

NEW HORIZONS

≡ *in the* ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ≡

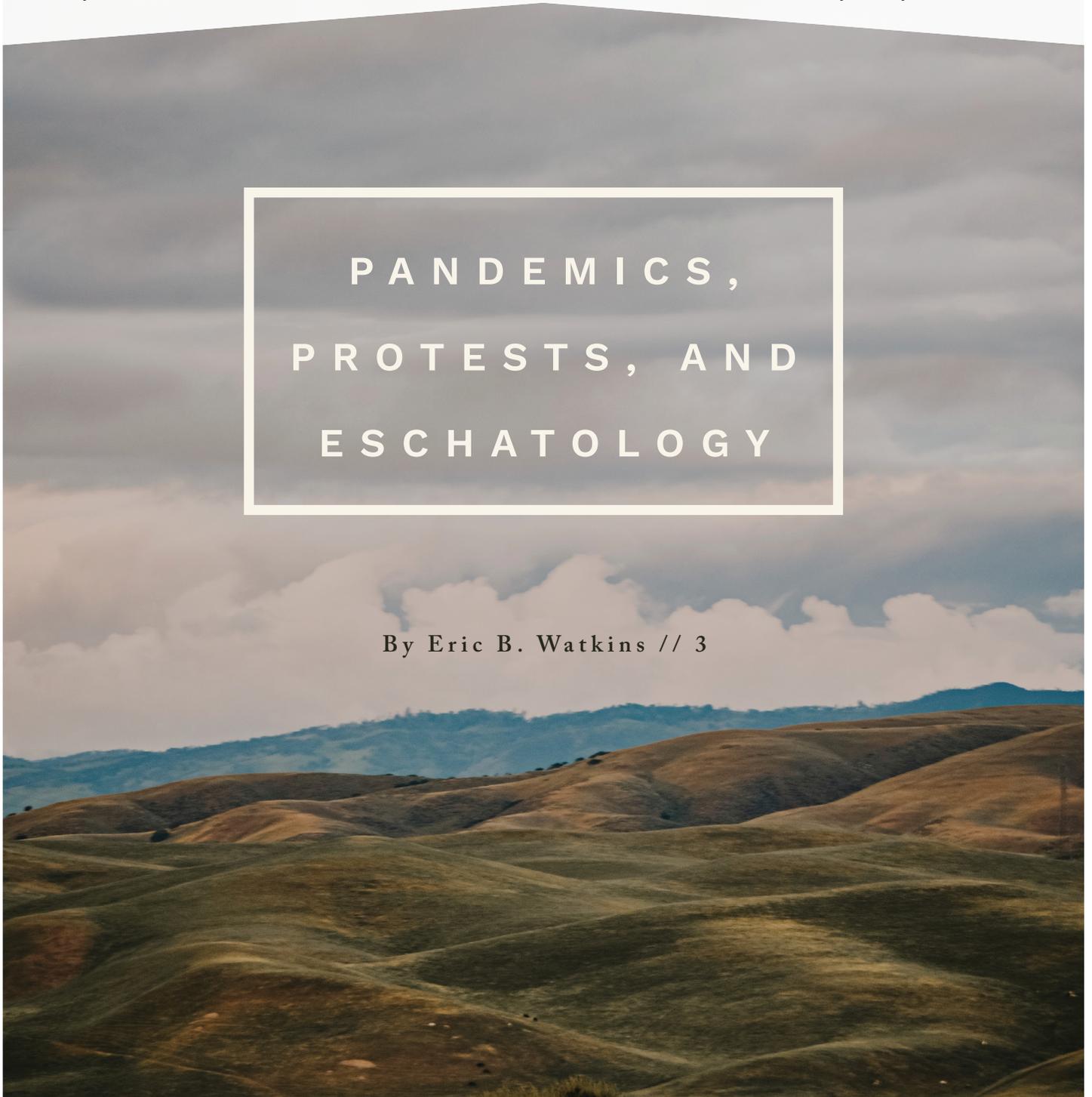
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Photo on page 14 courtesy of Lawrence OP, via Flickr.

John Mahaffy, featured on page 6, is the son of OP missionaries to Eritrea Francis and Arlena Mahaffy. The family is pictured here the day before John (far left) flew back to the United States for his freshman year at Dordt College in 1963. You can read about the Mahaffys and the OPC work in Eritrea in Clarence Duff’s *God’s Higher Ways* and about Mrs. Mahaffy in *Choosing the Good Portion*, edited by Patricia Clawson and Diane Olinger.



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PANDEMICS, PROTESTS, AND ESCHATOLOGY



ERIC B. WATKINS // Where do we look for help when the world is on fire and so many things seem to be not only out of our control, but headed in a troubling direction?

Several years ago, I had the privilege of studying in Holland and attending church there. The minister would begin each sermon by

asking the congregation, “On whom do you depend for help and strength?” The congregation would reply with Psalm 121:2: “My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” The Dutch city in which I studied was old, beautiful, and full of history. Members of the congregation there could easily remember life during World War II. Their stories of the war were otherworldly and rather moving to me, a young American student. It was almost impossible for me to imagine what people lived through, and then to realize that so many did not live through it. One old man cried while sharing his memories. Perhaps most striking was the sense that he and so many others had before the war of their own peace and safety, of the utter impossibility that Holland—and so much of Europe—could be invaded, ransacked, and devastated. And yet, by God’s grace, this man not only survived the war, but lived to see better days—and great grandchildren!

Perilous Times

The church today finds itself living through perilous times. While not as horrible as a world war, the realities enveloping us are something that most of us never imagined—things we too might describe as “impossible.” Who would have guessed a year ago that people would be wearing masks almost everywhere they go? That schools, businesses, and churches would be significantly hindered from functioning in their normal manner? That words like “quarantine” and “social-distancing” would be part of everyday use? Who could have predicted that a worldwide pandemic would alter the course of history by taking so many lives and creating a climate of fear and panic?

In addition to dealing with an infectious disease, the church also exists in a context of extremely disturbing political unrest. Months ago, the nation was disrupted by both violent and non-violent protests following the death of

George Floyd. What began as reflective of a moment in time—discussions about pandemics and protests—has become the new normal. Watching the news has become a daily reminder that more and more people are dying from disease and murder, and more and more property is being destroyed by violent protesters who have taken the law into their own hands. Who could have imagined a year ago that there would be calls to defund the police by politicians, all while violence is on the ascent nationwide?

The Psalms and Our Age-Old Conflict

In the midst of such trying times, where does the church look for help and strength?

It is here that we turn to the Psalms. There is something about them that comforts us in the midst of our trials. Perhaps it is the fact that, as Martin Luther observed, the book of Psalms is a miniature Bible, moving from the



Edenic garden of Psalm 1 to the climactic crescendo in heaven of Psalm 150. It may also be because the Psalms embody all the emotions of the soul. When the psalmist makes his confession in Psalm 51, we feel the sting of sin with him, but also his sense of hope and cleansing. When the psalmist cries out to God in Psalm 22, we feel the sense of abandonment with him, but also the promise of relief and celebration when God finally draws near. When the psalmist feels weak, afraid, and defenseless in Psalm 23, we feel the same sense of smallness, but we also rest in the same hope, knowing that our Good Shepherd is with us to comfort, defend, and lead us safely home.

There is something else about the book of Psalms that is uniquely helpful to us, especially in times like this. The Psalms are not simply devotional in a personal sense, they are also apocalyptic and eschatological. By that we mean that the Psalms display the age-old conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, as well as God's ultimate triumph in Jesus Christ. The Psalms tell the story of how the people of God triumph over their foes because God is with us and his kingdom will ultimately triumph in history. The Psalms describe the battlefield from the thirty-thousand-foot view just as much as they expose the heart of the psalmist who stands like a lonely soldier—outnumbered, surrounded, with no other confidence except the sure knowledge that the battle belongs to the Lord.

