

REVIEW: S. Greidanus's *PREACHING CHRIST FROM DANIEL* by L. Semel

New Horizons

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AUG - SEP 2013

REFLECTIONS ON OUR 80TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

by Brenton C. Ferry



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NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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During a break in the General Assembly, some commissioners chose to do some sightseeing in nearby San Francisco. Pictured here in front of the Golden Gate Bridge are (from the left): Rev. Todd Dole, elder Tom Dizer, Rev. Allen Harris, elder John Jambura, Rev. David Graves, elder Ken Barnes, Rev. Russell Hamilton, Rev. Mark Marquis, elder David Winslow, elder Paul Tavares, Rev. Tim Gregson, Rev. Stephen Tracey, Rev. Dan Dillard, Rev. Arthur Fox, and Rev. David Reese (RPCNA delegate).



BRENTON C. FERRY

Reflections on Our 80th General Assembly

The 80th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met this year, June 5–11, at St. Mary’s College in Moraga, California. The weather was beautiful: warm in the day and cool at night. Turkey, deer, and even some cows roamed around the campus all week. We were all gobbling and grazing together. Things got off to an iffy start, because a train carrying the assembly’s voting equipment was in a wreck. Then, when the equipment arrived, the system failed.

One man got locked out of his room in a funny way. Someone *tried* to call the question. We sang from an overhead projector instead of hymnals this time. Someone got the Jack-in-the-Box award. A brother from Japan told the assembly, “I feel like a child who sees his favorite cartoon characters come to life!” Those are some of the lighter things I’ll remember about the assembly this year.

The most memorable part of GA was being around so many spiritually gifted men. The Holy Spirit’s fruit and gifts are very evident among the officers in the OPC, especially when so many are bunched up together for a week of work, worship, and fellowship. It is difficult not to grow in love and respect for such men as these.

At each annual assembly, a poll of ordination dates is taken, which begins simply to see if the voting clickers work or not. This year 8 men had been ordained since 2010, 38 men since 2000, 35 men since 1990, 24 men since 1980, 14 men since 1970, 7 men since 1960, and 1 man since 1950. Once the assembly identifies the men in the room who have been ordained the longest, the mood changes. They have kept the faith for a long time. Fewer and fewer of them are among us. I hope they see the Lord’s hand in us, as we see it in them.

DELEGATES

The General Assembly is the annual denominational meeting to which each presbytery sends a designated num-

ber of commissioners from among their ministers and ruling elders. That is to say, not everyone gets to go. It is always a privilege.

Prior to the Assembly, each commissioner receives a docket from the stated clerk (this year, the Rev. George Cotenden). It lists all the items of business, together with several hundred pages of committee reports and accompanying documents. Included is a list of advisory committee assignments—each commissioner is assigned to one. “What advisory committee did you get put on?” is how many conversations begin early in the week, because the nature of a commissioner’s advisory committee assignment will direct the focus of his work for the duration of the Assembly. For example, some commissioners end up reading a stack of presbytery minute books, looking for “exceptions and notations” (big mistakes and little mistakes, respectively). Others spend time reading through judicial appeals, interviewing offended and/or offending parties. The workload and the nature of the work vary greatly from committee to committee, requiring a wide range of gifts and abilities.

COMMITTEE WORK

Ordinarily there are two sorts of committees that work for the Assembly: permanent *standing committees*, to which people are elected for an extended period of service, and *advisory committees*, to which people are assigned only for the

John Currie, Francis VanDelden, David and Susan Winslow



duration of the Assembly. The advisory committees review the standing committees' work and report back to the Assembly with any recommendations.

For example, the Committee on Foreign Missions is paired with an advisory committee on foreign missions (referred to as Advisory Committee 1). They meet together in a little room to go over everything the OPC is doing on the foreign mission field. Then both committees return to the auditorium together and address the entire assembly about foreign missions. Every day from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., the Assembly is treated to one report after another: a standing committee followed by its advisory committee, then another standing committee followed by its advisory committee, and so on. Reports from both kinds of committees may include recommendations, which the Assembly must debate and vote up or down.

The monotony is eased by breaks for meals and refreshments, preaching, singing, prayer, announcements, and fraternal addresses from representatives of other denominations. It is not a dance, but things happen at a good pace. There is usually a contingent of women in the rear gladly knitting and a flurry of young people passing out papers or collecting ballots. When evening finally comes, many men like to lounge around outside meeting old and new friends, telling jokes and stories, and sharing drinks and cigars with one another (or not) before it gets *too* late.

THE MODERATOR

Every year a commissioner is elected to serve as the Assembly's moderator. He holds the gavel and leads the meeting according to *Robert's Rules of Order*. Someone once described this job as trying to push a wheelbarrow full of jumping frogs. Traditionally, the body elects a different man each year—one who has served the OPC for a long time with notable distinction and maturity among his peers. The Assembly even claps out of respect when the moderator is elected. This is followed by a short speech of appreciation, after which the new moderator lays down the law and quickly turns the Assembly's attention to the business at hand.

This year the Rev. Tony Curto passed the gavel to the Rev. Jeffery Landis. Pastor Landis has served at Covenant OPC in San Jose, California, since 1986, when he was ordained to the gospel ministry. His humble and able leadership was well received by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Moderator!

FRATERNAL DELEGATES

General Assembly is also a time when other Reformed denominations from around the world send fraternal delegates to address the OPC in the interest of strengthening Reformed ecumenicity. Every now and then an ecumenical delegate comes across as little more than a public relations officer. But more often than not these delegates speak frankly to the OPC about denominational differences and similarities, strengths and weaknesses. This year the GA heard addresses from Adam Kaloostian, United Reformed Churches in North America; Takanori Kobayashi, Presbyterian Church in Japan; Jonathan Merica, Reformed Church in the US; F. Solano Portela, Presbyterian Church of Brazil; David J. Reese, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America; Lee A. Shelnett, Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church; L. Roy Taylor, Presbyterian Church in America; and Kurt Vetterli, Evangelical Reformed Church, Westminster Confession.

The GA requested the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to communicate to our Bible Presbyterian Church brothers the Assembly's gratitude to the Lord for his faithfulness to them on the seventy-fifth anniversary of their founding and assure them that we look forward to ever deepening fellowship with them in Christ.

Commissioners registering for the Assembly



THE LORD'S DAY

On Sunday, everyone loaded into vans and cars to worship at various OP churches in the region: Covenant Presbyterian Church in Berkeley, Covenant OPC in San Jose, Trinity OPC in Novato, Covenant Presbyterian Church in Monterey Bay, Delta Oaks Presbyterian Church in Pittsburg, First OPC in San Francisco, New Covenant OPC in South San Francisco, and First OPC in Sunnyvale. Afterwards the local churches served lunch to their visitors.

Then that evening, all the OP churches in the area came to the St. Mary's campus for a combined worship service and the Lord's Supper. The Rev. Wayne Forkner led the service, Pastor Landis preached, and the Rev. Michael Dengerink administered the sacrament.

A DAY OF PRAYER

On the final day of the GA's work, the body adopted a

recommendation calling for a day of prayer in the churches of the OPC for the spiritual and physical welfare and the release of prisoner of war SGT Bowe Bergdahl, USA, a noncommunicant member of the OPC, on the fourth anniversary of his capture, June 30, 2013, and for God's sustaining grace for him and his family during this ordeal.

AN ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICATORY

The General Assembly is a church court, a judicatory that resolves matters of conflict arising from any of the presbyteries. Before the Assembly enters into any judicial proceedings, the moderator will say, "This body is about to sit in a judicial capacity and I exhort you, the members, to bear in mind your solemn duty faithfully to minister and declare the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and to subordinate all human judgments to that infallible rule." When this happens, the room gets very serious all of a sudden.

JUDICIAL MATTERS IN THE REGIONAL CHURCH OF NEW JERSEY

Larry J. Westerveld

Three times the moderator of the Presbytery of New Jersey (PNJ) stepped down from the chair and stood directly in front of six members of the church seated in one of the front pews. On each occasion, he read to them a statement that had just been adopted by the PNJ. In these statements, the PNJ acknowledged that it had denied these individuals justice and that it had failed to be loving and faithful undershepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ to them during its adjudication of the various appeals and complaints that they had brought before it over the previous several years. The PNJ confessed its sin and sought their forgiveness. The PNJ then adopted a statement to be read to all the churches within its bounds, announcing that it had taken these actions and that it desired to be reconciled to Carol Mather, Stephen Mather, Gene and Janet Mehmel, Bruce Stahl, and Bethanie Stahl. It further affirmed that these six were members in good standing in the church and that they ought to be received and welcomed as such. This moving occasion is a testament to the work of the Holy Spirit, who not only convicts us of sin but also holds before us the forgiving and reconciling mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus.

The six individuals were members of Stratford OPC in Stratford, New Jersey. They had had occasion, over the course of a few years, to bring several charges and complaints to their session that were either denied or not heard. They appealed to the PNJ with similar results. Finally they appealed to the 76th (2009) and 77th (2010) General Assemblies, where their appeals were all sustained.

The 77th GA identified these six individuals as offended parties, and, recognizing the need to address the administrative, judicial, and pastoral deficiencies at both the session and the presbytery levels, took the rare step of establishing a special visitation committee to deal with these matters. The committee was tasked to consult with all interested parties, to meet with the Stratford session to discuss the proper application of the Book of Discipline and to encourage the session to pursue reconciliation with the offended parties, to consult with the PNJ about decisions pertaining to both Stratford and the PNJ, and to report back to the General Assembly.

