

NEW HORIZONS

— in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

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New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Covenant OPC in Barre, Vermont, recently celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary. The congregation, pictured here, gives thanks to God for sustaining them in the least-churched state of the union.



APOLOGETICS AT STARBUCKS



ROGER WAGNER // When we think about “doing apologetics,” too often (in our circles, at least) what first comes to mind is a debate over apologetic methodology. Are we going to be presuppositionalist-covenantal or “classical”-evidentialist? As a friend of mine used to say, “We seem more concerned with sharpening and

polishing our swords than with actually carrying them into the battle.”

Doing Apologetics

Apologetics—the “defense of the faith”—is an instrument of evangelism, designed to help us reach the lost with the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom to receive and trust is “eternal life.” As one of the most effective apologists in recent memory, the late Greg Bahnsen, did not tire of saying, our apologetic must be “taken to the streets.” A sound method that is never brought to bear on the actual questions and doubts of a skeptical unbeliever confronted with the claims of Christ is of little value.

When the apostle Peter exhorts us to “always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15), the context reminds us that such a defense is likely to arise in the rough-and-tumble of our daily interactions with the unbelieving world in which we move every day. Specifically, Peter reminds us that we may “suffer for righteousness’ sake” (v. 14), and he urges us not to be afraid of those who

would revile our good behavior (v. 16). Instead, we must be prepared—*always* prepared—to give a reasoned defense for our hope in Christ Jesus. Such a scenario is about as far removed from academic isolation as can be imagined.

So let’s think about doing apologetics at Starbucks.

In a Postmodern Setting

When we think of defending the faith in a “postmodern” cultural setting, we are simply recognizing that many of the people we will meet at Starbucks will have a certain orientation to their life experiences and human relationships.

We need not detain ourselves here with precise or elaborate definitions of postmodernism. Indeed, what is called “*postmodern*” is really the “other side” of modernism, and has been around for a long time.

Romanticism was a movement that emphasized *intuition* rather than scientific investigation when confronting the natural world, and *feelings* rather than analytical reasoning as the preferred route to personal convictions. Add to these a *relativism* in ethics and cultural values, and a *skepticism* about anything

deemed “traditional”—especially “organized religion” (i.e., Christianity)—and you have the kind of postmodernism you will encounter over coffee.

How We Say What We Say

Given this social temper, when our goal is to *persuade* people (2 Cor. 5:11), *how* we present our defense of the faith may be as important as its content. Among people who are more in tune with relational concerns than rational argument, who indeed are instinctively skeptical of the latter, Peter’s words about the manner of our speaking jump off the page: “make a defense ... with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

My experience has been that we Reformed presuppositionalists (or “covenantal apologists,” to use K. Scott Oliphant’s more recent term) tend to come on pretty strong. We may be speaking the truth, but our love and concern for the unbeliever can easily get lost in our personal interchanges. Francis Schaeffer wisely insisted that apologists must be out to win *people*, not merely arguments.

I first heard the Latin phrase *sua-viter in modo, fortiter in re* (“gently in manner, strongly in deed”), in my first-

year apologetics class at Westminster Seminary from Dr. Van Til. In interacting with others, though we do not want to compromise the substance of our message (we must give a “reasoned defense” of the Christian faith), we should present the matter in a gentle, respectful manner.

Peter’s exhortation is always in order, but it is especially appropriate in our postmodern setting, where genuine concern for those to whom we speak—communicated both verbally and non-verbally—may have a powerful impact as used by the Holy Spirit.

Don’t Be Afraid to Listen—a Lot!

As we seek to speak to our neighbors about Christ—and their need of him—questions will arise: questions regarding what the Bible teaches (and perhaps expressing misconceptions that have become common in contemporary society), questions about ultimate religious authority, questions about the presence of evil in the world, and questions about the practical outworking of faith in Jesus.

Some will ask questions out of ignorance and a genuine desire to learn; others will skeptically challenge anything we might say. In some ways, the most important apologetical skills in this setting are the ability to *keep listening* and to *roll with the punches*.

Proverbs 26:4–5 sets out a two-pronged approach to confronting the folly of unbelief: “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.”

As Bahnsen (following Cornelius Van Til) points out in his book *Always Ready* (chs. 14–16), these verses remind us that we cannot “answer” the unbeliever by adopting his intellectually covenant-breaking presuppositions. To do so would be disloyal to our commitment to the lordship of Christ in our thinking. It would also be futile, for we would become like the unbeliever.

On the other hand, we are encouraged to “answer a fool according to his folly.” That is, we help him see what

his ultimate presuppositions about life are—and, most importantly, where those fundamental assumptions must inevitably lead him in his thinking and behavior.

This idea lends itself to a methodology of *thoughtful listening and tactical questioning*. If time permits, we ought to do a lot of listening. Let the other speak. Again, my experience is that “our side” is often so eager to “reduce the opposition to absurdity,” that we *push* others to a place to which we ought to *lead* them.

Asking questions that little by little will help the unbeliever discover and express his basic assumptions about life (he probably will not yet be “epistemologically self-conscious”) and reveal the implications for life of those assumptions, may go much farther in persuading him of the futility of unbelief. As always, patience is a virtue—or, as James put it, “be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19).

The Greatest Story Ever Told

We are told that postmoderns prefer stories and images to propositions. If that is so, then we have in the Bible the perfect vehicle for reaching them, for it is “the greatest story ever told.”

While we need not be at all reluctant to express our faith in biblical propositions, it might be helpful to make greater use of the biblical story line in our evangelism and apologetic.

What better way is there to address the issue of ultimate religious authority than by setting out the story of Genesis 2–3: the Creator’s covenant-making words to Adam and Eve, the promise of covenant life, Satan’s deceitful temptation and our first parents’ foolish opting for it, and the deadly consequences of their unbelief?

What better way is there to address the problem of evil than with the story of faithful, but suffering, Job and the lessons he learned when God drew near to him in his anguish? What better way is there to explain the radical nature of conversion than by reference to Zachaeus or Saul of Tarsus?

And, of course, the gospel narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will introduce our blessed Lord Jesus in a way that nothing else can. There he speaks for himself, in a way especially suited to our postmodern friends and neighbors.

More Than a Human Effort

We have considered but a few ideas in this brief article. Much more could be—and has been—said. We in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have a well-stocked apologetics library from Cornelius Van Til, John Frame, Greg Bahnsen, K. Scott Oliphint, and others.

We must remember, however, that “doing apologetics” is more than a mere human exercise—no matter how well intentioned.

The heart-problem of the “natural man”—including his darkened understanding and suppression of the truth (Rom. 1:18–23)—is beyond the reach of the best human argumentation and the most gentle of personal approaches. As Jesus told Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.... I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3, 5).

The Holy Spirit is the ultimate evangelist and apologist. “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26–27).

We are responsible to prepare ourselves as thoughtfully and prayerfully as we can to speak to others about Christ, but the Spirit of God alone holds the key to the hearts of men and women. So we bear our witness and answer the questions of our neighbors, all the time praying that “God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25). □

The author is the pastor of Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, Calif. He quotes the ESV.

THE WITNESS NEEDED BY A WEARY WORLD



ALAN D. STRANGE // **Postmodernism is rightly critical of modernism. It recognizes that modernism is unable to account for its closed, naturalistic, materialistic worldview. Modernism's failure may be seen in its scientism (the conviction that the scientific method is the only path to objective, public knowledge), in its**

rationalism (which is purportedly autonomous and anti-supernatural), and in the myth of human evolution and progress. Postmodernism does not turn to Christianity, though, to provide the preconditions that make logic, science, ethics, love, and beauty intelligible.

In its critique of modernism, postmodernism embraces irrationalism and thus commits intellectual suicide by attempting to “establish” irrationalism through rational argument. That is an internal inconsistency not unlike a Hindu monism that argues against distinctions and at the same time urges its adherents to develop good karma. So postmodernism argues against the best aspects of modernism—the affirmation of objective truth, the reliability of the senses, the importance of the use of reason, and the laws of logic—denouncing them as mere conventions concocted by society’s masters. Thus, postmodernism may rightly be seen, not as completely different from modernism, but as the logical outcome of a worldview that cannot account for itself—modernism gone to seed, in which “anything goes.”

Manifestations of postmodernism and what to do about them apologetically have particularly concerned us in

recent years. The work of Einstein (relativity) and Heisenberg (uncertainty) has been co-opted by the popular culture as a whole. Thus, we see modernism giving birth to postmodernism, which lays the groundwork for our religious and political pluralism and our ethical relativism. Since modernism has not given us certain knowledge, postmodernists reason, one religion may be as good as another and one ethical system as valuable as another—as long as it “works for you.”

With postmodernism, all that matters is the self alone. Philosophically, we have existentialism and nihilism, both of which are irrational and self-destructive. The existentialists (Camus, Sartre, Heidegger) all called for authentic living over against the mechanization and dehumanization of our modern world, though many among them ironically embraced communism and fascism. Nietzsche was the one who called for the abolition of the petite bourgeoisie morality that holds back the *Übermensch*, the superman who cannot be held back by middle-class morality and must, by the will to power, by the revaluation of all values, make a new world after the “death of God.”

This nihilism and the will to power

have brought about a shift of emphasis from truth (that dominated in modernism) to power (that dominates in postmodernism). This postmodern emphasis on power discounts the notion of truth, arguing that it is but a tool of the power elite (taking a page from Marxism) used to oppress the powerless.

Thus, everything is politicized. Right and wrong have no objective meaning beyond “that which advances my interest” or “that which damages my interest.” It is just such a politicization of everything that is part and parcel of deconstructionism. Deconstructionism represents the supremacy of the interpreter over the text, in which authorial intent takes a back seat to reader response and in which the critic becomes sovereign over the text and more important than the author.

