

NEW HORIZONS

═ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ═

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// by Peter Y. Lee

April 2018

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Pastor Jim Megchelsen opens the door to Grace OPC's
new church building in Elburn, Illinois. On the twentieth
anniversary of their first worship service, Grace held a
dedication service in their new sanctuary. (See page 20
for more details.)



WHY BE GOOD?



DENNIS E. JOHNSON // Five centuries ago, the Protestant Reformers confronted a pastoral challenge that is still with us today. Actually, the same challenge confronted the Apostle Paul in the first century. As the Preacher said, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Eccles. 1:9).

The challenge, in a nutshell, is this: “If Jesus did it all, why should I try to be good?”

In Reformation terms, we could put it this way: If we preach the good news of *sola gratia*, *sola fidei*, and *solus Christus*—that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone—and if, believing this gospel, troubled hearts are assured of God’s favor on the basis of Jesus’s flawless obedience and substitutionary death, how can pastors *motivate them to pursue holiness*, “without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14)?

In Pauline terms, the dilemma sounds like this:

Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? *Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* (Rom. 5:20–6:1, emphasis added)

Of course, the Apostle’s answer is the strongest possible negative: “By no means!” (Rom. 6:2). But we must admit that his (and the Reformers’) gospel of utterly gratuitous justification, ground-

ed wholly and solely in Jesus’s blood and righteousness and independent of our efforts at obedience, undermines some potent motivators toward holy living.

Motivated by Fear and Self-Interest

Those potent motivators are fear and self-interest, two sides of the same coin. Fear of arrest discourages law-breaking; a self-interested preference for freedom prompts compliance with legal codes. Self-interested concern for one’s own reputation fuels fear of others’ disapproval, and the combination steers one away from behavior that threatens to bring shame and toward conduct that promises to enhance one’s image.

Not surprisingly, in Paul’s day, in Calvin’s, and in ours, many pastors, alarmed at society’s drift into sensuality and decadence, invoke the powers of fear and sanctified self-interest to warn people away from the precipice of lawlessness (and its ruinous consequences) and to lure them toward the rewards of morality. First-century Pharisees scrupulously adhered not only to the Law delivered on Sinai but also to traditions developed to build a fence around God’s commands, protecting the care-

less from trespassing into forbidden territory. Some hoped that the nation’s Torah-keeping might move God to end foreign occupation. The Church of Rome charged the Reformers with propagating a presumption that lulled people into complacency in sin.

Today, much preaching draws from the Bible moral lessons for living. “Fire and brimstone” preaching is rarer than it once was. But kinder, gentler versions of “Christian” behavior-modification still send the signal that the gospel message is about achieving personal and interpersonal wellbeing through “getting our act together.” Preachers explain God’s expectations from the Law or the Prophets or the Sermon on the Mount or the Epistles’ exhortations. When they preach biblical narratives, they highlight exemplary characters to emulate and expose the “villains” to *not* emulate. Listeners leave with a list of duties (or guidelines, or suggestions) to take home and put into practice.

Other preachers, reacting against the crushing burden of legal obligation and moral example, swing to different extremes. Some ease hearers’ uneasy consciences through esteem-enhancing reassurances that God’s law is not,

after all, as demanding as it appears. Their “gospel” sympathizes with the Corinthian church’s motto, “All things are lawful for me”—a motto that the Apostle hastened to correct whenever he cited it (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23)!

Still others uphold the high bar of God’s holy law, stressing that its standard is far beyond the reach of fallen people. Their preaching focuses on God’s grace, on Christ’s redemptive accomplishment for us, and on the assurance that flows from divine mercy. Their listeners leave worship comforted (that’s good) but often complacent in patterns of selfishness and sin (that’s not good). “We cannot keep God’s law,” they reason, “but Jesus did, so we can relax and rest in his achievement, period.”

A Passion for Purity

What we hear in the Bible and in the Reformers, however, is a proclamation of good news that ignites a passion for purity. The true gospel evokes wholehearted trust *in Christ*, and because this faith is in the living Savior (not mere concurrence with theological concepts), it stirs and empowers believers to genuine love for God and neighbor. To the question, “Why be good?” it offers a deeper, stronger answer than fear or self-interest: Be good *for love of Christ*, who loved us and gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

The New Testament announces this robust reason to pursue holiness through argument and through narrative. The argument:

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.... We love because he first loved us.... By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. (1 John 4:10–11, 19; 5:2–3)

The logic is airtight: God loved us *first* and sent his son to endure the wrath that we deserve. We who receive such excessive love must therefore love

our divine Lover, expressing our love by keeping his commands and loving those whom he loves.

But love-evoked love is not merely a matter of cold logic! In the gospel’s moving narrative, we see a woman, notorious for her sin-stained lifestyle, slipping into the dining salon of an upright pillar of the Jewish community, perhaps one of many onlookers observing a semi-public banquet at which Jesus of Nazareth is the guest of honor. Eyes brimming with tears—tears not of shame but of joyful adoration—she pours perfume on the Master’s feet, showers them with her tears, and dries them with her hair. Why? She has been forgiven much, so she loves much (Luke 7:36–50).

The Reformers preached grace alone received through faith alone in Christ alone, convinced that God’s largesse of mercy evokes a love that pursues holiness with a passion that neither fear nor self-interest can match. Calvin wrote: “It is faith alone that *first* engenders love in us,” since tasting God’s goodness kindles in us love for God in return. So “the Lord freely justifies his own *in order that* he may at the same time restore them to true righteousness by sanctification of his Spirit” (*Institutes*, 3.2.41, 3.3.19, emphasis added).

The Belgic Confession (1561) affirms:

Far from making people cold toward living in a pious and holy way, this justifying faith, quite to the contrary, so works within them that apart from it they will never do a thing out of love for God but only out of love for themselves and fear of being condemned. (Chapter 24)

Heirs of the Reformation preached the same life-transforming truth in succeeding centuries: justification granted *freely* by God, through faith alone, ignites in our hearts (as no list of duties, threats, or conditions ever could) a *passion for purity*. In the seventeenth century, Edward Fisher’s *Marrow of Modern Divinity* and Walter Marshall’s *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* expressed this insight. In the eighteenth, Thomas Boston and other “Marrow Men” called the

Church of Scotland back to a gospel-driven pursuit of holiness, over against the Scylla of legalism and the Charybdis of antinomianism. (See Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ*, Crossway, 2016.) Nineteenth-century pastor Thomas Chalmers argued in his historic sermon, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection”:

The freer the gospel, the more sanctifying is the gospel; and the more it is received as a doctrine of grace, the more will it be felt as a doctrine according to godliness.... It is only when, as in the gospel, acceptance is bestowed as a present, without money and without price, that the security which man feels in God is placed beyond the reach of disturbance ... finding that the truest gladness of his heart lies in the impulse of a gratitude, by which it is awakened to the charms of a new moral existence.

In the twenty-first century, some ask if the Reformation is over, or should be. New Perspectives and Federal Visions appeal to those who are disillusioned by “easy believism” and alarmed by Christians’ growing conformity to the sensuality of a paganizing culture. Their plausible theories promise to encourage holy living by suggesting that God’s justifying verdict is bound to take into account believers’ track records of good-faith efforts over a lifetime. But if we want our preaching and pastoral counseling to serve the Holy Spirit’s purpose of effecting *heart-deep* transformation, we will stand fast in this counterintuitive insight that the Reformers learned from Jesus and his apostles: divine grace freely bestowed on the basis of Jesus’s blood and righteousness alone and the assurance of God’s fatherly smile that such grace engenders are God’s secret weapons to set hearts free from the allure of sin, from fear, and from self-interest, and to ignite a true love for the Lord, a passion for purity, and compassion for others, for Jesus’s sake. □

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RESURRECTION-BIRTH IN FIRST PETER



PETER Y. LEE // The resurrection of our blessed Savior gives us extraordinary hope of eternal life and a “joy unspeakable” as we suffer through the trials of this fallen world and face the final enemy of death. However, what we may not realize is that his resurrection also helps us to understand the nature of our salvation.

The purpose of this article is to show that, according to 1 Peter, our salvation—our new birth in Christ—is in fact a resurrection from the dead.

A New Term

In 1 Peter 1:3, Peter declares that “according to [God’s] great mercy, he has caused us to be born again.” The phrase “he has caused us to be born again” is a wordy translation of the Greek word *anagennēsas* from the verb *anagennaw*. It occurs here in 1:3 and once again in verse 23. This verb does not occur in any other book in the New Testament, nor does it occur in any Greek translations of the Old Testament. In fact, as far as scholars can tell there is no attested use of this verb in extrabiblical texts. Peter himself, then, probably coined the term.

Due to its limited usage, the precise meaning of the verb is elusive. The prefix *ana-* often accompanies Greek verbs to give a sense of repeating an act, which is why the notion of a “second” birth or a “rebirth” is the common understanding.

The immediate literary context of

1 Peter offers additional exegetical clues. Right away in 1:3, the phrase “living hope” imbues hope with a human trait. We often speak of “living” as a characteristic of organisms, not abstract concepts like hope. The reason that hope can be “alive” is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have a living hope because we focus our faith on a living Christ, a “resurrected” Christ.

The apostle stresses this theme in 2:4–10 by saying that Jesus is the “living stone.” And in our union with Christ, Peter says that we, too, are “living stones” (v. 5). As the living stone, Christ is the central foundation for constructing the temple of the New Covenant, the church. Believers are described as the raw material (“living stones”) used to build this holy dwelling.

