

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

5 The Glory of the Church:
R. B. Kuiper
// by John R. Muether

OCTOBER 2021

7 A Biblical Doctrine
of the Church:
Edmund P. Clowney
// by Danny E. Olinger



RESPITE FOR WEARY SOULS

MACHEN ON THE CHURCH

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On June 5, Damon Young was ordained and installed as pastor of Grace and Peace Presbyterian Church in California, Maryland, to replace Rev. Edd Cathey, who retired on July 31, 2021. Pictured left to right: Tom Martin, Jeff Dronenburg, Pete Spaulding, Seth Huckabee, Damon Young, Edd Cathey, Francis VanDelden, Andrew Miller, and Steven Doe.



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RESPIRE FOR WEARY SOULS: MACHEN ON THE CHURCH



D. G. HART // If the old adage has it that you should not judge a book by its cover, that raises a question about evaluating a book by its table of contents. J. Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* has gone through many editions since its original 1923 publication, and with those versions have come many different covers. But the

significance of the book's contents has remained fixed. For historians and conservative Protestants both—not audiences that often agree—*Christianity and Liberalism* is, in the words of Yale University historian Sydney Ahlstrom, “the chief theological ornament of American fundamentalism.” Some Presbyterians may balk at putting Machen in the fundamentalist camp, since he preferred to call himself a Calvinist. But on the grounds that fundamentalism was mainly an expression of opposition to theological liberalism (or modernism), Machen well qualifies as a fundamentalist. After all, his book walked through the basic dogmas of Christian teaching—God, man, Christ, Scripture, salvation—and showed that liberal preachers and theologians had departed from historic understandings of the Christian religion.

What interpreters often miss is the book's last chapter, which is on the church. Ecclesiology is of course one of the topics of dogmatics. It is also the

fourth article of the Nicene Creed: “we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.” It was natural, then, for Machen to complete his table of contents by devoting a section of the book to the church.

The Church as a Voluntary Society

Students of ecclesiology may be disappointed by Machen's treatment of the church since he avoids technical discussions of Christ as head of the church, the nature of ecclesiastical authority, the unity of the church, or the offices in the church (for starters). Machen does not even spend much time in the sometimes extensive Presbyterian debates about the relative powers of general assembly in relation to presbyteries, though he was clear during the period after the book was published that general assembly's powers, for instance, to declare necessary and essential articles, were likely not as great as some conservatives imagined. (Machen here followed the American Presby-

terian pattern of reserving the rights of ordination to presbyteries.) The son and brother of prominent Baltimore attorneys, Machen knew his way around constitutions and at various points in the Presbyterian controversy had no trouble raising issues of church law and constitutional procedure (or asking for help when needed). What Machen spends the most time on in the last chapter of *Christianity and Liberalism*, however, is the church as a voluntary society as opposed to the involuntary associations that govern the state and citizenship. No one, he argued, is forced to become an officer in the Presbyterian Church USA. Elders and pastors become officers voluntarily. As such, they know full well what they are doing—or should—when they take ordination vows to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. That constitutional point about the place of the confession in the church's constitution, subscription to it, and the rigors of ordination were at the heart of

Machen's discussion of the church. If liberal Protestants could not affirm the confession and catechisms, then they did not need to remain in the PCUSA.

The Church as a Refuge from Strife

Still, Machen, known for his doctrinal convictions, did not limit his chapter on the church to subscription or the value of creeds. In several ways, he offered a much grander vision of the church than adherence to orthodoxy. What binds a church like the PCUSA (or any Presbyterian communion) is not merely a shared confession of faith but also the fellowship embodied in corporate worship. After he made recommendations about what conservatives could do in the conflict with liberalism—officers using their authority, examining pastoral candidates, and better educating of the laity—he offered encouragement to those overwhelmed by the enormity of the battle. That comfort came from the church and her worship:

There must be somewhere groups of redeemed men and women who can gather together humbly in the name of Christ, to give thanks to Him for His unspeakable gift and to worship the Father through Him. Such groups alone can satisfy the needs of the soul. At the present time, there is one longing of the human heart which is often forgotten—it is the deep, pathetic longing of the Christian for fellowship with his brethren. (*Christianity and Liberalism* [1923], 179)

Machen observed that finding such congregations was increasingly difficult. Too often, he confessed, he went to church to seek “refreshment for the soul,” and only heard about “the turmoil of the world” (180). “The preacher

comes forward, not out of a secret place of meditation and power, not with the authority of God's Word permeating his message, not with human wisdom pushed far into the background by the glory of the Cross,” Machen lamented, “but with human opinions about the social problems of the hour or easy solutions of the vast problem of sin” (180). Then, in the final paragraph of *Christianity and Liberalism*, he wondered whether Christians could find refuge from strife and assistance in preparation for the “battle of life.” His answer was to look to the church in worship. If such a place of comfort and aid existed, “then that is the house of God and that the gate of heaven.”



Machen's conclusion echoed the very confession of faith he defended elsewhere in the book. Chapter 26, “Of the Communion of the Saints,” expresses the idea of fellowship that informed Machen's desire for true worship. “Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification” (WCF 26.2). The idea of the church as the house of God also echoed chapter twenty-five, which describes the visible church as “the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (25.2). Machen's understanding of the church was as much mystical as it was doctrinal.

This high view of the church, as a body of believers, united in fellowship to Christ, with a shared understanding of Scripture and its doctrines about God, Christ, and salvation, was a major motivation for Machen's ministry over the last two decades of his life. If he seemed to be tired by the conflict in 1923 when he wrote *Christianity and*

Liberalism, imagine his energy reserves after the major battles at the General Assemblies of 1924, 1925, and 1926, the controversy at Princeton Seminary between 1927 and 1929, founding a new institution to train pastors, and then the foreign missions controversy that ran from 1932 until the eve of his death in 1937. Throughout these skirmishes, Machen continued to contend for a church and its ministry with the primary purpose of offering respite to weary souls. In 1931, in his commencement address to the graduating class at Westminster Theological Seminary, Machen said this:

Remember this, at least—the things in which the world is now interested are the things that are seen; but the things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal. You, as ministers of Christ, are called to deal with the unseen things. You are stewards of the mysteries of God. You alone can lead men, by the proclamation of God's word, . . . can give what the world with all its boasting and pride can never give—the infinite sweetness of the communion of the redeemed soul with the living God. (“Consolations in the Midst of Battle,” *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, 205)

Behind Machen's battle against liberalism, something greater was at stake than doctrinal truth. It was theology in service of salvation. It was doctrine for the sake of a worshiping body of believers. It was teaching for the sake of enduring the world, the flesh, and the devil until Christians experienced full communion with their Lord and Savior. Though doctrine was bound up with Machen's view of the church—he contended for a confessing church—the church as a body of believers communing with Christ in Word and sacrament was likely his ultimate motivation for battling theological liberalism. □

The author is a professor at Hillsdale College and a ruling elder at Hillsdale OPC in Hillsdale, Michigan.

THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH: R. B. KUIPER



JOHN R. MUETHER // Of the ministers who founded the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Rienk Bouke (“R. B.”) Kuiper (1886–1966) is among the least familiar to Orthodox Presbyterians today. The Dutch immigrant studied at Princeton Seminary and served seventeen years in pastoral ministry (in the Christian Reformed

Church and the Reformed Church in America) before joining the OPC and excelling as a teacher of preachers at Westminster Theological Seminary for two decades. He also enjoyed tenures as president of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

As his biographer and son-in-law Edward Heerema noted, retirement was a remarkably productive time during which Kuiper penned five books. The most popular (and his “masterpiece,” according to John Murray), was a comprehensive study of the doctrine of the church, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, published by Eerdmans in 1958. Organized in fifty-three short chapters that originally appeared as a series in the *Presbyterian Guardian* from 1947 to 1952, the book contains considered reflections on the church from Kuiper’s long and distinguished service from the pulpit and the lectern.

Attributes of the Church

Glorious Body begins by affirming the four attributes of the church according to the Nicene Creed: its unity, holi-

ness, catholicity, and apostolicity. Kuiper notes that a proper understanding of these terms is hampered by their frequent misuse. For example, denominationalism is often cited as an impediment to church unity. While Kuiper decries sectarian extremism in some denominations, he goes on to observe the irony that the “most striking example” of this extreme are the anti-denominational impulses in many independently minded churches. Catholicity can be defined too narrowly (as in Roman Catholicism) or too broadly (in the modern ecumenical movement). The “multiformity” of the church “has been used to cover a multitude of sins” by harboring heresies (43). But so too can an ill-defined unionism breed an indifference to the truth (48).

To these four Nicene attributes he adds three more notes. The first is the illumination of the church, which, rightly understood, must be set apart from Roman Catholic claims of infallibility and Radical Reformation denials of any role of the church in shaping biblical interpretation. The second will surprise some

readers: Kuiper affirms the progressiveness of the church, albeit not in the sense championed by theological modernists of his age nor progressive Christian movements of our time. Rather, it is decidedly a progress in the truth: the church should expect to grow in its understanding of the riches of God’s Word. The alternative is petrification, and “complacency is a most heinous sin in any church” (85). Third, the church is indestructible. Because of God’s faithfulness to his promises, “it is certain that God will at all times have a covenant people, a church, on earth” (90).

From these ecclesiological foundations, Kuiper turns to the organization of the church, where he affirms the principles of Presbyterian polity. The church is neither a democracy (as Congregationalists claim) nor a hierarchy (as expressed in forms of prelacy); it is a divine monarchy. Christ rules through the general office of members (here Kuiper cites Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 32 to demonstrate that all Christians are anointed to prophethood, priesthood, and kingship) and through special

offices of minister, elder, and deacon, to whom members must submit in the Lord.

