

NEW HORIZONS

MARCH 2024

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



3

ALBERT J. TRICARICO

MOTHER- DAUGHTER CHURCH PLANTING

6

Gospel Fruit at
Grace Fellowship
MICHAEL J. SCHOUT

8

Trial by Ordeal
TODD V. WAGENMAKER

22

Review: Bavinck's
*Personality and
Worldview*
DANIEL S. SCHROCK

NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FEATURES **3** **Mother-Daughter Church Planting**
by Albert J. Tricarico

6 **Gospel Fruit at Grace Fellowship**
by Michael J. Schout

8 **Trial by Ordeal**
by Todd V. Wagenmaker

DEPARTMENTS **10** **Home Missions**
A one-hundred-year-old mission work

12 **Christian Education**
Alan D. Strange reviews Wilson's Mere Christendom

14 **Foreign Missions**
Leah J. Hopp reports from Nakaale, Uganda

16 **Prayer Calendar**

18 **Stewardship**
The true Owner of our possessions

19 **News, Views & Reviews**

*Cover image: The congregation of Good News OPC
in West Norriton, PA*

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Good News OPC in West Norriton, PA, is a daughter church plant



MOTHER-DAUGHTER CHURCH PLANTING

We began with three interest meetings that took place during the summer. Each meeting featured presentations on chapters from *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, with discussion following the talks. A midweek home group began that fall with Nate leading most of the meetings. This led to a deeper acquaintance with Nate and a growing confidence that he would serve well as our organizing pastor.

Evening worship services began in spring 2023. The Lord provided an amazing location in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania—the Temple Brith Achim. It was known from the beginning that once we began morning worship, our gracious host would not be able to accommodate us. The search for a new location began.

The Lord provided again! Whitehall Elementary School in West Norriton became the next (and current) home for Good News Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Good News is in its formative season. Sunday worship, two Saturday morning Bible studies, a midweek home group, and regular fellowship meals are among the opportunities for fellowship and outreach presently in place. Pastor Nate, Amy, and their four children recently moved to the area and have already connected with neighbors and others with a view toward sharing the good news of Jesus with them.

All the mission member families are committed to working toward the formation of a vibrant, worshiping testimony of grace in this needy Philadelphia suburb. They are all committed to engaging in gospel conversations and are grateful for your prayers for a growing harvest in West Norriton.

THE BENEFITS OF SACRIFICE

This kind of church planting has its costs—to participating families, to the mission work itself, and to the mother congregation. Members from both congregations miss each other’s company. The church officers sent to serve the mission left a leadership need at home. All mission members took their gifts and ministry involvements with



ALBERT J. TRICARICO

The session and members of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Glenside, Pennsylvania, had been considering the possibility of planting a daughter congregation for some time. Attendance had risen above three hundred. When pandemic protocols were introduced in spring 2020, however, the discussion took a different path. Calvary decided at that time to support some presbytery efforts rather than start one of its own.

In April 2022, seminary student Nate Jeffries asked if his upcoming internship might be shaped in such a way as to allow him to participate in the first steps of planting a church. The session approved the concept and asked Nate to lead a home group for families interested in exploring the possibility. I was privileged to be among the participating members.

them. This left opportunities for others to step in and take up their work. Unsurprisingly, financial costs were considerable.

But with every challenge came God’s generous supply. The Spirit brought more people to Calvary. Members learned to serve in new ways. Calvary’s 2023 budget was met, despite the relocation of generous members and the redirection of their robust offerings. Everyone involved with this project can testify how kingdom-directed sacrifices bless those who make them and honor the Savior for whom they are made.

Calvary and Good News have both grown in missions interest and support—locally, regionally, and worldwide. Prayers for the harvest in Glenside and West Norriton have deepened and become more regular. Tangible support for missions has increased. Leadership training in both churches is taking place with the emergence of several promising candidates. There is good reason to expect that new men will be ordained to serve within the next year.

Good News is not yet one year old. More of its developing story will appear in a future *New Horizons* issue.

THE SEED AND SOWER FUND

As a daughter church plant, Good News OPC is receiving funding from the Seed and Sower Fund.

The Seed and Sower Fund used to be known by another name. In 2006, the Committee on Home Missions and

Church Extension (CHMCE) established the “Neilands Fund,” named for elder David (“Scotty”) Neilands who left a generous bequest for home missions support. In time, the fund was designated for the support of mother-daughter church planting.

Mother-daughter church planting contemplates a congregation (the mother) sending a substantial number of families to work toward the formation of a new congregation (the daughter) in a strategic location accessible to the mission families. CHMCE has come to believe that this kind of home missions effort provides some unique ministry strengths as well as promise for Spirit-empowered success. Here are some advantages to this approach:

- Families already know each other and can build on and deepen their relationships and the practice of their biblical “one-another” commitments.
- The overseeing session has a history of working together to shepherd members of Christ’s flock already familiar to them. They can draw from this acquaintance and experience in their oversight of the mission.
- Because of proximity, there often remains ongoing fellowship and worship opportunities between the mission and the mother congregation.
- Aspects of church life such as diaconal involvement and financial management can be shared for a time as the daughter church grows.

MOTHER CHURCH	DAUGHTER CHURCH	RECEIVED GRANT	FEATURED IN NEW HORIZONS
Covenant OPC in Buford, GA	Providence OPC in Cumming, GA	2018	December 2018
Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI	Grace Fellowship OPC in Zeeland, MI	2018	May 2021
South Austin OPC in Austin, TX	Heritage OPC in New Braunfels, TX	2019	Jan. 2020, Oct. 2022
Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI	Living Hope OPC in Dorr, MI	2021	Forthcoming
Reformation OPC in Virginia Beach, VA	Peninsula Reformed in Yorktown, VA	2022	June 2023
Bethel OPC in Oostburg, WI	Breakwater Church in Sheboygan, WI	2022	January 2023
Sterling OPC in Sterling, VA	Acacia Reformed OPC in Manassas, VA	2022	June 2022
Shiloh OPC in Raleigh, NC	Zion OPC in Wake County, NC	2023	November 2023
Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA	Good News OPC in West Norriton, PA	2023	March 2024
South Austin OPC in Austin, TX	Hays County OPC in Hays County, TX	2023	December 2023
Sandy Springs OPC in Maryville, TN	Zion OPC in Athens, TN	2024	December 2022
Reformation OPC in Virginia Beach, VA	All Saints OPC in Suffolk, VA	2024	Forthcoming

Heritage
Presbyterian in New
Braunfels, Texas, a
Seed and Sower
Fund recipient



- There is built-in financial strength that includes a substantial commitment from the mother church as well as additional funding from CHMCE.

This last point refers to the Seed and Sower Fund, previously the Neilands Fund. CHMCE will use money from the fund to provide a matching grant supplemental to its ordinary four-year program of support. Here are a few of the components of the Seed and Sower program that need to be in place for a work to be approved for the grant:

- The seed group must include at least eight committed families.
- The seed group must have at least \$20,000 on hand.
- Seed groups that include church officers will be given priority.
- The mother congregation must provide the match to CHMCE's grant.

(For a description of the term “seed group,” see “A Seed Must Die to Bear Fruit,” *New Horizons*, March 2023.)

Here is how the funding works. The usual support program for a mission work delivers funding for four years—one year with identical monthly payments followed by three years of declining support. Mission works that qualify for Seed and Sower monies will receive the equivalent of the first year total matched by an equal amount provided by the mother church. For example, if the first year funding is \$48,000, a mission work receiving Seed and Sower funding would receive that amount matched by its mother church for a total of \$96,000 as an initial boost meant to get the work off to a strong beginning. A regular four-year program would then begin on the one-year anniversary of the Seed and Sower distribution.

The program has been utilized well and has helped produce good fruit for the kingdom of Christ. When the Neilands Fund approached exhaustion, CHMCE made the decision to continue the support practice, rename the

account, and fill it with assets from its reserves. CHMCE will continue to fill the fund for future opportunities to support mother-daughter church planting.

The Seed and Sower Fund has been in active use since 2018. In the six years since, it has provided support for twelve works, all of which have been successful church-planting efforts. The table (page 4) lists those works, some of which were featured in *New Horizons* articles. You can consult those issues to learn more.

FUTURE SUPPORT

CHMCE is pleased to support up to three new mother-daughter initiatives per year. Interested congregations are invited to contact the CHMCE office for assistance on how to get started. The document entitled “Use of the Seed and Sower Fund” will lay out the process for requesting support.

The Seed and Sower program has been fruitful. As the Lord provides, CHMCE will continue to use it as long as congregations take this unique step to plant churches. Requests have already been approved to begin in 2024. Look for reports on these works and others as you pray for a growing harvest of righteousness in our needy world. **NH**

The author is associate general secretary for the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.



