

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

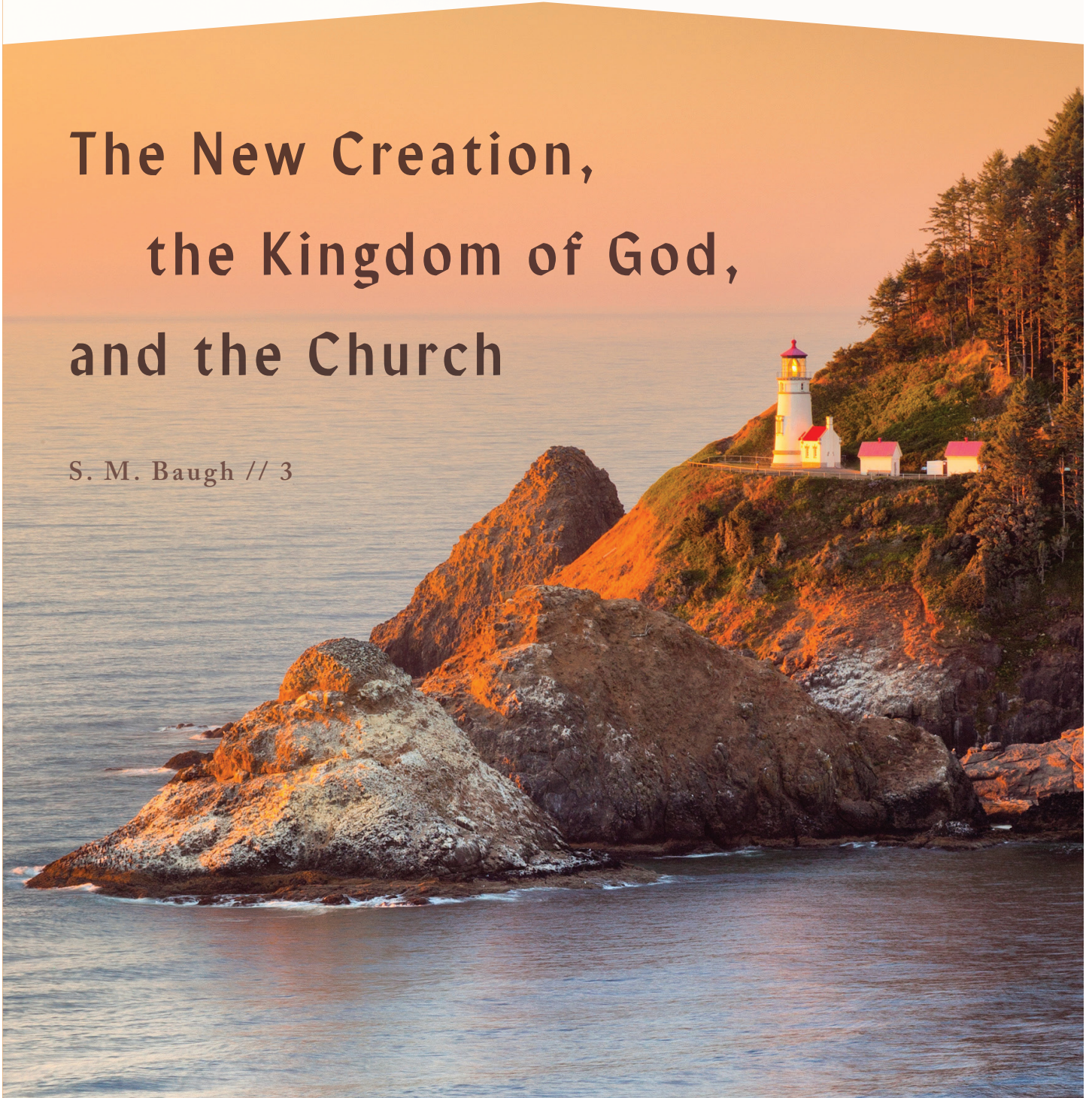
6 What the
Resurrection Demands
// by T. Nathan Trice

APRIL 2023

21 Review: *Covenantal and
Dispensational Theologies*
// by Harrison Perkins

The New Creation, the Kingdom of God, and the Church

S. M. Baugh // 3



CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 3** The New Creation, the Kingdom of God, and the Church
by S. M. Baugh
- 6** What the Resurrection Demands
by T. Nathan Trice
- 8** God's Cancel Culture and Ours
by Andrew J. Miller

DEPARTMENTS

- 10** Foreign Missions
Eyai Akuj, "God Is There"
- 12** Christian Education
Catechizing with the Truth • Old Books • Out of the Mouth ...
- 14** Home Missions
CHMCE's Growing Conference Schedule
- 16** Stewardship
Yet for Your Sake He Became Poor
- 17** Prayer Calendar
- 19** News, Views & Reviews

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in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

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Lowell Ivey, pastor of Reformation OPC in Virginia Beach, Virginia, received a family of thirteen in late 2022, causing the family and congregation together to rejoice in our being heirs to the promises of God. The eight youngest children were baptized. Pictured here are Jeremy and Jessie Williams with children Christina, Lydia, Ephraim, Cheyenne, Abigail, Luke, Nehemiah, Hadden, Tulip & Lavender (twins), and Imogen.



THE NEW CREATION, THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND THE CHURCH



S. M. BAUGH // It was my custom in my seminary class on the Gospels to ask the students at the opening of the kingdom of God section the simple question: “What is the kingdom of God?” Their faces grew serious as they invariably discovered that they did not know the answer exactly or that their thinking was unsatisfyingly

vague. Yet the definition of the kingdom of God is easy to give: it is the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth. In the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, it is “the kingdom of glory” (Q/A 102). According to that catechism answer, we are asking our Father to hasten this new creation kingdom when we pray for his kingdom to come in the Lord’s Prayer.

I don’t think people expect the definition of the kingdom to be so simple, but it is, and the Scriptures are clear on this. The kingdom of God is an eternal inheritance for all those who have been redeemed by Christ (Westminster Confession of Faith 8.5). And a promised inheritance necessarily lies in the future. Jesus confirms this when he speaks of our coming into the inheritance of the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:23–24) at the “rebirth” of creation when “the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne” (v. 28). At that time, all believers “will shine like the sun in the

kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43) and “inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:29).

This is why Paul, in a very important chapter in 1 Corinthians, insists that believers must be raised bodily and concludes, “I declare this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the corruptible inherit incorruptibility” (1 Cor. 15:50).

Thus, to enter into eternal life is to enter into the kingdom of God in resurrection glory. This shows that the kingdom of God is the new creation, when this heaven and earth will be comprehensively shaken (Heb. 12:26; cf. Rev. 6:12–14) and destroyed by fire (2 Pet. 3:7–13; cf. 2 Thess. 1:7–8). Then God will make all things new (Rev. 21:5) to be an “eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” into which we who persevere in faith will enter by God’s rich provision (2 Pet. 1:11). “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot

be shaken” (Heb. 12:28).

Is That It?

Yet is that it? Is the kingdom of God solely a future, divine, cosmic renovation of this creation when the Lord Jesus returns? Strictly speaking, yes, it is. The kingdom of God is the new heavens and new earth by definition, strictly speaking. It is true that we can possess this kingdom now as a covenantally guaranteed inheritance (especially Matt. 5:3, 10; Luke 22:29; 1 Pet. 1:3–5), but it is a future inheritance for which this whole creation groans in anticipation (Rom. 8:19–22).

But what about the New Testament proclamation that the kingdom of God has decisively *drawn near* in Christ (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28)? Did he postpone the kingdom to some distant future when he ascended to heaven in resurrection glory as the old form of dispensationalism teaches? No! On this the New Testament is very

clear: “the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5), marking the kingdom of God, have already arrived with the Son of God “in these last days” (Heb. 1:2; cf. 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 9:26; 1 John 2:18). Yet this requires some careful distinctions to understand properly.

Inauguration and Consummation

Scholars and preachers speak of the kingdom being “already” and “not yet” to deal with the fact that the Lord Jesus has indeed established it at his first coming. The distinction itself has the particular advantage of being biblical. For example, in Revelation 12, John sees a vision of the birth and ascension of Christ immediately followed by a battle between the devil and his angels who are cast out of heaven. We are then told what this means:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power *and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come*, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down.” (Rev. 12:10; emphasis added)

Thus, the kingdom of God is “already” when Christ Jesus “was caught up to God and to his throne” (Rev. 12:5) at his ascension.

In another vision in Revelation, though, John sees a portrayal of judgment day when the wrath of God comes, and he exerts his almighty power to take up his reign (Rev. 11:17). Then loud voices in heaven shout:

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. (Rev. 11:15)

Obviously, what had transpired earlier in history at the ascent of Christ (Rev. 12:5 above) was a real inauguration of the kingdom of God but not its consummation; it was “not yet” in the final, consummate sense. But how do we sort out this “already/not yet” dynamic without merely stating an unhelpful enigma?

Five Vantage Points

To address this potential problem of “already/not yet” sounding like an obscure riddle, I find it helpful to discuss the kingdom of God from five vantage points: 1) the king; 2) his authority to rule (“dominion” or “kingship”); 3) his realm (“dominion”); 4) his subjects or citizens; and 5) the divine covenant, which in biblical kingdoms acts as charter and constitution. Let’s sketch out four of these very briefly.

We only need a few verses to establish that the incarnate Son at his resurrection and ascent to heaven has been given universal authority in heaven and on earth forever (e.g., Dan. 7:13–14; Matt. 28:18; John 17:2; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:10; Rev. 2:27; cf. Westminster Larger Catechism Q/A 54). Hence, our first three vantage points—the king and his universal authority over the kingdom of God—have been introduced into history by the Lord Jesus Christ’s victory over death. We confess the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed with the church through the ages that the Lord Jesus ascended and sits on the “right hand” of the Father (from Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:33–34; 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; etc.). It is important to understand that the incarnate Son at the right hand of his Father is not idle, but he is seated on the Father’s throne ruling as king over all creation (cf. Heb. 1:3; Rev. 3:21). Accordingly, Revelation can properly speak about the one throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1), and Paul can properly speak about the kingdom of God being “the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5; cf. Col. 1:13).