Retaining the Glory of the Church

The balance of the book is a thorough review of the practices of the church. Six chapters are devoted to the supreme task of the church, the preaching of the Word, followed by a survey of the ministries of discipleship, evangelism, and Christian education. Throughout, Kuiper focuses on the attribute found in the title of his book—the *glory* of the church. Though the church is the object of the world’s scorn, the glory of the church is ever present and remains visible through the eyes of faith. Many chapters end with observations on how the topic under consideration particularly displays that glory. Faithful ministers “enhance the glory of Christ’s church” (142). Evangelism is a “most glorious” prerogative of the church (242). The diversity of the church contributes to its glory (100), whereas narrowness, prejudice, and bigotry obscure that glory (65). And because Christ is the head and king of his church, it “cannot but partake of his glory” (91). At times Kuiper seems to pause in doxological reflection, inviting the reader simply to marvel at the church’s glorious character (see, for example, 94, 96, 348).

But has the glory departed from Reformed churches today? This is a question to which Kuiper devotes sustained attention. “Indestructibility” does not provide license for presumption on the part of congregations or denominations. Rather, Kuiper warns how easy it is for the glory of the church to depart. While we can expect the world to mock the church, Kuiper laments that “even some Christians are wont to belittle it” (237). Churches that chase worldly measurements of prestige and honor only “evince vainglory” (30). A particular temptation of Reformed churches today is to go beyond the mandate to minister and declare the Word of God. “If the church attempts to be something else than the church, it denies itself and

detracts from its own glory. If it is satisfied to be the church, its glory will shine forth” (169).

A recurring call in the book is for the church to display “the rare virtue of theological balance” in its life and witness (228). It is important to affirm that the church is both an organism and an organization, and later he argues that the church must commit itself both to ministries of Christian nurture and evangelism. Balance in these matters will “greatly enhance the glory of the church” (162). But calls for balance have been misused. Kuiper regrets that, often in an appeal for balance, ecclesiastical pacifism becomes a higher concern than the truth of God’s Word, inviting into the church the cancer of doctrinal indifference (105). In Heerema’s words, Kuiper “detested” church leaders who refused to take a stand for the truth of God’s Word, which only served to substitute a false peace for a true peace.

Reformed believers today may particularly struggle to see the glory of the church in its militancy. Yet Kuiper writes, “the church on earth is glorious, not in spite of its militancy, but precisely because of it” (33). Later he argues that militance demands an antithesis between the church and the world. But even here, Kuiper drew a vital qualification. There are forbidden and required forms of separation from the world. A physical separation is a fundamentalist worldly escape, but Scripture calls for a spiritual separation. “He who strives,” Kuiper warned, “to escape from his earthly surroundings easily forgets that he is carrying the world about with him in his heart. In consequence world flight frequently results in worldliness of the worst kind” (268).

In another book that he wrote during this time, Kuiper warned that the Reformed church “must refuse steadfastly to sell even a portion of its

Reformed heritage” (*To Be or Not to Be Reformed?*, 9). By this, he underscores that the church stewards that heritage in both its doctrine and practice. In *Glorious Body*, he anticipates that churches will be particularly prone to abandon distinctively Reformed worship. “By and large,” he lamented, people go to church today “to be tranquilized. . . . [T]hat the glory of God is both the beginning and end of common worship does not seem to occur to them” (14).

John Murray noted that Kuiper’s preaching and writing were “always characterized by clarity and simplicity” (foreword to Kuiper’s *The Bible Tells Us So*, 1968). In addition, one can detect in *Glorious Body* a bold-

ness that is absent in much writing about the church today. Expressions such as “most certainly,” “indisputably,” and “there cannot be the slightest doubt” appear frequently in Kuiper’s prose. Moreover, an alert reader will detect—often between the lines—the ecclesiastical struggles that he fought throughout his distinguished career. In his

labors in three denominations, Kuiper witnessed at close range the challenges that modern American culture presented to the church.

Though originally written for a popular audience, *The Glorious Body of Christ* is a rich account of Reformed ecclesiology that became a staple in seminary curricula for decades. In the words of one reviewer, the book “breathes the spirit of devout conviction and ripe, Christian maturity.” Thanks to Banner of Truth Trust, the book remains in print, and it continues to be a profitable read. OPC congregations would do well to use the book in adult Sunday school and officer training. □

The author is a professor at RTS-Orlando and a ruling elder at Reformation OPC in Oviedo, Florida.



A BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH: EDMUND P. CLOWNEY



DANNY E. OLINGER // In the culturally turbulent year of 1968, Edmund Clowney, then an Orthodox Presbyterian minister and president of Westminster Theological Seminary, wrote the landmark article, “Toward a Biblical Doctrine of the Church” (*Westminster Theological Journal* 31, no. 1, November 1968). Over against

contemporary Protestant notions that sought to politicize the church—namely through the socializing and secularizing of the church—Clowney maintained that it is only as the church is under the headship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Word of God that it can be true to its spiritual nature and calling. He believed that in the balance was not only the church’s evangelism, edification, and worship, but also whether the church would stand for apostolicity instead of apostasy, holiness instead of worldliness, unity instead of division, and universality instead of sectarianism.

Socializing of the Church

Clowney observed in the article that a primary trend of the new ecclesiology was the socializing of the church. Rather than proclaiming a personal conception of salvation, the new ecclesiology sought in preaching to redeem oppressive social structures. Adherence to creedal formulations or doc-

trinaire forms of polity developed by the church in earlier ages curtails social action. If the church is to become relevant in modern times, it must dissolve old barriers and enter into a ministry of conflict, even revolution, with the “powers” of society.

According to Clowney, this socializing tendency of the new ecclesiology had led to a new universalism. Every person is a member of the “New Mankind.” The result is that the church can no longer be distinguished from the world by its salvation, but only by its consciousness that civic, economic, and social freedom brings about the corporate salvation of the world. “Shalom,” in the words of the World Council of Churches, “is a social happening” (25).

Secularizing of the Church

A second trend of the new ecclesiology was the secularizing of the church. Clowney argued that Reformational ecclesiology saw the church as a prophetic fellowship in opposi-

tion to an unbelieving world. Particularly, the Reformers saw the marks of the church—the right preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of discipline—as setting the church as a believing community over against the world.

In contrast, the theology of secularization calls the church to abandon the spiritual discipline demanded by the Reformation marks of the church. This is because the marks of the church serve to set the church as a believing and redeemed community over against the world. The result of such a shift is that the modern church, now standing in solidarity with the world, looks to worldly instruments to achieve its goals. A secular church employs secular power, but more, a secular church redefines biblical terms. Evangelism is no longer a personal call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It is now politics.

Where is Christ then to be found in a theology that is secular? He is found where liberation of oppressive

structures is taking place. Clowney asked the insightful question, “how then does the Christian differ from the Communist as they together promote revolution?” (28). The answer of secular theology, said Clowney, is that Communism errs because it has a fixed ideology that assigns absolute value to relative ends. According to secular theology, the church’s hope is open-ended with no fixed goal in view. Clowney concluded wryly, “Apparently the complete relativism of the church’s goal is the one safeguard against converting the church directly into a political power structure” (28).

The Biblical Doctrine of the Church

Clowney admitted that there were urgent practical issues before the church but maintained that the answer was not to turn away from the biblical doctrine of the church. The need in this secular world is not for the church to belong to the world. Rather, the need is for the church to start first with God, not with man, and to submit to the full-orbed teaching of God’s Word. Biblically considered, the church is the people of God, the kingdom and body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Too often this became fragmented—the Reformed conceived of the church as the people of God, Roman Catholics as the body of Christ, and Charismatics as the fellowship of the Spirit. The rich balance of biblical revelation calls for all three in a proper ecclesiology.

The People of God

Referencing 1 Peter 2:9, Clowney made much of the fact that the people of God belong to God. They are a treasure-people, a people for God’s own possession. This relationship of possession defines the church.

In the Old Testament, the great assembly of Israel was at Mount Sinai. With the coming of Christ, the people of God are assembled not to the fire and smoke of Mount Sinai but to God himself and to the heavenly assembly

where Christ is, as the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 12:18–24). It is this heavenly reality, manifested in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, that gives meaning to the earthly gathering in Christ’s name.

The Body of Christ

The world is given to the church, even as the church is Christ’s and Christ is God’s. Further, the church is for the world in that the church has a mission to the world. But the mission of the church has the savor of life unto life and death unto death. In the purpose of God, the church is not subjected to the world. The church shares in the suffering of Christ in seeking the lost in the world. This suffering is not to be understood as the church’s sharing in Christ’s redemptive work, but in the sense that the church, redeemed only by his blood, suffers for Christ’s sake, living out of union with him.

For Clowney, covenant representation offers the key for understanding the body of Christ imagery. Since the one physical body of Christ dies and is raised on behalf of believers, believers are united representatively to his body. “They are one in Christ’s body; they are one body in Christ (Rom. 12:5); they are a body of Christ (without the article, 1 Cor. 12:27); they are the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12)” (62).

Clowney stressed that the grounding of the body figure of Christ in covenant representation spares the church from false positions such as identifying the church with the resurrection body of Christ. Christ has risen from the dead bodily and is not seeking embodiment.