The Psalms, in this sense, demonstrate the tension between this present evil age and the age to come. Thus, as Geerhardus Vos notes:

It has happened more than once in the history of the church, that some great conflict has carried the use of the Psalms out from the prayer-

closet into the open places of a tumultuous world. (*Pauline Eschatology*, 323)

Lifting Our Eyes to the Hills

Psalm 121 embodies this very well. It reveals the tension of this present evil age on the one hand, and, on the other, the eternal hope that belongs uniquely to the people of God in the age to come. The psalm begins with the psalmist looking up to God for help. Jerusalem was a city built upon a hill, and the temple was its pinnacle. The psalmist has his eyes fixed on God while traveling through treacherous valleys that were riddled with robbers and wild beasts. The way can be rocky and slippery, yet God is pleased to steady him and keep him on the path that leads to life.

Still, the pilgrim-psalmist grows weary as he travels and needs sleep. This is when a traveler might be most vulnerable—alone, asleep in the dark, with all kinds of predators potentially nearby. But the Lord is his shepherd, and he who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. The Lord keeps watch over his lamb-like pilgrim to protect him from the scorching heat by day and the chilling cold of night. He protects the psalmist from all evil and preserves his life as he begins his pilgrimage and even as he returns home. The covenant promise “I will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Jer. 7:23) is made by the Lord, who keeps his word just as faithfully as he keeps the psalmist himself. God truly is our ever-present help in time of need.

As beautiful and encouraging as Psalm 121 is, it must also be seen in the broader context of covenant history and God's plan to fulfill his promise not to the psalmist alone, but also to the people of God whom the psalmist represents. Luther was right; there

is a reason that the psalms begin in the earthly garden and end in the heavenly sanctuary. The story in between is one of God's pilgrim people, making their way through the valley, up the hill, and into God's eternal city of glory, righteousness, and heavenly rest. But the psalmist is not the one who can ultimately bring this beautiful story to its climactic fulfillment. In fact, the psalmist himself will one day cease to make his pilgrim-journey in this life. God may preserve him from wolves and robbers, but death is a reality that all must face—including God's well-kept psalmist.



Not Only Singing, But Living, the Psalms

It is here that we recognize that the Psalms find their ultimate meaning and fulfillment not in themselves, nor in us, but in Jesus. The Psalms were not only the poetry of Jesus's soul, they were also a preview of his entrance into this present evil age on our behalf.

Jesus is the blessed man of Psalm 1 who keeps God's law day and night and is not led astray by evil; yet he is ultimately driven away from God's presence because of *our* sins. Jesus is the messianic Lord against whom the nations rage in Psalm 2. He is the righteous king of Psalm 3 who is assailed, rejected, and cast out by so many of his foes. He cries out to God from the cross in the first line of Psalm 22 and as he travels through the valley of the shadow of death in Psalm 23. Jesus is the one who ultimately fulfills the Psalms as he retraces many of the psalmist's footsteps, bringing them to completion in himself.

The Psalms are our Psalms—the poetry of our souls—because they were first the same for Jesus. He not only sang them, he lived them. And we do too, in many ways. There is obvious redemptive-historical discontinuity in that the Psalms were written under the Mosaic covenant. Their primary context and particular nuances are not exactly the same for Jesus or for us. At the same time, there is also profound continuity between the struggles the psalmist endured and the joys he experienced, and this was true for Jesus before it became true for us. The Psalms embody the struggles of the people of God in this present evil age while we long for the age to come. The life of the church is understood by looking closely at the life of Jesus, our intervening Lord and ever-protecting Shep-



herd. For our sakes, he also became our Lamb, who was led through the valley of darkness and death for us, and who has also sat down by the eternal, still waters of heaven, which God prepared for him—and not only for Jesus, but also for us.

To say it in a way reminiscent of Romans 8, the sufferings we see displayed in the Psalms pale in comparison to those of Jesus, just as the glory and rest we see in the Psalms pale in comparison to that which awaits the people of God in Christ.

As Vos again notes, “What can be prayed and sung now *in teatro mundi*” (in the theater of the world) was never meant for the psalmist alone (*Pauline Eschatology*, 324). They are our Psalms, and their chief goal is to fix our eyes on

the one who is both our travel partner and our destination. God is with us; and it is to the city of God that we are going. The reason this is so important brings us back to the reality that we are not yet home, as much as we long to be there. We are still what older theologians called the “church militant.” We are not yet a part of the “church triumphant.” The curtain has not closed. The last call has not been given. The church, like a cast of characters performing before a watching world, is still called to remain faithful under pressure. Pastors are still called to stick to the script of Scripture and remain confident that the ordinary means of grace (the preaching of God’s Word, the sacraments, and prayer) are still sufficient, still sanctify, and still sustain the people of God.

Our Otherworldly Message of Grace and Hope

There is also a wonderful opportunity before the church. As the world scrambles to come up with earthly solutions to its spiritual problems, the church has an otherworldly message of grace and hope in Jesus Christ.

Such confidence in dark times has been part of the identity of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church since its earliest days and should continue to be. J. Gresham Machen believed that in spite of all the opposition before the church, we could nevertheless face the future with “lively hope” because God had raised up our little church for such a time as this to proclaim the gospel (Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir*, 502).

Cornelius Van Til believed the same. He stood before the OPC General Assembly in 1968 and proclaimed,

Only if each one of God’s people will see himself in the light of the calling that he has, together with all the

people of the covenant to become a blessing to all nations through the promised Messiah, will they be able to face the future with joy and confidence instead of fear. (*God of Hope*, 41)

When the world is on fire, it is important for the church to remember to be the church and to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the “founder and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). He has gone before us through the darkest valleys. He has triumphed over the most formidable of our foes by his resurrection. His victory has secured heaven for us as our sure and everlasting inheritance. And he does not simply promise to preserve us, he intends to use us as his mouthpiece to the world, holding forth a message of hope and peace through the gospel.

As God’s pilgrim people today, we too are called to be heavenly minded, and that all the more when the world is so clearly on fire.

There is an old cliché that Christians are too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. We might suggest the very opposite. It is those Christians who are the most heavenly minded—that is, with their eyes most steadily fixed on Christ—who most peacefully find their place in this world and are able to minister to it.

As long as the psalmist kept his eyes on the Lord who made heaven and earth, he was safe. And so are we. Nothing can happen to us apart from our Father’s will, and no one or nothing can separate us from the love of our God who keeps his covenant, just as he keeps us from this time forth and forevermore—in Christ. □

The author is pastor of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in St. Augustine, Florida.



A “FAITHFUL PLODDER”: JOHN W. MAHAFFY



JUDITH M. DINSMORE // This year, OP pastor John W. Mahaffy will celebrate both his fiftieth wedding anniversary to Sipkje (Sylvia) and the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the OPC.

The Mahaffys served first for seven years in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and then, in 1977, moved up north for forty-three years and

counting at Trinity Presbyterian in Newberg, Oregon. Mahaffy’s many years at Trinity have not been marked by dramatic ministry or exponential congregational growth. In fact, when emailed about being featured in this magazine for his fifty years of pastoring, Mahaffy responded that there was probably a better candidate. (But thanks to Sipkje, he did agree.) As he reflects over the past five decades, Mahaffy’s self-evaluation is self-effacing: “I am certainly not an earth-shaking preacher. I am not one of the intellectual guiding lights of the OPC,” he said. “I am a faithful plodder.”

