

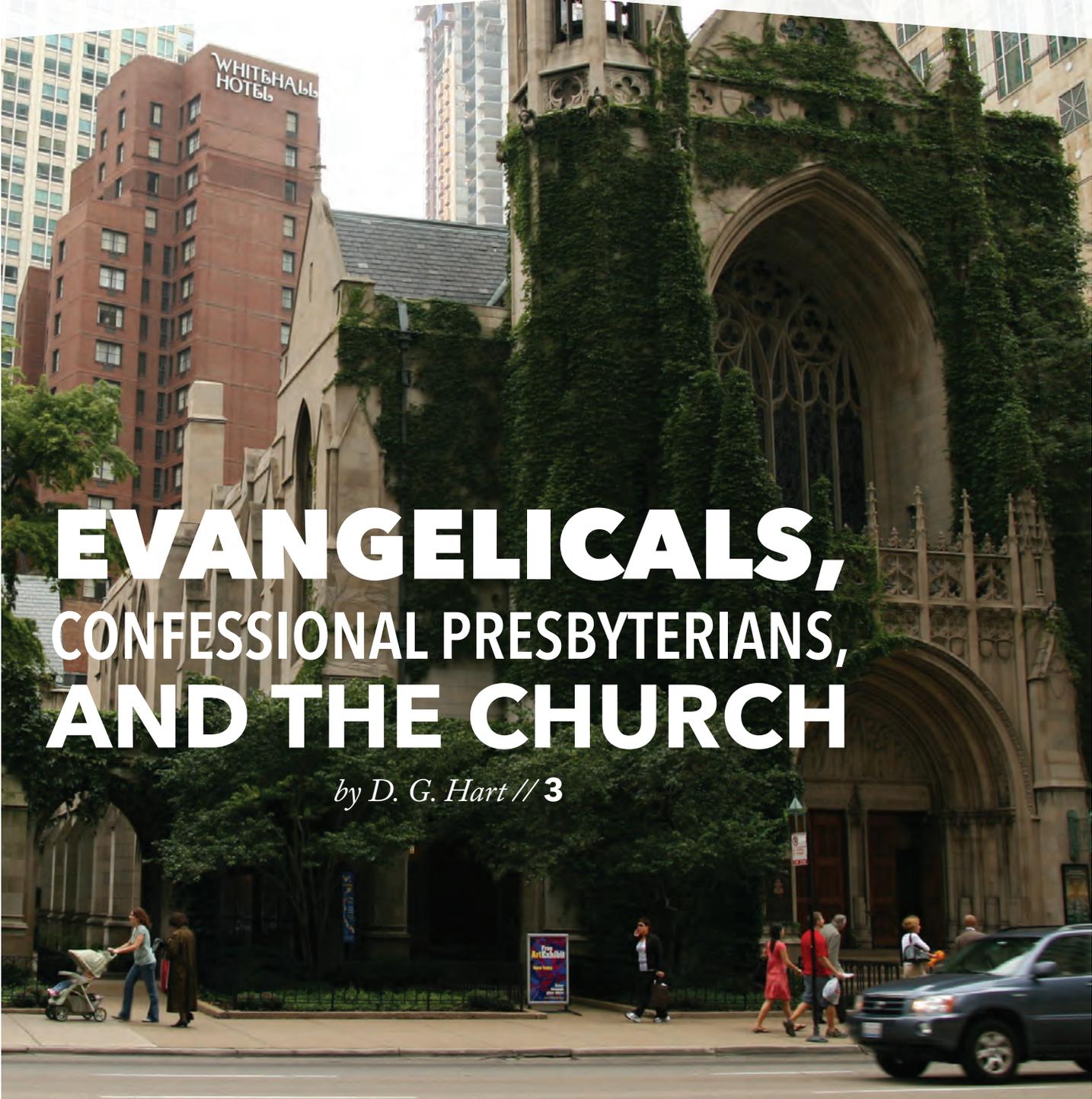
NEW HORIZONS

— in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

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Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, Florida, recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary and called an associate pastor. For more on these stories, turn to page 19.



EVANGELICALS, CONFESSIONAL PRESBYTERIANS, AND THE CHURCH



D. G. HART // Chances are that most Orthodox Presbyterians think of themselves as evangelical Protestants. For most of the OPC's history, the larger Protestant world in North America and Europe was divided between liberals, or mainline Protestants, and conservatives, or evangelicals.

That division accounted for the two most important Protestant magazines in the United States. *Christian Century* was the periodical edited, written, and read by Protestants in the denominations that endorsed or approved doctrinal teachings that had adapted historic Christianity to modern thought. On the other side was *Christianity Today*, a magazine founded by the likes of Carl Henry and Billy Graham. It spoke for the convictions of Protestants who stressed the need for conversion and the importance of the essential articles of the faith, such as the deity, virgin birth, substitutionary death, and resurrection of Christ. Liberal or conservative, mainline or evangelical—these opposites seemed to make sense of Protestantism in the United States after the fundamentalist controversy of the 1920s.

At the same time, older and current generations of Orthodox Presbyterians have experienced a twinge of discom-

fort with this dichotomy. One reason is that evangelicalism in the United States is responsible for a variety of Christian expressions that conservative Presbyterians hardly find endearing or true. One could, for instance, point to popular ministers like Joel Osteen and Rick Warren as examples of evangelicalism that veer significantly in teaching and worship from Reformed Protestant understandings of Scripture. But even some of the best examples of evangelicalism, such as Billy Graham, have held and taught doctrines of salvation that clearly depart from the truths that Orthodox Presbyterians confess.

For instance, OPC minister Leslie Sloat in 1957 expressed the view of many Orthodox Presbyterians that no matter how many people might come to a saving knowledge of Christ through the crusades of Billy Graham, “the work of the church of Christ goes forward most effectively and most steadily

through the unheralded labors of true ministers of the Word as they preach to and teach the members of their local congregations from week to week and year to year.” Not against evangelical enterprises, but against this church, Sloat concluded, “the gates of hell will never prevail” (*Presbyterian Guardian*, March 15, 1957, p. 41).

What then is the basis for this tension that Reformed Protestants experience with evangelicalism? Why do they consider themselves to be part of a Christian movement that does not embrace the convictions of Reformed theology or the practice of Presbyterian worship? Did evangelicalism go wrong? Or do we need different categories for understanding the relationship between confessional Presbyterianism and contemporary Protestantism?

What Is the Church?

One of the clearest ways to grasp

differences between evangelicals and Reformed Protestants is to consider the nature and ministry of the church. Is the visible church necessary to a believer's walk with the Lord and to Christian witness? Or is the church optional for individual Christians or those engaged in spiritual endeavors?

Our Confession of Faith is remarkably clear about the church's importance. For instance, our confession teaches that the visible church "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation" (CF, 25.1).

One way of reading that affirmation is to regard the visible church as the primary locus of God's saving activity in the world, as opposed to religious organizations that do not bear the marks of the church. Our confession goes on to explain why the visible church is so important to God's plan of salvation: "Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto" (25.3).

In other words, the visible church possesses the ministry of word and sacrament, the means of grace that God uses to save his people. In addition, as he has promised, God has sent his Spirit to bless and make effectual the church's ministry, as opposed to other organizations that pursue religious endeavors.

As clear as these convictions are in the OPC's doctrinal standards, Protestants with a high view of the church have had to affirm these teachings in remarkably diverse historical circumstances. For instance, at the time of the Westminster Assembly in 1640s London, the visible church was part of the political order in England and Scotland.

This meant, among other things, that the Westminster divines were the only Christian body recognized by the

English Parliament. Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Anabaptists were not free to hold their own assemblies in England, or to have their confessions recognized by the English government. It also meant that English authorities financially supported the pastors who ministered in the Church of England. Pastors were, in effect, civil servants who performed spiritual work for the good of the nation.

This situation also required all residents of England to become members of the Church of England, with penalties and sanctions for those who could not conscientiously commune in that church (such as Jews and Roman Catholics).

When we think of the visible church as an agency of a specific national government, we might compare a high view of the church with the way that Americans generally think of the U.S. military. Just as the Army or Navy is a branch of the federal government, so in England the Church of England was an agency of the nation's government. In such circumstances, churches without the government's backing would be the equivalent of a militia group formed by average citizens. Because of the United States' historic position of church-state differentiation, American Protestants may reject England's ecclesiastical policy (recognizing only one church as legitimate), but they would have no problem applying that same principle to the military (accepting only the U.S. Armed Services as legitimate).

What Americans recognize about the military, English rulers at the time of the Westminster Assembly understood about the church. In other words, in a state church environment, the visible church owns a monopoly on the religious life of the people. To pursue religious activity outside the established church's regulated operations would be akin to participating in a paramilitary organization.

But when Presbyterians from Scotland and Ireland migrated to British colonies in North America, the visible church assumed a different character. In

colonies such as Maryland and Pennsylvania, where Presbyterians enjoyed the greatest freedoms to form congregations and support ministers, colonial governments gave no preference to any single church or communion. Instead, they granted religious liberty to most colonists.

This situation resulted in a voluntary church, as opposed to an established one. It meant that pastors could not depend on the government for support, but would have to depend on contributions from church members for their livelihood. It also meant that settlers in the American colonies faced no legal requirements for either attending or giving to a church. As such, the Presbyterian churches in North America did not have the civil government behind them to back their decisions, to support their ministers, or to give them legitimacy.

From the perspective of human achievement, the success of a church in this voluntary setting depended on the ability of its minister and the congregation to attract members and financial contributions. To maintain a high view of the church when it is optional requires a different level of commitment than when the visible church is part of the established political order.

But when Presbyterians in the United States continued to affirm what their confession of faith said about the visible church in the nineteenth-century context of the new nation, they encountered yet another set of circumstances. From roughly 1820 to 1840, the United States experienced a wave of revivals led most famously by Charles Grandison Finney. This so-called Second Great Awakening introduced a variety of new measures for converting sinners, such as the use of the altar call at the end of a sermon, in which those under conviction were asked to go come forward to sit on the anxious bench, where they could receive counsel and prayer.