The relationship of the church to the lordship and servanthood of Christ is also pivotal here. Clowney wrote,

As Lord, God comes in Christ to gather his people. But Christ comes as Servant as well as Lord. He comes to fulfill the covenant from man’s side, to be the true Son and Servant. The Messiah is the head of a redeemed humanity; his headship binds him to the church as the representative and vital head of the covenant. (60)

The Fellowship of the Spirit

The same covenant relationship of possession—“as Lord, Christ claims his people for God; as Servant, Christ claims God for his people” (74)—applies to the church and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is both Giver, as the Spirit of God he possesses his church, and Gift, as the Spirit of God he is possessed by his church. The Spirit abides among the people of God, the living temple of his presence. The life of the church is nothing but a rigid shell apart from the filling of the Spirit.

Clowney also argued that the fellowship of the Spirit binds Christians together in the church in spiritual discipline. If Christians do not at times admonish and rebuke one another, they ignore the Spirit’s work as Lord and Sanctifier. If the church does not pronounce anathema to the lies of antichrist, then it betrays the ministry of the Spirit of truth.

In closing, Clowney said that Christ calls his scattered sheep to the unity of the Spirit. To the eye, impassable might be the path where he calls, blocked in part by the walls of rebellion. But Christ calls his church, and

he will be answered, not in the weary tones of political opportunism, but in ardor of jealous love. (81) □

The author is general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education and editor of New Horizons.



THE CHURCH'S POWER: JAMES BANNERMAN



A. CRAIG TROXEL // Every winter, James Bannerman taught the doctrine of the church to the fourth-year students at New College in Edinburgh, Scotland—the divinity school for the Free Church of Scotland. As the last lecture of the course came to its end, one can picture the grey-whiskered Scottish professor

gathering up his papers, looking up to his waiting students, and dismissing them with the closing verses of Psalm 122:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good. (KJV)¹

This passage conveys the heartfelt conviction of a churchman who wanted his students to linger over the Word of God in their future ministries in which they would guard “the peace of Jerusalem” and seek its good. Few Presbyterian scholars have done more to explain such biblical ideals, as well as the fundamental principles of church polity and power, than James Bannerman.

Life of Bannerman (1807–1868)

This esteemed Scot was born in 1807 in Cargill, Perthshire. He began by studying the arts at Edinburgh University but eventually turned to theol-

ogy. In 1833, he was ordained by the Church of Scotland as the minister at Ormiston (near Edinburgh). He was appointed Professor of Apologetics and Pastoral Theology at New College, Edinburgh, in 1849—a position he held until his death in 1868. Bannerman wrote several books and published several pamphlets on the issues of his day. He collaborated with James Buchanan in editing four volumes of William Cunningham's writings.

Bannerman played a significant role in the birth of the Free Church of Scotland, beginning with the Ten Years' Conflict which led up to the Disruption in 1843. The Disruption in the (Established) Church of Scotland was largely a conflict between two general parties: an evangelical party that wanted to assert the spiritual independence of the church and the rival party that was content with the church's relationship to the civil power. The conflict came to a head when the parishioners of the church at Auchterarder in Perthshire unanimously rejected the patron's selected candidate. This eventually pitted the presbytery (which backed the pa-

rishioners) against the Court of Session (which backed the rejected candidate), particularly when the Court of Session went so far as to declare the church to be a creation of the state. This directly challenged the church's confession of faith and the church's status as a spiritually independent and sovereign community, ruled by her own officers and courts. The general assembly protested the matter to an unsympathetic parliament and crown. In the end, the church was not willing to sacrifice the “crown rights of the Redeemer,” and more than four hundred and fifty ministers left the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland in 1843. What was at stake was not just the spiritual independence of the church, but whether Jesus Christ was the head of his church. This principle, the headship of Christ, lies at the center of James Bannerman's contribution to the Presbyterian doctrine of the church.

Bannerman's Ecclesiology

The Doctrine of Church Power

Bannerman's legacy is connected to his book *The Church of Christ*, which

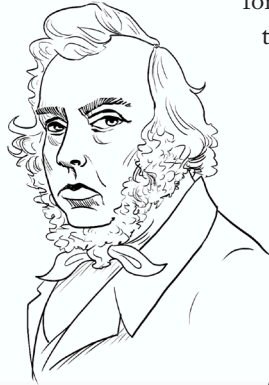
was published posthumously by his son Douglas D. Bannerman. It is a superior, near-exhaustive exposition of Presbyterian polity with special sensitivity to the issue of church power. Bannerman formulates the doctrine of the church under three branches of what the church is called and empowered to do: doctrine, ordinances (worship), and discipline. This triadic view of church power aligns with the thought of Calvin,² as well as other Reformed thinkers like Francis Turretin, George Gillespie, and Louis Berkhof.

The Nature of Church Power: Spiritual

Bannerman defended the church as a “spiritual society” for several reasons. It is a divine institution that owes its origin to Christ. It is an outward, visible society that is formed upon the idea of the inward and spiritual one, which is animated, peculiarly, by the Holy Spirit. Lastly, the church’s spiritual means—the ordinances—match her spiritual ends, the spiritual good of man. These insights distinguish the church, institutionally, from the state. The church is unique in its origin, its essence, its objects, and its instrumentality. It is a kingdom altogether different from the kingdoms of the world and it represents “the grand and public lesson taught by God as to the fundamental distinction between things civil and things spiritual.”³

The Rule of Church Power: The Word of God

Bannerman was convinced that Scripture was the only and all-sufficient rule of duty and direction for the church. It reveals more than enough of the mind of Christ regarding the order and administration of his own house. With Scripture as her rule, the church does not have authority in herself to frame laws or edicts but has authority only to declare the laws or enactments previously laid down and revealed by Christ. In her use of the keys of the kingdom, the church must be content



to read what Christ has “written” and declare what Christ has appointed for her in his Word. She simply has no power of legislation for herself, according to her own discretion. She would no sooner add to his laws than she would

add to his book. Similarly, her officers are not regarded or received for having any intrinsic authority, but rather for their faithful declaration and application of Scripture. They are not masters, but servants who carry out the will of the king.

The Limits of Church Power: Doctrine, Worship, and Government

Bannerman applied the sufficiency of Scripture over the whole of the church’s vocation; that is, her doctrine, worship, and government. The Bible provides the foundation for what the church ought to do, and it also sets limits on how she goes about doing it. In other words, the lawful use of church power pertains not only to what Scripture commands and prohibits for doctrine, but also to what Scripture commands and prohibits for worship and order. Faithfulness to Christ means doing his righteous work, righteously.

The Source of Church Power: The Headship of Christ

Like his Scottish forefathers and contemporaries, Bannerman viewed the doctrine of Christ’s headship as crucial for understanding the source of church power. All questions regarding the church’s spiritual jurisdiction, her dispensing grace to her members, and her administering Word, ordinance, and discipline—all come back to the source, the ever-present and ever-living head, Jesus Christ.

In affirming Christ’s headship over the church, Bannerman distinguished between Christ as head in his “founding” capacity and in his “presiding” capacity. The former points to the power given to the church at her inception, while the latter points to the power she exercises now as the instrument

of Christ’s present rule. This is nothing less than honoring Christ’s words: “apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). The source of all that she is and all she does is found in her head.

This checks the church’s ambition, and it humbles her to affirm again and again that she is not only established by Christ, but she is also continuously superintended and empowered by Christ her head. His singular headship is not a communicable attribute.

There is a magisterial and supreme authority in the Church; and there is a derived and subordinate authority, accountable to the former. The one belongs to Christ as Head of His Church, the only law or limit of His authority being His own will; the other belongs to the Church, or the office-bearers of the Church, the law or limit of their authority being the power intrusted [sic] to them by their Master, and the instructions given to them by Him.⁴

Bannerman’s affectionate hope was that he had equipped his students to stand upon the biblical principles that would guide their thinking and conduct. His exposition of church power should similarly direct us. Christ is head of his body. Christ is presently building his church, by his Word and Spirit. Let us bow to his rule and means, even as we look to his power and grace as the source of all we do. After all, *his* is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen. □

The author is an OP minister and professor at Westminster Seminary California.

Notes

1 This imaginary scene is actually not unlikely. These verses from Psalm 122 are the last words of Bannerman’s *Church of Christ*, which is composed of his lectures, with hardly any editing. See editor’s preface in Bannerman, *The Church of Christ* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), xvii.

2 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeil, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans., (Westminster Press, 1960), 4.8.1; 4.8.1n2.; 4.10.1; 4.11.1.

3 Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, 29.

4 *Ibid.*, 229.

“NOT A VISIBLE SOCIETY”: CHARLES HODGE



ALAN D. STRANGE // Charles Hodge (1797–1878) graduated from the recently established Princeton Theological Seminary (founded 1812) in 1819, proceeded to teach there as an instructor and then as a longtime professor in biblical (later theological) studies, and became its head in 1851.

During his almost six decades of labor at Princeton, Hodge taught thousands of Presbyterian pastors, missionaries, and those in other fields of ministerial service. Though, due to health concerns, he attended few general assemblies (serving as moderator in 1846), he wrote extensively each year on the general assembly of the PCUSA, publishing his writing in the July issues of the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, of which he was editor for many years. Hodge never served as a pastor, but he was, in many respects, a consummate churchman.

Hodge's views on the church were formative for so many in the Old School (1837–1869) Presbyterian church in the nineteenth century, and he left his mark on the wider Protestant church as well. At his death in 1878, Hodge's significance as a theologian and figure of great influence was heralded not only by Presbyterian publications, but also by Methodist, Episcopal, and Congregational ones. The national Methodist paper lauded him as the preeminent theologian of the day and, though clearly at variance with

many of Hodge's views, went so far as to say, "Princeton has lost its greatest ornament, the Presbyterian Church its most precious gem, the American Church her greatest earth-born luminary."¹ No other figure of American Presbyterianism was as widely loved and regarded as Charles Hodge.