He learned that faithfulness early from his parents, OP missionaries to Eritrea from 1945 to 1966. Mahaffy grew up in Senafe, a month’s journey by freighter from New York City. “Eritrea was a slow field,” Mahaffy said. He can remember his father and the other missionaries there asking if the work was worth continuing—whether it was the right use of time, gifts, and money from the church. “One of the things that

I learned just by witnessing it was the ability to persevere even when you don’t see a lot of visible fruit.”

From his first month as a pastor, at only twenty-four years old, Mahaffy needed perseverance. The Tulsa congregation, which disbanded a decade later, was small and suffering from a recent split. Trinity was “again a tiny, struggling congregation,” having lost four families in the year and a half preceding the Mahaffys’ arrival. But he didn’t find either situation discouraging. He enjoyed working with the saints, and, like his parents in Eritrea, he paused through the years to ask: Are we do-

ing the right thing? Are there things that need to change? If so, “you change them,” he said. If you are doing what the Bible tells you to do, “you keep doing it.”

Family Life

Newberg is a small city twenty miles to the southwest of Portland. While John pastors, Sylvia has taught Christian school in a variety of settings through the years—he jokes that she is much more likely to be recognized in the grocery store than he is. When their family grew to six children, she homeschooled and ran the household with a thriftiness she learned in her Dutch immigrant upbringing. “Small church and large family—we wouldn’t have survived without her ability to sew and do things for the family,” Mahaffy said.

After one biological son, the Mahaffys lost their second and any chance of future pregnancies in an emergency surgery for an ectopic pregnancy. They began to look at adoption, eventually welcoming to



John and Sylvia Mahaffy

their family five multiracial kids, four of them under four years old. “We went into adoption very naively, knowing adopted kids could have certain challenges, but figuring that love and consistent discipline could work things out,” Mahaffy said. “It was much more complicated than we realized.”

Now, every Christmas, the Mahaffys put up a strand of stockings across the living room with the names of each of their twenty-two grandchildren. Two lived less than a day, though they were able to hold them. Several more were adopted out at birth, and the Mahaffys maintain some contact. Their relationships with their six adult children vary.

As a new parent and pastor, Mahaffy said, he would be tempted to ask parents who were wrestling with parenting problems what they were doing wrong. But now he is slower to make assumptions. “I’ve come to realize existentially that you can have children in exactly the same environment, same discipline, same love, same setting, and have radically different outcomes,” he reflected.

A High Calling

That same humility has characterized his work for the denomination, where he has manned the minute book for dozens of meetings.

After seminary, Mahaffy was poised to go overseas, but the Foreign Missions committee turned down his application—“wisely,” Mahaffy said—and recommended that he get some experience in this country first. So, instead, Mahaffy has served on the Committee for Foreign Missions for almost forty years, most of the time taking the minutes. His congregation, he said, has always supported him in these labors. He has also served frequently as the general assembly’s assistant clerk and for nine years as stated clerk for his own presbytery.

“There’s something tedious about it,” Mahaffy said happily. An undergraduate English major, he may not have the great American novel in the

back of his brain, he explained, but he can take careful meeting notes. “I’m not sure why I enjoy it, but I do. I’m probably the only person in general assembly who’s thankful for a long, boring speech because it gives me a chance to catch up on my minutes.”

It’s a demanding job, Richard Gaffin pointed out. “Mahaffy can characterize himself as a faithful plodder, but he is also a very *effective* plodder,” Gaffin said. He has not only seen Mahaffy’s work at many general assemblies but also served with him since his earliest days on the Foreign Missions committee, becoming his close friend. “I can’t say enough, over many years on the committee, about how effectively efficient he was as a secretary. We would have had a hard time doing without him.”

In our digital age of hot takes and instant feedback, accurately recording meeting details may not seem as useful



Mahaffy, right, serving as assistant clerk with stated clerk Don Duff at the Seventy-Fifth (2008) General Assembly

to the church as, say, tweeting a reaction to the day’s news. But for Mahaffy, the mundane tasks are most important. “Being a servant of the church is a high calling. If you don’t grasp that, you don’t belong in the ministry,” Mahaffy said.

Even while taking copious notes, Mahaffy is able to lend his voice to the business at hand, Gaffin observed. “When he entered into debate, his comments were persuasive. . . . He has a very good sense of not coming short of what Scripture teaches, but also not going beyond what Scripture teaches.

That explains his value as a servant to the church.”

Mahaffy’s denominational tasks have indeed given him an up-close look at debate inside the OPC, which, Mahaffy said, has always had its share of controversy. During the 1980s debate over whether the OPC and PCA should merge, he himself wrote a number of “very long letters” to the Committee on Ecumenicity. But, within the last decade, he thinks there has been a harder edge to disagreements.

One encouraging sign that he has observed is that lately, at general assembly, he can no longer tell who will vote for what. Instead, commissioners are listening to one another and making decisions based on what they hear on the floor rather than on preconceived notions alone.

“We need to consciously work at preserving that ability to communicate,” Mahaffy said.

To Young(er) Pastors

For that reason, from experience and conviction, Mahaffy advises young pastors to keep discussion and argumentation at presbytery in the realm of ideas. “Don’t let it get personal,” he said.

On the other hand, in the local church, let it get very personal. One of the greatest privileges of pastoring, Mahaffy believes, is being with God’s people during hard and intimate times, like facing surgery or experiencing death. He tells young pastors to appreciate that gift. “People are entrusting some of the most difficult parts of their lives into your hands. Take care of them carefully,” he said.

Besides knowing your congregation, he adds, know the Word. After fifty years, Mahaffy is still amazed that he gets paid to study the Word and present it. He loves what he is called to do.

“Be faithful to the Word in your preaching,” he advises. “And remember: you’re a servant of the church.” □

The author is managing editor of New Horizons.

PERKINS AND MACHEN: AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP



BRIAN L. DE JONG // Two more dissimilar men you could not find. One a seminary professor, the other a small-town pastor. One grew up in Baltimore in comfortable circumstances. The other came from a farm in Wisconsin, living on modest means. One studied at Princeton and was covenantal, the other graduated from

the Moody Bible Institute and was a dispensationalist. One was a lifelong bachelor, the other was married with five children. One was a scholar with an international reputation, the other was largely unknown outside central Wisconsin.

J. Gresham Machen and Arthur F. Perkins were vastly different men, yet a shared faith in Christ united them in deep friendship. These two men suffered similarly at the hands of the PCUSA, both being unfairly disciplined for resisting modernism.

Epistolary Encouragement

Their relationship was initiated by Arthur Perkins in a letter of encouragement to Machen written on February 26, 1935. Over the next eighteen months, these men exchanged thirty-two letters and their friendship and fellowship grew. These letters, housed in the Machen archives at Westminster Theological Seminary, provide a window on their relationship.

They met in person at a Westminster Seminary dinner in 1933, an occasion that Perkins fondly recalled. They saw each other again in Syracuse at the PCUSA's general assembly. Their final meeting came on June 11, 1936, in Philadelphia at the first general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—both men being charter members of the new denomination. Perkins offered the opening prayer that day, and Machen served as moderator.

In the months following, both men

worked feverishly to the point of mental, physical, and spiritual exhaustion. By the turn of the new year, both Perkins and Machen had died.

Their relationship was occasioned by the love both held for their church, the PCUSA. Both grew concerned as theological liberalism exerted greater control. Both Machen and Perkins had the courage to speak out against the drift toward modernism, and they suffered for their stances.

They became aware of each other's situations as they followed developments in the press. In his first letter, Arthur Perkins wrote, "According to the notice in the *Presbyterian*, today is the time for the 'second sitting' in this famous or rather infamous trial. I have been thinking of you and remembering you."

In his reply, Machen said, "I well know how bravely you are standing for the truth in the Synod of Wisconsin, and I rejoice in that stand with all my heart."

