



reformed
means
missional

FOLLOWING JESUS INTO THE WORLD

EDITED BY

SAMUEL T. LOGAN, JR.

FOREWORD BY CHRISTOPHER J. H. WRIGHT

“In *Reformed Means Missional*, Dr. Sam Logan brings together both well-known authors and some hidden jewels of the church who labor, Jesus-like, in dark places, and serve the least and the lowest. Refreshingly, the theorists are also practitioners, while the practitioners think biblically and theologically about how God’s mission shapes their work. The result? This wide-ranging volume, which is calculated to give mind, conscience, and yes, emotions also, a serious, gospel workout.”

Sinclair B Ferguson, Theologian; author; and professor, Redeemer Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX

“Building on ‘Mission and Evangelism’ in the WRF Statement of Faith, *Reformed Means Missional* brings theological substance to ‘missional,’ ensuring the term doesn’t become a passing fad. A collection of the world’s top Reformed thinkers have provided rich, compelling insights as to how the church in the twenty-first century must change the way it thinks and behaves as it is sent into the world to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and promote the expansion of His Kingdom.”

Jeffrey Jeremiah, MDiv, PhD, Stated Clerk, Evangelical Presbyterian Church

“*Reformed Means Missional* is a foundational and strategic call to all in the Reformed tradition to truly be *His* church, on *His* mission taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World. My friend, Sam Logan, understands this reality and articulates this call, both in terms of its theological groundings and its global implications, more persuasively than anyone I know. This book is required reading for any leader in the Reformed tradition who wants to be able to participate in twenty-first century conversations with respect to the Reformational church and the core of Christ’s calling.”

Dr. S. Douglas Birdsall, President of the American Bible Society; former Executive Chair of the Lausanne Movement.

“I have sometimes been annoyed when twenty-first century leaders trumpet the mantra that their ministry is ‘missional’—as if no one else had ever discovered this concept before. However these essays, edited by Dr. Logan, focus on God’s own mission for his church, immersed in a shape-shifting culture. Here are arrows that fly from the Spirit’s own bow, still quivering from a bull’s-eye impact!”

Dr. Michael A. Rogers, Senior Pastor, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA

“God is a missionary God. He reaches out to claim and bless His people and through them to bless others. When God called Abraham, He said to him: ‘I will bless you... so that you will be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ We are called by God to be missionaries, to be ‘missional.’ We cannot all reach all families of the earth; but we can reach some families near or far. This book will help you become intentional in your focus to be missional in some area where you can have influence. Where are you a blessing? Where are you missional?”

Robert C. (Ric) Cannada, Jr., Chancellor Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary

“The heartbeat of Reformed theology (at its best) has always been its missional thrust. This extraordinary collection of essays explores from many angles how the gospel translates into God’s people serving as his instruments of redemptive healing in a very broken world. It will help us follow Jesus more faithfully into his world that his kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven.”

Leo R. Schuster III, Lead Pastor, East Side Congregation, Redeemer Presbyterian Church

“What is it after all to be ‘missional’? Finally, this remarkable book shows us the way. We recognize our calling to build upon our Reformed heritage *and* to passionately look ahead. By God’s grace we will fulfill our calling to bring *both* the gospel and long-needed change in our world, engaging issues too-long neglected. Some will need

to leave their denominations, others not, but we will labor together. This book unites us and stretches us at the same time—a must read to equip us for our Lord’s vast and deep calling to us all.”

D. Clair Davis, Professor and Chaplain, Redeemer Seminary, Dallas

“This is the book to read if you are serious about being part of God’s mission of reaching the world through the proclamation of the gospel. Articles by experienced missionaries from four continents, focusing on twenty-four different aspects with one conclusion: *Reformed means missional!* A thorough, biblically sound, God-centered, focus. I pray that thousands, through reading it, would be equipped and encouraged to fulfill their calling in the coming of his kingdom!”

Henk Stoker, Professor in Apologetics and Ethics, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

“Our Lord Jesus Christ said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’ ‘Reformed’ usually connotes for us a commitment to the truth. But our sovereign Lord commissioned his followers to apply this truth to all of life. This new book presents challenges from some of the best Reformed thinkers who also are leaders in application of our faith to a great variety of needs in our world.”

