


NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

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Always // *David J. Robbins*

JULY 2020

10 Alone, But Never
Truly Alone
// *Mark E. Richline*



IT'S COLOMBIA, NOT COLUMBIA

BY DANNY E. OLINGER // 3

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in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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The River of Life Food Pantry has been a part of the diaconal ministry of River of Life OPC in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, practically since the church began. Since COVID-19, its twice-a-month distribution has increased from 115 families to 180-200 families. Clients now must line up outside the pantry and then be checked in by volunteers in masks and gloves. Pastor William Slack prays over a loudspeaker to begin the ministry. Each distribution requires hours of volunteer effort before, during, and after. Pictured: Tina Slack assists with filling and moving bags of food for clients.



IT'S COLOMBIA, NOT COLUMBIA



DANNY E. OLINGER // “It’s Colombia, not Columbia.” Although I stood with my feet planted on the ground in this beautiful Latin American country, the popular t-shirt staring me in the face spoke volumes about just how little I knew about it. In preparation for addressing Reformed Christians in Colombia on the topic of

Christian education, I had written “Colombia” on all of my lessons.

What I found out in my week teaching in Colombia on behalf of Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps of the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM) was not just the correct spelling and pronunciation of the name, but the commitment of the Reformed Christians in that land to Jesus Christ. I also learned more about the efforts of CFM in seeking to assist these believers so that more confessional Presbyterian churches might be established in Colombia.

Eager Questions

Douglas Clawson, associate general secretary of CFM, and I arrived in Bucaramanga, population one million, for a conference hosted by the three Reformed Christian Churches in the Santander province. We were soon told that the conference had both been moved up by one day and lengthened to four days in total. There had been great interest in

the conference, and since the added day was a national holiday when more people could attend, the change was made.

That first night, every seat was filled, and questions flowed after my presentation on the implications for Christian education in Jesus’s Great Commission in Matthew 28—great, penetrating, insightful questions. Two young women, Camila Duque and Tatiana Quintero, impressed me with their pedagogical queries on how to present Christ to covenant youth. Both public school teachers, they were new to the Reformed faith and were excited about what they were

learning. I was later told that they were always inviting people to church and were eager to teach Christ to children.

The next day, Douglas and I met with Pastor John Sandoval, the organizer of the conference. A decade earlier, Pastor Sandoval and around ten others started meeting in his home. Their core group eventually formed the Reformed Christian Church of Bucaramanga, the first conservative Reformed church there. Now, in his words, “we have about 150 members, thanks to the Lord!”

Since that time, the church-planting efforts of the congregation in Bucaramanga have extended to the neighboring cities Piedecuesta and Floridablanca. My translator for the lectures, Diego Tellez, was a member of the Piedecuesta congregation. Douglas and I later found out just how courageous Diego and his wife, Ivonne, had been in joining the small group of believers at Reformed Christian Church of Piedecuesta. Ivonne’s parents were co-pastors of one of the largest Pentecostal churches in



Bogotá church member Camilo Hernández (from left) with Andrés Espinoza and translator Christian Castro

Bucaramanga. It was assumed that Diego would be the successor to that ministry and to all the financial benefits that flowed from it, but Diego and Ivonne instead embraced the doctrines of grace in salvation, became cessationist in their understanding of Scripture, and left that church.

Pastor Sandoval stated that his prayer for each congregation was that the Lord would raise up ruling elders and deacons. He also asked us to pray that he and the congregations would “remain faithful to the Word of the Lord and the Westminster Standards, as there are many influences from the United States that are little interested in being conservative in doctrine and practice.”

Bringing the Message of Christ from the Text

After the fourth session, Douglas and I said goodbye to our new friends in Christ and traveled to Colombia’s largest city, Bogotá, where I repeated the conference at Iglesia Cristiana Bíblica Raah, a congregation that Douglas had visited numerous times. Pastor Andrés Espinoza and his wife, Carolina, embraced Douglas and warmly greeted me. Pastor Espinoza said, “The church is very grateful to God for these seven years of friendship and fraternity with the OPC. We have been blessed by the conferences that they have brought us; they have allowed us to grow in the understanding of the Reformed faith.”

Part of the reason that I had been invited to talk in both Bucaramanga and Bogotá is that there is a scarcity of Reformed Christian education materials translated into the Spanish language. Douglas and I presented the Raah congregation with a Spanish translation of the four volumes of S. G. De Graaf’s *Promise and Deliverance*. When asked what books I recommend for teaching children a Reformed, Christ-centered, covenantal view, I have always an-

swered, “Get De Graaf’s *Promise and Deliverance*.” So, it was a joy to deliver this into eager hands.

I shared with them who De Graaf was, the history behind the volumes, and the methodology that he advocated in teaching. A Christian Reformed minister in the Netherlands, De Graaf originally published the volumes in 1936 to help Sunday school teachers present the stories of the Bible in a Christ-fashioned way. In particular, he wanted to help them tell the history of the Bible to covenant young people. You use whatever details the biblical account offers, you get the children involved,



Olinger with the Sunday school class

and you “paint pictures.” This form of storytelling engages the children, but its primary purpose is not to amuse. Neither is the purpose to reduce the text to a moral. The primary purpose is to bring the message of Christ from the text. The Scriptures speak of Christ, and the teacher’s aim in telling Bible history should be the same as God’s purpose in recording it for us in his Word.

De Graaf believed that such an approach was not only true to the text, but also confronted the typical sin of a child’s putting himself or herself first. A child often believes that “life is about me” and only has room in his or her life for God as long as God comes second. Christian education endeavors to show the children God’s centrality in all of life.

Wanting to see this method firsthand, Pastor Espinoza and Elders William Rojas and Fredy Ramirez asked if I could teach a Sunday school class for the children on the Lord’s Day with the parents and teachers present. I immediately agreed and told them that I would teach the story of David and Goliath from 1 Samuel 17.

The children at my feet, and translator Diane Rachel Torres Mizar by my side, I asked them why the story of David and Goliath was in the Bible. Is this story in the Bible so that we might have the courage to stand up to the bullies of life? No, the passage shows us that victory is the Lord’s. Just as the Lord brings deliverance through his anointed servant, David, the most insignificant of figures, so also the Lord brings deliverance through his anointed servant, Christ. Christ is held in no regard and despised by others, but it is through his work that we are saved.

In 1 Samuel 17, the armies of the Philistines and Israel are facing one another in the Valley of Elah. That none from Israel go forth to fight in the name of the Lord is a sign of the decline of faith in Israel. When King Saul agrees to allow David to fight, he says, “Go, and the Lord be with you.” These words are everything to David, but Saul does not really believe that victory is through the Lord. He immediately offers David his armor, his trust being in earthly might.

When Goliath sees David, he despises him as a “stick” fit only for a dog. But Israel is delivered through this one who is insignificant in the eyes of others. David goes forth and slays Goliath. It is not David’s courage, nor his skill with the sling, that makes him the victor. It is the fact that the Lord is with him. David goes forth in the name of the Lord of hosts against Goliath,

that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this as-

sembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand. (1 Sam. 17:46–47)

We see here a picture of the coming Christ, the deliverer of his people. We are more than conquerors because the one who was rejected and despised has achieved the victory for us over his and our enemies. We go forward in faith trusting in him.

The Need for Reformed Resources in Spanish

The Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps conducts its work in that same faith, hoping to assist pastors, elders, and other church members in sister churches in Colombia that they might see the centrality of Jesus Christ in all of life. Over the past eight years, Orthodox Presbyterian ministers David Crum, Stephen Larson, Geoffrey Downey, Stephen Payson, Aijalon Church, James Jordan, Lane Tipton, George Scipione, Carlos Cruz, Chad Van Dixhoorn, and Jonathan Falk, as well as ruling elders David Nakhla and Miguel Flower, have accompanied Douglas to Colombia, teaching on various aspects of Christian ministry, but always endeavoring to show the people Jesus. With that focus in mind, they have taught on books of the Bible from the Old and New Testaments; the doctrines of God, man, Christ, the covenants, soteriology, and eschatology; world vision; the diaconate; and the Westminster Standards. The constant response to the instruction presented to the Colombian believers through the Mobile Theological Mentoring program proceeds in a two-fold manner. First, there is such joy in hearing the Word of God clearly expounded. OPC instructors receive hugs and handshakes along with such words as “your teaching of the Reformed faith has opened up the Bible to us like never before.” But, second, the immediate follow-up question is, “Where can we get the materials that you mention in your talks published in our own language?” Due to a lack of available Reformed

material in the Spanish language, Re-

formed believers in Colombia struggle with the choice between more faithful materials on the one hand and more readily available popular materials on the other hand.

In my final talk, I asked everyone at Iglesia Cristiana Bíblica Raah what the Christian education vow of both their church and the OPC is. The answer comes from the second baptismal vow: “Do you promise to teach diligently to [your child] the principles of our holy Christian faith, revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and summarized in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this church?” If children are to see that every passage

of God's Word is primarily about Jesus and not about themselves, their parents and pastors and elders and teachers need to see it more clearly first.

Pray for these dear believers as they endeavor to raise up their children in the Lord. Pray that they will have Reformed Sunday school materials, in Spanish, that are both Christ-centered and covenantal to use in teaching their children. And, pray for Douglas Clawson and CFM as they seek to help the brothers and sisters in Colombia to show forth Christ in all that they do. □

The author is general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education.

