

The Old Testament Yesterday and Today

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Essays in Honor of Michael P. V. Barrett

Edited by Rhett P. Dodson



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Preface

Michael Barrett has had a significant influence on multitudes of students. It would be impossible to calculate the impact he has had on my life and ministry. I can see his imprint on everything I do as a preacher and teacher of God's Word. I would never have gone up to him after class and told him how much I love him, but with each passing year under his mentoring and training that devotion grew. It is now a distinct privilege to honor him with this *Festschrift*.

Dr. Barrett's teaching career has spanned thirty years as a professor at Bob Jones University followed by twelve years as president and professor of Old Testament at Geneva Reformed Seminary, and now as vice president for academics, academic dean, and professor of Old Testament at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Bible scholars, theologians, pastors, missionaries, and laymen have benefited immensely from his faithful commitment to and clear teaching of Holy Scripture. The contributors to this volume wish to honor the Lord through their appreciation for Dr. Barrett's ministry, to honor him for his commitment to Christ and His Word, and to mark the occasion of his seventieth birthday.

Dr. Barrett is a formidable scholar, and those of us who have sat at his feet have experienced the breadth of his knowledge and have felt the weight of the truth as he taught us Hebrew and Aramaic grammar or expounded a Messianic psalm. Though known as an expert in the Old Testament, Dr. Barrett also taught graduate courses in New Testament where he demonstrated he was just as at home in the Greek text as in the Hebrew Bible.

The essays in this volume cover a variety of topics and, following a personal tribute from his son Charles, have been divided into three sections: historical essays, exegetical and expositional essays, and theological essays. The historical section covers issues from the ancient Near East to Puritan preaching, and the importance of the Reformation. Though these may seem to be disparate subjects, they reflect Dr. Barrett's love for the world of the Old Testament as well as his allegiance to Protestant and Reformed Christianity.

The exegetical and expositional essays range from Genesis to the poetic literature of the Hebrew Bible, from historical and expositional theology to the details of textual criticism. Finally, the theological essays focus on three topics dear to Dr. Barrett's heart: Christ in the Old Testament, a biblical and balanced view of God, and the wisdom of Qoheleth. This variety reflects the breadth and depth of Dr. Barrett's own interest in the issues of reading, interpreting, and proclaiming the Scriptures. He taught us that scholarship was not for the sake of scholarship but for the faithful exposition of the truth.

I wish to thank all those who have contributed to this volume, especially Will Pareja whose vision for this book set the wheels in motion. A special word of thanks is also due to Patrick Robbins and his staff at the Mack Library at Bob Jones University and Laura Ladwig of The William Perkins Library at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

The authors of these essays have taken time out of their busy schedules to research, reflect, and write out of respect and admiration for the honoree. Each author writes from the perspective of evangelical Christianity and with a firm commitment to the inerrancy of the Bible. Each contributor is responsible for his own conclusions, and whether or not Dr. Barrett will agree with all we have written, I hope he will know that the essays in this volume are a labor of love and an attempt to give honor to whom honor is due.

—Rhett P. Dodson
Hudson, Ohio
February 28, 2019

Abbreviations

ABR	Australian Biblical Review
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
AW	<i>American Works</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCOT	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
<i>BT</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<i>BV</i>	<i>Biblical Viewpoint</i>
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>EBCRev</i>	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> , rev. ed.
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
<i>EQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ESV	<i>The Holy Bible: English Standard Version</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GBS	Gorgias Biblical Studies
GKC	E. Kautzsch, ed., Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar
Holman NTC	Holman New Testament Commentary
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IVPNTC	IVP New Testament Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JESOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament</i>

<i>JETS</i>	<i>The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JM	Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEL	Kregel Exegetical Library
LW	Luther's Works
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	The New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NET	<i>New English Translation</i> (Richardson, TX: Biblical Studies, 2006)
NIV	<i>The Holy Bible: New International Version</i>
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OT	Old Testament
OTL	The Old Testament Library
PL	Publications in Linguistics
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>PRJ</i>	<i>Puritan Reformed Journal</i>
Q	Qumran
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SSL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
TLL	Topics in Language and Linguistics
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

CHAPTER 1

The Wisdom of a Father: How the Old Testament Shaped a Home

Charles M. Barrett

I cannot imagine my dad would expect a volume of essays to be published in his honor. Despite his confident classroom presence, he is in fact unassuming, shy, and sometimes insecure. He probably won't be thrilled about that last part, but he will be pushing seventy by the time he reads this, and I am confident I can outrun him.

