OUR MISSION IS TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH IN HER CHARGE OF PRESENTING EVERY PERSON MATURE IN CHRIST (COL. 1:28).

REFORMED FORUM

SPRING/SUMMER
2020
NEWSLETTER

THE SPIRIT OF SCHLEIERMACHER

Jim Cassidy considers the heart of Schleiermacher's liberal theology and the unexpected places where it may arise today. p. 3

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During the modernist-fundamentalist controversy of the early twentieth century, E. J. Young wrote to J. Gresham Machen, the founder of Westminster Theological Seminary and key figure in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which had yet to be formed:

> *Within the church there should be an organization, entirely independent of the formal church, which would act as leaven. This organization should be composed of ministers, elders and laymen of the new church alone, who not only believe the Westminster Confession but who are on fire with it. The purpose of this organization should be to propagate and to defend the Reformed faith, to point out the errors of modernism, sacerdotalism, premillennialism, Arminianism, Trichotomy, and so much of the anti-Scriptural evangelism of today.*

Seventy-three years passed before Reformed Forum was founded, but providentially we have become such an organization. There is a need today just as there was then, because the theological challenges persist. Reformed Forum serves the church toward the end that Christ would be glorified in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

We firmly believe that for people to become mature in Christ, they must come to see Christ revealed progressively in all the Scriptures. We are privileged that theologians such as Geerhardus Vos and Cornelius Van Til have gone before showing us the truth of Scripture with depth and clarity. We feel like Andrew and Philip who after encountering the Christ, went to their brothers, saying "Come and see!"

We are passionately at work to bring the glorious treasure of Christ-crucified to the world. We regularly hear from people who are hungry for confessional, redemptive-historical theology. Pray that Christ would feed these people through faithful churches committed to the ordinary means of grace. And partner with us in our mission to support these churches in their charge to present every person mature in Christ.

Camden Bucey
Executive Director

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Reformed Forum published Danny Olinger's biography of Geerhardus Vos. Read an excerpt from the foreword to the book.

6 **Exploring the History of Heaven**
Dr. Lane Tipton teaches the *Foundations of Covenant Theology*, a twelve-week video series on Genesis 1–2.

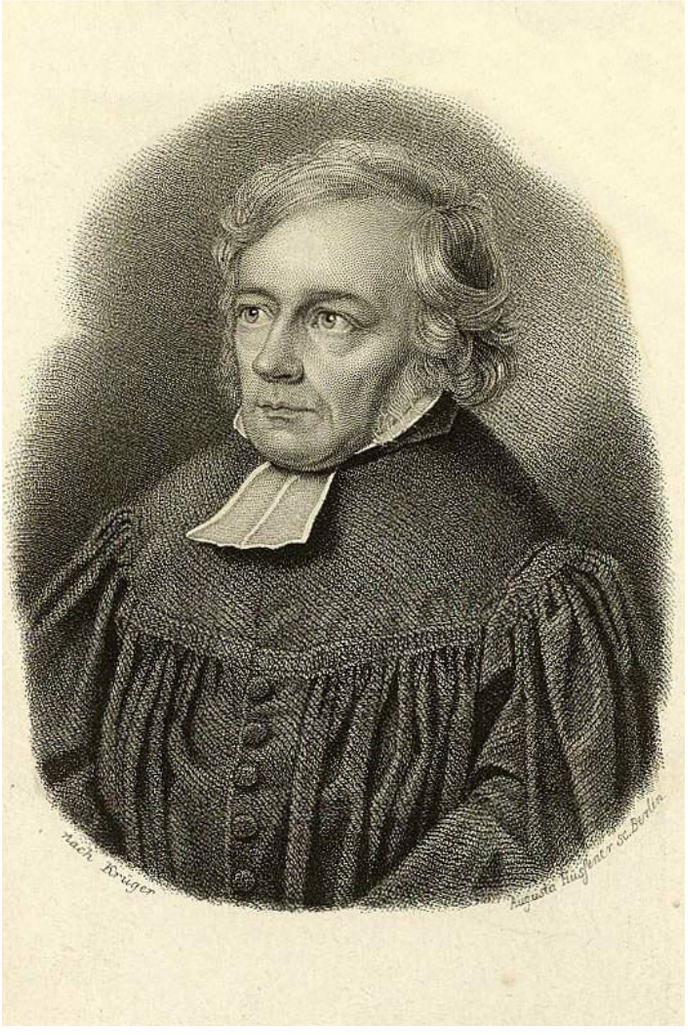
7 **The Christ the Center Podcast Visits Escondido**
Members of the faculty of Westminster Seminary California discuss several significant books.

