

NEW HORIZONS

— *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

8 A Conversation with
Rosaria Butterfield

DECEMBER 2023

21 Review: Letham's *The Holy Spirit* // by Robert T. Holda



Long Live
THE
True King

Ethan J. Bolyard // 3

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Articles previously published may be slightly edited.

New Horizons (ISSN: 0199-3518) is published monthly except for a combined issue, usually August-September, by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539; tel. 215-830-0900; fax 215-830-0350.

Letters to the editor are welcome. They should deal with an issue the magazine has recently addressed. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offense. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor.

Send inquiries, letters to the editor, and other correspondence to the editor at danny.olinger@opc.org.

Send address changes to ccesecretary@opc.org. Allow six weeks for address changes.

The digital edition (PDF, ePub) and an archive of previous issues are available at www.opc.org.

Views expressed by our writers are not necessarily those of the editors or official positions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Copies are distributed free to members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Nonmembers are asked to donate \$20.00 for an annual subscription (USD \$30.00 if sent to addresses in Canada; \$40.00 elsewhere abroad). A free e-mail PDF subscription is also available. Requests for a subscription should be sent to ccesecretary@opc.org or the address below.

Periodicals postage is paid at Willow Grove, PA, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 607 Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539.

On October 8, the congregation of Calvary Community OPC in Harmony, New Jersey, surprised their pastor, Rev. Michael W. Bobick, with a dinner celebrating his thirty years of ministry at Calvary Community. He is the longest tenured pastor in the Presbytery of New Jersey, having served since 1992. Pictured left to right: Dan Bobick (elder), Ed Kauffman (elder), Kevin Laubach (deacon), Michael and Linda Bobick, Rick DeBoer (deacon), Peter de Boer (elder) and Bob Freeman (elder).



LONG LIVE THE TRUE KING



ETHAN J. BOLYARD // As modern Christians, we live in what feels like an increasingly disenchanted cosmos. The thrill is gone. Charles Darwin told us we are just highly evolved apes. Carl Sagan informed us that the earth is nothing but a pale blue dot. And John Lennon encouraged us to “imagine there’s no heaven, / It’s easy if

you try. / No hell below us, / Above us, only sky.” What is left is a disenchanted cosmos—just matter in motion, no ghost in the machine. Everything (we are told) can be explained by science. Everything can be reduced to its component parts. A star, to quote Eustace Scrubb, is nothing but “a huge ball of flaming gas” (Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 209). Our bodies are nothing but recycled stardust. Love is only a chemical reaction. On the other side of the so-called Enlightenment, which some prefer to call the “Endarkenment,” modern man feels (understandably) alienated—estranged from God, the world, and himself. The cosmos feels disenchanted, as if it were (like Narnia under the reign of the White Witch) always winter but never Christmas.

And yet, even at his most jaded, modern man knows deep down that there is more to the story. As Hamlet told Horatio, “There are more things in heaven and earth . . . Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (Shakespeare, *Ham-*

let, 1.5.54). There is more than a ghost in the machine. We are more than the sum of our parts. Amidst the white noise of modern and postmodern despair, there remain what some have called “signals of transcendence,” persistent signposts that point beyond themselves to another world. One such signal or signpost is the church’s yearly celebration of Christ’s incarnation.

Christmas Through New Eyes

Like the rest of Scripture, the nativity accounts presuppose a robust pre-modern view of the world—namely, the supernatural worldview of the Bible. Nevertheless, it is precisely at this point that we face another challenge. The Christmas story is so familiar that many of us have become comfortably numb to its narrative power. We receive it through the distorted filter of countless commercials, cantatas, and caricatures. To borrow a phrase, how can we learn to see Christmas (and thus the cosmos) *through new eyes*? The short answer, ac-

cording to John Calvin, is by putting on the “spectacles” of Scripture (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.6.1; 1.14.1), by letting the Bible tell its own story in its own way. With this method in mind, we will focus on three Christmas realities: angels, the world, and Christ’s birth.

Heavenly Host

First, we must recover a biblical view of angels. It is impossible to tell the nativity story apart from angelic beings, especially the messenger Gabriel, who appeared to the Virgin Mary. Unfortunately, if modern people think of angels at all, they imagine the infantile cherubic forms of Renaissance paintings. Contrary to popular misconceptions, Gabriel is not a Precious Moments figurine but a created spirit, “immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, to execute [God’s] commandments, and to praise his name” (Larger Catechism Q. 16).

As a winged messenger, he represents one class of the celestial hierarchy,

whose other ranks include throne guardians with flaming swords (Gen. 3:24), fiery (perhaps serpentine) court attendants (Isa. 6:1–3), and four-winged/four-faced steeds who pull God’s cloud-chariot through the sky (Ps. 18:10) on wheels within wheels full of eyes (Ezek. 1:15–21). Having received a commission from the divine council on the heavenly mountain (Ps. 82), Gabriel—perhaps “being caused to fly swiftly” (Dan. 9:21)—descended upon the city of Nazareth to deliver a royal message to a young Jewish maiden (Luke 1:26–38). In the Bible, angels are good but terrible creatures who inspire fear in the hearts of those who encounter them. This is clear from the shepherds’ reaction to another angelic visitation: “And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid” (Luke 2:9). Like Elisha’s servant, we need our eyes opened that we may see the inhabitants of the unseen realm (2 Kings 6:17), including the heavenly host who sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

Deep Heaven

Second, we must recover a biblical view of the world. Whereas secular scientists speak of the universe as a mechanical closed system, the Bible describes the world as a majestic three-story house composed of heaven, earth, and sea (Exod. 20:4, 11). This ancient cosmology is reflected in the nativity story. After the shepherds heard the *Gloria* of the heavenly host, the angels departed from earth into heaven (Luke 2:14–15). This scene—of the heavenly host descending and ascending from the heavenly places—suggests an opportunity to improve our language. If you look up at the stars in the night sky, what do you call what you see? We have been catechized by modernism to call it outer space. For the secular scientist, that is all it is—outer space. But the Bible does not call it that. Luke instead refers to “heaven.” In fact, the apostles and prophets speak of three heavens

(cf. 2 Cor. 12:2): the airy heaven of the sky, the ethereal heaven of the stars, and the empyrean heaven of God’s special presence with his holy angels (see Van Mastricht’s discussion in *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, vol. 3:143).

This might seem like a minor point, but the difference between “outer space” and “deep heaven” is significant. Although there is nothing wrong with scientific descriptions of outer space, such language falls short of the Bible’s own vocabulary. C. S. Lewis made this point in the first installment of his Ransom Trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*. According to Lewis, whereas the term “space” suggests “the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds,” the term “heaven” evokes an “empyrean ocean of radiance” in which celestial bodies swim—“the womb of worlds, whose blazing and innumerable offspring looked down nightly even upon the earth with so many eyes” (32). He concluded, “Space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens—the heavens which declared the glory—the ‘happy climes that ly / Where day never shuts his eye / Up in the broad fields of the sky.’” Indeed, toward the end of the novel, the main character says, “If we could even effect in one percent of our readers a change-over from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven, we should have made a beginning” (154). It starts with a recovery of the Bible’s own cosmology, from the sea of crystal to the star of Bethlehem.

Deeper Conflict

Third, we must recover a biblical view of Christ’s birth. Not only do nativity sets and figurines put considerable strain on the second commandment (indeed, to the breaking point), they tend to domesticate and defang the raw reality of what is actually going on. According to Revelation 12, the nativity scene is one of cosmic warfare, what Meredith Kline called “the deeper conflict” that goes all the way back to Gen-

esis 3:15. It is the epic story of a queenly maiden in distress, threatened by a great, fiery red dragon (Rev. 12:1–6). Like Heracles, who strangled a serpent in his cradle, the hero whom she bears is destined to slay the dragon and wed the princess, and that is precisely what Jesus accomplished by the blood of his cross and the power of his resurrection (Heb. 2:14–15). He was born to die, and he died to purchase his bride and destroy his enemy. As others have said, you can summarize the Bible’s storyline as “kill the dragon, get the girl.” This is what it looks like to see Christmas (and thus the cosmos) through new eyes.

It’s Winter but Christmas Is Coming

As a modern Christian, you may feel like you are living in a disenchanted cosmos, but, rest assured, that perception is only an optical illusion. The reality is that we live in a fiercely supernatural cosmos, whose history teems with giants and dragons, warriors and wizards, angels and demons—a riotous realm in which stars sing, trees clap their hands, oceans roar, mountains melt, axe heads float, sinners get saved, and animals have been known to talk. Amidst the white noise of modern and postmodern despair, various “signals of transcendence” still get through—including the true story of Jesus, the only begotten Son, who was born of a virgin, defeated the dragon, descended into the underworld, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and (even now) sits at the right hand of the Ancient of Days surrounded by angelic throne guardians, who do not rest day or night, shouting, “Holy, holy, holy!” (Rev. 4:8). Of all times of the year, Christmas affords a wonderful opportunity to break the spell of the “Endarkenment” and (so to speak) re-enchant our view of the cosmos in our own generation. It may be winter, but Christmas is coming. Long live the true king! □

The author is pastor of Heritage OPC in Wilmington, North Carolina. He quotes from the New King James Version.

REJOICING IN THE MYSTERY



JONATHAN LANDRY CRUSE // Unlike the commercialized holiday, the Christian's Christmas lasts the year long. Every Lord's Day we gather as God's people to celebrate the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Savior. So it was perhaps not too odd for me to have written this carol in the heat of July.