One of the great joys of reflecting on my father's ministry, character, and influence on my and my brother's lives is the remarkable consistency he modeled in the home. I am grateful for his sermons and am acutely aware of how his teaching in the classroom shaped my thinking on the Bible and theology. Yet it was, and is, his faithful and ordinary consistency in his private life that enjoys the place of prominence in my memory. In fact, his private life only gives greater weight to his ministry in public. The way he lived and parented in the home reflects his abiding love for and commitment to God's Word. I consider it a kindness of God that in all the messages and lectures I heard him deliver I never once thought, "Well, that's not how he lives at home." He wasn't perfect, to be sure. But he even handled his imperfections biblically. I praise God for this.

There are many characteristics I could write about regarding my dad; however, I will mention three that stand out the most in my mind: his love for the ordinary, his love for God's Word, and his love for God's church. Each of these loves reveals the influence the Old Testament's Poetic and Wisdom literature have on my dad's thinking and life, especially the Psalms and Ecclesiastes. One of his constant refrains is, "Right thinking determines right living."

It is no surprise, then, that his knowledge of the Old Testament's Poetic and Wisdom literature shapes his practice. The great theme of the Wisdom literature is the fear of the Lord and wisdom. He often defines the fear of the Lord as living in the constant awareness of who God is, and wisdom as the skill or ability to live rightly in God's world.

He loves the ordinary. I have often wondered if his love for the mundane stood behind his love for the Bible's Wisdom literature, or if the Wisdom literature fueled within him a love for the mundane and ordinary, especially for routine. In my opinion, and this probably illustrates the difference between us, I would say his love for routine is irrational. He cannot see life any other way. Growing up, we would leave the house every school day at 6:46 a.m. and be home to sit down for dinner every evening at 5:00 p.m. We discussed the day's events at the dinner table, what was learned in school, and what tests were upcoming. Local news was at 5:30 p.m., family worship at 6:00 p.m., and national news at 6:30 p.m. There was no variation from this pattern, except on Sundays. On Sundays, we left the house oddly early to get to church, came home and ate lunch, then everyone went off to their rooms to take a nap. We then returned to church in the evening, also oddly early, to get the same pew we would sit in each Lord's Day. This was his world of joyful structure and we lived in it. During the week, we ate two of three meals a day together, and all meals together on Saturdays and Sundays. He loved being at home and could not grasp why his boys would often beg to go do something somewhere other than home on a weekend, just for the experience of it. He truly loved being at home with family. Looking back, I appreciate the simplicity of it all.

These ordinary routines were not an end in themselves. They provided the context of his love for family. He loves being at home and he loves being at home with his wife. Ecclesiastes 9:9 encourages the wise man to live joyfully with the wife whom he loves and which God has given. My dad has loved my mom since he first saw her, which, as he says, is also the moment he knew he would marry

her. Two people under the sun could not be more different, nor more inseparable. He is an introvert; she an extrovert. She talks to everyone; he enjoys the sound of silence. There is not a detail she won't share when it comes to mind. He just nods in response. As of 2019, theirs is a union that has remained strong for 48 years.

