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Essick's "Thomas Grantham: God's Messenger from Lincolnshire" (Critical Review)

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or what the Bible often refers to as the heart” (pp. 330-31). A deeper understanding of hymnody can lead to this appreciation and spiritual growth.

One weakness lies in the absence of an appendix dedicated to the explanation of various terms that lie outside the normal vocabulary of church musicians. While presenting them in the body of the chapter is helpful, a glossary would allow for a quick reference even after the book has been read. These technical terms such as poetic devices found within the hymns or theological concepts and ideas would have been much easier to find and understand with a brief appendix that might have included page references to more explanation. If, by chance, the reader is unaware of what epimone is and does in chapter 2 then knowing that a thorough investigation occurs on page 191 would encourage a better understanding of the device’s role in “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” when it was mentioned.

Also, the inclusion of the hymns, music and text, are helpful but strikingly absent from the first half of the book. There are numerous times that being able to see the hymn in print could enhance the reader’s understanding. To assume the reader is able to find the hymns on his or her personal book shelf or on the web is distracting from the activity of reading the book. Again, a brief appendix would be invaluable.

As a summary, Scotty Gray’s *Hermeneutics of Hymnody* is a refreshing resource in subject area that receives so much neglect. The author maintains focus throughout the book and is aware of the purpose. This work should be on every worship pastor, music minister, church choir director’s, organist or any other church musician’s book shelf. While not a breeze to read through quickly, it will give important and useful information to enhance an individual or corporate worship experience. The challenge is set and this book will help to achieve the goal.

Thomas Grantham: God’s Messenger from Lincolnshire,

by John Inscore Essick. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2013.

246 pp. \$30.00. ISBN 9780881464610

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John Inscore Essick, Assistant Professor of Church History at Baptist Seminary of Kentucky in Georgetown, Kentucky, has written a comprehensive and engaging story of the life of Thomas Grantham (1633/34-1692), an important General Baptist leader of the latter half of the seventeenth century. Not much has been written on Grantham aside from including him in the larger narrative of English Baptists until

recently. Essick demonstrates Grantham's life and works as meaningfully efficacious in the organization and validation of the General Baptists in his sphere of influence in Lincolnshire and Norfolk.

After a short introduction, the story begins in chapter 1 with life in the rural county of Lincolnshire through the time of the Restoration (1660). This considerably sized county struggled economically, politically, and ecclesiastically giving rise to many sectarian religious groups, including the "small but growing number of General Baptists" (p. 20). After his baptism in 1652 and subsequent entrance into public ministry in the late 1650s, Grantham found himself no stranger to the common conflict concerning the office of messenger and the practice of laying on of hands.

Chapter 2 provides a most thorough biographical sketch of Grantham's life and ministry. Essick adds a distinctive contextualization of his many writings alongside his ministerial work as messenger, which has not been previously actualized in the vital Baptist historical works of Thomas Crosby, Joseph Ivimey, and Adam Taylor.

The following chapter builds on the work of John F.V. Nicholson concerning the office of messenger. Nicholson's work, explained as being a "foundational study," was limited in scope, needing "expansion" and further "critique." Essick accomplishes this, then focuses on "Grantham's place in the process by which messengers became an established ministry among the General Baptists" (p. 70). He fully explains Grantham's logical reasoning and biblical evidences supporting this neglected office. The "three-fold task for the messenger" included: "(1) preach the gospel; (2) teach and strengthen churches; and (3) defend the gospel against attacks" (p. 111). Not only did Grantham define the office of messenger, he obviously lived it as well.

In chapter 4 Essick explains how Grantham took seriously the job of apologist among those who challenged this new group holding to different doctrines (p. 112). Again, Grantham earnestly believed and manifested this belief as a vital part of his ministry as a messenger. Debates were the common way of discussing these differences and gaining converts, and Grantham was a skilled debater, despite his lack of formal theological education. Essick demonstrates Grantham's abilities, through four separate disputes with Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Quakers, and Presbyterians.

The last chapter addresses dissent post Restoration concerning government and king. Grantham defended Baptists before the king and government convincing them that "Baptists were a peaceable and legitimate movement" (p. 205), purposefully differentiating the sect from the Fifth Monarchy. Despite persecution by local magistrates, Grantham himself along with many others were legally licensed under the Declaration of Indulgence (1672) by Charles II, further demonstrating their willing subjection to authority while exercising their ability to be taken seriously. A short conclusion then follows the final chapter.

The author relies skillfully on primary sources throughout this work. Each use of these sources contributes unequivocally to his argument demonstrating his deft command of source and subject. For example, Grantham's major theological work, *Christianismus Primitivus*, is consistently used to support Essick's claims, along with other works, including Particular Baptist sources. He also exhibits command of wide-ranging secondary sources and has no qualms disagreeing with other scholars on certain subjects pertaining to Thomas Grantham.

While individual chapters could stand on their own, it is obvious that succeeding chapters build on the foundation of Grantham's overall goal to elucidate seventeenth-century England of the underestimated office of messenger. Essick weaves naturally throughout the book the repeated "four-fold task" of a messenger, which included "preaching the gospel in all places, teaching and governing the churches," "defending the gospel against attacks, and assisting pastors in resisting those who would usurp authority" (p. 113).

The only weakness is quite minor: an informal acknowledgment at the beginning of the work concerning an explanation, in the original language, of the term "messenger" versus "apostle" in the New Testament, and how they are synonymous. Such a clarification might be helpful to those who may be unfamiliar.

Thomas Grantham: God's Messenger from Lincolnshire is a valuable and significant book for readers endeavoring to better understand not only early General Baptist belief and doctrine in its earliest stages as well as the works of an often neglected seventeenth-century theologian. The chapter covering Grantham's debates with other religious groups and denominations makes this book interesting yet beneficial not only to Baptists but to all Christians, enabling readers to understand both sides of those religious disputes. Further, at the beginning of the book are pictures and maps enabling readers to connect more concretely to this area of England. At the end of the book are several appendices which include Thomas Grantham's Will, Grantham's dying words, A Memorial to Thomas Grantham, Acrostics, Epitaphs, a poem by Grantham, and other items. By far the most helpful for the interested reader wishing to supplement their research pertaining to the life of Thomas Grantham, Essick has included an annotated bibliography.

This work will be broadly beneficial to those studying seventeenth-century England regardless of religious denomination or background. It will also be more narrowly constructive to students interested in the history of English Baptists. Moreover, Grantham's ability to successfully defend his General Baptist beliefs while utilizing biblical evidences as support to his claims in debates will undoubtedly be instructive for all, while at the same time encouraging believers to "always [be] ready to make a

defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15, NAS). The excellent scholarship along with a clever and insightful account of Grantham’s life and work will be a welcomed addition to any library both public and private.

John Inscore Essick has created an exemplary nevertheless accessible work on Thomas Grantham. He has succeeded in giving “Grantham a voice in the future” and letting “the history of which he is a part surprise and challenge.” Additionally, he has accomplished writing an excellent history more than three hundred years after the man’s death. Now we as twenty-first century readers may witness

“through [his] printing, preaching, debating, and representing congregations in the counties of Lincolnshire and Norfolk, Grantham contributed to the process by which a regional, sectarian affiliation of General Baptist congregations became a legitimate dissenting presence in England by the end of the seventeenth century” (p. 1).