



MONTHLY

June '26 - Issue #193

College News



It is hard to believe that Semester 1 is speeding to its end! We are very thankful to the Lord for sustaining us as we work to 'land' the semester while continuing to settle into new spaces at our Queen Street campus and promoting the work of RTC. On 12 May we welcomed a good number of guests to 'Day at RTC'. Please pray for them as they seek the Lord's will for their futures, including discerning whether this may include theological study. Significant progress was made in getting the library ready for its opening on the 12th of June (see below).

The month of May was, as usual, an intensely busy time for our students as they completed their assignments and prepared for their final exams (scheduled for the beginning of June). Please pray that the Lord will bless and keep them through this time and that He will use what is being learned in their lives and ministries.

Upcoming Events

Library Opening

12 June 2026, 4:30 – 6:00 PM



Please join us as we officially open our new Melbourne library, to be named the 'Alexander Barkley Library,' after RTC's first principal, on the 12th of June. Registrations are essential for catering purposes, please click here: [Alexander Barkley Library Opening Ceremony – Reformed Theological College](#).

Annual General Meeting

12 June, 6:00 PM

RTC members are invited to the college's Annual General Meeting. Members who are planning to attend the library opening and reception are strongly encouraged to stay for the AGM as well. The meeting will also be livestreamed. More information can be found here:

<https://rtc.edu.au/annual-general-meeting-2026/>

Preaching Conference 2026

Guard the Gospel – Preaching the Pastoral Epistles with Courage and Grace

15–16 July 2026

This year's Preaching Conference will explore the urgent relevance of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. We are pleased to announce that Lionel Windsor (Moore College) will be our main speaker; he will be joined by several RTC lecturers as they open up the riches of these letters for today's church. Over two days of sermons, lectures, and discussions, attendees will be equipped to handle difficult passages and embody gospel-shaped ministry with greater clarity and conviction.



Please click the link below for more information and to register for this event: <https://rtc.edu.au/pc26/>.

Save the Date – RTC Elders' Retreat

17 October

This year's Elders' Retreat, led by RTC Faculty, will focus on serving together as a team. Plan to join us for a rich day of teaching and equipping. This will be both an in-person and livestreamed event, with special pricing for eldership teams to join together in a 'watch party'. For more information, and to register, please click here:

<https://rtc.edu.au/rtc-elders-retreat-2026/>



Faculty News

Stephen Lewis will be speaking at the CRCA Victoria Youth Camp in Anglesea on "Honouring Your Parents, Not Just Surviving Them."

Phillip Scheepers is scheduled to attend the Principals' Forum and Consortium Conference of the Australian University of Theology in Sydney from 19–20 June. He will also be preaching at the Christian Reformed Church of Sutherland Shire (9:30 AM, 21 June)

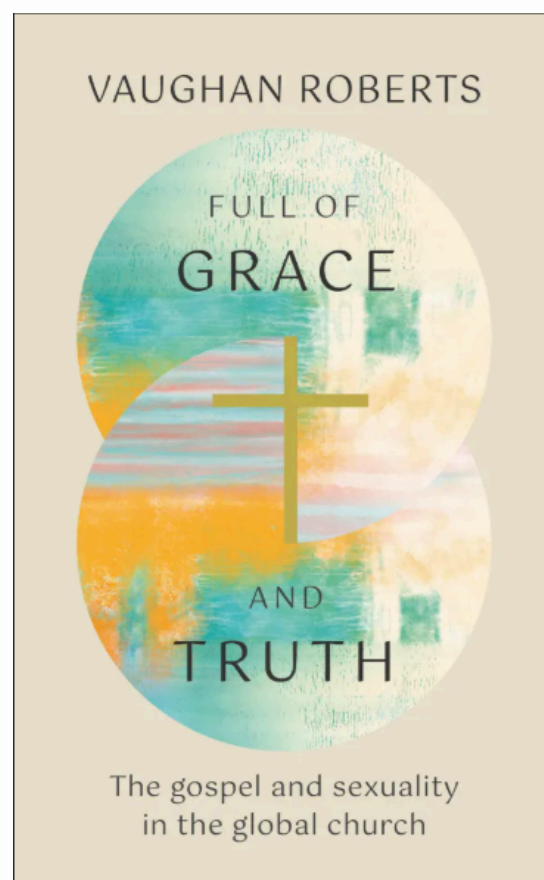
<https://www.sutherlandreformed.com.au/>

