

NEW HORIZONS

— in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

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of the Cross //
by Chad B. Van Dixboorn

APRIL 2014

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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At the Committee on Foreign Missions meeting on February 4 were (seated) Douglas Clawson (associate general secretary), John Mahaffy (secretary), Richard Gaffin (president), John Van Meerbeke (vice president), Mark Bube (general secretary); (standing) Lendall Smith, Glenn Jerrell (treasurer), Mark Green, David Gregg, Robert Joss, Scott Johnson, Billie Papke, Joseph Waggoner, William Kessler, John Emmett, Paul Browne, and Jon Stevenson.



THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION



GABRIEL N. E. FLUHRER // Reformed churches like the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have rightly frowned upon the celebration of feast days such as those found in the Church of Rome. But long before the unbiblical additions of Rome, feast days themselves were ordained by God for his old covenant people.

Stated simply, the lives of the ancient Israelites were scheduled around the feasts that God prescribed in his word.

Given the monumental importance of the festal calendar in the life of Israel, it is not surprising to find that this ordering of life shaped the structures of the apostle Paul's thinking. Indeed, his theology of resurrection life in 1 Corinthians 15 is subtly yet powerfully shaped by the festal calendar of Israel.

As a Pharisee and a Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil. 3:5), Paul knew much about the feasts of Israel from places like Leviticus 23. There God outlines in more detail what he previously told the Israelites (see Ex. 23:10–19), giving specific instructions for the festal calendar his people were to follow. There was the weekly “feast” of the Sabbath. In addition to this creation ordinance and weekly feast, there were three spring feasts and three fall feasts. The three spring feasts were Passover, Firstfruits, and Weeks. The three fall festivals were Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Booths.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives

perhaps his most systematic, startling, and spiritually rich teaching regarding the resurrection. Throughout this pivotal chapter, the festal calendar of Israel lies just beneath the surface of the apostle's thinking. In verse 20, Paul says that Christ was raised from the dead as the “firstfruits” of the resurrection. Since the Feast of Firstfruits was a celebration of the goodness of God's provision in the coming harvest, represented by those firstfruits, the connection to Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is clear. Paul is telling us that Christ's resurrection, promised by the inerrant word of God and fulfilled in history (vv. 1–5), is the guarantee of an eschatological resurrection harvest that surpasses any abundance of wheat that would have been brought into the granaries of Canaan. Because of Christ's resurrection, believers have the firm and unshakable assurance that they will be gathered in the Father's harvest to the greater Canaan, the new heavens and the new earth.

Paul goes on to speak of Christ's reign and the nature of the resurrection

body. He speaks of an extended period of time until Christ's final triumph (vv. 24–28), and thus we must not pass by another rich connection with the festal calendar of Israel. The feast that followed that of Firstfruits was that of Weeks or Pentecost. The word *Pentecost* comes from the Greek word that means “fiftieth.” The Feast of Weeks occurred fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits. When we turn to Acts 2:1–14, we read of the early Christians gathered together in one place on the Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

John the Baptist had told the early disciples that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16). This Spirit-fire-baptism took place on the day of Pentecost. But the timing was significant: it happened *after* Christ's resurrection. Again, the festal connection illumines the underlying unity of God's revelation. Fittingly, the risen Christ, the firstfruits of the coming resurrection harvest, now sends the Holy Spirit to begin the great ingathering of that resurrection harvest on the

day of Pentecost. As Israel's calendar prescribed in types and shadows, so Jesus fulfills in reality.

Today we are still in the reaping phase of that great harvest. Our sickles and scythes are the same as those of the infant church at Pentecost: the preaching of the word of the crucified and resurrected firstfruits Savior. Understanding this festal connection to Pentecost also enriches our understanding of our Savior's missionary words, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37). Christians now do not labor under oppressive spiritual "sun," plowing spiritually dry ground, awaiting an unsure harvest. Instead, in the power of the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), the gospel is preached and Christ's laborers work under the glad rays of a smiling heaven for a worldwide harvest that will bear the best of fruit.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 15, the festal cycle is completed in Paul's thinking as he informs us that this resurrection harvest will continue until that moment—"in the twinkling of an eye"—*when the trumpet sounds* (v. 52) and believers are gathered to the Lord. Again, the festal connection here, though subterranean, characterizes Paul's thinking. In Leviticus 23:24, God tells the Israelites that, following the Feast of Pentecost, the trumpets were to sound, calling the people to a holy convocation and Sabbath rest.

Similarly, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:52 that the eschatological resurrection harvest will be completed in God's good time, and then the trumpet will sound. Believers will immediately enter into the greater Sabbath rest of the new heavens and the new earth, with glorified resurrection bodies that are like that of Christ, the firstfruits. All of this is accomplished in the power of him who is the life-giving Spirit. By calling Christ the life-giving Spirit, Paul does not exhibit Trinitarian confusion, but rather shows us the unity of the work of the Spirit with the work of Christ in a seamless robe of eschatological, resurrection life.

Gathering together these various

biblical strands, a striking tapestry of revelation emerges. Israel's feasts governed her entire existence, reminding the people every season that God was the God who blessed them. He called them to rest in him and enjoy his bounty. By connecting these Old Testament festal types and shadows with Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 15, we also see afresh why the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches that the covenant of grace was

differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the old testament. (7:5)

The feasts of Israel therefore provided "types and ordinances" that were "sufficient and efficacious," by the power of the Spirit, to bring Christ to old covenant believers. By contrast, we live, not in the time of types and shadows, but in the time of resurrection fulfillment.

What This Means for Us

For those of us who live after Christ's resurrection, there is much to learn from this festal structure of Paul's thinking in 1 Corinthians 15. First, we can better understand Paul's closing verse in chapter 15 (which was the favorite verse of OPC founding father Cornelius Van Til): "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (v. 58). Paul encourages the Corinthian believers—the same group with all of the horrible sins detailed in the earlier chapters—that their labor is not vain. Why? Because they labored in light of the coming

resurrection harvest, as certain as Christ's firstfruits of the same.

Similarly for us, who live in the same redemptive-historical situation as the Corinthian believers, between the firstfruits and the final trumpet blast, *our* labors are not in vain. Whether we struggle to overcome a besetting sin, to reach a hardened neighbor who will not listen to the gospel, or to deal with the daily grind of disappointment, grief, and toil, we must remain steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of Jesus. Just as the ancient Israelites rejoiced with great joy as they held a handful of good grain at the beginning of the harvest and went on to labor all the more gladly *because* of the firstfruits, so we can rejoice in knowing that as the firstfruits are, so will be the harvest. Since Christ has been raised, our labors are certain to produce fruit. This fruit may be invisible in this age, for we walk by faith and not by sight; nevertheless, it is as certain as the empty tomb.

Second, and amplifying the previous point, the festal structure of Paul's theology of resurrection should renew our sense of mission. Since the Messiah has begun his great eschatological harvest, let us be found to be faithful laborers. Let Easter be a joyous reminder that, no matter how small the work may seem in the world's eyes, the truth is that our Savior is reaping an eternal harvest in our midst! Overarching years of ministerial and congregational toil with seemingly little result is the gargantuan, all-conditioning reality of the feast of resurrection. Therefore, let us remain steadfast, immovable, abounding in the work of Christ, the firstfruits of the resurrection, as we await the next feast in redemptive history: the trumpet blast calling us to the marriage supper of the Lamb!

In sum, Israel's festal calendar was *a graphic portrayal of the end of time brought into the present*. It was an eschatological calendar. It was and is the Christian calendar. □

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THE POWER AND WISDOM OF THE CROSS



CHAD B. VAN DIXHOORN // In the mid-nineteenth century, archaeologists digging around the Palatine Hill in Rome unearthed a house that formed one part of the palace of the emperor Caligula, an unpleasant man who reigned in Rome from A.D. 37 until he was murdered in A.D. 41.

In the years following Caligula's death, the imperial palace continued to grow, and over time this house became hidden, entombed within the foundations of the larger palace complex, and so it was preserved until its discovery in 1857.

Ironically, the unearthed house soon became best known for a bit of graffiti that was found on one of its walls. Scholars discovered a kind of ancient cartoon: it showed an image of a young man looking up in admiration at a crucified figure—a figure of a man with a donkey's head stretched out upon a cross. Underneath the picture, this was written: "Alexamenos worships his God."

Now it is possible that there was an obscure religion in Rome whose adherents worshipped a crucified donkey-man. But the Romans put crucified convicts at about the level of animals, and this sketch is no work of art: the caption is badly spelled, and the picture is crudely drawn. So this is not likely to be pious religious art. There is no real doubt that we see in this graffiti a

mocking laugh at the strange new religion that was spreading across the Roman Empire—a seemingly ridiculous religion that started in Jerusalem and required its followers to worship a crucified God.

You see, from the beginning, whether in Rome or in Corinth, it was true that "the word of the cross is folly," as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18. Actually, the Corinthians, even more than other urban people, prized the smooth talkers of their day. If you were to stop at a Corinthian convenience store and pick up, say, a copy of *The Aegean Monthly*, or maybe the weekly news-magazine, *Chronos*, you would find essays and reports from prominent professors, scientists, and economists—and the one thing that they would all have in common would be that they could sound clever and write well. The Greek intelligentsia cared at least as much about how something sounded as they did about what was actually said. Naturally, Christians in Corinth and Rome were exposed to this wise, sensible, witty talk all the time. It trickled into their

discussions about their preferences for preachers.

