

REVIEW: R.C. Sproul's *Unseen Realities* by Matthew Holst

# New Horizons

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

APR 2012

## *Responses to the* RESURRECTION

BY EVERETT A. HENES



**ALSO:** SHORT-TERM MISSIONS, LONG-TERM GOOD BY JAMIE DEAN

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## NEW HORIZONS

IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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A group working in the Czech Republic at a summer English camp doing some sightseeing in Prague (see article on pages 5-7)



EVERETT A. HENES

# Responses to the Resurrection

**T**here are plenty of issues within the church over which we can disagree. The doctrine of the Resurrection, however, is not one of those issues. The historicity of the resurrection of Jesus is essential to Christianity.

Addressing this question, J. Gresham Machen writes, “The great weapon with which the disciples of Jesus set out to conquer the world was not a mere comprehension of eternal principles; it was an historical message, an account of something that had recently happened, it was the message, ‘He is risen’” (*Christianity and Liberalism*, pp. 28–29).

The historical Resurrection, Machen explains, makes all the difference. The disciples were not merely convinced that Jesus had risen in their hearts. He had actually risen from the dead and had appeared to them as proof. For that reason, they were called to be reliable witnesses to this fact (Acts 1:8).

Of course, Machen is not alone in putting such an emphasis upon the historicity of the Resurrection. The apostle Paul declares to the church at Corinth, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:14, 17). It is not merely a matter of personal opinion, then, whether or not Jesus physically rose from the grave. For Christians, it is something that we confess as absolute truth.

This does not mean, however, that everyone has believed the story of the Resurrection. It is often thought that miracles were accepted in the days before science supposedly disproved such things. C. S. Lewis spoke of this as *chronological snobbery*. This is the view that previous generations were more superstitious and less intelligent than our own. However, our age is not the first to doubt the occurrence of miracles, particularly the resurrection of Christ.

When we turn to the Bible, we find that reactions to Christ’s resurrection are varied. What they all have in com-

mon is initial surprise and misunderstanding, and sometimes there was even outright doubt. This was for the simple reason that, contrary to modern skeptics, people in the first century did not believe that people rose from the dead. This sort of response to the Resurrection is seen in several instances. We can examine an example of each: surprise, misunderstanding, and doubt.

## SURPRISE

It was early on that Resurrection Day when Mary Magdalene and other women brought spices to anoint Jesus’ body. They had been there, near the cross, when he died. They had even followed those who took him to the tomb, so they would know where to go to do this (Luke 23:55). Jesus had died on a Friday, and they could not come to anoint his body on the Sabbath, so they waited until early Sunday morning to make the journey.

As they approached the tomb, discussing who would roll the stone away so they could get in, they came upon a startling scene. There was a young man (whom they didn’t know to be an angel) dressed in a white robe and sitting by the tomb. Mark tells us that the women were alarmed. Who could have done such a thing to their Lord’s burial place? The angel told them not to be alarmed, because Jesus had risen. He then instructed them to go and tell the disciples about what had taken place. Mark 16:8 gives us their response: “And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

Despite the Old Testament promises of the Resurrection

and despite Jesus' own testimony to his disciples that he would rise from the dead, they did not grasp at this time what had taken place. Instead, they were filled with fear and trembling. This was hardly the response of an ancient superstitious people. On the contrary, their response is understandable, given what they had expected to find at the tomb. Their surprise and fear, though, turned to joy when the Lord himself appeared to them (Matt. 28:9–10).

## MISUNDERSTANDING

The picture of the disciples misunderstanding what had taken place comes from Luke 24 and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. There we learn that two disciples were walking together and talking about what had taken place in the preceding days (the trial, conviction, and death of Jesus). Without their knowing who he was, Jesus himself joined them in their walk and asked them what they were talking about and why they were so sad. Dismayed at the stranger's question, Cleopas responded, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (v. 18).

Upon further questioning by Jesus, the disciples explained how they "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (v. 21). But now that Jesus was dead, even though his body was missing from the tomb, they felt that hope was gone. They misunderstood so much about what needed to take place. So Jesus told them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (vv. 25–26).

In Luke's gospel, the word "necessary" is an important one that often occurs when Jesus speaks of the works that he must accomplish. It was necessary, he said as a child, for him to be in his Father's house (Luke 2:49). Later he would declare that it was necessary for him to preach the good news of the kingdom of God (4:43). Just as it was necessary in those situations, so it was also necessary for Jesus to die. The disciples misunderstood because they believed that the death of Jesus meant the end of everything he had promised. The opposite, though, was true. The death and resurrection of Jesus meant that everything God had promised, from the very beginning, would come to pass. Once their eyes were opened, Jesus vanished. They ran to tell the others, and it was there that Jesus appeared to the majority of the disciples.

## DOUBT

A final example of reacting to the Resurrection is found in John 20:24–29. This is the famous incident with "Doubting Thomas." The other disciples had already seen the risen Christ. They had already believed in the Resurrection. The exception to this, we learn in verse 24, was Thomas, who

was also called Didymus. He had not been with them when Jesus previously appeared. They assured him that Jesus had risen from the dead, but Thomas responded, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe" (v. 25). Thomas, we can say, was an empiricist when it came to validating the resurrection of Jesus. The others had reported to him that they had seen the risen Lord with their own eyes. But Thomas wanted more. He wanted to touch the wounds that Jesus sustained through the course of the crucifixion. His position could not be stronger: "Unless I see ... I will never believe."

As the meeting in that room continued, Jesus appeared and stood among them. He turned to Thomas and said, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe" (v. 27). Jesus offered him the very thing that he requested. It wasn't because Thomas had lacked the evidence; rather, it had more to do with his own unbelief.

However, Thomas's response was surprising. We would expect him to walk up to the Lord and examine all of the wounds he had sustained, to make certain it was him. After all, that's what he said he wanted. He needed to see and touch. But there, in the presence of the risen Christ, his eyes were opened in a different way. Instead, Thomas responded, "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28). He no longer doubted, but believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

These accounts are not stories that we set aside as fables or myths, like many do. They are evidences of the Resurrection itself. But they are evidences that only work within the framework of Christianity itself. One must believe that God has created the world and that he upholds, sustains, and governs all things by his powerful word. Moreover, one must also believe that Jesus is the one sent by the Father to redeem a people for himself (Eph. 1). He is the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8 κϒ).

Our final example provides us with the Bible's own reasoning for including these accounts. John writes: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30–31). Luke writes something similar at the beginning of his gospel (Luke 1:1–4).

The accounts that we have reviewed confront us with an absolute claim: Christ has risen from the dead. Without this reality, there is no forgiveness of sins. The question that remains is: How will we respond? ❑

*The author is pastor of Hillsdale OPC in Hillsdale, Mich. Unless otherwise indicated, he quotes the ESV.*



JAMIE DEAN

# Short-Term Missions, Long-Term Good

**S**ince elder David Nakhla began his work as the OPC's first short-term missions and disaster response coordinator in September 2010, he has helped the OPC respond to a devastating tsunami in Japan, unprecedented flooding in upstate New York, and ongoing needs in foreign fields like Haiti and Uruguay.

The OPC has been working to expand its reach in short-term missions. In this interview, David offers some thoughts on the value of short-term trips and how OP churches and members can become more involved with the joyful task of making disciples of Christ at home and abroad.

*New Horizons: We regularly send full-time missionaries to conduct the long-term work of proclaiming Christ and planting churches around the world. What is the biblical basis for short-term trips?*

Nakhla: Interestingly, it's easier to find examples of short-term missions (STMs) in the Bible than long-term missions. In all his travels, the apostle Paul didn't spend more than possibly a couple of years in one place. Also, the Great Commission is a command given to all believers. STMs provide one avenue for many more people to participate in bringing the gospel literally to "all the nations."

*NH: What are the benefits of STMs for long-term missionaries?*

Nakhla: STMs connect the missionary to the church. Although missionaries are an extension of the church, they can often feel like an island. STMs help bridge that gap. STMs also connect the church to the missionary. Those who serve on short-term trips bring home a renewed enthusiasm for that field and firsthand information about how their church can pray for, support, and communicate with missionaries on the field.

If used effectively by the missionary on the field, each STM trip can be one more building block in the church that he is trying to establish in that particular region. It's all part of the sowing of the seed.

*NH: Which OP foreign fields currently host short-term trips?*

Nakhla: Uganda, Uruguay, Haiti, and Quebec regularly host STMs. Ukraine hosted its first OP team last summer and will allow us to send a team every other summer. Japan may now have additional opportunities because of the changed spiritual landscape since the tsunami.

*NH: What kinds of projects are short-term teams tackling?*

Nakhla: The main projects at this time would include VBS, construction, and English-language camps.

*NH: In their book When Helping Hurts, Christian authors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert warn against some of the potential pitfalls of short-term mission trips. How can our attempts to help sometimes actually hurt?*

Team Haiti '09 members displaying their duck, duck, goose prowess



Friday evening presentation in Quebec



Nakhla: Usually by unintended consequences. People on short-term missions trips don't intentionally try to hurt, but when we go into a situation with our own agenda, proudly thinking that we have all the answers, and not having a true appreciation for the culture or the circumstances, we can do a lot of harm without even realizing it.

*NH: How can groups avoid these pitfalls?*

Nakhla: The key, I believe, is to do STMs under the guidance and oversight of the local missionary or local church leadership. Those close to the situation who know the culture, language, and circumstances, can help us put together a project that avoids doing short-term missions with long-term harm.

*NH: The book also discusses the difference between relief work and rehabilitation/development. How should those considerations inform short-term trips?*

Nakhla: The authors define relief work as “stop the bleeding.” In contrast, rehabilitation/development work is characterized more by coming alongside and working with those whom we come to serve. The common analogy is teaching people to fish versus giving them a fish. Relief work is much easier to do. Rehabilitation/development work is very tough! It's relational. It takes great patience and endurance. Relief work is often applied to situations that really need rehabilitation/development work instead.

