

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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Exit Stage Left: Warren Gage Resigns from Knox Seminary by Steven T. Matthews

A recent email distributed by Knox Theological Seminary (Knox hereafter) announced the resignation of Dr. Warren Gage from the school's faculty. Gage, who has taught at the school since 2002, is an influential figure in the institution's history. Because of the prominent role he has played in shaping, or more accurately, reshaping Knox into the school it is today, and because his resignation provides a convenient opportunity to assess his work, it seemed good to take this occasion to review Gage's tenure at Knox.

First, a little bit about me: I briefly attended Knox, having enrolled in the school's M.Div. program in the in the fall of 2006. I was attracted to the school as a result of its strong Reformed credentials. It was also one of the few schools where at least some of the faculty members held the work of Gordon Clark in high regard. As an admirer of Clark's work, this made Knox an attractive option to me.

Although there was much that I liked about the school, I also harbored concerns. In the years leading up to my enrollment, the school prominently featured a study called the John - Revelation Project (JRP)¹ on its website. The JRP, a development of Dr. Gage, was billed as a new, Reformed approach to eschatology. In reading through the JRP, *new* and *Reformed* were not the first words that came to mind. The JRP struck me as downright bizarre and nearly stopped me from enrolling in the Knox M.Div. program altogether. But after prayerful consideration, I elected to attend Knox in the fall of 2006.

As it turned out, I entered Knox at a critical time in the school's history. Enough of what could be called the old

Knox was still around (Dr. Kennedy was still the school's Chancellor and actively preaching at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church; Dr. Robert Reymond, whose teaching represented historic reformed theology, was still Professor of Systematic Theology) that one could clearly see what the school had been. But enough of the new Knox, as represented by Dr. Gage and his supporters, was present that the future direction of the school could be discerned as well. Knox was a house divided against itself. And since the Lord himself has stated such a house cannot stand, the future of Knox did not seem terribly bright. For this and other reasons, I elected to leave Knox at the end of the fall 2006 semester and return home.

What follows below is a two-part review of Gage's work. First, I shall consider his doctrine. Some of this material is drawn from my time in his Old Testament Survey class and some from research into his work that I conducted after I left Knox. Next will follow a review of Gage's effect on Knox, how he and his supporters turned what was once a Reformed seminary into a parody of its former self.

The Doctrine of Warren Gage

Gage's approach to Biblical interpretation, what is known as hermeneutics, evidences a deep-seated antipathy toward logic. More Romanist than Protestant, his literary approach to the Bible involves hunting for word patterns ("intertextuality" he calls it) in Scripture and then intuiting their meaning through the use of poetic imagination.² Put another way, his hermeneutic is really nothing more than theological cloudspotting.³ And

¹ See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/> for a full text of the JRP retrieved from the Knox website on January 24, 2007

² See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/2008/09/27/the-john-revelation-project-introduction/>.

³ See <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/27/opinion/pretor-piney-cloud-spotting/>

as one might expect, Gage's perfervid imagination leads him to assert all manner of doctrinal absurdities, particularly in the areas of typology and eschatology.

For example, in Gage's Old Testament Survey class, he made the claim – based on *John* 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt (or “tabernacled” in Greek) among us,” – that the Apostle John structured his *Gospel* in such a way as to incorporate allusions to the furniture of the tabernacle: the altar, the laver, the table of showbread, etc. Gage even gave the class a handout to demonstrate his point. Among the various tabernacle implements allegedly alluded to in John's *Gospel* is the veil in front of the Holy of Holies, which was rent from top to bottom at the time of Christ's death. This tearing of the veil, Gage claimed, represented Jesus' body. But there is one minor problem with this clever scheme. Although the synoptic *Gospels* (*Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*) all record the rending of the temple veil, *John* never mentions it. And because John never mentions it, this author finds it hard to imagine that John ever intended what Gage claims for him.

Another example was a paper⁴ passed out in my New Testament class that went to great lengths to assert that the *Gospel* of *Mark* was written to portray Jesus as the new Elijah. But Gage's conclusion, based as it is on his interpretation of supposed literary patterns, goes against the plain teaching of the rest of the New Testament, *Mark* included, that John the Baptist, not Jesus, was the new Elijah. One may suppose that the Scriptures are clear enough on the identity of the new Elijah so as to prevent such a flight of fancy from being taught at a Reformed seminary, but the express statements and logical implications of Scripture seemed as dust on the scales to Gage and his cohorts, who found in their intuition and imagination a “more sure word of prophecy.”

I have already mentioned two important elements of Gage's hermeneutic, intertextuality⁵ and imagination. But there is a third important component to his interpretive method, and I would be remiss not to address it: the claim that Christ is referenced in every passage in the Bible. Gage principally rests his claim on *Luke* 24:27, which reads, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he [Jesus] expounded unto them in all

the scriptures the things concerning himself.”⁶ Certainly no Christian would dispute that there are Messianic references in the Old Testament, but it is not obvious that everything in the law, the prophets, and the writings speaks of Christ. Yet Gage makes this claim, and he does so on the basis of an interpretive principle called *sensus plenior*, a Latin term meaning the fuller sense. Those who make use of *sensus plenior* posit, contrary to the laws of logic and the *Westminster Confession*, that individual passages of Scripture have more than one meaning.⁷ According to Gage, *sensus plenior*, not logic, is the basis for typology. His reasoning seems to be that, if there are multiple meanings to a passage of Scripture, then this provides intellectual justification for the use of intertextuality and imagination as tools for divining hidden, typological references. Appealing to logic when it suits him, Gage invokes *Luke* 24:27, because it appears to provide Biblical cover for his typological method. But while taken in isolation this verse seems to provide logical support for Gage's contention, closer examination reveals this is not the case.

