

INTERVIEW

Interview with Bruce K. Waltke

PETER A. LILLBACK

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PETER LILLBACK: *Let me start with a word of prayer.*

Lord, thank you for the joy of meeting with Dr. Waltke, for the opportunity to have this conversation that we hope will be useful for your people globally as they think about Old Testament studies. Thank you for his faithful labors over many years and his impact on so many. We ask now that you will continue to bless him and his wife and the ministry that continues in his service. Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of now meeting with him. We give it all to you, and we pray we would glorify and edify your people as we seek to lift your name above all things. We pray this in Jesus's name. Amen.

BRUCE WALTKE: Amen!

PL: *Please share with us about your academic career and personal testimony of coming to faith in Christ.*

BW: I will begin with my coming to faith as a child. I was fortunate to have godly parents who were dedicated to the church. My father, coming from Germany, originally Lutheran, had a strong understanding of justification. My mother, from a Wesleyan Methodist background, had a strong understanding of sanctification. I think my father thought my mother did not fully understand justification, and my mother thought my father did not fully understand sanctification; but in any case, I had the blessing of both sides.

PL: *You were destined for John Calvin's duplex gratia.*

BW: Yes. At any rate, I grew up in a mission church; most of the pastors were apprentices who did not go to college, but maybe to Bible school while ministering—pious, godly people. In the tradition of altar calls, the climax of the service was making a decision, in contrast to my current tradition, where I am now an Anglican priest, in which the climax of the service is receiving the gift. One Sunday evening, when I was ten, I came under deep conviction of sin. I did not understand the gospel clearly but went forward, and all I knew was the sinner's prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner." In that, there was genuine repentance, and whatever faith in God I knew, it was all there, and a real confession of the God of Scripture; and, to my mind, that certainly would have included Jesus Christ. Although all the attention that evening focused on the husband of a Christian woman, who also went forward—nobody paid much attention to me over in the corner—I knew something serious had happened between the Lord and me. My life was changed. As I look back, these were childish footsteps toward the Lord, but it was a decisive turning point for me.

After that, and even before, I had an inclination toward ministry, but I think probably it was more a childhood thing like being a firefighter; it was always in my mind. When I was twelve, I was baptized in the Hudson River.

PL: *Tell us about later ...*

BW: After Houghton College, I went to seminary at Dallas. I began to understand better that my gifts were more in terms of teaching than pastoring. When I graduated, a significant church I had served as a summer intern in southwest Louisiana called me; however, Dr. John Walvoord encouraged me to stay on to be an educator. It was a turning point for me because it was a choice between taking this church or going on studying. That was in my heart; I decided to stay at Dallas and do my Masters in Hebrew and Old Testament and then my doctorate in Greek and New Testament under S. Lewis Johnson.

I remember distinctly that in the year I graduated from the doctoral program in 1958, after I received the degree, my mother and father and my wife Elaine were praying about my future. I was pastoring a Lutheran church but knew that it was not my future. When we finished praying, the phone rang. Dr. Walvoord was inviting me to join the faculty because Dwight Wayne Young had left precipitously to take a position at Brandeis University, and they were without a Hebrew instructor. It was to be a one-year term, a stopgap measure until they could get a full professor. God blessed it, and Walvoord decided to tailor me for Old Testament. I could study anywhere I

wanted, and I opted to go to Harvard, where they were very good and kind to me, also truly liberal—not progressive but open—and open to me. I did my work in ancient Near Eastern languages and literature.

Then I came back and taught at Dallas. Merrill Unger was the head of the department and told me to be patient, as he was going to retire in 1975 and I would become the head. I do not like administration—so I admire you, Peter, and I do not think I am very gifted at it—so I said, “I do not want you to retire. I just want to teach.” It turned out he had a stroke, and the doctor advised him to retire; upon that, they laid hands on me as the head of the department.