On the fifth distinction, we don’t always connect covenant with kingdom, but we should. Covenant is an administrative instrument which establishes kingship or dominion over a realm for a king, like David (e.g., Ps. 89). And it is also a governing instrument with stipulations for the parties involved: the king and his subjects. This gets into a lot of issues when we consider the new covenant, but let’s simply say here that the new covenant, which

was ratified by the blood of Christ (e.g., Matt. 26:26–29; Heb. 9:15), has established the eternal kingship of our Savior. When studied carefully, Luke 22:29 is an important passage for this as it teaches that God has covenantally conveyed the kingdom to Christ, who then conveys it to us as its beneficiaries (cf. WLC Q/A 31, 35).

What has just been discussed is why we have to make careful distinctions when saying that the kingdom of God is both “already” and “not yet” in our age. The king and his kingship and its constitutional foundation in the new covenant is *already*. There is no “not yet” to them except in a few specifics. For example, 1 Corinthians 15:20–28 in particular shows that although our Lord as last Adam “must [now] rule as king” (v. 25) until his second coming (v. 23), this reigning as king is “in the midst of [his and our] enemies” (Ps. 110:2), with the ultimate enemy being death (1 Cor. 15:24–26). Christ rules absolutely now, but his realm is “mixed” with enemies both outside and within his people (e.g., Acts 20:29–30; WCF 25.4–5).

With the king’s “realm” (third distinction above), we have the main way in which the kingdom of God is “not yet.” Although Christ comprehensively rules this creation, it is still subjected to futility and has yet to be transformed into new creational glory, for which we patiently wait (Rom. 8:18–25). There is no “already” when we consider the physical realm of this creation; it must wait until God makes all things new. Then God will dwell visibly with his people, who will enjoy him forever (e.g., Matt. 5:8; Rev. 21:1–5, 22–23; 22:4).

Church and Kingdom

Jesus told a parable about wheat and weeds in a field to the crowds following him, and soon after he explained it to his disciples (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43). This is one of the more important passages to teach us about church life in this age and the relation of the visible church with the kingdom

of God. Specifically, Jesus explained that “the field is the world,” “the good seed is the sons of the kingdom,” and the weeds are “the sons of the evil one” (v. 38). These two groups grow together until the Son of Man sends forth his angels at “the harvest . . . the end of the age” (v. 39) to gather his wheat into the barn but to bind up the weeds for burning when “they will gather out of *his kingdom* all causes of sin and all law-breakers” (v. 41; emphasis added; cf. vv. 47–50). Note that both the wheat and the weeds are in the Son of Man’s kingdom before the harvest of the last day at his second coming.

Consequently, the Westminster Confession of Faith states: “The visible church . . . is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ” (WCF 25.2; cf. 30.1). While this might seem to contradict the kingdom being the new creation that we have already discussed, it does not when we remember the five distinctions we made above. Specifically, the kingdom of God can be viewed from the perspective of its subjects, or citizens. Christ through his shed blood has “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev. 1:5–6; cf. Rev. 5:9–10), and so the visible church is now “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” as the new Israel of God in this age (1 Pet. 2:9; Gal. 6:16; cf. Exod. 19:6).

What the confession points out is that Christ’s kingdom in this age is focused upon its one, earthly institution: the visible church. As such, it is an embassy of heaven, “a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), which has been entrusted with “the keys of the kingdom” (Matt. 16:19), consisting of “the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world” (WCF 25.3; cf. 30.1–2). This means that the church’s members are ambassadors and sojourners, whose ultimate homeland is not of this world:

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him



Cleft of the Rock Lighthouse on the Oregon coast, not far from the author’s home

even to subject all things to himself.” (Phil. 3:20–21)

This now leads to another biblical way of stating that the church is the kingdom of God, which is properly the new creation: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). The working of God in his people in this old world through the Holy Spirit is thoroughly new creational (so John 3:3–8; Eph. 2:10), such that his people are “a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:18). This is how the kingdom of God is “already” in the lives of his kingdom citizens who are destined for consummate, resurrection glory when the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5), returns for his people.

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God . . . then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:50, 54–55)

Conclusion

Obviously, there is much more to say about the new creation, the kingdom of God, and the church, but the interrelation of these three realities is

one of the more important things to realize for understanding the Bible. To say that the kingdom of God is the new creation, that Christ has ascended to reign as king over this kingdom, and that the visible church is the kingdom of Christ can appear to be fraught with problems, but the solution to this is similar to understanding the biblical doctrine of the Trinity: make good and necessary distinctions.

Finally, a robust, biblical understanding of the kingdom of God is deeply beneficial for our perseverance in faith and for our spiritual life. As a work of new creation, Christ is already transforming our inner person into his own image through the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16; Eph. 3:16; Col. 3:10). But this transformation now has a great and glorious goal at his arrival when our bodies will bear his image in heavenly, resurrection glory (1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2). This is the focus of Christ’s kingship over the kingdom of God, the new creation, of which we are now a part. Meanwhile, in this age our Shepherd-King graciously supports and defends us from his and our enemies and powerfully orders all things for his glory and for our good (WLC Q/A 45). □

The author is professor emeritus of New Testament at Westminster Seminary California and an OP minister. He quotes from the ESV and his own translation.

WHAT THE RESURRECTION DEMANDS



T. NATHAN TRICE // Matthew's account of the resurrection of Jesus is surely a study in brevity. The events of the "holy week" prior have been related in painstaking detail, over seven chapters, with special attention given to our Lord's arrest, trial, sentencing, mocking, flogging, crucifixion, final words, death, and burial.

But when it comes to the event of Christ's resurrection, it is almost as if Matthew has run out of ink! He gives testimony to the resurrection itself in only ten verses (Matt. 28:1–10). What explains this curious economy of words about the historical event that alone makes the story of Jesus worth telling? (See 1 Cor. 15:17–19.)

That is the question that confronted me years ago at the end of a sermon series on Matthew's gospel. This article is about the answer that eventually dawned on me: the resurrection of Jesus demands a response, and Matthew's intentional brevity accentuates that demand. It is as if he is saying: "This Jesus, whose remarkable birth and life and death I've recorded for you, is alive again! *So what will you do with that fact?*"

Yet Matthew does more than demand a response to the resurrection. He also, as he details the events that occur shortly after our Lord's resurrection, points to the proper response.

The Resurrection Demands Faith

In the first place, as the angel's testimony makes clear, the resurrection

calls for faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Matthew's account of the resurrection focuses on the words and deeds of the angel of the Lord who visited our Lord's tomb that Easter morning. We are told that his appearance was spectacular, with a brightness like lightning, and that his descent from heaven was accompanied by a great earthquake. We are told that the guards posted at the tomb were rendered incapacitated with fright. And we are told that, after heaving aside the great stone that sealed the tomb, the angel took his seat upon that stone to await the arrival of visitors.

The first of these visitors to the tomb were the women among Jesus's disciples, and Matthew specifies two of them in particular: "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." They go with the intention merely of "seeing the tomb." But their encounter with the waiting angel has provided a world of instruction and edification to Christians ever since. I will focus on just one element of the angel's words here: "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said."

Do you hear a gentle word of reproof in these words? I do. These wom-

en, along with all the disciples, had no expectation of our Lord's resurrection. Whatever they might have thought of his repeated predictions of his death and resurrection, it would seem that the sheer trauma of the one had rid them of any hope of the other. But we should also hear in the angel's words a note of triumphant praise, as if to say, "He did it! He told you he was going to rise from the dead, and he did!" The angel is pointing out to the women that Jesus's resurrection from the dead vindicated his claim to be the Messiah of God and made him worthy of their trust for salvation. His resurrection demanded their renewed faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Likewise for us, the resurrection demands a believing embrace of all that Christ said about who he is. Jesus, after all, made some staggering claims about himself, as Matthew has faithfully recorded in his gospel. And when he died like a criminal at the hands of the Romans, all his claims seemed to be empty talk. Yet when he was raised from the dead, in fulfillment of his own words, suddenly all that he said must

now be reckoned with. His resurrection demands nothing less. He is who he said he was. He is worthy of our faith.

The Resurrection Demands Worship

In the second place, as the women's example makes clear, the resurrection calls for the worship of Jesus as God. The angel had not only good news for the women, but also a great assignment: "Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead." Matthew tells us that these fearful-yet-joyful women wasted no time in doing exactly that; they "departed quickly from the tomb" and "ran to tell his disciples." Yet the very next word of the story depicts these women being stopped in their tracks as they encounter the risen Christ himself. We're told, "and behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!'" What a moment of further fear and joy that must have been for these first witnesses of the resurrection!

Many in the church have noted with appreciation that our Lord appeared first to the women among his disciples, and I think the most obvious explanation for this is that Jesus recognized that they were the ones most devoted to him. Details given by Matthew in his account certainly seem to bear this out. They, in all their grief, were the last to leave our Lord on that Friday of his burial (Matt. 27:61), and they were the first to return to the tomb after the Sabbath was over. But their devotion to Christ takes a new turn when they encounter him risen from the dead. Matthew tells us, "And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him." That statement should not fall lightly on us. These faithful daughters of Zion knew well the law of God that his people may not bow down to any likeness of anything in heaven above or earth beneath. Yet here they are throwing themselves to the ground, clasping the feet of this man, and worshiping him.

Perhaps neither woman could have expressed in that moment all that went into this impulsive act, any more than the disciple Thomas could have articulated all the Trinitarian theology behind

his later confession to Christ: "My Lord, and my God!" (John 20:28). Yet their response was precisely what the resurrection demanded. Jesus was more than a man who had returned from the dead; after all, others had been raised from the dead before him. He was the one whose claim to have "come down from heaven" (John 6:38) and to be one with the Father (John 10:30) had been vindicated by his resurrection. So he was worthy to be worshiped as God.