The argument turns on the meaning of the word “all”. Gage understands the “all” in this verse to mean every passage in the Old Testament without exception. But there are examples in Scripture where “all” is used with qualifications. Take, for example, this well-known verse from earlier in *Luke*, “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (2:1). Does this passage indicate that every single person living on the face of the

⁶ At least as far back as 2008, Gage established a website titled “Luke 24:27.” See <http://luke2427.com/> accessed April 27, 2014. Although he apparently no longer runs it himself, the ideas found there are his. Please see <http://luke2427.com/about/> for the argument that Christ is found in every Scripture.

⁷ *Sensus plenior* represents a denial of the Law of Contradiction, which states that for a word to mean something, it must mean not-something else. The idea that individual passages of Scripture have multiple meanings is expressly denied by the *Westminster Confession* as well. In I.9 we read, “when there is a question of the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” This denial by the *Confession* rules out not only *sensus plenior*, but also a similar, medieval Romanist interpretive technique called the *Quadrigena*. Taken from a Latin word meaning four horse chariot, the *Quadrigena* was a method of reading the Scriptures that asserted each passage in the Bible had not one, but four meanings. This method did not fade away with the Middle Ages either, but is still used by Roman Catholic scholars today. Please see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (115). Although he did not advocate the *Quadrigena* in my hearing, Gage did promote its use in other classes he taught at Knox. Due in part to this, Knox brought charges of false teaching against Gage in 2007.

⁴ Although no author was named on the pages of the essay itself, it clearly was Gagian in its method and style; later I confirmed that Gage was, in fact, its co-author.

⁵ Intertextuality is said to exist when two, or possibly more, passages of Scripture use common language. See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/2008/09/27/the-john-revelation-project-study-paper-no-3/>.

Earth was taxed, or is the “all” in this passage qualified in some way? Since it was Caesar Augustus that sent forth the decree, logically “all the world” refers only to those under the authority of the Roman Empire. It does not refer to those living in parts of the world not subject to Rome.

Another example is Peter’s statement, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Taken by itself, one could fall into the error of the Arminians, who claim this verse proves that God desires the repentance of all men. But from other passages in Scripture, we understand that the “all” in this verse does not mean all men without exception (e.g. 1 Peter 1:2), it is qualified so as to refer only to the elect.

The question now remains, is the “all” in Luke 24:27 qualified in any way? The short answer is yes. And the clue to the proper reading of Luke 24:27 comes just a few verses later, where Jesus tells his disciples, “These [are] the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and [in] the prophets, and [in] the psalms, concerning me” (24:44). The qualifying element in this verse is the statement “concerning me,” which limits all three referents – the things written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the *Psalms*. Jesus did not say everything in the entire Old Testament referred to him. He spoke only of those things that were written concerning himself and found in various places throughout the law, the prophets, and the writings. Matthew Henry gives the true and full sense of this verse when he writes, “Christ had given them this general hint for the regulating of their expectations – that whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled.”⁸

Warren Gage has chosen to build his typological system on the sinking sand of *sensus plenior*, a concept alien both to the laws of logic and to the Scriptures. As such, it is not surprising that so much of what he writes is absurd and bizarre.

As a final example of Gagian misology, or hatred of logic, I would like to discuss in more detail the previously mentioned John - Revelation Project.⁹ Based on his doctoral dissertation written while he was a student at the University of Dallas (a Roman Catholic

institution), the JRP is, or at least was at the time I wrote about it, the most extensive statement of Gage’s hermeneutic readily available to the public.¹⁰ Early in his tenure at Knox, Gage held two public seminars on this material, and Knox thought enough of his work to feature the text of the JRP on its website. After the fall 2007 controversy that saw Gage exonerated from charges of false teaching, Knox removed this material from its website. This was a wise move on the part of Knox, for the JRP¹¹ manages to do what Gage’s prosecutors could not, provide damning evidence that Gage is a false teacher, a wolf in sheep’s clothing and has no business being on the faculty of any seminary claiming fidelity to the Scriptures.

In the JRP, all the elements of Gagian thought are present: the assertion that imagination, intuition and literary patterns, not logic, are the chief tools for interpreting Scripture; a typology and eschatology based on this interpretive approach; a defense of the Roman Catholic Church-State; and the disparagement of the Puritans, logic, and the Reformation.¹²

Gage spends a great deal of effort in the JRP attempting to establish that both *John* and *Revelation* are organized according to a principle called chiasmic structure, that the chiasmic structure of the books run in parallel so that there is a corresponding pattern of words running between both books¹³ (see discussion of intertextuality above), and that he has correctly imagined the eschatological and typological significance of all this. Whether or not he succeeds, I leave it to the reader to judge. Ancient Greek authors, Plato for example, are said to have used what is called Ring Composition or chiasmic structure¹⁴ as a way of organizing their material,

¹⁰ Steven T. Matthews, *Imagining a Vain Thing: The Decline and Fall of Knox Seminary* (The Trinity Foundation, 2008).

¹¹ See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/2008/09/27/the-john-revelation-project-introduction/> for the full text of the JRP retrieved from the Knox website.

¹² Curiously, there is no reference to *sensus plenior* anywhere in the JRP even though Gage’s typology requires it. There are at least two possible reasons for this. First, Gage developed his typology and later came to realize that word patterns alone do not imply a type-antitype relationship. Second, Gage had *sensus plenior* in mind all along but suppressed any reference to it in the JRP so as to avoid suspicion.