Our Response to Postmodernism

How do we deal with postmodernism? Some propose to deal with it by capitulating to it. Others oppose this and argue in a way that suggests that, as part of refuting postmodernism, we must lead men to modernism before we can lead them to Christianity. Surely this cannot be right. To be sure, we must

affirm that there is objective truth and that it is accessible by reason. But this skirts the question: can unbelievers reason rightly? Van Til would contend that they cannot, and that we do not have common epistemological ground with unbelievers; this is why we cannot make a direct appeal to the evidence.

It is a false dichotomy to assert, as do some, that truth is personal, not propositional; it is both. Certainly truth is propositional. And it is a person—Jesus Christ (John 14:6). This does not mean, though, that modernists were justified in asserting the law of noncontradiction—as if their worldview provided the necessary preconditions for the intelligibility of logic, when in fact only the Christian worldview does.

A Presuppositional Apologetic

If it was ever evident that we need a presuppositional apologetic, it is in dealing with the postmodernist. We can agree with the postmodernist in much of his critique of modernism, particularly as he points out the arbitrary nature of the modernist commitment to logic, science, and ethics. We can then turn our guns on the postmodernist and show him the folly of his own position, for he does not apply to himself the critique that he applies to others, even as the deconstructionist does not deconstruct or engage in a hermeneutics of suspicion in regard to his own work.

The internal critique of modernism makes it clear that it can account neither for its rationalism, which in the modern context comes from Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and all those who advocate a “stop-and-think” approach, nor for the empiricism that comes from the “look-and-see” approach of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and others. Even Kant’s “transcendental” attempt to rescue science and religion, after Hume’s skepticism destroyed the possibility of knowledge, proved to be a failure, leaving modern man with a subjectivism that developed in Hegel into historicism and in Nietzsche into postmodernism. The internal critique of postmodernism, as we have seen, is that its irrationalism de-

constructs itself. This spells the failure of the Enlightenment, which sought to overthrow the Christian faith in the name of science and reason. Christianity remains the only hope, and the Word of God the only sure beacon in the midst of all the darkness of modernism and postmodernism.

Engaging with the Gospel

We need to engage the postmodernist (and the modernist) with the gospel and show him that we have answers to his questions within our worldview, even though he cannot make sense of things in his worldview. Only in Christianity can the gaps between generations, races, socioeconomic classes, nations, etc., be bridged. Only in him who is the God-man can God and man be brought together, and only in him can warring mankind be united. Particularly given the politicization of everything in postmodernism, its adherents surely grow weary of incessant power struggles and the disunity that they create—we are more divided than ever, due to such pervasive politicization. They also surely long for something more than the political zero-sum game to which everything has been reduced. I would suggest that “something more” can be found in a vigorous spirituality of the church, of the sort held out by J. G. Machen:

Weary with the conflicts of the world, one goes into the Church to seek refreshment for the soul. And what does one find? Alas, too often, one finds only the turmoil of the world. The preacher comes forward, not out of a secret place of meditation and power, not with the authority of God’s Word permeating his message, not with human wisdom pushed far into the background by the glory of the Cross, but with human opinions about the social problems of the hour or easy solutions of the vast problem of sin. Such is the sermon. And then perhaps the service is closed by one of those hymns breathing out the angry passions of 1861, which are to be found in the back part of the hymnals. Thus the warfare of the world

has entered even into the house of God, and sad indeed is the heart of the man who has come seeking peace.

Is there no refuge from strife? Is there no place of refreshing where a man can prepare for the battle of life? Is there no place where two or three can gather in Jesus’ name, to forget for the moment all those things that divide nation from nation and race from race, to forget human pride, to forget the passions of war, to forget the puzzling problems of industrial strife, and to unite in overflowing gratitude at the foot of the Cross? If there be such a place, then that is the house of God and that the gate of heaven. And from under the threshold of that house will go forth a river that will revive the weary world. (*Christianity and Liberalism*, 179–80)

Only the gospel furnishes the necessary preconditions for a fallen humanity to be reconstituted as a new humanity in Christ. In him there is the basis for the reconciling of that which separates us from God and from each other. That gospel needs to be preached in its purity by a church committed to it and not compromised by political alliances that besmirch its spirituality. As a follower of Charles Hodge in this, I recognize that the Scriptures address matters that impact the civil sphere. (The spirituality of the church, properly construed, does not deny this.) By “political,” I mean those things that divide people holding the same confessional commitment (e.g., tax rates, immigration policy, gun control, public health care). They need to be worked out outside the institutional church (though not divorced from a faith commitment). Let’s address the apologetical and evangelistic questions concerning our witness to modernism and postmodernism and resist the temptation to let either CNBC or Fox News control our ecclesiastical agenda. Our witness to Christ is the one needed by a weary world. □

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

WE ARE WEAK, BUT HE IS STRONG



JAMIE DEAN // When Erick and Kristyn Nieves of Reformation OPC in Queens, New York, learned they were expecting a baby in 2013, the couple was happily surprised. The Nieveses already had two daughters, ages 4 and 1, and hadn't anticipated an addition to their family so soon.

They quickly learned the addition would be bigger than they expected.

When Kristyn visited the doctor for her first sonogram in May 2013, she watched the physician study the screen for a long time. She asked if everything was okay, and the doctor replied, "Well, yes. If you look here, you'll see one ... two ... and three."

The Nieveses were expecting triplets.

It was an overwhelming discovery for a family living in a three-bedroom house on expensive Long Island. How would they afford it? What kind of car would they need? Would Kristyn be able to continue her job as an elementary school teacher while Erick worked as a bridge and tunnel officer?

Despite the pressing questions, the couple thanked the Lord for his blessings, and asked the members of Reformation OPC to begin praying for their new adventure as parents of five children under five years of age.

Reformation OPC had already embarked on an adventure of its own. The OPC's first church plant in New York City was still young, and had faced the possibility of expulsion from their

meeting place after city officials threatened to prohibit churches from renting public schools for Sunday worship services.

The church members—and others around the country—prayed about the dilemma facing dozens of congregations around the city, and a court decision allowed churches to continue to meet in schools for now. The young OP mission work and its newly ordained pastor, Jonathan Shishko, were learning to rely on the Lord's provision week by week, even when the future wasn't clear.

It was a lesson that members of the church family—especially the Nieveses—would soon learn to apply in far more profound ways.

"Selective Reduction"?

When Kristyn visited the doctor for another sonogram in July 2013, the doctors discovered a problem. One of the triplets had a severe heart defect that would require a series of major surgeries after she was born. Since the triplets would be born early, surgeons wouldn't be able to operate right away.

Erick and Kristyn absorbed the sorrowful news: the high-risk pregnan-

cy could end with death for one of their tiny, unborn daughters.

The doctors suggested an unwelcome option: "selective reduction." Physicians presented the possibility of aborting their vulnerable daughter as the most rational way to protect the two other babies and their mother. Kristyn and Erick gave a firm response: they would keep all of the children the Lord had fearfully and wonderfully made.

The family began preparing to enlarge their tent, and the members of their local church began preparing to help them. Church members held a banquet and raised thousands of dollars. Another church member set up a website for donations. Others began planning to arrange meals and organize volunteers to sit with the children and help with other tasks.

Most of all, the church joined the Nieves family in praying for the Lord's grace in whatever his providence might bring. Jonathan Shishko, pastor at Reformation OPC, visited the family, offering prayer and encouragement from the Scriptures.

For Shishko, it was the most complex case of pastoral care he had faced

in his young ministry. Shishko says he had encountered families facing financial stress, the challenges of parenting, health crises, and other problems, “but to have all of those things together in one family is pretty amazing.”

Shishko says that the Nieveses learned to rely on the Lord’s daily care and trust his provisions for the future. “I told them, ‘Jesus is the Lord of your life, and he loves you,’” Shishko remembers. “And I said, ‘There are a whole lot of people who want to help you.’”

Meanwhile, Kristyn and Erick prayed for the Lord’s help as a family. During one time of prayer, Erick called their fragile daughter by a name he and Kristyn had discussed as a possibility for the child: Christiana. The couple agreed: “That’s her name.”

The parents began referring to their daughter by name during visits with their physicians leading up to the birth. “I think that really struck them,” says Kristyn of the world-renowned doctors they met. The family prayed Kristyn would be able to carry the triplets as long as possible, especially since Christiana was half the size of her sisters.

In October 2013, the three girls were born at 31 weeks into the pregnancy. (The average for triplets’ birth is around 33 or 34 weeks.) Arielle Joy arrived first, weighing three pounds and two ounces. Hannah Grace came next at three pounds and ten ounces. And last came Christiana Faith, weighing one pound and eleven ounces.

All the preemies remained in the neonatal intensive care unit for extended stays: Arielle stayed for 51 days. Hannah stayed for 83 days. Both babies eventually returned home, and are now healthy and happy.

Hope for Christiana

As expected, Christiana’s journey was more difficult. Her first surgery was in February 2014. The surgeons warned they would likely need to operate again soon because of the baby’s

complex anatomy, but a few weeks later they delivered worse news: pulmonary hypertension made additional surgeries impossible. The prognosis was grim. They urged Kristyn and Erick to take



The Nieves family (Christiana is at the far left)

their daughter home and make her comfortable.

The family was heartbroken. They mourned the possible loss of Christiana, and they grieved over the ordeal that her loss at home would be for their other children and Erick’s mother, who lives with the family.

Erick remembers a particularly sorrowful moment during the Lord’s Supper, as he contemplated the reality that his daughter might never enjoy the means of grace: “There are just so many things we want her to experience.” Shishko wondered if his first baptism as a pastor would also bring his first funeral for a baby. The Nieveses and their church family committed Christiana’s days to the Lord, who gives and takes away.