William S. Barker, Professor of Church History Emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary; former Moderator of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in America

“The European Reformers followed Jesus, the eternal Creator who lived in time-space history as a provincial carpenter-turned-rabbi, into their particular worlds half a millennium ago. In exemplary fashion, our reforming forefathers were both faithful to God’s enduring covenant and relevant to their contemporary settings. This volume’s heartening example of *semper reformans, semper reformanda* (“always reformed, always reforming”) serves today’s world Christian movement well toward following Jesus in faithful, relevant, and ‘missional’ ways.”

Rev. Dr. J. Nelson Jennings, Executive Director, Overseas Ministries Study Center; Teaching Elder, Presbyterian Church in America

“At a time when some people are asking how to be Reformed and missional at the same time, this book comes to show that being Reformed IS to be INTRINSICALLY missional. Written from different perspectives, with specific foci, the book is honest to its title as it challenges us to see, in practice, just how true it is that being really Reformed and being really missional are one and the same!”

David Charles Gomes, Chancellor, Mackenzie Presbyterian University, Sao Paulo, Brazil

“The reach of Jesus is as we sing, ‘far as the curse is found.’ Jesus calls his Body into all spaces of earthly life—as sick, ruined, and corrupt as they may be. Sam Logan has assembled a book that reminds those of us within the Reformed tradition that our attention to truth is always in some practical sense for the sake of the world—not as an abstract proclamation, but to embody in real, though incomplete and imperfect, ways his future now. This collection of essays not only reminds us of the missional aim of Christ, but helps us imagine the reach of Christ—far as the curse is found.”

Tuck Bartholomew, Pastor, City Church, Philadelphia, PA

“Searching for gold to enrich your convictions about being Reformed *and* missional? Here’s a robust mine in which the most imminently qualified Reformed scholars and practitioners help you discover the reasons, ways, and specific venues our missional God is glorifying himself in this broken world. It is difficult to imagine a more comprehensive, compassionate, compelling, theo-centric, accessible, scholarly, biblically-grounded, and inspiring treatment of the complex dimensions of the missional landscape.”

Mike Sharrett, Pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg, VA

REFORMED MEANS
MISSIONAL

FOLLOWING JESUS
INTO THE WORLD

Edited by Samuel T. Logan, Jr.



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For Susan

“My love is like a red, red rose.”

CONTENTS

Foreword: <i>What Do We Mean by “Missional”?</i> Christopher J. H. Wright	ix
Introduction: <i>Why the World Reformed Fellowship Seeks to Encourage Missional Theology and Practice,</i> Samuel T. Logan, Jr.	1
Section One: Laying the Foundation	9
1. <i>What a Missional Church Looks Like,</i> Martin Allen	11
2. <i>What’s the Point in Believing and Doing the Right Things? A Missional, “Edwardsean” Approach to Orthodox Belief and Moral Behavior,</i> Samuel T. Logan, Jr.	23
3. <i>The Book of Romans and the Missional Mandate: Why Mission and Theology Must Go Together,</i> Thomas Schirrmacher	48
Section Two: The Church Reaches the World	65
4. <i>A Missional Response to Poverty and Social Injustice,</i> P. J. (Flip) Buys	67
5. <i>What Is God’s Global Urban Mission?</i> Timothy Keller	97
6. <i>A Missional Approach to the Health of the City,</i> Susan M. Post	110
7. <i>A Missional Response to Global Violence against Women,</i> Diane Langberg	130
8. <i>Worship and Children: A Missional Response to Child Sexual Abuse,</i> Basyle Tchividjian	147

CONTENTS

9. <i>God Scatters to Gather through His People: A Missional Response to Migrant Churches</i> , Elias Medeiros	173
10. <i>Dogma Meets Diversity in Europe: A Missional Response to Secularity</i> , Robert Calvert	189
11. <i>The Missional Challenges of Islam: A Very Diverse People, Religion, and Culture</i> , John Leonard	198
12. <i>A Missional Approach to "Hidden Believers,"</i> John Nicholls	212
13. <i>A Missional Response to Homosexual Strugglers in the Church and the Gay Community</i> , John Freeman	221
Conclusion: <i>Crafting an Evangelical, Reformed, and Missional Theology for the Twenty-First Century</i> , A. T. .B. McGowan	237
Afterword: <i>Missional Is Mission Critical</i> , Frank A. James, III	253
Endnotes	255
Contributors	269

FOREWORD

WHAT DO WE MEAN
BY “MISSIONAL”?

