

## 2022 Pastor's Reading List

1. **UNDERBELLY: THE LEGEND BEGINS**, by T. R. Bryan (2021). This was one fun book. So full of action from the Academy prank that landed him in Section 31 beginning a fast moving career as an engineer progressing to the youngest Captain in Section 31 history. Along the way there are twists and turns that harken back to the brief encounters with Jax' life in the other books as this is a prequel. But with each story given there is so much more to seek out. We still don't know many things about "Lt. Nandi" but this book is written in such a way to make you want more and gives a sufficient amount to continue the interest of even the newbies to the Star Trek Universe. The writing in all these books is so engaging and humorous that you really do have a feeling the you intimately know the characters and that you like them or truly hate them as if you know them. This, of course, because of the picture that this authors paints for his readers. As I have said before, I had all but given up on Star trek books but this author has renewed my desire...at least for more of this series which I hope he comes out with more. Since this book came out last...it would be the book I would recommend that you begin because the rest build so well from it even though you will know the answers to some of the more pressing questions raised about "Lt. Nandi" in the other books. **UNDERBELLY: The Return of Jax Nandi (A Section 31 Novel Book 1); UNDERBELLY: Captain Aziz (A Section 31 Novel Book 2), and UNDERBELLY: Changing Of The Guard (A Section 31 Novel Book 3).** It is too bad that this is not the Section 31 TV show that is being planned on Paramount. This stuff could easily be turned into a screen play.
2. **CRASH LANDING (Ascension Series Prequel)**, by Ken Lozito (2017). As a prequel this little book gives us needed background information that becomes important in the second book in the **Ascension Series STAR DIVIDE**, which I will be reviewing shortly. This story shows Kladomaor's early experience in what became known as the Xiiginn Uprising, an interstellar war that continues long after this story and precedes the events in the Ascension Series. It focuses on the betrayal that is talked about in the second book and gives us all the necessary players in this universe, as far as the players that are at each other's throat in this universe. Kladomaor's is of the Boxan race and stands over ten feet tall. Mar Arden was of the Xiiginn race which is the Boxan's natural enemy even though they had at one time appeared to be friendly species serving together in the Confederation of multiple species nations. The Star Shroud had been controlled by the Boxans to protect lesser developed star systems from more hostile species and the rebellion started by the Xiiginn-by Mar Arden-was meant to wrest control of the Star Shroud from the Boxans so his species could become dominant over this part of the universe. I wish I had this before I finished the second book. It would have made reading it a whole lot easier. This prequel was written a whole year after the first 2 books but at least he did write it to help the readers understand. And as always this author does not disappoint in his writing even with something as far-fetched as this story.

3. **STAR SHROUD (Ascension Series Book 1)**, by Ken Lozito (2016). There has been a secret tightly kept for over 60 years. This secret is discovered quite by accident by a genius hacker who was simply looking for incriminating information to hurt a global conglomerate. What he discovered was buried so far in the material that He almost missed it. But finding it stirs up global conflict when he puts all of the found information on the global internet. (Sound familiar...though this action actually has a positive outcome.) This action puts him in contact with a long lost love and it requires him to make decisions that will begin to modify his hacker mentality--for there is so much more at stake than simply a global conglomerate's control--but the possibility of an alien race that might deal earth such a blow that earth may never recover. This journey starts with a kidnapping, a trip to Pluto to ascertain the purpose of some dwellings there and this book ends as they slip into a black hole. Great stuff!!! Again with Ken Lozito, he develops his characters so well from the very beginning that you get invested in the lives that he so aptly constructs that it is hard to put down and is extremely enjoyable reading. A great sci-fi series to lose yourself in. As the extended title suggests this is the first book in a series that has captured my attention even though his latest book has just come out from another series the **Federation Chronicles** called **Acheron Redemption (Federation Chronicles Book 3)** so I will be spending my time between these two as well as the autobiography of John Bunyan.
4. **GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS or A Brief relation of the exceeding Mercy of God in Christ, to this Poor Servant, John Bunyan**, by John Bunyan (first printed 1666, 1905, 2020 digitally). This was an extremely hard read. For over 50% of the book he recounts his struggle back and forth with his faith...many times going back to the same sinful struggle that he had catalogued previously. This book covers his life from infancy, to his salvation and afterwards into his time in prison. As I said he clearly and laboriously recites all the infirmities of his fight against himself, Satan and the world. This is perhaps the most detailed of a man's sanctification process I have yet to read. In a world of easy believeism, Bunyan was having none of it. After his many trials with his heart and soul he is asked to be a preacher of the Word by the people of his area around Bedfordshire and after 5 years of this he was arrested and remained in prison for 12 years because he was not licensed by the Church of England to preach. From his autobiography, *"I confessed myself guilty no otherwise. Keel. Then, said he, bear your judgment. You must be had back again to prison, and there lie for three months following; and at three months' end, if you do not submit to go to church to hear Divine service, and leave your preaching, you must be banished the realm: and if, after such a day as shall be appointed you to be gone, you shall be found in this realm, etc., or be found to come over again without special license from the king, etc., you must stretch by the neck for it, I tell you plainly: and so he bid my jailor have me away."* It is during this time that he wrote this autobiography of his life and trial and imprisonment. It is also during this time that he began writing a more well-known work **Pilgrim's Progress** which would not be finished until after his second incarceration 2 or 3 years later. With as much fervor as he describes his perils of the faith he also describes his exultations of the faith and his

commitment to preach no matter what may come. As the justices sought to get Him to ascribed to the Common Book of Prayer (in other words, saying that the Church of England is the one true Church and you must be a part of it to be a Christian because the book of Common Prayer was almost equal to Scripture itself, in their minds) he masterfully undermines the arguments of these justices of the Law and the Church. In fact, his testimony before his accusers is perhaps the most important thing about this autobiography. While there is much here to emulate, like with Richard Baxter, his life was based totally in absolutes with no wiggles room over even non-essentials like the Book of Common prayer, which often put him at odds even with other orthodox Puritan preachers even other non-conformists. Also, after reading this it is obvious that his wife carried the brunt of his struggles throughout the early years with hardly a mention and then after he is arrested he realizes that he had not prepared for his family in any way to be able to deal with his absence. I get sacrifice...but I often wonder about how high to elevate the example of some of these men.

5. **A SHEEP REMEMBERS**, by Dr. David Calhoun (2021). I thought I really liked another contemporary book on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm- **THROUGH THE VALLEY: How Psalm 23 Gives Us Hope in Suffering**, by Rob Wootton (2021), (and I did and still do) but after reading Dr. Calhoun's book I was moved for a couple of reasons. First, for the fact that this was his last book written as his 30-year fight with cancer was coming to an end and second, because I knew this man who was a professor, friend, pastor, mentor and fellow sheep to me and literally thousands since so many have listened to his seminary material on line. He says at one point as he was writing this book, *"In the valley I learned the importance of joy, peace and patience."* In this book Dr. Calhoun not only captures us with his own testimony spread throughout these pages but also the words and works of so many others from the Puritans and Scottish pastors of the day like James Montgomery, John Bunyan, and M'Cheyne, through to modern day theologians and fellow sheep like Eugene Peterson, Bruce Waltke and J. Ligon Duncan. He opens each chapter with a song/poem or a rendition of Psalm 23 since so many have been so enamored by this Psalm for so long then he gives a couple of pages of commentary peppered with the voices of our church fathers some known to us others only known to church historians. In the ***"surely goodness and mercy"*** section of the psalm he teaches us, ***"Goodness and mercy follow me."*** *The Hebrew word translated 'follow' can be rendered more forcefully. Goodness and mercy pursue us, haunting our steps (think stalking in today's terminology), and these two will not let us out of their sight. We are chased, so to speak, not by enemies but by the goodness and mercy of God. Martin Bucer said this, 'People pursue happiness but happiness pursues the saints and those who entrust themselves to GOD himself.'* But then he moves on to a section called Sheep and Shepherds where we get this passage from a true shepherd's perspective followed by prayers and other quotations like, *"Psalm 23 is a song of trust that celebrates I Am's competence, not the sheep's efforts."* (Bruce Waltke), or *"The highest degree of faith is to be able to wait, sit still, and not complain (not something are by nature very good at) ...but Jesus loves to show the world that*

*his people can wait.*" (J.C. Ryle) then ending with his personal testimony that is tied into each section of the psalm. To read his personal testimony and how God has enabled him to endure the back and forth battle with cancer and treatments bring the book to life in ways that few others that I have read could. HIGHLY recommend this book. I have an extra copy to loan out because mine will be re-read often.

6. **STAR DIVIDE (ASCENSION SERIES BOOK 2)**, by Ken Lozito (2016). Well Kaylan, Zach, Katie, Hick's and the rest of our "merry" space travelers make it to Pluto after a few twists and turns which could have been the demise of the trip if it wasn't for ingenuity and good old fashioned luck. One of those "hiccups" lands Kaylan in command of Athena with a lot more questions than answers of how the commander gets left behind when the ship is swept up in what appears to be a black hole...which later turns out to be a portal through the "space time continuum". Also, it is confirmed that Kaylan is "special" (which we all saw coming, but it doesn't take away from the book at all...makes it more worth reading for me) One quote, *"Yet, they were determined. Kaylan, their commander, possessed the Mardoxian potential. He wasn't sure that she could deliver on what she'd promised regarding her abilities, but he wasn't about to let that chance slip away."* Ingenuity kicks in when Zach figures out what is "wrong" with the computer once they arrive ...somewhere they did not plan to be. Along the way a couple of romances spring up along with old jealousies to add a bit of intrigue as well as old rivalries read their ugly head. In order to survive, the crew of the Athena must explore an alien star system to find the species that summoned them. Upon finding them they also find themselves in the middle of a conflict that is much older and broader than themselves that could possibly one day endanger the earth...who by the way is unsure what has happened to them until another communication is received. From aliens or someone else can only be known if you read all the way through this fast paced and increasingly intriguing book. Ken really knows how to keep the attention of the readers with his writing style. I am definitely looking forward to **STAR ALLIANCE Book 3**.
7. **ACHERON REDEMPTION (Federation Chronicles Book 3)**, by Ken Lozito (Copyright © 2021). What a great ending to an exciting story. The characters continued to grow and expand causing me as a reader to want to be with them like friends on a journey. As a reader of Lozito's book you are really drawn into the events and wish you could help since you have a perspective (of separation from and still be with) that, "of course" would be helpful...but then they figure it out without you...and even with that you aren't let down you feel like the team has succeeded...even this team of galactic misfits in many ways with few exceptions. At the beginning of this book the author gives us this by way or reminder to us and his characters: *"Galactic historical excerpt. Personality Matrix Construct (PMC) was first developed by Miles Harding of the Acheron Confederacy to upload a person's mind to an Energy Storage System (ESS). With the help of a highly complex set of virtual intelligences, they manage the human consciousness to machine interface. PMCs augmented existing combat technology, vastly*

increasing their effectiveness, surpassing traditional cyberwarfare suites. PMC technology was first adopted by the Acheron Confederacy to push back against the tyranny of the Jordani Federation. But the technology couldn't be contained to one federation and spread throughout the galaxy. PMC degradation began to occur with alarming frequency where entire federations lost control of their most powerful warships. Rogue PMCs attacked civilian population centers across the galaxy in an ever-expanding tide of death and destruction, causing the Federation Wars. Once a highly decorated naval officer in the ACN, Grand Admiral Elias Browning was branded a traitor and war criminal. Browning was believed to be responsible for the corruption of PMCs and the Federation Wars. To cope with an increasing list of atrocities by PMC controlled fleets, galactic federations devoted their vast resources to the Sentinel initiative to create and repurpose existing fleets. Sentinel warships were operated by highly restricted versions of PMCs, whose only purpose was to hunt down and eliminate all PMCs from the galaxy." But by the end we see; "The Sentinels had all been destroyed. A few hundred PMCs had survived because they'd been serving aboard other Alliance ships that helped defend the core systems from the Sentinels. They continued to serve on Alliance ships, but some had elected to have new bodies grown and their consciousness transferred into them. However, many of the surviving PMCs wanted to stay just as they were but with a cybernetic avatar similar to the one Quinton had used. Alliance engineers had been able to reproduce the avatars and were in the process of moving PMCs into their new bodies. They could be so lifelike that Simon suspected most would remain in those avatars for a very long time." The one question that wasn't answered to my liking is why Miles Harding turned evil? We are left to extrapolate that his PMC was defective somehow that the more power he sought the more humanity that was lost to the point that even his closeness to Admiral Browning fell apart. Not sure how satisfying that answer is...but it is an answer. But all in all a great trilogy. (Or quad-duplet...is that even a word? if you include the prequel.)

8. **ALL OF GRACE**, by Charles Spurgeon (Digitalized by Monergism 2015). To put it simply, this little book presents a comprehensive teaching on the subject of God's grace... specifically salvation by God's grace alone. He basis his thesis, if you will on many passages but he refers continually to Eph. 2:8-9. "Hold you on to this one fact— '***In due time Christ died for the ungodly.***' (Rom. 5:6) This truth will not require from you any deep research or profound reasoning, or convincing argument. There it stands: '***In due time Christ died for the ungodly.***' Fix your mind on that, and rest there." God's grace toward His own is so guaranteed and continual as he says, "I WANT YOU TO NOTICE the security which Paul confidently expected for all the saints. He says—"Who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the kind of confirmation which is above all things to be desired. You see it supposes that the persons are right, and it proposes to confirm them in the right. It would be an awful thing to confirm a man in ways of sin and error. Think of a confirmed drunkard, or a confirmed thief, or a confirmed liar. It would be a deplorable thing for a man to be confirmed in unbelief and ungodliness. Divine confirmation can

*only be enjoyed by those to whom the grace of God has been already manifested”* And so much of our being able to experience this grace on a continual basis is based on our on-going repentance. *“How am I to know that I am forgiven except I know also that I am turned from my former sinful course? To be a believer is to be a penitent. Faith and repentance are but two spokes in the same wheel, two handles of the same plough. Repentance has been well described as a heart broken for sin, and from sin; and it may equally well be spoken of as turning and returning. It is a change of mind of the most thorough and radical sort, and it is attended with sorrow for the past, and a resolve of amendment in the future.”* This is such an encouraging book that I have taken to re-reading every couple of years just to read the confirmation of what Scripture says...because this is no way is his opinion, but a fact that he easily and simply proves in this little book...and to be encouraged in the faith...especially in these days of Covid and fear mongering that is so prevalent today in our culture and the cultures of the world.

9. **REJOICE AND TREMBLE: The Surprising Good News of the Fear of God**, by Michael Reeves (2021). We all know that fear is one of the strongest human emotions. It is also one of the subjects that often confuse us as Christians. How are we to understand the fear of the Lord as a good and necessary thing when fear of something is defined by needing to run away from that fear. The Church is often so confused that many times we pass over it or refuse to talk about it making IT the problem. ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,” wrote Solomon (Prov. 1: 7), for the fear of the Lord gives believers a knowledge no natural-born genius ever has. Since Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, mankind has chased a particular sort of knowledge: knowledge without God. But the more we have pursued that knowledge, the more filled with fears we have become. We tremble at the terrifying size of the universe and despair at the dark complexity of the human psyche. Without God, more knowledge has not meant more happiness and satisfaction; it has left modern man feeling adrift on a vast sea of fears. At the same time, all that long quest for knowledge has left us profoundly ignorant: ignorant of the Maker and so the very logic of reality, and ignorant of who we are and who we were made to be. Wrote Calvin: ‘The greatest geniuses are blinder than moles! Certainly I do not deny that one can read competent and apt statements about God here and there in the philosophers, but these always show a certain giddy imagination. As was stated above, the Lord indeed gave them a slight taste of his divinity that they might not hide their impiety under a cloak of ignorance. And sometimes he impelled them to make certain utterances by the confession of which they would themselves be corrected. But they saw things in such a way that their seeing did not direct them to the truth, much less enable them to attain it!... Human reason, therefore, neither approaches, nor strives toward, nor even takes a straight aim at, this truth: to understand who the true God is or what sort of God he wishes to be toward us.’”*** Too many have said that the Bible is confusing at best on this subject but Dr. Reeves following in the long line of others like Charles Spurgeon, John Bunyan and John Flavel has shown us in his book that it is not the Bible that is confusing but our influence of our modern

definitions that confuse us. So Dr. Reeves wants us to have a working definition of the correct fear of God so he puts it this way, “A *working definition of what it is to Fear the Lord*. - How easily we can mistake the reality of the fear of God for an outward and hollow show! As Martin Luther put it: “To fear God is not merely to fall upon your knees. Even a godless man and a robber can do that.” Scripture presents the fear of God as a matter of the heart’s inclinations. So, reads **Psalm 112:1- “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!”** The one who fears the Lord, then, is not merely one who grudgingly attempts the outward action of keeping the Lord’s commandments. The one who truly fears the Lord greatly delights in God’s commandments! In other words, fear runs deeper than behavior: it drives behavior. Sinful fear hates God and therefore acts sinfully. Right fear loves God and therefore has a sincere longing to be like him.” This book is not as readable as Dane Ortlund’s book, **GENTLE AND LOWLY**, in this series from Union School of theology in Oxford, but what it has to offer is worth the work to get through it. The purpose for both of these books is for believers to experience a deeper enjoyment of the relationship they have been given through Christ.

10. **THE POOR DOUBTING CHRISTIAN DRAWN TO CHRIST: Wherein the Main Hindrances Which Keep Men from Coming to Christ Are Discovered, with Special Helps to Recover God's Favor**, by Thomas Hooker (1645, 1845 and then digitally in 2020) Always a pastor at heart, even though he was also one of the greatest Puritan/Reformed theologians of his time, he writes this book first and foremost to give aid and comfort to his patron’s wife. Francis Drake was his patron and benefactor in Surry, UK, before Hooker comes to America. Drake’s wife was under the impression that she had committed the unpardonable sin and she could find no ease for her conscience or peace for her troubled mind until Thomas Hooker began to deal pastorally with her. This book came out of his successful efforts in dealing with Mrs. Drake’s troubled soul. And it has been printed and re-printed for all the troubled souls since that seem to listen to the voice of Satan sometimes over the true voice of God about our true condition... not the one that Satan, the one who will actually suffer in the fiery pit for eternity, tells us. He speaks of the wiles of Satan while at the same time speaking to our own depravity through sin and pride that impacts on our unwillingness to turn to Christ. Hooker is very frank; he holds nothing back and certainly does not beat around the bush. Hooker looks to draw the Christian towards understanding that the foundation for the believer’s assurance must rest in the merits of Christ’s death and resurrection on their behalf. They must look to him. But how will they look to Christ when so many doubts and difficulties attack and weaken their faith? One of the greatest hindrances a Christian has walking with God comfortably, is their fickle nature. He has some GREAT points that really speaks volumes. Some would contend that he doesn’t have the same pastoral tone as someone like a Spurgeon because he doesn’t deal delicately with sensitive matters. But for me this speaks more to our day and age because most need to hear the truth in love. It may sound harsh but each word is said out of love and concern for God’s sheep. Take a listen to his style, “*How a man shall be trained up, that he may get the skill of living by faith.*”

*'Lord,' says my soul 'why shouldn't I have that mercy, supply, and succor?' Says Justice, 'You are a sinful wretch, and have wronged me.' Says Anger, 'You deserved to be plagued; and therefore you shall feel the smart of my displeasure.' But now faith lays hold upon the riches of the 'freeness of God's mercy in Christ;' and in Him, Justice is satisfied, and Anger appeased for all. And now mercy is purchased for all, and mercy triumphs over justice; and faith takes hold upon and overcomes God himself, if I may say, with a holy, humble baseness of heart.'*

Then the last few chapters deal with how to read, understand and hold onto the promises of God found in the Bible. By far the best part of this book.

11. **HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE**, by J.K. Rowling (1998). The first time I read this I had found it for free on Kindle and each time since I continue to find it to be a fun read and freeing. I try to read these every couple of years with the last time being 2019 and finishing the series in 2020. It is not the literary masterpiece in the same vain as **The Lord of the Rings**, but it masterfully written to draw a person in and keep them wanting more. It is a story of great courage, strength, loyalty, and sacrifice. The eleven year old Harry and his cohorts, at great sacrifice to themselves, find themselves seeking to keep Hogwarts safe from unknown forces when they discover that Lord Voldemort a dark wizard/spirit is behind the mischief leading towards an unknown nefarious purpose. Hogwarts quickly become Harry's home...a real place to belong so when given the challenge he doesn't back away though much of what he accomplishes at this early age can be contributed to "luck". Though as He grows it will become more and more evident that this youngster is full of courage and loyalty and fortitude. I am a fan of the movies so it seemed fun to pick up this free book. I have found out some things that were left hanging in the movies that may answer the whole question as to why things proceed as they do...specifically that Voldemort cannot be killed until or unless he takes on human form... and encountering him even in a less than powerful state isn't pleasant ...but that is enough for now. *"Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself."* *"Yes, sir. Well, Voldemort's going to try other ways of coming back, isn't he? I mean, he hasn't gone, has he?"* *"No, Harry, he has not. He is still out there somewhere, perhaps looking for another body to share . . . not being truly alive, he cannot be killed."* Harry's relationship with the headmaster Dumbledore keeps Harry sane and strong and secure. Fun stuff and only 322 pages or so.
12. **HARRY POTTER AND CHAMBER OF SECRETS**, by J.K. Rowling (1998 then digitally by Pottermore 2015). Young Mr. Potter is growing into his own, however still struggling in his person, with Ron and Hermione and Malfoy and Filch and a scary character from 50 years ago teaching him about such things as Pure bloods, Mud bloods, and Squibs. The mystery in this one takes the reader to a point of stress. But through it all Harry is also trying to discover where the voices are coming from, that only he can hear, and why his scar burns so...and when he finds out he comes face to face with his arch rival, in a place that most people didn't believe existed...again, but in a different form from the one that he had



already encountered (a bit of time travel and magic all rolled into one). And, of course, in the end saving the day once again. It is so nice to have great endings where the hero wins over evil...since so much of our days seems to have evil triumphing...or is that what we think we see...just like Harry, Ron and Hermione. One of my favorite quotes so far, *"It only put me in Gryffindor," said Harry in a defeated voice, "because I asked not to go in Slytherin. Exactly, said Dumbledore, beaming once more. Which makes you very different from Tom Riddle. It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities. Harry sat motionless in his chair, stunned."* This book was a slow read the first time through because I was expecting more...but the character development that I noticed the second and now third time through is wonderful. All in all with great anticipation even the third time through I push on to the **Prisoner of Azkaban.**

13. **HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN**, by J.K. Rowling (1999). I love how this book opens, *"Harry Potter was a highly unusual boy in many ways. For one thing, he hated the summer holidays more than any other time of year. For another, he really wanted to do his homework but was forced to do it in secret, in the dead of night. And he also happened to be a wizard."* Harry is learning a lot...the hard way...through extreme difficulty and trial...which is how most of us learn the lessons that matter...the ones that stay with us forever. Harry meets someone he never expects to meet and the outcome is beyond his wildest dreams. The prisoner of Azkaban gives Harry much more than he bargained for. Harry comes face to face with his past in this book and comes out wiser and stronger than ever before...and happier I might add, with a lot more chocolate. Chocolate, it seems, helps cure everything...something that I have always wondered about but never had confirmed. Even if this a wizarding world thing...I'll take that recommendation... This book takes many twists and turns and keeps your attention from start to finish and your heart is warmed by its outcome. Dumbledore says to Harry near the end, *"You think the dead we have loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don't recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that particular Patronus? Prongs rode again last night."* As we end the book it sounds like it will be a pretty good holiday after all with an addition that adds to the Dursleys fears...but dark clouds are rising on the horizon.
14. **HARRY POTTER: THE GOBLET OF FIRE**, By J.K. Rowling (2000). Harry is excited...he gets to go to the International Quidditch Cup...leaving behind the Dursleys for the summer and getting to hang out with his "family" the Weasleys but then things turn for the worse...as you would expect because of the trouble that follows *"the boy who lived."* So begins another turbulent but "fun" account of the on-going life of the young and maturing wizard Harry Potter. The antics of Ron, Hermione and he continue to explore the wizarding world revealing that there is a nefarious force alive and well in their midst. And then there is the Triwizard Tournament...aka the Quad-wizard Tournament taking front and center on everyone's mind especially since Harry is now one of the champions. In the

midst of this event is the lot of them getting thrown out of the kitchen by the house-elves taking offense to Hermione trying to “free” them from their lot. She has started S.P.E.W., which stands for the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare or as Ron will later call it, *“the House-Elf Liberation Front”*! And then comes the Christmas Ball...oh, the learning that goes on there for these young teenagers in a more “innocent” time. What fun...what intrigue...what sadness and along the way from beginning to the end life lessons abound from this book for Potter and his entourage, such as, *“If you want to know what a man’s like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals.”*, along with revelations that will shake, sharpen and solidify the wizarding world at its core. Professor Dumbledore says *“I say to you all, once again—in the light of Lord Voldemort’s return, we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. Lord Voldemort’s gift for spreading discord and enmity is very great. We can fight it only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open.”* Not to over spiritualize, but Christians would do well to remember this same thought concerning our fallen nature and the influence of Satan in these last days.

15. **HARRY POTTER: THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX**, J.K. Rowling (2003). Harry’s days as a student at Hogwarts’s School of Magic seem to be numbered. No one from the Ministry of Magic wants to listen to what he has to say...in fact, they want him out of the picture all together, hence the entrance of the Dementor’s who are called up by (**Spoiler Alert:** Delores Umbridge) to do him in since he was seen by the M of M as trying to undermine their authority. When that fails...those around him that he trusts most seem to not want to listen him as well...so as usual he seeks to take matters into his own hands. In fact, there was so much of this that it becomes annoying as you read. You sit there and say most of the things Harry has dealt with in his young age have been more than most adult or even wizards and witches will ever have to deal with...so the fact that he may be traumatized and act out should not come as a surprise. But even those who were with him for some of it seem to be saying to him “Get a grip, mate.” Even after the trauma of Cedric’s death and Voldemort’s return the adults (the adults of the Order as well as those who are against the Order and don’t want to admit the obvious) around Harry act as most adults are prone to do: (1)They over protect and keep the one traumatized out of the loop...(2) They seek to deny the event by not talking about it at all... delegitimizing the account of the one traumatized...(3)They even go so far as to either call the person a liar because they don’t want to admit the truth of the event or they make the victim feel guilty in how they interpret the event. Or maybe, (4) Dumbledore new he should have said something sooner but kept putting it off thinking, at the time, it would be better for everyone especially Harry. In fact, the book is full of people taking things into their hands and taking others for granted without regard for the consequences which leads at least in one case to a dire ending. (We lose an important character in this book!) There are a few moments where we see the trio (Harry, Ron and Hermione) stopping and maturing beyond themselves (they are pre-teens and teenagers after all) with

Neville, as they discover what happened to Neville's parents and where they are (something the Harry had discovered the year before in Dumbledore's office.) However, in the end, there is always Dumbledore with a calming effect even when Harry doesn't want to be calm any more. At one point Dumbledore says to Harry, *"There is no shame in what you are feeling, Harry, said Dumbledore's voice. On the contrary . . . the fact that you can feel pain like this is your greatest strength."* This would have reminded Harry of another talk that he and Dumbledore had said where Harry discovered the differences between him and Lord Voldemort. As usual this book has a number of twists and turns that keeps the reader entertained and spellbound (pun intended). This book is almost 900 pages long but felt like one of the much smaller ones because of all the action and intrigue throughout.

16. **HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE**, by J.K. Rowley (2005). As Harry moves into his sixth year his power continues to grow...but is it enough? Even in the midst of a war that has spilled over into the non-wizarding world life goes on at Hogwarts where we find Harry struggling with himself...his temper and his feelings for a particular red-headed girl. A Potions book and a new professor are a great distraction for Harry and the gang but the "fun" also comes with great tragedy as the book comes to an end. Lord Voldemort is growing stronger as is Harry's relationship with Professor Dumbledore as they seek together to unravel Lord Voldemort's weaknesses if there are any. Dumbledore's wisdom even comes forth as Harry and he argue, *"Ah, Harry, how often this happens, even between the best of friends! Each of us believes that what he has to say is much more important than anything the other might have to contribute!" "I don't think what you've got to say is unimportant, sir," said Harry stiffly. "Well, you are quite right, because it is not," said Dumbledore briskly.* The professor also gives Harry great encouragement when he says of Harry; *"You are protected, in short, by your ability to love!" said Dumbledore loudly. "The only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort's! In spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven, when you stared into a mirror that reflected your heart's desire, and it showed you only the way to thwart Lord Voldemort, and not immortality or riches."* This relationship reaches its climax when the student must carry the Master, *"I am not worried, Harry," said Dumbledore, his voice a little stronger despite the freezing water. "I am with you."* Now death has found him from a number of avenues and Harry remains resolutely comforted by Dumbledore's words to him, *"It was important, Dumbledore said, to fight, and fight again, and keep fighting, for only then could evil be kept at bay, though never quite eradicated. . . ."* Harry has come of age... a year early and knows what he must do! Snape a half-blood? Lord Voldemort has been exposed to be a half-blood already. Men of power telling lies about their own heritage to make themselves feel better do evil things...but Severus Snape?!? *"Tobias Snape was a Muggle from what it said in the Prophet."* *"Yeah, that fits," said Harry. "He'd play up the pure-blood side so he could get in with Lucius Malfoy and the rest of them. . . . He's just like Voldemort. Pure-blood mother, Muggle father . . . ashamed of his*

parentage, trying to make himself feared using the Dark Arts, gave himself an impressive new name—Lord Voldemort—the Half-Blood Prince—how could Dumbledore have missed—?” And what is this, treasonous behavior for Draco Malfoy (as if we are at all surprised) and Snape once again stepping in to “keep him safe”....but was it for Malfoy or for Dumbledore? This is yet another long book (over 650 pages) but the action is seemingly non-stop for Harry, Ron and Hermione as they seek to discover the coming and goings of the usual culprits Malfoy, Snape and of course, Lord Voldemort. ...heading into the **Deathly Hallows**.

