

# NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

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// by Jonathan L. Cruse and  
J. V. Fesko

FEBRUARY 2023

**10** Review: Tipton’s  
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MENTORING  
*across the  
Generational  
Divide*

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## New Horizons

in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

**Editor:** Danny E. Olinger  
**Managing Editor:** Judith M. Dinsmore  
**Editorial Assistant:** Diane L. Olinger  
**Proofreader:** Sarah Pederson  
**Cover Designer:** Christopher Tobias  
**Editorial Board:** The Committee on Christian Education's Subcommittee on Serial Publications

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**New Horizons** (ISSN: 0199-3518) is published monthly except for a combined issue, usually August-September, by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 607 Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539; tel. 215-830-0900; fax 215-830-0350.

Letters to the editor are welcome. They should deal with an issue the magazine has recently addressed. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offense. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor.

Send inquiries, letters to the editor, and other correspondence to the editor at [danny.oling@opc.org](mailto:danny.oling@opc.org).

Send address changes to [ccesecretary@opc.org](mailto:ccesecretary@opc.org). Allow six weeks for address changes.

The digital edition (PDF, ePub, mobi) and an archive of previous issues are available at [www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org).

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Copies are distributed free to members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Nonmembers are asked to donate \$20.00 for an annual subscription (USD \$30.00 if sent to addresses in Canada; \$40.00 elsewhere abroad). A free e-mail PDF subscription is also available. Requests for a subscription should be sent to [ccesecretary@opc.org](mailto:ccesecretary@opc.org) or the address below.

Periodicals postage is paid at Willow Grove, PA, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 607 Easton Road, Bldg. E, Willow Grove, PA 19090-2539.

On December 16, Peter Moelker (center, yellow tie), formerly pastor of Sovereign Grace OPC in Redlands, California, was installed as pastor of Faith OPC in Elmer, New Jersey. John Keegan moderated, Alan Strange preached, Richard Ellis gave the charge to the pastor, and Andrew Barshinger gave the charge to the congregation.



# MENTORING ACROSS THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // College campuses are known for plucking eighteen-year-olds out of real life and placing them in a sort of alternate universe where the daily contact they have with people of other age groups is typically professional: professors and staff.

Sue Jackson, an OP elder's wife who lives in State College, Pennsylvania, home to the sprawling public university Penn State, wanted to begin to build relationships with students, but wasn't sure how. At an open discussion at a congregational meeting at Resurrection OPC in early 2022, she hesitantly threw out an idea: what if she sat on Penn State's campus with a sign that invites students to come and ask a mom whatever they'd like?

No one in the meeting said anything. "It felt like a dud," Jackson laughed.

But afterwards, to her surprise, fellow OP elder's wife Lori Rose walked up to her. If you do it, she said, I'll do it with you. But "what you need is a dog," Rose followed up. "And I have a dog."

So the two women carefully parsed out the university's on-campus policies and packed a copy to take with, just in case. Not allowed to affix anything to

the ground or to any campus building, they also packed up two camping chairs; seventy homemade cookies from Jackson's kitchen; a cart with wheels from somewhere in Jackson's house; and, of course, Rose's gorgeous nine-year-old Welsh springer spaniel, Ellie.

The first time they visited campus, around forty students stopped by. The next week, it was more. After that, they couldn't keep track. "Everybody flocked to us! We weren't trying to get attention, but people just flocked to us," Rose said.

People chat, enthuse about the dog, and grab a cookie, saying things like, "this was the best part of my day," when they leave. Others stay off to the side until there's a lull, and then they approach. "We've had profound questions about grief, about anxiety, about relationships, about mom relationships," Jackson said. One young woman asked whether they thought uncondi-

tional love was real. A young man described his debilitating anxiety.

"After that first visit, when we were walking back to our vehicles, we kept saying, wow. *Wow*. There were no words for it. We lie awake at night thinking about the encounters," Jackson said.

"We were blown away," Rose agreed. "We go home and process it all."

## Actual Conversations with an Older Person

The students' desire for conversation surprised Rose. Her daughter graduated from Penn State; her son is currently taking classes as a nontraditional student. Rose exudes warmth—she's the kind of person who could chat up a rocky boulder. She has been on campus frequently and knows its feel. "People don't talk to each other; they're all on their phones. Or if they are talking, they're not actually talking, they're

texting.” What she couldn’t believe about their visits was “how many people want actual conversations, with an older person especially.” Students seem hungry for it, she said.

The popularity of their weekly visits has not gone unnoticed. Rose and Jackson have received requests for media coverage from student newspapers, local newspapers, and local television channels, which they have begun to turn down unless made by a student.

Jackson, however, isn’t sure they’re doing anything worth reporting on. She looks squarely at the result: they’ve built some relationships, but it’s slow going. Their dream is that God would use their visits to point students to Christ. But that hasn’t happened yet. “It’s a tiny effort. We’re just being available. [I’m] a weird mix of appreciating the enthusiasm, and almost being ashamed that we have nothing to show for it. Why all this hoopla? It’s a nothingburger!”

Rose agrees. “We don’t feel like we’ve been innovative.”

But then again, they’re the only gray-haired women sitting on Penn State’s campus with cookies and a sign that welcomes students to ask them anything.

### Cross-Generational Conversations within the Church

College campuses are not the only age-homogenous alternate universe. As a ten-year-old *National Review* article points out: “America today is startlingly segregated by age relative to historical norms, a change that is as lamentable as it is unremarked upon. . . . the hearth around which three generations of one family could gather is now archaic.”<sup>1</sup>

The obvious and glorious counterpart to locales split along generational lines is the local church, where all ages can worship side by side. There, like at the hearth of the natural family in previous eras, three (or more!) generations of spiritual family can gather.

Yet although church attendees may come from the campus, the cul-de-sac, and the retirement community into

one geographical location, the interpersonal distance can still be a hindrance to mentoring relationships—those relationships wherein the older comfortably and often informally share wisdom from their walk with Christ with those not so far along the path. Or, in other words, actual conversations with an older person.

Jackson and Rose parking at Penn State bridged a tangible divide. Their example illustrates bridging a second, non-tangible divide between generations, for the sake of mentoring relationships: the expectation to be a sort of professional.

### The Business of Mentoring

The word *mentor* comes from the name of a character in Homer’s epic poem *The Odyssey* who is entrusted with the care of the son while the dad, Odysseus, does his thing. The term lived a quiet life, however, used chiefly to describe literary relationships, until the mid-1900s, when social-psychological research into adult development began to latch onto it. When man is in his “novice phase,” the influential *Seasons of a Man’s Life* in 1978 rather authoritatively explained, he has the major task of “forming mentor relationships” (90).

In a 1979 survey of top executives, the *Harvard Business Review* asked how many had mentors. Most did, claimed the article—titled “Much Ado about Mentoring.” The business world quickly mainstreamed mentoring, with companies first creating formal mentoring programs in the early eighties.<sup>2</sup> Self-help shelves included books about mentoring at the popular level, and Christian publishers quickly caught on with titles such as *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* in 1992 (NavPress), or *Mentor-*



Lori Rose (left), Sue Jackson, and Ellie the springer spaniel on Penn State’s campus

*ing: Confidence in Finding a Mentor and Becoming One* in 1997 (Broadman & Holman).

Even as generations were become more segregated, then, mentoring began to flourish within professional contexts. Discipleship as a concept and a term within the church, which had always been a part of the faith, began to bleed back and forth with this new concept of mentoring. At some churches and ministries, the mentoring lingo, lifted as it often was from adult-development research and business-world practice that had no Christian roots, became littered with burdensome expectations of what a “mentor” ought to be or do. Is a mentor someone who levels up your sanctification? Someone who holds the keys to your next spiritual endeavor? Someone “powerful” (albeit in faith), someone “successful” (albeit in service)?

### Unprofessional Care

No, not at all, says Anneke Fesko, the OPC’s care coordinator for ministers’ wives and no stranger to the corporate world after working as an IT project manager at Siemens. She left to raise three children alongside her husband, OP minister and seminary professor J. V. Fesko.

“Something that surprised me

about mentoring is that the people who matter most at first seem the most unlikely or unimportant. They are the quiet ones who come alongside me and befriend me. They ask good questions and are rarely the center of attention,” Fesko reflected.

Here Jackson and Rose’s approach begins to make sense. They invite students not to ask an expert on a campus full of experts, but just to ask a normal mom. The pressure is off. The two women have some idea what *not* to say—“we’ve failed our own kids often enough that it’s like, well, I won’t say this because that wouldn’t work,” Rose explained—but they are not advertising solutions. They’re demonstrating care.

In her role as a seminary professor’s wife, Fesko will sometimes be approached by young female acquaintances who are eager to meet for a cup of coffee, to be mentored. But “they haven’t actually gotten to know me,” Fesko reflects. “How do they know I’m someone they want to get advice from?” They are looking to her role, not to her, for some sort of spiritual advice, like one might look to a plumber or a lawyer. Rather than pursuing a relationship, the request sounds more like asking for a consultation.

In contrast, a mentoring relationship is characterized by truth-telling and vulnerability. “If we are unwilling to tell the truth about ourselves and those around us, then how can we discover, confront, and change our shortcomings and sins?” Fesko pointed out. “All too often we are unwilling to open ourselves to scrutiny and accountability because we fear correction, embarrassment, or being hurt.” Truth-telling and vulnerability only exist where love is found. That is why love, demonstrated love, is key.

Mentors will not always say the right thing, give the best advice, or offer the most helpful counsel. Jackson and Rose, for example, often realize a better way to phrase an answer about two days too late. But within a loving relationship, mentees can “glean the very best and let the wind blow away the chaff,”

Fesko said.

In Fesko’s work as care coordinator, she purposefully provides opportunities for relationships to develop naturally between ministers’ wives that may turn into formal or informal mentoring. And when students ask her, or her husband, where to find a mentor, they direct them to a local church and encourage them to get plugged in and then to “look around you.”

If expertise is what you’re looking for, it’s easily accessible online: many excellent Christian ministries have a searchable database of thoughtful experts weighing in on matters spiritual and practical. That, however, is not really mentoring. And mentoring is not really that. Nobody we share a pew with is going to be a searchable database of thoughtful, expert opinions. And no searchable database can discern our hearts.