CHRISTOPHER J. H. WRIGHT

Strictly speaking, the word “missional” means “pertaining to, or characterized by, mission”—in the same way that “covenantal” relates to “covenant,” or “tribal” to “tribe.” The real question is, Whose mission are we talking about when we refer to an activity, community, strategy as being “missional”?

Our tendency has been to think primarily of “missions”—that is, of things that *we* do, activities we plan and execute “for God,” to help him get to places he seems to have difficulty reaching. I would like us to reconsider that definition.

In my book *The Mission of God*,¹ I argue that we need to shift our perspective to see that, like salvation, mission belongs to our God. Let me say that again: *Mission is not ours; mission is God's*. It is not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world; rather, God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God's mission. “Missional church,” therefore, is something of a tautology (like “female women”); if it isn't missional, it isn't church. A “church” may be a group of people doing religious things together, but if it is not participating in the purposes of God in the world and for the world, it has lost the plot and forgotten the reason for its own existence.

Such an understanding of what it means to be missional derives from the way the Bible communicates the mission of God. The Bible

presents itself to us as an overarching narrative in four great movements: creation, fall, redemption, and future hope. There is one God at work in the universe and in human history, and that God has a mission—a mission that will ultimately be accomplished by the power of his Word and for the glory of his name. That mission, according to Paul, includes the unifying of all creation under Christ (Ephesians 1:9–10), and the reconciliation of all creation through the cross and resurrection of Christ (Colossians 1:15–20). Within that, it includes the blessing and healing of the nations, as the good news of the redeeming work of Christ and all its implications is made known to the ends of the earth.

Missional living starts with a missional reading of the Bible, and that means reading every part of the Scriptures:

- in the light of God’s purpose for his whole creation, including the redemption of humanity and the creation of the new heavens and new earth;
- in the light of God’s purpose for human life in general on the planet, and of all the Bible teaches about human culture; social, economic, and political relationships; ethics; and behavior;
- in the light of God’s historical election of Old Testament Israel, their identity and role in relation to the nations, and the demands he made on their worship and ethics;
- in the light of the centrality of Jesus of Nazareth, his messianic identity and mission in relation to Old Testament Israel and the nations, and his cross and resurrection;
- in the light of God’s calling of the church, the community of believing Jews and gentiles who constitute the extended people of the Abraham covenant, to be the agent of God’s blessing to the nations in the name and for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we grasp that the whole Bible constitutes the coherent revelation of the mission of God, then we find our whole worldview impacted by this vision. The Bible is The Story, which tells us where we have come from, how we got to be here, who we are, why the world

is in the mess it is, how it can be (and has been) changed, and where we are ultimately going. And this whole story constitutes the mission of this God. God is the originator of the story, the teller of the story, the prime actor in the story, the planner and guide of the story's plot, the meaning of the story, and the story's ultimate completion. He is its beginning, end, and center. The Bible is the story of the mission of God—of this God and no other.

Now such an understanding of the mission of God as the very heartbeat of all reality, all creation, and all history generates a distinctive missional worldview that is radically and transformingly God-centered. It turns inside out and upside down some of the common ways in which we are accustomed to think about the Christian life. It is certainly a very healthy corrective to the egocentric obsession of much Western culture—including, sadly, even Western *Christian* culture. It constantly forces us to open our eyes to the big picture, rather than shelter in the cozy narcissism of our own small worlds:

- We ask, “Where does God fit into the story of my life?” when the real question is: Where does my little life fit into this great story of God's mission?
- We want to be driven by a purpose that has been tailored just right for our own individual lives, when we should be seeing the purpose of all life, including our own, wrapped up in the great mission of God for the whole of creation.
- We talk about “applying the Bible to our lives.” What would it mean to instead apply *our* lives to the *Bible*, assuming the Bible to be the reality—the real story—to which we are called to conform ourselves?
- We wrestle with “making the gospel relevant to the world.” But in *this* story, God is about the business of transforming the world to fit the shape of the gospel.
- We argue about what can legitimately be included in the mission that God expects from the church, when we should be asking what kind of church God wants for the whole range of his mission.