Then, unexpected hope arrived. The doctors devised an ambitious surgery, reconstructing Christiana’s pulmonary

artery and bringing down her hypertension. So far the surgery has worked, though the following months brought several trips back to the hospital. Christiana has been home consistently since July, and her parents are hopeful she’ll remain well until another surgery, possibly next spring.

Even with this hope, Christiana’s condition remains serious, and the Nieveses realize they don’t know what the future will bring. Erick says the uncertainty has deepened their dependence on the Lord. “Whatever may come, God is with us, and this is not an accident,” he says. “I’ve definitely seen the Lord working even more so in our lives than I probably would have if we weren’t so needy. It’s given me more confidence in God.”

For now, the Nieveses remain thankful for a church family that prays and helps them manage a complex web of overwhelming financial and logistical challenges. (Kristyn has returned to her job as a schoolteacher, and a website for donations for their many financial needs remains active: www.gofundme.com/5huhp4.)

The couple is thankful for opportunities to testify to God’s grace to both believers and unbelievers. Kristyn particularly thinks of those who have told her God doesn’t give us more than we can handle: “I tell them, ‘You know, sometimes I think he does give us more than we can handle, so we can learn to rely on him more.’”

It’s a lesson for the whole church, says Shishko, who baptized all three babies during a joyful service at Reformation OPC last June. He says the Nieveses’ joy and trust in the Lord have been an encouragement and an example to the congregation and to a watching community.

“It’s a call to a life of radical faith,” he says of the Nieveses. “And that’s what they’re doing.” □

The author is a member of Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.

OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP OUR YOUNG MINISTERS

// STEPHEN ROBERTS



Stephen (holding Seth) and Lindsey Roberts, just before he was deployed to Afghanistan in 2013

When I graduated from seminary in 2008, I was eager to put my gifts to use in the service of our King—and also incredibly presumptuous about the opportunities I would have before me. This arrogant young seminarian ran headfirst into the buzz saw of an economic recession. Before I knew it, both my fiancée and I were working retail and minimum wage jobs in order to make a living. My arrogance initially turned to anger, but gradually my heart softened under the weight of the Good Shepherd’s hand.

By God’s grace, a local OP church, Grace OPC in Vienna, Virginia, took me in as a summer intern, and their two pastors at the time, Dan Clifford and Chad Van Dixhoorn, began to shepherd me back toward the pulpit ministry. At the same time, I was finally assigned to an Army Reserve unit as its chaplain and began to grow in that role as well. But the summer internship came to an end, and one Army drill a month doesn’t pay the bills. Again, in God’s gracious providence, he provided my wife with full-time employment and gave me ample opportunities to pick up additional duties with the Army and to supply pulpits for a number of local OP churches.

A Sterling Opportunity

The church that afforded me the most opportunity during this time was Sterling OPC in Sterling, Virginia. It had a vacant pulpit and was looking for an experienced minister to take the reins. After about six months of rotating ministers for their pulpit supply, they called Phil Proctor, our former missionary to Uganda, to be their pastor. Pastor Proctor understood my plight—few open pulpits and a calling as a Reserve chaplain that further limited my pastoral opportunities—and asked me to come aboard for a minimal monthly stipend.

Some might scoff at such a use of cheap labor, but I saw in that calling an opportunity from God to further develop my

gifts and, God willing, to work my way into a full-time call. And God again was gracious. The congregation has tripled in size, from about two dozen to about eighty today, and I now earn a salary. The salary is still only half of what a minister needs in Loudoun County, Virginia, but alongside my Army income and my wife’s occasional freelance work, it is enough. In fact, the inconsistency of this income makes us more dependent upon God’s providence.

I relay this story to you, the reader, because I am representative of a large body of young ministers caught in the limbo of a bad economy, few ministerial opportunities, and a growing number of mouths to feed. Many of our young seminary graduates are without a call, not utilizing their God-given gifts for the ministry, struggling to support their families, and in danger of forsaking the ministerial path altogether. Here are several ways that I believe we can better care for the future ministers in our precious corner of Christ’s kingdom:

1. Call more young ministers as evangelists to particular congregations.

Evangelists need not only be church planters. There are a number of OP churches that greatly desire numerical growth, but are struggling to reach the surrounding community. Why not call an additional pastor to supplement the labors of the senior pastor in this regard? Your church may not have the monetary resources for this, but what if calling a young minister for this task ultimately pays for itself?

There is an old adage that comes to mind: You must spend money to make money. Christ’s work in and through his church cannot be reduced to such clichés, surely, but there is wisdom in that adage. There are often not enough hours in the day for the solo pastor to commit himself wholeheartedly to equipping the saints for evangelism, alongside preaching, teaching, counseling, etc. Churches don’t have money for

[Continued on page 19]

ANOTHER HARVEST

// RICHARD R. GERBER



Resurrection OPC's elders (from the left): Tim Shafer, Ian Gregg, Jeremiah Montgomery (pastor), Tom Jackson, and William Rose

For many plants, new sprouts are ready for harvest in only a few months. But in church planting, new sprouts generally take years to develop into mature congregations. Last fall, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church gathered in four new mature congregations.

Resurrection OPC in State College, Pennsylvania, was a tender sprout in October 2011, at a time when Penn State University and the community were in turmoil over serious offenses by a coach in the football program. Yet that sprout had a good start.

Resurrection was a daughter church of Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, where Mark Brown is the pastor. Organizing pastor Jeremiah Montgomery was a covenant child who grew up at Westminster. His dad is a ruling elder. Pastor Brown mentored him over many years, as he did much of his theological training through distance learning.

On October 3, 2014, three years after worship began, Resurrection OPC was organized as a new and separate congregation of the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. A highlight of the organizational process for Jeremiah was hearing the theological exams of the four men standing for certification as ruling elders. Each man sustained a ninety-nine-question, hour-and-a-half exam.

At the congregational meeting of the mission work, with 75 percent of the members present, four matters needed to be decided. The first was whether elders would have lifetime service or a limited term of service.

After a gracious debate, the congregation voted by a close vote for lifetime service. Then it went on to decide the next three matters unanimously: electing all four elders, calling Jeremiah as the pastor, and petitioning the presbytery to be organized.

As Resurrection OPC takes its place among the churches of the OPC, it wants to continue to be a church on a mission.

On October 17, 2014, two more mission works were harvested as new and separate congregations. Both are in the same time zone, and both confess a common faith, but their communities are worlds apart.

Cornerstone OPC is in the fourth-largest city in the U.S.—Houston, Texas, population 2,160,000. Sovereign Grace Reformed Church (OPC), on the other hand, is in Doniphan, Missouri—population 1,997.

The first contacts for a new OP church in Houston were made in 2011 through social media. In Doniphan, Pastor Kent Harding, his wife Laurie, and several other families came out of the Church of God in 2008 to form the core group of what would become two years later the mission work called Sovereign Grace Reformed Church.

Cornerstone began with the support of nearby Providence OPC in Kingwood, a suburb of Houston. Christ Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, over three hours away from Doniphan, took Sovereign Grace under its wings.

The organizational service in Doniphan was well attended by people from the Presbytery of the Midwest. To Kent, this was one more testimony to “how much support the brothers and sisters in the OPC and especially the Presbytery have shown SGRC.”

Kent says that one of the most encouraging aspects of the organizational process was developing a relationship with Pastor Scott Churnock and the elders of Christ Presbyterian Church. The feeling is mutual. The text for Pastor Churnock's sermon at the organizational service was: “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
New editions: February 11, 25.

become very dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8).

Another highlight of the organizational process for Kent was the development of a ruling elder. He says, “Nothing beats that.” This little congregation in a rural town watched and prayed to discern the Lord’s will for leadership for them. There was disappointment when the Lord took one strong candidate out of the area. On October 17, Matthew Thornton, a humble, clear-thinking young man, was ordained and installed as a ruling elder. He had left the Church of God with Pastor Harding to pursue becoming part of a Reformed church.

Sovereign Grace Reformed Church is grateful to be a Reformed and Presbyterian congregation. The people of SGRC are pleased to have a place where they can participate in Reformed worship.

When Robert Arendale became the organizing pastor of Cornerstone in October 2012, he focused on fostering cohesiveness in the body. The group began to see itself as a local church, not simply as random people who happened to meet in the same place for worship on Sunday. More and more they realized they were the church seven days a week. People began to care for one another and pray for one another without prompting from the pastor.

Most of the people were not from Presbyterian backgrounds, so Robert was very deliberate in explaining the process of organization when the body showed itself to be ready. The people were very excited when the day came for them to be organized as a new congregation of the OPC.

That excitement has carried over as the congregation has moved into a new chapter of its life. One theme of this new chapter is joining with Providence Church in talking and praying about where the next OP church should be planted in their sprawling metropolis.

On December 5, Reformation OPC in Gastonia, North

Carolina, was organized as a new church by the Presbytery of the Southeast. The congregation had a sweet time of fellowship surrounded by a large group of the people who had prayed for and labored with them in their development toward becoming a new congregation of the OPC. First interest in an OP church plant in Gastonia was shown in 2009. Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Charlotte and her pastor, Cliff Blair, took those interested under their wings. In January 2011, Pastor Joseph (Joby) Fowler began to labor with the core group to establish the church.

During the process leading up to their organization, Joby really enjoyed meeting with the men in the core group for Bible study and officer training. This was a time of building relationships and trust. During that time, God provided Reformation with two ruling elders, Kelvin Monteith and Mike Cloy, and a deacon, Spencer Grigg.