He loves his children as well. He told us often, probably daily, that he loved us. And contrary to his public persona, he was quite affectionate. He encouraged my brother and me to pursue God in whatever capacity God led. There was no pressure to follow a specific vocation over another. I remember sitting outside his office after school waiting to go home after he finished his office hours. Students would ask about what they should do in life. Instead of giving some impressive answer as though he knew the futures of college students, he would respond, "Well, what do you like to do? What do you enjoy?" He believed that God made each person with abilities and interests and guided them providentially. He communicated the same to his two sons. The question of God's will for life and the question of future vocation were not the same in his mind. God clearly revealed His will for His people: "Fear God, and keep his commandments" (Eccl. 12:13). Live wisely before Him, and God will take care of you. That is how he raised us. There was no pressure to go a certain direction vocationally. All that mattered was fearing God and keeping His commandments. There was a Psalm-1 simplicity to this: Walk in the way of God and not in the way of the ungodly. He did not love us by lavishing impressive gifts upon us. He loved my brother and me by encouraging us to love God. He provided for us, led us in family worship, disciplined us when we needed it, and took us to church—nothing really exciting in the moment, but over time, it is remarkably faithful.

The home was not only a home of love, but also of laughter and joy. My dad's humor is dry—very dry. It was his dry humor coupled with his quirkiness that brought the most laughs. Remembering him defend some of his eccentricities continues to be enjoyable. For a guy who says he knows too much to be happy, he found joy in a lot of seemingly mundane things. He had a reason (although I

can't remember what it was) as to why he wore a new pair of Puma tennis shoes only inside for about twelve years. He would talk at length about the virtues of chunky peanut butter over creamy, and how the best way to determine the right amount of coffee creamer (which had to be half & half and not milk, and *never* skim milk) was a matter of color and not taste. This is living Ecclesiastes at its finest. If God is God, the Creator of all, and the Giver of all good gifts, then there is joy to be found in peanut butter. We do not look for or find satisfaction in things, whether those things are a spouse, a child, a job, or coffee. But by factoring God into all of life, there is joy. There are appointed times of laughter, and God has made everything beautiful in its time (Eccl. 3:11). His firm commitment to the philosophy of life framed in Ecclesiastes gave us an appreciation and joy for the mundane of everyday life without taking ourselves too seriously. He continues to love routine, his family, and laughter. To a contemporary culture that moves from one experience to another for fear of missing out, these ordinary joys may seem boring. But for a father and his sons, they point to God's kind faithfulness as the Giver of all good gifts.

My dad also loves God's Word. Studying it, teaching it, and proclaiming it is not just a profession for him. It is his life. Conversations at home, no matter the topic, would invariably remind him of some passage that he explained and applied. He knows his Bible better than anyone else I know. I am often convicted of my own lack of knowledge of God's Word when I am with him. We had the privilege of teaching together at the same seminary for about six years. For a brief period, until I stopped going, we would drive to the gym together during our lunch break and work out together. We began the workout side by side on the elliptical trainer to get the heart rate up before moving on to other exercises. I would often use this time to watch sports and catch up on the previous day's scores. It wasn't long before I realized his head was often down and he would be speaking in almost a whisper. I asked him what he was saying. He simply responded, "the Psalms." Apparently, whatever number his heart rate was at he would see how much of that

particular Psalm he could quote before his heart rate changed. I know he wouldn't want me writing this, but it is one moment that illustrates a life of studying God's Word. He wants to know God's Word in order to know God. He has spent a lifetime of not only teaching God's Word to his family and his students, but also of hiding it in his heart and delighting in it day and night, even on an elliptical trainer.

God's Word also enables him to be honest about himself. Some of his favorite Psalms are the penitential Psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). He is not a perfect man; he will be the first to tell you. He knows his besetting sins, and so does his family. He knows he wrestles with impatience and worry. He also knows that there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared (Ps. 130:4). I remember one time as a teenager being rebuked for transgressing some precept of "Barrett law"—the set of rules he devised for the home. During the interaction, I sinfully and disrespectfully smarted off by suggesting that the real reason he was upset was that his routine was interrupted and he was just annoyed. Not surprisingly, I received a rebuke over this as well. However, not long after this exchange he returned to my room and confessed that he had at times disciplined out of annoyance and he apologized and asked for forgiveness. He said he took my words to heart, even if I did not say them in the right spirit. He may not remember this instance, but I will never forget. He never presented himself as something he was not. I believe his love for and knowledge of God's Word freed him to be honest about faults and humbled him to seek forgiveness, even if it meant apologizing to an obnoxious teenager. Wisdom is responding rightly to God's self-revelation. My dad modeled that wisdom by acknowledging his own sin and repenting. To this day, he will often apologize to my brother and me for his failings as a father. I believe he sees failings where there are none, but I also believe it is his humility about his failings where he has truly succeeded as a father. He didn't ignore them, nor did he excuse them. He apologized for them. And he pointed us to God's Word in doing so.