The Awakening also provoked Protestants to form a variety of voluntary associations whose purpose was to promote moral reform and religious

instruction—everything from Sunday schools and prison reform to temperance and antislavery societies. In this setting, a commitment to the visible church as affirmed in the Confession of Faith assumed a different character than it had in either seventeenth-century England or eighteenth-century North America. Here in the new nation, Presbyterians were surrounded by parachurch organizations and revivalists, for whom the visible church was not simply optional but even an outmoded form of ministry. If Protestants were going to save sinners, civilize the inhabitants on the frontier, and establish the kingdom of God in the United States, they would need more effective means than the church.

This tension between the church and the parachurch, and between revivals and the ordinary means of grace, was one of the principal causes of the division between Old School and New School Presbyterians. The Old School (represented by the likes of Charles Hodge) defended and maintained the prerogatives of the visible church as the divinely appointed vehicle for the salvation and edification of God's people. In particular, Old School Presbyterians affirmed Presbyterian church government—rule by elders who oversee the ministry of word (including evangelism, education, and moral improvement) and sacrament—as the biblical method for conducting explicitly Christian enterprises. The New School (represented by Lyman Beecher) viewed the church as one of many options, including parachurch bodies and voluntary associations, for conducting the ministry of God's word and creating a Christian society.

The patterns established for Protestantism in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century—relative cooperation between churches and parachurch organizations—are the ones in which the OPC has operated since its founding in 1936. Not only is church membership and support voluntary for Americans, but denominations in the U.S. confront a host of religious

organizations that perform—and in some ways compete with—many of the activities that the church is called to do, such as preaching, teaching the word, edifying and counseling the faithful, and even gathering for worship. In this setting as well, an average Presbyterian who attends church faithfully on the Lord's Day, leads family worship during the week, catechizes his children, and carries out his secular responsibilities may not be as visibly devout as a Christian who has a Christian radio bumper sticker on his car, exercises in a Christian aerobics class, participates in a community Bible study, sends money to a radio evangelist, subscribes to an evangelical magazine, and sends his kids to the youth group of the local megachurch.

In the context of parachurch, revival-based evangelicalism, Presbyterian piety appears to make few demands and Presbyterians sometimes look like they are merely going through the motions. A Presbyterian may be a member of the visible church under the oversight of duly appointed elders and participate in the regular means of grace. But how do we know if he is sincere? One way to know, as Protestants in the United States have learned since the revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is if a Presbyterian is engaged during most of his waking hours in spiritual endeavors of some kind.

The Real Conservative Protestants

If a version of Protestantism that stresses conversion along the lines of revivalism and that looks for spiritual activity in parachurch organizations is the standard for conservative Protestantism, where do Orthodox Presbyterians fit in? This is precisely the dilemma that has confronted conservative Presbyterians ever since the 1920s, the time of the so-called modernist-fundamentalist controversy. Because the OPC adheres to its confession's teaching on the importance of the visible church and the need for the means of grace to sustain a believer in his Christian walk, the denomination's leaders have often been

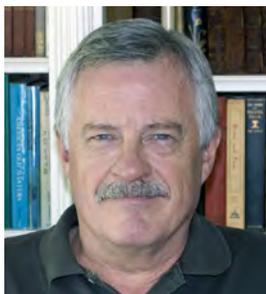
wary of identifying with evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants. In fact, when facing a decision on whether to join the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, the OPC declined.

Some interpreted that as an indication that the OPC was lukewarm—maybe even a little liberal—toward conservative Protestantism. But Orthodox Presbyterian leaders had a standard—Scripture, the confession and catechisms, and the rest of its constitution—that defined conservative Protestantism differently. The OPC looked back, not to the awakenings of Anglo-American church history, but to the origins of Reformed Protestantism in Europe, where pastors and church members understood the importance of belonging to the visible church and sitting under the ministry of the word in preaching, sacraments, and corporate worship. Such an understanding of Protestantism was clearly not liberal, but neither was it evangelical by the norms of a Protestant Christianity that stressed the individual's experience and involvement in the work of parachurch agencies as signs of genuine faith and devotion.

The tension between evangelical and confessional Protestantism will continue to shape the OPC's relationship to the broader conservative Protestant world. It has been part of the experience of Presbyterians in North America almost since their arrival in the New World, and for that reason this tension will not go away any time soon. But being aware of it—recognizing the different expectations that come with a Christian devotion that features the regular ministry of word and sacrament in a disciplined church as opposed to one that grants great autonomy to individuals and organizations not overseen by duly appointed church officers—may help Orthodox Presbyterians and other confessional Reformed Protestants find their place within the larger Protestant world. □

The author, an OP elder, teaches at Hillsdale College.

DEMOCRACY AND THE DENIGRATION OF OFFICE



GREGORY E. REYNOLDS // I do not intend to reflect on democracy as a political system, but rather as a popular ideal, a major strand in the fabric of the American mind, as that ideal impinges on the idea of church office. President Wilson encapsulated this American ideal in giving the rationale for entering World War I:

“The world must be made safe for democracy.”

In the popular imagination, “democracy” is a cultural catchword that conjures up a series of narcissistic notions, such as “I have rights,” “My opinion is as important as anyone’s,” “I may believe and say what I like,” and “I may do what I like as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone.” This egalitarian instinct—bringing everyone down to the same level—has denigrated the idea of office in the church. Furthermore, egalitarianism tends to elevate the authority of men over God. When it comes to the government of the church, we tamper with its God-given order at our own peril.

The Historical Roots of Egalitarianism

The fundamental spiritual and moral principle of egalitarianism is not equality, but autonomy. Thus, egalitarianism has its roots, not in the Enlightenment, but in Eden. Adam’s assertion of autonomy in God’s world is the ultimate cause of the democratic mentality in its contemporary expression. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century is the proximate historical source, which gave egalitarianism its present form.

Man, created as *imago dei*, was given the office of a servant of God. Under God, Adam was called to be a prophet, a priest, and a king—a vicegerent over God’s creation to the glory of God. In challenging the sovereign authority of God to define man’s meaning and role in history, Adam forsook his office. He became the first egalitarian by declaring his equality with God.

At the beginning of our history as a nation, this spirit was clearly present. As a true child of the Enlightenment, Thomas Paine confidently declared, “My own mind is my own church.” Paine’s *The Age of Reason* was a virulent attack on the integrity and authority of Scripture.

Benjamin Franklin was the quintessential individualist of the founding era, who lived by the utilitarian interpretation of Christianity captured in his famous statement, “God helps those who help themselves.” The moral maxims of *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, such as “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,” were rooted not in God’s Word, but in personal utility.¹ Man was the measure as well as the master of reality and history. God and his Word became the servant of man.

Nineteenth-century romanticism was more a child of the Enlightenment

than a reaction to it. Autonomy was at the heart of both. Whitman’s “Song of Myself” says it all in the first line: “I celebrate myself.”² The romantic poet and the rationalist philosopher-statesman were singing different parts to the same tune.

As new technologies propelled by egalitarianism reshape our institutions, the individual is rapidly replacing the authority of God, his Word, his church, and the idea of office. Increasingly, the conviction that the church exists to “meet my needs” is held by ministers and people alike as they use the church as a vehicle for their own self-fulfillment.

The Effects of Egalitarianism on Church Office

The Great Awakening, despite the spiritual good it generated, has proved to be a major influence in kindling the egalitarian impulse. Revivalists within the Presbyterian Church became a “force battering at the ecclesiastical structure.”³ Egalitarianism spawned rampant anticlericalism and anti-intellectualism. In claiming the right to question and judge all, the extreme revivalists denied the idea of special office altogether. A genuine experience

of God's grace was, for them, the only prerequisite for preaching.

The egalitarian spirit, however, did not find Presbyterianism to be the happiest of hunting grounds, due to the latter's strong and clear view of the importance of special office. Through the office of ruling elder, the laity already played a prominent role in the government of the church. Furthermore, the priesthood of all believers was taken seriously and insured each member a vital part in the worship and edification of the church without giving quarter to egalitarianism.

In the twentieth century, however, the power of the democratic ideal in the American mind threatened to overwhelm all institutions that dared to stand in its way. Where office formally exists, it is often used more for personal aggrandizement than for service to God or man. The celebrity has replaced the servant as a major mentor in our culture. Everyone has the potential to be a star. In the church, this translates into the mistaken notion that participation in worship requires a spotlight on the individual. Why should the preacher own center stage? Thus, church office often degenerates into a stage for the display of one's gifts, rather than a means of ministering God's grace to God's people.

If egalitarianism is in the business of leveling distinctions, particularly where authority and office are involved, the strict two-office view of church government⁴ falls prey to this instinct by obliterating the distinction between ruler and pastor. Its tendency is to bring down, not to elevate. At its worst, the preacher is thought merely to be paid to do full-time what the elder does for free. Thus, whatever distinction remains, it is not qualitative and official, but quantitative and practical. And, ironically, egalitarianism ends up elevating the very people it sought to level.

Charles Hodge pointed out that as a consequence of the two-office view, "we are therefore shut up by this new doctrine to abolish the office of ruling elder; we are required to make them all

preachers."⁵ The very people the two-office theory purports to help are deprived of their office. Hodge continues:

This doctrine is, therefore, completely revolutionary. It deprives the people of all substantive power. The legislative, judicial, and executive power according to our system, is in Church courts, and if these courts are to be composed entirely of clergymen, and are close, self-perpetuating bodies, then we have, or we should have, as complete a clerical domination as the world has ever seen.⁶

A further irony lies in the fact that where the two-office view prevails, the plurality of elders in a congregation tends to diminish the importance and therefore the quality of the teaching office. The biblical system requires both as separate offices to preserve the full range of ministry mandated in the Scriptures. In fact, most two-office proponents in Presbyterian churches do hold to a distinction between teaching and ruling elders, as two species of one genus. Popularly referred to as the two-and-a-half-office view, it seems to be logically bound to do away with the distinction between pastor and ruling elder.

