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EDITORIAL	93–95
What is Non–Negotiable in any Theology that Wishes to be ‘Reformed’? (Part 2)	
BRUCE L. MCCORMACK	96–105
Augustine, Creation and COP26	
ANGUS MORRISON	106–122
Ignored but not Forgotten: The Contributions of African Pioneer Missionaries to God’s Mission on their Home Continent	
THORSTEN PRILL	123–139
The Interconnected Ministry of Refugees in Geneva c. 1550–1560	
M. GAVIN SMITH	140–156
REVIEWS	157–176



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Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
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plasticity' (p. 37). This view has emotions as 'quasi-independent of executive, conscious mental activity because they are responsive to inputs that are not directly cognitively mediated' (p. 37). That is, emotions can be triggered by our environment and are not completely controlled by the mind (cognition), such as in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder where high anxiety (or a full panic attack) may occur because of a noise or some other sensory stimulus that reminds one of the traumatic event. The tiered psychology accounts for 'perceptive or adaptive unconscious and physiological inputs', and plasticity 'refers to the capacity to form new neuropathways' which 'are durable' (p. 38). Thus, plasticity accounts for things such as habit formation including links like that illustrated for PTSD.

For someone unfamiliar with psychological and theological language, this book may be difficult to wade through. However, the dividend is worth the effort. For those familiar with psychological and or theological language, particularly those struggling to find a path through emotional voluntarism and psychological models of emotion, this book is well worth the read. Coming from a place of having studied both psychology and theology, I found this book put words and form to the model I was intuitively working with. It was immensely helpful and I wholeheartedly recommend it.

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The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition: Preaching the Literary Artistry and Genres of the Bible. By Douglas Sean O'Donnell and Leland Ryken. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-4335-7044-5. 304pp. £17.99.

The authors lament the current state of preaching within Bible-believing churches (p. 28). Could it be that preachers do not understand the Bible as literature, the importance of genre, and the proper consideration of both in the preaching event? Douglas O'Donnell and Leland Ryken believe so. O'Donnell is Senior VP of Bible Publishing at Crossway and Ryken is professor of English emeritus at Wheaton College. They aim to lay a homiletical foundation for sermons that are fresh, relevant, interesting, and accurate to authorial intent (p. 23). O'Donnell and Ryken do this with clarity, defining each genre as it appears in Scripture, as well as supplying principles and practices for all who endeavour to preach God's Word faithfully and effectively. If you are searching for a revitalizer for your preaching this book will prove beneficial. While both are listed as authors, Ryken penned each genre specific chapter and then O'Donnell had freedom to use what he wanted, restate it in his own words, and add a preacher's perspective (p. 14).

The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition is both personal and engaging. Chapter emphases include: 1) *The Greatest Stories Ever Told* (Preaching Narrative), 2) *Let Him Who Has Ears Hear* (Preaching Parables), 3) *Love Letters* (Preaching Epistles), 4) *The Beauty of the Simple* (Preaching Poetry), 5) *Words of Wisdom* (Preaching Proverbs), and 6) *And I Saw* (Preaching Visionary Writings). Also included are many helpful Tables and Diagrams, numerous examples, and each chapter concludes with a *Build Your Library! Helpful Resources* that is a wellspring for understanding or preaching each genre. Six weighty chapters well worth the investment, but a couple may call for a closer look.

Love Letters (Chapter Three): while the Epistles are probably the most often preached, sadly preachers often fail to preach the Epistles as epistles (p. 106). Epistles are neither sermon, treatise, nor essay (pp. 106-107), still it must be remembered that the very forms the biblical authors employed are inspired (p. 118). Preachers are admonished to take serial preaching seriously, remembering that ‘all Scripture’ is ‘breathed out by God’ and is ‘useful’ (2 Tim. 3:16) – this means, among other things, that preachers who value the Epistles as epistles will touch on every greeting, thanksgiving, domestic code, and the lengthy list of names in the final greetings (p. 123).

Words of Wisdom (Chapter 5): the aim of Proverbs (and all other proverbs in the Bible) are to direct the reader to walk skilfully in wisdom. This type of wisdom will lead to living a morally and spiritually ordered life covering the breadth of human experience, resulting in right thinking and right acting (p. 190). It can be intimidating to think about preaching a Sunday morning series on Proverbs; nevertheless, it is essential that we preach it faithfully, as well as Ecclesiastes, Job, the Sermon on the Mount, and James. In addition, this is not merely for book expositions, as proverbs occur throughout God’s Word (p. 186). In this chapter, O’Donnell and Ryken point out that proverbs are not promises, instead of the proverb ‘Start a youth out on his way; even when he grows old, he will not depart from it’ (Prov. 22:6) being a promise or guarantee, it is a general principle (p. 198). They provide about twenty extremely helpful suggestions on ‘how to preach the proverbs.’

Several positives are worth noting. First, the authors encourage the public reading of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13), which is refreshing – O’Donnell and Ryken wonder if the preacher is reading God’s perfect Word before he preaches his imperfect ones (p. 121)? Next, there is also the welcome emphasis of preaching the gospel to the saved (what they label as *Evangelize the Elect!*): God’s gospel stands at the top of the list of theological truths that believers need to be reminded of on a weekly basis (p. 131). Third, every preacher should tailor his sermon to the shape/structure and

emphasis of the text, including tone and tenor (p. 172). Last, a prophetic charge, ‘We need to stop preaching (go home, or stay home) if we do not preach a big God’ (p. 278).

The Beauty and Power of Biblical Exposition will fit nicely on the shelf of every preacher seeking to hone his craft; a good companion for Steven Smith’s *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* (B&H Academic, 2015) or the forthcoming 5-volume, *Preaching Biblical Literature* (Fontes Press), Series Editors Jeffrey Arthurs and Kenneth Langley. Their desire was to assist preachers as they ‘bring the thunder’ (p. 14), knowing that what happens in the pastor’s study, as he seeks to understand, explain, illustrate, and apply Scripture, can help all who regularly teach God’s Word to connect to the surge behind the storm (p. 15). Their desire is to equip preachers with effective and reliable tools for proper understanding, teaching, and preaching the Bible (p. 61). This book will aid the preacher in fulfilling his God-given mandate: he is not to simply preach *from* the Word or *about* the Word, but to *preach the Word* (2 Tim. 4:2), and he will do so as he recalls the Word’s beauty and power, ‘How sweet your word is to my taste—sweeter than honey in my mouth’ (Ps. 119:103).

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Reformed & Evangelical across Four Centuries: The Presbyterian Story in America. Edited by S. Donald Forston III and Kenneth J. Stewart. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. xiii + 364pp. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7340-8. £23.99.

Four authors are listed as contributors to this volume. Besides the two editors, these include Nathaniel P. Feldmeth and Garth M. Rosell. Each represents a different branch of American Presbyterianism. The book is, however, the brainchild of the editors, developed out of a lunchtime meeting. There is no indication as to who wrote which chapter, but readers familiar with the theological interests and writing style of Ken Stewart (a frequent contributor to this journal) will recognize his influence in such matters as the British background and the relationship between American Presbyterianism and evangelicalism.

In a substantial and thoughtful foreword, noted historian George M. Marsden begins by commending the book’s distinctive strengths. ‘First, it offers a detailed and reliable new history of American Presbyterianism. Second, it is unusual among such histories in the thoroughness with which it recounts the British background. Third, it explicitly emphasizes ‘the symbiotic relationship that has frequently existed between American Presbyterianism and American evangelicalism.’ Finally, the emphasis