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Footnotes: Curated Resources for Ministers

Harding School of Theology

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Footnotes: Fall Reading + John Mark Hicks + Museum of the Bible

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Footnotes¹

Curated Resources for Ministers

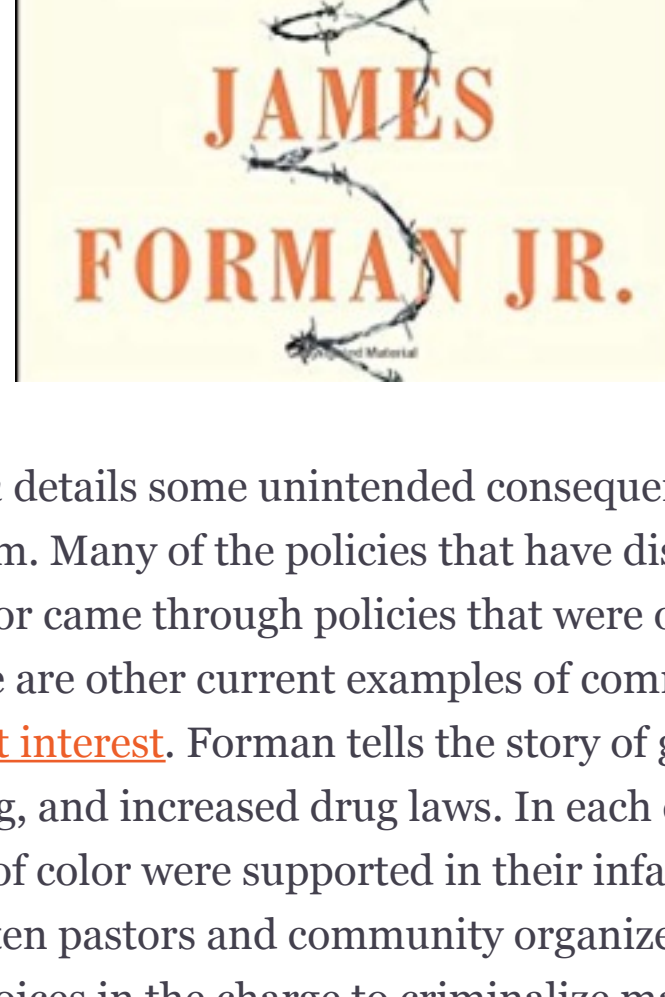


Hey Friends,

Our family was able to sneak away for some apple picking last week. The changes in the leaves and the scarcity of trees left with fruit reminded me that autumn is here. Pull out the sweaters and put away the flip flops, our best season has arrived. Perhaps you'll find time to grab a pumpkin spice latte and curl up with a good book. If so, I've got some ideas below. I've also included an update from one of our students, Aaron Parker, about the problems at Washington D.C.'s Museum of the Bible--an earlier issue included a discussion of [Bible Nation](#), which details the Museum's origins. Plus, a Few More Footnotes. Enjoy.



Locking Up Our Own



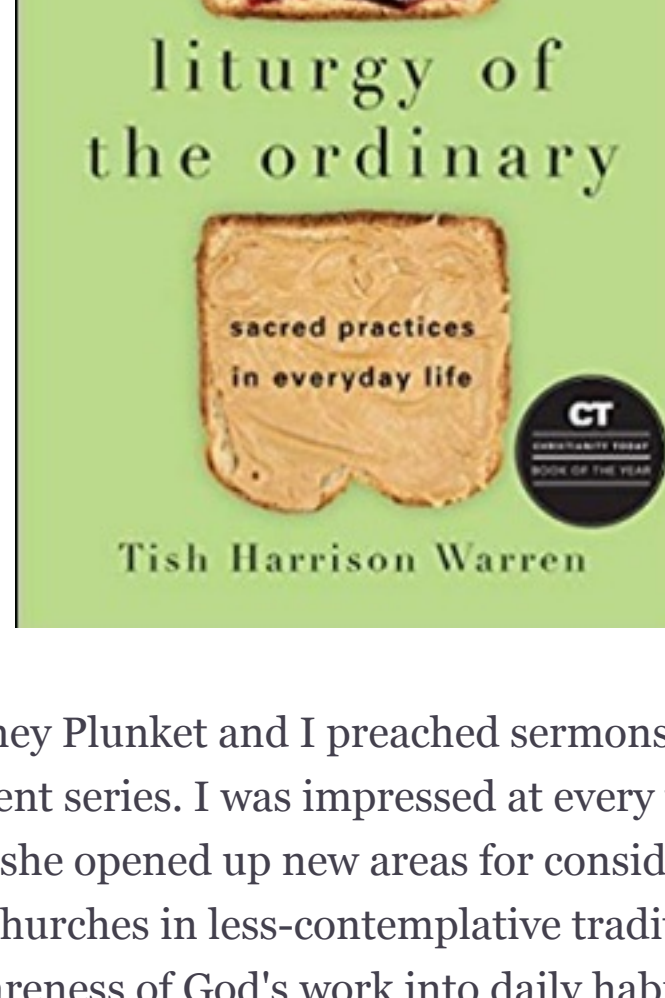
Locking Up Our Own details some unintended consequences within the criminal justice system. Many of the policies that have disproportionately affected people of color came through policies that were originally supported by people of color. There are other current examples of communities voting