While the PNJ acknowledged its errors and sins, repented of them, and sought the forgiveness of the offended parties, the Stratford session did not. When the PNJ began the process of bringing charges against the pastor and the associate pastor of that church, the two men, along with the congregation, renounced the jurisdiction of the OPC and declared themselves to be independent. They later joined another denomination.

The 80th (2013) General Assembly dissolved the visitation committee with thanks, praising the Lord for the response of the PNJ and for the offended parties who granted the PNJ forgiveness. The Assembly also commended the offended parties for their perseverance throughout this process, noting that they all remain members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The author, pastor of Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa., was the chairman of the Committee to Visit the Presbytery of New Jersey.

Moderator Jeffery Landis



Judicial appeals can be very delicate matters, because, on the one hand, commissioners are there to exercise judgment without respect of persons. But, on the other hand, each appeal represents an often dear person (or people) who got mixed up in something deeply frustrating that saddens everyone and which no one has been able to resolve with satisfaction.

This year one judicial matter was appealed to the General Assembly for judgment. The appeal was denied.

AN ORGANIZED RELIGION

The concept of an ecclesiastical assembly like our General Assembly seems at odds with much of American Christianity, which tends to minimize the importance of organized religion and church government. It is not uncommon to hear sincere believers interpret the existence of denominations and church judicatories as signs of division, discord, and schism; they are in favor of independent churches, or even more isolated home churches, or even more isolated individuals who never go to church. It is an ironic view, because the abandonment of a denominational ideal really represents ecclesiastical division and deconstruction. We should see the denominational glass as half full, not half empty.

The Bible teaches that the apostles planted local churches, organized regional-city churches (Titus 1:5), and met as a general assembly to hear appeals from the latter (Acts 15). These churches had officers (Phil. 1:1), with biblically restrained authority (1 Cor. 4:6) over specified members “allotted to” their

“charge” (1 Peter 5:3; Heb. 13:17). When one translates that into modern practice, the result is what we ordinarily call a Presbyterian denomination. The General Assembly is part of that original ecclesiastical order. This is important.

THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

More than that, the General Assembly is a *gospel* assembly—or it is nothing at all. This is not just a priority that our OP forefathers handed down to us. Meeting as a general assembly continues an ecclesiastical practice that began in Acts 15, when the New Testament church was struggling to transition from a circumcising Jewish church into a baptizing international church. Moving from the Old Testament era to the New Testament era was not an easy thing for people to do. Christ was murdered by the resistance, which continued to hound the church all through the New Testament age. This gross opposition provides the antagonistic backdrop for most of the New Testament, including the church’s first general assembly as recorded in Acts 15.

The apostles participated in an ecclesiastical assembly to debate what the gospel is and to vote on it with the other officers. This is an amazing juncture in the maturation of the New Testament church: the apostles, side by side with the men they trained to lead the next generation of churches forward, met together in a general assembly, to debate and vote on what the gospel is and is not. This was a foundation-laying moment. Would the apostles remain united about the gospel, or would they divide between those following Paul and those following Peter? If the apostles remained united about the gospel, would the assembly stay with the apostles or follow the Judaizers? Would the regional churches of Antioch and Jerusalem remain of one mind or split? On all counts, they remained unified.

Commissioners hearing the Home Missions report



Randy Bergquist speaking from the floor



The same sort of troublemakers who caused Paul to write his letter to the Galatians provoked that discordant event in Antioch which prompted the first general assembly in Jerusalem. In response, the regional church of Antioch sent delegates, including Paul and Barnabas, to Jerusalem for a trans-regional (general) assembly. We read:

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." (Acts 15:7-11, emphasis added)

Sons of the OPC: front: Jon Stevenson, John Mahaffy, Bob Coie, Glenn Jerrell; middle: David Phillips, Stephen Phillips, John Shaw, John Muether, Chuck Muether; back: Don Poundstone, David Haney, Keith LeMahieu, Dick Gaffin, Paul Tavares, Mark Sallade, Dick Ellis, David Nakhla



In substance, the first general assembly of the New Testament church addressed whether or not the gospel is the gospel. We have in Acts 15 the equivalent of the minutes of that meeting. Every subsequent ecclesiastical assembly is a *gospel* assembly or it is part of the resistance. May the OPC continue to follow that original trajectory in her assemblies and keep the faith. □

The author is the pastor of Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church in Mount Airy, N.C. He quotes the NASB, Updated Edition. Photos by Shelly Haney and Jonathan Moore.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

Class of 2016 (unless otherwise noted):

Appeals and Complaints: John W. Mallin III; S. Scott Willet (alternate)

Chaplains and Military Personnel: Bryan J. Weaver; Gordon E. Kauffman (Harmony, N.J.) (alternate)

Christian Education: ministers Rodney T. King, Stephen A. Pribble, Alan D. Strange; ruling elders James S. Gidley (Sewickley, Pa.), John R. Muether (Oviedo, Fla.)

Coordination: ministers Donald J. Duff, Stephen J. Oharek (2014); ruling elder John D. Mazunik (Atlanta, Ga.)

Diaconal Ministries: minister Ronald E. Pearce; ruling elder Alexander A. Zarek (Franklin Square, N.Y.); deacon John J. Voss, Jr. (Orland Park, Ill.)

Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations: George R. Cotten-den, L. Anthony Curto, Stephen J. Tracey

Foreign Missions: ministers William B. Kessler, John W. Mahaffy, John D. Van Meerbeke, Mark A. Green (2014); ruling elders John S. Emmett (Garland, Tex.), Robert H. Joss (Ipswich, Mass.), Joseph A. Waggoner (Perkasie, Pa.) (2015)

General Assembly Arrangements: Robert E. Tarullo

Historian: Brenton C. Ferry

Home Missions and Church Extension: ministers John Currie, Donald M. Poundstone, Gerald S. Taylor, J. Mark Sallade (2014); ruling elders Gregory S. DeJong (Wheaton, Ill.), Garret A. Hoogerhyde (Whippany, N.J.)

Pensions: minister Darren S. Thole; ruling elders Robert M. Meeker (Glenside, Pa.), William C. Redington (Regional Church of Philadelphia)

Trustees of the OPC: minister Mark D. Mathews; ruling elder Edward K. Tress (Glenside, Pa.)



PHILIP T. PROCTOR

Lessons from the Mission Field

Two years ago, our family left Uganda and returned to the United States. I transitioned from an intensely cross-cultural ministry to a suburban pastorate. My wife, Meredith, transitioned from a stay-at-home mom, homeschooler, and bed-and-breakfast operator to a working mom trying to juggle a new set of challenges. Our four children transitioned from a wild freedom—motorcycle taxis into town to hang out with best friends with four different hues of skin and languages—to the more tame, structured lifestyle of suburbia.

I've thought a fair amount over the past couple of years about writing an article, detailing my thoughts about the lessons learned about life on the foreign-mission field—the similarities and differences, compared with life in America. How do you boil down a lifetime into a couple of pages? What is the *essence*, and how is it best communicated? Here's my stab at it.

Three people stand out as examples of the people to whom we ministered. One was a woman who had been repeatedly abused—used as a plaything—by every man in the village. Whenever we visited the church in her area, she made a complete spectacle of herself—wandering in and screaming in the middle of the aisle, loudly weeping at various points in the service. Another was a young woman who could have run for the “Miss Uganda” beauty pageant, but by the time I met her, she was so ravaged by AIDS that she and her infant son were at death's door. Another was a Muslim woman who knew that she would find compassion from the Christian community in her financial hardship. These three were very real individuals, and yet they were representative of dozens—hundreds—of other people just like them whom we encountered on a daily basis. The abused psychotic, the dying prostitute, and the Muslim came into our life. We knelt together and cried out to Christ, we encouraged the Ugandan brothers and sisters to share in their lives as they were able, and we witnessed Christ Jesus continuing to build his church.

My Ugandan brothers and sisters were often embarrassed. It felt awkward. When the abused psychotic made a spectacle of herself, the church leaders would stare straight ahead—frozen—cringing and wishing this would all go away. Meredith would sit beside her and gently hold her or pat her back. When the prostitute needed help, she knew that she needed to go to the home of the “mzungu” (white person) to find someone who would listen to her plight.

Christians and Muslims regularly sat in the same row in taxi-vans without lovingly and honestly speaking to one another about the differences in their faith. My *alienness*—the color of my skin, my language—made me stand out from the crowd and marked me as the “pastor.” Whatever presuppositions people had, whatever they expected from Jesus Christ, they came to me and together we knelt and sought Christ's face. It was intensely uncomfortable for me, yet it was the price to pay for being a stranger in a strange land. It was intensely uncomfortable for my Ugandan brothers and sisters and was often avoided (“Let the missionary deal with this”). But it was also often awkwardly engaged in—for which I have enormous respect for my Ugandan brothers and sisters.

Two years in suburbia have taught me that there is no significant difference between the US and Uganda. Sure, there are all the window dressings, but the root issues are the same. The abused, the broken sinners, and the pagans are all around

Phil Proctor participating in a wedding in Uganda



us, and yet it seems easier to let the “outside professional” handle things, rather than for us to engage in the awkwardness and uncomfortableness of someone who disrupts our worship service, of someone from whom we might catch a deadly disease, or of someone who might turn a conversation into a shouting match and spoil what was supposed to be a simple trip to the grocery store.

In the affluent community in which I live, there are bitter divorces, financial ruin, and children in vicious, life-destroying rebellion. I turn on the television and am disgusted by the mockery of “reality” shows. I sit in the driveway in front of my house and speak to passing neighbors—and slowly discover that maybe the vileness of reality TV is actually not so far outside the envelope of American experience. The only difference is my interaction: do I laugh and eat popcorn, or do I weep and offer to pray?