¹³ See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/2008/09/27/the-john-revelation-project-study-paper-no-3/>.

¹⁴ Chiasmic structure is similar to intertextuality in that both involve word patterns. See <http://luke2427.com/chiasmic-structures-the-key-to-interpreting-the-bible/>, accessed May 5, 2014. But far from being, “the key to interpreting the Bible,” as Gage claims chiasmic structure is simply a technique ancient

⁸ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on Luke*.

⁹ See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/2008/09/27/the-john-revelation-project-introduction/>.

so it is not impossible that writers of the New Testament did likewise. It may even be that both books use similar language in roughly corresponding spots in the text. But even if Gage were to establish his case for the existence of chiasmic structure in *John* and *Revelation* and for intertextuality between these two books, precisely no logically valid doctrinal conclusions could be drawn from it.¹⁵ One can imagine and intuit anything he wants from a literary pattern. If Gage claims to divine a particular meaning from the use of chiasmic structure in the Biblical text, a thousand others can draw a thousand different conclusions, and all of them will be just as legitimate as those intuited by Gage. For that reason, literary patterns do not and cannot furnish us with knowledge. Truth is a property of propositions only,¹⁶ which is why the *Westminster Confession of Faith* states, “The whole counsel of God...is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture” (1.6). By substituting imagination for logic, Gage has laid his reason-hating axe to the root of not just eschatology, but to every doctrine in the Bible. But since his hermeneutical system of literary patterns, intuition, and imagination fails to prove even a single one of his claims, his attack on the Bible is a vain failure from the start.

Gage’s typology and eschatology follow from his hermeneutic. His belief seems to be that if one finds sufficient literary correspondence between two passages, one can imagine a type-antitype relationship between them. Gage makes great use of this principle in the JRP, where he asserts a type-antitype relationship between the Battle of Jericho in *Joshua* and the fall of Babylon in *Revelation*.¹⁷ But the failure of Gage’s hermeneutic is also the failure of his typology. Since nothing valid can be inferred from literary patterns, no typological inferences can be drawn using his method.

An almost comical example of eschatological absurdity can be found in the JRP, where Gage and his *compadres* of chiasmic structure claim that the *Gospel of John* and *Revelation* are actually the same story, just told from different perspectives. *John*, it is said, tells of Jesus’ ministry from an earthly perspective, while *Revelation* relates the same events from the viewpoint of Heaven. The JRP puts it this way, “The fourth Gospel’s Joshua

typology largely tracks the account of the conquest of Canaan.... This epic struggle occurs, from one perspective, on earth, depicted in the Gospel of John. Revelation offers a mimetic portrayal of the heavenly significance of Christ’s earthly ministry in conflict with the old Jerusalem, the history described for us in the Fourth Gospel.”¹⁸ If all the events in *John* are history from the perspective of the 21st century, and if *John* and *Revelation* are telling the same story, then this means all the events in *Revelation* are history as well. This implies that Gage and those who follow him are full preterists. But Gage and his followers deny this. In response to an audience question at the January 2004 Unlocking Revelation Conference (a presentation of the JRP held at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, in which Gage and several other individuals took turns offering the insights of the JRP to an unsuspecting public) one of the JRP panelists stated that it was their consensus that chapters 21 and 22 of *Revelation* pertain only to the future. But while this solves the preterist problem, it creates another equally bad one. For if part of *Revelation* pertains to the future, and *John* and *Revelation* are telling the same story, then this implies that at least some of the events in the *Gospel of John* have not yet taken place. As to which events these could be, the JRP panel, consisting of Gage, R. Fowler White, J. Randy Beck, and Steven P. Carpenter, wisely elected to remain silent.

As one would expect of such an imaginative fellow, Gage consistently expresses his disdain for logic in the JRP and elsewhere. Logic, in his view, is the province of pedantic Puritans – those killjoy people who dress in drab clothing, close down theaters, and make ghastly claims about what is, apparently, his favorite institution in the whole world, the Roman Catholic Church-State. While Gage presents imagination as all sweetness and light, he finds in logic his *bête noire*, the veritable triumph of the Pale Galilean.¹⁹ Such misology is un-Biblical. Considering that the Scriptures assert that it was the Logic of God, the *Logos*, Jesus Christ himself who spoke the world into existence and that even today he sustains and governs it, one would think a man naming the name of Christ would rejoice in logic. But such is not always the case. If pressed, Dr. Gage will allow that logic has some place in the interpretation of the Bible, just not a dominant one. It is the imagination that is king. And his work bears witness to this.

One could hope that in the years since Gage first published the JRP that he would have evidenced

authors used to organize their material. The use of logic is the key to understanding the Bible.

¹⁵ A logically valid conclusion is one that must follow from an argument’s premises. The classic example of this is: Socrates is a man; all men are mortal; therefore, Socrates is mortal.

¹⁶ A proposition is the meaning of a declarative sentence.

¹⁷ See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/2008/09/27/the-john-revelation-project-study-paper-no-1/>.

¹⁸ See <http://imaginingavainthing.wordpress.com/2008/09/27/the-john-revelation-project-study-paper-no-1/>.