8 **2020 Annual Theology Conference**
During our seventh annual theology conference at Hope Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Grayslake, Illinois, we will explore *The Attributes of God*, October 10, 2020.



FUNDAMENTALISTS AND THE SPIRIT OF SCHLEIERMACHER

JAMES J. CASSIDY



It is a great strength of our Presbyterian and Reformed ethos that we are historically conscious. We enjoy history and pride ourselves on being self-consciously rooted in the past. Confessional and conservative Presbyterians very much have their identity wrapped up in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. And a central figure in that controversy is our hero, J. Gresham Machen. Machen showed us how to stand for the truth of God's Word and the Reformed faith even upon pain of humiliation and marginalization.

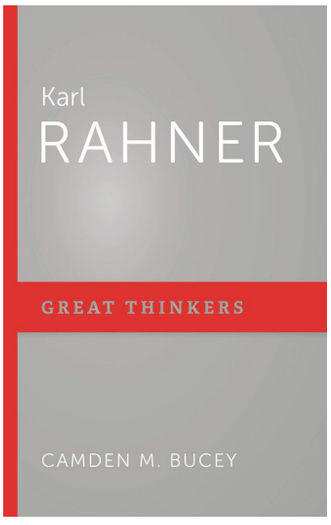
The way the history is told includes how Machen (and others, of course) opposed liberalism. Machen gave special attention to modernism's rejection of the supernaturalism of historic Christianity, particularly as that supernaturalism comes to expression in doctrines like the virgin birth and miracles of Jesus.

For generations, this history has aided conservative Presbyterians in defining liberalism. In the main, we have defined a "liberal" as someone who denies a high doctrine of Scripture or Christology. The label "liberal" is (rightly) applied to those who deny the virgin birth, Christ's resurrection, or the Bible's inerrancy. Conversely, if a minister in our denomination affirms those things, they get a pass (sometimes irrespective of his other theological positions).

That is all well and good, but that way of approaching the evaluation of a man's theology has its significant liabilities. Those liabilities arise when we realize that the denial of miracles or inerrancy is not the problem at root. Liberalism, at heart, was a failed apologetic attempt to defend the Christian faith in the face of growing skepticism. People like Schleiermacher, the father of theological liberalism, were attempting to save Christianity, not destroy it.

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was the son of a pastor, and pietism was

KARL RAHNER (GREAT THINKERS)