It was exciting to live through the mystery of what would happen in the mission work and wait on the Lord to see what he would do in the life of the body. Along the way, people would ask, “Where are we?” Joby could point to the tangible landmarks laid out in *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church* to help the people and himself see how they were coming along in the process of developing into a body of Christ. Noting the landmarks being passed helped them to overcome the weariness and impatience of the journey.

Having passed the church-planting landmarks, Pastor Fowler preached a series on “Organized for What?” He set out the biblical landmarks that can mark their way as a church of Jesus Christ.

Rejoice with the brothers and sisters of these congregations! Share their joy! Remember that you labored with them through your prayers on their behalf and your gifts to Worldwide Outreach in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.



The congregation of Reformation OPC in Gastonia, N.C.

REVIEW:
*HOW GOD
 BECAME JESUS*

// RYAN M. MCGRAW



For the last two hundred years, biblical scholarship has been virtually obsessed with finding the “historical Jesus.” The authors of *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus’ Divine Nature* (edited by Michael F. Bird) respond to a recent attempt by Bart Ehrman to find the Jesus in whom the first-century Christians believed. Ehrman’s conclusion is that the early Christians did not believe that Jesus was God Almighty, but that he was an angelic being who received divine honor. Ehrman claims that the church moved from an exaltation Christology to an incarnation Christology, and thus perverted the views of the early Christians. After reading many attempts of this kind to reinvent the historical Jesus, this reviewer gets the wearied feeling that he is running on a theological hamster wheel or watching the same old movie repeatedly. Yet such assaults on the New Testament witness must be answered, and the five scholars in this volume do an excellent job of demonstrating that the early Christians did in fact believe in a transcendent, divine Christ.

Two things make Ehrman’s approach to early Christology significant (though far from unique): First, he is a scholar (a professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina) who is reaching a popular audience. Second, he was once a “fundamentalist” Christian. His opponents in this book are likewise well-respected scholars from such diverse institutions as Cambridge University and Reformed Theological Seminary, and they aim with great effectiveness at a popular audience. They do so with a blend of robust humor and thorough historical and biblical scholarship. Charles Hill in particular treats the important way in which Ehrman’s rejection of his fundamen-

talism forms a presuppositional backdrop for his historical research (p. 176). The authors (especially Michael Bird) include comical references to a red-knuckled Santa Claus, communist and racist chess pieces, bad television shows, and much more. This makes the book both entertaining and informative.

One downside of the book is the strange, abstract picture on the front cover that I think is supposed to represent Jesus. (I guess Zondervan has not taken to heart my past letters complaining about violating the second commandment with book cover art and asking them at least to be considerate of those who have conscientious objections to pictures of Jesus.)

If you are looking for a defense and presentation of the gospel, then this book will disappoint you. The authors’ defenses of the early Christian belief in the divine Christ could potentially gain the consent of such diverse readers as the Pope, N. T. Wright, and Bob Jones. However, Christ’s divine identity is essential to the Christian faith. Many modern versions of evangelical Christianity have an alarming habit of downplaying the person of Christ in presenting the gospel. God in Christ is presented as helping people through cancer, giving solace in sorrow, coping with life, and giving hope after death. However, a person can also (supposedly) find all of these things through New Age philosophy. Jesus tells us that eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent (John 17:3). Just as sin is relational, so salvation is relational. Instead of presenting a detached list of benefits (most of which are not even accurate), Christians must take care to present Christ to sinners, and in him all the benefits of redemption. An orthodox Christology alone does not present the gospel; it must be accompanied by an equally orthodox presentation of redemption as accomplished and applied. However, we must remember that we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. The authors of *How God Became Jesus* at least defend the foundation on which we must do this.



Ryan M. McGraw

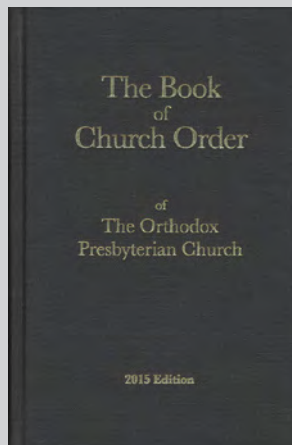
Unfaithful scholars have typically distorted or even undermined the faith of a generation of Christians by having a bad influence on those who have become their teachers. Ehrman aims at the people directly. This book meets Ehrman on a level playing field and disarms him successfully. Ehrman's assault on the New Testament witness to Christ's deity is not the first one to get into print, and it will not be the last. But we must continue to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. This book is part of Christ's provision to enable his church to do so.

The reviewer is the pastor of First OPC in Sunnyvale, Calif. How God Became Jesus is published by Zondervan (paperback, 236 pages, list price \$16.99).



BCO 2015

The 2015 edition of *The Book of Church Order* is now available. BCO 2015 includes all revisions effective January 1, 2015. It features a new preface, two changes to the Form of Government, and a few corrections. It will be up to date until at least 2020.



Every officer in the OPC should have a copy of *The Book of Church Order*. It contains our standards of government, discipline, and worship—together with suggested forms to be used in connection with the Book of Discipline and at particular services (the solemnization of marriage, the funeral service and interment, and the service of thanksgiving for a church building) and the recommended curriculum for ministerial preparation in the OPC.

Copies of this book may be ordered for \$10.00 at store.opc.org (using a credit card and PayPal) or at CCEsec@opc.org or 215-935-1023 (to be billed).

ABCs of PRESBYTERIANISM

The Priesthood of Every Believer

Larry Wilson

No sooner do we mention church officers (such as ministers of the Word) than someone protests, "Wait! Don't you believe in 'the priesthood of every believer'?"

Well, in fact, we affirm not only the *priesthood* of every believer, but also the *prophethood* and the *kingship* of every believer (cf. 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:5–6; Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:1–4). In union with Christ, by his Spirit, every believer is at the same time a prophet, a priest, and a king (cf. Heidelberg Catechism 31–32).

As a *prophet*, each believer knows the living and true God. He also makes him known, confessing his name to others. As a *priest*, he has access to God. He offers all that he is and has as a living sacrifice to the Lord. He has the privilege of praying for himself and others. As a *king*, he learns self-control. He fights against sin and the devil. And he implements God's Word in practice. Each believer does these things not only within the church but also in his daily walk within his vocation and stations in the world. This is the office of Christian, the *general office of believer*.

As the OPC's Form of Government puts it:

The power which Christ has committed to his church is not vested in the special officers alone, but in the whole body. All believers are endowed with the Spirit and called of Christ to join in the worship, edification, and witness of the church which grows as the body of Christ fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplies, according to the working in due measure of each part. The power of believers in their general office includes the right to acknowledge and desire the exercise of the gifts and calling of the special offices. The regular exercise of oversight in a particular congregation is discharged by those who have been called to such work by vote of the people. (III:1)

Because believers hold the general office of Christian, all communicant church members are involved in selecting special officers for the church.

Out of the Mouth . . .

We were teaching our son Calvin, 2, many new things, including the Children's Catechism and the American presidents. When asked the catechism question, "Who were our first parents?" Calvin answered, "John Adams."

—Tricia Peters
Valencia, Calif.

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

USING OUR CATECHISMS IN KARAMOJA

// DAVID A. OKKEN



David Okken with Maruk as he reads the Bible aloud during Clinic staff devotions

Being Presbyterians, we appreciate the value of our catechisms. We never want to compromise our conviction that the Bible is our highest standard, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Yet, we know that solidly biblical catechisms are wonderfully useful tools. In our churches, as well as in our homes, they have helped shape our knowledge of the Scriptures and have aided us in the instruction of our children as we have sought to impart unto them those things that we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of us.

Fifteen years ago, when the OP Uganda Mission first came to Karamoja, we knew that a tremendous opportunity was before us. In this region and in this tribal group, there was no established Reformed and Presbyterian church. In taking up labors here, we knew that we would be working to plant one. We looked forward to a day when a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating Reformed church would be worshipping and serving the Lord Jesus Christ in this place. Of necessity, then, part of our work would be to instruct believers in the doctrines of our Westminster Standards. And since the majority of the population does not know English, we knew that we would need to make those standards available in the Karimojong language.

Since then, our efforts have focused primarily on preaching and teaching from the Bible. Of course, at our Nakaale church plant, we have preached through the Scriptures. We have done this in our evangelistic outreach work as well. Appreciating the usefulness of storytelling in this culture, we have for years mainly taught Bible stories. It has been wonderful to work through the Scriptures and invite our hearers to consider the wondrous things that God has done. We have sought to saturate this area with the Word of God by presenting these stories in villages throughout our area. And we have sought to show how all these stories point us to Jesus—his life, death,

and resurrection. Indeed, the stories are all his story! Each story is a call to repentance and faith in him.

However, we have not neglected the use of our secondary standards. Years ago we did some teaching from the Westminster Confession in a local Pentecostal church in Namalu. At times, the teaching was well appreciated, but at other times less so. We also used it as part of an eldership training class. Studying the confessional doctrines and the Scriptures from which they emerge, one brother expressed his approval by exclaiming, “This is the real word!”

We have also made use of the catechisms. Their biblical doctrines are clearly seen, for example, in the booklet that we created years ago for use in evangelistic outreaches, *The Gospel for Karamoja*. We have also taught through parts or all of the Shorter Catechism in various contexts, including: morning devotions with the Clinic staff, ministry to students in the local schools (initiated by our former teammate, missionary associate Amy Wright [née DeWit], who was also teaching the Catechism to our friend, Dengel Joyce), and adult Sunday school at church.

The adult Sunday school class, which was held a number of years ago, turned out to be quite a project. We worked our way through the entire Shorter Catechism, taking one or two questions per week and translating the material into the Karimojong language in preparation for each lesson. By the end of the class, we had the entire Catechism in Karimojong, at least in a first draft. We knew that much more work would be required if it were one day to be published. That project sat on the back burner for some years. It was resurrected more recently, as missionary associate Christopher Verdick has been helping us work on materials that we would like to see published.