So a short-term worker should be more concerned about how he relates to those he's going to work with than just getting the job done. That's not to say that we don't want to worry about completing things. But the real impact has to do with the relationships developed during our time there.

*NH: Some people raise the concern that we can spend as much money on a week of service as some of the local population earn in several weeks or more. How do we balance this consideration with the need to serve and help?*

Nakhla: We have to be honest with the fact that STMs are—more than anything—an investment in the life of the one who goes. If STMs were only about getting some work done on the field, I don't think that we could justify the cost, for the most part. So, knowing that a trip is going to place an indelible mark on the one who goes, we need to be sure that person spends plenty of time preparing—not just physically, but most importantly spiritually. And when the individual comes back, he needs to take time to reflect on what the Lord would have him learn through this rich and costly endeavor. This is an area that we need to focus on developing more.

*NH: Why is the OPC expanding its involvement with short-term missions now?*

Nakhla: First, the church is asking for it. The program committees of the OPC see that many OP churches have come to appreciate the role that STMs can play in shaping their members and the mission-mindedness of their whole church. These churches are going to get involved in STMs, with or without the OPC. If we can provide those opportunities within the OPC, why wouldn't we want that help to come to our fields? As I mentioned previously, prayer and financial support also follow STMs. So it makes sense that we direct all that toward our own missionaries, if we can.

Also, the missionaries are welcoming it. Some of our missionaries are building greater portions of their ministries around the help that short-termers bring. I think that is good for the whole church.

*NH: How should a church pick a field and a project?*

Nakhla: They should ask themselves: What are our gifts and skills? What are our interests? Do we already have a natural connection to any of the fields? What is our budget?

*NH: How can churches choose good candidates for short-term trips?*

Nakhla: They should consider gifts, experience, maturity, and team makeup. If it's a costly venture, prudence dictates that they look for individuals who are mature in their faith, exemplify service locally, and have a great interest in missions. If it's a local disaster response, where the team is simply piling into a van with a cooler and sleeping bags, we don't have to be as selective. That said, I would look for those who are team players, flexible, servants, humble, and eager to learn.

*NH: What's the ideal size for a short-term team?*

Nakhla: Depending on the project, teams can range anywhere from three to twenty members.

*NH: How should churches prepare for a trip?*

Nakhla: They should pray that the Lord would open their eyes to the opportunities around them, and that he'll give wisdom in choosing the right one for them. They should provide opportunities for individuals to exercise service in the church

locally. They could also connect with other churches in their presbytery. The typical OP church has seventy members—possibly not enough to field a team. Connect with the regional church! Finally, explore the opportunities that do arise. We've built the website [www.OPCSTM.org](http://www.OPCSTM.org) to publicize opportunities, as well as the Facebook page "OPC Short-Term Missions."

*NH: How much do trips typically cost?*

Nakhla: Domestically, they could cost as little as a few hundred dollars per person. Internationally, they could cost anywhere from \$1,300 to \$3,500, depending on the destination.

*NH: Is this something that sessions should consider thinking about in their budgeting process?*

Nakhla: That would be great. Some churches have a "Short-Term Missions" line item in their budget. Others create a "Short-Term Missions Fund" that people can contribute to. Others may take up a special offering when they have the opportunity to send off a team or an individual.

*NH: Are there opportunities for individuals to join groups from other churches if their own church isn't planning a trip?*

Nakhla: Absolutely! Keep an eye on [www.OPCSTM.org](http://www.OPCSTM.org) or e-mail me at [nakhla.1@opc.org](mailto:nakhla.1@opc.org).

*NH: Are there opportunities for domestic short-term trips?*

Nakhla: I hope to see domestic short-term missions developed within the presbyteries. I would be so encouraged to see local churches mobilize to work with their sister churches, helping with outreach projects, building and grounds projects, or ministry projects to folks with needs within the church.

*NH: Speaking of domestic fields, how can churches prepare in advance for local disasters and be ready to serve?*

Nakhla: Churches should figure out their resources, strengths, and abilities, but also their vulnerabilities and weaknesses. They can explore various forms of training given by groups like the Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, or Mission to North America (the PCA's domestic missions branch). Ultimately, our denomination's Committee on Diaconal Ministries would love to see each presbytery's diaconal committee create a network of contacts and responders within their presbytery, so that churches within the regional church could minister to one another better when a disaster strikes.

*NH: Looking ahead, how can we continue to cultivate a service-oriented mind-set in our churches?*

Nakhla: We live in a very me-centered culture, don't we? I think a service-oriented mind-set begins to be formed when parents expect more from their children. (And I'm talking to myself here!) This is difficult in a culture that is so comfortable and geared toward comfort. Yet we can rob ourselves of the satisfaction that's found when we serve others. Our Lord

Disaster response coworkers for Hurricane Katrina



taught us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). We need to be willing to give others the opportunity to serve. And we need to be willing to have things done in a fashion that may not be perfect since people will make mistakes in the process of learning how to serve well.

*NH: What can sessions and diaconates do to help?*

Nakhla: Create opportunities. Recruit for those opportunities. Lead, not only by example, but also by coming alongside and encouraging others.

*NH: Could this be a means of raising up future missionaries?*

Nakhla: I believe that the main justification for STMs is that they do just that: plant seeds for future missionaries!

*NH: What do you hope that increasing numbers of short-term trips will accomplish in the OPC and the larger kingdom of Christ?*

Nakhla: I hope STMs will become a tool to invigorate God's people to serve Christ and his church in all of their lives, so that being a Christian would not just be a part of who they are, but would define them in all that they think, do, and say.

I have been saddened to see many of the next generation drift off, having grown up without a passion for the church and for the OPC in particular. May the Lord do powerful things through the work of short-term missions in the lives of many, even as it has done for me personally over the years! □

*The author is a member of Matthews OPC in Matthews, N.C., and news editor of World magazine.*

## Want to know more?

Visit [www.opcstm.org](http://www.opcstm.org) for news of the latest short-term missions opportunities. You'll find information about domestic and foreign projects and learn more about building a team—or joining one—for projects as early as this summer. You can also e-mail David Nakhla at [nakhla.1@opc.org](mailto:nakhla.1@opc.org).



JAMES W. SCOTT

# Why Can't Christians Agree?

**A**ccording to Presbyterians, infant baptism is taught in the Bible. But according to Baptists, the Bible teaches that only professing believers should be baptized—and they must be immersed, besides. Why can't we agree on what the Bible teaches about baptism? Why doesn't the Bible tell us simply and unmistakably who should be baptized—and how? We could ask such questions about many matters.

Sociologist Christian Smith has the answer. We can't agree, he tells us, because the biblical writers don't agree. To take another example, some passages really are Calvinistic, and others really are Arminian, but evangelicals can't see that because they assume the Bible has a consistent position. Hence, they twist the other side's passages to suit their own preferred view. Furthermore, they try to extract "biblical teachings" on all sorts of subjects that the Bible doesn't really address.

Evangelicals of all theological stripes misuse the Bible like this, argues Smith in *The Bible Made Impossible* (Brazos Press, 2011), because of their erroneous doctrine of Scripture, which he labels "biblicism." They think that the Bible, as God's inspired word, must be inerrant and self-consistent. And because God gave it to us to instruct us about theology and life, it presumably provides clear teaching on these matters. But since evangelicals disagree on many issues, and are fragmented into numerous contentious groups, we can only conclude, Smith insists, that the Bible does not contain the clear, consistent teachings that evangelicals think it does. In short, all the disagreements among evangelicals refute their doctrine of Scripture. Their "pervasive interpretive pluralism" proves that the evangelical view of Scripture is simply impossible.

Most of Smith's book is a recycling of insufficiently substantiated assertions made by other critics. While the book is clearly and engagingly written, it presents a web of beguiling misrepresentation and argumentation that threatens to ensnare the unwary reader. For example, Smith repeatedly

declares that the evangelical doctrine of biblical inspiration and inerrancy is merely a preconceived theory that people bring to the Bible. In reality, it is the traditional Christian view (as expressed by the Westminster Confession). It has been carefully derived from what the Bible says about itself, and in fact it pervades Scripture. Smith does draw attention to some passages that pose problems for this view (in chapter 4), but he ignores the explanations that Christians have put forward.

Furthermore, the author's credibility, as one who supposedly writes as a fellow evangelical, is undermined by his recent conversion to Roman Catholicism (which he mentions).

## THE CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE

Much more could be said about Smith's book, but his basic point needs to be answered. He asks rhetorically: "If the Bible is given by a truthful and omnipotent God as an internally consistent and perspicuous [clear] text precisely for the purpose of revealing to humans correct beliefs, practices, and morals, then *why is it that the presumably sincere Christians to whom it has been given cannot read it and come to common agreement about what it teaches?*" (p. 26). The absence of such agreement, Smith says, demonstrates that the Bible is not God's clear revelation of correct beliefs, practices, and morals.

Smith's conclusion does indeed follow from his premises, but his premises are faulty. He misrepresents the traditional Protestant and Reformed doctrine of Scripture. The Bible is indeed "given by a truthful and omnipotent God," and there-

fore must be “internally consistent.” But it does not necessarily follow that the Bible is a “perspicuous text,” clearly and unmistakably revealing a wide range of “correct beliefs, practices, and morals” equally to all “presumably sincere Christians.” As our Confession (1.7) states, the basic truths “necessary . . . for salvation” are taught in the Bible with “sufficient” (but not necessarily full) clarity for all to understand, but (1) “all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves,” nor (2) are they “alike clear unto all.” Let us see why this is so.

## THE DIFFICULTY OF UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

First of all, it is often difficult for our limited minds to understand the word of God very deeply, even though it has been expressed in human language. If we had the divine intellect, the Scriptures would be crystal clear to us, but we don’t. Even after a lifetime of study, meditation, and prayer, building on the insights of those who have gone before us, our understanding of Scripture still leaves much to be desired.

God has given us a written Word that is not only profound, but also in many respects challenging. Instead of giving us, say, an encyclopedia of doctrine, in which we could easily look up clear and concise answers to all of our questions, God has given us a set of sometimes obscure texts that require us to find our answers in scattered verses that can be interpreted properly only in the light of the whole. On many subjects, he gives us a glimmer of truth here and another glimmer there, and challenges us to figure it out.