### Out of Touch?

Losing the expectation of expertise in a mentoring relationship allows all generations to have a sense of humor about how quickly tech is changing every aspect of our lives. Increasingly, the expert in the room about life online or tech in general is rarely the oldest person—and might not even be the college student, if a tween is around.

In fact, some argue that the pace of social change is actually accelerating<sup>3</sup>—that the differences in daily life between you and your children, in other words, are likely as great as the differences between you and your grandparents. Less theoretically, it is undeniable that for those of us who live comfortably online, our social media and apps and games and online communities can spawn habits and conversations strange to outsiders. Some translation will be required, which takes vulnerability and humor on both sides.

Jackson and Rose feel it. After one female student had chatted with them and walked away, others leaned in. “Didn’t you recognize her?” they asked Jackson and Rose. No, they hadn’t. She is an influencer with 7.2 million fol-

lowers who rose to fame in 2020 with Amazon unboxing videos. They hadn’t heard her name before. And they hadn’t ever seen an unboxing vid, either. So, they just laughed.

“Each generation must rest assured that the Lord preserves his people, the church. One thing that never changes is the sinful human heart, and the only thing that can change it is the gospel,” reflected Fesko. “When we interact with the people the Lord places in our lives and make ourselves vulnerable, we open ourselves to sanctification and growing in holiness.”

### Something to Learn

As we seek to know each other better in the local church context, we may come up hard against a divide in experience or perspective between younger generations and older ones—a divide that is not new to our era, but may be more pronounced, thanks to tech and rapid social change.

Jackson and Rose’s example of persistent, unassuming presence may help us to bridge that divide.

Perhaps older generations who are endeavoring to mentor both inside and outside the church can learn from their love, guts, and availability.

And perhaps younger generations can learn from Penn State students about how to receive it—at a recent visit, before Jackson and Rose had even set up their chairs and their sign, two young women came running toward them. They were both shouting. “We found you! We found you!” □

*The author is managing editor of New Horizons.*

### Notes

1. Matthew Shaffer, “Ages Apart: How Modernity Has Separated the Generations, and Why We Should Care,” *National Review* 68, no. 11 (2011): 35–37.
2. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring* 19, no. 1 (2021): 137–151.
3. See Carl Trueman, “A Critical Theorist Worth Reading,” review of *The Uncontrollability of the World* by Hartmut Rosa, *First Things* (Sept. 2021), [firstthings.com](https://www.firstthings.com).

# “IMITATE ME”: MINISTRY MENTORS AND MENTEES



JONATHAN L. CRUSE AND J. V. FESKO // Ministry mentors play a vital role in the life of the church as they guide, direct, and counsel aspiring and young ministers. The mentor-mentee relationship parallels patterns “common to human actions

and societies,” to borrow a line from the Westminster Confession of Faith (1.6). Whether in business, sports, or education, the inexperienced seek the wisdom and guidance of older, wiser, and more experienced practitioners. The Scriptures, however, paint the mentor-mentee relationship in a slightly different light.

## Mentoring in the Scriptures

One of the earliest mentions of the Holy Spirit comes when God endowed Oholiab and Bezalel with the “Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship,” so they could construct the desert tabernacle (Exod. 31:3). But the Spirit’s gifts were not restricted to them alone. God filled them with the Spirit, and “inspired [Bezalel] to teach, both him and Oholiab” (Exod. 35:34). In other words, both men were supposed to build the tabernacle and teach others to do the same; they were supposed to mentor people to construct the meeting place between God and man. The

gifting of Oholiab and Bezalel is a typological portrait of Christ’s outpouring of the Spirit and giving gifts to the church: “And he gave some . . . pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11–12 kjv).

Christ gives gifts through the Spirit for the sake of building the meeting place between God and man, the church. But just as Oholiab and Bezalel were gifted and instructed others, so too Christ has given pastors and teachers to instruct others. While these pastors and teachers are supposed to instruct the whole church, they have a special responsibility to mentor aspiring and young ministers.

The mentor-mentee relationship appears prominently in the Scriptures, as Jesus himself instructed and mentored his disciples, the future leaders of the church. The Apostle Paul mentored Timothy and documented his counsel in two letters to the young pastor. The pattern appears in the post-apostolic

church where the mentor-mentee line runs from the Apostle John to Polycarp (69–155), the bishop of Smyrna, and to Irenaeus (ca. 130–ca. 202), the bishop of Lyons. John’s instruction in wisdom came to fruition in Polycarp’s willingness to be a martyr for Christ and in Irenaeus’s defense of the faith in his *Against Heresies*, as he refuted those who denied the incarnation of Christ. What mentors do is share their gifts of the Spirit so others can contribute to building the church. By virtue of their union with Christ, they share in Christ’s “graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory,” and because they are united to their disciples through the bond of the Spirit, “they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces” (WCF 26.1).

## Why Bother?

Our contention is that these types of mentoring relationships are urgently needed in the church today. Consider the following five points about why they are important and what they

should look like.

First, they combat the unhealthy obsession with youth culture that has gripped our world. The most successful brands and companies and products are those that tap into the youth market. Pop music, plastic surgery, and the boom of cosmetic companies attest to people's desire to look younger. The church has often sadly followed suit in the execution of her ministries. When a school district in 1963 was basing their curricula off the liking of the students, Southern writer Flannery O'Connor weighed in by quipping, "[The student's] taste should not be consulted; it is being formed." Learning from those who have gone before situates us to say with Paul, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Cor. 13:11).

Second, these mentoring partnerships offer protection against the assaults of the culture. We have entered a post-Christian age, and the majority of society is no friend to our faith. It is becoming all too common to hear of "deconversion" stories, even from prominent leaders and pastors in the church who have been swayed by the doctrinal winds of the day. Might this not be mitigated if Christians in general, and pastors in particular, took to heart the reality that there is strength in numbers (Eccles. 4:9–11)? We would do well to look to a method such as Calvin's company of pastors as a means of fortifying our ministry against the waves of the world. We can't do it on our own, and we aren't meant to.

Third, the ubiquity of blogs and podcasts has given many young ministers the unhealthy notion that they can (or should) become celebrities. Participating in the conference circuit isn't the goal; holiness and growth in grace is. The willingness to sit under a mentor is a step in the right direction of accepting that there are seasons to listen and learn. After all, Paul trained for some seventeen years before he began his ministry!

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, our theology teaches us that we are a work in progress, constantly being sanctified by Christ's Spirit through the means of grace. We have not "arrived," nor will we until called home to glory. That reason alone should impress us with the importance of investing in a relationship that, Lord willing, will result in maturity and greater growth in godliness. We are never too young or too old to start. The authors know of an eighty-five-year-old man who approached a younger man and asked to be mentored by him so he could better understand the Scriptures. What humility!

On the subject of sanctification, remember that these relationships will inevitably be infiltrated by sin. Mentors and mentees sin. But we learn in these moments, too. In fact, there may be nothing more valuable for a maturing Christian than to witness personal failures handled with humility and grace. The church does not need proud pastors, and yet arrogance and self-defense are our natural instincts unless we are taught a better way. A mentor isn't a sinless saint, but a faithful servant who consistently points to the sinless Savior.

Finally, keep in mind that love must undergird the mentor-mentee relationship. For mentoring to be effective, we must live with our hearts wide open to one another (2 Cor. 6:11). Titus was not merely Paul's student. He was his "true child" in the faith (Titus 1:4, see also 1 Tim. 1:2 and Philem. 10). Regarding his apprentice, John Calvin once wrote, "I would be very cold-hearted if I did not care deeply for Beza, who loves me more than a brother and honors me more than a father."

### More than Data

Mentors play a vital role in teaching future generations of ministers be-



*The authors at the 87th (2021) General Assembly*

cause learning theology and ministry is not only about book smarts, life hacks, or tips for productivity. Theology is an inherently moral exercise that requires virtue (1 Pet. 1:5). Remember that Paul told the Corinthians not simply to *learn* from him but to *live* like him:

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. (1 Cor. 4:15–16)

A mature mentor can pass on valuable wisdom to his mentee simply by living in obedience to Scripture. Reading about suffering is very different from experiencing it. Preaching about holiness is not the same as practicing it. Doctrine is not merely about passing on data but about learning to love and fear the Lord: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7). Forged on the anvil of pastoral ministry, and communicated through mutual love and commitment, a mentor teaches an aspiring pastor how to live the theology of the cross before our triune God and his people. □

*J. V. Fesko, professor of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, has mentored Jonathan L. Cruse, pastor of Community Presbyterian in Kalamazoo, Michigan, since Cruse was his student at Westminster Seminary California.*

# OUR COMPANY, OUR FAMILY, OUR FUTURE



JOEL M. ELLIS JR. // Many Christians attend worship services with their local church every week without realizing the cosmic, spiritual context of that assembly. They gather to sing and pray and take the sacraments and hear the ministry of God's Word. They greet their brethren and enjoy fellowship with them during the

week. But their experience of the church is narrow, limited to the congregation (and maybe fraternally related congregations) where they regularly attend.

## United with Believers Present and Past in Christ

The Scriptures, however, describe Christian worship as an otherworldly experience in the presence of a heavenly host. We worship with the glorified saints and angels in heaven whenever the church assembles and on a daily basis in family worship and private prayer. When the church on earth worships, we do so with the church in glory:

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. . . . But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly

Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Heb. 12:18–24 NKJV)

This passage describes our experience as those united to Christ, made alive by the Spirit, justified, sanctified, and glorified as members of the new covenant. We are always and forever in the presence of these spiritual and heavenly realities. And if that is so on Monday, how much more visible is it on the Lord's Day? Christians in the local church are not merely worshipping together in a meeting place. They are summoned by the Lord's call to join the gathering on Mt. Zion, to unite with their brothers and sisters throughout the world and in glory, to sing and pray and praise the God of salvation as part of the one, holy, catholic church.

