

*Advent Reflections
from Church History*

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EDITED & INTRODUCED BY
Ron Prosise & Ryan Rippee



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Heritage Seminary Press, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada
An imprint of H&E Publishing, West Lorne, Ontario, Canada

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Cover & book design: Janice Van Eck

Advent Reflections from Church History

Edited and Introduced by Ron Prosis and Ryan Rippee

ISBN 978-1-77484-190-7 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-77484-191-4 (eBook)

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Foreword

Christians, of all people, ought to be givers of thanks. We have so much to be grateful for, not the least of which is being the heirs of a rich tradition of Christian wisdom. To recall the words and lives of our Christian forebears is an act of deep gratitude. Since many of us, though, do not have the time or resources to study in detail the writings of our predecessors in the faith, a compilation like this one is so vital.

What binds this particular volume together is the Christian celebration called *Advent*, the beginning of the church year, in which we who are believers in the Lord Jesus remember his advents: the first as a babe in the manger, a necessary step in his incarnation and on the road to the cross; the second as the Lord of glory from heaven in triumph over all of the forces of evil.

More and more of us are recognizing the wisdom of drawing upon the Christian year that is organized around the key events of salvation history. Advent prepares us for the celebration of *the* momentous turning-point of all of history, namely, the incarnation.

May this small collection of wise reflections from past saints help to prepare all who read this work to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas and live in the light of the glory of the incarnate Christ.

Michael A.G. Azad Haykin

Dundas, Ontario

In the year of our Lord 2025, October 17.

Introduction

The word *advent* is from the Latin *Adventus*, which means coming. Historians believe that Advent began first as a preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, which was the celebration of Christ's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1–11). By the sixth century, the emphasis shifted to the coming of Christ. But this celebration was not of Jesus' first coming as Saviour, but his second as Judge. Advent season was not explicitly connected to Christ's first coming until the Middle Ages. It then incorporated both aspects of Jesus' coming, past and future. Today the Advent season is observed as a preparation for Christmas, a reflection on the grace of God in Christ, as well as the promise of the Lord's coming again.

Protestant Christians observe Advent beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ending on Christmas Eve, December 24. And so, depending on the year, the Advent season is from 22 to 28 days in length.

As the Christmas season is typically a busy one, countless believers have found that Advent devotionals are a wonderful way to fix their eyes on Jesus during this special time. There are many such wonderful advent devotionals in print. We saw the opportunity to glean from the writings of faithful men and women from ages past to compile *Advent Reflections from Church History*, reading their wise insights and passionate love for Jesus Christ as we consider the mystery, wonder and grace of our Saviour, *Immanuel*, God with us.

Ron Prorise and Ryan Rippee, editors

Day 1



Tertullian

(c. 155-c. 220)

Tertullian was an elder and theologian in the church at Carthage, writing a number of books defending the Christian faith. He is known for coining the term *Trinitas* or *Trinity* in English to defend monotheism alongside the full deity of our Lord Jesus as well as the Holy Spirit.



*And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall call his name Jesus (Luke 1:31).*

Touching then the discussion of his flesh, and of his nativity, and incidentally of his name *Immanuel*, let this suffice. For *Christ* means *anointed*, and to be anointed is certainly an affair of the body. He who had not a body, could not by any possibility have been anointed; he who could not by any possibility have been anointed, could not in any wise have been called Christ. It is a different thing, if he only assumed the phantom of a name too. But how was he to insinuate himself into being believed by the Jews, except through a name which was usual and familiar among them? Then it is a fickle and deceptive God whom you describe!