Letter from a Colombian Pastor by Andrés Espinoza

Dear brothers, receive greetings from our churches in Colombia. As always, we are grateful to the Lord for the willingness of the OPC to support the work in our country and for your prayers.

The grace of the Lord has sustained us, despite everything that is happening in the world due to COVID-19. There are no sick among us, nor those in need. Even though we had anticipated a drop in the attendance of the church, the opposite has happened. The brothers have been very generous and so far, nothing has been lacking for the pastors of the presbytery.

We have been in mandatory confinement for two months. During this time, the Lord has helped us as a church to show the love of Christ to our brothers in need and to have a greater commitment to the work of the ministry. Families who've lost their jobs or suffered from shortages have been adopted by families who are able to care for them. Our churches and the presbytery have continued with all their activities in a virtual way, including the conferences that we had scheduled for this year. They doubled their efforts in discipleship and counseling, since working and studying at home have brought new challenges for church families.

Following the advice of David Nakhla, we have made plans to anticipate the worst, expecting the best from God. These plans include changes to our budgets to spend only on necessary things and to save for what is coming worldwide. The Lord has also given us grace with the leases of the church premises. We have made good arrangements to continue the work.

We have also written to the government to request to be allowed to meet while following the same security protocols that have been requested from restaurants, gyms, and banks. We miss being able to commune with our brothers and to sit together around the Lord's table together.

We ask you to pray: 1) for the government to respond positively to our request; 2) for the Lord to help us to use our resources wisely during these times; and 3) that our brothers who have lost their jobs and are being affected by COVID may be wise to undertake new jobs.

Beloved, may the grace of the Lord continue to sustain you. We pray for you.

AND BEHOLD, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS



DAVID J. ROBBINS // “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Jesus is with his people. Our faith and our evangelism depend entirely upon his presence. The church that Jesus said he would build would utterly fall and the Great Commission fail if he left us to struggle on alone.

His ascension does not mean that he is absent: by his Spirit, in all his power and glory, the Lord himself is with us and in us and for us. And if God is for us, can anyone be against us? “Behold,” Jesus says. By faith, he calls his church to see and to observe, not only that he is risen, but that he is with us. And if he is with us, his Word and Spirit should be evidently at work in us.

What a gracious thing it is to perceive Jesus in and with his church in Karamoja, Uganda!

I Am with You Against the Powers of Darkness

Much has changed in the twenty years that the OPC has labored in Karamoja. We are all so thankful that cattle raiding has mostly stopped for now and that there is peace in the region. It is rare to hear gunshots these days. Yet while battles between the various tribes and clans are not common anymore, our great adversary, the devil, remains violently opposed to the reign

of our King and still imprisons many in witchcraft, animistic sacrifice, and chronic sin. We are at war; yet Jesus is with his church, and his power is infinitely greater.

There have been times when the enemy seemed to be working especially hard. About two years ago, we introduced the community to a tract explaining that because Christ came and sacrificed his life for us, we must trust in him and leave behind the sacrifices of the culture that do not please God. This provoked a reaction. A church member even heard some men discussing under

the tree a plot to curse the mission for this teaching. But the Lord confused their plans: none of them were willing to sacrifice the cow that was needed for the curse. We thank God for that. There have been other times when church members resisted intense pressure from unbelieving family to practice witchcraft; or were able to persuade others not to offer a sacrifice; or prayed, sometimes all night, and the power of witchcraft or apparent demonic activity was frustrated. God’s people here have real faith because they know that their Jesus is really with them.



A worship service in the village of Nakasien

I Am with You in Trial and Temptation

A common saying here is *eyai Akuj*, “God is there.” This is what you say when a person is sick or has some problem at home. Sickness, sometimes severe and debilitating, is very common in Karamoja. Death is familiar. I have lost track of how many funerals I have been a part of these past four years. God is

there, it is certainly true, but only his people know the sweetness and the power of the truth that Jesus is not just there, but also *with* us.

This past year a dear sister badly broke her foot, but that did not stop her from coming to worship every week—dragging her cast through the thick mud that spanned the half-mile between her home and the church. Her testimony of love for Christ in her trouble is amazing proof that Jesus is with us, always. Another brother who has often been very sick continues to humbly trust the Lord. Others who have been assaulted by neighbors or have had their crops devastated by careless shepherds have forgiven for Jesus’s sake. And as they do, many take comfort not in platitudes but in the Word of God.

This is especially encouraging because outward trials and inward temptations often go together. If you owe money that you must urgently repay, or if you don’t know what you will feed your children tomorrow, or if your neighbors are harassing you, then anxieties begin to mount and temporary

escape through alcohol can be very appealing.

Drunkenness is a rampant and “acceptable” sin here. For a person to admit to drunkenness and accept the shame of it requires special, unusual grace, especially in this culture. So it amazed me when a brother who I knew was struggling with this sin finally admitted it in front of several other men and promised to leave alcohol entirely. In another situation, a brother whose life was in total bondage to alcohol came to his senses, grieving and repentant. Before the church, he confessed his sin and his determination to follow Christ.

Not every story is so heartening. Some members of the local church are under discipline for grievous sin. Two were recently excommunicated. Yet there is evidence that God’s people here and around the village of Nakaale are growing in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Their trials are great, but they love the Word of God, and their path is growing brighter and brighter in Jesus, because he is with us.

I Am with You as You Go with the Gospel

Such assurance! *I am with you.* We need not fear: our Savior is present, even to the end of the age. Our brothers and sisters here have growing confidence in his promise and growing obedience to his command to go and make disciples.

Last year, some mature young men in our local congregation began hosting conferences

for area youth. They have done most of the speaking and are growing in their ability to open the Word of God with clarity and conviction. Lochap Emmanuel, who graduated from the mission’s Timothy Discipleship program, recently exhorted in public worship. Others have been instrumental in leading public worship and exhorting in the nearby village of Nakasien, where last year ten children were baptized. We rejoice that the Lord is raising up such men to lead his church! Please pray for their protection and growth in Christ. (Reaching and discipling the young women

around Nakaale has been more difficult, but even in this, we see Jesus beginning to work. Please pray for this.)

More and more doors for the gospel are opening, and now it is the Karimojong who are becoming missionaries. Four times so far, young men in the church have gone to a group of villages up the mountain to evangelize. Every time, the reception has been truly amazing. Other villages closer to us are also opening up, and our little band of evangelists is thrilled. One place is even requesting worship services. Other church members are gathering their neighbors to read the Bible, going to funerals to share the comfort of the gospel, or helping one another when there is a need. There is a cost to all of these things, but Christ is worthy, and he is with us. We do not need to be afraid.

Jesus is with his church. He is the joy and the strength of his people everywhere, and for all time. May he be seen in his church in Karamoja. Pray for us. □

The author is an OP missionary in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda. Although the missionaries in Uganda are now coping with government lockdowns and other restrictions due to COVID-19, this piece was written in early 2020 and does not reflect these new difficulties.



Lochap Emmanuel exhorting with Maruk Mark translating



Evangelism team (left to right) Lochap Emmanuel, Loduk Joseph, Lokiru Timo, Chegem Mark



Robbins baptizing in the village of Nakasien

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO DEATH



CARL R. TRUEMAN // One of the most striking and memorable of William Blake's many wonderful paintings is *The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve*. Here the artist imagines the moment when Adam and Eve find the corpse of Abel, the first victim not simply of murder but of fratricide.

To the left, Cain, terrified either by what he has done or the fact that he has been discovered, flees the scene, his head surrounded by fire, symbolizing judgment, and the background—a dark, volcanic sky—intensifying this. To the right, a horrified Adam stares in disbelief and accusation at his fleeing son. And in front of Adam, Eve bows in disconsolate despair over Abel's body. Her face is hidden, but that simply enhances the agony of the moment: Blake knew that a mother's grief in such circumstances transcends any artist's ability to give it expression. The hiddenness of her tears reveals the depth of her agony.

The painting is, of course, a work of the poet's imagination. The Bible does not record the pain and sorrow that Adam and Eve must have felt when they realized Abel was dead. Though death was an intrusion into God's created order, Moses does not care to delineate the emotional pain and confusion of this, the first murder, and of these, the first parents. As Blake

knew that Eve's heartbreak was revealed more dramatically by hiding her face, so Genesis does not domesticate the moment by verbalizing it.

Grieving in the Face of Death

I have thought about Genesis a lot during the past few months because Moses's narrative of Creation and Fall has to be foundational to any Christian response to the coronavirus. Yet, in this context, what has come to strike me most about the early chapters is what is absent, what is not mentioned: grieving in the face of death. It is not that grief would not have been there—Blake's picture surely captures something of what Eve must have felt. It is the fact that Moses chose to omit it.

Why? Well, any answer inevitably involves speculation, but perhaps a later chapter provides a clue: Genesis 23, particularly verse 2. It is there that we find the first account of weeping in the face of death when we are told that Abraham mourned and wept over the death of his beloved wife, Sarah.

This is striking. Genesis casts a veil over the agony of Adam and Eve when Abel is torn from them, and yet here Abraham, the father of the faithful, the man to whom the great promise of God's covenant love to his people is made, is seen lamenting for his departed wife.

In context, this might seem odd. Adam and Eve know what they have lost in their expulsion from the garden. The promise given to them is one that is arguably quite vague and certainly somewhat experientially muted in comparison to the judgment that has fallen upon them and of which they would be reminded every day. In contrast, Abraham knows that God has promised to make his seed a light to all the nations. And in the aftermath of Genesis 22, he knows that God is powerful, mysterious, and will care for him and his offspring even in situations that are about as dark and confusing as is possible to imagine. And, yet, he is the first man described as crying and mourning over the death of a loved one.