- I may wonder what kind of mission God has for me, when I should be asking what kind of *me* God wants for *his* mission.

The paragraphs above are drawn from my book, *The Mission of God*. But it would be good to conclude this foreword with a short extract from The Cape Town Commitment, from the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town, 2010—a document quoted frequently throughout this book. Its section, “We love the mission of God,” makes the following statement and challenge. Here, in a nutshell, is missional theology:

We are committed to world mission, because it is central to our understanding of God, the Bible, the Church, human history and the ultimate future. The whole Bible reveals the mission of God to bring all things in heaven and earth into unity under Christ, reconciling them through the blood of his cross. In fulfilling his mission, God will transform the creation broken by sin and evil into the new creation in which there is no more sin or curse. God will fulfill his promise to Abraham to bless all nations on the earth, through the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah, the seed of Abraham. God will transform the fractured world of nations that are scattered under the judgment of God into the new humanity that will be redeemed by the blood of Christ from every tribe, nation, tongue and language, and will be gathered to worship our God and Savior. God will destroy the reign of death, corruption and violence when Christ returns to establish his eternal reign of life, justice and peace. Then God, Immanuel, will dwell with us, and the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever.

A) Our participation in God's mission. God calls his people to share his mission. The Church from all nations stands in continuity through the Messiah Jesus with God's people in the Old Testament. With them we have been called through Abraham and commissioned to be a blessing and a light to the nations. With them, we are to be shaped and taught through the law and the prophets to be a community of holiness, compassion and justice in a world of sin and suffering. We have been redeemed through the cross and

resurrection of Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear witness to what God has done in Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God for all eternity and to participate in the transforming mission of God within history. Our mission is wholly derived from God’s mission, addresses the whole of God’s creation, and is grounded at its centre in the redeeming victory of the cross. This is the people to whom we belong, whose faith we confess and whose mission we share.

B) The integrity of our mission. The *source* of all our mission is what God has done in Christ for the redemption of the whole world, as revealed in the Bible. Our evangelistic task is to make that good news known to all nations. The *context* of all our mission is the world in which we live, the world of sin, suffering, injustice, and creational disorder, into which God sends us to love and serve for Christ’s sake. All our mission must therefore reflect the integration of evangelism and committed engagement in the world, both being ordered and driven by the whole biblical revelation of the gospel of God.²

Because this is what being “missional” involves, I am pleased to commend this present volume to all who desire to be part of the mission of God.

INTRODUCTION

WHY THE WORLD REFORMED
FELLOWSHIP SEEKS TO
ENCOURAGE MISSIONAL
THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

SAMUEL T. LOGAN, JR.

Chris Wright, in his foreword, explained exactly what “missional” means—or more specifically, what it *should* mean to us. Armed with this new definition, I would now like to briefly describe why the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) seeks to be missional. I will start my description by using what I call “The Parable of the Two Librarians.” Of course, this parable is not inerrant or infallible. It is, however, historical.

Susan and I have had the privilege of spending four sabbaticals in Cambridge, England. During one of those sabbaticals, my research subject was the causes of theological change at Christ’s College, one of the constituent colleges of Cambridge University. In 1590, Christ’s College was one of the leading Puritan institutions in the world. By 1680, it was one of the leading latitudinarian institutions in the world. What happened?

In my research, I worked with two librarians—the librarian at Christ’s College and the librarian at the “UL” (university library). The librarian at Christ’s College acted as though it was his mission in life to protect the books at Christ’s from people. Every time a person touched a book there was the chance of it being damaged, or at least of it acquiring dirt and grime from the hands touching the book. There was

never an outright refusal to hand over a requested volume (so long as the request slip was completely accurate!). But there was a clear sense that he (and the library) would be much happier if I would just go away and let the books and other materials stay exactly as they had been for four hundred years.