Now if he caught at the name *Christ*, why did he wish to be called *Jesus* too, by a name which was not so much looked for by the Jews? When Hoshea the son of Nun (Numbers 13:8) was destined to be the successor of Moses, is not his old name then changed, and for the first time he is called *Joshua* (Numbers 27:18)? It is true, you say. This, then, we first observe, was a figure of him who was to come. For inasmuch as Jesus Christ was to introduce a new generation (because we are born in the wilderness of this world) into the promised land which flows with milk and honey, that is, into the possession of eternal life, than which nothing can be sweeter; inasmuch, too, as this was to be brought about not by Moses, that is to say, not by the discipline of the law, but by Joshua, by the grace of the gospel, our circumcision being effected by a knife of stone, that is, (by the circumcision) of Christ, for Christ is a rock (or stone; 1 Corinthians 10:4), therefore that great man, who was ordained as a type of this mystery, was actually consecrated with the figure of the Lord's own name, being called *Joshua*. This name Christ himself even then testified to be his own, when he talked with Moses. For who was it that talked with him, but the Spirit of the Creator, which is Christ? When he therefore spoke this commandment to the people, "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him" (Exodus 23:20–21). He called him an angel indeed, because of the greatness of the powers which he was to exercise, and because of his prophetic office, while announcing the will of God; but Joshua also (Jesus), because it was a type of his own future name. Often did he confirm that name of his which he had thus conferred upon (his servant); because it was not the name of angel, nor Hoshea, but Joshua (Jesus), which he had commanded him to bear as his usual appellation for the time to come. Since, therefore, both these names are suitable to the Christ of the Creator, they are proportionately unsuitable to the non-Creator's Christ; and so indeed is all the rest of (our Christ's) destined course. In short, there must now for the future be made between us that certain and equitable rule, necessary to both sides, which shall

determine that there ought to be absolutely nothing at all in common between the Christ of the other god and the Creator's Christ. For you will have as great a necessity to maintain their diversity as we have to resist it, inasmuch as you will be as unable to show that the Christ of the other god has come, until you have proved him to be a far different being from the Creator's Christ, as we, to claim him (who has come) as the Creator's, until we have shown him to be such a one as the Creator has appointed. Now respecting their names, such is our conclusion against (Marcion) I claim for myself Christ; I maintain for myself Jesus.¹



An encouragement to prayer by Tertullian

It begins with witness to God and the reward of faith, when we say: "Father, who art in heaven" [Matthew 6:9]. For we are both praying to God and setting forth our faith, the reward of which is the right to call him by this name. It is written to them that have believed in him, he hath given the power to be called sons of God."²



¹ *Tertullianus Against Marcion*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868), 148–152.

² *Tertullian's Treatises: Concerning Prayer, Concerning Baptism*, trans. Alexander Souter (London: The MacMillan Company, 1919), 21.

Day 2



Athanasius

(c. 296–373)

Athanasius was the pastor of the church in Alexandria, Egypt. He was exiled from his pastorate five times for defending the full deity of Jesus Christ. His most famous book is *On the Incarnation*. He was also at the Council of Nicaea and instrumental in the formulation of the Nicene Creed.



But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus (Hebrews 2:9).

The Word, perceiving that in no other way could the corruption of men be undone save by death as a necessary condition, while it was impossible for the Word to suffer death, being immortal, and Son of the Father; to this end he takes to himself a body capable of death, that it, by partaking of the Word who is above all, might be worthy to die in the stead of all, and might, because of the Word which was come to dwell in it, remain incorruptible, and that thereafter corruption might be stayed from all by the grace of the resurrection. And like as when a great king has entered into some large city and taken up his abode in one of the houses there, such city is at all events held worthy of high honour, nor does any enemy or bandit any longer

descend upon it and subject it; but on the contrary, it is thought entitled to all care, because of the king's having taken up his residence in a single house there: so, too, has it been with the Monarch of all. For now that he has come to our realm, and taken up his abode in one body among his peers, henceforth the whole conspiracy of the enemy against mankind is checked, and the corruption of death which before was prevailing against them is done away. For the race of men had gone to ruin, had not the Lord and Saviour of all, the Son of God, come among us to meet the end of death.

Now in truth this great work was peculiarly suited to God's goodness. For if a king, having founded a house or city, if it be beset by bandits from the carelessness of its inmates, does not by any means neglect it, but avenges and reclaims it as his own work, having regard not to the carelessness of the inhabitants, but to what he himself seems fit; much more did God the Word of the all-good Father not neglect the race of men, his work, going to corruption: but, while he blotted out the death which had ensued by the offering of his own body, he corrected their neglect by his own teaching, restoring all that was man's by his own power. And of this one may be assured at the hands of the Saviour's own inspired writers, if one happen upon their writings, where they say: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). And again: "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9). Then he also points out the reason why it was necessary for none other than God the Word himself to become incarnate; as follows: "For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering" (Hebrews 2:10), by which words he means, that it belonged to none other to bring man back from the corruption which had begun, than the Word of God, who had also made them from the beginning.