Hodge's Ecclesiology

It is often noted that Hodge omitted ecclesiology in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. For this, and more particularly for their debates on the nature of true Presbyterianism, James Henley Thornwell did not regard Hodge as a good ecclesologist. It is indeed the case that Hodge and much of American Presbyterianism (including critics like Thornwell) could tend toward too low a view of the church and the sacraments. But Hodge did not neglect ecclesiology, setting forth in many essays published over many years what he did not in his systematic theology. These were gathered by his son A. A. Hodge, after his father's death, in the volume *Discussions in Church Polity*. This article focuses on

Hodge's understanding of the church's spiritual nature as set forth in his *Church Polity*. Like all Protestants, Hodge understood the essence of the church to be spiritual and thus invisible, though this may have led at times to too low a view of the visible church, a common American problem.²

In the first chapter of *Church Polity*, on the "Idea of the Church," Hodge gives us a definition of the church: The church is, in its essence, a spiritual kingdom, constituted such by the work of the Holy Spirit, who applies to her the accomplished redemption of the one who is her prophet, priest, and king: the Lord Jesus Christ. Hodge endeavors to flesh out the particulars of his approach in this essay. He starts by noting that in the "symbol of faith adopted by the whole Christian world," the Apostles' Creed, "the Church is declared to be 'the Communion of saints'" (5). Thus, he equates the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church with the communion of the saints. Since the church is the communion of saints, Hodge argues, this means

[Continued on page 18]

UPDATE ON THE KARAMOJA EDUCATION OUTREACH

// ANGELA J. VOSKUIL



With schools still closed, teachers at the Karamoja Education Outreach review Bible story curriculum.

“**T**he promises of God remain the same, even though we change. We have the Word of God in our mind and heart; let’s share with others,” said Lokaalei Paul. The teachers of the Karamoja Education Outreach, including Paul, were discussing the story of Pentecost and answering the question, “What does this Bible story teach me about God, myself, and others?” Others chimed in, “We are disciples since we have received the Holy Spirit, and we are sharing God’s Word like the disciples,” and “since we have received the Word of God, we should also spread God’s Word.”

The Purposes of God

We have all been affected by COVID-19. Our pre-primary village school, the Karamoja Education Outreach (KEO), the focus of my work here in Uganda, has been closed for nearly a year and a half. I returned to Karamoja in January 2021 after being home for ten months longer than expected due to COVID-19. No one knew exactly when schools would reopen in Uganda. We are still waiting.

God’s purposes cannot be thwarted, and often his plans unfold in ways we would never expect or even wish for. In February, the teachers and I began a new work schedule. Instead of teaching, we decided to focus on discipleship and training. I knew this would be a great opportunity for growth, but I questioned the sustainability of our work.

Here we are, months later. KEO is still closed, but I know beyond a shadow of a doubt

that God is using this time for our good. God is growing us closer to himself and to each other. We have been able to connect with neighbors in our community and with some of our students. The teachers have also been blessed to share their gift of literacy with some of the Karimojong women who work on our mission compound who do not know how to read or write in the Karimojong language. We are also studying God’s Word together, which is one of the greatest blessings! God is deepening our understanding of who he is and who we are.

Next to Dust

We have been reading the Psalms together for morning devotions. I love to watch as the teachers pour hungrily over the passages. One morning a couple weeks ago, we read Psalm 88, and they noted the following verses: “My eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you. . . . You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend” (vv. 9, 18 NIV). The KEO teachers know loss. They know grief. There is so much death, sickness, and suffering in this place. Everyone has lost friends, neighbors, and family members. In May, I shared in the devastating grief of losing a fellow KEO teacher and friend, Opie Mark. Death has a way of bringing into focus what is most important in this life. The teachers know Jesus is their only hope in life and in death, and they desire to share this message with people in their communities.

One or two mornings every week, we visit neighbors who are in need. Often the teachers suggest whom to visit, and I



KEO teacher Opie Mark, who passed away in March 2021, with his students

follow along. I appreciate how the Karimojong people welcome anyone, whether a stranger or friend, to sit with them, read from God's Word, and share advice. The people we visit never act like we are interrupting their lives. They give attention to their visitors. There isn't a reluctance, but a genuine gratefulness. Spending time with people is the priority. We have had many opportunities to sit with our neighbors in



A student whom the KEO teachers visited and gifted a Karimojong Bible

their grief—a wife who lost her husband, a mother her child, the wife of our KEO teacher who passed away, a woman who wanted to commit suicide, a woman sick with typhoid, two sisters who lost their sister-in-law, their brother, and their nephew in one year, a schoolboy who lost his mother . . . and, sadly, the stories continue. More recently we walked five miles to visit our fellow KEO teacher, Koriang Domenic, who returned from the hospital after undergoing surgery.

Never has the reality of death and the hope we have in Jesus Christ been more real to me than now, living in this place, surrounded by my Karimojong neighbors. From dust we came and to dust we will return, no matter who we are or what our situation is in life. Our only hope in this life is Jesus. Please pray that the Lord would open hearts to the truth and that there would be much fruit evident in the lives of those who are hearing the gospel.

Discussions of the Word

On Tuesdays, the teachers and I break into three groups to discuss a Bible story. We know the Bible stories from



Visiting KEO teacher Koriang Domenic, who had recently returned home from the hospital after surgery

teaching them to the children over the years, but it is always good to review and gain new insight. I love the interest and excitement over God's Word. We are all learning so much from each other. The teachers raise good points, and they enjoy contributing their thoughts.

For example, the teachers brought up that some people in the community ask for money when Bible stories are shared with them. I encouraged them with the passage from Acts 3:6, when Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you." They laughed at the prospect of emulating Peter's response. Later, when we were reviewing the conversion of Saul, KEO teacher Angella Elfra said, "God can change people's hearts. Imagine Saul, and he became the strongest among others!"

The teachers know many songs that go with the Bible stories. One morning they began to sing a song about the woman caught in the act of adultery. We all read the passage from John 8 together. Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). When we concluded with the last verse, "And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more,'" (v. 11), they cheered and broke into the song. It was a beautiful moment of praise for who our God is.

The future of KEO is still uncertain, but it is in God's hands. He works all things according to his purposes and for our good. Amidst an ever-changing world, God does not change. His promises remain the same, and his Word will go out into all the world, so let's share the good news with others!



Teaching a literacy class

The author is an associate tentmaking missionary from Rebobeth Presbyterian Church (ARP) in Waxhaw, North Carolina, laboring with the Uganda Mission in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda.

What's New

// Comings/Goings

Mr. and Mrs. Christopher (Chloe) Verdick welcomed Olive Andromeda Verdick on August 16 in Matany, Karamoja, Uganda.

REVIEW: FESKO'S *NEED FOR CREEDS TODAY*

// D. G. HART

Presbyterians have a reputation for being creedal Christians—Orthodox Presbyterians even more so. In the typical map of Reformed Protestants that divides the landscape among pietists, culturalists, and doctrinalists, the OPC is the prime example of those Reformed Protestants who stress doctrine (as opposed to the pietism of Puritans and the transformationalism of Kuyperians).

Despite that reputation, Presbyterians' relationship to creeds has been highly contentious. In colonial America, when ministers wanted the Synod of Philadelphia to prescribe the Westminster Confession and Catechisms for the young Presbyterian communion, others objected because confessional subscription allegedly violated liberty of conscience. Although the Synod of 1729 did eventually adopt the Westminster Standards, the coming of awakenings, great and small, did not bring a peaceful settlement to the victory for subscription. The revivals encouraged among some a strong sense of the Spirit's work that man-made forms and restrictions (creeds and polity) should never impede. In the nineteenth century at the time of the Second Not-So-Great Awakening, antagonism to creeds in general and the Westminster Standards particularly was easier to spot. Charles Finney, along with his colleagues, openly questioned the covenantal scheme of salvation taught in the Westminster Confession even while warning about the danger of man-made creeds. A century later, Presbyterian modernists pled for liberty of conscience in the face of confessional subscription, even as they claimed to affirm the spirit of the confession. The OPC emerged from the controversy over modernism with a high regard for the Westminster Confession, which may explain the name of a certain seminary.

A brief reminder of American Presbyterian history is part of the context that J. V. Fesko has in mind with this book, *The Need for Creeds Today*. The author, now a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson), writes specifically to

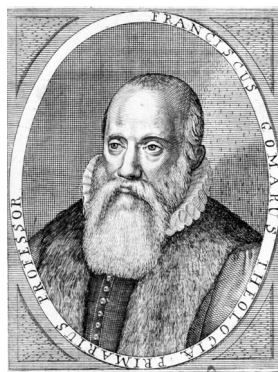
THE NEED FOR CREEDS TODAY

*Confessional Faith in a
Faithless Age*

J. V. FESKO

overcome common objections to creeds. What makes Fesko's case especially laudable is that he does not merely celebrate his subject. He also acknowledges historical circumstances that produced creeds and rendered them dubious. That combination makes this book highly effective.