So what is the real difference between ministry in Uganda and ministry in suburbia? The more I think about it, none at all. The situations were identical: broken sinners in need of the healing power of the gospel. The responses were identical: awkwardness, yet a stumbling, start-and-stop attempt by Christian brothers and sisters to engage. The catalyst was a little different: I was an obvious stranger in a culture in which people inferred from my skin color that I was a Christian missionary, whereas in suburbia I am just a guy who looks like everyone else. The catalyst had more to do with forces outside myself and far too little to do with my own intentionality. Sure, I made an intentional decision to get on a British Air flight and move to Africa, but after that,

I just had to “roll with it” as ministry came to me.

I don’t mean to minimize the challenges of missionary life. Snakes, huge spiders, malaria, death threats, loneliness, and separation from stateside family are very real, and missionaries need prayer. But just like my own differences from my Ugandan brothers and sisters, these are “window dressing” issues. The reality is that all those you encounter are the children of the first Adam, have the law written on their hearts, are in rebellion, and need to be united to the second Adam. Reality is that every man, woman, boy, and girl is either a sinner saved by grace or a sinner who needs to be saved by grace.

The central lesson that needs to be learned—by me and by my brothers and sisters, both Ugandan and American—is that we are *all* strangers and aliens. My life in suburbia needs to be framed by an intentional alienness in a way that my life in Uganda was unintentionally alien. Our view of the church and fellow humanity needs to be “dumbed down” with the same broad brush strokes that we often apply to people in the developing world. We must see ourselves as sinners saved by grace and reach out to those who need to be saved by grace. It is uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous—whether here or in Africa. It’s a glorious privilege, both here and in Africa. I wouldn’t trade my experience in Uganda for anything—it was one of the most enriching journeys of my life. I wouldn’t trade my experience here in suburbia for anything, either—it is one of the most enjoyable challenges I have ever undertaken. I pray that all of us will be powerful witnesses for Jesus and joyfully seek our opportunities in Judea and Samaria as faithfully as we seek our opportunities in the uttermost parts of the world. □

The author is the pastor of Sterling OPC in Sterling, Va.

Christmas fellowship/outreach meal at Sterling OPC in Sterling, Va.



Missions Can Be Messy

A MISSIONARY IN ASIA

“**F**or Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica...

Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds... The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim. 4:10, 14, 18).

In the course of a missionary’s ministry, things do go wrong and need to be reported. Of course, they need to be reported properly. Missionaries should not share scandalous details in such a way that confidences are broken. They should not gossip. But we missionaries do have an extra dose of temptation to put a positive spin on things when we report back to the home church—to avoid mentioning the negative, even to the extent that truth is sinfully compromised (see Larger Catechism 145). Maybe the dynamic is worse with so-called “faith missions” setups, where reports of success may be more helpful in raising support money, but we have this problem, too. There are other factors, but it is mostly our sinful pride of wanting to look good. Any such God-displeasing distortion of the truth could result in people getting the wrong idea of what is really happening on the mission field, not being informed properly so that they can pray knowledgeably.

So why am I writing this now? Well, as I prepare for furlough, I naturally think back over the last term. While there have been many fruitful and happy developments, I must honestly say that it was a hard four years of ministry. At times I have hesitated to share negative things. There was the long season of waiting



Three students this past semester

after the construction of the buildings of a university of science and technology in a new country had already been completed—waiting for permission for Christian teachers to enter that country and begin teaching. There was the even harder experience of going to live and work in that country, only to find that the team had quite different ideas about how to “do missions to” a hostile, idol-worshipping people. There were the Mission’s growing pains when my colleague moved to work in other regions of the main country in which we work, and our missionary associate base had to function with only a weak, provisional oversight system. More recently, there have been readjustments for us all as my family and I moved back to our main country to solidify this last semester before the upcoming furlough year. And interwoven with all of this have been blessings and conflicts, happy and sad things, victories for the gospel, and

cases where sin (too often my remaining sin!) reared its ugly head.

As I picked up my pen to write this (yes, I still start with pen and paper!), I had the opportunity to do so because three students at our main university did not keep their commitment to study the Bible with me this morning. (Two of the three did better than most, when they called a few hours ahead, waking my wife and kids, to leave a message that they wouldn’t be able to come.) I remember multiple times, especially during the first fifteen years of my ministry here, when, having arisen at 4:30 a.m. to prepare and then having travelled all the way downtown, walking a good part of the way (for security), the pastoral intern I was to have taught would not show up at 6:00 a.m. as scheduled. Early on, that made me angry; later I learned to see these broken promises as opportunities for me to enjoy extra quiet times with God, although I

did still need to train the intern to keep his promises.

Some of the other problems that we deal with on a regular basis are overwork at the schools we work with, too much time spent with each other instead of with our new friends in this country, the dynamic between missionary wives and single young ladies involved in the ministry of the Mission, letting English teaching activities and relationships crowd out more direct forms of gospel ministry, and swinging back and forth between the extremes of thoughtless compromise with broad evangelicals and overly critical judging of and withdrawal from them.

Of course, not everyone to whom we proclaim the gospel is saved, and even if someone is saved, not all have a smooth path of sanctification. Some want to profess Christ secretly and are unresponsive to the call for a public profession and baptism in the church. In response to the good news that Jesus lived and died to save them from their sins, some respond well in a general sense, but hold on to an area in their life that they refuse to submit to his lordship. Some non-Christians see the activities of our Mission as an opportunity to take advantage of us without giving due consideration to the claims of Christ, which we regularly lay before them. They “milk” us for the chance to learn English and to “be cool” by hanging out with the foreigners, but are unresponsive to invitations to come to Bible studies or church.

When working with young people, we often have our hands full dealing with sins in boy-girl relationships, mental purity, and marriage. Pornography, homosexuality, fornication, being unequally yoked, adultery, and divorce are—over these long twenty years of ministry—unfortunately some of the sad, evil things our Mission in this country has had to deal with. We are not strangers to the equally heinous, but often less scandalous, sins of self-pity, pride, jealousy, quiet insubordination, abuse of “theology” or bending the law for personal gain, stubborn refusal to reconcile with brethren with whom

Mother and child enjoying the Mission's annual picnic



relationships have been broken, and even thievery.

Some of the hardest cases have been when those called by God through the church to special services (among both us missionaries and the local people) have fallen into patterns of sin. Since generalities have limited usefulness, let me share an example. After about two years of studying God's Word and the Westminster Standards, a young pastoral intern whom I was mentoring showed signs that things were progressing well. But then, not following what I had taught him, “Ben” foolishly began offering regular one-on-one counsel and prayer to a young adult woman in the church, and they committed adultery. He came in tearful repentance to me and then—on my advice—went to his wife and to the church leadership, but things were just covered up, and he was transferred to minister in a faraway locale. Pain filled my heart; sleepless were my nights! And I have never heard from Ben again. Similarly excruciating experiences have been mine more than eight times in my work here in this country. Our wonderful God uses such terrible things to test and train us and the indigenous church. Too often we fail the test, but God always carries his purposes forward, and he will glorify his name among the nations.

As I ponder this painful mission topic, I (together with our other missionaries) thank God for giving us a faithful church back home to help us get through. To help me and my brothers (and sisters!) associated with the Mission, God has used the oversight, accountability, and support structures of his church on the denominational foreign missions committee, in my presbytery, in our good network of supporting churches, and among you through your prayers for the hard things and your good example.

Please do keep praying for the Mission for:

- New life as we hold forth the gospel.
- The fruit of gospel righteousness as we disciple new Christians.
- Training of new young pastors (and influence on the “old” ones)—one young man entering his last year of seminary; one waiting on a visa so he can begin.
- Planting of consistently Reformed churches (and presbyteries) in our area and elsewhere in the country.
- Right strategy, personnel, and timing, through which God will use the Mission as a gospel torch to pierce the darkness of another country with the bright light of redemption and liberation from Satan.
- The heart of Christ and heavenly wisdom to deal with unpleasant and hard things on our mission field.

WHAT'S NEW

COMINGS/GOINGS

- **Rev. and Mrs. Stewart E. (Laurie) Lauer** returned to the U.S. in May to begin a seven-month furlough.
- **Rev. and Mrs. S. N. F.** returned to the U.S. in July to begin a yearlong furlough.
- **Mr. and Mrs. Mark D. (Christine) Weber** and their four sons are scheduled to arrive on August 21 in Mbale, Uganda, where Mark will serve as a missionary deacon with the OP Uganda Mission.

Novel Ideas for Church Libraries

PATRICIA E. CLAWSON

If you glance around most OP church libraries, you will probably see a lot of theology books. Perhaps you will find children's books as well. What you might not spot is adult Christian fiction.

The reasons are many. Some churches simply don't have room on their shelves to add fiction for adults. If a church librarian on a tiny budget must choose between Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* and Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, doctrine trumps fantasy every time. Some librarians feel that adult Christian fiction doesn't belong in church libraries.

Yet even when a church library has shelves set aside for Christian fiction, it's often difficult to know if a particular novel will pass muster with the session and readers. Placing adult fiction in a church library usually makes it available to any reader, young and old, so the book needs to be suitable for precocious young readers. Add to that the challenge of ensuring that the book's theology doesn't conflict with our Reformed faith, and you'll see that selecting adult Christian fiction for church libraries is no easy task. Library staff from two OP churches and an OP pastor-novelist share their insights.

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

About 475 Christian novels line the shelves in the adult Sunday school classroom at Faith OPC in Long Beach, California. The adult fiction collection, all of which was donated, joins 1,100 books in the main library and more than 500 books in a separate children's library. Church librarian Gale Curtis brought her favorite Christian novels from home to share her love of fiction with others.