It is truly wondrous to ponder the magnitude of what is being said in this passage. The privileged blessing that was limited to only the high priest of the Old Testament, and then only after making atonement for his sins, is now given to all God’s people in light of our

union with the resurrected Christ.

However, it is not only hope that is qualified by Jesus’s resurrection but also our birth. Whereas our hope is given the adjective “living,” our new birth is given a lexical parallel. In Christ, we have a “new-birth” (*ANA-gennaw*) because of Jesus’s resurrection (*ANA-stasis*). The birth in mind in 1 Peter 1:3, then, is to be understood as a “resurrection-birth.”

Such a notion of a “new birth” is not limited to Peter, although he is the only one to use the verb *anagennaw*. Jesus, in answer to Nicodemus’s question in John 3:3 about how one gains eternal life, says that one must be “born again” (*gennēthē anōthen*), a Greek phrase that can also be interpreted as “born from above.” In other words, this is a *spiritual* birth. First Peter gives us the historical redemptive source of our being “born from above,” namely the redemptive event of the resurrection of Christ.

Our new birth in Christ is both death to our old sinful nature and new life as a new creation in Christ. This is how Paul understands this birth imagery in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “If anyone is

in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Those united to Christ in his death and resurrection have already experienced this newness of life.

A New Identity

In our new birth, we also have a new identity. In 1 Peter 2:4–10, Peter provides a parade of glorious titles that the church can claim for herself in light of the accomplished work of Christ. He says that believers are now a holy temple where the glory presence of God dwells, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (v. 9).

In verse 10, he writes that we were once “not a people” but now we are “God’s people”; that we were once a people without mercy, but now we have received mercy.

This is an allusion to the writings of the prophet Hosea, who was called by the Lord to give rather eccentric names to his children. The names reflected divine acts of pending judgment against Israel for their violation of the Mosaic code. Hosea’s daughter was named Lo-Ruhamah, meaning “No Mercy,” and his son, Lo-Ammi, meaning “Not My People.” But, because of the amazing grace of God, Israel would not remain as people who received a covenant curse but would receive the blessings of the New Covenant; they would be called “Mercy” and “My People” (Hosea 1:6–2:1). As rebellious sinners, we also were once “No Mercy” and “Not My People,” but because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our name has been changed! We can now be called “Mercy” and “My People.”

The identity of the church is indeed a blessing. As we meditate upon our new status, it is truly a source of great comfort and joy to believers. According to Peter, we are who we are because of what God has done for us in Christ: “He has caused us to be born again” (1 Peter 1:3). Therefore, because we are now born anew, we are called to live by the specific moral standard that

is consistent with our new identity as citizens of a “holy nation” where Christ is seated as the king.

For example, he calls believers not to feud among each other, but rather to “love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (v. 22). According to Peter, the reason we can have such a godly love is because we “have been born again” (v. 23), where he uses the verb *anagennaw* for the second time. Our old self is dead and raised anew in Christ, so we can now do what was impossible before—love one another earnestly from a pure heart. In light of this new identity, believers are to put aside “all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander” (2:1). We are called to live a life of humility to various authorities and institutions in society (2:13–3:7). The old ways are dead to us because we now have a resurrection-birth.

Implications of the Resurrection-Birth

This resurrection-birth, however, comes with a price: hostility from the world that sees us with the same hatred as they saw our Savior. As Jesus taught, “the world has hated them because they are not of the world” (John 17:14). Yet we are encouraged to remember that the world only hates us because it hated Jesus first (John 15:18). His suffering now becomes our suffering.

The only other possible alternative to facing antagonism with this world is to make peace with it by becoming one with it. “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own,” Jesus says in John 15:19. If the “believer” compromises to become a like-minded friend of the world, he or she would be welcomed by the world as an ally to its sinful agenda. As pleasant as that peace-making might be for a time, it would ultimately end in facing the wrath of God. Jesus sets up the two options: follow Christ and be in conflict with the world, or follow the world and be in conflict with Christ.

Both John and Peter reiterate this teaching of Christ. God has chosen us from this world. We who were once

rebels against the will of God are now born anew into a world that conforms perfectly to the good and pleasing will of God. However, because of this new identity as disciples of Christ who join in his condemnation of the values of the fallen world, that world now sees us in the same way that it perceived Jesus. As a result, we are persecuted and rejected by this world. That is the price that we pay. *But*, when compared with what we have gained in Christ, everything else is loss. As Paul writes, “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8).

Peter continues to describe the impact of the resurrection upon our spiritual blessings in Christ; in Christ, he says, we have an inheritance that is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). Our inheritance is invincible because of the resurrection. Although the fullest reality of our inheritance will be revealed in the “last days,” in a real sense it is something that we have now. We have life now! And we have a life that reaches beyond the grave. In John 11:25, Jesus says, “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”

This even impacts how we can speak about saints who have gone before. Because of the resurrection, we can speak about deceased loved ones in the Lord in the present tense. In Christ, they *are* alive! They *are* blessed! They *are* no longer suffering! They *are* rejoicing! Yet, this is a resurrection-birth, meaning there is a part of them that is dead. They once were sinners, but no longer. They once battled with the flesh, but no longer. They once endured the pains of a fallen, sinful world, but no longer. There is only resurrection-birth, hope, and life for them because Jesus was raised from the dead. This same blessed reality is also for us by faith in Christ.

Praise God for the resurrection of Jesus Christ! □

The author is associate professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, DC.

THE RESURRECTION TOUCH



D. PATRICK RAMSEY // In Greek mythology, a king named Midas was given by the gods a gift of much wealth: whatever he touched turned to gold. His gift came to be called the Midas touch, or the golden touch. In a similar way, we could say that Jesus has the “resurrection touch.”

Jesus has come and has conquered sin and death by his own death and resurrection, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Whatever Jesus touches is given life—and not just life, but resurrection life, because he has power over death.

Universal, Cruel, and Deserved

To understand and appreciate resurrection, however, we must first understand and confront death. There wouldn't be a need for, let alone a possibility of, resurrection without the prior reality of death. Death is the necessary and inevitable counterpart to resurrection. Indeed, our Lord's resurrection shines brilliantly against the dark background of death.

The seventeenth-century English poet John Donne famously wrote, “Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” In his day, the church bell rang at funerals to mark a recent decease. By saying that the bell tolls for “thee,” the living, breathing reader, Donne is noting that the bell's ring is a reminder and confirmation

of the reader's end, as well as the deceased's. Death is universal. Until the Lord returns, “it is appointed for man to die” (Heb. 9:27).

Besides being universal, death is cruel. The Bible calls it our enemy. It is the great destroyer. Death rips the soul from the body and disintegrates it, returning the body to dust. Death wreaks havoc on relationships. It tears us from our loved ones and our loved ones from us. A husband is left without his wife, a daughter without a mother, a father without a son, and a man without his best friend. Worst of all, death, in its most significant form, eternally separates all who are outside of Christ from the presence and blessing of God.

The harshness and cold reality of death was not ignored by our Lord. In John 11, death is knocking at the door for Lazarus, whom Jesus loved. Lazarus's sisters, Mary and Martha, quickly send word to Jesus so that he might come and heal his dear friend and their beloved brother. But they are too late—or rather, Jesus is too late. By the time he arrives, Lazarus has already been dead four days.

Martha and Mary are overcome with grief and sorrow. When she discovers that Jesus had come, Mary runs to him, weeping. Jesus himself weeps.

This scene of grief over death has played itself out again and again throughout the centuries. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, a nineteenth-century Presbyterian pastor, wrote a similar account about his daughter, Marion Louisa Palmer, a godly young woman who died from tuberculosis at the age of seventeen. As she was lying on her bed suffocating, Palmer picked up her “skeleton frame” in his arms, while she made one last “cry of distress...one despairing look...one feeble clutch of the thin fingers at the neck of her dress.” Her mother, utterly heartbroken, burst out, “Oh, my God!” Marion died in her father's arms. (B. M. Palmer, *The Broken Home*, Reformed Academic Press).

More recently, Frank A. James III, president of Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania, wrote a poignant article about the grief he experienced over the death of his brother Kelly. He describes the news of his

brother's mountain-climbing accident as "a blow to the solar plexus, knocking the breath out of me." But that was nothing compared to what happened when he told the news to the family. The heartache he felt was beyond anything he had previously experienced, and the weeping he heard was something he hoped to never hear again ("In the Shadow of Mount Hood," ChristianityToday.com, September 2010). Death is cruel.

Death is also deserved. Death is punishment for our rebellion against God: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). God did not make us in his image to live a short while and then die. Death is not natural or "just the way things are." It is not unfair or bad luck. We all die because we are all guilty and have done things worthy of death. God returns us to dust and brings us to an end because of our sins (Ps. 90:3–8).

Death is universal, cruel, and deserved. It is therefore a stark and constant reminder that all is not well in this world, and that all is not well with us. But it's not the end of the story. The rest is wonderfully glimpsed in John 11, when death barged into a home in Bethany.

Resurrection Life

When a grief-stricken Martha confronts Jesus over the death of Lazarus, he tells her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25–26). Jesus is making the bold claim that he possesses in himself resurrection life. This life is not the same thing as simply being raised from the dead. Lazarus was raised from the dead only to one day die again, but resurrection life is life that *overcomes* death in all of its forms. It is the life Jesus described to Martha. It is eternal life with an immortal and incorruptible body. This is the kind of life Jesus possesses in himself and the kind he gives to his people.