That Moses chose this moment to point to this basic element of human existence—that death wreaks havoc not just on the one who dies but also on those left behind—is very significant. In doing so, he not only underlines the fact that the gospel promise does not take away the pain of death; he also subtly suggests that the gospel promise may actually intensify it.

This is an important lesson for Christians to learn. I have encountered many Christians who struggle to know how to respond to death. Everyone who has ever lost a loved one knows that the situation involves agony and painful emptiness. And, yet, there is often a nagging thought in our minds that we believe in the forgiveness of sins, that we believe in the resurrection and the life everlasting, and that we should therefore not feel the pain of loss and the bleakness of bereavement, particularly if the person died in Christ. The most tragic examples of this are those funerals where the broken-hearted greet people with forced smiles and barely contained tears, doubly tormented by their loss and by the guilt that they experience in feeling that loss.

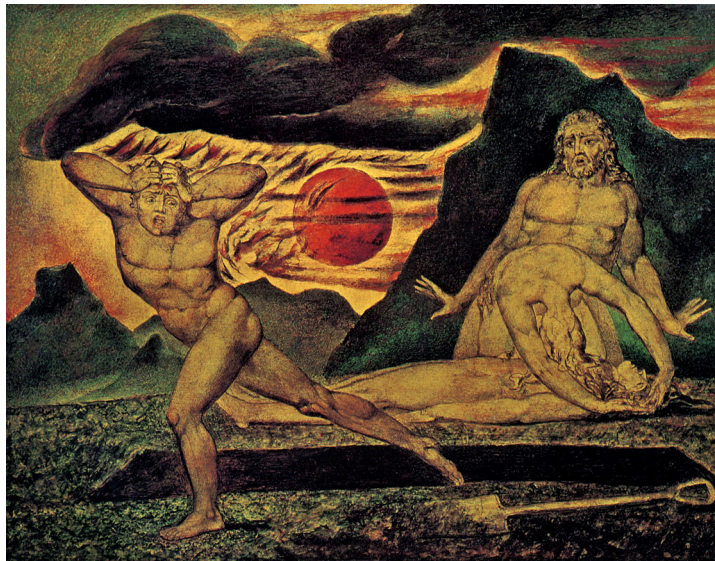
Yet, the Genesis narrative is the first sign that this is not the case, that the promise does not cancel out death but rather sets it in a context that makes its immediate impact more devastating. As Abraham mourns Sarah, he of all people on the face of the earth knows that this situation should not be, that his love should not have been thus torn from his arms, and that he should not be having to face the future without her.

The Mystery of Christ's Tears

What we see in Abraham is only intensified and made yet more counter-intuitive in the Lord Jesus Christ. As

he stands at the tomb of Lazarus, having just declared that he is himself the resurrection and the life, Christ weeps. If it is odd that the first act of mourning recorded in Scripture is that of the recipient of the covenant promise, how much more mysterious and perhaps even disturbing is it that the one who is the very fulfillment of that promise weeps at the tomb of his friend?

While the mystery of Christ's tears surely surpasses human finite understanding, one thing is clear: the



The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve
William Blake / Public domain

promise does not cancel the present pain of death or circumvent grieving and lamentation. In fact, the path from Abraham to Christ strongly suggests the opposite, that knowledge of the promise and the final victory of God over death actually makes the reality of death that much more devastating because death is that which should never have been. Abraham knows something of what God must do to right the wrong of death. Jesus knows exactly what God must do to right the wrong of death. And, in both cases, they are therefore aware of the full tragedy of the fallen human condition.

What lesson might we draw from this? Perhaps the most obvious is that we should not seek to sentimentalize

or rationalize death in some vain effort to make it make sense. It defies such categories. It is an alien, unwanted intruder into this world, turning what was meant to be a paradise into a vale of tears. We should never pretend otherwise.

We should therefore grieve the loss of loved ones. It is good to have happy memories of those who have died. It is appropriate to remember with gratitude the joy they brought us and the wisdom they imparted. But their deaths cannot be canceled out by “celebrations of life” whose ultimate purpose seems to be to distract the bereaved from the full horror of what has happened.

Yet, as Paul says, we grieve but not as those without hope. Even as he wept at the tomb, Christ knew what he was about to do. He did not stand passive in his sorrow but rather pointed by his words and then action toward the glorious hope of the resurrection. And therein lies the task of the church: she is to help her members understand the true horror of death and never sentimentalize or pretend that

such does not exist—that would be an unrealistic, false, and thus disastrous strategy. But, while giving death its due, she must not stop there but point her people to the promise of the empty tomb and the final resurrection. That is a hard balance, particularly when most of us tend toward doom and gloom or Pollyannaish optimism. But the figures of Abraham and, above all, Christ surely require that such balance be struck. Ours is not the despair of Eve in Blake's painting. It is both more painful and yet paradoxically more hopeful. □

The author is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and professor of biblical and religious studies at Grove City College.

ALONE, BUT NEVER TRULY ALONE

// MARK E. RICHLINE



Sunday morning worship at Salvos por Gracia in Montevideo, Uruguay

We have all felt it. As kids when the lights went out, we pulled up the covers and went to sleep as fast as we could so we weren't lying alone in the dark. As adults, we sit in the pew in a crowded church but still feel alone. We all face loneliness at one time or another.

In our worst moments our aloneness grips us with icy cold fingers that hold us tight and won't let go. It leaves us feeling like nobody cares or no one listens, and that even our heavenly Father has left us to ourselves.

One of God's afflicted people lamented, "I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places; I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop" (Ps. 102:6-7). In his suffering, David cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from . . . the words of my groaning?" (Ps. 22:1).

We grope around in the darkness of our aloneness and

find that God seems out of reach.

Living with Eyes Fixed on Jesus

Certain changes took place in our mission at the beginning of last year, leaving me as the sole ordained missionary leading a growing church in the city of Montevideo, Uruguay. I found myself preaching and leading worship, teaching membership classes, making challenging decisions, resolving church conflicts, and training leadership, while developing curriculum in Spanish and teaching a seminary class for the first time. In addition, we faced a series of challenges with the church building. I often felt overwhelmed and isolated.

God's words to Joshua as he faced leading Israel alone are just as much for me—"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9). As Jesus sent his disciples into the world, he assured them, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). This promise is as much mine as it was theirs. God's amazing promise of closeness is grounded in his finished work of reconciliation. Our Jesus took on himself our aloneness, being rejected by his people and deserted by the ones he was closest to, betrayed by one of them and denied by another. He was left suffering alone on a cross where his own Father had forsaken him. Jesus suffered the eternal separation from God and from all that is good—the suffering that we deserve for our sinfulness. His once-and-for-all-time being forsaken by the Father frees us from being truly alone ever again.

When the cold, dark despair of loneliness creeps over us, we look to Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). Over the past year, I found that the more I fixed my eyes on Jesus, the more I rested in the peace of his presence.

As my eyes were on Jesus, he graciously turned my gaze



Baptism of a new member



Greeting a new member

toward all those he placed around me whom I was neglecting to appreciate. My wife, Jeni, has been here for me, as she has been for the past twenty-six years, walking with me through trying times. Our children here and in the States have constantly provided me with sweet encouragements.

I also turned to Steve and Carrie Hill, our missionary associates who served with us last year. Our times of devotion and fellowship around freshly baked cinnamon rolls strengthened my weary heart. They worked faithfully alongside us, taking initiative to meet the needs of our church members.

Back home, the Lord was moving others to keep me encouraged in love and prayer. In one of my toughest moments, my spirit lifted when a longtime friend mentioned that he had been praying every day for the work here. Another good friend from one of our California churches recently mentioned that they pray for our family in every evening service. Our general secretaries of the Committee on Foreign Missions have come to my rescue several times with counsel and prayer. Two brothers from my presbytery have also regularly taken time out of their busy schedules to call and encourage our mission. Then I think of all of you who have faithfully sent us birthday and anniversary cards for years. I have come to realize that I will never fully appreciate just how many of his children God moves to remember our Montevideo ministry. I am not alone.

A Church Family in Montevideo

At the same time, our Lord showed me how he is transforming our five-year-old church plant from a missionary-driven work to a vibrant church family directed by its own leadership. Every Sunday from April through November, we welcomed at least one new visitor to our worship service. During the week, many local people stop in from the street looking for assistance, which we provide as we are able.

Believers who recently moved from troubled places like Cuba and Venezuela have appreciated our Reformed ministry and have become members. Another Cuban couple has recently started attending. A Venezuelan couple is meeting with me for premarital counseling. One young Uruguayan just publicly professed her faith in Christ and was baptized. She now brings her mother to worship. Three others who have been attending for a while have expressed their gratitude for the church and will soon begin a membership class.

Church members are engaging in the work—cleaning and maintaining the building, greeting people at the door, providing snacks after services, encouraging one another with Scripture texts on social media, running online radio broadcasts, and inviting others to church activities. Our two elder nominees are taking on more responsibilities in assisting me in ministry. One of them has assured me that he is not a “bench-warmer” and consistently looks for more ways to serve. He now leads the church in evangelizing residents in a local retirement home. Two other men are leading a monthly men’s group where we study A.W. Pink’s *The Attributes of God*.

Two of our sisters are also starting a monthly women’s group. I delight to see others lead these ministries and thrill to watch our Lord work in and through his people.