17. **HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS**, by J.K. Rowling (2007). The war looms on. Hogwarts will be attacked and almost destroyed...but enough of the spoilers. There will be friends and foes who perish along the way but the climax and the end of this one brings you to a crescendo and closure. The heart of Book 7 is a hero's mission--not just in Harry's quest for the Horcruxes or is it Hallows, but in his journey from boy to man. Here Harry faces more dangers than are found in all six books combined, from the direct threat of the Death Eaters and Lord Voldemort, to the subtle perils of losing faith in himself. It seems as this book sums up this whole story line that readers would do well to remember Dumbledore's warning about making the choice between *"what is right and what is easy,"* and know that Rowling applies the same difficult principle to the conclusion of her series. She takes us on a journey in this book between the dark and dangerous honor and dishonor, contempt and reconciliation, love and loss and right and wrong. It is in this book that you will find the answers to hotly speculated questions about Dumbledore, Snape, and Lord Voldemort, but Rowling's skill as a storyteller is revealed in that even the most astute and careful reader will be taken by surprise even after multiple readings. There is an interesting exchange of note between the main characters that really got me thinking, *"But even if we wreck the thing it lives in," said Ron, "why can't the bit of soul in it just go and live in something else?" 'Because a Horcrux is the complete opposite of a human being', says Hermione. Seeing that Harry and Ron looked thoroughly confused, Hermione hurried on, 'Look, if I picked up a sword right now, Ron, and ran you through with it, I wouldn't damage your soul at all.'* *'Which would be a real comfort to me, I'm sure,' said Ron. Harry laughed. 'It should be, actually! But my point is that whatever happens to your body, your soul will survive, untouched.'* said Hermione. *'But it's the other way round with a Horcrux. The fragment of soul inside it depends on its container, its enchanted body, for survival. It can't exist without it.'* I am always interested by how fiction, as in this case, mirrors the truth....for our body may die but our soul lives on. This book has been, as all the books, a fun read and enlightening as well...the themes that work best have always been creation, fall and restoration and they are evident throughout these books and especially this one. Another long book (almost 800 pages) but a page turner to be sure. Again, thank you J.K. Rowling for a good month of reading. Such a classic story. One that I will visit time and again just like this time...but I don't remember if this is the second or third time...it is so fresh each time.

**18. STAR ALLIANCE (ASCENSION SERIES BOOK 3), by Ken Lozito (2016).**

Kaylan and the crew of the Athena are bent on making sure that Zack is still alive. There is no evidence that he died from last time and she is convinced he is alive but her “special” powers aren’t working. Kladomaor can’t let the humans fall into the hands of the Xiiginns so he openly opposes any type of rescue mission...but thankfully cooler heads prevail. Because Zach has been captured and is being tortured and basically left to rot with alien mutants that result of the Xiiginns experimentation to create a mutant military force. This story takes many twists and turns as the crew of the Athena break off on their own to save Zach once it has been determined he is still alive. But in the meantime it is evident that Zach is not simply a computer hacker but also an able “soldier” when in crisis especially for the life of others...and in this case he knows he has information that needs to be sent back to earth so that they can be ready to deal with the Xiiginns when they come...so that battle to be rescued or find a way out is on. Along the way old “feelings” between Zach and Kaylan are confirmed thus giving each of them added incentive to “find” one another again. Do they? Does Zach get away from the pit? How does this progress? It and so much more are packed in this action packed book of on-going delight for the reader of Ken Lozito’s works. For there is yet another adventure to go on before these folks can go back to earth. On to the next in the series, **INFINITY’S EDGE**.

**19. INFINITY’S EDGE(ASCENSION SERIES BOOK 4), by Ken Lozito (2017).** The series continues with our merry band of displaced humans and the Boxan’s stealth ship heading off to what they describe as Infinity’s Edge...the end of space as they know it, possibly out of phase with the known universe, to find a civilization that is seemingly long gone - the Drars. *“That part of space is out of phase with where we are. Chances are the Athena is just inside it.” ‘Infinity’s Edge,’ Kladomaor said. ‘Until they come out the other side, at least,’ Gaarokk replied. Ma’jasalax stopped speaking to Ezerah and came over to them. ‘What’s Infinity’s Edge?’ Ezerah asked. ‘We use the Cherubian drive to create a wormhole to cross vast distances of the great expanse. If we were to change our trajectory upon entering the wormhole, we would begin to shift from our current position but never reach our destination. No one really knows where those ships go when that happens. They’re lost,’ Gaarokk said. Ezerah frowned. ‘But we’ve changed our trajectory inside wormholes before.’ ‘Correct, but never when we first enter them. It’s also the reason why we can’t go backward out of a wormhole,’ Gaarokk said.”* The Boxans have adapted some of their technologies...namely the Star Shroud that is to keep out undesirable species or to shield developing species...like humans safe and under everyone else’ radar. They each have come a long way, being separated along the way, but in the end they find what they were looking for...or so it seems. That is when things get weirder than they have been. Athena and her crew are allowed to come into the space port of what they believe was made by the Drars...but there are no beings...just an unhelpful AI. The Xiiginn show up at inappropriate times probably led their by one of the Athena crew who knows he is under their influence...and a battle begins here and then once they leave this star system to head back to earth they “jump” right in to middle of

another battle with no weapons - they cannot help until...Zach finds a way! Oh and the Xiiginn have found earth as well. Will the powers on earth come together to survive or not? These is continual buildup of the characters who are extremely interesting, funny and engaging, but the story line is getting a bit stale...some part a bit long...feeling like, if this had been a movie large sections could have been left on the cutting room floor. But the characters are engaging enough to move me on to the next book in this 6 book series **RISING FORCE book 5.**

**20. RISING FORCE (ASCENSION SERIES BOOK 5), by Ken Lozito (2017).**

Tensions are rising as Zach and Kaylan uncover a massive cover-up that involves the Boxans and those they left behind on their home planet Sethion. At the time, leaving them behind was necessary because they didn't know of the survivors who were and who weren't under the Xiiginn influence. They had to insure their survival...but now this survival at all cost mentality is getting in the way of actually persevering their society as the resources on the planet they are on are running out and they aren't doing much out of fear of discovery by the Xiiginn. Kaylan and her mind force draws some necessary conclusions and the gang along with Kladomaor and his troops pull off a daring and bold move to get the Boxans to move off their security first initiative. They find themselves in a battle for their lives and the lives of a few hundred thousand Boxan refugees on Sethion that they have come to rescue. While all this is going on, which seems to be solidifying the connection between the Boxans and at least this earth crew of the Athena, Mars Arden has survived and devised a plan to deal with the Earth even if most all of his force was decimated...there is only a lone group of astronauts and technicians that can come to the aid of the earth at this time...not much in the form of appreciable combat force. Can they stop Mars Arden and his group from making it to Earth? Can they convince the earth to get behind the Boxans enough to kick the Xiiginn out? On to the last book in this series **ACSENSION BOOK 6.**

**21. ASCENSION (ASCENSION SERIES BOOK 6), by Ken Lozito (2018).**The Confederation lead by the Xiiginn have a plan to "liberate" Earth from the Boxans. The plan is to use all their assets that have been brought under the Xiiginn Influence to marshal all their spaceships into a grand armada to go to the earth system and plow through the Star Shield surrounding the earth system that Zach constructed. Like all tyrants, the leader of the Xiiginn, Garm Antis, believes it is his destiny to rule the universe already devising who among his own people that will have to be done away with for his plans to succeed. Meanwhile back on earth Mars Arden loses all of his troops to an ambush set up by Ed Johnson from Dux Corp...but of course he gets away and stows away on the battle-carrier Lincoln as He seeks to go the Confederation Space station so that he can become the lone ruler of the universe in opposition to his boss Garm Antis. Now at the same time, let's just say that Zach has taken Athena on a mission to stop the Armada as well leaving behind the rest of the crew and Kaylan deep in negotiations with other groups to join the Alliance against the Xiiginn. After initial shock, all parties decide to try this Alliance out and they as well go to meet the Confederation before they jump to the earth system. They have discovered many things about Athena and

Athena has discovered many things about “herself”. The AI continues to evolve to the point that she willingly sacrifices herself in order to stop the Xiiginn...but is she really gone? The last and “final battle was a bit lack luster as is all of his space battles. He could take a lesson on space battles from his friend Jay Allen...but the battles aren’t really the “thing” in these books but people...and this has been a very good series that will keep me reading his material after I finish a few other things down the road.

**22. CREATION AND CHANGE: GENESIS 1:1-2:4 IN LIGHT OF THE CHANGING SCIENTIFIC PARADIGMS**, by Douglas F. Kelly (2017). This is a revised work

from an earlier book written in the 90’s seeking to clarify somethings said then as well as update the arguments with current scientific detail. Kelly will expertly make the point that anything less than a Confessional 6-day Creation stand leaves the door open to all sorts of interpretation from the Gap theory that sought to accommodate the culture at the time to various forms of theistic evolutionists taught by Enns, Walke, or Collins in the Reformed traditions today - seeking once again to accommodate the culture and science where science needs to accommodate the Scriptures - since they and they alone are the only real paradigm of truth! There are many extremely helpful “discussions” on the various current disputation on Creation and evolution found in this book and it is extremely readable...but make no mistake it is an academic writing to academics and those who wish to be able to teach clearly from a position of clarity rather than obscurity. For someone who didn’t need to be convinced of the biblical position of God’s creation he further enlightened me with so much more teachable material for when I teach Genesis again...or simply teach on the creation account so that I can “arm” those being taught with the right kind of ammunition to discuss this subject cogently. He is an expert in this subject so he can say without hesitation, *“So far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that: (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of twenty-four hours we now experience; (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the Biblical story; and (c) Noah’s flood was understood to be world-wide and to have extinguished all human and land animal life except for those in the ark. Or to put it negatively, the apologetic arguments which suppose the “days” of creation to be long eras of time, the figures of years not to be chronological, and the flood to be a merely local Mesopotamian flood, are not taken seriously by any professor, as far as I know. To summarize, liberal scholars of both 19th and 20th centuries admit that the text of Genesis is clearly meant to be taken in a literal, historical sense, although they deny its claims to speak accurately to our space/time cosmos. A large percentage of conservative evangelical scholars refuse to interpret the Genesis text in its plain historical or literal sense in order to accommodate it to the premises of the reigning world view concerning origins. It is the contention of the present volume that neither approach does full justice to the truth claims of Scripture nor makes sense of the actual cosmos. This diverse interpretative*

*agenda must be openly addressed in any serious attempt to do justice to the teaching of the Word of God on creation.” You have to love this type of certainty. And he will support this claim throughout the book, especially concerning evangelical and reformed scholars. He does this expressly well by letting another expert on this subject speak in chapter entitled **Supernatural Creation of Man: The Historicity of Adam and Eve**, by Dr. Richard P. Belcher, Jr. And the last chapter on the Sabbath Day is almost worth the price of the book alone. It is not long (380 pages plus or minus) though it can be slow reading especially through some of the paper and books he quotes from leading liberal scholars. A great and helpful read for all who desire to solidify a most basic of truth and doctrine.*

**23. THE TRUE BOUNDS OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM**, by Samuel Bolton (1645 and digitalized by Monergism) This is an extremely helpful book concerning the much debated discourse concerning the law and the gospel. Most everyone wants to pit these two at odds but Rev. Bolton takes the biblical position of how they relate and encourage the Christian in our purpose to glorify God. Better than I can, he says, *“We have given our opponents a fair trial, having been willing to hear the utmost they could say. Our examination of the questions on which we differ is comprised under six queries, namely,*

- 1. Whether our being made free by Christ frees us from the law,*
- 2. Whether our being made free by Christ delivers us from all punishments or chastisements for sin,*
- 3. Whether it is consistent with Christian freedom to be under obligation to perform duties because God has commanded them,*
- 4. Whether Christ’s freemen may come into bondage again through sin,*
- 5. Whether it is consistent with Christian freedom to perform duties out of respect for the recompense of the reward,*
- 6. Whether the freedom of a Christian frees him from all obedience to men.*

*These will be the main inquiries. Opinions contrary to those here expounded will be debated in a friendly manner and plainly confuted. My main aim is to convince the judgment, not to irritate the affections, lest while I seek to be helpful to grace, I might render service to sin, and while I endeavor to lead men to holiness, I should stir up men’s corruptions, and so run in vain. I have sought, therefore, to deal with principles more than persons, and rather to unveil errors by means of argument than by naming them. It is my earnest desire that what is here made obvious to the eye, the God of truth would make evident to the heart, and that He would give to my readers and myself sound judgment, that we may be able to distinguish between things that differ. May He guide us in the ways of faith and obedience,*



*enable us to serve Him while we live, smile upon us when we die, and after death take us to Himself. This is all I desire for myself, and the least I desire for my readers.*" This book fully expositis this subject going beyond what most of us would even consider necessary. But he never wavers from his point of how understanding this doctrine is pivotal to be strong in the Lord. Just under 300 pages long...but the arguments can get a bit tedious even if they are helpful.

**24. LET US WORSHIP GOD: Why We Worship the Way We Do, by Derek W.H.**

Thomas © 2021. Every category from the local church, Sunday school, the regulative principle through to music, the sacraments and the benediction shows that you really don't want anyone else teaching you on this aspect of worship in today's church. This book is so rich and inspirational showing us his heart for God's people and the desire that we worship as God has set forward for it is in this that we will best fulfill our purpose of glorifying Him and enjoying Him. He says emphatically, ***"Jesus only has one plan, and its called church! ***"I will build my church"* (Matt. 16: 18).***** The author of Hebrews exhorts his readers, ***"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near"* (Heb. 10: 24–25).** Christians are meant to assemble together, especially on the Lord's Day. They are meant to worship together. Theologians speak of the ***"visible"*** church: the church that is made up of all those who profess to be Christians. Paedobaptists include children in this definition. The point is its visibility. It is not a secret society. It has a certain structure. It is made up of people who believe certain truths and live out a certain lifestyle. They do things together in a manner that is purposeful and sets them apart. And one important reason for a visible assembling of God's people is to worship God in a manner prescribed by Scripture. During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 when churches across the entire world "shut down," they didn't cease to be visible churches. Churches are not defined by buildings. Meeting online may be irregular, but it is not illegal. The author of Hebrews hardly envisaged the internet, but virtual worship in seasons of extremity do meet many of the objectives of worship. The purpose of this book is to examine the nature of this collective, corporate worship. The church exists for Him... The nonattendance of some that the author of Hebrews writes about reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of what the church is supposed to be. Some were neglecting corporate gathering. The word "neglect" is the word "forsaken" used by Jesus on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15: 34). Some had forsaken the church, cut off all connection with it, viewing the church as nonessential and irrelevant." Church was never meant to be a spectator sport...biblically, theologically and also philosophically. This is the book to give out when people want to know what true biblical worship is too look like. Only thing that would make this book better would be a study guide of 3-4 thought provoking questions at the end of each chapter. It won't be long before I re-read this one again.

**25. PRAYING TOGETHER: The Priority and Privilege of Prayer in Our Homes, Communities, and Churches**, by Megan Hill (2016 by Crossway).

This book is excellent on the subject of praying ...literally everywhere. Megan journals for us her own experiences as a child where she learned and was taught how to pray by her parents and this learning continued into the many churches she has attended from to mega-church to the small rural church of maybe 20. God had something to teach her about prayer in each place which she masterfully shares with us here in the book. The Scripture she intertwines with story clearly illustrate each of her points. She is insistent that prayer is the “life-force” of every Christian. She says, *“But the Bible gives us an entirely different picture: God tells us what to want, He bids us to ask him for it, and He promises to answer. If prayer is ‘an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will,’ then there is a necessary correlation between what God wants, what we want, and what we ask for. Our desires can be—must be!—trained by God’s desires. Jonathan Edwards famously said, ‘Undoubtedly that which God does abundantly make the subject of his promises, God’s people should abundantly make the subject of their prayers.’ What God has promised to do, we should together ask Him to do.”* She encourages us in congregational prayer...something that the Church has gotten away from in the last few decades. She also highlights the need for leaders to lead in this as well. *“Here, I will plead for two things: substantial, elder-led prayer in corporate worship and regular, public prayer meetings in church life. In order to facilitate those, I will also address two important, practical issues: first, how to pray while someone else leads and, second, how to lead while others pray. Brothers and sisters, in the words attributed to Martin Luther, ‘Let us pray—in the church, with the church, for the church!’”* The questions at the end of the book linked to each chapter are worth the price of the book alone and this ought to be a book used in every church going forward to call the church back to prayer in our homes, in our communities and in our churches. Again, a book I will read again.

**26. A PLACE TO BELONG: Learning to Love the Local Church**, by Megan Hill (Copyright © 2020 Published by Crossway). I love these words from Karen Hodge (if you don’t know that name, ask a woman in this church), *“Megan Hill encourages us to think biblically about the church rather than just experientially or emotionally. This book celebrates our ‘blessed belonging’ that is our privilege as God’s covenant people. It is also an accessible tool to prepare us as his bride as we await our bridegroom’s return.”* Again this book just like **Praying Together** (see above) actually catalogues for us Megan’s experience in the church through the years. Her theology of the church complements her experiences and the scriptures throughout this book. She highlights many aspects of the church and their benefit for us. *“Our holiness is not merely personal. It is also the foundation of our corporate identity as the church. The surprising thing about the Bible’s testimony is that the word ‘saints’ does not single out exemplary church members, or church members whose gifts and graces are only of a particular variety. In fact, in biblical terms,*

there are no individual saints. In its sixty appearances in the New Testament, the word is always plural and always used as a description of all the Christians in the church. The corporate people of God are, for example, **‘the saints at Jerusalem’ (Rom. 15: 26), ‘the saints who are in Ephesus’ (Eph. 1: 1), ‘the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi’ (Phil. 1: 1) and ‘the saints who are in the whole of Achaia’ (2 Cor. 1: 1).** We are not lone saints, haloed marble statues standing aloof on separate hills; we are corporate saints, members of a holy company, and most truly the holy ones only when we are viewed together. The pews—or benches or chairs—of every church in every age in every part of the world are filled with people in different stages of spiritual maturity. We worship with people whose Bibles are tattered with use and people who still need help to find the Minor Prophets. We join our prayers with people who have been praying fervently for a lifetime and people who are just learning to pray.” We are always pointed in the direction of our personal growth and as you can see by this quote Megan points us toward how we grow well...corporately! Yet, another quote that highlights this for us...because I don’t think it can be highlighted enough, **“Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matt. 12: 46–50)** With this pronouncement, Jesus redefines his Israelite hearers’ understanding of family in three ways. First, he places a high value on spiritual family, making it clear that his biological family is welcome to join them but can’t expect to be preferred above them. His hearers expected him to prioritize his biological ties; Christ prioritizes his spiritual ones. Elsewhere, Christ even teaches that when a conflict arises between loyalty to biological family and loyalty to Christ and his family, the Christian must always align himself with Christ (**e.g., Luke 14: 26**). Jesus next expands the perceived boundaries of this spiritual family, including everyone whose life—regardless of genetics—is marked by sincere godliness. Finally, he establishes his own centrality in the family, pointing his disciples to **“the will of my Father”** and naming them **“my brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12: 50)**. This passage makes clear that the people of God are not primarily or necessarily the descendants of Abraham or Isaac or Jacob. They are the family of Christ. Our membership in this spiritual family is an essential part of our Christ-purchased identity and an important fulfillment of God’s family promises to his old-covenant people. The story of the early church in the book of Acts reveals this truth.” Again the questions at the end of the book are exceptional and ought to be slowly digested and answered before others in the church.

27. **WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?: Understanding the Basics**, by R.C. Sproul (2005, 2016). This is an immensely helpful book. I read this book when it first came out in 2005 and thought I needed to give one of these to as many people as I could...and I tried to make that happen. R.C. deals with this subject/doctrine in a way that no one else in his generation did. This book is called and introductory book to Reformed theology, and it is, but many will pick this up and find it to be academically thorough as well as delightfully readable

all at the same time. R.C. had a way of writing that made his audience feel like he was talking to them without “dumbing down” any of his points. In fact, he gives a bit more than average because he expected more of Christians than most writers do today. This book documents this theology which is rooted in the doctrines of grace - which are summarized by the 5 points of Calvinism. The wisdom of R.C. comes through from beginning to end, *“People reject the natural knowledge they have of God. This rejection, however, does not annihilate either the revelation or the knowledge itself. The sin of mankind is in refusing to acknowledge the knowledge they have. They act against the truth that God reveals and they clearly receive.”* I had forgotten this major point that drives much of the discussions in theology of today, *“Religion is anthropocentric; theology is theocentric. The difference between religion and theology is ultimately the difference between God and man—hardly a small difference. Again, it is a difference of subject matter. The subject matter of theology proper is God; the subject matter of religion is man. A major objection to this simplification may arise immediately: Doesn’t the study of theology involve the study of what human beings say about God?”* I had forgotten how soundly he speaks out against Arminianism and semi-Pelagianism, *“Roger Nicole has declared, ‘We are all born Pelagians.’ Conversion to Christ does not instantly cure us of our Pelagian tendencies. From the earliest days of our conversion, our Pelagianism is reinforced on every side. We brought it with us out of paganism, and the secular world around us reinforces it with the humanistic view of human freedom and inherent goodness. In the church we are widely exposed to Arminianism, which has had American evangelicalism in a stranglehold since the days of Charles Finney. During the controversy over justification in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther wrote a controversial work entitled The Babylonian Captivity of the Church. This book likened the Roman Catholic church to pagan Babylon of antiquity. If Luther were alive today, I suspect he would write a book entitled The Pelagian Captivity of the Church. Though Arminianism is more properly speaking a variety of semi-Pelagianism, the ‘semi’ is a thin patina. The essence of Pelagianism is retained in semi-Pelagianism, and it is carried through into Arminianism and, to a degree, into Dispensationalism. ‘The most significant difference, at least in the long run because of its impact on theology as a whole dividing Dispensationalism and Reformed theology, may be the different views of regeneration. According to Dispensationalism, when the Holy Spirit regenerates a person, nothing really happens to effect change in the person’s constituent nature. In the Dispensational view, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer but may or may not change the believer’s nature. The believer must cooperate with the indwelling Spirit to effect the changes that should accompany sanctification. This makes it possible for the believer to be in a state of grace and remain a ‘carnal Christian,’ one who receives Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. Though the believer should embrace Christ as both Savior and Lord, it is possible for the believer to submit to Christ only as Savior. There is an intramural debate among Dispensationalists on this point. Some argue that the believer will inevitably submit to Christ as Lord, but not necessarily immediately. The*

*person may, at least for a time, remain carnal.*" This book belongs on every Christian book shelf or in their Kindle list as a reference and a reassurance.

**28. HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD: Part 1&2**, by J.K. Rowling (2017). This story begins 19 years after Voldemort is destroyed by Harry... the Boy Who Lived. We walk into a serene world without the fear of Voldemort... or is it? Not all things are as they seem and not all things are as good in Harry Potter's world as he would like to think. Adulthood is harder than he thought but he and Ginny and the kids, James, Albus and Lily are making a go of it. Albus Severus Potter is having a hard time walking in his dad's shadow. So he links up with a youngster by the name of Scorpius...you guessed it...Malfoy and they become best friends. But life in a Harry Potter world cannot remain even slightly sane so as usual it is going to get worse as the scar starts to hurt again and the possibility of Voldemort's return becomes evident... because of the actions of the Cursed Child. Dumbledore makes occasional appearances in old Headmaster portraits and, of course, gives Harry his regular speeches about how important it is to love. *"Harry, there is never a perfect answer in this messy, emotional world. Perfection is beyond the reach of humankind, beyond the reach of magic. In every shining moment of happiness is that drop of poison: the knowledge that pain will come again. Be honest to those you love, show them your pain. To suffer is as human as to breathe."* This play script is easy to follow and the story is compelling even if there is a lot of time travel involved. The present fuses into the past and along the way we are allowed into some of the happening pre-Harry's infant encounter with Voldemort in Godric Hallow. It is 336 pages of sheer fun just like the other books.

**29. THE TALES OF BEEDLE THE BARD: A HARRY POTTER HOGAWARTS LIBRARY BOOK**, by J.K. Rowling (1st published in 15<sup>th</sup> Century by Beedle the Bard...and throughout time ever since...this edition by J.K. Rowley in 2008). As the edited addition states, *"Beedle the Bard lived in the fifteenth century, and much of his life remains shrouded in mystery. We know that he was born in Yorkshire, and the only surviving woodcut shows that he had an exceptionally luxuriant beard. If his stories accurately reflect his opinions, he rather liked Muggles, whom he regarded as ignorant rather than malevolent; he mistrusted Dark Magic, and he believed that the worst excesses of wizardkind sprang from the all-too-human traits of cruelty, apathy, or arrogant misapplication of their own talents. The heroes and heroines who triumph in his stories are not those with the most powerful magic, but rather those who demonstrate the most kindness, common sense, and ingenuity."* The book also gives a good explanation of itself, **"THE TALES OF BEEDLE THE BARD"** *is a collection of stories written for young wizards and witches. They have been popular bedtime reading for centuries, with the result that the Hopping Pot and the Fountain of Fair Fortune are as familiar to many of the students at Hogwarts as Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty are to Muggle (non-magical) children. Beedle's stories resemble our fairy tales in many respects; for instance, virtue is usually rewarded, and wickedness punished. However,*

*there is one very obvious difference. In Muggle fairy tales, magic tends to lie at the root of the hero's or heroine's troubles—the wicked witch has poisoned the apple, or put the princess into a hundred-years' sleep, or turned the prince into a hideous beast. In The Tales of Beedle the Bard, on the other hand, we meet heroes and heroines who can perform magic themselves, and yet find it just as hard to solve their problems as we do.*" These are the tales that I have been wanting to read again as they are so often referenced in the Harry Potter books that I just finished reading for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. Some are just children's tales with life lessons in them but some like the "*The Warlock's Hairy Heart*" are downright gruesome in its ending. (In Dumbledore's commentary he says that most wizarding parent wouldn't allow their little wizard's or witches to read this story until they were old enough not to get nightmares). Interesting, like so many things in life we see complainers about content that gives Muggles too much of accepted status for some of the "pure-blood" families which Professor Dumbledore states in his notes on each story, that there really aren't any pure-bloods anymore; those who claim that status are perhaps some of the most mixed in the wizarding world, like the Malfoy's and even Tom Riddle-better known as ...Lord Voldemort. One of the best parts of this short read is the commentary of Albus Dumbledore at the end of each story. Even JKR's own commentary on Dumbledore's commentary, "*The reason for any omission lies, perhaps, in what Dumbledore said about truth, many years ago, to his favorite and most famous pupil: "It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution."* Whether we agree with him or not, we can perhaps excuse Professor Dumbledore for wishing to protect future readers from the temptations to which he himself had fallen prey, and for which he paid so terrible a price. J.K. Rowling 2008 A NOTE ON THE FOOTNOTES Professor Dumbledore appears to have been writing for a Wizarding audience, so I have occasionally inserted an explanation of a term or fact that might need clarification for Muggle readers.—JKR—" A good read for all those who are devoted fans.