Having written hymns for ten years now, I had never yet attempted one focused on the theme of the incarnation. The topic seemed too marvelous and mysterious to justify it with my own paltry words. But then I thought that perhaps rejoicing in the mystery of it all would be a fitting approach. How could a mighty Messiah be weak? How could a King come in poverty? Why would a High Priest die for sinners? How is it that the God who sleeps in the manger still upholds the universe by the Word of his power?

This carol rests in the contemplative, and that is brought out beautifully by a pensive, almost lullaby-like tune by composer Josh Bauder. The singable and memorable melody rises sequentially over three phrases before falling back to its original register in a comforting, settled gesture for the final cadence. This restful shape to the music, along with the lilting rhythm, draws out not only the image of the sleeping Savior but also the peace of the believer who is held in the arms of Almighty God. □

The author is pastor of Community Presbyterian in Kalamazoo, Michigan. To download a PDF of the sheet music of "In the Manger," visit hymnsofdevotion.com.

In the Manger

1. See, rest-ing soft - ly in Beth - le - hem's man - ger,
 2. King in the man - ger with - out an - y splen - dor,
 3. Priest in the man - ger who now sym - pa - thiz - es,
 4. God in the man - ger who some - how is sleep - ing,

there is a Sav - ior as God had long sworn.
 gave up the rich - es and yield - ed the crown.
 wear - ing our na - ture and clothed in dis - grace.
 lulled by the sing - ing of an - gels a - bove,

Might - y Mes - si - ah, to keep us from dan - ger,
 These are the least that our King will sur - ren - der:
 O what a mys - t'ry that ev - 'ry saint priz - es:
 holds all the world with His un - fail - ing keep - ing,

now, come in weak - ness, is fi - nal - ly born.
 res - cu - ing re - bels, He'll lay His life down.
 why would this Priest come and die in our place?
 holds all my heart with His un - fail - ing love.

Words: Jonathan Landry Cruse, 2022
 Music: IN THE MANGER | Josh Bauder, 2022

A CLOSER LOOK AT TWO COMMON CAROLS



TIMOTHY AND LOU ANN SHAFER // **When we sing the familiar old carols each year, we often pass by words and phrases with a comfortable lack of understanding that we don't even notice. Sometimes the texts have idioms from another**

era, sometimes lofty poetic language, sometimes confusing word order and punctuation. Other times, however, it's our own comfortability with the familiar words that obscures the meaning of the text.

"Angels We Have Heard on High" (TPH 318)

That was the case for me [Timothy] with "Angels We Have Heard on High," until I sat down to examine exactly what it was that I was singing about. The carol is written by James Chadwick, based on Luke 2:8–17, and set to an anonymously composed French tune called Gloria. The text as presented in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* consists of three verses separated by a repeating chorus. I tried my hand at paraphrasing the verses in more plain-spoken English. The first two verses seem to be from a narrator's perspective:

We heard angels from heaven singing sweetly over the fields, and we also heard the mountains answering back with echoes of the angels' joyful melodies.

Shepherds, what event are you celebrating, and why are you singing such a long and happy melody? Tell me about the good news that inspires you to sing this heavenly song.

The third verse seems to be the response from the shepherds:

Come to Bethlehem to see the one whose birth the angels are singing about! Come and bow before Christ the Lord and worship him!

The verses are set to a simple tune that hovers on the third note of the scale (often said to be the "sweetest" note of the scale). In fact, the hovering on one note is so prominent as to almost be speechlike as the narrator sets

forth his observations and questions. In contrasting response to each of the restrained speechlike verses of the narrator, at the chorus we sing in communion with the heavenly host an ornate, yet lispings echo of that prolonged, joyous strain heard on the night of Christ's birth.

The chorus consists of a unique combination of text and music in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. The text, of course, is *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, meaning "Glory to God in the highest," and it is set to the beautiful and rapidly cascading sequence of soprano pitches, supported by independent alto, tenor, and bass parts. The text of the chorus is unique because it is a Latin phrase for the congregation to sing, and the musical setting is unique because it contains highly decorative melismas—a single word or a syllable of text that is prolonged by singing it to many notes.

Here, in this single chorus, we

have a textual/musical depiction of the multitude of the heavenly host in the prolonged praising of God. The chorus's phrase is from a language that remains the principal source of numerous languages spoken on earth to this day. Musically, the assignment of so many notes (in this case fifteen!) to the first syllable of the Latin word *gloria* is a beautifully vivid way of amplifying and magnifying the word *glory*, thus giving God prolonged and extended glory in the assembly.

In their reforms of the Catholic church, both Calvin and Luther rightly sought to bring singing back to the congregation by translating the psalms to the vernacular and setting syllables of text to a minimal number of notes. No doubt the Reformers were correct in seeking to protect their congregations' abilities to sing with understanding. However, we are each responsible, with the help of the Spirit, for preparing our own hearts and minds as we bring a sacrifice of praise to the Lord's worship. Knowing what we are singing about often requires preparation and study so that we may follow the apostle Paul's admonition to sing not only with our spirit, but also with understanding (1 Cor. 14:15).

"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" (TPH 314)

Have you ever chuckled at sentences with questionable comma placement? Slow children crossing. We went caroling with our dogs, grandma and grandpa. I find inspiration in cooking my family, and reading. All three sentences demonstrate that commas matter! So, too, for the carol at hand. Is it "God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen" or "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"?

Both uses of the comma in this first line of text are common. Interestingly, the first published version of the lyrics, from a broadside circa 1700, includes *no* comma. (A broadside was a sheet of paper printed on one side that featured news, proclamations, advertisements, or



A London broadside circa 1830 with "God Rest You Merry Gentlemen" (British Library)

ballads or carols of the day.)

But we can reach a little further back into history to help us interpret the first line. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the phrase "rest you merry" first appeared in the Middle Ages and was a common expression of good wishes that meant "remain happy, contented, or pleased." Over time, it was changed by addition: "God rest you merry," meaning, "may God keep you contented or joyful." This very phrase was used in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Act V, Scene I, when William says, "God rest ye merry, sir." By the late eighteenth century, the phrase had long since fallen out of the vernacular. However, the carol was very popular, especially in London. In 1843, Charles Dickens referenced it in *A Christmas Carol*: "God bless you, merry gentleman! May nothing you dismay!"

The text of "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" is based on Luke 2 and was first published around 1700 but was probably written in the sixteenth century; its author is anonymous. Stanzas 1 and 3 echo each other in exhortations to not be dismayed or afraid because Christ saves the sinner who trusts in him from Satan's power. Hallelujah! This seems to solve the dilemma of the comma, as the opening text serves as a prayer for continued joy: God rest you merry, gentlemen.

Stanzas 2 and 4 continue the narrative: the angel brings glad tidings, and the shepherds rejoice and go to Bethle-

hem to see the Son of God.

The refrain perfectly encapsulates all four stanzas: these are "tidings of comfort and joy"!

In the nineteenth century, there were two tunes in common usage for the text: London (the tune found in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*) and Cornwall. The London tune, which is in a minor key, appears to descend from an English folk song from circa 1650; it first appeared in print in 1846. The Cornwall tune, which is in a major key, first appeared in print in 1833. The London tune was far more popular.

The form of the music is interesting. The first two lines are exactly the same. The third phrase is different. Then there is a refrain, which is different still. Although this song does not have very much melodic repetition, it is still easy to sing due to the memorable opening of lines 1 and 2 with repeated notes and a big leap, and then moving by step. A crisp tempo will enhance these aspects of the melody.

Although the London tune of "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" was not composed for the text, the marriage of the two makes a wonderful setting, bringing tidings of comfort and joy. God rest you merry! □

The authors are members of Resurrection OPC in State College, Pennsylvania. Timothy Shafer served as musicologist and Lou Ann Shafer as music editor for the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

A CONVERSATION WITH ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD



*This fall, Rosaria Butterfield, the former lesbian, professor, and activist who converted to Christianity and is now an RPCNA member, followed up her popular *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey with Five Lies* of an Anti-Christian Age (Crossway 2023). She reflects here on what's changed since her prior book, and why she picked up her pen again.*

New Horizons: How has the conversation surrounding LGBTQ+ issues changed since the publication of *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*?

Rosaria Butterfield: In the course of watching the rollout from the *Obergefell* decision in 2015, it was very clear very quickly that it was not “just” about domestic partnerships with an official mandate. It was way more than that. The decision has something in it called the dignitary harm clause, which is a particular use of the Fourteenth Amendment. In that clause, it said that you are actually doing harm to an LGBTQ+ person if you do not affirm their identity. That was pretty shocking to me. When I was a lesbian, you would do me harm if you were a pizzeria and I come in for a pizza, and you said, “I’m sorry, we don’t sell pizzas to lesbians.” This was different.

Another rollout was that, in the public schools and government schools, LGBTQ+ education was no longer sex

education, which you could actually exempt your kids from. It is a part of anti-bullying legislation, which everybody has to do. All of a sudden, my neighbors are sending their kids to me. “Hey, Mrs. Butterfield,” said thirteen-year-old Julie, “is it true that everyone in my seventh grade is bisexual?”