GOSPEL FRUIT AT GRACE FELLOWSHIP



MICHAEL J. SCHOUT

Three years ago, I told the story in these pages of the beginning of Grace Fellowship Church in Zeeland, Michigan (see “One Church Planter’s Journey,” May 2021). A daughter of Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, Grace Fellowship was planted in 2018 as a recipient of the Seed and Sower Fund. In 2023, we concluded support from the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. What’s the best way to tell the story of our development and growth over the last five years? Since “people are more important than things” (to quote John Shaw), I’d like to tell the story from the perspective of the various people here whom God has been transforming through the power of the gospel.

NEEDY AND NEEDED

But before I do that, I want to share two truths that have been foundational to Grace Fellowship. The first comes

from Ed Welch, who says that we in the church are both “needy and needed.” I can’t tell you how many times I’ve said this, repeated this, and have gone back to this in these first five years of church planting. It’s one of those statements that is part of the DNA of our church. We are all needy, which means the gospel really is our only source of power, strength, and hope. We need the gospel not just to get us saved but to keep us growing, which is why we often talk about walking with limps. From the leadership down, all of us are sheep before any of us are shepherds. And all of us are severely broken and incredibly weak.

But we’re also needed. Not just some of us. All of us. Every single person who walks into our church. We’re all members of the same body, with different functions, varying gifts, and tailored usefulness. These twin truths—needy and needed—have been an anchor for us as we’ve welcomed people from all different backgrounds.

GOSPEL DOCTRINE + GOSPEL CULTURE

The second big idea that has been vital is what Ray Ortlund in his book *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* calls “Gospel Doctrine + Gospel Culture.” It’s the doctrine of the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, but it’s the culture that flows from that doctrine that will start to transform a community.

One of my favorite quotes from Ortlund, which I’ve shared in all our new members classes, goes like this:

The doctrine of grace creates a culture of grace. When the doctrine is clear and the culture is beautiful, that church will be powerful. But there are no shortcuts to getting there. Without the doctrine, our culture will

be weak. Without the culture, the doctrine will seem pointless. . . . If by God's grace we hold the two together—gospel doctrine and gospel culture—people of all ages will more likely come to our churches with great joy. (21–22)

Some of our folks have grown up with solid gospel doctrine, but the culture has been missing. There's little joy and lots of condemnation. So when they see this kind of gospel culture, they can hardly believe it. Others have come with little to no understanding of the gospel at all. For them, hearing the gospel preached, that Christ has redeemed sinners, has been a spiritual awakening.

WHO IS COMING?

But now to the stories of people. And I want to give glory to God because he has done it. Our boast is in Christ: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Cor. 3:6–7).

One of my favorite stories is of a woman in her seventies, who was out walking one day to Dollar General. Because our church building is right next door, she saw our sign out front. Curious, she asked our secretary if the "Orthodox" in our name meant that we are Jewish. Well, our secretary was ready with an answer and invited her to our church, and she's been with us ever since.

Then there's the story of a single woman in her fifties who worked at one of Zeeland's newest and favorite restaurants, StrEATs Taco Kitchen. My wife had been meeting there with various women in the church for fellowship and struck up a conversation with her. This woman reads lips because she is mostly deaf. My wife invited her to church—and she came. She shared that she had been

looking for a church where she felt safe ever since losing her mom. Now she is an active participant and attends an adult Sunday School small group for adults with various disabilities. She's an incredible encouragement.

Another story is that of a couple in their sixties who moved to the west side of the state and were looking for expository preaching, thanks to the influence of author Nancy Guthrie. Our website includes our core values—one of which is expository preaching—so when the wife researched churches in the Zeeland area, she found ours, and they've been here ever since.

A couple in their forties with several kids came from a very religious background, but they were weary and wounded, longing for gospel freedom. By God's grace, they have found it—to their absolute joy. Now they can't get enough of Christ-centered preaching as they soak in the amazing news that Christ came for sinners.

When a man in his fifties became sick with cancer, the whole church felt it. Eventually, he had to be moved to a hospice facility. Someone suggested that since he couldn't worship with us, perhaps we could send some of our body to worship with him via livestream. Those were beautiful weeks for the members who had a chance to worship at Trillium Woods with this fellow member before the Lord called him home in late October. While there, this member even had the opportunity to give testimony of the gospel to a Buddhist intern—and so his prayer that God would use his cancer for good was answered in marvelous ways.

One of the more recent stories is that of a young man in his twenties. He's homeless and was found by a Zeeland police officer in the local splash pad one evening. That officer and I graduated from high school together. When the man shared with the officer that he's longing for community, the officer recommended that he reach out to me. He's been worshipping with us for the past few months, and a couple in our church has offered him a place to stay. His eyes are starting to come alive. He is attending two men's Bible studies, and an older gentleman in our church is taking him for lunch every Friday.

These are just some of the people who've been impacted because of the power of the gospel and because our mother church, Harvest OPC, had the vision and took the risk to plant a church. Thank you to everyone who has prayed for us, supported us, and ministered to us in these first five years. It is wonderful to be part of the OPC. We are humbled and full of gratitude. To God be the glory. **NH**

The author is pastor of Grace Fellowship in Zeeland, Michigan.

Worship at Grace Fellowship



TRIAL BY ORDEAL



TODD V. WAGENMAKER

The word “vindication” doesn’t seem to be an important word in Scripture—it most prominently appears in 1 Timothy 3:16, which says that Christ was “vindicated by the Spirit.” And yet, few would say that the theme of the resurrection is not important: “If Christ has not been raised, then . . . your faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14). Understanding vindication not only better explains the New Testament’s frequent references to the Old Testament predicting Christ’s resurrection (Luke 24:45–46 and 1 Cor. 15:3–4), but it also gives us a strong gospel understanding and comfort as we approach death.

CHRIST’S RESURRECTION PREDICTED

In Luke 24 and 1 Corinthians 15, we are told that Jesus had to rise from the dead, according to the (Old Testament) Scriptures. Where do we in fact find the prophecy of Christ’s resurrection in the Old Testament? There *are*

references to Christ’s resurrection in the Psalms (see Psalm 16 and Psalm 22), but none that mention the word “resurrection.” Certainly, Jesus cites Jonah’s experience in the deep waters in the great fish as a sure sign that he would lie dead in the earth for three days, only to rise again to life. But how many other Old Testament texts clearly prophesy Christ’s resurrection? Job speaks of a final resurrection—“I know that my Redeemer lives And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25–26)—but what about Christ’s resurrection? If you do a word study of “resurrection” in the Old Testament, again, you might come up short. Indeed, there were many Old Testament theologians in Jesus’s day who doubted the reality of any resurrection (see the Sadducees’ discussion with Jesus).

So if Christ’s resurrection is so important (and it is), then where do we see it predicted and prophesied in the Old Testament? Understanding the concept of vindication gives us the Old Testament rationale and support for Jesus’s numerous claims that the Old Testament predicts and supports his bodily resurrection (see Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* [Two Age Press, 2000], 214).

The underlying truths behind vindication are not controversial: God is holy and demands not only a lack of sinfulness, but also goodness and a positive righteousness—“the person who does [God’s] commandments shall live by them” (Rom. 10:5). Therefore, to not only draw near to a holy God but also to receive his affirmative blessing, we not only have to be forgiven, but we have to be good. However, we are not good, nor are our good works truly good (Rom. 3:23). We know that Christ’s work as our substitute sacrifice removes sin and guilt and God’s curse, but how do forgiven sinners become good? Christ’s substitutionary work also does not exempt us from experiencing death; we may be forgiven, but we still have to pass through the deep waters of the Jordan River, as it were. None are spared death’s trial; the forgiveness we experience from Christ’s saving work on the cross does not spare us from the grave.

So how do we have comfort when we face the deep waters of death? If forgiveness removes the curse of hell, what secures the blessings of your resurrected body in the presence of God? At some level, our sanctification can provide a measure of comfort, since it is evidence that God has begun his work in us and we are his, but looking at our sanctification is not a very good source of comfort. Our sanctification is very imperfect and very incomplete (to quote the Heidelberg Catechism Q. 114, “even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience”). Having confidence of receiving God’s blessing after our death requires that we look outside of ourselves

and our sanctification. The answer lies in the Old Testament's teaching on vindication.

VINDICATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The theme of trial by ordeal is common in the Old Testament. The creation was put to the trial by ordeal of the flood waters in Genesis 7 and 8 (the number forty often referring to the number of testing or trial), and only righteous Noah with his family passed through the destructive flood, vindicated and alive. Israel, in its exodus from Egypt, also passed through the trial of the deep waters. Not because they are good, but because Moses (like Noah) was considered righteous, the Israelites, being "baptized into Moses" (1 Cor. 10:2), are vindicated and live. In the book of Daniel, the three righteous sons of Israel pass through the fiery furnace, vindicated as righteous and alive. Daniel himself passes through the trial of the lion's den, and, since he is righteous, he is vindicated. There are numerous other examples of trial by ordeal in the Old Testament, but these four are very familiar.

Further, in the most explicit gospel proof of Christ's resurrection, Jesus uses an Old Testament narrative—Jonah's descent into the death waters and the great fish for three days and three nights (Matt. 12:39–40).

With all these Old Testament narratives, the bottom line is this: all who are labeled "righteous" pass through the death trial, vindicated and alive and blessed, while all who are not righteous perish and are consumed.

What comfort do these Old Testament narratives give us? The problem that we face (and that Noah, Moses, Shadrach, and Daniel also faced) is that no one is truly righteous. We all sin, and therefore we all have a date with the deep waters of the grave and the judgment throne of God. Even Noah, Moses, and Daniel waded into the waters of death and ultimately died. If only there was someone who was truly righteous, who perfectly kept all of God's laws and commandments, who could go through the trial and be vindicated!

THE RIGHTEOUS ONE

Of course, there is One who is righteous (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 19:17). Jesus perfectly kept all God's laws. He is the truly righteous One to whom all the other types in the Old Testament with the label "righteous" point us. And Christ, per the reality of 1 Timothy 3:16, walked into the deep waters



Gustave Doré, "The Israelites Cross the Jordan River" (public domain)

of death itself, and because he is truly righteous, he was vindicated—he was raised! Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of God's trial by ordeal.

The Old Testament explicitly says that the One who *does* the law—i.e. the one who perfectly obeys—will live on the basis of his righteous obedience (Lev. 18:5). Jesus repeats this principle in Matthew 19:16–17 and Luke 10:25–28, saying that a perfectly obedient, perfectly righteous person will live, by implication passing through the death waters, unto eternal life. And, by the way, he mentions almost in passing that "there is only one who is good" (Matt. 19:17, the righteous Son of Man).

And in Christ's great work as the truly righteous, obedient One, all who are baptized into him will also be vindicated! Although we will experience the reality of death and the grave, if we rest in Christ and are joined to him, we too will pass through the deep waters of death. We will be vindicated—we will be raised to life as the righteous sons and daughters of God.

The theme of trial by ordeal and the righteous being vindicated not only gives the Old Testament basis for Christ's resurrection, but it also gives the one who trusts in Christ confidence in passing through the nastiness of the grave. As Machen, who faced an early death, said, "Thank God for the active obedience of Christ—no hope without it." All who have Christ's perfect obedience as their own have a certain hope of being vindicated as righteous. **NH**

The author is pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

THROUGHOUT ALL GENERATIONS

MIKE CLOY



*Landis Presbyterian
in 1933*

a petition with thirty-five names was presented to the presbytery, requesting that Landis Chapel be organized as a church in the Concord Presbytery of the PCUS. The request was granted, and the church was particularized as Landis Presbyterian Church on the third Sunday of October 1933. God established the first generation.

In 1950, a permanent church structure was built where the

God has abundantly blessed the congregation of new mission work Landis Presbyterian Church in Marion, North Carolina, more than we can ask or think (Eph. 3:20–21). Last year, Landis Presbyterian celebrated its one hundredth anniversary, and a new generation has been established by God with the installation of organizing pastor Johnny Serafini. With God's enabling help, he hopes to lead this historic church into the next generation.

THREE GENERATIONS

You might be wondering how a new mission work of the OPC can be one hundred years old. God has sustained the work through his ministry of seventeen pastors, twenty-nine stated supply pastors, twenty-six ruling elders, nineteen deacons, and four hundred and twenty-five communicant members in the Presbyterian Church of the United States (PCUS, from its founding in 1923 to 1974), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA, from 1974 to 2019), and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (2019 to present).

Landis Presbyterian began as a Sunday school organized on May 27, 1923, at Tom's Creek School in this rural community nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In 1925, the Sunday school moved to a one-room schoolhouse located on the farm of Mr. W. E. Landis, who granted the property to the church. In the fall of 1933,

congregation worships today. In September 1973, the church unanimously voted to withdraw from the Concord Presbytery of the PCUS and join the PCA. The congregation lost the use of the property to the PCUS, who held the deed. However, a clause in the original land grant from Mr. Landis stated a church would permanently be established on the property, and the PCUS forfeited the property back to Mr. Landis. Mr. Landis returned the property to this historic congregation. God preserved the second generation through a storm.

On December 28, 2018, ruling elders Thomas Willis and Johnny C. Byrd petitioned the OPC Presbytery of the Southeast to receive Landis Presbyterian into the presbytery. The church had four members regularly attending worship. On April 4, 2019, eleven people interested in joining the OPC mission work were examined for membership by the provisional session composed of regional home missionary Lacy Andrews, ruling elders John Mauldin and myself, and OP minister Dr. Sid Dyer. They were added to the rolls on April 26 as a mission work of the presbytery. God began a third generation of Landis Presbyterian.

The author is an elder and member of Landis Presbyterian in Marion, North Carolina.

*Johnny and Berry Serafini
with their children, children's
spouses, and grandchildren*

FROM BRAZIL TO THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

Johnny Serafini

In God's provision, several key generational leaders came at the right time to lead this congregation through its one-hundred-year history. Dr. James Cameron Story was the organizing pastor from 1933–1940. Then there was Dr. Carl Walker McMurray (1972–1978), who led Landis into the PCA. There is Phillip Sealy (2002–2010), who brought the church back to a means of grace ministry. There is OPC minister Dr. Sid Dyer (2011–2023), who loved the church with his faithful, consistent ministry during its thin years. Seminary student Corey Paige, now the organizing pastor of Hays County OPC in Kyle, Texas, was instrumental in the life of Landis as an intern from 2021–2022.

GOD'S GOOD PROVIDENCE

My own journey to serve Landis Presbyterian in Marion led all the way from Brazil, where I was raised in a Roman Catholic family. In God's good providence, my parents enrolled me in an American, Protestant Christian school in São Paulo, Brazil. I came to know the Lord through this school's Christian teachers, Bible classes, and Friday assembly meetings that often featured the preached Word of God. After college, I went to work with an evangelistic mission in the city of São José dos Campos.

In another act of God's good providence, I met my wife, Berry, at a Christian conference in 1994 in São Paulo. Berry had traveled from her home in the Northeast Amazon Basin where her parents, Harley and Margaret Davis, were farmers and agricultural missionaries. Berry grew up working the land, industrious in the Word and her labors. After meeting at the conference, a relationship developed, and on November 17, 1995, we were married. We are now the parents of eleven children: Johnny Jr. (and Nadine), Markie (and Greg), Harley, Angela, Esli, Anna, Luke, Katie, Levi, Evelyn, and Madeline.

In 1995, I became the pastor of Grace Baptist Church in São José dos Campos, Brazil. In 1997, we moved to the Northeast Amazon Basin to assist Berry's parents in their ministry. Then, in order to enroll at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, we relocated to Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 2005. After graduating in 2009, I was called to be the pastor at Heritage Reformed Congregation



Church in Kinnelon, New Jersey, where I served for fourteen years.

GROWTH AT LANDIS PRESBYTERIAN

Since being called as church planter of Landis Presbyterian, membership has increased from 21 to 30 members. Morning worship services increased from an average of 17 to 36. We have begun an evening worship service with an average attendance of 28. On the last Sunday of 2023, we had several visiting families—some to see friends and family, others because they were looking for expository preaching and Presbyterian polity. So, a new worship attendance record was established at 70. What a blessing from God to show us how he can do far more abundantly than all we ask and think.

I am grateful to the four members of the provisional session. It is a great blessing to the church that Mike Cloy is a Landis member, assisting with the Wednesday prayer meeting devotionals and many Sunday school classes. The Lord has been greatly using Mike through his warm, jovial, and godly demeanor. We are also blessed to have a seminary student under care of the Presbytery of the Southeast, Blake Stanley, who has also been assisting in the teaching ministry at Landis.

We indeed marvel at the Lord's work in revitalizing this small congregation in this new generation. Please rejoice with us and give the glory to God in Christ Jesus for all the Landis generations past, present, and future.

The author is church planter of Landis Presbyterian in Marion, North Carolina.