The Restoration of Church Office

The point at issue, Hodge maintained, is

the nature of the office of the ruling elder. Is he a clergyman, a bishop? or is he a layman? Does he hold the same office with the minister or a different one? According to the new theory the offices are identified.... This new theory makes all elders, bishops, pastors, teachers, and rulers.... It therefore destroys all official distinctions between them. It reduces the two to one order, class, or office.⁷

The focus of the question from an exegetical perspective is clearly stated by Iain Murray:

The question which arises is how this Presbyterian distinction between "ministers" and "elders" is to be just-

fied from the New Testament. Upon what grounds should such a title as "pastor" be restricted to one if the word in the New Testament is descriptive of all elders?⁸

If "presbyter" is used uniformly in the New Testament to refer to a single office, then the distinction between the ruling elder and the pastor cannot be maintained. But, as Edmund Clowney cautions,

In 1 Timothy 5:17, those who engage in rule are distinguished from those who also labor in the word and doctrine. Again, the fact that both groups can be called *πρεσβύτεροι* by no means demonstrates that their office is identical.⁹

Hodge makes a crucial exegetical point in recounting the essence of a debate he had with Thornwell:

If the apostles being deacons in the wide sense of the word, does not prove that they were officially deacons, then that elders were presbyters in the one sense, does not prove them to be presbyters in the other sense.¹⁰

Some defenders of the three-office view, such as Thomas Smyth, held that ruling elders were never referred to in the New Testament "under the term presbyter or elder, *which always refers to the teacher or bishop solely.*"¹¹ Like Calvin, he found his warrant for the office of governor or ruling elder in passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:8. He understood passages such as 1 Timothy 3; 5:17; Titus 1; Acts 20 as referring only to ministers of the Word. However, Samuel Miller, who held the three-office view, understood the above passages to refer to both offices together.¹² In fact, Hodge declared himself to be in complete agreement with Miller as to the nature of the ruling office, only differing with him in the method of establishing its biblical warrant.¹³ Exegetical uniformity is not required in order to base the view clearly on Scripture.

Hodge summed up the three-office position robustly:

This is the old, healthful, conservative doctrine of the Presbyterian Church. Ministers of the word are clergymen, having special training, vocation, and ordination; ruling elders are laymen, chosen from the people as their representatives, having, by divine warrant, equal authority in all Church courts with the ministers.¹⁴

Ultimately, the centrality of preaching in the worship and life of the church is at stake. It is not the privilege of persons, but the dignity of God's Word which is being upheld. Egalitarianism tends to see all official distinctions as tools of oppression. A biblical servant, however, will see such a distinction as a tool of ministry and himself as an instrument of grace.

But the three-office doctrine also preserves the ruling function of the eldership. As every faithful minister knows, the oversight of the flock is impossible to maintain alone. The three-office position allows ruling elders to focus on the application of what the minister teaches from God's Word. The three-office position, rightly understood, alone preserves the true dignity and effectiveness of the ruling office.

The benefits of the three-office view are manifold. First, the parity of rule protects the church from tyranny. The minister does not rule alone. There is a balance of power—a system of checks and balances. The most reserved ruling elder has the same vote as the minister. The biblical view of office limits power, whereas egalitarianism allows power to fall into the hands of the domineering and gives voice to the loudest mouth.

Second, the three-office doctrine provides leadership. The minister, as a scribe of the Word, is a leader among the rulers. He is usually the moderator of the session, a first among equals. A ship cannot sail without a captain. Egalitarianism engenders lordship, not leadership.

Third, the three-office view allows the minister to focus on the ministry of the Word, unhindered by the multitude of concerns that only the group of elders can attend to with him. Jethro's ad-

vice to Moses is pertinent today: "What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone" (Ex. 18:17–18). Egalitarianism leads not only to tyranny but to burnout.

Fourth, this view allows for the proper and effective implementation of discipline, which the minister could not appropriately or practically provide on his own. Egalitarianism leads to moral chaos.

Promoting a Biblical View of Office

There are several things that need to be done to promote a more biblical view of office in our churches. First, people need to be instructed about the nature and dangers of egalitarianism.

Second, pastors and elders need to encourage each other to fulfill the ministries to which God has called them. The strengths and weaknesses of each officer should be openly discussed in the privacy of the session.

Third, a good working relationship should be cultivated among elders and ministers. This means developing biblical communication and conflict-resolution skills. The session must see itself as a team. This means that the individualist instinct must be suppressed. Matters under discussion must be kept confidential. When decisions are made, the dissenter should keep his disagreement to himself unless it involves moral or doctrinal absolutes.

One of the greatest temptations presented by the democratic mentality is the idea that the ruling elder is a sounding board for congregational discontent or an agent for special interests. The pastor must be teachable and humble, never demanding his agenda. But the ruling elder must protect the pastor from the power of destructive criticism.

Finally, ministers and elders will serve the Lord and promote the godly government of his church best by being servants of God and his people. The three-office view, by itself, will not restore true ministry to the church. Only if those who fill the offices have

the mind of their Master, the mind of a humble servant (Phil. 2:5–11), will egalitarianism be kept at bay and the kingdom of God built. The individualist will use the office for his own personal fulfillment and thus denigrate the office. The true servant will seek the glory of his Lord. □

The author is the pastor of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church in Manchester, N.H. He quotes the ESV. This article is an updated and edited version of an essay in Order in the Offices, edited by Mark R. Brown.

1 Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 32.

2 *Ibid.*, 34.

3 Alan Heimart and Perry Miller, eds., *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), xxx.

4 The two-office view is that there are only two continuing offices in the church: elder and deacon. The three-office view is that there are three offices: minister, elder, and deacon. The view sometimes referred to in the OPC as the two-and-a-half-office view is that of the nineteenth-century Southern Presbyterian theologian James Thornwell, who held that the office of elder had two orders, or divisions of labor, minister and elder.

5 Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1878), 269.

6 *Ibid.*, 129.

7 *Ibid.*, 128.

8 Iain Murray, "Ruling Elders—A Sketch of a Controversy," *The Banner of Truth Magazine*, no. 235 (April 1983), 1.

9 Edmund P. Clowney, "A Brief for Church Governors in Church Government" (unpublished paper, 1972), 15.

10 Hodge, *Church Polity*, 130.

11 Thomas Smyth, *Complete Works of the Reverend Thomas Smyth, D.D.*, ed. J. William Flinn (Columbia, S.C.: R. L. Bryan, 1908), IV, 26.

12 Samuel Miller, *An Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder, in the Presbyterian Church* (New York: Jonathan Leavitt; Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1831), 28.

13 Hodge, *Church Polity*, 129.

14 *Ibid.*, 130.

WE WILL NOT SERVE YOUR GODS



JONATHAN B. FALK // The book of Daniel can be summarized as “changing kings and kingdoms, but God unchanging.” In the accounts of God’s deliverance of his people in the first six chapters, and in the dreams and visions of the last half of the book, Daniel reveals the profound spiritual conflict that underlies human history.

And Daniel exposes the constant threat posed by the kings and kingdoms of this world against the kingdom of God.

In both our private and our corporate worship, we often pray the words our Lord Jesus taught us: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” We are praying for God to grant obedience on earth, as it is practiced in heaven.

In the third chapter of his book, Daniel records the story of three young men standing before an image of gold outside the city of Babylon. They did the will of God. They knew the true God and his revealed will: “You shall have no other gods before me.” “You shall not make for yourself any graven image.... You shall not bow down to them or serve them.” They knew that God had the power to deliver them from the fiery furnace. There was no doubt in their minds as to God’s power to save them. But as mere mortals, they could not know God’s specific plan for them in this situation. Even if the God we serve is not going to save our lives, they declare, “Be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods

nor worship the golden image that you have set up.”

God knows the temptations of his children. The idols of this world still exert a powerful influence on believers in the living and true God. At times they seek to seduce us in a more subtle manner, but at other times they are able to use the power of the state to oppress us. When everyone around us seems to “go with the flow,” when the pressure to conform feels irresistible, it takes faith and courage to stand alone.

More and more today, it seems like the people of God are rowing against the current of our popular culture. And like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we cannot be certain that choosing the path of obedience will keep us from suffering. These three men knew this; they trusted and obeyed God, even if he would not deliver them from the fiery furnace.

A Dutch pastor told the story of a Christian man who lived to tell his experiences in a Nazi concentration camp. He was helped by an older Christian man, who did not live to see freedom. One day the young man asked his fel-

low prisoner: “Is the war going to last long?” The older man replied: “Nobody knows how long the war will last. To us, that’s not an important question. The only important question is, *how* are we going to live through it?”

We don’t know how long the conflict between the kingdoms of this world and God’s kingdom will last. The only important question for us is whether we are trusting in the God who is unchanging and whose kingdom cannot fail—and whether we will stand in obedience to God against the idols of our age.

We have the promise of God’s presence with us now and of a wonderful future in his kingdom of glory. And we have the assurance of this blessed hope through faith in the One who suffered the hatred of this world and the fiery wrath of God against our sin: our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. □

The author is associate pastor of Falls Presbyterian Church in Menomonee Falls, Wis. This meditation first appeared in their church newsletter, Under the Steeple, February–March 2013.

ONE OF THE OPC'S PILGRIM FAMILIES

// DAVID SMILEY



David and Kathy Smiley

Kathy and I have been blessed by the pioneering spirit of God's OPC household. We were mentored at Bethel OPC in Wheaton, Illinois, by Pastor Lendall Smith and his wife, Sherrill. They had raised their children on the foreign mission field. The Lord called them to Bethel as the church family was recovering from a split that reduced the congregation from over 300 to 45. God grew Bethel again to over 200 during their service there, and used her to help plant churches in Orland Park and Batavia. I was the seventh intern mentored by Pastor Smith.

There we also got to know Jim and Judy Bosgraf. Jim has been a pastor and church planter, and he is now the regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest.

Then the Lord introduced us to the Presbytery of the South's regional home missionary, Jim Heemstra, his wife, Sandy, and the budding mission work of Providence OPC in Bradenton, in the greater Tampa area of the Florida Gulf Coast. Jim and Sandy had moved to Manatee County not long after worship began there in 2004 to join the OPC's retired director of evangelism, Bill (and Gladys) Vermeulen, in providing leadership for the young and gifted core group the Lord had gathered together.