In fact, just a month ago, we decided to utilize questions 31–35 of the Shorter Catechism for some of our village Bible study teaching. For these particular lessons, we did not set aside the Bible story approach. Rather, we combined Bible

storytelling with catechizing. These lessons use a Bible story to illustrate the particular teaching (e.g., effectual calling, justification, adoption, or sanctification). The lessons have also been useful in helping instruct our preschool (Karamoja Education Outreach, or KEO) teachers in the biblical doctrine of salvation.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism in Karimojong is still a work in process—and quite a challenging one at that. In so many cases, the Karimojong language does not have a precise word to render accurately the meaning of a particular theological term. For example, in Karimojong there appears to be no word for “effectual,” as in “effectual calling.” After struggling to find the best translation, the literal rendering in Karimojong was something like “the call which works completely.” When the translation is not perfect, it will require extra care in teaching the concepts. And, of course, the official language of Uganda is English. Even with a completed Karimojong text in hand, the church will continue to make use of the English translation.

Some months back, with the Shorter Catechism project ongoing, we received an excellent suggestion from a brother who mentioned how useful the Children’s Catechism had proven to be to the work in Haiti. We decided to make its translation into Karimojong a top priority. Although we could not help but feel a bit remiss for not having thought of trying this much earlier on, it is wonderful how the Lord was preparing for this way back in our first days in Karamoja. It was our first Clinic missionary nurse, Kristie Freeman (née Scott), on whose heart the Lord had placed a burden for teaching the Children’s Catechism to a few of the young schoolboys in our midst way back in 2002. I still remember so fondly hearing her work with them each Lord’s day before worship right outside our living room window. Well, one of those young boys was

Lokwii David. With nurse Kristie’s faithful tutoring, Lokwii managed to memorize the entire Children’s Catechism in English. Now, fourteen years later, Lokwii is by far our best translator.

Having grown up around the Mission, Lokwii’s English is excellent, as is his grasp of theological concepts. His memory of and love for that First Catechism made him the natural choice to be the one tasked with putting it all into Karimojong. He completed it with zeal and efficiency! Christopher Verdick has worked on putting it into a good format for publication. Even as the work was being done, word reached someone from the (Anglican) Church of Uganda, who contacted us expressing interest in what we were doing. We pray that this project will soon come to fruition, and that it will be of tremendous use in the building of Christ’s church in Karamoja. We even plan this summer, Lord willing, to host a short-term missionary team from the Presbytery of Southern California. We pray that their ministry with us will help promote the use of catechisms in Karamoja. As the hunger for such resources grows, may it pave the way for a welcoming of the Shorter Catechism and even the Larger Catechism and Confession of Faith. It would be a huge project to get all these materials translated into Karimojong, but God is great!

As you pray for the church in Karamoja, please pray that our Lord would bless and use our efforts to make these Reformed confessional and catechetical materials available to our Karimojong brothers and sisters. May they greatly help the people of God as they grow in the knowledge of him who, for his own glory, made them and takes care of them. May they increasingly learn about loving him and doing what he commands. By God’s grace in Christ Jesus, may we and the Karimojong together, more and more, realize our chief end of glorifying God and enjoying him forever!



David Okken (center) teaching a Bible lesson to those who will be teaching it in the villages

GOOD STEWARDS OF GOD'S VARIED GRACE

// JOEL D. FICK

When I think of a steward, the first thing that comes to mind are the Stewards of Gondor in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. They wore no crown and held no scepter; a plain white rod served as the emblem of their office. They did not sit on the throne, but on a simple chair at the lowest level of the platform. They were not to take to themselves any symbol belonging to the king, and they swore an oath to use their office and their gifts to serve the people of Gondor in the king's stead "until he shall return." All of the symbols of their office were meant to remind both themselves and the people that they were stewards. In fact, the very seal of their office was inscribed "Servant of the King."

A steward is a servant, but he has been entrusted with the responsibility to faithfully manage the resources or the affairs of his master. Peter employs this figure of a steward to encourage us to use the gifts that our Lord has committed to our charge for his own good purposes. He says:

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, *as good stewards of God's varied grace*: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10–11)

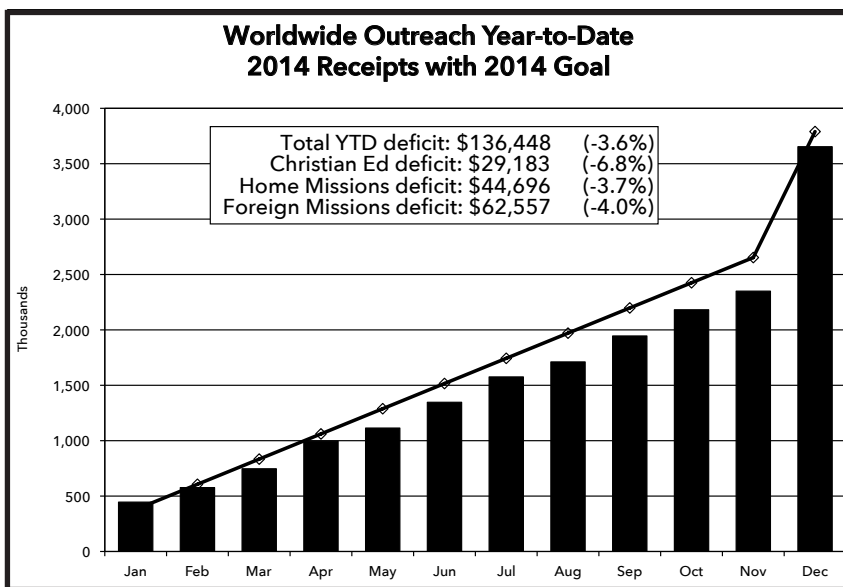
When we think of God's salvation, we are meant to think not only of the forgiveness of our sins, but also of the way in which God renews us in righteousness and holiness. Part of that work of renewal is the way in which God takes useless sinners and transforms us into useful servants in his kingdom. As Peter

says, he makes us "stewards of his varied grace," for "each has received a gift."

Whether we realize it or not, our King has committed to each and every one of us "varied" gifts or abilities that he desires to be employed for his glory and for the good of his people. Peter seems to teach us that these "varied" gifts fall into one of two big categories: speaking and serving. Some, like pastors, teachers, and evangelists, have gifts of "speaking," and they are to speak "as one who speaks oracles of God." Most of God's people have gifts that fall into the category of "serving"; they are to serve "by the strength that God supplies." Whether that service is in hospitality or helps, giving or mercy, they are to serve "by the strength that *God supplies*." Here is a marvelous truth! God not only endows his people with gifts, but also empowers the gifts that he endows. "All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Cor. 12:11).

These endowed and empowered gifts of the King are meant to be employed for his purposes. They are not given for self-fulfillment or self-aggrandizement; rather, they are given that we might "serve one another." A "good steward of God's varied grace" is one who remembers that he is but a servant seeking to do the will of the King "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." So let us (like those Stewards of Gondor), as "good stewards of God's varied grace," use these gifts to serve our King by serving his people "until he shall return." As we serve our King in this way, our stewardship resounds in doxology: "To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

The author is the pastor of Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Fla.



FEBRUARY

1. Pray for **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan, as they return to the U.S. later this month, following more than thirty-five years of missionary service in Japan. / **Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Praise God for Omega OPC's vibrant outreach committee. / **Jeff (and Diane) Downs**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Orland Park, Ill.
2. **Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, Calif. Pray that many people will attend Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church's new Sunday evening Bible study in Luke. / **Kaz and Katie Yaegashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray that the message of salvation will reach many of the people of Japan. / Pray that Great Commission Publications' **Customer Service Department** will be able to serve customers efficiently during their computer software transition.
3. Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. Pray for continued follow-up with contacts made through Christmas outreach activities. / **Greg and Stella Hoadley**, Fargo, N.Dak. Pray that God would bless Grace OPC with additional families. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator.
4. **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, Tex. Pray for a more central meeting location for San Antonio Reformed Church. / **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray that new members of the ladies' Bible study will come to a clear understanding of their need for Christ. / Navy chaplain **Tim (and Janine) Power** (deployed).
5. **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for continued growth and spiritual development in the church in L'viv. / Pray for **Lacy Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast, as he visits mission works and organized congregations in the region. / Pray that **churches will apply** for a summer or yearlong intern for 2015 by the February 27 deadline.
6. **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray for Hillsdale OPC as the congregation works through the particularization process. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for Ben as he leads St-Marc Church in biblical worship. / **Andrew (and Samantha) Fortenberry**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
7. Pray that the Lord would provide for the needs of our retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Greet Rietkerk, Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. / Pray for Home Missions staff administrator **Sean Gregg**. / Navy chaplains **John (and Linda) Carter**.
8. **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Davenport, Iowa. Pray that Sovereign Grace OPC will be completely dependent on the Lord for their needs going forward. / Tentmaker missionary **T. L. L.**, Asia. Pray for the teachers at the university as they prepare for a new semester of classes. / Pray for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he visits seminaries.
9. **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. F. as he mentors future church leaders for their country. / **Mika and Christina Edmondson**, Grand Rapids, Mich. Pray that there will be spiritual maturity, faithful gospel proclamation and outreach, a healthy membership process, and healthy births at New City Fellowship. / **James Jordan**, yearlong intern at Church of the Covenant in Hackettstown, N.J.
10. **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, Fla. Pray that the Lord would provide a more permanent meeting place for Naples Presbyterian Church (OPC). / **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia (on furlough). Pray for Mike's safe travel as he speaks at churches in California this week. / Pray for stated clerk **Ross Graham** as he works with the Committee on Arrangements to plan for an efficient registration process at the 2015 General Assembly at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.
11. Pray for our missionary associates in Asia: **J. B., C. B., T. DeJ.**, and **T. D.** / **Jonathan and Lauryn Shishko**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that visitors to Reformation Presbyterian Church will desire to join the congregation in communicant fellowship. / **Roberto (and Irma) Quiñones**, yearlong intern at Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana in San Juan, P.R.
12. **Phil Strong**, Lander, Wyo. Pray that members of Grace Reformed Fellowship will have a growing delight in the Lord and a love for others. / **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would grant them health and strength for their labors. / Diaconal Ministries administrator **David Nakhla**. Pray that Christ would be glorified through the ministry of mercy carried out by OPC deacons.
13. **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would provide additional personnel to assist Jim at the clinic. / **Ron and Carol Beabout**, Gaithersburg, Md. Pray for God's Spirit to direct and empower the gospel witness of Trinity Reformed Church. / Pray for **Linda Foh**, OPC.org website technical assistant.
14. **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray that God would bless the witness of Christ Covenant



Eric and Donna Hausler

Presbyterian Church and add new families. / Pray for our missionary associates in Uganda: **Erika Bulthuis**, **Taryn Dieckmann**, and **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**. / Pray for the work of **Lou Ann Shafer**, music editor for the Psalter-Hymnal Committee.