But much more importantly, all this emphasis on clever talk could also undermine the foundation of these Christians' faith. One of the things that wise people said—and they could sure say it well!—was that the cross of Christianity was foolishness. They could create much better cartoons with their words than Roman graffiti artists could with their chisels. They were smart, they were clever, and you couldn't help seeing the funny side of a crucified redeemer!

The Foolishness of the Cross

From the beginning, the most common view of the cross has been that it is crazy. But the problem with this perspective is that it is held by people with a tragic destiny. The cross is foolishness—but it is foolishness to those who are perishing. Paul was not deaf to the laughter of the world, directed at the cross. On the contrary, he listened very carefully and noted its sound. He detected the hollow laugh of the dying man who needs to be saved, but is

being lost; the empty crow of those who think they are wise, but have rejected the power of God for their salvation. These are the sick patients who laugh at their doctor as he offers a cure. They are the accused criminals who reject the only good defense that their lawyer can give them. In other words, this perspective on the cross, this worldly wisdom, belongs to a dying breed.

Unhappily it is also the case, as Paul explains in verses 19–21, that this worldly wisdom is a joke to the One who is wisest of all. Paraphrasing Isaiah 29, Paul reminds Christians that God turns upside down this so-called “wisdom of the wise.” He destroys and thwarts it. The Lord is like a professional wrestler laughing at a group of schoolboys who think they can take him down: “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?” God effortlessly makes foolish the wisdom of the world, as Paul says in verse 20.

In fact, since the world values fancy talk, big ideas, and proud solutions to life’s biggest problems, God could not save through wisdom—or anything the world would think is wise. Do you see what Paul is saying? God ignores worldly wisdom; actually, he does not esteem it; he declares it useless in the quest for salvation. For what matters most, this kind of wisdom is least useful. Human learning over the centuries has had many shining moments and has been used (and abused) in more ways than can be counted. But it is also the case, as John Calvin remarks in one of his most unflattering lines, that “man with all his shrewdness is as stupid about understanding, by himself, the mysteries of God as [a donkey] is incapable of understanding musical harmony” (*Commentary* on 1 Cor. 1:20).

As Paul says in verse 21, this foolish message about a Savior on a cross is actually what we need. The death of this man actually saves all those who believe it. And when people discover this, they find themselves, with young Alexamenos, gazing at the man upon the cross, seeing the God-man of the biblical gos-

pels, rather than the donkey-man of the mocking world. Knowing Jesus gives us a whole new perspective on the wisdom of the wise.

An Unimpressive Cross

In verses 18–21, when considering the supposed wisdom of the wise, Paul has his eye on the Greeks. But when he continues his thought in verses 22–25, he now glances at both Gentiles and Jews.

You see, the cross is unimpressive in more than one way. For the Greeks, the cross did not appear clever; it could not appeal to the influential and the intelligent. But for the Jews, the cross did not appear powerful. The Jews liked signs and miracles, not a symbol of weakness and shame. Where the cross was a signpost of folly for the Greeks, it was a theological roadblock in the path of Jewish people, because Deuteronomy 21:23 pronounced a curse on anyone who hung on a tree, and the Jews understood this to include executions on a cross. How could the promised one be a crucified one?

And so Paul could capture in these two words the objections of all his hearers, and of many skeptics thereafter: foolishness and weakness. These two words are the world’s synonyms, or substitute words, for the cross. For them, the crucified Christ represents the foolishness of the Christian God and the weakness of the Christian God. But Christians have two different synonyms for the cross: power and wisdom. For us, the crucified Christ is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).

When we are told that the Christian gospel is not very impressive, we face the temptation to give it a face-lift. But verse 25 tells us not to bother, because God wants us to learn to look at the gospel his way, rather than refashion it in some other way.

I used to think that verse 25 was making a comment about God, using impossible hypothetical scenarios. Only recently did I finally see that verse 25 is making a point about the cross itself.

When Paul talks about “the foolishness of God,” he is using the unbeliever’s term for the cross. When he talks about “the weakness of God,” he is borrowing another unbelieving description of the cross. And his message here is not about the divine power and wisdom of Christ, but the surprising power and wisdom of the cross.

The wise of this world will always anoint the head of our Savior with their eloquent scorn. But as Paul told the Corinthians, and as he is telling us now, we have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel, no reason to update it or refurbish it, and every reason to stand with admiration and wonder at the foot of the cross.

Considering Our Callings

But being a Christian must come at a cost, and we must count that cost. For of course what is true of Christ and the cross will also be true for all who trust in that cross. If the gospel we confess seems weak and foolish, then you and I will seem weak and foolish too. That is not comfortable for us. At times it is painful. In spite of appearances, I don’t like to look weak or foolish. I doubt you do either. And we will be tempted to avoid a way of life, or a confession of Christ, that leaves us exposed to the disapproval or mockery of others. But it is part of God’s plan that obedient Christians will look as silly as the gospel sounds silly.

In fact, that has been God’s plan from the beginning, as the apostle Paul explains in verses 26–29. We can see that, if we consider our callings. Not many of us are rated as wise men by the world’s standards. Not many of the faithful are powerful. Not many of us belong to the upper crust of society.

Just the opposite is true. God chose people like he chose his gospel: those who are failures and outsiders—foolish and weak by the standards of the wise and powerful. He chose to magnify his own name and plan. That’s the basic point of verse 28, where Paul is saying that God chose this world’s nothings because he wanted the somebodies to

see that they are really nobodies.

In other words, we unimportant people are prime examples of the principle that God uses the weak and foolish things in the world. God uses Christians more in spite of who we are than because of who we are. As an unknown third-century Christian once said when meditating on this passage, “God is not elitist in his choice of believers.” That’s humbling. And that’s OK.

Christ and the Christian

We are not to boast in the presence of God (as Paul says in verse 29), because of what God has done (as Paul says in verse 30). God has forged a unique relationship between Christ and the Christian.

Christ transforms his own weakness, and shows his real strength; he unveils his own foolishness, and reveals his true wisdom. Similarly, when God unveils our foolishness, our sinfulness, our dirtiness, and the weakness of our bondage, he also reveals the real wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption that we can obtain through Christ alone.

Paul teaches in verse 30 that God takes all those who believe in Christ and places them in Christ. There they find true wisdom, discovering that the Christ who appears to be nothing is in fact everything: he is the wisdom of God’s provision.

In Jesus we find our righteousness: we are justified and forgiven before the throne of God. In Christ Jesus we find our sanctification: we grow in holiness as we grow closer to and more like him. In Christ we find our redemption: our full and final deliverance from sin and guilt, from punishment and curse, from final death and hell.

So here is the fine point about Christ and the Christian, as well expressed by Reformed theologian Michael Horton: “There are no gifts that we receive from God apart from Christ, and his work is inseparable from his person. It is impossible to receive the benefits of Christ apart from Christ himself” (*The Christian Faith*, 598–99).

Does that make sense to you? Everything that we are and have comes from Christ alone and in Christ alone. We must be connected to him to benefit from anything that he has done.

But there is another point to make. Just as every grace given to a Christian is connected to Christ, so too is each grace connected to every other grace. For example, one cannot receive justification without sanctification. As John Calvin puts it, “These graces are connected together, as it were, by an indissoluble tie, so that he who attempts to sever them does in a manner tear Christ in pieces” (*Commentary* on 1 Cor. 1:30). When we receive Christ, we receive every good gift in him. Each gift is different from the others, but forgiveness, the gift of Christ’s righteousness, and at least some growth in holiness are received together in Christ. These gifts are not like a series of birthday presents, received in different years, but like an inheritance, with everything given all at once.

Because the great preachers of the Protestant Reformation realized this twin truth about Christ and his union with the Christian, they insisted that salvation is of Christ alone! All that we have comes from Christ, and in Christ we have all that we need.

The End of It All

It is God’s provision of an entirely sufficient Savior in Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit wants us to see in this passage, so that, as I paraphrase, we who tend to boast, will boast in the Lord. In 1731, a young colonial preacher was persuaded to preach at the commencement of Yale College in New Haven, Connecticut. He had noted early in his ministry that the main weapon used by opponents of the full gospel was laughter and mockery. The wise men and debaters of his age, the skeptics and deists, labored to make the cross of Christ and the gospel of Christ look weak and foolish.

This young man, perhaps more than any other man in his century, would labor for the whole of his life to show, in his own unique way, how the

gospel is wise and powerful. But he was not doing this to make people think more highly of himself or of his friends. He wasn’t trying to make believers in the gospel respectable. And that is why he delivered a sermon at Yale College entitled “God Glorified in the Work of Redemption.”

The preacher’s name was Jonathan Edwards, and he is not known for writing the most elegant sentences in the English language. But the truth of what he said that day is worth remembering for all of our days. At the beginning of his sermon, he insisted that “what God aims at in the arrangement [*i.e.*, disposition] of things in the affair of redemption” is that “man should not glory in himself, but in God alone” (Edwards, *Works*, 2:2). Is this not what Paul was saying in verses 29 and 31?

And at the end of his sermon, he declared that “whatever scheme” of salvation there may be that “is inconsistent with our entire dependence on God for all, and of having all through him, and in him, it is repugnant to the design ... of the gospel, and it robs it of that which God accounts its ... glory” (*Works*, 2:7). Is this not what God teaches in the whole of the Scriptures? We have understood the plan of salvation properly only if the whole system offers God the glory.