Resurrection life was not something Jesus possessed from the begin-

ning. He had to work for it. He had to be delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25). He had to die for our sins and be raised on the third day (1 Cor. 15:3–4). He had to conquer death by his own death and resurrection. Now that he has risen victoriously over death, the Bible says that Jesus holds the keys to Hades and death (Rev. 1:18). He is the resurrection and the life.

Jesus, of course, didn't become resurrection life merely for himself. He died and rose again so that we might have resurrection life in him. This is why Jesus says repeatedly that he came down from heaven to give eternal life (for example, John 6:38–40). "The wages of sin is death, *but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23, emphasis added).

The gift of eternal life, however, is not like a one-way ticket that we can hand out to people. Jesus *himself*—not a piece of paper, not a set of words—is the resurrection. Life is found in him. You need to be joined to Jesus, like a woman is joined to a man in marriage, in order to share in his resurrection. You need to be "in Christ," to use a favorite expression of Paul's.

And the means by which we are united to Christ is faith. That is why the Scriptures repeatedly state that you need to *believe* in Jesus in order to have eternal life. In fact, believers have eternal life the moment they believe. Jesus says that believers have passed from death to life: "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

Why Must We Still Die?

If this is true, we are bound to ask, "Why do believers die?" Since our sins have been put away and we have been given resurrection life, why must we still die? The answer is that although we have received eternal life, we have yet to experience that life in its fullness. In one sense, we who believe have already been raised from the dead to eternal life, and

in another sense, we are yet waiting for that resurrection.

Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 4:16: "Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." Our inner self has been raised from the dead and is being daily renewed. Our hearts of stone have been removed, and we have been given hearts of flesh. We have been born again by the Spirit, and we are being sanctified by the Spirit. Our outer self, however, has not been raised. Our bodies are decaying, and we will die. We must suffer the curse of sin in that limited sense. But though we die, it is not to our condemnation. At death we enter the presence of the Lord in heaven and remain there with him until the final day when our bodies will be resurrected to eternal glory and honor.

Thus, our resurrection takes place in two stages: inner resurrection in this life, outer at judgment day. This is why Jesus can say: "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25–26). Our inner self does not die and shall never die. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. But our outer self will die—though it, too, shall be raised in the future: "Though he die, yet shall he live."

Although Jesus has administered the final blow to death, it has yet to be put under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25–26). One day in the future it will be, and then death shall be no more. But in the meantime, we walk by faith and not by sight. We wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23). We, through the Spirit, by faith, "eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5). And when death does come and take away our loved ones in the Lord, we grieve, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). We grieve with a hope that does not disappoint, because Jesus is the resurrection and the life. □

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VOS'S REFORMED DOGMATICS

// LANE G. TIPTON



Lane Tipton with prospective students at Westminster Theological Seminary

Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949) was a professor at Princeton Seminary whose teaching and writings greatly influenced the founders of the OPC and Westminster Theological Seminary. His influence is still felt today, as shown in this review article by Rev. Dr. Lane G. Tipton, associate professor of systematic theology at Westminster, who unpacks some of the riches of Vos's recently published, five-volume Reformed Dogmatics.

Richard B. Gaffin Jr.'s editorial oversight of the translation of Geerhardus Vos's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* has brought to light yet another theological treasure from perhaps the finest Reformed theologian since Calvin.¹ The sustained depth of penetration of the traditional *loci* of systematic theological discussion is coupled with the warmth of a theological reflection pursued in vital communion with the absolute, triune God through Spirit-gifted, faith-union with Christ. This renders it ideal for both seminary instruction and devotional reading.

On the one side, Vos's work displays the proper, and it seems to me necessary, task of retrieving creedal doctrine in the preservation of Christian theology. On the other side, his work displays the proper, and it seems to me equally necessary, task of reforming that creedal doctrine in the formulation of a confessionally constructive, Reformed theology, tethered to its preceding creedal and confessional expressions, yet advancing organically beyond both, through biblical and systematic theological methods of interpreting the inerrant Scriptures. Vos not only expounds orthodox creedal theology in a faithful way, but, within the boundaries of confessionally Reformed theology, he advances that confessional theology with unparalleled insight. His work presents us with an orthodox, yet constructive, expression of the truth of the Scriptures that faithfully serves to instruct the church in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To show the depth of Vos's theological insight, I will focus on two sections of the *Reformed Dogmatics* that bring into view what, in Vos's theology, is the proper relation between the absolute and unchanging triune Creator and an eschatologically oriented creation, focused specifically on man as the image of God.

Vos argues that creation is a "transitive act" that occurs "in time" (1:177). That transitive act must be set qualitatively and ontologically over against the absolute, triune God in whom, as the Creator, "no time distinction exists." For this reason, creation does not occasion a change in God. Rather, creation expresses the willing agency of the absolute and unchanging, triune God, who remains absolute as the Creator in relation to the world. Vos, quoting Voetius, says, "Creation, actively considered, is not a real change because by it God is not changed by that act; it only requires a new relationship of the Creator to what is created. And this new relation, which is not real in God, can therefore not effect a real change in Him" (1:178). Thus, the absolute God remains absolute both behind (*ad intra*) and in (*ad extra*) the "new relation" brought to pass by God's free act of creation. This is the substance of what we term a logical, but not real, change in the God-world relation. That there is no change in God as he creates—which is what the language of "no real change" is designed to safeguard—is a deeply creedal and confessional strand of orthodoxy. God freely wills a "new relation" that introduces no change in God as he wills that "new relation." Hence, while not introducing change in God, either *ad intra* or *ad extra*, the absolute God freely wills a bona fide "new relation" in the act of creation, yet undergoes no change himself. Hence, God relates to the world as the absolute, triune Creator.

What, more precisely, can we say about the nature of that "new relation" into which God freely enters, while remaining absolute and triune? Put negatively, the "new relation" does not introduce into being a freely willed, contingently temporal, interactive feature somehow "in" God *ad extra*, yet not "in" God

ad intra. Put positively, God remains immutably absolute and triune precisely in his relation to creation.²

This critical formulation provides the theological and creational backdrop for Vos's discussion of the God-world relationship in general. Yet, at the same time, the discussion also provides the context for developing the approach of God to man, the image of God, that constitutes the religious essence of the "new relation" freely willed by the absolute, triune Creator.

Vos amplifies this discussion under the topic of anthropology, specifically, man (male and female) created as the image of God. The religious and eschatological character of man as he is the image of God adds clarity to the nature of the "new relation" to creation willed by the absolute, triune Creator.

Vos quickly focuses this "new relation" when he says that, "In the idea that one forms of the image is reflected one's idea of the religious state of man and of the essence of religion itself" (2:12). What, precisely, is the "essence of religion itself," or "the religious state of man" on which true religion depends? Quite simply, it is that image bearers are created for "life in communion with God" (2:13). The image of God means, according to Vos, "above all that he is disposed for communion with God, that all the capacities of his soul can act in a way that corresponds to their destiny only if they rest in God" (2:13). That "destiny" is movement from life in communion with God in earthly Eden (innocency) to the consummation of that life in communion with God in heaven (glory). Intrinsic to the image of God, essential to its nature, is this dynamic, eschatologically oriented, communion bond that consists in life in fellowship with the absolute, triune God.

To make clear his "deeper Protestant conception" (2:13) about the religious and eschatological essence of man as the image of God, Vos makes explicit that Rome's view cannot supply the theological categories that account for the religious and eschatological character of man as the image of God. In particular, Vos argues that Rome's deficient understanding of the image of God, coupled with a weakened doctrine of original sin, conspire to render its theology incapable of offering to man the essence of religion in fellowship with God.³

Roman Catholic theology teaches: "Only by something that raises him above his created nature," that is, by an additional, supernatural endowment, man is enabled to "become a religious being, able to love, to enjoy his God, and to live in Him" (2:12). Man is created in the image of God, yet that image does not in itself achieve a religious relationship that yields fellowship with God. Because man bears only similitude to God by nature as the image of God, and is not created in a fellowship bond as the image of God, the Roman Catholic view requires a divinely infused, additional grace, an "added gift" (*donum superadditum*) that confers "original righteousness" and enables fellowship with God. Vos says:

Out of this follows entirely the externalist character of Ro-

man Catholic religion. It becomes something added to man, that he has but is not identified with him, does not enter into his essence. That man is like God in this natural sense is a purely deistic relationship. (2:13)

According to Vos, then, the essence of religion, which consists in fellowship with God, does not reside in the essence of man created as the image of God, as understood by Roman Catholic theology. The relationship between God and man, the image of God, remains an external relation that cannot achieve the eschatological end of the essence of religion, namely, a communion bond with God. Stating the matter by way of contrast, the ethical relation to God, according to Rome, is an externally added, accidental feature of human existence. According to the "deeper Protestant conception," the ethical relation to God exists essentially as a fellowship bond and, as such, forms the deepest integral dimension of the image of God.