Just as believers on earth today have been made "alive together with Christ" and raised to be "seated . . . with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5–6), so we enjoy communion with all those who share the same benefits. We are united not only to Christians in other congregations and nations but to those who have passed from this realm into glory. John Calvin, in his commentary on Hebrews 12, affirms that "we are joined to holy souls, which have put off their bodies, and left behind them all the filth of this world" (*s.v.* 12:23). Matthew Henry observes the same:

By faith we come to them, have communion with them in the same head, by the same Spirit, and in the same blessed hope, and walk in the same way of holiness, grappling with the same spiritual enemies, and hastening to the same rest, victory, and glorious triumph. . . . Believers have union with departed saints in one and the same head and Spirit, and a title to the same inheritance, of which those



on earth are heirs, those in heaven possessors. (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*, s.v. Heb. 12:18–29)

We have fellowship with “the first-born ones who are registered in heaven” because *we* are also firstborn ones, adopted heirs, whose names also have been recorded in heaven. We are united to “the spirits of righteous men made perfect” because *we* too are righteous ones whose spirits have been justified and have been, are being, and will forever be, perfected and glorified. We have standing in the court of heaven, judgment for our sins having been accomplished and Christ’s righteousness imputed as our own. We are not on probation in our earthly sojourn. We are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, members of God’s family, and we belong in that assembly of righteous, holy, worshiping creatures assembled on Mt. Zion night and day.

### Joining in an Ongoing Worship

This is the spiritual reality of Lord’s Day worship. Whenever a local church gathers, it joins the whole church in assembly. We meet with “an innumerable company of angels” and the saints—once dead but behold, they live—who have been glorified. The fullness of this assembly may not be seen with our physical eyes, but it is no less real for being invisible. On the contrary, it is more real because it is eschatological. This is the church in glory, in worship. The end of all things has come near. We sing on *this* Lord’s Day in view of *that* day of the Lord when our Savior returns.

Christian worship transcends time, place, and the earthly realm. We sing “Holy, Holy, Holy” with the multitude that surrounds God’s throne and sings his praises night and day. Worship does not begin when the Lord summons us to the meeting place. We do not start the worship service; we step into it. The church on earth joins worship that is already going on. Nor does that chorus of praise and thanksgiving end when we receive God’s benediction and return to our homes. Heavenly praise

is unending, and when the church on earth gathers, we join and participate in it in a special, visible way.

The saints on earth worship alongside the righteous who are with the Lord. We are surrounded by a multitude of heavenly witnesses. We do not need images of saints in our worship services. We do not need to parade icons down the center aisle in our worship. We do not need to surround our sanctuaries with the statues of saints.

Believers have  
union with  
departed saints  
in one and the  
same head and  
Spirit, and a title  
to the same  
inheritance.

—Matthew Henry

These are manmade, unbiblical traditions, but they are also distortions of a divinely revealed, biblical truth. We truly are in the company of the glorious ones—saints and angels. We do not worship alone, nor even only with those in the same congregation. The church unites in worship: the whole church, on earth and in heaven, militant and triumphant, visible and invisible. We sing together with all the saints the praises of our Savior and Lord.

Reformed churches rightly reject the iconography and statuary found in other Christian traditions, but we should not reject the spiritual reality those icons and images represent. We are worshiping with Abraham, Moses, and David, with Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Paul. We are singing along with Sarah,

Miriam, and Deborah, and with Mary, the mother of our Lord. We are in communion with Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm; Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Calvin; Jerome, Luther, and Machen, all of whom continue to worship our common Lord. We do not pray to the saints in glory, but we do pray *with* them. We do not kneel before statues of them, but we do thank God for their lives and influence. We do not kiss pictures of them, but one day we will greet them and be greeted by them with a kiss of love (1 Pet. 5:14). These are not merely historical characters; they are family members, and when we gather on the Lord’s Day to sing God’s praise, we participate in the same heavenly assembly to which they belong. We are with them, though we only see them by faith.

When Christians gather on the Lord’s Day, the church on earth enters the throne room of heaven. We join in a chorus of prayer and praise that is already going on. We step into another realm and participate in the celebration that will occupy us for eternity. This is the design of our existence. This is our destiny. “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever” (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q/A 1). The saints are made and saved to worship the Lord.

Every worship service is full of “ghosts”—the ghosts of those who have gone before and the spirits of men made righteous by the work of Christ, now perfected in glory. God breathed into Adam’s nostrils, and he became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). We are embodied spirits, and when we sing and pray and hear God’s Word with reverence and gratitude, we do so alongside countless disembodied spirits with whom we will one day receive resurrection bodies. This is our company, our family, our future. We are God’s people, together, united by one Lord, one faith, and one hope. Come, and let us worship our King together with them. □

*The author is pastor of Reformation OPC in Apache Junction, Arizona.*

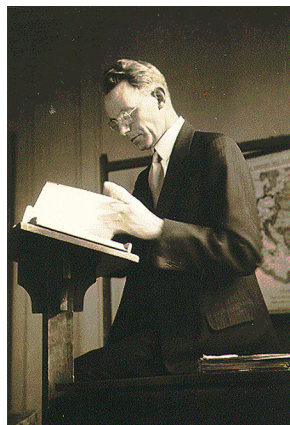
# REVIEW: *THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF CORNELIUS VAN TIL*

// WILLIAM D. DENNISON

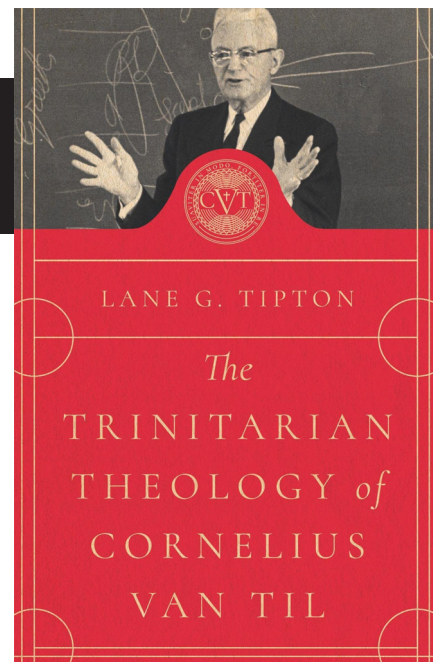
“A cedar in Lebanon has fallen” were the words that I immediately heard as I picked up the phone when my brother, Charlie, historian of the OPC, informed me that Dr. Van Til had passed into glory. Since Van Til’s death, a misunderstanding of his thought has characterized his critics outside and inside the Reformed world in the same manner it did while he was alive. It has been most disappointing, however, to discover that such misunderstandings have become a popular voice within the OPC. Thankfully, Lane Tipton has produced a work on Van Til’s Trinitarian theology that is unsurpassed in penetrating Van Til’s foundational premises and their implications for the entire corpus of his thought. Even Frame, Oliphint, and Bahnsen, standard positive voices in articulating Van Til’s thought, have not grasped the depths of Van Til’s Trinitarian theology at the level of Tipton’s contribution. In the judgment of this reviewer, Tipton’s work is so important that no critic who claims they understand Van Til should be heard unless they have penetrated Tipton’s discussion point by point. The days of amateur critical analysis of Van Til must end. Furthermore, any critic of Van Til who ignores Tipton’s work will most likely continue to misunderstand Van Til and, perhaps, lack a consistent understanding of historic Reformed Trinitarian theology and its connection with every loci within orthodox Reformed theology. Tipton’s work is that important!

## “Theologically Constructive and Ecumenically Reformed”

The starting point of Van Til’s thought is the ontological Godhead, i.e., the self-contained Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), with a central focus given in revela-



Cornelius Van Til



tional-history to the self-attesting Christ of Scripture. Tipton’s goal is to bring Van Til’s “representational principle” of the Trinity to the life of Christ’s church. To my knowledge, Tipton is alone in providing a concentrated investigation of Van Til’s *ad intra* personal representation in the ontological Trinity and *ad extra* personal representation of the Trinity in covenant (24, 132–137, 143–145). Tipton’s study is crucial in expanding our understanding of Van Til’s Trinitarian theology within his own corpus as well as in the historical context of Reformed orthodoxy. By considering the recent translations of Bavinck’s and Vos’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, Tipton has uncovered historical links to Van Til’s formation that had escaped earlier readers of Van Til (23–25, 28–31). Tipton also explains the genetic connections between Van Til, Vos, and Bavinck with “classical Reformed Trinitarianism,” i.e., B. B. Warfield, A. A. Hodge’s own theological formulation as well as his interpretation of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Charles Hodge, Francis Turretin, and the Confession itself. What is intriguing and enlightening is Tipton’s connection between Van Til and John Calvin (138–143). As Tipton states: “Van Til’s formulations are both theologically constructive and ecumenically Reformed” (74). With this historical connection established, Tipton is aware of those who have challenged the orthodoxy of Van Til’s view of the Trinity, e.g., that God is one self-contained “absolute personality,” and that the Trinity are “three personal subsistences [persons]” (82–83). Tipton has clarified Van Til’s language here in which there is absolutely no deviation from the biblical summary of the Trinity found in the WCF 2.2–3. In fact, Tipton notes how Van Til’s formulation is a powerful apologetic defense against Boston personalism (61–62; 79–102). Tipton not only highlights Van Til’s biblical defense against personalism, but he also highlights his

apologetic defenses against idealism, rationalism, empiricism, Roman Catholicism, and Karl Barth.

### Van Til's Trinitarian Theology

Tipton also brings to the forefront how Van Til's Trinitarian theology is communicated to humans. Thus, at the heart of Tipton's presentation of Van Til's "representational principle" is the image of God and the triune God's condescension in covenant (36–55; see WCF 7:1). Simply put, as Tipton reaches the consummation of his discussion, he notes that Van Til's view of the image of God and the covenant is operating specifically within the Reformed conception of federal theology (131–158). In this context, Tipton applies Vos's phrase, "the deeper Protestant conception" to Van Til. Tipton unfolds Van Til's antithetical Reformed position on the image of God from medieval Roman Catholic theology into the present era. Van Til's opposing position is at the heart of his criticism of Aquinas, Roman Catholic, and natural theological theism. To truly understand federal theology in the Reformed tradition, Van Til maintained that it is imperative to grasp that all "created reality by general and special revelation represents in revelation the absolute and living triune God and suggests a definite conception of image-bearing Adam in covenant with God" (132). Even after the fall, the Trinity anchors the image of God and the *sensus divinitatis* (138). For Van Til, the Trinity is imperative for any interpretation and exegesis of Romans 1 and Acts 17 (138; 141, n. 29). In this regard, Van Til held that a correct understanding of the biblical teaching about the Trinity does not teach distinct and separate domains for natural and special revelation that are to be viewed as complementing one another (Roman Catholic view). Rather, according to Van Til, humans are created by the triune God and there is one grand covenantal revelation of God to humans so that "general and special revelation 'must . . . be seen as presupposing and supplementing one another. They are aspects of one general philosophy of history'" (147).