Book Recommendation | Dr Andrew Stewart

Vaughan Roberts, *Full of Grace and Truth: The Gospel and Sexuality in the Global Church*. 2015, 10 Publishing, 48 pages.

Vaughan Roberts' *Full of Grace and Truth* is a pocket size booklet about a very big topic. Human sexuality figures prominently in contemporary secular conversations about ethics and identity. Christians have a significant and gospel focused contribution to make to those conversations.

The core of this booklet is the text of a fifteen-minute address which Roberts gave at the fourth international Lausanne Conference in Seoul in 2024. The Lausanne Movement began as an initiative of Billy Graham and John Stott which aimed to bring together evangelical leaders from around the world to promote unity in the work of the gospel. In recent years evangelical Christians have not been entirely united in their responses to contemporary questions about gender and sexuality, hence the discussion of this topic at a conference pursuing evangelical unity.



In the opening chapter Roberts sets out his aims and concerns as he prepared his address for the Lausanne Conference. He aimed to speak as a pastor with a concern for people who struggle with sexual sin (including same-sex attraction). He also aimed to be faithful to biblical truth in a debate where the integrity of the gospel was at stake. Roberts speaks from within the Church of England and grieves that many in his denomination have abandoned biblical truth in this area.

The core of the booklet is the address which Roberts gave in Seoul. It has four main points: God is for sex; sex is for marriage; marriage is for life; and life is for Christ. As we might expect, Roberts approaches the topic from the perspective of a robust biblical theology. He grounds his arguments in the unfolding theological message of the Bible – creation, fall, redemption.

Thus, his main points are built on what the Bible teaches about God's creation of humanity, humanity's fall into sin, and Christ's redemptive revolution. He shows that Christ alone can give reliable guidance to those who are confused, as well as healing to those who are broken. He illustrated his message by acknowledging his own struggles with same-sex attraction, which he acknowledges as a temptation to be resisted.

A final chapter describes the critical responses which followed his address in Seoul. Some came from theological revisionists, who argued that same-sex attraction should be affirmed and even celebrated rather than condemned. Others came from theological conservatives, who objected to his openness about his personal struggles with unwanted same-sex attraction. Roberts describes how, after many years of private struggle, he decided to speak

openly about this struggle to resist temptation and live a life of gospel empowered obedience to the teaching of scripture.

To both sets of critics, and to any who are struggling with the contemporary confusion on matters of gender and sexuality, he presents biblical teaching on gender and sexuality as a message of both grace and truth.

Ministry Spot | Dr Martin Williams



High Noon for the Heart: The Hour of Temptation

You know the pattern. For weeks, maybe months, you've kept a particular temptation at arm's length. It knocked occasionally, but you managed. You prayed, stayed busy, avoided certain situations. You felt, if you're honest, a quiet confidence that you had this under control.

Then something shifted.

Maybe it was a season of success when your guard came down. Maybe exhaustion after a demanding stretch of ministry. Maybe a device in your hand late at night, or a conversation that left you lonely and disappointed. Suddenly the temptation wasn't just knocking; it was in the room with you. Your thoughts narrowed. Your body woke up. And obedience, which once felt natural, now felt impossibly distant. The thing you'd always said you'd never do started to feel reasonable. How did this happen?