We wait on the Lord to send us another missionary family to help us mature this work while beginning another one. Meanwhile I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus. Every day I seek him for his wisdom in this ministry and give him all my thanks for the ones he has placed around me. I have never been truly alone, and I never will be.

The author is an Orthodox Presbyterian missionary in Montevideo, Uruguay.

COVID-19 Ministry and Relief

Montevideo’s economy is suffering due to COVID-19; the closure of businesses has made work very scarce. To respond, Salvos por Gracia began a weekly food distribution effort at their location in the center of town at the beginning of March. Every Thursday, members of the church and community come up to the church window to talk, pray, and receive a basket of food including flour, oil, sugar, rice, beans or lentils, pasta, sauce, tuna, milk, tea, jelly, and a bar of soap. Since March, the church has distributed over fifty food baskets.

“The response has been amazing,” Jeni Richline writes. “One family insisted on cooking us a hot meal made from the simple ingredients in the food basket. ‘Praise the Lord’ was their reaction last week after accepting the food. Another week, I received a message on my phone: ‘Thank you, we’re excited to have black beans, Aleluya, Aleluya!’”

The ministry has also been an opportunity to make contacts with others who are distributing resources. One business donated hotdogs and sausage for the church to give along with the rice, flour, beans, and oil. Another couple let the Richlines know that they could send people to them for a hot meal once a week.

In May, having exhausted their funds, Salvos por Gracia requested relief aid from the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, which gave an initial gift of \$1,000. The church hopes to continue this ministry of giving baskets of food for six more months. If you would like to contribute to the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Fund, go to give.opc.org.



Mark Richline distributing food

REVIEW: *THE THEOLOGY OF THE HUGUENOT REFUGE*

// WILLIAM EDGAR

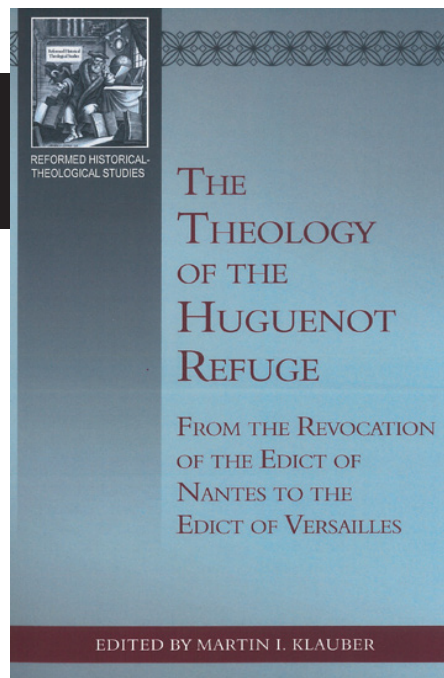
The French have given Protestantism a mixed reception. A number of years ago the Minister of Finance, Alain Peyrefitte, himself a Roman Catholic, wrote a two-volume work entitled *Le mal français* (French evil, or what is wrong with France). His conclusion? The banishing of the French Calvinists known as the Huguenots in the eighteenth century. In so doing, France missed a great chance to benefit from their talents and hard work, and in the bargain delayed—by decades, if not centuries—the move into modernity with its commitment to pluralism.

Today in France, awareness is better, but still low. The press regularly characterizes Evangelicals as a sect or cult. Fortunately, certain Evangelicals with credibility, such as scholar Sebastien Fath, have been able to counter this view with more or less success. There is still polarization. Charles de Gaulle's wife, Yvonne, would never, on principle, invite a Protestant into the house. When I was a youth, growing up in Paris, our literature textbook cited John Calvin as a good writer but obsessed with predestination. In 2009, the five hundredth anniversary of Calvin's death, many French people suddenly realized that this brilliant man was French, not Swiss! And in recent surveys, the French sometimes realize that they have great approval of Protestant values. Often without being familiar with their history, French people will tick "Huguenot sympathies" on surveys.

A careful reading of *The Theology of the Huguenot Refuge*, edited by Martin Klauber, should bring a good deal of light to



Reviewer William Edgar



the subject. Studies abound on the theology developed during the Edict of Nantes, which granted Protestants substantial rights in France in 1598. One thinks of Bernard Cottret's magisterial book, *Le siècle de l'édit de Nantes* (Paris: CNRS, 2018). And volumes have been written on the history of the "Desert" period in Huguenot history, but there is relatively little focusing on the theology of that Desert era. The present volume goes a long way toward filling that aperture.

This anthology comprises the contributions of eleven authors. While there are a few drawbacks to an anthology, such as overlap and some—a very few—omissions, there is remarkable harmony in this volume. It is organized into two major sections, (1) the history of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and ensuing decades and (2) various significant individuals considered. The first essay, by Jeanine Olson, is one of the best short introductions to the history of the Huguenots that I have encountered. She not only covers the period under review but brings us up to date in France and the world. The other four historical examinations are first-rate. Then in the second part, the choice of figures to study is good, including Pierre Jurieu, David Martin, Claude Brousson, Jacques Basnage, and Antoine Court. I could have wished for a piece on (or mention of) Marie Durand, prisoner in the Tower of Constance for thirty-eight years, whose letters to Paul Rabaut and others are deeply spiritual. But where would the list stop?

Some Huguenots stayed in France, but many fled to places such as Holland or Prussia or Great Britain, from which they could minister in absentia to those who stayed. Nearly all the persons discussed had great concerns for Reformed Christians in France living under heavy persecution. Often writing from Holland, the

exiled leaders encouraged the people with different degrees of severity. “Nicodemism,” or converting to Protestantism while outwardly continuing Roman Catholic practices, was sometimes roundly condemned, but at other times considered a necessity. If the Apostle Paul could legitimately escape persecution by traveling from place to place, so could the Huguenots. Claude Brousson, the “bellicose dove,” declared that God was punishing France for persecuting Protestants. After fleeing the country several times, he was finally caught and died a horrible death, but defiantly quoting the church’s most notable martyrs.

Many engaged with apocalyptic concerns. Some of the Huguenot prophets were rare birds, claiming the voice of God’s Spirit to preach or even trying to reproduce biblical miracles. A number, including Jurieu, Basnage, and Daniel de Superville, engaged in interpreting the times using language from Daniel or Revelation.

During the eighteenth century, polemics were strong. Christian apologetics against Roman Catholics were widespread. David Martin and Jacques Abbadie are typical of Huguenot apologists who reacted to the rationalism of the

Enlightenment, arguing as they do for biblical authority in matters of history and cosmology. Protestants fought among themselves as well. Several of the more conservative Huguenots debated Pierre Bayle’s ideas. Others, such as Jacques Saurin, were more retiring, preaching on the love of God without revisiting the controversies of the previous century about his sovereignty and our free will.



The Huguenot cross

While there were a few published theological tomes, often funded by friends from Holland, Switzerland, or Great Britain, much of the material presented here, understandably, is either in sermons or in correspondence. An entire chapter is devoted to a single sermon by Antoine Court, the most influential pastor to the refugees in the Desert. A largely self-taught, tireless minister, Court founded a seminary in Lausanne whose diplomas were dubbed certificates of death, since graduates would return to France to encounter Louis the XIV’s dragoons and be executed or sent to row themselves to death in the king’s war galleys. Addressed to his widowed mother, the sermon is a wide-ranging meditation on the providence of God and the hope of the New Creation.

A few of the omissions in this volume are surprising. It might have been useful to define “Huguenot” or try to explain the origins of the word. Also, there is no mention of Maria-Cristina Pitassi, who has done much of the heavy lifting on the theology of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, this anthology is excellent. Indeed, everything Martin Klauber does turns to gold. These extraordinary believers, whom I count in my own ancestry, are a great inspiration, the more so as

Favorite Psalms and Hymns Trinity Psalter Hymnal no. 73A “Surely God Is Good to Israel”

Bryan D. Estelle

Editor’s note: A deeper understanding of the biblical text will enrich our singing of Psalm 73.

Psalm 73 is a masterpiece of “reorientation.” What I mean by this is that the psalmist is very honest about his personal struggles. In fact, so much so, that some of his comments (in vv. 2–16) sound almost blasphemous. However, by the end of the psalm, we observe the poignancy of his change, primarily brought about by a faithful attendance to the means of grace.

Verse 1 starts out with a summary statement of faith and belief. “Surely God is good to Israel.” But then the tone changes drastically. He recounts in vv. 1–16 how he almost abandoned the faith. With brutal honesty, he wonders if he should even recount his doubts publicly, because it might cause covenant youth to stumble, so desperate is his plight (v. 15).

Verse 17 is the pivot point, the entire turning of the psalm. Before the psalmist was “brutish,” but now he understands their end [i.e., the wicked]. Previously, he had no realizations of God’s ways in the world. Now he understands the mystery of iniquity and of God’s sovereignty. The justice of God will triumph eventually. He has learned this adult faith in the schoolhouse of prayer.

Unlike the original psalmist who stumbled and fell, Christ has persevered. Trusting in the goodness of his heavenly Father, Christ persevered even in his darkest hour (Luke 22:43). We should not give up on the Christian convictions that God has set within our hearts, even in the most bewildering of times. This should be the case even when we struggle to understand God’s ways in the world as this psalmist did.

Just as the pivot point for the original psalmist was experiencing God’s presence and perspective in the sanctuary, exactly so God continues to provide for our needs in the new covenant period by giving us a picture of our turbulent world from the vantage point of the world to come in our weekly worship with him.