30. **THE ROAD TO SHANDARA, THE SANFANARION ORDER, BOOK 1**, by Ken Lozito (2014). Aaron Jace is from Earth but most of his family is not and now those who are not from earth are dead. Wow, you begin this book in a whirlwind and it continues drawing you in as you move through it seeking to discover its secrets. In some ways this is a combination of **Harry Potter**...for its apparent magic, **The Lord of the Rings** ...for the quests and Aragon like character and Star Wars with its Force. The Heir of Shandara, if that is who he is, has been trained from a little one on Earth to fight a battle on another planet and in different dimensions. His grandfather has given him skill that he wasn't aware of and he inherited a sensitivity that puts him in touch with literally every living thing around him. That sensitivity is actually his "super power"...his Force, if you will. He goes from university in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America to Sanfara, the planet of his origin, with a new last name. He is of the family "Alenzar'seth" and he has to learn all about who and what that means on his own...well almost of his own. He has two companions along this journey...Zeus, his

grandfather's wolf-dog...and a spirit banished between worlds in a dimension that he will find himself fighting in over and over again, I suspect. This planet is ruled by an evil he doesn't yet understand but one he is meant to fight and it seems it hasn't always been this evil ...or has it. Men being men in any galaxy leads even "good men" to do things for "the greater good" they wouldn't normally do. Can Aaron rise above the corruption in this Middle-ages-ish setting...where magic and forces unknown by mortal men seem to rule the day...but what or who is behind it all. There is so much more here than seen by the naked eye...so Aaron will need his special strength to discern how to move forward. This character is a compelling one and though this might sound a bit far-fetched once again the author masterfully puts it all together for the enjoyment of the reader.

**31. ECHOES OF A GLORIFIED PAST: THE SANFANARION ORDER, BOOK 2,**

by Ken Lozito (2014). Well...surprise, surprise...it turns out that there is no "magic" as far as I can tell in this series. The power source that appears in many kingdoms of Sanfara that appeared to be magical were actually crystals that came from outer space in a meteor that crashed into the planet decades ago. The people learned how to harness the energy from the different colored crystal (shades of the left over hippie culture of the 80's with their "power crystals"). They use them for lighting their houses, businesses and streets. They use them to power what little industry they have along with airships...yes airships...held up by balloons and power with small engines. They are also used by some as teleportation devices taking people long distances from where they began. The Elitesman have also learned how to weaponized them into power grenades. The whole Jedi-Force thingy is still at play as an elite group of people have learned to tap into the "energy"...the Force...the life source of the people and the planet and use this for evil (think the Dark side) or for good (Aaron and the Sanfanarion Order side). Then there is yet another group there – The Hythariam- the Hythariam appeared human-like, their slightly larger golden eyes, almost feline, were nothing short of otherworldly and they are, in fact, refugees from another world. Their world was dying and their people were divided so they found a way to leave and prevent to horde from following them...but that prevention is beginning to breakdown. And...of course, they DO have advanced technology and they are too dependent upon it. This is where Aaron steps in as a bridge since Earth had some of the same technology but at the same time he was taught how to use his senses. The Drake is on the rampage and it has Sarah. Aaron and his band of merry men must fight their way out of the city of the High King, enemy of Aaron, with hopefully a way to save Sarah. The truth is "life will find a way" and the Drake, a humanoid turned nanite enhanced monster, is defeated and when that happens the life of a loved one from Aaron's past come out just before death. Along the way we will find out if Aaron's efforts to save Sarah, the love of his life, pan out...will life find its way in this situation? (**Spoiler Alert:** There is a huge reveal about the relationship between Earth and Sanfara.) This book is mostly about Aaron being driven to find a way to save Sarah but he "stumbles"

upon some helpful insight along the way that may save the whole planet from utter destruction...but that is yet to pan out in book 3.

**32. THE WARDEN'S OATH**, by Ken Lozito (2014). This is a great little book (40-50 pages depending on source). You would almost want him to write a whole book on Braden- one of the companions of Aaron- but also one of the order of the De'anjard of Shandara, sworn protectors of Shandara's ruling elite. Shandara, now sits in ruins, but when Braden grabbed the relic of the past, he had a vision of the city, "*The city was pristine was pristine again with marbled columns lining the way to a grand brazier. The flames flickered, and floating above them, was the black war hammer with golden runes carved on one side and a dragon upon the other. A spike was opposite the face, and the heft ended in a three-pronged claw. It wasn't so big as to require two hands to lift it, at least not for Braden. "Claim the war hammer, Warden of the De'anjard", whispered a voice. The Wardens were a sacred group within the De'anjard, reserved for the most senior of the order.*" These were specialists serving the ideals of the order and enforcers of its discipline and it was into this order that the hammer placed him. This was a great honor and would have been a great shock as he and his brother Eric had been learning how to control the force but they weren't quite there yet and since entering the city of the High King, Eric had been killed for the sake of the mission. This "book" is the re-telling of the story of how he came into possession of the hammer and how it enabled him to defeat 7 Elitesmen and kill the one that killed his brother. The time frame of this book is roughly in the middle of the second book as they are seeking to rescue their friends from the Elitesmen who had kidnapped them to interrogate them concerning Aaron but is left untold until the author saw the need to give us "extra" footage, if you will...an extended version to the original that gives gravitas to the side mission as well as strength to the whole book. It is written so well...action packed, funny, and heart-warming all at the same time.

**33. AMIDST THE RISING SHADOWS: THE SANFANARION ORDER, BOOK 3**, by Ken Lozito (2014). War is coming from a couple of fronts and Aaron begins this saga as a prisoner of a dying planet with it being completely uncertain how he will get out of this one to save Sanfara. The High King has gone over to the complete dark side and must be stopped and then there is Halcylon, the general of the Hythariam faction called the Zekara...both want control over this world for different reasons and nothing but the annihilation of the people of the planet will suit either one of them. Enter the Heir of Shandara who has found his way back with the help of a mysterious force which will remain unseen throughout the rest of this book. This force, yet another faction, is set on getting his revenge on the crazy Hythariam general, so Aaron and him...whoever he is... have a common cause there and a common enemy. As I said, Aaron has returned but many are left with the question if he is Aaron and then there is a mysterious deformed man who keeps showing up unannounced. Well, Aaron is finally revealed after much pain and



struggle. The war begins in earnest with the High King while the Zekara watch and learn their enemy. Sarah gives great insight into the power that Aaron wields when she says, *"You fight with honor. My father won't, and neither will Halcylon. 'We can't fight if we don't have hope. I won't become like them.' Aaron said. 'Do you think that they didn't believe the same thing or something similar at one time or another?' Sarah asked. 'This is a burden shared by anyone, whether they are king or queen or just your everyday average person.' 'You're right, this is a burden shared by all. Desperation has a way of sapping the souls of men, and once you make a compromise on one thing the next becomes easier, until one day you find yourself doing despicable things you never would have thought you would be doing. That is what Colind is trying to warn you about, my love.'"* Queens and Kings are made by such wisdom. The action never stops in this series and I can't wait to move on to the last book in the series, it seems; **HEIR OF SHANDARA, BOOK 4.**

34. **HEIR OF SHANDARA: THE SANFANARION ORDER, BOOK 4**, by Ken Lozito (2015). Wow...what a wild ride this has been...from beginning to end. Halcylon seems to be able to control all the Forsaken for his purposes and Aaron and his people can't get an edge up no matter what. Then on top of that there is this mysterious young man that shows up to "help" them with the infection problem but everything about him is so elusive and yet he is so much like Aaron in so many ways. The battles rage...Rexel is lost, along with hundreds of smaller villages with their people being turned into the Forsaken...the Zekara seem to be winning this battle for Sanfanar and Aaron and the order are not getting the help that they need...until... Well, let's say the eagles don't save them as in the Lord of The Rings but the Eldarin do in some many unforeseen ways. There is also an army inside the army of the FNA that they were unaware of until an old friend points out to Aaron how willing they are to fight if only he would call them forth. Baden and His men do their best as well as Sarah even pregnant with twins. At the end of the day the war is won and Halcylon is ... **(spoiler alert: captured and held)**. The ending is as powerful as the rest of the book filled with technology and "the Force". The action never stops in this series though this phase is over, and I can't wait to move on to the next series in this story line, the **Broken Crown Series: Haven of Shadows.**

35. **EMPIRE REBORN, Blood on the Stars Book 18**, by Jay Allan (March, 2022). It is wonderful getting back with old friends Tyler Barron and Andi... Jake and Stara ... and Atara... seems like it was yesterday that they were fighting that "final battle" with the arrogant Highborn. And the action hasn't stopped because the Highborn are battling 2 fronts and the main front is not against the humans. We have an old rival who has become an ally...the Warrior Alliance from even farther off the Rim and then the enemy turn ally, the Hegemony. The Hegemony had had the same "sickness" of superiority that the Highborn have but not quite as ruthless, since they were able to come to their senses but not until the Highborn attacked and made their desire to

conquer and subjugate all humans everywhere. Interestingly enough, this is something that the true enemy of the highborn cannot allow. And who is this enemy that the Highborn has never met in over 400 years of struggle against them? The Mules... they have lived some 40,000 years since the fall of the First Imperium. The mules were created by Earthers, who after they had been locked in Imperium space defeated the 1<sup>st</sup> Regent, began to grow and experiment. An original group were constructed of 116 individuals were created by Hieronymus Cutter and Ana Zhukov with the use of Ancient (the original builders of the First Imperium which the Regent was “protecting”) DNA and human DNA...they are called Mules in this society because they cannot naturally reproduce on their own. But war is not over. A second Regent rears its ugly head and the Mules help the humans defeat that regent as well. This is from the **Crimson World Refugee Series** which, doing the math tells us that humans have been out here in space for a long long time...and this war is one of many and those heroes are from a long line of heroes. So it is basically 40,000 years between the folks of the **Crimson World** and **Crimson World Refugee Series** and this one, **Blood on the Stars**. We also find out that it was the Mules who created the races of the Hegemony and the Highborn originally as an experiment, and the Highborn have become defective causing great consternation among the Mules who now must eradicate them. Achilles, one of the original 116 and a few hundred others...for some though immortal have died out throughout millennium...set out to fight and destroy this defective creation that they have allowed to live and spread its chaos too far. Especially now as they are threatening the humans with extinction - something they swore would never happen so long ago to their human friends. Will they be able to help the Humans defeat the Highborn fleet that is set on their total annihilation? What will become of the humans and the Alliance and the hegemony going forward? And the Mules? The twists and turns of this...the battle sequences...the intrigue ...all of it literally keeps you on the edge of your seat the whole time reading. A masterful conclusion to a long but exciting series.

36. **THE FORGOTTEN TRINITY: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief**, by James R. White (1998 and then digitally in 2012). I had heard of this book for years. I have seen it reference in many other works on the Trinity so when it came up on Kindle Unlimited it seemed time to read it. I am now ashamed that I hadn't read this book before so that I could recommend it to those struggling with the doctrine of the Trinity...understanding the Godhead. This short book (less than 250 pages) is so academic that it may be hard to get through this by the novice but I am left to wonder if that wasn't its purpose...to make us work for a credible understanding of this mysterious doctrine and truth. He states, *“I write as a Christian theologian and apologist. A Christian apologist is a person who gives a defense, a reason for the Christian faith. As a Christian apologist, I have often undertaken to define, and defend, the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. I do not intend this book to be an exhaustive defense of the Trinity. There are all sorts of objections I simply will not address, not for lack of desire*

*to do so, but for another more important reason. It is my desire that this work function to introduce, explain, and make understandable a doctrine that, while at the center of our faith, is often ignored and misunderstood. I am attempting to explain and, as a result, cause Christians to love and understand the doctrine of the Trinity. I do provide some responses to the common objections raised against the truth of the Trinity, mainly through the use of endnotes, but if I allowed too much of the “debate” to enter into the work itself, I would lose the very audience I so desire to see fall in love with the Trinity.”* He says this and at the same time makes it clear that the Bible is the best interpreter of the Trinity, “*Do you see how the faith of the New Testament is an implicitly Trinitarian faith? None of these passages say, ‘Now, the doctrine of the Trinity is this . . .’ Nor do they need to. When you write to a friend, you don’t start every letter by introducing yourself and going back over every shared experience you’ve had. No, there is an entire body of shared experiences and beliefs that form the background of such a letter to a close friend. In the same way, the early believers spoke easily of Father, Son, and Spirit without giving the slightest indication that they found anything strange in joining these divine persons in the one work of salvation and in the edification of the church. It was simply natural for them to speak in this way. That is why B. B. Warfield wrote, ‘The whole book is Trinitarian to the core; all its teaching is built on the assumption of the Trinity; and its allusions to the Trinity are frequent, cursory, easy and confident.’”* The fact that we need other books to help us understand is really a testament to the fact that we (the Church) has complicated this truth. This book takes us back to the text to make the necessary point of the Trinity. Highly recommend this book. Actually, truth be told the book ought to be purchased for the study notes!

37. **INFINITY (First Colony Book 13)**, by Ken Lozito (2022). The plot focuses on the fact that the Ark II has not been heard from since entering the Zeta-Alpha star system and Noah, Sean, a team of regulars, including Kara, Noah’s wife along with CDF troops go off in the new I-Drive engine...cutting the ten-year mission down to 2 months...to discover what happened to the Ark II crew and colonists. The Ark II was sent out while the Krake wars were going on to hopefully save the human race if the folks on New earth failed in bringing the Krake to its knees...which, of course, they did. They get to the planet and are hit with all kinds of impossible situations that seemingly are impossible. On the planet, looking for the exploratory crew that includes Lars Mallory they encounter even more problems than in space...or do they? The alien species they thought they might meet turns into something entirely foreign to their thinking. Can communications be established before time runs out? The plot line on the planet is a lot thinner than the one going on in space trying to save the colonists. So much so that everything is actually rapped up within the last few pages. Having said that though, all ends well as you would expect...but there is sufficient action, drama and humor to keep you reading through to the end even if you have already figured out the outcome. Upon returning to New earth Noah and Conner are debriefing and we have this brief exchange, “The

Uvai, a planetary-spanning intelligent fungi,” Connor said. “That really doesn’t do them justice. After the terror, the whole experience was really quite amazing. We’ve received some reports from the second colony, and they’re having regular contact with the Uvai. I don’t know if I’d say it was easier communicating with them than the Ovarrow, but I will say it was definitely different, says Noah.” These have been and are extremely well written with a great balance of intrigue and humor. I hope He does keep writing. On to number 14?!

### 38. **OF THE BLESSED STATE OF GLORY WHICH THE SAINTS POSSESS**

**AFTER DEATH**, by Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680, (digital Copyright © 2020).

This is perhaps the most exhaustive and exhausting (longest 300 page book that I have read in a while) commentary on the State of the believer after death. He literally takes every Scripture to support all the benefits of being a believer and what we possess after death. Having said this, it would make a great reference book as he has sectioned off all the parts to be considered and the digital copy allows for you to go to the section you need extra teaching on...especially in this day and age when so many do not even begin to realize the benefits of being a believer let alone the benefits possessed by us after death. His main text is **Rev.14:13- “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’”** Though he also expounds ad infinitum II Cor. 5; Rom. 8; John 11:25-26; Heb. 11 as well as innumerable others. He states, *“The soul is blessed who dies in the Lord, because in that very hour Christ admits him into the actual possession of the eternal inheritance which he had purchased. It was this reception which Stephen prayed for: Acts 7:59, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.’ And he not only receives it into his own bosom, but he brings it to God, and presents it to him with a joy infinitely more abounding than can be in us. So that then it is that Christ is glorified and rejoiceth in us, and so we may be said rather to die to the Lord and his interest than to ourselves.”* In Hebrews 11 he makes a great point to keep us grounded in the realities which he so painstakingly seeks to prove, *“Heb. 11:13, there is this clause, ‘These all died in faith.’ Why is that so specially put in? For it had been said, that whilst they lived, they had professed that they sought another country, and desired a heavenly, verses 14, 16. But over and above, you see, it is added, they died in the faith; because, upon their deaths it was, that God promised their entrance into that heavenly country, and they accordingly in dying believed to enjoy it, which they had here seen afar off, but by faith, and pursued after but by desires.”* In concluding this monumental work, he says, *“I take it, the promises unto the overcomers at the close of every epistle to the seven churches, are for the most part, if not all of them, made concerning the blessed state of the souls of saints in heaven, and in Christ’s kingdom afore the day of judgment, which I shall now describe to you, from particular instances concerning the state of a believer’s soul departed, collected for the*

*most part out of the book of the Revelation.*" While it is tedious it is rewarding as all things worked for usually are.

39. **HAVEN OF SHADOWS: Broken Crown Series BOOK 1**, by Ken Lozito (2017). This is (supposedly) the first book in the **Broken Crown trilogy**, a sequel to the **Safanarion Order series**, which just like the first series is an epic fantasy that features fast-paced action and a breathtaking world of high adventure of "magic stones", technology and the use of the "force" ... (which I am sure the author would not like my comparison but it is very similar to how the Jedi can manipulate the life force around them even calling on the "fathers" for of old. But having said that it is not a tiresome tale seeking to make money on the back of Star Wars...the series and the events and the people are very engaging as is most of Lozito's writing. In this book we are re-introduced to the crown prince Bayen Jace. (if you read the **Safanarion Order series** first you will know what I am talkig about.) This Bayen is not that much different than the last Bayen and really not that different from younger version of his father Aaron Jace. This book opens with his bad choices causing the disruption of a mission and the near death of his closest friend. This has been a habit so the Order takes direct action and brings him before them in trial and then to jail for his reckless and endangering actions once again. Well, as with all good stories there is more going on than the escapades of a spoiled brat prince and after he "escapes" from prison, his journeys place him in direct conflict with a Shadow organization known as the White Order - run by an even more shadowy Mistress with immense power to control the life force... (think the Dark Side of the Force). Bayen is linked up with the unlikeliest of companions for this "quest" and they learn to work together to uncover those in the Shadows and while they are not all defeated the work up to this point keeps the reader on the edge of his or her seat. There really is something for everyone in these books if you are attracted to sci-fi fantasy. It's been 4 years since the first book came out...I really do hope he completes the trilogy.

40. **WALK BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH: LISTENING TO MARTIN LUTHER ON HOW TO BE A TRUE THEOLOGIAN**, by Joshua Nickel (Copyright © 2017). Luther put it this way, *"This is a key to becoming a true theologian: realizing that your struggles are theological and that the solution, and the victory, are theological as well. In Christ, you are free from the need to justify yourself—not always before others, but before God. Until you begin to appreciate this freedom, you will never realize how much you used to try to justify yourself."* Joshua Nickel takes us into the classroom of Luther when he gave to his students his teaching on the letter to the Galatians exposing himself to them concerning his own struggles with sin and the law and his own redemption through the gospel of Christ. This is not a fiction but what the author does is give his readers a sense of Luther being before us and teaching us with the help of other sources, but primarily using Luther's own words as if we were there. He does take some license to commentate on certain areas to make sure we understand Luther's train of thought but for those of us who

have read both the full version of Luther's commentary to the Galatians as well as the more abridged one written from 1931, we will find this to be an excellent further abridgement to help understand the main points of Luther's thoughts on Galatians. To his students and us, we hear Luther speak, *"Now, maybe the devil can't persuade you that you are going to hell when you die. But he will settle for less. He will still try to make you ineffective in this life. He will try to make you unsure of yourself, fearful and insecure. He will seek to rob your witness of its boldness and power. You are not immune to these kinds of struggles of conscience. They will come. You will have to fight these spiritual battles, and I have some advice on how to win. Nobody is really winning these fights. Nobody was really experiencing the joy of their salvation on a regular basis. One reason for this is that they have not struggled in the afflictions of conscience like I have. The peace of conscience that most Christians experienced is shallow, it isn't battled-tested, and it isn't built for endurance."* Then the author says, *"We can certainly listen to his advice in this regard. For example, read the following quote from Luther and see if it isn't relevant for much of the church today: 'Who would have thought that the Galatians, who had learned such sound and pure doctrine from such an excellent apostle and teacher, could be led away from the Gospel so suddenly by the false apostles. I repeat: it is easy to fall away from the truth of the Gospel because even the faithful do not grasp what an excellent and precious treasure the true knowledge of Christ is. Therefore, they do not work as hard as they should to experience it and keep it. Most of those who hear the word are not exercised with any cross or affliction; they are not wrestling against sin, death, and the devil but are living complacently, without any conflict. Such people, because they are not tested by temptations and therefore are not armed with the Word of God against the devil's tricks, never feel the power of the Word. Indeed, while they are among faithful ministers and preachers, they can follow their words and say as they say, persuading themselves that they perfectly understand the doctrine of justification. But when those preachers are gone, and wolves in sheep's clothing have replaced them, what happened to the Galatians happens to them—they are suddenly seduced and easily turned back to weak and miserable principles. A dull conscience is not the same as a clean conscience. We may seem, even to ourselves, to be at peace, while far below the surface our consciences are suffering in silence.'"* This book's purpose is to get us to look at ourselves so we can fight the daily fight of faith. By becoming a true theologian—one who studies God daily—it sets us on the right path and prepares us for the fight ahead.

41. **GLORIOUS FREEDOM: THE EXCELLENCY OF THE GOSPEL ABOVE THE LAW**, by Richard Sibbes (1639 and the digitally by Monergism Books 2022). The rest of the title is this: **Wherein the Liberty of the Sonnes of God is shewed. With the Image of their Graces here, and Glory hereafter. Which affords much Comfort and great Incouragement, to all such as Begin Timely, and Continue Constantly in the wayes of God.** This is one of Richard Sibbes most encouraging books to be sure. And it is timely to have

been “published” digitally for this is a book that many in our depressed era would do well to read and read thoroughly. For he spares no encouragement- for the Gospel is so full of encouragement for those who believe that we have forgotten because we all too often digress back to the Law. He says these things, *“The more we see the grace of God in Christ, it diminisheth a spirit of fear, and puts into us a spirit of love and boldness. For it presents to us in Christ, full satisfaction to divine justice, that when we offer Christ to the Father whom he hath sent and sealed for us, God cannot refuse a Saviour of his own sending and sealing, and appointing to satisfy his justice. Therefore, we go boldly to the throne of grace. It is a marvelous privilege that we see God clearly in the gospel, with open face, with a spirit of boldness, the veil of ignorance being taken away. For the sight of God to a conscience that is natural, and is not convinced of the mercy of God by the Spirit, it is a terrible sight.”* Encouraging us further he says, *“Is it not, as I said, a glorious thing for a man to have that peace in him that passeth all understanding, that shall settle and quiet his soul in all tumults in the world? When all things are turned upside down, for a Christian to stand unmoveably built upon the rock: whence comes this glorious pitch, but from grace? Grace and peace: one follows another. Then for a man to have inward joy and comfort in the midst of afflictions and disconsolations in the world, it is a wonderful and a glorious thing. It is called 'joy unspeakable,' 1 Peter 1:8, and 'glorious grace,' 2 Cor. 3:8. Therefore in regard of that that follows it, in this world it is glory.”* And one last thing, *“There is nothing so excellent as grace, and nothing so base as sin. Indeed, there is nothing base but sin; and nothing excellent but grace. So that God's children, not only in their glorious riches and prerogatives to be the sons of God and heirs of heaven, are glorious, but they have an inward glory. 'The spouse of Christ is glorious within,' Ps. 45:13. I beseech you, let us take heed how we trifle away our time, these precious times and blessed opportunities; for if we labour not to get out of the state of nature into the state of grace, and so to be changed from glory to glory, God in justice will curse the means we have, that in hearing we shall not hear, and seeing we shall not see, and he will secretly and insensibly harden our hearts. It is the curse of all curses, when we are under plenty of means, to grow worse and duller. Oh take heed of spiritual judgments above all others, tremble at them. They belong to reprobates and castaways. Let us labour for hearts sensible of the mercies of God in Christ, and labour to be transformed and moulded into this gospel every day more and more. That that hath been spoken shall be sufficient for this time, and for this whole text”* The wisdom and compassion this man had for the flocks of God transcends time. I only wish more people today would read him well for their encouragement and edification.

42. **BLESSED: Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Revelation** by Nancy Guthrie (Crossway 2022). This has to be the best book of Revelation that I have read since I read Michael Card and Scotty Smith's first book on Revelation **UNVEILED** **HOPE: Eternal Encouragement from the Book of Revelation.** Why? Because of them are devotional in nature. If there is one thing our culture within and without the Church needs right now is a good understanding of what is going on and where it is

all going and the book of Revelation is the place to go. Nancy does her normal due diligence in exegeting the text...as she says she has been taught well that she might teach. Well, this book definitely is timely in that way, to help all of her readers not just navigate the book so feared by many but to help us devotionally be changed by this wonderful book of hope with the mysterious title Revelation. She says at the beginning, *"We need to see this world, and our lives in this world, through the perspective of heaven. We sometimes foolishly assume we have all of the data we need to evaluate what is happening in our world. But we don't. Our perspectives are limited by our humanity and our earthly vantage point. In the book of Revelation, we find that a curtain was pulled back for John so that he could see beyond the time and space of this earthly life into the heart of ultimate reality. He was enabled to see what is happening in this world, not from the perspective of this earth, but from the perspective of heaven. As we take in what he saw, we find that we are better able to see the true nature of things. Rather than view this world's offerings as attractive, from heaven's perspective we can see how ugly and unsatisfying they are. Rather than seeing the persecution of a faithful believer as a tragic defeat, we're able to see it as a glorious victory."* She paints a picture throughout this book of hope and comfort staged within the actual events of this world that are anything but hopeful and comforting. She reveals to us that Jesus is revealing to His own who are also in turmoil at the time that He obviously is in control and that His plan...a plan forged in eternity past with the father and the Spirit will proceed just as it was meant to. To wit: when talking of the letters to the 7 church she says, *"those seven churches in Asia in the first century; the entire passage is a letter to you and me today. Jesus says to you and me: 'I know you. I know the good and the bad. I know what needs to happen in your life. I know what I'm preparing for you, and if you will treasure my promises, you will not regret it.'" This statement sums up the point of Revelation for her in so many ways, "So it is important that we know what has actually been promised to us; what we can rightly expect as we live our lives in this world as those who profess the name of Christ. And he hasn't left us in the dark regarding what we should expect. Right before his crucifixion John records that Jesus told the disciples that he was going away and he told them exactly what they could expect in the time in between his ascension and his coming again. He told them that they were going to be hated and killed. **"In the world you will have tribulation," he said. "But take heart; I have overcome the world"** (John 16: 33). That's not exactly what we were hoping for, is it? No one can ever say that Jesus was not honest about what those who are joined to him by faith can expect as we live our lives in this world for him. Anyone who tells you that you can have your best life now, and suggests that this is the message of the Bible, is lying to you. Jesus, however, is the faithful witness. Jesus tells us the truth about what we can expect as we live our lives in this world in this in-between time—this time in between his ascension and return."* Praise be to God for such faithful followers as Nancy Guthrie and that God uses her to enable His Church to grow for His glory.

43. **THE FEET OF JESUS: In Life, Death, Resurrection and Glory**, by Philip Bennett Power (originally 1872, digital edition by Hardpress 2017). Much of this seems to have digitalized off a microfiche scroll, so much of the imperfection like spelling and headings have been lost. In fact, at some points you lose whole paragraphs. But that should not deter the avid reader for the majority of the text while obviously from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century is quite readable and contemporary. I was first made aware of this author last month through an article that I was reading by Joel Beeke. This author and his works (which seem to be pretty extensive, though not much of it has been preserved) had been unknown to me



before. Even today, there is not much about him except his surviving works as this brief introduction that I copied off the Internet displays: *Philip Bennett Power (1822-1899) entered the ministry of the Church of England in 1846. He served congregations in Leicester, Holloway (in London), and Worthing until 1865. During the last 34 years of his life he was an invalid.* The book itself gets to the heart of our faith by focusing on starting at the feet of Jesus. Joel Beeke writes about this book, “***The Feet of Jesus*** is a virtual manual of spiritual growth; it pulsates with Christ-glorifying insight, spiritual comfort, and practical guidance. Power's book unveils as do few others the inestimable value of Jesus and His work both in His humiliation and exaltation. If you would grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus, pray for Mary's portion to sit at the feet of Jesus as you read this book.” Throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus, numerous people felt the weight of this world's misery and sought comfort at the feet of the Lord. In this book, Rev. Power analyzes several texts of the Bible that mention the feet of Jesus and shows the consolation found in each. Because the feet of Jesus passed through the valley of the shadow of death and came out triumphant, those who fall at the feet of Jesus can be assured of His sympathy and rest in His all-sufficient care. At whose feet could we possibly fall that would supply such sustaining strength? There is none and he makes the point extremely well for all to see-and many did-as during his lifetime and after his works were widely disseminated. In fact, one of the many who fall at Jesus' feet, the last the Apostle John he dwells on and says towards the end, “*And now that the apostle lies prostrate at the feet, shining like unto fine brass, as though they burned in a furnace; we ask, 'of what use would it have been to Christ, to the Church, to himself, had he been allowed to remain there?' That falling had its place, and the apostle rose from the feet of Jesus a deeply self-emptied man, to receive for His Church the fullness of the things He was about to reveal.*” His main point is this: we must find ourselves at the feet of Jesus before we can be called to rise. His feet like the head are both worthy but until we are brought low we can never rise to look into the face of our Savior.