### Cedar in Lebanon

Tipton has written a definitive study on how Van Til's Trinitarian theology is connected to the presupposition and inner structures of his thought as well as being loyal to historic Reformed orthodoxy. Tipton's work has also grasped another crucial principle in Van Til: our theology must never truncate the biblical and Reformed confessional tradition, but we must always commit ourselves to being more *consistent* to the true infallible religion of the Bible. For our church's continuing pilgrim journey on earth, Tipton has made a tremendous contribution to enable this cedar in Lebanon to stand upright in the history of biblical Reformed orthodoxy.

*The author is pastor of Emmanuel OPC in Kent, Washington, and professor emeritus at Covenant College.*

[The Trinitarian Theology of Cornelius Van Til](#), by Lane G. Tipton. Reformed Forum, 2022. Hardcover, 184 pages,

## 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*

### CHRISTIANITY AND LIBERALISM (1923)

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

Imagine yourself fresh from Westminster Theological Seminary with a degree in hand, enrolling at Harvard Divinity School (do not think too long about why you decided on Harvard Divinity School). Imagine too that most of your awareness of J. Gresham Machen came from his Greek grammar (used in first-year classes) and the name of the building where you picked up mail. You register for a course in American religious history and discover *Christianity and Liberalism* is on the syllabus. Also assigned is the professor's history of Protestant modernism in which Machen receives praise. That author, William R. Hutchison, wrote "the great contribution . . . of the Princeton scholar J. Gresham Machen lay in his willingness and ability to argue out—rather than just assume or proof-text—the premise that modernistic liberalism was not Christianity." Hutchison, a son of Presbyterian missionaries who became a Quaker, believed Machen was "credible" when separating criticism of ideas from personal animus.

Imagine then reading Machen's book and being amazed, not simply because of the professor's praise, but because Machen explained the gospel with conviction and thoughtfulness, even while employing polemics. Those circumstances may well incline you to esteem *Christianity and Liberalism* (even if you did not write a dissertation about Machen).

Two reasons remain for recommending the book. First, Machen gave liberal Protestants credit for trying to salvage the faith in the face of modern science. He recognized the greatness of thinkers who were not orthodox Christians, such as Socrates and Goethe. Christians had much to learn from non-Christians but not in theology. Second, Machen understood that Christianity ceased to be Christianity without supernaturalism. If someone took seriously the penalty and depth of sin, then miracles made sense. They were not easy to believe, but salvation without them was impossible. "Without miracles we should have a teacher," he wrote. "With the miracles we have a savior."

—D. G. Hart

## ☆ Congratulations

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

- **Eliora Barrett**, Covenant OPC, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

# A LIGHT IN THE VALLEY OF THE SUN

// DAVID S. SCHEXNAYDER



*Scottsdale, AZ, a suburb of Phoenix, is church planter David Schexnayder's hometown*

The Valley of the Sun (Phoenix, Arizona, and the surrounding area) is my favorite place in the entire country. I realize that probably sounds odd as the Valley doesn't loom very large in the collective consciousness: it lacks the prestige and history of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston; it doesn't have the cultural lineage of Chicago, New Orleans, or Atlanta; and it certainly doesn't have the unassailable weather of California (like many Arizonans, I have successfully baked goods on my dashboard in the summer). That's why I wish I could help you to see the city the way that I see it. I wish you could meet the independent yet welcoming people, many arriving from all over America. I wish you could see the neighborhoods, how they bring the stories and cultures of the rest of the country together, resulting in a truly American melting pot. I really wish you could see the desert in all its beauty—there's no better sunset in the country, and even our *rain* smells better here because of the desert plants. I truly wish the Valley was better known and loved.

But most of all, I wish my hometown had more churches.

## Well-Loved, Unchurched

This city of vibrant communities, mixed cultures, and natural beauty—this city of over five million souls—is a mostly unchurched city. According to Barna, the Valley is the ninth least-churched metropolitan area in America, with half the city not attending any church services in the past six months. According to the American Bible Society, Phoenix ranked 92nd of America's one-hundred-largest cities in familiar-

ity with the Bible; only 16 percent of the population regularly reads the Scriptures.

For the first half of my life, I was part of those statistics. God eventually drew me to faith in Christ in college, and after years growing my family and career, he called me to the ministry. He graciously returned me to my hometown for my first call, where I was privileged to work alongside Rev. Michael Babcock at Calvin Presbyterian in Phoenix. God gifted me three wonderful years at Calvin, where I was able to serve as an intern, ruling elder, and minister—all while seeing the power of the gospel at work inside a church body. The more that I experienced the blessing of the church in a community, however, the more the lack of churches in the rest of the Valley's communities became apparent. Although Phoenix is the fifth-largest city in America, we had only one other OP church, and less than a dozen NAPARC churches citywide. How many communities would be blessed by having a faithful Reformed church in their midst? Why couldn't we have such a vital Christian blessing in every city that makes up the Valley? What was the problem?

Increasingly, I came to the Chester-tonian conviction that I was the problem. I had spent a decade praying for renewal and revival in my hometown. I had prayed, while in seminary, that God might allow me to return to the Valley for ministry. I had been trained and prepared by the example of the saints at Calvin, and I had even done work researching church planting over the years. How could I expect any new growth to come if I wasn't willing to work out in the field that I loved?

It turned out I wasn't the only one being so convicted. There were others who were wrestling with this internal



*The Schexnayder family*

quandary; others who had been praying and considering church planting; others who were asking God when such a thing might happen. When a possibility arose for a church plant in the suburb of Scottsdale, the question of church planting became a lot less academic for all of us.

### How Do You Know?

So, how does one discern when it's time to make a leap of faith? I had been at Calvin for three years at this point, but many of the people wrestling with church planting had been at their home churches for even longer. How do you know when it's time to leave helpful ministry, strong community, and good relationships—all for the unknown future of planting a church?

We started to explore the possibility of a church plant in Scottsdale by hosting Bible studies on Sunday evenings in spring 2022. Earlier in the process, our presbytery's regional home missionary, Rev. Chris Hartshorn, had challenged us not to think of church planting in terms of subtraction—what might be lost—but instead in terms of multiplication—what (and who!) might be gained. With this conviction in mind, our first Bible study meeting was on John 12:23–26, where Christ points to his own death as the only hope for new life, and then calls his disciples to follow him by laying down their own lives. If this church plant was going to move forward, it would have to be with the mindset that following Christ into this church plant would be a sacrificial endeavor. This would have to be the answer to the question above: you knew it was time to leave and plant when you knew you were willing to lay down your life for the work.

The response to that challenge in the core group was totally surprising and deeply convicting.

Where I was expecting a debate, or at least a discussion, I only received one question: “how can I serve?” The question was asked directly and powerfully, not by one or two individuals, but by almost every single person there. The question was not asked theoretically or casually, but with a force that expected, even demanded, a tangible response that could be immediately applied. That first Bible study was the very last



After worship at Providence OPC in Scottsdale

that I organized on my own; it was the last Bible study where I was the first to arrive or the last to leave. People pitched in and served wherever they could; they prayed, set up chairs, invited neighbors, mopped floors—they did it all.

We held our first worship service on May 15, 2022, and the past six months have made Hartshorn look dangerously like a prophet: the body has only multiplied in number and in its service to Christ. We were able to add an evening worship service in the summer, a midweek prayer meeting in the fall, and are starting officer training this winter. We've been able to hold multiple women's ministry, men's ministry, and evangelism events, and it's all been because of the body of Christ laying down their lives to serve. This hasn't come from clever strategies, well-oiled programs, or the skills of the stated minister. It's come from the Holy Spirit working through the ordinary service of ordinary people.

They serve because it is Christ who promises them that the harvest is ready. They serve because it is Christ who promises them that they will find new life if they die to their old one. Watching God's people respond to his challenge to serve has been the most humbling experience in my entire life. Now, by faith, our desire for more churches in the Valley has only increased because our understanding of the blessing of church planting has grown. New church plants bring the gospel to neighborhoods and win new converts, but they also challenge, change, and deeply bless the Christians serving in the work.

We pray and believe we can reach this Valley that we love with many more churches, because we've tasted and seen what God can build through the service of his people. We hope that God will use these ordinary Christians to establish not only Providence in Scottsdale, but—as God's people lay down their lives for the kingdom—a church in every city that makes up the Valley of the Sun.

*The author is church planter of Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Scottsdale, Arizona.*

### Home Missions Today

For up-to-date news and prayer requests, receive our newsletter by subscribing at [CHMCE.org](http://CHMCE.org) or scanning this QR code.



# WHY MISSIONS? PART 3

// DOUGLAS B. CLAWSON

*In “Why Missions? Part 1,” Clawson, general secretary of Foreign Missions, argued that missions is glorifying God by doing what Jesus commanded and speaking the words he’s given us to speak. In Part 2, he explained that this is more than just another item on the church’s to-do list; as Christians, our lives are “missionary lives.”*

Man was given a mission before the fall. In Genesis 1:28, God said: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” We must be cautious as we look at the connection between the cultural mandate and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20). The church’s mission is no longer a call to extend the boundaries of the garden to encompass the earth, because there is no longer a garden in this creation. Man’s sin, the presence of death, God’s subjection of the creation to futility, and man’s removal from the garden ended the possibility for this creation or man to arrive at a glorified state apart from the redeeming work of God.

Nevertheless, the command given to man in his perfect but probationary state was subsequently repeated to man in his fallen state in an altered form. We find it in Genesis 9:1: “God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’” Although the woman would have pain in childbearing, the cursing of the ground would frustrate man’s attempt at dominion, and death would bring an end to each man’s efforts, man was also blessed by God and commanded to glorify God by extending God’s reign throughout the earth.

Having rid the earth of Cain’s seed through the flood, it may have seemed that a new day of glorifying and enjoying God had dawned for all the earth. But God’s blessing of Noah and his sons in chapter 9 is placed in the context of God’s words at the end of chapter 8: “I will never again curse the



*Danny Olinger teaching parents in Bogotá, Colombia, how to teach their children Bible stories from a Christ-centered perspective*

ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (v. 21).

Think of that: God’s blessing of Noah and his sons was placed upon those whom God knew to have hearts of evil intention. In other words, God was pronouncing a blessing upon evil people. Man didn’t have to struggle to gain dominion. It was given to him.