It is profitable to remember this as we gather as Christians each Sunday to worship a Jewish man named Jesus. To the ancient heretics of the church, along with Jews and Muslims to this day, this is idolatry: God alone is to be worshiped! But we are right to follow the example of the two Marys and, in light of the resurrection, to worship our Messiah as divine, for he "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Apart from the empty tomb, the conclusion would be inescapable: he was but an ordinary man. But the place where he lay was empty that Easter morning; thus, we too bow before him as God in the flesh.

The Resurrection Demands Service

In the third place, as our Lord's Great Commission makes clear, the resurrection calls for service to Christ as King. In Matthew's account, Jesus has very few words for his disciples after his resurrection. We know from other Gospels that Jesus says and does many things in the days between his resurrection and ascension, yet Matthew is seemingly uninterested in them. What he does record for us, however, is the most famous of all our Lord's final words: the Great Commission. And it is with these words that the Gospel comes to a climactic finale:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I

am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18–20)

As familiar as these words have become, I think they should still take our breath away. The claim that this man on a mountaintop makes is staggering: that of divine authority over the entire cosmos. And the summons that he gives his followers is equally amazing: that of bringing the whole world into subjection to that authority by means of water and words (baptizing and teaching).

But what has happened to warrant our Lord's staking of this claim now? It was his resurrection, of course. That is the event that lies behind both his claim and his summons. Indeed, by passing almost directly from the resurrection account to the Great Commission, Matthew draws our attention to precisely this connection. Jesus's resurrection demands a response in the lives of his disciples: one of radical devotion to his lordship over all of life, and in all of the earth.

So in our celebrations of Easter, let's not forget the summons that comes with it. Having returned from the great work he accomplished as their Savior, Jesus gathers his disciples to give them a great work to accomplish for him, their King. And this is what Matthew's gospel, so famous for its emphasis on the kingdom of God, has been driving toward from the beginning. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has provided irrefutable proof of his identity as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and this calls for radical devotion to advancing his kingdom in the earth. The event that we celebrate at Easter did more than secure our salvation; it secured our service.

Perhaps the ending of Matthew's gospel is not as abrupt, then, as it might seem. Or perhaps, rather, the abruptness is the point! The resurrection of Jesus should in fact bring us up short. If this wondrous event has happened, then I must decide: Will I believe in Jesus as my Savior? Will I worship him as my God? Will I serve him as my King? □

The author is pastor of Resurrection Presbyterian in Matthews, North Carolina.

GOD'S CANCEL CULTURE AND OURS



ANDREW J. MILLER // Today, “cancel culture” dominates our media. If a person says or does something that goes against the culture’s prevailing mores, they get “canceled,” criticized, banned from social media, and ostracized. Christian churches, however, must have a very different culture—one in which, instead of canceling people,

sins are blotted out. We must choose to not keep record of wrongs.

We do this because our God blots out sins. The Lord declares, “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (Isa. 43:25). God is a sin-blotter, and those who have had their guilt canceled by him should act likewise: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. . . . Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph. 4:32; 5:1). Clearly, God blots out transgressions through the substitutionary sufferings of Christ (Col. 2:13–14).

God Cancels Our Sin

The language God uses in Isaiah of “blotting out” sin provides a powerful metaphor. Think of signing a contract that turns over everything you have—even giving yourself into slavery, your future wages garnished. But then ink spills over the only copy of the contract, and it is like it never happened.¹ This il-

lustration is inadequate for several reasons, such as that with today’s technology it’s easy to uncover what has been covered. But in Isaiah’s day, blotted out things were *gone*. There was no trace. The truth is glorious: God put all his peoples’ sins on his beloved and faithful Son; they are covered over by the blood of Christ.

A somewhat more modern illustration of God’s blotting out sin comes in the story of a wealthy Englishman who loved to drive a Rolls Royce.² One fateful day, he drove over a pothole, and the rear axle broke. He shipped it to the Rolls factory, where it was quickly repaired and sent back. Knowing his warranty period was past, the man expected to receive a repair bill, but one never came. When he contacted the factory, they responded, “We have thoroughly searched our files and find no record of a Rolls-Royce axle ever breaking.” In other words, they had such a high standard of excellence that they would not permit a flaw to be known. This is like Christ covering over our sins—the

excellence of his saving work means he will never let a single one of our flaws be known to the Father. It is as if our sins never happened.

God did not do this because people merited it—God says he blots out *for his own sake* (Isa. 43:25). Martin Luther called this clause “a great thunderbolt against all merits.”³ In other words, the Lord does this *despite* what we have done. His reason is not in us; it is in him. God linked himself to his people (2 Tim. 2:11–13; Acts 9:4–5; Isa. 37:32–35; Ezek. 36:21–23), and if he does not bless his people, it reflects poorly on him (Isa. 48:11). He would be demeaned. So, he hallows his own name by redeeming a people for himself.

Far from being worthy of this, we deserve to be canceled by God. He could rightly ostracize us and blot us out, as the flood judgment illustrated: “So the LORD said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land’” (Gen. 6:7). Our only hope is God’s grace: “Have mercy on me, O

God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Ps. 51:1–2). This prayer is ours, granted in Christ, along with the promise of Revelation 3:5: our names will never be blotted out of the book of life.

God Canceled Their Sin

This has been the way of God throughout history. Again and again, the Bible records how the major flaws of biblical characters are not held against them. Hebrews 11, for example, lauds many figures we might not think worthy because of their egregious sin—but God’s grace is greater than all our sin:

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. (Heb. 11:32–34)

These characters each had their flaws—major flaws—but these people were not canceled. They were instead honored for what little faith they had. David, likewise, was not defined by his theft of another man’s wife and the murder of his faithful servant Uriah. These sins did not condemn David, who repented, though they continued to impact his life. The way of God is not the way of man, and it runs counter to today’s culture; but God shows us that blot-out grace excels cancel culture.

The Church’s Blot-Out Grace

God’s grace shows us our own path forward. The church imitates God—those who have been forgiven, forgive. For example, David welcomed one of Saul’s own grandchildren into his palace and to his own table, despite Saul’s

mistreatment of him and the political threats this potentially posed (2 Sam. 9). He blotted out a history of persecution—weeping even over Saul’s demise (2 Sam. 1:12).

In gratitude to God for our own sins being blotted out, we blot out the sins of others. We do not keep record of their wrongs. Instead of holding on to the sins people have committed against us, we forgive them. This does not undo sin’s consequences—trust takes time to rebuild, and some sins entail precautions to ensure that even a supposedly repentant offender does not continue to hurt themselves or others. But forgiveness means being willing to overlook offenses and to focus on what is good in people (Phil. 4:8).

Jesus taught us to pray for such things:

In the fifth petition (which is, *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*), acknowledging that we and all others are guilty both of original and actual sin, and thereby become debtors to the justice of God; and that neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt: we pray for ourselves and others, that God of his free grace would, through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin, accept us in his Beloved; continue his favor and grace to us, pardon our daily failings, and fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness; which we are the rather emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect, when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we from the heart forgive others their offenses. (Westminster Larger Catechism Q/A 194)

Instead of being like the unmerciful servant of Matthew 18, who demands to be paid what he is owed, God’s people cover over what failings we can. God’s grace in blotting out our sin softens our hearts toward others and enables us to see and love the

deep requirements of the ninth commandment—the call not to bear false witness. The church’s blot-out culture includes, according to the Westminster Larger Catechism on the ninth commandment,

a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers . . . studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report. (Q/A 144)

How different our lives would be if we lived this way! Sadly, instead of blotting out the sins of others, we tend to underline them; we tend to highlight them. There is an important challenge here: Have you been highlighting the flaws and sins of others? Maybe it is a spouse in the wrong; or your parent; or your brother. Perhaps it is a friend who slighted you. Instead of giving them the silent treatment, the cold shoulder, or canceling them, would you be gracious to them and blot out the impact and memory of their transgression? Whatever it costs you, it costs you less than it cost Jesus to blot out your sins.

This is one of the most glorious callings we have as God’s children: “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense” (Prov. 19:11). □

Andrew J. Miller is the pastor of Bethel Reformed Presbyterian in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Endnotes

1. Aaron Sironi, “From Your Heart . . . Forgive,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 26, no. 3 (2012): 46–57.
2. This illustration is adjusted slightly from Michael P. Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Baker Books, 2000), 154.
3. Martin Luther, quoted in John F. A. Sawyer, *Isaiah Through the Centuries* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 255.

EYAI AKUJ, "GOD IS THERE"

// JAMES FOLKERTS



James and Esther Folkerts

This morning we woke up to news that we had slept through a significant gun battle. Just another day here “east of Eden” in Karamoja, Uganda. Apparently, nomadic raiders had attacked the local army camp a few kilometers away. The army was supposed to be protecting some large herds of cattle. One or two child shepherds were killed in the fight, but, of more concern to the army, over two hundred cows were taken. Today, I am sure the army is busy hunting down these bad guys.

We are currently in the middle of dry season, and food insecurity is worsening. This is often the time of year when quarreling and drunkenness intensifies in the villages around us. Last week, one of the wives of our polygamous former guard rolled onto her baby in a drunken stupor, accidentally smothering the child. The week before, a young girl in a nearby village told us her gut-wrenching story of ongoing sexual abuse and forced abortions. Last month, a mother who already has six children took in another six from her deceased sister. The rumor is that the sister was killed by her husband. He is still around. The adoptive mother now has twelve mouths to feed. Food is scarce. Lord, have mercy!