Similarly, I was at a speaking event in Charlotte, and there was a woman there who was not a Christian. She raised her hand and said, “Dr. Butterfield, I’m the chair of the counseling center here; I’m not a Christian, I don’t want to hear the gospel, I want to know why one out of four girls who come into my clinic for anxiety and depression leave wanting to get a double mastectomy and a hysterectomy.” I had never heard of anything like that. That was before we talked about rapid onset gender dysphoria, but it was clear that there was something really satanic about this.

NH: You repent publicly for using

transgender pronouns both in a viral Reformation 21 article and in your new book, *Five Lies*. Why?

RB: I came to realize that transgenderism doesn’t mean what it meant when I was in the LGBT community. I knew this person named Jill, and I never knew until I became a Christian that Jill’s name was Matthew. What we all [in the community] knew was that Jill had a very serious mental illness, that we were all participating in a fiction, and that the fiction was helpful in not escalating this mental illness.

First of all, that’s not the right thing to do, that’s not how to treat mental illness. But now that it has become, “let’s treat mental illness with a Pride parade and a sticker,” I guess the actual error of what I was thinking was brought into very clear light. Participating in a fiction is called lying.

I also realized something else—and it sounds really strange: I am actually a

public figure. I don't experience myself as a public figure! I experience myself as a mom and a grandma and a pastor's wife and a neighbor. But I realized that with how confusing the situation is, I needed to say it as firmly as I possibly could. In the Ref21 article, I did what I should have done years ago: not only repent of it as a sin, but repent of it publicly as a sin, and explain exactly why it's really a sin.

NH: Your story of Jill/Matthew was about your use of transgender pronouns to step inside a fiction that's localized. Now that the fiction is so widespread, if we use transgender pronouns, we step into a sort of dystopian world.

RB: Yes. Stepping into the fiction doesn't allow you to bring somebody out of the fiction. But now surgeries and horrific abuses of the body are pushed, whereas twenty-five years ago that just wasn't a reality.

It's not enough to course correct; the little lie is still a lie. This is not just about a mental health issue or the brokenness of living downside of Genesis 3. No, Satan is all over the transgender movement. It is a satanic movement. Christians go into a situation like that with a different sense of their responsibility to the people trapped in it. You go in as though to save someone as though in a fire (Jude 23).

You can't really separate the gospel for too long from these LGBTQ+ issues, because these are issues that are in rebellion against the creation order. . . . Being made in the image of God, male and female, is at the heart of things. The seeds of the gospel are in the garden—you can't just share the gospel with your transgender friend and leave the rebellion against the creation ordinance intact.

NH: Who was in your mind's eye as you wrote this book?

RB: This book is written to Christian women, whose daughters and neighbors and sometimes mothers and aunts and friends have become indoctrinated by a false gospel, the cult of LGBTQ+, and are now waging a kind of war against

the Christian faith. If that sounds kind of nuts, I can just tell you about some of the letters that come in to my website. These are real people!

I started to realize that many Christians feel that we're living at ground zero of the tower of Babel. Yesterday we were all friends, today we're bigots and haters. What changed, and how do we respond? How do we respond to the grandmother who writes to my website and says, "I need to talk to you because my daughter, who used to be a lesbian, has now decided that she is a transgender man and, in an effort to rid the world of toxic masculinity, is raising my three-year-old grandson as a girl?"

NH: So there's been an acceleration.

RB: I loved the idea of a middle road, a third way, finding a neutral ground where we all can at least have a civil conversation. I do believe we can still have a civil conversation—I have them every day with my unbelieving neighbors. But there is no middle ground anymore. That's because the *Obergefell* decision launched a war. Sometimes in war, borders close. It doesn't mean you can't get out, but it makes it harder to get out. We're not talking about being a soft presence in a neutral world where a marketplace of ideas allows for a sharing of differences. We're talking about being a soft presence in Sodom. It didn't go very well for Lot, it went even more poorly for his family, and it probably won't go very well for us.

NH: In that account, it's interesting that it's Lot's family that suffers the most.

RB: Yes, think about this child [being raised as a girl]. I cannot even imagine the story that this child will have. But it's not a good one.

NH: Why is it helpful to conceive of this ideology specifically as a false religion?

RB: You know it's a religion when people make sacrifices for it and worship it.

Romans 1 gives us a great place to start with this conversation. Paul gives us three exchanges: the exchange of truth for lies; the exchange of a true religion for false religion; and the exchange of heterosexuality for homosexuality.

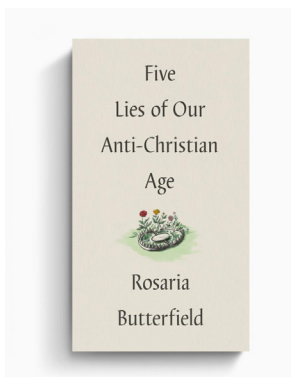
The death culture that you see in transgenderism—if you start a person on cross-sex hormones, or surgery, that person becomes a medical patient for life—means that there's some really serious consequences. There are seriously damaged lives.

The question is, why were Christians so duped? And the answer might be, because people like me were using transgender pronouns. Maybe it was because people like me said, "OK, we can normalize this and hunker down in this necessary fiction." But what critical theorists call necessary fiction, God calls lies.

NH: What about Christians who advise treating the transgender people one encounters, say, at the grocery store, with disgust?

RB: Christian hospitality has to include a place where the gospel has a hearing, which is why I like to do it in my home, because I own this home. The grocery store would be a little different, because I don't own the grocery store. These public space encounters are really challenging. I do not believe we are called, ever, to a scornful derision of strangers at the local grocery store, nor would I want to teach my children that. When you see someone in drag at the grocery store, you see someone who is deceived and who is in a very dangerous place. I do not recommend acting in hostility. But when you're there with your children or grandchildren, you need them to know, "That is in defiance of a holy God." □

Butterfield is an author, speaker, and member of First Reformed Presbyterian Church in Durham, North Carolina.



A CORD OF THREE STRANDS

// BENJAMIN K. HOPP



Port-au-Prince church leaders Jean, Herby, and Rémy

There is a Haitian Creole proverb that says, *kouri lapli, tonbe larivyè*. It roughly translates to “run from the rain, fall in the river.” What this proverb communicates is the reality that sometimes when you try to run from one danger, you fall into an even greater one. You might only get wet in the rain, but you will certainly get swept away if you fall into a raging river.

How do we stay encouraged to do ministry when Haiti seems to run from the rain and fall in the river? By asking God to increase our faith and to keep us focused on building the church. We are seeing God not only raise up leaders for his church but also connect them together into the beginnings of a truly national church.

Three Men in Port-au-Prince

This story is the story of two sets of three men. The first three men—each with a different story—are all faithfully following the one true and living God in Port-au-Prince. Jean, Herby, and Rémy have all been involved in ministry at the Port-au-Prince church for many years now. In the midst of



Jean leading worship in Port-au-Prince

a country experiencing great brokenness and destruction, the Lord is building up the church of Jesus Christ, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it! These men have laid hold of that hope and hidden that truth in their hearts. How else could their smiles radiate such joy and confidence?

Jean, Herby, and Rémy were nominated by the congregation several years ago to train as potential elders and deacons. As they grow in their knowledge of the Scriptures and ability to serve his church, they face obstacles that the Lord is using to refine them.

For Jean, it has been health challenges. Proper medical care is hard to come by in Haiti. This is even more true now. Gangs have kidnapped doctors, forcing medical professionals to leave needy areas. Hospitals are shut down because of the gangs’ stranglehold on supply chains and fuel. Jean suffered a severe case of tuberculosis a couple years ago. We were so thankful that his illness was finally diagnosed and that the Lord graciously healed him. Through his weakness, Jean was able to testify to the Lord’s strength and model to the congregation what suffering with hope looks like for the Christian.

Herby has shown his godliness as he meets the challenges of caring for a family of four in an economically depressed country. Herby exemplifies the faith of a godly husband, providing for his family physically and spiritually amidst the chaos and uncertainty around him. He consistently brings his family to worship because he recognizes this is where true hope is found. His testimony as a loving husband and father who has a godly respect of his wife and children impacts the congregation for good. His leadership in his family and the church is true servant leadership.

For Rémy, the weekly challenge is getting to and from church. He doesn’t live in a particularly dangerous area of Port-au-Prince, but travel on public transportation is never easy. Three years ago, Rémy was in a motorcycle accident. He badly injured his left knee. Though nothing was broken, damage to muscles and ligaments required him to use crutches and

a cane for months. Initially he was able to get medical care, but gang activity on the road to the hospital specializing in longer term rehabilitation and therapy meant he could not access this care. Though suffering pain and reduced mobility, Rémy always made it to worship services. His perseverance and commitment to Christ meant that the congregation was blessed to sing with musical accompaniment—Maestro Rémy is the church’s keyboard player. In the midst of adversity, putting on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness has enriched his heart and those of the saints.

Three Men in La Gonâve

These three men from Port-au-Prince have only met the other three men from La Gonâve a couple times. Since 2017, we have been holding meetings of the pastors and elders who will form a future presbytery in Haiti. Elissaint, Teveno, and Samy are church leaders on La Gonâve, along with Pastor Lexene, whom God is using to promote growth in the churches at Doglace and Nan Mangot.

An important first step in connecting churches is building relationships among the men who lead those churches. Trust is such an important part of working together. Opportunities to build relationships not only happen during theological training seminars but also during regular Sunday services. I was able to see this in action on a recent trip to La Gonâve. On that particular Sunday, Elissaint accompanied me on the long road trip from Doglace to Nan Mangot.