- 44. THE ART OF DIVINE CONTENTMENT: In Modern English,** by Thomas Watson 1660, Copyright © 2017 by Jason Roth into modern English. This is yet another work that falls under the heading **Christian Classics for the Modern Reader**. I am finishing up another of his translation works from John Owen entitled **Temptations**. I have read the original of this work and commented on it here in my list on some year, but this one is even better because the author has made it so much easier to read without taking out any content. It is not so modern, though, as to lose any of its original authority and clarity of the author. I never tire in reading of how each author in their times considers their times to be the worst of times, for the reign of sin has been that pervasive since the Fall. He says, “*Certainly, never since the dawn of Creation did this sin of discontent reign (or rather rage) more than in our times, and never has God been more dishonored. You can hardly speak with anyone, but the passion of their tongue betrays the discontent in their heart. Everyone lisps out their trouble, and here even the stammering tongue speaks too freely and fluently. If we do not have what we desire, God will not have a good look from us. Instead, we are presently sick from discontent and ready to die from our moods. When God would not satisfy the appetites of the people of Israel, they asked Him to take their lives. Then they had to add quails to their manna. Ahab, although a king (and one would think his royal lands should have been sufficient for him), is sullen and discontented for want of Naboth's vineyard. Jonah, although a good man and a prophet, was ready to die in a fit—because God killed his plant! He complained, “It is better for me to die than to live” (Jonah 4: 8). Rachel said, “Give me children, or I shall die” (Gen 30: 1). She had many blessings if she could have seen them, but she wanted this to be content. God will supply our needs, but must He satisfy our desires too? Many are discontented for a very small thing; another has a better dress, a richer jewel, or a newer fashion. Nero, not content with his empire, was troubled that the musicians had more skill in playing than he.*

*How amazing are some, that pine away in discontent for the want of those things, which, if they had them, would render them more ridiculous!”* His contrast of contentment and discontentment is so easy to follow in this work and the classic one as well...for he is wanting to make sure that his fellow brothers and sisters can understand the root of our discontentment and the foundation for our contentment...one is in the world and out being too tied to it and the other is to faith in Christ being worked out by the Holy Spirit. Bottom line for Watson is this: *“Contentment is trusting God’s Plan. Whatever our condition, God, the great overseer of the world, has from eternity decreed that condition for us and ordered all circumstances to that end. Think often to yourself, ‘My place here, whether I am in a higher or lower state, is not chance or fortune, as the blind pagans imagined; no, it is the wise God in His providence who has fixed me in this sphere.’ We must act out the scene which God chose for us. Do not say, ‘Such a one has caused this to happen to me.’ Do not look too much at the under-wheel. We read in Ezekiel of ‘a wheel within a wheel’ (Ezek. 1: 16). God’s Decree is the cause of the turning of the wheels, and His providence is the inner wheel that moves all the others. God’s providence is the helm which turns around the whole ship of the universe. Say then, like David, ‘I was silent, for you did it’ (Ps 39: 9). God’s providence, which is nothing but the fulfillment of His decree, should be a guarantee and an opposing force against discontent. In His wisdom, God has set us in our current station.”* It is God who has placed us where we are...it is God who gives us what we have...it is all God...what right to we have then to be content?

- 45. TEMPTATIONS: Winning the Battle Before the War: In Modern English**, by John Owen 1658, Copyright © 2018 by Jason Roth into Modern English. This is yet another **Christian Classics for the Modern Reader** translated by Jason Roth that only tends to help the readers understand a text that otherwise can be hard to understand from the original. I have read the original a couple of times and like I said for **The Art of Divine Contentment**, nothing is taken away and what is added is ease and clarity of reading. Just like with the Art of Divine Contentment these works are so contemporary and ought to be read again by modern Christian and hopefully with these translations many people will pick them up and read them. Sometimes Owen is hard to understand at first read but his biblical logic is impeccable like with the following short argument which sums up the entire book, *“But why is this great endeavor and attentiveness necessary? Is it not said that ‘God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape’ (1 Cor 10: 13)? Also, ‘the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials’ (2 Pet 2: 9). Why then do we need to be careful that we do not enter into temptation? Answer: I sincerely question what assistance you will have from God in your temptation if you willingly enter into it, supposing that God has promised to deliver you out of it. The Lord knows that even when we have done our best, we will still enter into various temptations through the craft of Satan, the malice of the world, and the deceitfulness of sin that so easily besets us. In His love, care, tenderness, and faithfulness, He has provided such a sufficiency of grace for us that temptations do not utterly prevail to eternally separate us from Himself; yet, I have three things to say against this objection. First, if you willingly or negligently enter into temptation, you have no reason in the world to claim any promise of assistance from God or any deliverance from the temptation that you have entered into. The promise is made to those who are beset with temptations in their walk despite their wishes, not to those who willfully fall into them or run out of their way to meet them. And, therefore, when the devil tempted our Savior, he purposely left out the expression, all thy ways, in the quoted scripture (Ps 91: 11). As is commonly observed, the promise of deliverance is to those who are in their ways. This is one principal to beware of temptation. Second, although there is a sufficiency of grace provided for all believers that temptation will not result in our eternal separation from God, it should make our hearts tremble to think of the dishonor to God, the scandal to the gospel, the woeful darkness, and the disquiet to our own souls*

that temptation causes. In my opinion, those who are not moved by these considerations but only scared by the fear of hell, have more reason to fear than perhaps they are aware of. Finally, to enter into temptation on this account is to venture on sin or to **'continue in sin that grace may abound,'** which the apostle rejects with the greatest detestation (**Rom 6: 1-2**). Is it not madness for a man to willingly allow his ship to split itself on a rock, to the irrecoverable loss of his merchandise, because he supposes that he can swim safely to shore on a plank? Is it less mad for us to hazard the shipwreck of all our comfort, peace, joy, and so much of the glory of God, and the honor of the gospel we are entrusted with, merely on the supposition that our soul will still escape? You would think that these things did not deserve to be mentioned; and yet, poor souls sometimes delude themselves in this way." Owen's words are pure encouragement on this subject and Roth makes them even more so as we can fully understand and embrace the biblical thinking and admonition for our edification.

46. **THE PRESIDENT AND THE FREEDOM FIGHTER: Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Their Battle to Save America's Soul**, by Brian Kilmeade (2021). Brian's writing style is very engaging just like with **George Washington' Secret Six** or **Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates** he makes history fun and engaging. There isn't much new here as far as the individual histories of these two great men but the story of how their stories in American history run parallel and then to intersect was a new twist on a time honored part of our nation's story. This nearly forgotten slice of our history is an important addition to our discussion concerning race relations and how we might come together as the one people we are under God. This paragraph gets at the heart of these two men and their respective roles in history. *"During Lincoln's boyhood, the inferiority of the Black man was received wisdom, a belief he shared with almost all Whites in the North as well as the South. Then, as a young man, Lincoln's coordinates changed as his values evolved and he accepted that slavery was a clear moral wrong. In manhood he began to imagine a route that, in time, could lead to abolition; and he gradually accepted that Blacks were the equal of Whites and must be made full citizens. Only in the last several years of his life did Lincoln manage to steer the country, once and for all, away from slavery. Frederick Douglass's personal history was very different. In his youth, he smelled and tasted the blood of slavery; sometimes that blood was his own. He knew from a very young age what he wanted: freedom, plain and simple. After he gained freedom for himself, on his own, his goal became to free all of those enslaved in his country. Unlike Lincoln, from youth he possessed a North Star—it was freedom for his people—a constant he could rely upon. His bearings never changed as he made himself famous, on his own terms, and played an immense role in achieving freedom for his people."* It took time to develop a friendship between these two but when it happened their lives would forever be intertwined in their march for the freedom of a people. While Lincoln's first thought was to preserve the Union at all cost even if that meant to compromise his personal belief against slavery...he moved with the help of God and Douglass to see that preserving the nation's heart was crucial in preserving the nation and to do THAT...slavery had to come to an end no matter the cost. A good book that all should read today.
47. **THE MISHIEF OF SIN**, by Thomas Watson (1671, digital by Monergism 2020). One of the main problems with us Christians is that we do not really see the depth of our sinfulness before a Holy God. The Puritans above all seemed to have re-captured the ugliness, folly, destructiveness and the provocation of sin that the Bible seems to clearly teach. J.I. Packer said that no other Puritan expressed these insights more precisely than Thomas Watson. The need for us to see sin in its true form is so we can run to Christ with all that we are. Watson says at the beginning of this book that was lost for almost 3 centuries, *"Some sin out of ignorance—but even the blind can find the way to hell. But*

most sin out of choice. They know the forbidden dish—but they lust after it, though in the day they eat thereof—they shall surely die! My design in this small treatise is to give check to sinners—and sound a pious retreat in their ears, to make them return from the hot pursuit of their impieties. If notwithstanding all my admonitions, they will run counter to the Word of God—and prostitute themselves to their sordid lusts, they are soul-suicides—and their blood will be upon their own head! God will say to them in anger, **‘If you die, you die. If you are killed, you are killed.’ Zechariah 11:9**” In today’s world most don’t like to think about this because we are convinced that we are all basically good in heart. Watson ends with these exhortations: *“Exhortation 1. As we should take heed of living in any sin (for the least sin lived in and unrepented of will bring us to hell), so especially let us take heed of being in the black roll of these sinners I have now mentioned. These dying in final impenitence shall be more severely punished. A greater millstone of wrath will fall upon their head. If a spark or two of God’s anger is so grievous, what is it when He shall stir up all His wrath! ‘Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath!’ Psalm 78:38. Exhortation 2. Let us labor to fly to Christ by faith. Let us get Him to stand as a screen between us and the fire of God’s indignation. Romans 8:1, ‘There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.’ God the Father will not condemn them, because He is satisfied in the price paid for them. He will not require the debt twice—from both the Surety and the debtor. And Jesus Christ will not condemn them, for believers are His spouse; and Christ will not condemn His own spouse. So that, if ever we would be safe, let us get into Christ—and being in this city of refuge, God’s justice, that avenger of blood, will not touch us. Having put on the garment of our Lord’s righteousness, the fire of hell can never singe this garment! 1 Thessalonians 1:10, ‘Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath!’”* Again, this is a book (short treatise 110 plus or minus pages depending upon the version you pick up) so that we can be reminded of the heinousness of our sin before a Holy God.

48. **WEAPONS FREE (BATTLEGROUP Z SERIES BOOK 1)**, by Daniel Gibbs (Copyright © 2020). This is one of the better military sci-fi works that I have had the pleasure to read. This work is right up there with the **Blood on the Stars** series by Jay Allen and the sci-fi space dramas of Ken Lozito, like the **Ascension** series and **First Colony** series. While having read all the works of these two authors, it has been somewhat painstaking to find anyone who even comes close to them. (I have started and stopped more series than I care to count in the last year.) this one begins as Lt. Justin Spenser is out in his Sabre (star craft fighter of the 25<sup>th</sup> Century) fulfilling his reservist duty with one day to being finished for this tour. He joined the reserves to have his college paid off since it had been 50 plus years since the Coalition Defense Force had seen combat of any kind. But on this day all of that would change. First Lieutenant Justin Spencer piloted the lead craft, a Terran Coalition SF-76 Sabre, around the latest hazard to crop up in his path and readjusted back to the flight plan. An enemy of unknown origin has decided to declare war on the Terran Coalition and Justin and His Red Tails Squadron (historic reference and all) will find itself in the first attack of many that will take his readers into the hearts and minds of Justin, his squadron and his superior officers in a way that makes putting this book down hard for any true military sci-fi freak. There is the normal hard to handle life style change from being a weekend volunteer warrior just seeking to fulfill your flight time requirements to being thrust into full-fledged fight for your lives and the lives of your crew. They find during the Battle for Canaan (the capitol world of the Terran Coalition) that they are in conflict with a large military invasion force from Earth. The League of Sol is a quasi-communistic regime that is set on conquering the rest of human space which is vast. The delightful twist on this is that this author seeks to bring together Jews, Christians and Muslim on the same side with the intermingling faith seen clearly in how they see the world and their work. This adds to the drama as he seeks to show how each of these fulfill the same purpose with the same God. Unfortunate, but most space dramas seek to show

there is no need for a “higher power” for man has evolved past such nonsense. This author embraces the positive sides of each faith system making it clear throughout how important faith is...even if this is a postmodern view it is somewhat refreshing.

49. **STAND FIRM**, by Daniel Gibbs (2021-22). This little book helps us understand some of the not so “important” characters of the Battle for Canaan that were briefly spoken about but not elaborated on in **WEAPONS FREE**. In this book we meet Major Levi Cohen, his wife and his daughter, along with the commanding General of the space force General Gabrielle Irvine. This book helps us capture in even more depth the cost of war and how that cost energizes war fighters to do even more...beyond what is expected when you meet an enemy that has you outnumbered 10 to 1. This addition to this story line and the sacrifices made makes things seem almost personal...as if you are directly involved with the fight and the fighters. This book reminds us of how we are all called upon all too often to stand firm no matter the cost for the lives of others fully depend on the decisions you make in the midst of crisis. This book is a third of the size of the first book (roughly 130 pages) but it is chocked full of excitement, self-sacrifice and pain that holds your attention to the point that when it is through you want more.

50. **HOSTILE STRIKE (BATTLEGROUP Z, BOOK 2)**, by Daniel Gibbs (Copyright © 2021). These books just keep getting better and better. Just a mere six weeks ago 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Justin Spencer was a reservist with no combat experience...in that time he has become an ace and a combat pilot veteran. With several pivotal battles now under his belt, friends and strangers alike call Justin a hero. But he finds the accolades difficult to swallow when the night only intensifies images from his first taste of combat. So many things have gone through his mind during and after the multiple dogfights...from wondering about his place in the world outside of his home with wife and daughter...that had been the one true constant in his life...to faith...a subject of much speculation by him and others who either didn't really believe 6 weeks ago or were nominal in their faith at best. *“Major Wright put the mug down, he continued, ‘I think I get what you’re saying, though, skipper. The League attack was a massive shock to my system. It’s made me reevaluate a lot of things in my life—my behavior and my relationships, and one of those is my relationship with God.’ ‘I struggle with feeling like a hypocrite,’ Col. Tehrani replied. She’d been wrestling with her feelings more and more. Being a Muslim was a cultural identity for her people—ninety percent of the Persian Republic shared the same religion—yet she’d never been devout. ‘Would you mind sharing how?’ Wright asked. ‘That is, as long as we’re talking as friends. Because if this is an official conversation, I don’t even know where to begin.’ Tehrani failed to stifle a laugh. It’s nice to have friends.”* It is on one mission in particular Justin is brought faith to face with his lack of faith and the possibility that he needs the kind of relationship that his wife has with her God. The only thing that is distracting in the book...and it is just a little distracting for me...though for some it may be a hindrance to them...is the combination use of army type leadership and rank language and Navy talk concerning the space ships. Not sure why he didn't go fully one way or another...but the action and the character development in the midst of an on-going war far outweighs the confusion in this.

51. **SOL STRIKE (BATTLEGROUP Z, BOOK 3)**, by Daniel Gibbs (Copyright © 2021). Another great installment in this series. The president of the Terran Coalition decides that they have been on defense too much against the League of Sol (a communist empire emanating from Earth the home world of all Terrans/humans). All human life left after a major conflict that threatened to destroy humanity 400 years before this current conflict where the communists won leaving freedom seeking people to have to leave. Anyway, the president wants to hit the Sol system (the Terrans need a win to bolster support for the war) ...he would prefer they hit Earth in an offensive maneuver...bombing strategic sites

on Earth to let the League know that they can get to them the same way the League nearly got to the Terrans in the Battle for Canaan... a sneak attack. (If this decision by the president sounds familiar, it is...think Doolittle Raid a few months after the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor). It would do minimal damage to the overall war effort except that it might cause the powers to be to be less aggressive believing they must protect the Sol system hence keeping the biggest part of the fleet in the system away from the Terrans. It's been generations since anyone has seen Earth after the communist League chased humanity's ancestors from their former home, and Justin is eager to lead the squadron of stealth recon fighters for some payback for that and for their incursion into the Terran system that killed hundreds of thousands of Terrans. (Spoiler Alert: it worked! For a while, but that is the next book.) There is a lot of soul searching going on as the pilots prepare and ultimately carry out this daring raid deep into enemy territory. They can't hit earth but they can hit many installations in the solar system and they do. But the more of Justin's friends who die along with his personal crisis of faith causes him to second guess himself, weakening his resolve and then a moment of weakness almost undoes him to the point that he finds himself seeking help from the last place he ever thought he would look. Again, this/these books are unique in the genre because of its emphasis on faith and the tensions that that cause to soldiers, Marines and sailors. These are written in a way that you want to continue to see the outcome of not just the war but also the character development of Capt. Justin Spenser troubled war hero and veteran with less than a year's active service under his belt. War does that to people.

52. **SICKNESS**, Free Grace Broadcaster Issue 252, Copyright 2020 Chapel Library: compilation, abridgment, annotations. This is a compilation of treatises on a subject not often taught on today. Most of the authors are well known some are not. Most treatises speak clearly to the subject matters others do not (specifically the newer additions) The treatise titles and authors are these: **Sickness Is Universal** J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): an introduction to the worldwide reality of disease and the biblical testimony of its cause. **The Priceless Gift of Health** Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952): Good health is due alone to God's great goodness and kindness; godly living is often a major factor in it. **God's Comfort in Sickness** Philip Bennett Power (1822-1899): a blessed encouragement to apply high thoughts of God and the riches of Christ to ourselves for comfort in our seasons of sickness. **Using Time Wisely in Sickness** Thomas Boston (1676-1732): Believers should use their time wisely when sick. But what should we learn in times of illness and bodily afflictions? The biblical answer is serious godliness. **God's Medicine: Prayer** Christopher W. Bogosh: an exhortation that we pray, an explanation why we pray, and direction for what to pray when we are sick. **The Sickbed Not Favorable for Finding Eternal Life** John D. Wells (1815-1903): While some sinners are converted on their deathbeds, sound biblical and practical reasons should warn sinners not to count on repenting when sick. **Visiting the Sick** George Swinnock (1627-1673): Visiting the sick is not simply a pastoral duty but every believer's duty: Christ will address those visits in the Day of Judgment. **Are You Prepared for Sickness?** J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Do we prepare ourselves for sickness? It is not likely, but it is a vital part of a healthy Christian's life. **The One You Love Is Sick** Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Sickness does not separate believers from Christ; in fact, it can be a great benefit to those who know Christ and use their sickness wisely: we can glorify God in our sickness. This last one is perhaps the most pastoral of all taking the story of raising Lazarus as its base. These treatises can be found for free through Chapel Library online. They are not particularly Reformed in their doctrinal statement but many if not most of these treatises are from Reformed and Calvinistic pastors and theologians...because that was the bulk of the teaching until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. There is a compilation for just about any subject or doctrine and I have put up for review many of these through the years. The closet thing that we have of this sort is from John Piper, **DON'T WASTE YOUR CANCER**...but that is a whole book.

53. **BANDITS ENGAGED (BATTLEGROUP Z, BOOK 4)**, by Daniel Gibbs (Copyright © 2021). This book is filled with all the regular “good guy” characters from Captain Justin Spencer to Col. Tehrani. This is war so we will lose many more in battle than they would like. At one point Maj. Whatley, the commander of the pilots, says that we have lost over 20% in every engagement...even though they always win these engagements. The ship CSV Zvika Greengold will by the end of this book be up to 9 battle stars. For a small ship loaded with “heroes” they are holding their own. The war with the League of Sol goes on, but there is another enemy that is becoming a hazard to the war effort as shipments of rare metals needed by the Terran Coalition keep getting pirated by ruthless pirates that do not want any survivors- just the cargoes. It is bad enough to have the League seeking to subjugate all of humanity, now they have another enemy in it for the money. So the crew of the CSV Zvika Greengold is asked to take on a special mission to find out who is behind these “enhanced” pirate ships so that others can take the lead in dealing with them. So they go on this mission, but more than what they bargained for is what they get. The crew is stretched yet again to the limit. Will they survive or will this be the last voyage of an illustrious career? If they do... do they ever make it back into the main war? Moving on ...quickly to **Book 5 IRON HAND** to find out.
54. **IRON HAND (BATTLEGROUP Z, BOOK 5)**, by Daniel Gibbs (Copyright © 2021). Another book about fighting pirates...yet there is some good news...Justin gets to go home in time for His son’s birth...great news! However, back at the war front, this time it is clear who the real enemy is... only our group of courageous soldiers only suspect... (oh for the characters to have the mind of the writer!). However, this enemy is even more ruthless than the last, which brings hunting them to a place that the crew of the Zvika Greengold doesn’t want to go. The battle and the deaths...civilian and military...continue to mount up ...causing the Colonel to look and sound more like Agent Grant than herself. In fact, her anger and her desire for pay back reaches a point of no return with an order that she gives that there is no going back from. This is a turning point just as this last battle with this particular pirate comes to a close...and she realizes she made a choice she didn’t have to make...and now she has to live with it as well as get her battlegroup ready for the next battle with the League of Sol. She and the rest of the crew, continues to struggle with the “necessity of war” and the tension to not cross over to become an animal like this latest pirate. They also continue in their walks of “faiths” struggles. Here is a brief conversation between Colonel Tehrani and Major Wright, *“At least you go to prayers five times a day, said Major Wright to the Colonel.” ‘Sometimes,’ Tehrani murmured. ‘Sometimes I find an excuse not to. Or try to destroy escape pods.’ Guilt and shame for her actions washed over her. ‘Not the highlight of my life, Benjamin... and something I wish I could take back. That God saw in my heart the awful things I wanted to do...’ ‘He sees the same things in my heart. It’s why we have to strive so hard to avoid becoming like those we fight.’ Wright narrowed his eyes. ‘We can do that together if we stand strong. I’m sure of it.’ ‘Then I look forward to continuing the fight together,’ said Tehrani.”* This book tugs at the heart in so many ways especially in this day and age there are similar connections and actions with “innocents” being sacrificed for fame, fortune or convenience. Now they are gearing up for what will be the final battle(s) and so we will see how our heroes fare in **FINAL FLIGHT (BATTLEGROUP Z, BOOK 6)**. Let’s get to it.
55. **FINAL FLIGHT (BATTLEGROUP Z, BOOK 6)**, by Daniel Gibbs (2022). Justin and the gang are all back. Col Tehrani is dealing with stuff because of a decision she made fighting pirates that is still haunting her and will ultimately affect her career and possibly her husband’s. But I am getting ahead of myself. The Terran Coalition is putting a major hurt on the League of Sol or at least it seems that way to them. It is all part of the master plan of the commanding Admiral of the League. So as the Coalition seeks to reclaim the

planet Eire -that was taken over by the League sometime back- commanding Gen. Suarez is understandably over confident in his new type of fighting scheme...carrier-based battlegroups exclusively. As the battle for Eire begins, things go extremely well and then the Leagers spring their trap and the Coalition is in a fight for their lives and many of the main characters will give the ultimate sacrifice. All along Justin's faith continues to grow to the point that he doesn't make a move without praying about it but also putting into practice what he is reading, *"Ever since he'd accepted Jesus as his savior a few months prior, something had changed within him and on the exterior. One of the things he'd done was to incorporate the armor of God into his preflight activities. It had become a ritual in short order. 'Reactor online, nominal output.' 'Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, stand'. 'Flare and chaff dispensers online.' 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.' 'Thrusters active.' Take the breastplate of righteousness. He toggled several switches, and a new bank of lights came to life. 'Electronic countermeasure systems energized.' And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, take the shield of faith, that you will be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked. 'Shields charged. Green lights on all generators. Neutron cannons and missile systems in standby mode.' Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. 'Alpha One, ready to launch.'"* Justin comes to a turning point at the end of this extremely costly battle when he realizes that so many people didn't have to die. What will he do: take the command training position, or will he stay on the Greengold or ...will he leave the service and pursue something entirely different? What happens with those left behind and how far do Justin's aspirations actually take him? He wants to make a difference in this war...as in bring it to an end. Will he do that? The story picks back up in the **Echoes of War Series** which is where I am going with this author next.

56. **CHRIST OF THE COVENANTS**, by O. Palmer Robertson (1980). This "text" book is a standard for understanding the covenant structure instituted by God before time began and carried out through to the consummation when Christ returns. Having read multiple books on the covenants of Works and Grace...this one surpasses them all in content and readability. This book is a must for all Christians but especially us who hold to the doctrines of grace and the covenantal structure which is foundational to the work of redemption of God's people. When you get stuck on a concept concerning the covenants ...this is where you turn. His definition of covenant gets to the very heart/core of God's foundational plan. "A covenant is bond in blood sovereignly administered." A bond of life and death is that serious...a bond that binds us forever as His children. It was good to re-read this book as it had been a while...a long while. His approach is simple without being juvenile...clear without being unsubstantial. One of the chapters is devoted to the difference between covenant theology and dispensationalism...this chapter alone is worth the price of the book. This is the book that old timers study with...but it is a book to give to those searching and beginning their journey in Reformed thinking.
57. **A TREATISE ON JUSTIFICATION AND REGENERATION**, by John Witherspoon (A Treatise on Justification was first published 1756 and then the one on Regeneration was published in 1764, this Monergism eBook 2022) This book is a hard and long read. Extremely helpful information concerning these two subject...strictly academic though. But along the way nuggets like this, *"Self-denial is the first condition of the gospel, and a renunciation of all self-dependence is the lesson continued through the whole. "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," may be called the motto of every Christian, is a short and comprehensive summary of his faith, and the great foundation of his hope and trust."* It is interesting that in every age there are retractors to such doctrines for the SAKE of the Gospel we are told. To insist on such doctrines will squelch man's natural



desire to evangelize, causing people to wait on the Lord for Him alone to raise up His people. We consider Witherspoon to be one of the great theological minds of his time and yet there was considerable push back on him and others who sought to publish works like this. I highly recommend and commend this work...however, I believe that I would actually be more likely to recommend to the average reader Kevin De Young's new book **JUSTIFICATION and REGENERATION: Practical Guide on Saving Faith (the Library of Presbyterian Classics, Book 2)** where He edits this work reworking some of the language and adding headings and separation where there is not any in the original work. Kevin's work, which I have only perused seems to aid the casual reader without limiting the treatises in anyway...perhaps even enhancing them so that the casual reader of the Puritans can actually grasp the fullness of the original writer.

58. **THE 'I WILLS' OF THE PSALMS**, by Philip Bennett Power (originally published 1859, digitally 2014). I have begun to really like this author. (I read and reviewed recently, **THE FEET OF JESUS: In Life, Death, Resurrection and Glory**.) The title is somewhat self-explanatory to be sure. He looks at many of the *"I will"* statements in the Psalms whether it is David or whoever in the multiple texts that he considers. Of course, each of these is used to speak to us about how we should act toward God in them. His style is so readable and his exegesis so complete but not so as to be so academic. He seeks for the heart of the manner and he achieves it. I will next take up **The I Wills of Christ**. If it is anything like this one, these will become the type of books I will read over and over again. This work is so much easier to read than **The Feet of Jesus** version (see review above for explanation). He is so easily read and understood. The many anecdotes and historical references make this work alive and fresh. Here are a couple of examples; *"That a child should in part be taught what to say, is very right; but the evil consists in confining it to the form. Let us remember that a child lives in a perfect little world of its own; that it has its griefs and joys, which are as real as our own—as important to it, as ours are to us; it has its little wants, desires, and fears; and to repress its prayers on all these subjects, and turn them into another channel, is to introduce the leaven of unreality, into the very beginning of its spiritual life. Let prayer, above all things, be real; let a child mean what it says; let it have an interest in the prayer it offers up; let it not be forced to say prayers about things which it cannot understand, and in which it cannot possibly take any interest. For my own part, I should much rather hear my child pray to God, with all her heart, that tomorrow might be a fine day, so that she may be able to enjoy an expected treat, than to hear her utter some words about the conversion of the heathen, or a similar subject, which, from her age, she could not possibly understand. If I might make a suggestion to parents upon this subject, I would say, when your child has uttered its simple form of prayer, every word of which you should take care that it understands, not only permit, but encourage it to offer up prayer to God in its own words, and about its own interests. Do not be shocked, or offended, if the request be about a trifle; remember that trifles are the great events of a child's life; a broken wheel of a little cart is as important to it, as the breaking of a bank may be to you. Because the child is a child, its little sorrows are real to it; let its prayers be real to; then it will grow up with a real interest in prayer; it will look upon prayer as a practical working thing; it will, in all probability, escape much of that formalism which is so detrimental, so dangerous to the soul. A parent will of course, show a child when, and where its petitions are not right; but, above all things, take care that the child understands."* And then this one which is one of my favorites, ***"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice,"*** says the Psalmist *This continuance in prayer, is independent of place, as well as time. Some people are very dependent upon place and becoming slavishly so, they are, from this very cause, hindered in continuance in prayer. The old minister's servant maid will teach us how to be independent of time and place in prayer. A number of ministers were assembled for the discussion of difficult questions, and among others it was asked, how*

the command, **'Pray without ceasing,'** could be complied with. Various suppositions were started, and at length one of the number was appointed to write an essay upon it, to be read at the next monthly meeting; which being heard by a plain, sensible servant girl, she exclaimed, 'What! a whole month wanted to tell the meaning of that text? It is one of the easiest in the Bible.' 'Well, well,' said an old minister, 'Mary, what can you say about it? let us know how you understand it. Can you pray all the time?' 'Oh, yes Sir.' 'What, when you have so many things to do?' 'Why, Sir, the more I have to do, the more I can pray.' 'Indeed! Well, Mary do let us know how it is, for most people think otherwise.' 'Well Sir,' said the girl, 'when I first open my eyes in the morning, I pray, 'Lord, open the eyes of my understanding;' and while I am dressing I pray that I may be clothed with the robe of righteousness; and when I have washed me, I ask for the washing of regeneration; and as I begin to work, I pray that I may have strength equal to my day. When I begin to kindle up the fire, I pray that God's work may revive in my soul; and as I sweep out the house I pray that my heart may be cleansed from all impurities; and while preparing and partaking of breakfast, I desire to be fed with the hidden manna and the sincere milk of the Word; and as I am busy with the little children, I look up to God as my Father, and pray for the spirit of adoption, that I may be His child; and so on all day. Everything I do furnishes me with a thought for prayer.' 'Enough, enough,' cried the old divine; 'these things are revealed to babes, and often hid from the wise and prudent. Go on, Mary,' said he; 'pray without ceasing. And as for us, my brethren, let us bless the Lord for this exposition, and remember that He has said, **'The meek will He guide in judgment.'** The essay, as a matter of course, was not considered necessary after the occurrence of this little event." A book to consider at another time soon!