Edwards was preaching on the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 1, and I think we can see that he understood what is at its very heart. There is a God-glorifying wisdom and power to the cross. The Christian gospel calls us to trust in the Christ, the crucified one, who came as a substitute for sinners who place their hope in him, instead of in themselves. Do you hear this call? If so, you will find that, united to this Savior, you will have all that you ever need for this life and for the next. And you will also find it your irresistible joy to join the famous Jonathan Edwards in glorying in Christ alone, and join the unknown Alexamenos in worshipping his God. □

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FINDING JESUS IN THE BOOK OF JAMES



STEPHEN J. OHAREK // The great Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, infamously referred to the book of James as “an epistle of straw” in his preface to the German New Testament. What is less well known or talked about, is that Luther also praised the book of James in the same preface.

Luther said about James, “*I praise it and hold it a good book*, because it sets up no doctrine of men and lays great stress upon God’s law.” Luther did have a way of using his tongue to both bless the book of James and also to curse it. And with respect to the latter, the most devastating criticism he leveled against James was that he believed it did not teach us about Christ.

Luther is correct when he says, “That is the true test, by which to judge all books, when we see whether they deal with Christ or not, since all the Scriptures show us Christ.” Absolutely! Sadly, though, Luther went on to say that James does not pass that test.

If you were to listen to most people talk about James, and most preachers preach through James, you might think that they were all students of Martin Luther! It is all too common for people to approach James as a book without Christ in it. They merely glean the great imperatives of James while missing the great indicative named Jesus. In a small effort to help correct that tendency, let’s consider the following ways in which

we see Jesus in the book of James.

James and the Sermon on the Mount

If you could read only one thing in order to better understand James, it should be Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5–7. There are so many ways in which the book of James clearly echoes that most famous sermon of Jesus. Both tackle the themes of worldliness over against heavenly mindedness. Both deal with issues like oaths and vows, suffering well, judging others, persecution, effective prayer, and proving our faith by the fruit of good works.

And, like Jesus’ sermon, James must be read with Jesus himself in mind. In the Sermon on the Mount, who is the peacemaker, the one who is persecuted, and the pure in heart? Yes, those beatitudes belong to us believers, but only as they first belong to our Savior who spoke such blessings. Similarly in James, who is it that has perfectly endured the test (1:12), but our Savior? Who is the lowly one who is exalted

(1:9)? Who is himself the perfect gift that has come down from the Father of lights (1:17)? And who has come to this world, from the Father, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unstained from the world in perfect righteousness (1:27)? It is the same Christ who alone can ultimately save our souls from death and cover a multitude of sins (5:20).

The book of James gives numerous commands to believers to live out by God’s strength. James has around fifty imperatives (commands) in just over one hundred verses. And those imperatives are meant to be obeyed by us. But, like all the imperatives in God’s Word, they describe an obedience that was first and foremost lived out by Jesus, who came to fulfill the entirety of God’s demands. Jesus is the one who came, not to abolish the law, but to fulfill or keep it (Matt. 5:17). It is Jesus who has really fulfilled the royal law according to the Scripture (Jas. 2:8). Therefore, the proper approach to the obedient Christian life is not a life of just trying harder all the time, as James is often read and

preached, but a life of becoming who we are in Christ.

James, the Brother of Jesus

It is commonly and correctly believed that the James who wrote this book was James, the half-brother of Jesus. While James had a merely human father named Joseph, and Jesus had a heavenly Father of lights, they yet shared the same human mother named Mary. As best we can tell, James (and some of his other siblings) neither believed nor followed Jesus during his earthly ministry (see Matt. 12:46–50; John 7:5). This background makes James's later position of leadership in the church nearly as amazing as that which a Pharisee named Saul would enjoy! It also makes the book of James the same kind of “not how I did it in my earlier years” kind of treatise as that of Peter in his first epistle.

But the sibling relationship between Jesus and James ought not to be too quickly passed over. It is true that Jesus is explicitly named by James only twice, in 1:1 and 2:1. But it is wrongly inferred from this, that this is the full extent of when James had Jesus in mind when he wrote the contents of his epistle. And it is wrongly assumed that these are the only times when James wanted *us* to have Jesus in mind as we read this book.

The opening of New Testament letters carries more importance than we often realize. The first couple of verses provide an opportunity to present the author's credentials. So, if you were James, the half-brother of Jesus, why not mention that connection? Would this not lend some credibility to your claims? And yet, James begins differently than we might have expected. In verse 1, he labels himself “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” And in verse 1 he also calls his intended readers spiritual exiles, “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1, “elect exiles of the dispersion”). After giving such spiritual identity labels, James then says in verse 2, “Count it all joy, *my brothers*, when you meet trials of various kinds.”

And in the next two verses he speaks of the goal of suffering well, that we may become “perfect.”

Now, if you were in that original audience, getting a letter from a man whom you knew to have had the special privilege of growing up with the Savior of the world, how could you not think to yourself, “James calls himself, not Jesus' brother, but his *servant!* And James calls *me* his brother and speaks of *me* reaching this complete state!” James is dignifying his audience of ordinary people by grouping them with himself, thereby indicating that all who are found in Christ by faith are brothers with this brother of Jesus.

In a book where he so infrequently names his brother who is the object of our faith, James calls *us* his brothers time and time again! And he speaks of our calling—to go down the same path that all of us know Jesus walked. It is almost as though this is James's biography of his brother Jesus, because his person and work are everywhere in this book! This is not unlike the book of Ruth, where the name of God is infrequently used, but the fingerprints of divine providence are all over it. James, the half-brother of Jesus, never intended for us to read of the wisdom that comes down from above (Jas. 3:17–18) without thinking of Jesus, the Wisdom that has come to us from above (Matt. 11:19; 1 Cor. 1:30).

How We Should Read the Book

Given what we have been saying about Jesus in James, there are a few significant ways in which it should affect how we read James.

First, it should affect *how* and *why* we appreciate the book of James. Some Christians are fond of James because they think it speaks almost exclusively of them and their obedience. But other Christians are cautious about James because, like Luther, they're not quite sure if it says much about Jesus. Let us not find ourselves in either category. Let us be those readers who appreciate the ways in which our Savior's obedience is described in the book, and then

be challenged by faith in him to heed the many practical commands. This is a book about how we should live, because it is a book about how he lived.

Second, we ought to be *comforted* by Christ as we read the strong demands of James. How is the “joy” of trials (1:2) to be understood, unless we can understand our trials in the light of Jesus' cross, which we now bear, and understand them with reference to his image, to which we are being conformed through them? How else can we not be discouraged by the discussion in chapter 2 of faith being demonstrated by our works, unless we realize that the less-than-perfect fruit of our faith is sanctified by our Savior to become presentable to God? How can we read the many references in James to the final judgment that is coming, without clinging by faith to the Christ who will present us pure and undefiled to the Father? The centrality of Christ to this book and to its demands gives us the comfort of knowing that, although we are not, Jesus is that “perfect man” who has perfectly bridled his body and tongue (3:2).

Finally, reading this book in the light of Christ should *motivate* us to obey its many commands. If it is read apart from Christ, one would either become a strict legalist or a completely disheartened disciple. But if it is read in the light of Christ, we are able (by God's strength) to walk in the demands it sets before us. When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, saying that we need to be perfect like our Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48), we are not discouraged to the point of giving up our efforts to be faithful. It is true that we will never reach sinless perfection in this life (John 1:8). But we may be encouraged that, as our works are sanctified by Christ, we may press on to bear more of this kind of fruit. For in doing so, we will be living out of the Christ who is central to our faith, and who (as it turns out) is central to the book of James. □

The author is the pastor of Reformation OPC in Oviedo, Fla.

GOD'S SURPRISES IN CHURCH PLANTING

// RICHARD R. GERBER



A membership class at Trinity Reformed Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland, being taught by ruling elder James Van Dam

God has been good to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, blessing her with eight to fourteen new mission works a year over the past fifteen years. Many of these mission works originated as groups of people or a few households who contacted the OPC, seeking help in establishing a Reformed and Presbyterian church in their area.

Other mission works were daughter churches that grew from an established congregation. The mother congregation would assist church families, who lived at a distance from the church building, to start a new congregation closer to where they lived.

Ten years ago, ten urban areas and metropolitan regions were identified as desirable for church planting. The church was asked to pray for these cities. As you prayed, God sent contacts and opportunities. By God's grace, the OPC now has churches or mission works in six of the ten locations.

Other new churches were begun by sending an organizing pastor into an area where a presbytery believed there was a need for a confessional Presbyterian church and the opportunity seemed ripe for harvest.

Still other mission works have begun in surprising ways. Several current mission works are in this last category.

Gaithersburg, Maryland

In one sense, Trinity Reformed Church (OPC) in Gaithersburg, Maryland, had its start when Vincent Kluth and his family sat down at a Bible study going on in the food court of a mall. The study was being led by Charles Jackson. Then Vince went back again and again, building a relationship with Charles and the group. When the mall ejected the group from the food court, the Kluth family welcomed this seriously minded group into their home.

The Kluth family is part of Trinity Reformed Church in Lanham, Maryland. Pastor Jerry Taylor and the session began

to build a relationship with the Gaithersburg people, a growing group of young adults who are excited about the grace of God in Christ and the Reformed faith. Along the way, conversations turned to the possibility of the group becoming the core for a new Orthodox Presbyterian church. Mid-Atlantic RHM Steve Doe has been assisting in the continued development of the group. With the start of Sunday afternoon worship services, various ministers of the presbytery have been leading worship and preaching. A search is underway for an organizing pastor for Trinity-Gaithersburg.

West Lebanon, New Hampshire

In West Lebanon, New Hampshire, Rev. Tim Herndon was released by the independent Bible church of which he had been associate pastor for fifteen years. This step was taken reluctantly at the end of 2012, due a decrease in the level of giving by the congregation. Severing the relationship was painful for Tim and Debbie and their children. The congregation had been an integral part of their life and the only congregation the children had really known.

