that earthly felicity will be his. Of course, Stoner’s movement of faith is ill-fated and immoral, for, unlike Abraham, he believed in an idol. He trusted the affair to work the miracle that only God can; he trusted the affair to overcome the world. At some level, even Stoner seems to recognize that his faith is misplaced. He knew from the beginning that “the world was creeping up on him...and he watched the approach with a sadness of which he could not speak.”<sup>18</sup> His affair could not—and did not—survive contact with reality. Stoner builds for himself an ark to escape the world; but floodwaters eventually recede, and the occupants must disembark.

The ethical expression for what Stoner did is that he committed adultery; the religious expression is that he attempted the movement of faith. The tragedy of Stoner’s life is that he believed in the affair. In other words, the tragedy of Stoner’s life is idolatry. This is why Stoner’s act can never be justified, not even in principle. For Kierkegaard, the obligation to uphold the “ethical” term can only be suspended by a true movement of faith: Abraham, *the* knight of faith, was willing to sacrifice Isaac “for the sake of God because God demand[ed] proof of his faith.”<sup>19</sup> Abraham was tested by God, and his response was justified only because he believed God in the time of trial. Stoner is not tested, nor does he believe God: thus, his act cannot be the response of faith. And yet, in spite of the fact that Stoner remains within and violates the

realm of the ethical, his actions testify to the truth that man does not live by bread alone: infinite resignation is supremely rational east of Eden, and it is the logical response to the conditions of our world. But it cannot satisfy. The transposition of one’s loves from the concrete to the ideal, the forfeiture of wife and daughter and University in the face of powerlessness to keep them, is ultimately inhuman. Hence

18. Williams, *Stoner*, 202.  
19. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 59.

BY HIS ADULTERY,  
STONER NEARLY LEARNS  
THE MEANING OF FAITH,  
BELIEVING ON THE  
STRENGTH OF THE ABSURD  
THAT EARTHLY FELICITY  
WILL BE HIS.



ALBERT CAMUS—HIMSELF, LIKE STONER, AN ADULTERER—  
WITH HIS SECOND WIFE FRANCINE.

fallen man makes for himself graven images: idolatry is the reprobate's response to the impossibility of infinite resignation.

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus takes up his pen against what he perceives as Kierkegaard's escapism. He investigates the problem of suicide, seeking to answer whether life is worth living. When one finds the "universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, [one] feels an alien, a stranger."<sup>20</sup> The gulf between man, who craves meaning, and the meaningless universe, is the absurd. For Camus, against Kierkegaard, the absurd is ultimate reality. There is no God who can overcome it; neither is there a faith which can believe on its strength. Instead, the absurd man, that is, the man who reckons with absurdity, "does nothing for the eternal."<sup>21</sup> Camus thus concludes that life "will be lived all the better if it has no meaning. Living an experience, a par-

ticular fate, is accepting it fully."<sup>22</sup> This is infinite resignation. Against Camus, I need offer as evidence only William Stoner. He could not escape Camus' absurd by anything in his own power—neither by wife, nor daughter, nor University, nor adultery—but neither could he live with it. To the knight of infinite resignation, who refuses to attempt the movement of faith, we can only say that man was not made to drink this world to the dregs. That is why we must sympathize with William Stoner.

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*Onsi A. Kamel is editor-in-chief of the Davenant Press and senior editor of Ad Fontes. He lives in Chicago with his wife and two children.*

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20. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2018), 6.

21. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 60.

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22. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 53.



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# COMMON PRAYER: AN INTERVIEW

SAMUEL L. BRAY AND DREW N. KEANE, EDS., *THE 1662 BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER:*

*INTERNATIONAL EDITION* (WESTMONT, IL: INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2021).