I am writing this during the COVID-19 pandemic, which presents a different kind of persecution, but requires the same wise theological reflection.

The author is professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary.

The Theology of the Huguenot Refuge: From the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to the Edict of Versailles, edited by Martin L. Klauber, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020. Paperback, 314 pages, \$19.00.

INTRODUCING TWO NEW CHURCH PLANTERS



The Seufert family on the front porch of their new home, right across the street from Mission OPC

PROVIDENCE IN ST. PAUL

by Michael J. Seufert

Editor's note: This article was written in March, prior to the upheaval in Minneapolis-St. Paul following the death of George Floyd. Mission OPC is a few miles from the primary protest location in St. Paul. Please keep Mission and its leadership in prayer.

As I consider how God called my family to Mission OPC in St. Paul, Minnesota, I am struck by the mystery of providence and the kindness of our God.

In March 2016, my wife and I visited St. Paul for a wedding. We returned to Washington, DC, remarking that St. Paul would be a nice place to raise a family. At the time, I was beginning in a graduate program and serving as a PCA pastor in the DC metro area. Life beyond DC seemed remote.

In November 2018, a former member of my congregation moved to St. Paul and joined Mission. He wrote that a well-loved interim pastor, David King, was serving the saints there. Soon the church would begin a formal pastoral search. He asked if he could submit my name. I agreed, but did not immediately think much of it, as I was committed to finishing my studies before accepting a full-time call anywhere.

In February 2019, the search committee at Mission formally asked if I would stand as a candidate for minister. I was set to finish seminary in spring, near the time the church planned to enter the final stages of their search. That summer, my family and I traveled to St. Paul to meet with the church face to face. It was immediately obvious that both the church and the city were a good fit for my family. My wife felt at home. Both our hearts warmed to the congregation. They had been through a difficult season. We were coming off a difficult season. We had both tasted the sustaining grace of the Lord. We were both eager and excited to transition into a new season.

There was one wrinkle. I had received another call from

a church that was also a wonderful fit. In fact, both churches issued a call nearly simultaneously. The decision was tremendously difficult. The reason for the difficulty was God's abundance. In July, after much consideration, we accepted Mission's offer. In October 2019, we moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. And we were off!

In November, the church held the annual Bold North Conference on Reformed Theology, featuring Rev. Dr. John Currie and Pastor Tim Challies. In December, churches throughout the area came out in support as I was installed as Mission's pastor. In March 2020, we held our annual Zwingli Sausage Supper, an evening of sausage and theology, which this year featured Dr. David VanDrunen. All the events have been a blessing and well attended.

The regular life of the church and the ministry of the Word also commenced, gathering for worship morning and evening around the means of grace. The church has been encouraging in its warm reception, and I am grateful for the elders' shared desire to care for Christ's sheep according to Christ's call. Our hearts are joined in the desire to see the church gathered and sustained around the means of grace; to see Christ exalted week in and week out as the whole counsel of God is set forth; to see the church grow in faith, hope, and love; and to lift the saints up in prayer.

Additionally, I had always envisioned living close to the church building, extending hospitality to the immediate neighbors and becoming a part of the life of the community. The church was enthusiastic about this and the neighborhood itself is ideally suited for it. In mid-March, the house across the street from the church went up for sale. And now, as I write this, in three days' time, we are set to close on this house.

We are overwhelmed by the wisdom and the kindness of God. Please do pray for us. We are encouraged by this beginning, and we trust the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to provide for us and sustain us.

The author is a church planter in St. Paul, Minnesota.

CHRIST'S PROMISE IN MAINE

by Micah Bickford

I was once asked about church planting while at seminary. I quickly replied that it wasn't for me.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promises, "I will build my church." The story of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church in Farmington, Maine, is the story of God's sovereign providence as Christ fulfills his promise to build his church, even in rocky, rural Maine.

Some years ago, my family and I were visiting my childhood home in Maine when we drove past an empty church. I keenly remember turning to my wife and describing to her the overwhelming feeling I had of the urgent need of the people in Maine for the gospel of Jesus Christ. I returned to seminary in Philadelphia never expecting to call Maine home, much less be called to plant a church here.

Just two years later, my family had an unexpected opportunity to move to Maine. For the first few years, I telecommuted to my longtime job at Westminster Bookstore. In 2015, at a crossroads in my career, I began receiving requests from several local churches to fill their pulpits. The more opportunities I had to share God's Word, the more a passion for being a pastor was kindled. One of those opportunities was at Grace Reformed, not far from where we lived.

Grace Reformed began in 2013 when several families with Reformed convictions in the greater Farmington area began gathering for a Bible study to consider the possibility of planting a confessionally Reformed church. Nestled in western Maine, Farmington is a university town, agricultural community, and year-round vacationland of mountains, lakes, forests, and rivers.

Over the next several years, many people sacrificed time and poured out their love on this small congregation as they petitioned presbytery to be organized into a mission work,

came under the oversight and nurture of Limington OPC, worked out the many logistical details, and secured faithful men who traveled long distances week after week to lead worship.

Through the initial stages God provided a consistent core group committed to the truths of Scripture, growing in love and care for one another, and dedicated to seeing the gospel of Jesus Christ impact the community. In June 2017, I began serving as stated supply.

Today, Grace Reformed continues steadily onward. The gospel is being preached at an old Unitarian meetinghouse near the heart of Farmington that we rent from the local historical society. Our people are active in developing relationships in their communities and fostering the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Maine is a state of rugged natural beauty and fiercely hard-working people. It is a land of ever-changing seasons and independent community. Church planting in Maine is a long-term investment in hard, rocky soil that desperately needs life that only Christ can give. Relationships take time to build, trust takes time to establish, and growth takes time to root.

Jesus finishes his promise in Matthew 16:18: "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Indeed, Christ is at work building his church. There are many bright beacons of hope in Maine as the gospel takes root in places where it has been long forgotten. Old churches are being revitalized and new churches planted. I am truly thankful to be part of this work of the OPC in Maine.

As we seek to be faithful stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ in Farmington, please pray:

1. For an ever greater love for the lost, urgency to proclaim the gospel, and wisdom on how to offer Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. For a growing love and knowledge of Jesus Christ and deepening care for one another.
3. For God to bring growth so that Christ is glorified as he builds his church.
4. For God to raise up additional men to be trained for the offices of elder and deacon.
5. For faithfulness as we map out a course toward becoming a particularized church.



The Bickford family in front of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church's meeting place, a historic building

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by emailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions: July 8 & 22.

The author is a licentiate of the Presbytery of New York and New England approved as stated supply in Farmington, Maine, and preparing for ordination this fall.

AN EAST AFRICAN CHURCH IN LOCKDOWN

// JUDITH M. DINSMORE



(Left) Sunday school teachers in West Pokot, a remote region in eastern Kenya, and (right) Pastor Joseph Mutemi, moderator of the AEPC

While the United States and Europe may be slowly opening as COVID-19 recedes, East Africa, home to the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC), is still aggressively locked down as the number of new cases is on the rise. The AEPC was founded in Kenya in 1962 and now has 105 congregations, including some in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is a sister denomination to the OPC; their fraternal ties extend back for decades. But the AEPC's future will likely be dramatically changed by COVID-19.

"The effects of the coronavirus on the AEPC are disastrous," said Joseph Mutemi, moderator of the denomination. In Kenya, churches are not allowed to meet. The whole country is under a strict 7 p.m. curfew. The four counties along the coast are in lockdown. No one may enter or exit the major cities, including Nakuru, where Mutemi lives and pastors a 150-member congregation.

These restrictions are disastrous for the AEPC because it is not a wealthy church, Mutemi explained. The AEPC was begun in rural and semi-arid east Kenya. About 70 percent of AEPC churches are still in this region. Its members and pastors are subsistence farmers. "Life there is not very good because people are poor," Mutemi said. "Most of the time, they don't have rain." If they do have a year of rain, they know that they can expect two or three years without rain. Recently, a locust plague is threatening farmers as well.

The other thirty percent of AEPC churches are in Nairobi, Nakuru, and Mombasa. When those city churches were planted, it was by these poorer families in the eastern region. "Most of our churches in urban areas were started in what I can call slums," Mutemi said. If you could fly over the region where Mutemi lives, for example, you'd look down to see nothing but rusted corrugated metal as roofs.

"Almost 95 percent of our pastors are seriously impacted by this virus because they are depending either on subsistence farming in the rural areas or, in the urban areas, on the giving of their church members," Mutemi said. And due to COVID-19, the city churches remain in name only. "When we talk

about church, we should be talking about people in covenant together. But the people have scattered, to the point that you cannot tell where they are," Mutemi said. "The church members have disappeared."

Many went back to their rural homes. Urban Kenyans often have two homes—one in the city, where they work, and one in the village that they come from. "There, it's a bit cheaper," Mutemi said. "You're not going to rent a house, maybe you can get food from a shamba [neighborhood garden]."

Without members, many pastors in the cities are also without income. Mutemi keeps in touch with them over the phone—and through the water, power, and sanitation bills from these churches that land on his desk.

In mid-May, a group of pastors approached the head of state and asked that the churches be allowed to open once more. But the government was adamant that the ban on gathering cannot be lifted. "We were shocked because we all expected the government to allow us to meet outside and observe more of those guidelines."

They were told to meet via the internet—but no AEPC church can afford that, members or pastors. "We have no hope here except God, who is our hope," Mutemi said. As Kenya moves into its second month of lockdowns, he knows the AEPC needs to plan for the future. "Our ministry still continues. Jesus sent us to preach the gospel. We cannot say, 'It is a time for corona, we cannot preach Jesus.' We have to," he said. "The AEPC is a very small church. But God is wonderful. [Our] footprint cannot get lost. He likes it."