REVIEW: WILSON'S MERE CHRISTENDOM

ALAN D. STRANGE

Douglas Wilson in his book *Mere Christendom: The Case for Bringing Christianity Back into Modern Culture* (Canon Press, 2023) argues that “theocracy” is inevitable. He regards the standard that governs a society as its functional sacred writ; since every society is governed by some such standard, he argues, every society is a theocracy of some sort. Wilson wants the Bible, which actually is sacred writ, to be that standard for our, and every, society. Wilson expects all, not just the church, to adhere to God’s Word, with the civil magistrate enforcing both tables of the law. While all persons everywhere are indeed called to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, in this era only God’s people will ever do that. If people are forced to submit to the whole of God’s law on some basis other than a renewed will, it will have to be coercive, especially in our current culture.

NO GOLDEN AGE BEFORE CHRIST’S RETURN

In this world, as Richard Gaffin notes in his seminal piece “Theonomy and Eschatology,” the righteous will continue to suffer, and there is no future golden age before the return of Christ. Wilson, however, calls for “mere Christendom” now, presumably one shorn of the undesirable excrescences of earlier Christendom(s). Requiring the whole of a pluralistic society like ours, much of which is antithetical to God and his Word, to submit to God’s Word, however, highlights the problem. Historian Mark Noll, in his recent masterwork on the Bible in this country, notes that though the Bible was in earlier years “America’s Book,” we have since witnessed a precipitous plummet, what he calls “the rise and decline of a Bible Civilization (1794–1911).”

Wilson, recognizing the decline, notes that the standard in contemporary culture is some mash of ideologies like Marxism, expressive individualism, and the rest of the beliefs that comprise our reigning secularistic unbelief. Thus, he regards the current reigning religion as “secularism,” the conviction that God must be excluded from the public

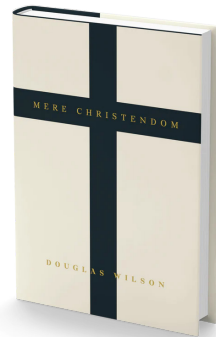
square, not only in the counsels of the state but also in the boardroom, the classroom, the factory floor, etc. Wilson divides his book into four sections: critiquing secularism and its concomitants; setting forth the basic dimensions of mere Christendom; clearing up misconceptions about mere Christendom; and the plan to restore Christendom (Christendom 2.0 as Wilson calls it).

Wilson espouses “principled Christian conservatism” (58), with politics seeming paramount (98–99): all the “alphabet agencies” of the bureaucracy must be eliminated (EPA, IRS, and the like), term limits and redrawn districts required, etc. (72–73). The feel of the whole book is that heaven demands, as reflected in the Bible, a Christendom that is a theocratic libertarian’s dream (Wilson self-identifies as a “theocratic libertarian,” 120), and we should all get in line with that.

I suppose Wilson’s theocracy will put an end to all that inconvenient political debate and disagreement that occurs not only with the ungodly but also with fellow believers who don’t think that God mandates libertarianism (even if they prefer it). This is just why C. S. Lewis opposed theocracy: Lewis realized that the worst

sort of civil government is one that claims detailed divine sanction though it really does not have divine sanction as to specifics (119–120). Wilson acknowledges Lewis’s opposition but seems completely to miss his point for it. Calvin also did not find the Bible committed to any form of civil government (*Institutes*, 4.20.8) or to carrying out Israel’s civil polity (4.20.14). Wilson, however, seems to think that the form the kingdoms of this world must take enjoys divine mandate.

Jesus Christ’s kingdom, though, is not of this world and his servants don’t bring it about by fighting (John 18:36), which includes insisting that our political views be enshrined in law as if they were divine writ. Many of us well understand the impulse to throw open the window and tell the world how mad we are and that we’re not going to take



it anymore. Believers have long had to contend with the frustration of the wicked prospering (Psalm 73). Certainly, the disadvantaged, the oppressed, and the dispossessed have. As the psalmist discovered, though, the ultimate solution is not in revolt, but in coming into God's presence and realizing the truth of his plan being worked out, resulting in his, and our, ultimate victory, discovered as we worship him (vv. 16–17). We need to be calling our society to join us in this, to find their lives hidden with Christ in God as we have. Here's the only hope for either end of the political spectrum.

The most any Christian can personally hope for are political, social, and economic views that are in keeping with the principles of God's Word, not political, social, and economic positions that embody "thus saith the Lord." Here's why: the Bible contains principles that may correspond with different political, social, and economic approaches. It is not the purpose of the Bible to furnish us with a detailed blueprint of many things in life but rather to tell us about the person and work of Jesus Christ, calling us to faith and repentance and to walk in union with him in newness of life. Wilson's approach demands more; his "mere" Christendom is not so mere for all that.

Christians certainly may, and should, seek to have biblical principles, whether garnered through natural law or the Bible, given societal expression. The need of the hour in our highly politicized and polarized time is for Christians, whether called to preach or simply to witness (1 Peter 3:15), to hold forth the hope that is found only in Christ and his gospel. We should not sound like we are promoting just one more political program in a world drowning in partisan politics. The last thing the world needs is more hopelessness of that sort. We should, by our word and deeds, testify to a King who stands the kingdoms of this world on their head, a King who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The author is an OP pastor and professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

CONGRATULATIONS

The **Children's Catechism** has been recited by:

- **Jedidiah Wical**, *Pilgrim Presbyterian, Lakeside, CA*

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

- **Elsie Harding**, *Sovereign Grace Reformed, Doniphan, MO*
- **Kathleen Harding**, *Sovereign Grace Reformed, Doniphan, MO*

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

Epistle to Diognetus (c. AD 100s)

The *Epistle to Diognetus* explains and defends Christianity to a pagan unbeliever. This work is mysterious in many ways. The author doesn't state his name, date, or location, nor do we know the identity of the recipient, "His Excellency, Diognetus." (This document exists in multiple editions; my quotations come from Cyril C. Richardson's translation in *Early Christian Fathers* [Collier, 1970].) The letter probably dates to the second century AD and is perhaps one of the very earliest pieces of post-New Testament Christian literature we possess. That alone makes it an interesting read. But two matters in particular stand out.

One is the *Epistle's* description of salvation. Here is beautiful evidence that salvation by Christ's righteousness through substitutionary atonement wasn't an invention of the Protestant Reformation. The author says, for example, that God "took up the burden of our sins" and "gave up his own Son as a ransom for us—the holy one for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, the righteous one for the unrighteous." He asks: "What else could cover our sins except his righteousness?" We sinners could not "be made righteous except in the Son of God alone," he adds, and "the righteousness of the One justifies the many that are sinners." "O sweetest exchange," he declares.

The *Epistle's* description of Christians' place in the world is also noteworthy. He says that they aren't distinguished by their country, language, or customs. They live in all sorts of cities, but while "they busy themselves on earth . . . their citizenship is in heaven." They live as "aliens" in their native countries and deem their earthly "fatherland" as a "foreign land." Christians "obey the established laws" but go far beyond them, loving all people even while being persecuted and blessing others in response to reviling. This early Christian letter provides much insight about being good citizens and loving neighbors in an increasingly hostile culture.

—David VanDrunen

A DAY OF ENDURING CONNECTIONS IN RURAL KARAMOJA

LEAH J. HOPP

In the heart of rural Karamoja, Uganda, where the earth breathes tales of tradition, there exists a hidden village home that stands as an ode to simplicity and resilience. Imagine stepping into this realm with two eager students holding Scriptures close to their hearts and two devoted women from the community health team equipped with an impressive array of pictures. As the sun climbs, we venture deep into the village, each step a rhythm of anticipation and purpose.

COLLABORATION IN ALAMACAR

In November, I accompanied Lomokol and Lokuso, secondary school students sponsored by the Mission, as well as Akol and Nakut, women from my community health team, out to Alamacar village. Since the students had returned to Nakaale on their two-month Christmas break, the two teams were able to collaborate to teach inside various villages.

Under the generous shade of a mango tree, the students gathered neighbors together to share with them timeless verses. The words echoed in the native tongue, painting vivid pictures of the heavens declaring the glory of God and the beauty of his creation. They spoke of the sun rising like a bridegroom and the heavens proclaiming the work of his hands, instilling a sense of awe in the listeners. For the student duo, it is more than a mere narration of Psalm 19; it's about weaving threads of hope and belief in Christ.

Afterward, the community health team unfolded a visual narrative, presenting illustrations on the importance of nourishing the body as a vessel for the Holy Spirit. The health teachers have been dedicating their time to educating their neighbors about the significance of proper nutrition and other health topics, encouraging them to incorporate their understanding into their daily lives. Adults and children alike gravitate toward these visual aids, accepting newfound insights that nurture both their spiritual and physical well-being and promise a healthier



Walking to the village

future for their community.