832 PAGES, \$28.00 (HARDCOVER).

INTERVIEW BY ONSI A. KAMEL

*Ad Fontes is pleased to publish this interview with Samuel L. Bray and Drew N. Keane, conducted by editor-in-chief Onsi A. Kamel. Bray and Keane are the editors of a new edition of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer forthcoming from InterVarsity Press. The interview has been lightly edited for style and clarity.*

*This work will be published in January 2021. To preorder, visit [ivpress.com/the-1662-book-of-common-prayer](http://ivpress.com/the-1662-book-of-common-prayer).*

**First, let me just say that it's a pleasure to be able to do this interview with you. I'd like to start by asking about your goals in this project. You've written at length about the problem of fragmentation in Anglican liturgical practice. How many USA Anglican congregations are now using a version of the 1662 BCP, and do you hope this Book of Common Prayer will help retrieve truly common prayer?**

DNK: Thank you, Onsi. We're happy to be able to tell readers of *Ad Fontes* more about this edition of the classic Book of Common Prayer. Within the US Episcopal Church, I know of at least one church, the Cathedral of the Advent in Birmingham, that uses the 1662 BCP for their Communion liturgy. But I also know of many US Episcopal churches that use it for choral Evensongs (at least some of the time). These churches may have other Books of Common Prayer in their pews, but the choir is singing settings of the 1662 service. Beyond congregations, I know a great many individuals who have adopted the 1662 BCP for their personal devotional use.

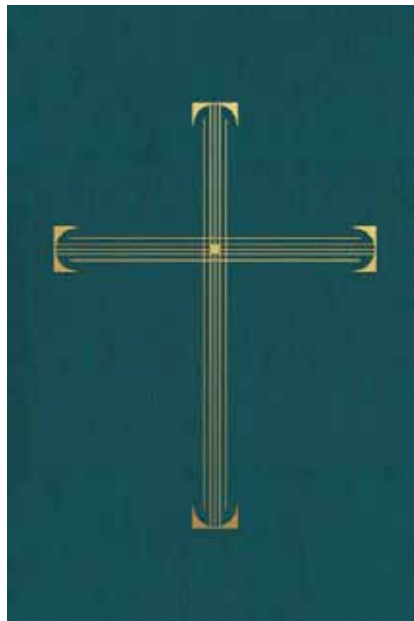
SLB: A few parishes in the Anglican Church in North America use it as well. But my sense of the pattern is the same as Drew's—in the United States, the 1662 BCP tends to be used more by

individuals than by parishes. Among individuals, it seems to be enjoying a resurgence during the pandemic, as people find comfort in its language and theology. Most of the use of the 1662 BCP is in other parts of the world, especially in Anglican churches in what is sometimes called the Global South.

DNK: The 1662 BCP continues to be an instrument of unity for Anglicans around the world, and it expresses what the Anglican way offers to Christians more broadly. Sadly, today Anglicans are in danger of becoming more characterized by their fierce disagreements than by their shared form of prayer. My hope is that this edition of the 1662 will push in the other direction, that it will promote unity.

**Of course, the 1662 Book of Common prayer holds pride of place among Anglican Prayer books. By contrast, modern prayer books come and go, and even widely adopted prayer books (like the 1979 BCP) become outdated after a few decades. What are the distinctive, lasting virtues of 1662? What does it offer that prior or successive Books of Common Prayer don't?**

DNK: The first advantage of the 1662 BCP is its clarity about the gospel. Some commentators, including J. I. Packer and Gavin Dunbar, have noted that the 1662 services are marked by a triad of guilt, grace, and gratitude (or repentance, faith, and charity). It is unequivocal: we cannot save ourselves, "there is no health in us." We are saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, "by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." Therefore, as the Lord has opened our lips, we show forth his praise, "not only with our lips but in our lives."



Rather than simply being presented once, this gospel is reiterated again and again, in the structure of the services and in the words of the prayers. That's the second lasting virtue of the 1662 BCP: its repetitions and reiterations, which plant the gospel deep in the memory. This quality is one that the 1662 BCP preserves from Cranmer's work more than a century earlier. It reflects the orality of mid-sixteenth century written English. This is also why people notice its strong cadences. It was written for the ear. That's a great usability advantage because it increases memorability.