But Tim and Debbie saw this as God's providential dealings with them. This Dallas Seminary graduate had come in contact with pastors in New England who loved the doctrines of grace. Meeting regularly with them, including many who were Orthodox Presbyterian ministers, his understanding of God's ways had been changing. When he was still the associate pastor of the independent Bible church, he had begun a Doctor of Ministry program at Westminster Theological Seminary, regularly making the 360-mile drive from West Lebanon to Philadelphia.

Praying and waiting for what God might have for them next, Tim and Debbie took jobs to support their family. Tim completed and circulated an OPC Ministerial Information Form, seeking a ministerial call within the OPC. The praying and waiting continued. Then the question began to come from friends and acquaintances, "So when are you going to start a



Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old (left) with Tom, Lynne, and Nate Shield at Providence OPC in West Lebanon, New Hampshire

Reformed and Presbyterian church?"

This possibility had crossed their minds, but to take that step seemed fraught with challenges. They loved and appreciated the ministry of the church they had been part of for so long. They did not want to disrupt its ministry. Since so many of the Christians they knew were affiliated with that church, it seemed unwise to pursue a church plant in the West Lebanon area. But the question kept coming up.

Finally they did begin a Bible study. That study grew to become Providence Presbyterian Church. The manner in which they went about it was so gracious that their former church actually made a financial contribution to help the new church plant.

But Providence Presbyterian Church was unaffiliated. The irony of an independent Presbyterian church was not lost on Tim. But organization takes time. Tim had approached the OPC's Presbytery of New York and New England to come under its care and oversight. That goal was accomplished in October 2013. The presbytery met again on December 6 to process a call from Covenant OPC in Barre, Vermont, to Tim to be their associate pastor to plant Providence Presbyterian Church in West Lebanon. At the same meeting, Providence Church was received as a mission work of the presbytery.

Anaheim Hills, California

Chris Hartshorn grew up in Fullerton, California. By the age of 20, he was addicted to drugs and alcohol. But then God saved him and delivered him from his addictions. Through the ministry of Calvary Chapel, he devoured the Scriptures.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: April 9, 23.

At the age of 30, he became a church planter with Calvary Chapel. God used him to raise up a church in East Harlem, New York, and then another in Lawrence, Kansas. As he preached and taught his way through three-quarters of the Bible, he came to embrace the Reformed faith. Then, because of his growing interest in Reformed theology, he enrolled at Westminster Seminary California.

Chris, Megan, and their children became part of Harvest OPC in San Marcos, California, where Mark Schroeder is the pastor. Chris has been sitting in on session meetings, learning the ropes of Reformed ministry, and preaching on Sunday evenings.

As a student at WSC, he was not all that far from where he had grown up. People he knew started asking him if they could study the Bible with him. Some had no church background. None of those with a church background had any connection with Reformed thinking. A regular Bible study was begun. The group first met in Fullerton; it has since moved to Anaheim Hills.

Pastor Mark Schroeder, who is also chair of the presbytery home missions committee, and RHM Dave Crum have been overseeing the development of the work. Lord willing, Chris will complete his studies in May. The prayerful expectation is that he will be called to labor full-time in planting an Orthodox Presbyterian church in Anaheim Hills.

We in the OPC are not sitting idly by, waiting for God's surprises in order to plant our new churches. We are all praying for new opportunities. Presbyteries are actively reaching out to new groups, seeking to aid them in developing into confessional Presbyterian churches. Congregations are praying and planning for the planting of daughter congregations. Within the next two years, expect to see several more daughter churches planted.

Presbyteries and the General Assembly's Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension are actively looking across North America to determine where we ought to seek

to plant Orthodox Presbyterian churches. Metropolitan regions are being carefully considered.

When God wonderfully surprises us with an opportunity we didn't anticipate, we joyfully praise him for raising up yet another place where his name is worshipped. Then, in thankful humility, we undertake the care of more of his sheep.



Chris and Megan Hartshorn

FOR PASTORS: FIVE STONES TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

// WILLIAM SHISHKO

We are oblivious to reality if we do not accept that this is an age of increasing opposition to the Christian faith and to those who seek to live out of that faith in all that they do. We live in a time much like that of the Philistine opposition to Israel in the days of Saul (1 Sam. 17). Modern Philistines and modern Goliaths defy the ranks of the Israel of God, the church (v. 10). In reality, they are defying the living God and his armies (vv. 36, 45). Like Israel of old, the hearts of God's people today are dismayed and greatly afraid (v. 11).

While we rejoice that David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus, now leads and fights for his people as the ascended King, we must also accept that we are part of his army in the world, and that we, too, must take our places in standing against the modern enemies of God. Pastors lead that army. They are called to represent Christ, to minister him, and to "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) in his name. They must lead God's people by putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10–20), but they learn what that armor is and how to wear it as they learn from seasoned, faithful pastors who have been on the battlefield and not become casualties of the war. Unlike Saul's armor (1 Sam. 17:39)—the pronouncements and directions of men who have had little or no experience (or failure in) the pastorate—theirs is tested and found to be good. Their writings are like the smooth stones David pulled out of the brook to equip him for his battle.

I have chosen five books for pastors to use like David's stones. The material of these stones has been made smooth in the rough waters of pastoral experience. There are many other such stones that pastors could choose, but I have picked these because each one offers distinctive help to pastors on today's battlefield.

The first smooth stone is *Encouragement for Today's Pastors*, by Joel R. Beeke and Terry D. Slachter (Reformation Heritage Books, 2013). Subtitled *Help from the Puritans*, this

Encouragement for Today's Pastors

Help from the Puritans

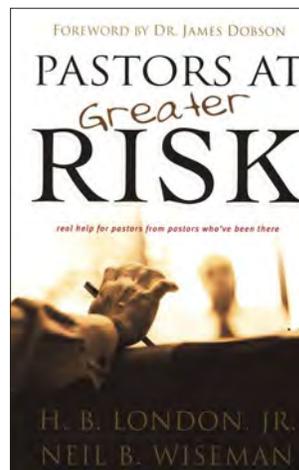


Joel R. Beeke and Terry D. Slachter

rich little volume (written by a Reformed pastor and a man with over a quarter of a century of church parish service) is a treasure trove of history lessons and quotations from Puritan pastors. While the book would perhaps be better titled "Lessons from Yesterday's Pastors," it nevertheless gives wise words

to today's pastors on such subjects as zeal for the ministry of the Word, submission to God's will, the calling of the shepherd, and the rewards promised to faithful service. I found the chapters on the dignity of the Christian ministry especially helpful, particularly the intriguing treatment of "Doing the Work of the Angels"—which opens up an area of biblical teaching that is too little considered in Reformed circles.

Pastors at Greater Risk, by H. B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman (Regal, 2003), the second smooth stone, is a production of Focus on the Family's ministry outreach/pastoral



ministries division. London is a fourth-generation minister and was a pastor for thirty-one years. Wiseman had twenty years of pastoral experience before serving for fifteen years as a professor of pastoral development. The pastoral sensitivity of the writers radiates throughout the book. While there are far too few references to the Scriptures in these pages, and while the concept of a plurality of elders in local church government would address many of the concerns raised in the

book (e.g., "support groups" for pastors), the topics covered here as risks to a pastor's family life and personal life make the book quite worthwhile. Wiseman's personal words between the chapters are priceless. The book's final chapter, "Twelve Steps to More Effective Ministry," is excellent.

Smooth stone number three is *On Being a Pastor*, by Derek Prime and Alistair Begg (Moody Publishers, 2004). One of the many strengths of this outstanding volume is that it brings together the insights of a Scot (Prime) who has over thirty years of pastoral experience and an American (Begg) who has served at Parkside Church in suburban Cleveland, Ohio, for over thirty years. The whole range of pastoral life and

ministry is touched on here: the call to the ministry, the pastor's personal life, goals and priorities, prayer, devotional life, study, preaching, pastoral work, leadership of worship, leadership, delegation, family and leisure, and the rich concluding chapter on "Perils Tempered by Privileges." I found the material on planning family vacations to be especially helpful.

You Lift Me Up, by Albert N. Martin (Mentor, 2013), is smooth stone number four. When a man has had such a greatly used Calvinistic preaching and pastoral ministry in one place over more than forty years (Trinity Baptist Church, Montville, N.J.), one should pay attention to the lessons he can teach those of us on the battlefield today. This volume is based on pastors' conference messages in which he addressed the problem of ministerial backsliding and burnout. The chapters consist of ten warnings and five closing counsels. They offer a kind of diagnostic self-examination for pastors, coupled with passionate calls not to leave the disciplines and practices necessary for ministerial perseverance in any age. The two chapters on "Beware of Ministry with Neglect of Your Physical Body" are worth the price of the book.

The last stone, *Time Bomb in the Church: Defusing Pastoral Burnout*, by Daniel Spaite, M.D., with Debbie Salter Goodwin (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1999), was recommended to me by a pastor who, because of his intensity, frequently hovers on the borders of pastoral burnout. This book has the great benefit of bringing a medical doctor's training and experience to bear on the increasingly prevalent incidences of burnout in the ministry. Spaite's father was a pastor, so he is aware of the unique pressures facing pastors. Goodwin is the wife of a pastor, and she brings out into the open many of the otherwise unspoken challenges that beset a pastor and his family. The book's encouragement of sabbaticals for pastors is among the many things that make this an insightful contribution.