God wants us to wrestle with the Scriptures, studying them diligently (Ps. 119:97; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:13), with deep humility (Ps. 25:9) and persistence (Matt. 5:6), imploring him to show us his truth and how it applies in our lives (2 Tim. 3:16–17). That is the path of spiritual growth. God does not simply want us to know what the right doctrines and practices are. He wants us to arrive at that knowledge in such a way that it takes root and transforms us into the image of Christ (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10; Rom. 8:29). Often the truths of Scripture are not obvious on the surface because God wants us to dig them out and learn from that process.

This digging is complicated today by our distance from the prophets and apostles. The original text of Scripture is sometimes difficult to ascertain. The exact meaning of the inspired text is sometimes obscured by imprecise translation. The correct interpretation of the biblical text is often distorted by our own ideas. Modern scholarship can help (or not), but the bottom line is that we are dependent upon the illumination of the Holy Spirit to understand the spiritual teachings of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:4–5, 10–13; 1 Thess. 1:5).

## HUMAN SIN

Proper understanding of Scripture does not follow automatically from diligent study, even when employing proper

exegetical techniques with hermeneutical sophistication. Those who have sinful attitudes and sinful desires will tend to twist Scripture accordingly (2 Peter 3:16), no matter how educated they are. Not one of us is immune to this tendency.

Because of sin, false teachings arise and hold sway. Within the church itself, many “wolves in sheep’s clothing” promote erroneous teaching for their own selfish and wicked purposes (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29–30; Rom. 16:17–18; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 2:1–3). These false teachers are necessary, Paul explains, so that, in the debates and divisions that follow, “those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Cor. 11:19; cf. 1 John 2:19). But even genuinely Christian teachers “stumble in many ways” as they struggle with sin and misunderstandings (James 3:1–2). Personal pride leads many astray.

Because of sin, people are not only vulnerable to false teachings (2 Tim. 3:6), but actually eager to follow after errors that satisfy their ungodly desires (2 Tim. 4:3–4). Falsehood will always attract a large following (Matt. 7:13–14).

Theological disputes are not merely efforts by what Smith calls “presumably sincere Christians” to arrive at the truth. In reality, there is a great spiritual struggle going on behind the scenes, in which Satan and his minions are working mightily to deceive people, including teachers and other church leaders (1 Tim. 4:1; Eph. 6:11–12). Thanks be to God that his Spirit is also at work, and has the upper hand, or all would be lost.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was a mighty work of the Spirit. It was marred by sin, of course, but the Reformers achieved a remarkable theological consensus as they resolutely looked to the Scriptures for guidance. This historical fact belies Smith’s claim that Christians relying on the Bible cannot reach agreement. But that Reformed consensus, manifested by the many Reformed confessions, came under attack from false teachers.

Some of their false teachings have prospered in the broadly evangelical world, not because the Bible itself is defective, but for all the reasons outlined above. For example, Arminian errors have gained a wide following because sinners do not want to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in their life, especially with regard to salvation. Many errors are now well entrenched in modern evangelicalism, and the sin of party spirit only adds to the inability of “presumably sincere Christians” to reach agreement on all that the Bible teaches.

Contrary to Smith, the evangelical doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture is the foundation of the true Christian faith. That doctrine, and the use of the Bible that is consistent with it, are certainly not “made impossible” by disagreements among evangelicals. □

*The author is the managing editor of New Horizons. He quotes the ESV. For a thorough rebuttal of Smith’s book, see “Smithereens!” by Robert H. Gundry, at [www.booksandculture.com](http://www.booksandculture.com).*

# His Friend Needed That Religion Stuff

**F**remont OPC in Fremont, Michigan, began as an effort of Little Farms Chapel (OPC) in Coopersville.

One family was driving from Fremont to Little Farms Chapel and praying that God would establish an OP congregation in their community in western Michigan. In the spring of 2008, Dr. Norman De Jong began leading Lord's Day worship there, morning and evening. By the fall, a core group had been gathered and Dr. De Jong was called to be the organizing pastor.

Pastor Norm and his wife, Wilma, established a welcoming atmosphere with people who had a desire to hear the preaching of God's Word. About a year ago, they sensed that it was time for a younger pastor to lead this new congregation on to new stages of ministry growth and development. In September 2011, Fremont OPC welcomed its new organizing pastor, W. Vernon Picknally, Jr.

Vern had served for the previous twelve years as the pastor of Bethel OPC in Carson, North Dakota. He loves to preach and share the gospel with others.

He knows the joy of having been sought and found by a merciful God.

At the age of eighteen, Vern discovered his sin and God's mercy.

Growing up in New Jersey, he was a good kid. He did not imbibe the party mentality of many of his peers. He was convinced that his good deeds outweighed the bad, and so he was okay. He was not a churchgoer. His mom and dad had divorced when he was six, and he gave his mom a lot of trouble about going to church.

When Vern was a senior in high school, his sister became religious. She was attending a Bible study and kept inviting Vern to come. Eventually she brought home

the guy teaching the Bible study, and Vern was surprised that he knew him. They had met in science class, when Vern was a freshman and the man was a senior. This senior often came to class drunk or stoned.

Pastor Vern Picknally baptizing Isaiah Guikema



Girls of Fremont OPC posing for the camera



Vern's first reaction was that the guy was a fake. Then it became, "He really needed this religion stuff." Ultimately, Vern says, "the Lord really broke me and convicted me of my sin. I then knew that I was just as much in need of the saving work of Christ as him, and I pleaded for grace and mercy." Through this teacher, Vern became part of a Presbyterian Church in America congregation.

As he grew in his faith, he felt a sense of calling to the ministry, but he pushed it aside. How could he be a minister, since he did not grow up in the church? But his pastor, Ken Klett, encouraged him to pursue the ministry. By then, Vern had an associate's degree in criminal justice. He went on to finish his bachelor's degree at Kuyper College in Grand Rapids. He received his M.Div. at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

Vern is excited to be at Fremont OPC. The people love to hear the Word of God preached and enjoy fellowshiping with one another. The congregation is a wonderful blend of people from Dutch Reformed backgrounds and more recent

converts. He wants to continue to develop those two strands of covenant nurture and gospel outreach.

Pray that the Lord would bring new people into Fremont OPC. There is plenty of room for established Christians and new converts—anyone seeking to be fed on the Word.

The Lord has provided a number of potential elders and deacons. Please pray that the Lord would prosper their preparation for office and bring them into service soon.

## Surprise! Surprise!

The move to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has been filled with wonderful surprises for Chad and Katie Mullinix.

The Mullinixes are not new to Florida. They both graduated from Clearwater Christian College. They met in college. During their years of dating, they came to know the Reformed faith through the ministry of a local Presbyterian Church in America congregation. After graduation, they were married, and Chad did an internship in the PCA church that had nurtured them.

During the five years they spent in the Philadelphia area, Chad completed his M.Div. at Westminster Theological Seminary and a yearlong internship at Trinity OPC in Hatboro. He also renovated the fixer-upper that they had purchased. Katie worked full-time in the accounting department of a hospital, so that Chad could focus on his studies and preparation

## Home Missions Today

Due to a computer problem, some people have been inadvertently dropped from the Home Missions Today e-mail list. If you want to continue receiving it by e-mail, please send your name and e-mail address to [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org). It can also be accessed at our new website, [www.chmce.com](http://www.chmce.com).

The congregation of Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.



for the ministry.

In August 2011, Chad and Katie returned to Florida for Chad to become the pastor of Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale. Chad reports that a lot of work had already been invested in this new congregation before he arrived. Church officers are in place and functioning well. The people love gospel preaching and want to be consistently Reformed. The Lord used Dr. Robert Reymond, the first organizing pastor, to lay a good foundation.

The Mullinixes were pleasantly surprised by the ethnic diversity of the congregation and their neighborhood. On their first visit to the local Walmart, they heard only two conversations in English. In the church, God has gathered people whose backgrounds are African-American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Anglo, Jewish, and Indian.

In answer to the prayers of his people, God continues to send new people to Holy Trinity. In a recent two-month period, there were fifteen new visitors. Some have continued to attend. Evening worship has been very important for receiving visitors. People are able to check out Holy Trinity without immediately leaving their current church.

## Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org). New editions: **April 11, 25.**

A friendly welcome awaits everyone who comes to Holy Trinity. The whole congregation shows Christian hospitality. Even covenant children extend a warm greeting to visitors.

Outreach is an area in which the church continues to develop. Printed materials are being improved. The website is being refreshed. Plans for outreach and evangelism are progressing.

Chad is excited to be the pastor of Holy Trinity Presbyterian Church. His sense of calling to the ministry began to develop in high school. He had grown up in a Christian home with parents who taught him God's Word and encouraged him to love the Lord Jesus and Christ's church. In high school, he went on a series of mission trips to Ukraine. On those trips, he was asked to teach the Scriptures. The Lord used that to prompt him to prayerfully consider pastoral ministry. His calling and giftedness for ministry have been tested in many settings over the intervening years and confirmed.

Chad and Katie are now parents. Coletta Grace was born shortly after their arrival in Florida.

Please pray that:

1. God's Word would be faithfully preached and received.
2. God would continue to send visitors and equip the congregation to minister to them.
3. God would strengthen the congregation's fellowship and its love for the lost.
4. God would enable the congregation to become self-sustaining.

# Families and Churches Rowing Together

DAN BOULTON

**P**icture in your mind that you are sitting beside another person in a rowboat. Both of you have an oar in your hands. You are ready to row together, recognizing that you must work in unison. So when the oars are consistently used in harmony, the result is that the boat can be maneuvered skillfully. This illustrates for me how families (parents and grandparents) together with the church family can intentionally seek to raise children to know and love the Lord.