Their mutual interest in



Perkins, center, with his family

each other was in order to encourage. Perkins wrote to Machen, "How I do thank God that in our great church we have a few great souls who will not 'bow the knee' to the modernistic program. I believe, that like Elijah on Mount Carmel, God will use you in this case to confound those who have sold out to lead the people astray . . . I believe God has raised you up in this day to glorify His dear Son in you."

Four days later, Machen wrote, "Dear Mr. Perkins, I cannot begin to find words to tell you how grateful I am for your letter of February 26. These are indeed trying times, and few comforts that God gives us in such a time are greater than the comfort of Christian sympathy from people who know what is really going on."

Machen also sought to encourage his friend. He wrote on September 20, 1935, that "every time I think of you and of the injustice to which you have been subjected, I rejoice again in your courage and reliance upon God in the midst of so much wickedness and unbelief."

Under Trial

As both Perkins and Machen were put on trial for their convictions, their treatment was similar. In the opinion of Perkins's defense team, the charges brought against him by the Winnebago Presbytery were extraordinarily like those brought against Machen for supporting the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions. Both men were convicted by their presbyteries, and their appeals were denied by the PCUSA general assembly without an adequate opportunity to defend themselves. Both of these faithful ministers were put out of the church for having the integrity to question the program of the theological liberals.

One insight into their friendship comes from an exchange in May 1936. Perkins's defense had cost his friends \$436.49—a princely sum during the Great Depression. It seems that Perkins simply did not have the funds to travel to Syracuse for general assembly, al-

though he longed to meet like-minded men. He wrote to Machen that "I shall quietly wait at home."

Machen responded, "I do wish that it could be possible for you to go to the General Assembly. It is always to me just about the most painful experience imaginable. Yet it does provide opportunities of conference with the remnant of Christian people in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A."

On May 5, the "Defense Committee" sent out an appeal for funds for Reverend Perkins's expenses, and on May 7 Machen sent "a little contribution of \$20 to help enable Mr. Perkins to be present in Syracuse."

Perkins replied on May 11 with appreciation: "God willing I expect to have the great pleasure of looking into your face and talking with you and fellowshiping for a brief period. I thank God for the high privilege of being allowed by his grace to live today and to stand out here against force and tyranny."

A mutual respect grew. Machen expressed his opinion of Perkins on April 13, 1936: "Really, I do not know of anyone who has been holding aloft the banner of the cross in a more unselfish way than you have been doing under this sinful persecution which you have endured for Christ's sake." And on August 1, 1936, Perkins wrote, "More and more I thank God for your stand through the years and how I praise him for the wonderful meeting of the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America [OPC]. I shall never forget your fairness as the moderator."

Last Letters

The strength of their relationship is seen in their last pair of letters. On August 6, 1936, Perkins wrote another letter in which he was clearly upset. Suggestions had spread that dispensational premillennialists like himself would be unwelcome in the new church. Perkins did not believe the rumors, yet was concerned, and wrote to Machen for an answer.

"I am a Presbyterian first, last, and all time, and the basis of my fellowship has always been and now is with those who being 'born again' center in 'neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' I expect men to have freedom on eschatological questions and I expect to be granted the same," Perkins wrote. "However if such as I are not to be tolerated . . . please let me know right now." Although he disliked the idea of being independent, Perkins was ready to do so, if forced by his new church.

Two days later Machen wrote a



Perkins with his wife and friend in June 1936

long and tender letter to "My dear Mr. Perkins" to help him understand his differing perspective on dispensationalism, and why Machen wanted Perkins to remain a member of the new denomination. Neither man wanted to divide over this question.

Perkins invited Machen to preach at his installation in Merrill, Wisconsin, in September, but Machen's previous commitments prevented him from participating. That fall, Arthur Perkins suffered a nervous breakdown. On December 29, 1936, he died at a mental hospital in Madison, Wisconsin. He was buried on January 1, 1937. On that same day, Machen died in Bismarck, North Dakota. And that day, the souls of these brothers-in-arms met before the throne of their Savior. What joy they must have shared as they both rested from their arduous labors! □

The author is pastor of Grace OPC in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and a member of the Committee for the Historian.

DIACONAL MINISTRIES

REBUILDING IN MIDLAND, MICHIGAN

// CHERYL WADE



Glenn and Michelle Moots in their home, where volunteers and family members have written encouraging words and verses on the walls as the restoration continues

When floodwaters filled Glenn and Michelle Moots's house with two inches of mud and dumped another six inches into their driveway, the couple wasn't sure they ever would live in their single-story home in rural Midland County, Michigan, again.

Heavy rains caused the ninety-five-year-old Edenville and Sanford dams to fail on May 19 and, during the next few hours, water drained out of the manmade Sanford and Wixom lakes that the dams protected. Gone were the homes, cottages, boats, and docks that had seen many summers of fishing, swimming, and boating. What was left were surreal, mud-filled beaches. As many as eleven thousand people were evacuated during the evening and night. By May 20, when the swollen waters of the Tittabawassee River began to recede, local residents found that the village of Sanford had been decimated. The village hall had been pushed from one area of town and smashed into another building. Many homes were destroyed, and many others severely damaged.

"First responders came door to door, and we started hearing sirens everywhere," said Michelle Moots, describing their evacuation to the nearby community of Clare in the middle of the night.

"We weren't sure if the house was still going to be there," said Glenn, recalling the couple's damage survey the next morning. "There were houses that were floating away. There were houses washed off their foundations. [Some] houses had washed into neighboring houses."

What the Mootses didn't know was that calls of concern from their home church, Christ Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the county seat of Midland, were being passed on to OPC Disaster Response. They didn't know that, in just a few days, volunteers would show up to rip out sodden materials and dry out what remained. Later, these volunteers determined the house was salvageable and brought equipment

to begin what will be a months-long process of demolition and rebuilding.

"They offered us dehumidifiers and fans and all kinds of things we didn't even know the OPC owned," said Michelle, her voice breaking with emotion. She lost many books vital to her business of selling books online. Glenn, a professor, also lost a huge collection of books, many of which are hard to find.

Destruction to Construction

Churches, religious and nonprofit organizations, and big-hearted residents spread themselves over the flood-ravaged area to distribute food and other essentials, remove debris, and help people muck out their houses. But the OPC did more, the Mootses said.

"If all the OPC did was to help us to dry the house out, they would've been doing what other organizations were doing," Glenn said. "But the difference was that the OPC said that they were able to help us rebuild, and a lot of organizations do not do that." What seemed especially amazing was the OPC's commitment to restore their house in time for Thanksgiving.



Volunteers from Covenant OPC in Sinking Spring, PA, New Hope Presbyterian in Bridgeton, NJ, and Redeemer Presbyterian in Ada, MI, work on rewiring

“Typically, the OPC gets involved in disasters that impact ten thousand or more people, or if the OPC is directly impacted,” said David Nakhla, OPC Disaster Response Coordinator. Besides the Mootses, another Christ Covenant family, Linda and Tom Kennedy, also saw their home severely damaged.

“At 4:30 in the morning [on May 19] we looked over the railing of the upstairs and saw five feet of water in our basement,” Tom said. “We were a bit in shock. Just in a very short period of time, all of the water was gone out of our house. It looked like someone had taken a giant mixer and just scrambled up all our furniture, even our paperwork—just everything.”

To Linda, it felt as though everything was gone, soaked. “It seemed like nothing mattered anymore.”

OPC volunteers used their equipment to dry out the house. Two groups of drywallers came. Some stayed to help with the “mudding”—putting a plaster-of-Paris type goo over the seams where the large pieces of drywall came together.