¹⁹ See Algernon Charles Swinburne, “Hymn to Proserpine.”

repentance for his many gross theological blunders, but this does not seem to be the case. In a recent post on the Knox blog titled *The Art of Exegetical Theology in Preaching*, Gage made the following statement:

We pastors need the imagination to realize that worldly impurity can be transformed by Christ's love into heavenly virginity. If God can bring forth life from death, why should it seem impossible for God to transform an impure people into the Lamb's virgin bride?²⁰

Where does the Bible ever once command Christians to do what Gage claims – to imagine anything? Gage cites no Scripture for his assertion. The reason for this is simple: the Bible offers none. But while it never commands Christians to apply their imaginations to matters of doctrine, it is hardly silent on the topic. On the contrary, Scripture says much about imagination – *i.e.* thinking apart from or contrary to God's propositional revelation – and none of it good. Consider the following passages:

And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every **imagination** of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. (*Genesis* 6:5)

[F]or the **imagination** of man's heart *is* evil from his youth. (*Genesis* 8:21)

And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the **imagination** of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The LORD will not spare him.... (*Deuteronomy* 29:19, 20)

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the **imagination** of their evil heart. (*Jeremiah* 3:17)

But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels *and* in the **imagination** of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. (*Jeremiah* 7:24)

And the LORD saith, "Because they have forsaken my law [propositional revelation] which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the **imagination** of their own heart, and after Balim, which their fathers

taught them": Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; "Behold, I will feed them, *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink." (*Jeremiah* 9:13, 14)

Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the **imagination** of their evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded *them* to do; but they did *them* not. (*Jeremiah* 11:8)

This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the **imagination** of their heart.... (*Jeremiah* 13:10)

And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the **imagination** of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me. (*Jeremiah* 16:12)

And they said, "There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the **imagination** of his evil heart." (*Jeremiah* 18:12)

They say still unto them that despise me, "The LORD hath said, 'Ye shall have peace': and they say unto every one that walketh after the **imagination** of his own heart, 'No evil shall come upon you.'" (*Jeremiah* 23:17)

He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the **imagination** of their hearts. (*Luke* 1:51)

These six things doth the LORD hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him.... An heart that deviseth wicked **imaginings**.... (*Proverbs* 6:16, 18)

Thou hast seen all their vengeance and all their **imaginings** against me. Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, and all their **imaginings** against me. (*Lamentations* 3:60, 61)

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their **imaginings**, and their foolish heart was darkened. (*Romans* 1:21)

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down **imaginings**, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. (*2 Corinthians* 10:4, 5)

Why do the heathen rage, and the people **imagine** a vain thing? (*Psalms* 2:1)

They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous

²⁰ See <http://www.knoxseminary.edu/the-art-of-exegetical-theology-in-preaching/>, accessed April 27, 2014.

things, and **imagine** deceits all the day long. (*Psalm* 38:12)

How long will ye **imagine** mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.* (*Psalm* 62:3)

Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; Which **imagine** mischiefs in *their* heart.... (*Psalm* 140:1, 2)

Deceit is in the heart of them that **imagine** evil: but to the counsellors of peace *is* joy. (*Proverbs* 12:20)

Though I have bound *and* strengthened their arms, yet do they **imagine** mischief against me. (*Hosea* 7:15)

What do ye **imagine** against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. (*Nahum* 1:9)

And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you **imagine** evil against his brother in your heart. (*Zechariah* 7:10)

And let none of you **imagine** evil in your hearts against his neighbour.... (*Zechariah* 8:17)

Scripture clearly condemns imagination. It is vain. It is foolish. It is contrary to God. When he advocates Christians think in this manner, Gage brings the condemnation of God upon himself. But if we are not commanded to imagine, what exactly are Christians supposed to do? The answer is simple. Contrary to Gage, the principle verb of Christianity is not *imagine*, but *believe*.

Yet in this thing ye did not **believe** the LORD your God.... (*Deuteronomy* 1:32)

Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not **believe** in the LORD their God. (*2 Kings* 17:14)

Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established: **believe** his prophets, so shall ye prosper. (*2 Chronicles* 20:20)

If ye will not **believe**, surely ye shall not be established. (*Isaiah* 7:9)

Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst **believe**, all things *are* possible to him that **believeth**." (*Mark* 9:23)

Therefore I say unto you, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, **believe** that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*." (*Mark* 11:24)

Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hears, lest they should **believe** and be saved. (*Luke* 8:12)

Then he said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to **believe** all that the prophets have spoken." (*Luke* 24:25)

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might **believe**. (*John* 1:7)

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that **believe** on his name. (*John* 1:12)

If I have told you earthly things and ye **believe** not, how shall ye **believe** if I tell you of heavenly things? (*John* 3:12)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (*John* 3:16)

Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye **believe** on him whom he hath sent." (*John* 6:29)

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye **believe** not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. (*John* 8:24)

But these things are written, that ye might **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** ye might have life through his name. (*John* 20:31)

And Philip said, "If thou **believest** with all thine heart, thou mayest." And he answered and said, "I **believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (*Acts* 8:37)

And by him all that **believe** are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (*Acts* 13:39)

And they said, "**Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (*Acts* 16:31)

For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (*Romans* 4:3).

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe** in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (*Romans* 10:9)

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that **believe**. (*Galatians 3:22*)

Many more examples could be given, but by now the reader likely gets the point. The Bible has nothing good to say about the imagination; it is belief²¹ in the Gospel alone that saves us. Not imagination. Not intuition. Not hallucination or any other such thing. Gage's hermeneutic is neither logical, nor Reformed, nor Biblical. It impugns the integrity of God, insults the intelligence of his people, and sows confusion in the body of Christ. There is no soundness in it.