As we think of the first person with an oar, continuing with our analogy, we must consider the responsibility of parents and grandparents as revealed in the Bible. Such passages as Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and Proverbs 6:20–23 clearly teach that it is the role of parents to diligently teach their children the truths of Scripture. Additionally, we learn from Psalm 78:1–8 that grandparents have a God-given place to help train their grandchildren.

Now as to the oar being used by the church family, once again we need to examine what the Bible has to say. We learn in such passages as 1 Timothy 5:17 and 6:2b that preaching and teaching are to take place in the church. We can safely assume that children would normally be present when this takes place. The apostle Paul regarded children as part of the church when he addressed them directly in Ephesians 6:1–3. Also, from Romans 12:7 we learn that certain individuals in the church are gifted as teachers. It is a logical inference that some of those teachers have children under their instruction.

Congregations for centuries have placed a high priority on the teaching of children. Presbyterians emphasize the strong link between the home and

the church when they baptize covenant children. The pastor normally asks the members of the congregation to affirm their willingness to assist the parents of the child in raising them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Families and congregations harmoniously rowing together can be God's means of grace in the life of any child. For diligent Christian parents and grandparents, the steady reinforcement and expansion of Bible teaching through their church can yield abundant fruit. For a child to be exposed to other loving, concerned Christian adults, and to be taught by them, is truly a blessing from the Lord.

The church can also be of great benefit to the family in times of trial, neglect, or innocence. Think of the widow or widower with three young children and the joy of having a covenant community to aid them in this God-ordained task. Consider the third grade boy whose unbelieving parents allow him to attend Sunday school. Through that ministry, he may be converted and later go to seminary and become a pastor. Or what of the

newly converted couple who have four children and who know nothing of the Bible or Christian parenting?

Great Commission Publications ([www.gcp.org](http://www.gcp.org)) has a foundational commitment to assist in this God-given

assignment to shepherd children to and in Christ. GCP's Sunday school and catechism curriculums both have handouts for the children. The purpose of these materials is to link the teaching that takes place at church with what goes on at home. As this happens, parents and teachers can row in harmony.

The materials sent home with the children assist in reviewing and reinforcing the Bible lesson. They also serve as a way for parents to help their children memorize the Scriptures and the catechism. For

middle and older elementary students, these resources provide a means for daily Bible study and journaling. Parental involvement in teaching and practicing these disciplines can be very advantageous.

Maximizing these resources should be the goal of every family and church. When parents have a specific place to

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keep children's handouts at home, it greatly assists in their use. Some churches provide special bags, folders, or notebooks for this purpose. Additionally, when parents set aside a special time, either daily or weekly, to go over the contents of the material, it can provide for increased learning and retention. The vast majority of children who memorize the Scriptures, catechism, creeds, and hymns do so with both the family and church rowing together.

In light of the combined roles of the family and the church, it is important to keep in mind a simple yet weighty truth. We are always teaching children. Children are constantly learning from purposeful training or the lack of such training. The question is not whether or not we are teaching or they are learning. Rather, what are we teaching, and what are they learning? Every family and church should prayerfully evaluate what they are teaching children in light of the truth of Scripture.

We know that the Word of God is central to the work of God in our salvation and during a lifetime of Christian growth. This is why parents and the church family need to be intentional about training children. Guiding them to love Christ and grow in him all the days of their lives is a sacred responsibility. Thank God that he has given both the church and the family his Word and his Spirit to enable us for the task! May we be found faithful in our generation.

*The author is the field representative for Great Commissions Publications, a joint publishing ministry of the Committee on Christian Education of the OPC and the Committee for Christian Education and Publications of the PCA.*

## Congratulations

**The Children's Catechism has been recited by:**

- Harrison Chase (Grace OPC in Vienna, Va.)
- Hannah Hoisington (Grace OPC in Vienna, Va.)

## Four Favorites

### Books on Reformed Worship

**1. Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship Reformed according to Scripture*. Rev. edition, Westminster John Knox, 2002.**

This is an excellent place to begin a study of Reformed worship. Each chapter focuses on a specific element of worship and examines (1) what Scripture says concerning it, and (2) how it was practiced throughout church history. Here one finds clear answers to the following questions: What is worship? How do we worship "according to Scripture"? What are the most valuable liturgical traditions in the heritage of the Reformed church, and how do they apply to worship in our day?

**2. Hughes Oliphant Old, *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology*. Eerdmans, 1992.**

This book focuses on worship "as a distinct branch of the theological sciences." Old sets forth "a simple, clear and basic theology of worship" and explains how worship glorifies God. Liturgical theology and practice must be derived from Scripture alone, but the traditions of the church should also be carefully studied, for they often reveal rich biblical and theological insights into worship. Old examines five biblical themes of Christian doxology and certain variations on those themes that one

hears throughout church history.

**3. Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*. Fortress, 1980.**

This book provides an English translation of several liturgical forms (including those used by Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Calvin, Cranmer, Knox, and Baxter) and an informative introduction to each form. While I disagree with some of Thompson's criticisms, I nevertheless commend this work as an indispensable resource for a serious study of Reformed worship.

**4. Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies*. Repr., Baker Book House, 1957. (Original 1855 title: *Eutaxia*. See Google Books.)**

This historical study of Reformed worship was a milestone in American Presbyterianism and had a profound effect on the worship of the church in the late nineteenth century. By presenting fascinating historical sketches of the worship practices of the Reformers, Baird seeks to recover the true liturgical heritage of Reformed Protestantism. This book was designed not only to inform the reader of the subject, but also to inspire him to worship "decently and in order."

—Glen J. Clary

## Out of the Mouth ...

My granddaughter, age 4, posed a question as we were riding in my van one day. As she was eating a snack, she asked, "Grandmom, if Jesus is in my heart, and I'm eating, is it going to get all over him?"

—Carol Pacana  
Clayton, Del.

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

# From Blackboard to Whiteboard

BARRY S. JAMES

It is just after 8:00 on a Tuesday morning, and we are bumping our way out of Mbale towards Mile-4—the site of Knox Theological College (KTC)—through clouds of reddish-brown dust and over the potholed sections of occasional tarmac. The ventilator system of the Orthodox Presbyterian Uganda Mission’s van is going full blast to keep some of the fine aggregate out of the cabin, and progress is slow. This is the dry season, and with the dusty haze, the hazards of the road have to be remembered, rather than seen. The safe arrival on site is occasion to be thankful to the Lord for his overarching provision and protection!

As I write this, the second semester of the present academic year at KTC is about to begin. Students from the Free Reformed Church of Kenya in southern Kenya have returned after the Christmas break, and the Ugandan students have managed to be on time by either catching a *matatu* (Ugandan taxi van) or peddling in on bicycles. Some men have been on the road since the early hours of the morning. Devotions are due to commence at 8:30, but before this, it is all hands on deck: layers of dust have to be removed from benches and desks.

From the above, you might gather that theological education in rural Uganda is no ivory-tower experience. However, out at KTC, the OPC does have a setup that is quite adequate for the task of training indigenous men for leadership in their churches as pastors and elders. The three-year course is structured along Western seminary lines, and the instructors have been trained in Reformed institutions. There is a well-stocked theological library attached to a lecture room, plus a

dormitory and a kitchen. And there are the basics for actual instruction: a large whiteboard and a ready supply of markers.

It wasn’t always this way. When I first came to Mbale in 1999 to do some teaching at what was then called Westminster Theological College, the venue was a room in a block of buildings constituting Covenant Primary School. The only teaching aid was a blackboard, recently constructed from cement and black paint, smoothed out (as much as possible) on a brick wall. After a chalk-and-talk lecture, the instructor emerged looking somewhat worse for wear—covered, as he was, in blackened chalk dust!

It was hard on the students, too. These days, out at Mile-4, there are mainly morning lectures. It is still rather heavy going for both teacher and student, but at least there are breaks for *chai* (morning tea, which is really the Ugandan breakfast). Also, at the close of a four-hour period of devotions and lectures, lunch is served free of charge (as is the whole course). In the old days, no refreshments were provided; one had to trek off into the distance for a drink of water from a tap.

Since that time, the theological college has temporarily occupied two other borrowed sites. When the primary school had to be quickly vacated, the valuable library was transferred by truck to a room in the present guesthouse compound, where we were living. The lounge of the guesthouse became the new lecture room, and my wife spent some days sorting out and reassembling the jumble of books that had been put in the storage room. The lectures proceeded in somewhat more comfortable circumstances than previously (with the benefit of an electric fan, when the power was on), and the balancing act of trying to conduct

Barry James teaching at Westminster Theological College housed in the guesthouse (note the ironing board used as a lectern)



college life in the midst of home life got under way.

The third site of this college (now called Knox Theological College) was another compound leased by the OPC. It also functioned as an OP missionary resi-

dence for a while. It was smaller than the former guesthouse, and so domestic and college life became more intertwined for its residents—who again turned out to be my wife and me! By now, a whiteboard had come into use. Also, one of the small rooms was set up as a pharmacy. After lectures ended, students and members of their congregations had their prescriptions dispensed free of charge. Both word and deed ministries were being carried on there.

We know that, as Reformed churches, we are called to defend and propagate the faith. But in Uganda, this has assumed unexpected dimensions, as the OPC has often been very much on the run. We have experienced not just a literal dry season out at Mile-4, but also the painful assaults of the Evil One. We are not in an ivory-tower situation, in splendid isolation; rather, the task has been something of a man-the-ramparts exercise. Successive OP missionary appointees in Mbale have had more than a taste of it.

In spite of this—and probably more so *because* of it—providing a Reformed theological education in this environment has been eminently worthwhile to those who have been engaged in it. True, it has been a relatively mundane enterprise, with no outwardly spectacular results. The work of the medical clinic can be presented in graphic before-and-after terms, but how is one to portray the progress of a student growing in grace and knowledge, learning how to handle God’s Word? Yet—praise the Lord!—we now have two KTC graduates serving as pastors in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Uganda (OPCU), and two serving in the associated Free Reformed Church of Kenya.