Although the library doesn't have any

official guidelines for what is included in the adult fiction collection, Curtis reads every book before adding it to the collection. She tries to include historical as well as contemporary fiction, but avoids works that are too graphic about sexual sins, involve demonic warfare, or are labeled "romance."

Curtis's favorite Christian authors include Lori Wick, Karen Kingsbury, Dee Henderson, T. Davis Bunn, Janette Oke, Judith Pella, Francine Rivers, and Michael Phillips (early titles).

"I love reading Christian fiction myself and wanted to encourage others to do the same," said Curtis. "Besides being so enjoyable, reading these books is a tremendous help to me spiritually. I tend to dwell on what I have read and the lessons that the characters learn from God."

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

After Diane Fisher became the library committee chair at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Illinois, in 2007, she bought new editions of the classics that were on the shelves and added new novels she cherished. When Kathy De Jong joined the library committee two years ago, she brought a personal reading log that included a summary and a ranking of many potential books for the library.

Bethel's library now offers about 125 adult novels, chosen by Fisher and De Jong with input from the church's pastors, Christian Education committee, and the congregation—and after considering reviews in *New Horizons*, *World*, *Christianity Today*, and *Church Libraries* (an Evangelical Church Library Association journal). Each book is read before making it to the shelves, and some are rejected.

"We look for explicitly Christian works that speak strongly about God's redemptive purposes," said Fisher, now Bethel's librarian. "We ask for a lot: rounded, believable characters who grow, high-quality writing, true-to-life situations, and a lack of preachiness."

Although Fisher and De Jong look for fiction that is compatible with Reformed theology, they include books that embody Christian truths from other perspectives, such as Athol Dickson's *River Rising* and George MacDonald's *Lilith* and *Phantastes*.

Some novels are rejected because of poor writing or not relating a nuanced spiritual journey for at least one character. Others are "too gritty, too violent, or have too many social issues, such as child abuse, abortion, divorce, or white slavery, loaded into one plot," said Fisher. "We continue to look for a spectrum of fantasy, historical, contemporary, and classic fiction for our readers to enjoy."

"It is really exciting when we do find an author and/or title that seems to be a good fit for our audience," said De Jong. "It is gratifying to have discussions with our readers that help all of us in our faith journey."

Why fiction? "Fiction opens up entire worlds of creative possibilities," said De Jong. "Everyone enjoys a good story. More than that, a good story, well-crafted, can become a means to ponder truths about God and the people and things he has created."

For church libraries, Fisher suggests all the works of C. S. Lewis and Lynn Austin, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* and *Home*, Bo Caldwell's *City*

of *Tranquil Light*, Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Nine Tailors*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and G. K. Chesterton's *Father Brown: The Essential Tales*.

A NOVELIST'S VIEWPOINT

Organizing pastor Jeremiah Montgomery's second fantasy novel, *The Scarlet Bishop*, was published recently by P&R. He recommends that a discerning church member first read novels before including them in the church library. "Material found in a church library carries the implicit approval (to some degree) of the session," said Montgomery, of Resurrection OPC in State College, Pennsylvania. "It may not be necessary to read every line of reference material, but it is easy to read a work of Christian fiction."

Montgomery says that librarians should look for books that are well written, as God does all things well. Characters and imaginary worlds should be consistent because God is a God of order. There should be clear standards of good and evil and a clear purpose. He adds, "People coming to faith should struggle with the bad news about themselves and the good news about Christ."

He recommends looking for adult fiction from trustworthy publishers, such as Banner of Truth, Christian Focus, P&R, and Reformation Heritage Books.

"History, which is God's story, is moving in a definite direction toward a definite goal (eschatological consummation)," said Montgomery. "God is saying something with his story. Good Christian fiction should do the same."

Congratulations

The Shorter Catechism has been recited by:

- John Groggel (Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.)
- Helena Ritenour (Covenant OPC in Grove City, Pa.)

The Children's Catechism has been recited by:

- Grace Gunnnett (Redeemer OPC in Carlisle, Pa.)

Four Favorites

Books by Christopher Ash

I was once told I was a serial reader. I wondered if I had some rare reading disease. When I found an author I liked, I just kept reading more and more of that author. So when the editor kindly invited me to contribute to this series of Four Favorites, I was happily reading the books of Christopher Ash (director of the Cornhill Training Course for the Proclamation Trust). Here are my four favorites:

1. *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God*. Regent College Publishing, 2005 (2nd ed.).

This is a brilliant biblical theology of marriage. Ash establishes and unpacks the following definition of marriage: "Marriage is the voluntary sexual and public social union of one man and one woman from different families. This union is patterned upon the union of God with his people, his bride, of Christ with his church. Intrinsic to this union is God's calling to lifelong exclusive sexual faithfulness."

2. *The Priority of Preaching*. Christian Focus, 2009.

This book is for "ordinary ministers who preach regularly to ordinary people in ordinary places." Ash empha-

sizes not simply the place of the written word, but that "Christ governs his people by the written word preached by preachers." Hence we are called to "persevere in costly expository ministry." A powerful reminder of the priority of preaching.

3. *Bible Delight: Heartbeat of the Word of God*. Christian Focus, 2008.

Here is a delightful study of Psalm 119. Ash carefully takes us through the twenty-two sections of the "great Psalm," aiming all the while to promote joyful holiness. He succeeds.

4. *Listen Up: A Practical Guide to Listening to Sermons*. The Good Book Company, 2009.

Since there are far more listeners than preachers in the church, this booklet is a wonderful aid to listening to good preaching—or even bad preaching! Yet it is more: it is also a reminder of the place of the local church. This booklet, of only thirty pages, is lively and well written, and you might even enjoy the cartoons. Cartoons, you ask? Well, what can you expect when you ask a serial reader?

Stephen J. Tracey

Out of the Mouth ...

I was playing Bible trivia with my youngest son, Peden. The question was, "What were the names of the first two sons of Adam and Eve?" Peden looked somewhat puzzled, so after a moment or two I gave him a hint: "Cain and ..." To that he promptly replied, "Ites!"

—Dave Bush
Sonora, Calif.

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

Worldwide Outreach and Instrument E

DONALD J. DUFF

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has a rather unique way of financing the work of its committees on Christian education, foreign missions, and home missions and church extension (the three “program committees”).

The OPC has a combined budget for the program committees. *Instrument E* of the *Instruments of the General Assembly*, which is entitled “Coordinating the Worldwide Outreach of the Church,” establishes a Committee on Coordination. Its task is to develop and operate a Worldwide Outreach centralized accounting system and to recommend to the General Assembly each year a combined budget for the program committees.

In the early days of the church, each program committee promoted its own work and sought to raise funds to support its work. After some time, there was the realization that the work of the church is a unified work.

The risen Lord’s commission to the church is: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19–20). In Acts 1:8, the commission is: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Here we see that the Great Commission includes home missions and foreign missions. Furthermore, in going to all nations, the church is to teach disciples, which involves Christian education. Seeing this threefold mission of the church, the General Assembly decided that, while it had committees specifically established to carry out those three tasks, their whole work should, as

much as possible, be set before the church in a unified and coordinated way.

After a good deal of debate, the present *Instrument E* was developed over a period of time and implemented. (To see *Instrument E*, go online to <http://opc.org/GA/Instruments2013.pdf>.) While the program committees can and do inform the church separately concerning their work and encourage interest in and prayer for that work, an effort is made to set before the church in a unified way the whole work of the church. This is seen, perhaps most clearly, in the promotional material that is sent out each autumn about the Thank Offering, which supports Worldwide Outreach.

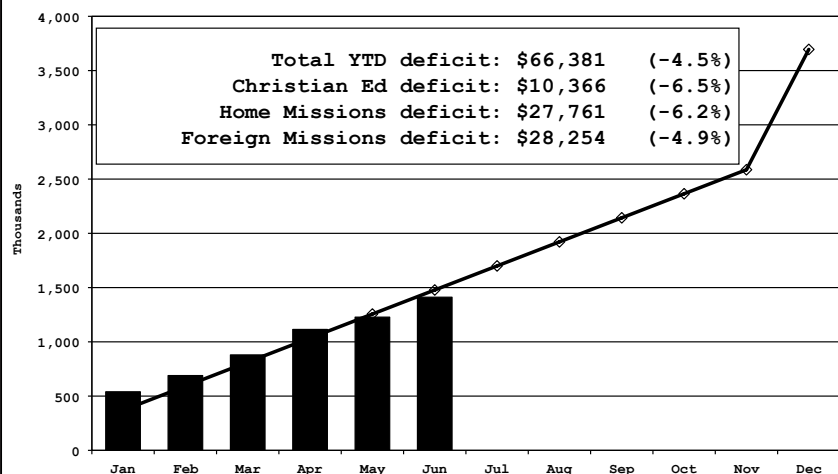
In each issue of *New Horizons*, there is a graph at the bottom of the Stewardship page that shows the Worldwide Outreach year-to-date progress toward reaching the goal set by the General Assembly’s combined budget. In 2013 that goal is \$3,695,000, and for 2014 it has been set

at \$3,790,000. These goals are somewhat ambitious, yet realistic, as recommended by the Committee on Coordination and adopted by the General Assembly. The committee is thankful for the faithful response of the church in recent years in giving to Worldwide Outreach and in meeting its goals.

Most church members ignore the details of *Instrument E*. Still, this instrument is a theological statement of how the Orthodox Presbyterian Church seeks to raise and distribute funds for the unified mission of the church. As a Presbyterian church, we are a connected church. We seek to support, by our gifts and by our prayers, the whole mission of the church. We encourage the churches to give faithfully to the Worldwide Outreach program, so that each program committee will be able to carry out its work.