Light and Grace in the Darkness

Yet there are also shafts of light and grace in the darkness. After a church family found out that their little girl had Down syndrome, the mother said with faith to my wife, Esther, “We know that this child is a gift from God. God does not make mistakes. He knows what he is doing. We love this child just like our other children.” This child, named Esther after my wife, passed away at four months.

Two of the young men from the discipleship program have a young sister whom the rest of their clan wanted to force into marriage with an older man. I think she would have been the man’s fifth wife. The girl’s impoverished family would have received more than twenty cows for the dowry, which could have

lifted them out of severe poverty and food insecurity. But in the face of family violence, these two brothers stood up for Christ in their large, polygamous family and were able to have their sister marry a young Christian man from our church instead. With big smiles and a quiet chuckle, they shared that they had received a dowry of two small cows and five malnourished goats. Their family is extremely angry with them, but these brothers, Chegem and Louse, are thankful their sister is now happily married. These stories of darkness, injustice, and the light that shines in that darkness keep piling up.

The Context of the Cross

This spring, we will be leaving the mission field in Uganda with sad hearts. Some have asked us how we managed to remain on the field as long as we did despite our own personal trials, suffering, fear, and discouragement, especially with the ambush and beating we received from robbers in 2021. We truly ask ourselves the same question. All we can say is a simple, but not simplistic, Karimojong saying: *Eyai Akuj*, “God is there!” The saying reminds us of the verse, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” (Rom. 8:31, 35). God by his presence and grace has carried us through so many trials. He has even blessed us richly in allowing us to be used by him here in Karamoja, despite our trials and our own ever-present shortcomings.

We always speak of the need for contextualization in missions. We are taught to ask, “What is the context of the people we are ministering to?” Greater still, however, is the need to see our work within the context of the cross and Christ’s abiding love. The cross is not only our message but also our context! It is the source of our very identity and life. In my fear, it is easy to meditate on and clothe myself with panic, anger, isolation, and feelings of being in danger. But I need better clothing—empowering clothing. I need the clothing of knowing that I

am known, forgiven, loved, justified, adopted, and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. I need each piece put on with prayer. I continually tell myself, “Though my trauma is part of my experience, it is not the core or center of my identity.” For me to find my identity in my missionary experiences—whether positive or negative, whether trauma or success—would be a disabling lie from Satan. My identity is in Christ alone. I need to keep my eyes on him who is able to keep me from stumbling. *Eyai Akuj*. Our boast is not in ourselves, but in Christ.

When I am back in Kampala, I go running past the place of the ambush. I like to pray when I run, especially there. It is becoming a place of thankfulness and victory for me now, a place where I can challenge my fears, my desire for revenge, and my nightmares, and remember who I am: loved in Christ, cared for in Christ, and being used for Christ. I give thanks to him for sparing our lives. I pray for those enemies—which has not been an easy thing. I pray for Karamoja, for my family, for the work in Uganda, for light to overcome darkness. I give thanks for healing. *Eyai Akuj!*

Living here in Karamoja puts our own struggles in a new context. It has helped us to continue serving as we share in the struggles of those around us, albeit in a very small way. How much more is that the case when we view our trials and sacrifices before the cross itself? I often think of Romans 12:1: “in view of God’s mercy . . . offer your bodies as a living sacrifice” (NIV). The context of the cross itself enriches and emboldens my identity in Christ, for it is through the cross that I am not my own, but belong to him body and soul. The context of the cross brings me healing. It is when I lose sight of the cross that I begin to minister in my own pride, indifference, or despair. Losing sight of the cross slowly poisons ministry, causing it to lack integrity and to become counterfeit and fundamentally idolatrous. I keep praying for the Lord to turn my eyes back to him and his cross.

The Gift of God’s People

As Esther and I look back on our time here, we see another powerful way that God has been here, and that has been through the gracious ministry of his people. Missions is a coordinated team effort, and an essential part of that is care for missionaries themselves. We missionaries are often strong-minded, independent people who are not always the best team players. Caring for us can be challenging. But we still need it. We need encouragement, accountability, prayer, love, forgiveness, and support.

Throughout our journey we have received such ministry and been refreshed by it. At times we have had to actively seek help. When we asked for it, we also graciously received it. That help has been God’s gift to us, and we have made lifelong friends through this. We think especially of our teammates who helped us and prayed for us—you know who you are. I think of members of the Committee on Foreign Missions who regularly checked in with me and prayed with me. I think of the “Good Samaritan” families at African Bible University that literally

took us in and looked after us during the weeks of our initial recovery. These “small” things were huge. We think of the effective professional counseling and trauma therapy that we received in Kampala through African Inland Mission. We think of our “home” church, Faith Reformed (URCNA) in Telkwa, British Columbia. Paul echoes this in his own experience when he says, “I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people” (1 Cor. 16:17–18). I want to give recognition to everyone, and particularly to my wife, Esther, who encouraged me along the way. We also think of the effective prayers of all of you! What a gift that has been.

What About You?

As we close this article, I want you, reader, to think about what you can do for missions. Are you on Christ’s mission team as an active, invested member? You have managed to read this far! Today there is a great shortage of missionaries across most Reformed and Presbyterian denominations. There is so much work to be done, yet the workers are not only few but getting fewer. As churches, do we know the names of our missionaries? And do we pray for them? As parents, do we encourage our children to consider service on a mission field? The clock of the kingdom of Christ is ticking toward eternity. In the history of the church, our Western churches have great wealth, but the light of our witness could be much, much brighter. We need missionaries. Uganda needs missionaries. The world needs missionaries, more than ever as the Day approaches.

This past month I spoke to our Karimojong discipleship team. I told them that they are pretty much the first generation of their tribe who are coming to know Christ. Can you imagine that? These brothers are some of the first to be able to share the gospel with their people. I said, “When you get to heaven, you will be able to greet every tribe, but especially your tribe. People will ask, who were the first evangelists to the Karimojong? And you will be able to say, *we* were some of the first!” It is not enough to simply know Christ. We must also *make him known*.

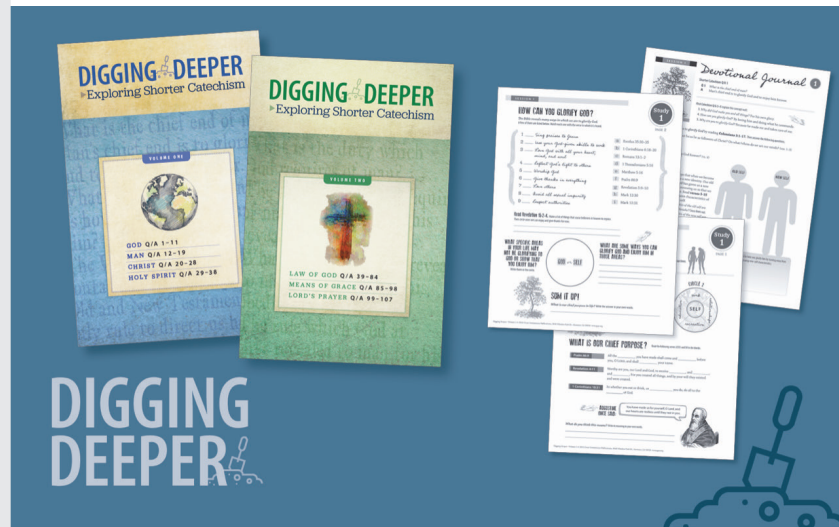
As we leave this field in May, we have been blessed to have a Ugandan pastor to whom I will pass the ministerial work. Pastor Julius has been working with the mission in Karamoja since 2019 as a chaplain in our clinic. To that he will now add the work of pastoring Nakaale Presbyterian Church and working with the brothers we have discipled. We are also working on bringing this church-planting work into a new denomination called the Reformation Church in East Africa (RCEA).

Please pray for this time of transition for our small team. In a little over a year, our team has said goodbye to the Van Essendelfts, the Knox family, Angela Voskuil, and now us. This team is going to need much prayer and support—and more teammates! We thank you for all your prayer and support for us and our team.

The author is a missionary in Nakaale, Karamoja, Uganda.

CATECHIZING WITH THE TRUTH

// HEATHER COSSAR



As the next generation grows and matures, they will no doubt bump up against the “catechisms” of the world. *Q. Who should you live for? A. I should be true to myself. Q. What is the meaning of life? A. To be happy.*

How can we help our young people develop a biblical worldview—the worldview of Jesus? The Shorter Catechism provides a road map into the kingdom vision of the Bible.

Q. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Q. What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

By studying these truths—especially in community—we can engage with God’s Word together, applying these concepts to our everyday lives. We think about Jesus, who asked his lis-

teners questions to reveal the innermost depths of their hearts and to see their need for him. By using the framework set out by godly saints who are now in the “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1), we can disciple teens and adults into a deeper relationship with our triune God.

A Map of the Bible

Luke begins his gospel,

It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:3–4)

The phrase “the things you have been taught” is a translation of a single Greek word from which we get our English word for *catechize*. Luke’s reader, a new Christian, did not begin with his own study of the Bible. He was first taught by others about God and his Word. He was catechized, in other words. He then tested and confirmed his catechism by studying the inspired Scripture that Luke sent to him.

Why is catechizing so effective? Perhaps an illustration will help. The catechism is to the Bible what a map is to the surface of the earth. Why do we bother with maps? Why do we not just go out and study the surface of the earth for ourselves? The answer, of course, is that life is brief and the world is big. Maps are so valuable because many people, over many years, have made a study of the earth’s surface. While maps are not perfect, they are much more complete and accurate than what we would produce on our own.

It is like that with our understanding of the Scriptures. The Bible contains a vast wealth of information. It is no easy thing to master it all; in fact, no one besides Jesus ever has mastered it completely. The catechism, like other great creeds of the church, is a spiritual map of the Bible—worked out and proved by

Digging Deeper is designed to:

- Provide a systematic teaching of Christian doctrine
- Demonstrate the biblical basis for church faith and practice
- Show that doctrine affects both faith and life, both knowledge and action, and both mind and will
- Help develop a biblical world and life view
- Deepen Bible study skills
- Encourage appreciation and memorization of the Shorter Catechism

others who have gone before us.