As the sun climbed to its peak, this quartet left, but not without a promise to return another day. The four found common ground through shared tasks, laboring side by side. The echoes of the lessons remained in the village, promising a ripple effect that transcended a single day's interaction. Our team knew that the essence of the upcoming Christmas holiday was not just in the much-anticipated festivities, but in the gift of nurturing minds and bodies to grow in their knowledge of our revealed Lord.

STEWARDSHIP THE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

I have been enjoying these weekly outings to the village, as they allow me to build rapport with the nine students, one pair at a time. These young men, scattered between boarding schools and institutions beyond the village, are not just beneficiaries of the Mission's sponsorship program but also threads in the tapestry of spiritual unity woven by God over the history of the Mission. When the young men gather for the holidays, it's more than a casual reunion: there are moments of reconnection

and nurturing of relationships that span kilometers and years. With seven of them boarding outside of Karamoja, the opportunities to bond are as scarce as the rain in the dry season.

Because there are now fewer OPC missionaries in Karamoja than ever before—only five—we have had to redistribute responsibilities and reevaluate our priorities as to what can be sustained until more people are added to our Mission team. In mid-2023, I began stewarding the Mission's school sponsorship program. This task is slightly outside of my natural giftings and has moved me to grow in areas of cross-cultural communication. Although painful work for me at times, the school sponsorship program is bringing more unity among the team, community, and local church. I also trust that God is taking me through this experience to grow me for his glory.

Eleven young men started in the program, and nine remain. I am unused to the various aspects of nurturing adolescents to adulthood, so managing five teenage boys in secondary school and four young men pursuing post-secondary education has been at times difficult. Most of their parents have not had formal educations themselves and thus are not as able to direct their children through the complex details of the Ugandan system. The Mission takes on the role of advising students on their opportunities. As their impromptu school guidance counselor, I am nearly as unfamiliar with the Ugandan educational system as they are; yet I do not want to do all the work for them, but instead teach them to find the necessary information to become more self-sufficient.

I also have six health teachers on my community health team, so the number of people that I am managing has more than doubled in the past six months. The geo-

Lomokol teaching from the Bible

graphical area of which the community health team and the sponsored students are now spread has grown exponentially, from locations within walking distance to now a three-hour drive away from the Mission.

But with perseverance and dedication, a rhythm for the Mission is emerging—a way to communicate, track details, and foster a supportive network that spans beyond the boundaries of the village. Within this web of mentorship and growth are the nine students under the Mission's sponsorship. They are all a testament to determination, nurtured by the Mission's support. Not just educational support—they were also part of the Timothy Discipleship Training program, carving paths of spiritual growth alongside their academic pursuits. Even during their breaks, away from lecture halls and textbooks, they found guidance in the teaching of various Mission pastors. Pastor Julius now continues to disciple the students when they come home on break. Week after week, these gatherings are not merely about academic updates or progress reports. They are about fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening the bonds that transcend classrooms and campuses.

In the picturesque village home nestled within this remote corner of Karamoja, our day in Alamacar stood as a beacon, illuminating the potential of partnership between gospel proclamation and community health initiatives. The vivid snapshots of the day unfold like pages in a storybook: a tale of collaboration, growth, and enduring connections.

The author is an associate missionary in Uganda.



Akol and Nakut from the community health team teaching in the village



MAR 2024 PRAYER CALENDAR



The Hopps (day 4)



The Wans (day 9)

1 Pray for the Lord's blessing on the work of the **Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ)**. / **A.J. & Chelsea Millsaps**, Athens, TN. Pray that the Lord would make Zion OPC faithful in its labors.

2 **Mike (Elizabeth) Diercks**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Pray for the **students and teachers** involved in the spring MTIOPC courses.

3 Associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for the visitors and children coming to church to be brought into Christ's fold. / **David Nakhla**, Disaster Response coordinator. Pray for brothers and sisters who have chosen to remain in eastern Ukraine as the war continues.

4 **Matt & Christine Ezzell**, Wake Co., NC. Pray for Zion Presbyterian's membership class and those participating in it. / **Ben & Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for a safe and easy transition for the Hopps as they move to Africa in a few days and Ben begins service as regional foreign missionary to Africa and Haiti.

5 Active duty military chaplains **Joshua (Stephanie) Jackson**, US Army, and **Kenneth (Mandy) Kruckow**, US Army. / **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for God's blessing on the college ministry and "Crates for Ukraine" ministry.

6 Pray for **retired missionaries** Cal & Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, Mary Lou Son, and Brian & Dorothy Wingard. / **Melaku & Meron Tamirat**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for Redeemer Mercy Ministry's weekly Bible studies.

7 **Dave (Elizabeth) Holmlund**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Yearlong intern **David Wright** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

8 Affiliated missionaries **Jerry & Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic. Pray for wisdom about how to encourage youth who are reaching out to their peers with the Gospel. / Pray that **The Reformed Deacon** podcast would be an encouragement to deacons.

9 **Joseph & Christina Wan**, Madison, WI. Pray that the saints at Madison Chinese Christian Church would be built up together. / Affiliated missionaries **Dr. Mark & Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. Pray for healing and growth in faith for the girls at Dahlia Dorm.

10 **Caleb & Erika Smith**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray for Thousand Oaks Presbyterian Church as they work towards particularization. / Pray that those coordinating and leading **short term mission** teams would be energized to prepare for summer missions.

11 **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for fruitful co-laboring with the missionaries of the Brazilian Presbyterian Church. / Yearlong intern **David (Hope) Garrett** at Orthodox Presbyterian in Franklin Square, NY.

12 **Mark & Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the development of a Bible study and core group in Maldonado, Uruguay. / Pray for **James (Bonnie) Hoekstra**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

13 **Christopher & Sara Drew**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray that the Lord would provide officers for Faith OPC. / **Diane Olinger** and **Ayrian Yasar**, editorial assistants of *New Horizons*.

14 Pray for the **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church** and for the persecuted church in **East Africa**. / Pray that the **Ruling Elder Podcast** would bless listeners.

.....
15 Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah Montgomery**. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M as he travels and speaks for conferences and presentations.

.....
16 **Paul & Sarah Mourreale**, West Plains, MO. Pray that Covenant Reformed Church would grow in love and unity. / Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Uganda Mission team will have wisdom about visitor applications and timing.

.....
17 **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for four men to make it through their credentialing and ordination process soon. / **Mark (Peggy) Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.

.....
18 Pray for affiliated missionaries **Craig & Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. / Pray for the members of the **Committee on Christian Education** as they meet this week.

.....
19 **Tyler & Kara Jackson**, New Castle, IN. Pray that Redemption Life Bible Church would continue to grow spiritually and numerically. / Yearlong intern **Tyler (Jeanna) Freire** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

.....
20 **Charles & Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for health, strength, rest, joy, and fruitful labors. /

.....
21 **Micah & Eileen Bickford**, Farmington, ME. Pray that Grace Reformed would have more opportunities for evangelism.

.....
21 Pray for the **Committee on Diaconal Ministries** as it meets today. / Pray for **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda, as their family adjusts to a new baby and prepares to travel.

.....
22 **Mark & Lorie Wheat**, Sugar Land, TX. Pray for Good Shepherd OPC as they work towards particularization. / Yearlong intern **Brennen (Tiffany) Winter** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

.....
23 Missionary associates **Nathan & Elisabeth Bloechl**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the Lord to provide discipleship opportunities. / Yearlong intern **Andrew (Noel) Davis** at Covenant Presbyterian in Marina, CA.

.....
24 **Nate & Amy Jeffries**, West Norriton, PA. Pray that members of Good News OPC would have boldness in sharing the gospel. / **Stephen Pribble**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.

.....
25 Pray for associate missionaries **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they prepare clinic and accounting staff to oversee important activities while the Verdicks are on furlough. / Yearlong intern **Joe (Melody) Gehrman** at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, IL.

.....
26 **John & Katie Terrell**, Dorr, MI. Praise the Lord for the influx of new members and baptisms at Living Hope OPC. / Pray for missionary associates **Josh & Danielle Grimsley**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they and their children settle into their new work and surroundings.



The Jeffries (day 24)

.....
27 Pray for **Danny Olinger** in his work as director of the intern program. / **Bruce (Sue) Hollister**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest.

.....
28 Tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for thankful hearts for the relationships and resources God has given. / Yearlong intern **David (Jasmine) Rios** at The Haven in Commack, NY.

.....
29 Missionary associate **Jed Homan**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Jed to be able to point the Ugandans who work with him to Christ. / **John Paul & Corinne Holloway**, Manassas, VA. Pray that Acacia Reformed Church will have compassion for the lost and zeal for evangelism.

.....
30 Stated clerk **Hank Belfield** and others preparing for the 90th General Assembly, June 19–25. / Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**.