- 15. Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for Eric as he encourages the pastors and elders of the OPCU in their labors. / **Jeremiah and Elizabeth Montgomery**, State College, Pa. Pray that members of Resurrection OPC will have spiritual conversations with people seeking God. / *Ordained Servant* staff: **Greg Reynolds**, editor, and **Diane Olinger**, proofreader.
- 16. Jim Bosgraf**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest. Pray for Jim as he give counsel to organizing pastors and to overseeing sessions. / **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the witness in the villages where Bob and his crew are drilling wells. / Pray for **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
- 17. David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Praise God for a good number of people interested in joining the church. / **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago (downtown), Ill. Pray that God would bring new people to Gospel Life Presbyterian Church. / **Jeffrey (and Maryfrances) Carter**, yearlong intern at Calvary OPC in Glenside, Pa.

- 18. Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, Ky. Pray that the Lord would bless Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church's outreach and evangelism efforts. / Pray for missionary associate **Leah Hopp's** community health care ministry in the villages around Nakaale, Uganda. / *New Horizons* cover designer **Chris Tobias** and proofreader **Sarah Pederson**.



Jay and Andrea Bennett

- 19.** Pray for **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa, as the new semester begins at Mukhanyo Theological College. / **Tom and Martha Albaugh**, Pittsburgh, Pa. Pray that attendees of Redeemer OPC Mission's outreach events will come to worship. / Army chaplain **Graham (and Carla) Harbman**.
- 20.** Pray for Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for Mark as he carries out his preaching and teaching responsibilities in the church in Montevideo. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries administrative assistant.
- 21. Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the process of applying for residency permits will go smoothly. / **Mike and Katy Myers**, Royston, Ga. Pray that Heritage Presbyterian Church will use its new,

prominent location to be a lampstand in Royston. / **Pat Clawson**, *New Horizons* editorial assistant and CCE secretary.

- 22. Christopher and Ann Malamisuro**, Cincinnati, Ohio. Pray that local families that have visited Good Shepherd OPC will begin attending regularly. / Pray for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he reports to the Committee meeting this week. / **Jim Scott**, *New Horizons* managing editor and CCE publications coordinator.
- 23. Christopher and Della Chelpka**, Tucson, Ariz. Pray that those who have expressed interest in membership will join Covenant OPC. / Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as the Committee begins two days of meetings. / **Matthew (and Melinda) Cole**, yearlong intern at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Bellmawr, N.J.
- 24.** Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Abigail Yates** during this busy week of Committee meetings. / **Carlos and Diana Cruz**, Ponce, P.R. Pray for the continued development of the ministry of Mission de Ponce, OPC. / **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director.
- 25.** Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray that more children will come to church to hear the gospel and come to saving faith. / **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray that Verde Valley Reformed Chapel's new location will improve their visibility in the community. / **Matthew (and Trina) Patton**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
- 26. Jonathan and Kristin Moersch**, Capistrano Beach, Calif. Pray that Trinity Presbyterian Church will find a place to meet on Sunday evenings and throughout the week. / **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for Heather as she homeschools the children. / Part-time staff accountant **Doug Watson**.
- 27.** Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray that God would use the preaching of his Word to bring people to faith in Christ. / **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Huntington, N.Y. Pray that God would bless the work of Trinity Church's newly formed diaconate. / **Robert (and Adelinda) Canode**, yearlong intern at Providence Presbyterian Church in Pflugerville, Tex.
- 28. Robert and Christy Arendale**, Houston, Tex. Pray that recent visitors to Cornerstone OPC will become more involved in the life of the church. / Pray for missionary associates **Mary York**, Czech Republic; **Jennifer Nelson**, Quebec, Canada; and **Allison Zylstra**, Uruguay. / **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator.



Abigail Yates

OUR YOUNG MINISTERS

[Continued from page 9]

evangelists, so they have difficulty growing, which means they don't have money for evangelists. This is a vicious cycle, which might be broken by calling an evangelist, which will hopefully draw in more believers and unbelievers alike, which will then cover the cost of the call. If not, then the evangelist should be encouraged to look for another call.

But aren't we placing our young, vulnerable ministers in a precarious position by offering such tenuous calls? I imagine most of our young ministers, like me, would jump at such opportunities. In many cases, they are struggling with finances and facing uncertain futures—why not give them an opportunity to fight for their calling alongside their fight for their family's well-being? Your congregation can follow Sterling OPC's example—pay the young minister what you can afford, with the promise (placed clearly within his call) that his salary will increase in accordance with whatever growth God gives your church.

2. Offer more part-time calls to young ministers.

In that last vein, churches need not offer only full-time calls to our young ministers. We all understand that we wish to keep our ministers "free from worldly care," but this is not always practicable. Most young ministers would gladly take a part-time call over no call at all, and further develop their gifts under an experienced pastor while also earning supplemental income.

This would also be a gift to our solo pastors. I imagine that some of you out there may wonder what a pastor even does, that he would require or greatly benefit from a fellow laborer in the ministry. He is likely pouring out his whole life into preaching, teaching, shepherding, counseling, visiting the sick, building bonds of fellowship, and trying to reach the lost. Our solo pastors are liable to fatigue, if not burnout, because their early ambitions to be used to grow Christ's church are often thwarted by the need to focus on the more basic ministry demands.

The investment of say, \$20,000, in a part-time call to a young minister not only gives him an opportunity to hone his gifts under the oversight of a more experienced minister, and alleviates the pressure placed upon the solo pastor, but also changes the often defensive posture of the church into an offensive posture. For years, Sterling OPC was hanging on for dear life without a minister, but now they have two, with the belief that, by God's grace, the church will not simply endure, but grow.

3. Promote and encourage young ministers to enter the military or civilian chaplaincy, on either a full-time or part-time basis.

This final means of provision is a particular passion of

mine. While the list of vacant pulpits in the OPC (and to a lesser extent, the PCA) is pretty sparse, there is still a great need for military and civilian chaplains. In my experience as a young Army Reserve chaplain, there are few callings that provide as much ministerial training and excitement for the young minister as the chaplaincy.

While I was an intern at Grace OPC, I spent one weekend a month learning how to initiate conversations with unformed strangers at Fort Belvoir, as well as leading chapel services that brought the gospel to believers and unbelievers alike. I also went away for two weeks of intensive training and found myself engaging in presuppositional apologetics with a cynical agnostic, a naive rationalist, and a disillusioned former fundamentalist—all at once! I found myself consistently counseling broken soldiers late into the night. Contrary to popular perception, I have never been hindered in the least from proclaiming the gospel in chapel services or in the counseling of soldiers. The plentiful opportunities for evangelism, counseling, and spontaneous chapel services have made me much more effective in the regular pastoral ministry.

Sterling OPC, recognizing how few churches are willing to call Reserve chaplains, despite their additional ministerial training, crafted my call around my chaplain work. They recognized that this dual calling is mutually beneficial to the Army and to the OPC. Thus, they were prepared for my deployment to Afghanistan in 2013. They cared for my family and prayed for me as I engaged in the difficult missionary work of a deployed chaplain. After being deployed on my mission field, I came back more seasoned and better equipped to shepherd and counsel. And, by God's grace, I continue to provide for my family with a part-time church salary and part-time Army salary.

A Word to Young Ministers

While I have offered a few ways for our churches to better care for our young ministers, I close with a call to our young ministers: employ yourself in Christ's ministry. Do not use the lack of vacant pulpits as an excuse to forsake the ministry and let your gifts atrophy. There are creative callings out there, like my own, and always plenty of opportunities for pulpit supply. Beyond that, there are always needs in various chaplaincies. If you do not have a call, join the military! I have watched our Lord melt Roman Catholic hearts with the doctrines of grace and add depth to Pentecostal enthusiasm with Christ-centered expositions of Scripture. I have witnessed baby believers hungrily devouring God's Word like honey. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Avoid making excuses and employ yourself for the sake of Christ and his kingdom, dear brothers.

The author is an evangelist at Sterling OPC in Sterling, Va., and a chaplain with the U.S. Army Reserves. He and his wife, Lindsey, have two children: Seth (twenty months) and Tabitha (due in February).

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

CHURCH ORGANIZED IN GASTONIA, N.C.