In April, the AEPC requested \$9,500 in relief aid from the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, which gave an initial gift of \$2,000. That was distributed among twenty-nine AEPC pastors. If you would like to contribute to the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Fund, go to give.opc.org.

Mutemi concluded, "Knowing that you have brothers and sisters who are also praying for you, praying with you, it is so amazing. It gives courage, especially in a time like this."

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

JULY



The Peppos

1 **BRAD & CINNAMON PEPPO**, Dayton, OH. Pray for First Street Reformed's ministry to the immigrant community. / **ABBY HARTING**, office secretary for Christian Education, and **ANNELISA STUDLEY**, office manager.

2 Pray for **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia, that the Lord would strengthen the relationships among the members of the provisional presbytery. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

3 Pray for the **ASSOCIATES** in Asia this summer, that they may be a daily witness to the students they teach online. / **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education.

4 Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for a good transition for their family into new responsibilities this fall.

5 **MARK AND CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for transitions as their oldest son Joshua returns to the US. / Summer intern **DAVID (LEAH) VOGEL** at Redeemer Presbyterian in Charlotte, NC.

6 **CHARLES AND CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for area churches and their work of diaconal relief. / Summer interns: **JAMES STAFFORD** at New Covenant Community in Joliet, IL, and **A. J. (CHELSEA) MILLSAPS** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

7 Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for fruitful witness to terminal patients at Joy Hospice. / **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray for the ministry at Grace and Truth OPC.

8 Home Missions administrative assistant **KATHARINE OLINGER**. / Yearlong interns **SEOB (RACHEL) KIM**, Rockford Springs Community Church in Rockford, MI, and **SETH (EVA) DORMAN**, Limington OPC in Limington, ME.

9 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for wisdom to know when and how to restart worship services. / Pray for students in **MTI ONLINE SUMMER CLASSES**: Ecclesiology (Troxel), Hebrew Refresher (Patton), and Reformed Worship (Clary).

10 Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Affiliated missionaries **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for new outreach plans as summer teams have been restricted from travel.



The Allards

11 **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray for wisdom for the session at Pasadena Presbyterian Church. / Summer intern **GRANT (STORMIE) ALLARD** at Christ Covenant in Amarillo, TX.

12 **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for the work of the Holy Spirit as the Hopps train VBS leaders in Port-au-Prince. / **SHANE & RACHELLE BENNETT**, Grand Rapids, MI. Pray for elder training at Reformation OPC.

13 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for their and the church's protection in an unpredictable economic situation. / Summer intern **DUSTIN (EMILY) KARZEN** at Branch of Hope in Torrance, CA.

14 **CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER**, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for a new meeting facility for Harvest OPC. / Pray for those **OP MISSIONARIES** who will be unable to enjoy the encouragement of short-term volunteers, due to COVID-19.

15 **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD** and missionary associate **ALETHEA FLORES**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for online summer camp plans. / Summer intern **DUSTIN (AMYE) THOMPSON** at Trinity Presbyterian in Medford, OR.

JULY



The Folkerts family

21 Assoc. missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK** and **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the clinic staff to be encouraged in their work and faith. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

22 Pray for affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia, and the spiritual growth of the Family Clinic staff. / **PAUL & SARAH MOURREALE**, West Plains, MO. Pray for growth at Covenant Reformed Church.

23 **MICHAEL & SAMANTHA SEUFERT**, St. Paul, MN. Pray for the endurance of Mission OPC. / Yearlong interns **DAMON (ELISABETH) YOUNG**, First Church, Merrimack, NH, and **BEN PETERSEN**, Covenant Presbyterian, Abilene, TX.

24 Pray for **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, tentmaking missionary **TINA DE-JONG**, and missionary associates, as they consider travel plans. / **JACEY (JULIE) DAVISON**, church-planting intern at Grace Fellowship in Zeeland, MI.

25 Pray for **OPC DEACONS** and **DISASTER RESPONSE VOLUNTEERS** who are helping those impacted by COVID-19. / **MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD**, Farmington, ME. Pray that God would provide wisdom for leaders at Grace Reformed.

26 Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG AND REE COULBOURNE** (on furlough) and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan, especially as Linda awaits a postponed hip replacement. / Summer interns: **BEN (VICTORIA) CIAVOLELLA** at Delta Oaks Presbyterian in Pittsburg, CA, and **NATE (AMY) JEFFRIES** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.



The Richline family

27 **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the Lord to raise up another full-time missionary. / **JOHN FIKKERT**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care, and **MELISA MCGINNIS**, controller.

28 Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son.

29 **NICHOLAS & ROSEMARIE LAMMÉ**, Houston, TX. Pray for the Lord's blessing as this mission work approaches its ending. / Foreign missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON**.

30 **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator. / Summer interns: **LUKE (LAURA) WALKUP** at Faith OPC in Indiana, PA, and **CHRISTIAN (JOLENE) McARTHUR** at Providence OPC in Temecula, CA.

31 Foreign Missions administrative assistant **TIN LING LEE** and office secretary **SHENISE MEDINA**. / Pray for **SHORT-TERM MISSIONARIES IN SENDAI**, Japan, working with Reformed Presbyterian missions.

16 Assoc. missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for open doors and hearts for the gospel in this COVID-19 season. / Summer intern **EUGENE (KATHERINE) MCKINNON** at Christ OPC in Marietta, GA.

17 **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray that the Lord would continue to raise up disciples. / Pray for the **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, that the Lord would raise up more leaders.

18 **KEVIN & RACHEL MEDCALF**, Cumming, GA. Praise the Lord for new members at Providence Presbyterian Church. / Loan Fund manager **MARK STUMPF** and database coordinator **CHARLENE TIPTON**.

19 Pray that **NEW HORIZONS, ORDAINED SERVANT**, and **OPC.ORG** will edify the church and help it communicate its message. / **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for evangelistic faithfulness at Neon Reformed.

20 **BILL WELZIEN**, Key West, FL. Pray for Keys Presbyterian's growth in Christ, and for a quick return to open air evangelism at Mallory Square. / OPC Committee on **CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL**.

USING OUR ABILITIES FOR THE KINGDOM

// GORDON L. OLIVER

In Matthew 25:14–30, Jesus teaches the parable of the talents. The central theme of this parable is the servants’ faithfulness to their duty while the master is away. It’s easy to recognize that the master is Jesus, who has ascended into heaven and will one day return. While away, he has instructed his disciples to be his witnesses and “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Jesus illustrates this with this parable. A business man has to go on a business trip that will take some time and, wanting his resources to work for him while he is gone, he leaves trusted men in charge of his money. Three servants are chosen—the first receives five talents, the second, two talents, and the third, one talent. In our day “talent” means a natural ability or skill, but in Jesus’s day it referred to a monetary weight of gold or silver. In that time, one talent equaled about twenty years’ wages.

When the master finally returns, he commends the first two servants for doubling his money. Because of their faithfulness, they both are given more responsibility and are allowed to enter into the joy of the master. The third servant is condemned and cast out because he hid the talent.

What can we learn from this parable? First, God is the owner of all things, and we are stewards of what God has graciously given us.

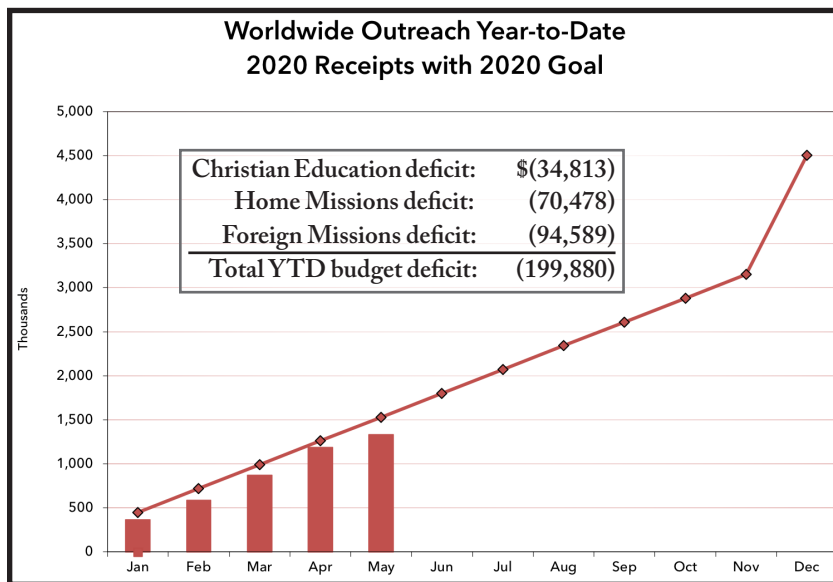
Second, the Lord has entrusted resources to us—money, time, natural abilities. Some receive more than others, and of those ones, more will be required (Luke 12:48). Others have less but are required to use their resources accordingly. What matters is our faithfulness in service. As we see from this parable, the second

servant was given less than the first and therefore made less money. Yet he was rewarded the same because he was similarly faithful in his service.