You can see on their faces that these men also have joy in their God-given roles as leaders of the church of Jesus Christ. They learn from one another and are humble enough to talk about their difficulties in the ministry. It is heartening to observe these men supporting one another as they deal with both the physical and spiritual challenges of church members.

These three men on La Gonâve face their own unique challenges just like Jean, Herby, and Rémy in Port-au-Prince. Elissaint has humbly come alongside Pastor Lexene at the



Elissaint, Teveno, and Samy at Nan Mangot

Doglace church as he has grown in his gifts. While evidencing leadership gifts, he has worked faithfully in the background, teaching from the Scriptures and modeling true servant leadership. Elissaint works as a mason, serves his wife and four boys, and invests in the spiritual lives of his neighbors.

For Teveno, it is challenging to balance providing for his family and providing spiritual care to the church. He lives in the main town of Anse-à-Galets, a one-and-a-half-hour ride down the mountain from Nan Mangot. He works as a cleaner at the hospital during the week. On the weekend, he returns to Nan Mangot to encourage the saints and lead worship services. Just the travel itself can be a difficult task.

Samy has experienced poor health after suffering various bouts of malaria and typhoid fever. It has been encouraging to hear others praying for him. Even the men who are far away in Port-au-Prince pray for his physical needs.

Lord willing, these leaders will one day become members of a Haitian presbytery of a Reformed and Presbyterian church. This unity now is exciting, as it bodes well for that day when their connectedness officially forms part of what God is doing among our churches in Haiti. “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” (Ps. 133:1). These are the indigenous leaders the Lord is raising up to carry the banner of Christ’s love in Haiti.

The author is an OP missionary in Haiti.



Participants in a seminar on La Gonâve

What’s New

// Comings/Goings

The departure of missionaries **Mr. and Mrs. Travis A. (Bonnie) Emmett** (Christ Church OPC, Downingtown, PA) and their children to their field of service in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda, has been delayed until early 2024.

ENCOURAGING OUR ELDERS

// STEPHEN J. TRACEY



A well-known TV advertisement asks, “What’s in your wallet?” Let’s change the question. What’s in your podcast app? Apparently the top three podcasts in the United States are *The Joe Rogan Experience*, *Crime Junkie*, and *The Daily*.¹ A little politics, humor, crime, and news seem to be the staple diet. The *Ruling Elder* podcast, produced by the Committee on Christian Education, may not cover the same topics as the top three, but it is a modest attempt at edifying and encouraging our ruling elders. Of course, one does not have to be a ruling elder to listen. Maybe the podcast will help others to continue to pray for, and encourage, their elders.

Walking Closely with Christ’s Sheep

Ruling elders, as servants of the Great Shepherd, are to care for his flock. The Scriptures say, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). This is no small

task. It conjures up visions of cheerful sheep munching on verdant vistas and skipping along oil paintings to cheerful tunes, yet it is part of spiritual warfare. It carries with it great privileges and also great responsibilities. It is a privilege to walk closely with Christ’s sheep. There are times it can be discouraging.

The Scriptures recognize this task can become heart-breaking. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17). Keeping watch over souls is joyful work, yet elders must give an account to the Lord Jesus, and this may not be without some grief.

A Year of Episodes

At the time of writing, the *Ruling Elder* podcast, which is available at repod.opc.org or wherever you listen to podcasts, has completed almost a year of episodes. Topics covered have varied from teaching Sunday school to protecting children, from disability to deacons, from confessional standards to autism.

The current average is about five hundred downloads per month. Obviously, the longer an episode is available online, the more often it is downloaded. The first episode, with the warm-hearted Craig Troxel, has almost twelve hundred downloads.

The Committee on Christian Education has sought to encourage elders (and deacons) for many years through the publication of *Ordained Servant*. This publication is not obsolete; it is just as lively as ever. The *Ruling Elder* podcast is not meant to replace it. A glance at the most recent edition shows its timely relevance with an excellent installment to the series *Letters to a Younger Ruling Elder*. Letter No. 7 is titled “Discouragement and the Ruling Elder.” The author, a remaining-anonymous-older-elder, acknowledges that “Shepherding can be mentally and spiritually exhausting.”² To this he adds the problem of loneliness and also the danger of losing “sight of

Podcast Episodes

- ▶ Ruling Elders and the Westminster Standards
- ▶ How Elders Can Encourage Deacons
- ▶ Protecting Children
- ▶ Disability
- ▶ Hospital Visitation
- ▶ Ruling Elders and a Pastoral Search
- ▶ Ruling Elder Spotlight: David Winslow Jr.
- ▶ Teaching Adult Sunday School
- ▶ First Impressions
- ▶ The Gift of Ruling Elders

God's love for us in Christ." In providing a podcast for ruling elders, we are seeking to supplement the work of *Ordained Servant* and to draw attention to the excellent resources already available to office-bearers. Each podcast seeks to provide references and suggestions for further reading.

Ordained Servant recently celebrated its thirtieth year of publication. Reflecting on that, the current editor, Rev. Gregory Reynolds, wrote "Grace in Winter: Reflections on *Ordained Servant* at Thirty." Here is his conclusion:

Why did I title this article "Grace in Winter"? It is the title of Faith Cook's book which puts several of Samuel Rutherford's (1600–1661) choice and eloquent letters into verse, (*Grace in Winter: Rutherford in Verse* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989]). Rutherford said, "Grace grows best in winter." This little book meant a great deal to me during a difficult time in my ministry in 1989 and after. Each church officer encounters suffering and difficulty in the lives of those to whom he ministers and also experiences this himself in his own life and ministry. In a sense all of life in a fallen world is in the season of winter in desperate need of the light and warmth of the gospel. It is my constant hope that in a small way *Ordained Servant* helps to alleviate the wintry conditions with which we all deal from day to day and provide a path forward through the snow.³

While there are wintry conditions, we thank God that we also see signs of spring. There is new life. There is joy. There are souls being added to the kingdom, and there are diligent and humble ruling elders busy in their edifying work, encouraging and helping God's precious people. Ruling elders form the backbone of presbyterian churches. (And not just presbyterian churches—other denominations also know the blessing of elders). Often they are men who grew up in the congregation they serve, are deeply rooted in the local community, and serve in one place longer than most ministers. They are spiritual men, called and equipped by the Great Shepherd, and they put their hands and hearts to serving and helping the people.

Godly elders also put their knees to the work by giving themselves to prayer. We thank God for these precious servants and their families. May God's grace enable each one to continue to be an example to the flock. Here is the promise to faithful elders: "And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:4). So, as Horatius Bonar said, "Go, labor on: spend and be spent, your joy to do the Father's will."

The author is pastor of Lakeview OPC in Rockport, Maine.

1. "The top 50 podcasts in the U.S. Q2, 2023," August 2, 2023, in Featured, Media Research, Podcast Research, Podcasts by Edison Research.
2. "Discouragement and the Ruling Elder: Letter No. 7, Letters to a Younger Ruling Elder." *Ordained Servant* Online, August–September 2023.
3. Gregory E. Reynolds, "Grace in Winter: Reflections on *Ordained Servant* at Thirty." *Ordained Servant* Online, January 2022.

ON READING OLD BOOKS

"It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between." —C. S. Lewis

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY (1948)

BY GEERHARDUS VOS

As one born British but whose home is now in America, I find the following fact fascinating: Geerhardus Vos's *Biblical Theology* was first published in America in 1948 and in the United Kingdom not until 1975, by the Banner of Truth Trust. This might explain the relatively late growth of biblical theology, as a discipline, in the UK. Vos's contribution to the theological landscape of the twentieth century, and perhaps especially the landscape of the OPC, should not be underestimated.

Born in March 1862 in the Netherlands, Vos became known for his theological output while professor of biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Vos is noted not only for his theological output but also for his poetry, the influence of which can be seen, at times, in the style of *Biblical Theology*. Vos's writing is at times dense, other times lyrical. But in both styles his grasp of the flow of redemption as revealed in Scripture drives the reader to constantly look back and forward throughout their own Scripture reading. Vos's linear drive towards the eschaton forces the reader to consider and reconsider the recapitulating nature of revelation. That is to say, if one understands Vos's method (and the method of biblical theology), one is constantly hearing the redemptive echoes and re-echoes of the goodness and plan of God throughout the history of salvation.

Vos's *Biblical Theology* is a deep dive into the flow of special revelation. It is not for the faint of heart, but that said, to read and study *Biblical Theology* is to sit at the feet of one whom God used mightily in the kingdom. The modern emphasis of seeking to find Christ in all the Scriptures is, in no small measure, indebted to Vos and those others whom God has used to reveal the unified yet organic progression of the message of Scripture from Old to New Testaments.

—Matthew Holst

● Out of the Mouth . . .

After a nature study on photosynthesis, my mother-in-law was prompting my five-year-old, Adeline, to share about what they had learned. "Photo . . . , photo . . . ," my mother-in-law hinted. "Photodepravity!" Adeline said.

—Jennifer Harding
Doniphan, MO

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

WHAT DOES A MOTHER CHURCH NEED?

// JAMES J. CASSIDY



An outreach event of Hays County OPC

When we started South Austin Presbyterian Church nine years ago, the shared mind of the leadership was that we wanted to be a church-planting church plant. We began the process early of praying and strategizing for a future plant. After initially reaching out in Dripping Spring, Texas, an effort which did not “take,” we received two new families from the New Braunfels area who wanted to plant a church. That was the beginning of Heritage Presbyterian Church, our first daughter church plant, organized by Pastor Carl Miller.