## God Accomplishes the Mission

This is the first lesson that is extremely valuable to our understanding of missions. Here, God is not blessing men because they have good intentions. God promises success to men whose hearts have evil intentions. They will not succeed because they have earned it. They will not succeed because they deserve it. They will succeed because God gives them the success. This should encourage us because it makes us realize that success does not depend on us but on the God who promises blessing. He will accomplish all his holy will.

The second valuable lesson to our understanding of missions is learned by looking at the character of mankind before and after the flood. Although Genesis 6:9 calls Noah righteous, we must consider what the Scriptures say about that righteousness. In Hebrews 11:7, we are told that Noah had “the righteousness that comes by faith.” Was there a distinction between the behavior of Noah and the evil of mankind around him? Certainly. However, in the view of God, the distinction of behavior did not mean that there was a fundamental distinction in intention. God says of all mankind, when there are only four men and four women on the whole earth, that “the intention of man’s heart is only evil from his youth.”

Therefore, while missions seeks to have men glorify God by obeying all that Christ has commanded, the church cannot think that success will be achieved through better behavior. It will only be achieved through changed hearts of men and women who have the righteousness that comes by faith. True obedience to Christ’s commands will be an obedience that is the fruit of Spirit-given faith.

If glorifying God comes from a God-given faith and a Spirit-produced obedience to do all that Christ has commanded,

we must remember where God's work begins. People must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit must work through that Word to raise them from the dead and give them saving faith. By his grace, God blesses men whose hearts have evil intentions. He gives them life, cleanses them, sanctifies them, blesses them, and uses them, for the sake of Christ.

In missions, therefore, the fruitfulness, multiplication, and filling of the earth in Genesis 9 is the expansion of God's work. Missions is nothing less than the work that God does to give life and faith to the people whom God has chosen, who are born of God and saved through Jesus Christ. It is the work of God to bring glory to himself through the instruments of redeemed men and women who know and do and teach others to do all that Christ has commanded.

### Jesus Is Central to the Mission

God promised blessing to all families and all nations of the earth through the offspring of Abraham (Gen. 22:17–18). The recipients of that blessing are not described as passive but as active participants (Isa. 2:2–3). Narrowly focused, the promise of God to draw the peoples of the earth to the Messiah of Israel is God's promise that he will draw men to Christ (Isa. 11:10–12; 18:3; 49:22; 62:10–11; Luke 2:30–32; John 12:32). After his ascension, it is through his church that he draws men to himself (Matt. 5:13–16).

It is Jesus whom people must see in the Scriptures. While the attributes of our God are so clearly revealed in his creation that people are held accountable to judgment for their failure to believe in and serve him, it is in the Scriptures alone that we find that the forgiveness for our unbelief and sin, deliverance from judgment, and access to God is only through Jesus. While many Scriptures testify to this (Luke 24:46–47; John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:22–25; 2:1–2; 3:11), they also tell us that some have misread the Bible and haven't seen Jesus. They must be shown (Luke 24:27, 44–45).

### Jesus Has Sent His Church on the Mission

Preaching is what God continues to use to spread his gospel throughout the earth. Jesus is the builder of his church (Matt. 16:18). He is its cornerstone, and it is joined together in him (Eph. 2:19–22). Jesus sends those who preach (Rom. 10:14–17), and he alone gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:7; Acts 2:41, 46–47; 5:14). When we do speak, we do so with the knowledge that he is with us (Acts 18:9–10). Therefore, the subject of preaching is always Christ and what God has done through him (Acts 21:18–19).

Preaching Christ is therefore central to the mission. It remains central because it is what God uses to call people to saving faith (Rom. 10:14–15). However, its importance does not stop there, since preaching along with teaching are the vehicles of communication used by Christ's preaching officers "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the mea-

sure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12–13).

Jesus compels men to preach (1 Cor. 9:16–17). It is his work, not their work. Therefore, the preaching missionary is Christ's ambassador, representative, and laborer. It is God who gives the message and makes the appeal (2 Cor. 5:18–20; 1 Cor. 15:10). The work is so much from God and of God that Paul sees even his life as Christ's life, rather than his own (Gal. 2:20). This doesn't result in the false confidence of those who live as if their will is God's will, rather it results in a life of faith and complete dependence on Christ who opens and closes the way before us according to his good providence (Acts 16:6–7; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3).

However, while the preaching of Christ is the means of grace used to regenerate us into those who glorify God and sanctify us into those who will glorify God more and more (2 Cor. 3:18), God uses his entire church and every member in it to teach, love, encourage, serve, and set a Christlike example to all whose mission is to glorify God by obeying all that Christ has commanded.

Communicating information is essential to teaching others to obey, but as Proverbs and James make clear, it also involves life and wisdom. And life and wisdom might look different in different cultures or under different circumstances. This doesn't mean that Christ's commands aren't always the same—they are—but my loving treatment of one person might be different than my loving treatment of another person (Jude 22–23). The God who has made us different members of the same body has given us different gifts, called us to different kinds of service, and providentially worked in us in very different ways. My obedience to all that Christ has commanded may look somewhat different from your obedience. That is why we are repeatedly forbidden from passing judgment on our brother in passages like Romans 14. Teaching others to observe all that Christ commands involves a lot of faithful detail. We must be teaching what the Bible says about Christ. We must not add or take away from all that he commanded. And we must recognize that, apart from the true faith that has Jesus as its only object, neither the message nor Jesus will be understood.

He warned us that just as they didn't listen to him, that they will not listen to us. Missions is the work of Jesus. We must look to him to change us and to change others. He works through us to glorify God by sanctifying us. He gives the understanding, and he makes the changes to do all that he has commanded. Jesus then uses us to glorify God by calling all men and women everywhere to glorify God, teaching his disciples to obey all that he has commanded.

We, his people, are his missionaries. What does that mean? His Spirit converts those whom he has drawn through his Word; in doing so, *he providentially uses our words and behavior*. His Spirit sanctifies them through his Word so that they will glorify him; and here also, in doing so, *he providentially uses the words and lives of his missionaries*—YOU. Your mission to glorify him in your words and lives is used by him to accomplish his redeeming and life-transforming work through Jesus Christ.

# WORKING TOGETHER TO CARE FOR MINISTERS

// GREGORY S. DE JONG



**H**elp Wanted. You have probably seen those words throughout your community as businesses struggle to find and retain employees. Might we soon also be seeing “Help Wanted” notices in front of local churches? A [survey last year from Barna Group](#) seems to indicate so.

The life of a pastor has rarely been easy, but the challenges of pastoral ministry have intensified in recent years, much of it related to the pandemic. In January 2021, Barna surveyed Protestant ministers and found that 29 percent of them had considered quitting full-time ministry within the prior twelve months. Less than a year later, that number had jumped to 38 percent. Of ministers under age forty-five, discouragement was even more widespread, with nearly one in two pastors contemplating a change of career.

How have OPC ministers fared in this climate? John Fikkert, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care, has traveled widely and spoken with many ministers during the past year. He reports that “during the pandemic, the church’s health and the minister’s well-being tended to follow the same trajectory. In healthy churches that experienced unity and growth during the pandemic, ministers also seemed to weather the array of challenges well. When churches struggled, ministers tended to struggle too.” Beyond pandemic-related headaches, ministers have shared with him a variety of other challenges, including inadequate compensation, lack of unity on sessions, and general feelings of being tired.

Help is wanted, and the Committee on Ministerial Care (CMC) sees many ways to support our ministers. Such support is hardly the exclusive responsibility of a denominational committee, and should extend through presbyteries, local sessions, and ultimately to every member in the pew. While CMC may be the OPC’s most prominent face of ministerial care, the on-the-ground efforts of members and their sessions can have an outsized impact on encouraging and supporting

a pastor. Fikkert notes, “The best and most effective ministerial care is accomplished when the whole church is working together.”

The general assembly clearly had an expansive view of caring for ministers when the CMC was birthed in 2017. The committee’s twelve-point mandate included providing financial planning and insurance advice to our ministers, overseeing a ministerial retirement plan, encouraging adequate compensation packages, and meeting the diaconal needs of ministers.

In God’s gracious providence, much has already been accomplished in CMC’s five-year history. Ben Snodgrass, pastor of Falls Church in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, reflected that the “CMC has worked to get to know pastors and their needs. Their quarterly videos and the new retirement planning program have been especially helpful.” Yet much more can be done to address the needs of our ministers and their families.

One of the assignments the general assembly gave the CMC is to “inform presbyteries and local sessions of tools available for the care of their ministers.” Effective partnerships now exist between most presbytery diaconal committees and the CMC to ensure that the diaconal needs of our pastors and their widows are being met, often with the financial support of the Obadiah Fund. The Pastoral Compensation Tool, available at [opcCMC.org](#), has been useful as presbyteries evaluate calls to ministers. Several presbyteries have formed ministerial care committees of their own.

In addition, local sessions have looked to the CMC for guidance on compensation and benefits. The committee has also helped sessions structure sabbaticals for their pastors and provided financial support through sabbatical grants. “Some of our best work has been partnering with local sessions and presbyteries to find the right strategy for providing care in the local ministry context,” Fikkert notes.

Looking forward, the CMC plans to continue sharing in *New Horizons* practical ways that all of us can support and encourage the ministers God has given us.

*The author is an OP ruling elder and member of the CMC.*



# FEBRUARY



The Folkerts (day 6)



The Holmlunds (day 11)

**1 RETIRED MISSIONARIES** Cal & Edie Cummings, Brian & Dorothy Wingard, Greet Rietkerk, and Young & Mary Lou Son. / **A. J. & CHELSEA MILLSAPS**, Maryville, TN. Pray that the Lord would open a door for the Word in North Knoxville.

**2** Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Committee on Diaconal Ministries asks prayer for volunteers for **CRATES FOR UKRAINE**, an initiative to pack and deliver basic supplies to needy communities.

**3** Tentmaking missionary **TINA DE-JONG**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the missionary children as they often cope with big changes. / Pray for **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of Christian Education, as he visits seminaries.

**4 MARK & CELESTE JENKINS**, Placentia, CA. Pray for conversions at Resurrection through preaching of the Word. / Tentmaking missionary **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for traveling mercies while she visits the US.

**5** Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Director **JOHN FIKKERT**, Committee on Ministerial Care. / **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database administrator.