The Right People at the Right Time

Before the lofty rebuilding plans could be put into place, the OPC needed a site manager who could order construction supplies, find the fastest and most effective way to get the job done, use contacts to find skilled volunteers, and work closely with the families. That person turned out to be Mike Greene, who attends Christ Covenant and has extensive experience in project management. He’s a chemical engineer and has worked as a project manager for a large semiconductor plant near Midland.

Greene credits the success of his disaster relief work with the OPC to the Lord’s leading. At times, he thought he was out of resources with the clock running down. “Then, someone who had the necessary skills to get the job done would show up, out of nowhere,” he said.

He found a site foreman in Rob Brinks, a carpenter who brought a trailer with shower facilities and now travels to Midland twice a week. Greene located Cary Hirdes, a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning specialist from Zeeland, Michigan, who worked at the Kennedys’ house on the heating system and on drywalling.

“This is something we’re supposed to do,” Hirdes, a deacon at New Life Fellowship in Holland, Michigan, said matter-of-factly. In other words, it’s what a Christian does when there’s a need.

The OPC doesn’t have big fundraising drives the way some organizations do, Nakhla said. They tell churches,

in short, “here’s the fund” to receive disaster relief money. Churches are then encouraged to collect offerings for disaster response. The OPC Committee on Diaconal Ministries has created the Midland Disaster Oversight Committee, which includes representatives from Midland and from the presbytery. The denomination augments volunteer labor with money that is primarily for materials. In Midland’s case, the committee has estimated a need of approximately one hundred thousand dollars to fully minister to these two families. Giving has been slower than usual, Nakhla said. This might be because Midland isn’t a major city, and there was no warning of the disaster to heighten awareness in the state or region. In addition, COVID-19 has caused financial hardships and work stoppages as well as dominating the news.

Master plumber Doug Baxter of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, said he heard Nakhla speak at his church, New Life OPC, and at a deacons’ conference. Baxter has been retired two years and recently sold his plumbing and heating business. When he heard about the need for help in the Midland area, he said simply, “I could do that.” His teenage grandson, Leif McDermott, has worked for his “Poppy” before and came to Midland to help him.

Baxter tore out the Mootses’ worn-out copper plumbing and replaced it with sturdier new materials. It was a big job and, for site manager Mike Greene, it was the answer to a desperate prayer. With limited resources and the uncertainties of COVID, many companies with construction specialties such as HVAC were tied up with other work. People are coming here from long dis-

tances, he said. These are people “whom I believe the Lord put here to make this a strong project.”

Brett Gillet, member of Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, New Jersey, took a break from his carpentry business in order to travel to Michigan to help when he saw the flood on the news. “A lot of the things I do [at work] are small in scale,” he said. “When a project like this comes up, I can really flex my muscles and do a lot more.”

Others from OP churches have stepped up to help, strangers to both the Mootses and Kennedys. There is no fanfare, no glory, no awards. They do it because it is a calling from the Lord, as brothers and sisters in Christ, and it’s a beautiful thing.

If you would like to get involved with OPC Disaster Response, go to OPCDisasterResponse.org to find out more.

The author is a member of Christ Covenant in Midland, Michigan. Photos courtesy of Katie Plas, member of Harvest OPC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Tom and Linda Kennedy with the New Jersey Team (from three OP churches): David Hitchner, Tandem Mints, Caleb De Ruiter, Rich Duggan and Tim Milchling

A *FROZEN 2* PARODY: "OUR GOD CANNOT CHANGE"

// EMILY VAN DIXHOORN



Sometimes we take comfort in knowing that things will change—and sometimes in knowing that they won't. The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us all that life in this world is unpredictable, and sometimes devastatingly so. In contrast, Disney's popular film *Frozen 2*, released last year, features the cheerful song "Some Things Never Change." Princess Anna's message that there are "certain certainties" is unexpectedly refreshing. But is it true? Is there a basis for this message?

The Bible decidedly tells us "yes!"

In our hearts, we know that some things never change because there is Someone who cannot change. From the light of nature and the works of creation and providence, people know who God is in his goodness, wisdom, and power (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:1). Even where sinners suppress this knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18), it nevertheless remains, tugging on our hearts, that we might seek him who does not change (Acts 17:27).

Through the testimony of Scripture, we see all the more clearly the beautiful reality that God cannot change. God has made himself known to us in Jesus Christ, who as the divine Son of God is "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3). And in his resurrection glory as our Redeemer, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). In both the deity and incarnate work of our Savior, we see the same truth blazing forth: our God cannot change. He is "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth" (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 4).

So yes, for Christians, there is an unchanging reason to sing that some things never change.

While Disney is not a source for our theology, a Disney song can accurately and eloquently capture the current concerns of people's hearts, including: how do we understand the

cycle of life and death? How can we face an uncertain world with confidence? Is there something that never changes? Is this "something" just a principle of truth—like gravity—or is there an ultimate personal dimension to this truth? Is there someone whom we can know will never change, not ever? And can we have a relationship with such a person?

Princesses Anna and Elsa answer these questions resting in their own strength, singing, "Some things never change. / And I'm holding on tight to you." And so the world sings with them, looking for a personal relationship that will never change.

What if we could give the world the biblical reason to believe what they sing—and even more? Our parody of "Some Things Never Change," a collaborative effort between me and a few others, attempts to do just that. The lyrics are below, but the song is best listened to rather than read. You can find it, sung by the amazing Lindsay Padden, on my [YouTube channel](#).

Our hope is that these lyrics would cause many to rejoice in the God who never changes like the shifting shadows, pandemic news, or our unstable hearts! And as many learn his unchanging trustworthiness in the gospel of his Son, may they call this God their own.

"Our God Cannot Change"

Yes, the curse runs a little bit colder (Gen. 3:17),
But we're all getting bolder (Acts 2:14).
And the glory of heaven's filled with
God's own peace (Ps. 46).
At the start God spoke as the Realizer
(Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:6),
At the end he'll act as the Heavenizer
(Rev. 21:1–2)
And his love comes to us with certain
certainty (Rom. 8:38–39).

Yes, our God cannot change (Mal. 3:6),
Like his covenant grace is mine (Ps. 25:14)
Our God stays the same (Mal. 3:6)
For he lives beyond space and time (Ps. 90:2).

As the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9),
No one knows your ways (Isa. 55:8).
Your mercies are always new (Lam. 3:23).
Our God cannot change (Mal. 3:6),
So in Christ I'll worship you (John 4:24)!

We know that Satan has already fallen (Is. 14:13–14),
And we read that the Father is calling (1 Cor. 1:9),
Are you telling me tonight you're going to get down
on your knees (Phil. 2:11)?
God's decreed and now his work is all planned out
(Eph. 1:11)
The risen Christ has his lamps and the meal's out
(Rev. 1:12–13; 19:9)
And what he says in his Word you know he guaran-
tees (Ps. 119:89).

Yes, our God cannot change (Mal. 3:6),
And there is nothing in him impure (Ps. 18:26).
Our God stays the same (Mal. 3:6),
And if anyone's eager

To make a fit and dispense with it (1 Tim. 6:20),
You'll know what to say and do (Heb. 10:23), right?
Our God cannot change (Mal. 3:6),
And the blessing is all on you (Num. 6:24–26).

Our sins are restless, and that's why I so easily fall
(Gen. 4:7),
But God he loves us, he will not lose the least of us
at all (John 6:39),
The church is precious, it will not slip away (Eph.
5:22–23; Matt. 16:18).
For Christ has made atonement and, now he reigns
above for her this day (Isa. 53:5–6; 1 Pet. 2:24; Col.
3:1).

The curse runs a little bit colder (Gen. 3:17),
But in Christ we're all getting much bolder (Acts
2:14);
It's time to hold the faith we share with saints gone
by (Heb. 13:7).
We'll always live in the kingdom of glory (Heb.
12:28)
That shines in the big upper story (Ps. 57:5; 113:4).
And God promises his church will soon be raised on
high (James 5:8).