As I took up my labors in 2005 as Providence OPC's evangelist, twenty-seven worshippers gathered on our first Lord's Day. The church steadily grew. By Easter 2008, we were in danger of exceeding the building's capacity of 130. In 2010, Hope PCA in Bradenton asked Providence OPC to consider renting their facilities. Worship in their sanctuary, with a seating capacity of 245, began in January 2011. Six weeks later, we were asked to consider purchasing their four buildings and six acres of land. With assistance from Jim Heemstra, the OPC Loan Fund, and the Presbytery of the South's Home Missions Committee, this property became our home in October 2011.

At the beginning of 2013, we were surprised to be asked

to consider whether the Lord was calling me to the Presbytery of Philadelphia to serve as their regional home missionary. Kathy and I laughed when I first told her of the request.

But our laughter turned to conviction as we asked the Lord to make his plans for Bradenton and in the regional church of eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware clear. We remembered how we had been blessed by the wisdom of so many people in the OPC. So we decided we would willingly follow the Lord wherever he might send us as missionaries.

We could not pretend that the Lord needed us to stay at Providence for her to continue to thrive. Providence has always been blessed to send people out for ministry far and wide. Amy Folkert had served as a missionary associate in Karamoja. Adam and Sarah Thompson are serving as missionary associates in Japan. Benjamin and Heather Hopp, missionaries to Haiti, have Providence OPC as their stateside base of operations. Ruling elders Matt Folkert and Al Hanna and deacon Matt Avery have been on mission trips to Haiti. Amy Folkert and Laurel Swift have served on several VBS teams in Haiti.

While serving on the Presbytery of the South's Home Missions Committee, I was honored to see the Lord's blessing on OPC outreach and church planting. It was a pleasure to see the Lord plant and grow thriving, mission-minded mission works and congregations in St. Augustine, Fort Lauderdale, Gainesville, and Naples, Florida, and in Collierville, Tennessee. Bill Welzien's faithfulness as an open-air preacher in Key West and the pastor of Keys OPC has also been a source of wisdom and encouragement.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: February 12, 26.

After hearing the vision of the men serving on the Presbytery of Philadelphia's Home Missions Committee, Kathy and I were convicted that the Lord was calling me to serve as their RHM. We are excited to trust the Lord to plant havens and beacons of light in new mission works where his hurting or lost sheep can hear the voice of the Good Shepherd through the means of grace and the undershepherding of the elders and pastors he will raise up in the months and years to come.

Please pray for:

- Wisdom for David in encouraging and shepherding core groups raised up by the Lord.
- Wisdom for Kathy as they settle into a new home in the Reading, Pennsylvania, area and encourage Rachel, 15, Caleb, 11, and Hannah, 5, in their new adventures.
- David as he meets with and encourages the sessions and congregations of the seventeen Presbytery of Philadelphia churches in their ministries of evangelism, outreach, and home missions.
- Unity and peace for God's people at Providence OPC in Bradenton, as Michael Borg begins his labors there and the process of ordination.

GROWTH IN ARIZONA

Sean Gregg

Five years ago, four families in Tucson, Arizona, approached the session of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Phoenix about becoming a mission work. On December 15, the congregation that grew from that initial group was organized as Covenant OPC, a new and separate congregation of the Presbytery of Southern California.

Christopher Chelpka, who had served as the congregation's organizing pastor since 2011, was installed as Covenant's pastor. Bruce Ferg and Rob Lukavich were ordained and installed as ruling elders, and Stephen Peabody was ordained and installed as a deacon.

All of the Orthodox Presbyterian pastors in Arizona attended the service of recognition, ordination, and installation, as well as a group of people from Calvin OPC. The entire session of Grace PCA in Sierra Vista also joined in praising God for establishing this church in Tucson.

David Crum, regional home missionary for the Presbytery, led the service. In the congregation's early days, Mr. Crum travelled regularly from Fallbrook, California, to preach the Word and do outreach work. Michael Babcock, pastor of Calvin OPC, gave the charge to the congregation.

Rev. Brian Chang preached on Ephesians

1:15–23. In 2011, he had been ordained and installed to serve as the organizing pastor for Verde Valley Reformed Chapel in Cottonwood, one day before Rev. Chelpka was ordained and installed to serve as the organizing pastor for Covenant Presbyterian Church's pastor, Rev. Charlie Perkins, gave the charge to the pastor.

Those gathered raised their voices together to proclaim that "the church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord; she is his new creation by water and the Word; from heav'n he came and sought her to be his holy bride; with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died."

When the group initially formed, the other Reformed churches in Tucson were on the edge of town. Covenant OPC is located centrally in a Seventh-day Adventist building. This facility continues to serve them well.

In October, Mr. Crum assisted the group during the congregational meeting preparing for organization. He reminded them that they would soon "no longer be a mission church, but would always be a church with a mission." In addition to reaching out to the lost in Tucson, the congregation prayerfully hopes to be involved in church-planting efforts throughout southern Arizona in the years to come.

Pastor Chelpka expressed gratitude for the work of the overseeing elders who "sacrificed much to see this work grow." While he will miss their counsel, he is glad to work with Covenant's new session, which is "well-qualified and eager to begin." The group has grown to more than seventy people, and the session is working to set the precedent of healthy visitation practices.

The congregation gives thanks for the prayer and financial support that was given by so many in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church over the last few years. The notes and cards you sent and your visits have also been a great encouragement.



Rob Lukavich being ordained as a ruling elder at Covenant OPC in Tucson

iPod, YouTube, Wii Play

// DANNY E. OLINGER



Brent Laytham

A generation ago, media theorist Neil Postman feared that modern men and women, enamored with technology and entertainment, were losing the ability to think critically. He also believed that they were erring in making technology—in the place of a moral universe that spoke of sin and righteousness—the new standard for behavior. Such changes that signaled the surrender of American culture to technology made spiritual devastation inevitable, even if masked by the entertainment that technology is able to offer. Postman concluded that the modern man was amusing himself to death.

Methodist theologian D. Brent Laytham does not share Postman's technophobia, but he does share Postman's concern for the misappropriation of technology and entertainment in his sharply argued and cleverly titled *iPod, YouTube, Wii Play*. Laytham examines what entertainment is, how it works, and what it means. He also reflects on how technology and entertainment have distorted or displaced a proper, church-centered ethic. Postman could identify the threat, but he could not provide a positive answer. Laytham does both—and with a theology that points both to Christ and to his church.

For Laytham, the fact that we use the Internet and watch television is more crucial than which websites we visit and which shows we watch. His basic premises are: (1) entertainment isn't theology, even if it is ripe for theological reflection; (2) in a culture saturated with entertainments and overwhelmed with amusements, theology must engage entertainments; and (3) entertainments will converge toward, complement, compete with, confuse, or confute Christian conviction.

The Christian's proper response to entertainment (and technology), then, involves refusing its pretension of being

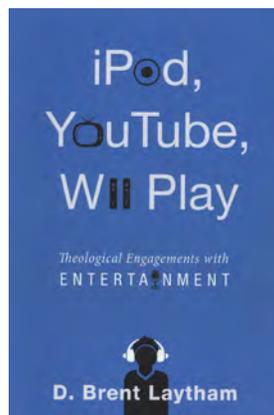
ultimate, while affirming its subordinate role as a good creation. One resists entertainment as a principality, but one embraces it as a triviality.

Illustrative of Laytham's approach is his chapter on the iPod, where he argues that it epitomizes music's journey from "we play" to "I listen." The nineteenth-century Christian's iPod was a pocket hymnal, where singing was communal and it was essential to know melodies, harmonies, rhythm, and tempos. Laytham writes, "The hymnal implicates and assumes relationships with fellow Christians and with God; one does not sing hymns by oneself or to oneself. Even if I'm the only person in the room, I sing praise with all Christ's saints. Even when I love the song, I sing it not for myself, but for and to God. And the hymnal invites action, a bodily practice learned in community and shaped by tradition" (p. 45).

The iPod moves in the other direction. Rather than societal, communicative, and active, it is individual, consumptive, and passive. It is, after all, an iPod, not a wePod. Richer in musical recordings, we have become poorer in musical relationship and less fit for the musical work of worship, which is always an active, social communication, never a passive, private consumption.

But, unlike Postman, who undoubtedly would have viewed the iPod as he did television—as a technology that should be avoided at all costs—Laytham believes the iPod can still be used positively for God's glory. One needs a strategy for using it, but should not fear it.

YouTube is more complex. It combines a top-down platform for the distribution of popular culture with a bottom-up platform for personal creativity. YouTube creates fun with sharing and can be educational in giving tips on a wide range of subjects. But it can hold people captive for hours, encourages excessive behavior to get noticed, and includes degrading spectacles. With such technology, Laytham argues, the



Christian needs to develop a sense of decorum, a proper moral repugnance that knows when to look away from that which degrades human dignity, diminishes proper desires, and weakens the common good.

Laytham also notes that some have sought to incorporate YouTube videos into worship as a way of capturing a churchgoer's imagination and interest. However, he warns against making worship a highly produced form of entertainment. This is exactly what Walt Kallestad did in the 1990s at the Phoenix megachurch Community Church of Joy, growing its weekly attendance from two hundred to twelve thousand. Laytham writes:

As it turns out, Kallestad himself now claims to have been on the wrong track. Coming back from a three-month sabbatical, he noticed that his congregation's worship "was shallow," indeed, that it "was a show." Participating in his congregation's life with new eyes, he saw that entertainment as drawing in spectators rather than forming and sending forth "transformed, empowered disciples." Put another way, Kallestad discovered that entertainment couldn't be used for evangelism, because it was evangelism; a set of processes and activities that shaped how people felt, thought, and acted. (p. 6)

Wanting to avoid both the Scylla of "entertainment is whatever you do for fun" and the Charybdis of "entertainment is utterly passive consumption" (p. 80), Laytham endorses play. Play stretches the imagination, sharpens the mind, and engages the body. It is not justified by the work it does, the effects it produces, or the difference it makes. Play is a needed area of life that is not fraught with ultimacy. He writes:

If entertainment is defined as whatever we do for fun with our leisure time, then play is certainly entertainment, even if we are both entertainer and audience in one. On the other hand, if entertainment is defined as whatever we "watch" for fun, as another's activity presented for our pleasurable but passive attention, then play is only entertainment if we are being entertained (note the passive verb) by the play of others. (p. 79)

While Laytham's ideas are undeniably creative and properly stress that we are better off being engaged and interacting with others, rather than being passive consumers, I wonder if "play" is the great alternative to entertainment that Laytham believes it is. Take it from a former athlete, play can take on primacy in our lives just as easily as passive entertainment.