Moreover, the Roman Catholic view is not merely externalist in its theology of creation; it is defective in its theology of sin. A semi-Pelagian denial of total depravity, resting on its "weakened conception of original sin," contributes to this externalist conception and precludes the Roman Catholic proposal from penetrating to the religious essence of man as the image of God (2:13). Elaborating, Vos says that in the Roman Catholic view,

man can only lose what was not essential to him, namely the supernaturally added gifts, the *dona superaddita*. Because of his fall, these are lost. The essence of man, the *imago*, consisting in formal existence as spirit, in the *liberum arbitrium* [freedom of the will], remained. Because, however, there was no inner connection between the *similitudo* and the *imago*, the removal of the former cannot essentially change the latter. The *liberum arbitrium* might be weakened a little; in reality it is unharmed. In other words, by loosening the moral powers from the will, from the capacity of the will, and by denying that the former are natural in man, Rome has in principle appropriated the Pelagian conception of the will as *liberum arbitrium*. That capacity of free will has remained, and with that the possibility that man, even after the fall, can do something good. (2:13)

Vos also offers what I think are incisive critiques of the implications of the fatal flaw of the Roman Catholic doctrine of sin in relation to the image of God (cf. 2:14). It is only the Reformed who affirm and develop the key insight that "the image of God and original righteousness are to be identified," and this means that "life in communion with God belongs to the nature of man and can nowhere be excluded" (2:13). Thus, Vos summarizes:

According to our conception, our entire nature should not be free from God at any point; the nature of man must be wor-



ship from beginning to end. According to the deeper Protestant conception, the image does not exist only in correspondence with God but in being disposed toward God. (2:13)

The “deeper Protestant conception” is the reforming of an ancient, orthodox, creedal theology in the service of the ongoing reformation of Christ’s church—a service Rome’s theology cannot render.

Let me make a summarizing point in order to show the perennial value of Vos’s theological contribution. This “new relation” Vos delineates involves a religious approach from the absolute, triune God toward his image-bearing people. In this “religious” relation, man as the image of God is oriented to eschatological consummation in communion with God as he comes from the creative breath of God (Gen. 2:7), and as the terms of that consummation are stipulated by the positive, “special providential” revelation of God by way of covenant (Gen. 2:8–17). Put more globally, the absolute, triune creator-God, while remaining absolute in the “new relation” expressed by his creative act, dwells with his people, and they dwell with him, in the act of creation and in the voluntary condescension in special providence that constitutes the sacred bond of the covenant of works.

The events associated with Jesus’s incarnation are for Vos a purely remedial means to a creational and eschatological end. This is the logic of Paul’s appeal to Genesis 2:7 in 1 Corinthians 15:45, the subject of what is arguably the most penetrating footnote in Vos’s corpus.⁴ The “natural body” in verse 44, which is correlated with the “image of the earthly” in verse 49, brings into view the image of God as it was oriented toward the eschatological goal of consummate fellowship with God. That “natural body” has reached its *de facto* realization in the “spiritual body” of the resurrected Christ (vv. 44–45), the man of heaven (v. 47), who bears an appropriately heavenly image (v. 49).

Therefore, the incarnation is not an ontological solution to an ontological problem in relating God to the world,⁵ since God already relates to the world through creation wholly apart from incarnation, and God offers eschatological advancement to Adam wholly apart from the incarnation. Rather, the work of Christ, as the last Adam, is a remedial and redemptive means toward securing the original eschatological end of the image of God, which is confirmed communion with God in a heavenly estate of glory. That communion, due to the Fall, was not realized in glory by Adam under the covenant of works. Accordingly, it is only through remedial and redemptive in-

tervention, centered on Christ, that the eschatological essence of religion is realized, first in the ascended Christ, and then in those united to him by the Spirit and through faith, the church (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20–23). Christ’s work is therefore redemptively eschatological; it is required only where there is a need to deliver a people from sin into eschatologically confirmed fellowship with God.

At the end of his publishing career, Vos, in the *Pauline Eschatology*, helps us grasp not only the orthodoxy already expressed in the *Reformed Dogmatics*, but the widening and deepening of those same insights as they are saturated by the theology of the Apostle Paul. He says:

Although in the abstract being self-sufficient as God, He has freely chosen to carry his concern with us to the extreme of eternal mutual appurtenance of which the creature is capable. Paul affirms both, on the one hand that God is the only immortal Being 1 Tim. 6:16 and, on the other hand, that He has appointed as the eschatological goal of religious fellowship with Himself, among other things, the prize of an incorruption, Rom. 2:7 such as is equivalent to eternal life ... The biblical terminology does not in respect to believers employ, after the philosophic fashion, the word “immortality,” but chooses as a larger, deeper receptacle the term “life.” ... Eschatology ... becomes the profoundest and most practical of all thought-complexes [for the church] because they, like Paul, live and move and have their redemptively-religious treasures in God.⁶

Vos’s penetrating and unparalleled insight into that “deeper Protestant conception” is on grand display in both the *Reformed Dogmatics*, a systematic theological treatise, and in his *Pauline Eschatology*, a biblical theological treatise.

Interested in Geerhardus Vos?

A fourteen-chapter biography of Vos by Danny E. Olinger has been published serially on OPC.org in volumes 25–27 of *Ordained Servant Online*, beginning in October 2016 with “Geerhardus Vos: Life in the Old Country, 1862–1881” and concluding in March 2018 with “Appreciation, Legacy, and Posthumous Publications.”

1 Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., et al., 5 vols. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014–2016). Also available through Logos Bible Software.

2 Vos adds elsewhere that what holds for God’s relation to creation holds equally for all of God’s providential dealings with creation throughout history: “We must believe that all these deeds [in history] do not effect any change in God, since they do not require time in Him, although naturally their realization falls within time” (1:14).

3 Vos has similarly penetrating insights about the deficiencies in Pelagian, Socinian, Lutheran, and Arminian views of the image of God as well (2:15).

4 Regarding Paul’s use of Genesis 2:7, Vos writes, “The Apostle was intent on showing that in the plan of God from the outset provision was made for a higher kind of body . . . the abnormal body of sin and the eschatological body are not so logically correlated that the one can be postulated from the other. But the world of creation and the world to come are thus correlated, the one pointing forward to the other.” Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, (1930; repr. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979), 169n19.

5 Vos says, “Because we hold satisfaction to be a single historical fact and not a transition in the eternal development process of the Absolute, for that reason we have need of the genuine humanity of the Lord—and as a basis for that, an incarnation taking place at a particular point in space and time” (3:25).

6 Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 293–94.

WITNESSING HISTORY FROM MY DESK AT THE CFM

// LINDA R. POSTHUMA



Linda Posthuma at her post of thirty-two years

Standing at a third-floor window, overlooking the backyard of the OPC administrative offices in the summer of 1974, I watched the news media interview two of our missionaries, husband and wife, shortly after their return to the United States following the wife's kidnapping in the Horn of Africa. I felt like I was witnessing a piece of history. Little did I imagine that I would someday return to that same building at 7401 Old York Road to begin nearly thirty-two years of service as administrative assistant for the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM). As I prepare for my retirement this spring, I realize that I have witnessed much more history being made.

When I watched the interview, I was new to the OPC, having joined the church only six months before. I was the daughter of a Christian Reformed Church home missionary to the Navajo and Zuni Native Americans in New Mexico, where I got a taste of missionary life at a young age. When I moved to the Philadelphia area to take a teaching position at a local Christian school, I looked for a church similar in doctrine to the Dutch Reformed tradition in which I'd been raised, and the OPC was recommended to me. Over the years, I have come to love the OPC and cherish it. I credit much of this to my work with the CFM.

On September 3, 1986, I was hired to work with the committee's finances, to manage its office, and to assist the missionaries in any number of ways. The next summer, at my first general assembly, I was asked by the moderator to respond to questions about the committee's finances. I was very nervous and prayed that I'd have my wits about me. I wasn't used to speaking to such an august group and was encouraged by the presence of a number of godly women attending the assembly with their husbands: Dorothy Anderson Barker, Ada Galbraith, Betty Oliver, and Barbara Steltzer.

Having the privilege of working with and getting to

know our missionaries has been a great joy for me. When I first introduced myself to them, I signed my letters, "Your servant in Christ." I firmly believe that God calls us to serve him wherever he places us and that by serving the OPC and its missionaries, I am serving him.

A Ministry of Support

An important part of supporting our missionaries is logistics. Scheduling interviews, making travel arrangements, even arranging for childcare can be a part of planning a missionary candidate's visit to the office. Once appointed, a missionary needs information about salary, allowances, insurance, taxes, retirement plans, and children's education. Getting to the mission field requires visas, tickets, and shipping containers (during my tenure, eighteen have been sent to Uganda alone). Once a missionary is on the field, there are expense reports, international bank transfers, email inquiries, and packing suitcases filled with ministry supplies and "goodies" that a US-based traveler will courier when heading overseas for a visit.

While on furlough, missionaries visit churches throughout the United States and Canada. Scheduling their speaking engagements has given me the opportunity to get to know people in OP congregations, many of whom have become friends. One day in 1992, I was surprised to receive a call asking if I would consider speaking to the Women's Presbyterial of New Jersey. I agreed and thus began my speaking career to women's groups, in Sunday schools, at mission conferences, and at church camps.

One Sunday morning, I spoke to a Sunday school in an OP church in the Chicago area about OP missionary labors. As I was leaving the service, a woman rushed up to me and pressed two fifty-dollar bills into my hand. She asked me to use the money for my work when I returned to the mission field. I tried to explain that I had never been to the mission field I had discussed. In fact, I've only been to one OP mission

field, in the Middle East, where I taught a group of Egyptian women at MERF's John Calvin Centre in Larnaca, Cyprus. Perhaps visiting more mission fields is something to plan for retirement.

Changes at the Committee on Foreign Missions

When asked about changes I've seen since I first started working for CFM thirty-two years ago, I usually respond with what I hope is a touch of humor: In 1986, I was younger than our OP missionaries. Today, I am older than *all* of them.