So, pastors, take these stones (and others you may gather), and use them in your daily battles. God may use them as the means to give you victory over the modern Goliaths that have inflicted so much harm in the ranks of those in the Christian ministry in this perilous age.

The author is the pastor of Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Franklin Square, N.Y.



William Shishko

☆ Congratulations

The **Shorter Catechism** has been recited by:

- **Mary Van Der Linden**, *Reformation Fellowship*, Roseville, Calif.

ABCs of PRESBYTERIANISM God's Right-hand Man

Larry Wilson

When you hear that someone has gone up in the world, it means that he has been promoted. And when God the Father lifted Jesus up in the air, and a cloud took him out of the apostles' sight, it was a sign to them that God had promoted him to the throne of the universe. Having ascended, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God. Accordingly, pulling together many Scriptures, our Form of Government begins:

Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even forever, having all power given unto him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come, and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all; he being ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, received gifts for his church and gave offices necessary for the building of his church, for making disciples of all nations and perfecting his saints.

He is not only King over all things for the sake of the church, but especially the King of the church, his kingdom of grace. As such,

Jesus Christ is the sole source of all church power. No man can have any office in the church except as appointed by Jesus Christ himself, who himself equips and appoints all other officers besides himself. The church is a kingdom, and he is, in right and practice, king. But the power of Christ is not merely an appointing power; he himself discharges all official functions whatever. . . . It is Christ who rules and teaches the church by the ministry of men, and not they who rule and teach the church for him. (F. P. Ramsay, *An Exposition of the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, 1898, pp. 19–20)

● Out of the Mouth . . .

Here is an interchange I overheard in my Sunday school class:

Abbie: "Grace, why don't you pray for patience?"

Grace: "Because God would take too long to answer me."

—Olivia Durham
Barre, Vt.

Note: If you have an example of the humorous "wisdom" that can come from children, please send it to the editor.

POVERTY, PROSPERITY, AND THE GOSPEL

// BRIAN T. WINGARD



Missionary Brian Wingard teaching at Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaMhlanga, South Africa

I was asked by a student in class, “If the Bible doesn’t teach the principle of ‘multiplication in giving,’ what can we tell them that Christ says to the poor?” The following is an abridgment of my written reply.

The witness of Scripture is clear that God considers the poor and, therefore, directs his people to consider the poor. “Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him” (Ps. 41:1). The question is not, however, what message ought to be proclaimed to the materially wealthy. The issue concerns the message from God’s Word that ought to be proclaimed to the poor.

First of all, what do we mean by the “poor”? The difference between poverty in North American terms and poverty in African terms is quite discernible. In North America, there are people possessing many things, who, nevertheless, think of themselves as living in poverty because, in comparison to others, they are disadvantaged. Even in the African context, however, poverty is a relative thing. In comparison to the living conditions in many of the villages of East Africa, the living conditions in some parts of rural South Africa are a picture of unimagined luxury. People call themselves poor as they compare themselves to others.

Does the Bible view poverty as an absolute term or as a relative term? In 1 Timothy 6:8, the apostle Paul suggests that possessing food and clothing ought to bring contentment to a Christian. One might say that the biblical understanding of poverty is the lack of those things that are necessary for the sustenance of healthy life.

Does the word of Christ have a message to the poor, when poverty is defined like that? It most certainly does! Paul, in Philippians 4:19, states that God will supply all our needs. This is a promise that can be proclaimed to God’s people without hesitancy and without reservation! It is less clear that Scripture makes promises when poverty is a relative term in

comparing one person’s possessions with another’s.

Eyes on the Kingdom

What is the message that will encourage God’s people to direct their vision where the Scriptures direct it? The Lord Jesus Christ addresses the issue in Matthew 6:19–34. Of particular note is verse 33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

In verse 20, Jesus promises “treasure” to be received which might be referred to as “bountiful reaping.” It is clear, however, that this refers, not to reaping in this life, but to reaping in the life to come. This allows the eyes of God’s people to be directed to the proper place. “But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” Jesus says, “and all of these things will be added to you.” He is saying that we should not first seek our own welfare, but leave it in the hands of God. Eyes that are on the kingdom will be eyes that are turned in faith away from their own needs to the priorities of the kingdom of God.

A proclamation of “giving in order to get” turns one’s attention to one’s own condition. It sets one’s attention on the matters of “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” If the “godliness” of giving is presented as a means of gaining prosperity, does it not point God’s people in the direction of which the apostle Paul warns in 1 Timothy 6:5—“imagining that godliness is a means of gain”? The biblical principle of giving is not “giving in order to get,” but *giving in order to give*.

The Context of 2 Corinthians 9:6 and “the Principle of Multiplication”

Is “the principle of multiplication” taught in 2 Corinthians 9:6, which says, “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”? Does the context of this passage give us the right to expect that, from the bountiful sowing of money or other material possessions, one might expect the bountiful

reaping of more money and material possessions?

Admittedly, in this passage what is sown is a material gift. The question, however, concerns the reaping. Does the context indicate that the bountiful reaping is of material possessions? What does the passage say? In verse 8, the harvest is mentioned as “contentment in all things” and abounding “in every good work.” In verse 10, the actual word “harvest” is employed, but Paul calls it “the harvest of your righteousness”! In verse 11, indeed, mention is made of “being enriched in every way,” but the enrichment is then explained as the “thanksgiving to God” that will come as the gift is communicated to the saints. A careful reading will show that generosity produces thanksgiving, and thanksgiving must refer to the “harvest” that is produced. The same point is emphasized in verses 12–15. Also look at the quotation taken from Psalm 112:9. The distribution to the poor is said to have a result, but that result is not spoken of as a return of multiplied possessions, but as of “righteousness” that endures forever.

Can I Trust God with My Wealth?

In class we were discussing the text from Proverbs 3:9–10, “Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.” It was suggested that this can be construed as a promise of multiplication.

We cannot ignore this text, and we cannot ignore the previously mentioned text from Matthew 6:19–34. How are we to look at them and see a harmony between them, rather than a disjunction?

Both texts declare to us that we can trust God with our wealth and that he will provide for our sustenance. The Old Testament farmer or vinedresser was not going to be short-changing himself by following the command of the law and giving the firstfruits of his harvest to the Lord. The disciple of Jesus is to understand that the Lord will not allow him to go hungry or naked, if he sets his mind upon seeking God and the righteousness of his kingdom. In both cases, the issue is trust in God, rather than in one’s own devices.

In the one case, it teaches that God would so direct his providential care that the harvests would be abundant enough that the “firstfruits” could be sacrificed without fear. In the other case, the message is similar. Jesus directs that his disciples’ vision is to be trustingly turned away from their own



South African women making bricks by hand

needs to the needs of the kingdom. They are to be confident that God will bring what they need into their hands. In both cases, we are directed to the fatherly care of the One who directs our course.

Conclusion—the Heart of True Faith

Christ’s message to the poor is that *they can* trust him to meet all their needs! Yet, he is not the means to an end, but an end in himself. The faith we direct to Christ is rewarded by the gift of him-

self. True faith takes hold of Christ for his own sake—not because of what he can do for the believer! The message that we preach to all humanity—rich or poor, black or white, high or low—must leave room for the words of Habakkuk 3:17–18, “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.”

The author, an OP missionary, is head of the department of systematic theology and senior lecturer at Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaMhlanga, South Africa.

What’s New

// Appointments

Sisters **Miss Morgan E. Adams** and **Miss Hailey J. Adams** (Reformation OPC, Castle Rock, Colo.) have been appointed to serve for five months as missionary associates in Mbale, Uganda, where they are assisting the Weber family with the homeschooling of their children. They arrived on the field in early February.

Miss Akiko Oshimizu (Higashi Sendai Church, RCJ) has been appointed to serve as a missionary associate in Sendai, Japan, for fourteen months. She is already on the field.

// Comings/Goings

Mr. and Mrs. Adam J. Thompson (Providence OPC, Bradenton, Fla.) have completed their term of service as missionary associates in Japan and plan to return to the U.S. this month.

A STEWARD OF YOUR BROTHER

// BENJAMIN J. SNODGRASS

Stewards care for possessions, right? But your brother is more important and valuable than your possessions. Since, as a steward, you would be expected to fix your leaky roof or change your car's dirty oil, Deuteronomy 15:1–15 presents the expectation that you will respond as a steward when your brother is in need.

The situation in verse 7 is that your brother has become poor. Two related warnings are given to you: don't be hard-hearted or tightfisted. Verse 8 states your call to action: be openhanded and freely lend whatever your brother needs. Verse 9 cautions, "Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart." What would happen then? Verse 9 concludes that your brother may "cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin." That sin is located, not simply in your hands (by giving nothing), but also in your heart. Verse 10 repeats the dual theme of both inward and outward stewardship: "You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him."

Repeated here is the word "release" (vv. 1, 2, 3, 9), so you end up releasing your heart, hand, funds, and brother. How did this become your job? In verse 15 we read, "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you." This links your action to release your brother to God's action to redeem you—ultimately, from your bonds of sin by Christ's cross. Now that you are a free man, it turns out that your surplus funds are not surplus. Just as you must pay your bills, you are obligated to release your "surplus" to release your brother.