Later revisions to the prayer book tend to cut back on the reiteration. They tend to rearrange material without respect to the guilt, grace, and gratitude triad, and to add content that disrupts patterns and connections, thus obscuring the crystal clarity. And the newer prayer books have lots and lots of options—that also makes them less user-friendly. The more options there are, the more people need to look at the book (or a service leaflet), the more often they need to flip pages back and forth, and the less likely they are to know what is going to happen next.

Now you asked about the advantages of the 1662 BCP not just over subsequent books, but also over prior ones. (There were five before it: Cranmer's first edition in 1549, his second in 1552, the prayer book of Queen Elizabeth I in 1559, that of King James in 1604, and the 1637 BCP that King Charles unsuccessfully tried to impose on the Church of Scotland.) There are some useful additions in the 1662 BCP that weren't there before. For example, one of the most treasured prayers, the general thanksgiving, is first introduced in 1662.

But more than that, it's the 1662 BCP that has had the greatest global impact. Most of the churches that make up the Anglican Communion have used it at some point in their history (including the Episcopal Churches of Scotland and America). Even in the nineteenth century, when theological and ceremonial differences began to widen, both E. B. Pusey and J. C. Ryle could agree on following the 1662 BCP without alteration or addition. It has served as an instrument of unity and an expression of shared identity, and it can continue to be such an instrument.

SLB: Drew has put it brilliantly. I have nothing to add.

**Why produce this new edition of the 1662 prayer book rather than, say, urge the use of the original 1662 prayer book? What were the major modifications you made to *The 1662 Book of Common Prayer: International Edition* from the standard English rite of 1662?**

SLB: There are other good editions of the 1662 BCP available now, including ones from Oxford University Press and Cambridge

University Press. And other good editions are meant for study, perhaps in a literature class, and aren't designed for prayer.

But if someone today picks up one of the 1662 editions designed for prayer, there are three obstacles. First, there are prayers for civil authorities, called state prayers, that are tied to the English monarchy. If you're outside of England, and in a republic, those don't work as well. Second, there are some obscure expressions, as you would expect in a text that is 350 years old. Third, the reader might miss some much-loved prayers introduced in later Anglican prayer books.

Our goal was to remove these three obstacles, but otherwise not to change the text. That's critical to understanding our edition and its essential modesty. So what you will find in our edition

is the 1662 BCP, but with state prayers from other places in the world. There are some very modest updates to the language. And one of the appendices has additional prayers that are mostly taken from later prayer books.

**In your Afterword, you indicate that you had to pay special attention to the Coverdale Psalter. What changes did you make, and what did you try to preserve as you made them?**

SLB: The Psalter is one of the glories of the prayer book. It was translated by Miles Coverdale early in the English Reformation, as part of the Great Bible of 1539, and ever since it has been cherished by those who use the Book of Common Prayer. When the revision of the prayer book was made in 1662, almost all of the passages of Scripture were updated to use the King James Version, but not the Psalms—the people in the pews loved the Coverdale Psalter too much.

DNK: The English in the Psalter is the oldest in the whole book, so it included the highest concentration of obscure words of any part of the book. For example, one word in the Psalter is *leas-ing*; it means “lying, deceiving,” not “renting.” So we had to make some revisions. But again, we aimed for modesty, and we tried not to disrupt Coverdale's idiom—in other words, we aimed to say things he could have said. We made sure our vocabulary and syntax were consistent with what you might find in the Geneva Bible, the Douay-Rheims, or the King James Version. Our other concern was rhythmic. Because Coverdale's language is so finely crafted and so well-suited to singing, we strove to make the fewest rhythmic changes possible, both in number of syllables and in the placement of accents. In a mere handful of places, we also made a revision where Biblical scholarship has advanced, and Coverdale's version could not be justified with reference to the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin—again, with care not to disrupt the idiom or rhythms.