Another large change has been the speed of communication. In 1986, a missionary's letter would take seven to ten days to arrive, and then my reply would take about that long to get back to the missionary. Today, an email exchange can be almost instantaneous, and we can easily hear a missionary's voice or see his face from halfway around the world. I've seen a photo of missionary Tony Curto, with cellphone to ear, sitting on top of his truck on the road to Mbale, Uganda. He'd found the perfect location to make a call within range of the nearest cellphone tower. We've certainly come a long way.

The mission fields where the OPC has sent missionaries have also changed. CFM no longer has missionaries laboring in Japan, Kenya, Korea, the Middle East, Suriname, or Taiwan, but since 1986, new missions have begun in Asia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Uganda, Ukraine, and Uruguay.

In early 1992, missionary doctor Grietje (Greet) Rietkerk, who labored in East Africa for the OPC, was on furlough in the United States and visiting the Philadelphia area. One evening, Greet and I had dinner at an ethnic restaurant, along with Mary Bird, a former missionary to the Horn of Africa, and her daughter Ruth. There I was introduced to *injera* and *zigni* and the wonderful hospitality of the people of that region.

As we were leaving, six or seven men who had been sitting at the owner's table got up, followed us out of the restaurant, and surrounded us with animated chatter. Had we heard that the war was over? Wasn't it wonderful that now they could return to their homeland? Then one of the men approached Greet and asked her excitedly, "Do you remember me? You fixed my leg at the hospital on the mission field before it closed!" I couldn't help but marvel at how God had brought these two people, who had touched each other's lives years before and half a world away, into contact again on the

streets of Philadelphia.

A "Family" of Laborers

Seeing changes in missionary personnel has always been difficult for me. It makes me feel as if something's different in my family. Some missionaries move on to other employment; some retire after many years of service. By far the most deeply emotional experience for me occurred in May 2007.

I was on my way to the office when I received a call from Mark Bube, general secretary of Foreign Missions. He told me that Matt Baugh, OP missionary to Haiti, had been in a serious road accident and was on his way to the hospital in Port-au-Prince. When I arrived in the office, I learned that Matt had died. It's difficult to describe the anguish of that moment and the sorrow I felt for his wife, Shannon, and their five young children, so far away from family and friends.

Dealing with the tragedy personally was combined with the need to take care of so many little details: sending a support team to Haiti; contacting the US embassy in Port-au-Prince; bringing a grieving young family home. The Lord in his mercy sees us through these times and provides strength we can depend upon. The OPC came to-

gether in love and support for Shannon and her family.

Not Finished Yet

My work for CFM has changed over the years, and so have I. For more than three decades, I have witnessed how God has used the OPC to advance his kingdom around the world. What a blessing it has been for me to see him at work, using so many people to touch the lives of so many others with the gospel message. I have been blessed by the Lord to be able to serve him as I worked for the committee, and I pray that the Lord will continue to use me though service to his church.

As I contemplate my own retirement, I think of those who've returned to the United States following many years of ministry overseas. Ted and Grace Hard became involved in short-term missionary endeavors in India and the Philippines. Jonathan and Margaret Falk and Young and Mary Lou Son served OP churches in the United States. Cal and Edie Cummings returned to Nozomi Center, in Yamamoto, Japan, where they had labored after the earthquake and tsunami of 2011. Greet Rietkerk established a program to assist in the education of young Kenyans. Their service in the Lord's work did not end upon retirement, and I pray that neither will mine.



Linda Posthuma (left) with Greet Rietkerk

FROM LEADING SHEEP TO MINDING MANNERS

// AL TRICARICO



Praying for each other and the harvest

The prayer times were rich. The fellowship was sweet. In January, the annual Church Planter Training Conference was held at Covenant OPC in St. Augustine, Florida, where Eric Watkins serves as pastor.

The conference is one important way that the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, responsible for supporting OP church-planting efforts, assists church planters in their work. The Committee also provides church planters with regular funding, guidance, training, assessments, accountability, resources, and prayer for the harvest.

In some ways the conference was similar to those of previous years. The schedule included lectures and discussion on relevant topics, times for prayer, interactions with fellow church planters, featured talks on the program committees of our General Assembly, and fellowship around meals. (The provisions made by our host church were generous, delicious, and deeply appreciated by all who attended.)

This year, John Shaw and Al Tricarico delivered most of the teaching under titles such as “The Church Planter and His Family,” “Building a Culture of Evangelism,” “Pastoral Leadership,” “Manners in the Ministry,” and “Welcoming Visitors.” Pastor Watkins and Brad Hertzog, designer of Outwardopc.com, contributed helpfully at several points as well.

General Secretaries Danny Olinger and Mark Bube provided informative and encouraging reviews of the doings of Christian Education and Foreign Missions, respectively. Da-

vid Haney also spoke as the director of finance and planned giving. During these times, men were asked to make Worldwide Outreach prominent in the prayers and giving of new congregations of the OPC.

As has been the case in the past, the Ambassadors Conference took place the day after Church Planter Training. Church planters moved out. Ambassadors moved in. As presbytery representatives who promote Worldwide Outreach to their regions, the Ambassadors benefit from hearing the same men who also speak to the church planters: General Secretaries John Shaw, Danny Olinger, and Mark Bube.

Changes to the Conference

So, the usual pieces of the annual Church Planter Training Conference were in place, but several changes were made for the 2018 gathering.

The conference was expanded to include an extra day. It began on Monday night and closed on Thursday evening with a joint dinner out with the Ambassadors. The additional time gave folk more hours to visit with fellow church planters and to take in historic St. Augustine, the oldest continuously occupied settlement in the United States.

There was also an increase in participants. The approach in recent years has been to require every church planter to attend once during the four years of Committee funding, often the first year of a man’s call. Starting this year, the Committee is encouraging church planters to attend twice—their first and third years of service. It was good to have men at different stages of their work enjoy each other’s company and learn from each other’s stories.



Eric Watkins (right) with Larry and Gail Mininger

For the first time in fifteen years, wives of the church planters were also invited to attend. They joined their husbands in some meetings and enjoyed the ministry of experienced wives of pastors in other meetings of their own.

Gail Mininger led times of teaching and interaction with the women. She shared helpful insights on life in the ministry as the wife of Larry Mininger, pastor of Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, Florida, for over forty years. Heather Watkins, wife of Pastor Eric, practiced warm hospitality by welcoming everyone into her home in the evenings and hosting additional times of fellowship for the women.

Two active interns in the new church-planting internship program were present for the conference as well. Other men who are considering church-planting service in the OPC also attended.



(top) John Shaw leading a discussion on "The Church Planter and His Family"

(bottom) Women receiving counsel from Gail Mininger

"More Free Time, Please!"

A total of twelve current church planters/interns were present along with ten wives of church planters/interns. All participants were sent evaluation questions after the conference and were invited to help make the event better by sending in their feedback. Responses were helpful and encouraging. Here are some:

"I thought the section on leadership was super helpful. I would have loved to have spent more time on this subject."

"The conference was definitely worth our time and I really appreciated that the committee would take the time to plan one that included the wives.... I had an opportunity to meet the wives of other

church planters as well. It was so nice to get to know the people I have been praying for from the Home Missions prayer list."

"The material on manners was fantastic. Very, very helpful. It's the kind of thing that is too easily overlooked in the ministry."

Several helpful suggestions came as well—topics of interest, revised ways of dividing the hours, and an almost universal request for more free time. It seemed especially useful for couples to spend time together, as well as with others who share their challenges as they serve in Christ's kingdom.

The Unique Character of Church Planting

While much of the work of a church planter is similar to that of a pastor of an organized congregation, there are unique challenges. When the men were asked

to name some, they provided a robust list. Here are just a few things that were mentioned:

- The temporary nature of worship location and the impact of that on ministry strategy
- The geographical distance between the work and members of the overseeing session
- Thick administrative task lists with less help available to perform them
- The general fragility of the church in its early stages and

the pain that comes when people move away

Do pray for our church planters and their families. They are doing good work in their home missions fields. The challenges they face are unique and many. With your gifts to Worldwide Outreach and regular prayers for the harvest, they will have the support they need to carry on their work for the glory of Jesus Christ.

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

Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail HomeMissionsToday@opc.org.
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ABRAM: FOOL FOR CHRIST

// FRANCIS E. VANDELLEN

Abram was a fool. Sure, he was very rich—gold even Ajingled in the nomad’s pockets (Gen. 13:2). But he was about to make the worst financial decision of his life. Soon his deep pockets would have crater holes.

The problem was his nephew, Lot. They were both so rich that there wasn’t land enough to support their living together (13:6). Lot the Lesser had to leave. So Abram says to Lot, “Listen, it’s been good having you around, but you’ve got to move on. There’s no room for you here. See that land of Canaan there? God sometimes sends it water. That’s your new home.”

At least, that’s what we’d expect. But that’s actually not what Abram says at all. He politely, foolishly, offers Lot the choice: “Take your pick of the land. If you go left, I’ll go right. If you go right, I’ll go left” (13:9). So Lot lifts up his eyes and sees that the Jordan Valley is well-watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord and like Egypt. In the other direction is bleak, rocky Canaan. See the greedy glint in Lot’s eyes? This is no decision! “Oh, the old fool, he’s finally lost it,” Lot says to himself.

But, like Eve in Eden and Israel fresh out of Egypt, Lot’s eyes are fixed on earthly treasure, and his choice leads to loss and curse. He loses all his earthly possessions, his wife succumbs to materialism, and he almost dies in Sodom. That’s a good poke for us, isn’t it? Think about it—where are your eyes? Are you eager for an earthly paradise and its profits, but dispassionate about the God of paradise?