[against their own best interest](#). Forman tells the story of gun control, mandatory sentencing, and increased drug laws. In each case, laws that have plagued poor people of color were supported in their infancy by African American leaders (often pastors and community organizers). For instance, some of the leading voices in the charge to criminalize marijuana were African American pastors.

Mandatory sentencing is now viewed as a policy that has produced overpopulated prisons. It was supported in its early years as a reform that would keep violent offenders off the streets. And while gun control is presently seen as a way to reduce violence, there was a perception among people of color in the decades after the Civil Rights Movement that a gun was their only means of self-protection. This book testifies both to the complexities of the criminal justice system and to the topic of racism. It also details the intersection of class and race to show that class wars are never far from race wars. There is a lot to unpack in this one.



Liturgy of the Ordinary



Really fantastic. Rodney Plunket and I preached sermons based on Warren's chapters during a recent series. I was impressed at every turn with her wit, practicality, and how she opened up new areas for consideration. This is a perfect book to help churches in less-contemplative traditions learn to incorporate an awareness of God's work into daily habits. I loved Chapter 4 on Confession. It was also a great reminder for Protestants like me to make more use of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

I'll admit, my favorite part of the book was being asked by my 5-year-old if being allergic to peanuts affected my ability to read it without sneezing.



Searching for the Pattern



In *Searching for the Pattern*, John Mark Hicks details his journey from a blueprint interpretation of the Bible to a theological hermeneutic. His story is familiar, as this type of autobiography is the coming-of-age story of many Church of Christ leaders. John Mark was in the library recently and we chatted about the work (which I had only started). I told him I wasn't raised in what I would call a *patternist* tradition of Churches of Christ. He asked if we took the Lord's Supper every Sunday (and only on Sunday). That sounded right. We talked more. Then I read his book. I then began to realize that patternism is the norm, even for those of us who weren't raised in the more sectarian parts of the movement.

Hicks has done a really nice job here. He shows how we have married an important question "What does God require of us," with another question "How does God authorize what he requires of us?" The answers we've given to these questions might have included a few more assumptions than we've been comfortable admitting. For many, these two questions were answered by going to Acts-Epistles and looking for commands, examples, and necessary inferences. Hicks suggests that while this is a route to answering the first question, it is hardly the only route.

I appreciate his effort to show how fragments within Churches of Christ (such as non-institutional congregations) are natural out workings of our hermeneutic. If we insist on commands, examples, and necessary inferences for everything we do as a church, then Christian colleges and orphanages probably don't make the cut. So while we've been quick to dismiss the people and the positions in these traditions, our time is probably better spent determining how this same problematic hermeneutic has caused issues in our own contexts.

Hicks's premise in the early chapters is that the pursuit of a simple church has become rather complicated. This created countless opportunities for division. He argues that rather than a blueprint hermeneutic, the story of God should guide our interpretation--as a way to better understand God's heart. I love the head vs. heart thing here. The Bible stories of our childhood formed our hearts (in addition to the love of our parents and churches). But I'm not sure that same longing to know God's heart has framed the way we've read the Bible on other topics (church governance, assemblies, sexual ethics, how we fund ministries, etc). For some of these conversations, our hyper-rational approach has bulldozed anything we absorbed when we fell in love with the Bible's core narrative. Hicks tries to develop a framework for understanding how the church should interpret the Bible that appreciates the awe, wonder, love, and compassion that we get from reading the Bible's narrative.