Hank L. Belfield

At a special meeting held on Friday, December 5, the Presbytery of the Southeast organized Reformation OPC in Gastonia, North Carolina, as a new and separate congregation of the OPC. Rev. Joseph “Joby” Fowler, Jr. was installed as the pastor. Kelvin Monteith and Michael Cloy were installed as the ruling elders of the church, and Spencer Grigg was ordained and installed as the deacon.

The organizational service was well attended. Rev. Nathan Trice (pastor of Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C.) preached the sermon. Rev. Cliff Blair (pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, N.C.) gave the charge to the officers. Rev. Lacy Andrews (regional home missionary of the Presbytery) gave the charge to the congregation. A time of fellowship and refreshments followed.

The congregation meets for worship at the facility of Our Saviour Lutheran Church, 725 Gastonia Technology Pkwy., Dallas, NC 28034.

We rejoice over the Lord’s blessing in establishing this new congregation. And we look forward to what the Lord will continue to do through this ministry in the Dallas/Gastonia, North Carolina area. [For more, see p. 11—*editor*]

UPDATE

CHURCHES

• The historic First Congregational Church of Merrimack, New Hampshire, was received into the OPC by the Presbytery of New York and New England on December 12 as **First Church of Merrimack, New Hampshire**. Allen C. Tomlinson, having been installed by the Presbytery as pastor there in 1995, as an OP minister laboring out of bounds, was recognized as pastor of First Church without needing to be reinstalled.

• On December 5, **Reformation OPC** in Gastonia, N.C., was organized as a separate congregation by the Presbytery of the Southeast.

• **Sovereign Grace Reformed Church** in Doniphan, Mo., was organized as a separate congregation by the Presbytery of the Midwest on November 17.

MINISTERS

• On December 5, **Joseph H. “Joby” Fowler, Jr.**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Reformation OPC in Gastonia, N.C.

• **Kent W. Harding**, formerly the organizing pastor, was installed as pastor of Sovereign Grace Reformed Church in Doniphan, Mo., on November 17.

• **Jack K. Unangst, Jr.**, was transferred by the Presbytery of New York and New England to the Presbytery of the Southwest of the PCA on October 21, and he has retired from active duty as a chaplain.

• On December 5, the Presbytery of Ohio dissolved the ministerial relationship between **Sacha Walicord** and Knox Presbyterian Church in Mount Vernon, Ohio, and determined to send a certificate of standing on his behalf to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the U.S., and remove his name from the rolls contingent upon his reception by the RPCUS.

LETTERS

MISSION FIELD AT HOME

Editor:

In the obituary for Mrs. Grace Haney (December 2014), I appreciated the comment about this church mother finding “a mission field in her home.” That was an encouraging reminder not to take for granted the seemingly simple, ordinary means by which the Lord can use us.

Sarah Dautel
San Diego, Calif.

REVIEWS

The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights, by J. V. Fesko. Crossway, 2014. Paperback, 441 pages, list price \$28.00. Reviewed by OP minister Robert Letham.

Our understanding of the Westminster Assembly has been greatly extended in recent years by Chad Van Dixhoorn’s edition of the Assembly’s minutes



and papers (2004, 2012), Muller and Ward on Scripture and worship (2007), Letham (2009), Van Dixhoorn’s commentary on the Confession (2014), and the explosion of Internet access to early modern printed books. Ministers and others leading classes on the Westminster Standards cannot ignore this development if they want to place them in context and teach them accurately.

Now we have Fesko to thank for a thorough treatment of the wider theological context of the Assembly as it impacts these documents. Drawing on a copious reservoir of writings of Reformed theologians, as well as Assembly members and contemporaries, he provides a rich context for the Confession, catechisms, and directories. Fesko’s scholarship is impressive,

Correction

In the October issue, p. 16, near the bottom of column 1, the text should read: “These tree-like pillars ... were not part of the tabernacle.” They were part of the temple.

and his judgments are judicious. The level may be beyond the reach of many church members, but those who teach and preach should use it and will benefit from it.

There are many excellent insights, too many to mention here. I found of particular interest Fesko's persuasive argument on whether the Assembly intended the Confession to set forth a particular view on the role of the active obedience of Christ in justification or leave it ambiguous, so as to accommodate those who differed (pp. 209–28).

Fesko repeatedly and correctly stresses the diversity of views on most theological topics, which are clearly expressed in the minutes and are represented in the background literature. From this, his remarks about the nature of confessions and the task of the Assembly should be read and pondered widely. Within what were considered to be acceptable bounds of Reformed doctrine, a wider range of views was permitted than many today might suppose. In



At the organizational service of Cornerstone OPC in Jersey Village (NW Houston) on October 17: back row: Andrew Moody (pastor, San Antonio), Jim Cassidy (pastor, Austin), Phil Hodson (pastor, Longview), Glen Clary (pastor, Austin), elder Jeff Levy, Adam York (pastor, Kingwood), John Johnson (pastor, Tyler); front row (newly installed Cornerstone officers): elder Randy Perkins, elder Paul McDonald, Pastor Robert Arendale, and deacon Drew Barnes (newly ordained)



At the ordination and installation service of Jeremy Boothby as pastor of Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church in Amarillo, Tex., Nov. 7: back row: Ron Kohler (Westview Christian Church), Jon Kohler (Amarillo College), elders Kerry Rice, Craig Wallace,

and Mike Mahon, deacon Mel Huebner, Russ Baker (Westview Christian Church), deacon Rodney Betts, Bobby File (Evangelical Fellowship Church); middle row: Todd Dole (OP pastor, Norman, Okla.), elder Jesse Montgomery, Adam York (OP pastor, Kingwood,

Tex.); front row: Andrew Moody (OP pastor, San Antonio), elder John Brack, Robert Arendale (OP pastor, Jersey Village, Tex.), Scott Oliphint (Westminster Seminary), Jeremy Boothby, David Brack (retired OP minister), Lane Tipton (Westminster Seminary)

✓ Short-Term Missions

Do you receive the “S.T.O.R.M. Report,” the OPC’s monthly short-term missions newsletter, where you can find opportunities for short-term service at home or abroad, or make known your need for help with a project at your church? To receive it, visit www.opcstm.org or contact OPCShortTermMissions@opc.org.

short, the Assembly represented the variegated nature of Reformed theology at the time and was not a rigid or exclusive body.

Fesko is not as clear to my mind on the relationship between baptism and regeneration (pp. 316–19). WCF 28.1 brings the two into connection, as do comments in the debate, but he makes no reference to this. He cites Assembly member Daniel Featley on justification, but ignores his 1626 work on the subject and misses Cornelius Burgess’s 1629 book on the baptismal regeneration of elect infants—an idea that was poles apart from the *ex opere operato* Roman Catholic doctrine.

Finally, Fesko smuggles in the currently popular two-kingdom idea when discussing the church and the civil magistrate (pp. 302–14). He relies heavily on George Gillespie, a Scottish commissioner to the Assembly (but not a member of it), who claimed that the incarnate Christ is mediator and head of the church, but king over creation as the eternal Son in the Trinity. However, Matthew 28:16–20, Hebrews 1:1–4, and Revelation 1:5–6 and 5:1ff. indicate that it is Christ *as risen from the dead* who is the ruler of the kings on earth, and who, *as the Lamb that was slain*, opens the seals and governs the history of the world. Following Gillespie, Fesko says that Christ’s mediatorial kingdom is to end, in contrast to the Nicene Creed’s affirmation that the kingdom of the crucified, risen, and ascended Son shall have no end. There are wider Christological questions here; we cannot divide the person of Christ. Moreover, Fesko ignores Gillespie’s commitment to establishment and the Christian commonwealth, and does not cite a single Assembly member in

support of his view.

That apart, this is a contribution of great value, for which we stand in Fesko’s debt.

***Fools Rush In Where Monkeys Fear to Tread: Taking Aim at Everyone*, by Carl R. Trueman. P&R Publishing, 2012. Paperback, 240 pages, list price \$14.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Roth Reason.**

This book by Carl Trueman, in spite of its laborious title and unflattering cover, is a laugh-a-minute dissection of American politics, church, and pop culture. The author is professor of church history at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, and pastor of Cornerstone OPC in Ambler, Pennsylvania. His quick wit and native British sensibilities give him a unique insight into the American scene not found in many other contemporary authors.

This book is the third in a series of published blog posts written for the website *Reformation 21*, and it has all of the benefits and drawbacks of such a collection. It has the feel of being written for the Web, as it consists of disconnected, short musings on narrow topics. As a result, I would recommend taking it in small doses.

Trueman’s favorite topics to critique include Christian celebrities, adolescent spirituality, the misuse of the Internet, and the irony of self-promotion. Along the way, he quotes surprising sources to support his insights: Kierkegaard, The Who, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx. He advocates controversial positions, including the virtues of laziness, middle age, and wasting time. Trueman argues that drinking beer with friends reforms the church, admits that normal church life is boring, and asserts that, despite what you may think, you aren’t special! Trueman attacks Facebook as juvenile and makes a case for why we shouldn’t care when we “hurt” people’s feelings.

Part of the appeal of the book is that it is filled with humor. British colloquialisms and antiquated cultural references

pepper every page (there’s even a glossary in the back!).

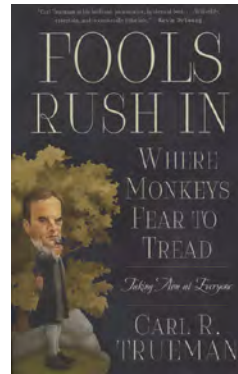
But the book isn’t all humor and wit—it is written with a pastor’s heart. The real meat of the book is the biblical insights that are set in contrast to all of the fluff and sin that pervade our lives. Trueman also shows the importance of a historical awareness for understanding the present. Too often movements and individuals are overhyped and given more credit or blame than they deserve. I appreciate Trueman’s emphasis on how the Lord normally grows his church—not through big conferences and high-flying preachers, but by little people plodding away in unheard-of parts of the world. For me, one of the most valuable aspects of the book is the inclusion of a series of chapters on Roman Catholicism, presenting the most balanced

criticism *and* appreciation of it that I have ever read.