Warren Gage's Influence on Knox

In addition to assessing his doctrine, it is also fitting to examine the effect Gage's tenure at Knox has had on the school itself. One of the clearest ways of doing this is to compare the Statement of Faith required of students pre-2007 to that used by the school in 2014. The 2006-2007 Knox Academic Catalog reads,

Knox requires its students to affirm the following Statement of Faith. Students acknowledge their understanding of and agreement with these essential truths, which are vital to the Gospel:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (excluding those books commonly called the Apocrypha) are the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
2. There is one God, eternally existent in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. Our Lord Jesus Christ is God and man in one person. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed miracles, and vicariously atoned for sin through His shed blood and death. He was bodily resurrected from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of God the Father and will personally return in power and glory.
4. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the salvation of lost and sinful man.
5. God justifies the sinner on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, which is imputed to him by grace alone and which is received by faith alone.
6. Eternal life is received by faith, that is, by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

7. The Holy Spirit indwells all true believers and enables them to live godly lives.
8. Both the saved and the lost will be resurrected from the dead; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
9. There is spiritual unity of all true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

While not a perfect statement of faith – for example, nothing is said about the doctrines of election and reprobation; the claim that the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for salvation leaves open the question whether regeneration proceeds or follows faith – it is much better than what is required of students today. Now all Knox requires of seminarians is an affirmation of the “Apostle's Creed,”²² a seriously flawed document that was not written by the Apostles, asserts falsehoods – Christ did not go to Hell (*Luke 23:43*) – and contains gaping theological holes such that a Romanist and a Calvinist can, with few scruples, recite it together.²³ Given Gage's Romanizing tendencies, one suspects that this last point may be the principle reason for the change.

Although Warren Gage is not the only one responsible for the doctrinal downgrade at Knox, he is the principle cause of it. This can easily be seen from the controversy at the school concerning Gage and his teaching. The uproar began at the end of the 2007 spring semester, when a student brought a complaint against Gage for false teaching. This led to an investigation headed by Dr. R. Fowler White resulting in two charges against Gage: the first was that Gage asserted individual passages of Scripture had more than one meaning (please see above for my discussion of *sensus plenior* and the *Quadrige*), which is a Roman Catholic doctrine specifically denied by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1.9), and the second was the allegation that Gage regularly disparaged logic and systematic theology in his class lectures.

Given obvious flights of fancy on exhibit in the JRP, one may suppose that this was the source of the charges brought against Gage. But such was not the case. The charges originated from a student complaint about Gage's teaching in the school's Christianity and Culture (C & C) classes. C & C was a program of studies developed by Gage specifically for Knox and was promoted as filling an educational gap among today's seminary students. The Reformers, it was argued, all had

²¹ Belief or faith consists of two parts, understanding and assent (agreement).

²² See <http://www.knoxseminary.edu/about/statement-of-faith>.
²³ See Clifton R. Loucks, “Rethinking the Apostles' Creed” (*The Trinity Review*, April 2003).

backgrounds in Greek and Latin classics, philosophy, and so forth, but very few seminarians in the 21st century have had such training. By reading and discussing the great works of both Christian and non-Christian writers, the very same works studied by the Reformers, students would be better equipped to evaluate secular ideas in light of the Bible. With my background in classical studies and interest in applying Scripture to the political and economic questions of the day, this all sounded quite attractive. As it turned out, I was rather naïve to think so.

After leaving Knox, I learned that Dr. Kennedy had adamantly opposed the creation of the C & C program²⁴ on the grounds that it would devolve from its stated purpose of teaching students to judge secular culture by the Bible into a humanistic Great Books program in which the Bible was judged by secular thinking. Dr. Kennedy's concerns proved prescient as my experience in the C & C course showed.

The only class in this series I had was CC 500 The Origin of Christian and Anti-Christian Culture. The course description in the Knox Academic Catalog reads, "In this course we first establish the biblical teaching on the two cultures and cities, and then we observe a Christian apologist in action on these issues as we study Augustine's defense of the Christian moral vision in his *City of God* over against the competing secular vision represented in Plato's *Republic* and other period writings." While this sounds good on paper, in practice Plato's ideas were presented to my class as normative, Augustine made only a cameo appearance, and the Bible was rarely mentioned.

When the charges and supporting evidence from the C & C courses were presented to the Executive Committee of the Knox Seminary Board, the decision was made to fire Gage. But after this admirable initial decision, events at Knox quickly took on the character of a farce. I have written in detail about this in *Imagining a Vain Thing* and do not intend to reproduce all this material here. Suffice it to say that when the dust had settled, Gage was re-instated, and all those who had opposed him found themselves out of a job at the school, either by resignation or by firing. It seems that Gage, for all his capacious imagination, found inconceivable the thought of working with anyone who expressed disagreement with him.

After inflicting a humiliating defeat on the standard bearers of the old Knox, Gage walked away from the

wreckage as the *de facto* if not *de jure* head of the school. Of course, he did not achieve his triumph completely on his own. It takes a village to subvert a seminary. But Gage was the principle actor in bringing about the death of the old Knox, a legitimate Reformed seminary, and the birth of the new Knox, an Evangelical-Romanist caldron of confusion.

How the new Knox stacks up against the old Knox in terms of its budget or number of students, I do not know. The school seems to have a fairly savvy approach to marketing,²⁵ so it would not surprise me to hear that the school is doing well in terms of numbers. The value of a seminary, however, lies not in how many students fill its classrooms or the value of its endowment; rather it lies in the institution's fidelity to the Word of God. By this standard, Gage's tenure at Knox has been a disaster.

Yes, it is good that Warren Gage will no longer be teaching at the school. But this is coming seven years too late. If the email I received from Knox is true, the parting will be an amicable one. This stands in stark contrast to the bum's rush given to Gage's opponents in 2007. Of course, it would have been far better for Knox had Gage never been hired in the first place. But what's done is done, and that in the providence of God, who works all things to his own glory.