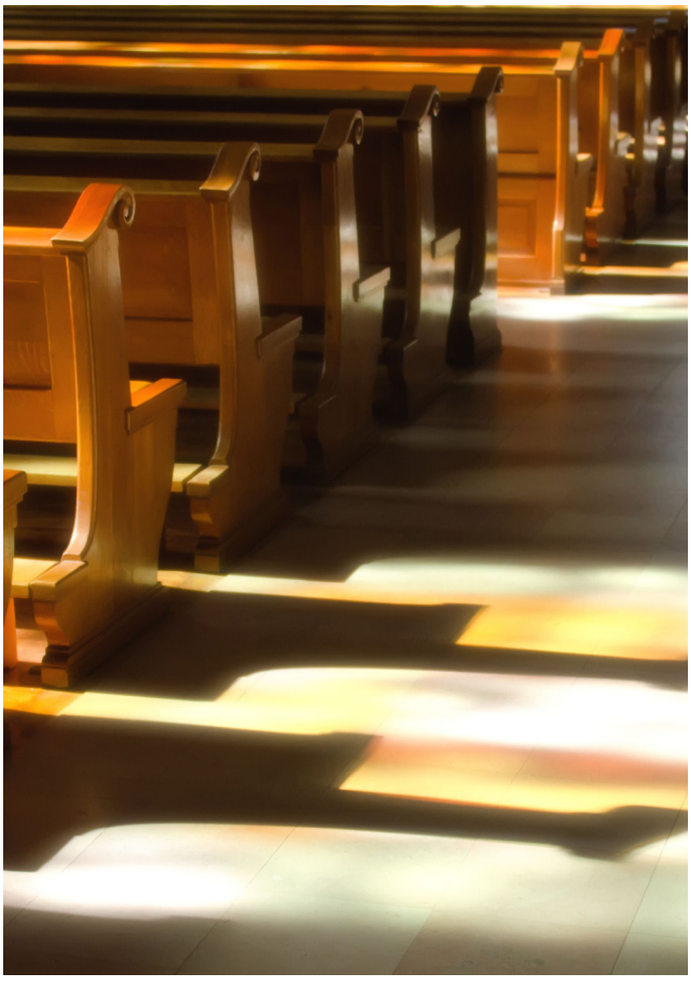


Our executive director and faculty member, Camden Bucey, recently wrote a book Karl Rahner, arguably the most influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. Rahner (1904–1984) developed a theology that has influenced much of post-Vatican II Catholicism and its modern inclusivist approach to missions. Despite his impact, little has been written on Rahner from a Reformed perspective. In this introduction and critique, Bucey guides readers to an understanding of Rahner's theology as a whole. Rahner set out to explain how God communicates himself to humanity, whom he created specifically for the purpose of fellowship with him.

Leonardo De Chirico writes, "Part of the confused and naïve attitude of contemporary evangelicals toward Rome depends on the lack of awareness of both Vatican II and Karl Rahner. This lucid book is a helpful introduction to this seminal Roman Catholic theologian whose language contains all the key Christian words (e.g., Trinity, Christ, humanity), but whose meaning is significantly different from that of straightforward biblical teaching. It is time that Reformed theologians do their homework in grasping what is at stake with contemporary Roman Catholicism." ❋

• *P&R Publishing*
166 pages, paperback •

Listen to a special episode of Christ the Center on this book at www.reformedforum.org/ctc623/



the air he breathed growing up. He struggled with doubts about his faith, doubts his father simply blew off. When he matriculated at the University of Halle, he read deeply in Plato and Kant and found an intellectual home in the Romanticism of the day. He would eventually become a pastor in the state church and a professor at the University of Berlin.

Upon looking for answers to his doubts, he found answers in grounding true religion in intuition rather than knowledge. This differed greatly from the older orthodox Protestantism which began with the knowledge of God in revelation. In his great systematic theology, *The Christian Faith*, he proposed that the basis of all theology is man's feeling of absolute dependence on God.

Schleiermacher saw increasing skepticism toward the faith among his fellow Bohemians, especially those involved in the arts and literature. He wanted to provide a way for them to believe despite their allegiance to enlightenment ideas. This was the occasion for his *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*. These speeches were an apologetic effort to convince modern people of the value of religion.

In this book, Schleiermacher says that religion is the sense and taste for the infinite. If one lives his or her life without religion, it is quite incomplete *sans* the transcendent. To put it roughly, he argues that religion is good for you. In his introduction to the book, Rudolf Otto explains that Schleiermacher attempted to "lead an age weary with and alien to religion back to its very mainsprings; and to reweave religion, threatened with oblivion, into the incomparably rich fabric of the burgeoning intellectual life of modern times."

That is a big statement for several reasons. First, Schleiermacher offered a defense of religion at a time when it was decreasing in popularity and on the cusp of "oblivion." Secularism was knocking, and Schleiermacher wanted to turn it away. Second, Schleiermacher attempted a "reweave" of religion, giving it a make-over to present it more palatable to a modern age. Third, the "reweave" would include fabric from "the burgeoning intellectual life of modern times." To put it simply, Schleiermacher sought to show how religion and modernism could sweetly comply.

To summarize in a very pedestrian way, we might say that Schleiermacher felt a need to help religion survive by recasting it in a way that a modern people would be cool with.

If liberalism is a disease, the denial of the supernatural is only the symptom. The disease can manifest itself in other symptoms. I worry that conservative Presbyterians are unaware of those symptoms when they arise. That is because we have a kind of confession within our confessionalism. For some, we only fight over "gospel issues" (whatever those are). For others, the battleground is only over inerrancy or the five points of Calvinism (include justification by faith in that). And while those are important—even central—issues to fight over, there are surely more.