**6** Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would raise up men for church office in Karamoja. / Active duty military chaplains **DAVID (JENNA) DERIENZO**, US Army, and **JOHN (LINDA) CARTER**, US Navy.

**7 CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the new Knox students from Burundi, Congo, Kenya, South Sudan, and Karamoja. / **DAN & STACY HALLEY**, Tampa, FL. Pray for the neighbors of Bay Haven Pres. who are visiting for worship.

**8 DAVID & ASHLEIGH SCHEXNAYDER**, Scottsdale, CA. Pray for meaningful relationships to be built between Providence OPC and important community institutions. / Yearlong intern **SAMUELIS (MILDA) LUKOSIUS** at Covenant Presbyterian in Barre, VT.

**9** Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER AND CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for wisdom for the Nakaale church's mercy committee as they distribute funds. / **MELISA MCGINNIS**, financial controller, and **MARK STUMPF**, Loan Fund manager.

**10 NATE & ANNA STROM**, Sheboygan, WI. Pray that Breakwater Church would have positive interactions with the community and neighbors. / Pray for missionary associate **JED HOMAN**, Nakaale, Uganda, as he finishes maintenance projects and prepares to leave the field. / Yearlong intern **JACOB (LINDSAY) CASH** at Redeemer OPC in Beaver creek, OH.

**11 DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / Yearlong intern **DOMINIC (MARTHA) SILLA** at Living Hope OPC in Allentown, PA. / Staff of **New Horizons** and **Ordained Servant**.

**12 HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray that the people of Ukraine would find their hope in Christ and the gospel of grace. / **Great Commission Publications**, a joint publishing effort of the OPC and PCA.

**13 BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for the students in Ben's seminary class who are studying Reformed doctrine for the first time. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

**14 CARL & STACEY MILLER**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray for the Lord's blessing for the many growing families of Heritage Presbyterian. / **TIN LING LEE**, administrative assistant for Committee on Foreign Missions.

**15** Give thanks for God's sustenance of the persecuted church in **EAST AFRICA** and pray that he would give them joy and endurance. / Yearlong intern **Christopher (Laura) Barnard** at Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, FL.

FEBRUARY



The Tamirats (day 23)

**20** **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Com-mack, NY. Pray that visitors will be ministered to, will return, and will become members of The Haven. / Yearlong intern **CHRIS-TIAN (HANNA) REPP** at Harvest OPC in San Marcos, CA.



The Paiges (day 26)

**21** Affiliated missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for their efforts to reha-bilitate and support the young victims of trafficking. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator.

**25** Pray for **Ben & Heather Hopp**, Haiti, as they serve the church in Haiti from the US and for safety when Ben is able to travel there. / Yearlong intern **ZACHARY JOHNSON** at Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, NJ.

**22** **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presby-tery of the Southwest. / **STEPHEN & CATALINA PAYSON**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the Uruguay-ans would seek the Lord and be hungry for sound doctrine.

**26** Yearlong intern **COREY (ANDREA) PAIGE** at South Austin OPC in Austin, TX. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, Short-Term Missions coordinator. Pray that those organizing and leading teams would be ener-gized to prepare for the summer.

**23** **MELAKU & MERON TAMIRAT**, Clarkston, GA. Pray for Redeem-er Mercy Ministry as it seeks to reach refugees and immigrants with the gospel. / Home Mis-sions administrative assistant **ALLISON HILL**.

**27** Assoc. missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti. Give thanks for members who continue to serve the Lord through the chal-lenges of fear and violence. / Yearlong intern **JOHN (ERIN) NY-MANN** at Reformation in Virginia Beach, VA.

**24** **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevi-deo, Uruguay. Pray for the spiri-tual growth and outreach efforts of the members of Salvos Por Gracia church. / Pray for stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** and others preparing for the 89<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, June 7-13. / **BRUCE (SUE) HOLLISTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbyteries of the Midwest and Wisconsin & Minnesota.

**28** **MIKE & NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray that the Lord would provide Grace Fellowship OPC with an associate pastor. / Pray for the spiritual growth of the shepherds and the congrega-tions of the **ETHIOPIAN REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**.

**16** **ETHAN & CATHERINE BOLYARD**, Wilmington, NC. Pray that the Lord would bless Heritage's men's group and women's fel-lowship. / Pray for associate mis-sionaries **LEAH HOPP** and **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda.

**17** **JAY & ANDREA BENNETT**, Neon, KY. Pray for Neon Reformed's relationship with the community and people of Neon. / Yearlong intern **RICHY (NEVA) BRASHER** at Escondido OPC in Escondido, CA.

**18** Pray for **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia, as their teaching resumes after the break. Pray that their classes could be channels of the good news. / Intern **NATE (AMY) JEF-FRIES** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

**19** **GREGORY & GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for Christ Church to see fruit in making disciples and witnessing to the lost. / **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for the Lord's work in the hearts of the international students they serve through weekly study in the Word and hospitality.

# PLANNED-GIVING SERVICES FOR ALL OP MEMBERS

// KEITH A. LEMAHIEU

If you regularly read *New Horizons*, you know that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is engaged in a variety of ministries on behalf of its members everywhere. These ministries are carried out by the Committees on Foreign Missions, Home Missions and Church Extension, Christian Education, Diaconal Ministries, and Ministerial Care. These various committees make it possible for us to do things collectively that we would likely be unable to do effectively in our individual congregations.

The General Assembly coordinates the activities of the above-mentioned committees through its Committee on Coordination (COC). On behalf of the general assembly, the COC oversees pooled resources, combined budgets, and shared assets.

The COC also facilitates planned giving. Planned giving is one aspect of the believer’s responsibility to care for *all* the Master has entrusted to us (see Matt. 25:14–30 and 1 Cor. 4:2). But if we are honest, long-term strategic planning is an area where many of us could benefit from professional assistance.

## Barnabas Foundation

COC is excited to report it has entered into an agreement with Barnabas Foundation to provide a variety of significant biblically-based planning services designed to benefit the denomination, your presbytery, your local church, and *you*. Through our relationship with Barnabas Foundation, every member of the OPC now has access to trusted, biblically-based advice from Christian planned giving experts, at no cost to you.

For almost fifty years, Barnabas Foundation has provided robust, biblical, estate-

planning services to individuals on behalf of churches, Christian schools, colleges, seminaries, and many other Christian organizations.

Barnabas attorneys can help you understand all the planned giving options available to you, ensure your estate plan reflects your family and your charitable goals, and help you make gifts that maximize your specific circumstances.

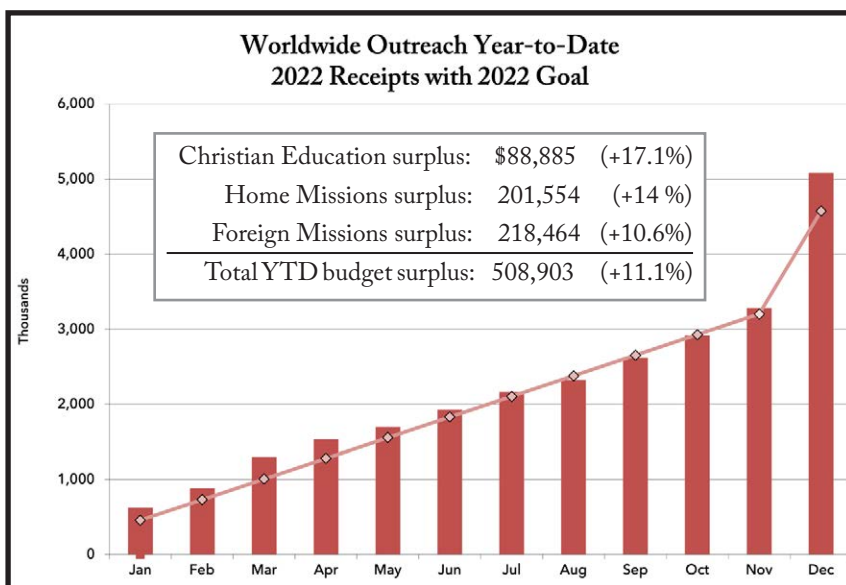
Do you wish to give a gift of stock, real estate, appreciated personal property, a business, or even commodities (like cattle or crops) to your church but don’t know where to begin? Barnabas can manage those transactions for you while helping to reduce your tax obligations. Do you want to create a donor-advised fund to invest, grow, and give to kingdom causes in the most tax-advantageous and strategic way? Are you thinking, “I don’t even know what any of this means?” Then you should consider talking to a representative of Barnabas Foundation.

## Expertise in Giving

All consultations are strictly confidential. A Barnabas Foundation attorney will gather information and provide recommendations to help you develop a tax-wise charitable giving strategy from a distinctly Christian worldview.

Let them help you purposefully allocate the resources in your care to support the people and ministries you hold dear while modeling a legacy of generosity for both your church and family. Visit <https://barnabasfoundation.com> or call 888.448.3040 and tell them you are a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We trust you will appreciate their expertise and wise planned-giving advice.

*The author is an OP ruling elder and member of the COC.*



# NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS

## BAAMANN INSTALLED IN AIRDRIE

*Eugene Gritter*

Redeemer OPC in Airdrie, Alberta, celebrated the ordination and installation of its new pastor, Iwan Baumann, on the evening of November 17, 2022. Brett McNeill conducted the service as moderator of the Presbytery of the Northwest, delighting with us in the Old Testament beatitudes of Psalm 84 under the theme “A Day in Your Courts.” OP pastors Jeff Scott, who offered the prayer of ordination, and John Mahaffy also joined us on this solemn and joyous occasion.

Rand Lankheet, formerly pastor of Covenant Presbyterian (URCNA) in Toronto, Ontario, where Iwan Baumann had interned, delivered a beautiful charge to Baumann, exhorting him to pastor as a tender mother and a loving father. Pastor Mahaffy, in his charge to the congregation, was similarly warm and firm. Also participating in the evening were Jeff Kerr and Chris Pignatiello from Crestwood Presbyterian (PCA) in Edmonton, Alberta, where the Baumanns had been members.

## NEW OPPORTUNITY TO TRAIN FOR MISSIONS WITH THE URCNA

The United Reformed Church in North America is holding a new missions training program in spring 2023 and invites OP members to apply.

“Many of us do not know where to start with the idea of bringing the gospel to a place we have never been,” URCNA Missions Coordinator Rich Bout explained. “The goal of the program is to provide for our young people an honest glimpse of what bringing the gospel to the nations looks like, while providing them with the tools and context to succeed.”