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**Professor Bray penned an essay for *Ad Fontes* last year entitled “The Shape Fallacy.” In it, he argued that the BCP tradition is relatively light on prescribed ritual and heavy on text. Given the intense interest in liturgical ritual over the past decade and the saturation of our culture in images, what are the particular goods of textual worship, and why are they important for us?**

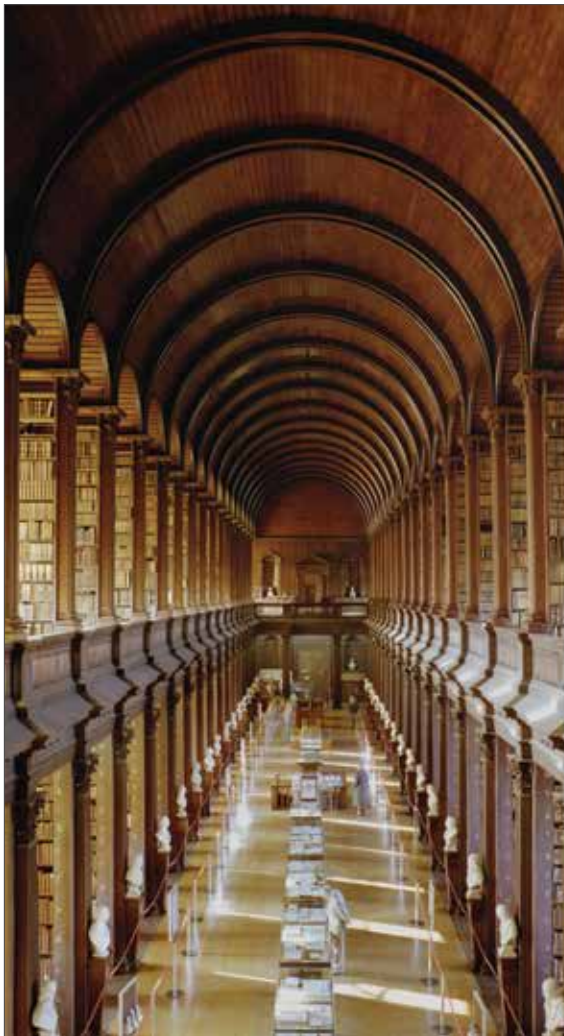
SLB: Your question about the goods of textual worship is important, but I think there are some threshold questions that have to be addressed before we get there. One is that for a Christian, God has chosen to present himself, even as incarnate in Jesus Christ, as the Word (e.g., Genesis 1; John 1). This is part of why words—whether read from a book, or read from memory, or spoken—are central to Christian worship. There are various intermediate steps in that argument, but that will have to suffice.

And latent in your question are several different contrasts we could pull apart. One is between the spoken text and the instructions (the rubrics, which can be likened to stage directions).

Another is between word and image—there’s always been a sense of hesitation about images in the churches of the Reformation, especially the ones that, like the Church of England, were more Reformed than Lutheran. There has been a concern for idolatry, about the risk of turning away from divine transcendence to things made with hands. This reluctance might be summed up in a couple phrases from Eliot—

“fancy lights, / Risking enchantment.” Another is the contrast between word as spoken and word as written. And yet another is between mind and body, and especially the fad right now of pitching liturgical worship to evangelicals as “embodied”—as if anyone who ever stubbed a toe on a door or got the flu could forget that we have bodies.

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So there are many possible angles on this, and the 1662 BCP cuts across each of them. It has spoken text and instructions, but for worshippers, the text predominates. It reflects a deep commitment to the word and the Word, so much so that Morning and Evening Prayer can be described as means to immerse yourself in Scripture. It is a written text, with the stability and other virtues of a written text, and yet like other great written texts from early modern England—including Shakespeare and the English Bible—it shows an extraordinary sensitivity to the sound of words and the rhythms of speech. There are a few things for bodies to do, such as kneeling for prayer and standing for the reading of the gospel, but it is mostly about what we are to say and believe, and out of that what we are to do. That internal focus could be summed up with the words of the prophet Joel that appear at the beginning of Morning and Evening Prayer: “Rend your heart, not your garments.”

DNK: I think the prayer book’s approach to text and to ceremonial is fundamentally the same. The words and actions should set forth the Word of God, arrest the attention, and be clearly intelligible or comprehensible (1 Corinthians 14:4). Much of the complex medieval ceremonial was neither visible to the assembly nor intelligible, and explanations of different ceremonies differed from place to place. Like the Apostle Paul says of praying in an unknown tongue, it does not edify the church. The prayer book cuts back drastically on ceremonial, not because it is anti-ceremonial, but so that the ceremonies that remain arrest the attention, communicate clearly, and set forth the Word.