The author, a retired minister in the OPC, is a member of the Committee on Coordination.

**Worldwide Outreach Year-to-Date
2013 Receipts with 2013 Goal**



WORLDWIDE OUTREACH

August-September

1. Pray for affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic, as they present the gospel to groups each week. / **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Huntington, N.Y. Pray that giving will continue to increase at Trinity Church. / **Andrew (and Jacqueline Ann) Minatelli**, summer intern at Spencer Mills OPC in Gowen, Mich.
2. **Joshua and Jessica Lyon**, Carson, Calif. Pray for the outreach and evangelism of Grace OPC, that God would bring many to faith in Jesus Christ. / Pray for new missionary associate **Mary York**, Czech Republic, as she assists the Farniks. / Pray for the work of **the Psalter-Hymnal Committee**.
3. **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for their health and strength as they labor in a tropical climate. / **Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray that God would provide a more suitable facility for Omega OPC. / Summer interns: **Ben Gordon** (Grace OPC in Vienna, Va.) and **Adam (and Amanda) Phillips** (Covenant OPC in Kennewick, Wash.).
4. **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that the Lord would bless the outreach and evangelism efforts at Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church. / Our **missionary associates in Uganda**. / **Yevgeni Koh**, yearlong intern at Bonita OPC in Bonita, Calif.
5. **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their teaching and outreach ministries. / **Doug and Kristi Bylsma**, Beamsville, Ontario. Pray that God would raise up leaders at Living Hope Presbyterian Church. / **Jeffrey (and Maryfrances) Carter**, summer intern at Providence OPC in Mantua, N.J.
6. Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for David as he presents the gospel to those coming to the clinic for treatment. / Pray for short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla** as he travels to Uganda and Haiti concerning missionary deacon work in September.
7. **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Nakaale congregation's spiritual growth and understanding. / **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. (downtown). Pray for God's blessing on Gospel Life Presbyterian Church's outreach efforts. / **Adrian (and Rachel) Crum**, summer intern at Branch of Hope OPC in Torrance, Calif.
8. **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray for growth at San Antonio Reformed Church. / **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their efforts to bear witness to Christ. / Pray for a good finish for **the summer interns**.
9. **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for Brian's preparation to teach classes at Mukhanyo Theological College. / **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray that Hillsdale OPC will find a better meeting place. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he serves as director of the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC.
10. Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for neighborhood evangelism and outreach in Port-au-Prince. / **Kent and Laurie Harding**, Doniphan, Mo. Pray that God would guard and keep the young people of Sovereign Grace Reformed Church. / **Steven (and Sarah) Moulson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa., beginning in September.
11. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray that visitors will respond to the preaching of the Word. / **Sacha and Martina Walicord**, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Pray that the young people of Knox Presbyterian Church will remain faithful in their covenantal relationship. / **Thomas (and Erin) Tkach**, yearlong intern at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.
12. **Jeremiah and Elizabeth Montgomery**, State College, Pa. Pray for gospel contact between Resurrection OPC and the community. / Pray that **the church in the**



Over the summer, many mission works and congregations are sponsoring children's outreach ministries. Pictured here are Kristyn and Laura Nieves from Reformation Presbyterian Church in New York City. Please pray:

- that the workers will labor in joyful expectation of gospel fruit,
- that God's word would take root in the hearts of the many children who have participated,
- that the Holy Spirit would be pleased to bring them to committed faith in Jesus Christ,
- that their parents would be moved to come and visit a worship service, and
- that the preached word and the love of the congregation would be used to initiate gospel conversations with the parents.

- horn of Africa** will continue its bold witness. / Summer interns: **Richard Chung** (Grace OPC in Wasilla, Alaska) and **Silverio (and Lisa) Gonzalez** (Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Santa Maria, Calif.).
13. **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the preaching of God's Word would bear much fruit. / **Tim and Joanne Beauchamp**, Bridgton, Maine. Pray for Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church's continued growth and spiritual development. / Army chaplains **Jonathan (and Marion) Gibbs** and **Graham (and Carla) Harbman**.
 14. **Jim and Tricia Stevenson**, Tulsa, Okla. Pray that the people of Providence OPC will continue to observe all that Christ commanded. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for follow-up with contacts made in this summer's English Bible camps. / **Jeremy Logan**, yearlong intern at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mansfield, Ohio.
 15. **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray that their time of furlough will refresh and strengthen them for future service. / **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray that God would bring new growth to Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church. / Navy chaplains: **Tim (and Janine) Power** and **John (and Linda) Carter**.
 16. **Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that outreach events at Redeemer OP Mission will be effective. / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for the church leaders with whom Mr. M. works. / Summer interns: **Joseph Johnson** (Reformation Fellowship in Roseville, Calif.) and **Joshua (and Bethanne) Schendel** (Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Ada, Mich.).
 17. Missionary associates **E. C., T. D.**, and **T. L. L.**, Asia. / **Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray that visitors will join Cornerstone OPC. / Summer interns: **Jordon (and Gabrielle) Rossi** (Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Fla.) and **Matthew (and Melinda) Cole** (Reformation OPC in Oviedo, Fla.).
 18. **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Davenport, Iowa. Pray that God would add more core families to Sovereign Grace OPC. / **Mark and Christine Weber**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for safe travel as they leave for Uganda on August 19. / **Shane (and Rachelle) Bennett**, yearlong intern at Knox OPC in Silver Spring, Md.
 19. Pray for new missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia, as they adjust to life on the mission field. / **Carlos and Diana Cruz**, San Juan, P.R. Pray that visitors to Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada will join in communicant fellowship. / **David (and Kathryn) Landow**, yearlong intern at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Del.
 20. Home Missions associate general secretary **Dick Gerber**. / Missionary associates **H. L.** and **M. W.**, Asia. Pray for their preparation to teach fall classes. / Pray for the work of the OPC administrative staff: **Doug Watson**, **Jim Scott**, **Jan Gregson**, **Kathy Bube**, **Pat Clawson**, and **Char Tipton**.
 21. **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for wisdom in developing ministry strategies. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray that the preaching at Keys Presbyterian Church will edify and convert. / **Caleb (and Erika) Smith**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
 22. **Daniel and Jill McManigal**, Seattle, Wash. Give thanks for new families that started to worship at Hope OPC. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he reports to the Committee on Foreign Missions this week in September. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
 23. Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as the Committee begins meeting Sept. 23. / **Philip and Jenny Dharmawirya**, Philadelphia, Pa. (Indonesian). Pray for the spiritual growth of the congregation of Emmanuel Chapel. / **Geoff (and Heather) Downey**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa., until the end of August.
 24. **Joseph and Carla Fowler**, Gastonia, N.C. Pray that the Lord would raise up godly men who can lead as officers at Reformation OPC. / Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Janet Birkmann**. / **Justin (and Hannah) Rosser**, yearlong intern at Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.
 25. **Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church**. Pray for the believers who faithfully attend worship. / **Christopher and Della Chelпка**, Tucson, Ariz. Praise God for a larger meeting place for Covenant OPC. / **Jeremy (and Maricruz) Boothby**, yearlong intern at Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Amarillo, Tex.
 26. **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Retired missionaries **Betty Andrews**, **Greet Rietkerk**, **Young and May Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. / Pray for the **Subcommittee on Internet Ministries** as they oversee OPC.org.
 27. Pray for **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan (on furlough), as they maintain a busy furlough schedule. / Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / Pray for **George Cottenden**, stated clerk, as he prepares the minutes of the 80th General Assembly for the printer.
 28. **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for spiritual fruit from the Bible classes they teach. / **Chad and Katie Mullinix**, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Pray for Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church as they seek to bring people under the ministry of the Word. / **Marvin Padgett**, acting executive director of Great Commission Publications.
 29. **Kaz and Katie Yaegashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray for open doors as they seek to make contacts and share the gospel. / **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Ask the Lord to strengthen and establish Verde Valley Reformed Chapel. / **David (and Amanda) Franks**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, Ill.
 30. **Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Give thanks for their new home near Trinity Presbyterian Church's meeting place. / Missionary associates **Adam and Sarah Thompson**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for their study of Japanese. / **Andrew (and Elizabeth) Barshinger**, yearlong intern at Faith OPC in Elmer, N.J.
 31. Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. / **Stephen and Catalina Payson**, Mifflinburg, Pa. Pray that those who attended Providence OPC's summer inquirers class will join in communicant fellowship. / **Jeff (and Dawn) Scott**, yearlong intern at Covenant Grace OPC in Roseburg, Ore.

An Awesome Offer in Houston, Texas

What does a small, newly developing church have to offer? It meets in rented facilities that may not be adequate or attractive. It offers a limited number of programs. It's overseeing elders are usually borrowed from other congregations and are not present with the people frequently. Everyone is expected to pitch in and share the workload.

Cornerstone OPC in northwest Houston, Texas, knows it has two great things to offer: the Word of God and the love of Christ. The Bible is front and center in the worship of the church. There is a Bible study at the men's breakfast and a regular women's Bible study also. The visitors who return to worship a second and a third time come because they want more of the Bible.

The love of Christ is evident among the people of Cornerstone. They are a group the world would say has little in common. There are two-parent families and single moms, new Christians and mature believers, a wide age range, and a mix of ethnic backgrounds. And yet, as the forty to fifty members and regular attenders gather week after week, they are one in Christ! The unity of the church is unity in the gospel! And that fellowship is fostered through such events as fellowship lunches, church picnics, and simply walking through life together.