Finally, my dad loves God's church. There is a corporate element to the Bible's Wisdom literature. We do not exist for ourselves or unto ourselves. We live for the glory of God and do so as part of God's people. My dad is conscious that God's dealing with individuals ought to have a significance for the body of Christ. He reminds his hearers in the pews or students in the classroom that David's experiences with God in the Psalms often conclude with a prayer for the blessing of God's people. My dad desires the same. The Bible reminds us that our times are appointed. There is a time to be born and a time to die. My dad was born September 18, 1949. God saved him through the ministry of a Sunday school teacher when he was seven years old. His parents brought him up in church and God called him to serve the church. He frequently prays that God would make him useful. The prayer for usefulness has increased in intensity as he has aged. As he repeatedly observes, there is more time behind him than in front of him.

His love for the church and his commitment to the Reformed faith led him to make some surprising career choices. He came to Bob Jones University as a Baptist, yet at some point during his undergraduate years two subjects confronted him that changed the course of his life. The first was Presbyterianism and the second was Hebrew. As he studied polity, he came to embrace the Presbyterian form of government. As he grew in his understanding of Presbyterianism, he came to love the Reformed tradition as confessed in the *Westminster Standards*. This coincided with his newfound love of the biblical languages. He enjoyed Greek, but he loved Hebrew. Fortunately for him, he had a personality and social life that catered to his fondness for dead languages. He immediately entered graduate school to pursue a doctorate in Old Testament. His embrace of Reformed theology, with its emphasis on the continuity of the Old and New Testaments, and his gifts in biblical Hebrew were a perfect match. He believed the Lord was leading him to dedicate his life to teaching students the Bible, primarily the Old Testament. He loves working through the text and teaching on God's

progressive revelation that culminates in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In my early twenties I learned for the first time that he was offered a position at a well-known seminary in the mid to late 1970s. I asked him why he did not accept it. He just made a passing remark that he felt he could influence more students to see Christ in all of Scripture at BJU. He wanted students who did not come from a Reformed background to see the unity and richness of the whole Bible. It was also at this time that he became involved in a small denomination called the Free Presbyterian Church of Northern Ireland (FPC), whose emphases were preaching Christ in all His fullness, prayer, and holiness. The FPC had been established in Northern Ireland since 1951, but a group of believers in Greenville reached out to see if the denomination would accept their congregation into its membership. Spending over thirty years teaching at a school notorious for many things other than Reformed theology and laboring in an obscure denomination just shy of forty years do not seem like career moves to position oneself for recognition. I am not sure how many undergraduate students went through his rotation of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Minor Prophets, and Old Testament Poetry, or how many graduate students passed through his classroom. But for those who did, I am sure many saw the glories of Christ presented in the Bible in life transforming ways for the first time. I do pray, however, that usefulness would not be measured by notoriety.

My dad went through a surprising vocational move in what is considered by many to be the twilight years of life. Given his love for monotony, he never expected to leave Bob Jones but did so in 2000. Given his age in 2011, he never expected to leave Geneva Reformed Seminary (GRS). Yet, everything changed for him in the early fall of 2011. The process of the Lord's providential leading during these days was clear and unmistakable, regardless of my dad's initial stubbornness. He traveled to Michigan every September to spend a week with Richard Crawford, his brother-in-law and close friend, to hunt and enjoy a week together, but mainly to hunt.