It is the closeness of his relationship to you as your brother (vv. 2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 12) that brings with it a pressing moral component. A

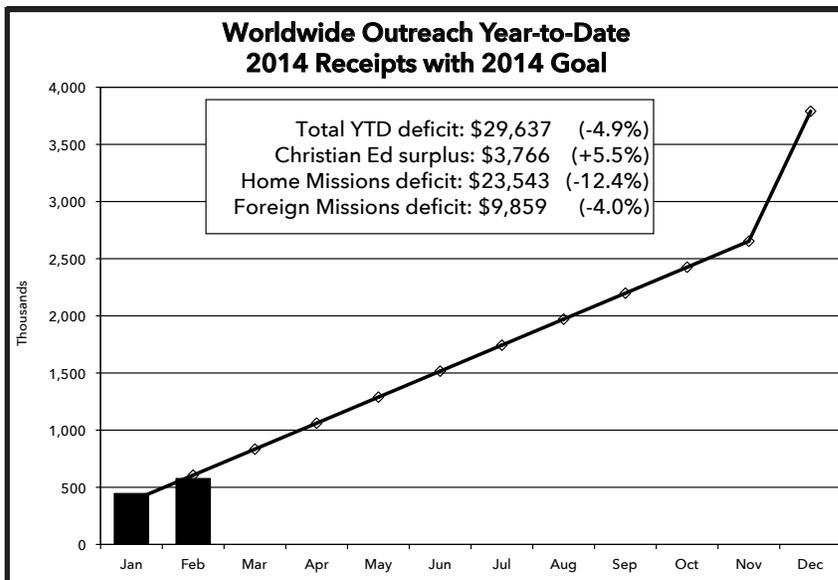
person in such a relationship to you has a claim on your compassion and your wallet!

Picture yourself as a funnel between God above you and your brother below you. God's funds flow down to you, marked for your needy brother. God's funds flow through our own accounts and then straight on through to your needy brother, like you are an open money funnel. If you close your heart, you automatically and simultaneously close your hand, retaining for yourself the funds that God sent along for your brother.

Duties as brother-steward are echoed in the New Testament. James 2:16 says that it is not enough to verbalize with your mouth, "Be warmed and filled," without handing your brother what is needed. In 1 John 3:16–17, if you have goods and see your brother in need, you must not close your heart against him. Your stewardship toward your brother arises out of the definitive action of Christ, the only good Brother, who gave you what you needed (that is, himself). This sacrificial action of Christ for you generates your obligation to your brother. Christ performed best as brother-steward, as we read in 1 John 3:16, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."

Once you have, in your heart, laid down your life for your brother with a Christlike attitude, giving your actual money to your brother, with your hand, comes easily and even automatically. Christ placed on you this very duty with both heart and hand as a steward of your brother, and Christ himself fuels you as your carry it out.

The author is pastor of Falls Presbyterian Church in Menomonee Falls, Wis.



APRIL

1. Pray for **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia (on furlough), as they pursue a busy furlough schedule. / **Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray that God would save local families and bring them to worship at New City Fellowship. / Pray for stated clerk **George Cottenden** as he prepares the agenda and advisory committee assignments for the 81st General Assembly in June.
2. **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray that newspaper articles written by Pastor Henes will bring visitors to Hillsdale OPC. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M. as he works with church leaders. / Pray for **Tim and Lou Ann Shafer** as they serve the Psalter-Hymnal Committee.
3. Pray for tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia, as she works with the university's English conversation teachers. / Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / Committee on Coordination staff: **Doug Watson**, accountant; **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director; **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator; **Charlene Tipton**, office assistant.
4. **Mike and Katy Myers**, Hartwell, Ga. Pray that the Lord would provide more visitors and new contacts who will worship at Heritage Presbyterian Church. / Pray for our **missionary associates in Asia** in their teaching responsibilities. / **Shane (and Rachele) Bennett**, yearlong intern at Knox OPC in Silver Spring, Md.
5. **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for fruitful contacts in their community. / **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray that Christ will be preached with spiritual power at Naples Presbyterian Church. / **Barry Traver**, OPC website technical associate.
6. Pray for regional home missionary **Steve Doe** as he assists church plants in the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery. / **Church in the Horn of Africa**. Pray for spiritual growth and maturity in the church as it faces severe persecution and other challenges. / **Andrew (and Elizabeth) Barshinger**, yearlong intern at Faith OPC in Elmer, N.J.
7. **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough). Pray for David as he speaks to OP congregations in the Presbytery of the Northwest this week. / **Todd and Julie Wagenmaker**, St. Louis, Mo. Pray for Gateway OPC's discipleship and ministry. / **Jeffrey (and Jennifer) Shames**, yearlong intern at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Mich.
8. **Mark and Michele Winder**, Collierville, Tenn. Pray that the Lord would raise up office bearers at Wolf River Presbyterian Church. / Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**, in Colombia to assist with the training of church leaders. / **David (and Kathryn) Landow**, yearlong intern at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Del.
9. Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Abigail Cory**. / **Kim and Barbara Kuhfuss**, Eau Claire, Wis. Pray that recent visitors will become members at Providence Reformed Church. / Pray for the young men attending the **OPC Timothy Conference** held April 9-12 in Charlotte, N.C.
10. **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Huntington, N.Y. Pray that Trinity Church's outreach to the unchurched and under-churched will flourish in 2014. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube**, in Haiti teaching at a seminar for church leaders. / Army chaplains: **Earl (and Susan) Vanderhof**, **Paul (and Mary) Berghaus**, and **Chris (and Virginia) Wisdom**.
11. Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for Jerry as he maintains a busy ministry schedule. / **Joseph and Carla Fowler**, Gastonia, N.C. Pray that the Lord would raise up officers at Reformation OPC. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
12. **Jonathan and Lauryn Shishko**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that Reformation Presbyterian Church will find a building that will be available on Sunday evenings and during the week. / Missionary associates **Mary York**, Czech Republic, and **Amanda McCrina**, Japan. / **David (and Amanda) Franks**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, Ill.
13. Pray for missionary associates **Adam and Sarah Thompson**, Sendai, Japan, as they complete their term of service and return to the U.S. / Home Missions associate general secretary **Dick Gerber**. / *New Horizons* staff: **Jim Scott**, managing editor; **Pat Clawson**, editorial assistant; **Sarah Pederson**, proofreader.
14. **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray for unity and growth within the congregation of San Antonio Reformed Church. / **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray for spiritual growth and understanding for those attending Bible studies. / **Broc (and Morgan) Seaman**, yearlong intern at Providence OPC in Temecula, Calif.
15. **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for the salvation of seekers attending activities at the Nozomi Center. / **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (down-



Jonathan and Lauryn Shishko

town). Pray that more people will attend Gospel Life Presbyterian Church's outreach Bible studies. / **Josh (and Kristen) McKamy**, yearlong intern at New Life OPC in Montoursville, Pa.

- 16. Sacha and Martina Walicord**, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Pray that visitors to Knox Presbyterian Church will desire to join in communicant fellowship. / **Kaz and Katie Yae-gashi**, Yamagata, Japan, ask prayer for outreach efforts in their community. / **Louis (and Lizette) Cloete**, yearlong intern at Redeemer OPC Mission in Pittsburgh, Pa.
- 17.** Pray for the labors of affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. / **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Davenport, Iowa. Pray that God would send more core families to encourage the members of Sovereign Grace OPC. / **Kevin (and Marianne) Olivier**, yearlong intern at Pineville Presbyterian Church in Pineville, La.
- 18. Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray that the Lord would bless Omega OPC's Visitor Sundays on the last Sunday of months with five Sundays. / Pray for retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Greet Rietkerk, Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. / Air Force chaplain **C. Phillip (and Melanie) Hollstein III**.
- 19.** Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray that the Reformed faith will take deep root in Haiti. / **Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that those at Grace Reformed Fellowship will know the Lord better and have a greater love for the lost. / **Steven (and Sarah) Moulson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
- 20. Daniel and Jill McManigal**, Seattle, Wash. Praise God for providing new families and musicians at Hope OPC. / **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray that the Lord would raise up qualified men to serve as church leaders in Port-au-Prince. / Short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla** asks for prayer for wisdom for those considering service or ministry this summer.
- 21. Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for wisdom in developing outreach strategies. / **Tim and Joanne Beauchamp**, Bridgton, Maine. Pray for church growth at Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church through outreach efforts and mercy ministry to the community. / **Jeff (and Dawn) Scott**, yearlong intern at Covenant Grace OPC in Roseburg, Ore.
- 22. Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray that recent visitors will feel at home at Grace OPC. / **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the local church as it seeks to meet the diaconal needs of its members. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general



Benjamin Hopp

secretary, as he prepares for the upcoming General Assembly.

- 23. James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the children who come to the Clinic in need of medical care. / **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that the Lord would bless Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church's outreach and evangelism efforts. / **Thomas (and Erin) Tkach**, yearlong intern at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.
- 24. Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray for new visitors to come to Cornerstone OPC and for opportunities to reach the lost. / Pray for missionary associate sisters **Morgan and Hailey Adams**, Mbale, Uganda, as they assist the Weber family. / **Jeremy Logan**, yearlong intern at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mansfield, Ohio.
- 25.** Pray for our **missionary associates in Uganda**, assisting in the OP Uganda Mission's ministry activities. / **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray for continued development in the ministry of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church. / **Tony (and Mica) Garbarino**, yearlong intern at Covenant Presbyterian Church in San Jose, Calif.
- 26.** Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that those sitting under Eric's instruction will grow in their commitment to the whole counsel of God's Word. / **Jeremy (and Maricruz) Boothby**, yearlong intern at Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Amarillo, Tex.
- 27. Mark and Christine Weber**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Mark's safe travel on Ugandan roads. / **Jeremiah and Elizabeth Montgomery**, State College, Pa. Pray for new contacts from Discuss Your Faith, Resurrection OPC's campus ministry at Penn State University. / Pray for tomorrow's meeting of the **Board of Trustees of Great Commission Publications**.
- 28.** Pray for **Chris Walmer**, area home missions coordinator, as he supports mission works in the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Bob as he works on the construction and repair of missionary housing in Karamoja. / **Micah Shin**, yearlong intern at Cedar Presbyterian Church in Hudsonville, Mich.
- 29. Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the care and development of the young church in L'viv. / **Kent and Laurie Harding**, Doniphan, Mo. Pray that the Lord would add several new families to Sovereign Grace Reformed Church. / **Caleb (and Erika) Smith**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
- 30. Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that those who attend Redeemer OPC Mission's outreach events will hear the gospel. / **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for Brian's ministry to the future generation of church leaders. / **Yevgeni Koh**, yearlong intern at Bonita OPC in Bonita, Calif.