He eventually insists that he still is a patternist, but he redefines the word: he patterns his life and teaching after Jesus, not an arbitrary set of assumptions that mimic the way that the earliest Christian communities patterned themselves after Jesus. Strong distinction. Do you want to put out fires or just dress up like a firefighter? Hicks's emphasis on creation, community, Christ, and new creation reminded me of Richard Hays's ethical emphasis on cross, community, and new creation in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (btw, if I only had one New Testament book to recommend, this would be it).

John Mark told me he tried to write an accessible book so that a variety of church leaders could follow this argument. He said he would love for Church of Christ elders to read it as they determine how to move forward. I hope they do, too.

Related:

- I like what John Young has done in [Visions of Restoration: The History of Churches of Christ](#) (Cypress, 2019). This is close to miraculous, as he writes the story of Churches of Christ in about 100 pages. I'm blown away. There are restoration historians (no names) who could take that many pages to tell how John Smith became *Raccoon* John Smith. Let's just call this the 4-minute mile among Stone-Campbell histories. Young takes readers through the story of Churches of Christ in a way that is informative, yet humble.
- Greg McKinzie wrote "Doing Justice to the Text: A Missional Hermeneutic of Embodied Participation," in *Stone-Campbell Journal* 22, no. 1 (2019)--email me and I'll send you a PDF. He's talking about how to interpret the Bible, but he comes around halfway and starts comparing how various Church of Christ scholars like Leonard Allen, Richard Hughes, and John Mark Hicks have called for restoration through their historical surveys. It's a nice summary, which includes McKinzie's own proposal of a missional hermeneutic. He proposes that missionary communities today (as all churches should be) must take a cue from the missionary communities who wrote and received the letters we now call the New Testament. Those documents were not published as Canon Law, but instead as pastoral responses to the real demands of missionary work by small faith communities in a culture that ranged from unreached to antagonistic. Feels timely.



Problems at the Museum of the Bible

Aaron Parker
Student, Harding School of Theology

The Museum of the Bible is pretty much always in hot water these days. Last year the US government confiscated [3,800 artifacts](#) acquired and imported illegally by Hobby Lobby, the Museum's primary underwriter, and returned them to Iraq.

Now the Museum has come forward to say that [13 papyrus fragments](#) in the Green Collection were purchased from Dirk Obbink, an Oxford Professor, who apparently stole them from the Egypt Exploration Society. On June 23, 2019, [Michael W. Holmes](#), director of the Museum's Scholar's Initiative, [sent an email](#) with [evidence](#) of the illicit transactions to an SBL panel slated to discuss the significance of one of the fragments in question. The [EES has repeatedly denied selling](#) the fragments, but noted in their October 14th statement that not only the fragments but their card catalog records and archival photographs were missing from their collection, as well. In a [statement](#) released on October 21, 2019, the EES announced that 5 of the papyri in a [list of potentially stolen fragments](#) published by Dr. Brent Nongbri are in fact where they should be. Another 5 fragments missing from the EES collection were located in the Stimer Collection, but were acquired in good faith and are being returned to the EES.



A Few More Footnotes

1. John Mark Hicks's newest book is self-published. While a few decades ago this might have been a blight (and put someone in a financial hole that guaranteed boxes of unsold books in their attic) this is not the case with the evolution of on-demand printing. [In 2018, self-publishing increased by 40%](#). If an author has name/brand recognition within the community they are targeting, there is really no downside to self-publishing as far as sales are concerned. John Mark is writing to a really specific audience, so he can leverage his social media platform to publicize his work. Yes, the quality can be lacking for some self-published work. I've seen books where the title page, cover, and spine all have different variations of the title. I'd probably avoid self-publishing for all critical research and texts that are packed with footnotes and technical language. As for memoirs? I say publish it yourself and keep a larger share of the royalties.
2. College students want new fancy libraries, right? [Well...](#)
3. Unlikely convert: [Kanye West](#)?
4. This one is so much fun. A predatory journal is one with illegitimacy somewhere within its operations (publishes works without reviewing them, overcharges authors to publish, or even adds fake people to editorial boards). [This recent post](#) investigates some of these predatory journals and lists some problematic articles that have been published, such as the "Star Wars Sting" (sloppy research about an obscure topic), the "Chocolate Makes You Lose Weight" sting (ridiculous premise with lousy research), the Seinfeld sting (borrows a fake term from a sitcom), and the Dr. Szust problem (a "scholar" who doesn't exist with a fake resume is added to the editorial board). Some of this reminds me of the [Postmodern Generator](#), which creates fake articles that feel somewhat real to anyone who walked into the wrong room at an academic conference.



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UPCOMING
November 11

Failure of Nerve

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