59. **FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT: Echoes of War Book 1**, Daniel Gibbs and David VanDyke (2019). This is the first book in the series but it was written before the **BATTLEGROUP Z** series which is actually a prequel chronologically. In this series, we meet Cpl. David Cohen, the grown up son of the "hero of Canaan" Maj. Levi Cohen from the books **STAND FIRM** (a book to explain some of the happenings in the Battle of Canaan along with introducing us to David Cohen, only a small boy at the time of his father's death) and **WEAPONS FREE: BATTLEGROUP Z SERIES BOOK 1**. Now David has served his time during the war with the League that continues years after his father's death and is preparing to leave the service and become a Rabbi. Those are his plans but as with all things in war...personal plans are subject to change. Especially after a dramatic save aboard the ship he is serving on as a maintenance tech, he is hit with the reality that he has skills beyond those of a simple rabbi...though he doesn't want to acknowledge them at first, of course. Making for an interesting trial of faith...which Daniel is so well known for in his space military dramas. But as this trial of faith continues he is also hit with the trial and grief of losing people under his eventual command. The initial decision comes easy as to how to fight...and fight he does (making for some great space battles) ...but then counting the cost for those decision, especially when there is a board of inquiry putting pressure on him because of his dad's past. Is he privileged and entitled or is he really that good at what he does? As I said this was a debut book for him. There are some kinks to work out...and he does in subsequent books. There is also, another series of books: **The Breach of Faith series**, that occurs alongside of this one. I don't know if they will intersect but I suspect they will. On his website he gives a chronological order for his books which is helpful as they can be read separately or sequentially which I am choosing to do. Again, I am so thankful to have found this author and his work. It is an adventure well worth taking especially in the dog days of summer.
60. **A SIMPLE MISSION: Breach of Faith Book 0**, Daniel Gibbs (2019) Interesting numbering in a series...starting with 0. As you would think this is a prequel to the **Breach of Faith** series which gives us a much needed look into an event that shapes Capt.

James Henry's career and faith. He is currently serving as a spacer Captain with a rag tag crew of extremely talented and loyal rejects and refugees. But that is not how this once celebrated Coalition commander thought his life would end up. Because of his successes, of course, he is asked to take on a critical exercise that ultimately fails and looking for a scapegoat, people that he respected shanghaied and charged him with everything in the book...even treason! None of which was true, of course...but when did the truth matter when there are trillions of credits and on-going military contracts on the line? Yeah...they said it was about the war...but really...as always...it is about the credits! People never change. Mess up and find someone else to blame. Well, is he ruined or does something else happen. This is not your run of the mill good guy wins drama...at least not in this book...but the character development and story line made me want to read this sequentially with **THE ECHOES OF WAR** series. Good stuff to be sure. I have moved on to the next 2 books in the **BREACH OF FAITH** series because they come right at the conclusion of **ECHOES OF WAR: Book 1**. It is not that difficult...they are related though they are two separate stories. I do hope at some point they do intersect.

61. **BREACH OF PEACE: Breach of Faith Book 1**, by Daniel Gibbs, Gary T. Stevens (2019). Another grand adventure with Captain Henry and his crew as they rescue a woman wanted for a number of different reasons by the League of Sol. She is wanted because she is a spy and a traitor...and because she has information that could incriminate to upcoming "peace plan" put forth by the Leaguers by 2 different ministers on the planet Lusitania...both vying for power in different ways...both wanting the information for different goals in achieving that power. And then there is the Coalition Defense Force intelligence division who wants to make sure a past operative and trainer of operatives would be kept safe. And guess who is in the middle of this mess...working for all of them at the same time...yep... Captain Henry and the crew of the Shadow Wolf -much to the consternation of most -because of how complicated this matter has become. Like in **A SIMPLE MISSION**...they continue to discover there is no easy day in space to be sure...or on land as they comes to a proverbial head just when they think they have completed their mission. But the unrest on Lusitania has come to a crescendo and... this changes everything. I can't wait as I move into the next book in this series **BREACH OF FAITH**.
62. **BREACH OF FAITH: Breach of Faith Book 2**, by Daniel Gibbs, Gary T. Stevens (2020). These last two books fall neatly into the month of August 2460. They tell the story of Capt. James Henry and his rag tag crew of spacers/privateers as they seek to do a job that ends up extremely more complicated and dangerous than anyone foresaw from the beginning. Anyway...what seems like a simple job with multiple ways to get paid...just pick up a passenger and bring her to Lusitania ...simple right? Well, there is no easy day for these spacers who get drawn into the war against their will. This is the same month that the Leaguers were seeking a "peace" with the Coalition and these events happened in the background ending up thwarting a part of the plan to take over more and more of the Neutral Space which would eventually lead to conquering the Terran Coalition. The League of Sol have grandiose plans to take over the whole world for the Society (think socialism and communism to the extreme which promises equality and then freedom but provides instead for an elite class with everyone else providing for the "State"/ the elite class...the only ones who know what's best for the people...hence enslaving people for the rest of their lives. Sound familiar? Yep still with us.) Through it all of course...some enemies are discovered to be forced "allies" and political enemies turn out to be "friends", and the crew just gets stronger and stronger in their trust for one another. At the end of all the drama Capt. Henry sits back and reflects, *"The banter continued, and Henry listened. He could order them back to their posts, and soon he would, but for now, he enjoyed their back and forth. It was a welcome reminder that they*

were one team, one crew... in many ways, a family. One he was responsible for. As much as it could sometimes annoy him, he was fine with the sentiment. After all, you could put up with a lot for the sake of family.” Another great read...maybe not quite as compelling as **The Echoes of War** series...but still well worth picking up. Now back to the **Echoes of War Book 2, STRONG AND COURAGEOUS**...which picks up in September of 2460.

63. **HEAVEN TAKEN BY STORM: Exposition of Matthew 11:12**, by Thomas Watson, (Copyright © 2019 from Monergism digital books). What a powerful little book (approx. 120 or so pages depending upon how you are reading it). His strong exposition of **Matthew 11:12, “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.”** is one that might and should energize all Christians especially in this day and age. This is also one of my favorite verses...that causes me to relish in the power that comes through the gospel so that we can be zealous...so that we can be drained for the Gospel, since time is so short...but, at the same time, it is humbling because it causes me to reflect and recognize my lack of violence/zeal for the gospel, especially since time is so short and this world is passing away. It seems the church is still too complacent for passages such as this especially combined with all the passages that speak of endurance...the blood, sweat and tears...of the Christian life. Even Christ knowing the cost of this on-going violence (zeal) says, **“Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden...”** Of all people Christ knows the violence that has been and continues to be thrown against the TRUTH. And the Bible is clear at how hard we should be constantly working to press the gospel into all the areas that God places us in. There is never a time to slow down or truly rest since the battle rages. Given the fickleness of some in the church, this book could be a call to arms, to be sure. There are so many quotes worth sharing but here is one that I think is especially appropriate for today, *“If you would be violent for Heaven, take heed of a slothful, LAZY disposition. A slothful Christian is like a fearful soldier, who has a good desire for the plunder—but is loathe to storm the castle. A slothful person would gladly have Heaven—but is loathe to take it by storm. Sloth is the soul’s sleep. Many instead of working out salvation, sleep away salvation. Such as will not labor, must be put at last to beg. They must beg, as Dives in hell—for one drop of water. An idle man (says Solomon) “puts his hand in his bosom,” Proverbs xix. 24. (ESV- “The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.) He should have his hand to the plough, and he puts it in bosom. God never made Heaven a hive for drones. Sloth is a disease apt to grow upon men—shake it off! A sluggish ship is a prey to the pirate. A sluggish soul is a prey to Satan.”* This is the type of in your face, powerfully convicting language that he uses throughout this book. This book has really caused me to look at myself and instead of saying, right off, that’s not me...I recognize “me” in these comments as I am sure he could recognize himself... and I am brought to a place of repentance and renewal. I am so glad I found this book.
64. **THE EMOTIONAL LIFE OF OUR LORD**, by B. B. Warfield (original printing 1912, digitally seems 2013). Just dealing with 6 specific emotions of Christ; compassion and love, indignation and annoyance and joy and sorrow he speaks to the wide range of Jesus’ emotions as a man. This is a topic that many have sought to stay away from in the past but Warfield was known for going to his teachings and writings where angels fear to tread sometime. His distinction of Christ’s emotions is best seen in the definition he gives between compassion and love. *“How close to one another the two emotions of love and compassion lie, may be taught us by the only instance in which the emotion of love is attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics (Mk. x. 21). Here we are told that Jesus, looking upon the rich young ruler, “loved” him, and said to him, “One thing thou lackest.” It is not the “love of complacency” which is intended, but the “love of benevolence”; that is to say, it is the love, not so much that finds good, as that intends good, — though we may no doubt*

allow that “love of compassion is never” — let us rather say, “seldom” — “absolutely separated from love of approbation”; that is to say, there is ordinarily some good to be found already in those upon whom we fix our benevolent regard. The heart of our Saviour turned yearningly to the rich young man and longed to do him good; and this is an emotion, we say, which, especially in the circumstances depicted, is not far from simple compassion. In point of fact, this is the emotion which is most frequently attributed to Him. The term employed to express it was unknown to the Greek classics, and was perhaps a coinage of the Jewish dispersion. It first appears in common use in this sense, indeed, in the Synoptic Gospels, where it takes the place of the most inward classical word of this connotation. The Divine mercy has been defined as that essential perfection in God ‘whereby he pities and relieves the miseries of his creatures’: it includes, that is to say, the two parts of an internal movement of pity and an external act of beneficence. Love lies at the bottom of compassion. And love is attributed to Jesus only once in the Synoptics, but compassion often; while with John the contrary is true — compassion is attributed to Jesus not even once, but love often. This love is commonly the love of compassion, or, rather, let us broaden it now and say, the love of benevolence; but sometimes it is the love of sheer delight in its object. Love to God is, of course, the love of pure complacency. We are surprised to note that Jesus’ love to God is only once explicitly mentioned (Jn. xiv. 31); but in this single mention it is set before us as the motive of his entire saving work and particularly of his offering of himself up.” He states in his summation, “The highest note — Calvin does not neglect it — is struck by the Epistle to the Hebrews, when it declares that “it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. ii. 17). “Surely,” says the Prophet (Is. liii. 4), “he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” — a general statement to which an Evangelist (Mt. viii. 1) has given a special application (as a case in point) when he adduces it in the form, “himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” He subjected himself to the conditions of our human life that he might save us from the evil that curses human life in its sinful manifestation. When we observe him exhibiting the movements of his human emotions, we are gazing on the very process of our salvation: every manifestation of the truth of our Lord’s humanity is an exhibition of the reality of our redemption...As we survey the emotional life of our Lord as depicted by the Evangelists, therefore, let us not permit it to slip out of sight, that we are not only observing the proofs of the truth of his humanity, and not merely regarding the most perfect example of a human life which is afforded by history, but are contemplating the atoning work of the Saviour in its fundamental elements. The cup which he drank to its bitter dregs was not his cup but our cup; and he needed to drink it only because he was set upon our salvation.” A great “little” treatise on looking at the Real Christ.

- 65. THE “I WILLS” OF CHRIST: A Treatise Upon Some of the Passages in Which the Words “I Will” are used by the Lord Jesus Christ**, by Philip B. Power (originally published 1862, digitally circa 21014). Again a masterful work on an area that Looks specifically at Christ’s Words ... or rather His declaration involving “I will”. Just like in *The I Wills of the Psalms* we see God speaking through Christ to deliver more covenantal promises or describing those existing promises in a more “contemporary way. There is so much in here but truly the strength of this book is the stories that he tells of real people and real places to illustrate his points from martin Luther to David Brainerd to Charles Wesley (who interestingly confessed to Arminianism while most of his hymns are strait up biblical (we would say today Reformed) in their format) to people from His parish and stories brought o him along the way of his ministry. The multiple stories lift this book from a merely academic exercise into a heartwarming project that shows us clearly the heart of Christ toward his own. Now he uses language and phrases that may sound strange to us like the continual discussion about how Christ invites us to Himself. Hang in there...he is

thoroughly biblical here seeking to see this “invitation” as a calling from the king that cannot be denied...on one hand who would say no to the king’s request...on the other only those who have been called and justified by the King can accept such an invitation. His chapter on Confession is priceless. There is the story of a Jewish man who becomes a Christian and basically loses almost everything (his parents and family disown him) for his refusal to change his faith back to Judaism. This is a long story but told so well that you are crying out ...why do not I have that type of faith? This work like the other one from the Psalm really focuses us on the promises of the God head and ought to be required reading by all who seek to grow in the Lord. As He ends the book he highlights Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in a way that we don’t always consider. They were ready when they were called before the king. They weren’t given time to consider they were immediately brought before the king and gave an answer showing us how important it is to always be ready to have to confess and stand firm for Christ...always being ready to live or die for Him no matter the outcome. How they were ready and God gave them answers to their accusers. He ends with this; *“Might we not profitably ask ourselves, how do we stand in this matter this very day? Should we be called upon suddenly, are we prepared? Can we trace any discipline of God upon our souls which would produce fruit in our trial hour? The question is an important one, for, let us remember this, undisciplined souls are not likely to confess Christ on earth, or to be confessed by Christ in heaven. It may be that some are expecting time for preparation, and thinking that they will do very well if they have time given them for this; but as no time was given to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so may none be given to us; let us remember that these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats and called upon to stand.”*

66. **YOUR SORROW WILL TURN TO JOY**, by different writers associated with Desiring God ministries 2016. The title comes to us from John 16:20- ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.”*** Thinking of this, this book catalogues with devotional intent the last week of Christ’s life up to His resurrection. In a day where we spend too little time on such important doctrines as the resurrection, this book seeks to draw its audience into the events of that last week so that we come away with the reality of Christ’s death and resurrection...making this reality the foundation of our faith. Overall, it is a book that helps to highlight the importance of this work of God for all of his own. Desiring God assembled a team of eleven pastors and scholars to walk us through Holy Week as we walk together with our Lord. This collection of short meditations includes readings for each morning and evening from Palm Sunday to the triumph of Easter. Some of the meditations do not actually correspond to the day for which they speak and it is not covenantally minded so some details are seen as disjointed but it is a worthy devotional on the Passion Week. The writing is great, *“The Easter joy Jesus foretold has arrived, and it’s deeply personal. The resurrection is both a cosmic event, and it comes intimately close, reminding us of God’s work in our lives. ‘The point of Easter is that God is in the process of clearing this world of all heartbreak’ (John Piper). Therefore, ‘Christ’s resurrection not only gives you hope for the future; it gives you hope to handle your scars right now’ (Tim Keller). Such a restoring and reviving joy was purchased for you and me in the resurrection of Christ. Easter now has become our annual dress rehearsal for that great coming Day. When our perishable bodies will put on the imperishable. When the mortal finally puts on immortality. When we join in the triumph song with the prophets and the apostles, ‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ (Hos. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:55) Just as rehearsing the details of Jesus’s final days leading up to the cross prepares us for the fiery trial coming on us, so also Easter readies us for the triumph that will follow. Easter is our foretaste of glory divine. Indeed, even agony will turn to glory, but Easter doesn’t suppress our pain. It doesn’t minimize our loss. It bids our burdens stand as they are, in*

*all their weight, with all their threats. And this risen Christ, with the brilliance of indestructible life in his eyes, says, 'These too I will claim in the victory. These too will serve your joy. These too, even these, I can make an occasion for rejoicing. I have overcome, and you will more than conquer.' Easter is not an occasion to repress whatever ails you and put on a happy face. Rather, the joy of Easter speaks tenderly to the pains that plague you. Whatever loss you lament, whatever burden weighs you down, Easter says, 'It will not always be this way for you. The new age has begun. Jesus has risen, and the kingdom of the Messiah is here. He has conquered death and sin and hell. He is alive and on his throne. And he is putting your enemies, all your enemies, under his feet.'"* This will help the reader get back to the text so we will know that God is always working to turn our sorrow into joy.

**67. THE HIDDEN LIFE OF PRAYER**, by David McIntyre (pronounced McIntyre). This book was originally written in 1906 digitally formatted by Monergism in 2016. This is a great little handbook in a time when handbooks concerning doctrine and subjects of faith were all the rage. It is a small book-100 plus pages-depending upon the format you have it in...but it is a wealth of helpful information. Too often prayer gets neglected today in the lives of pastors, lay persons, and everyday Christians. This book challenges your habits of prayer and causes one to rethink about how important and necessary prayer is in the life of a believer. It has been said about this book, *"Private prayer is the life-blood of the Christian. Great men and women of God down through the ages have testified to the effectiveness of secret prayer in their lives. Upon the foundation of biblical teaching, McIntyre cites numerous examples from the lives of church leaders like Augustine, Luther, Whitefield, Spurgeon, and others. The result is a handbook for prayer based both on Scripture and on the time-tested wisdom of God's people throughout history. Reading this book, therefore, will give you an abundance of counselors (Proverbs 11:14) to lead you toward a victorious prayer life."* He uses men of renown this way, *"Our Lord takes it for granted that His people will pray. And indeed in Scripture generally the outward obligation of prayer is implied rather than asserted. Moved by a divinely-implanted instinct, our natures cry out for God, for the living God. And however this instinct may be crushed by sin, it awakes to power in the consciousness of redemption. Theologians of all schools, and Christians of every type, agree in their recognition of this principle of the new life. Chrysostom has said, 'The just man does not desist from praying until he ceases to be just;' and Augustine, 'He that loveth little prayeth little, and he that loveth much prayeth much;' and Richard Hooker, 'Prayer is the first thing wherewith a righteous life beginneth, and the last wherewith it doth end;' and Pre la Combe, 'He who has a pure heart will never cease to pray, and he who will be constant in prayer shall know what it is to have a pure heart;' and Bunyan, 'If thou art not a praying person, thou art not a Christian,'" and Richard Baxter, "Prayer is the breath of the new creature;" and George Herbert, 'Prayer...the soul's blood.'"* McIntyre's advice may not only transform your life; it could be a catalyst toward a change in the world around you." It is in an established private prayer life that we will be free to have a more public prayer life and more public proclamation of the gospel. He builds the book around this simple statement, *"The equipment for the inner life of prayer is simple, if not always easily secured. It consists particularly of a quiet place, a quiet hour, and a quiet heart."* This is yet another book that I will catalogue as one to read again and again. The footnotes that speak of so many saints and their perspective on prayer is absolutely worth the "price" of this book. Wonderful.

**68. WALKING WITH JESUS: Spiritual meditations for pilgrims in a weary land on their way to glory!**, by Mary Winslow (monergism digital 2016). Mary Winslow-mother and saint-wrote many devotionals and reflections during her time on this earth (1774–1854). This particular one is a compilation of her walk with Jesus and also reflections on her desire to be home with Christ later in life. She is the mother of Octavius Winslow, pastor

and theologian. Her and her son were shipped off to America with the promise that her husband would join them as soon as he sorted out the family finances but her husband died before he could make the trip so she was left to raise her son alone. She was very upfront with her faith and her reflections revealed that, *"Men think lightly of sin; not only sinners, but the saints do not view it in its proper light. Sin is not a light thing in the sight of God. The Church of God is asleep. Christians have too light views of sin."* Or this one: *"What a mercy of mercies that He has condescended to call us out of darkness into His marvelous light, and to translate us into the kingdom of His dear Son! What do we not owe Him for this rich display of sovereign mercy? I often have to exclaim, 'Lord, why me? Why such a poor sinner as I am, to be brought near unto God, adopted into His family, made an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus?'"* What wonderful language she uses. She speaks the very words of God naturally. This is her native tongue as she dwells on life with Jesus. *"The believer's life is changeful and chequered. The path along which he is retracing his steps back to paradise is paved with stones of variegated hues. And yet, painfully diversified as are often the events in his history, that very diversity is as essential to the symmetry and completeness of his Christian character as are different shades of coloring to the perfection of a picture, or as opposite notes in music are to the creation of harmony."* As others have said, through her trials, her faith came forth as gold and her deep communion with Christ continues to be a help and comfort to many that read her works published so many years after her death.

69. **STRONG AND COURAGEOUS (Echoes of War Book 2)**, by Daniel Gibbs (2019) These books just get better and better and by the way, already in this one we see the crossover between **The Breach of Faith** series and this one. David and his crew have been pulling out win after win against the league of Sol...in fact the whole Terran Coalition is slowly but surely pushing the League out of Canaan space. So there is much to be thankful for. But David and the Lion of Judah are given a new assignment in the midst of the war...a diplomatic assignment that he is told is an extremely delicate situation but should be a walk in the park. Monrovia, an independent world has been just dallying with the league especially when they thought the League was getting the upper hand. But Terran intelligence thinks they may be ripe to be nudged gently back into neutral space or even toward the Coalition. Well...of course things aren't what they seem and the government is systematically exterminating ALL people of faith. Well, so much for delicate diplomacy especially when David and most of his senior staff go off the reservation to fight along with a para-military organization named-The Little Sisters of Divine Recompense...yep...nun commandos (yeah...that is what I said) who seek to spare blood shed by helping the less fortunate... but do not be mistaken, this is a Marine Corps type group the gets the job done. ...Makes for some hilarious banter even in the midst of the horrors associated with exterminating hundreds of thousands of people. This operation goes south and then further south as the League steps in to assist. Good battles, strong faith-based decisions and great comradery: all characteristics that make for this series being continually great.
70. **SO FIGHT I (Echoes of War Book 3)**, by Daniel Gibbs (2019). This book has a lot of fight in it. (No pun intended!) Battles everywhere but especially around a particular space station: Unity Station...the League of Sol's best kept secret for almost 20 years. This is where they have resupplied their ships and other war machines that have cost the terran Coalition hundreds of thousands of lives. The Lion of Judah was placed on a "simple mission" according to the intelligence and it almost wound up as a complete loss for the Coalition...almost. Gen. Seville is back, David's arch nemesis...and they go at it with a new weapon that the League has come up with. But David and his crew take on the task along with the rest in his battlegroup to determine the best way to deal with this new weapon and finally secure the insecure according to Seville...Unity Station. The fights...the losses...mount up and then the opportunity to take the station and what the



ultimate cost may be! Friends die...friends come apart in the heat of battle...friends find new strengths and will...and a romance buds. Great stuff, making this book yet another great addition to this series. On to Book 4.

71. **GATES OF HELL (Echoes of War Book 4)**, by Daniel Gibbs (2019). Another well written story. He takes a page out of our current times (even though it is July 2461), when the Leaguer leader explains his on-going strategy to bring down the Coalition, *"We will provoke and fan the flames of discord throughout their entire pathetic republic. 'It will take more than a few traitors to do that, Director.' 'Oh, that's not the only tool in my bag of tricks. The very essence of their society... its openness... is a weakness I'll exploit. They trust everyone and everything they read on their social media platforms or their holochannels. By injecting stories that are believable but ultimately false, we can bend the narrative to fit our ends. They'll be powerless to stop it and won't even realize what's happening until it's far, far too late.'"* So far the Coalition is beating the league back, in fact they have basically thrown them out of their area of space ...for now. But there are still former planets friendly to the Coalition that have Leaguers on them. The intelligence division keeps tabs on these planets to determine which are better to seek to "liberate". You gotta love their motto..." *In God we trust. All others, we monitor.*" So The Lion of Judah is ordered to send an elite commando group (think SEALs on steroids) to a planet and along with them Ruth Goldberg, the Lion of Judah's TAO, goes along because this used to be her planet and she has many horrific memories of the place that obviously come back to the forefront when she arrives. Well that op goes from bad to worse in a heartbeat... (can you say No Easy Day?). The planet is mostly inhabited with Amish folks who came there to be separate from the universe but the League found them. So does this "simple" recon mission become something more? What happens to Ruth on this planet with so many memories? And while that is happening, the Lion is tasked with helping keep the supply lines to Unity. Freedom Station is open since the league keeps jumping in and disrupting the supply chain...to the tune of thousands of dead spacers. Something not right about all of this. The leaguers know where everyone is all the time ...is there a mole in the CDF? And if so can they discover who it is before it is too late? How many more people must die under Col. Cohen's watch as they seek to make an actual dent in this war? This story has so many different twists of conscience and faith that it makes the title extremely appropriate. This particular style is very appealing to me. According to the time line I will be moving back into the **BREACH OF FAITH** series Book 3 as the story that follows Echoes continues.

72. **BIBLICAL ELDERS AND DEACONS**, by Nehemiah Coxe (1681, digitally BY Chapel Library 2015). He is not someone that many in the reformed tradition will have heard of, but he was quite the orator and Bible expositor in his day. Nehemiah Coxe was the son of the early Particular Baptist leader Benjamin Coxe. In 1669, he joined the Bedford church made famous by John Bunyan, and in 1673 was called to serve as pastor of the church's sub-congregation at Hitchin. He begins this by expositing **Titus 1:5**-*"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you..."* Christ's will as revealed in Scripture is the pattern for the church, and Nehemiah Coxe unfolds aspects of that pattern that relate to church leadership. *"The edification and beauty of the Church is much concerned in her order, not such an order as superstition will dictate, or litigious nicety contend for, but such as sets her in a conformity with Christ's will; and particularly the filling up of the offices which He has appointed, with persons duly qualified for the administration of them, and the regular acting both of officers and members in their respective positions."* This little booklet is an expanded sermon that he preached at the ordination service of a young man. He seeks to make sure the officers and the congregation understand God's structure for His church. As John Bunyan was blunt, so is he...but blunt to the correct point; *"He (the elder) is*

*obliged to a constant watchfulness for and over his people, and ought diligently to enquire and search into the state of his flock—that those who are in danger to err for want of counsel may be directed; the unruly warned and rebuked; the feeble and dejected soul strengthened, comforted, and encouraged; and those that are beset with difficulties and temptations succored and relieved, and holding fast the faithful Word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”* He spends a short time talking about the office of deacon and more time of the office of elder and pastor, but then he lets the congregation have it with the majority of His work...let’s call it a charge to the congregation, if you will, of which this is just a small sampling, *“And we beseech you, brethren, to know [that is to acknowledge with due respect] them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves”* (1Th 5:12-13). And again, ***‘Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine’*** (1Ti 5:17). *If you have a true friend in the world, it is he that watches for your souls, tells you the truth, and travails night and day to present you perfect unto God. Let not his faithfulness in admonishing you cause an abatement of your love to him; but if you love your own salvation, let it rather raise your esteem of him.”* This booklet is full of biblical wisdom for the officer and the member alike even from a Particular Baptist... which meant they believed in particular atonement.