Conclusion

It is sometimes said that nothing is a complete failure; it can always serve as a bad example. In this regard, Knox stands as a stark warning for Christians. One lesson from the collapse of Knox is the importance of being Bereans. The Bereans are commended in Scripture for their zeal for the Bible. Instead of simply taking Paul and Silas at their word that Jesus was the Christ, the Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so" (*Acts* 17:11). But far from being Bereans, most of the Knox leadership seemed to be asleep at the wheel when Gage was hired in 2001. Even though Gage's 2001 University of Dallas (a Roman Catholic school) doctoral dissertation titled *St. John's Vision of the Heavenly City*²⁶ made it abundantly clear that he was ill suited to teach in a Reformed seminary, few seemed to take notice. To this author's knowledge, New Testament professor Dr. R. Fowler White was the only person at Knox who had read Gage's work at the

²⁵ See for instance, <https://www.youtube.com/user/knoxseminary/featured>.

²⁶ See <http://www.udallas.edu/documents/pdf/braniff/gage2001.pdf>. This work provides the basis for the material Gage later used in the JRP. This URL provides only the dissertation's abstract. The full version of the dissertation appears no longer to be available online.

²⁴ C & C was not a single class; it was a series of six required classes, all to be taken simultaneously with traditional M.Div. courses.

time Gage was hired. But instead of denouncing Gage's obviously un-Reformed, un-Biblical, and fallacious reasoning, White wrote a glowing review of the dissertation in the March 2003 *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Although the Apostle Paul did not tolerate false teachers even for an hour (*Galatians 2:5*), Knox put up with Gage's irrational nonsense for five years (Gage did not start teaching at the school until 2002) before taking any serious action against him. By then his heresy had already leavened the whole seminary.

A second lesson from the Knox debacle is the importance of Christians being decisive. Jesus enjoined his followers to let their yes be yes, and their no, no. But the Knox leadership, only a short time after their bold and decisive move to fire Gage, fled their standards and rather pathetically chose instead to seek only a one semester suspension for the man who was destroying the seminary. Standing up to a theological bully like Warren Gage can be scary. But the Lord is the Christian's strength and shield. Running from those who hate and attack his Word dishonors God and shows a disbelief in his promises. It is not even practical. Gage soundly defeated his opponents on the board and faculty of Knox, despite, and probably in part because of, their compromise.

A third lesson is that Christians should be careful to avoid guilt by association. According to Scripture, Christians can become guilty of the sins of a false teacher. They do this by ignoring the Apostle John's injunction, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine [the doctrine of Christ], receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God Speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 *John* 10, 11). Knox has hosted Warren Gage in its house for almost thirteen years. And if this were not bad enough, the school is now bidding him God speed upon his resignation. The email announcing his resignation reads, "Please join us as we pray the Lord's blessing upon Dr. Gage and his new ministry. We are excited for him and expect great blessings to be poured out on his ministry." In doing this, the writer of this email continues to implicate both himself and the rest of the Knox community in Gage's many, outrageous sins.²⁷

²⁷ False teaching is a violation of the Third Commandment. According to the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (Q & A 113), among the sins forbidden by this commandment are, "misapplying, misinterpreting, or in any way perverting the word [of God], or any part of it."

A fourth and final lesson from Knox comes, oddly enough, from Gage himself. Almost aping Caiaphas,²⁸ Gage wrote in the JRP, "We need a radical reformation in theological education today." To this statement one can say only, "Amen!" Of course as with Caiaphas, Gage does not seem to understand the full import of his words, but the basic thought is correct. In a day when members of Reformed churches, their ministers and whole denominations are confused about the Gospel; in a day when scientists waste precious talent time and money in a futile search for the origins of the universe; in a day when lawyers lack an understanding of the basis of our legal system; when politicians are confused about the proper role of government; when economists are clueless about economics, the need for a new reformation could not be more pressing. Our churches and our nation perish for lack of knowledge. But tragically Christians, who have the answers and who have been charged by Christ himself with declaring the truth, of all men seem to be the most confused. Yes, we need a systemic reformation of our seminaries and of our churches, so that once again they may declare to a lost and dying world the logical, systematic, truth God has revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.

Brief Book Reviews

Reviewed by Thomas W. Juodaitis

Faith's Reasons for Believing: An Apologetic Antidote to Mindless Christianity by Robert L. Reymond (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, Mentor Imprint, 2008, 474 pages with index). A scholarly Scriptural gem by the late Dr. Reymond, *Faith's Reasons for Believing* demonstrates that the Bible alone is the Christian's *που στο* ("the place where I may stand" – i.e. the epistemological point of reference or "first principle"), which can justify human knowledge and ethical predications. In his Preface Dr. Reymond gives the reader the reason behind the publication of *Faith's Reasons for Believing*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company let Dr. Reymond's *The Justification of Knowledge* (1976) go out of print after several printings, and Reformed Theological Seminary requested in 2006 that he

²⁸ Caiaphas was the Jewish high priest who was instrumental in the crucifixion of Christ. The Apostle John records him as saying, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish" (*John* 11:49, 50). John adds, "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (*John* 11:51). Caiaphas spoke the truth unknowingly.

teach its Apologetics course at the Boca Raton campus. Dr. Reymond prepared the chapters of the book as lectures for the course, which due to scheduling difficulties never took place. The work, however was not in vain, as witnessed by the publication of *Faith's Reasons for Believing*, which by the way is in contradistinction to *Reasons for Faith* edited by Norman Geisler, an evidentialist – the titles respectively show the writers' presuppositions. Additionally, Dr. Reymond required students in his course in apologetics to read three books by Gordon H. Clark (*Three Types of Religious Philosophy, Religion, Reason and Revelation*, and *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark: A Festschrift* – students had to read "The Wheaton Lectures, Chapter V "Gordon Clark's Theory of Knowledge" by Ronald H. Nash and Clark's Reply, Chapter VI "Theism and the Problem of Ethics" by Merold Westphal and Clark's Reply, Chapter VII "The Philosophical Methodology of Gordon Clark" by Arthur F. Holmes and Clark's Reply, and Chapter XI "Gordon Clark: Christian Apologist" by Gilbert M. Weaver and Clark's Reply) among other books and articles.