The librarian at the UL, on the other hand, acted as though it was her mission in life to get the information in the books “out.” When she discovered my research subject, she suggested materials for me to read that I didn’t even know existed. She communicated a positive eagerness, that the question I was asking be answered. Now, she did take precautions—did she ever! I was not allowed to bring any writing instrument of any kind into the reading room; she provided #2 pencils and blank paper (this was years before laptops and iPads). I was never left alone with a manuscript; a librarian or sublibrarian was always present and always watching. But the sense one had was that the most important thing was the research—and that, to me at least, made all the difference.

I have come to believe that missional theology embodies the spirit of the UL librarian. Every kind of precaution imaginable is taken to preserve the precious and priceless original source material. But the ultimate goal is not preservation; it is propagation. More than anything else, we want to get the knowledge of Jesus as Savior and Lord “out,” so that he receives the honor and worship that is his due.

Of course, even the best “missional librarians” may differ among themselves about both specific preservation measures and specific propagation strategies. But they will all agree that both are critically important, and they will all agree that there is no point in having the most magnificent library imaginable if it is inaccessible to everyone except the librarian himself. Just so, there are different perspectives presented in this volume— different perspectives on church unity and diversity, on missions and evangelism strategies, and on a whole host of other things. We see those different perspectives as enriching the whole, and yet it is critically important to remember that each of those perspectives is presented by an author who has affirmed both his or her personal commitment to one of the great historic Reformed creeds of the church

and his or her personal commitment to the following WRF statement: “The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the God-breathed Word of God, without error in all that it affirms.”

Perhaps another parable, this one genuinely both inerrant and infallible, will further elucidate the motives of the WRF in the nature and the implications of our missional stance. This parable occurs at the end of Luke 15, but first we need some context.

In Luke 15:1–2, we read this: “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him [Jesus]. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’” Why all the grumbling?

We do need to be fair to the Pharisees and scribes. All through the Old Testament, God’s people were urged to come out from amongst the pagans and be separate. For example, the first two chapters of the book of Judges describe God’s anger when Israel mixed with the Canaanites. The Pharisees in Luke 15 are just reflecting that reality in their reaction to Jesus. For that matter, this grumbling isn’t totally different from Peter’s reaction when first invited to eat those wild and unclean animals—“By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean” (Acts 10:14).

And we must not forget Luke’s *inerrant* statement that these people with whom Jesus was spending time were sinners! There is a clear indication from the text that these people were *notorious and public sinners*. And yet, Jesus actually seems to welcome them, if not blatantly seek them out! This flew in the face of the Jewish culture of that time.

Behind the grumbling of the Pharisees lay many things—and some of them were anchored solidly in appropriate biblical tradition. Of course, in no way did Jesus’s “receiving” and “eating with” sinners imply an endorsement of their sin. But it did reveal the essence of his way of responding to their sin. So, no matter how much theoretically good tradition might lie behind the grumbling, it was just that—grumbling.

In response to this grumbling, Jesus tells three parables—not three doctrinal postulates, nor three historical narratives, but three short stories.

Luke 15:3–7 is often called “The Parable of the Lost Sheep,” but in light of the way the chapter begins, the better title would be “The Parable of the Seeking Shepherd.” Verse six is the key: “And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’” The point of this first story: This is just the kind of shepherd you would want if you were a lost sheep.

The parable in Luke 15:8–10 is often known as “The Parable of the Lost Coin,” but perhaps a better title would be “The Parable of the Searching Woman.” We can see this in verse nine: “And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’” The point of our second story, therefore: This is just the kind of owner you would want if you were a lost coin.

And now we come to one of the most famous parables in Scripture. Luke 15:11–32 is often called “The Parable of the Prodigal Son,” but once more, in light of the way this chapter begins, the better title would be “The Parable of the Running Father.” This time, our key is in verses 20–24.

“And he [the Prodigal Son] arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

The point of this third story? *That this is just the kind of father you would want if you were a disobedient and wayward child.*

All three of the stories in Luke 15 are about the person who seeks and carries and sweeps and searches and runs and rejoices, and all three are Jesus’s response to the grumbling of the Pharisees. All three stories constitute Jesus’s defense of the fact that he “receives sinners and eats

with them,” and all three stories describe the essence of why Jesus entered the world as the incarnate Son of God. All three of these stories, therefore, describe Jesus’s “missional mission.”