Cornerstone is praying and working to gather in more people to enjoy what it has to offer. In April an Outreach Sunday was held. Providence OPC, their sister congregation in Kingwood (in the northeast corner of Houston), did the same thing on the same Sunday. At Cornerstone, it was regularly highlighted in the announcements during the preceding two



Receiving new members at Cornerstone OPC in Houston, Tex.

months as a great time to invite people to come to church. Prayer was regularly offered that visitors would attend worship on Outreach Sunday, hear Christ, and become part of the church. The Lord answered the prayers of the church in a mighty and glorious way. Fifty-one people were at worship on Outreach Sunday, the second highest attendance yet at Cornerstone. Some of the new visitors have become regulars at worship. Most of the newer people are able to drive to Cornerstone's worship location within five to fifteen minutes.

Pastor Arendale wants to see a mindset in the body that is focused outward. In preaching and prayer, he emphasizes that the gospel is to be taken into the world. Prayers for the lost are prominent at the prayer meeting. They also ask the Lord to extend the influence of the church.

Houston is a city of five million people. Employment is on the rise. The northwest section, where Cornerstone is located, is growing. But in this quadrant, the Reformed presence is rather weak.

Pastor Arendale grew up in a family that was part of the Presbyterian Church in America. He and his wife met at Baylor University. While in seminary at Reformed Theological Seminary Charlotte, he was wrestling with whether to pursue ministry with Reformed University Fellowship or a PhD. But God drew him more and more strongly to pastoral ministry. He comes to the OPC from an associate pastor position in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

He asks you to pray that the Lord would give him patience as the body develops overall and grows numerically. Please pray for the church to bear a faithful witness to Christ in NW Houston and for the Lord to gather in more people, including some mature, Reformed believers to be part of Cornerstone OPC. Also pray that the church's fellowship would continue to deepen. Finally, the church will change locations to a new rental facility this summer. Pray that this would be a means to extend the gospel call to Houston and beyond!

A Life Lived

With the emphasis in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on starting new congregations, we may all feel like we are intimately involved in the ministry of home missions. We may feel like it has been that way for as long as we can remember.

Regional Home Missionary Stephen Doe has been involved in home missions for all of his thirty-six years in the ministry. As a summer intern in 1977, Steve went to California to serve under Henry Coray, associate pastor in Goleta, to plant a church in Oxnard. There was a core group of people who had left the Presbyterian Church USA.

During the summer, Steve led Bible studies and learned a lot about planting a church. His term was extended for two months. Then the congregation in Goleta called him to work in Oxnard. Lives were transformed. People grew in grace. The young guys began reading Puritan literature. A new Orthodox Presbyterian church was established by God's grace.

Steve moved to Faith OPC in Lincoln, Nebraska, to serve as stated supply at a time when the congregation was reeling because its pastor had been deposed by the presbytery. When Steve was called to be the pastor, he was elected to the missions committee of the Presbytery of the Dakotas. In this role, he started going to conferences sponsored by the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. This helped him to see the bigger picture of home missions.

When he went to Barre, Vermont, to pastor Covenant Presbyterian Church, he was elected to the home missions committee of the Presbytery of New York and New England. There he saw the fragility of mission works. And he got to see Gor-

don Cook labor to plant Merrymeeting Bay OPC in Brunswick, Maine.

Then it was on to Fredericksburg, Virginia, to be the organizing pastor of Bethel Reformed Presbyterian Church (OPC). A large, solid core group had come from another denomination. God has grown Bethel substantially. Today it is a very encouraging body of Christ with five ruling elders and two deacons.

CALLED AS REGIONAL HOME MISSIONARY

From there Steve has been called by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic to serve as their regional home missionary. He had no grand design to be involved with home missions throughout his ministry. It was all in God's providence.

What does it mean to be an RHM?

It means miles, miles, and more miles in the car. Steve says he knew up front that there would be a lot of travel. However, he is still surprised at just how much he is on the road. He logs over 1,500 miles each month. Much of that is in a very congested corridor of I-95.

It means life is bunched up around the weekends. He meets with groups, participates in Bible studies, leads worship, preaches, and meets with people exploring the possibility of a new church start. He is usually away from home one or two weekends a month.

It means still being a pastor. Steve ministers to God's people through preaching, teaching, and leading worship. He prays with and for the people he meets. He finds that people need pastoring. As he spends time with them and life issues and

struggles come out, he ministers God's Word to them. He seeks to give each person the very best that he has, helping them to draw nearer to Christ.

It means acknowledging that God is in control. Contacts and core groups do not always develop in the way that you had hoped, planned, and prayed. You labor, believing that God is working and that your labor will be used by him, even if it does not result in a new Orthodox Presbyterian church in a given area.

It means changes for your wife. The phone does not ring as much as when you were the pastor of a local church. That's a pleasant change for her. But she has to decide whether she will travel with you on weekends or remain at home to maintain a home church and the relationships there.

Please pray for Steve for:

- courage in talking with groups and wisdom in evaluating situations,
- safety in travel,
- confidence that God will bless his word, and
- him to keep Christ as the heartbeat of all he does and says.

Praise God:

- for a great presbytery missions committee to supervise Steve's work,
- that the Bible study in Montgomery County, Maryland, has been received by the presbytery as a mission work,
- for the groups developing in Virginia Beach and Front Royal, Virginia, and
- for the exploration of other possible church-planting sites.

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: **August 14, 28;**
September 11, 25.



Gathering for the first worship service in Montgomery County, Md.

UPDATE

Ministers

- **Alan J. Dueck** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Grace OPC in Battle Mountain, Nev., on June 14.
- On June 28, **Scott R. Huber**, formerly a PCA chaplain, was installed as pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church of Forth Worth in Forth Worth, Tex.
- **Jonathan F. Peters**, formerly stated supply for the Greater Reading Chinese Church, was installed as associate pastor of Covenant OPC in Reading, Pa. (into which the Chinese congregation is being incorporated), on June 21.
- On May 29, **Bruce L. Prentice**, formerly a minister outside the OPC, was installed as pastor of Bethel OPC in Carson, N.D.
- On May 22, **Philip B. Strong**, formerly a PCA minister, was installed as pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Salt Lake City, Utah, to serve as organizing pastor of Grace Reformed Fellowship in Lander, Wyo.

LETTERS

PRAYER

Editor:

In his article “Pray without Ceasing?” Eric Hausler (in the June issue) acknowledges that constant prayer is an imperative, a law. He then states how we are to “understand” this law and meet its requirements through being “always in an attitude of prayer” and “having the Lord in our thoughts all day long.”

Yet is that truly possible? If constant prayer is not possible, is a constant prayerful attitude possible? Do we try to

Correction

In the June UPDATE column, p. 21, “Busey” should have been spelled “Bucey.”

do the best that we can, even if we can’t do it “always” or “all day long”?

We are unable to meet the stringent demands of this requirement (or any law of God). But what the law demands, the gospel provides. It is through Christ’s righteous representative work that we meet the obligation and duties of the law. When we know that, we are able to pray joyfully, gratefully, and humbly.

*Christian Peterson
Columbus, Ohio*

Editorial comment: As Mr. Hausler notes, Paul managed to pray “without ceasing,” “always,” etc. (Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 3:10; 2 Thess. 1:11), as did others, and so these expressions must allow time for sleeping at night and engaging in many activities during the day. Paul’s instructions are fulfilled if we maintain a constant attitude of prayer and never give up praying for those on our list. While we fall short of the ideal, Paul sets forth realistic goals for the Christian. We will never be perfect in this life, but we can attain maturity.

Editor:

The June issue on prayer was very encouraging. Eric Hausler’s article (“Pray without Ceasing?”) explained very well what 1 Thessalonians 5:17 looks like in our daily lives, along with the benefits of following this admonition. However, the most important reason why believers pray without ceasing is simply that this is how God works in us through his Spirit, as John Van Meerbeke’s fine article suggests. We can sometimes forget that we need the Spirit as much as we need the Word.

Like all New Testament imperatives, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 is indicative-based. Because all true believers have the indwelling Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16), God is always part of the Christian’s “inner conversation.” In other words, God is always speaking to us by his Spirit, and we can always respond to him.

If we truly seek him, we can be confident that God will reveal his will, which will always be consistent with the written Word and confirmed by our conscience

(see Phil. 3:15). And whenever we neglect or reject the Spirit’s counsel, God will forgive us and welcome us to resume this conversation!

*Christopher Andrus
Dublin, Calif.*

EVANGELISM

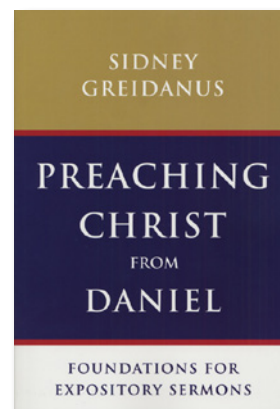
Editor:

The *July New Horizons* arrived at my home just in time to lift me up after hearing a discouraging, cop-out approach to evangelism. I would like to thank both Pastor Sumpter and Pastor Montgomery for sharing their encouraging experiences. We know the whole world lies under the power of darkness, and the only light the world can get is if we reflect the light of Jesus. We need a paradigm shift about reaching out to our neighbors and start encouraging one another. We are commanded to love our neighbors, and the best and highest form of exercising love toward them is through evangelism.

*Yohannes Seifu
Hawthorne, N.J.*

REVIEWS

Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations For Expository Sermons, by **Sidney Greidanus**. Published by **Eerdmans, 2012. Paperback, 440 pages, list price \$34.00. Reviewed by retired OP minister Lawrence Semel.**



According to Jesus, the whole Old Testament is about him (cf. Luke 24:44–45). In *Preaching Christ from Daniel*,

Sidney Greidanus agrees. He is convinced that the key to biblical interpretation is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Greidanus's book is not a traditional commentary. It's about preaching the book of Daniel and is intended "to help busy preachers and bible teachers proclaim the good news of Daniel" (p. x).