REMEMBRANCES OF OUR OLD MEETING PLACE



SUSAN HOLLISTER // Last week a friend asked me if I would miss the Lions Community Center in New Lenox, Illinois, as our place of worship when we move into our new building in Joliet next month. “What an odd question,” I thought. “What would I miss about this community center?”

There certainly are aspects of meeting for worship here that I won't miss, such as the occasional stale cigarette smell left over from a party the night before, the loud music we have sometimes heard through the wall during our service, and the way we have been reminded that it is time to leave after the evening service, when we have lingered too long.

But upon reflection, our nineteen years here at the New Lenox Lions Community Center does have significance to me.

Many children of the families here today have attended worship in this humble building for most of their childhood. They have run through these halls; they have made best friends here. Two of these friends, Nate and Sonia, actually grew up here together and got married to each other! Our children have played hundreds of games of soccer on warm summer evenings outside in the field. They have climbed the trees after church, and walked to McDonalds from here for a bag of fries and a shake after the evening service. They

have sought out Elder LeMahieu for a peppermint and Gina Murany for a candy treat. They have been baptized here, have confessed their faith here, and have first enjoyed the Lord's Supper here.

During one Lord's Supper a few years ago, it was Mother's Day, and as the elders were distributing the cup, our daughter, Gracie, whispered to me that she was feeling ill. After I assured her that she was probably fine, she fainted right across my lap! Unfortunately, Dr. Ambrose was not in his usual spot behind us that day. I looked around, caught the eye of our son, Nate, and said, "We need a doctor!" We stretched Gracie out across the chairs in the front row, her hands folded across her body. Sue Kapke called an ambulance, and then we all waited in silence for a few minutes. That silence meant a lot to me. It was a visual expression of an invisible reality—the reality of the body of Christ. When one member of the body is in need, the attention and prayers of the other members are focused on that need.

Finally, my husband (pastor Bruce Hollister) said, "Well, we should complete the Lord's Supper." So, as Gracie lay stretched out on the chairs, we all drank the cup and sang the Doxology. And then we waited for the ambulance. Later, Gracie said that as the congregation sang the Doxology, and she was beginning to regain consciousness, she thought (in her semiconscious state) that she was at her own funeral service! Thankfully, there was nothing seriously wrong, and she was home by the afternoon.

The Lions Community Center is where many children of our congregation have learned to love the Lord. Many of them have served on the setup and takedown crew, and many are now serving as the sound system setup crew, Sunday school teachers, song leaders, and deacons. Some of them are now moms and dads themselves, bringing their own children to worship. In this building, our children have learned to take their place as adults within the community of believers. This is not a small thing to us or to the Lord.



Young ladies at New Covenant Community Church

I warmly remember my husband preaching hundreds of sermons at the Lions Community Center. From my vantage point, where I sit, I can see his posture from the side. I have seen him leaning forward to press a point, standing up on tiptoe, kicking out his right foot, and even (on a rare occasion) jumping! Hundreds of times from him and from Pastor Strange, we have heard of the incredible love of the Blessed Trinity, the perfect work of Christ on the cross, and the double imputation that perfectly meets our need. On one occasion, Bruce was telling us just how needy we are (as Pastor Strange says, we are full of putrefaction, from the top of our head to the bottom of our feet). Bruce explained that even our children are sinful, and if they don't want to obey their parents, then, perhaps, they are still in need of a new heart. At that point, from directly behind me, five-year-old Jaylyn Brown said loudly and clearly, "Oh brother, I need a new heart!" So, our children *can* pay close attention during the sermons.

We loved to hear Chris Eichler, when he was younger, echo Bruce from time to time, in his own way. If you were listening carefully, after

was asking the first- and second-grade class what they knew about the birth of Christ. They were all eager to repeat parts of the story. When I asked, "Who were the wise men, and what did they do?" one young student raised his hand first. "I know, I know!" he said. "Weren't they the ones who brought Frankenstein to Christ?"

Another time I was finishing a lesson on why we meet for worship on the first day of the week, and we were about to close in prayer when one young boy raised his hand and said, "But I haven't heard anything about the substitutionary death of Christ yet!" It is a wonderful blessing that our children are learning to know what to look for and what to expect in a sermon—and even in their Sunday school classes.



Some of the men at New Covenant Community Church

Bruce clapped his hands or slapped the pulpit, you could often hear Chris clapping his hands in response. Sunday school teachers know that our children pay attention to the sermons, as best they can for their tender age.

One Sunday during the Christmas season several years ago, I

I have loved our Christmas Eve program! One Christmas Eve, my mom and dad (who were not members of the church) came to the service. They joined in the singing, and listened as the Scriptures were read. When it came time that the offering plate was passed around, I watched them out of the corner of my eye. They began to argue about whether they should put anything into the plate or not. My dad didn't want to, but my mom did. Their deliberation got louder, and I was getting concerned. Then, my mom, who was very frustrated by this time, said in a loud whisper (and I won't repeat her words verbatim), "Get your wallet out, Theodore! It's their custom!" My dad reluctantly added a small contribution.

This is the place where we have met together as a congregation for almost a fifth of a century. Establishing a church takes a particular kind of pioneer spirit. Many believers would not feel comfortable meeting in a place like this. They may choose to worship in a place that appears to be more "permanent," and there is nothing wrong with that! But we have reaped substantial benefits as we have met in this temporary place. In particular, we have enjoyed a singleness of mind and purpose, a unity of heart and spirit. We have learned in some measure to love one another, fervently, from the heart. This also is no small thing.

So, getting back to my friend's question, will I miss the Lions Community Center in New Lenox when we move into our new building in Joliet next month? Actually, no—not at all. But I am thankful for the time we have met here. God has richly blessed us. □

The author is a member of New Covenant Community Church in Joliet, Ill.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

IN MEMORIAM JESSE DENTON

James J. Cassidy

Elder Jesse James Denton, Jr., died on Tuesday, February 11, 2014, at age 95 in his home. Jesse served the Lord faithfully at Calvary Church of Amwell (OPC) in Ringoes, New Jersey, for over seventy years.

Born in Dumont, New Jersey, on February 2, 1919, he joined Calvary Church in the 1940s and was ordained soon thereafter, having been trained by then pastor Meredith G. Kline. Jesse remained a member of the session right up to his passing into glory. Jesse only surrendered his service on the board of trustees three years ago, and his role as the clerk of session five years ago. He was also the founder and leader of the Machen League, Calvary Church's longtime youth ministry. An active member of the Presbytery of New Jersey, he attended his first meeting on October 17, 1950, and his last meeting on April 26, 2011.

He was a member and former president and chaplain of the Amwell Valley Fire Company in Ringoes, an avid bowler, and an Army veteran of World War II.

In 1942, Jesse married the former Mabel Dani of Ringoes. They had met while she was a student at Trenton State College and he was a young soldier. After the war, they returned to Ringoes, and he joined the local office of the federal Soil Conservation Service.

Most of all, Jesse will be remembered at Calvary Church for his firm handshakes, abiding wisdom, servant's heart, sharp mind, easy-going personality, and great sense of humor.



Jesse Denton

BETHEL SANCTUARY EXTENSION

Jean S. Withnell

During the 2010–2011 expansion of the Bethel Presbyterian Church building in Leesburg, Virginia, workmen built a vestry behind the sanctuary to allow for a future extension in worship facilities. Two years later, the space was needed.

When the construction started, the church had a membership of 141 and an average worship attendance of 106. In 2013, membership grew to 154 with an average of 113 attending worship services, creating a need for additional worship space.

Construction started in January this year and is projected to be finished by late April. The wall between the current sanctuary and vestry will be knocked out to reveal a new, larger, and higher platform for the pulpit. Additional seating for 35–50 people will be provided.



Elder Glenn Taylor, the primary contact between Bethel Presbyterian Church and the contractors, standing close to where the pulpit will be placed

UPDATE

MINISTERS

• **Chaplain Kyle N. Brown**, formerly associate pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio, was installed as associate pastor of military ministries at Living Hope OPC in Gettysburg, Pa., on December 13.

• The pastoral relationship between the retiring **Claude D. DePrine III** and Providence OPC in Mantua, N.J., was dissolved by the Presbytery of New Jersey effective March 31.

• **Geoffrey C. Smith** was installed on February 2 to serve again as pastor of Park Woods OPC in Overland Park, Kans.

MILESTONES

• **Jesse J. Denton**, 95, longtime elder at Calvary Church in Ringoes, N.J., died on February 11.

LETTERS

MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Editor:

The review article on Brent Laytham's book *ipod, YouTube, Wii Play* (February, p. 12) was excellent. However, based on your review, I am confident that Laytham is going in the wrong direction and denying the freedom we have in Christ with respect to new technologies.