Is this not what the promise of Jesus implied? When he was about to finish his work on the earth, he said to his disciples, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). Jesus kept this promise. When the day of Pentecost came, he sent his Spirit to dwell in his church, as his own body. The Spirit was poured out—not on individuals by themselves, but on the whole body of believers together (Acts 2). And from that time on he has been leading his church into an ever-deepening understanding of the Scriptures.

Digging Deeper: Exploring the Shorter Catechism

Digging Deeper is the newest curriculum from Great Commission Publications. A revision of the beloved Bible Doctrine curriculum, this two-year study is designed for youth and also helpful for adults new to the Christian faith and to Reformed doctrine in particular.

Volume 1 is available now and covers the first major division of the Shorter Catechism: what we should believe about God (Q/A 1–38). The twenty-five sessions deep-dive into foundational truths about God (Q/A 1–11), man (Q/A 12–19), Christ (Q/A 20–28), and the Holy Spirit (Q/A 29–38).

Volume 2, covering the second major division—what duty God requires of us (Q/A 39–107)—will be available in fall 2023. This study of the Ten Commandments, the means of grace, and the Lord’s Prayer will give both covenant teenagers and anyone going deeper in the Reformed faith a refreshing exploration into the wonderful ways God has provided for us to grow and become more like Christ.

The Leader Guide equips teachers with key concepts that focus the aims of each session. Scriptures to explore, along with engaging discussion questions, guide the lesson. Student Bible studies, available both in print and digitally, help students to process the concepts in a creative way. Each session also includes a devotional journal, also available in print or digitally, to encourage time in the Word during the week. A free sample lesson is available at www.gcp.org.

G. I. Williamson once wrote,

It has been my privilege to instruct the Lord’s covenant children in the riches of this catechism for many years. Not so long ago one of those who received this instruction graduated from Westminster Seminary. He reported that what he had long before learned in catechetical studies had often given him a distinct advantage over seminary students who had never had this privilege. In a word, there is lifelong benefit gained from a solid catechetical foundation.

The author is managing editor at Great Commission Publications.

☆ Congratulations

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

- **Clare Shannon**, *Covenant OPC, Orland Park, IL*

ON READING OLD BOOKS

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

THE PAULINE ESCHATOLOGY (1930)

BY GEERHARDUS VOS

Among the books that have most influenced my understanding of Scripture, this one more than any other has fostered my appreciation of and for the teaching of the Apostle Paul and how to interpret it.

The title is misleading to readers who, understanding “eschatology” in its customary sense, expect a study limited to those “last things” associated with the second coming of Christ. Vos, however, does something much more. His basic thesis is that “to unfold the Apostle’s eschatology means to set forth his theology as a whole” (11). With unparalleled insight, he shows the dual focus eschatology has for Paul. Along with Christ’s future return, eschatology spans as well his coming in “the fullness of time”—the salvation accomplished centrally in his death and resurrection—with its present consequences for our lives as believers and the mission of the church until his return.

I am especially grateful for how Vos has opened my eyes to the full eschatological significance of the resurrection for Paul—both Christ’s and ours. As that most stupendous of all miracles authenticating the truth claims of Christianity, Christ’s resurrection is much more. For our salvation, it is the crucial validation of the justifying righteousness of his obedience culminating in his death and also the “firstfruits” inauguration of the eschatological resurrection-harvest. As such it constitutes him the “life-giving Spirit,” the source of resurrection-life, so that those united by faith to him, their firstborn resurrected brother, already share partially and imperfectly in that eschatological life, as they will fully and perfectly at his return.

This is not an easy book. In assigning from it over the years, an occasional student complaint has been, “when will someone translate Vos into English!” But those willing to immerse themselves in his sometimes densely expressed insights, unmatched in their depth, will, like me, be richly rewarded and edified.

—Richard B. Gaffin Jr.

● Out of the Mouth . . .

Recently my youngest announced at the dinner table, “God told Jonah to tell the wicked people to obey God—and to enjoy him forever.”

—David Kinner
Cape Cod, MA

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

HOME MISSIONS

CHMCE'S GROWING CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

// ALBERT J. TRICARICO



At the Regional Home Missionary conference in November

To support the growth and maturity of the OPC, the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension sponsors conferences throughout the year. Three are long-standing. Two new conferences were launched in 2022, and another new conference is scheduled for 2023.

Longstanding Conferences

Readiness for Ministry in the OPC is a two-day event conducted on seminary campuses during the months of February and March. The seminar serves several purposes: to introduce the OPC and the work of its program committees to seminarians; to provide training on themes related to Christian ministry; and to give preliminary evaluations of men whom the Lord may be leading to internships and eventually to pastoral calls in the OPC. Ordinarily, CHMCE arranges three Readiness conferences each year.

Next on the calendar is the annual church-planter training week, which takes place during the summer and has recently been located at Second Parish OPC in Scarborough, Maine. Church planters and their wives are welcomed to a relaxed schedule that includes talks on pertinent subjects; discussions of mission progress; and reports from the program committees of the OPC. The conference includes dedicated times for couples to share and pray together as well as ample free time for them to explore local sights. Every church planter is required to attend this week of training twice during the time when he

is receiving CHMCE support.

CHMCE sponsors its annual regional church extension conference each November. Presbytery home missions committee chairmen and regional home missionaries meet in central Florida to discuss church planting in their regions and plans for future efforts to establish OPC mission works. Guests are invited to present on themes related to church planting. New requests for support are listed for CHMCE's consideration at its stated December meeting.

Regional Home Missionary Conference

As helpful as the November regional conference is, it does not provide sufficient opportunity for regional home missionaries to discuss matters that are uniquely relevant to their work. So, in order to give time for this, CHMCE added a day to the schedule and named it the first RHM conference.

The inaugural meeting was a big success. In addition to a scheduled talk given by Rev. Lacy Andrews (see "A Seed Must Die to Bear Fruit," March *New Horizons*), brothers were asked to suggest topics that would interest them, questions that relate

to their work, or lessons they have learned in their ministry. Twenty-six distinct subjects were named, including: How do you best serve a church planter when he feels isolated? How do you establish alliances with other groups in the work of church planting? How do you involve your family in the work of regional home missions? What are the unique attributes of a church planter? What are the best ways to provide spiritual care to church planters and their families?



At the Readiness for Ministry conference in February

Participants then engaged in helpful discussions of three of these questions. The rest of the list will provide content for upcoming meetings. When asked if CHMCE should continue to arrange an RHM conference, the response from these men whose time is dear was a unanimous “yes.”

Revitalization

CHMCE’s general secretaries have occasionally been asked to consider how the committee might help smaller churches grow in congregational health. A number of different efforts were made over the years, but a fixed program of support has only recently been developed. Implementation will soon begin.

The program is designed to provide counsel to sessions who believe they need help but may lack the understanding and resources to get the help they need. CHMCE is ready to share the expense of engaging the service of experienced mentors who will make visits to the church—up to six in an eighteen-month period—and offer evaluation and advice.

Churches interested in participating in the program must complete a stewardship plan that will give mentors a thorough description of the congregation and its perceived needs. The plan is then submitted to the home missions committee of the presbytery, who will assess the readiness of the congregation to participate in the mentoring process. If approved, the request is delivered to CHMCE for its consideration. A trained elder and minister will then be identified as mentors for the church.

Now, the conference. In November, prospective mentors met in San Antonio, Texas, to discuss how best to serve the church in this ministry. Speakers were asked to present material on various topics germane to the work. Rev. John Currie was the main speaker. He gave three talks: “Intentional Pastoral Leadership,” “Analyzing the Past: Celebrating Grace, Repentance of Sins,” and “Mentoring: What It Is and What It Isn’t.” Reverends Dale Van Dyke, Steve McDaniel, Al Tricarico, and John Shaw also gave presentations. The conference ended with a time of reflection on the talks and on the prospect of helping congregations grow in spiritual vitality.

This kind of ministry is expensive. CHMCE will provide half the total cost of travel, lodging, and honoraria for two men to make six trips. Churches interested in taking advantage of this ministry may contact their presbytery home missions committee to begin the application process.

Keeping Up with the Harvest

As congregations grow in membership, pastors and el-



Grace OPC in Columbus, Ohio, will host Keeping Up with the Harvest in 2023

ders face unique challenges. In April of this year, CHMCE will oversee a new conference it has named Keeping Up with the Harvest. The purpose of this meeting is for pastors of larger congregations to come together and share what they have learned as the congregations they serve have grown. Men will come with questions as well. Four experienced pastors have been asked to give brief conversation starters on subjects that will interest all who attend.

These questions and others will be discussed at our first Keeping Up conference: How does a pastor and his session meaningfully shepherd a growing flock? What kinds of system adjustments can be made as a church increases in size? When is it time to engage in mother/daughter church planting? What does leadership training look like in a growing church?

CHMCE expects some robust discussion of topics that should help and may even stir some friendly debate. It is hoped that some iron sharpening will prove useful to Christ’s servants as they open their hearts to each other. The main goal is for pastors who face similar challenges to share successes, problems, and inquiries with a view toward gaining from the wisdom and experience of their fellow labors in the harvest field.

To sum it up, here is CHMCE’s conference schedule:

February/March	Readiness for Ministry in the OPC
April	Keeping Up with the Harvest
July	Church-Planter Training
November	RHM Conference
	Regional Church Extension
	Revitalization Mentor Training

While most of these are annual, CHMCE is not committed to sponsoring every conference every year. It is also not likely that three conferences will again be scheduled in the same month. But the committee does believe that these are all worthy endeavors, and it will continue to provide them in support of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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

Home Missions Today

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



YET FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR

// DAVID M. SARAFOLEAN

Stewardship. Charitable giving. Tithing. While similar, these terms are not exactly synonymous. All point to the Christian practice of giving sacrificially for the sake of the gospel and the well-being of others. Precisely how much one ought to give as a percent of their income is a matter of perennial debate. Rather than wade into those waters, I'd like to approach the topic from another angle.