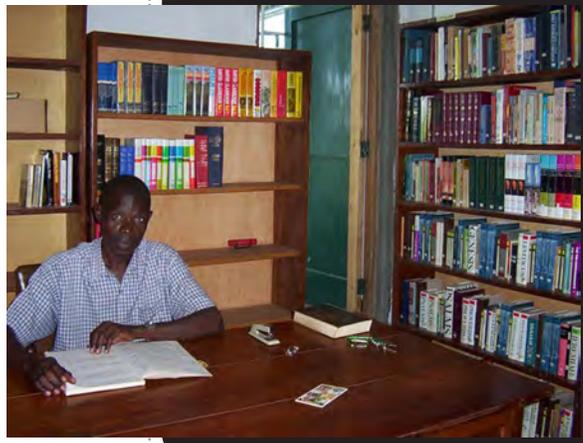
Such results are the aim of KTC. There remain considerable difficulties for the students. These men range in age from early twenties to late fifties (when the gray hairs come, and one is called *Mzee* [em-zay], “honorable older

man”). Their schooling has been, to say the least, mostly elementary and often rudimentary. Lectures are in English, and the grasp of this second language is generally poor. Theological terms are largely a mystery, and the accents of teachers necessitate constant adjustments on the part of the hearers.

For the instructors, there are similar challenges. They have to carefully (and repeatedly) explain words and terms, speak slowly and deliberately, use as many graphic illustrations as possible, and employ the whiteboard extensively. The lengthy lecture periods are demanding. But the rewards are there too: somewhat glazed eyes light up and smiles break out when there is (at last) understanding of a concept that the lecturer has labored to get across—sometimes by visualizing truths, and even acting them out!

In recent months, a small, brightly painted mosque has appeared within a stone’s throw of the KTC premises. Everyone using it (and the school associated with it) also uses the access road that the OP Uganda Mission constructed over wetlands to our college entrance. This mosque is a reminder of the challenges that lie ahead for Christ’s church here. Not only are there a basically animist culture and a superficial, false Christianity to contend with, but now Islam is quite

Pastor Steven Hamya: KTC librarian and registrar



literally on the doorstep.

The *only* effective counter to the increasingly invading crescent is the triumphant cross of Christ. The scimitar of Islam has to be met with the sword of the Spirit. The best way to mount this offensive—and actually change the culture of this land—is through the training of indigenous pastors in the vital Reformed faith, enabling them to preach and teach a full-orbed gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ Jesus!

This requires long-term, sacrificial commitment on the part of the OPC and the small OPCU. It is a pray-and-work enterprise in difficult cultural circumstances. We have been blessed with dedicated missionaries (and their families), who have answered the call to “come over and help.” There has been a complement of indigenous students willing and able to come to study at the college at considerable personal and family sacrifice. Let us pray—most fervently—that these two factors remain in place to the praise of the King and for the advance of his kingdom.

*The author is a minister in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, laboring as an associate missionary of the OP Uganda Mission.*

Pastor Charles Magala: Have pulpit, will travel.



## Telenews

Call 215/830-9424, ext. \*833, for the latest Foreign Missions news and prayer requests. New editions: **April 13, 27.**

# Wrapped in Grace



To: [junemcrea@ustel.com](mailto:junemcrea@ustel.com)

From: [bevwhyler@connect.com](mailto:bevwhyler@connect.com)

Dear June,

I had a great time at presbyterial, and so did the other ladies from Redeemer. I always worry that a whole day is going to be “wasted.” But once I’m there, I love the fellowship with my sisters in Christ. Mrs. Hunter’s perspective on her time on the mission field with Rev. Hunter was fascinating. Great Q&A session, too. Thanks to all of you at Covenant for hosting.

I didn’t have a chance to talk to you privately that day, so I’ll bend your ear now electronically. Our pastor has asked me to “take under my wing” a young woman who began attending our church earlier this year and is now taking membership classes. Let’s call her “Maggie.” Maggie comes to worship services dressed provocatively. The pastor thinks, and I agree, that this matter is best addressed woman-to-woman. How can I approach Maggie about such a sensitive subject? What if I offend her and she doesn’t come back to church? I don’t want to ask any other ladies from Redeemer for help because I fear I’d tarnish Maggie’s reputation just by discussing the problem. If you have suggestions, let me know.

*In Christ,*

*Bev*

To: [bevwhyler@connect.com](mailto:bevwhyler@connect.com)

From: [junemcrea@ustel.com](mailto:junemcrea@ustel.com)

Dear Bev,

Glad to hear you enjoyed presbyterial. Hosting it is a lot of work, but I can honestly say we loved having the opportunity to serve. Your presence is always encouraging to me, so, if that counts, your day at presbyterial is never wasted! The Bible says women should dress

“in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control” (1 Tim. 2:9). Sounds simple enough, but it’s easy to fall short of this standard due to vanity, sensuality, worldliness, or plain old bad judgment. Confronting these sins in ourselves is difficult, but confronting another with them can be downright painful. So, how should you talk to Maggie about this?

Well, I have a few suggestions. We’ve faced this problem in our congregation from time to time (often with covenant youth!), and I’ve learned a few things by trial and error. First, approach this matter with prayer, humility, and patience. Seeking forgiveness for your own sin will help you to have the proper perspective and compassion when helping Maggie. “First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:5). And remember that we, like Maggie, are all works in progress. Is this a situation where you simply need to be patient with a weaker sister, pray for her, think the best of her, model good behavior, and let the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit do its work? Or is this a situation where love demands that you speak?

If you do need to raise this issue with Maggie, be sure to do so within the bounds of Christian friendship. That means you’ll need to take the time to get to know her and to let her get to know you. I imagine this is what your pastor had in mind when he asked you to take Maggie “under your wing.” He doesn’t want you simply to deliver the news to Maggie that her clothing offends, with proof texts. When you befriend Maggie, this issue can be addressed as part of a nurturing, and even protective, relationship. Maggie is less likely to be offended if she is convinced that you love her and want what’s best for her.

Also, approach this touchy subject in its proper biblical context. The apostle Paul writes that women should adorn themselves “with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works” (1 Tim. 2:10). The apostle Peter admonishes women not to adorn themselves merely externally, but “with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:4). Any discussions you have with Maggie about “what not to wear” should be accompanied by the apostles’ instructions on what to wear. Remember, you want to encourage Maggie to pursue godliness, not to keep a list of outward rules. As she grows in her love for the Lord, you can expect that her behavior (including the way she dresses) will reflect that.

One final thought: there are a number of books out there by Christian women about Christian womanhood. Maybe you and Maggie could work through one of these together. Since Maggie is new to the church, this may lead to a number of teachable moments and help her see the big picture.

I hope this goes well, Bev. I’ll be praying for you and for Maggie.

*In his service,*

*June*

To: [junemcrea@ustel.com](mailto:junemcrea@ustel.com)

From: [bevwhyler@connect.com](mailto:bevwhyler@connect.com)

Dear June,

Thanks for your advice. I’m taking a long-term perspective on this, as you suggested. Maggie and I met for lunch yesterday for the first time. I’m looking forward to getting to know her and praying that the Lord will use our relationship to edify us both.

See you at the fall presbyterial!

*Bev*

# April

1. Pray for **Al and Laurie Tricarico**, Nakaale, Uganda, as they prepare to return to the U.S. on furlough. / **Brian and Sara Chang**, Cottonwood, Ariz. Pray that the Lord would bless Verde Valley Reformed Chapel with new growth. / Pray for wisdom for stated clerk **George Cottenden** as he prepares advisory committee assignments for recommendation to the 79th General Assembly convening on June 6.
2. **Stephen and Catalina Payson**, Mifflinburg, Pa. Pray that the unbelievers who attend worship at Providence OPC will be converted. / Pray for Foreign Missions associate general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as he visits our missionaries in Uruguay this week. / **Joshua (and Jessica) Lyon**, yearlong intern at Branch of Hope OPC in Torrance, Calif.
3. Missionary associate teachers **Erika Bulthuis** and **Emily Pihl**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their ministry to the children of our missionaries. / **John and Wenny Ro**, Chicago, Ill. Pray that God would bring new visitors to the Good Friday and Easter services at Gospel Life Presbyterian Church. / **Cris (and Margaret) Simpson**, yearlong intern at Trinity OPC in Hatboro, Pa.
4. **Drew and Sonya Adcock**, Williamsport, Pa. Pray for Bob Buchner, who was nominated for elder at Omega OPC. / **David and Sunshine Okken**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Bible studies held each week in various locations. / Pray for **the Subcommittee on Internet Ministries** as they oversee the OPC.org website.
5. Pray for **Barry and Anne James**, Mbale, Uganda, who are concluding their labors in Mbale and returning home. / **Mark and Michele Winder**, Collierville, Tenn. Pray that Wolf River Presbyterian Church will gain a reputation for a distinctive ministry of the Word in the community.
6. **Ben and Sarah Miller**, Huntington, N.Y. Pray that Trinity OPC will have continued unity and enthusiasm, effective evangelistic outreach, and many visitors. / Missionary associates **Heather Foss** and **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their labors at the Clinic while the medical director is off the field. / **Sarah Pederson**, *New Horizons* proofreader.
7. **Bob and Martha Wright**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the Lord would protect Bob from injury as he works around dangerous equipment. / **Brad Hertzog**, Queens, N.Y. Pray that men would be brought into Reformation Presbyterian Church who would be raised up to lead. / **Andrew (and Rebekah) Miller**, yearlong intern at Bethel Reformed Presbyterian Church in Fredericksburg, Va.
8. **Terry and Karen Thole**, Fargo, N.Dak. Pray that Grace OPC will be constant in prayer, seeking God's blessing on the church's ministry and development. / **Church in the Horn of Africa**. Pray for all of the believers who have been imprisoned for their faith, and pray also for their families. / **Pat Clawson**, Christian Education office secretary.
9. **James and Jenny Knox**, M.D. and R.N., Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough). Pray that their furlough will be refreshing and rewarding. / Home Missions general secretary **Ross Graham**. / Short-term missions coordinator **David Nakhla**. Give thanks for an increase in the number of those applying for the open missionary deacon positions.
10. **David and Rashel Robbins**, Huntington, W.Va. Pray that the Lord would bring new visitors to Trinity Presbyterian Church. / **Mark and Jeni Richline**, Uruguay. Pray for ever-increasing skill in their use of Spanish. / **Jason (and Amanda) Kirklin**, yearlong intern at Grace Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio.
11. **Steve and Linda Larson**, Uruguay. Pray for the publication and distribution of Reformed literature in Spanish.