Abram faces a very real temptation. He’s rich. Very rich. He “should” hoard it, protect it. But he doesn’t. He holds it loosely, is most generous to Lot, and happily goes to the bleak land.

Why is he so foolish? Because he is a fool for Christ. He has a greater treasure. He’s not looking to the land, but the Land-Owner, and nothing is more highly trea-

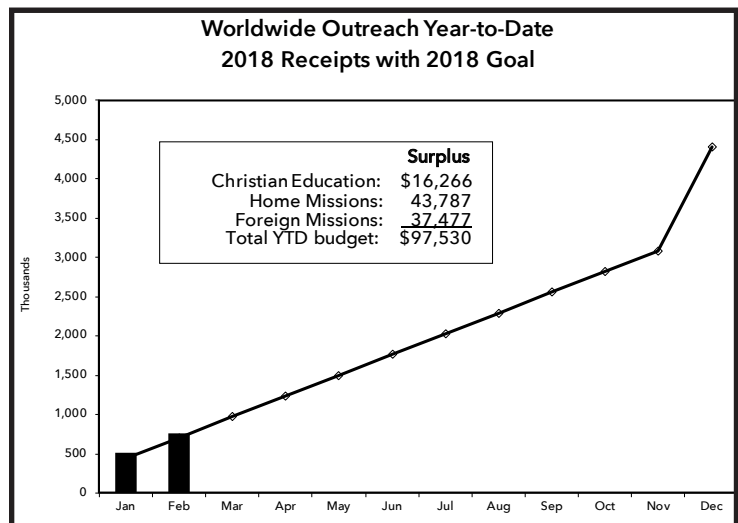
sured than him. This is evident in Abram’s altar-building and his calling on the name of the Lord (13:4, 18). His eyes are focused on God’s promised land. Hebrews tells us he was itching for “the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.... A better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Heb. 11:10, 16).

Think about this for a minute. Haven’t we received this inheritance, the true promised land, in Christ? “He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3–4). The Spirit is our pledge or down payment (2 Cor. 5:5). And that land is better by far than anything this world can offer! Consider how much better God is than land (or success, or possessions):

- God can forgive sin, but success never deals with sin.
- God never changes, but land is always subject to change.
- God can comfort, but land can’t love you.
- God is security, but land is shifty.
- God will reward beyond the best down payment on earth, but possessions are temporal.
- God is simply received and enjoyed by faith, but possessions must be worked for.
- God alone can offer lasting joy, satisfaction, and rest, and land comes up short in each one.

If God is that good to us, let’s not be dispassionate toward him. Rather, let’s seek opportunities to share his riches with those who are near and those who are far away. And let’s use our riches to free our denomination to do this same work without hindrance.

The author is pastor of New Hope OPC in Frederick, MD.



APRIL

1. Missionary associates **Markus and Sharon Jeromin**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for boldness to share the Word with their neighbors. / Pray for Home Missions general secretary **John Shaw**. / Pray for stated clerk **Ross Graham** as he prepares the agenda for the meeting of the Eighty-Fifth General Assembly that will begin June 11.
2. **Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Andover, MN. Pray that the Lord would add several new families to Immanuel OPC. / **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for planning of the sixth annual Reformation Conference to be held later this year. / **Andrew Farr**, yearlong intern at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Ada, MI.
3. **Ray and Michele Call**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the Lord would bless and encourage the fruitful members of the young church in Montevideo. / **Jay and Andrea Bennett**, Neon, KY. Pray for Neon Reformed Presbyterian Church's organization as a local church by 2020. / **Stephen Pribble**, OPC.org senior technical associate.
4. **Bradney and Eileen Lopez**, Arroyo, Puerto Rico. Pray for Iglesia Uno Reformada to have an impact on more people with the gospel at their new location. / Affiliated missionaries **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for Jerry as he meets with several young men in the church for discipleship. / **Doug Watson**, part-time staff accountant.
5. Pray for the labors of missionary associates **Kathleen Winslow**, Prague, Czech Republic, and **Janine Eygenraam**, Quebec, Canada. / **Eric and Donna Hausler**, Naples, FL. May the Lord give Christ the King Presbyterian Church wisdom in reaching families in their community. / *Ordained Servant* editor **Greg Reynolds**.
6. Pray for Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for continued follow up of families who sent their children to last summer's English Bible camps. / Pray for the work of **Alan Strange** and **Derrick Vander Meulen**, coeditors of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.
7. **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. F. as he mentors men seeking to be pastors and leaders. / **Andrew and Billie Moody**, San Antonio, TX. Pray for San Antonio Reformed Church's growth groups as they study how to be a good neighbor. / **Andrew (and Cyndi) Myers**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, PA.
8. **Josh and Kristen McKamy**, Chambersburg, PA. Pray for faithful outreach and for returning visitors to join a new members' class at Covenant OPC. / Missionary associates, **E. C.**, **E. K.**, and **M. S.**, Asia. Pray that their students will come to faith in Christ. / Pray for the Committee on Diaconal Ministries administrator **David Nakhla** as he visits the Lord's work in Uganda and Sudan from April 9 to 23.
9. **Mr. and Mrs. K.**, Asia. Pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the young people attending Bible studies. / **Matt and Elin Prather**, Corona, CA. Pray for growth in love for God and neighbor at Corona Presbyterian Church. / **Aijalon (and Jana) Church**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Sinking Spring, PA.
10. Pray for **David (and Jane) Crum**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / **Mr. and Mrs. M. M.**, Asia. Pray for wisdom and energy to prioritize and manage many ministry demands. / Pray for the young men participating in the **Timothy Conference**, which will be held April 11-14 at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.
11. **Mr. and Mrs. J. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. J. M. as he makes contacts in the community. / Pray for **Steve (and Joanie) Doe**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, as he regularly visits mission works and organized congregations. / **Charlene Tipton**, database administrator.
12. **David and Rebekah Graves**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Pray that the new families at Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church will be integrated into the congregation. / Pray for tentmaker missionary **T. D.**, Asia, as she talks to young women about Christ. / Pray for *New Horizons* managing editor **Judith Dinsmore**.
13. Pray for affiliated missionary **Linda Karner**, Japan (on furlough), as she visits those who support her labors on the mission field. / **Lowell and Mae Ivey**, Virginia Beach, VA. Pray for God's Spirit to direct and empower the gospel witness of Reformation Presbyterian Church. / *New Horizons* cover designer **Chris Tobias**.
14. **Jeremy and Gwen Baker**, Yuma, AZ. Pray that God would save local families and bring them to worship at Yuma OPC. / Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Urayasu, Japan. Pray for open doors and open hearts for the gospel. / **Scott (and Elizabeth) Creel**, yearlong intern at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, FL.



David and Jane Crum

- 15. Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray for wisdom in making decisions regarding diaconal assistance. / Pray for **Bill (and Margaret) Shishko**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Connecticut and Southern New York. / **Adam (and Joy) Harris**, yearlong intern at Covenant OPC in Komoka, Ontario, CA.
- 16. Miller (and Stephanie) Ansell**, church-planting intern, Houston, TX. / Associate missionaries **Octavius and Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for Tav as he completes a translation project. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
- 17.** Retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Cal and Edie Cummings, Greet Rietkerk, and Young and Mary Lou Son**. Pray for the encouragement they offer to those on the fields where they served. / **Matthew and Lois Cotta**, Pasadena, CA. Please pray that the Lord would bless Pasadena Presbyterian Church's outreach efforts and membership classes.
- 18.** Pray for Home Missions administrative assistant **Katie Stumpff**. / Pray for safe travel for Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube** as he visits our missionaries in Uganda. / **Daniel (and Victoria) Garcia**, yearlong intern at Escondido OPC in Escondido, CA.
- 19.** Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Ling Lee** and secretary **Katrina Zartman**. Pray for this time of transition in the Foreign Missions office. / **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, FL. Pray that Keys Presbyterian Church would minister effectively and receive Christ's sheep into the congregation. / **Mark Stumpff**, loan fund administrator.
- 20.** Pray for **Mark (and Peggy) Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson**, speaking at a conference in Florida. / **Stephen (and Felicia) Lauer**, yearlong intern at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.
- 21. Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for wisdom as the church seeks effective ways to reach out to adults in the community. / **Ryan (and Rachel) Heaton**, church-planting intern, Naples, FL. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **Danny Olinger** as he meets with the Board of Trustees of Great Commission Publications.
- 22. Jim and Eve Cassidy**, Austin, TX. Pray for wisdom in implementing plans for hospitality and evangelism at South Austin Presbyterian Church. / **David and Rashel Robbins**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the continued growth of the congregation in Nakaale. / Pray for to-



Douglas and Pat Clawson

morrow's meeting of the **Board of Trustees of Great Commission Publications**.