Favorite Psalms and Hymns *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* Psalms in a Minor Key

Terry L. Johnson

Too often the worship of my childhood and youth assumed a narrow range of human emotion for the Christian, all of it positive. “Now I am happy all the day” seemed to sum up the believer’s experience. Voice rarely was given, if ever, to the darker side of Christian experience, to the struggle with the hiddenness of God, his seeming absence in our trials, his delays in responding to our pleas.

I love the Psalms for many reasons, among the chief of which is their realism. They are sober about the struggles of the faithful. We often cry to God “out of the depths” (Ps. 130:1). Not infrequently we find ourselves “sinking in the mire” and struggling in “deep waters” (Ps. 69:14, 15). For this reason I am drawn to the minor key Welsh tunes. I say this knowing that many people reject the minor key categorically, complaining that it is gloomy or depressing, or sounds like funeral dirges. However, when joined with the words of the Psalms, so many of which are laments, or complaints, or cries of despair, the impact is powerful. The tune “Llef” is a near perfect vehicle for expressing the cry of Psalm 86A (also used with Psalm 38). The tune “Llangloffan” beautifully expresses the spiritual longing of Psalm 84B (also used with Psalm 17). The mood of “Aberystwyth” matches Psalm 5 (also used with Psalm 115A), as does “Ebenezer” with Psalm 54 and “Trewen” with Psalm 119I.

Among the lesser known Welsh tunes, Psalms 49 and 83 utilize “Eifionydd;” 137 is joined to “Brynteg;” 44 and 80A to “Maldwyn;” 94A and 109 to “Blaenhafren;” 143B to “Dolgelly;” and 67A to “Meirionydd.” When we are ready to switch to a major key, “Hyfrydol” takes us to great heights as we sing Psalm 91B, as does “Cwm Rhondda” with Psalm 122A and “Ash Grove” to Psalm 33.

We are indebted to the Welsh revival tradition for providing us with so many beautiful tunes with which to sing our God-given songs.

Our God cannot change (Mal 3:6)
He never turns like the shadows roam (James 1:17)
Our God stays the same (Mal. 3:6)
So the future is his alone (Is. 46:10)
He is not surpassed, may his power last (Rev. 7:12).
Earth comes and goes, it's true (Ps. 102:26),
Our God cannot change (Mal. 3:6),
So in Christ I'll worship you (John 4:24).

The author is member of Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

AWKWARD MARKETING OR AUTHENTIC COMMUNI- CATION?

// JEREMIAH W. MONTGOMERY



Detail from a stained glass window in St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, depicting Paul in Athens

It's hard to escape that awkward guy at Walmart. He stands near the entrance and tries to catch your attention: "Can I ask you a question?" If you agree, he launches into a sales pitch. Unless you're in the market for satellite television, that's when things start to feel awkward. I respect this man for working seriously at a hard job. But I didn't come to Walmart to be waylaid in this manner.

In contrast, a few months ago I was sitting with friends and talking about books we were reading. We had a favorite genre in common, and so they strongly recommended to me a new series of which I had never heard. I purchased the first book and began reading. Several times throughout the reading, I wondered whether I really liked the story. Yet I trust these friends, and their enthusiasm was authentic. So I kept going. More than a thousand pages later, I finished the book.

Compare these results. On one hand, you have a stranger initiating an awkward public interaction that ultimately failed either to connect or convince and left me annoyed in under a minute. On the other hand, you have a friend who persuaded me to persevere for dozens of hours in order to finish a book that I did not find all that gripping.

Now let's ask ourselves a hard question: is our evangelism more like the guy at Walmart or my friend recommending a book? Is our gospel communication awkward marketing or authentic communication?

Awkward Marketing in Evangelism

I think the answer to this question is all too obvious. Most of the time, contemporary Christian evangelism is awkward marketing. We plan a special, public event. We make sure we are well-stocked on professionally designed, glossy brochures (also known as tracts). We train ourselves to memorize imper-

sonal gospel presentations. And then we attempt to engage people using invasive methods: putting ourselves in places that they cannot avoid, initiating conversations without permission, or standing in an elevated place so that we can "street preach" to them.

Before anybody gets too upset, let me remind my readers that I myself engaged in open-air evangelism at Penn State University in State College, Pennsylvania, for more than three years. I am not critiquing this method because I am afraid of it. Nor am I saying that it was totally fruitless. Indeed, I know two young men for whom our ministry was a real component in their conversion.

So I am not saying that this style of evangelism *never* yields fruit. The guy at Walmart sometimes makes a sale, too! But this style of evangelism is not the *most* fruitful—nor is it the most *biblical*. We can do better. Scripture shows us a better way.

Gospel Communication in the New Testament

The fifth chapter of Mark's gospel recalls the story of a demoniac dramatically saved by our Lord. When the locals ask Jesus to depart,

the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled. (Mark 5:18–20)

This man is perhaps the first commissioned evangelist sent out by Jesus.

In the former demoniac's commission, we may note several important things. First, the man's mission is local: "Go home. . ." Second, his method is relational: "Go home *to your friends* and *tell them*. . ." Third, the man's message is personal:

“. . . tell them how much the Lord has done *for you*, and how he has had mercy *on you*.” Jesus sends this early evangelist back into his local context, to his natural connections, with an intensely personal testimony.

A similar pattern is observable in the fourth chapter of John’s gospel, in Jesus’s encounter with the woman at the well. After Jesus gently exposes her sin and reveals himself as her Savior, “the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?’” (John 4:28–29). Again we see the same pattern: local context, natural connections, and a personal testimony.

But what about the rest of the New Testament? What about the apostles’ public preaching in the synagogues? What about Paul’s famous encounters in Athens?

Paul and his associates made the synagogue their first stop whenever possible (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8). This was very natural, for synagogue-goers possessed a foundation of biblical knowledge. Not only this, but the apostles could anticipate an initial, respectful hearing; they might even be *invited* to speak:

After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.” (Acts 13:15)

Why did Paul like to begin in the local synagogue? It was because the synagogue was a natural point of contact. His message was offensive, but his method was natural.

But what about Athens? Here, in addition to visiting the synagogue, Paul reasoned “in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17). Is this an exception to what we have been seeing? Look what happens next: Paul is engaged by the philosophers who invite him to address the Areopagus (Acts 17:18–20), and Luke informs us that “all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (Acts 17:21). This suggests Paul was not being invasive or engaging in awkward marketing. He was authentically communicating in a way that was socially acceptable.

Authentic Communication in Our Context

Scripture shows us that authentic gospel communication is a far cry from the awkward marketing techniques that our churches too often employ. The New Testament encourages

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us to return to a model of gospel communication that is local, natural, and personal. The *message* of the cross will always be offensive (1 Cor. 1:22–24), which is all the more reason for us to use *methods* that are natural and socially acceptable. How do we do this?

First, we should respect the dignity of others (Matt. 7:12; 1 Pet. 3:15). The “golden rule” is not suspended for Christian evangelism! When in doubt whether it’s okay to initiate or push further in a spiritual conversation, *ask permission*: “Do you mind if I ask you a spiritual question?” For topics that I know will be difficult, I have found that it’s also helpful to *give permission*: “You may think this is crazy or offensive. . . .” By acknowledging a potential difficulty in advance, we show the respect that we would want to be shown.

Second, we should remember that true evangelism is not something we *do*, but something we *are*. I still remember another OPC pastor putting it like this—true evangelism is a way of life characterized by being “friendly to people, liking people, and talking to people” about Jesus. Even the most introverted among us talk about what they love! Evangelism is

about loving Jesus, loving people, and sharing the former with the latter. It should not be an invasive, awkward marketing program. It should be like my friend recommending a book: natural, personal, authentic communication.