Of course, life with all its legitimate pleasures is a gift from God. Jesus himself used the ordinary enjoyments of life as figures to describe the blessedness of heavenly life. But all of life, including entertainment and play, is to be lived for God's glory. Laytham would certainly affirm this, but his exaltation of play might point to a difference between a Methodism that sees the insignificant as significant and a Presbyterianism that constantly focuses on the eternal. Still, this is an excellent book that deserves a wide reading.

ABCs of PRESBYTERIANISM

Jesus Christ Is Building His Church (1)

Larry Wilson

Our Lord Jesus Christ promises that he will build his church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). The word "church" (*ekklesia*) means "a gathering" or "an assembly" (cf. Acts 19:32, 39); it has Old Testament roots (cf. Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:12). God gathered his people around himself at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:4–5). Later he called them regularly to gather around his dwelling place on Mount Zion. In the same way, Christ gathers his people around himself. The Good Shepherd effectually calls his sheep, both near and far, into one flock around himself (John 10:16; Acts 2:39; Eph. 2:11–22).

Although they are one organism, like the caterpillar and the butterfly the New Testament church that Christ is building takes a different form from that of the Old Testament assembly of God's people (Heb. 12:18–24). That assembly gathered around God on Mount Sinai. But Christ now assembles us by his Spirit at the heavenly Zion, "the church of the firstborn enrolled in heaven." The church is gathered around Christ where he now is, in heaven. Our citizenship in the heavenly Zion is not a future hope. It is a present reality ("you have come ..."). Right now we are members of this church by grace through faith in Christ, gathered around our Lord Jesus in heaven (Heb. 12:22; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:3).

This is the church we affirm by faith: "I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church" (the Nicene Creed). She is one because the one Savior assembles her around himself by one Spirit in one place, in heaven. She is holy, because the living God consecrates her unto himself and sanctifies her members. She is catholic because Christ gathers her "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Rev. 7:9). She is apostolic because he founded her on the apostles and their teaching, and he sends her out with the gospel (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14; Matt. 28:19–20).

The heavenly church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. We embrace her by faith, not by sight.

Out of the Mouth . . .

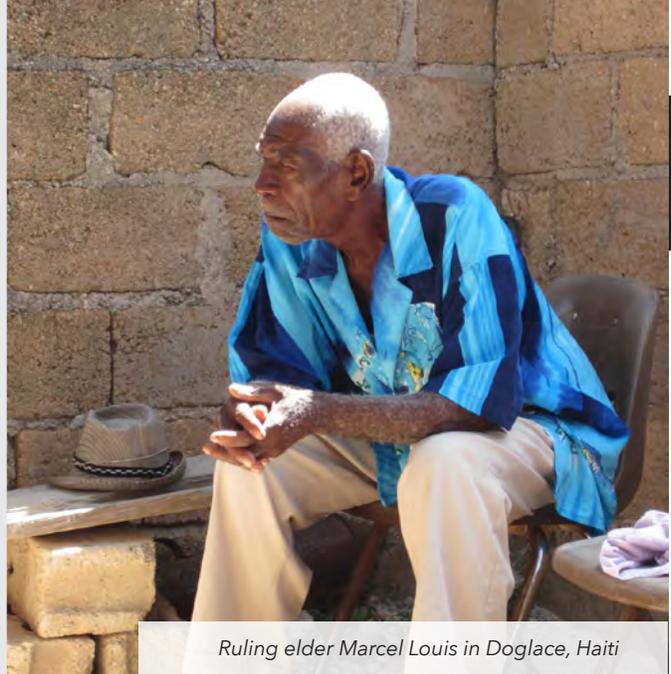
I asked my two-year-old daughter Lydia a catechism question: "Who were our first parents?" She replied, "Adam and Eve. And our second parents are Nana and Grandpa."

—Kelly O'Leary
Flourtown, PA

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

BUILDING A CHURCH IN HAITI

// BENJAMIN K. HOPP



Ruling elder Marcel Louis in Doglace, Haiti

Marcel walks slowly into the church enclosure. He is using a cane, but is only slightly bent over. His steps are firm and determined, despite his eighty years. You can tell by the reaction of the other church members that he is important. Marcel is not only a godly man, but also a well-respected member of the community. He might well be considered the patriarch of the church at Doglace on the island of La Gonâve.

Heather and I clearly remember our first visit to the Doglace church in November 2006. Doglace was our first stop on the grand tour of all the churches on La Gonâve. We were traveling over very rough roads in the back of a pickup truck. As we neared the Doglace church, the road ended as large rocks and rough terrain prevented the truck from going any further. A footpath that wove its way up the hillside was visible ahead of us. A twenty-minute walk brought us to a clearing, where we met the saints of the church for the first time. Behind them stood the church building in its infancy. A few courses of block had been laid.

Seven months later, we returned to serve in Haiti. I remember meeting with Marcel, and he communicated his desire to see a roof put on the church at Doglace. The foundation had been laid, and the walls were blocked up. At that time, only a tarp covered part of the worship area to keep out the rain and hot sun.

But in order to fulfill the desire that Pastor Lexene Leveille, Marcel, and the rest of the congregation had to finish the building, an important first step was required. In order to transport cement, water, and other building materials to the church site, a road would have to be built. It was Marcel's vision that motivated the Doglace church to build the road. When Marcel leads, people follow. After over a year of hammering, picking, and digging, the people of the church and the surrounding community completed the road.

It was a Sunday morning sometime in 2008 when I first

drove right up to the church for the first time to join the people for worship. I still remember coming around the final bend and hearing the singing of those already gathered. Even over the engine noise of our Kawasaki Mule, I could hear the sweet sounds of the congregation praising God in Haitian Creole. It was a special privilege to rejoice with them that Sunday!

There is a commonly used Haitian proverb that says, "*Piti, piti, zwazo fè nich.*" Translated literally, it means, "Little by little, the bird makes a nest." This has been the attitude of the Doglace congregation over the years. They wanted to complete the church building by putting on the roof, but they did not have the resources. Mortgages are not readily available in Haiti. Everyone understood the value of the congregation being the main contributors to the work. It needed to be something that the people did for themselves. The people of the congregation made a significant sacrifice and paid for over half of the materials. Your generous contributions to the work in Haiti helped these brothers and sisters complete the work.

This work was not without trials. The congregation at Doglace has persevered to see their building completed. Money from special offerings over several years was collected, and a local boss was hired. When he unexpectedly died, it turned out that he had already spent their money, and his family was not able to return the funds to the church. So often the church here in Haiti finds itself in difficult circumstances at the hands of untrustworthy people. Despite their sacrifice and loss, the congregation purposed to save again. They would have to wait another four years.

Help came to this project in a special way. Using the money from the church plus that contributed by the OPC, we were able to purchase the materials cheaper in Port-au-Prince. But how were we going to get them to the island? Over the years, we developed friendships with many other missionaries on La Gonâve. My friend Rod, with his bushy red beard, which has gained him the nickname *bab* (beard), works for a mission with a boat. He is the son of a pastor, and is always



Doglace church building without a roof



Doglace church building with a roof

willing to help the work of the church. He approached his mission and expressed his willingness to transport everything on their boat for free. What a blessing! We are grateful for good friends and cooperation here on the mission field.

While the physical building in Doglace was going up little by little, God's spiritual house was also being built. The congregation has continued to meet, and Pastor Lexene has faithfully preached the gospel, from week to week, under a tarp. Many VBS teams have taught there. The apostle Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 2:5 that "you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." These people are the living stones, bought with the blood of Christ, gathering to give God glory. In rural communities like Doglace, the church is an important gathering place for members of the community. Pray that more living stones would be added to this church.

The Doglace church was finally covered in November 2013. It was a day of great celebration at the church! All their hard work, many prayers, and generous giving reaped the reward of a roofed church building.

Once again, as I drive up to the church on a Sunday morning, I hear the sound of singing. Lord willing, God will bless this church, so that the sound of even more voices may join the chorus of praise in Doglace, across La Gonave, and throughout the nation of Haiti.

Much like the church in Doglace was, the church plant in Port-au-Prince is years away from having its own church building. But this has not prevented the saints from gathering each Lord's Day. They gather under a large tent. This tent is full of people attentively worshipping and listening to the preached Word. There is a steady stream of visitors to the church, and new members are being added, despite the lack of a beautiful building in which to worship. The saints who gather are the spiritual stones that make up the spiritual bride of Christ. And Christ will build his church.

So, has God answered Marcel's prayers and honored his

efforts over the years? Absolutely! Marcel rejoices over the Lord's provision of a completed church building for the believers in Doglace. But if you were to ask him where his true joy is found, he would focus somewhere else. He would tell you about the satisfaction it gives him to see the children of the church gathering to learn about Jesus each Sunday and at the vacation Bible school programs. He would comment that now they have a larger space, away from the heat of the day, where even more children can hear the words of Jesus: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). While some might say that Marcel's vision was for a church building, in reality his true desire all along has been to build the church.

You can see pictures of the Doglace church by following this Internet link: <http://goo.gl/t5Gm4I>.

What's New

// Appointments

The missionary associate appointment of **Mr. and Mrs. Christopher J. (Chloe) Verdick** (New Life Presb. Church, PCA, San Diego, Calif.) to Nakaale, Uganda, has been extended one year beginning in April 2014.

Appointed as missionary associates: **Miss J. R. B.** (OPC, Franklin Square, N.Y.), one year in Asia, beginning in January; **Mr. James S. Durham** (Covenant OPC, Barre, Vt.), one year in Nakaale, Uganda, beginning in January; **Mr. and Mrs. M. A. I.** (Spencer Mills OPC, Gowen, Mich.), six months in Asia, beginning in February.

// Comings/Goings

Missionary associate **Miss Erin M. Chong** (Lake Sherwood OPC, Orlando, Fla.) has completed her term of service in Asia and returned to the U.S.