.....
31 Home Missions administrative assistant **Allison Groot**. / *New Horizons* managing editor **Judith Dinsmore**.



The Holloways (day 29)

EXTRAVAGANT STEWARDSHIP

JOHN H. RO

How would you define “possessions”? These are things we own by buying them or receiving them as gifts. We place an emotional and mental value upon them because they belong to us. Once they belong to us, we become fearful of losing them. Studies have shown that people with fewer possessions tend to be more generous with what they have. Why do you think this is so? Perhaps if we have less to lose, we are more willing to give. If people have more, they know it will generate more income for themselves, so it becomes harder to give. Some may also have a sense that if they earned their possessions through their hard work, others should work hard for what they have, too.

But who is the true owner of our possessions? In 1 Chronicles 29:10–12, David said that all things belong to God. (See also Psalm 89:11.) It caused him to freely and joyously offer all things to God. In Luke 7:39–50, Luke gives the account of a woman who poured expensive perfume on Jesus’s feet. She recognized that he is King and deserves to be anointed extravagantly. How appropriate that it turned out to be for his upcoming death and burial! Matthew 6:19–24 says what we treasure and store up rusts and rots away—in other words, it goes unused and gets wasted. In the next few verses (25–33), Jesus guarantees the provision of daily basic needs, so we do not need to worry.

If we are not the owner, then what is our role toward our possessions? Matthew 25:14–15 tells us that we are God’s stewards. In this parable, the man who was given five talents and the man who was given two talents both put to use what they were given and doubled it. In response, the master said, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (v. 23), and they were made stewards of much. They were allowed to enter the joy of their master. According to Matthew 25:18, 24–27, what was wrong with what the man did who was given just one talent? He “was afraid” and simply put the talent in the ground. His talent was taken away and given to the man with ten talents,



and he was cast into outer darkness. Why do you think the man with one talent faced such a harsh consequence? He treasured his possession and did not understand what his role was. He was afraid of losing that one talent. He did not understand his role as a steward—that his possessions were meant for the growth and expansion of God’s kingdom.

We all struggle with taking care of God’s possessions. It is one of the greatest challenges we will face while on earth. However, when we see the things of this world in light of Jesus’s imminent return, we can freely and joyously use them for his glory.

The author is an OP minister.



Members of the presbytery and friends at the installation of Jay Bennett (center, blue tie)

NEWS

KIM ORDAINED AND INSTALLED IN NAPLES, FL

On January 5, Rev. J. Kim was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Christ the King Presbyterian Church in Naples, Florida. Pastor Kim formerly served as an intern at Christ the King in 2020 and then as an assistant to the pastor in 2023 following mission work in Africa. The service was led by Mr. John R. Muether, moderator of the Presbytery of the South. Rev. Christian Khanda of Holy Trinity Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale gave the invocation, and a message was preached on Exodus 36:6–10 by Rev. Warren Bennett III of Covenant Presbyterian in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Rev. Eric Hausler of Christ the King gave the charge to the new pastor, and Rev. Dan Halley of Bay Haven Presbyterian in Tampa gave the charge to the congregation.

BENNETT INSTALLED IN LYNCHBURG, VA

Hank L. Belfield

On January 19, Rev. M. Jay Bennett was installed to serve as pastor of Grace OPC in Lynchburg, Virginia. Rev. Hank L. Belfield, pastor of Providence OPC in Chilhowie, Virginia, preached the sermon and posed the installation questions to Rev. Bennett and the congregation. Rev. Peter Stazen II, former pastor of Grace OPC, gave the charge to Rev. Bennett. Rev. James W. Clark, pastor of Garst Mill OPC in Roanoke, Virginia, gave the charge to

the congregation. Ruling elder Dan Cooke from All Saints OPC in Suffolk, Virginia, led a wonderful prayer for the newly installed pastor and the congregation, commending them to God's guidance and blessings. It was a cold night outside, but the sanctuary was filled with warm smiles and joyful hearts.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On September 15, **Brett E. Mahlen** was installed as teacher of the Word at Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary.
- On January 12, **John R. Nymann** was ordained and installed as a pastor of Reformation Presbyterian in Virginia Beach, VA, to serve as organizing pastor of All Saints OPC in Suffolk, VA.
- On January 19, **James T. Hoekstra** was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota to serve as its regional home missionary.
- On January 19, **M. Jay Bennett** was installed as pastor of Grace OPC in Lynchburg, VA.
- On January 26, **Benjamin K. Hopp** was installed as regional foreign missionary to Africa and Haiti.
- On February 2, **John S. Shaw** was installed as a pastor of Grace Presbyterian in Columbus, OH.

MILESTONES

- **Rheta Carole (Peacock) Hubenthal**, 84, wife of retired OP minister Karl A. Hubenthal, died January 22.

Members of the presbytery and friends at the ordination and installation of John Nymann (center, gray tie)



LETTERS

NEW TECH, OLD PROBLEM

Dear Editor:

Jan Dudt's excellent article "AI: The Latest Idol" (January 2024) unmasked some thinking of AI innovators. He cites an interview Tucker Carlson had with Elon Musk, who promotes the lie that humans are less than human. Ironically, within the same month of that interview (April 2023), Carlson was canned by Fox executives for his own history of lies on TV. He had been able to unload that old-fashioned style of lies onto the public for years, so what hope do we have that sophisticated, AI-generated falsehoods will be quickly extinguished?

Roger W. Schmurr
Cleveland, OH

REVIEWS

Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales, by Eifion Evans. **Banner of Truth, 2023. Hardcover, 410 pages, \$31.50. Reviewed by OP pastor Jonathan Holst.**

This book is a narrative history of a Welsh preacher who was used by God.

In the past, British newspapers would print rave reviews about certain preachers, such as Spurgeon, and leaders of American Presbyterianism would read these reports and sail to Britain to witness this praised preaching. (Allegedly, these fathers from the southern states claimed that the same biblical preaching was common in pulpits across the United States, week after week.) Over the years, the Brits have penned similarly euphoric praise for the Welsh Daniel Rowland (see Ryle and "The Doctor"), but Eifion Evans in this biography of Rowland presents a less emotional and more factually detailed assessment of this minister's life and service.

The latest Banner of Truth reprint is

a full and straightforward read. I recommend it to all. I cannot claim to offer a dispassionate assessment. I read of oddly named places and people, recalling that I lived and worked in several of these towns, and I have worshiped in Rowland's church. Some readers may be similarly passionate, having strong opinions about the phenomenon known as "revival." Evans does not attempt to confirm or deny such opinions; actually, he makes clear that Rowland took a more circumspect view of such things than Whitfield or Harris.

This detailed biography covers all of Rowland's life (1713–1790), a part of which was dominated by revival. One learns about many other matters: for example, the struggle of working with brethren of differing convictions when the world is set against you and them, or of the nature and cost of the Christian ministry in a distant time and place. On that point, how many Calvinist ministers have been silenced by the local police; elsewhere arrested and then acquitted at trial; or attacked by a mob on an occasion when a supporter was killed? Rowland even had a gun drawn on him and fired, though the flint did not ignite the powder. Later in his ministry, gunpowder was placed under a makeshift pulpit he was to preach from—but mercifully a friend discovered it. Not allowing such opposition to limit his service, Rowland went on to minister the Supper to thousands outside his church building.

Daniel Rowland was instrumental in forming what became known as the Presbyterian Church of Wales, in his time the Calvinistic Methodist Church. Many readers of this review will know much about Scottish Presbyterians, their persecution, their theologians, and even their arguments. What about Wales? We can learn a few things from this different branch of the Reformed and Presbyterian church.

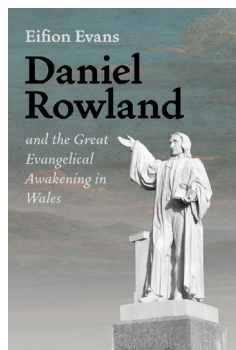
At 410 pages, this book may not be a

simple holiday read, but it is not a tome you will trudge through. Evans's research is comprehensive. He was a pharmacist and an academic, fluent in English and Welsh. I commend this biography to you for your consideration. Believers should be encouraged to read of the faithful labors of other servants, particularly when the Lord adds a measure of blessing to those efforts. Rowland's life was just that—sacrificial labor mercifully blessed by our Lord.