An early sign that this is not going to be your grandfather's case for creeds is a chapter that Fesko devotes to an incident of dueling at the Synod of Dort. This is not the sort of anecdote one might expect from a book in praise of creeds. But that does not stop Fesko from narrating the episode when, soon after the Synod dismissed, a public theological debate took place between Franciscus Gomarus, the leading defender of Reformed orthodoxy, and Matthias Martinus, a defender of Arminianism. As the debate progressed, Gomarus



Franciscus Gomarus

sensed that Martinus (though accounts are sketchy) would not debate the substance of doctrine. Instead, Martinus resorted to insults. As a result, Gomarus challenged Martinus to a duel. Cooler heads prevailed for a moment, and the moderator led the audience in prayer. But even after that petition, Gomarus repeated his challenge to Martinus. The duel never took place. Each man went his separate way that night and apparently dropped the matter.

But Gomarus's attachment to correct doctrine, which led to an attempt to vindicate his views by a common method at the time of defending personal honor, is one way that defenders of creeds have damaged the reputation of orthodoxy. Fesko uses the incident, not to detract from the importance of creeds, but to counsel about the temptations of pride that accompany even the best theologians.

That lesson is also part of the author's broader effort not

to hide the unsavory circumstances that produced creeds. At one point, Fesko explains the decline of confessions this way: “The convergence of bloody warfare and confessionalism cannot be ignored and was unquestionably a factor in the large-scale demise” of creeds (49). Even without drawing a simplistic link between religion and violence the way some recent scholars have, Fesko’s point reminds readers that creeds emerged from the establishment of Christianity as part of civil rule in Europe. Without civil magistrates adopting the church, Christianity would not have creeds or confessions. In practically every instance of a creed, its origin comes either from the state (think Constantine and Nicea) asking church officials to define the boundaries of acceptable belief for a civil realm or believers (like the Belgic or Gallican confessions) explaining their beliefs to a hostile ruler. The Westminster Confession itself, the gem of orthodoxy for Presbyterians, would not have been written had not the English Parliament asked pastors to draw up new standards for the Church of England. When wars broke out in Europe after the Reformation, religion may have been merely an excuse rather than the basis for a ruler to expand his territory. For Fesko to acknowledge the political origins of creeds is a welcome addition to defending confessionalism. A frank understanding of confessions’ context puts apologists in a better position to answer objections. At the same time, church history, warts and all, is no reason to denigrate or reject the church. The same goes for confessions.

On the positive side, Fesko makes several observations in defense of confessions. Aside from their role in setting boundaries and maintaining the church’s corporate witness, Fesko also argues that confessions are not simply man-made expressions but actually biblical in both content and even form. In what may be one of the book’s most original chapters, the author contends that Scripture itself at various points in redemptive history points to, assumes, and even relies on creeds. For instance, Paul’s appeal five times to “trustworthy sayings” allows Fesko to assert that “under divine inspiration, [the apostle] incorporated these digested forms of revelation into his own letters”(10). This means that “there is biblical warrant for the church to create and maintain confessions of faith” (10).

Although this book is short, it packs a punch both theologically and historically. Its size is all the more reason that *The Need for Creeds Today* should not be ignored.

The author, a professor at Hillsdale College and a ruling elder at Hillsdale OPC in Hillsdale, Michigan, reviews [The Need for Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age](#), by J. V. Fesko. Baker Academic, 2020. Paperback, 160 pages, \$15.99.

☆ Congratulations

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

• **Izzy Sanchez**, Harvest OPC, San Marcos, CA

Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal no. 268* “Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

Alan D. Strange

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten” is not the oldest hymn in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*; that honor goes to no. 258, “Shepherd of Tender Youth,” attributed to Clement of Alexandria, circa 200. It is among the oldest, however, written by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348–413), an early church Latin hymn writer. He was born in Spain, enjoying success as a lawyer in a civil career, before becoming a Christian poet in retirement. His poetry often had an apologetic edge to it, opposing Marcion (the heretic who rejected the “wrathful” God of the Old Testament in favor of the meek Savior of the new), Arius (the heretic who taught that Jesus was not truly God), and others.

These sorts of sensibilities can be seen in this hymn. The first stanza affirms the eternity of the Son. The second speaks of the incarnation, in which our Lord was born of the virgin and “first revealed his sacred face.” Such a line is a great illustration of the marriage of biblical truth and heartfelt devotion that characterized the church fathers. The third stanza proclaims that this was all in fulfillment of the prophets of old, calling for Jesus’s praise. The fourth picks this up and calls for all of creation to praise the Lord, in exultant terms, concluding with the fifth stanza, extolling the triune God, a routine occurrence in ancient hymns, which were redolent with Trinitarian sensibility.

The music for this is a moving plainsong of the twelfth century (arranged in the early twentieth century). This is a style of medieval liturgical chant that is sung in unison, yielding a hymn of lovely expression of truth coupled with ardent religious affection.

🗨️ Out of the Mouth . . .

When my husband retired as head pastor, our church began praying for a new pastor. Some months later, my three-year-old granddaughter, Gia, asked her mom when she could meet the new pastor. “We don’t have one yet,” mom replied. Gia insisted that they did. Finally, mom asked what his name was. “Way! His name is Way!” Gia replied. “Way Pastor Bedtime!”

–Sue Hollister
Homer Glen, IL

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

CHRISTIANITY AND TRIBALISM

// JEREMIAH W. MONTGOMERY

In the first paragraph of the introduction to *Christianity and Liberalism*, J. Gresham Machen wrote: “In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; the really important things are the things about which men will fight.”

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church exists today because we assent to Machen’s position. Yet too often we may be tempted to embrace Machen’s thesis without imitating his spirit. The man who wrote the scathing indictment represented in the pages of *Christianity and Liberalism* was the same man whose integrity and manners won him the respect even of such thoroughgoing opponents as Pearl S. Buck and H. L. Mencken—both of whom wrote tributes to Dr. Machen after his death.

The pages of *New Horizons* have called our attention to this temptation previously with articles such as “[A Person—Not a Cause](#)” (September 2008) and “[Alienation and the Household of Faith](#)” (August-September 2021). The latter article includes a very specific point of application: “Love your neighbor more than your causes.”

This is exactly the temptation we are facing in today’s polarized social climate: *the temptation to love our causes more than our neighbor*. This is the temptation, which we will refer to as “tribalism,” that this article will seek to address.

Understanding Tribalism

Every day, each of us inhabits various “affinity groups.” An affinity group is a group defined by a common interest or a shared commitment. These interests might be cultural, recreational, even theological. The OPC itself, in a sense, is an affinity group: we are the body of Christ, bound together by our shared commitment to confessional Christianity.

It should be obvious, then, that the problem with tribal-

ism is not a problem with affinity groups as such. Nor does the problem lie with concern for, or vigorous debate over, important cultural or theological issues. The problem arises when we manifest our concern over these issues in ways that are inconsistent with our commitment to Jesus Christ.

The most obvious arena in which tribalism emerges is the polarization of our political perspectives. But tribalism is not limited to politics, nor does it only emerge every four years. We have seen tribalism in divisive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, in controversies surrounding feminism, and in acrimonious debates about racial justice. We see it every time we divide into belligerent camps, restrict our news feeds to only those outlets that align with our viewpoint, and then dismiss everything coming from the other side with stigmatizing labels or sweeping generalizations.

Why is it that we are all prone to tribalism? Precisely because there is much about which to be concerned! Who among us is not bothered by the seeming avalanche of a global pandemic, unprecedented restrictions, and widespread social unrest? Who among us is not concerned over what appears to be a rising tide of radical activism, moral relativism, and political opportunism? To preserve what remains of value in our society and in our church, must we not respond aggressively and fight for our causes? Who brings a water pistol to a culture war? Yet such sentiments, however attractive, lead us further and further toward loving our causes more than our neighbors.

False Solutions to Tribalism

We cannot avoid tribalism by claiming the gospel is apolitical. To confess that “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:9) is to confess that Caesar is not—a fact that was not missed by the Jews in Thessalonica in Acts 17:7. So, while it is true that the gospel can thrive in any political environment, from democracies to dictatorships, we must likewise recognize that the gospel has always carried implications for political life.

We also dare not say that our faith does not inform our cultural engagement. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,” (1 Cor. 10:31). Our Lord Jesus himself commands us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). No sphere of life is left untouched by these words.

Nor can we simply avoid people who are different from us. How many divergent opinions on pressing issues must have existed in an early church composed of cosmopolitan Greeks and conservative Jews, Roman imperialists and subjugated peoples, and masters and slaves? And yet Luke tells us that “in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians”

(Acts 11:26): their unity in Christ somehow transcended their cultural differences. How can we imitate them in our own day?

Tribalism Is Inconsistent with Loving Jesus

The disciples in Antioch were called “Christians” because they loved Jesus more than they loved their cultures. They could reject “tribalism” because they knew that it was inconsistent with loving Jesus. How so?

First, *tribalism is a work of the flesh*. Tribalism stokes “enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions”—all of which are “works of the flesh” which have no place in the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19–21). It is a work of the flesh when we minimize the faults of our side, while magnifying the flaws of our opponents. It is a work of the flesh when we don rose-colored glasses to examine our own actions and motives, but then interpret our opponents’ actions and motives in the worst possible light. What would the Apostle Paul say if he read our social media posts?

Second, *tribalism disregards basic Christian ethics*. Second only to the love of God is the command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). The parable of the Good Samaritan shows us that this command applies just as much to our cultural enemies as to our cultural allies (Luke 10:25–37). The love we are commanded to show believes the best and gives others the benefit of the doubt (1 Cor. 13:7). Tribalism disregards this command and denies the basic Christian ethic: “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them” (Matt. 7:12).

Third, *tribalism dehumanizes people made in God’s image*. When we fail to treat others as we would be treated, we implicitly deny their dignity as fellow image-bearers of God. We are called to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19). Even if our opponents treat us unjustly, Jesus calls us not to “own them,” but to love and pray for them (Matt. 5:44).