He had noticed that Dr. Beeke was preaching in eastern Michigan, so they planned to get dinner together and discuss the *Reformation Heritage Study Bible* project. It was at this dinner that Dr. Beeke approached my dad about prayerfully considering the position of Academic Dean and Vice President at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS). Humbled at such a request, he politely said no. Dr. Beeke asked him to pray. That night, I remember talking to him on the phone and he mentioned that he had an interesting discussion with Dr. Beeke. Having seen some positions open at the seminary on Dr. David Murray's blog a few weeks prior, I jokingly asked which position at PRTS was offered. There was a bit of pause on the phone and then he went back to talking about hunting. As usual at that point, I zoned out.

Through Thanksgiving, he did not give the request much thought. Yet, to those close to him his teaching and seminary administrative experience appeared to be providential preparation for the responsibilities for the position. It wasn't until late November that he began to pray seriously about it. And I think that was mainly because he knew Dr. Beeke would be asking him if he had been praying. While honored, he had no initial desire to leave the home he had lived in since 1981, nor leave the seminary he had labored in for eleven years within a denomination he had been in for over thirty. But the Lord began to move in his heart. From a son's vantage point it was a curious thing to watch. I had asked him countless times about knowing God's will and how to discern it. His answers proceeded along two lines of thought. First, he would say some variation of, "God's will is for you to obey His revealed will found in His Word; it is your sanctification, as Paul says." He would mention this first to counter any understanding of the will of God as being only some mysterious thing that is always out there in the future. Then he would say, "Be submitted to God's will before you know what it is." He wanted to encourage faithfulness in the moment and trust in the God who leads into the future. How would he follow his own advice in this major decision? The Lord led providentially, answered every prayer specifically, and he

submitted to the Lord's leading. In July of 2012, they were off to western Michigan with much fear and trepidation.

He has spent seven years to date at PRTS. He loves all aspects of the ministry there, the team assembled and the Reformed commitment to ministry. His prayer that the Lord would use him seems to have been answered in a most unlikely place, at least unlikely as he is concerned. He never expected to leave Greenville. But the Lord brought him to Grand Rapids and to a seminary where his previous ministry experience prepared him for the task he was called to do. He is incredibly insecure and this came out in conversations, especially in times of the on-site accreditation visits. Yet, the Lord has blessed. From my perspective, I have never seen my parents happier than they are now in Michigan. He speaks often about his enjoyment at the seminary and of his colleagues there. He has more opportunities to preach on the Lord's Day than he ever did in the past. God's calling to this dual ministry of church and seminary in a context where he is supported forms the basis of his joy. He submitted to the Lord's will before he knew it and the Lord has led well.

He believes deeply in God's mission in and through the local church. He loves the ordinary ministry of Word and Sacrament. His teaching in the classroom is motivated by a desire to see students faithfully handle the Word of God in the mundane and ordinary means of grace, Lord's Day by Lord's Day. Ministry, either in the classroom or the pulpit, is not about him. It is about God's glory in the expansion of Christ's church through the ministry of the Spirit.

Several years ago, he and I had a conversation about how to handle criticism in ministry in a particularly difficult time. I asked why he never sought to defend himself. His response was simple and short. There is no need to defend oneself against every criticism when it is personal. When the gospel and the glory of Christ is at stake, then it is time to speak up for Christ's sake. If it is because other believers don't like you, let it go and don't make yourself

bigger than the church. He concluded with a final exhortation: Read God's Word, love God's Word, and be faithful in ministry.

His is an ordinary life: go to work during the week, worship on the Lord's Day, confess your sins, enjoy family, and then repeat. He is not an exciting man. Nor is he a perfect man. He is ordinary, quirky, and has an irrational love for routine and schedules. He is a private man (and thus might be upset with many of these reflections). He loves the routine of God's gift of six days of work and one day of rest and gathered worship. If there is a chance to sit in a tree stand with a gun during one of those six days; well, that's just a bonus and another good gift from the Giver with whom we all have to do. The sum of his ministry is simple: read the Bible, love Christ, sit under the ordinary means of grace, never get over the wonder of Christ's work for you, fear God, and keep His commandments.