When I became the head of the department, we had thirty students in Old Testament. I asked them to tell me what was wrong with it, and they were honest with me. “We are getting splendid biblical studies, but not Old Testament theology.” Well, I had never had Old Testament theology, since at Dallas they did not teach biblical theology, at least nothing thought through methodically. I appealed to the administration to teach it, but they turned down my request. They argued it belongs to the department of theology. I knew, however, that it was not taught, so I wondered how to do this. I had just read a book by Robert Laurin on contemporary Old Testament theologians,¹ and so I came back, “Would it be possible to teach a course on Old Testament theologians?” That passed muster. Well, you can imagine how teaching all these different theologies formed my own. It is out of biblical theology that I came to realize that dispensational premillennialism did not accommodate the text or appropriately put the Testaments together. That is what led to my leaving Dallas and how I ended up an Old Testament professor.

PL: *At what institutions, then, have you taught Old Testament?*

BW: I taught at Dallas from 1962 until 1976. Then I went to Regent College from 1976 to 1985: from 1,200 students to 100, from overseeing doctoral work to teaching first-year Hebrew. Though nobody could make sense of it, I knew that this was the right context for me at that moment. Usually, one gets more and more specialized; at Regent, however, with its interdisciplinary emphasis, you know everything about nothing or nothing about everything. Anyway, I realized I was losing my skills.

When Ray Dillard of Westminster had a heart attack in 1984, they asked me to teach a winter course in his place, and then asked me to consider

¹ Robert B. Laurin, ed., *Contemporary Old Testament Theologians* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1970).

teaching there. As I did not come out of a Reformed tradition, know the language, or grow up with the Westminster Confession, I was not sure whether I would fit. So, they asked me questions; I gave them honest answers, and they said that I was very Reformed. I came to these convictions through biblical studies and biblical theology; I was articulating the Westminster Confession in nontraditional ways. I think the students appreciated a fresh way of saying things. So, that is how I got to Westminster, and I stayed there until 1990.

However, I missed the context of Regent, and I candidly felt there was a divorce at Westminster between the faculty's understanding of inspiration and the board's understanding of inspiration. I felt there was a lack of integrity and that bothered me. Prompted by the board, we discussed George Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*.² It documents the change at Fuller Seminary toward New Evangelicalism. I remember that Gleason Archer said that it was a very accurate picture of the debate at Fuller between Charles Fuller's son, Daniel Fuller, and Wilbur Smith, who eventually left for Trinity Evangelical Seminary. I found myself resonating more with David Hubbard, Fuller's president, than anybody else. So I asked the board, "Well, what do you think about David Hubbard's position?" And they laughed it out of court. Then I realized that we were not thinking on the same wavelength. That is partly why I went back to Regent. At Regent you had to retire at seventy, but I did not feel at all ready to retire. So, when Luder Whitlock invited me to teach at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando and gave me carte blanche with the option to continue until I felt I could no longer teach, I announced my resignation at Regent. They were shocked because they did not expect me to retire, but no one had told me that! So, Regent immediately appointed me professor emeritus, and I served both schools for a while. Then came the BioLogos controversy and the unfortunate way I first handled it. However, when I saw the YouTube videos, I knew it was wrong and would hurt the school and handed in my resignation. Ric Cannada, then in charge, did not want to accept it, but a week later, they all saw its wisdom.

PL: *You made the evening news.*

BW: Yes. Not the publicity I wanted. They wanted me to appear on ABC with Diane Sawyer, but I refused, as I knew it was not going to help the church.

² George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

PL: *Whitlock then invited you down to Knox Theological Seminary?*

BW: That is the irony of it. I think the board was at first reluctant until they heard me teach. Then I could not continue going down to Florida with Elaine, and that is when I stopped professional teaching around 2014.