Third, Jesus gives an inkling here that there is to be a relatively long period of time before his return—so long that one may become idle in faith and lazy in practice. Thus we should heed what happened to the wicked servant and continue to serve him (see Heb. 3:12–14; Gal. 6:6–10). At the end of Hebrews, we have this blessing: “Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20–21). Because God has equipped each of us according to the ability he has given us, any excuse we make for not performing our Christian duty will not hold up. Each of us has not only been endowed with abilities from our Creator but has been commissioned by our Savior, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and equipped for service. We have been given these gifts not for our own glory but to bring glory and honor to Christ in how we use them.

We who love God and have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit owe our Lord faithful service. We should desire to see his kingdom advance and work toward that end. We should want to use all that he has given us to grow in his grace so that we too may hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:23).

The author is pastor of Covenant Life Presbyterian in Shawano, Wisconsin.



NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS



Herman and Elly de Ru

IN MEMORIAM: HERMAN DE RU

Ron de Ru

On May 20, 2020, Herman de Ru, 88, went to be with his Lord, after passing away of natural causes in Fallbrook, California. He was born May 24, 1931, in Leiden, the Netherlands. From the age of nine until he was almost fourteen years old, he lived in occupied Netherlands where his family hid Jews from the Nazis. Risking their safety to save the lives of strangers, Herman's parents are recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations." Herman received the official recognition on their behalf from the Israeli Consulate on April 28, 2019. Herman served the kingdom wholeheartedly as a Sunday school teacher and deacon at Calvary OPC in La Mirada, California, and as an elder at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, California. He also spent a year as a missionary associate in Paramaribo, Suriname. He was never shy to speak the truth, never feared the scoffing of men, was zealous for the gospel, and was willing to spend and be spent for it despite his physical ailments.

FLOOD RESPONSE TO CHRIST COVENANT OPC IN MIDLAND, MI

On May 19, the city of Midland, Michigan, experienced unprecedented flooding as a result of the breaching of two dams following days of heavy rain. Several families from Christ Covenant OPC in Midland suffered the flooding of their homes; one family's home was completely underwater.

The diaconal committee of the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario immediately mobilized a disaster response effort, in cooperation with the OPC Disaster Response office. Christ Covenant desires to see its families cared for in restoring their homes, but they also see through this devastation an opportunity to show mercy in the name of Christ to the neighbors of the church. Praise the Lord that Reformed Missions Services has come alongside the OPC in offering the use of their shower trailer and other equipment.

If you would like to participate in the OPC response effort, please register as a volunteer at opcdisasterresponse.org. Monetary gifts toward this effort can be designated to "Midland Flood" by going to: give.opc.org/diaconal-ministries-summary. Please pray for Midland, Michigan, as they recover from this devastation.



A major road underwater just minutes from Christ Covenant OPC in Midland, MI (photo courtesy of OP pastor David Sarafolean).



Pastor Gregory Thurston

OP PASTOR RECOVERS FROM COVID-19

Gregory Thurston, pastor of Bethel Presbyterian in Broomfield, Colorado, started showing the symptoms of COVID-19 on March 29. His daughter, a physical therapist in Florida, had contracted the virus while caring for a patient and came back to the Thurston's home to recover. She had a moderate case, and Thurston's was mild to moderate. Days seven through twelve of the illness were "really, really terrible," with difficulty breathing, fatigue, and fever. By week three, he was feeling more like himself.

But the mental toll, he said, was worse than the physical. "One day you feel better, and the next day you feel terrible again." The work that he wanted to do, he couldn't; the work he did do, flooded him. "You think, other pastors are out sharing the gospel, and here I am watching TV at 10 a.m." Thurston did preach via livestream on April 5—and "literally collapsed" afterward.

Yet it allowed him opportunity to pastor well a Reformed couple visiting the Denver area who both contracted

COVID-19, as well. The husband was hospitalized, the wife quarantined in a hotel. Thurston called regularly and was able to sympathize with their illness. They are both on the mend; and the Thurston household has all recovered. “To God be all the glory,” Thurston concluded.

A TIME FOR PRAYER

Eric B. Watkins

On Friday, June 5, churches in St. Augustine, Florida, gathered together to pray for their community and the nation in the midst of the unrest following the death of George Floyd. The event came together because area pastors felt that something needed to be done—and that prayer was the place to start. Tarence Dickerson, elder at Covenant OPC in St. Augustine, and I were asked to lead the meeting. I preached the gospel to a gathered crowd in the town square, and Tarence led in a sweet time of prayer, focusing on particular areas of need. Members of the community from many ethnicities and churches attended and were grateful to see Christians gathering peacefully together to call upon God’s name in a time of trouble. Local law enforcement was also present, and said they very much appreciated the gesture of support. Covenant OPC is viewing this as an opportunity to build bridges to people who are grieving and perplexed right now. Please pray for gospel opportunities and continued healing.



*Tarence Dickerson leading a time of community prayer in St. Augustine, FL
Photo by Peter Willott / The Record, © Gannett Co., Inc. 2020, staugustine.com*

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- On March 13, **Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church** in Bridgton, ME, was organized as a particular congregation of the OPC.

MINISTERS

- On March 13, **Stephen M. Michaud**, previously a minister in the RPCNA, was installed as pastor of Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church in Bridgton, ME.
- On May 10, the Presbytery of the Dakotas dissolved the ministerial relationship between **Michael J. Chapa** and Emmanuel OPC in Castle Rock, CO.

MILESTONES

- Retired OP minister **William J. Bomer**, 96, died on April 26. He served as a US Army chaplain, in addition to pastoring churches in several states.
- **Margaret (Chambers) Porter**, 98, died on May 10. For over seventy years, Peggy was a member of Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA, where her husband, Howard Porter, served as an elder.
- Retired OP minister **Robert A. Minnig**, 77, died on May 12, having pastored OP churches in FL, NJ, and PA.

- **Herman de Ru**, 88, died on May 20. He served the OPC for over seventy years as a deacon and then an elder at churches in Southern California.

LETTERS

COMPROMISING A HYMN?

Editor:

When I read Mary Love Seay’s June 2020 letter to the editor, I couldn’t help but smile. I smiled because, with Jonathan Cruse, I’m delighted that Newton’s hymn (“I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow”) was rescued from obscurity and included in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. I smiled because I believe she is absolutely right that the original lyrics allude to Jonah 4, and I too very much like that. I smiled because the first time that this hymn with its original lyrics was introduced to an OP congregation in my experience, a man surreptitiously asked, “Blasted my gourds? Is it OK to sing that in mixed company?” Like it or not, familiarity with the KJV is a rapidly receding memory for most. It seems that—lest we put God’s people into the position of singing in tongues without interpretation—hymn lyrics might need occasional updating. I too wish that some allusion to Jonah 4 remained, but I’m grateful that this hymn is included, and that it’s included in understandable form.

Larry E. Wilson
Wasilla, AK

CONCERNING COVID-19

Editor:

May the civil government command the church to close? Dr. Alan Strange, in his article “COVID-19 and the Church” (May) says yes, and many OP elders have agreed with him. But the Scripture says no. If we are willing to disregard Scripture and surrender control of the church to the government for so small a threat, we should not be surprised when God comes and removes our candle.

Daniel Burns
Huntsville, AL

Editor:

The articles related to the COVID-19 pandemic (May) were very insightful, particularly John Fesko’s. The only thing

that seems to be missing at this point is a true pandemic. We are suffering more from the consequences of a political response to the virus than from the virus itself. There are many theories as to why the politicians and governors of many states decided to use this opportunity to display their own power and promote their own ideas on how to “keep us safe” instead of letting the medical institutions and the citizens make their own decisions as to what is best for their health. But one thing is quite telling: their response to the church. They seem to consider churches non-essential—in some cases, even persecuting pastors and church members who defy the orders of the almighty state in order to worship God.

I hope that once more people in the OPC catch on to this, we may see more articles in *New Horizons* dealing with an overbearing government that opposes Christ and his church.

Doug Kobilan
Vancouver, WA

Editor:

I want to thank Dr. Strange for “COVID-19 and the Church” (May). However, I wish he would have elaborated further on how or in what ways can we know “that the Lord calls us to repentance whenever he brings any difficulties our way.” I would like to suggest that the churchly examination for sin not be limited to one denomination but include the church catholic. Is there not an abundance of reasons to be grieved and humbled over sins not amended but indulged and duties not exercised but excused away by the church in these United States?

Alexander Suarez
Oviedo, FL

From the Editor

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Thank you for your prayers, emails, and cards regarding my thyroid cancer. On May 9, I had surgery and am praising the Lord that it was successful.

Danny E. Olinger

REVIEWS

***Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It*, by David Zahl. Fortress, 2019. Hardcover, 250 pages, \$18.69 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP elder Joseph W. Smith III.**

“For an increasing amount of the population, to be alive in the twenty-first century is to wonder privately how much longer you can keep feeding the beast before you keel over” (6).

That’s author and podcaster David Zahl in his terrific new book, *Seculosity*. He’s talking about our society’s exhausting (and self-imposed) busyness—just one of many “new religions,” which, as the book shows, have replaced genuine spirituality in modern culture.

The widespread nature of this “secular spirituality” is indicated by Zahl’s subtitle: *How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It*. As the author puts it in his text, “The religious impulse is easier to rebrand than to extinguish” (xii).

In a series of pithy, insightful, and often convicting chapters, Zahl shows how contemporary Americans use such things as work, family, love life, and political affiliation to gain the sort of self-worth, inner peace, and freedom from guilt that were once the purview of traditional Christianity.

Yet he also shows that in the long run, these quasi-religions are actually much crueler taskmasters than the biblical gospel of free grace from a kindly Father who (unlike worldly pursuits) does not constantly require us to “measure up.”