Fourth, *tribalism inhibits the Great Commission*. More than once in OP congregations I have seen allegedly non-partisan “voter information guides” displayed. Even where there are no pamphlets, there is often an undercurrent of tribalism in our conversations and assumptions—not just with political questions, but also with questions such as how best to educate our children. Such undercurrents can communicate hostility and suffocate grace, especially toward those who do not yet believe, who are new to the faith, or who simply hold a different perspective.

We as churches tend to think that we are non-partisan as long as nothing overtly political comes from the pulpit. But the problem can be not just with the words coming from the

pulpit, but also with the words spoken among the pews. And tribalistic undercurrents, whether overt or subtle, may very easily push away people whom the Lord is drawing to himself. Of course lost people will carry all sorts of wrong ideas with them through the doors of our churches! What else would we expect? Yet should we not ensure that they first understand the core message of the gospel before trying to persuade them to embrace its political or social implications? The problem is not that we have political or social interest; The problem is that we can so easily get our priorities inverted (Matt. 23:23).

Finally, *tribalism diminishes respect for Christian liberty*. The Apostle Paul was not a man to avoid necessary controversy (see Gal. 2:11–15), and he was capable of sharp words (see Gal. 5:12). However, on secondary issues, he insisted on making space for divergent viewpoints (Rom. 14:1–6). Tribalism demands that we line up behind a single platform or position; Christ calls for liberty where the gospel is not at stake.

Expelling Tribalism with the Gospel

Tribalism thrives on fear: the fear of losing our freedom, our safety, or our country. But the gospel reminds us that our true freedom is not freedom from persecution (2 Tim. 3:12), but freedom from the guilt of sin and the fear of death (1 Cor. 15:55–57). Our true safety is not found in the things we hold in our hands, but in the reality that we are held in the hands that hung the stars (John 10:28–29). Our true country is not even our beloved nation, but rather the new creation (Rev. 21–22). Meditating on these promises each day makes Jesus larger to us and enables us to expel tribalism in the following ways.

First, *recognize that in Christ you have nothing to prove and nothing to lose*. Your identity and value are not tied to the rise or fall of any social movement or political party; your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3.3). Your destiny is secure. Your ultimate safety and hope are not bound up with the fate of your country; you are destined for a better country (Heb. 11:16).

Second, *engage individuals rather than labels*. Don’t abandon concern for society; embrace social concern in a way that cares for souls! Even if you happen to be a true expert, remember that ideas always inhabit individuals with unique histories and perspectives. If somebody asks you, What do you think about X?, respond by asking them, What do you understand X to mean? Then try to engage what they share from a biblical perspective.

Finally, *focus on serving rather than seeking control*. We are sent into the world not to seize power or control others, but to serve individuals and societies by sharing with them the only hope that can save anybody (Mark 10:45; see also John 20:21). Christians don’t have to secure our victory. Our victory is already won. This gives us a flexibility the world lacks: we can appreciate truth wherever it is found and rebuke error even in our own backyard. In so doing, we show a love for Jesus that outshines loyalty to any tribe—and we bear witness to all tribes that there is far more to life than winning (Mark 8:36).

The author is a pastor of Covenant Presbyterian in Vandalia, Ohio.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by emailing HomeMissionsToday@opc.org. New editions: October 13 & 27.

[Continued from page 11]

that there is that which “is not included in it,” as well as that which “it does really embrace” (5).

Hodge writes, “It is obvious that the Church, considered as the communion of saints, does not necessarily include the idea of a visible society organized under one definite form” (5). While an earthly kingdom is a “political society governed by a king” and a democracy one “having the power centered in the people,” there “may, however, be a communion of saints without a visible head, without prelates,” or without a congregational government. Hodge will make this point time and again, particularly in this essay: “[T]he conception of the Church as the communion of saints does not include the idea of any external organization. The bond of union may be spiritual. There may be communion without external organized union. The Church, therefore, according to this view, is not essentially a visible society . . . which ceases to exist if the external bond of union be dissolved” (5) as it may do for a time when persecuted and forced underground.

This is because, simply, “the Church, as such, is not a visible society. All visible union, all external organization may cease, and yet, so long as there are saints who have communion, the Church exists, if the Church is the communion of saints” (6). What is the glue of such communion, one may ask? “That communion may be in faith, in love, in obedience to a common Lord. It may have its origin in something deeper still; in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of Christ, by which every member is united to Christ, and all the members are joined in one body” (6). For Hodge, “this is a union far more real, a communion far more intimate, than subsists between the members of any visible society as such” (6).



This union that believers have with Christ renders them holy, free from the guilt and moral pollution of sin. “The saints, therefore, according to the scriptural meaning of the term, are those who have been cleansed from guilt or justified, who have been inwardly renewed or sanctified, and who have been separated from the world and consecrated to God” (6). Hodge argues that it is saints thus defined who constitute the church: “If a man is not justified, sanctified, and consecrated to God, he is not a saint, and therefore does not belong to the Church, which is the communion of saints” (6). This is a quintessentially “spiritual” conception of the church. This may unsettle some Presbyterians: in outworking the doctrine of the church, our nineteenth-century Old School forbears sometimes fell short. Hodge does clearly define Presbyterianism, however, in his essay on that in his *Church Polity*, but not in a way that unchurches all who are not Presbyterians. The specifics of Presbyterian polity, Hodge was always clear, belong not to the being (the essence) of the church but to its well-being.

The Indwelling of the Spirit

Here you have the doctrine of spirituality in its essence and in its most potent form: “The proximate and essential bond of union between the saints, that which gives rise to their communion, and makes them the Church, or body of Christ, is, therefore, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost” (7). It is the presence of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, in individual hearts and lives that make them, as a collective, to be the church. Hodge asserts: “Such, then, is the true idea of the Church, or, what is the same thing, the idea of the true Church. It is the communion of saints, the body of those who are united to Christ by the indwelling of his Spirit” (7). Hodge concludes, “The two

essential points included in this definition are, that the Church consists of saints, and that the bond of their union is not external organization, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit” (7). Hodge speaks of this summarily in this way in his *Church Polity*:

1. The Holy Spirit constitutes the true church—that invisible body of believers gathered across the ages and found in a variety of particular visible churches. This stands against all Rationalism and anti-supernaturalism. It also serves to refute the charge that Hodge was captive to Scottish Common Sense Realism.

2. The church is a spiritual kingdom, whose power is moral and suasive—as opposed to the state, a physical kingdom whose power is legal and coercive. The state itself is not atheistic, however, and, though separate from the church, and not over the church, should provide the atmosphere in which the church can thrive (facilitating Sabbath observance, encouraging Christian morality in schools, etc.).

3. The church, over against the Roman Catholic Church, or any other ritualist churches, exercises power in a fashion that is ministerial and declarative as opposed to power that is magisterial and legislative.

4. Thus the spirituality of the church, in this sense, means that the church is the Spirit-composed communion of saints, who dwell in a variety of particular churches across the earth, who are called to a specific task, the gathering and perfecting of the saints. It is to that task and not to mere ritualism ecclesiastically or politics civilly that this true church is called. □

The author is a professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary and associate pastor of New Covenant Community in Joliet, IL.

Notes

1 Alan D. Strange, *The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge* (P&R, 2017), 87. For more on the life of Hodge, in keeping with his work on the spirituality of the church, see chapter 2 (49–87).

2 For a fuller discussion, see *Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge*, especially 162–174.

OCTOBER



The Ansell's

1 MILLER & STEPHANIE ANSELL, Waco, TX. Pray that Baylor students would be led to join Trinity Presbyterian. / Active duty military chaplains **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS**, US Army, and **DANIEL (STACEY) HALLEY**, US Air Force.

2 CALVIN & CONNIE KELLER, Winston-Salem, NC. Pray for Harvest OPC's leadership training and for the church's building-search committee. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator.

3 BEN & HEATHER HOPP, Haiti (on furlough). Pray for the Haiti Mission as they consider earthquake relief. / **JOHN FIKKERT**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care, and **MELISA MCGINNIS**, financial controller.

4 MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD, Farmington, ME. Pray for outreach opportunities and growth at Grace Reformed. / Pray for **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay (on furlough), as they begin a three-month furlough in the US.

5 CHRISTOPHER & SARA DREW, Grand Forks, ND. Pray Faith OPC would grow in grace and that it might find a new worship facility. / Pray for the **COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION** as it meets Oct. 5-6.

6 Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE**, Japan. Pray for the church as it responds to the challenges of COVID restrictions. / **CHRIS BYRD**, Westfield, NJ. Pray that Grace OPC would see fruit from the summer's evangelism training.

7 DAVID NAKHLA, administrator for the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, meeting today. Praise God for worldwide opportunities to distribute COVID relief funds to churches in need. / **MARK STUMPPF**, OPC Loan Fund manager.

8 TYLER & NATALIE DETRICK, Dayton, OH. Pray that God would bless Light of the Nations' ESL program and open gospel conversations. / Affiliated missionary **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. Pray for wisdom for staff and teachers as they plan for 2021-22.

9 Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda, give thanks for the recent rains and the grain harvests. / Pray for **CHRIS (MEGAN) HARTSHORN**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California.

10 Yearlong interns **BEN (VICTORIA) CIAVOLELLA** at Delta Oaks Presbyterian in Pittsburg, CA, and **JASON (CAITLIN) VARTANIAN** at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA. / **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom for the mercy committee as it distributes church funds.