Here are some gems from his chapter "Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Nature of Biblical Truth":

The only solution to this dreadful muddleheadedness is to deny to paradox, understood as *irreconcilable* contradictions that are actually only apparently so to us, a legitimate place in the Christian understanding of truth, recognizing it for what it is – "truth decay," the offspring of an irrational age. This view of paradox is destructive of Christianity for, by positing that the Bible contains such irreconcilable contradictions, it makes God the author of confusion, attacks the unity, inerrancy, and perspicuity of Scripture, and renders forever impossible a *rational* faith and a *systematic* theology. And any Bible-believing theologian who claims to have found such irreconcilable truths in the Bible proudly speaks logical nonsense and deserves to be ignored by the Christian world, for his is not theology but *anti*-theology.

But the notion that God's propositional statements will often, if not always, finally appear to the human existent as contradictions must be rejected. Specifically, the contention that the cardinal doctrines of the Faith – the

Trinity, the person of Christ, the doctrines of grace, and the doctrine of justification – when proclaimed aright will contain irreconcilable contradictions is a travesty of Scripture interpretation. (388, 389)

Chapters include: Frontispiece; Preface; What is Christian Apologetics?; Faith's Reasons for Believing the Bible is God's Word; Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Bodily Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven of Jesus Christ; Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Virgin Birth of Christ; Faith's Reasons for Believing in Biblical Miracles in General and Jesus' Miracles in Particular; Faith's Reasons for Believing in Paul's Supernatural Conversion on the Damascus Road; Faith's Reasons for Rejecting Evidentialism: A Case Study in Apologetic Methodology; Faith's Reasons for Believing in the God of Christian Theism; Faith's Reasons for Believing the Bible Is Man's Only *Pou Sto* for Knowledge and Personal Significance; Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Nature of Biblical Truth; Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Apologetic Value of Christian Theistic Ethics; Faith's Reasons for Believing in the Pauline Apologetic for Reaching This Postmodern Generation; and an Epilogue.

Ecumenism: Another Gospel – Lausanne's Road to Rome by E. S. Williams (London: Belmont House Publishing, 2014, 151 pages). Dr. Williams exposes the ecumenical movement, specifically the Lausanne movement started by Billy Graham and John R. Stott, both of whom were friendly to Rome. The Lausanne Movement put a new twist on evangelism, by adding social and political action and calling it evangelization. Evangelization fits well with the Roman Catholic Church-State's "evangelism." Dr. Williams gives a history of the Lausanne Movement from its first Congress in 1974 to the Cape Town Congress in 2010 and newer developments. He further demonstrates the Lausanne Movement's continuing slide into apostasy as it promotes the arts and the emergent church, downgrades the written Word and instead upholds a man-made oral word, promotes the charismatic movement, and champions various leftist economic, social and political causes. What is also interesting, especially in light of recent *Reviews*, is that Tim Keller, John Piper, and Rick Warren were all speakers at the Cape Town Congress in 2010.

Chapters include: Preface; The Cause of World Evangelization; Billy Graham – the Ecumenical Evangelist; John Stott – the Political Theologian; The Cape Town Congress 2010; Promoting the Arts and the Emerging Church; The Orality Movement; Downgrading the Written Word; Ecumenical Alpha; Lausanne’s Love for the Poor; Lausanne’s Feminist Agenda; Lausanne’s Environmental Agenda; and Lausanne’s Socio-political Agenda.

The New Calvinists: Changing the Gospel by E. S. Williams (London: The Wakeman Trust & Belmont House Publishing, 2014, 74 pages). Dr. Williams discusses the New Calvinism’s worldliness, its roots in the New Evangelicalism, and demonstrates how the new movement changes the Gospel. Dr. Williams exposes the teachings of three of the New Calvinists most popular figures – Tim Keller, John Piper, and Mark Driscoll, and shows how their teaching is affecting churches in the United Kingdom.

Chapters include: The Phenomenon of New Calvinism: the Resurgence of Worldly Christianity; Tim Keller: the Intellectual Populist of New Calvinism; John Piper and Theological Flexibility; Mark Driscoll: Proponent of “Cultural Relevance”; New Calvinism in the UK: the Proclamation Trust; The Porterbrook Network and New Calvinism; and A Voice From the Past.

Dr. E. S. Williams was the Director of Public Health for Croydon Health Authority for many years. He is the author of a number of books, and is a member of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church in London (*aka* Spurgeon’s church).