I would contend that any time we find an attempt to recast our doctrine or practice in order to make us more attractive to the culture, it may be the spirit of Schleiermacher haunting us. In the early twentieth century that came in the form of anti-supernaturalism. But the spirit of Schleiermacher can haunt the halls and pulpits of churches and seminaries that are committed to supernaturalism as well.

For example, if we alter our doctrine of sin so as to not turn off those who identify as "sexual minorities," we may be exhibiting symptoms of Schleiermacher. If we alter our worship to make it more entertaining to millennials, we may be haunted by the ghost of Schleiermacher. Or, if we seek to placate Arminian or open-theist critics of the Reformed doctrine of God by compromising it in a way that they can endorse, Schleiermacher may be in our midst.

The spirit of Schleiermacher is evident not only among modernists but also among fundamentalists seeking cultural acceptance from the world.

The examples can be multiplied, but it can all be boiled down to this: Are we tempted at any point to back off our doctrine or practice for fear of turning off someone on the outside? Are we tempted to recast and restate the faith in order not to offend them? If so, we might just be seeing an apparition of the Berliner apologist among us. Beware of compromised apologetics. ❋



Jim Cassidy is pastor of South Austin OPC in South Austin, Texas and president of the board of directors of Reformed Forum. He is the author of God's Time for Us: Barth's Reconciliation of Eternity and Time in Jesus Christ *(Lexham Press).*

REFORMED BIBLICAL THEOLOGIAN, CONFESSIONAL PRESBYTERIAN

A BIOGRAPHY OF GEERHARDUS VOS

CAMDEN M. BUCEY

Reformed Forum published Danny Olinger's biography of Geerhardus Vos, which will soon be entering a second print run. The following is taken from the foreword to the book.

I moved to Philadelphia in July 2007 to attend Westminster Theological Seminary. Coming from a childhood background in mainline Presbyterianism and church attendance among a wide range of evangelical churches in my college and early professional years, I was eager to join a confessionally Reformed church. My wife and I visited Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Glenside that first Lord's Day. We quickly found a faithful and welcoming church home in the OPC. It was at Calvary that I was introduced to redemptive-historical preaching and one of its most ardent defenders, Danny Olinger.

Prior to moving to Philadelphia, I read Vos's *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, but I cannot say that I understood much of it. I have come to believe that biblical theology is often better caught than taught. I caught it while attending Calvary's monthly Vos Group, which met at the home of Grace Mullen. Lane Tipton would lead our faithful platoon of warrior children page by page through *Biblical Theology*. Rev. Olinger would always attend, contributing much to my learning with particular insights into Vos and his interpreters. Studying Vos opened the Scriptures to me in an entirely new way. For several years, I had been firmly committed to *lectio continua* expository preaching, but my eyes were opened further. God's Word unfolded with a depth and weight that I never had experienced. The Scriptures were no longer a static deposit of timeless truths but a history of God's self-disclosure to his covenant people. God's Word became alive to me in a new way, because I was a member of this covenant; this was my history as well.

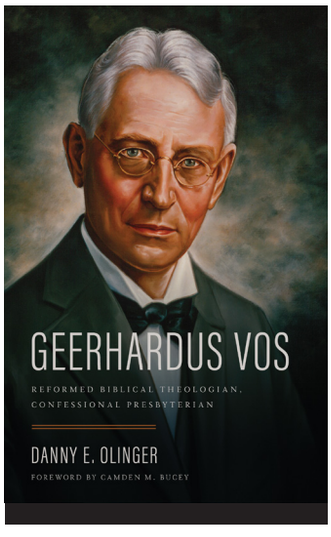
Having come to this understanding, one begins to feel a burden for the impoverished masses of Christians who have never come to understand this. One feels that you have found a table at a five-star feast available to all for free while others continue to live on stale bread. Biblical theology becomes a mission. It is an essential aspect of presenting every person mature in Christ (Col. 1:28), for without grasping the character of God's revelation, we cannot understand it properly. Rev. Olinger has committed his life to this mission. He serves as the General Secretary for the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He also serves on the OPC's Committee for the Historian. He possesses an uncanny ability to remember the details and significance of our denominational history. Vos would never teach at Westminster or become a ministerial member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but his heart was there. Olinger skillfully retells the history of this Dutch giant in American Presbyterianism. This book is the product of painstaking research, yet if you ever have the privilege to speak with Danny about these matters, you will know that he lives and breathes them.