“We may be sleeping in on Sunday mornings in greater numbers,” Zahl writes, “but we’ve never been more pious. Religious observance hasn’t faded apace ‘secularization’ so much as it has migrated—and we’ve

got the anxiety to prove it” (xii).

Seculosity is especially hard-hitting in its examination of jobs, love, and politics. Zahl shows how success and failure are now automatically (and absurdly) linked to career—and how making romance the be-all and end-all has actually weakened lifelong marriage.

As for politics, *Seculosity* explains why this has become increasingly divisive and vitriolic: because we’ve staked our entire well-being on our own political stance, resulting in moral outrage, finger-pointing (by which we alleviate our own guilt by accusing others), and virtue signaling, as Zahl penetratingly dissects (148).

And yet the church itself is not free from these problems! Zahl’s penultimate chapter, “The Seculosity of Jesusland,” insists that we, also, inside the church have often replaced biblical dependence on Christ

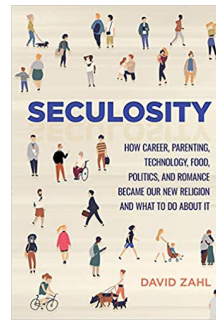
with a works-oriented mindset that results in one-upmanship, superficiality, and exhaustion. At the same time, he shows how both the church and the true gospel really do provide a refuge from the black hole of replacement religion.

Undergirding the whole book is a winsome, conversational, and often humorous writing style—one that is notably free from Evangelical jargon, while also drawing on a wide array of sources both secular and Christian.

This is a wise, helpful, and genuinely grace-driven book that can easily be shared with unbelieving friends and neighbors.

***Christ Victorious: Selected Writings of Hugh Martin*, edited by Matthew J. Hyde and Catherine E. Hyde. Banner of Truth, 2019. Hardcover, 440 pages, \$27.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Iain A. M. Wright.**

Hugh Martin was a nineteenth century Scottish Free Church clergyman, licensed (as one of his letters states) on May 19, 1843. The significance of this is that he was licensed the day after the Disruption (a division in the established Church of Scotland) which, although it would rob him technically of the title of a



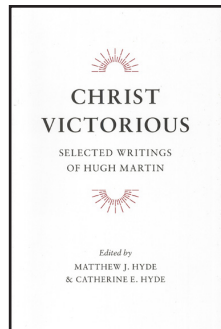
Mid-Atlantic Men's Retreat

October 2-4 • Harvey Cedars, NJ

- A gathering of men for worship, prayer, teaching, and fellowship in devotion to the King
- At the Harvey Cedars Conference Center, with indoor swimming, gym, volleyball, basketball, and saltwater fishing (bay or ocean)
- Sign up: immanuelonline.org/mens-retreat-2020/

“Disruption Worthy,” places him firmly in the Free Church of Scotland from the beginning of his ministry.

In this volume, the reader will find ten sermons, nine essays, and a collection of his letters. Being born a few years after Queen Victoria and pre-deceasing her by many more makes him very much a Victorian minister. Modern readers may find the style of English a little hard to grasp, with sentences that can run to over sixteen lines, but whatever effort the reader is prepared to make will be rewarded with insights from Scripture and perceptions as to how its teaching harmonizes across the breadth of God's Word. I found his two sermons on “Heav-



en: The Scene of Christ's Priesthood” not only illuminating but filled with much to stimulate the heart as well as the mind in making connections between the worship in the temple and the work of Christ.

In his essays, Martin handles a number of issues judiciously but ever with an eye to the One whose Word he is seeking to expound. His handling of the work of Christ on the cross and how we can talk of Christ's active obedience in his offering of himself was particularly helpful; Martin offers a response to the oversimplification by which the active obedience is limited to Christ's keeping of the Law for the believer and his passive obedience is narrowed to the hours upon the cross.

Martin also provides the reader with a very thoughtful defense of the *filioque* clause: that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in accord with the Latin West in contradistinction to the Greek East, which holds that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father.

The reader would benefit from having some knowledge of nineteenth century Scottish history, as Martin alludes to the Second Ten Years' Conflict and the attempt of the Free Church to unite with the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and to the William Robertson Smith case. That is not to say such knowledge is essential.

On a couple of occasions, Martin finds himself

having to take his correspondent to task. In doing so, he exercises much pastoral warmth even as he challenges wrong ideas. He is certainly providing a model for pastors who find themselves having to correct someone but wondering how best to broach the matter without crushing the person.

The book is from the pen of a thoughtful Christian Victorian gentleman. His love and devotion to his Lord is clear in his preaching, in his lecturing, and in his pastoring.

***With All Your Heart: Orienting Your Mind, Desires, and Will Toward Christ*, by A. Craig Troxel. Crossway, 2020. Paperback, 224 pages, \$13.38 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor John D. Van Meerbeke.**

One may say, “My heart says one thing, but my brain says another.” But Craig Troxel, professor of practical theology at Westminster Seminary California, gives the interested reader a better biblical understanding of the heart as the source of what we think and feel and say and do. Having served for twenty-four years as pastor of two churches, Troxel provides a generous and instructive study that will serve the church for years to come in studying Reformed spirituality, as devotional reading, and as a Sunday school text for young people and adults. Thirteen chapters are a useful convenience for a class quarter. The book divides into four parts, discussing the heart's mind (with Christ as Prophet), desires (with Christ as Priest), and will (with Christ as King), and concluding with the keeping of the heart and the Lord as our keeper (Psalm 121).

Early in the book, the author underscores the modern usage of the word “heart” in our language, providing plenty of examples of popular conceptions (and misconceptions), but also he lays the groundwork for his study by showing that the word occurs nearly a thousand times in sacred Scripture, enough to fill a two-hundred-page book worthy of your learning (17). Most pages have footnotes and an abundant supply of supportive Bible texts along with a liberal provision of references from authors like Augustine,



Short-Term Missions

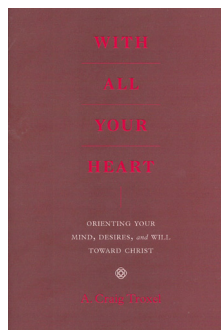
opcstm.org/opportunity

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

Luther, Calvin, Owen, Edwards, Ryle, Lewis, and Keller. And the reader will be reminded throughout the book that the gospel of Jesus Christ is alive and well in the true heart, despite frequent discouragement. Only by God's sufficient grace are hearts purified. Thanks be to God! Troxel writes, "Christ's free grace renews us constantly through the driving force of the Word of God, the power of prayer, and the nourishment of the Lord's Supper, all of which is carried out by the Holy Spirit" (97). In his biblical, theological, and practical treatment of the heart, Troxel examines the real matters of the heart for Christians in all their painful struggles and sometimes surprising successes, stressing that God is our ultimate guard and keeper.

The book is very readable and accessible in its scope and detail. In all, the author is a generous writer. Looking up the Scripture references (and hymns) will only add to the depth and richness of the reading experience. There is a five-page general index of subjects and authors and a Scripture index with well over 1,500 entries.

Crossway has done us a favor in helping to produce this handy book. Those of us who have sat under Craig Troxel's teaching and preaching ministry will recognize good reading and good feeding in this highly recommended volume on the biblical anatomy of the heart, written from the heart, for the heart.



***Remaking a Broken World: The Heart of the Bible Story*, by Christopher Ash. The Good Book Company, 2019. Paperback, 200 pages, \$12.74. (This is a revised edition; it was previously published by Authentic Media in 2010). Reviewed by OP pastor Stephen Tracey.**

This is a refreshing book. Christopher Ash, who always writes with brevity and lucidity, sets out to prove that "the ordinary local Christian church contains within itself the seeds, or the DNA, of a remade world" (7). He does this by carefully combing through the Bible, highlighting the theme of gathering and scattering. The result is a careful biblical theology of the purpose of God in gathering his people and scattering his enemies.

Ash follows the Bible's story line from Eden to the New Jerusalem with various stopping points in between. In Eden, God gathered the first couple to work with him in harmony. Before long we arrive at Babel, where human pride led to humanity being scattered. But Babel is not the end of the story. From here Ash follows the biblical plot line to Sinai, where some gathering begins; to Jerusalem, where there is a greater gathering, though incomplete; and then back to Babylon, scattered in exile. God's full purpose for scattered humanity is not Jerusalem, but the New Jerusalem. So Ash concludes with Golgotha, Pentecost, and the local church gathered worldwide as the begin-

ning of the New Creation. The book is packed with helpful exegesis of relevant biblical texts.

At the beginning of the book, Ash states that he wants to persuade us "to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to belonging to, and serving in the fellowship of, a local church" and to believe that "this may be the most significant thing we do with our lives" (7). *The most important thing we do with our lives?* I think he is right. He draws out the nuance of this thought from the Old Testament as well as the New. This study is a powerful statement on the importance of the local church in God's glorious purpose.

The final chapter on the New Creation was thought-provoking, but it seems to me it would have been strengthened by attention to the reappearance of Babylon in the language of the book of Revelation. While the New Creation can be described as gathered forever, the theme of scattered forever is also present in this concluding section of Scripture. There is something profoundly important in the cry of Revelation 18:2, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"

Each chapter of *Remaking a Broken World* concludes with a series of discussion questions that would be useful in small group discussions. Each chapter also has a sermon shape—a real treasure since Ash is an excellent preacher.

I highly recommend this book. It is readable, refreshing, and relevant. It would prove useful from high school Sunday school to seminary.

