

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

August 30, 2018

My dear Friends:

It has been a good year reading-wise, much better than last year. As I think I've mentioned, I have a special journal in which I record books that I've completed. Unfortunately, I buy and start far more books than I actually complete. In fact, recently I told my wife that we needed to build bookshelves. She said, "Why? We have enough shelves for the books we have right now." To which I replied, "No, these bookshelves are for the books that I want to buy!"

But I have completed more books this year. Part of that has been the result of a mini-kick: books on Kentucky and Appalachia, things that I'm reading for a potential book project down the road on the Presbyterian evangelist, Edward O. Guerrant. He is sometimes called "the apostle of the highlands," credited with helping to start over 60 churches and 13 schools in eastern Kentucky, southwest Virginia, and western North Carolina. In 1915, when the Presbyterian Church in the United States formed the Synod of Appalachia with over 100 churches, nearly 60% of those churches were started by Guerrant. He is a fascinating figure and that is a fascinating region of our country.

One of the best books that I've read was a new biography on Henry Clay written by James Klotter, the state historian of Kentucky. *Henry Clay: The Man Who Would Be President* not only offers biography, but also an analysis of the political trade winds of the antebellum period. That in itself was valuable—reading this story made me realize that there are definite patterns in American democracy, both in the way we do politics and in the issues we confront. The other value of the book is that it is exquisitely written—I moved through the book in around a week because Klotter did a fabulous job carrying me along with his prose.

Another enjoyable book that I recently finished was Rebecca Reynolds's *Courage, Dear Heart*. We will have the book in the IPC bookstore; it is out of stock at the publisher right now. You might know Reynolds's work if you read the Rabbit Room website (Rabbit Room is the ministry of Andrew Peterson, the musician/author based out of Nashville; if you don't know that website, you need to). In nine letters to those who are discouraged, Reynolds offers a pathway for reflecting on the Gospel in the midst of discouragement, transition, loss, and longing. It was the right book at the right time for me.

Like I normally do, I'll put together a top ten list at the end of the year. But those two were too good not to share now. In the pace of life, having good books is like having a good friend—good books offer comfort and rest to the soul.

In the grip of God's grace,



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