Consider a few examples. In Morning Prayer, the person who reads the lessons is instructed to “so stand and turn himself as to be best heard by those who are present.” This gestural (therefore visual) instruction increases audibility and communicates through body language that what is being read involves the laity. Turning towards them signals that their attention is desired.

In the Communion, the ceremonial during the prayer of consecration is designed to align with the words, and the placement of the minister vis-à-vis the table allows the people to see what he is doing there. When the priest reads the words “he brake it,” the rubric instructs him to break the bread. Immediately after the words of institution are read, which include the dominical instructions “take, eat,” and “drink,” those instructions are followed. The rubrics even require the people to take the bread and the cup “into their hands.” This bit of ceremonial—the act of taking in order to eat and drink—is assigned to the laity.

In baptism, Mark 10:13–16 is read, which includes the phrase “when he had taken them up in his arms.” This is then enacted in the ceremonial—“Then the priest shall take the child into his hands.” In the prayer book’s approach, these ceremonies stand out. They arrest attention, align with the words, and are intelligible.

But these actions are there to support the words. The words have pride of place because God has spoken to us (Hebrews 1:1–4). The gospel consists principally in what Jesus did; yet, as Matthew’s gospel reiterates throughout, his actions were such “that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” The words and the actions aligned, conveying one message, one gospel.

“Faith cometh by hearing,” Paul wrote, “and hearing by the word of God.” This is what the prayer book aims to facilitate. Its preface presents it as a framework for hearing the Word of God. The

prayer book provides for this in continuous reading through all of scripture in the daily Morning and Evening Prayer. The words of the liturgical script—its exhortations, hymns, and prayers—are all saturated with Scripture. In the office of Communion, the Ten Commandments are heard to invite repentance; and the Word is set forth in a pair of readings (epistle and gospel) that are thematically or doctrinally focused; in the scriptural exposition of the sermon; and most of all in the Lord’s Supper, in which Christ’s words are heard and followed, and his body and blood are truly received by the faithful.

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The bottom line is that the ceremonies in the prayer book, which are relatively few but striking, are all there to illustrate, support, and lend an affective emphasis to the encounter with the Divine Word.

**One of the major arguments of the seminal Anglican Divine Richard Hooker with regard to worship is that particular national churches are free, within bounds, to adapt their worship for their own people. But this BCP bills itself as an “international” edition. Do you see any tensions there?**

DNK: Of course, this argument isn’t unique to Hooker; he’s arguing for the position staked out in Article 34. This understanding is taught in the formularies. But a kind of tension appears as soon as what we now call the Anglican Communion began to emerge. When, for example, the United States of America was formed, those former colonists who had been members of the Church of England were free to form their own national church or disperse into the other kinds of churches that had been planted in the colonies. In the preface to the 1789 BCP, the first prayer book authorized by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of

America, the revisers asserted this right as a national church to pursue a different approach concerning “things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable.” But at the same time, they insisted that they were “far from intending to depart from the Church of England in any essential point of doctrine, discipline, or worship; or further than local circumstances require.” From the beginning, then, the Episcopal Church has been both an autonomous sister church and a daughter wishing to follow her mother.

This tension remains to the present in the Anglican Communion, which is a family of autonomous churches. In the recent controversies that have threatened to break up that family of churches, the significance of the 1662 BCP to the shared or common “Anglican” identity has consistently been emphasized, not least in documents that have tried to articulate ways for us to continue to walk together in unity and charity.

SLB: I do see the tension, and I would even go so far as to say this is a legitimate ground for critique of our edition. Article 34 allows divergence, and that’s been understood to allow each province (roughly speaking, the Anglican church in each country) to make revisions to the prayer book. For a long time, these revisions were fairly modest. There was family resemblance, but more than that, there was a very high degree of interoperability across all the national editions of the Book of Common Prayer. But that’s no longer true, and the divergence has grown enormously in the last half century. So we live in a world where you can either have the virtues of a fairly consistent and stable prayer book (as with the 1662 International Edition), or the virtues of national adaptation, but the position where you can have both has been hollowed out.

