



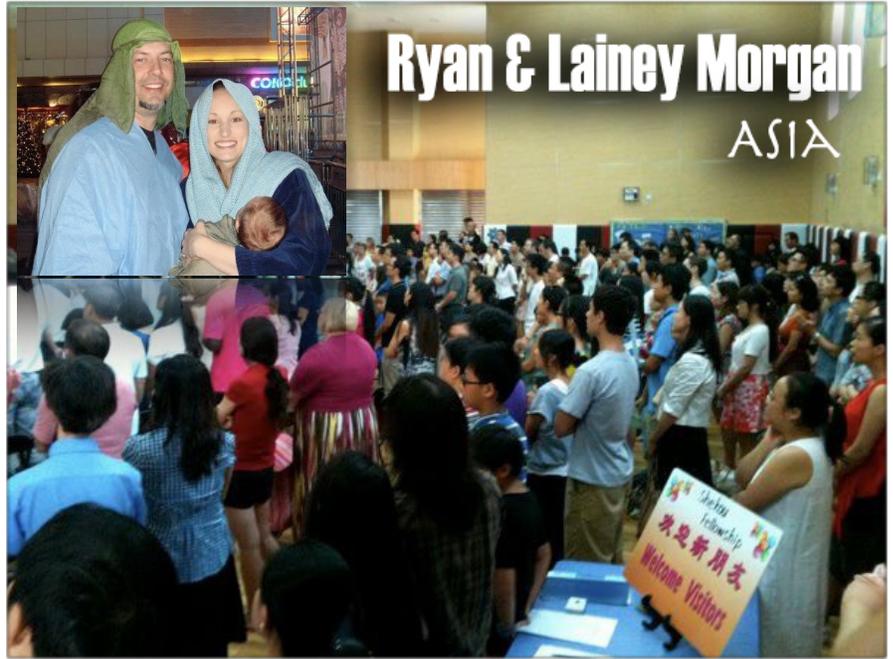
EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

David McCullough wrote an informative essay on Harriet Beecher Stowe (1992), who authored *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. What struck me most was the tension she endured in her inner soul. On the one hand, she fully rejected her father's gospel truth as a repugnant "glacial [icy]" viewpoint, which discounted "man's natural goodness." On the other hand, "she sorely lamented the decline of the Christian faith in the land" and even "admired the backbone the old religion gave people." Despite years of mental anguish and agony, she never professed faith in Jesus before her death in 1892. Oh that we — and all who suffer — would believe Jesus' words: "Come unto me and I will give you rest; learn of me and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt. 11:28-29).



It is not often that VBTS is able to highlight a husband and wife team who are *both* graduates of VBTS, but such is the case with Ryan and Lainey Morgan, who graduated together in 2008 with a Master of Biblical Studies. Since graduation, God has blessed them with two wonderful children and led them to Asia and a dynamic church ministry. Their ministry has been anything but routine, facing spiritual challenges such as false teaching and demonic oppression. They learned to improvise regarding logistical aspects of church ministry, such as conducting baptisms in blown-up pools on apartment balconies. They also have been creative in communicating God's Word, such as performing a nativity dramatization in a local mall (see both pictures). And they've risked their personal safety by carrying suitcases of materials across the border. After eight years, they recently moved to a safer place—an international school. Yet their hearts yearn for their former fellowship. They ask us to pray for the churches being persecuted in Asia. Thank you, Ryan and Lainey, for manifesting Christ's grace in Asia!



Truth for the Agora: *The Encouragement of Scripture*

Guest Author: Dr. Michael Windsor, Professor of Historical Theology

Do you find the study of God's Word encouraging? In the previous issue of *Exposition* (Sept., 2018), I explained why I am a dispensationalist. By way of review, the key elements for me are (1) the progressive nature of God's revelation as he unfolded his purposes to mankind over time; (2) the clarity and unity of God's written revelation when understood through a normative hermeneutic; and (3) the clear distinction between Israel and the Church (a distinction which is influenced by the previous two concepts). You may ask: *How do these principles apply to my personal study of God's Word so that I am encouraged to be a faithful disciple of Christ?* Though I do not have the space to give a full response to this question, let me share an insight that comforts my soul: the trustworthy character of God and his word.

God's Word is trustworthy. The absolute trustworthiness of God's Word necessitates two ideas for me. First, God's Word is divine truth revealed to all mankind ("Your word is truth," Jn. 17:17a). As reliable, written communication, it is used by God's Spirit to transform both my life (*how I live*) and my worldview (*how I view the world around me*). In reality, God's word does exactly what Jesus said—it sanctifies me (Jn. 17:17b). Second, it is both clear and sufficient to accomplish God's divine purposes in my life. Paul encouraged Timothy with this fact and wrote that the Scriptures are "breathed out by God" and will "make you complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

God Himself is trustworthy. The trustworthiness of God's Word is grounded in his unchanging, perfect character (cf. Ps. 18:30). Since God acts and speaks without flaw, all his promises conform to his nature, and therefore, can be trusted (Isa. 55:9–11). Thus I can rejoice, even in the midst of personal trials, because God has given "exceedingly great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:4) that are "sure" (v. 19). With this in mind, consider his distinct promises to Israel in the OT and his faithfulness to his word.

Israel is an illustration of God's trustworthiness. The OT is full of stories and events that reveal Israel's *unfaithfulness* to God, which resulted in the national judgments of the Assyrian and the Babylonian captivities. Nevertheless God was faithful to his promises and continually called for Israel's return to him. Israel may have forgotten God, but God had not forgotten his promises to Israel (cf. Isa. 65:2; Ro. 10:21). Even in Israel's failures, he remains true to his word to save and restore them to their land. As God's plans unfolded, Israel's apostasy opened the door of the gospel to the Gentile nations (cf. Ro. 11:11–12). When Paul considered this improbable plan of God to redeem *both* Jew and Gentile through Israel's disobedience, he exclaims, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! ... How inscrutable his ways!" (Ro. 11:33).

The paradox of Israel is my security. Bible readers clearly notice the human dilemma Israel finds itself. On the one hand Israel's apostasy and national judgments are recorded in the historical books of the OT. On the other hand, the OT prophets from Isaiah to Malachi continue to rehearse the multiple promises God made to Israel and his plan to regather and restore them as a nation to the land he promised them (cf. Gen. 17:1–8; Mal. 3:6). As a dispensational thinker, I think the paradox is only solved through this sovereign reality: God is faithful to do exactly as he promised. In this truth, I find absolute comfort!