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in biblical theology among evangelicals. You can see this in the academic catalogues of the leading publishers. Though I whole-heartedly welcome this resurgence, I also lament the fact that many are covering ground well-tread a century ago. We have forgotten the lessons of the past—or worse, we never knew they existed. Vos is known to many in our ecclesiastical circles as the father of Reformed biblical theology, but he is all but unknown to the church more broadly considered. This book is helping to open the eyes of many in the Christian church to the wealth of riches available to us from Vos's pen.

While Vos is a hero to many of us, this is not a hagiographic work. Vos was a humble man, called and gifted of the Lord to carry out the labors set before him. Vos was a humble pilgrim. The same can be said of Danny Olinger. We all would do well to read this work prayerfully and to follow Vos as one of the great cloud of witnesses who has gone before us, walking the course set out by Christ, our ἀρχηγός. ❋

This book is available directly at www.reformedforum.org/store as well as through several other reputable booksellers.

• 344 pages, cloth with dustjacket •



Olinger's biography of Geerhardus Vos is the second book published by Reformed Forum.



EXPLORING THE HISTORY OF HEAVEN

Lane Tipton teaches our first video curriculum designed for adult Sunday school.

Dr. Lane Tipton teaches *Foundations of Covenant Theology*, a twelve-week series on Genesis 1–2. Tipton skillfully unfolds God's plan and purpose to reveal his glory in all of creation and bring his image bearers into his presence that they would worship him forever.

In April 2019, we hosted a special seminar at Old Glory Ranch in Wimberley, Texas, and we are delighted how this special event has translated to video.

The course is comprised of twelve approximately thirty-minute lessons tailored to an adult Sunday school audience. The course is now available for purchase as a digital download at www.reformedforum.org/store.

While *Foundations of Covenant Theology* is the title of this course, it proceeds somewhat differently than you might expect. It begins with a consideration of the deep structures of Genesis 1–2 in order to present a comprehensive but digestible overview of the teaching of Scripture with regard to the foundations of covenant theology. At the end of the course, you will not merely come away with details about God's covenantal arrangements with man, but you will gain a rich understanding of the ultimate purpose of humanity and our relationship to God. At the outset, we have to recognize that the comprehensive and fundamental focus of the Scriptures is the glory of the self-contained Triune God. Everything about creation is oriented toward this chief end.



In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). He created the highest heavens, which is a real, though presently veiled temple-dwelling where the glory of God is made known. The visible heavens and earth are created as a replica of the glory that abides in the invisible heavens. As the Lord dwells in these invisible heavens, his glory fills the place as a holy sanctuary and royal Temple. This is where God is enthroned and has entered into Sabbath Rest. Adam is an image-bearing creature who was created from the dust of the ground in the closest possible fellowship with God. As created, Adam was inclined toward God and oriented to enter into the highest heavens that he would behold the glory of God in his temple dwelling.

Adam's original setting pointed him in this direction as well. Genesis 2 is a primal account of the earthly place of worship which orients our minds beyond

Eden to the glory it reflects and manifests by design. One way the bible draw our gaze upward to the highest heavens is through the imagery of mountains. According to Ezekiel 28:13, Eden itself was on a mountain. God called Moses on a mountain and gave his people the law at Mount Sinai. The ark housed Noah and his family from the flood waters of judgment and came to rest on a mountain. The temple was built on Mt. Zion. Jesus Christ is now ascended upon Mount Zion and has brought us to the heavenly Mt. Zion, to which these earthly mountains pointed.

Because he is created in the image of God, Adam has a special relationship to God. While he had no claim upon God, the LORD nevertheless condescended to him through a special arrangement, called a covenant. The first covenant God established with Adam is called the covenant of works. This covenant focuses upon a test of Adam's obedience at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If Adam obeys God, he will receive a higher, heavenly life. But if he disobeys God, he will die. This is the nature of true religion: Will we serve God for his sake alone, or will we serve ourselves? These are the two most primitive religions: God-centeredness and man-centeredness.