This is what the Puritan John Owen called the "hour" of temptation. It's not every passing enticement but a season when temptation ripens, presses in,

seeks to master you. In that hour, the mind, the body, and the heart align around a single desire. Sin feels strangely compelling. And you realise, perhaps for the first time in a long while, just how weak you actually are.

John Owen wrote about this not as a distant scholar but as a pastor who knew both Scripture and the human heart with piercing clarity. He understood what we often forget: there's a difference between being tempted and entering into temptation. And if we don't learn to recognise when temptation is reaching its hour, and what to do when it does, we'll find ourselves, like Peter in the courtyard, stunned at our own capacity for failure.

The Garden: Ideal Conditions, Total Failure

Consider Gethsemane. Jesus has just told his disciples, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38). These words came at a moment uniquely suited to obedience. Think about it: the Last Supper still fresh in memory, hours of teaching about abiding in Christ, Peter's bold promise never to forsake him, Jesus himself a stone's throw away praying with such anguish about the cup. Every circumstance favoured watchfulness.

Yet a short while later, Jesus found them sleeping. "Could you not keep watch for one hour?"

Owen turns this failure back on us with uncomfortable precision: "Indeed it would be an amazing thing to consider that Peter should make so high a promise, and immediately be so remiss and careless in the pursuit of it, but that we find the root of the same treachery abiding and working in our own hearts." We see it every day: noble engagements unto obedience quickly ending in deplorable negligence.

In the Saviour's very presence, at the climax of his earthly ministry, the disciples didn't just drowse off. They failed abysmally. Peter swung a sword, denied his Lord three times, nearly succumbed to despair. The others fled.

When Temptation Comes to Its "Hour"

Owen observes that every significant temptation has a kind of "high noon"—a season when it becomes "most vigorous, active, operative, and prevalent." It may have been quietly knocking at the door of your life for a long time, but there is a moment when it walks into the room.

Several things converge:

- Your circumstances now **favour** the sin: time alone, a device in your hand, tiredness after ministry, relational disappointment.

- Your heart has grown **familiar** with the thought of this sin; what once shocked you now seems “not such a big deal,” as you tell yourself, “Is it not a little one?”
- You’re “**cooling**” in the duties that once kept you watchful: prayer is rushed, Scripture is thin, Christian fellowship avoided.

When these join together, Owen says, temptation has reached its hour: “Satan sees his advantage, considers...advantages and opportunities; let the soul know that the hour of it is come, and the glory of God, with its own welfare, depends on its behaviour in this trial.”

Think of Peter in the courtyard. Hours earlier: “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” But when the “hour of darkness” came, when fear, opportunity, and spiritual drowsiness converged, he denied even knowing Christ. The hour had arrived. He was unprepared.

What is Happening in the Mind

Modern descriptions of attention and desire help us see what Scripture and Owen are describing.

In the hour of temptation:

- **Attention narrows.** Your mind “locks on” to the tempting image or scenario and pushes God, consequences, and calling to the edge of consciousness.
- **Arousal joins in.** Bodily desire and the brain’s reward system activate, making the thought feel not just attractive but urgent.
- **Imagination fixes on the object.** Owen says temptation works by “fixing the imagination and the thoughts upon the object...so that the mind shall be diverted from the consideration of the things that would relieve and succour it.”

At that point, you’re not merely being tempted in the ordinary sense; you are, in Owen’s language, “entering into temptation” (Matt 26:41). You’re in a state or season where a particular sin seeks to gain dominion.

Why “Just Stop It” Doesn’t Work

In this state, people often scold themselves: “Stop thinking about this.” But sheer suppression usually fails. Once imagination is captured and the body aroused, simply pushing thoughts away can make them rebound with greater intensity. Owen is realistic about this: “He that now abhors the thoughts of such and such a thing, if he once enters into temptation will find his heart inflamed towards it, and all contrary reasonings overborne and silenced.”