In Matthew 6:19–21, Jesus exhorted us to lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth. He also warned us that where our treasure is, there our heart will be as well. The Apostle Paul makes a similar comment in 1 Timothy 6:19, where he exhorts the rich “to take hold of that which is truly life.” Neither one tells us how much we are to give, yet we are warned about hoarding earthly wealth.

I once attended a church where every year the pastor preached a sermon on charitable giving, using the same passage: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). This passage sidesteps the debate about what percentage of one’s income to tithe (and whether it should be based on net or gross income) and states in stark terms that Jesus Christ set aside all his riches and gave his life, breath, and blood to win our salvation. Put differently, he gave 100 percent. It is his example that sets the bar for us.

Many of us are familiar with the Heidelberg Catechism and its three headings: Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude. Charitable giving falls under Gratitude. The Apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians to give generously and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:6–11). Likewise, it comes through loud and clear in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

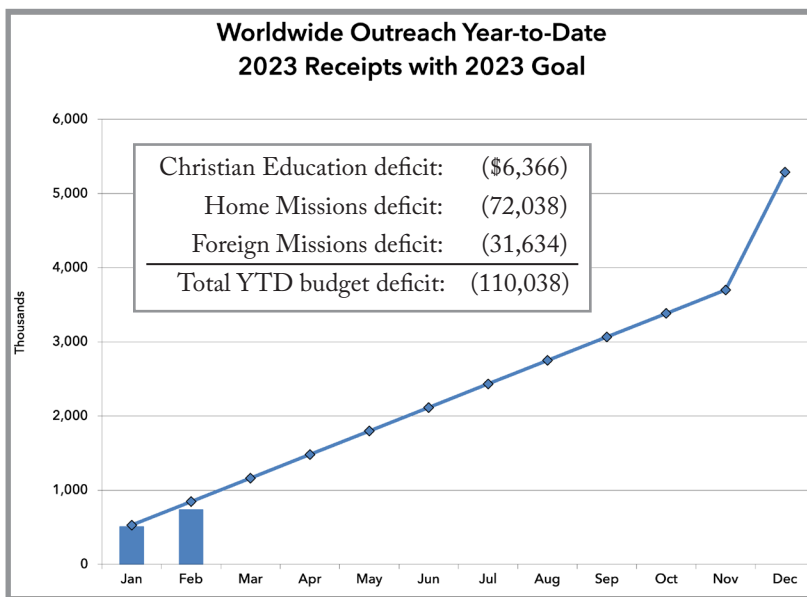
Consider Luke 7:47: “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

Brothers and sisters, if we have any awareness about the tremendous debt we have been forgiven, we won’t bother to think about what percent of our income we ought to give to the Lord’s work. We will give generously, and then give even more as the Lord enables us. Let each one of us pause right now to take stock of our financial affairs. Let each one of us compare our charitable giving to our own personal debt, which Jesus erased with his own blood. Those who have a low estimation of their debt give little. Those who see that they have been forgiven a tremendous amount give generously. May God help us see how much we have been forgiven, and may he help us respond with gratitude.

In closing, let me remind you of C. S. Lewis’s opinion on giving:

Charity—giving to the poor—is an essential part of Christian morality . . . I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them. (*Mere Christianity*, 81–82)

The author is pastor of Christ Covenant OPC in Midland, MI.



APRIL



The Stroms (day 7)



Tina DeJong (day 12)

-
- 1 Pray for the church in **EAST AFRICA** and **ETHIOPIA**. / **DAN & STACY HALLEY**, Tampa, FL. Pray that God would raise up men to serve as officers in Bay Haven Presbyterian.

 - 2 **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / **MARK STUMPF**, loan fund manager. / Pray for **HANK BELFIELD**, stated clerk of the GA as he balances many responsibilities.

 - 3 **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for Ben's summer courses. / **COMMITTEE ON DIACONAL MINISTRIES**. Pray for effective ministry of mercy in Turkey and Syria following February's devastating earthquakes.

 - 4 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**. / Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for preparations for summer outreach events and that many would respond to invitations.

 - 5 **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Give thanks for and pray that the Lord would protect the ministry of the Word. / Yearlong intern **ZACHARY JOHNSON** at Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, NJ.

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- 6 **DAVID & ASHLEIGH SCHEXNAYDER**, Scottsdale, AZ. Pray for Providence's new members classes. / Yearlong interns **CHRISTIAN (HANNA) REPP** at Harvest in San Marcos, CA, and **RICHY (NEVA) BRASHER** at Escondido OPC in Escondido, CA.

 - 7 **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for the church despite disincentives lingering from post-COVID social dynamics. / **NATE & ANNA STROM**, Sheboygan, WI. Pray for Breakwater Church to build relationships with the community.

 - 8 **CARL & STACEY MILLER**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray for Heritage to see fruit from their outreach efforts. / Tentmaking missionary **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the team as they help the Folkerts prepare to leave the field.

 - 9 Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for another missionary evangelist to serve in Karamoja. / Active duty military chaplains **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS**, US Army, and **CORNELIUS (DEIDRE) JOHNSON**, US Navy.

 - 10 Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, Short-Term Missions coordinator. Pray that churches and individuals would engage in upcoming short-term missions.

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- 11 **ETHAN & CATHERINE BOLYARD**, Wilmington, NC. Pray for Heritage OPC as they begin Sunday school this spring. / Yearlong intern **DOMINIC (MARTHA) SILLA** at Living Hope OPC in Allentown, PA.

 - 12 Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the missionary children would find their identity in Christ. / Gregory Reynolds, editor of **ORDAINED SERVANT**.

 - 13 Pray for **RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**.

 - 14 **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for Neon Reformed's outreach to the community this spring. / Pray for **AYRIAN YASAR**, editorial assistant for **NEW HORIZONS**.

 - 15 **STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Praise God for new visitors attending Salvos Por Gracia. / Pray that **OPC RULING ELDER PODCAST** would be useful for ruling elders in the OPC and beyond.

APRIL



The Hopps (day 30)

21 Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for spiritual growth and strength for young Karimojong men in the ministry team. / **LINDA FOH**, OPC.org technical assistant.

22 **MIKE & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray that Grace Fellowship would continue to be prayerfully dependent on the Lord. / **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary for Christian Education.

23 **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Guayama, PR. Pray that the Lord would use Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura to confront people with the gospel. / Yearlong intern **COREY (ANDREA) PAIGE** at South Austin Presbyterian in Austin, TX.

24 Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Give thanks for the benefits of new housing construction for clinic staff. / **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS**. Pray for the trustees, meeting today.

25 **BRUCE (SUE) HOLLISTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbyteries of the Midwest and Wisconsin & Minnesota. / Yearlong intern **CHRISTOPHER (LAURA) BARNARD** at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.

26 **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Praise the Lord that Knox School of Theology is fully accredited and running. / **MATTHEW & LOIS COTTA**, Pasadena, CA. Pray that Pasadena Presbyterian would have a continued concern for outreach and evangelism.



The Nymanns (day 30)

27 **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Praise God for many new members in the L'viv church and for an encouraging, energetic atmosphere. / **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database administrator.

28 Home Missions administrative assistant **ALLISON GROOT**. / Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Pray that people in Haiti would find their hope and peace in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

29 **CALEB & ERIKA SMITH**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray for those training to be church officers at Thousand Oaks Presbyterian. / Financial controller **MELISA MCGINNIS**. / Director **JOHN FIKKERT**, Committee on Ministerial Care.

30 **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for more parents to come to services in Port-au-Prince with their children who are already attending. / Yearlong interns **JOHN (ERIN) NYMANN** at Reformation Presbyterian in Virginia Beach, VA, and **SAMUELIS (MILDA) LUKOŠIUS** at Covenant Presbyterian in Barre, VT.

16 **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that elder candidates would be equipped for office and ready to serve by midyear.

17 **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Commack, NY. Pray that the Lord would bring more visitors to The Haven. / Yearlong intern **JACOB (LINDSAY) CASH** at Redeemer OPC in Beavercreek, OH.

18 Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray that the mercy ministry of the family clinic would also open doors for church planting. / Pray for **JAMIE DEAN**, communications coordinator.

19 Foreign Missions general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON** and administrative assistant **TIN LING LEE**. / Pray for the young men at the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE** today in Glenside, PA, as they learn about pastoral ministry.

20 **MELAKU & MERON TAMIRAT**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for Redeemer Mercy Ministry's gospel-shaped care for refugees. / **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for Christ Church's outreach efforts.

NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

TWO BRANCHES FROM ONE TREE

John H. Johnson Jr.

In February, Tyler OPC in Tyler, Texas, had the joy of seeing two sons of the church ordained to the gospel ministry. On February 15, David Bonner was ordained and installed as pastor of Pilgrim Presbyterian in Metamora, Michigan. On February 24, Ryan Heaton was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Tyler OPC. Both men were members of Tyler OPC, attended Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, and are part of the same extended family.

The story, in a sense, begins with the lives of Francis and Arlena Mahaffy, OPC missionaries. Mary Mahaffy, their fifth child, married Dave Bonner and moved to Tyler in 1980, joining Tyler OPC. David, the fourth child of Dave and Mary, was born in 1992. (As his pastor, it was a joy to see David develop from “critter kid”—there was no lizard or snake he didn’t like—to a man seeking to serve the Lord.) Twelve years later, Ryan joined the Mahaffy/Bonner family when he married Rachel Bonner, becoming part of Tyler OPC in May 2014.