PL: *What do you believe to be the most significant biblical theologies of the Old Testament from the Reformation to the present?*

BW: Going back to when I proposed a course on Old Testament theology, I used the first book mentioned in Laurin's volume by Walther Eichrodt. I think he is the first self-consciously to write a biblical theology in the 1930s.³ Biblical theology is thought to begin with Johann Philipp Gabler's inaugural address, "The Distinction Between Biblical and Systematic Theology," in 1787, but it was a call back to a historical interpretation. John Owen proposes a biblical theology, but it was a matter of using Scripture solely over against natural theology and philosophy and other disciplines that would come into systematics.⁴

A proper definition of biblical theology is crucial, with two distinctives.⁵ First of all, there is the way you organize theological reflections. Systematic theology organizes by logical categories to present the Christian faith to the church. It is essential that biblical theology and systematics work together and that one feeds the other. Biblical theology can inform the content of systematic; systematics provides guidelines and controls for biblical theology. It follows that both are necessary but organized differently. In biblical theology, each book has its own theology, and you can talk about Matthean theology, Lukan theology, Petrine theology, Johannine theology, and also the theology of Isaiah. Geerhardus Vos presents the Mosaic material, then Prophetic material, and finally the New Testament. In this way, he is thinking as a biblical theologian. So, for me, biblical theology's task is to expound the theology of Genesis, Exodus, and so forth. Then, one needs to categorize

³ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961, 1967). In subsequent years, we read the following volumes: Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 1965); Theodor C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); and Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper, 1958). These were almost all neo-Orthodox theologians, but they were the ones that were influencing the field.

⁴ John Owen, *Biblical Theology, or, The Nature, Origin, Development, and Study of Theological Truth, In Six Books* (1661), trans. Stephen P. Westcott (Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1994).

⁵ A helpful book that clarifies the issue is Gerhard Hasel's *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972, 1991), especially the basis, task, and method of biblical theology.

the materials. Eichrodt was the first to do that, as he organized Old Testament theology around the concept of covenant, whereas much biblical theology before that was organized around God, man, and soteriology, systematic categories which to me are not part of biblical theology.

The second thing is that biblical theology is more diachronic than synchronic. In my biblical theology work, I identify the blocks of writings and find each dominant theme. The text is like a pearl or an opal with all kind of colors, but there is a dominant theme or color in a given block of writing. Diachronically, you trace the development of that theme or that doctrine, and once you understand that, you see how it fits within the canon and relates to the New Testament. Thus, you can authentically preach the New Testament from the Old, because you are developing the same theme. These two notions are still influential in the field even after Brevard Childs came along with his view of biblical theology⁶ and of the Bible as Scripture,⁷ and contributed to reading the Bible holistically.

PL: *Who do you think set the stage for conservative, orthodox, Reformed Old Testament biblical theology?*

BW: As I was getting into the Reformed tradition—in my dispensational background there was no thought of this kind—the one who influenced me was Vos. I thought that his unveiling of the mind of God and his insights into the text were great. He is therefore a foundation in my thinking.

Gerhard Hasel's way of thinking about the whole discipline helped shape my Old Testament theology.⁸ However, there is no one theology that influenced my work, and I did not consciously imitate anybody. Reformed theology certainly influenced it, but my whole methodological stance on higher criticism makes all the difference in the world. Whether you begin with the JEDP hypothesis or not is going to seriously influence the way you are going to do things diachronically. For instance, if the Priestly document is written last, you turn the whole Bible on its head. Thus, a high view of inspiration is crucial to me for doing biblical theology.

Another element of my method is how to articulate poetics and narrative analysis with theology so you can speak dogmatically from story. Because the storyteller does not tell you his theology abstractly, you have to extrapolate it. However, to do that, you need to have a sound method. The contribution of

⁶ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970).

⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

⁸ See Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

my theology is that I have clearly thought through my basis, task, and method in the first six chapters and then carry it out in the rest of the book. James I. Packer appreciated that because my method of taking a block of writing, finding its primary theme, and developing it guards against arbitrary selection of themes. He thinks it is the only theology to attempt this.