- 23. David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Dave as he presents the gospel to those coming to the clinic for medical care. / **Bob and Grace Holda**, Oshkosh, WI. May God's Word at Resurrection Presbyterian Church produce deepening faith in Christ. / Navy chaplain **Cornelius (and Deidre) Johnson**.
- 24. Chris and Megan Hartshorn**, Anaheim Hills, CA. Pray that Anaheim Hills Presbyterian Church would see growth both numerically and spiritually. / Missionary associates **Christopher and Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Christopher as he assists Flip Baardman with administration at the clinic. / *New Horizons* proofreader **Jessica Johnson**.
- 25.** Pray for missionary associates **Schylie La Belle** and **Angela Voskuil**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they teach at the mission's preschool in Karamoja. / **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Huron, OH. Pray for effective outreach and for four additional families to join Grace Fellowship OPC. / **Janet Birkmann**, Diaconal Ministries communications coordinator.
- 26.** Pray for **Jim (and Judy) Bosgraf**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest, as he gives counsel to organizing pastors and overseeing sessions. / **Mark and Carla Van Essendelft**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for physical strength and stamina in everyday tasks. / **Jan Gregson**, assistant to the finance director.
- 27. Dr. Flip and Anneloes Baardman**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for good health for Anneloes, expecting the couple's first child. / **Daniel and Amber Doleys**, Springfield, OH. Pray that the people of Living Water OPC will continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. / *New Horizons* editorial assistant **Diane Olinger**.
- 28. Jason and Amanda Kirklin**, Waco, TX. Pray that Trinity OPC would be bold in outreach and evangelism. / Pray for the labors of missionary associates **Leah Hopp, Sarah Jantzen, and Paige Vanderwey**, Mbale, Uganda. / Army chaplain **David (and Jenna) DeRienzo**.
- 29. Charles and Connie Jackson**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the local pastors as they deal with the needs of their congregations. / **Chris and Grace Ann Cashen**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for refugee children in Clarkston. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund document specialist.
- 30.** Pray for **Lacy (and Debbie) Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **Eric and Dianna Tuininga**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the many meetings that take place where the Word is presented. / *New Horizons* editorial assistant **Pat Clawson**.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

A CHURCH BUILDING FOR THE PRICE OF A DOLLAR

Gordon Morris

God never runs out of surprises as he builds his church. In New Berlin, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee, two congregations learned how he can orchestrate events that seem impossible to man.

In 2001, Covenant OPC began life meeting in a school in New Berlin. But Jim Hoekstra, then a church planter in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, encouraged the congregation to pray that God would give them a church building.

Meanwhile, Calvary Reformed Church (RCA), also in New Berlin, was completing fifty years of ministry with a dwindling congregation and finances. They began praying for another church to occupy their property when they closed their doors.

By 2015, Covenant had been particularized, and Frank Marsh had been installed as pastor. They had rented Calvary's building several times, and Calvary suggested that Covenant leave the school and share their building full-time. They did, and the schedule dovetailed perfectly. Despite the fact that the OPC and the RCA have no official ecclesiastical fellowship, the congregations came to know, love, and respect each other and their ministries.

In fact, they had much in common. Calvary was planted by an RCA church in Oostburg, Wisconsin, and Covenant has family ties at Bethel OPC, also in Oostburg. Some even found that they were related to members of the other congregation.

Then, in 2017, when their pastor accepted a call elsewhere, Calvary placed a pre-approved plan into action. They announced they would be closing, but they wanted Covenant to have the property at a price they could not refuse: one dollar.

The sale was completed in February 2018—with an anonymously donated dollar! So God, indeed, did *give* Covenant a church building—plus a manse and



The new church building of Covenant OPC in New Berlin, WI

eleven acres of beautiful property, surrounded by a growing city, which they see as a growing mission field.

Also included are plans for over \$500,000 of needed maintenance and improvements—one reason for the low price. To help, the Presbytery of the Midwest selected Covenant to receive the King's Men offering in 2018.

"Our story about the purchase of the

property and buildings is God's story of his determination to use his people to advance the gospel," Frank Marsh said.

Now the challenge is for Covenant OPC—including some new members who have come from Calvary—to be faithful stewards of the tremendous facility and opportunity God has provided by finding new ways to reach out in love with God's grace.



Signing the purchase agreement were (l. to r.) Covenant deacon Greg Holland, Tony De La Rosa of the RCA Wisconsin Classis, Calvary elder John True, and Covenant elder Gordon Morris. Standing second from right is Covenant's pastor, Frank Marsh.

GRACE OPC DEDICATES NEW CHURCH BUILDING

Grace OPC (formerly Covenant of Grace) in Elburn, Illinois, dedicated their new church building at a service on February 2, on the twentieth anniversary of their first morning worship service. Pastor Jim Megchelsen, pastor emeritus of Bethel Rev. Lendall Smith, Regional Home Missionary Jim Bosgraf, and Rev. Bruce Hollister of New Covenant Community OPC in Joliet participated in the service.

Grace began as a daughter church of Bethel OPC in Wheaton in the mid-1990s and initially met for worship in an SDA school building. Over the years, they have also met in an SDA fellowship hall, a park district building gymnasium, and an elementary school cafeteria.

Last summer, God enabled Grace to purchase a former Roman Catholic building in downtown Elburn. The property included a beautiful old church building with a fellowship hall and a manse. The congregation began meeting for worship in the fellowship hall in October 2017 and was able to begin worshipping in the refurbished sanctuary just before Christmas.

The congregation of Grace is very thankful to God for his provision of the new building and the opportunity to reach out to a new community.

BEING THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS

Janet Birkmann

The Committee on Disaster Response gives a heartfelt thank you to all those who have donated to hurricane relief or volunteered at one of our hurricane relief sites in the six months since Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria hit Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico.

Over one hundred and thirty volunteers from around the country have served in Texas and Florida, and over \$670,000 has been donated to OPC Hurricane Relief Funds. Disaster Response Coordinator David Nakhla and regional coordinators have used the funds for the purchase of equipment, materials, and supplies needed to reconstruct homes that were flooded, for travel and living expenses for



Jim Megchelsen preaching at Grace OPC's dedication service for their new building

those overseeing the work full-time, to help with the payment of high insurance deductibles, and more.

Care has been taken to ensure that all physical and material help given is accompanied by the sharing of the Word. Regional Coordinator Steve Larson in Houston recently reported, "Our volunteer site coordinator, Jeff Davis, routinely starts each day off by having a short time of devotions with the volunteers. This

sets the tone for the outreach aspect of this ministry, which is focused on being the hands and feet of Jesus. This leads to occasions almost every day for evangelistic conversations and times of prayer for those being helped."

Thank you again to those whose generous participation has made this important ministry of mercy possible. The work goes on. Visit OPCDisasterResponse.org for further information.



OPC Disaster Response volunteer Sam Newhouse at work in Houston



Nearly fifty ladies of Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA, met for a retreat on February 24, at the scenic Jenkins Arboretum in Devon. Along with conversation, laughter, and brunch, the ladies enjoyed a presentation from Jean Gaffin on the biblical theme of walking as women of the light.

(Top) Left to right, Rebecca Schnitzel, Myriam Berdoulat, Faith Nakhla, and Elizabeth Holmlund visit over brunch, and Jean Gaffin presents.

(Bottom) Some attendees gather around the theme sign.



REVIEWS

***The Messiah Comes to Middle Earth: Images of Christ's Threefold Office in the Lord of the Rings*, by Philip Ryken. InterVarsity, 2017. Paperback, 136 pages, \$10.32 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister Jeremiah Montgomery.**

More than a decade ago, I visited the Wade Center at Wheaton College, which houses a special collection of papers and memorabilia from seven British authors: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Dorothy L. Sayers, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, and Owen

Barfield. *The Messiah Comes to Middle Earth* contains the inaugural lectures of the Hansen Lectureship Series, which was established to “explore the great literature of the seven Wade authors” (xi).

Author Philip Ryken’s thesis in this book is straightforward: “There are really three main Christ figures in *The Lord of the Rings*, and each one echoes a different aspect of the work of Christ—what theologians call his ‘threefold office’ as prophet, priest, and king” (3). To establish this thesis, Ryken systematically exegetes the story’s text. He



supports his conclusions with citations from *The Silmarillion* (the story’s crucially important prequel), Tolkien’s letters, and a wide array of secondary literature.

Gandalf the Grey embodies the image of Christ’s prophetic work. “For all his miraculous powers, the wizard’s prophetic influence lay chiefly in the domain of wisdom. Gandalf shaped the affairs of Middle-earth by the power of his words” (12). Though in reality an incarnate angel, Gandalf never used his power to coerce. Applying this image, Ryken reminds those

in authority that “one of the rules for us is not to make decisions for other people or manipulate them” (32).

The hobbits, especially Frodo Baggins, embody the image of Christ’s priestly work. Hobbits are a people “rustic, not to mention diminutive ... easily overlooked” (52). “Yet for all their apparent weakness, the hobbits are faithful in their service and prove to have surprising strength” (53). More particularly, by volunteering to bear the dark burden of the One Ring from the pleasant gardens of Rivendell to the lifeless heights of Mount Doom, Frodo and his servant, Samwise Gamgee, poignantly depict the personal self-sacrifice of Christ.

Applying this image, Ryken reminds us that “we begin to become heroes simply by being friends” (68) and that all Christians “are called to serve and to sacrifice, through a ministry of presence and through prayer” (76). This section also includes an intriguing exploration of Frodo’s apparent “failure” at the story’s climax (65–66).

Finally, Aragorn son of Arathorn embodies the image of Christ’s kingly work. Though initially appearing in the story as a humble Ranger with an understated ability to heal others, Aragorn grows in stature and renown as the story progresses. In his coronation near the story’s end, we are presented with an image of “an eschatological celebration of an enduring kingdom ... ‘in a great city, one with mighty walls, a river, and the Tree of Life’” (111–12).

What would Tolkien say about Ryken’s analysis? The author of *The Lord of the Rings* was known to have little love for allegory. Yet as his story gained more currency, many readers began to see images such as those Ryken explores in this book. When the question was put to him, in a 1966 letter, whether this sort of analysis was valid, Tolkien responded as follows: “Much of this is true enough, except, of course, the general impression given ... that I had any such ‘schema’ in my conscious mind before or during the writing” (46). Tolkien did not set out to write a Christian allegory. But he knew Christ—and that knowledge permeated his literature.