Leading up to its particularization, the Lord began to bring us families who had moved into the Buda and Kyle area in Hays County, about thirty minutes south of our church. The session and diaconate were all thinking the same thing: here’s our next church planting effort!

The Essentials of Mother-Daughter Church Planting

But in order to plant a daughter church, some things, we have learned, are essential.

First, there needs to be a core that is committed to the idea. What is more, they need to be committed for the right reason. Church planting is how the church carries out the Great Commission. We plant churches not so that people have a shorter commute to church. Rather, we do it to bring the preaching of the gospel to the people of a particular place.

Second, the officers of the mother have to be onboard, and enthusiastically so. While anything is possible with God, if only a person or few people have zeal for the work, they will be rowing against the current without the support and enthusiasm of officers. Early on, we purposed to purchase a smaller builder because our plan was to grow to one hundred members and then plant. So far, that strategy has worked, by God’s grace and blessing. But it would have been impossible without the support and enthusiasm of our officers.

Third, the effort to plant has to be a whole-church, team

effort. While a planting effort may indeed succeed when driven by a few people (all things are possible through God!), that is certainly the harder way to do it. What is more, it’s not very presbyterian. And it’s not a true mother-daughter plant—for a mother to birth a daughter, the whole body is involved.

Fourth, the principles of our ecclesiology and polity must remain intact. It is tempting to cut corners and become “practical.” But this also is to fail to be a true mother-daughter plant, because then the daughter is already different than the mother, being born with principles other than the mother’s. It is possible to plant presbyterian churches in presbyterian ways. And that we must do.

Finally, the daughter is related to the mother as family, not as a clone. Circumstances will require adjustments, and context will bring differences from the mother. But the beauty is that the daughter does not have to reinvent the wheel. Carrying over the Reformed principles of worship and ministry provides an important foundation; as long as the people departing the mother church still love those Reformed principles, the worship of the daughter ought not change too much. But more important is the need to begin ministry and worship in a way that the daughter desires to do it into the future. Changes and adjustment are easier at the beginning than later.

This is how we went about planting first in New Braunfels, and now in Hays. After we received commitments from the core families, the next steps were fairly straightforward. We planned for a gradual, organic move into the Hays County area. Meanwhile, Corey Paige had joined our church staff as our first yearlong intern. We had assumed he would serve his internship, find a call, and move on. But Corey jumped right into the effort in Hays County and led their Bible study and prayer meeting. The group and Corey bonded. The rest of the story, I’ll let him tell.

The author is pastor of South Austin Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas.

FROM KENTUCKY TO HAYS COUNTY

Corey Paige

I am very humbled and grateful as I look back on the Lord's lovingkindness to my wife and me throughout our journey into the OPC.

The Inescapable Doctrines of Grace

Having grown up as part of a Southern Baptist Church, I began to consider whether I was called to the ministry near the end of high school, as the Lord increased within me a desire to grow in my knowledge of the Bible and a desire to serve him and my fellow members in the local church.

During my first year at Alice Lloyd College in Pippa Passes, Kentucky, I found a lot of resources online that first exposed me to the doctrines of grace. Around the same time, my college choir director, Richard Bowers, invited me to a Bible study named Sola Gratia that he was leading for college students. At my first meeting, I heard him teach the doctrines of grace. I couldn't escape it! Over the next few months, through my conversations with Richard and online reading, the Lord used his Word to convince me of his sovereign grace in salvation. Richard would continue to lead the studies, and I was asked to lead some of the classes myself.

A year later, the Bible study continued to grow, and we decided to give opportunities for Reformed ministers in the region to teach the college group. One of the ministers we invited was M. Jay Bennett, evangelist of Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church in Neon, Kentucky. We quickly took a liking to him and he to us. Jay began to regularly come to our meetings to support the group and to invite people to worship at their mission work in Neon. It was through his ministry that the Lord brought me and my wife, Andy, into the OPC. We joined Neon Reformed shortly after we were married in 2014.

My Internship with SAPC

In 2022, after graduating from Greenville Presbyterian



Corey and Andy Paige



Hays County OPC

Theological Seminary, I applied for the OPC's ministerial internship program. In God's providence, South Austin Presbyterian Church (SAPC) in Austin, Texas, offered everything that I had been praying for in a ministerial internship. As a licentiate in the Presbytery of the Southeast, I was graciously given the opportunity by Rev. Jim Cassidy to share the pulpit regularly. After a few months, I began to preach every Lord's day evening and was able to preach through the book of Daniel and start a series in Luke.

The internship also allowed me to alternate between leading the two prayer meetings each week that were offered to SAPC. One group met at the church building, the other in Hays County, over thirty minutes away from SAPC. We had many members of SAPC who lived in Kyle and Buda, Texas, and the church had seen the opportunity to start the prayer group a few months prior to my accepting the internship.

Early in the internship, it was made known to me that the Hays group was interested in an OPC mission work starting up in Hays County. I was already licensed to preach and had just finished my studies at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Near the end of the internship, a call was extended to me by SAPC to be an evangelist serving the Hays County group. I humbly and gladly accepted. I was ordained on June 30, at the end of my yearlong internship.

Hays County OPC, a Mission Work

The mission work began holding regular evening services in Kyle, Texas, on August 6. We are currently worshipping in a hotel meeting room and are pleading with the Lord to grow us to particularization. In God's providence, the Lord has placed me to serve as an under-shepherd to a church whose desire is to see Christ's church built up; the same desire that the Lord inflamed in me all those years ago in high school. If the Lord wills, may Hays County OPC be a faithful and zealous lampstand that shines forth the glory of the Triune God for all men to see. May it be used to plant more churches that "proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

The author is an evangelist serving as church planter of Hays County OPC.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by subscribing at CHMCE.org or scanning this QR code.



CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL

RESOURCES FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

// MICHAEL C. CLOY



Mike Cloy (left) enrolling a veteran into Veteran Treatment Court with the veteran's mentor, OP member and Air Force veteran Brian Batstone, looking on

Every year, over two hundred thousand military veterans depart their service and return home. Many of them are unable to successfully reintegrate back into their communities because they struggle with mental health challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, moral injury, and even military sexual trauma. The OPC Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel (CCMP) is a resource for the church to help the veterans in your congregations struggling with symptoms and outcomes of these challenges.

The CCMP is comprised of OP officers who have served as military chaplains or military members. The men of the CCMP primarily serve as part of the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel, an endorsing agency for Reformed chaplains in the military representing seven Reformed denominations. However, they are also involved in military personnel, active, reserve, and national guard.

Diaconal Resources

The CCMP can be a resource to your church by its familiarity with grants that are available to veterans who are struggling to overcome the many challenges resulting from their military service. These challenges can lead to unemployment,



Cloy (center) at the graduation of his mentee (left) from Veterans Treatment Court

homelessness, substance abuse, and involvement in the justice system.

For example, if a veteran is unemployed, a federal grant (HVRP) can assist with finding work and paying for training, uniforms, and equipment. If a veteran is homeless, another federal grant (SSVF) assists in locating housing, paying security and utility deposits, and paying several months of rent. Suppose the veteran is about to be evicted. In that case, this grant can assist by paying a few months of back rent to prevent the veteran from becoming homeless. Suppose the veteran is involved in the justice system due to mental health challenges and substance abuse. In that case, there are Veteran Treatment Courts that help them become sober and receive healthcare. All these grants come with case management to help the veteran navigate the services the grant provides.

Spiritual and Mental Health Resources

As ordained church officers, the men on the CCMP are also available for presbyteries and sessions to consult on the unique nuances of spiritually shepherding veterans and their families. Sometimes those who have served in the military will only speak to someone who also is a veteran. If a veteran needs counseling, there are Veteran Counseling Centers where the veteran and family members can receive care. If a veteran is contemplating suicide, a federal grant (SSG Fox) assists with providing resources toward suicide prevention, including connection to Veteran Administration and community services.

Members of local congregations can also contact the CCMP for information on how to help their military family members or how to locate a Reformed chaplain on a military installation. If you are interested in receiving assistance for your veterans and their families from the CCMP, please email CCMP chairman Mike Cloy at opcsmikecloy@gmail.com.

The author is an OP elder at Landis Presbyterian in Marion, North Carolina, and a retired Army officer.

DECEMBER



The Andrews (day 2)



The Winters (day 14)

1 **MR. & MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray that Mr. M.'s online catalog of literature would be a helpful resource to students in Asia. / **JOHN FIKKERT**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

2 **JOHN & GRACE JEE**, Columbia, MD. Pray Word of Life OPC is edified by the Word. / **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

3 **MR. & MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. F. as he teaches the WCF to two candidates. / Pray for an abundant **THANK OFFERING** to fund Worldwide Outreach.
COREY & ANDREA PAIGE, Kyle,

4 TX. Pray for Hays County OPC's evangelism efforts. / Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray for perseverance and effective ministry through trying times.

5 Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Pray for **OPC DISASTER RESPONSE**, as they encourage presbyteries to grow in their ability to respond to disasters within their bounds.

6 **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for the Lord to provide for each Haitian church family economically in very difficult circumstances. / Pray for general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** in his work as director of the MTIOPC.

7 **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the church plant to grow in number, depth, and fellowship. / **MARK & CELESTE JENKINS**, Placentia, CA. Pray Resurrection Presbyterian would be able to reach the unchurched students in the area.