GIVING OF OURSELVES TO GOD

// ROBERT E. TARULLO

The saints of Philippi loved Paul. They had a close relationship with the apostle. He held them in his heart as partakers of grace with him in both his imprisonment and his ministry of the gospel (Phil. 1:7).

Like anyone who has benefited from the ministry of the gospel, the Philippians wanted to help Paul in his ministry, presumably with a financial gift of some sort. And Paul took the occasion of this letter to thank them for their gifts that came through Epaphroditus, as well as to give them the important reminder that their gift to him was a sacrifice. The gift was not just to Paul, as one might have thought; rather, it was a gift offered to God. The gift was “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God” (4:18).

In the act of Christian giving, in the act of offering up our gifts, whether every Lord’s Day or during diaconal offerings or special offerings, Paul would have us see a Christlike action in which we give for the assistance of others. Whether for the continuing ministry of the Word (i.e., for your pastor to live without worldly care), or for the relief of those in need, our giving should be a Christlike action! Moreover, our gifts should be a Christlike giving to God—always to God.

Practically speaking, our tithes and offerings are acts of worship. We are meant to participate in this act of worship, if we have means to do so, however humble. And so, even as we teach our children to sing, to listen to the Word read and proclaimed, we also teach our children to give—yes, even sacrificially.

To give to others in Christlike service is to give to God. And so we are challenged: Do my lifestyle and the way I handle money allow me to give to others?

The Lord provides a beautiful illustration of this principle in the story of the widow’s offering (Mark 12:41–44). The rich put large sums of money into the treasury out of their great wealth, in which there was no sacrifice offered. But the widow put in what amounted only to a penny, out of her poverty—indeed, at great sacrifice.

The widow gave out of her poverty, not thinking about herself first, but about God, sacrificially giving of herself to God.

What makes such service a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, and well pleasing to God is its Christlike attitude and actions. May God help us to understand that it is never the bare service itself, or the amount, or the personal, or worldly value that we might get out of it!

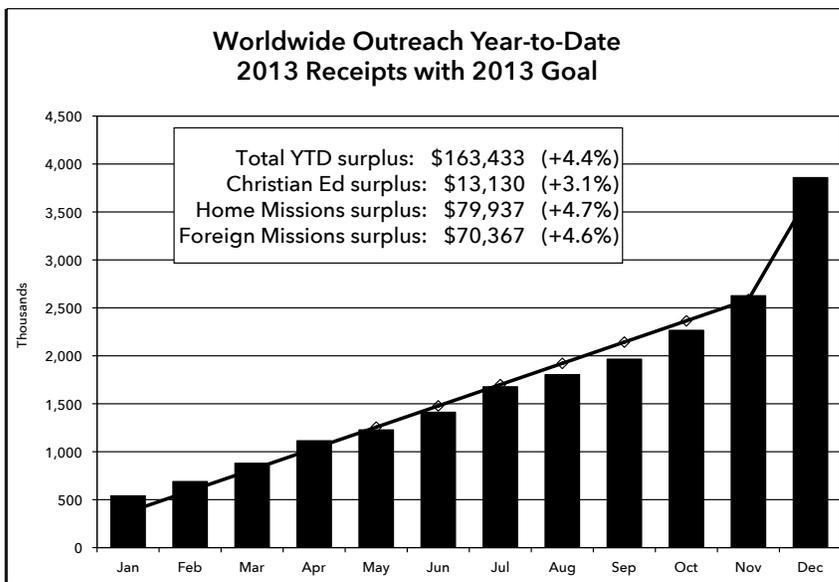
How often do we give in order to get? If this is our motivation or attitude, then we have lost the Christlike focus of placing others before ourselves in our giving!

Believe the promise: “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (4:19).

Paul teaches us that such glory is from God and in his heavenly kingdom, in which we lay up our treasures. But this glory is sought and gained, not through simply monetary giving, but rather through our Christlike giving and offering up of ourselves, and therefore it’s all of grace!

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus ... (2:3–5)

The author is pastor of Westminster OPC in Indian Head Park, Ill.



FEBRUARY

1. **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray for the provision of gifted and able Japanese men to serve the church as elders. / **Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that the Lord would bless Grace Reformed Fellowship with a love for each other and a heart for the lost. / **Andrew (and Elizabeth) Barshinger**, yearlong intern at Faith OPC in Elmer, N.J.
2. **Daniel and Jill McManigal**, Seattle, Wash. Pray that God would send someone with the ability to accompany congregational singing to Hope OPC. / **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray that God would use their ministry to reach the lost in Japan. / Army chaplains: **Jonathan (and Marion) Gibbs** and **Graham (and Carla) Harbman**.
3. Pray for the labors of missionary associates **Adam and Sarah Thompson**, Japan, and **James Durham** and **Jesse Van Gorkom**, Uganda. / **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Long Island, N.Y. Pray that God would grant Trinity Church a harvest of new converts through their gospel witness. / Pray for the **Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC's instructors and students** as they begin the Spring 2014 term today.
4. **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray that God would be pleased to bring visitors to Hillsdale OPC's new worship facility. / **Kaz and Katie Yaegashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray for increased evangelistic outreach in their weekly Bible studies. / **Shane (and Rachelle) Bennett**, yearlong intern at Knox OPC in Silver Spring, Md.

Everett and Kimberly Henes
5. **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for Mark's pastoral ministry as he serves the church in Montevideo. / **Jonathan and Lauryn Shishko**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that God would provide Reformation Presbyterian Church with a building to rent that will allow for gatherings in addition to Sunday mornings. / **Marvin Padgett**, executive director of Great Commission Publications.
6. **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Davenport, Iowa. Pray that the Lord would send more core families to Sovereign Grace OPC in 2014. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for the translation and publication of Reformed literature. / **Tony (and Mica) Garbarino**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in San Jose, Calif.
7. Pray for a quick adjustment to life on the mission field for new missionary associates **J. B.** and **Mr. and Mrs I.**, Asia. / **John Shaw**, general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions. / Pray for short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla** as he adjusts to additional responsibilities as the administrator of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.
8. **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (downtown). Pray that the Lord would bless Gospel Life Presbyterian Church with opportunities for outreach and evangelism. / Missionary associates **T. D.**, **H. L.**, and **M. W.**, Asia. Pray for opportunities to present the gospel to seekers. / **David (and Kathryn) Landow**, yearlong intern at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Del.
9. Tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia. Pray that many contacts will be made through the English Corner outreach. / **Sacha and Martina Walicord**, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Pray that the young people of Knox Presbyterian Church will remain faithful. / Pray for stated clerk **George Cottenden** as he works on a procedural manual for the clerk's office.
10. **Kent and Laurie Harding**, Doniphan, Mo. Pray that God would give wisdom to Sovereign Grace Reformed Church's session, as its first ruling elder has been installed. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for Ben as he provides pastoral care and counseling to members of St-Marc Church. / **Jeffrey (and Jennifer) Shames**, yearlong intern at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Mich.
11. **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for Brian as he prepares for and teaches classes at Mukhanyo Theological College. / **Tim and Joanne Beauchamp**, Bridgton, Maine, Pray for unity and growth within the congregation of Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church. / **David (and Amanda) Franks**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, Ill.
12. **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray that the Lord would give wisdom in identifying future officers for Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church. / **Benjamin and Heather Hopp**, Haiti, are thankful for ministry opportunities that the Lord has provided. / **Stephen Pribble**, OPC.org senior technical associate.
13. Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray that the Lord would work in the lives of unbelievers who visit the church in Port-au-Prince. / **Jeremiah and Elizabeth Montgomery**, State College, Pa. Pray for the smooth integration of new members into the congregation of Resurrection OPC. / Pray for **Alan Strange**, president of the Psalter-Hymnal Committee.
14. **Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray that God's elect will be brought to Cornerstone OPC. / **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for

wisdom in developing strategies for ministry. / **Yevgeni Koh**, yearlong intern at Bonita OPC in Bonita, Calif.

- 15.** Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic, are thankful for those who support them in prayer. / **Mike and Katy Myers**, Hartwell, Ga. Pray that visitors to Heritage Presbyterian Church will desire to join in communicant fellowship. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
- 16.** **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that God will save local families and bring them to worship at Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / Retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Greet Rietkerk, Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. Pray for the encouragement they offer to those on the fields of their service. / Navy chaplains: **Tim (and Janine) Power** and **John (and Linda) Carter**.
- 17.** Missionary associate **Mary York**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for opportunities for her to witness. / **Carlos and Diana Cruz**, San Juan, P.R. Pray that God would bless Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada with additional families. / *New Horizons* staff: **Jim Scott**, managing editor; **Pat Clawson**, editorial assistant; **Sarah Pederson**, proofreader.
- 18.** **Jim and Tricia Stevenson**, Tulsa, Okla. Pray that the Lord would add several new families to Providence OPC. / **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Dianna as she homeschools their children. / Pray for safe travel for Christian Education general secretary **Danny Olinger** as he visits seminaries. / **Kevin (and Marianne) Olivier**, yearlong intern at Pineville OPC in Pineville, La.
- 19.** **Mark and Christine Weber**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom as Mark makes decisions regarding diaconal assistance. / **Sean Gregg**, staff administrator for the Committee on Home Missions. / Committee on Coordination staff: **Doug Watson**, accountant; **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the director of finance; **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator; **Charlene Tipton**, office assistant.
- 20.** **Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray for new visitors to come to Redeemer OPC Mission and for opportunities to reach the lost. / **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Holy Spirit's provision in the preaching and hearing of the Word at Nakaale Presbyterian Church. / **Broc (and Morgan) Seaman**, yearlong intern at Providence OPC in Temecula, Calif.
- 21.** **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for Mr. F. as he continues his ministry to churches in the U.S. / **Philip and Jenny Dharmawirya**, Philadelphia, Pa. Pray for increased unity, wisdom, and godliness for the leadership committee of Emmanuel Chapel (Indonesian). / **Louis (and Lizette) Cloete**, yearlong intern at Redeemer OPC Mission in Pittsburgh, Pa.