And the really neat thing is that these three parables are, *in themselves*, instances of fatherly running. The Pharisees grumble, and Jesus responds patiently with stories designed to help them change their grumbling to relishing so they, too, can participate in the family celebration—to help them see that these “sinners” are brothers who were thought to be dead and are now alive, sons who were lost and now are found. In this sense, therefore, in the Parable of the Running Father, the Incarnate Heavenly Father is running to meet the scribes and Pharisees—just as he had already run to meet sinners and tax collectors.

To what end? What did Jesus ultimately want to see happen in the lives of those scribes and Pharisees? Not just that they would cease their grumbling, not just that they would stop criticizing Jesus, but that they would join him in receiving and eating with sinners—to the end that sinners, including those very scribes and Pharisees themselves, might return to their Father and bring delight to his heart. As Martin Allen says in his chapter, “[The Father’s] heart throbs and beats with compassion for the ends of the earth.” Ours must, as well.

Yes, when one receives and eats with sinners—or when one encourages the (careful) use of centuries-old manuscripts—one engages in behavior which can be (and, far more frequently, can be seen *as being*) dangerous. But what counts is the mission—in the one case, the mission of getting the knowledge in the manuscripts out; and in the far more important case, the mission of maximizing the delight of the Father.

At the WRF General Assembly in Edinburgh in 2010, a new Statement of Faith was received by the members. (The statement is available, in numerous languages, at www.wrfnet.org.) Questions have been raised about the need for such a statement, and some explanations are provided in Andrew McGowan’s introduction to the statement. But there is a missional reason for the statement as well. When most of the great historical Reformed confessions were written, the part of the world those confessions sought to serve was considered “Christendom,” at least in a broad sense. One searches in vain for the words “mission,”

“missions,” or “evangelism” in such documents as The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Thirty-Nine Articles, The Canons of Dordt, or The Heidelberg Catechism. Those documents focused almost entirely on differentiating Protestant, Reformed Christianity from other Christian churches. The world has changed since those documents were written.

Of course, as Chris Wright has reminded us, “missional” is not synonymous with “missions,” or even with “evangelism.” But there is an outward face to all of these words—a sense of going out to the world as the running father went to his prodigal son. And that is one main reason for the WRF Statement of Faith: to provide an outward perspective within historic Reformed orthodoxy. The entirety of Section Ten of the Statement (“Mission and evangelism”) expresses that outward face, and its specific subsections express well some of the things involved in that outward, missional face:

1. Our calling to be God’s witnesses through word and deed
2. The extent of the call to mission
3. The compassion of Christians for the world
4. The transformation of human community

To a significant degree, the present book seeks to give concrete expression to these affirmations.

We start the book with three discussions of the theological foundations of the “outward, missional face” of Reformed theology. We classify these chapters as “Laying the Foundation.” We then move to the second section, “The Church Reaches the World.” It is here that we explore in greatest detail some of the things that might be involved if the church, and Christians in the church, become serious about living out what Jesus teaches us in The Parable of the Running Father.

The e-book version of this collection (available at newgrowthpress.com) includes an additional section, “Building the Church.” This section talks more directly about the church itself, and especially about the thorny problem of what to do when one perceives that his or her church is abandoning its biblical foundations and the complex scriptural teaching regarding church unity.

The book concludes by pulling all these concerns together in Andrew McGowan’s “Crafting an Evangelical, Reformed, and Missional Theology for the Twenty-First Century.” In all of this, we are seeking to describe how—and why—to be both missional and Reformed.

I have had the privilege for the past couple of years to work as special counsel to the president at Biblical Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania. That institution has, as its vision statement, “Following Jesus into the World.” The world can be a frightening place. It is a place of secularism and relativism; it is a place where sexual abuse and child abuse occur; it is a place of pain and poverty and disease; it is a place of sexual dysfunction. It is the kind of place to which Jesus came, and we do him honor as we follow him into that world.

This is what the WRF seeks to do, and it is what this book seeks to do.