Finally, most of us don’t need new contacts. Jesus has already planted each of us in a garden of family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. We simply need to leverage

the relationships already present in our lives. But to do this, we must learn—as another OPC minister taught me—to see people not as *landscape* (part of the background to my life) or as *machines* (those who serve me), but as *souls* with everlasting destinies. When you are in the checkout line at the grocery store, do you greet your clerk by name?

How many people do you see every day at school, at the store, or at work? Be friendly and intentional with all of them: learn their names and even ask about their tattoos! Cultivate these relationships, remember their stories, and pray for a natural opening. And when it comes, don’t recite an impersonal gospel presentation. Rather, “tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19).

The author is one of the pastors at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Vandalia, Ohio.



Jeremiah Montgomery

AN INHERITANCE OF WEALTH—OR WISDOM?

// MICHAEL D. DIERCKS

This summer, my sons took me whitewater rafting for my birthday. As we got into the boat, we were given a paddle and instructed to paddle forward or backward to move the boat based on the guide’s instruction. The guide had a different paddle. His paddle helped navigate the boat through the river. He also was able to look ahead and, knowing the river well, determine which course to take. He then applied his knowledge to steer the boat where he wanted it to go. The one time that our guide failed to navigate correctly, no matter how hard we paddled, we all were unable to avoid getting thrown from the boat—including the guide!

Why am I sharing this story, and what does it have to do with stewardship? Ecclesiastes 7:11–12 reads, “Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.”

Here we see two types of inheritance: money and wisdom. Both are good and profitable, but one is far superior to the other. An inheritance of money is like the oars we were given. They were our protection for adverse river conditions. We were able to propel through, or back out of, dangerous situations. But an inheritance of wisdom is like the oar the guide used, leading and navigating us to avoid dangers and obstacles.

Solomon teaches that wealth inheritance can be very helpful. It can propel our heirs through some of life’s “category 5 rapids” quicker. It can be used to lessen the impact of and, maybe, even to back out of a situation. It provides for protection and shelter. As stewards of the money God has given to us, we

ought to strive to provide a means to protect and shelter our children.

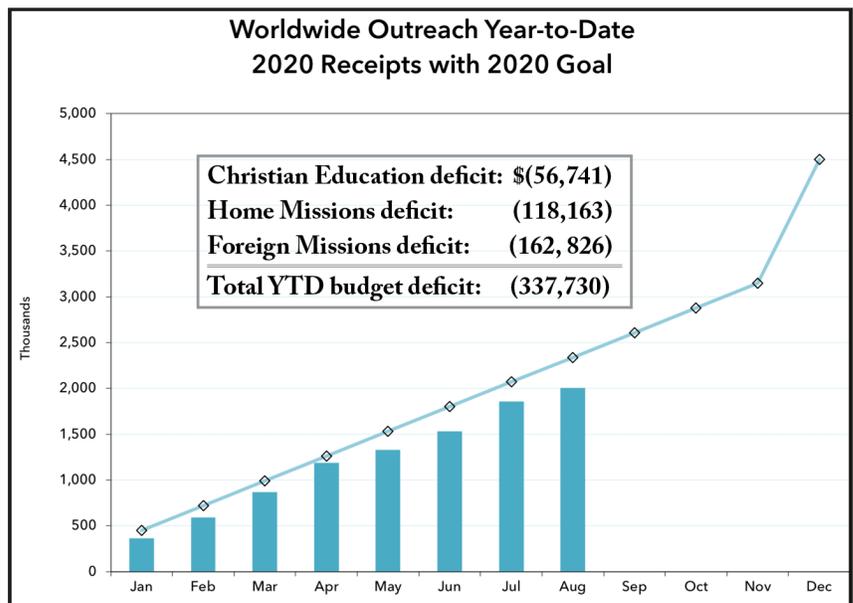
But wisdom is the greater and higher-value inheritance. In fact, Solomon states that “wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.” Wisdom does not guarantee the absence of hardship in life, but it does chart a course through the hardship of this life. Wisdom, which is anchored in Christ and his Word, is truly life-preserving. Timothy was an inheritor of wisdom. Paul reminds Timothy of his “sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice” (2 Tim. 1:5).

Jesus teaches us to store up treasures in heaven “where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt. 6:20). What portfolio are you focused on—retirement or wisdom? Passing on the inheritance of wisdom requires more than a good stock portfolio, retirement plan, or long-term care insurance. It requires investing in the lives of others, teaching the Word of God to the next generation, nurturing love for God and his people, regularly accessing the means of grace (prayer, Word, and sacraments), supporting the work of the church, and showing Christ in all things. It is becoming a person of the cross.

Fools and wise alike find their boat hitting the same waves and headed toward the same rocks. If we, as parents, grandparents, and older generation church members do our job well, we will pass on wisdom so our heirs will know how to navigate the challenges of life.

An inheritance of wisdom preserves not wealth, but life.

The author is regional home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio.



OCTOBER



The Bickfords



The Lopezes

1 **BEN & HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray that the Lord would preserve the work of preaching and teaching the gospel in Haiti. / **MICAH & EILEEN BICKFORD**, Farmington, ME. Pray for Grace Reformed's ministry to college students.

2 **CARL & STACEY MILLER**, New Braunfels, TX. Pray for provision of a new meeting place for New Braunfels OPC. / **HEERO & ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for health and safety in a country with a poor medical system.

3 Pray for associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS & MARIE DELFILS**, Haiti, and the Port-au-Prince church, that the Lord would grant them safety from violence. / Yearlong intern **DAVID (LEBO) BONNER** at Tyler Presbyterian in Tyler, TX.

4 **DAVID & REBEKAH GRAVES**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Give thanks for Coeur d'Alene Reformed as they finish Home Missions support. / *New Horizons* managing editor **JUDITH DINSMORE** and staff.

5 **TYLER (NATALIE) DETRICK**, church-planting intern at First Street Reformed in Dayton, OH. / Pray that **OPC.ORG** would edify the church and help communicate its message to others.

6 **BEN & MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray that God would give congregation and visitors a deep longing for the means of grace. / **DANNY OLINGER**, general secretary of the Committee on Christian Education, as they meet today.

7 **MARK & CARLA VAN ESSENDELFT** and missionary associate **JOANNA GROVE**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the opportunity to disciple believing women. / Yearlong intern **ELIJAH (GRETA) DE JONG** at Faith OPC in Grants Pass, OR.

8 Pray for **CHRIS (NANCY) WALMER**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, administrator, asks for prayer for the Committee on Diaconal Ministry as it meets October 8-9.

9 Associate missionaries **JAMES & ESTHER FOLKERTS**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Timothy Discipleship brothers as they record radio messages for distribution. / Yearlong intern **ANDREW (ANESSA) BEKKERING** at Harvest OPC in Wyoming, MI.

10 **ANDREW & REBEKAH CANAVAN**, Corona, CA. Pray that Corona Presbyterian would grow in love for God's Word and the lost. / Associate missionaries **CHRISTOPHER & CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for a joyful life witness as they work and live among the Karimojong people.

11 **BRADNEY & EILEEN LOPEZ**, Arroyo, PR. Pray that the Lord would use Iglesia Presbiteriana Sola Escritura to spread the gospel. / Pray for **MARK (PEGGY) SUMPTER**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.

12 Associate missionary **LEAH HOPP**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the Community Health Team as they provide services to mothers and children. / Yearlong intern **JOSHUA VALDIX** at Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, PA.

13 Pray for **DAVID & RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda, (on furlough) as they report on the work in Uganda to churches in the Ohio and Midwest Presbyteries. / **KERRI ANN CRUSE**, video and social media coordinator.