73. **BREACH OF DUTY: Breach of Faith Book 3**, by Daniel Gibbs, Gary T. Stevens (2020). This book in the time line comes right after **GATES OF HELL (Echoes of War Book 4)** ... covering some events of August 2461. The crew of the Shadow Wolf is under constant harassment by Leaguers and independent bounty hunters because of the league wanting them dead for aiding in a Terran Operation that made them look bad. Capt. James Henry is constantly looking over his shoulders since the safety of his crew is always at the front of his mind. After a particularly rough cargo job which include killing numerous bounty hunters and losing part of his cargo...he finds out that his beloved “partner” and uncle is dying so he decides with his crew to go and visit Uncle Charlie so he can see him one more time. It is at this point that things get sticky. For Henry hasn’t been in Terran space for awhile and some people get nervous...specifically those who engineered Henry’s disgrace out of the service years ago. Gen. Erhart has him arrested along with the rest of his old crew from the CVS Laffey from 16 years before as insurance while he carries out his plan. Well, that ensures that Capt. Henry will not get to say good bye to his uncle and that has an opposite affect than Gen. Erhart had intended. After breaking out of the Generals custody, the crew of the Shadow Wolf finds itself in a conspiracy that is much bigger than the disgracing of Henry...a conspiracy that has the potential of crippling the League and at the same time splitting the Terran coalition. A very big unwinnable battle begins at a space station controlled by the General until the Lion of Judah arrives to help. Again yet another great book by these authors...and the on-going character development....and their faith struggles seem to be at the forefront making this series in my opinion one worth reading.
74. **ON THE INCARNATION or De Incarnatione Verbi Dei**, by Athanasius (circa 320 AD), translated by Sister Penelope Lawson of the Anglican Community of St. Mary the Virgin in Wantage, England (1944), with introduction by C.S. Lewis. Athanasius stood *contra mundum* (“against the world”) in defense of the biblical doctrine of Christ. He opposed Arius when it seemed all the world would follow Arius’s heresy. Athanasius’s work remains even today one of the definitive statements of orthodox Trinitarianism. This translation is intended for the world at large, not only for theological students. This work is a universally acknowledged masterpiece of fourth-century patristic theology. As C. S. Lewis observes in his introduction: *“When I first opened De Incarnatione I soon*

discovered by a very simple test that I was reading a masterpiece, for only a master mind could have written so deeply on such a subject with such classical simplicity." It is also from this introduction that we get one of Lewis' famous sayings, "Naturally, since I myself am a writer, I do not wish the ordinary reader to read no modern books. But if he must read only the new or only the old, I would advise him to read the old. And I would give him this advice precisely because he is an amateur and therefore much less protected than the expert against the dangers of an exclusive contemporary diet. A new book is still on its trial and the amateur is not in a position to judge it. It has to be tested against the great body of Christian thought down the ages, and all its hidden implications (often unsuspected by the author himself) have to be brought to light." And this is one that when the Christian considers the Incarnation of Christ has been vetted well, even though some of his theology is still in the early stages as is theological development as seen in this quote, "You may be wondering why we are discussing the origin of men when we set out to talk about the Word's becoming Man. The former subject is relevant to the latter for this reason: it was our sorry case that caused the Word to come down, our transgression that called out His love for us, so that He made haste to help us and to appear among us. It is we who were the cause of His taking human form, and for our salvation that in His great love He was both born and manifested in a human body. For God had made man thus (that is, as an embodied spirit), and had willed that he should remain in incorruption." However, even with its weakness on the covenant reason for Christ's coming (we see this doctrine in its infancy), this book was a definitive text for years in the original, and this translation-which many scholars have said is the best English translation of this work-has been settled as authoritative. In this form it is an easy read (I know for I had to translate part of this in Seminary for my Greek professor) and easily understood and applied. In actuality the text is right at 100 pages plus or minus and perhaps one of the best parts of it is his refutation the Jews and their declaring that Jesus is not their Expected One. After the clear and concise refutation...that could be used today...he basically asks if not Jesus then who? His argument would work for agnostics and some atheists as well. Perhaps the weakest part of this work is his refutation of the lack of belief in the Gentiles. Use the argument he uses for the Jew...worked for Paul!

75. **KEEP THE FAITH (Echoes of War Book 5)**, by Daniel Gibbs (2019). This one was interesting...a whole lot more interesting than the one about crushing a pirate syndicate a few books back. The League of Sol is seeking to divide and conquer the Terran Coalition from the inside out. The work they are doing hyping up the Peace Movement Party has been obvious, but now a more deadly enemy has begun affecting the youngest and most vulnerable of military age young adults. It is a new drug call Orbita that gives a highly euphoric rush that hooks the user in one use and with minor continual use guarantees a death sentence (think fentanyl on steroids). David and the Lion of Judah are sent on a diplomatic mission to the planet Gilead and it becomes anything but a diplomatic mission given the need to catch the Leagues' drug dealer on a pleasure planet that would rather look the other way than impede anyone's freedom even to kill. The dilemmas of faith have become more and more apparent when the op goes awry and the informant that has been groomed by one of the spy agencies ends up dying in her arms. The spy agencies motto always causes me to chuckle: "*In God We Trust...all others we monitor*". Anyway, between the "spook" and David the constant assault of having to make life and death decisions about other people's lives continues to take its toll. This all must be done and diplomatically and soon since so many are dying in the Coalition and now among the Saurians, the Coalitions only ally in this fight against the Sol. Is he able to deal with this newest threat? Oh, and then there is the election that has been hovering in the background...which way will the people go? It is in fact, all wrapped up in this book and now I am off to the next book in this timeline-**RUN THE GAUNTLET (Echoes of War Book 6)** before getting back to the next book in the **Breach of Faith** series.

76. **RUN THE GAUNTLET (Echoes of War Book 6)**, by Daniel Gibbs, 2020). The election is over and the one thing David didn't think would happen...happened: The Peace Union won the presidency with a resounding victory as people tire of the "endless" war with the League, never imagining that the League is as bad as the CDF as President Spencer has always said they are. *"Live now in our studio with this announcement. President-Elect Fuentes will be making his victory speech within the next three hours. I repeat, Canaan News Network projects that Eduardo Fuentes has won the presidency of the Terran Coalition." Whiskey, tango, foxtrot. The socialist won? Kenneth's eyes bugged out of his head. 'Okay, the world's gone mad.'"* The Peace Union do not understand that the League has embedded spies in their midst stirring them up...no one ever does. Everyone has been asking why there is so much division in the population canceling one another and no one is seeing the truth of where this is coming from. (just like today in our time). One of the League leaders says, *"Once you understand that these capitalist dogs are driven by a short term, twenty-four-hour news cycle, it's quite easy to manipulate them. We tricked them into voting for a man whose political beliefs are in the same strata as our own. The sad thing is, he's probably too stupid to even realize it, much less his followers."* President Spencer is handed a plan that could keep the League's war machine occupied for a couple of decades and he orders it done. David is promoted to General and given charge over the fleet that will engage two shipbuilding space stations. Seemed like an easy day...until it wasn't! The fights that are depicted in this book are among the best described and carried out both in space and then in the space station where the Marines and Special Operators have landed to set charges to blow it up as well. So did they succeed again? Were they welcomed home as heroes? The book comes to an end with our "heroes" feeling shame and distress with General Cohen left as the scape goat for the new President and the Peace Union. Will he retire? Will he and Angie make a life together? These are question to be answered in **FINISH THE FIGHT (Echoes of war book 7)**. But first I will be heading back to Captain Henry and the Shadow Wolf as it is next in the timeline. **BREACH OF TRUST (Breach of Faith book 4)**.

77. **THE DRAGON AND THE RAVEN or The Days of King Alfred**, by G. A. (George Alfred) Henty (1886 digitalized for Kindle 2014). The story was written to entertain young and old...perhaps the first of really good historical fiction. It follows the actual history of King Alfred, the Saxon king of England but the story is really about ealdorman (nobleman) Edmund from childhood through to great general of the Saxon armies and great Admiral of the Saxon fleets as they seek to run the Vikings (the Danes) from their shore. The fight went on for decades until finally the Danes determined it was costing them too much to continue pillaging in England. In the midst of some grand battles on land and sea we see the strategy of Edmund as well as a great love for a Viking princess set in and come to fruition with her and her father along with a great number of other Danes converting to Christianity. All that is written about here is true but there is a lot of conversation that the writer takes much license in without taking away from the overall true events. Such good license that is, that this book of just over 340 pages was extremely hard to put down. From one chapter to the next you are compelled to keep reading just to find out what was happening next.

78. **NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST JESUS**, by Octavius Winslow (1862, Monergism digital 2019). This is one of the best expositions of the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans I have ever read. His almost exhaustive accounts, reasoning, illustrations and use of Scripture to interpret Scripture is absolutely encouraging and uplifting at the same time. You can't help but come away with a lift as you consider the chapter many scholars have donned the Greatest chapter in the Whole Bible. Going along with him in this masterful journey has been of great benefit to me personally as I have often struggle with what God is doing in

my life and the lives of my children, especially as Hannah struggles with this last round of chemo. He elucidates his points; *"In Christ they were chosen- to Christ they were betrothed- with Christ they were united- by Christ they are saved, - and, sitting with Christ on his throne, they shall reign with him forever and ever. We would remind those who can appropriate to themselves the language of the text, of the exalted privilege to which they are raised. A holy, filial, joyful liberty, is your birthright. It is the liberty of a pardoned and justified sinner. It is the liberty of a reconciled, adopted child. It is the liberty of one for whom there is "now no condemnation." And yet how few of God's people walk in the full enjoyment of this liberty? How few pray, and love, and confide, as adopted children! How few labor for life! Oh, sons of God, rise to this your high and heavenly calling! Your freedom was purchased at a high price, undervalue it not. It is most holy- abuse it not. It binds you, by the strongest obligations, to yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead. God Is for Us! In the most comprehensive meaning of the words, he is for us. His love is for us- his perfections are for us- his covenant is for us- his government, extending over all the world, and his power over all flesh, is for us. There is nothing in God, nothing in his dealings, nothing in his providences, but what is on the side of his people. Enshrined in his heart, engraved on his hand, kept as the apple of his eye, God forms a mighty bulwark for his Church. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever." In Christ Jesus, holiness, justice, and truth, unite with mercy, grace, and love, in weaving an invincible shield around each believer."* It is not an easy read at first, because of all the run on sentences and the lack of bullet points in his numerous short pithy statements that define much. But after the first 100 or so pages you pick up the cadence of his writing and then the work becomes pleasurable. Another free read from Monergism.com.

**79. BREACH OF TRUST (Breach of Faith book 4)**, by Daniel Gibbs, Gary T. Stevens (2020). This was the longest of the book at over 500 pages because I think this was supposed to be the last in this series until the decision was made to make 2 more. So this will not be the last of Henry and his crew. The Shadow Wolf is gone, lost in battle. Felix sacrificed himself to save his best friend Jim Henry. Henry has been cleared of all wrong doing but the new administration in the Coalition still sees him as a threat to the "peace" with the League who are just biding their time as this weak Coalition continues to languish in their own prosperity...then they plan to strike again. This book is filled with thrills and battles as Tia is captured and tortured by a Megacorp guy (Antione Rigualt) on her home world of Hestia. He wants revenge because 16 years ago she left him for dead as she was leading a revolution to free her people. Now she has been freed by the crew of the Shadow Wolf with another ship and a few others in tow like the Sisters of Recompense...and she is once again fighting for the freedom of her people. One is left to wonder what that might look like since there are so many fingers in the pot. Anyway the day is won. Rigualt is going to stand trial for his oppression and his placing a dermal control device attached to the brains in people to control their motor functions as well as mental functions. Tia is elected Prime Minister and Henry becomes the Admiral of the Independent Space Force. All seems good for now but...the League is not going away, no matter how much the current Coalition government thinks they will so Henry and the group are preparing for the inevitable. I will be reading the next book in the timeline which takes me back to **FINISH THE FIGHT (ECHOES OF WAR SERIES book 7)**.

**80. THE ASSURANCE OF HEAVEN AND SALVATION: A Powerful Motive to Serve God with Fear**, by Ezekiel Hopkins (2021 Monergism digitally copy write). This passage is an extended exposition of Hebrews 12:28-29- *"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."* He spends much of his time speaking to the later part of verse 29: *"... for our God is a consuming fire."* because he

believes that Christians cannot experience their fullness of faith unless they truly have a fear of God...as God says by the way. So he sets out to distinguish for the believer and the non-believer what this fear should look like for us both. For the non-believer, it represents all and more of the fear that people have of being burned alive and as he puts it without the “pleasure” of dying...but burning for eternity. For the believer, our “fear” ought to balance between our assurance of a salvation that will never be taken away...a salvation given to us by the grace of God alone...a salvation that should not cause us to fear anything in this life...and yet a fear that we are constantly seeking to improve for our God who has secured all of this for us as if we could lose it. He is clear that we won’t be, and he is equally clear that we are not to be presumptuous of our position. An earthly example is the fear we have of letting our beloved parent down. On one hand we know we will and when we seek forgiveness we shall surely receive it since it has been promised...but on the other...the feeling that we have let them down should be of such a measure that we fear the reprisal that will surely come if we don’t immediately seek forgiveness. All too often Christians get “idle”, taking God’s grace for granted and we are “put out” when He has the audacity to discipline us rather than fearing that discipline and the fact that He has the right to do it. As he states for the Christian, *“Our God is a consuming fire: though he hath laid down his enmity against us, yet he hath not laid down his sovereignty and majesty over us. Indeed, these two expressions, our God, and a consuming fire, at first blush and glance seem to look strangely and wistly (intently) one upon another: but the Holy Ghost hath excellently tempered them. He is our God: this corrects that despairing fear, that otherwise would seize upon us, from the consideration of God as a consuming fire. And he is a consuming fire also: this corrects that presumptuous irreverence, that else the consideration of our interest in God might possibly embolden us unto.* This book (technically, at the time, a booklet though over 120 pages) is a true gem concerning a subject no one likes to talk much about today...but then it never stopped these dedicated preachers, teachers and theologians.

81. **PRAYING THE BIBLE**, by Donald S. Whitney (2015). Donald Whitney is a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where Al Mohler is president. His works are always fresh and encouraging. He focuses on our practice of pursuing holiness. Sometimes his methods and his words can sound “legalistic” but they have been proven by many to be edifying. His premise in this book is that most Christians don’t enjoy praying because we don’t “feel” like it, because prayer...their prayers...are boring. *“They /we hear ourselves saying the same old things about the same old things. With that being the case we immediately come down on ourselves and say there must be something wrong with me since I don’t feel like praying.”* But throughout this book, he continues to encourage us that it is not us (most of the time) it really is the method that we choose. **SPOILER ALERT:** His method: praying through the Psalms. So I commend this little book (just under 100 pages) for your study and practice. I have actually prayed through the Psalms on many occasions and find when I don’t know what to say, the Spirit enables me through His Word. (Other areas of the Bible as well.) We know that the Psalms play a major role especially in the New Testament (Jesus Himself prays using Psalm 22 on the cross, Jesus and the disciples went out from the Last Supper singing the Hallel Psalms on the way to Gethsemane, the believers in Acts 4 pray through the Psalm when asking for boldness...and this is just 2 examples.) In fact, I have promoted praying through the Bible many times...whether in structuring our prayers as we looked at the prayers of the Bible a few years back in Sunday School or with my endorsement of journaling through the Bible and praying through what you have read...journaling those prayers as well. This method isn’t for everyone...but it is another tool in the tool box that I believe is helpful and edifying for the believer and I commend to the Church.

**82. FINISH THE FIGHT (Echoes of War Book 7)**, by Daniel Gibbs (2020). The election is lost to the Peace Party. Hardly anyone in the military are happy with this outcome...for the Coalition had the League on its heels and they could have pushed them back to Earth...or so President Justin Spencer and General David Cohen and multitude of others thought. The League is still out there and with the return of Freedom/Unity Station it is thought that they will be back sooner rather than later especially since the CDF is not able to get any eyes around the station in a clear violation of the treaty signed just weeks after the new administration took office. As they say, elections have consequences...and this one is no different. The CDF is pared down. President Spencer goes home, Gen. Cohen retires and starts rabbinical school. But the League is not gone. This sentiment sums up David's feelings in his retirement, *"It wasn't like space didn't have hundreds of thousands of planets. They didn't need the resources. No, the League is an excellent example of what happens every time one group of people thinks they're better than everyone else and seeks to impose its will by force...and that people are also socialists."* Though the League leadership put on a face of peace since their shipyards are gone there is another plan with the home fleet that had never been used for one final push. But will the CDF discover this plot before it is too late? What will David do with the new information that has just come to his attention along with the new administration? Will they sit on the hands continuing to call the CDF "baby-killers" or will they turn and fight if and when that time approaches? Oh, and how does James Henry fit into this book as well? This seems to be the conclusion of a great series. I hope not. But now I move on to the next books in the timeline...**SPACER'S LUCK (Breach of Faith book 5)**. **SPOILER ALERT:** At the end of it all this book ends with this...a nod to another Captain... *"At first, one could barely tell they were moving, but the speed picked up, and over the course of a few minutes, the massive vessel cleared its moorings and left the station behind. To the left of them was the capital of the Terran Coalition—Canaan—in all its splendor. A world of blue and green, the new cradle of humanity. And to the right, the blackness of space. Hammond turned around in her seat and flashed a grin at David. "Course, sir?" "Tradition would be the second star to the right, straight on till morning, sir," Ruth interjected. ...In that case...second star to the left, David said. And from the background you hear, And who said anything about stopping in the morning?"*

**83. SPACER'S LUCK (Breach of Faith book 5)**, by Daniel Gibbs and Gary T. Stevens (2022). Admiral James Henry has a new ship, the *Liberator* which is the flagship of the Independent Space Force...but he misses the *Shadow Wolf*...or should I say, the *Venture Star*. However, is it the ship he misses or is it the freedom of going from an independent spacer to an Admiral, which has him involved with more and more politics-which he hates. The war may be over with the League, but men continue to war with words and then there is the constant insidious nature of men that is always seeking to undue others...to control others. Whether it is the League or pirates or other factions, men never seem to change...aliens either for that matter. All suffer from an extreme case of total depravity. Miri Gaon has taken over as Captain of the *Venture Star* and they are seeking to simply make a regular wage in transporting goods...but, of course, as from the beginning there is no "simple mission" for this crew. They get attacked by a pirate and barely make it to a planet where the asteroids are so thick that you can only get out at certain times. Anyway, after off-loading their goods and sensing some interesting folks, Miri gets an old CIS call from someone on planet which begins them on a journey that comes close to causing death to the whole crew, because they have gotten in the middle of a galactic conspiracy set on changing the course and leadership in the independent systems. A new drug is at the core of this conspiracy that addicts and then kills if you try to stop... so the addicted are at the mercy of the suppliers. "Curall" as it is called (the author is not good with drug names...though I suspect that the ridiculousness is symbolic of the nature of the drug...a play on words.) After a lot of near death experiences, and only a couple of space

battles...miss those in this series...they get a sample, fight their way back and seek to discover who it is who is trying to take over this part of the Sagittarian Arm of the Milky Way ...enter back in, Adm. Henry and the Independent Space Force...which brings us to the next book **FORTUNE'S FAVOR (Breach of Faith book 6)**. These are not quite the same as the **Echoes of War series** but they still uphold the same standard of faith and struggle and good guys winning...so I'm in. Oh, and the *Lion of Judah* (don't know who or what that is? Look above.) is lost...jumped into a wormhole and disappeared and all hands are presumed dead. I CAN'T WAIT for that series to come out! Next year!!!

**84. JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN: How the First Female Disciples Help Us Know and Love the Lord**, by Rebecca McLaughlin (2022 from the Gospel Coalition). I

have read many books by Christian women and I would have to say that this is the first that seems solely devoted to other women. That may sound funny since this is written by a woman for a woman's book study but most of the others I have read could easily cross over if only they would make the book covers a little more masculine...since guys don't normally read books written by women, which is a fault in their character to be sure. LOL! *"As we look through Mary's eyes, we also see the cost of letting Jesus in. Birth itself is intensely costly. Nursing an infant day and night is an ongoing act of sacrificial love. Amid the joy of meeting my first child, I cried repeatedly in the first days and weeks of Miranda's life. Everything hurt. I couldn't sleep. I worried desperately about her, fearing she'd go to sleep and never wake, while also longing for her times of sleep. I felt like I had lost my life by gaining hers. I loved her, and she ruined me. For Mary, two millennia ago, every risk was multiplied—the risk of her own death in childbirth or that her son would die in infancy. But Mary risked much more with Jesus than she would have with another child. She risked her reputation, her marriage prospects, her community, even her life when she replied to Gabriel, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord: let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1: 38)." When speaking of the woman healed from bleeding she goes into great detail on menstruation and while I am married and have "lived" through 3 daughters those are not the details I am used to reading about. But all said and done, she makes her point rather well, that the witness of women is paramount to the Gospel writers for the Church today to consider. I thought her healing of Peter's mother-in-law particularly helpful, "Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell the story, but we might wonder why. Of all the hundreds or thousands of people Jesus healed, why highlight this one? Did they simply want to reinforce a woman's role of serving? I don't think so. If we read this story within the web of the Gospels as a whole, we'll find it doesn't simply reinforce a woman's place. The verb for serving (diakoneo) that's applied to Peter's mother-in-law also describes the angels who ministered to Jesus after he was tempted in the wilderness (Mark 1: 13; Matt. 4: 11). It describes Jesus's female disciples (Luke 8: 1–3). It describes Martha of Bethany when she serves while her sister Mary sits at Jesus's feet and learns, before Jesus specifically affirms Mary's choice (Luke 10: 38–42). Most significantly, it describes Jesus himself, when he explains to his disciples that "whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10: 43–45). Peter's mother-in-law's response to Jesus healing her is a model not just for women but for all of us. In Jesus's kingdom, serving isn't women's work. It's everybody's work." And she wraps up her thought process many ways, but I thought this the clearest, "To look at Jesus through the eyes of women may seem at first like an innately modern project. But when it comes to Jesus's death and resurrection, it's precisely what the Gospel authors invite us to do. What we see through their eyes is not an alternative Jesus, but rather the authentic Jesus, who welcomes both men and women as his disciples, and who is best seen from below." A good book to be sure maybe more for women, though.*



85. **BROTHERS, WHAT SHALL WE DO?**, by Thomas Manton, (1874 THEN Copyright © 2022, Monergism). This book is the compilation of 8 sermons by Manton expositing Acts 2:37-38, ***“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”*** He takes each section of these verses to highlight the goodness of the Lord’s promise given through Peter at Pentecost...a day when over 3000 were convicted of their sins and repented and believed and received the Spirit. What led to their asking the most appropriate of questions was, *“This grievous sin was wrong done to Christ Jesus, ‘Whom ye have crucified.’ Now they find the nails pricking in their hearts as so many sharp daggers; and having formerly pierced Christ, are now pierced themselves: ‘Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts.’ Note from hence, that sin will then affect the heart most when the wrong done to Christ thereby is seriously thought of. It was prophesied of these Jews, Zech. 12:10, ‘They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born;’...Now I come to come to the trouble and anxiety of heart caused by the word, κατενύγησαν τῇ καρδίᾳ, ‘They were pricked (cut) in their hearts.’ Mark, it was not a slight stroke, the razing of the skin, but a compunction or pricking, a deep remorse and trouble. This was not of the eye, as Esau sought the blessing with tears when he had lost it, Heb. 12:17, but in the heart. Not a lighter touch or sudden pang, but a deep wound. The words are passive, not pricked themselves, but ‘were pricked.’ Could they have told how to prevent it, it had never been; but God breaketh in upon their consciences by his word, and then they are sore troubled. We read of some that, when they were charged with the same crime, they were ‘cut at heart;’ Acts 7:54, ‘Ye have been betrayers and murderers of the just One. As to their need of repentance he says among many other things, “To a daily repentance for daily sins. As we pray for daily bread, so for daily pardon; we need one as much as the other. We daily heap up new sins, and we must daily sue out our pardon. This was the method God took with Adam when he was fallen: God came to him in the cool of the day, Gen. 3:8. God would not let them sleep in their sins, that he might bring them suddenly to recall themselves, and consider what they had done, that they might long rest quiet in their sins.”* Throughout this book, his use of the scriptures to illustrate and interpret is smooth flowing along with his use of Greek and Latin. His exposition is top notched not focusing on his knowledge but on the Scriptures for the question, ***“Brothers, what shall we do?”*** should be one we can answer with the simplicity of the apostles.

86. **FORTUNE’S FAVOR (Breach of Faith book 6)**, by Daniel Gibbs and Gary t. Stevens (2022). Curall continues to be an issue that s dividing people, nations and planets from one another...the exact plan of the Jalm’tar Empire. As we saw in the last book, they were making inroads into these places that couldn’t afford the pharmaceuticals coming out of Terran controlled worlds. They were implementing their plan while the war was going on so that they could move in no matter who won the war. But Curall “seemed” to work...when all it did was addict and eventually kill, putting off the symptoms until it is too late. But some of the bigger worlds are struggling because they are some diseases that are still incurable so this enables them to keep their loved ones around even though they are simply putting off the inevitable for their own selfish reasons. They would have they whole people be enslaved for the sake of their own well-being, if that is how you define well-being. So Admiral Henry has to do something before all of Independent Space is controlled by the Jalm’tar...so of course, he puts together a plan involving his old crew on the *Venture Star*, who are still shaken up by the mess on Starfall that nearly got them all killed, to get information but one of their own becomes “infected” with Curall. The mission of course changes because there is no simple mission for this crew as we have seen

throughout the book. You know it is coming but you look forward to finding out how they get out of it and if they can save their crew member. Do they find a cure? Is the galaxy saved once again? **SPOILER ALERT:** Yes and No! What is on the horizon for these spacers? We will find out in **IRON DICE (Breach of Faith book 7)** but not until December of this year. Oy vay! In the meantime, onto the next book series **DECEPTION FLEET: Victory's Wake Book 1.**

**87. THE HOBBIT: Or There and Back Again**, by J.R.R. Tolkien (1937 but this addition 1996). I couldn't resist...when this came up on Kindle Unlimited I just had to read it again. It has, after all been 2 years since my last reading. This was a fun break from the sci-fi military space dramas and Puritan works just before I go on vacation...but I finished it too soon! What a fun and swift read of a journey from there and back again! This volume is one of great adventure and of loyalty, valor of good men, elves and dwarves standing in the face of such evil. But the reality is... (at least Hobbit reality) ... Hobbits don't do anything troublesome (which equals adventurous) or heroic...it is just not done unless you are a Took...and they are a bit strange to any respectable Hobbit. But when Bilbo Baggins (a descendant of those pesky Took's) meets a troop of dwarves seeking to reclaim their home... all of that changes. *"As they (the dwarves...a Tolkien spelling of the word) sang, the hobbit felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and a jealous love, the desire of the hearts of dwarves. Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick."* Tolkien's own description speaks of a time between faerie and the dominion of men...a time of great wonder, great tragedy, and greater still victories over evil that have become the songs and tales of old. This is not as hard to read as say, **The Silmarillion** or **The Unfinished Tales**, so the reading is enjoyable and relaxing and moves at a faster pace than you realize, as we encounter a world of Hobbits, wizard, dwarves, trolls, goblins, elves, a "skin changer", regular men of sorts and a dragon named Smaug who has hoarded the dwarves' gold since days of old almost beyond the remembrances of men. This is a journey for the ages as well as timeless life lessons that we should all adhere to, like: ***"Never laugh at live dragons!"*** That is a truth to hold on to whether in Middle-Earth or in the real world. The "lesson" concerning hospitality is on its own so important and worth slowing your reading pace because true hospitality is a lost art on men in this world today and needs to be reclaimed, especially since it is yet another character trait of the Christian as spelled out in Scriptures.

**88. EXPEDITION EARTH (First Colony series book 14)**, by Ken Lozito (2022). This book actually dropped on August 31<sup>st</sup> and here I am September 3 writing a review. Yeah, it is that good. In fact, the whole series is that good, and from what I read there is more to come. Ken is definitely my favorite author in this genre. Daniel Gibbs comes close but his stuff is just enough different that I can't wait to pick up whatever they are writing. Connor Gates and most of the gang along with Connor and Lenora's two children that are all grown up...Ethan and Lauren...and the action between the characters is non-stop. This book basically begins by New Earth receiving one of the probes sent to back to earth ...about 60 years earlier than they thought... to going back to the Sol System to discover millions of people have survived the original Vemus attack that sought to destroy (assimilate) all things mammal... specifically human...to sending a diplomatic envoy made up of humans and Ovarrow...to placing their feet on old Terra Firma...Earth again. The meeting of the people out in the system bring with it new understanding in many ways...ways that they ...the people of New Earth... could not have imagined when they left. This is seen in the brutality of all Earther... pre-Vemus attack... natural ways of despotism and depravity coming to a head again...that many, if not most of the younger

ones from the colony have never seen since their society is almost a utopia. And while finding a Hitler-esk kind of leadership that wants to annihilate anyone who is not just like they are is interesting enough... it is what they find in the exiled colonies that brings the most attention to the Colonial Defense Force and before you know it they are on Earth. Things have changed and things they are a changin' as well. To say anymore, I would have to put up a large Spoiler alert. Even though Connor still remembers what life was like on earth 250 years ago before the Vemus, he finds himself missing New Earth, for he has forged a life there over the decades. But the question is: What is next for the General who had considered retirement before this voyage into the unknown came along? What about his children? Are there weddings and great-grandchildren on the horizon? And then what about Noah and the others, on a new colony established because of the Krake Wars, who weren't as prominent in this book? Again this is a GREAT read...the whole series is...I highly recommend it to your reading pleasure.