In time, both sensed the call of God



At Heaton's ordination: (front) Andrew Moody, Joe Angle, Daniel Carrell, Eric Hausler, Ryan Heaton, John Johnson, Joe Keller, Jim Cassidy, John Terpstra, Phil Hodson; (back) Mark Sumpter, Gerry Macklin, Mark Moody, Joe Troutman, Harry Monroe

to ministry. David served a summer and a yearlong internship at Tyler OPC. Ryan did as well, plus a yearlong internship at Christ the King in Naples, Florida. It has been a great joy and privilege to see God at work in the lives of these two men.



At Bonner's ordination: Allan James, Everett Henes, David Sarafolean, John Johnson, David Bonner, Stephen Pribble, Vern Picknally, Ernie Monroe, Doug Doll, Wes Reynolds

VARTANIAN ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT BAYVIEW

Roger Wagner

On the afternoon of February 11, Jason Vartanian was ordained to the gospel ministry and installed as pastor of Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, California. Mr. Vartanian, a native of coastal Southern California, is a graduate of Westminster Seminary California and a doctoral student at Cambridge University. More recently, he served a yearlong internship at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, California.

Presbytery moderator Jonathan Moersch presided over the

service and offered the ordination prayer. The sermon, “The Medium of the Message,” was delivered by Dr. A. Craig Troxel from the WSC faculty. The charge to Mr. Vartanian was given by Harvest OPC



Praying over Jason Vartanian at his ordination

pastor Eric Watkins. The charge to the congregation was given by Roger Wagner, who has served the Bayview congregation as pastor for forty years and is planning to retire in October. Zach Keele, pastor of Escondido OPC and chairman of the presbytery’s Committee on Candidates and Credentials, offered prayer for the church and her new pastor.

Many members from Harvest OPC traveled the fifty miles to witness the ordination of their intern and joined Jason’s wife, Caitlin, and three children, Samuel, Jane, and Betty; the Bayview congregation; and other visitors from the presbytery in the celebration that followed.



At Neumair's installation: (front) David Noe, Tyler Gastra, Mick Knierim, Vern Picknally, Steve Igo, Jerry Neumair, Doug Felch, Dale Van Dyke, Marc Scaturro; (back) Bill Grysen, Ken Folkerts, Brian Guilkema, Wayne Veenstra, John McGeehan, David VanDyke, Stephen Pribble, Tony Blair, Terry Thole

NEUMAIR INSTALLED IN JENISON, MI

Stephen W. Igo

Rev. Jerry Neumair was installed as associate pastor of outreach and Christian education at Cedar Presbyterian in Jenison, Michigan, on February 3. The meeting was moderated by Rev. Vern Picknally, the moderator of the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario. The general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, Rev. John Shaw, preached on Psalm 87, "God's Growing City." Rev. Dr. Doug Felch, pastor of New City Fellowship in Grand Rapids, Michigan, presented a charge to the minister. Rev. Dale Van Dyke, pastor of Harvest OPC in Wyoming, Michigan, presented a charge to the congregation. Pastor and pastor emeritus of Cedar, Steve Igo and Mick Knierim, both read Scripture and led in prayer. The presbytery celebrated this event with a pre-meeting seminar led by John Shaw on "Mother/Daughter Church Planting in the OPC."

A graduate of Westminster Seminary California ('86), Rev. Neumair was ordained on February 22, 1987, in the Presbytery of Southern California. Cedar OPC is his fourth congregation in a long and fruitful season of ordained ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

FERGUSON RETIRES IN GREEN BAY, WI

Jim Ferguson retired as pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin, on December 31, 2022, after twenty-eight years of faithful ministry. He was granted emeritus status.



Jim and Lauren Ferguson

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On December 31, the Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota dissolved the pastoral relationship between **James E. Ferguson** and New Hope Presbyterian Church in Green Bay, WI, upon his retirement.
- On February 3, **Gerald J. Neumair** was installed as associate pastor at Cedar Presbyterian in Jenison, MI.
- On February 3, **Melwin Issac** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor at Albuquerque Reformed Church in Albuquerque, NM.

- On February 3, the Presbytery of Southern California dissolved the pastoral relationship between **William J. Gorrell** and Westminster OPC in Westminster, CA. At his request, Mr. Gorrell's name was erased from the roll of the presbytery.

- On February 11, **Jason P. Vartanian** was ordained as a minister and installed as a pastor of Bayview OPC in Chula Vista, CA.

- On February 13, the Presbytery of Philadelphia dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Andrew J. D. Myers** and Trinity OPC in Hatboro, PA, at their mutual request.

- On February 15, **David W. Bonner** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Pilgrim Presbyterian in Metamora, MI.

- On February 24, **Ryan S. Heaton** was ordained as a minister and installed as associate pastor of Tyler Presbyterian in Tyler, TX.

MILESTONES

- **Paul de Bruin**, 97, died November 25, having served as a ruling elder for over fifty years at El Camino OPC in Goleta, CA, and subsequently at Redeemer Presbyterian in Santa Maria, CA.

- **Richard P. Kaufmann**, 76, died February 18. Before transferring to the PCA, he was an OPC minister and pastored New Life Presbyterian in Escondido, CA.

REVIEWS

Second Timothy, by **Michael G. Brown**. **Reformation Heritage, 2022. Hardcover, 215 pages, \$22.50. Reviewed by OP pastor Ethan J. Bolyard.**

When people ask me to recommend a commentary on a book of the Bible, I'm inclined to say, "It depends on what kind of commentary you're looking for; it depends on what you want the commentary to do for you." After all, Christians turn to commentaries for a host of reasons, including discussion of Greek grammar, answers to interpretive questions, and encouragement for private or family worship. There is no one-size-fits-all or one-stop shop. Rather,

New Jersey Women's Presbyterial

April 22 • Bellmawr, NJ

- Speaker: Leah Hopp, missionary to Uganda
- Location: Immanuel OPC
Park Dr. & Market St.
- Email njwomenspresbyterial@gmail.com for more information or for a Zoom link. Event begins at 9:30 a.m.

commentaries come in exegetical, expositional, and devotional varieties.

For those who want an accessible but substantive exposition of 2 Timothy, I recommend Michael Brown's contribution to *The Lectio Continua Expository Commentary on the New Testament*. This series seeks to revive the tradition of *lectio continua* preaching—namely, “the uninterrupted, systematic, expository proclamation of God's Word . . . verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book” (xvi).

In keeping with this laudable purpose, Brown describes his commentary as “an exposition of 2 Timothy that aims not only to be Christ-centered, redemptive-historical, and gospel-focused but also packed with pastoral and practical application” (xii). This might sound like a tall order, but the author delivers on his pledge.

As a former URCNA church planter and current missionary to Italy, Brown is well suited to comment on Paul's final pastoral epistle. Based on a 2012 sermon series, the book divides the text into thirteen sections, each of which is a reworked message. For example, in his exposition of 2 Timothy 1:7, Brown develops a proposition (i.e., “The Holy Spirit has equipped us in a threefold way so that we can fulfill our callings and persevere in the faith, even in the face of fear”) with four main points (i.e., “a spirit not of fear,” “a spirit of power,” “a spirit of love,” and “a spirit of self-control”), bracketed by illustra-

tions from Martin Luther's stand at the Diet of Worms (29–40). In this manner, he expounds each section with the overarching view that the first three chapters of “instruction, admonition, and encouragement” function “as a long introduction” to the “main charge” in chapter four (10).

However helpful to Christians in general, this sermonic format could pose a liability for pastors, who may be tempted (even unconsciously) to borrow the author's structure and language without appropriate acknowledgment. Likewise, as a preacher, Brown does not always delineate the various exegetical options or defend his interpretive decisions (e.g., his handling of 2 Tim. 2:13).

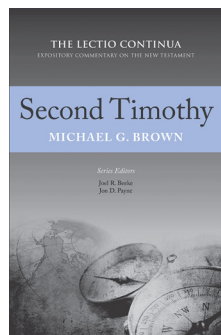
Nevertheless, if properly used, Brown's commentary “can serve as a tool for a pastor while he preaches . . . through 2 Timothy, a resource for church leadership to read together, or devotional material for the individual Christian or prayer group” (xii). Although I would advise against turning to this book during the early stages of sermon prep, preachers may find it helpful to peruse after the message is already written, perhaps on a Saturday afternoon—not so much to glean specific exegetical insights, but to reinforce the tone and tenor of the text in their minds and (most importantly) to feed their own souls before offering the bread of life to others. At its best, this commentary breathes the pastoral urgency of the underlying epistle, which encourages pastors to “preach the

word” and all Christians to fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith from one generation to the next.

Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture, edited by Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas. IVP Academic, 2022. Paperback, 280 pages, \$22.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Harrison Perkins.

In the OPC, officers take a vow that we believe that we receive the Westminster Standards “as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures,” expressing our belief that biblical truth can be summarized into a coherent body of teaching. The vow's point, however, is to confess that we believe Scripture is accurately summarized by the particular system elaborated in the Westminster Standards. Many Christians share the view that scriptural truth can be digested into a doctrinal system but disagree about what that system is. Brent Parker and Richard Lucas have edited a collection of essays addressing the differences among doctrinal systems in regard to the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, focusing on two types of covenant theology and two types of dispensational theology.

Although the increasingly prevalent multi-view books are often unevenly helpful, Parker and Lucas assembled a collection of highly informative and thoroughly rich essays with authors from the four perspectives each contributing an initial essay arguing for their position and an essay responding to the other three



Turkey Earthquake Fund

The OPC Committee on Diaconal Ministries recently opened the Turkey Earthquake Fund. While the OPC does not have direct connections in the affected regions, we do have fraternal connections through whom we might bring a ministry of mercy. We anticipate many opportunities to use these funds to the glory of Christ and to bring comfort and peace through this suffering. Find out more at OPCDisasterResponse.org.