8 **NATE & ANNA STROM**, Sheboygan, WI. Pray for Breakwater Church as they engage with new visitors. / Pray the Lord would raise up good leaders now for next summer's **SHORT-TERM MISSION TEAMS**.

9 Missionary associates **NATHAN & ELISABETH BLOECHL**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Ugandans to truly commit their lives to Jesus as Lord and Savior. / Yearlong intern **TYLER (JEANNA) FREIRE** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

10 **DAN & STACY HALLEY**, Tampa, FL. Give thanks for Bay Haven Presbyterian's recently installed church officers. / Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for grace to wisely answer material requests in the Christmas season.

11 **DAVID & ASHLEIGH SCHEXNAYDER**, Scottsdale, AZ. Pray for Providence OPC as they consider particularization. / Pray for **JUDITH DINSMORE**, managing editor of *New Horizons*.

12 Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for fruitful Christmas outreach events. / Yearlong intern **JOHN (ERIN) NYMANN** at Reformation Presbyterian in Virginia Beach, VA.

13 Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the young men sponsored by the mission would finish the school year well. / Pray that the **RULING ELDER PODCAST** would bless listeners.

14 **CARL & STACEY MILLER**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray the Lord would raise up more men to serve as officers at Heritage Presbyterian. / Yearlong intern **BRENNEN (TIFFANY) WINTER** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

15 Pray for **TRAVIS & BONNIE EMMETT** and missionary associate **JED HOMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **CHARLES (MARGARET) BIGGS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.

DECEMBER



The Hacquebords (day 17)

16 **MATT & HYOJUNG WALKER**, Yorktown, VA. Pray for God to bless Peninsula Reformed's morning and evening worship. / Yearlong intern **ANDREW (NOEL) DAVIS** at Covenant Presbyterian in Marina, CA.

17 Home Missions general secretary **JEREMIAH MONTGOMERY**. / **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for the Lord to raise up leaders to lay the groundwork for church plants.

18 Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Young & Mary Lou Son, and Brian & Dorothy Wingard. / **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS**, US Army, and **CORNELIUS (DEIDRE) JOHNSON**, US Navy.

19 Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. / **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for the new members of Neon Reformed Presbyterian.

20 Pray for **BRAD (CINNAMON) PEPPO**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Yearlong intern **JOE (MELODY) GEHRMANN** at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, IL.

21 Pray for the Lord to raise up more **MISSIONARY EVANGELISTS** for our foreign mission fields. / Pray for the **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** and for the persecuted church in **EAST AFRICA**.

22 **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor, and **AYRIAN YASAR**, editorial assistant, for *Ordained Servant*. / **JOHNNY & BERRY SERAFINI**, Marion, NC. Pray the Lord would give Landis Presbyterian a great desire to worship him.

23 **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Commack, NY. Pray for the prospective new members at The Haven. / Pray deacons utilize *THE REFORMED DEACON* podcast as a means of encouragement.

24 Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for the Lord to bring fruit from seeds planted in outreaches this year. / Yearlong intern **DAVID (JAZMINE) RIOS** at The Haven in Commack, NY.

25 Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** and administrative assistants **JOANNA GROVE** and **TIN LING LEE**. / **CHRIS (MEGAN) HARTSHORN**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern CA.

26 **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for God's blessing on Christ Church Downingtown. / Stated clerk **HANK L. BELFIELD** and accounts manager **CHARLENE TIPTON** as they begin preliminary work for the next General Assembly.



The Tamirats (day 29)

27 Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray that the young people living at Dahlia Dorm will have open hearts to the gospel. / Yearlong intern **DAVID WRIGHT** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

28 Home Missions administrative assistant **ALLISON GROOT**. / **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for a publishing project, a *Westminster Confession of Faith* commentary.

29 **MELAKU & MERON TAMIRAT**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for Redeemer Mercy Ministry. / Yearlong intern **DAVID (HOPE) GARRETT** at Orthodox Presbyterian in Franklin Square, NY.

30 **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Praise the Lord for the enthusiastic attendees at the weekly "Open Church" at Salvos por Gracia! / Three-month intern **CALEB (ABIGAIL) BURKHART** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

31 **STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray the Lord would raise up a Uruguayan pastor for Salvos por Gracia. / **ANDREW (REBEKAH) MILLER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Central PA.

STEWARDING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

// ROBERT M. VAN MANEN

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Perhaps, because you’re a frequent reader of this page, you think immediately of stewarding your money. Certainly, we are called to exercise stewardship in regards to the financial blessings that are available to us. On the other hand, maybe you think of the earth. Again, Scripture does call us to be good stewards of his creation. Genesis 2, among other passages, reaffirms our calling to be stewards of that which God has made and given to us to care for. Perhaps you think of stewardship of time. And again, it is a good answer, because we are called to manage our time wisely on this earth.

I wonder though, how many of you thought of the word “gifts,” as in, stewarding our spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts is not a term reserved only for the charismatics and Pentecostals. We as Orthodox Presbyterians do believe that there is such a thing as spiritual gifts, although sometimes in Reformed circles we speak of them too rarely. But the principle of stewardship certainly applies to gifts. Are we being good stewards of the spiritual gifts we have been given?

There is no doubt that you as a believer possess at least one of the spiritual gifts. This is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 12:7: “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Paul then proceeds in the rest of the chapter to use the illustration of the human body to teach that every believer is part of the body and has been given a gift to be used for the benefit of the rest of the body. So, are you being a good steward of the spiritual gift that you have been given? Are you even aware of what your gift is? And

if you are aware, are you using it for the benefit of the body—the church?

In Romans 12:6, Paul writes: “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.” The Lord Jesus Christ has, through the Holy Spirit, given you a spiritual gift to be used! A spiritual gift is not to be hoarded, nor kept for one’s own benefit, nor buried in the ground out of fear of using it wrongly.

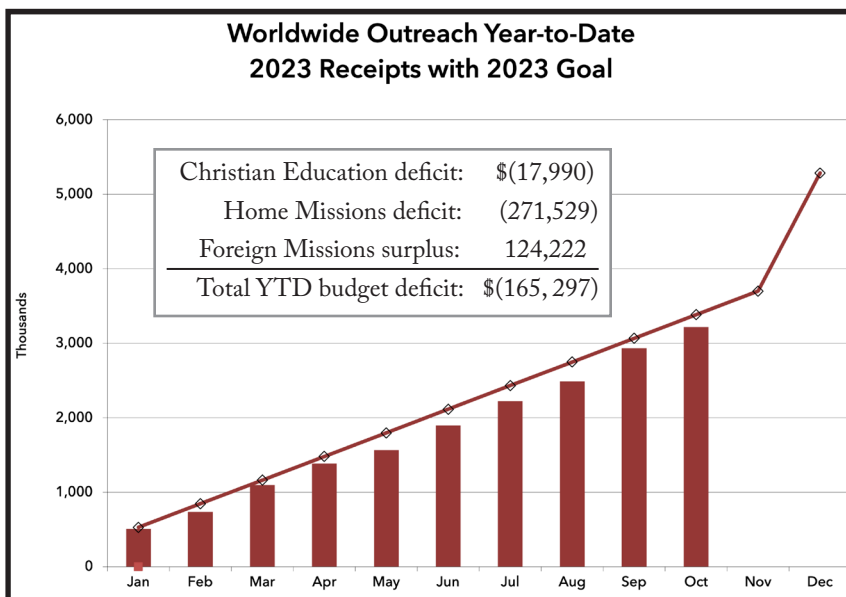
A Treasure to Be Spent

Imagine that your home sits on top of a buried treasure that you are not aware of. Imagine all the good you could accomplish for the church if that treasure were unearthed and you chose to be a good steward of it. Sometimes I think it’s the same way with spiritual gifts. The church is sitting on top of a treasure but is unaware of the great resources that it has available.

How much would it benefit our churches and our denomination financially if all members were engaged in faithfully using their spiritual gifts?

If you are unaware of your spiritual gift, let me encourage you to search God’s Word and unearth the church’s hidden treasure of your gift. If you know what it is but are not using it, remember Jesus’s parable of the servant who would not make use of the master’s gift—and the condemnation of that servant. If you are using your gift, *thank you!* Thank you for using your gift so that the body of Christ might be built up by it and Christ glorified through it.

The author is pastor of Little Farms Chapel in Coopersville, Michigan.



NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

MONTGOMERY INSTALLED AS EVANGELIST

On September 29, Jeremiah Montgomery was installed as an evangelist to serve as general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. The service was held at Covenant Presbyterian in Vandalia, Ohio, where Montgomery had been serving as a pastor.

Paul Browne, pastor of New Life in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, preached from Romans 16; Jonathan Shishko, pastor of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, Ohio, gave the charge to Montgomery; and Bulut Yasar, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian in St. Augustine, Florida, prayed.



OP ministers and elders at the installation of Jeremiah Montgomery (center)

WOMEN'S PRESBYTERIAL OF THE MIDWEST MEETS

The Women's Presbyterial of the Midwest was held on Saturday, October 7, at Bethel Presbyterian in Wheaton, Illinois. Erika Allen, director of Bible Editorial at Crossway, spoke on the topic of humility to sixty-three women representing fourteen churches from Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Beginning in 2024, separate women's presbyterial events will be held in the Presbytery of the Midwest and the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota, making this the last time the women from these presbyteries meet

jointly.