Holding Communion Together: The Reformed Baptists: The First Fifty Years, Divided & United by Thomas Chantry and David Dykstra (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2014, 326 pages with index). This is a history of the modern Reformed Baptist Movement of the 20th and 21st centuries written from the “confessional associationalist” perspective. The title is taken from the 1689 *London Baptist Confession* 26:15: “In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of doctrine or administration...it is according to the mind of Christ, that many churches holding communion together, do, by their messengers, meet to consider, and give their advice in or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the churches concerned....” There are twenty chapters

and eight appendices that give the reader an objective history of the Reformed Baptists (confessional Baptists who subscribe fully to the 1689 *London Baptist Confession*) from the spreading of Arthur Pink’s books in central Pennsylvania in the early 20th century to the establishment of the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America (ARBCA) in the late 20th century.

Chapters include: Foreword by Earl Blackburn; Introduction; Pink Wave; Almost Presbyterian?; A Very Intense Manner; A Cord of Three Strands, Slowly Unraveling; Plagued with Weakness; Local-Churchism; A Revolt Against Righteousness; Fault Lines Appear; The Anatomy of a Schism; Going Public; The Practice of Oversight; Turning Out the Lights; Baptist Episcopacy; Hybrid Vigor; Holding the Ropes; An Association Is Born; Real-World Challenges; The Rise of the New Calvinists; At the Crossroads; A Confessional Assessment; and Afterword: “On the Writing of This Book.” Appendices include: Letter of Invitation to the 1966 Pastors Conference; Grace Baptist Presentation on Missions; Trinity Baptist Response to Proposal; The Associationalism of the Philadelphia Baptists; Invitation to the ARBCA Organizational Meetings; Jim Renihan’s Report on the ARBCA Organizational Meetings; Confessional Subscription; and Reformed Baptist Associations.

From the Foreword by Earl Blackburn:

First, remember, as the old saying goes, that “the best of men are *men* at best.” There are no perfect pastors or flawless servants of God, except the One who sits at God’s right hand. All ministerial labors are tainted, to one degree or another, with remaining sin. As the puritan John Howe reminds us, “Even our tears need to be washed in the blood of Christ.” To think that there is a model pastor or church leader is naïve. The best pastors, as men of God, have incalculable foibles and insecurities imbedded within them.

Second, not all conflict is bad. In the midst of fiery conflict, distressing and heart-wrenching as it is, faulty thinking is corrected, dross is removed, and the Spirit of God purifies and refines. Holy Scripture instructs us that factions (i.e. divisions) are necessary, especially in the visible church, and God has distinct purposes in them (see 1 Corinthians 11:19). ...

Sixth, perhaps the most important lesson to be learned, is the great value and unity in confessional Christianity. The Christian Church has always been a confessing religion of creeds (Latin *credo, I believe*) and confessions of faith. Taking their lead from the early church Fathers, the Protestant Reformers, and their Baptist forefathers, modern-day Reformed Baptists quickly adopted the best of the Baptist confessions—the “1689.” This delivered us from a constantly changing culture and a ravaging paradigm shift that has invaded our society. Furthermore, the Confession also rescued us from the lording of persuasive and controlling men. Today, confessional Reformed Baptists fully and tenaciously cling to our confession of faith, instead of to a pastor or denominational leaders. Faith in Christ must never be subtly usurped by dynamic or intellectual personality, but ever be governed by God’s revealed truth that is unchanged and unchanging. Objective truth has always been, and always will be more important than pastors and people. A confession of faith provides both a foundation of that objective truth and a structure of doctrinal unity.

McIntire: Defender of Faith and Freedom by Gladys Titzck Rhoads and Nancy Titzck Anderson (Xulon Press, 2012, 600 pages with bibliography and index). This biography of Carl McIntire is more than just the life of one man, but it also details the movement he started, and gives another perspective on the history of the Bible Presbyterian Church, the American Council of Christian Churches, and the International Council of Christian Churches, one that is certainly friendly to those institutions, unlike the accounts given in the history books of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Furthermore, while the authors loved Carl McIntire, they do not cover over his faults and sins (this is not a hagiography); rather they speak the truth in love.

McIntire is organized into four parts. *Part I: Beginnings (1906-1939)* includes chapters 1-6 and details the early childhood of McIntire to the loss of the church building when he along with Machen and others formed what would eventually become the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *Part II: Building (1940’s – 1950’s)* includes chapter 7-13 detailing the beginning of the Fundamental Movement (this form of Fundamental Christianity was more concerned with separation from apostasy and worldliness, not just a legalism of not drinking,

smoking, swearing, or going to movies) with the start of the *Christian Beacon Press*, the Harvey Cedars Bible Conference, the American Council of Churches in opposition to the compromise and apostasy of the National or Federal Council of Churches, National Association of Evangelicals, and Fuller Theological Seminary. The beginnings of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) – the worldwide movement of Fundamental Christianity – and the growing controversy with and confrontation of the New Evangelicalism are also included, as well as the confrontation with Communism and a split within the Bible Presbyterian Church. *Part III: Expansion (1960’s)* includes chapters 14-18 detailing the many different expansions of the movement from the *Christian Beacon* Banquets and Press to the Christian Admiral and the move of Shelton College to the expansion of the ICCC and the opposition and protest of the World Council of Churches (WCC). *Part IV: Turmoil (1970’s – 2002)* includes chapters 19-25 and details the dissension, division, and decline of the movement as well as the man in an honest and forthright manner. Interspersed throughout all four parts the reader is given glimpses of the McIntire household and family life.

Holding Communion Together and *McIntire* give the reader a history of each movement – the modern Reformed Baptist movement and the 20th century Fundamental Christianity movement – that the reader will not likely get anywhere else, and they each help fill out the history of the church in America in the 20th century.

New eBook Available

A Christian View of Men and Things by Gordon H. Clark is now available as an eBook. It can be purchased from the website for a \$5 download.