According to Laytham, the iPod is individual, consumptive, and passive, rather than societal, communicative, and active. But when I see my son go to sleep with his iPod in his ears—this dear son who, along with my daughters, is a joyful member of the societies of our family, our friends, the church, and the world—I say, "What's

wrong with the iPod?" There is no scriptural prohibition of being passive in any general sense. Indeed, the very process of going to sleep is passive, accepting the biological gift of rest from God (see Pss. 3:5; 4:8).

I speak as one who has gone this wrong direction, oversimplifying issues so that I can have a neat and tidy understanding of some aspect of life.

Steve Knudsen
Morgantown, WV

CHURCH OFFICE

Editor:

Gregory Reynolds's article articulating the three-office view of church office (February, p. 6) suggests any other view of church office tends to downgrade the legitimate role of a minister as "a leader among the rulers." But it's been my observation that the usurpation of power by ministers has been at least as much of a problem in the church as any ruling elder overstepping his role. In the same unpublished paper by Edmund Clowney cited by Reynolds, Clowney hints at this by saying that the notion that ministers should dominate rule in the church would "clericalize' the government of the church."

Instead of tracing power misuse to egalitarianism, Jesus saw elitism as the problem and stressed that "whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Matt. 20:26).

The infelicitous citation from Charles Hodge compounds the problem: "Ministers ... [have] special training, vocation, and ordination; ruling elders are laymen, chosen from the people." In the OPC, ruling elders also have special training, vocation, and ordination. In fact, the formal theological questions that they answer for ordination are almost identical to those that ministers answer for ordination.

Roger Schmurr
Georgetown, TX

PSALTER-HYMNAL

Editor:

Thank you for Mr. Poundstone's article (March, p. 7), arguing against the OPC's Psalter-Hymnal project. He argues for a selective approach, like that in *Trinity Hymnal*, which clarifies the Christian

interpretation of the Psalter and respects our place in redemptive history.

First, he argues that we should not sing the imprecatory psalms, as it is not for us to invoke curses on our enemies. However, imprecations are part of Paul's introduction to Galatians and his final words in 1 Corinthians. When we pray for Christ to return, we are praying an imprecatory prayer, given what his return will entail for the ungodly. May we not sing imprecatory psalms today, understanding that they are fulfilled in Christ's second coming?

Second, Poundstone says that the Psalms, in their old covenant setting, fall short of a Christian view of suffering and persecution. However, Christ is the typified lamenting victim, and we "fill up what remains" of his suffering. Each lament starts with a vocative, "O Lord," laments innocent suffering, and praises God for his faithfulness. Can we not do that?

Third, Poundstone points to the hostile attitude toward the Gentiles manifested in the Psalms. However, the nations are also called to worship the Lord. They are given to Christ as his inheritance (Pss. 2:8; 22:27).

Finally, Poundstone says that the Psalms express a limited (and gloomy) view of death. However, the Psalms speak of the future life typologically through earthly pictures. Is it inappropriate to sing in typology? The Psalter was written by God, the audience of our worship. He knows what he means when we sing his words to him.

Nevertheless, I agree with Poundstone that we don't need a Psalter-Hymnal, just like we don't need another English translation of the Bible. There are already plenty out there. Do we have to have the best Psalter-Hymnal, one with our brand on it? Many of us want one, but I don't think we need one.

Brenton Ferry
Mount Airy, NC

Editor:

I was deeply saddened by Donald Poundstone's article, "Do We Really Need a Psalter-Hymnal?"

Poundstone says that an accurate translation of the Psalter denies David "a clear Christian voice." However, there

is no clearer Christian voice anywhere in the Bible than that of David. Psalm 22 contains a detailed picture of the agony of the cross that has no equal anywhere else in Scripture, not even in the Gospels. The Psalms are quoted more often in the New Testament than any other book of the Old Testament, not because they are obsolete, but because the New Testament writers saw them as perfect vehicles for communicating precious truths about the Savior. The imprecatory psalms which the author decries are quoted more often than any other genre except the messianic psalms. Psalm 69 alone is quoted in five separate places and referred to in a dozen more.

The author insists that God nowhere commands us to sing all 150 psalms. But why did the Holy Spirit put a complete collection of worship songs in the Bible? Who has the right or the wisdom to decide which we may sing and which are to be excluded?

The shadows which Poundstone sees as hindrances to the use of the Psalter are gone. We now sing the Psalms in the light of the cross, and we can understand them as no Old Testament saint ever could. Is it likely that now, when we can finally plumb the depths of the Psalter, the Holy Spirit would have us exclude large portions of it as unworthy to be used for his praise?

Michael Bushell
Norfolk, VA

ADOPTION

Editor:

As adoptive parents, my wife and I read the articles on adoption in the January 2014 issue of *New Horizons* (and in previous issues) with great interest. One aspect of the Sallades' story struck us, as they articulated a common concern amongst Christians who contemplate domestic or foreign adoption. Most Orthodox Presbyterian families are not wealthy, and although the federal government grants some tax rebates to adoptive parents, the financial expense of adoption can seem prohibitive. However, there is another option that is nearly cost-free: adoption through social service agencies.

Our four-year-old daughter was adopted this way. We have since met many

2014 Women's Spring Conference

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- *Speaker:* Kathleen Nielson
- *Location:* New Hope Presby. Church, 2401 Deckner Ave., Green Bay
- *Time:* 6:30 p.m. Friday to 3:00 p.m. Sat.
- *Cost:* \$25 per person; \$15 for students
- To obtain more information and to register online (deadline: April 15), visit www.nhopc.org or contact Anne Tess at 920-468-8565 or office@nhopc.org.

fellow believers who also are, or have been, foster parents, and have come to realize that foster and adoptive care is a tremendous ministry opportunity. In my opinion, it is overlooked in our circles primarily because of ignorance—not indifference to the plight of the abandoned and abused children who live all around us—and so I write in hopes of alerting more Orthodox Presbyterians to it.

Fostering and adopting children who have been neglected can pose many challenges, but as the Sallades' story indicates, these challenges arise in every adoption. With them, my wife and I thank our God that we can place our daughter and other children under the care of their gentle and faithful Lord and Shepherd. I strongly suggest that our members who have begun thinking about this area of service start asking around; we have found that most of us are only one or two degrees of separation away from other Reformed foster parents.

I have been encouraged by the attention *New Horizons* has been paying to adoption. It is becoming a much more common way of building families in Christian circles. I hope more of our members will contact their local social service agencies and look to provide covenant homes for the orphans all around us.

Matthew Kingsbury
Aurora, Colo.



New Church in Chambersburg, Pa.

Worship services will begin for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Chambersburg, Pa., at 9:30 a.m. on April 6 at the Four Points Sheraton Motel, at the intersection of I-81 and U.S. 30. For further information, contact John W. Mallin at 717-816-2793 or johnwmallin@gmail.com.

REVIEWS

The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate, by Michael J. Kruger. IVP Academic, 2013. Paperback, 256 pages, list price \$24.00. Reviewed by managing editor James W. Scott.

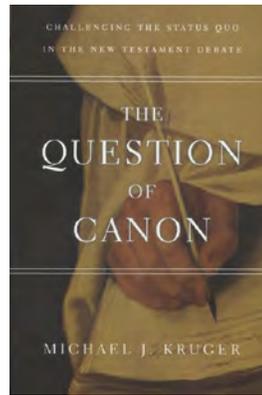
Why does our New Testament contain certain books, but not others? Indeed, why is there a New Testament at all? The dominant view in (largely non-evangelical) academic circles today is that the ancient church gradually decided to invest certain writings, but not others, with an authoritative status alongside its Old Testament inherited from Judaism. Taking issue with this view is Michael J. Kruger, who teaches at (and is now the president of) Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. He does so with clarity, cautious conviction, and a command of the issues in *The Question of Canon*.

Kruger grants that “it took time” (“several centuries,” in fact) for this new collection of sacred books “to be developed and shaped” (p. 20). But he puts forward the view, not original to him, that canonical authority was not “imposed from the outside” on the New Testament writings (the “extrinsic model”), but developed “more organically from within the early Christian religion itself” (the “intrinsic model”) (p. 21). He argues that the five major, generally held tenets of the extrinsic model are “problematic” (pp. 23, 209). He does not deny that the process of canonization was “a long, drawn-out process” (p. 21), but he recommends his intrinsic

model for consideration as a corrective to the extrinsic model.

In each of his five chapters, Kruger takes on one of the five basic arguments for the extrinsic model. First, we should recognize that Christians accepted the various books of the New Testament as “canonical” in the sense of “authoritative” long before the church (i.e., the ecclesiastical authorities) settled on a final, closed list of them. Second, certain theological beliefs of the apostolic church anticipated the development of a canon of apostolic writings. Third, while most early Christians were illiterate, they nonetheless valued, and had knowledge of, written texts. Fourth, the New Testament authors presented their writings to the church as authoritative documents. Fifth, many New Testament books were regarded as Scripture by Christians much earlier than is often acknowledged. Kruger makes a strong, thorough case that will have to be reckoned with.

In his conclusion, Kruger modestly concedes that his critique of the extrinsic model does not prove his intrinsic model (pp. 209–10)—but what other option is there? He simply asks for a “fresh look” at the question. He insists that the intrinsic model is not tied to an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, for it only asserts that the New Testament canon arose “naturally within the first few stages of Christianity” (p. 210; see also pp. 79 and 118). However, a close inspection of what happened “naturally” will bring the supernatural clearly into view. Kruger has already done that in *Canon Revisited* (Crossway, 2012), an excellent introduction to New Testament canonicity.





I SHOULD DIE...

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