DNK: I don’t have any data for this, but anecdotally, I’ve seen an increasing interest in the 1662 BCP among young Anglicans. It seems to me, in the midst of fierce disagreements, that a movement has emerged that longs to rediscover our shared roots, an *ad fontes* movement. That was certainly true for me personally. In the Episcopal Church, of which I’m a member, the opportunity for this rediscovery to take place at the congregational level has been supported by Resolution A068 of the 2018 General Convention, which invited Bishops to “engage worshipping communities in experimentation and the creation of alternative texts”—that is, alternatives to the 1979 prayer book—opening the door to the rediscovery of old liturgies as much as to the development of new ones.

SLB: Also anecdotal, but I am finding a similar interest in going upstream in the tradition. Among younger Anglicans there is interest—to a degree that would have seemed unimaginable twenty or thirty years ago—in the 1662 BCP, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the homilies, and this rich Anglican tradition that was there for centuries before the Oxford Movement or the Liturgical Renewal Movement.

**I know you’ve incorporated Collects from a variety of provinces in the Anglican Communion. How did you**

**select these, and why did you think it was important to include them?**

DNK: These are in our appendix of additional prayers. Some of these are prayers that had “caught on” and become a part of the common prayer tradition. They would be keenly missed by those making this book their primary devotional text. So we gathered together some of the most treasured prayers from post-1662 Anglican prayer books, and even some from before the 1662 BCP. In addition, we recognized that in twentieth-century revisions there were more prayers for particular occasions. So we added some of those to the appendix of prayers, again trying to remove an obstacle for anyone who wanted to use the 1662 BCP. In our selection, we have been wide-ranging, including prayers from the subsequent prayer books of many churches of the Communion, not just from, say, the US revisions. We also used the 1662 BCP as our touchstone, so we did not include any prayers that expressed doctrines that the 1662 BCP itself does not express. In other words, we did not aim to weigh in on doctrinal disagreements. We just wanted to provide a supplement of additional prayers that are consistent with the 1662 BCP.

SLB: No one has to use the appendix of additional prayers. But we hope that it will make it easier for someone to use this book, because you can have the solidity, majesty, and homely comfort of the 1662 services as well as having prayers for a wider set of occasions. Allow me, if you don’t mind, to conclude with one of these prayers from our appendix. It is part of a considerably longer prayer written by Jane Austen, and we hope it will be widely used and loved—especially by readers and reviewers of our work:

“Incline us, O God, to think humbly of ourselves, to be severe only in the examination of our own conduct, to consider our fellow-creatures with kindness, and to judge of all they say and do with that charity which we would desire from them ourselves. Grant this most merciful Father, for the sake of our blessed Saviour, who hast set us an example of such a temper of forbearance and patience, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.”

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*Drew Nathaniel Keane is a lecturer in the Department of Writing and Linguistics at Georgia Southern University. His academic work has been published in Anglican Theological Review and the Journal of Technical Writing and Communication. From 2012 to 2018, he served on the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music for the Episcopal Church. He contributed to Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2018.*

# A MAN FOR OUR TIME

A REVIEW OF *BAVINCK: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, BY JAMES EGLINTON

(GRAND RAPIDS: BAKER ACADEMIC, 2020), 480 PAGES, \$44.99 (HARDCOVER).

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH MINICH

In my mid-twenties, I recall pacing through the stacks at The Catholic University of America's library and lighting upon the recently published first volume of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. It only took reading the table of contents to realize that I had discovered a great theologian. By the time I entered seminary in Washington D.C., the systematic theology courses all used Bavinck's *Dogmatics*. Coming out the other side of Bavinck's magnum opus (after two years), I was a different person. In *Bavinck*, I discovered a confessional orthodoxy animated by an imagination on fire. Bavinck's defenses and explanations of traditional doctrines were more holistic and thorough (and, what is crucial in his rhetoric, more *attractive*) than those of his rivals. His penetrating mind refuted error, but always with a heart that recognized truth wherever it existed.