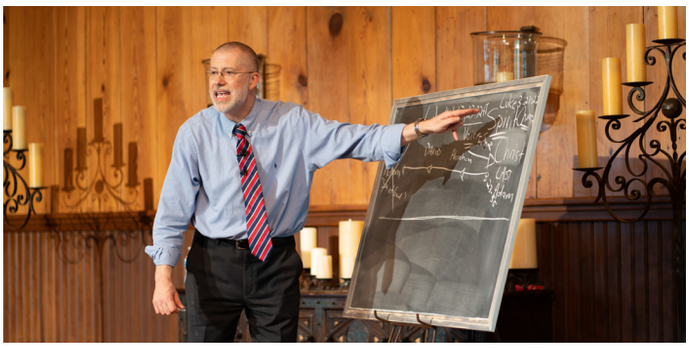
Adam was called to protect the holy realm and keep it pure from anything unholy. While the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the focus of Adam's test of obedience, the tree of life symbolized the reward for passing that test. It symbolized the holy rest that Adam would enter into and the consummate life he would receive if he perfectly obeyed the Lord. Therefore, the tree of life pointed Adam in the right direction.

The tree of life symbolized the holy rest that Adam would enter into and the consummate life he would receive if he perfectly obeyed the Lord.

Satan, in the form of a serpent, entered the garden to tempt Eve. His strategy was to twist God's word. Rather than following the ultimate authority of God, Eve entertained the serpent's word. While Adam should have killed the wicked serpent, removing him from the holy realm, he too sinned by taking and eating of the fruit.

God came to the garden in judgment, but rather than destroying Adam and Eve, he provided a sacrifice, which not only typifies the atoning blood of the Messiah but also serves to "clothe" Adam and Eve with life. It makes them look like Jesus, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Even though Adam and all his posterity fell into sin and misery, the original award still awaits.

God gave them the promise of a redeemer. Luke later develops this theme through his account of Jesus's genealogy, baptism, and wilderness temptation. We behold the seed of the woman both recapitulating and reversing the outcome of the temptations of Adam as Son of God and Israel as the son of God. ❋

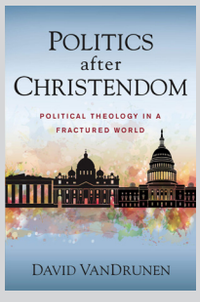


CHRIST THE CENTER

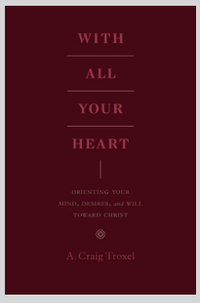


On a recent trip to Escondido, California, Camden Bucey interviewed members of the faculty of Westminster Seminary California.

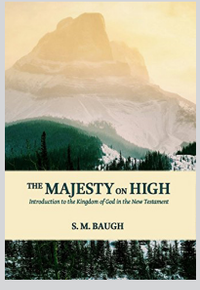
David VanDrunen spoke about his book, *Politics after Christendom* (Zondervan Academic), reflecting upon the status and responsibilities of Christians in their contemporary pluralistic political communities. VanDrunen presents a biblical-theological model of political engagement and explores themes such as race, religious liberty, justice, authority, and civil resistance.



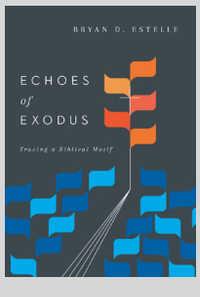
Craig Troxel introduced *With All Your Heart: Orienting Your Mind, Desires, and Will toward Christ* (Crossway). Whereas contemporary culture identifies the "heart" with feelings and emotions, Troxel explains the range of uses of the word "heart" in the Bible. The heart knows, desires, and chooses. This fuller conception of "heart" helps us understand our battle with sin and the redemption that has been wrought by Jesus Christ.



Steve Baugh spoke about his book, *The Majesty on High: An Introduction to the Kingdom of God in the New Testament*. Beginning with a definition of the kingdom of God based on the new creation, Baugh introduces listeners to the kingdom and its foundational issues.



Finally, Bryan Estelle spoke about *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif* (IVP Academic). Israel's exodus from Egypt is the Bible's enduring emblem of deliverance. It shapes the telling of the Bible's narrative of redemption. Estelle traces the motif as it unfolds throughout Scripture.



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Our Focus
Serving pastors, scholars, and anyone who desires to grow in their understanding of Scripture and the theology that faithfully summarizes its teachings.

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