Lunch and fellowship was followed by breakout sessions led by Karen Baldwin from Grace OPC in Hanover Park, Illinois; Sue Hollister from New Covenant Community in Joliet, Illinois; and Kathy De Jong from Bethel Presbyterian in Wheaton, Illinois. An offering was received to support Breakwater Church in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, which is served by church planter Nate Strom.



Karen Baldwin, Sue Hollister, Kathy De Jong, and Erika Allen

FREDERICK LO ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT RINGOES, NJ

Todd E. Smith

On October 21, 2023, Frederick Lo was ordained and installed as a teacher of the Word at Calvary OPC in Ringoes, New Jersey. Douglas Clawson, general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions, preached the message. Rev. Michael Bobick, pastor of Calvary Community in Harmony, New Jersey, gave the charge to Lo. Rev. Christopher Bush, pastor of Calvary OPC in Ringoes, New Jersey, gave the charge to the congregation.



Members and friends of the presbytery of New Jersey at Lo's ordination and installation

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On September 22, the Presbytery of the Northwest granted the request of Emmanuel OPC in Colville, WA, to dissolve its pastoral relationship with **Ryan D. Woods** and to dissolve the congregation.
- On September 29, **Jeremiah W. Montgomery** was installed as an evangelist serving as general secretary of the Committee on Home

Missions and Church Extension of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

- On October 6, **Andrew J. Miller** was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania to serve as the regional home missionary.
- On October 20, the Presbytery of Ohio erased from the roll the name of **Alan J. Dueck**.
- On October 21, **Ching-Hsiung Frederick Lo** was ordained and installed as a teacher of the Word at Calvary OPC in Ringoes, NJ.



At the October 6 installation of Andrew J. Miller (center, black suit) as regional home missionary for the presbytery of Central Pennsylvania, having served previously as pastor of Bethel Reformed Presbyterian in Fredericksburg, Virginia

REVIEWS

The Holy Spirit, by **Robert Letham**. P&R, 2023. Paperback, 376 pages, \$22.90. Reviewed by OP pastor **Robert T. Holda**.

Oh, how I wish I had access to this incisive and balanced teaching on the third person of the Holy Trinity in my youth! Perhaps like many of you, I grew up in faith communities that did not consistently offer me clarity and wisdom regarding the person and work of God's Spirit, but often and sadly encouraged my own natural tendency toward confusion and folly.

In *The Holy Spirit*, intended to be the first in a trilogy on the three persons of the Godhead, Letham does a masterful job of combining historical, biblical-theological, practical, and even polemical modes of instruction regarding the Spirit of God. He consistently takes a Reformed viewpoint and offers much-needed critiques of Pentecostal theology and practice, especially in his appendix. His writing is clear, orderly, concise, and consistently bears the marks of charity and humility.

The first section summarizes the historical development of the church's understanding of the Holy Spirit without much comment. Although these chapters were slightly dry, I know I will turn back to them as a handy historical and theological resource. What was more helpful was Letham's summary of the Nicene Creed's teaching on the Holy Spirit (ch. 4). I was personally refreshed by the somewhat

shocking reminder that, as "the Lord and Giver of Life," the Holy Spirit personally "gives life to the vegetation, the trees and plants around us, and sustains it" (86). How many of us live as practical deists, overlooking the Spirit's ongoing work in creation?

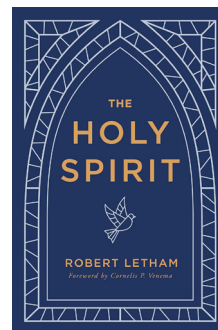
Although the author's explanation of New Testament teaching on God's Spirit was very good, I found his chapter on the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament even more enlightening. There, passages that are not often set side by side are brought together to provide a worthy summary of Old Testament revelation on the Spirit's old covenant activities.

Regarding New Testament Gifts (ch. 9), Letham includes a survey of many charismata, or gifts of the Spirit. Here, he provides an evenhanded, honest evaluation of the prevailing descriptions of the extraordinary spiritual gifts. He includes thoughts from a variety of scholars and often makes provisional conclusions. As one who can easily desire more certainty than the Scriptures provide, I found this humbling, though it strengthened my convictions in those truths about the Spirit's person and work that are certain.

Chapter 11 offers the church much-

needed help in discerning where the Spirit is at work in the world today. After asserting his expectation that the Spirit of God is still doing "great and amazing things . . . in the means of grace" (255), Letham points our attention to wherever Christ is being glorified, the gospel is being preached and believed, the fruit of the Spirit is growing, where loving service is present, and where the saints are working hard. Here, the author expressly rules out the possibility that the Spirit is at work in the celebrity culture in the church, where some leader, and not Christ, is being glorified, and where, instead of self-control, what flourishes is "uncontrolled spontaneous, ecstatic phenomena such as protracted hysterical laughter, barking like dogs, and howling like hyenas" (258).

Although this book could serve well in a seminary curriculum, it is also accessible enough for the average layperson to understand. It is useful and trustworthy enough to quickly enrich any believer's understanding of the Holy Spirit. Letham achieves this by an easy writing style and by offering multiple helps, such as a glossary of terms, reflection questions, and lists of resources for further study. I highly recommend this book.



Reformed Theology, by Jonathan Master. P&R, 2023. Hardcover, 112 pages, \$12.21. Reviewed by OP pastor Michael Grasso.

As a pastor I am always thinking about finding simple books to recommend to people who are new to the Reformed faith. There are many works that are worth their weight in gold but not accessible to someone new who has basic questions about Reformed theology. Jonathan Master's *Reformed Theology* is one of those simple books intended to introduce the Reformed faith in clear, simple language that is truly accessible to everyone. Since the book is short, it is easy to recommend even to those who perhaps do not read many books.

Another benefit of Master's book is that it focuses on the heart. He writes that the book "arises out of two simple convictions. The first is that knowing what we believe about God, humanity, worship, and salvation is important" (13), and the second is that "Reformed theology is a blessing" (14). Master argues, "Reformed theology, rightly understood, cuts through a false association between theological thinking and ivory-tower speculation" (14).

Master begins with a discussion on what Reformed theology is. He starts with a simple overview of the historical significance of the Reformation before highlighting the five points of Calvinism, which he says are important for Reformed theology, though "they do not fully encapsulate, or accurately describe, all of Reformed theology" (20). Master argues that the five *solas* of the Reformation provide a more holistic overview of Reformed theology (20). His overview of the *solas* provides a good introduction to the concepts with helpful applications to the way people think today. For instance, regarding *sola Scriptura*, Master not only highlights the issue of tradition versus the Bible (21), but also the Bible's relationship to "sociologists, scientists, politicians, and entertainers" (22) as well as the relationship of the Bible to feelings and experiences (23). Master also highlights the importance of covenant and historic Reformed confes-

sions to round out the discussion on what Reformed theology is (29–30).

In chapter 2, Master goes into more detail on the doctrines of Scripture and the sovereignty of God as these are bedrock foundations in Reformed theology. In chapter 3, he gives a basic overview of covenant theology. One thing I would have liked to see emphasized more is the importance of Genesis 3:15. Master does note that Genesis 3:15 is related to the Abrahamic covenant (55), but it may have been helpful to give more space to Genesis 3:15, particularly as it provides such an important foundation for all the

covenants that follow. In chapter 4, Master highlights the blessings of Reformed theology. Once again, the heart is not overlooked. Master notes that Reformed theology provides comfort for the people of God (64).

The last part of the book is a Q&A. Master takes the opportunity in this section to highlight the importance of finding a Reformed church (96). I have personally found it very common for people to become convinced of Reformed soteriology and either to be at a loss on how to find a Reformed church or to fail to see the need to do so. Master helpfully draws the connection between Reformed convictions in theology and finding a local church where these can be lived out.

The Faithful Apologist: Rethinking the Role of Persuasion in Apologetics, by K. Scott Oliphint. Zondervan, 2022. Paperback, 224 pages, \$2.31 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister Allen D. Curry.

Readers of *New Horizons* probably have different reactions to a review of a book about apologetics. Some may eagerly seek out such works. Others may wonder, What is apologetics anyway? Still others will roll their eyes and say, "a book on philosophy."

Dr. Scott Oliphint, longtime professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, offers another fine work on the subject. He offers wise and helpful counsel to those who aren't clear about the scope or meaning of Christian apologetics. The reader will not find extensive references

to unbelieving philosophers. Instead, we find apologetics that at its "core consists of biblical reasons for the hope that is ours in Christ" (xiv). The author seeks to add to apologetics a perspective that includes persuasion.

The book begins by presenting God as the great persuader. The reader is guided to look at the way God accommodates to our creaturely status by communicating with us through the written and the incarnate Word.

He next expounds the Bible's teaching on God as the divine warrior. He shows why this notion is important in a sinful world opposed to God. Oliphint makes the point that God is the ultimate defender of the faith.

A third element in Oliphint's approach is the role of the Word and Spirit, which he designates divine sword.

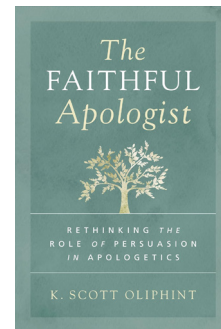
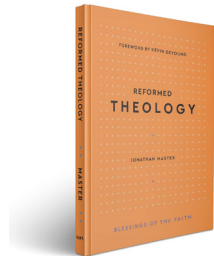
Oliphint then lays out three categories of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. He first addresses ethos or our personal character. The second element in persuasion is pathos or understanding those with whom we converse about Christianity. The final category is logos or the offering of proofs

or arguments for our commitment to Christ.