Abby Harting

11 MR. AND MRS. F., Asia (on furlough). Pray for a visa and for church members who lost jobs. / Pray for teachers and students in **MTIOPC COURSES** beginning today in homiletics, pastoral theology, and Reformed evangelism.

12 Missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the ladies in her Bible study may lead their own. / Pray for OPC office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY** and Christian Education office secretary **ABBY HARTING**.

13 Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that missionary children would grow in love for local people. / Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

14 **MARKUS & SHARON JEROMIN**, Battle Creek, MI. Pray that God would grow Pastor Jeromin's weekly Bible study and use it to reach the lost. / Stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** and database administrator **CHARLENE TIPTON**.

15 Associate missionary **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. Give thanks for the KEO teachers serving the community even with closed schools. / Pray for technical assistants **ANDREW MOODY** and **LINDA FOH** at OPC.org.

OCTOBER



The Delfils family

16 Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for church members and others grieving the loss of lives from the earthquake. / Intern **JOSIAH (HANNAH) STOCKWELL** at Pilgrim OPC in Bangor, ME.

17 **CALEB & ERIKA SMITH**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Praise the Lord that Thousand Oaks has found a new place for worship! / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education, as he directs the intern program.

18 Pray for associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda, as their family welcomes the joys and challenges of new baby Olive. / Pray for Disaster Response staffers **TRISH DUGGAN** and **SARAH KLAZINGA**.

19 Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for spiritual rest and refreshment during their home assignment. / **NATE & KATIE PASCHALL**, church-planting intern at Christ the King in Naples, FL.

20 Pray for **BRAD (CINNAMON) PEPPO**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Assoc. missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that her health work would testify to the Lord's care.

21 **ANDREW & REBEKAH CANAVAN**, Corona, CA. Pray that Corona Presbyterian would faithfully and winsomely share the gospel. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for mutual encouragement in the church.

22 **RON & CAROL BEABOUT**, McAlisterville, PA. Pray that Grace and Truth would make new connections while maintaining old ones. / **ISAAC & ESTHER ZHOU**, church-planting intern at Pasadena OPC in Pasadena, CA.

23 **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray that God would provide Pasadena Presbyterian with officers. / **JUDITH DINSMORE**, managing editor of *New Horizons*, and **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

24 Yearlong interns **BEN (CHERIE) FRANKS** at Ketocin Covenant in Purcellville, VA, and **MARC (RUTHIE) SCATURRO** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

25 Yearlong interns **JEREMIAH (ANNA) MOONEY** at Covenant Community in Taylors, SC, and **KELLE (ALEX) CRAFT** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATHARINE OLINGER**.

26 Pray for **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda, as Charles continues to heal from neck surgery. / Yearlong interns **TAYLOR (SOPHIA) SEXTON** at Heritage Presbyterian in Royston, GA, and **MATTHEW (HYOJUNG) WALKER** at Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, PA.



The Oldakers

27 **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Sandusky, OH. Pray for the church as it moves toward a permanent meeting place. / **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray for church growth and Eileen's health during her pregnancy.

28 Missionary assoc. **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the churches in Uganda, which have been closed for months due to COVID. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic.

29 **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for the children at a new school and for Mr. M. as he serves students at a local university. / Yearlong intern **A. J. (CHELSEA) MILLSAPS** at Sandy Springs Presbyterian in Maryville, TN.

30 Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / Yearlong intern **DUSTIN (AMYE) THOMPSON** at Trinity Presbyterian in Medford, OR.

31 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the follow-up with 35 college students who attended English camp for the first time. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

WISE ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT BATTLE MOUNTAIN, NV

On May 7, John M. Wise was ordained by the Presbytery of Northern California and Nevada and installed as pastor of Grace OPC in Battle Mountain, Nevada.

Rev. Francis VanDelden, pastor of New Hope OPC in Frederick, Maryland, preached from John 3:25-30. The Rev. Wayne Forkner, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian in Berkley, California, and moderator of the PNCN, presented the warrant and nature of the office and gave the charge to the minister. Rev. Dave Bush, pastor of Oak Hill Presbyterian in Sonora, California, who had served for three years as ministerial advisor of Grace while the pulpit remained unfilled, gave the charge to the congregation and prayed.

Grace OPC, located in the north central region of Nevada, was organized as a congregation of the OPC in 1995, and Mr. Wise is the congregation's sixth pastor. Mr. Wise most recently served as a ruling elder at New Hope OPC.

UPDATE

CHURCHES

- On May 13, **Grace Fellowship OPC** in Zeeland, MI, became a particular congregation of the OPC.
- On July 23, **Heritage OPC** in Wilmington, NC, became a particular congregation of the OPC.

MINISTERS

- On May 7, **John M. Wise** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Grace OPC in Battle Mountain, NV.
- On May 13, **Michael J. Schout**, previously the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Grace Fellowship OPC in Zeeland, MI.
- On June 11, **Jimmy S. Apodaca** was ordained as a minister and installed as a pastor of Providence OPC in Temecula, CA.



At Wise's ordination and installation: William Gilbert, Adam Gustavson, Joe Horvath, Kevin Van der Linden, Francis VanDelden, Wayne Forkner, John Wise, Adrian Crum, Dave Bush, and Bryan Aten

- On July 23, **Ethan J. Bolyard**, previously the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Heritage OPC in Wilmington, NC.
- On July 31, **S. Edd Cathey** retired. He was the pastor of Grace and Peace Presbyterian in California, MD.
- On August 13, **Melaku Solomon Tamirat** was installed as an evangelist of Redeemer OPC in Doraville, GA, to work with the Refugee Ministry in Clarkston,

GA. He previously served as a minister in the Reformed Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ethiopia.

MILESTONES

- Retired OP pastor **Richard A. Miller**, 71, died on July 18. He served churches in WA, FL, and ID.
- **Barbara (Piper) Keller**, 84, died on August 31. She was the wife of retired OP pastor Rollin P. Keller.



At Melaku Tamirat's August 13 installation: Ben Stahl, Ken Montgomery, James Ganzevoort, Jeff Cunningham, Boyd Miller, Glenn Jerrell, Zecharias Weldeyesus, Rich Hastings, Melaku Tamirat, Bob Horton, Mike Myers, Alemu Chemada, and Chris Cashen

LETTERS

“NEW” PRESBYTERY OF THE MIDWEST

Editor:

In the [August issue](#), a statement was made that requires a gentle correction. The paragraph reads: “The assembly adopted the overture of the Presbytery of the Midwest to divide the presbytery into two separate regional churches. The new Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota will include the geographical region within those two states and the upper peninsula of the state of Michigan. The Presbytery of the Midwest will include the states of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska.”

The assembly did adopt the overture and divided PMW as described, but the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota is not the “new presbytery.” The Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota is the new name for the continuing presbytery—it is the mother presbytery. From 1936 onward, it has had a continuous presence in Wisconsin. The “new presbytery”—the daughter presbytery—is in the southern part of our territory, encompassing the states of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. They retain the name “The Presbytery of the Midwest,” but they are the new entity created by the general assembly’s action.

Brian De Jong
Sheboygan, WI

FAULT LINES: CAREFUL, HELPFUL, VALUABLE

Editor:

I was dismayed to see the [two letters published in the August-September issue](#) dissenting from the recent positive review of Voddie Baucham’s *Fault Lines*. The adoption of assumptions propounded by Critical Theory and the apology for it offered by both respondents was disheartening and troubling. *Fault Lines* is a careful, substantive, and valuable assessment of CRT and the social justice movement that is ravaging western civilization and corrupting once conservative, evangelical, and Reformed churches. There should be no quarter given to Critical Theory by officers, members, and congregations of the

OPC. It is not merely a neutral, analytical tool. It is explicitly and radically opposed to truth and corrosive to Christian orthodoxy and human flourishing. I beg my brothers not to go down this road.

Joel Ellis
Apache Junction, AZ

Editor:

I was heartened to read Mike Myers’s [ree view \(June\) of *Fault Lines*](#), Voddie Baucham’s helpful and moving contribution to discussions in church and culture concerning true justice. Conversely, I was disheartened to read [two letters](#) openly dismissive of *Fault Lines*.

One called Baucham’s appeal to the “gospel of free grace in Jesus Christ” a “historically rooted trope,” adding the suspicion that this trope might be used to “truncate the gospel by eliminating the gospel’s full implications: loving and seeking the welfare of our neighbors.” But Baucham apparently did pass Theology 101: “We love God, so we keep His commandments, and in doing so, we love our neighbor” (211).

The second referred to James Lindsay as a publisher of “hoax papers” and a “non-expert in legal studies or religion.” The first statement inexplicably fails to mention that Lindsay published the “hoax papers” as an intentional experiment, and the second is *ad hominem*. We should engage with substance while respecting persons.

Perhaps more free grace is needed, especially when we consider that *Fault Lines* is fueled both by Baucham’s profound experiences of racial injustice and his desire that the church defend, embrace, preach and experience the liberating and peace-making gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter Van Doodewaard
Greenville, SC

REVIEWS

Reading the Times: A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News, by Jeffrey Bilbro. InterVarsity, 2021. Hardcover, 187 pages, \$19.60 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP member Diane L. Olinger.

Books and essays that critique modern journalism abound. This book offers critique as well, but differs in that it calls us

as Christian readers of news to address the problem by becoming better consumers of news. Author Jeffrey Bilbro, an editor of *Front Porch Republic* and a professor at Grove City College, aims to produce a “practical theology of the news” that considers “how a Christian account of attention, time, and community might inform our relation to the news” (6).