The Cross-Cultural Missions Training will be held May 12–June 12 in central Mexico. Registration is due March 1.



*Iwan Baumann being prayed over at his November installation*

The training will include a week of intensive instruction, a week of living in the home of Hispanic Christians, and two weeks of working alongside missionaries and pastors in different Latin countries. The program is open to post-secondary young people aged 18 and older and young married couples who desire to serve the Lord in missions. To learn more, visit [www.ccmtmissions.com/home](http://www.ccmtmissions.com/home).

## UPDATE

### MINISTERS

- On November 17, **Iwan Baumann** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Redeemer OPC in Airdrie, Alberta, Canada.
- On December 16, **Peter J. A. Moelker** was installed as pastor of Faith OPC in Elmer, NJ.
- On December 16, the Presbytery of New Jersey dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Richard N. Ellis** and Faith OPC in Elmer, NJ, at their request, and designated Mr. Ellis as honorably retired.
- On December 31, the Presbytery of New Jersey dissolved the pastoral relationship between **Joseph P. Trombetta** and Immanuel OPC in West Collingswood, NJ,

at their request and designated Mr. Trombetta as honorably retired.

### MILESTONES

- **E. Marvin Padgett Jr.**, 78, died December 18. A retired PCA teaching elder, Padgett was previously the executive director of Great Commission Publications.

## REVIEWS

*The Rise and Fall of Christian Ireland*, by Crawford Gribben. Oxford University Press, 2021. Hardcover, 352 pages, \$19.69 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP ruling elder, Professor D. G. Hart.

Just when you thought the history of Christianity in the United States was unusual, maybe even special, along comes Crawford Gribben's *The Rise and Fall of Christian Ireland* to break up the party. American Christianity has features that set it apart from churches in other lands. For starters, the creation of a government independent from the church was unusual after almost 1,400 years of established churches. What softened the blow was the greater good of religious freedom for all denominations. These were conditions for a religious marketplace that allowed outlier Protestants, such as Methodists and Baptists, to grow in ways that embarrassed denominations with ties to state churches—namely, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Reformed, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics. The novelty of American Christianity, consequently, stems from the unusual political order that developed in the United States after 1790.

Ireland, in contrast, yields a Christian story that spans an ancient, indigenous people embracing faith, the efforts of institutional Christianity to consolidate Irish Christians into one body, and an era when serious Christians find themselves in a rapidly secular and hostile social environment. In fact, the arrival of Christianity in Ireland through the efforts of itinerant evangelists mirrors the sort of

evangelization that the Apostle Paul conducted four centuries earlier throughout the Mediterranean world. As such, the initial spread of Christianity in Ireland is reminiscent of the early church before either episcopal or imperial authorities held sway. To see Irish Christians emerge from those conditions, and then become pawns (at least sometimes) in the competing jurisdictions of popes, bishops, assemblies, kings, and empire, is to witness a breadth of historical experience that American Christians likely cannot fathom.

Crawford Gribben, a historian at Queen's University Belfast, who has years of experience studying British Protestantism, is well suited to tell this story. In fact, his own sympathies as an Irishman, who taught for many years at Trinity College Dublin, position him well to recognize and highlight the Irishness of Ireland's many churches and avoid the temptation to take sides in the Roman-Catholic /Protestant divide. His roots in Northern Ireland and experience of Ulster's sectarian politics and "The Troubles" are additional factors in Gribben's evenhanded treatment.

Two themes stand out in the book's narrative. The first is the difference between institutional and indigenous Christianity. In 431, Palladius, who became Ireland's first bishop, arrived with instructions from Pope Celestine to organize the island's believers. That chronology—Christians before Rome's structures—indicates a Christian history that was Irish before it became Roman. Ireland's first Christians may have been slaves or prisoners of war whose circumstances took them there. This was also a period before the famous work of Patrick, "the apostle of the Irish," who may have arrived in 432 and whose evangelism is always the first chapter of Irish church history. Although Ireland became part of the Roman pontiff's administration of church life, the Irish always retained a measure of independence. In the sixth century, the Irish church was part of a dispute about when to date Easter and, though Irish bishops

may have followed Rome's rules, not all of Ireland's monasteries did. Almost a millennium later, Ireland was still showing its independence by ordaining married priests and observing its own liturgical forms. Columba, the sixth-century founder of a monastic brotherhood was another source of Ireland's independence. His followers nurtured a Gaelic strain of Christianity up the west coast of the island into Scotland and the Hebrides islands.

The second significant theme is the interplay between Christianity and politics.

Some of Irish Christianity's independence was part of an effort to preserve indigenous forms of devotion over against Rome's powers. By the time of the Reformation, however, identification with Roman Catholicism became a vehicle for the Irish people to resist English (but also Scottish) Protestantism. By the 1922 formation of the Irish Republic (in the South), followed by its 1937 Constitution, Ireland had become a Christian nation. Its constitution opened with an affirmation of the Trinity, and the state's social services depended on Roman Catholic agencies administered by bishops (especially health care and education). In the Protestant North, the provincial government was also committed to maintaining a Protestant society, though the diversity of denominations and Protestantism's own distinction between church and civil institutions made Northern Ireland less overtly churchly than the South. But both the North and South's commitment to a Christian society, as Gribben explains, made secularization after 1990 more dramatic than in other western societies. Revelations about sexual abuse among clergy (and other scandals) have turned the Republic of Ireland into one of the most secular nations in Europe. In the North, people remain devout, but civil institutions are abandoning Christian norms under the banners of freedom and toleration.

Gribben's valuable and moving history may not be an obvious choice for American Presbyterian readers. But because of

the contribution of Ulster Presbyterians to the American church—Francis Makemie, the so-called Father of American Presbyterianism, came from Northern Ireland—Gribben's book should be instructive. For anyone who wants to consider the role of Christianity in the West, the test case of Ireland is as fascinating as it is instructive.

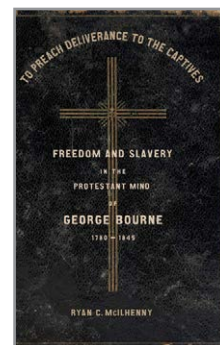
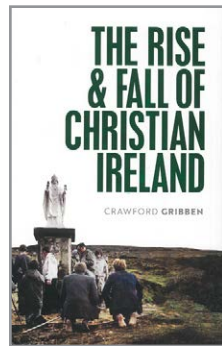
***To Preach Deliverance to the Captives: Freedom and Slavery in the Protestant Mind of George Bourne, 1780–1845 (Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World)*, by Ryan C. McIlhenny. LSU Press, 2020. Hardcover, 420 pages, \$45.00. Reviewed by OP minister and professor Alan D. Strange.**

Professor McIlhenny, in this reworking of his doctoral dissertation, introduces the reader to Irish-born George Bourne, an important figure in the rise of American abolitionism. One of the seminal figures that Bourne influenced was William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the well-known antislavery newspaper *The Liberator*, which began publication in 1831. Garrison and others testified to the power and rhetoric of the transplanted Bourne's arguments in persuading them of the utter horror and sinfulness of American chattel slavery.

Bourne became, particularly in moving to the slave state of Virginia, an outspoken advocate of immediate abolition, arguing that slave-owning should disqualify one from membership in the Presbyterian church and that those who refused to manumit their slaves should

be excommunicated. While the Covenanters—or Reformed Presbyterians—had always opposed slaveholding and would censure any members who engaged in it, the Presbyterian Church in the

USA (PCUSA) would not do such, and Bourne's position was regarded as radical and dangerous. The significant majority



of the PCUSA, especially the Old School after the split in 1837, opposed abolitionism because they saw it, unlike gradual emancipation, as fanaticism that opposed slavery at all costs, imperiling the unity of the church and the nation.

There was a judicial back and forth from 1815–1818 over Bourne’s views, and at the end of it all, Bourne was defrocked and forced to leave his church. Interestingly, in that same 1818 General Assembly, a remarkable statement was adopted by the PCUSA condemning slavery in no uncertain terms and calling for the emancipation of slaves stateside and worldwide. Subsequently, Bourne served a congregational church in Canada, and then upon his return to New York, several (Dutch) Reformed congregations in the New York classis. Many abolitionists rejected the Bible since it did not seem on its face to condemn slavery; Bourne, and some others, however, showed that the Bible did condemn the kind of slavery that was in America and argued that those who defended American slavery biblically twisted and abused the text of Scripture in order to do so.

A feature of Bourne’s life, and of this book, that may surprise those unfamiliar with American and broader English history, is Bourne’s virulent “anti-popery,” second in McIlhenny’s narrative only

to Bourne’s disdain for slavery. They are, in fact, tied together. Bourne’s anti-Catholicism is not mere religious bigotry as one would discover today in the anti-Catholicism of the media and others in our secularized culture. Bourne’s animus against Rome had deep Protestant roots, especially among those who championed republican government, as did Bourne, and eschewed monarchy.

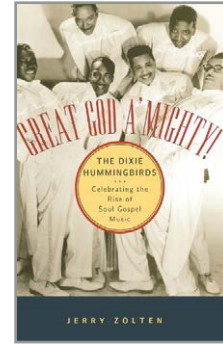
In short, Bourne disliked any sort of absolutism, whether in state (as in the England from which he and much of America came) or in church, manifested chiefly in the hierarchical episcopacy of the Roman church, particularly in the claims of the papacy. To Bourne, as McIlhenny sets forth in chapters 4 and 6, slavery and popery must be defeated so that maximum freedom may reign in every sphere. This is how the Protestant mind of George Bourne functioned. Perhaps this is the lesson to learn from Bourne: properly cherish biblical freedom and seek to develop it over forms of control and dominance.

***Great God A’Mighty! The Dixie Hummingbirds: Celebrating the Rise of Soul Gospel Music*, by Jerry Zolten. Oxford University Press, 2022. Hardcover, 408 pages, \$35.00 (Amazon). Reviewed by emeritus professor William Edgar.**

Many won’t be familiar with the great “quartet style” developed by black gospel singers in the mid-twentieth century. Gospel developed out of the spiritual in a more upbeat, urban version. There were hundreds of these groups, including the Golden Gate, the Spirit of Memphis, the Five Blind Boys of Alabama and, of course, the Dixie Hummingbirds. If you are not familiar with this extraordinary ensemble, then put this magazine down and tune-in to YouTube’s or Spotify’s many recordings. Try the retrospective, “The Dixie Hummingbirds - 80 Years

Young” on YouTube.