And that it was in order to the sacrifice for bodies such as his own that the Word himself also assumed a body, to this, also, they refer in these words: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:14–15).¹



Prayer of Athanasius

I will never cease to bless thee, O thou who endures forever. Thou art Jesus, the Son of the Father. Yea, Amen. Thou art he who commandeth the cherubim and the seraphim. Yea, Amen. Thou hast existed with the Father, in truth always. Yea, Amen. Thou rulest the angels. Yea, Amen. Thou art the power of the heavens. Yea, Amen. Thou art the crown of the martyrs. Yea, Amen. Thou art the deep counsel of the saints. Yea, Amen. Thou art he in whom the deep counsel of the Father is hidden. Yea, Amen. Thou art the mouth of the prophets. Yea, Amen. Thou art the tongue of the angels. Yea, Amen. Thou art Jesus my life. Yea, Amen.²



¹ *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation*, trans. Archibald Robinson (London: D. Nutt, 1891), 16–18.

² *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, ed. E.A. Wallis Budge (London: The British Museum, 1915), 1017–1018.

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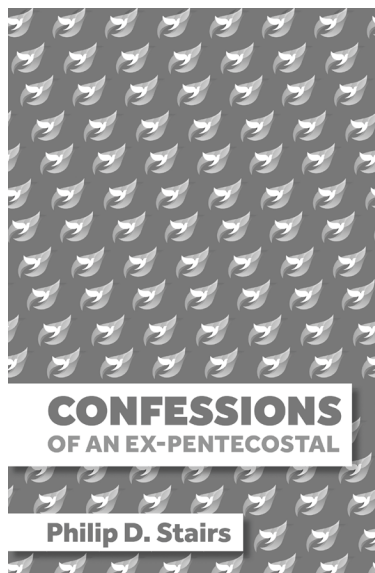
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Philip Stairs was born and raised in a United Pentecostal (UPC) pastors' home in New Brunswick, Canada. Early on, it became clear that Phil would follow in the footsteps of his parents, Wynn and Margaret. As Phil grew in his faith, he became increasingly uncomfortable with Pentecostal-style worship and the practice of speaking in tongues as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

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ISBN 978-1-77484-180-8 (Pbk)

ISBN 978-1-77484-181-5 (eBook)

168 pages; 5.5 x 8.5"

Published October 2025



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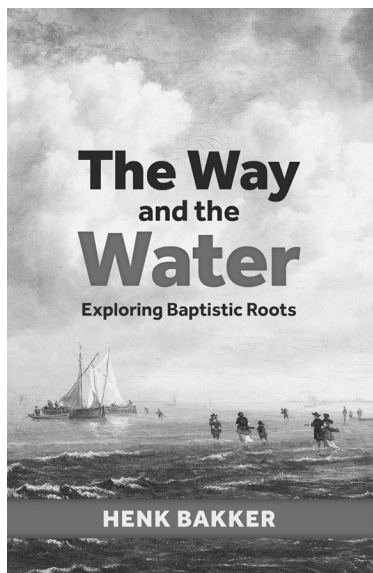
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It is hoped this title will encourage Baptist and Anabaptist communities to learn more about their history and consider how they can learn from each other's traditions. May it challenge us to live for Christ with greater commitment, engagement and endurance in society today.



Translated by Aize Smit

ISBN 978-1-77484-171-6 (Pbk)

ISBN 978-1-77484-172-3 (eBook)

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Published September 2025



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A Theologian in Service of the Church: The Collected Writings of Stanley K. Fowler

Fowler

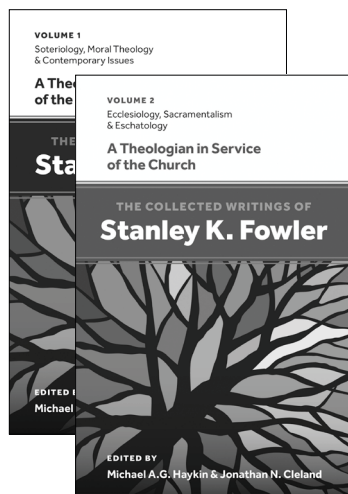
**Edited by Michael A.G. Haykin
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ISBN 978-1-77484-160-0 (Hdcvr)