- 89. THE FADING OF THE FLESH**, by George Swinnock (1627-1673). Swinnock was an English Puritan, known for his vivid illustrations of biblical truth. And this book is no slouch in that department as well...talking about a subject ...literally no one talks about these days...dying well in the LORD. I have long been interested in the Puritans, as you know well, for their devotion to Christ. Their writings are useful for edification from their high view of God and warm application of divine theology. What I appreciate most is how they stir my heart toward the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit by means of Scripture. I think any thirsty believer will read this book with profit. The Puritan's frequently talked about death since it was so real to them and with them always. Swinnock says, *"Nothing in the whole creation can pacify the conscience awakened with the guilt of sin, and frightened with the fear of death, but a pardon in the blood of this covenant; for want of this it was that the heathen were either desperate or doubtful in their deaths, and their orator ingeniously confesseth, that notwithstanding all the medicines they could gather out of their own gardens, the disease was still too strong for the remedy. But a plaster spread with the blood of Christ, and applied by faith to the sore, is a sovereign and certain cure. Faith in Christ is such a shield, that under its protection a Christian may stand in the evil day of death, keep his ground, and secure himself from all the shot which the law, Satan, or conscience can make against him: 'I am the resurrection and the life; he that liveth and believeth in me shall live, though he die,' John 11...Friend, if thou wouldst leave the world cheerfully, live in the world conscientiously; take heed of those fiends which will fright thee in the night of death; choose suffering before sin, and punish thy body to keep thy soul pure. The ermine, some say, will die before she will go into the dirt to defile her beautiful skin; and the mouse of Armenia will rather be taken and slain, than preserve and pollute herself in a filthy hole. As the white is always in the archer's eye, so let thy death be in thine, that it may quicken thee to diligence and exactness in thy life. Death is with us as well but we have gotten used to living longer hence we don't consider our death as another way to glorify God. In this work, Swinnock expounds Psalm 73:26, **"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."** With illustrations and Gospel wisdom he speaks of the futility of "banking" on this life and the glorious blessing and "portion" of being in Christ till death. We must always remember, *"That the comfort of a Christian in his saddest condition is this, that God is his portion. The psalmist's condition was very sad; his flesh failed him. Man's spirit often decays with his flesh. The spirits and blood are let out together. His heart fell with his flesh; but what was the strong cordial which kept him from swooning at such a season? Truly this: 'But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.'"* Sinclair Ferguson says of this work, *"This wonderful little book, written with charm, simplicity, and clarity by George Swinnock is bound to prove both a delight and a challenge to any Christian who values the riches of the gospel. It is a spiritual gem that deserves to be read**

and re-read. In addition, its charm, simplicity, and clarity make it a perfect entry point to the writings of the pastoral Puritans... *The Fading of the Flesh* is a rare spiritual treat."

90. **A BELIEVER'S LAST DAY, HIS BEST DAY**, by Thomas Brooks, (written 1651, Copyright Monergism © 2020). This little booklet (100 plus pages) was first a funeral message at the burial of a good friend and sister in Christ at Christ's Church, London in 1651. People were so drawn to the sermon that Brooks was urged to expound a bit more fully and publish it for the "masses". By calling this sermon/message by this title **A BELIEVER'S LAST DAY, HIS BEST DAY**, Brooks at once demolished the conventional view of death as an earthly calamity that some had begun to fall into, even with this being a main theme of encouragement from the Puritans. He says, *"Death is a change of our imperfect and incomplete enjoyments of God, for a more complete and perfect enjoyment of him. As no believer has a clear sight of God here, so no believer has a full and perfect sight of God here."* In fact, he makes his case even stronger when he says, *"Death is a change, which puts an end to all CHANGES. What is the whole life of a man—but a life of changes? Death is a change that puts an end to all external changes. Here on earth, you often change your joy for sorrow, your health for sickness, your strength for weakness, your honor for dishonor, your plenty for poverty, your beauty for deformity, your friends for foes, your silver for brass, and your gold for copper. Now the comforts of a man are smiling, the next hour they are dying, etc. All temporals are as transitory as a rapid torrent, a ship, a bird, an arrow, a runner who passes by. Man himself—the king of these outward comforts—what is he—but a mere nothing? —the dream of a dream, a shadow, a bubble, a flash, a blast. Now death puts an end to all external changes: there shall be no more sickness, no more complaints, no more needs, etc. And then death also puts an end to all internal changes. Now the soul shall be tempted no more, sin no more, be foiled no more. Now you may judge by this, that a Christian's dying-day is his best day."* And he ends with this sentiment from the original sermon, *"See that you have a real interest in Christ; see that you die daily to sin, to the world, and to your own righteousness. See that conscience is always waking, speaking, and tender. See that Christ be your Lord and Master. See that all reckonings stand right between the Lord and your souls. See that you are fruitful, faithful, and watchful—and then your dying-day shall be to you as the day of harvest to the farmer, as the day of deliverance to the prisoner, as the day of coronation to the king, and as the day of marriage to the bride. Your dying-day shall be a day of triumph and exaltation, a day of freedom and consolation, a day of rest and satisfaction! Then the Lord Jesus shall be as honey in the mouth, ointment in the nostrils, music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart."* These last 2 books have been extremely encouraging...not at all morose as their titles might lead some to believe. These need to be re-read in this day and age so that we will take appropriate action to understand the gifts given to us...making the most of this life as it prepares us for the next one...to the glory of God alone.

91. **VICTORY'S WAKE (Deception Fleet Book 1)**, by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa (2021). The war with the League of Sol is over... or is it? As far as the politicians on Canaan are concerned, all they want is for it to be over even though President Spencer, General Macintosh and others, even the leftist Vice-President Fuentes, are not so certain. Since the war, there has been a huge upheaval in the League, as prescribed under the peace agreement...planets voting to leave the League and join the Terran Coalition...and many refugees fleeing planets that have not voted to align with the Coalition. It is this latter one that is the focus of this book. While the League is not technically sanctioning anything, there is a covert operative that is heading up a divide and conquer campaign aided by the natural unrest that comes with too many people cramming the border of the Coalition (sound familiar?). Human trafficking and drugs are rampant and if the refugees are too compliant, why not add a group of paid thugs to make things worse than that already are

for those in the rest of the Coalition...? Well, all of this causes the president and his immediate cabinet to put together their own covert action groups to seek to undermine and bring to justice those who are overseeing the drugs and the trafficking for profit as they build a new type of stealth spacecraft. CAU (Covert Action Unit) 171 is put into place with Captain Jackson Adams at its head and a rag tag group of CDF and civilian contractors making up the rest. We meet warrant officer Ehud (Sparks) Dwyer who is a pilot jockey and explosive expert, Gina Wilkes with her particular skills in espionage and death, Sevastopol (Sev) Rast, a league of Sol defector and expert sniper and over watch, LT. Brant Guinto, computer geek and communication expert with all of this being based out of "the Oxford" (the spy ship we have seen before) and overseen by the one and only Col. Robert Sinclair that we see throughout all of the series. Well, as I said, in victory's wake the League is seeking to undermine the Coalition ...underestimating them all along the way...considering their adherence to such principles as faith and freedom and duty a "weaknesses" when actually it is their strength. The League operative Vasiliy Keil will play a big role in the rest of the books as he seeks to undermine the Coalition with CAU 171 stopping him in the nick of time...like in this book. Also...Jackson has problem at home on the ranch in his off times that he needs to deal with though he prefers to run off and save the galaxy. Predictable reading...yes, to a degree. Fun, entertaining and worthwhile...absolutely.

**92. COLD CONFLICT (Deception Fleet Book 2),** by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa (2021).

The league operative is at it again. One of the leading megacorps (nobody likes megacorps in these series) Nosamo Aerothermic has made a new atmospheric terraforming breakthrough that is set to turn the terraforming industry on its proverbial ear. All seems up and up at first...but then a Coalition undercover asset is killed and another missing since there is more going on than originally thought. For it seems that this new invention has the power to give life but also at the same time to take away life if used in the wrong hands...hence the League of Sol wanting it. CAU 171 is called back up to settle this issue of the dead and missing agents and in the mean time they discover the League's intent and Jackson must make some changes in protocol that could have detrimental consequences. Jackson and his nemesis are playing a dangerous game of chess with people's lives in the balance. There is no easy day for this team though there is a sufficient amount of comradery as well. Jackson's on going war with his own brother takes a turn for the worst on top of everything else. Just like the rest of his books, author Gibbs has developed "real" characters that are struggling with real life issues along with their "failure is not an option" moments. Faith is always at the forefront of these books...here is Brant telling Jackson at the end of this book what he needs to depend upon: *"His responsibility, his love, extends to all of us. You know the comparisons to His being a shepherd, right?" Jackson pointed north. "Sheep are ninety clicks that way." "I'm serious. He wants you to come to him for rest and shelter. Take the time to receive His gift. It's good for your soul, Jack, and I don't use the expression lightly. If you're going to make it through these upcoming operations whole, you'll need Him—and more than that, you'll gain the handy side benefit of eternal salvation of the same soul."* *"What's the advice, then?" "People get reassigned. Friends move on. Families grow, and people die."* *Brant put his hands behind him on the rock and leaned back so he could stare up into the sky. "But God never leaves. He will always be there for you. Anytime you want the introduction, I'll make it."* Always there. Jackson watched the last of the herd saunter by. Since when has anything—anyone—been constant in my life? CDF was the current anchor, but Brant was right." Something that's missing in much of today's literature.

**93. HAZARDS NEAR (Deception Fleet Book 3)**, by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa (2021). In this story, the Coalition seeks to go on the offensive to draw out the league and their operative. They are offering up an attractive piece of bait. They say they are in the midst of a refit of their most super secretive long range sensor array PASCORE which was design to detect enemy incursions even before they get into Coalition space. Of course, the leaguers bite for that is the way it must be in this cat and mouse game of espionage. For all the seriousness in these books, there is a lot of humor as well...whether it is among the special teams guys (sort of SEAL Team) or among themselves as a team or the more subtle things like when they had to shut down PASCORE because of League sabotage, *"Initiate total shutdown of Region Thirteen on my authority as PASCORE commander. Code of the day is Omega Hotel Sierra Hotel India Tango."* Not so subtle, really, but definitely funny. Things, of course, do not go as planned for Jackson and his unit (which, of course, is the author's plan...hence keeping us excited for the eventual predictable outcome). Some people say that these are like a James Bond spy novel but like the rest of his books though, in the distant future, he is very James Patterson-esque in the way that he rips true events from today's headlines to show how men really do not change and how much in need of family and family, duty and honor we are. As with the last two this is an enjoyable and fast paced read... (read all six in a week on vacation).

**94. LIBERTY'S PRICE (Deception Fleet Book 4)**, by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa (2022). This book opens with Jackson home on the ranch seeking time to heal from a near failed mission that almost killed his best friend...simply because he was going after revenge and did not heed the counsel of others. At home while he heals from all of this he starts up with an old friend that he used to like back in high school but more of a sister than a girlfriend...along with that he is seeking to mend the relationship with Harry which has its moments of light but mostly darkness and lack of willingness to hear either side. And while the Sol is always lurking in the background, this mission seems to be against a group of socialists who have radicalized themselves for the sake of the good...as they see it. Revolutionaries without a desire to understand how their actions will actually hurt the people they say they want to save more than anyone else in the Coalition. Typical for radicals. The same team is here but they are not being led by Jackson this time because of what happened on the last mission. *"What if I were to tell you this action has all the hallmarks of chatter we've picked up from Fabian elements operating on both sides of the border?" Sinclair smiled. 'Warrant Dwyer, even if he hasn't realized the full import, helped bring in a handful of cell members on Meron. Your man Sevastopol played a key part in getting an independent contractor to confess, I might add.'* *'What kind of contractor?'* Jackson was floored by the idea of Sev convincing anyone to talk at length about anything, *weather included. 'It seems, Captain, that the Fabian cell on Meron's moons was working on a technological project, the specifics of which we're still deciphering. Captain Tamir and Warrant Eldred have taken the lead on this effort aboard Oxford. We don't yet know what the leftover materials were used for, but our chatty interrogatee said it was work for hire. Poor man made quite a blubbing mess of himself when we explained he might be involved in treason. Jackson, I hope this experience with Vasilii and his Leaguer colleague has left the correct impact on you. I have warned you time and again about the evils of seeking revenge. You have seen up close the folly and tragedy of ignoring that advice.'* The question sits on your lips all the way through the book: Who is it that is funding the Fabians in their expensive revolution? The League is strapped for funding so it can't be them right now...but are they involved. And then it is discovered that someone they met on the last mission is doing the funding soured by the fact that his plan failed miserably. *"Underway at Santa Cruz. Tucson is off on a secondary assignment to intercept the benefactor responsible for funding the Fabians and creating this mess in the first place. Jackson glanced at Garza. 'Ardalion Noor,' Garza explained."* There are enough twists and turns in this one to keep you guessing to the end.

95. **ECLIPTIC FLIGHT (Deception Fleet Book 5)**, by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa (2022). Jackson father has died...and tension at the ranch begin to get worse as there is a discussion to merge their ranch with a long time family friend's ranch because Harry was hurt and his wounds will not allow him to do as he has always done...but, of course, he opposes the merger...since it was Jackson who initiated it. However, another scheme is on the horizon...League led or not...to undermine the Spencer administration. Within the Intelligence service there is a group of warmongers that hated it that the war is over...in fact, the ring leader uses the death of a very close friend of David Cohen to fuel his rage...so weapons are being sold off and the moneys are being placed in multiple accounts under the president's name so they CAY 171 must discover who's behind this and undercover the necessary evidence to clear the president's good name. Think Maquis on Star Trek seeking to rid their part of space of the Cardassians but better funded and more connected. Faith and duty are spread throughout these books as I have said before. I like this particular quote as it captures both; *"Stone breathed deep, in and out, three times. Lord, watch our backs. I won't ask You to pick a side, but just keep safe as we push these birds through their toughest trials. 'Lead to Griffons—all right, people. I'm up first, then each of you jump, three-second intervals, to the first point as designated in your nav systems. Say your prayers, and hold on to your butts.'"*
96. **COLLISION VECTOR(Deception Fleet Book 6)**, by Daniel Gibbs and Steve Rzasa (2022). Vasiliy is back with a passion and he is on a vendetta against Jackson and his team...though he might have to hurt a few more people to draw Jackson out. This League of Sol operative makes his way to Canaan with the help of their stealth ship. He plots to kill, assassinate, or at least wound the president and his direct staff and he accomplishes this, which set the Coalition into lockdown mode and Jackson on a one-way trip to discover where Vasiliy is before too many people are lost or hurt. Each team member is attacked and each attack is thwarted. The hunters become the hunted before they know it and though many people perish in Vasiliy's unsanctioned vendetta the climax ends up at the Jackson family ranch with everyone ...even Harry fighting to save the ranch and Jackson and his team. In the end all things come to a victorious climax and finally space is safe from the likes of this operative of the League turn traitor but before that there are so many plasma charges and explosions (all in print of course...☺) that you feel like you are in the midst of the FINAL BATTLE yourself. This was a good series...Not as good as the **Echoes of War** or **Breach of Faith** series...but highly entertaining none the less.
97. **THE DUTIES OF PARENTS**, by J.C. Ryle (1816-1900). This book was written in 1860 when he was rector of Helmingham, Suffolk. This version was put together by Monergism digitally in 2014. The principles gleaned come from all of Scripture but his basis is **Proverbs 22:6- "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."** *"This is a plain promise on your side. Think what it is to have a promise like this. Promises were the only lamp of hope which cheered the hearts of the patriarchs before the Bible was written. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—all lived on a few promises, and prospered in their souls. Promises are the cordials which in every age have supported and strengthened the believer. He that has got a plain text upon his side need never be cast down. Fathers and mothers, when your hearts are failing, and ready to halt, look at the word of this text, and take comfort."* This booklet has become one of Ryle's widest read. He speaks with the authority afforded to him by God and the church and as a mature minister of God's Word. He gives this quite simply so that parents can easily apply it to their situation. Of all the parenting books I have read...this one is perhaps the easiest to apply and certainly, perhaps, the most biblical. There are 17 sections in this booklet 2-3 pages each and easy to read. All of them were worthy of the reader's time but I found chapter 13 to be of greater application because what he teaches there have broader application than just raising our children wisely. He says much here but here is one snippet

which I hope will move the reader to pick up the book as a whole. Section 13 is entitled; **Train Them Remembering Continually How God Trains His children.** “See, too, how often God leads His people by ways which seem dark and mysterious to our eyes. We cannot see the meaning of all His dealings with us; we cannot see the reasonableness of the path in which our feet are treading. Sometimes so many trials have assailed us, —so many difficulties encompassed us, —that we have not been able to discover the needs-be of it all. It has been just as if our Father was taking us by the hand into a dark place and saying, “Ask no questions, but follow Me.” There was a direct road from Egypt to Canaan, yet Israel was not led into it; but round, through the wilderness. And this seemed hard at the time. “The soul of the people,” we are told, “was much discouraged because of the way” (Exod. xiii. 17; Num. xxi. 4). See, also, how often God chastens His people with trial and affliction. He sends them crosses and disappointments; He lays them low with sickness; He strips them of property and friends; He changes them from one position to another; He visits them with things most hard to flesh and blood; and some of us have well-near fainted under the burdens laid upon us. We have felt pressed beyond strength, and have been almost ready to murmur at the hand which chastened us. Paul the Apostle had a thorn in the flesh appointed him, some bitter bodily trial, no doubt, though we know not exactly what it was. But this we know, —he besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed; yet it was not taken away (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9). Reader, if you would train your children wisely, mark well how God the Father trains His. He does all things well; the plan which He adopts must be right.” Great teaching from a great teacher.

98. **THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF CHRIST**, by Thomas Boston (written in the 1680's, copy write Monergism ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions April 2021) This was an excellent book. It has been put together from a much larger piece found in **The Works of Thomas Boston** which is multiple volumes. This particular work focuses on His names and attributes found in one text **Isaiah 9:6**, **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”** Now this is the ESV of this text...the King James or the Geneva Bible version reads, **“For unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given: and the government is upon His shoulder, and He shall call His name, Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The prince of peace.”** An extra name is added here because of uninformed translation based in the King James as well as the tradition at the time...instead of Wonderful Counselor ...it is as you see, Wonderful, Counselor, etc. Much to his normal style of things he proceeds to seek to exhaustively deal with each name/title starting with **“Son”** at the beginning of the quote. He separates Wonderful from Counsellor but makes the point of those who come later for combining the names with this quote, **“He is the Counsellor of the world of men; John 8:12, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” They have all lost their way, their affairs are all in confusion, they know not how to right them. But he is, (1.) Their Counsellor in respect of office and is wonderful. As the sun is set in the firmament to give light on the earth, so is Christ given for a light to the world, that whosoever will, may have his counsel, and by his counsel get the affairs of their souls retrieved; John 12:46, “I am, come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.” Whoever will consult him, are welcome; none shall be refused his wise counsel; John 6:37, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out”** But aside from this and the tremendous amount of repetition of attributes and Scripture this is an excellent book for those who seek to understand about this passage from Isaiah 9.

99. **THE BOOK OF COMFORT**, by J. R. Miller (originally published post humorously in 1912. Monergism Copyright © 2022). J.R. Miller was a Presbyterian minister from the 1860's through his death in 1912. This is a wonderful book to help all who are dealing with



hardships in this life. So many of his topics, illustrations and anecdotes are so contemporary and would be extremely useful if anyone was to download this book from Monergism. But few probably would since few people know of this pastor, theologian and professor. Speaking to the believers death and immortality he says, *"When Jesus was speaking of eternal life which those who believed should enter into, he said, 'He who hears my word, and believes him that sent me—has eternal life.' He did not say, 'He will have eternal life when he enters heaven,' but he 'has it,' that is, from the moment he believes. He is not to wait until he reaches heaven—before he begins to live his eternal life. He is on the earth yet, and cannot get away from his earthly relations. He must take up his tasks, he must do his duties—having eternal life does not release him from these. He is to practice eternal life now and continually."* Concerning feeling inadequate he says, *"When Jesus says, 'Apart from me you can do nothing,' we must understand his meaning. He does not say we cannot live good lives, cannot be good merchants, good lawyers, good teachers, good fathers and mothers—but what he means is that we cannot have the joy and blessing of spiritual life—we cannot do the things of God."* The first quote speaks to this as well since the Christians biggest enemy is themselves. When we wonder if God understands he says, *"God's love is personal. His heart lays hold upon each life. He cares for us—for me! He enters into all our individual experiences. If we suffer—he suffers. In a remarkable passage in the Old Testament, the writer, speaking of the love of God for his people, says: 'In all their suffering—he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy, he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years.' Isaiah 63:9. How could the care of God for his children, be expressed in plainer or more positive way? In their afflictions—he was afflicted. When they suffered—he suffered. In their sorrows—he sorrowed!"* As you can tell this would be a good book for believers of all stripes to pick up and read and keep in their library.

- 100. AGAINST ALL ODDS: A Military Sci-Fi Series (Grimm's War Book 1)** by Jeffery H. Haskell (2022). I have been looking for something else to read within the military sci-fi realm and came across this book series after trying a couple of others that ...well let's say were full of things and words I don't need a regular diet of. This author sets up the character so well that by the end of the book you want to see more of Lieutenant (SG.) Jacob Grimm. His story is that of an outcast and downtrodden Navy officer who entered the service to honor his mother's service and the one time he is thrust into a command decision...he saves thousands of lives when his ship is attacked by Caliphate warships...but ...as good as that sounds...it only gets worse. On one of the ships that he disabled they found something that would by, the time the media got a hold of it, almost ruin his entire career...certainly almost ruined his reputation. This is after all, peace time and he must have provoked the encounter and given what they found...well let's say he has become a pariah because he won't muster out of the Navy on account of his mother, always hoping to reassert her good name. A scheme is put together to give Jacob a command thinking that he would ruin things and if he did at least he of all people are expendable. The problem is that he is good at his job...he is a good officer and even being placed on a 40-year-old ship *The Interceptor* that can't fly...he is given the task to get 'r done...and he does much to his superior's surprise. Against all odds he and his crew save the day inching the Alliance back into another war...but it will be a war on their terms not another sneak attack that could bring the Alliance to its knees...which is where the Caliphate wants it. Oh, he loses his command at the end and his "frocked" Lt. Commander is gone as well...but something happens against all odds that gives him hope of seeing his ship again. Much like Daniel Gibbs works, there is faith struggles and prayers running through the work...but not to the degree as Gibbs work. *"His mother, when she was still alive, had a devout faith that would make a priest question his own. She never doubted the existence of God. He had to admit that when things like this happened, he did. How could the kind, just God his mother worshiped allow this to happen? A smile played at the corner*

of his lips. His mother's voice came to him, *Because, son, we're here to prove ourselves, to be the good people He knows we can be. If He forced us to behave, then what would that show? His mother's voice was a constant echo in his head, imparting the wisdom of a lifetime of service to him.*" While the theology is looser than Gibbs, it is still there. Cussing is at a minimum, but there is some...there are Marines here after all, Lol! This is the first book in the series and so he crams many characters into the book many of whom actually won't be going forward into the next books...which can be a bit tedious... but in the end (almost 500 pages later) it all comes together quite nicely. So I am looking forward to the next book in series **WITH GRIMM RESOLVE.**

**101. BACKYARD STARSHIP (Vol.1)**, by J.N. Chaney and Terry Maggert (2021). When Van's grandfather dies, he encounters something that he never expected ...that his grandfather was actually a part of a galactic peacekeeping force known as the Galactic Knights Uniform...an organization that now Van inherited into from his grandfather with his blessing to go and protect the galaxy. Hidden beneath the barn is Van's legacy...a stealth spaceship, the *Dragonet*, powered by an AI named Netty and along with that is an AI companion in the form of an eagle named Perry. He quickly is assimilated into this new lifestyle...too quickly for reality...but then the story evolves into a Green Lantern-esque type of story. A human joining an all alien organization for the most part...getting "superpowers, but not really everything he needs. The characters, of course, are all flawed and there is way too much cussing for my liking and then... there is the whole Green Lantern thing with the council and all leaving these Peacemakers to fend for themselves for the most part causing them to have to skirt the law in order to survive sometimes. I like the Green Lantern...but...need I elaborate? Like in real life...law enforcement it isn't about the pay...it's about the duty and the service...except to perform the duty and service you need Galactic bonds/credits. This is supposed to be an award winning author and I am not impressed. This is the second book I have tried to read by this author...and will not read any more. I finished this 600-page book with a lot of struggle just because I wanted to give it a chance since the story and the characters were beginning to gel...at the end. Oh well...few hours I won't get back.

**102. LAST STAND ON KREMLIN STATION: A Grimm War Story**, by James Aaron (2022). I have seen this before, where different authors enter into the universe of another author to tell a short story about one or more of Jacob's crew. This time to main character in this story is Warrant Officer Viv Boudreaux (who would be elevated to LT and XO in **A GRIMM SACRIFICE (A Military Sci-Fi Series (Grimm's War Book 4).)**) This short delves into more of life on Kremlin Station before Jacob Grimm shows up and the lengths to which WO Boudreaux was willing to go to get her ship up and running again. The book also highlights and defines some of the personnel found in the first book above. This guy's writing is so flawless it is hard to tell that someone besides Jeffery Haskell is writing.

**103. TERMS OF ENLISTMENT (Frontlines Book 1)**, by Mark Kloos (2013). I picked up this book right after I put down **BACKYARD STARSHIP (Vol.1)**, by J.N. Chaney and Terry Maggert, as I have been searching for the next good/great read. This was an interesting story line to be sure...one that many have used and built amazing stories...throw away people on earth in search of a "better" life join the military to see the stars but end up seeing death and destruction and along the way develop good comrades and good villains. This is book has all the makings of a great series...in fact, just like J.N. Chaney, he is another award-winning military sci-fi author, and unlike J.N. Chaney his stories are interesting and engaging. To watch the development of Andrew Grayson from public housing to become an Army grunt to eventually making it into the Starship Navy as a spacer was really good...BUT...like the Chaney book there was way too much use of

certain cuss words that are just not good...and on top of that, he took the love interests way too far. Not as far as he could...but when I am wincing from what I am reading worried about what might come next... (thankfully more doesn't come) ...it is time to move on to other books which I have done. These last 2 books are just 2 of a number of books I began and just couldn't finish. Thankfully, the series I began that started with **AGAINST ALL ODDS: A Military Sci-Fi Series (Grimm's War Book 1)**, by Jeffery H. Haskell is right up there with Daniel Gibbs' works (See above reviews). There isn't as much faith as in Daniel's, but it is an underlining theme of the man characters at least...plus the swearing is at a minimal since in this Navy it is against protocol.

**104. WITH GRIMM RESOLVE: A Military Sci-Fi Series (Grimm's War Book 2)**, by Jeffery H. Haskell (2022). Jacob Grimm is fresh from the command school and he is back on *Interceptor*. Jacob still carries a past that some people can't just get their heads around even with his Lt. Commander bars on his sleeve. Even so they are sent off to places where he can stay off everyone's radar. As CO, he and his crew that has pretty much stayed intact from his time away, are sent on a "simple rescue mission" to Zuckabar, a cold planet at the edge of everything. This simple mission turns into a long trip that includes everything from slavery, to arms dealing to piracy and following up on all of that takes Grimm to even farther reaches of the galaxy to uncover a plot that could upset the balance of power in known space. What is uncovered is far beyond what anyone could have imagined, but his resolve to rescue the miners...rescuing these Alliance citizens drives him and his crew to near deprivation as they seek to perform their duty. This story is so good as we see the pain of loss and the thrill of seeking to overcome the greatest challenges with a CO who cares for his people and his faith, always taking decisions to the Lord in prayer. He is NOT pristine and the author shows it without the unnecessary amount of cussing or scenes of unnecessary details of one's private life...in fact, not even a glimpse which is always good with me. I am already reading the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 5 books in this series. So, from now on I think I will stay with the authors that the authors I like recommend.

**105. MARK OF BETRAYAL (Sovereign Fleet Prequel)**, by Joe Shaughnessy (2022). This author was recommended by one of the other authors that I really like, so I picked up this prequel and I just finished reading the first book in the series **GENERAL'S GAMBIT**. This book introduces us to the two main characters...Jorde and Quinn. Jorde is a banished General from the Sovereign Alliance Navy (why he is not an Admiral, I don't know...many authors break back and forth on naval designation and Army designations.) We meet Jorde as he arrives all beaten up on a slavers planet. Think *Gladiator* (the movie) in space. He endures so much but learns about compassion from another slave that risks his life and his food to help Jorde regain his strength to keep from being left behind in the desert to die. I say learns because as a General, he grew up in a rather privileged lifestyle and while he is loved by his men, he is not necessarily known for his patience and compassion...he is a warrior's warrior...who at this point is humbled to be cared for by a slave. Then there is Quinn, a washed up planetary police Captain who is in over his head to the mob that he often put in jail because of an addiction to gambling since he left the force. He is contacted by the local police captain to do a very specific job and he takes the job that leads down the road to a whole new life after almost being killed multiple times. It was enough to get me interested in the series.