Zolten’s book is a labor of love. Thoroughly researched and faithful to its subject, it provides an eye-opening on several issues. For example, it is a window on race relations. Unless you have lived through it, it is hard to believe the amount of cruelty associated with segregation. Black audiences and white audiences could not listen together. Hotels were segregated. Blacks were not allowed in white restaurants. Many were denied ordinary schooling. Admirably, the “Birds” decided to endure all of this and get on with performing.



We learn a good deal about rampant poverty. Livings were scraped together by spirited mothers, and young people grew up with severe privations. Yet faith was usually there. Here is a telling comment by the marvelous singer Ira Tucker: “Gospel came from loneliness, bewilderedness, and short-changed in life, cursed out and knocked down and everything.” But he quickly adds, “And then, after all that, you go to church and thank God for another day” (57).

The story of the Birds is also a window onto American life in midcentury. For example, the advent of the radio was a major feature of the culture of the 1930s. Almost everyone listened to Roosevelt’s Fireside Chats, where the president explained the troubles of life during hard times. Black entertainment was an integral part of radio, including comedy and music. Performances and narratives were full of fun and humor. The singers obviously loved their audiences. But the central calling of the Birds, who could have risen to Ray-Charles-like stardom, was the gospel.

As might be expected, personnel changes occurred. The founding leader was James Davis, whom Zolten met and interviewed. He was a born leader and sang beautifully. Another superstar was Ira Tucker Jr., who came from a musical

## Positions Available

**Associate Pastor:** Grace Fellowship OPC in Zeeland, Michigan, is a young, growing church of about 400 people. We are looking for a godly, humble man with pastoral experience who can help further our vision, mission, and core values by modeling and mobilizing a vibrant discipleship and congregational care ministry primarily in the areas of shepherding, discipleship, and teaching. Email [secretary@gracefellowshipopc.com](mailto:secretary@gracefellowshipopc.com) to receive a job application. Applications are due by March 10.

**Pastor:** Sovereign Grace OPC in Redlands, California, is actively looking for a pastor. Please direct all inquiries to Derek Medlin at [dfmedlin@icloud.com](mailto:dfmedlin@icloud.com).

family that rubbed shoulders with the popular groups of the time. And there were others. But the extraordinary cohesiveness of the Birds came mostly from the consistency of its personnel. The life was grueling: four or five performances per day, travels on a bus, publicity. One admires the integrity of the singers in such a pressure cooker.

For readers not familiar with this manner of singing, they will be (pleasantly) surprised by the combination of traditional harmonies, syncopated rhythms and a use of the voice that is decidedly not European. Basses could go very low. Tenors easily soared into falsetto. The accord of the group was often assured by a *cappella* singing or by a simple guitar. There could be humor, or there could be sobering seriousness, depending on the theme. Every aspect of biblical truth was explored in song.

Zolten has provided a thorough guide to the Birds, including a couple of indexes, a fine bibliography, a discography, great photos, and abundant notes. Beautifully written, this is a real feast.

***Well Ordered, Living Well: A Field Guide to Presbyterian Church Government* by Guy Prentiss Waters. Reformation Heritage, 2022. Paperback, 112 pages, \$10.00 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Anthony C. Phelps.**

“I love thy kingdom, Lord” (*Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, no. 405). So begins a beloved hymn, and such Spirit-wrought affection for the church is evident throughout Guy Prentiss Waters’s excellent little book. How can we help those new to the OPC share our love for Christ’s visible kingdom? How can we train officers to see beyond the minutia of procedures in our *Book of Church Order* to behold the beauty of Christ’s rule by his Word and Spirit, as exercised ministerially in the offices he has gifted to his church? This book is an accessible and edifying way to start. It would therefore work well as a supplement to both new members classes and officer training in Presbyterian and Reformed churches.



In five short chapters, Waters addresses the following questions: “Why Does Church Government Matter?” “What Makes a Church?” “How Is the Church Led?” “But What about . . . ?” and, “Where Do We Go from Here?”

Waters has a gift for clear writing. He blends both practical and substantial ecclesiology in an understandable way. In fact, this book sneaks in a robust biblical theology of the church with its brief, jargon-free format. He points the reader to the Bible to help us to see how Christ’s saving rule is expressed in the ordinary means of grace, and through ordinary men called to serve his church as ministers, elders, or deacons. He also reminds us that when we begin to see the church as Christ does, we will more readily overlook her remaining weaknesses and sins.

Waters writes charitably and helpfully as he addresses sticky issues like churches without formal membership, spiritual gifts and male-only offices, and how to handle disagreement with church leadership decisions. He displays pastoral wisdom and biblical faithfulness in these brief discussions.

The final chapter reflects Waters’s desire for the Christian to see the beauty and relevance of Christ-appointed church government for our Christian lives. As we think biblically about it, we

## Crates for Ukraine

It’s getting cold, and the war continues in Ukraine. The OPC’s Disaster Response is participating in an initiative of Mission to the World (a ministry of sister denomination Presbyterian Church in America) to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Ukraine. You can help! Mission to the World is asking churches and groups to donate and collect personal and medical care supplies to send to Ukraine. Each registered group will buy crates and supplies, pack the supplies into the crates, and then ship or deliver to Dallas, Texas, or Chattanooga, Tennessee, where they will then be shipped to L’viv, Ukraine. Visit <https://opcdisasterresponse.org/opportunity/crates-for-ukraine/> for more information. Registration closes March 1.

will choose to love Christ’s church (including the flawed people in it!), and we will feel increasing gratitude and joy for it. We may even sing “I love thy kingdom, Lord” more robustly than ever.

There’s even something for polity nerds. Appendix 2 is a contribution from Bartel Elshout which provides a helpful and concise comparison of Presbyterian church government with the Dutch Reformed Church Order of Dort (yes, the same synod that gave us the Canons of Dort). Elshout reminds us that both traditions seek to apply the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* to the question of how Christ runs his church.

The one quibble I have with this book is the title. The subtitle explains it well enough. But it seems a bit obscure to stand on its own. A couple of others come to mind: *Welcome to Christ’s Kingdom*, or perhaps even, *I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*.

***Our Heavenly Shepherd: Comfort and Strength from Psalm 23*, by Ian Hamilton. Reformation Heritage, 2022. Paperback, 112 pages, \$7.50 Reviewed by OP pastor Matthew Holst.**

Many will know Ian Hamilton through his work at the Banner of Truth Trust. I know Ian through being his intern in Cambridge, England, for a year back in 2009. That year has left lasting impact on my life and ministry. To read *Our Heavenly Shepherd: Comfort and Strength from Psalm 23* is to be refreshed by his theologically keen but kind pastoral heart.

Hamilton recounts his first pastorate in Scotland where he presided over seven hundred funerals, at least half of which included the singing of Psalm 23. Why its popularity? Psalm 23 speaks of a “heavenly Shepherd [who] watches over, leads, provides for and protects His sheep with a personalized, individual care and compassion” (3). This thesis statement is the outline of the book.

Hamilton quickly sets Psalm 23 in its historical and redemptive historical contexts: it is a psalm of and about David and it is a psalm about Jesus Christ:

When Jesus said “I am the good shepherd” . . . He was identifying Himself as the long-promised Shepherd who would personally seek the lost, bind up the broken, strengthen the sick and destroy the fat and the strong. . . . Psalm 23 points beyond its immediate circumstance to the incarnate Lord of glory, who would do what no other shepherd could do: He would lay down his life as a sin atoning sacrifice for His sheep, thereby securing their everlasting good. (6–7)

Seeing Psalm 23’s relevance in Christ allows us to see how it is a “Psalm of Experiential Realism” (7) and a psalm for “Living and Dying.” Hamilton rightly ties the christological significance to the experiential, thus rooting the reader not in a subjective experience of the Christian life, but the objective life, work, ministry, and experience of Christ himself. Here is the payoff for the reader: given that Jesus is both the Good Shepherd and for a time was also a lamb led to slaughter,

the Christian is caught up in his life, both in suffering and in glory.

Hamilton, guided by these perspectives, works through Psalm 23: chapter 1, “The Lord Loves His Sheep.” The ensuing chapters reveal the Lord’s provision for, his restoration of, his leading of, his presence with, and his protection of his sheep. The closing chapter describes the heavenly Shepherd who leads his sheep safely home. Hamilton concludes that Psalm 23 “wonderfully captures the essence of the believing life, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd.’ David is confessing the fundamental truth that shaped and directed his life” (93).

Herein is the great profit of this short devotional: Hamilton’s treatment of Psalm 23 brings home the objective realities of God as our Shepherd, which then shape our faith, understanding, and attitude to the numerous trials Christians face, including death itself. The book is to be highly commended on this matter. The book also has study questions at the end of each chapter, suitable for small-group study or discipleship of older children.

***Creeks, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader’s Edition*, edited by Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn. Crossway, 2022. Hardcover, 480 pages, \$23.49 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP elder David Winslow Jr.**

In recent years Crossway has published two titles worthy of note that contain extensive creeds and confessional material. The first was the *ESV Bible with Creeks and Confessions*, and now comes *Creeks, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader’s Edition*. What ties these two publications together is that the creeds, confessions, and catechisms included are identical.

Of further note, is that the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards are printed exactly as found in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Yet another important point of unity is that Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn, so well-known for his scholarship surrounding the Westminster Standards, provides the introductions to each of these thirteen historic expressions of the Christian faith found in both books. These introductions are written with admirable clarity and conciseness at a level that all readers will appreciate.

What is a reader’s edition, you may well ask? There are no footnotes, and the proof texts are referenced by citation rather than by quoting the biblical text. This allows the reader the pleasure of a good font size and the ability to get quick access to what the five church traditions represented have confessed (Lutheran, Anglican, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, and Reformed Baptist).

What sets *A Reader’s Edition* apart from its Bible companion are the subject and Scripture indexes that the editors at Crossway have helpfully included. This allows for enlightening comparisons of how the churches of the Reformation have handled the doctrinal matters that we believe.

It must be noted that the subject index could be more extensive. For example, in looking up “election,” references to important parts of the Canons of Dort and the Larger Catechism were omitted. Nevertheless, this is a very helpful volume that allows us to be both readers and students.