The Power of Revival: Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Baptism in the Spirit, and Preaching on Fire, by Dongjin Park. **Lexham Academic, 2023. Paperback, 264 pages, \$26.99. Reviewed by OP minister D. Leonard Gulstrom.**

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (MLJ) is without a doubt one of the most influential preachers of the twentieth century. His books, commentaries, and sermons have been a source of edification for people across the globe. In *The Power of Revival*, South Korean professor and pastor Dongjin Park (PhD, McMaster Divinity College) has written an engaging and well-researched book on the one issue that some, particularly in the Reformed community, have had with MLJ—his doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In nine chapters Dr. Park traces out how MLJ came to his conclusions on the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. MLJ's understanding of this doctrine differs substantially from that of the Pentecostal position. MLJ objected to speaking in tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism, opposed the belief that this was given through the laying on of hands, and did not regard Spirit baptism as a once-for-all crisis experience. So what did MLJ see as the basis for his view of Spirit baptism? Parks traces it back to several influences that he believes affected MLJ's interpretations of Ephesians 1:13–14 and Romans 8:15–16. First, there is one strand of Puritan teaching that spoke of this in regard to assurance of salvation and revival. This is found in John Owen,



Thomas Goodwin, and Richard Sibbes, though they did not completely agree with one another. Second, MLJ's upbringing as a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist had a great influence on him. This denomination encouraged regular "experience meetings" that were divided into two groups. One meeting was for the "general society" and the other to an inner "private" society. To be a part of this latter group you had to answer yes to the question, "Does God's Spirit at all times bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" Third, MLJ's reading of the revivals and testimonies of such men as Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland as well as others whom the Lord used to bring revival to his church, such as George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards, convinced him of the need of a special unction of the Spirit, an anointing of the Spirit, a sealing of the Spirit, which MLJ interpreted to be the baptism of the Spirit. And fourth, MLJ was convinced of his own experience of Spirit baptism.

It was this emphasis on assurance and revival that had such a profound effect on MLJ. As he looked at the church and the world around him, he was moved to pray for revival, not the revival that is man-centered, but one that comes from the work of the Spirit in the hearts of men. This he saw as a possible immediate work of the Spirit, even without the means of the scriptural Word, which is a notable deviation from Reformed theology. This he

saw as the need of the day: the necessity of Spirit baptism in preaching so that there might be another revival in the church of Christ. This is true preaching, or as MLJ called it, "logic on fire."

Park does an excellent job of explaining all of this in a way that makes us realize that, while we might not agree with MLJ on Spirit baptism, we would all agree that the need of revival today, the need to pray for revival, the need of Spirit-filled preachers, and the need of Spirit-filled preaching today, is as great as ever.

Let those of us who bring God's Word to his people seek in our prayers, in our study, and in our preaching, that God would use his Word and Spirit to bring in another day of great harvest for the kingdom.

Alexander Moody Stuart: A Memoir, by Kenneth Moody Stuart. Banner of Truth, 2023. Hardcover, 448 pages, \$27.00. Reviewed by OP minister Derrick B. Leitão.

Alexander Moody Stuart stands in the great train of Scottish ministers who have gone before us, one being his mentor and professor Thomas Chalmers. He lived among the likes of Horace and Andrew Bonar, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, and "Rabbi" John Duncan. He lived during some of the most defining moments of the Scottish Kirk, from the mid to late 1800s, including the formation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843.

Although his memoir was completed by his son, Kenneth Moody Stuart, it contains large sections of Alexander's own words. First published in 1899, it is well written and captures the

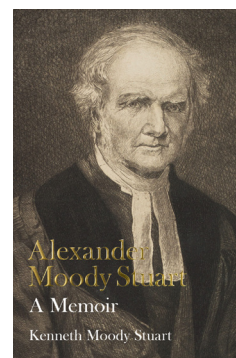
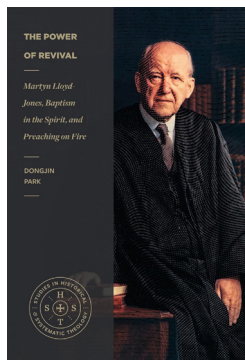
imagination of its readers with beautiful environmental descriptions and details about his life and mission.

The book begins in the busy town of Paisley, about eight miles west of Glasgow, where Alexander Moody Stuart was born in 1809. Then it moves quickly from his childhood to his college days and his conversion. From there, we read about his pulpit ministry. He seemed "impressed, sometimes almost oppressed with his position as standing between God and man, and bearing a direct message from the divine Father, Son, and Spirit, to his hearers" (60). As he moved from place to place, he trusted in God's providence and his empowering Spirit to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to lost souls. He realized the preciousness of the promise, "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:11–12).

In this book, you'll follow him on his journeys from Holy Island, off the coast of Northumberland, to becoming a minister in Edinburgh to a congregation with 750

members on the rolls, to visits to Brazil and to the island of Madeira due to his health issues. He returned to Scotland to serve the congregation of St. Luke's almost immediately following the Disruption and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843. Although he was not directly involved, he favored the split from the established church.

As you read this memoir, I believe you will be convinced, as I have been, of this man's warm piety, a love for the Lord and his people that we would do well to emulate. He also had a love for neighbor, as he would lead the effort to gather others together to form the Jewish Mission



KINGDOM PRAYER GROUP

Interested in praying for the church of Christ around the world? The **Kingdom Prayer Group** meets via Zoom to pray for a predetermined nation on the second Friday evening of every month. No chat, no discussion—just a brief Scripture reading followed by ninety minutes of prayer. To join us, email secretary Elizabeth Cummings at elizabethrcummings@gmail.com. Questions? Email Rev. Tom Church at church.1@opc.org.

Committee, which would later appoint him to visit the mission stations of the Free Church in Hungary and Bulgaria. Also, during his stay in Brazil, he burned with anger against the evils of African slavery: “Oh! accursed African slavery, darkest and sorest of human ills!” (79).

I commend this book to you. It is a story of a life devoted to the glory of God and the proclamation of his gospel. And, if that were not enough, it is worth reading just for the quotes, correspondence, and sermons that make up half the book.

***Standing Against Tyranny: The Life and Legacy of Arthur Perkins*, by Brian De Jong. Independently published, 2023. Paperback, 537 pages, \$19.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by Wayne Sparkman, Director, PCA Historical Center.**

I first learned of Arthur Perkins from reading Gary North’s magnum opus, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*. North tells the story in short order:

On the day Machen died, Rev. Arthur F. Perkins’ funeral was held in Wisconsin. He died three days before Machen did. A year earlier he had been in good health. He was an even more obvious victim of the Presbyterian power religion. He had operated a summer camp for children in Wisconsin. . . . He had made the mistake of charging young people \$3.50 a week instead of the \$12 charged by the (PCUSA) presbytery’s camp. This brought down the wrath of his

presbytery. In vain did he protest that the camp was not a deliberately rival camp, just a place for children to have Bible studies and have fun. It was non-denominational. It was not run through his local church. That, of course, was the liberals’ whole point in the summer of 1936. He refused to close it, and he refused to resign from the Independent Board. For this he was suspended. His health declined sharply after this. He died in late December, possibly as the result of a seemingly minor head injury. (*Crossed Fingers*, 748–749)

Remembering that account, it was exciting when in 2004, the Rev. Robert Smallman donated those documents previously stored at his Wisconsin church that now constitute the Arthur F. Perkins Manuscript Collection. Fourteen years later, I first met Rev. Brian De Jong when he was part of the OPC’s Committee for the Historian as they paid a visit to the PCA Historical Center in 2018, which in turn led to his later visits to research the Perkins Collection.

In my twenty-five years at the PCA Historical Center, I have yet to see anyone else take the ball and run with it the way

De Jong has in his research into the life and legacy of the Perkins. The Perkins Collection is actually one of our smaller collections, with less than one hundred pages in content. And while the material is rich, it was De Jong’s dogged pursuit of every lead given up in those pages that turned the whole matter into a masterpiece.

The result is a biography well worth your time, for as

De Jong surveys Perkins’s story, we see that his legacy is clearly one we need today:

Arthur Perkins stood against tyranny in his day, and he paid a tremendous price for his stand. In his estimation, the truth mattered more than his own personal comfort, ease and happiness. In the end, his courageous stand cost him his sanity, and his very life. In a certain respect, Harry Rimmer was correct when he opined that when Arthur Perkins died on December 29, 1936, he was “one martyred witness who was faithful unto death.” (*Standing Against Tyranny*, 326)

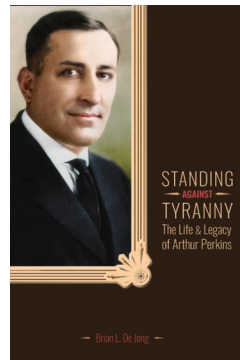
Orthodox Presbyterians will particularly be interested in the correspondence between Perkins and J. Gresham Machen provided in appendix 4.