The book has the preacher and preaching in mind throughout. The help for preachers is summarized in appendix 1, "Ten Steps from Text to Sermon." These steps are woven into his exposition of each chapter in Daniel. The help continues in appendix 2, "An Expository Sermon Model," where he suggests three main elements of each sermon, explains each element, and relates them to each other, to make a sermon focused upon the theme and goal of the passage.

Greidanus recommends that the sermon be written out in manuscript form, and he explains how to write a sermon in an "oral style" (p. 28).

This is a book about preaching Christ from Daniel. Greidanus writes "to demonstrate and reinforce the redemptive historical Christocentric method" (p. x). He cautions preachers to avoid moralism. The redemptive-historical method is Christocentric. The exegete and preacher must look for possible ways to move the sermon from the Old Testament narrative to the fulfillment that comes in Christ. Greidanus suggests "seven ways to Christ" (p. 27), and he demonstrates them in his exposition of each of the eleven literary units of Daniel.

He applies the book of Daniel throughout. Israel's situation in Babylonian exile anticipates the church's situation in the world. The church is now in exile, and believers are strangers and aliens among the nations. God's message to the church then and now is one of encouragement. Let the people of God remain faithful during their pilgrimage, even in the worst kind of persecution, and be comforted to know that God is still sovereign. In both the narrative and the apocalyptic sections of Daniel, the message is the same. The future is firmly in God's hand. He rules all human king-

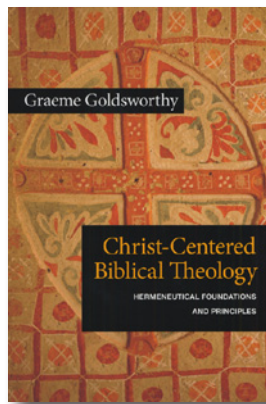
doms in the interest of establishing his eternal kingdom.

In the apocalyptic sections of the book, the reader will rejoice to find the Reformed eschatological insights that we are already familiar with from E. J. Young's *The Prophecy of Daniel* and others.

Greidanus has written a different kind of commentary on Daniel, but one of great value. Although he states regularly that the goal of redemptive history is the perfected kingdom of God on earth, he sees the church (Old Testament or New) as in the world but not of it, and that her citizenship is in heaven. Her calling is to remain faithful in her religion and ethic, even in the face of persecution, realizing that in Christ she has received a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

* * *

***Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles*, by Graeme Goldsworthy. Published by InterVarsity Press, 2012. Paperback, 251 pages, list price \$20.00. Reviewed by Prof. J. V. Fesko.**



Christ-Centered Biblical Theology is an interesting book because the author is quite knowledgeable of American Reformed

biblical theology. He interacts mainly with Geerhardus Vos and his "disciples," including Edmund Clowney, Dennis Johnson, and Willem VanGemeren (pp. 80–90). Goldsworthy seeks to develop the optimal approach to biblical theology. In his judgment, Vos's contribution is helpful, but requires improvement.

Goldsworthy alternatively proposes the "Robinson-Hebert schema," which he draws from two Australian Anglican theologians, Donald B. Robinson and A. G.

Hebert (pp. 21–23). His chief criticism of the Vos-Clowney approach is that when it divides redemptive history into epochs, it fails to give adequate attention to the period from Moses to Christ (p. 132). The Robinson-Hebert schema is supposedly superior in this regard (p. 134).

According to Goldsworthy, there are four weaknesses to the Vos-Clowney approach: (1) It identifies Moses and Sinai as new beginnings, which separates them from the antecedent promises to Abraham. (2) It fails to give adequate recognition to the Davidic and Solomonic glories as a fulfillment of Abrahamic promises (1 Kings 3–10). (3) It downplays the role of prophetic eschatology. (4) It does not provide an adequate basis for a working typology (p. 169). One of the limiting factors in the Vos-Clowney approach, Goldsworthy suggests, is its connection to the Westminster Confession's teaching on the covenant of works. Goldsworthy believes that his own Thirty-nine Articles, by comparison, allow more interpretive flexibility (p. 169, n. 11).

However, it remains to be seen whether Vos and Clowney ever intended their epochal division of redemptive history to be a hermeneutical straightjacket. When Paul, for example, divides redemptive history, he places markers at Adam, Moses, and Christ (Rom. 5:14–21), but who would suggest that such divisions are exclusive of other periods within this broader framework? Goldsworthy largely examines Vos's *Biblical Theology* to ascertain the weaknesses in his approach, but does not explore his *Eschatology of the Old Testament* or his "Eschatology of the Psalter," which deal with the interval between Moses and Christ and its eschatological outlook.

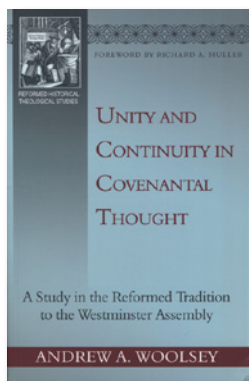
Furthermore, Goldsworthy at times evidences a lack of familiarity with Reformed history. He incorrectly states: "The Reformation restored a biblical view of history only to have it squandered in post-Reformation orthodoxy's 'resurgence of an almost purely systematic, doctrinal approach.'" He claims that the covenant theology of Johannes Cocceius reestablished redemptive history in

Protestant theology (p. 57). This is factually incorrect and likely explains some of Goldsworthy's mild antipathy toward the theology of the Westminster Standards. Vos believed that covenant theology was a vital example of the biblical theology of an earlier age (see his essay on the history of Reformed covenant theology). Hence, his approach to biblical theology may not have the weaknesses that Goldsworthy claims.

Despite these shortcomings, Goldsworthy's book is a stimulating read. It forces the reader to reconsider basic interpretive assumptions. It will encourage people to pull Vos and Clowney off their shelves and reread their rich works.

* * *

***Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought*, by Andrew A. Woolsey. Published by Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. Paperback, 672 pages, list price \$30.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Matthew Holst.**



Woolsey's work on covenant theology is a study of the relationship between the early Reformers' view of covenant and that of English and Continental

Puritans. Weighing in at 672 pages, it is not a short read, but I am delighted to say that in spite of its substance, it is not a difficult read. Woolsey is to be credited for making a somewhat scholastic issue accessible to pastors and interested laymen.

This book deals with the claim that English and Continental Puritan covenant theology bore little resemblance to that of the earlier Reformers. The critics have argued that later Reformed theologians misunderstood and thus misapplied Calvin's covenant theology. In particular, the Westminster Confession of Faith and its statements on covenant have been at-



Participants at the Young Adult Conference held at Machen Retreat and Conference Center May 29–June 1, led by OP pastors Charles Biggs and Dan Halley

tacked as “a plague that had long infected the Reformed churches.” It has been alleged of the Confession's covenantal statements that “Calvin knew nothing [of them], for these theological innovations were the work of his successors.” The same commentator wrote, “It was Calvin who rescued me from the Calvinists.” Is it the case that the English and Continental Puritans innovated when addressing covenant theology?

Woolsey sets out an extensive argument against this position, delineating so clearly the continuity and unity from Calvin to Westminster, that one wonders if the critics have actually read the source materials. This is not to say that the path from Calvin to Beza to Ursinus and Olevianus and to England with Cartwright, Fenner, and Perkins and to Scotland with Knox, Rollock, and Howie was monolithic. Woolsey readily discerns differences and development that one might expect with the passing of time. He does, however, ably demonstrate that the basic structure of covenant theology is indeed present from Calvin to the later Reformed theologians.

In Part One, Woolsey sets out the Westminster Assembly's view of covenant, citing many of their influences and

sources. Part Two deals with the fore-runners of covenant theology, from the church fathers to Luther and Bullinger. Part Three is a substantial treatment of Calvin's covenant theology, worthy of study in itself. In Part Four, Woolsey treats post-Reformation development—to Heidelberg, England, and Scotland, demonstrating that, in spite of development, the basic structure of covenant theology remained consistent from Calvin to the Calvinists. I commend Woolsey for his work and the accessible and unaffected manner of his writing, and Reformation Heritage Books for publishing it.

* * *

***The Creedal Imperative*, by Carl R. Trueman. Published by Crossway, 2012. Paperback, 208 pages, list**

price \$16.99. Reviewed by Pastor David J. Robbins.

Not long ago I found myself in a messy conversation about the Trinity.



As it turns out, talking about divine mysteries becomes vastly more difficult, and biblical orthodoxy more troublesome to parse, when you are unwilling to engage with the historic statements of the church.

My interlocutor claimed “no creed but the Bible.” For him, and indeed for anyone suspicious of confessions and the ecclesiastical bodies that hold to them, this book is an eyepopper. Carl Trueman develops an incisive critique of the prevailing anticonfessional bias and a positive argument for the principle of confessionalism—not just as something sensible, but as a biblical necessity. If the subject seems tedious, don’t be put off; this is a book that constantly stimulates, frequently scintillates, and occasionally compels a hearty amen!

Chapter 1 exposes how various cultural ideas negatively shape the regard paid to creeds and confessions, often imperceptibly. Three are discussed: (1) Real value is in the next big thing, or whatever comes after that, so the past is radically devalued. (2) Emotions are the locus of truth, and words, including doctrine, are not to be trusted. (3) Traditional forms of external, institutional authority are rejected. These trajectories combine to render confessionalism not only distasteful, but also countercultural. Trueman’s analysis here is first-rate, and he interacts with these themes throughout the book.