The Rev. Dr. Brian A. DeVries is the principal of Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaMhlanga, South Africa, where Brian and Dorothy Wingard labor. Pictured here with his wife, Lanae, and their daughter, Krista, Dr. DeVries is a missionary minister of the Heritage Reformed Congregations and a minister in the Reformed Churches of South Africa—with both of which the OPC enjoys ecclesiastical relationships. Please pray that it will delight our Lord to use the instruction at MTC to help prepare a new generation of men to preach his Word faithfully in South Africa and beyond.

/ **Larry and Kalynn Oldaker**, Mayfield Village, Ohio. Praise God for Lake OPC's progress toward being organized. / **Steve (and Siobhan) Brown**, yearlong intern at Grace Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Va.

12. **Vern and Olena Picknally**, Fremont, Mich. Pray for the discipleship and ministry of Fremont OPC. / **Ben and Melanie Westerveld**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for Ben as he works with a number of individuals seeking to make a profession of faith. / **Jonathan (and Lauryn) Shishko**, yearlong intern at Reformation Presbyterian Church in Queens, N.Y.
13. **Woody and Laurie Lauer**, Numazu, Japan. Pray that there will be spiritual and numerical growth at Kita Numazu Chapel. / **Ken and Cressid Golden**, Moline, Ill. Pray that God would bless the evangelistic efforts of Sovereign Grace OPC by bringing more visitors and core families to the church.
14. Home Missions associate general secretary **Dick Gerber**. / **Kaz and Katie Yaegashi**, Yamagata, Japan. Pray for the gospel witness in unevangelized areas of Japan. / **Jim Scott**, managing editor of *New Horizons*.
15. **Cal and Edie Cummings**, Sendai, Japan. Pray for outreach efforts aimed at reaching unbelieving men with the gospel. / **Doug and Kristi Bylsma**, Beamsville, Ont., Canada. Pray for Spirit-empowered preaching that transforms lives and brings conversions at Living Hope Presbyterian Church.
16. **Everett and Kimberly Henes**, Hillsdale, Mich. Pray that new members at Hillsdale OPC will be knit into the fellowship. / Affiliated missionary **Linda Karner**, Chiba, Japan. / **Ryan (and Jennifer) Stoddard**, yearlong intern at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Ill.
17. **Ben and Heather Hopp**, Haiti. Pray that the Lord would keep them safe as they travel about. / **Kent and Laurie Harding**, Doniphan, Mo. Pray for God's guidance in selecting elders and deacons at Sovereign Grace Reformed Church. / Army chaplain **Earl (and Susan) Vanderhoff**.
18. **Jim and Bonnie Hoekstra**, Cedarburg, Wis. Pray that the people of Mercy OPC will be encouraged. / Pray for new missionary associate **Marcie Winslow**, Haiti, as she adjusts to her living and working situation in Haiti. / Pray for safety for **Danny Olinger**, Christian Education general secretary, as he visits presbyteries and churches.
19. Ask the Lord to make the congregations of **the Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church** a powerful witness in their communities. / **Tim and Joanne Beauchamp**, Bridgton, Maine. Pray that Pleasant Mountain Presbyterian Church will have steady growth and increased opportunities for outreach. / **Kathy Bube**, Loan Fund administrator.
20. **Joe and Jennifer Troutman**, Bedford, Tex. Pray for the continued development in the ministry of Mid Cities Presbyterian Church. / Foreign Missions general secretary **Mark Bube**. Pray for his continued good health and strength as he pursues a busy schedule. / Army chaplain **Paul (and Mary) Berghaus**.
21. Foreign Missions administrative assistant **Linda Posthuma** and secretary **Janet Birkmann**. / **John and Lois Hilbelink**, Rockford, Ill. Praise God for faithful Sunday

school teachers at Providence OPC and for a serving attitude among the members. / **Alan Strange**, Psalter Hymnal Committee chairman.

22. **Carlos and Diana Cruz**, San Juan, P.R. Pray for the continued growth and spiritual development of the congregation of Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada. / **Heero and Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for Heero in his ministry responsibilities. / Pray for wisdom and insight for **the trustees of Great Commission Publication** as they meet tomorrow.
23. **Brian and Dorothy Wingard**, South Africa. Pray for Brian as he prepares for and teaches classes at Mukhanyo Theological College. / **Roberto and Marieta Laranjo**, Lowell, Mass. Praise God for his continuing blessing on Igreja Presbiteriana Brasileira. / **Austin (and Rebecca) Britton**, yearlong intern at Grace OPC in Mount Vernon, Wash.
24. **Chuck and Kristie Muether**, Pella, Iowa. Pray that God's Word and fellowship events will continue to unite and encourage visitors at Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church. / Retired missionaries **Betty Andrews, Greet Rietkerk, Young and Mary Lou Son**, and **Fumi Uomoto**. Remember especially those with chronic illnesses.
25. Affiliated missionaries **Craig and Ree Coulbourne**, Urayasu, Japan, and **Jerry and Marilyn Farnik**, Prague, Czech Republic. / **Lacy Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast. / **David Haney**, director of finance and planned giving for the Committee on Coordination.
26. **Bill and Sessie Welzien**, Key West, Fla. Pray for God's Spirit to direct and empower the gospel witness of Keys Presbyterian Church. / Missionary associates in Asia. Remember the efforts of our missionary associates to present Christ through their teaching. / Army chaplain **Chris (and Virginia) Wisdom**.
27. **Mr and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray that they will have opportunities to reach young adults. / **Brandon and Laurie Wilkins**, Crystal Lake, Ill. Pray that the Lord would provide a new meeting location for Christ Covenant Presbyterian Church. / Pray for a productive Intensive Training session for students who attend **the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC** April 28–May 3 at Franklin Square, N.Y.
28. Pray for Home Missions administrative assistant **Vickie Swann**. / Missionary associates in Asia. Pray for their witness in the classroom. / **Alan (and Carrie) Dueck**, yearlong intern at Church of the Covenant in Hackettstown, N.J.
29. **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray for Mr. M. as he develops relationships with other Reformed church leaders around Changchun. / **Matthew and Jessica Figura**, Cookeville, Tenn. Pray that new visitors will come to Faith Presbyterian Church. / Air Force chaplain **C. Phillip (and Melanie) Hollstein III**.
30. **David Crum**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Missionary associates in Asia. Pray that they will have fruitful contacts with their students. / **Jan Giandomenico**, office manager and assistant to the director of finance.

# From 10 Percent to 100 Percent

JAMES J. CASSIDY

*There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.—Acts 4:34*

**U**nder the old covenant, there was a tax that was levied on the people of Israel. The proceeds were given for both civil and religious purposes. The priests were supported in their ministry, the temple was maintained, and the administrative work of the government was paid for. This is what has been traditionally known as the “tithe,” or 10 percent offering, given by the people and collected by the Levites.

In the new covenant, however, we see something remarkable with regard to the giving of God’s people. In Acts 4:32–37, we see God’s people, not meting out a strict 10 percent of their income, but rather, out of the abundance of their joy for the arrival of the kingdom of God in Jesus, giving *all* that they had.

Of course, this is not to say that the church has a right to its members’ property. Acts 5:4, in a very unhappy scenario, makes clear that the earthly possessions of God’s people remain their own—at least up to the point where they purpose in their heart what to give. But once purposed, the obligation is there to give what is purposed (2 Cor. 9:7). To withhold after that is sin.

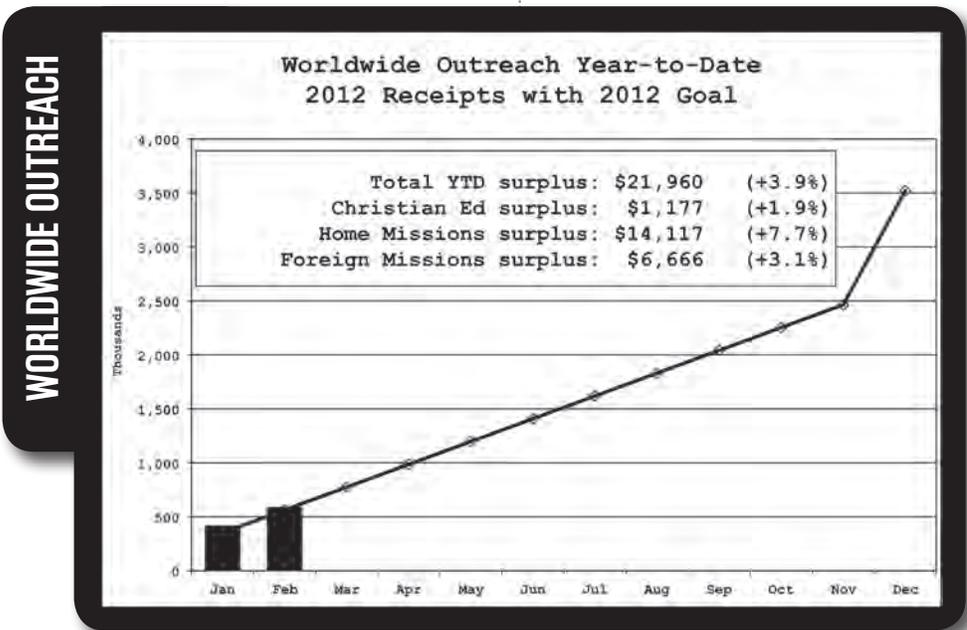
But in Acts, God’s people do not give out of a sense of legal exaction or tax (2 Cor. 9:5). Rather, there is a glorious freedom in the gospel to give *more* than 10 percent. The biblical example is God’s people giving their whole selves. They lose their lives, so that they might find them in the crucified Christ. It is this “cruciform” perspective that drives them to give all. No longer is 10 percent the standard; now it is 100 percent!