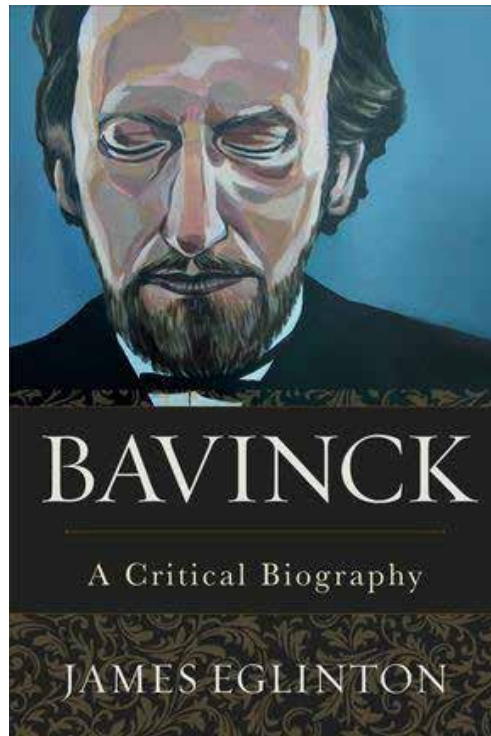
And Bavinck *expected* it to exist in surprising places. Moreover, he always aimed to re-integrate the truth of his opponents into a more compelling framework, seeking to win his enemies to orthodox Christianity by framing it as the fulfillment of their native emphases. This was not just true of European intellectual trends. Bavinck explains no doctrine without imagining its implication for late modern civilization, and what is more, for the whole of mankind outside of Christendom. While firmly planted in the church, Bavinck always had an eye on late Christendom and the newly emerging globalist world coming to fruition at the turn of the last century. Discovering Bavinck, it seemed to me, was discovering a wise guide through the complex re-negotiation of reality that just *is* globalized late modernity. Here was an orthodox theologian who saw and responded precisely to the relativization

of the faith but without dismissing the advantages of (and the superintending will of God in) the development of modern culture. It was immediately clear to me that Bavinck was the man to build upon. It was also clear to me that Bavinck needed a new English-speaking biographer.

Unfortunately, despite its acclaim among a few popular theologians, the 2010 English-language biography of Bavinck

wrapped him in the ethos of its author, Ron Gleason. Gleason's *Bavinck* is a fairly vanilla confessional Reformed theologian who happens to be sophisticated in his presentation of the faith. But unexplained by Gleason is Bavinck's *drive* to cultivate precisely the intellectual project that he did. The *Bavinck* of Gleason's biography was *not* the Bavinck who wrote the *Reformed Dogmatics* (except incidentally). A decade on, my wish for a fitting biography of Bavinck in English has come to fruition. James Eglinton, the author of *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, is rightly described by George Harink as "the biographer Herman Bavinck deserves." Eglinton is already a (if not *the*) central figure in contemporary Bavinck studies. His 2012 book, *Trinity and Organism*, is a decisive critique of the Dutch hypothesis that Bavinck represents an unstable union of modernity and

orthodoxy. Eglinton argues that Bavinck's orthodoxy and his engagement with modernity constitute a coherent project, and that no hypothesis of his ideological or affective schizophrenia is needed. Such hypotheses, consequently, reveal more about us than about Bavinck. Eglinton's project is now being expanded (in both Bavinck translations and monographs) by students like Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, Cory Brock, and Cam Clausing.