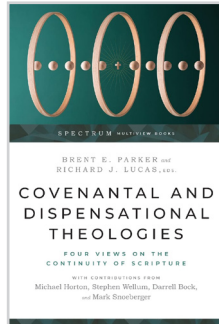


Kidney Donor Request

A member of Covenant OPC in Brighton, Michigan, is suffering from kidney failure and is seeking a healthy kidney. A prospective donor should have A+ blood. Inquiries may be sent to Pastor Doll (doll.1@opc.org).

positions. Michael Horton argues for Reformed covenant theology, surveying the distinction between the covenant of works and covenant of grace, articulating how these two covenants express the Reformed formulation of the law-gospel distinction, and pointing to the unity of the covenant of grace across redemptive history in that its each administration ultimately grounds the believer's relationship with God upon grace alone. Stephen Wellum argues "progressive covenantalism," contending that the covenants drive the narrative backbone of God's saving plan that culminates in Christ, which entails a redemptive-historical hermeneutic aware of good typology and that national Israel and the church are not distinct peoples in God's ultimate plan.

In the two essays about dispensationalism, Darrell Bock and Mark Snoeberger argue respectively for progressive and traditional perspectives, contending in different ways for dispensationalism's central concern: national Israel's abiding distinct role in God's plan. Bock makes greater concessions to typology and argues that God does have one people with internal distinctions of "structure" between Israel and other nations. Interestingly, Snoeberger mounts a case that dispensationalism was born, historically speaking, from a consistent concern for the Presbyterian doctrine of the church's spirituality. His argument will not carry the day for this magazine's readers but does provide fascinating insight into one of the more rigorously doctrinal explanations of dispensationalism. Perhaps even more interesting, Snoeberger



miss that all God's promises find their yes and amen in Christ as the climax of redemptive history.

The responsive essays highlight two critical issues that divide all these positions: the covenant of works and Israel's place in God's plan. Although Horton and Wellum both argue for a covenant between God and Adam, they part ways on how to understand its nature. They also agree on the church's unity with Israel as God's new covenant people but (expectedly) disagree about how Israel's typology affects the issues of church membership and baptism's recipients. Bock and Snoeberger equally fault both Horton and Wellum for their use of typological exegesis, claiming that it does not do justice to God's promises to national Israel in their original context, which must remain true to what Scripture's *human* author could have known according to grammatical-historical exegesis.

With varying degrees and areas of agreement, these essays highlight the critical issues of the nature of biblical interpretation, the implications of Scripture's divine authorship, the relationship of salvation in Old and New Testaments (since questions are not always answered even when agreement is asserted), and particularly the intersection of works and grace. Wellum, Bock, and Snoeberger all fault Horton for having a pre-fall covenant of works resting on a different premise than God's post-fall dealings with humanity in grace. This particular disagreement highlights the strength and theological consistency of the Reformed system for making clearest sense of our standing before and walk with God.

faults progressive dispensationalism for being too concerned with political and social involvement, perhaps providing fruitful fodder for analysis of American generic evangelicalism. Nonetheless, both forms of dispensationalism still

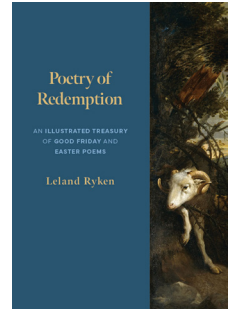
***Poetry of Redemption: An Illustrated Treasury of Good Friday and Easter Poems*, edited by Leland Ryken. P&R, 2023. Paperback, 168 pages, \$11.70. Reviewed by OP pastor Jonathan L. Cruse.**

Dr. Leland Ryken, through his decades of teaching and writing, has established himself as an authority on the subjects of English literature and poetry. In *Poetry of Redemption*, he now brings his expertise to guide us through the wonderful poetic works that focus on the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Savior. Christian readers will recognize a number of the poems that have come to us in the form of some of our most beloved hymns, like "All Glory, Laud and Honor," or "Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed." Less familiar, perhaps, would be the non-hymnic poems of Edmund Spenser, Joseph Addison, George Herbert, and John Donne.

To introduce us to these great pieces, Ryken appends his historical, literary, and theological reflections to each, giving us a better understanding of these poems. One representative example is Herbert's piece "The Agony," which sets out to define two concepts: sin and love.

Who would know Sin, let him repair
Unto mount Olivet; there shall he see
A man so wrung with pains, that all his hair,
His skin, his garments bloody be.
Sin is that press and vice, which forceth pain
To hunt his cruel food through every vein.

Ryken explains, "The bulk of the stanza makes us feel the pain that Christ experienced in the garden of Gethsemane. . . . To make his pain vivid, Herbert employs imagery of machines (press and vice) that squeeze juice out of plants to portray the extreme mutilation of Jesus' body." If this is what sin looks like, where do we see love? "Given the poem's title, we are inclined to say, 'In Christ's suffering and



death.' But the poem surprises us by answering, 'In the Communion cup.'" Ryken refers to Herbert's breathtaking conclusion:

Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,
Which my God feels as blood; but I as wine.

The poem "paints a picture of divine leniency: Christ shed his blood in agony, while we partake of the Lord's Supper in the comfort of a church" (64–66).

Quite unique to other similar books by Ryken is that this is an *illustrated* collection—nearly every page is adorned with beautiful artwork, both classic and contemporary. This reviewer appreciated the publisher's sensitivity to second commandment convictions in that, in a book filled with art related to Holy Week, there are no explicit images of Jesus. This isn't immediately evident. Opposite the introductory page, unless you know the original piece, you might not realize the man hanging on the cross is the thief, not Christ. Elsewhere, a page is laid out in such a way that in a fourteenth-century rendering of the Last Supper only the disciples are in frame. This thoughtful editing and design, embellishing the exquisite poetry and Ryken's rich insights, results in a gorgeous book that many Christians would benefit to keep out on the coffee table or incorporate into family worship in the weeks leading up to Easter.

***Retiring Well*, by John Dunlop, MD. Crossway, 2022. Paperback, 184 pages, \$16.99. Reviewed by OP ruling elder Gregory S. De Jong, a retired financial planner.**

Should Christians retire? If yes, what exactly does that mean, and what should a God-glorifying retirement look like? The topic is of more than theoretical interest, since many of us will be given the gift of twenty years or more following our full-time careers, with great discretion over how that time is used.

Retiring Well, written by a recently retired physician, John Dunlop, will challenge most Christians to think carefully and scripturally about what their retirement should look like. Those nearing

retirement or newly retired will benefit most obviously, but Dunlop's principles and strategies may challenge the thinking of longtime retirees as well. Readers under age sixty will find insights to help them understand, and come alongside of, parents or grandparents.

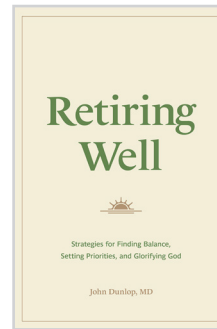
Retirement is commonly perceived as an endpoint, but *Retiring Well* convincingly reframes a biblically attuned retirement as an exciting new life chapter to be guided by three questions: What are my priorities? How do I keep them in proper balance? How can I live them out in light of the gifts of time, finances, and flexibility that I now have? Cautioning against a lifestyle of leisure and aimlessness, Dunlop makes a vigorous case for an intentional, prioritized life that glorifies God and deploys one's gifts for kingdom purposes. As he aptly reminds us, the Christian is called to both work and rest throughout our earthly life. While many will reach a point where work is no longer required for financial reasons, this is hardly an excuse for putting one's God-given talents on the shelf.

Practical advice abounds throughout this book. Dunlop devotes one chapter to retiring at the right time. Another explores how to determine the right place, both in terms of a geographical locale and the various types of residential arrangements available. As expected, the author addresses the importance of family connections during retirement. Less intuitive but equally valuable is his advice regarding broader community. He makes a compelling case for

maintaining a diverse social circle: by age, to keep your thinking fresh and provide mentoring opportunities, and by spiritual status, to provide ongoing opportunities for evangelism. His emphasis on the importance of one's continuing involvement in a local church is especially laudatory.

That the author is a retired gerontologist shapes this book in several ways. Some readers may not relate fully to Dunlop's own ambitions and financial freedom in retirement. Yet he brings helpful

advice on diet, exercise, and maintaining mental acuity, as well as helpful examples drawn from the lives of his retired patients. His frequent Scripture references are not always developed thoroughly, but *Retiring Well* will challenge and stimulate the thinking of any Christian who wishes to finish the race well.



Positions Available

Associate Pastor: Calvin Presbyterian in Phoenix, Arizona, has an immediate need for an associate pastor for its growing membership of over two hundred. The candidate will have pastoral experience in a local church context and strong administrative skills. His ministry responsibilities will be to assist elders in shepherding and discipleship; preach once or twice per month; teach adult Sunday school; and lead a fellowship group, youth ministry, and men's ministry. Send resume or ministry information form to secretary@calvinopc.org.

Associate Pastor: Branch of Hope OPC in Torrance, California, a congregation of about three hundred members, is searching for someone who can eventually succeed our beloved pastor of thirty-plus years. The ideal candidate should have, at minimum, several years of pastoral experience and would be tasked to lead our discipleship and other ministries. We anticipate a transition period of five to ten years. If interested, please send your resume or direct any inquiries to office@branchofhope.org.



The Committee on Ministerial Care

SUPPORT • RESOURCES • ENCOURAGEMENT



CARING FOR MINISTERS

*Pastors are called to care for their flock.
How can we care for our pastors?*

The Committee on Ministerial Care is committed to providing support, resources, and encouragement for OPC ministers, their wives, and their widows. We work with them directly, as well as with sessions and presbyteries, by providing:

- A yearly love gift from the Obadiah Fund for all retired ministers and widows
- Monetary grants for retreats and sabbaticals
- Quarterly webinars on helpful topics
- A growing library of resources online
- Financial planning support
- A 403(b) retirement plan
- Counseling resources

Thank you for your support as we serve Christ by serving our ministers and their families.



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