Mary York

- 22.** **Christopher and Ann Malamisuro**, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pray that Good Shepherd OPC's new evening service will be well attended. / Pray for the health of missionary associates **Erika Bulthuis, Taryn Dieckmann**, and **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **Steven (and Sarah) Moulson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
- 23.** Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he reports to the Committee on Foreign Missions meeting on February 25-26. / **Christopher and Della Chelpka**, Tucson, Ariz. Pray for God's spirit to direct and empower the gospel witness of Covenant OPC. / **Josh (and Kristen) McKamy**, yearlong intern at New Life OPC in Montoursville, Pa.
- 24.** **Chad and Katie Mullinix**, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Pray for a love for God, fellowship with believers, and bold, loving witness to unbelievers at Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church. / Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Abigail Cory** during this busy week of committee meetings. / **Thomas (and Erin) Tkach**, yearlong intern at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.
- 25.** Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as the Committee begins two days of meetings. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray for unity and fellowship among the people of Keys Presbyterian Church. / **Jeff (and Dawn) Scott**, yearlong intern at Covenant Grace OPC in Roseburg, Ore.
- 26.** **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Ask the Lord to strengthen and establish Verde Valley Reformed Chapel. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough). Pray for safe travel and good visits in OP churches. / **Jeremy (and Maricruz) Boothby**, yearlong intern at Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Amarillo, Tex.
- 27.** **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the diaconal efforts and construction work in Karamoja. / **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray that God would bless San Antonio Reformed Church with additional families. / Yearlong interns: **Jeremy Logan** at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mansfield, Ohio, and **Micah Shin** at Cedar Presbyterian Church in Hudsonville, Mich.

- 28.** **Dick Gerber**, associate general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions. / **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would provide the health and strength they need to meet their demanding schedules. / **Caleb (and Erika) Smith**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.



James and Jenny Knox

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

LAKE SHERWOOD CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS OF MINISTRY

Larry and Gail Mininger

The congregation of Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, Florida, recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with an evening worship service followed by dinner in the festively decorated fellowship hall. Special music was provided by choir members and pianists. Rev. Dr. Luder Whitlock, former president of Reformed Theological Seminary, reminisced about the church and preached the sermon. The senior pastor of Lake Sherwood, Rev. Dr. Larry G. Mininger, had interned under Dr. Whitlock at Sharon OPC in Hialeah, Florida.

The vision to build a faithful Presbyterian church in West Orange County began with Bob and Claire Boney and several other families in 1960. In 1962, the group re-formed and met at the Ocoee Women's Club. In October 1963, the group was officially organized as Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, a congregation of the OPC, calling Rev. Jonathan Male as their pastor.

The congregation purchased ten acres of woodland between orange groves on the north shore of Lake Sherwood, which was then undeveloped land with no paved road leading to the property. Church members felled the trees and cleared the land themselves. In 1969, they hired a contractor to build a small sanctuary and a small Sunday school facility. The lovely white, steepled, Colonial-style building was dedicated as Lake Sherwood Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In one year, they enlarged the Sunday school building and added a kitchen.

Pastor Male moved to Abilene, Texas, to help plant another OP congregation. In 1971, Lake Sherwood called Larry G. Mininger as their second pastor, and he has continued to pastor the church for forty-two years.

As the Lord prospered, buildings were added and the sanctuary seating doubled.



Larry and Gail Mininger (left) with Luder and MaryLou Whitlock

The beautifully wooded location has become a national conference center for OP committees.

The vision of the founders is being carried out as the gospel is preached weekly from the pulpit and people are trained in God's Word through Sunday school, small groups, youth meetings, and Scripture memory work.

A number of Lake Sherwood youth have served around the world with Teen Missions, International. The church has been privileged to help prepare seminarians, youth workers, interns, and associate pastors for ministries around the world. Over twenty-five individuals now in ministry have had some training in the Reformed faith at Lake Sherwood. In addition, members of the congregation have participated in short-term mission trips to Haiti, Belize, Jamaica, Uganda, China, Key West, Appalachia, and inner-city St. Louis. Funds and personnel have also been sent to disaster areas in New York and Japan. The Reformed Youth Conference (RYC), established within the congregation, now serves the Presbytery of the South and beyond.

The church has twice sent its associate pastors to plant daughter churches. Hope OPC was begun in St. Cloud, Florida, and continued for a short time. Reformation OPC in Oviedo, Florida, is prosper-

ing today. Recently Lake Sherwood added Rev. Geoff Downey to its staff as associate pastor.

The services at Lake Sherwood emphasize reverent and joyful traditional worship, expounding Scripture, and applying it directly to people's lives. The congregation is known for its friendliness, hospitality, and service. God's faithfulness and blessings over the past

fifty years encourage the people to trust God for the next fifty years of worship and service to him.

For more information about the church, visit its website at www.lsopc.org.

GEOFF DOWNEY ORDAINED IN ORLANDO

Larry and Gail Mininger

The Presbytery of the South ordained Geoff Downey as a minister and installed him as associate pastor of Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, Florida, on November 15.

At the ordination service, Larry G. Mininger, Lake Sherwood's senior pastor, served as moderator, led the worship, and gave the charge to the congregation. Rev. Jon Falk, associate pastor of Falls Presbyterian Church in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, gave the charge to Mr. Downey, who previously ministered in English and Spanish under Mr. Falk in Uruguay. Rev. Larry Westerveld, pastor of Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, where Mr. Downey interned this past year, preached the sermon.

Mr. Downey completed his bachelor of arts degree at UCLA and his master of divinity at Westminster Seminary California. He has served as pulpit supply in five different states. Earlier he worked in



At Geoff Downey's ordination and installation (from the left): John Muether, Larry Mininger, David Chilton, Jon Falk, Eric Watkins, Geoff Downey, Joel Fick, Larry Westerveld, Stephen Chong, Greg Hoadley, Stephen Oharek, David Smiley

telecommunications and insurance. His wife, Heather, holds a Ph.D. in Spanish literature from Temple University and has been a professor at Eastern University.

As Mr. Downey begins his ministry at Lake Sherwood Church, he shares preaching and pastoral responsibilities with Dr. Mininger and is beginning a new ministry for young adults.

MICHAEL MYERS ORDAINED TO SERVE IN HARTWELL, GEORGIA

Michael Myers

On Friday, December 6, 2013, the Presbytery of the Southeast convened in Royston, Georgia, to ordain and install Michael Myers as an evangelist. He will serve as the organizing pastor of Heritage

Presbyterian Church, a mission work currently meeting in Hartwell, Georgia.

There was a very supportive turnout for the service, with many people coming from (fairly) nearby Greenville, Anderson, and the local community. Lacy Andrews, regional home missionary for the Presbytery, moderated the meeting—a unique privilege both for him and the congregation, since he has developed a strong relationship over the past several years with the members of Heritage. Nicholas T. Batzig, a PCA church planter and Mike's close friend, preached on "The Mission Heart of God" from Revelation 22:17. The charge to the evangelist was given by Peter Van Doodewaard (pastor, Covenant Community OPC, Taylors, S.C.), and Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. (president, Greenville Seminary) charged the congregation.

Pastor Myers's father, David Myers (ruling elder, New Hope OPC, Frederick, Md.), his father-in-law, Dan Wall (ruling elder, Oakbrook Community PCA, Summerville, S.C.), and his brother-in-law Josh Sparkman (pastor, Christ Presbyterian PCA, Mobile, Ala.) were all able to be present and participate in the service.

The Lord blessed the service richly. Please pray that he would continue to lead Pastor Myers and Heritage Presbyterian Church in the way of truth, and that they would find great delight in calling many to come and drink of the waters of life freely.

Mike and his wife, Katy, have been married for five and a half years. They are the proud parents of Nate (4) and Zach (1), and eagerly await the arrival of their third child in May, Lord willing. Mike is a recent graduate of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and has been laboring at Heritage Presbyterian Church since July 2013 as an intern. He is also a chaplain in the South Carolina National Guard.

BRAD PEPPLO ORDAINED AND INSTALLED IN VANDALIA, OHIO

Brad Peppo

On November 8, the Presbytery of Ohio ordained and installed Bradley M. Peppo as an evangelist at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Vandalia, Ohio. The sermon



The participants in the ordination and installation of Michael Myers (center, gray suit) included his father, David Myers (to Mike's right, our left) and his father-in-law, Dan Wall (back row, second from the right).



Charles and Connie Jackson (left) with Brad and Cinnamon Peppo

Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Prior to that, he worked as an attorney and as a school teacher. Brad and his wife, Cinnamon, live in Dayton with their two children, Brayden and Corina.

CROTTS INSTALLED IN GREENSBORO

Hank L. Belfield

at the service was preached by David J. Robbins, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Huntington, West Virginia. Robert J. McKelvey (pastor, Westminster OPC, Windber, Pa.) delivered the charge to Mr. Peppo, and L. Charles Jackson (pastor, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Vandalia, Ohio) charged the congregation. Covenant Church has called Brad to do evangelistic outreach in the north Dayton area and to begin the process of planting a church in nearby Springfield.

For the past two years, Brad has been serving as pastoral intern at Covenant and completing his seminary studies at

On November 8, 2013, the Presbytery of the Southeast installed the Rev. Bryan P. Crotts, formerly a minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, as teacher at Providence Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, North Carolina, to serve alongside the pastor, the Rev. Arie van Eyk.

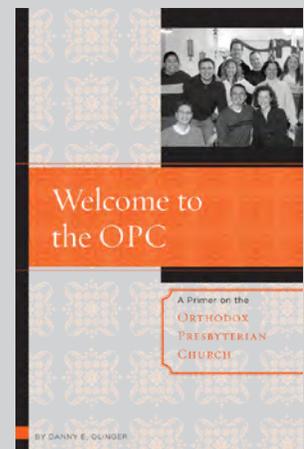
Pastor van Eyk preached the sermon during the installation service. Ruling elder John Perez gave the charge to Mr. Crotts. Gabriel N. E. Fluhrer (pastor in Cary, N.C.) gave the charge to the congregation. Tony Curto (professor at Greenville Seminary) prayed for the newly

installed teacher. Peter Stazen (pastor in Lynchburg, Va.) moderated the meeting, and Peter Van Doodewaard (pastor in Greenville, S.C.) and Brent Ferry (pastor in Mount Airy, N.C.) led other parts of the worship service.