Bilbro’s main point is that, if we want to understand our times, we must read the news in light of what is timeless. Or, as Bilbro puts it, we should read *chronos* (secular, progressive history) in light of *kairos*

(God’s redemptive drama). This does not mean that we view the news as a cosmic scoreboard, with ourselves as the “good guys and our opponents as the “bad guys” to blame for all the ills of culture (45). In fact, Bilbro recommends something quite the opposite from this news-as-scoreboard reading: he suggests a sort of “indifference” toward the outcome of issues we read about and advocate for, one that is “rooted in a confidence that God is in control and in a humility about our own ability to discern the workings of Providence in contemporary events” (37). Far from a privileged insulation from the effects of bad news, Bilbro urges us to have an attitude like the martyrs, who faithfully obeyed God regardless of the consequences because of their eschatological hope (42, 54). Reading the news in this way, Bilbro posits, can help us to love our neighbors well.

To illustrate his points, Bilbro draws on the work of writers from Thoreau and Dante to Merton and Berry, along with activist-journalists like Frederick Douglass and Dorothy Day. A quote from Thoreau is repeated throughout the book: “Read not the Times. Read the Eternities” (from Thoreau’s *Reform Papers*).

Happily, Bilbro not only identifies problems, but offers helpful suggestions for Christians trying to navigate the digital media ecosystem. If our “tastes”

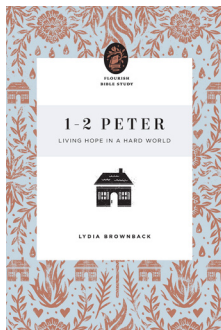
for news have been malformed, the good news is that we can “begin to change our cravings by changing what we consume” (57). It’s not enough to just diversify our news feed. Instead, he encourages us to look for writers and institutions “who attend to the news from a longer, deeper perspective,” rather than those who drive us to flit from scandal to scandal (170). He also urges those who are tempted to find community and identity through partisan, screen-mediated discourse, to re-connect with their neighborhoods.

I found this book to be convicting. Particularly, this statement: “Reading the morning newspaper is the realist’s morning prayer” (75, quoting Hegel). When I reach for my phone first thing in the morning, what am I orienting myself to—God or the world? What community do I imagine that I am a part of—the one outside my door or some far-flung group connected by a similar news feed?

1–2 Peter: Living Hope in a Hard World, by Lydia Brownback. Crossway, 2021. Paperback, 128 pages, \$14.99. Reviewed by managing editor Judith Dinsmore.

In *1–2 Peter*, Lydia Brownback, a PCA member and seminary graduate who has also published workbooks on the books of Esther and Judges and the gospel of Luke, guides the lay reader in asking good questions of, and thus meditating on, the text.

With about as many blank lines for the reader as there are commentary and questions from Brownback, the workbook doesn’t allow for either idleness or haste. Any veteran of Bible reading plans will appreciate the chance to linger in 1 and 2 Peter: the workbook on these two short epistles is segmented into ten weeks. The prompts can often be answered simply by rewriting portions of the text. For example, “From verse 22,” Brownback asks, “identify the characteristics of the love we are to have



for our Christian brothers and sisters” (40). 1 Peter 1:22 easily yields up the answer: the love is to be sincere, earnest, and from a pure heart. Regularly, Brownback directs the reader to other relevant passages. Refreshingly scant are personal application questions: only two per week.

With little commentary from Brownback and few reflective questions, the workbook may be difficult to use as a group discussion guide. However, it’s an excellent resource for individual study or for accountability partners. And there is no sanctioned study space required. The uncomplicated, step-by-step questions that stick to the clear meaning of the text pair well, if necessary, with feeding babies and praising dinosaur drawings. But that’s not to say the workbook detracts from the wonder of 1 and 2 Peter. On the contrary, it provoked joy and delight—the joy of making connections that scads of believers have made before me about suffering, submission, and our incorruptible inheritance; the delight of the perspicuity of Scripture.

***Aging With Grace: Flourishing in an Anti-Aging Culture*, by Sharon W. Betters and Susan Hunt. Crossway, 2021. Paperback, 192 pages, \$12.79 (Amazon). Reviewed by Eileen Scipione, recently widowed wife of Dr. George Scipione, OP pastor.**

Have you felt, as I have, that once the senior years arrive and especially once you have lost a life partner, you do not have much left to really make a difference in the kingdom? When the time comes for your children to take control of your life in the areas of your greatest weakness, do you and I panic and demand to keep the reins in hand? Do you notice that when older folks in the church get together, the topic is usually their

aches and pains and latest ailments? Are you embarrassed to let others in the body of Christ know about the struggles your own children and grandchildren face in their spiritual journeys?

This little book by Sharon Betters and Susan Hunt, two women in their eighties, brings a biblically balanced approach to staying grace-filled and joyful as we age. The authors’ experiences—loss of a sixteen-year-old son, death of a husband, breast cancer—enrich their application of Scripture to the long haul of life.



Other women who have faced divorce, depression, brain disorders, and alienation have contributed to many of the chapters. The harsh mirror of reality is reflected on every page. Hunt

writes honestly when she says that God’s sovereignty was not a comfort to her in the days following her son’s death.

The strongest benefit of this book comes from its diverse use of Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as well as quotes from men and women throughout the ages up to the very present. There are entire chapters on Anna, Elizabeth, and Naomi, gleaning profound and powerful lessons from these aging women. There is another invaluable chapter on Psalm 71,

Position Available

Pastor: Christ Presbyterian Church in Janesville, Wisconsin, is seeking a pastor. We are a congregation of ninety-five communicant members in a city of sixty-eight thousand. We seek a pastor to faithfully preach the Word, administer the sacraments, shepherd the flock, and provide leadership on the session. Interested candidates should submit their ministerial information form, including a link to three recently preached sermons, to: pastorsearch@christ-opc.org or Pastor Search Committee, Christ Presbyterian Church, 3625 Skyview Dr, Janesville, Wisconsin, 53546.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

which is all about being “old and gray.”

Men as well as women can benefit from this easy-to-read book. Even believers in their forties and fifties can benefit because of the sense of loss that comes with reduced stamina and increased demands. We have stories to tell to our children and grandchildren, we have prayers to pray for the reformation of the church, and we have hope to demonstrate to our caregivers who need to see a trail of faith in Christ. My favorite line is this: “Old age, when life becomes quieter and slower, is prime time to reflect on the power of the gospel to change us” (67).

My appreciation is extended to the authors, two mighty women of God who still flourish in old age. You would do well to read this little gem they have written together.

***No Flesh Shall Glory: How the Bible Destroys the Foundations of Racism*, by C. Herbert Oliver. P&R, 2021. Paperback, 144 pages, \$11.25. Reviewed by OP member Bryan Selby.**

Ever since 2012, when Trayvon Martin was shot and killed, there has been an increase in conversation concerning America’s long history of racism, racial segregation, and racial injustice. New movements have begun, books have been written, and theories have been developed in order to bring awareness to the reality of racism in America and even to shape our understanding of it and our response to it. But in my estimation, what is often lacking in the conversation is clear thinking about what the Bible says about race and racism. The reprint of then-OP minister Rev. C. Herbert Oliver’s classic study from 1959, *No Flesh Shall Glory*, provides

that. As indicated by the subtitle of the work, Oliver’s aim is to expose the reader to a biblical understanding of race and to how such an understanding undermines the very foundation of racism.

The book begins in chapter 1 where any book on human origins should, the creation of man, male and female, in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). It is this foundational truth—that God created the root of all mankind, Adam and Eve, after his own image “with the inherent capacity to procreate endless varieties” of the one human race—that destabilizes the notion of racial solidarity (18). Racial solidarity is that popular notion that people can be grouped together and separated from others based on a few physical characteristics. Oliver argues that the Christian must recognize the differences and varieties among people, but such differences should never sever the unity of the one human race.

Chapters 2–4 unfold the painful historical reality that many Western Christians often turned to the Bible to confirm their prejudices and justify the enslavement of blacks by invoking the curse of Noah on Ham’s son, Canaan. Chapter 2 takes up the task of exploring what the Bible says about color and refuting the common association of black skin with a curse. Chapters 3–4 examine a handful of Old Testament commentaries that erroneously extend the curse of Canaan to all the descendants of Ham and some that go so far as to explicitly connect Canaan’s curse with the enslavement of Af-

ricans. With these commentaries as the backdrop, Oliver, through close attention to the genealogies of Noah’s three sons recorded in Scripture and other biblical texts, concludes that the curse of Canaan was fulfilled in the subjection of the Canaanites to Israel, the progeny of Shem.

Having established that the Bible provides no basis for racial divisions or racial superiority, Oliver in chapters 5–7 tackles the ideas of segregation, social association, and arguments against interracial marriages and concludes that “Christian ethics cannot support segregationist ideas, for such ideas have no place whatsoever in a truly Christian view of life” (68). And lastly, this reprint includes a short essay by Oliver entitled “The Church and Social Change” that underlines the fact that the teachings of the church always have societal im-

plications that often oppose the opinions of the time. It was true for the apostles in a Greco-Roman society; it was true of the Reformers in a feudalistic society; and it is most certainly true of Christians in a segregated one.

Oliver’s interlocutors and arguments might seem to be a bit out of date to the modern reader, but his method of sound exegesis and its application to issues of race and racism aren’t. This book will certainly challenge you to think more biblically about matters of race and racism, but Oliver’s aim is much higher. Racism ideology from whites, blacks, and everyone in between is a form of glorying in the flesh, and such glory is due to our triune God alone.