This is not to say that Christians are all called to poverty and *must* give away all their earthly possessions. Compul-

sion undermines the very principle of gospel freedom expressed above! But it also means that 10 percent is not the bar. Rather, 10 percent is the minimum and 100 percent is the maximum. Our entire lives are now given over to God. He deserves our all.

Lastly, let our cheerfulness increase with the increase of our giving. What good is it for us to grow in our giving if we become increasingly resentful in proportion to our giving? No, the two should go hand in hand. Therefore, as we move from 10 percent to 100 percent, may we also by God’s grace increase in our cheerfulness in giving.

*The author is the pastor of Calvary OPC in Ringoes, N.J.*



## Loan Fund Rates

The OPC Loan Fund may offer its fixed-rate Notes to OPC members (and a “limited class” of investors) residing in thirty-three states. Its Board grants loans to help OP churches buy or build worship facilities.

### CURRENT INTEREST RATES:

- 1 year maturity..... 0.75 %/yr.
- 3 years ..... 1.75 %
- 5 years ..... 2.75 %
- 10 years ..... 3.75 %

To learn more, contact David Haney at [haney.1@opc.org](mailto:haney.1@opc.org) or Kathy Bube at [kathybube.1@opc.org](mailto:kathybube.1@opc.org). Sale is only by Offering Circular, where permitted by state authorities. Rates for new Notes are subject to change by the OPCLF Board.

WORLDWIDE OUTREACH

The ministers and elders at the installation of James T. Lim included (in front, from the left): the Revs. Rollin Keller, Larry Mininger, Lim, John Fesko, and Dan Overduin



## JAMES T. LIM INSTALLED AT LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

The Rev. James T. Lim was installed by the Presbytery of Southern California as the seventh pastor of Faith OPC in Long Beach, California, on January 22.

Larry G. Mininger, pastor of Lake Sherwood OPC in Orlando, Florida, where Mr. Lim had previously been the associate pastor, preached the sermon, entitled “Jeremiah’s Call and Your Call.” John V. Fesko, the new moderator of presbytery (and a professor at Westminster Seminary California), conducted the service, administered the constitutional questions, and led in the prayer of installation.

Daniel H. Overduin, former pastor at Faith, was asked to give the charge to the congregation. Rollin P. Keller, ministerial advisor, brought the charge to the minister. The adult choir sang “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us,” and many friends from nearby OP churches came to attend this special occasion.

Ruling elders Mike Dempsey, Bill Gekler, Skip McClean, Mike Lynch, Dick Vincent, and Eric Kooi welcomed Mr. Lim to labor with them on the session of Faith Church.

## UPDATE

### Ministers

- **Gregory K. Beale** was installed as a teacher by the Presbytery of Philadelphia on February 20; he is a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary.
- **Donald G. Buchanan, Jr.**, retired as pastor of Calvary OPC in La Mirada, Calif., on December 31, and was designated pastor emeritus.

## LETTERS

### THE CHURCH AND POLITICS

Editor:

Professor Hart’s article in the February issue of “New Horizons” asks a terrific question, namely, whether the Religious Right has been good for American Conservatism. How about a corollary question: “Has the Religious Right been good for Christians?”

In 1976, Jimmy Carter ran as a “born-again” Christian. His administration and its policies promoted government as a way to better the lives of Americans. Ronald Reagan, around whom many in

the Religious Right coalesced, increased the size and cost of the Federal government exponentially. George H. W. Bush received vigorous support from the Religious Right and used that support to expand government. Bill Clinton, a Baptist, made the expansion of government a hallmark of his administration. George W. Bush won election with tremendous support from the Religious Right. His willingness to expand the authority of the state in the lives of Americans was unprecedented. If you doubt this, take a brief tour through the Patriot Act, consider who receives “faith-based” federal funding, or try boarding a commercial plane. Our current President, Barack Obama, is without parallel in his willingness to increase the power, reach, and expense of government.

During this entire period, the Religious Right has spent tremendous amounts of time and money seeking to influence American politics. Leaders of the Religious Right regularly rail against the liberal assault on freedom. Unfortunately, disciples of the Religious Right love the state just as much as do many liberals; they just want it to do different things.

*Greg Eddings  
Odessa, Tex.*

Editor:

Thank you for David Innes’s article, “The Godliness of Government,” in the February issue. I have some comments about the internal logic of the article.

Innes’s conclusion and thesis is that “politics is not a choice; it’s an obligation,” based on the major premise that “God is political.” The only way to get from this major premise to that conclusion is through the assumed minor premise that we have a moral obligation to be everything that God is, which is not true.

Further along, Innes writes, “At the very least, citizens of a republic have a moral obligation to vote when called upon to do so.” But Innes confuses a freedom with an obligation. These two concepts—freedom and obligation—are opposite concepts. If freedom to vote is

turned into an obligation, then it is no longer a freedom.

The Confession summarizes what the Bible teaches about our responsibility toward civil government: pray for officials, honor their persons (not just their office), pay taxes, and obey lawful commands.

*Brent Ferry  
Mount Airy, N.C.*

Editor:

I am not original in saying that a core of OPC identity is an overriding commitment to Christian liberty of conscience. Where Scripture speaks, the authority of the church is absolute; where Scripture does not speak, the church must be absolutely silent. I commend Darryl Hart and David King for maintaining this consciousness in the February issue on “The Church & Politics.”

Others seem unaware of this legacy. David Innes tells us that “citizens of a republic have a moral obligation to vote when called upon to do so.” But what if no candidate’s platform approximates my own political preferences? If every candidate’s platform violates my conscience under Christ, why should I vote?

Even more disconcerting, Innes’s rationale for limited government suggests that some forms of government are more biblical than others. However, Scripture actually says little about government. Limited government is a good idea, but unrelated to the Bible’s message of redemption. It is sadly ironic that (strained) scriptural arguments for political liberty have displaced arguments for Christian liberty in these pages.

Similarly, Greg Forster insists, “Every Christian is called to become a student of history and society.” However, most of our brethren around the world do not have the leisure to do what Forster insists we are “called” to do. More troubling is the claim, “Our redemption involves learning how to become a force for good in our homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities.” The OPC, in its commitment to historic Calvinism, has never endorsed such a transformationalist view of the work of Christ. Redemption

## PROFESSOR BEALE INSTALLED

On February 20, the Presbytery of Philadelphia installed Gregory K. Beale as a teacher. Dr. Beale became professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in 2010. Ordained by the Conservative Congregational Christian

Conference in 1992, he has also taught as Grove City College, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Wheaton College. In addition to the men pictured below, Westminster president Peter Lillback and professor David Garner participated in the service.

Participants in the installation service of Greg Beale (center) included Mark Sallade (pastor, Calvary OPC, Glenside, Pa.), Vern Poythress (professor, Westminster), Carl Trueman (academic dean and professor, Westminster), and John Currie (director of student development and alumni relations, Westminster)



is not something we go out and do; it is something that is *done to us* by virtue of the obedience of Christ. Forster’s view would bind the conscience in ways Scripture does not.

Finally, Paul Viggiano’s review of Wayne Grudem’s *Politics according to the Bible* and his endorsement of Grudem’s claim that the church should be involved in the political arena, are far removed from the historic consciousness of the OPC. While disagreeing with Grudem on his treatment of the law and the gospel, Viggiano embraces Grudem’s vision of a politically engaged (in conservative politics, naturally) church. So much for our forbearers’ vision of a church without cultural aspirations—of a church defined by Christian liberty.

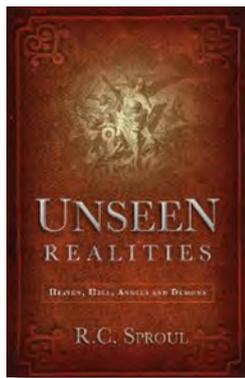
It seems appropriate to remind ourselves of J. Gresham Machen’s ardent libertarianism. He was appalled by the New Deal politics of his day and passion-

ately called for the end of intrusive institutions ranging from Prohibition to the federal Department of Education. When Philadelphia outlawed jaywalking in the 1930s, Machen testified before the city council that the act constituted an offense to personal liberty. In short, he saw the same impulses animating moderates and liberals in the mainline church as motivating the drive toward an all-encompassing state. Yet, to my knowledge, *Machen never once brought his libertarian politics into the pulpit of any Presbyterian church*. He, whose conscience had been falsely bound by the courts of the old denomination, understood that he could not similarly bind the consciences of his fellow believers beyond what Scripture demanded. I pray that this same care will continue to be applied in pulpits—and publications—across our denomination.

*Cale Horne  
Lookout Mountain, Tenn.*

## REVIEWS

***Unseen Realities: Heaven, Hell, Angels and Demons*, by R.C. Sproul. Published by Christian Focus, 2011. Paperback, 160 pages, list price \$14.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Matthew Holst.**



One should not turn to R.C. Sproul's book on the supernatural expecting deep and thorough exegesis. Rather, this brief volume has the

character of a fireside Bible study, which both warms and warns the heart to consider eternal realities. The book has four sections, dealing with heaven, hell, angels, and Satan and his demons. The whole book is heavily anecdotal, perhaps too much for my taste. The illustrations do, however, add to the personal, warm, and sometimes deeply moving feel of the book.

In the first section, "Heaven," Sproul recalls that on the day after his son was born, his mother died. Such experiences remind us that at times in our life we are left asking questions that cannot be answered. Sproul opens John 14 to the reader, emphasizing that if one believes in God, he is to respond to Christ's admonition, "Let not your hearts be troubled." The last chapter of this section, entitled "No More Tears," particularly resonated with me. The revelation of heaven in Revelation 21–22 is particularly edifying and encouraging. Sproul's exposition of it emphasizes the true, real, and unmediated presence of God with man. However, this section was a little lacking in the Trinitarian presence of God, which is so prominent in Revelation 21–22.