PL: *You once wrote an article distinguishing an exegesis of power from an exegesis of wonder.⁹ Would you describe what you had in mind, and do you continue to believe that this is a critical issue to be addressed by biblical interpreters in the Reformed tradition?*

BW: Very much so. The problem is that as an exegete you have to control the text and decide what it means, what the words and the figures of speech mean. In a certain sense, the exegete and theologian have to stand above the text in determining what it is and what it means. That is what I mean by power; you are mastering the text. This form of power is very dangerous to me.

So, for example, I will be preaching, a week from Sunday, on Isaiah 6 and will read, “And the train of his robe filled the temple” (v. 1). Almost all the translations say that too, but the word does not mean “train.” When I think of a train, I think of Queen Elizabeth’s wedding and her eighteen-foot train of purple velvet silk trimmed in five inches of vermin and six ladies of honor carrying it. Well, they did not have trains in the ancient Near East; no art shows a king or a queen with a train. Further, the Hebrew word means “hem.” It can be used for a skirt or the hem of Aaron’s garment. So a hem that fills the entire temple. That is a very different picture. If the hem fills the entire temple, how big is your God?

Then you get to the seraphs. You discover that outside of Isaiah 6 the word only occurs four times, in Numbers 21:6 and 8, and in Isaiah 14:29 and 30:6. In these passages, it clearly refers to a kind of a snake, and the English Standard Version translates it, as most do, by fiery serpent. But what do we mean by a fiery serpent? Maybe it is a red spitting cobra, or maybe the point is it is poisonous. As I studied, I read Jerome and discovered that he uses *basilisk* in the Isaiah passage, which is the king of serpents. That is the idea. Most venomous is the king of serpents. Then you get the point that the kings of serpents, the deadliest, are covering their faces before the glory of God. They are aware of their creatureliness, cover their feet, and do

⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, “Exegesis and the Spiritual Life: Theology as Spiritual Formation,” *Crux* 30.3 (September 1994): 28–35; cf. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Dance Between God and Humanity: Reading the Bible Today as the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 9–11.

his bidding—a whole new way of looking at this passage. Now this is where the wonder comes in, because you can be satisfied with that: “I see it!” And that is power, and that is wrong. You have to take the next step of wonder. Only God and the Spirit can make you stand in awe and wonder at the whole thing.

PL: *What would you describe as your most significant contributions and insights into Old Testament theology, as reflected by your academic lectures and publications?*

BW: My contribution is heavily exegetical. I have tried to ground everything in Scripture. That must dominate my writing, in addition to in-depth research for the exegesis. I get excited about words, grammar, and going into the text. When I began thinking about teaching, I was thinking about teaching systematic theology, because that was what I knew; but then I realized, in line with the Reformed tradition, that what I knew mostly about God was by words, language. That is what set me off into majoring in Greek and Hebrew. That is why I became an exegetical theologian. God enables my heart to do this with wonder and worship and awe.

PL: *An exegetical theologian of wonder—that is an excellent summary! What trends do you see emerging in Old Testament scholarship that are promising or may cause concern?*

BW: As I consider my work on the New International Version and the new contributors, I realized that I am the only one left from the original committee responsible for the New International Version. Honestly, there are outstanding and godly scholars coming up. I am thankful to think of Richard Hess at Denver Seminary, Mark Boda at McMaster Divinity College, and Daniel Block at Wheaton College. Block was not on our committee, but the other two were. I am impressed and thankful for the integrity of their work.

At my age what you appreciate is the baton being handed on to even more competent hands. For example, in the field of Hebrew poetics, one can mention Meir Sternberg’s *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*,¹⁰ works by Adele Berlin, and Robert Alter,¹¹ and Raymond Van Leeuwen at Eastern University.¹² And Richard Hess’s writings on religions of Israel and

¹⁰ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, 1987).

¹¹ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985) and Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: HarperCollins, 1985).