The strength of the book lies in the way the author bases his positions in the Scriptures. He does an excellent job of expounding the biblical

basis of apologetics. In his finely developed biblical studies, two aspects are particularly well done. Oliphint's treatment of the image of God is superb. In addition, he handles skillfully Paul's speech on Mars Hill in Acts 17.

In this excellent contribution to the defense of the faith, I found one aspect a bit confusing. It is the way Oliphint defines persuasion. He sees the core of persuasion as "our attempt to discern and initiate a connection between two or more people in order to defend and commend the gospel to them" (xi). If one follows a simple dictionary or even an ordinary language



meaning of persuasion, convincing or changing someone's mind is crucial to the meaning. I recognize that Oliphint wants us to see that God is the one who changes people. As I think of persuasion, I'm drawn to Paul's defense in Acts 26. When King Agrippa asks whether Paul thinks he could persuade him to be a Christian in a short time. Paul responds: "I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains" (v. 29).

Perhaps the author wants to maintain a clear difference between apologetics and evangelism. If so, I'm not convinced. With that caveat, I find Dr. Oliphint's work worth the effort to read and digest.

***Five Puritan Women: Portraits of Faith and Love*, by Jenny-Lyn de Klerk. Crossway, 2023. Paperback, 160 pages, \$14.99. Reviewed by OP member Elizabeth Downs.**

From the first pages of the introduction, de Klerk rightly commends the Puritans as those who "stand out in church history for being particularly skilled at applying the Bible to all areas of existence" (22) and as individuals worthy of our praise and emulation. Her work seeks to provide glimpses into the lives of five Puritan women: Agnes Beaumont, Lucy Hutchinson, Mary Rich, Anne Bradstreet, and Lady Brilliana Harley.

Her portraits are vividly and succinctly written, bringing to life the devotional practices of these women, namely Bible memorization, fellowship, meditation, prayer, and spiritual conversation. She is particularly adept at illustrating the ebbs and flows of these women's fervor, which helps readers see beyond popular puritanical caricatures to the vital spirituality of their actual lives. Like the women she profiled, de Klerk affirms the Lord's goodness in the face of loss and suffering. I am confident these stories will spur readers on in their walks.

That being said, I believe this book must be read with discernment. In the introduction, de Klerk recognizes the propensity of modern scholarship to either bend or erase women's narratives to fit

modern historians' goals: "The proclamation to listen to women, believe women, and appreciate women as unique individuals is sometimes only applied to those who can fit within our current culture's belief system without too much force" (20). Setting aside the fact that the author does not interrogate the problematic aspects of the believe-women movement, her work itself does not escape an overly modern framing. One illustrative quote from the conclusion states:

Overall, though these women did not have the same credentials or draw the same crowd as the professional pastors they interacted with, we would be remiss to ignore the fact that their ministry was just as effective as their more famous counterparts: they were the female soul doctors of their time. In fact, their preaching was even more moving, their teaching more relevant, and their shepherding more empathetic when it came to their own family members, for it was all given in the context of their life together. (135)

I understand the author's desire to elevate the importance of women in the work of ministry—it is not always given the weight it deserves. However, this point does not necessitate contrasting ministers with mothers, aunts, and sisters in the faith. They work in beautiful concert in God's good plan, a symphony that I am confident these women rejoiced to be a part of.

The two above quotes are not characteristic of the entire work, but they stand behind its more subtle statements and conclusions. This second quote also dovetails with my most serious critique: the overall lack of discussion of the role of the church in these women's lives. I can recognize that the author's project was to showcase their personal piety in familial settings; however, to only hint at how these practices existed within and were strengthened by their ecclesiastical context tells at best a partial story and at worst an ahistorical one. Moreover, it represents a lost opportunity to illustrate how private piety

practiced within a robust ecclesiastical life is the antidote to the individualist—and lonely—strain in many church circles, both broader evangelical and our own.

***Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*, by Rosaria Butterfield. Crossway, 2023. Hardcover, 368 pages, \$25.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP elder Joseph W. Smith III.**

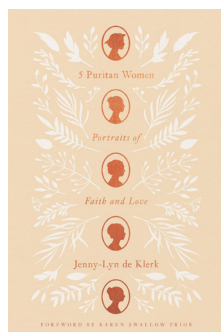
"The world is in chaos, and the church is divided because we have failed to obey God and value his plan for how men and women should live." That's from the introduction to Rosaria Butterfield's *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*—a bracing wake-up call on demonic deceptions that permeate not only the modern world, but also sadly, sometimes even the church as well.

Butterfield told the fascinating story of her journey to Christ as a lesbian and a feminist professor in 2012's *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*. The five lies Butterfield addresses in this book are: 1. Homosexuality is normal; 2. Being a spiritual person is kinder than being a biblical Christian; 3. Feminism is good for the world and the church; 4. Transgenderism is normal; 5. Modesty is an outdated burden that serves male dominance and holds women back (12–17).

Initially, the book's most striking aspect is that Butterfield is not principally interested in *refuting* these lies. With considerable expertise, she does advance plenty of Scripture, research, and even plain old common sense to show the falseness of these beliefs. But on the whole, Butterfield is more concerned with warning the church against concession to these lies, and also with assisting those ensnared by their delusions—folks who should, as she quotes, "put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires" (Eph. 4:22).

Time and again, the author marshals similar passages to confront the lies head-on—which also reminds us that Scripture really does address such issues with clarity and relevance. (I especially enjoyed her application of 1 Timothy 6:4 to the ongoing "pronoun wars.")

In addition to emphasizing exhortation,



NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS *Continued*

the book is notable for its take-no-prisoners approach. Rather than the popular “warm and soft” approach, trying to meet our culture halfway, Butterfield goes on the offensive, relentlessly destroying these deceptions. That too takes some getting used to, but it is certainly biblical.

On the downside, it’s sometimes tough to follow the author’s reasoning—to connect her argument to the topic she’s addressing (particularly with Lie 2, which in any case does not fit well with the other gender-related issues).

Nonetheless, there are many vital take-aways here: her questioning of empathy (a recent concept, as opposed to the more biblical and time-tested sympathy—see Heb. 4:15); a scathing dissection of social media (chapter 14); and cogently tying transgenderism to the sin of envy.

Perhaps most importantly, Butterfield repeatedly crushes the notion that a Christian can retain and be content with an inner “gay” identity as long as he or she doesn’t act on it. Among other things, this leaves one open to temptation, while also claiming as vital something that will not exist in heaven.

But really, there is so much truth in this volume that a mere book review cannot do it justice. Get a copy and see for yourself.

***Yuletide: Poems and Artwork*, by Gregory R. Reynolds. Monadnock, 2022. Paperback, 46 pages, \$15.00 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP elder Christopher Campbell.**

For the past fifty years, Gregory Reynolds has crafted Christmas cards with his own poems and artwork. This comes as no surprise to readers of *Ordained Servant*,

edited by Reynolds, in which he makes room in each issue for poems ranging from the classic poets (Marvell, Herbert) to contemporaries (Lee, Green), along with helpful comments such as the difference



between free and blank verse. If one is looking for ideas for a Christmas card or gift, one might consider *Yuletide*, a chapbook of twenty of Reynolds’s Christmas poems and illustrations.

An OP minister, Reynolds states in his preface that his focus is to present the incarnation as the tide-changer that it is. The poems deal with the themes of light, the winter solstice, and the Light come into the darkness. The poet draws on the season for his imagery—“In morning sharp light / Then early darkness at night / Prelude to winter’s frost” (“Winter Solstice II”). In “Winter Solstice I,” we walk with him in winter woods—

Madrigals of silence and snow-sounds
Strike my listening ear this solstice
season,
As the black Brookside woods
sequester
Long night thoughts of the short-light
spell.

If these lines bring to mind Robert Frost, as Reynolds’s poems unfold the biblical narrative, we might also think of T. S. Eliot’s *Ariel Poems*, such as “The Journey of the Magi” and “A Song for Simeon.” (Interestingly, these and several other of

Eliot’s poems were published along with illustrations as part of a series of greeting cards by Eliot’s London publisher.)

In “No Ordinary Birth,” Reynolds writes:

The presence of several mysterious
Magi, not to mention the star
That so oddly guided their industrious
Journey, seeking a king from afar,
Whose glory was hidden from the
high
And the mighty, to humble the proud,
To seek sinners and the lowly.

Several of the poems help us to consider mankind’s Savior in a fresh light. “Another Kind of Solstice Light” is addressed to a “you” who views the solstice light as a source of earthly hope only (it’s not clear whom the poem is addressing—Satan, who comes dressed as an angel of light?):

Your earthly hopes were dashed by
One
Who from another realm outdid the
sun
As Yahweh subtly entered Caesar’s
sphere
To bring Emmanuel’s godhead near.

During a break at a presbytery meeting, I noticed one of the pastors writing notes. When I asked him what he was working on, he said he liked to send short, handwritten notes to parishioners to let them know he was praying for them. As we think about Christmas apart from what our culture has made it, Reynolds’s poems and artwork are like those pastor’s handwritten notes—examples of how we might testify to the Light to one who is battling the darkness.