***Personality and Worldview*, by J. H. Bavinck. Crossway, 2023. Hardcover, 208 pages, \$30.68 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister Daniel Schrock.**

In American Reformed circles, one can presently speak the name “Bavinck” without much need for differentiation. The day may soon come, however, when a mention of the surname will elicit the question, “Which Bavinck?” The translation of this book moves the dial on that closer.

Johan Herman Bavinck was the nephew of the more renowned Bavinck. But unlike his uncle the dogmatician, J. H. Bavinck was primarily a missiologist. And though he is not merely an intellectual doppelganger of his uncle, one can detect his deep influence upon his nephew’s thought as a synthetic thinker who prized organic holism.

As Timothy Keller observes in his foreword, Bavinck’s treatment of the notion of a worldview avoids the concerns of those who charge the concept with being too rationalistic, too simplistic, too individualistic, and too triumphalist. In Bavinck’s handling, worldview is not a stale diagram of propositions merely to be mapped out on a chalkboard; it is to be wedded to the dynamism of the inner life



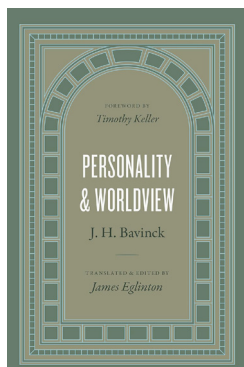
POSITION AVAILABLE

Associate Pastor: New Hope Presbyterian Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin, is seeking a man who is ordainable according to the requirements of the OPC. This man will support the senior pastor in overseeing all the work of New Hope, including preaching the gospel, teaching God’s Word, and shepherding the people and ministries of New Hope. Visit www.nhopc.org/apply and contact us at search@nhopc.org.



of personalities. Hence the title.

Now, readers should be warned that this book is likely not to find its way into headlining for many small groups. Bavinck's treatment of the Western philosophical tradition is detailed, and the average churchgoer (even in the OPC) will probably not have an appetite for his journeys into the thought world of Hume, Spinoza, and Kant. This is the work of an academic who was deeply acquainted with the Western philosophical tradition. And, to add a bit more flavor, it is also the work of one showing equal measure of acquaintance with the Eastern tradition. But if a reader does have the kind of intellectual proclivities Bavinck assumes of his audience, they will discover this book is a tour de force.



He distinguishes between worldviews as tacit, pre-theoretical perspectives, and worldviews, which are more rigorous theoretical attempts at grasping objective truth upon which to build a worthy life. In this perspective, a world-

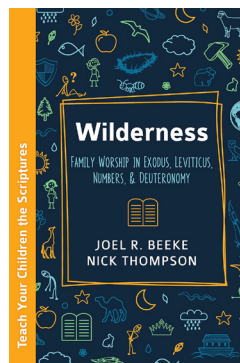
view is an instrument for conquering the self and bringing it in line with truth. Indeed, the principal text upon which Bavinck rests this project is John 8:32, "The truth will set you free."

Bavinck takes the reader through a sampling of major categorizations of worldviews and the underlying personalities who construct them. Yet at the end of each, he shows how they all manage to shatter authentic personality. This is what he understands sin to do in its essence, break the harmony of personality. His conclusion proffers the gospel as the only worldview that does not descend into this discord. Rather, it lifts man out from his attempts to construct worldviews that always amount to futile performances in human achievement. It gives him instead the truth that sets him free, that liberates and restores his personality via the sovereign grace of God.

Experts in the intellectual systems Bavinck treats along the way will undoubtedly find ways to quibble with his characterizations. Notwithstanding, this new translation has retrieved for English readers a way of deploying the concept of worldview that is compelling.

***Wilderness: Family Worship in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*, by Joel Beeke and Nick Thompson. Reformation Heritage, 2023. Paperback, 200 pages, \$14.00. Reviewed by OP elder Ben Stahl.**

I once witnessed someone asking an elderly OPC minister what he saw as a pressing concern for the church. His answer as I remember it: "We are losing our children to the world." A recent Pew Research Study found that among Christian parents with children under age eighteen, fewer than 33 percent of parents read the Bible at least once per week. There is a famine of the Word of God. Daily family worship is essential. But



how does one do it?

Joel Beeke and Nick Thompson have provided a helpful resource for parents facing just this question. Following their first book, *Beginning*, on Genesis, *Wilderness* takes parents from Exodus through Deuteronomy. Eighty-eight two-page lessons are broken into four parts: Wilderness Liberation (Ex. 1–18); Wilderness Worship (Ex. 19–Lev. 27); Wilderness Wandering (Num. 1–36); and Wilderness Renewal (Deut. 1–34).

The authors seek to drive home the high points of the text both by applying the Scripture immediately to the reader and showing the ways in which the Old Testament and New Testament and the law and gospel sweetly comply. Throughout the book, the authors teach many fundamental doctrines of Scripture, such as repentance (33), the regulative principle of worship (49, 117), the names of God (56, 155), and the covenant of grace (6–93, 180–181).

The lessons are appropriate to be read during family worship, but the book is designed to give parents a memorable format so that they can have a structure for family worship when *Wilderness* is not at hand. Each lesson has four sections beginning with the letter *R*. *Review*: The lesson begins with simple questions concerning the Scripture reading the prior day. (For example, "How did God show His glory to Moses?") *Read*: The lesson then provides a portion of Scripture to read.

(For example, "Lesson 71: Numbers 16:1–5, 8–11, 32–35.") *Reflect*: This is the bulk of the lesson. A summary of the text is provided along with thought-provoking questions for children and adults. (For example, "Why is God the only one worthy of worship? Is it ever right to be angry? Why is the fourth book of our Bible titled Numbers?") *Request*: This section, the shortest, is a highlight of the book. Nearly every lesson

drives children and parents to pray for conversion, sanctification, and growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. (For example, “Pray that every member of your family would unite under the Lord’s banner and be a humble soldier in the cause of Christ; pray that your children would seek and know the eternal life and light that is found in Jesus Christ alone.”)

Whether parents use this book during or in preparation for family worship, the chief end of the book series will be obtained, “to equip many parents to lead their children to relish the unsearchable riches of God’s glory in Jesus Christ” (xiii).

***The Gospel According to Christ’s Enemies*, by David J. Randall. Banner of Truth, 2022. Paperback, 192 pages, \$14.40. Reviewed by OP pastor Michael Shingler.**

“They spoke better than they knew.” That phrase could well summarize the theme of *The Gospel According to Christ’s Enemies*. In this practical and accessible little volume, David Randall reflects on the words of Jesus’s enemies as they are recorded in Scripture. He shows the reader how these individuals often unwittingly spoke truth concerning the person and work of Jesus. Their words, though often intended to mean something quite different, actually convey the truths that are central to the gospel message. This book is an unfolding and application of the gospel as reflected in the words of Christ’s enemies.

Randall has included various statements of Christ’s enemies from both the Gospels and the book of Acts and, in one case, from the Epistles. In some cases, it is quite obvious that those who spoke were Christ’s enemies and intended to speak against him. For example, the Pharisees mean to criticize Jesus when they said, “This man receives sinners,” and Caiaphas was plotting to kill Jesus when he unknowingly prophesied concerning Jesus’s death on behalf of God’s people. In some instances, on the other hand, it is less clear whether the speakers were directly antagonistic toward Jesus. In the case of the Apostle Paul, we hear the words of a former enemy of Christ who spoke in retrospect about his own experience of God’s grace. Yet all of the included sayings are associated, in one way or another, with Christ’s enemies. They come from a variety of figures, both Jew and Gentile, from Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem to pagan philosophers in Athens and everywhere in between.

While ten chapters focus on the words of Jesus’s enemies, chapters 11 and 12 turn attention to “Christ’s Enemies According to the Gospel” and “The Gospel According to Christ.” In the last chapter, Randall covers some modern examples of how opponents still unintentionally speak truth about the gospel.

This work exudes the heart of a pastor with a passion for making the gospel clear. Using the statements of opponents as a starting point, the author expounds numerous aspects of the person and work of Christ. He counters some of the false ideas concerning Christ and salvation that were present in the past and persist among many today. He addresses issues like Christ’s deity and humanity, the seriousness of sin, the atoning death of Christ, his resurrection and Lordship, repentance, faith, and sanctification. Throughout, this work magnifies the grace of God in Christ.

While the last chapter addresses contemporary misconceptions about the gospel, the entire book is filled with application.

Randall not only gently presses personal application to the reader, he also provides insightful applications of gospel truth to the specific problems and needs of contemporary western society, steeped, as it is, in the worldview of secularism. In this way, Randall reminds us that the gospel is the only real solution to the misery and destruction caused by sin.

The Gospel According to Christ’s Enemies is a unique reflection on the gospel of grace. It will be useful both as an evangelistic tool for the unconverted and as a refreshing encouragement to believers.