¹² See, e.g., Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Proverbs,” in *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 256–67.

archeology,¹³ which are scholarly and clear. He argues, for instance, in a convincing way that a text from Emar dating from around 1300 BC has many similarities to the priestly document. It is subtle support for the Mosaic date of the “P” document.

There is also a consciousness among many younger scholars of the need for spirituality in exegesis. When you are in the academia, you have to accept systematic atheism, naturalism, skepticism, and analogy; you cannot be bold about miracles and the resurrection. The danger is to try to satisfy the academic community and compromise to have its acceptance. I am very disturbed by what I read about Andy Stanley dropping the Old Testament from his preaching; but that is partly due to a caricature of dispensationalism and goes back ultimately to Marcionism. People do not want an angry God—neither did Darwin—but the God of the Bible is a holy God and a God of justice, and it is because of his mercy for his own that he shows justice toward the offender. However, justice is always tempered with mercy. In my studies on Proverbs, I read that one Proverb says, “Lady wisdom rejoices when righteousness triumphs” (cf. Prov 11:10; 28:12),¹⁴ while another says, “Do not gloat when the enemy falls” (Prov 24:17). You have to hold the two together. A Christian knows what that means and that to fear God includes loving God.

PL: *For the average pastor preaching on the Old Testament, what would be a few essential studies that you would highly recommend for the understanding of Old Testament theology?*

BW: I think William Dumbrell’s book *Covenant and Creation*,¹⁵ as it deals with two major themes is good. Stephen Dempster’s *Dominion and Dynasty* is another good book.¹⁶ Although Peter John Gentry pushes the Baptist issue too much in *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*,¹⁷ it is still an excellent introduction to biblical covenants. One could add T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land*.¹⁸ I

¹³ Richard Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

¹⁴ See also Proverbs 1:26 and Waltke’s comments; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 2 vols., NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, 2005), 1:207.

¹⁵ William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (1984; repr., Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997).

¹⁶ Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Leicester: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Peter John Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

¹⁸ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

thought that Elmer Martens's *God's Design*¹⁹ was beneficial for my understanding of land, as was William Davies's *The Gospel and the Land*.²⁰

PL: *In your study of Proverbs, what general, practical, pastoral works have offered you insight into the broad topic of biblical theology?*

BW: I think questions of introduction are critical for developing Old Testament theology. I make a stout defense of Solomonic authorship depending on Kenneth Kitchen's work.²¹ I once did a series at Dallas on preaching Proverbs but was not happy with it. There are blocks of Proverbs, and I focus on that now. I have studied every word in Proverbs along with every use in the Old Testament. So, when I say a word means something, it is based on a concordance, not on a lexicon. One can have full confidence in that work because I have done it thoroughly. At the level of poetics, the way it is organized, I think it is just a solid piece of work and probably my best piece of scholarship overall.²²

PL: *You developed a definition of what you thought a righteous man and an unrighteous man is according to Proverbs.*

BW: When I tried to take particulars and abstract from them, I came away with a very simple idea: righteousness is that you disadvantage yourself in order to advantage the other person.²³ In contrast, wickedness is when you disadvantage the other person to advantage yourself. This definition is not that much different from "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39), but it is a fresh way of saying it. It has also revolutionized my behavior. It has changed my driving, my relationship with people, my priorities. Further, in my life, I have to allow God to define what I mean by what is advantageous to the other person, because they may not think it is advantageous for me to say you need a Savior. I need an authority to define what I mean by advantageous, the values or teachings of Scripture, and within that frame of reference, by God's grace, it has helped me to live. We lived in a condominium in Vancouver in a complex with 140 owners, and I was chosen to be the chair of the council overseeing the condominium association. When we

¹⁹ Elmer A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

²⁰ William D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

²¹ Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Proverbs and Wisdom Books of the Ancient Near East: The Factual History of a Literary Form," *Tyndale Bulletin* 28 (1977): 69–114.

²² Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 1:97–99.

moved, the council had a dinner in my honor, and it came out that they chose me because of my wisdom in putting other people first.

PL: *How do you assess the abiding significance of Old Testament theologians in the broader Westminster tradition such as Geerhardus Vos, Meredith Kline, Edward J. Young, and perhaps others?*

BW: Vos's contribution is certainly going to abide. Kline is artistic and intuitive, and he sees connections many people do not see, and his work is going to endure. I do not know about Young. He was a stalwart in his day, but I do not know what his legacy is going to be. I have appreciated his material, but what remains, I am not sure. Tremper Longman is coming out with a new book on contemporary issues confronting the church,²⁴ in which he takes up the question of genocide, homosexuality, and other controversial issues related to the Old Testament. I was delighted with this work, as it is based on the authority of Scripture without compromise and expounds its plain sense in Calvin's vein. He confronts the issues honestly without doing a lot of gymnastics trying to get around them. Although I disagree with some of his work on wisdom literature, I think this book is going to be useful to the church.

PL: *As you consider the climax of what many of us believe is a remarkable academic career and church-based ministry, what do you hope will be your lasting legacy and what advice would you leave for budding Old Testament scholars?*

BW: I hope that I will leave behind confidence in the Bible as being the Word of God without compromising it. I hope that another abiding contribution will be that our faith is defensible, not based on reason but on the Spirit. I hope and pray that the Spirit of God will continue and may be pleased to use my writings to reinforce trust in Scripture as the Word of God. I also hope to leave a legacy of integrity and honesty in scholarship. I value the confessions, but sometimes they can be corrected; in this context, evangelicals have made the mistake of not being more open to academia. I hope in that connection for a prophetic scholarship that is willing to confront academia when it is against Scripture. I want to promote orthodox scholarship, scholarship with integrity, and prophetic scholarship. So, I hope that whatever I have written will model what I have just outlined.

²⁴ Tremper Longman III, *Confronting Old Testament Controversies: Pressing Questions about Evolution, Sexuality, History, and Violence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019).

PL: *At the end of an interview, I always love to say, is there anything further you would like to share that comes to mind or is on your heart?*

BW: I guess, the grace of God is better. You know, I will end there.

PL: *Thank God for amazing grace. Would you like to give us a sense of why you ultimately allowed your credentials to enter into the Anglican tradition at the end of your career?*

BW: I think most of the differences within the believing community are all too often based on where the New Testament is silent. If the New Testament were perfectly clear, there would be no debate between Episcopalians and Presbyterians and Congregationalists. I do not see myself identified with a particular tradition. It happens that at this moment the church where I am and serve is Anglican. Of course, I appreciate many things in Anglicanism. It is part of the vineyard, yet not the whole vineyard. I carry with me the Thirty-Nine Articles, which present Reformed doctrines. I do like the sense of history, of tradition. However, I do not believe you can add to Scripture.

PL: *Thank you for your friendship and theological leadership over the years. I have looked to you as a spiritual guide and father, and your kindness has been a great blessing. Would you be so kind as to give an Aaronic prayer blessing?*

BW:

Father, we ended by commenting on your grace to us, and we are gentiles—more than that, we are sinners, apart from your original people, yet always in your heart, elected from all eternity, out of sheer mercy and grace. Father, we thank you for the privilege of being part of your people for all eternity, knowing Jesus, being able to say to you, “Abba, Father,” confessing him as Lord, believing in our hearts that he was raised from the dead. It is not natural; it is your grace. Thank you for schools like Westminster, and others where I have been privileged to teach, that hold fast to the authority of your Word without compromise and with honest and sound scholarship. Thank you, Lord, that you have been faithful to build your church and that you continue to raise so many gifted pastors and teachers. Oh God, thank you that the wheat will continue to the end despite the tares. Lord, give us the grace to bear good fruit. In Christ’s name, Amen.

PL: *Amen. Thank you, sir.*