The service was well attended, and there was a spirit of joy and gratitude by all. A brief time of fellowship over a meal followed the service.



Booklet Updated



Welcome to the OPC, a 32-page booklet, has been revised and updated (with more color photos) by Danny E. Olinger, the general secretary for the Committee on Christian Education.

To purchase this booklet, go to our website publications page, store.opc.org (to order using PayPal), or e-mail your order to Pat Clawson at CCEsec@opc.org (to be invoiced). The price is \$1.25, or \$1.00 per copy for 10 or more. For U.S. addresses, there is a flat \$4.00 shipping charge for orders under \$35.00, so consider ordering several items together for free shipping.



Front row: Peter Van Doodewaard, John T. Perez, Bryan P. Crotts, Arie van Eyk, L. Anthony Curto; back row: Hank Belfield, Brenton C. Ferry, Gabriel N. E. Fluhrer, Mike Shields, Peter Stazen II, Christopher B. Cashen

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- **Christ Presbyterian Church** in Etowah, N.C., was dissolved by the Presbytery of the Southeast, effective December 31, as requested by the congregation.
- **Covenant OPC** in Tucson, Ariz., formerly a mission work, was organized as a separate congregation by the Presbytery of Southern California on December 15.
- **Faith Presbyterian Church** in Ocala, Fla., was dissolved by the Presbytery of the South effective December 31, as requested by the congregation.

MINISTERS

- **Christopher J. Chelpka**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Covenant OPC in Tucson, Ariz., on December 15.
- The pastoral relationship between **Roy A. Davenport** and Christ Presbyterian Church in Etowah, N.C., was dissolved by the Presbytery of the Southeast, effective December 31.
- **Timothy G. Herndon**, recently received into the OPC from independency by the Presbytery of New York and New England, was installed on December 6 as an evangelist of Covenant OPC in Barre, Vt., to labor at Providence Presbyterian Church in West Lebanon, N.H., a new mission work of the presbytery.
- The pastoral relationship between **Greg P. Hoadley** and Faith Presbyterian Church in Ocala, Fla., was dissolved as a result of the dissolution of the congregation as of December 31.
- **D. Nathan Holloway**, having been received as a ministerial member from the Presbytery of the Southeast, was installed by the Presbytery of the Dakotas as pastor of Bethlehem Reformed Church in Freeman, S.D., on November 7.
- After **David T. King** resigned as organizing pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Elkton, Md., the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic dissolved his call to be an evangelist, effective June 30, 2013.

• **Joshua P. Lyon** was ordained and installed on November 16 as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Southern California to serve at Grace OPC in Carson, Calif.

• The pastoral relationship between **Steven P. Marusich** and New Covenant Presbyterian Church in Newton Center, Mass., was dissolved by the Presbytery of New York and New England on October 21.

• On November 15, the Presbytery of the Northwest installed **Daniel W. McManigal** as associate pastor of Westminster OPC in Monroe, Wash., to serve as organizing pastor of Hope OPC in Mercer Island, Wash.

• On December 6, **Michael L. Myers** was ordained and installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the Southeast to serve as organizing pastor of Heritage Presbyterian Church in Hartwell, Ga.

• Having been transferred by the Presbytery of the South, **Luis A. Orteza** was received by the Evangel Presbytery of the PCA on November 12 and installed as pastor of Providence Community Church in Birmingham (Homewood), Ala., on December 13.

LETTERS

SHARIA LAW IN THE U.K.

Editor:

According to the review of *The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent* (December, p. 23), “The United Kingdom has allowed Muslims to establish multiple districts where Sharia is the law of the land, superseding the British constitution.” This is false. In the words of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Helen Grant, in a recent public forum at Westminster: “Sharia law has no jurisdiction under the law of England and Wales and the courts do not recognise it. There is no parallel court system in this country, and we have no intention of changing the position in any part of England and Wales.”

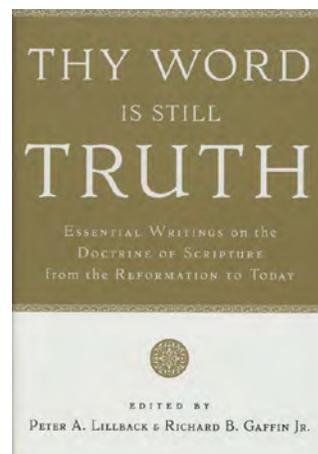
Robert Letham
Bridgend, Wales

Editor's note: The Gatestone Institute reported (online) on April 23, 2013, that a BBC documentary that first aired on April 8, 2013, “proves what has long been suspected: namely, that Sharia courts, which operate in mosques and houses across Britain, routinely issue rulings on domestic and marital issues according to Islamic Sharia law that are at odds with British law. Although Sharia rulings are not legally binding, those subject to the rulings often feel obliged to obey them as a matter of religious belief, or because of pressure from family and community members to do so.... Under the Arbitration Act 1996, Sharia courts in Britain ... are legally recognized as providing a form of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). In addition to marital disputes, Sharia courts rule in conflicts over inheritance, contractual disagreements between Muslim landlords and tenants and sometimes between employees and their employer.”

REVIEWS

Thy Word Is Still Truth: Essential Writings on the Doctrine of Scripture from the Reformation to Today, edited by Peter A. Lillback and Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Published by Westminster Seminary Press and P&R Publishing, 2013. Hardback, 1,424 large pages, list price \$59.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Ryan M. McGraw.

Since the creation of the world, Satan has attacked the doctrine of Scripture vigorously. He tempted Eve to doubt God's Word, and he has done so ever since. Questioning the inspiration, authority, sufficiency, and other attributes of Scripture lies behind most heresies and apostasies in the history



NYNE OPC Women's Retreat

April 11-12 • Pittsfield, Mass.

To request a registration form or to obtain more information about the annual women's retreat of the Regional Church of New York and New England, which will be held at Lakeside Christian Camp and Conference Center in Pittsfield, Mass., contact Elise Pasqualino at: womens-retreat-committee@hotmail.com.

of the church. Maintaining a biblical doctrine of Scripture is essential to the very being of Christianity and to our communion with the triune God and spiritual vitality.

Thy Word Is Still Truth is a massive compendium (sixty-four chapters) of Reformed teaching from Martin Luther to the present day. The editors introduce each chapter with a brief historical introduction in order to demonstrate the importance of the selected material. Roughly half of the book covers the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The remainder of the work divides authors by century and country, with a special emphasis on writings by professors at Westminster Theological Seminary (pp. 895–1347). This last section reflects the fact that one of the overarching purposes of this book is to underscore the seminary's strong stance on the Reformed doctrine of Scripture. The title of the book is itself adapted self-consciously from E. J. Young's book *Thy Word is Truth* (1957) (p. xiii).

The primary strength of this book is that it is a large collection of much of the best Reformed literature on the doctrine of Scripture. It includes the most well-known names in the Reformed tradition. This gives readers a taste of the primary teaching of the Reformed tradition on this subject. Moreover, the large section that includes present and past faculty from Westminster Seminary makes a clear statement regarding where the seminary stands on this vital issue. This material covers recent controversies that have

surrounded former faculty members at the seminary.

The weaknesses of the book mirror its strengths. By choosing the most well-known Reformed authors on Scripture, the editors limited their resources to the most readily available material. With the exception of a handful of chapters, this reviewer already owns almost all of the works cited. For example, most of the section on Reformed orthodoxy comes from Francis Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. This is an outstanding selection, but it would have been helpful to include instead significant authors that readers may not otherwise know of, such as Edward Leigh or John Downam. For a volume of this size, it would have been useful as well to include pre-Reformation authors in order to give a more robust representation of church history. However, for those with smaller libraries or who want a single volume of primary sources on the Reformed doctrine of Scripture, these features will not be a weakness.

May the Lord use this book as an essential Reformed reader on the doctrine of Scripture and may he strengthen the faith of the church as a result.

Extravagant Grace: God's Glory Displayed in your Weakness, by Barbara Duguid. Published by P&R, 2013. Paperback, 240 pages, list price \$12.99. Reviewed by OP member Maureen Sutton.

Barbara Duguid's book *Extravagant Grace* has received rave reviews from thoughtful Christian writers. It deals with honest questions she has wrestled with concerning the presence of remaining sin in a believer's life.

Her answers flow chiefly from her study of *Select Letters of John Newton*. She includes many real-life stories. Her book is written in a simple, conversational style that is inviting. It is undergirded by her sound theological knowledge, widespread reading of other Christian writers, and familiarity with the historic Reformed

Confessions.

In the preface, Duguid speaks of her experience as a pastor's wife, meeting Christians who are discouraged and depressed because they still sin. In Duguid's words, "The sins they try hardest to conquer and triumph over are often the very ones they cannot defeat" (p. 17). She attributes much of the blame for this on preaching that focuses too much on defeating sin. This kind of preaching conveys the false illusion that personal growth in holiness depends upon our faith and our efforts to stop sinning, rather than upon a work of grace accomplished solely by God.

She stresses that self-effort to overcome sin in our lives is not what God intends for us. Rather, we should progressively realize that God's "extravagant grace" is such that we can have joy in the midst of great failure and even "thrive in the face of great failure."

Duguid's main emphasis is that although you, as a genuine believer, do and will frequently lapse into sin, this does not mean that you are unsaved or that God is disappointed with you. She urges you to remember that when you sin, Christ has perfectly obeyed for you. So a believer is "free to struggle and fail," or "free to grow slowly," or even "not to grow at all." So accept God's wisdom in calling you to this struggle and count on his faithfulness in bringing you safely home. And trust that God does change his people. In the midst of your sin, he is always for you and not against you.

Overall, Duguid explores two biblical tracks: Christ's finished work for us, and our obligation to mourn over and wrestle against sin in our lives. At points, these two tracks are not clearly distinguished, which can lead to misunderstanding. In general, however, this is a book well worth reading and pondering. Duguid has her spiritual feet planted firmly in a down-to-earth take, both on the powerful reality of our remaining sin and also on the wonder that God has chosen to display his glory in our weakness.





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