***It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be: A Reconsideration of the Imago Dei in Light of Those with Severe Cognitive Disabilities*, by George C. Hammond. P&R Reformed Academic Dissertations, 2017. Paperback, 336 pages, \$40.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Philip T. Proctor.**

How do we understand the doctrine of humanity made in God’s image? How does our *imago Dei* doctrine encompass those with profound cognitive disability? Pastor Hammond writes of his seminary studies, “a thought occurred to me that filled me with horror: *My daughter does not bear the image of God ...* If the *imago Dei* is to be found substantively in those things which separate us from animals such as language and intellect; if it is to be found functionally in the ability to exert dominion over the environment and other creatures; or if it is to be found relationally in creating and maintaining intricate human relationships, then it was evident that Rebecca’s life did not fit these criteria” (2).

We tend to include the profoundly cognitively disabled in the definition of *imago Dei* by exception, which leads to some frightening conclusions. In the first chapter, “The Problem and Its Setting,” the historical understanding of what it means to be *human*—to bear the image of God—is traced from the Patristic period through the Reformation to the modern disabilities rights movement. In words that sound chillingly Third Reich-ish, the modern and respected scholar Peter Singer is quoted: “If we can put aside these emotionally moving but strictly irrelevant aspects of the killing of a baby [the idea that they are created in God’s image], we can see that the grounds for not killing persons do not apply to newborn infants” (48). Singer’s criteria for the value of human life (consciousness, capacity for interaction, ability to express desire for continued

living, etc.) provide the grounds for not merely abortion but for killing the “unhuman” from a wider range. Reacting to this view, Hammond writes at the close of the first chapter, “the church needs a basis for valuing and protecting [the cognitively disabled] that transcends a compassion born of mere sentiment and emotion” (48).

Moving from historical formulations of the *imago Dei*, to modern “disability theologians,” to exegetical treatment of key passages, Pastor Hammond then offers a holistic definition. In the final section, he gives practical guidance to seminary professors and pastors for teaching and modeling the truth that those with profound cognitive disabilities are as fully made in God’s image as any of us.

Through Pastor Hammond, his daughter Rebecca speaks and teaches the church. This work provides genuinely fresh insight into a problem that, prior to reading it, I hadn’t really considered. While reading, I was challenged and moved by the rigorous academic work that is displayed and the warm father’s heart that is so clearly evident. After reading it, I warmly commend this book to the church as a whole.

***Faith, Hope, Love: The Christ-Centered Way to Grow in Grace*, by Mark Jones. Crossway, 2017. Paperback, 287 pages, \$15.59. Reviewed by Prof. Ryan M. McGraw.**

Many Christians recognize that faith, hope, and love are important. It is difficult to read the New Testament without encountering them all. However, few today connect faith, hope, and love as did our forefathers in the early and medieval church. The fact that they went together in the Apostle Paul’s mind should be enough to alert us to the fact that we may be missing something vital.

Mark Jones seeks to revive the so-called “theological virtues” of faith, hope, and love in this thought-provoking and heart-stirring volume. Jones’s writings are marked by theological balance, Christ-exalting content, and devotional warmth. This book is



no exception, and readers of all levels of Christian maturity will both enjoy it and profit from it.

The book treats faith, hope, and love in catechetical form. Following the catechetical tradition of the Christian church, each chapter expounds a question related to its subject. The end of the book includes a list of all fifty-seven questions, comprising a complete catechism on faith, hope, and love. The themes tying the entire book together are the pre-eminence of Christ in Christian theology and life, as well as communion with the triune God. He treats a wide range of issues such as the habits and acts of saving faith, the relevance of hope to persecution and suffering, and Christ embodying the Ten Commandments as the rule of love. Jones's book is full of careful and deep reflection on Scripture, addressing his readers with wisdom and pastoral sensitivity throughout.

Many features of this book stand out. These include the detailed description of how Adam broke all Ten Commandments in his Fall into sin (163–65) and the glorious inverse parallel in the life of Christ as he loved and kept all of them (168–70). Jones leads his readers to meditate on the majesty of Christ in keeping the law for his people in a way that moves beyond superficial theological epithets. This is precisely the kind of thinking that the church needs so desperately in every generation. He tenderly addresses parents and children alike in their duties toward God in union with Christ by the Spirit. He also maintains the important conceptual distinction between faith and love (175), seeing faith as the principle of love without confusing faith and faithfulness. He also does not avoid hard issues that face Christians today, especially in the area of prevalent sexual sins that many shy away from addressing (217).

These features, and many others, remind us why Jones is always worth reading. He succinctly addresses the key issues of Christian faith and life in a positive and encouraging way. *Faith, Hope, and Love* is compelling and edifying. It connects us to the piety of the church in all ages through the lens of Reformed theology. Most importantly, it drives us back to three key

biblical virtues that belong together and are together in the Bible. Reading this book will show you why these virtues were so important to the Apostle Paul and why believers should treasure them today.

***All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*, by James E. Dolezal. Reformation Heritage, 2017. Paperback, 176 pages, \$10.00. Reviewed by OP minister Brian T. Wingard.**

Dr. Dolezal has produced a book that takes one to the rarefied heights of philosophy and theology proper. To complete the statement from which the title comes, “All that is in God is God” (Anselm of Canterbury, 1300s). The subtitle indicates the author's belief that this classical view of God, found in the Early Fathers, medieval theologians, the Reformers, and the Puritans, has been lost by much of contemporary evangelicalism, including Calvinists. At issue is the doctrine of God's simplicity, i.e., that God is not a composite being of the sum of his constituent parts. The book may be considered a defense of the famous description of God as being “without body, parts, or passions” (WCF 2.1).

The opposing view Dolezal calls mutualism, which states that in order to be a true person, God's relation to his rational creatures must be one of “give and take.” In one scholar's words, God's love must be “a vulnerable love that feels pain” (24). While the more radical forms of mutualism are found in process theology and open theism, Dolezal believes the greatest danger is with its milder forms, like that found in the writings of Bruce Ware, an avowed critic of open theism.

The book begins with an overview of models of theism, focusing mainly upon classical Christian theism and mutualism. From there Dolezal proceeds to focus on the

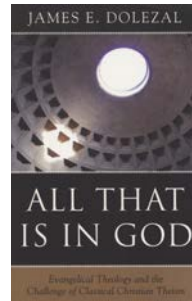
doctrines of immutability, simplicity, eternity, and the Trinity, respectively, before giving his conclusion.

The focus on simplicity encompasses two chapters, one outlining the doctrine and a second detailing its contemporary loss. Dolezal states that the doctrine has been lost in one of three ways: by ignoring it, denying it, or distorting it. It may be surprising to some, as it was to me, to be reminded that Charles Hodge is among those who denied the classical understand-

ing of the doctrine. These chapters contain what is, perhaps, the most controversial portion of the book. Dolezal insists that classical theism teaches that in God every attribute is identical. This has led many to object that power is not the same as wisdom or justice, or any of the other attributes. The author counters

that the language of theology is not of attributes as they are known by God, but analogously as they are spoken of by human beings. Furthermore, Dolezal helpfully states, God is omnipotent simply by virtue of being God, and the same is true of all his other attributes. The concept of deity is not a genus of which the attributes are species, but God is simply God. A man, conversely, is not powerful by virtue of being human but by virtue of possessing a certain trait of “power.”

I recommend this volume to any pastor in the OPC who intends to teach in depth on the subject of theology proper. The book is not without its flaws, but they are in matters of omission, beyond the scope of this review.



Position Available

Pastor: Garst Mill OPC in Roanoke, Virginia, is seeking a full-time pastor to work with a mature session in faithfully shepherding the flock and finding new ways to evangelize the community. We are a suburban church in the beautiful Roanoke River valley, meeting in our own building. For further information please contact Elder Joe Gladu at patriarch62@msn.com and view our website at www.garstmillopc.org.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

KAMÉLOS YOUTH RETREAT

The Presbytery of Philadelphia sponsored the second Kamélos Winter Youth Conference February 16–18 at the Streamside Camp & Conference Center in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. *Kamélos* is the Greek word for camel, and the conference meets in the shadow of Camelback Mountain in the Poconos.

Eighty-five students, grades 8–12, engaged in activities like snow tubing, table tennis, rock climbing, nine square, snowball fights around the campfire, and cardboard box “dogsled” races, as well as learning about the Lord’s Prayer and how to develop an intimate and powerful prayer life. Lessons from Matthew 6 were presented by speaker David Landow, associate pastor of Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Delaware, who focused on the topic of God’s kingdom and our needs.

“After each session, the students would have about forty-five minutes to get together with their counselors and pray continually through lists of subjects from each section. It was truly amazing to see the Holy Spirit’s work in these students,” said Adam Hartlaub, a counselor and member of Calvary OPC, Glenside, Pennsylvania.

One of the ideas behind Kamélos, as envisioned by direc-

tor Steve Corsello, a member at Trinity OPC in Easton, Pennsylvania, is to connect youth from smaller churches with other youth in their presbytery. The presbytery’s prayer is that this conference will help young men and women develop a life-long devotion to Jesus Christ, an appreciation for the Reformed tradition, and a commitment to the local church.

“Please continue to pray for these students, that many more would come to profess faith, would take home what they learned at camp, and would continue to build their

personal relationship with Jesus Christ in order to grow into the next generation of church leadership,” said Hartlaub.



Building a dogsled out of a cardboard box



2018 Kamélos Winter Youth Conference