The second section, "Hell," acknowledges the intellectual and emotional difficulties we experience when examin-

ing this doctrine. Sproul notes that hell is often described in the Bible in symbolic language. He emphasizes that the reality to which the symbol points is *greater* than the symbol itself. The images of the pit and of eternal fire do not exhaust the terrors of hell itself. He argues that separation from God in outer darkness is not a lesser form of hell. Rather, in this dark separation, man is confronted by the holiness of God and the inescapability of eternal torment.

Sproul's third section is on "Angels." Perhaps the most striking aspect of this section is the discussion of the multi-eyed seraphim of Isaiah 6. They have eyes all around their heads, so that "there's no direction they can turn that will cause them to lose sight of the glory of God" (p. 99).

The final section of the book ends rather abruptly, with no conclusion to the previous chapters. In it, Sproul strongly emphasizes the reality of Satan and demons. Their work is seen throughout Scripture. It is a real and devastating work that the Christian must take seriously if he is to engage in spiritual warfare.

This book is a useful and warmly written piece, accessible to teenagers and adults. I heartily commend it.

\* \* \*

***Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*, by David Platt. Published by Multnomah Books, 2010. Paperback, 240 pages, list price \$14.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Greg Hoadley.**

A megachurch celebrates its brand-new, \$23 million facility. Meanwhile, that same church sends merely \$5,000 to aid Sudanese refugees. What's wrong with this picture?

This is essentially the question David Platt asks in his *New York Times* best seller, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*. Platt attempts to shake American Christians out of their generally superficial spirituality (built around a "nice, middle-class, American Jesus"), exposes the shallowness of worship and "programs" that

characterizes so many churches, and helps his readers to realize that Christian living involves both service and suffering.

Platt also reminds us that there are millions overseas who suffer from oppression and poverty. He encourages readers to serve the destitute, both here and abroad.

However, while there is much to like in *Radical*, it suffers from three major problems. First, while Platt does use much Scripture, he is often guilty of eisegesis (reading into the text). For instance, he cites Christ's statement to "sell all that you have and give to the poor ... and come, follow me." But was Jesus calling *all* believers to do this, as Platt implies? Or was Christ challenging the rich young ruler in his particular circumstances? This possibility is not considered.

Further, in a book that so emphasizes helping the poor, one would expect exegesis of texts like 1 Timothy 5 and Galatians 6:10 (which emphasize that charity begins in the local church). There is none.

Second, the role of the church is largely ignored. There is no treatment of the diaconal ministry or of the church government's role in ordaining ministers. It is simply assumed that all Christians can decide for themselves whether to become evangelists or to perform works of mercy, without any elder oversight.

Third, there is much use of guilt. At one point, Platt makes Christians feel guilty for worshipping while so many poor people are left outside—never mind, apparently, that worship is a divine command. One is also left with the conclusion that true service only comes when one either moves overseas or goes to work in a soup kitchen. Surely God will call some to these mercy ministries, and yes, most

## Church Officers!

Don't forget that *your* magazine is online:

[www.opc.org/os.html](http://www.opc.org/os.html)

Christians should serve more than they do. But why can't they also serve through their chosen vocations and in their local churches?

While *Radical* does much to shake American churches out of their slumber, it sadly falls short in too many places.

\* \* \*

**Acts, by Derek W. H. Thomas. Published by P&R Publishing, 2011. Hardback, 784 pages, list price \$39.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Arthur J. Fox.**

I was two-thirds of the way through a series of sermons on the book of Acts when this book came out. Therefore, my perspective is different than it might otherwise have been.

This book is part of the Reformed Expository Commentary, a set of commentaries edited by Richard Phillips and Philip Ryken. The commentaries are expository, usually (as in this case) based on sermons preached by the author.

This book is not difficult to read. It is quite accessible to anyone interested in learning about the way Christ built the early church after his ascension and how he continues to build his church today. Christ and the Holy Spirit are at the center of each chapter, and the reader will find himself challenged to pray for Christ's work to be as powerful today as it was back then and to become an active servant of Christ for the good of the church and the gathering in of the lost by the faithful proclamation of the gospel.

It is easy to follow Thomas's explanations of the history and literature relevant to the times. References to Jewish traditions, secular histories and poetry, and other religions of that day abound in this book and help make clear what challenges the gospel faced. In addition, Thomas makes it very clear that we face many of the same challenges. This book is full of practical application!

The preacher who reads this book would do well to heed Thomas's comment on page 44: "Peter, then, provides us with a model of what preaching is: exposition of God's written Word with

a view to applying it to the present and preparing us for the future. Such preaching has God's blessing upon it."

The reader who wants to understand theology will find the complex made simple. Such concepts as the already-not yet aspect of the work of Christ, the need never to separate the work of the Holy Spirit from the work of Christ, and the importance of suffering for the growth of the church are all presented simply and clearly. The reader will also find himself drawn with affection to Peter, Paul, and the other prominent men who appear in this biblical history of the early church.

All Christians have much to gain from a careful reading of this book. It has helped me better understand how to preach simply and clearly without sacrificing depth. This is a "good read."

\* \* \*

**Between the Times: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945–1990, by D. G. Hart. Published by the Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 2011. Hardback, 352 pages, list price \$10.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Mark R. Brown.**

Hart is my favorite historian! How can you not love someone who learns of Machen from outside the OPC and then joins in fellowship and service with our cause.

This book is

## Summer Missions Trips

Do you have plans for a short-term missions trip this summer? How about doing it within the OPC? Consider the various opportunities posted on:

[www.OPCSTM.org](http://www.OPCSTM.org)

our story. It should be read by every teen and adult in the OPC. We need to know our history, so we can understand and appreciate our unique place in the American church scene.

The OPC is often plagued with people who would rather be elsewhere. Many pastors hear the refrain: "I prefer the PCA [or the CRC], but I put up with the OPC as the only current local option." Reading our history gives people a reason to stand solidly with the OPC testimony.

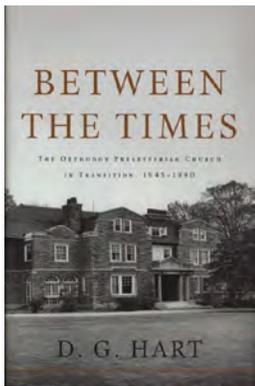
LeRoy Oliver gave me his personal copy of *The Presbyterian Conflict* by Edwin Rian. Reading that book and the Machen biography by Stonehouse, along with Tom Tyson's kind pastoral mentoring, brought

## Positions Available

**Pastor:** Covenant OPC in Vineland, N.J., is seeking a pastor. We are a small congregation hoping to grow. Interested candidates are invited to send their résumé to Edward Duffy, P.O. Box 54, Vineland, NJ 08362 or 71 Almond St., Vineland, NJ 08360 or e-mail [prgg1@verizon.net](mailto:prgg1@verizon.net). All submissions will be kept strictly confidential.

**Associate Pastor:** Grace Presbyterian Church, located in the Washington, D.C., suburb of Vienna, Va., is seeking a man to join its current pastoral staff. The position would focus on congregational care, but would also involve preaching, teaching, and administration. Interested candidates may send their résumé and ministerial profile to the clerk of session, John Logan, at [jlogan2311@gmail.com](mailto:jlogan2311@gmail.com) or 2381 Cedar Lane, Vienna, VA 22180.

**Associate Pastor:** Covenant OPC in Grove City, Pa., seeks an associate pastor. We are an established church in western Pennsylvania with an average weekly attendance of over 200. We are located in a community of 10,000 people, including a Christian liberal arts college. Candidates must have a gift for biblical preaching, a heart for young people and college students, and a burden for evangelism and outreach. Experience is preferred. Please send cover letter and résumé to Dr. Mark W. Graham, Chairman, Search Committee, 508 Tidball Avenue, Grove City, PA 16127 or at [mwgraham@gcc.edu](mailto:mwgraham@gcc.edu).



me into the OPC.

*Between the Times* is dedicated to the memory of Charlie Dennison. Hart acknowledges how influential Charlie

was during the period of time covered by this book, especially the decade of the 1980s. As OPC historian, Charlie built up the historical consciousness of the OPC while battling those who would end her testimony through merger with the PCA.

This reviewer lived through those years as a young pastor. Influenced by some who were ashamed of the word *orthodox*, and desiring to be flexible, I then favored joining the PCA. Charlie was a patient friend and mentor to me. As a result of his pastoral and literary labors, I became rooted and happy with my OPC lot. In 2002, I wrote in the preface to the second edition of Henry Coray's *J. Gresham Machen: A Silhouette*: "We are convinced that the work of the late Rev. Charles Dennison and the Committee for the Historian (beginning with books that commemorated the semi-centennial of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1986) provided exposure to our denomination that has resulted by God's grace in the tremendous growth in home missions over the past fifteen years. We believe that this popular biography of Dr. Machen by

Rev. Coray will join those works in offering an answer to the important question, "Why the OPC?" As Hart reviews that era, you may experience a similar satisfaction in God's call to you to live and serve in the OPC—not as your second choice, but as your first choice.

There is much more in this volume than an account of the "Joining and Receiving" struggles. *Between the Times* is a topical, not a completely chronological, history. Topics discussed include *Trinity Hymnal*, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Great Commission Publications. The theme underlying each topic is the tie between our history and our identity. As we understand our story, we better appreciate our place in God's providence.

I highly recommend that

this book be shared with seminarians and seekers, as well as with the people already sitting in the pews of our Orthodox Presbyterian congregations.

## LIBERIAN ELDERS ORDAINED

Many of the members of Grace OPC in Philadelphia, Pa., are Liberians. On January 22, two of these Liberians were ordained to the office of elder—Mason Weh, a musician, and Boima Karmo, a faithful servant. Participating in the ordination was the Rev. Wallah Wilsitoe, Jr., from Liberia. George F. Morton is the pastor of Grace OPC, assisted by elder William Joe.

Kneeling: Mason Weh (front) and Boima Karmo; standing from left: Matthew Stephan (OP minister), Wallah Wilsitoe, Jr., William Joe, elder Bill Brasch, George Morton