The second chapter articulates a series of biblically derived positions that together argue compellingly for confessionalism. A superb defense of the vital adequacy of verbal communication is followed by short expositions on human nature, the church as an institution, and the confessional implications of Paul’s instruction to “hold fast the *form* of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). Here the author maintains a Pauline creedal sensibility and even the expectation that the church will continue to develop normative doctrinal statements for the stable transmission of truth. The following two chapters helpfully connect this notion with the creeds of the early church and later Protestant confessions.

The remaining chapters emphasize the doxological (and pedagogical) character of confessions as well as the utility of confessional statements for delimiting church power, discriminating between members and office bearers, maintaining corporate unity, etc. An appendix reflects briefly on confessional revisions and supplementation, and, lastly, there is a short but worthwhile guide to further reading.

Many other features of this book stand out; I will mention two. First, the author posits that every Christian has a functional creed, a way of summarizing biblical truth. Unwritten creeds are dangerous because they cannot be evaluated in light of Scripture, the norming norm. Second, I find Trueman’s sympathetic approach to anticonfessional Christians quite helpful. As he observes, those who are concerned that confessional statements not be granted autonomous authority may in fact share the conviction of our own Confession: that Scripture is the supreme authority by which all creeds and confessions are to be examined (WCF 1.10).

Would I give this book to my confused conversationalist? Probably not; “no creed but the Bible” often translates to “no book,” either. But pastors, elders, and all who love and want to grow in their appreciation of confessionalism ought to take it up and read. This book will not only help you respond to those who find creeds distasteful, but will also fuel your joy in the tradition that has been faithfully handed down to us.

* * *

***The Perfect Saviour: Key Themes in Hebrews*, edited by Jonathan Griffiths. Published by InterVarsity Press (England), 2012. Paperback, 176 pages, currently \$6.31 plus shipping at Amazon. Reviewed by retired OP minister Donald M. Poundstone.**

One of my seminary professors observed that pastors often avoid preaching on the book of Hebrews because Christians don’t



know much about the book of Leviticus. On the other hand, a popular Reformed teacher says that if he had to be stranded

on a desert island with only one book of the Bible, it would be Hebrews.

Such is the difficulty that this meaty volume of eight essays by biblical scholars from England, Northern Ireland, Australia, and America seeks to address. (Most readers of *New Horizons* will recognize among the contributors only the name of retired OP professor Richard Gaffin, Jr.) How can Christians with a weak knowledge of Old Testament religious rituals make sense of an epistle that presumes intimate acquaintance with such ceremonies?

The Perfect Saviour aims to “bridge the gap between the work of evangelical scholars in universities and colleges and the world of the busy preacher and Bible teacher.” Topics covered are the new covenant, the word of God, the priesthood of Christ, the tabernacle, warning and assurance, access and arrival, perfection, and suffering.

The authors perform a valuable service by faithfully summarizing the teaching of the epistle on these central themes. While intended primarily for ministers, the articles are accessible to all serious readers of the Bible. The book

Offering your heart
“promptly and sincerely”
to the Lord?

Have daily devotions
with the man who did.
www.opc.org/devotional.html

lends itself to careful study and discussion by small groups of believers, and will engage the interest and prove edifying to adult Christians.

Its usefulness to “the busy preacher” is another matter. Perhaps it could serve as an introduction or refresher course before he starts a sermon series on Hebrews. Pastors with a solid theological education, however, should be able to mine any of several full-length commentaries to aid their understanding of particular texts and topics in Hebrews.

Thoughtful essays such as these provoke the reader’s thinking on related matters. For example, the writers agree that Hebrews is a sermon or “oral communication” rather than a typical epistle or letter. (Just compare the opening verses of Hebrews with those in the acknowledged “letters” of Paul and Peter.) If they are right, how should that affect our practice and attitudes toward writing out sermons in full, reading them before a congregation at worship, and then making copies for later use or distribution? If a Bible writer does all this, can we object if modern preachers follow in his steps?

Another thought. Hebrews makes much of the imperfect, temporary, and anticipatory nature of Jewish rituals versus the supremacy of Christ and the finality of God’s new covenant. That’s why we no longer slaughter animals in church or follow ancient rules about clean and unclean foods. Do these considerable differences between the old and new covenants take us further? Is it perhaps possible that some of the songs and prayers used by Jews before the coming of Christ have now grown “obsolete” (Heb. 8:13)?

I recommend *The Perfect Saviour* to believers who desire a deeper appreciation of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

* * *

***The Gift of Faith: Discovering the Glory of God in Salvation*, by Bryan Holstrom. Published by Ambassador International, 2012. Paperback, 197 pages, list price \$12.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Dan Dillard.**

The Gift of Faith has in view the con-



temporary American evangelical scene, in which evangelicals affirm that salvation is by God’s grace, while at the same time affirming that exercising faith is man’s part in salvation. In contrast, Bryan Holstrom affirms with Scripture that saving faith is God’s gift:

The issue may be stated in these terms: Does God purpose to save some individuals on the basis of their having first distinguished themselves from others by freely choosing the gospel—a response which all who hear the call are equally empowered to perform? Or is the sinner’s response of faith itself a gift of God’s grace? Stated another way—is God’s grace the distinguishing factor in who will actually believe the gospel call to embrace Christ? (p. 11)

Chapter 1 sets the pace for the whole book. Beginning with Ephesians 2:8–9, the reader is led through a detailed scriptural presentation (a Scripture saturation) of the doctrines of grace. The discussion is solid, but easy to read. Throughout the book, the author’s zeal and love for these doctrines is evident.

He clearly wants the reader to embrace and love these doctrines too. For Holstrom, the study of these doctrines is not merely an academic, intellectual exercise. The doctrines of grace lead us to more fully glorify God and enjoy him. They lead us to a deeper understanding of God’s power and his love:

Scripture also makes clear that love is the motivating factor behind God’s decision to grant mercy to those who are estranged from him on account of sin. Thus, we may define grace as *God’s loving mercy toward undeserving sinners*. (p. 14)

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the history of the doctrines of grace from the ancient church debate between Augustine (the defender of monergism) and Pelagius (the synergist) to the revivalist Charles Finney and modern evangelical Arminianism. Holstrom shows that the church down through the ages has found it frequently necessary to defend the doctrines of grace.

Chapters 3 through 7 give a Scripture-packed presentation of the doctrines of man’s total depravity, God’s gracious and unconditional election, the efficacious atonement of Christ, the efficacy of grace, and the perseverance of the saints. Along the way, the author corrects some common misunderstandings of these doctrines and takes up and answers Arminian objections. The concluding chapter 8 speaks of God’s sovereign grace as the basis for assurance.

Throughout the book, Holstrom asks the reader to use a twofold test of doctrine: is the doctrine scriptural, and does it give all the glory for salvation to God? Our testimony to men must be that we are saved by God’s sovereign grace alone to the praise of God’s glory.

* * *

Positions Available

Associate Pastor: Bethel OPC in Loudoun County, Va., is seeking an associate pastor to oversee visitation, outreach, evangelism, and other “house-to-house” ministries, as well as assist in leading weekly worship, occasionally preach, administer the sacraments, teach, and help establish an additional worship service for which he will take the lead role. The right man for the task will heartily embrace the philosophy and worship of Bethel Church and the challenges that come from ministering to a highly educated, largely professional congregation. Interested candidates should send a paper résumé and ministerial data form, including a link to three recently preached sermons, to: Search Committee, Bethel Presbyterian Church, 19856 Evergreen Mills Road, Leesburg, VA 20175-8739.

NEWS, VIEWS, REVIEWS (cont.)

***The Dark Faith*, by Jeremiah W. Montgomery. (The Dark Harvest Trilogy, Book One.) Published by P&R, 2012. Paperback, 367 pages, list price \$14.99. Reviewed by OP member Katharine Olinger.**



It seems that every book in the epic fantasy genre includes outlandish names, an unexpected journey, and cloaks. In this respect,

Jeremiah Montgomery's *The Dark Faith* does not disappoint. When we first meet the young monk Morumus, he has just been given the task of translating Holy Writ into Grendannathi, the language of the barbarian lands, and is setting out with his mentor, Abbot Graham. And, of course, they wear things like cloaks and robes (they are monks, after all). As the story continues, allies are added, villains threaten, and Morumus's mettle and faith in Aesus are tested.

There is a bit of violence in the book. I don't know if you've ever noticed this, but in spite of the full-fledged battle scene in the movie version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the most carnage you get is a bloody nose on one Pevensie and a

bloody lip on another (Edmund, I think). A film production of *The Dark Faith* could not get away with this. While most of the violence is moderate, there are some gruesome scenes. My favorite was when Urien, the female character of the story, fell into a well of blood. Now that's exciting. Being the teenage girl that I am, I enjoyed (and longed for more) chapters from this character's perspective and felt that the story really could have used more females in general. But I am probably not the target audience.

Still, I was intrigued by the structure of the world that Montgomery fashioned. Ecclesiastical and theological terms are all slightly slanted, such as "Holy Writ" in place of "Holy Bible" and "Aesus" instead of "Jesus." The political system is all twisted up with the

equivalent of the church of the Middle Ages.

The best parts of the book focus on the difference between the dark faith (the faith of Urien) and the true faith (the faith of Morumus and his comrades). Urien serves a mute goddess who demands blood and offers nothing in return. Morumus serves Aesus, who offers his own blood for his people and gives life. When Urien hears about Aesus, a deity that actually lives and speaks and gives, her life is changed.

The Dark Faith would make an interesting read for the teenage/young adult epic fantasy fan who is mature enough to handle a few eyeballs being gauged out.

The VBS program at Grace OPC in Middletown, Del., was blessed this summer with seventy children and over twenty staff.