**106. GENERAL'S GAMBIT (Sovereign Fleet Book 1)**, by Joe Shaughnessy (2022). The story continues from **Mark of Betrayal** and we meet a third main player called The Prince...who it seems is a usurper of the throne of one who didn't know if he wanted it or not...and a silent King who the Prince talks to a lot, but gets no feedback from other than what he wants the King to tell him - which is what he wants to hear. He has a weapon ...a

planet destroying weapon. And when he uses it, he gets all giddy and happy but otherwise he is terrible and causes fear in his subjects never knowing if he will just kill them for fun or not. (Think King Herod when all Jerusalem was troubled when he was angered by the Magi)...in other words, this Prince is a megalomaniac. *"Then, around the globe, the satellite ships with their world-busting power flew into position. One by one, they found their assigned position and created a patchwork of star-ships around the planet. It looks like a blanket covering the surface below. 'It's a beautiful sight,' the Prince marveled. He couldn't wait to see the web of satellites unleash their power to destroy the lives of millions."* (Think Death Star on Star Wars.) Quinn has been enlisted into the Anarchist movement against the Prince because of some vital information that nearly cost him his life a number of times in the last book and this one. This vital information is supposed to change the direction of the war so he seeks to get it where it will do the best and he succeeds. Jorde, well it turns out that he is not only a banished General of the Sovereign Fleet but he is also the heir to the throne that the Prince has usurped and that is why He was cast aside and left for dead. Multiple battles ensue to kill and then to capture the general and then when all seems grim he aligns with his lifelong enemy to change the direction of the war and ruin the Prince's day. Another planet WON'T be blown up...a least not today. The general's gambit paid off and when the Fleet found out he was still alive a quarter of the Fleet abandons the Prince for the General. Now on to the next book in this series.

- 107. GOSPEL PEOPLE: A Call for Evangelical Integrity**, by Michael Reeves (2022). I love this book that borders between academic and devotional. In his pursuit of what is Evangelical Integrity, he has convinced me that being evangelical is not a bad term as some would have us believe, but that it is as old as the faith itself and it shouldn't let the Church and the world's abuses of the word cloud my judgment. This was similar to when I heard R.C. Sproul define himself as a fundamentalist at a time when Fundamentalism was ruining many churches. Both authors take us back to the Scripture then...and only then...to the history of the word. He says at the very beginning of the book, *"So what should it mean to be evangelical? We cannot simply look around at what we see of 'evangelicalism' today. To understand and define evangelicalism properly, we must do as evangelicals themselves have traditionally done and hold it to its etymology in the evangel. Evangelicalism is defined by the evangel ('euangelion' being the Greek word for 'good news'). Evangelicals are 'gospel people,' or people of the evangel. Some gospel people may dislike 'evangelicalism,' and others may use the label without being people of the gospel. But it is a distortion of the very meaning of the word 'evangelical' to define it in any other way. To be evangelical, by definition, is not to be of a race or of a party, but of the gospel. Evangelicalism, then, must be defined theologically. To be evangelical means to act, not out of cultural or political leanings, but out of theological, biblical convictions."* He spends much of his time drawing out this conclusion from the Scripture, hence the devotional part. But he doesn't shy away from the academic as well. Going through the history of the word and the actual movement in Christianity he begins his conclusion with this, *"I want to argue, said John Stott, that the Evangelical Faith is nothing other than the historic Christian faith: original, biblical, apostolic Christianity." Rather than being a backwater off the mainstream of Christianity, it is the original mainstream, he argued: the Christianity of the apostles, the Apostles' Creed, and the Nicene Creed. J. I. Packer similarly described evangelicalism as 'in principle nothing but Christianity itself. The critics call it a new heresy. We shall give reasons for regarding it as the oldest orthodoxy. . . . A consistent Evangelicalism is the truest catholicity.'* Both were echoing J. C. Ryle, who asserted *'that a religion to be really 'Evangelical' and really good, must be the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, as Christ prescribed it and expounded it to the Apostles.'* And if evangelicalism really is 'mere Christianity,' how could

*it be anything but the oldest orthodoxy of the apostles?"* An excellent read and only a bit over 125 pages. There is much stuffed into these few pages.

**108. SILENT TIMES: A Book to Help in Reading the Bible into Life**, by J. R. Miller (written and published in the 1886, free download from Monergism in ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions 2022). Again, the pastor highlights an issue in the Church...the point at which many Christians fail in the using of divine truths—is the point at which doctrine should be “read into life”. Many know and honor the Bible as the Word of God, and sincerely wish to conform their lives to its inspired teachings—but have difficulty in applying the word to the actual experiences of daily life. This book is offered as a pastoral help in this direction. Its aim is to bring such divine truths down, and give some hints of the way they may be used on common days and in the actual experiences of those days. The title, Silent Times, is suggestive of the need of seasons of quiet in every life that would grow into full, rich beauty...hence silent times...times of reflection on the truths that we are taking in. he says, *“Every true Christian life needs its daily “silent times,” when all shall be still, when the busy activity of other hours shall cease, and when the heart, in holy hush, shall commune with God. One of the greatest needs in Christian life in these days, is more devotion. Ours is not an age of prayer so much as an age of work. The tendency is to action rather than to worship; to busy toil rather than to quiet sitting at the Savior's feet to commune with him. The key-note of our present Christian life is consecration, which is understood to mean dedication to active service. On every hand we are incited to work. Our zeal is stirred by every inspiring incentive. The calls to duty come to us from a thousand earnest voices.”* But it is also suggestive of one particular use that may be made of the book—the reading of its chapters, or portions of them, in the “silent times” of busy even overwhelming days, as helps in the direction of true Christian growth. The author sent this book out in Christ's name and for His sake, with the hope that it may make the way a little plainer for some earnest believers/pilgrims, as well as, make the Christian faith a little more real, so that it may become a lamp for some dark ways, and a staff for some rough and steep paths. He makes this clear with this statement, *“This rule applies to sins as well as to mistakes. The true science of living—is never to commit the same sin a second time. But even this falls short. We are not saved by negatives. We can never go to heaven by merely turning from wrong ways. True repentance leads to Christ—and into his ways. It is the man who forsakes his wicked ways, and his wicked thoughts, and returns to the Lord—who is abundantly pardoned. When there is this kind of repentance, it does not matter how black the sin is. Even Christ does not undo the wrong past, and make that which has been done—as though it had never been done. It never can be made true—that the thief did not once steal. But grace may so make over a marred life, that, where the blemish was, some special beauty may appear.”* There were some places that were weaker than others but he covers so many places in our lives where we need to insert the Scriptures (obviously everywhere) that you come away very glad to have read this book.

**109. ONE DECISIVE VICTORY A Military Sci-Fi Series (Grimm's War Book 3)**, by Jeffery H. Haskell (2022). Even after one decisive win after the other, the Navy still decides to muster Jacob out of the service because of his distant past...at this point...or do they? It seems that there is yet another mission in the works for this Lt. Commander but he must go rogue...or so it seems. After the Caliphate destroyed the capitol city form space it would seem that it would be a no-brainer for the new Congress (since almost all the old Congress was destroyed in the attack) to make a declaration of war, but instead they are cowards just like the last Congress and refuse to hold anyone responsible except maybe the Guild. But there are those in power that know something must be done...the Caliphate must know that they are just as open to a sneak attack as the Alliance was. Hence the need for a plan that would be run by a highly successful boat “captain” with nothing to lose since he is already “out” of the Navy. Jacob is promised if he pulls off this clandestine

rescue and destruction op that he will be thrown into prison...and because of his sense of duty...knowing that something needs to be done or the Caliphate WILL strike again, he accepts. The odds are against him and his crew from the beginning...of course...just the way he likes it. As I said last time, these stories are so good as we see the pain of loss and the thrill of seeking to overcome the greatest challenges with a CO who cares for his people and his faith, always taking decisions to the Lord in prayer. He is NOT pristine and the author shows it without the unnecessary amount of cussing or scenes of unnecessary details of one's private life...in fact, not even a glimpse which is always good with me. I am now onto the 4<sup>th</sup> book in the series **A GRIMM SACRIFICE**.

110. **BLOODED (A prequel to the Grimm War Series)**, by Josh Hayes (2022). All throughout the Grim War Series we meet and get to know Marine Allison Jennings who is a rather muscular and gung-ho Marine from a high gravity world known as MacGregor's World. Her size and abilities are not much on her home world but off world in normal gravity she is a force to be dealt with. But not only is she a lean mean fighting machine but she is absolutely committed to her "captain" Lt. Commander Jacob Grimm and the crew of the *Interceptor*. We have all come to know her and look forward to her in the stories but this book is about her first mission after boot camp...a simple mission that goes sideways and could have ended differently, but in the end prepared her for the rise from Private to Gunny in a short period of time. She is all about time honored traditions of the Corps, but she is more about taking care of her people and getting them home safe no matter what it cost...duty first! Oorah!
111. **AGING WITH GRACE: Flourishing in an Anti-aging Culture**, by Sharon Betters and Susan Hunt (2021). Another excellent book from two women who are ahead of me in the race, yet have often taken the time to stop and pay attention to me and my family in service and support. Both of these women know what it is to be stretched by God's severe providence and both have still come forth shining with the light of their Savior. This book is an excellent resource for those who are retired...are a divorced after a long term marriage...are being put out to pasture by your company after many years of service...or have children who don't seek an on-going relationship with you in your old age...and you are asking yourself, what is the Lord's plan? These women are filled with the Spirit and with His wisdom that they "deserve" to be heard by any and all...not just the women to which they are writing. The exposition of Psalm 92 is alone worth the price of the book. And their grace points, called *Growing in Grace*, that run throughout the book are amazingly insightful, like this one, *"Our justification is an act of God's free grace. The physical and mental decline of aging does not decrease the power of his grace to reverse the effects of the fall and to make us flourish spiritually. God has spoken, and he will do it."* Or this one, *"As long as we live in this world, we are prone to look down. The rhythm of Sabbath and daily worship recalibrates our minds and hearts in the present moment to remember our destiny and destination while 'waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ' Titus 2:13, when we will experience the ultimate change ...glorification."* Gospel hope just radiates from every page, so please pick this up and read...whether you are young or aging...male or female...there is much here for everyone.
112. **AGING IN GRACE: Letters to Those in the Autumn of Life**, by Archibald Alexander (1841, 2018 by Log College Press). This book, born out of earlier writings which appeared in papers and journals, was first assembled and published in 1841. Three years later, an appendix was added to a new edition containing letters of counsel to the aged, the young, Christian mothers, and grieving widows and widowers. He writes as one who knows intimately to what he speaks. In this book, he offers 5 sections...or letters, as he calls them, and a prayer. The "letters" are entitled, *Struggles in the Autumn of Life*, *Sin in the*

Autumn of Life, Duty in the Autumn of Life, Facing Death in the Autumn of Life, and Assurance in the Autumn of Life. With these he attaches a prayer for the one who feels that he is approaching the borders of another world. All of these are offered so that the believer can continue to prepare and be ready for the Lord's coming even in the autumn of life, when we begin to slow down and fall apart. I picked this up at the same time I picked up Sharon and Susan's book above **AGING WITH GRACE**. I read them at the same time and they both give helpful insight into what is required by God for those of us living later in life and wondering after our usefulness in the Lord. Alexander reminds us that *"God is perhaps more honored by quiet submission to his will under sufferings, than by the greatest achievements of zeal and exertion."* He says this knowing that sometimes that is the best that some can do at this stage of life. He offers us helpful biblical exposition to answer the struggles of this time of life and then as our life comes to a close and we refuse to even think about our impending death he says, *"There is one remaining subject, my dear friends, to which I wish to call your attention. I refer to the solemn event of our departure out of life. Whatever may be uncertain in the future, concerning this there cannot exist the shadow of a doubt— 'It is appointed unto men once to die.' 'I know that thou wilt bring me to the house appointed for all living.' 'The grave is mine house.' But we do not need the voice of revelation to assure us of our mortality: the evidence is daily before our eyes. Hundreds of our race close their eyes in death every day."* After clearly wrapping up the assurances that are still ours in the Autumn of our lives he says, *"The whole evidence of Christian character may be reduced to two particulars—entire trust in Christ for justification, and a sincere and universal love of holiness, with a dependence on the Holy Spirit for its existence, continuance and increase. If, my friend, you have these evidences now, you need not perplex yourself by a multitude of scruples. You may dismiss your doubts. God's word will never deceive any who rely upon its guidance. You may not know the day nor even the year, when spiritual life commenced in your soul; and yet, if you now feel its warm pulsations—if you breathe its genuine aspirations—if your heart's treasures are in heaven, and if the cause of God is dearer to you than any other interest—if his people are dearer to you than any other people—if your most constant and supreme desire is to glorify God your Redeemer, whether by living or dying—then may you welcome death. He is no king of terrors to you. You may say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!'"*

**113. A POCKET GUIDE TO NOAH'S ARK: A Brief Biblical and Scientific Look at the Genesis Account**, from Answers in Genesis (2019). This is a booklet put together with condensed yet highly informative versions of broader works by such people as Ken Hamm, Ti Lovett, A.J. Monty, and others associated with teaching and marketing of Answers in Genesis and the Ark Encounter. I have read a number of books by these authors through the years and this booklet summarizes in a 6-8 grade fashion all that they have taught through the years...from the scientific research done to prove that sedimentation does not take millions of years and that the Ark is a true story and is very explainable without compromising the biblical account which isn't as detailed as say the way God describes the Tabernacle or the Temple. The information in these separate articles from the science to the images used in modern depiction of the "myth" are extremely verifiable from the text and extremely understandable for all age groups. This is an updated and expanded even shorter version from 2017 and is great for teaching and just individual learning. I actually have this on my desktop so if anyone wants to read it in its entirety all they would have to do is contact me.

**114. A GRIMM SACRIFICE (A Military Sci-Fi Series (Grimm's War Book 4)**, by Jeffery H. Haskell (2022). This series just keeps getting better and better. The intrigue...the espionage, the rivalries the misunderstandings go a long way in this book to make it the most interesting of the bunch so far. But news, next book in series won't come out until

March 2023- KNOW THY ENEMY, book 5. In this book, the Caliphate seems energized since the Alliance Congress chose not to go after them after they blew up Alexandria killing millions of citizens. But rather than going to war, or at least putting the Caliphate on notice they choose to take a posture of passivity thinking that this will deter a terrorist government. Grimm and his crew are actually part of a real Naval exercise and a small fleet...under a Captain that is not sure what to do with him... given the job of "recon" when the Consortium called and asked for assistance. All of his "officers" (ensigns and midshipmen) that have been assigned are completely green, some obviously, not having even completed the Academy. This seems strange to him at first but then a pattern emerges and his hopes then turns to hopefully bringing them all home alive so that they can become what the navy needs in its officers. Figuring out the enemy... or in this case also his CO... is always hard when there is so much about them you don't know...but Jacob always remembers his faith and his mother. "It reminded him of a quote his mom was fond of saying whenever Jacob had trouble with the kids at school: 'If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained, you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.' He'd been thrilled to discover the book she'd quoted from years after her death. He'd read it along with dozens of others while at the Academy. Hopefully, he would live long enough to learn from his mistake." Encountering the enemy and surviving is always tricky. Would faith be with the bold way he approaches the engagement to save the rest of the battlegroup or not? And then there is Nadia's mission in the background while all of this is going on. Which politician will suffer from her wrath and how much will she have to give up making it happen? Now we wait to answer some of these questions.

**115. RECALL (GSG Vanhorn #1)**, by Toby Neighbors (2022). Well, I did it again, that is, I started a series by a new author with characters that he already had a previous series creating. The **SSG Vanhorn series** rather than **GSG Vanhorn series**. Now the dilemma: Do I go back, or do I have enough of the back story to just move forward? This was an exciting ride in a lot of ways. You have it all...an older TAC Marine (Terrestrial Advanced Combat- TAC Marine) being recalled to duty against a formidable enemy from whom he has received injuries and scars (physical and emotional) that will be with him the rest of his life. He has been "retired" for a couple of years recuperating and now he has been given a new rank of Gunnery Sergeant, put into a team of people to be sent to the home world of this enemy... (that almost killed him) to do reconnaissance after his superiors getting intel that there are hostages being held. Their team is to get them off planet before the Navy can raze the planet with bombardments. Now, of course, there is no simple mission and before you know it he is cross-wise with his LT and has no idea why other than the fact that he may be jealous of his "fame" from previous encounters with this enemy which cost the lives of men of Vanhorn's teammates and brought near life-ending injuries to him. The mission goes fairly well...a couple of hiccups along the way until the LT tries to kill Vanhorn and then the Orcs (Orrkasi) rise up and begin to fight back. The battle is brutal and the treatment of fellow marines is insane because of the LT's fury against Vanhorn mixed with enhancement drugs. The story ends with them still on planet wondering if they were ever meant to get off. It is good in that the cussing is extremely limited especially for Marines and the romance is tame...which is how I like it. This was an extremely good story...but...I do think I will return to the original series before moving ahead in this one. (You knew I would. LOL!)

**116. PRIVATE VANHORN**, by Toby Neighbors (2021). Now was most of the way through the first book in the **SGS (Staff Sergeant) Vanhorn series** when I found this prequel to them all. This short book (130 pages or so) catalogues his induction into the Terrestrial Marines and his first mission which concludes with his Gunnery recommending he get into the



TAC... (Terrestrial Advanced Combat- TAC Marine). These are the best of the best...like a Marine Special Forces group today. If TAC can't do it ...it can't be done. This prequel still does not answer all the questions concerning his 8<sup>th</sup> combat engagement on Luyten C which almost killed him but it does give us a good look at the man and his passions which helps with the overall understanding of the character and his life.

**117. SURVIVORS: SSG Vanhorn Book 1**, by Toby Neighbors (2021). After Luyten C, SGS Vanhorn had a long road to recovery, if you want to call it that. He had been a TAC team member...that was his identity through 7 combat engagements with the Orrkasi (Orcs for short), but because of his new limbs and an empty eye socket covered over by a surgically applied patch and a face that looked like he had gone through a meat grinder he was lucky that he was still in service, and I am sure many wondered why? In fact, many of the younger ones not knowing his sacrifice did make fun of him. That was sort of the TAC way...find the weakness and exploit it. He understood but he didn't have to like it even if it was going to be his life from now on. He is brought back to duty and given a duty station in the armory of a ship named the *Rihla*...making him the lowest grunt with the most action of anyone on the ship...but he would be seen as the lowest grunt...so he decided to make the most of hiding in plain sight. The ship sets out on a simple recon mission...but of course, you put that word "simple" in the orders and it is doomed to fail. Well, they showed up at the planet and they immediately were shot out of space. Vanhorn, the armory, and a logistic private all escape as the armory was set up to detach in the case of an attack as not to blow up the whole ship. Not knowing how many others got away...they found themselves on this beautiful planet, Leonis B, being hunted by Orcs...but the hunted become the hunters when SGS Vanhorn's training kicks in...muscle memory he calls it...when fear tries to edge its way in you trust your training and go to work...which he does. They find multiple survivors they rescue others from the Orcs and they seek to maintain a balance of vigilance as they survive.

**118. INFILTRATORS: SSG Vanhorn Book 2**, by Toby Neighbors (2021). They are still on Leonis B, still sometimes being the hunted and sometimes the hunters. His injuries from his prior engagement with the Orcs seemingly would stop an even lesser man. SGS Vanhorn says, *"Roger that," I replied, getting slowly to my feet. I remembered that before my injuries sustained on Luyten C, I could dive to the ground, roll around, and hop up again with no complaints. But my core wasn't strong enough to absorb the abuse the way it used to.*" After sending a message back to the Fleet, the little band of survivors on the planet are being continually hunted by the savage Orrkasi though they are still unaware of where they are hiding. It will take all their cunning, and everything SGS Vanhorn knows about strategy and tactics and guerilla warfare, along with a fair amount of luck to stay one step ahead of their adversaries. Van has now likely killed more Orcs than any other soldier, marine or sailor. It does seem a bit unbelievable but he is fighting a guerilla war and since the Orcs never have a clue where he will be next or what he will do makes it very hard for them. When you add in the fact Van doesn't know either, he is impossible to predict. But the enemy is closing in on the hidden basecamp used by the survivors of the *Rihla*, and soon they will have to do the unthinkable... go on the offensive and strike back at the Orrkasi...which is something that some within their camp do not want to do...thinking negotiation would be more acceptable...even though deadly. **Infiltrators** is a fast paced, military sci-fi adventure series that is an incredible story of survival, strategy, and sacrifice. Again, the character development is good and its PG rating is pleasing to my sensibilities. So I keep reading.

**119. EMMANUEL: or Titles of Christ**, by Octavius Winslow (1869). The titles that he focuses on are the Ones we most commonly would think of as we consider Christ day by day. He

begins with those found in **Isaiah 9:6- “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**, though in typical King James fashion he separates Wonderful and counselor as separate titles rather than one which the Hebrew clearly indicates. In a quote right at the end of multiple pages of his work on the title “Wonderful” he states, *“That Jesus should love such beings as we; that He should love us while we were yet sinners; that He should set his heart upon us, choose us, die for us, call us, and finally bring us to glory, knowing what we were, and what we should prove, Oh, this is wondrous love indeed! Plunge into this fathomless, boundless ocean of love, O you sin-burdened one! It will cover all your sins, it will efface all your guilt; it will flood over all your unworthiness; and, floating upon its golden waves, it will gently waft you to the shore of eternal blessedness. How often have you wondered how Christ should set His heart upon such a one as you! It was because His name was ‘Wonderful.’ And is it not a wonder that, amid all your fickleness, backslidings, cold, base returns, this love of God towards you has not chilled or changed.”* He goes on to include other familiar titles like, *A man of sorrows, The Resurrection and the Life, our Righteousness, and the Alpha and Omega*. It is said that his readers sought his works out as devotional and comforting but as I read through it I find it more analytical than devotional and more academic than comforting. Maybe, I am just not as smart as they were or have a different expectation of what is devotional and comforting. (Hopefully the latter) He almost seeks to exhaustively deal with each of these titles to ad nauseam sometime, though having said that there is much insight to the thinking of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> Century English church. Read as a historical narrative of the time I have come away with much knowledge I wouldn’t have gotten from reading a history book of the time. This quote concerning Christ the man of sorrow shows a bit of the thoroughness to which he speaks, *“As the sin-bearer of His Church, Christ was a ‘Man of sorrows.’ Thus, the sufferings of our Lord were vicarious, the sorrow of His soul sin-atonement. No other rational solution of His sufferings and grief can be found than this. The prophecy from where this title of our Lord is taken- a prophecy of the sufferings of Christ- is so real and so life-like that it might well be taken for a chapter of one of the evangelists- completely vindicates the vicarious nature of our Lord's sorrow. In this part of God's word, the sin-bearing, sin-atonement character of His death is presented with a clearness so distinct, the seeing eye cannot possibly mistake, and with a force so commanding the candid mind cannot possibly resist.”* Inspirational to be sure...but sometimes when there is page after page the inspiration wanes. A recommended read if you read this nearly 400 pages slowly.

**120. RESISTANCE: SSG Vanhorn Book 3**, by Toby Neighbors (2021). Even with all the injuries it is good to actually be on the hunt...seeking to resist the Orcs and destroy and evade as best as possible. Finding the city built into a mountain by who knows who was an extreme benefit to the cause. But when Vanhorn returns from a long recon he finds that even the safety of this place has gone over to the dark side. People from within, junior officers that feels they should be in charge have taken over and while that was true before he left upon his return Vanhorn discovers real abuse against people he cares about and he rectifies the situation. They need to be front focused on surviving and against and resisting the Orcs... so they hurt them before the fleet arrives... if the fleet arrives. After a near death experience, “friendly fire” assassination attempt, Van grabs the bull by the horns literally and takes his assailant out on a recon along with a couple others and the Polytrot (alien beings they rescued a couple of books back that look like a cross between a triceratops and a dog, but are as intelligent as humans and also have the capacity to learn language), friends Mook and Kilv. Sometimes simply surviving just isn’t enough, so the survivors determine to take the fight to the Orcs making the planet ready for the fleet to arrive. Like all the rest it is a fast moving and always developing story. The characters...especially the main character seems to have an immense amount of luck and

an extremely high tolerance for pain...almost supernatural in nature...but who doesn't like an underdog story especially one that is more believable than not.

**121. CONQUEST: SSG Vanhorn Book 4**, by Toby Neighbors (2021). SSG Eli Vanhorn's only mission is to keep the remaining crew of the *Rihla* safe from the Orrkasi until the fleet arrives. He is a TAC member so in his mind, he got this. *"TAC stands for Terrestrial Advance Combat. We are the best of the best—the Marines that get sent in to recon a situation before the Fleet lands thousands of Marines or bombards a planet from orbit. To be TAC team-qualified, a Marine has to stay in good physical shape."* In good shape is the operative words however, since Luyten C he is only half the man physically that he was and yet his drive and determination to keep his crew members safe drives him to push himself to work harder and smarter. Along the way, he has acquired some good relationships as well, Mook, Trix, Lt. Holly, and even Sargent Barker who had tried to kill him at one point. All of them are working together to hold the Orcs at bay and keep them from getting into their safe haven, Havvar. *"Describing Havvar is difficult. There are places like it on Earth, ancient cities carved into solid stone, but they are like the work of children compared to the ornate architecture of Havvar. A glowing mineral gilds every building and gives the entire city a magical luminance that heightens the mystery of the underground city while making it feel welcoming at the same time. Perhaps it was because I was so relieved to be back, to be alive, and to see my friends, but I felt as if I were finally home."* But this does not seem to be a likely place of safety much longer. The battles on the ground are amazing. The heroism and loyalty is impressive. And the cruelty one is brought to deal with a cruel enemy is taking its toll especially on the Staff Sargent. The enemy is attacking with what appears to be their full force. Will Vanhorn and his small team be able to hold on to get the survivors off the planet and to the fleet when it arrives. This is a non-stop read to be sure...maybe the best in this series. On to **OCCUPATION: SSG Vanhorn Book 5**.

**122. CRAZY BUSY: A (Merciful) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem**, by Kevin De Young (2013). I needed to read this book again because I very much liked the basic message of this book... *"the reason we are busy is that we are supposed to be busy. This may seem like a strange way to (almost) end a book on busyness. But keep in mind that this is the last of seven diagnoses, not the only one. If this were the only point of the book you'd think, 'Great, life is going to stink! I'm supposed to feel overwhelmed. I should be neglecting family and strung out on four asleep. Super! I guess I'll sign the kids up for taekwon do.' I wrote the rest of this book because that's not the way we should feel. Busyness is a big problem. It comes with serious spiritual dangers. There's a reason this chapter is not the only chapter in the book."* God created us to work and to do His will... it is what brings Him glory. The basic problem is that we have our priorities all messed up. The busyness that is bad is not the busyness of doing the work God has called us to do, but rather the busyness that works hard at the wrong things...the things we want to do or the things that we think will make us better, stronger and more mature at the expense of the expressed work that God says we are to be doing. Because we miss the focus of the mission God gives us we are overwhelmed. *"If you have creativity, ambition, and love, you will be busy. We are supposed to disciple the nations. We are supposed to work with our hands. We are supposed to love God with our minds. We are supposed to have babies and take care of them. It's not a sin to be busy. It's not wrong to be active. Busyness, as I've been diagnosing it, is as much a mind-set and a heart sickness as it is a failure in time management. It's possible to live your days in a flurry of hard work, serving, and bearing burdens, and to do so with the right character and a right dependence on God so that it doesn't feel crazy busy. By the same token, it's possible to feel amazingly stressed and frenzied while actually accomplishing very little. The antidote to busyness of soul is not sloth and indifference. The antidote is rest, rhythm, death to pride, acceptance*

*of our own finitude, and trust in the providence of God. The busyness that's bad is not the busyness of work, but the busyness that works hard at the wrong things."* This is a great book for parents who live in what has been coined as a "Kindergarchy" ...over programming their children and the type of lifestyle that creates for the family and the child...a cycle of unbiblical busyness that will lead to frustration and a lack of contentment in the things of the Lord. And yet, he also highlights yet "one more thing" for us to be doing ...but it is that thing that keeps us front focused on the things of the Lord. *"And yet, few things demonstrate our devotion to Christ more than making time with him a priority each day. As J. C. Ryle observed, 'A man may preach from false motives. A man may write books, and make fine speeches, and seem diligent in good works, and yet be a Judas Iscariot. But a man seldom goes into his closet, and pours out his soul before God in secret, unless he is serious.'* People know if you pray at the dinner table. They know if you attend worship on Sunday. They know if you are part of a small group. But they don't know if you are finding desolate places to pray." This is a really good read.