ISBN 978-1-77484-157-0 (Pbk)

ISBN 978-1-77484-158-7 (Ebook)
276 pages; 5.5 x 8.5"

Published January 2025

Volume 2

ISBN 978-1-77484-163-1 (Hdcvr)

ISBN 978-1-77484-161-7 (Pbk)

ISBN 978-1-77484-162-4 (Ebook)
296 pages; 5.5 x 8.5"

Published May 2025



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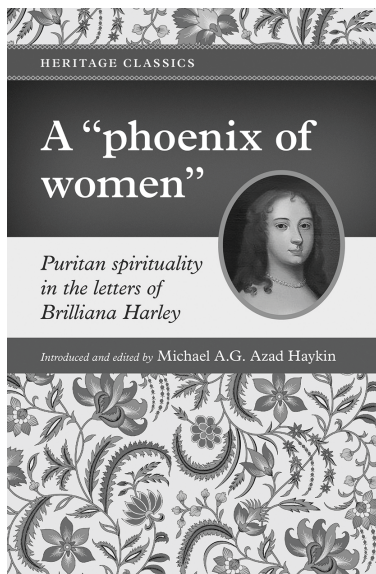
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ISBN 978-1-77484-152-5 (Pbk)
ISBN 978-1-77484-153-2 (Ebook)
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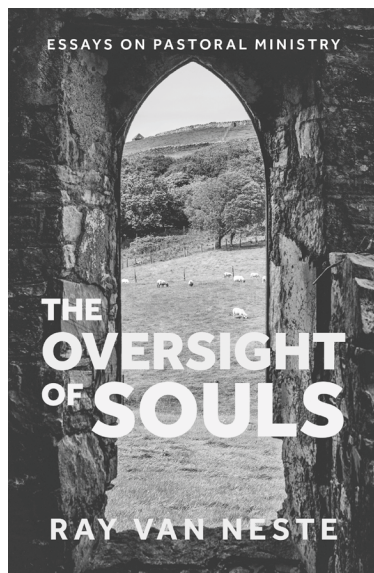
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ISBN 978-1-77484-120-4 (Pbk)
ISBN 978-1-77484-121-1 (Ebook)
104 pages; 6 x 9"
Published June 2023



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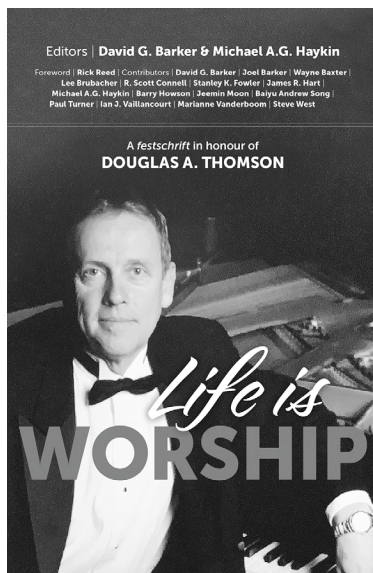
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ISBN 978-1-77484-128-0 (Pbk)
ISBN 978-1-77484-129-7 (Ebook)
364 pages; 6 x 9"
Published September 2023



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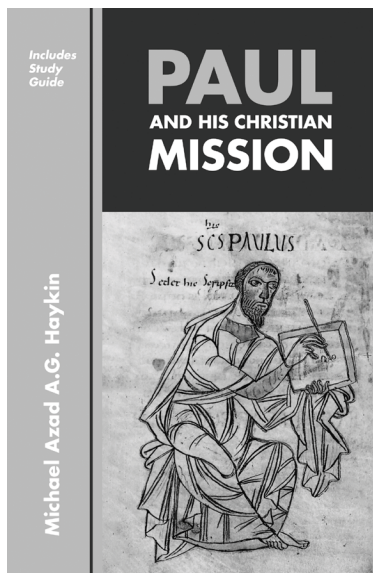
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ISBN 978-1-77484-106-8 (Pbk)

ISBN 978-1-77484-107-5 (Ebook)

88 pages; 5.5 x 8.5"

Published December 2022



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