Two dynamics are at work:

- **The anticipation of reward.** The mind remembers the short-term pleasure and expects another “hit,” and that anticipation is itself pleasurable.
- **Shame keeps you engaged with the thought.** You stare at your sin and at yourself instead of at Christ; the very self-condemnation preoccupies you with the temptation.

So the answer is not bare will-power, but a different way of responding: spiritually and mentally.

Watch and Pray: Christ’s Remedy

Jesus’ words in Gethsemane give Owen his central text: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41). Watching and praying aren’t pious generalities; they’re concrete practices for the hour of temptation.

1. Watch the seasons

Owen insists we must learn to read the seasons of our own hearts and lives. Certain times put us especially at risk:

- Seasons of **unusual prosperity**, when success lulls us into self-confidence.
- Seasons of **spiritual slumber**, when duties become rote and dry.
- Seasons of **strong enjoyment**, when joy runs high and caution low.
- Seasons of **self-confidence**, when we quietly think, “That could never be me.”

Wise watching means naming these seasons, acknowledging weakness, refusing situations that feed our particular temptations.

2. Pray as the Weak, Not the Strong

For Owen, true watchfulness is always joined with prayer that confesses, “It is not in our power to keep ourselves.” Christ’s command to pray “that you may not enter into temptation” presumes that only his preserving mercy can keep us from its power.

So in the hour of temptation, prayer isn’t vague spirituality but concrete dependence: “Lord, I am weak. This desire feels strong. Keep me by your Spirit; do not let me enter into its power.” The disciples slept instead of praying, and so when the time of testing came, they fled; Peter denied.

3. Keep the Word of Christ's Patience

Owen's final counsel, from Revelation 3:10, is to "watch against temptation by constant 'keeping the word of Christ's patience.'" That is, keep hold of the gospel that calls you to endure with Christ, to suffer rather than sin, to wait for glory rather than seize pleasure now.

Christ promises the church at Philadelphia: "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming" (Rev 3:10). By holding fast to his word in ordinary days, we're kept in extraordinary days.

A Pastoral Picture: Watching the Stream

Many believers describe sexual temptation as if they move into an altered state until the desire is either indulged in imagination or acted upon. One helpful picture, used in some Christian counselling, is that of sitting beside a stream and letting thoughts float past on leaves.

The aim isn't to white-knuckle your thoughts into silence, but to:

- Notice the tempting thought.
- Name it for what it is: "lust," "self-pity," "fantasy."
- Place it, as it were, on a leaf and let it pass, while you turn again to God in prayer.

This is, in a different idiom, what Owen describes when he urges us not to let temptation "fix" the imagination but to divert the mind to thoughts that strengthen faith and obedience. It's a way of refusing to argue with the thought or enter into it, and instead to watch it before God until it passes.

Christ in the hour of temptation

Ultimately, Owen insists that our hope in temptation isn't our skill, but our Saviour. Jesus himself entered the "hour" of testing, both in the wilderness and at the cross, and emerged faithful. He knows the weight of being pressed by Satan, and he now intercedes for his people (Luke 22:31-32).

For Peter, Christ not only predicted his fall but also his restoration: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). That's the pattern of gospel grace in all our temptations. You may fail in the hour of temptation, but Christ does not. He brings you to repentance, restores you, and then uses even that bitter experience to equip you to strengthen others.

A monthly newsletter can't do everything, but it can do this: it can remind God's people that temptation has an hour; that we're weaker than we think; that Christ has provided means of watching and praying; and that in every hour of temptation, we face not only a powerful enemy but a faithful High Priest who knows our frame and will not let our faith finally fail.



p [03 5244 8600](tel:0352448600)

e admin@rtc.edu.au w rtc.edu.au

RTC Melbourne Campus

3/221 Queen St, Melbourne VIC 3000

© 2025 Reformed Theological College, All rights reserved.

Update your [preferences](#) or [Unsubscribe](#)

"Soli Deo Gloria—Glory to God Alone"