I find it refreshing that Trueman doesn’t pull any punches in his criticisms. He attacks head-on the big phenomena that all of us get sucked into: the American penchant for pragmatism, “mega-everything,” and style over substance. Trueman has been dubbed “the anti-celebrity celebrity” because of his willingness to criticize movements of which he is also a part. After all, he is famous himself. It is left to the reader to decide whether this is possible. Can he successfully pull off a critique of American cults of personality without creating one himself?

***Covenanted Uniformity in Religion: The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners upon the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly*, by Wayne R. Spear. Reformation Heritage Books, 2013. Hardback, 240 pages, list price \$40.00. Reviewed by OP pastor L. Charles Jackson.**

Dr. Spear is professor emeritus of systematic theology at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. The title of his book derives from a phrase in the Solemn League and Covenant regarding the work of the Scottish



Titus 2 Seminar Beauty: God's Gift, God's Glory

February 21 • Vienna, Va.

Speakers: Kelli Clifford, Sadie Morris, Melissa Hensen

Venue: Grace Presbyterian Church, 2381 Cedar Lane, Vienna, VA 22180

Time: February 21, 12:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Light refreshments will be served.

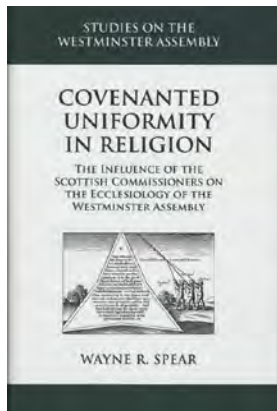
Most suited for ages 13 and older or with parental consent.

For further information, contact Lucy Green at lucyanngreen6@gmail.com.

commissioners as they joined the ongoing labors of the Westminster Assembly in 1643. This study originated as Spear's doctoral dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh.

As the book jacket notes, Spear focuses primarily on the Form of Church Government. He begins by surveying the historical setting and explaining how the assembly conducted its business. Then, following the order of the Form of Church Government, he traces each significant expression from its origin in a committee, through its debate and modification in the Assembly, to its final placement in the document. Spear evaluates the significance of the Form of Government by considering the responses it received in England and Scotland. The Scots failed to achieve some of their most cherished goals in the Assembly debates, which demonstrates that the Assembly operated as a truly deliberative body. This book provides an accurate snapshot of the Westminster Assembly as it debated the proper structure and function of the Christian church.

It may seem unimportant to know about the debates that went on behind the scenes, but it's actually quite practical, especially for pastors who will be asked



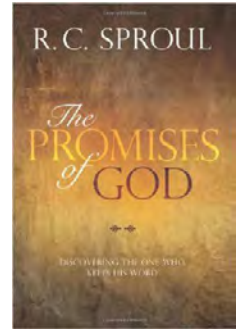
the very same questions that were debated at Westminster. If you have already thought through your answers with differing views in mind, then you will be better equipped to humbly help others work their way through the same questions. Many pastors, for instance, have been asked why only ministers can administer the sacraments. Or what's the difference between an elder and a deacon? Although this book has a definitely academic feel, it provides accessible answers to such ecclesiastical questions and thus can really help the church wrestle with questions about church government.

The history of the Westminster Assembly shows that there was a noteworthy amount of diversity among the views of the commissioners. For instance, the Assembly actually voted by one vote to ordain women to the office of deacon. The Assembly's editors dropped this from the final document, but it reveals a genuine diversity among those whom many of us consider the fathers of our Presbyterian heritage. Spear also conveys what may seem like a surprising diversity about the nature of classical assemblies or what we call a presbytery. This calls us to a sense of modesty as we continue to discuss and to think about some of the same issues today. Too often we are quick to dismiss those with whom we disagree, failing to remember that similar differences existed in the Westminster Assembly—an assembly that we sometimes consider the depository of Reformed theological wisdom.

I highly recommend this book to pastors and church libraries everywhere as a helpful reference for questions about church government.

The Promises of God: Discovering the One Who Keeps His Word, by R.C. Sproul. David C. Cook, 2013. Hardback, 260 pages, list price \$19.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Nathan Holloway.

The Promises of God, by R.C. Sproul, is an introductory study of the covenants. Each chapter includes a study guide summarizing the main points, study questions, and related readings in Robertson's *Christ of the Covenants* and Vos's *Biblical Theology*.



Three weaknesses need to be noted. First, in chapter 3, Sproul's discussion of interpreting mandates of Scripture as cultural issues seems to have been randomly inserted. A second weakness in that chapter is his use of head coverings as an example of interpreting mandates as cultural concerns. He fails to note that the creation mandate was male headship in the home, not women's head coverings. A third weakness is his handling of Abraham's justification. Sproul states that Abraham's faith was "faith in the promise" (p. 120). However, God gave revelation "sufficient to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah" (LC 34). Justification is never received through faith in a vague idea, but faith in a person.

Despite those weaknesses, the book provides a good overall introduction to the covenants. Sproul defines a biblical covenant as "an agreement that rests on God's sovereignty with divine sanction" (p. 22). The covenants, then, must have begun in eternity with the covenant of redemption, which reveals "unity of purpose" (p. 28) within the Trinity. Knowing that God has an eternal purpose, we can understand his dealings with man in history, beginning with the covenant of works given to Adam. Because man failed in the covenant of works, Genesis 3:15 initiates the covenant of grace. In the Noahic covenant, the first covenant within the covenant of grace, "God promises to preserve His creation, for it is the context for His plan of redemption" (p. 106).

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

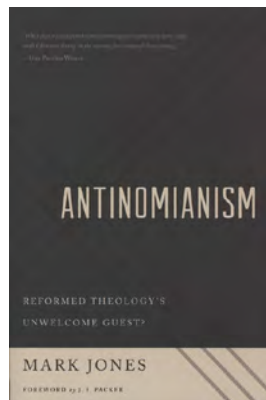
The Abrahamic covenant covers justification, the full dependence on God to fulfill the covenant, and the sign of the covenant. The events of Genesis 15 show that God takes on the responsibility of fulfilling the covenant. Circumcision is tied in with baptism, in that both are “signs of cleansing” (p. 141).

In the Mosaic covenant, Moses “anticipates the ministry of Jesus himself” (p. 155), especially as a mediator. The author points out that the exodus preceded the giving of the law, showing that the Decalogue was given to be a rule of life for people already in a covenant relationship, while at the same time serving the redemptive purpose of revealing sin and driving people to Christ. The “ceremonial law” contains types and shadows, which serve this end. The Davidic covenant prepares us for Christ, who is the anointed son of David. The new covenant fulfills all the former covenants as the “covenant of completion, the covenant of consummation” (p. 213).

The tone of this book is for the most part gracious and humble, providing an example of Christian maturity. This makes the book a good source for those who are new to the Reformed side and those who are sitting on the fence.

***Antinomianism*, by Mark Jones. P&R, 2013. Paperback, 176 pages, list price \$17.99. Reviewed by Pastor Jeremiah Montgomery.**

What roles do God’s law and good works play in the Christian life? In answering this question, one must avoid two dangerous errors. The first is *legalism*: the idea that good works in any sense earn or merit



eternal life. The second error is *antinomianism*: the idea that good works are in any sense optional in the Christian life. Legalism confuses justification with sanctification. Antinomianism does just the opposite. It is the latter error that provides both the target and the title for this book.

Drawing on a wide reading of historical and contemporary sources, Mark Jones does an able job of explaining and analyzing the major tenets of antinomian theology. The problem with antinomianism, Jones argues, is not that it denies any role for God’s law or good works in the Christian life. (Few antinomians would deny New Testament commands!) Rather, the problem is that antinomianism blurs the distinction between the accomplishment and the application of redemption.

Point by point, Jones argues that antinomianism so emphasizes what Christ has done *for us* that it fails to emphasize fully what Christ does *in us*. Though it sees Jesus as our Savior, it neglects him as our example of holiness (pp. 20–22). Though it cherishes Christ’s imputed righteousness in our justification, it insufficiently appreciates his infused grace in our sanctification (pp. 24–28). Though it recognizes how the law brings us to Christ, it relaxes the use of the law as a guide in following Christ (pp. 31–39). In

short, though antinomianism realizes that Christ saves us from the *guilt* of sin, it fails to wrestle comprehensively with how he also delivers us from the *power* of sin (pp. 50–53).

Jones argues that at the root of antinomianism is hermeneutical error. In interpreting the Bible, antinomianism makes justification, rather than union with Christ, its governing principle (p. 41). It leans much closer to a Lutheran law-gospel paradigm than a Reformed covenantal framework (pp. 53–56). Consequently, it comes to different conclusions and/or emphases in various practical areas, such as the role of good works, the distinctions in God’s love, and the evidences of assurance.

Overall, Mark Jones has given to the church a very useful little book. His analysis is compelling, and the chapters on good works and the love of God are immensely practical. The final chapter summarizes the issues and points the reader toward a solution: a full-orbed appreciation of Christ’s person, his work, and our union with him by faith.

Two points should be raised in conclusion. First, *Antinomianism* is an erudite book. It contains foreign-language quotations and cites an array of Puritan sources. This may have been necessary, but it limits accessibility. This is a book for the pastor’s study, not the church’s book table.

Finally, it should be noted that Jones critically engages two living NAPARC ministers by name. The book’s preface does not indicate whether or not these men were contacted directly, prior to publication. Whether such engagement is necessary may be debated. Whether it occurred should have been noted.