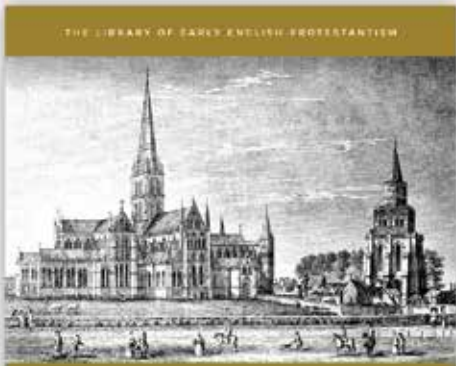


What role, then, does this biography play in the contemporary Bavinck revival? Crucially, it does not focus primarily upon Bavinck's theology. Rather, the book captures the historical and social situation within which Bavinck did theology. Breaking the subject into five sections, Eglinton first discusses Bavinck's roots in the Dutch Seceder tradition (conservative offshoots of the national church). Unlike many portrayals of this movement, however, Eglinton's emphasizes its internal diversity, a diversity that allowed it to function as a sort of *scholia* in which Bavinck first developed many of his instincts. Among the Seceders were members of the newly emerging upwardly mobile class, who had the intellectual and cultural curiosity that such a context affords. His father, Jan, was this sort of man, and much of Eglinton's account highlights how much Bavinck received from his father.

Bavinck's vantage point was expanded through his education at the University of Leiden, wherein he engaged directly with contemporary thought and endured the trial of a faith put to the test against live (and brilliant!) interlocutors. After a brief but fruitful pastorate, Bavinck's life is conveniently divided into his professorship at the conservative University of Kampen and his professorship at the more prestigious, cosmopolitan Free University of Amsterdam. The first position, with an eye toward the ecclesiastical sphere, was the context in which Bavinck first wrote his *Dogmatics*. There, Bavinck was especially keen to present the Reformed faith relative to various modern intellectual trends and alternative theologies. Nevertheless, as Bavinck began to really come to grips with all the shifting sands of modernity, he decided to revise his classic work with

an eye toward modern civilization and global culture. This coincided with his move to the Free University of Amsterdam. The project of Reformed Orthodoxy was no longer an ecclesiastical project alone, but an intellectual project for modern persons. The unique quality of the *Dogmatics*, then, is precisely that they are a theology both for the church and for the world. In the course of his life, Bavinck would become especially interested in mission movements and the reign of Christ in all nations. And as his *Dogmatics* often make clear, the way of Christ will not turn each nation into a perfect representation of Western man; it will, rather, preserve their unique and indigenous genius, bringing their gifts to bear for the whole world.

Eglinton's Bavinck is a man whose mind honestly grasps the challenges to the faith in the modern world—not just intellectual challenges, but the shifting dynamics of ordinary post-industrial life and all of the civilizational fallout that entails. Bavinck is the Reformed movement's original interpreter of late modernity. What sets Bavinck apart from many others is that he is not reflexively dismissive of this shift. Interpreting it as within the intention of divine providence, Bavinck sees many fruits in modernity without ignoring the risks that attend sudden social change. He saw this in society and its practices (traditional family structures versus female suffrage, etc.) and also in the life of the church. Moreover, what guided him through the negotiation between orthodoxy and modernity was not a reactive spirit, but a love of God, a curious and sharp mind, and a wise caution about the hubris of many modern trends. His various cultural and social projects remained *positive*, rather than reactive (even if highly calibrated to a collection of very



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unique circumstances). One of the excellent features of Eglinton's account is that one sees how this vision worked out in very concrete ways in Bavinck's life. Despite concerns from the more rigid confessionalists in his contexts, Bavinck is shown to have been very careful in the maintenance and the deep internalization of orthodoxy. Bavinck's explanations are deeper because he entered into the doctrines more profoundly. Especially remarkable are the many personal ways in which Bavinck negotiated the issues of his time. Of note is his life-long intellectual companionship with an enigmatic quasi-Muslim, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. Tracing this relationship through several stages of Bavinck's intellectual development, one detects Bavinck's life-long passion to *persuade* a non-believer of the compelling truth of the Christian faith. He frequently sent theological manuscripts to Snouck Hurgronje for comment, and Snouck Hurgronje was only too willing to critique his views. Eglinton's biography is not significant merely because it satis-

fies curiosity about the man who could have written *Reformed Dogmatics*, though it does this. The deeper significance, in my judgment, is that in Eglinton's Bavinck we find that very rare guide through the morass of modernity. Eglinton paints the portrait of a courageous elder brother in whose footsteps we may walk. Bavinck's will not be the last word for late modern man, but he might be the first confessional Reformed theologian to have seen and spoken precisely to us.

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