14 **MELISA MCGINNIS**, controller, and **BOB JONES**, interim administrator for the Committee on Coordination. / Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

15 Tentmaking missionary **TINA DEJONG** and missionary associate **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **JEREMY & GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Pray that Yuma OPC would be given more opportunities for outreach.

OCTOBER



The Knox family

16 **STEPHEN & FELICIA LAUER**, Wilmington, OH. Pray that the Lord would open doors for outreach. / Missionary associates **DR. JIM & JENNY KNOX**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for the JOY clinic staff working under pandemic conditions.

17 Pray for ongoing **OPC DISASTER RESPONSE** efforts in Midland, MI (flooding), and near California, MD (hurricane Isaias). / **LARRY & KALYNN OLDAKER**, Sandusky, OH. Pray for the evangelistic efforts of Firelands Grace OPC.

18 **CHARLES & CONNIE JACKSON**, Mbale, Uganda. Pray that many in economic hardship may be drawn to the comfort of the gospel. / **GREGORY REYNOLDS**, editor of *Ordained Servant*.

19 Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**. / Pray for retired missionaries **CAL & EDIE CUMMINGS**, Pennsylvania, and **BRIAN & DOROTHY WINGARD**, Wisconsin, as they encourage the work of missions in the church.

20 **BILL & MARGARET SHISHKO**, Deer Park, NY. Pray that God would bless the growth and life of The Haven, OPC. / **MARK STUMPF**, Loan Fund manager, and **John Fikkert**, director for the Committee on Ministerial Care.

21 Pray for continuing health concerns for retired missionaries **GREET RIETKERK**, the Netherlands, and **YOUNG & MARY LOU SON**, Pennsylvania. / Yearlong intern **DAMON (ELISABETH) YOUNG** at First Church in Merrimack, NH.

22 Pray for **MIKE (ELIZABETH) DIERCKS**, area home missions coordinator for the Presbytery of Ohio. / Affil. missionaries **DR. MARK & LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia. Pray for fruit in the church's efforts to restart community outreach.

23 **BOB & GRACE HOLDA**, Oshkosh, WI. Give thanks for the ministry at Resurrection Presbyterian, another church plant finishing support this fall. / Pray for active duty military chaplain **CORNELIUS (DEIDRE) JOHNSON**, US Navy.

24 **MR. AND MRS. F.**, Asia. Pray for their work abroad and that their four children in the US would thrive in the Lord. / Yearlong intern **JOHN (SHARON) CANAVAN** at Grace Presbyterian in Vienna, VA.

25 Associate **P. F.**, Asia. Pray for a balance of boldness and wisdom. / **RYAN & ROCHELLE CAVANAUGH**, Merrillville, IN. Pray that the believers at Mission Church would be bold in love and witness.

26 Pray for **DAVE (ELIZABETH) HOLMLUND**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. / **MARK LOWREY**, interim executive director of Great Commission Publications, as the board of trustees meets today.



Abby Harting

27 **ETHAN & CATHERINE BOLYARD**, Wilmington, NC. Pray that God would grant Heritage OPC wisdom as the church moves toward particularization. / **ABBY HARTING**, office secretary for Christian Education.

28 Affiliated missionaries **JERRY & MARILYN FARNIK**, Czech Republic. Pray for the church's ministry to those who heard the gospel at summer English camp. / Office manager **ANNELISA STUDLEY**.

29 Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / **MARK & JENI RICHLINE**, Montevideo, Uruguay, give thanks for the church's fifth anniversary and God's provision of officers.

30 **MR. AND MRS. M.**, Asia. Pray for the family as they look forward to transitioning to a new home base. / Stated clerk **HANK BELFIELD** and database administrator **CHARLENE TIPTON**.

31 Pray for affiliated missionaries **CRAIG & REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan, as church and education ministries resume this fall. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATHARINE OLINGER**.

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

EMMANUEL ORGANIZED, WOODS ORDAINED IN COLVILLE, WA

Ryan Woods

Emmanuel Presbyterian, a mission work of the Presbytery of the Northwest, was organized as a new and separate congregation at a service of recognition, ordination, and installation on Friday, July 10, with Rev. Brett McNeill moderating. The presbytery approved the organization of Emmanuel at its stated meeting in April. Ryan Woods was ordained and installed as its first pastor.

Emmanuel began as a mission work in 1999 and endured periods of hardship and conflict with limited resources. By the grace of God, many labored for this church to have a faithful Reformed witness in Northeast Washington, especially Mark Collingridge, pastor of Covenant OPC in Kennewick, Washington, who served as ministerial advisor since 2007, and Paul Johnson, associate pastor of Covenant OPC, who served the mission work in Colville from 2011 to 2016. The Lord's faithfulness endures as Emmanuel celebrates this milestone that comes as an act of his marvelous grace.

IN MEMORIAM: RICHARD C. MILLER

W. Reid Hankins

"One learns to weep over the city. In spite of all the affluence, Novato is a spiritual ghetto," Richard C. Miller wrote a year into his service at Trinity OPC, in Novato, California, where he ministered as pastor from 1974–2006. That call began with many trials for the recently organized church. Miller later said of those beginning years, "We needed the hardship to teach us to cry out to God." In 1976, the church's outlook significantly improved, and Miller testified to answered prayer. While ministry challenges continued in an unchurched area, God used Miller to firmly establish the congregation. Even in retirement, Miller would pray daily for the church.



The congregation of Emmanuel Presbyterian in Colville, Washington; pastor Ryan Woods is center left, in the black suit

He also served as pastor of Community OPC in Garfield, New Jersey, as interim pastor at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Delaware, and twice as stated clerk of the Presbytery of Northern California.



Richard C. Miller

Miller persevered in faith and entered into glory on August 12, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Jo Ellen, his three children, and his grandchildren.

IN MEMORIAM: JEAN CHAMPNESS

Mark Winder

Jean (Barton) Champness entered into her eternal rest in Jesus Christ on August 18, 2020. Born in 1934, Champness grew up in Minneapolis and graduated from Johns Hopkins Hospital and University. She worked as a highly skilled nurse and was

in the room for the first open heart surgery performed in the United States. She married Thomas Champness in 1957 and used her nursing skills to support him through seminary. After the birth of their first child, Champness left professional nursing and continued faithfully to support her husband in three pastorates (in New Jersey, California, and Georgia) spanning fifty years. She was an accomplished organist and pianist, played the violin, and taught music from 1959 until her death. She loved the Lord and was passionate about her walk with him and using her talents to serve him. For



Jean Champness

more than a decade since their retirement in 2009, Champness was the regular piano accompanist at Wolf River Presbyterian in Collierville, Tennessee. She joins her daughter in glory and is survived by her husband, three children, eight grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On August 7, **Michael J. Matossian**, previously the pastor of Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, DE, was installed as pastor of Christ Presbyterian in St. Charles, MO.
- On August 23, **Kenneth R. Golden** was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of the Midwest serving the mission work Sovereign Grace OPC of Quad Cities in Rock Island, IL.
- On August 25, **John M. Fikkert**, previously a teacher of the Word at Hope Reformed Presbyterian in Pella, IA, was installed as the OPC's director of Ministerial Care.

MILESTONES

- **Richard C. Miller** (80), a retired OP minister, died on August 12. Miller served congregations in NJ, CA, and DE.
- **Jean (Barton) Champness** (86), died on August 18. She was the wife of retired OP pastor Thomas S. Champness Jr..

LETTERS

THE DANGER OF RUSHING TO JUDGMENT

Editor:

Thank you for the August articles by Eric Watkins and Alan Strange in connection to the death of George Floyd. The authors brought a great deal of biblical light into a situation that has mostly been characterized by the heat of reactionary anger. One additional point I would add is that the characterization of Mr. Floyd's death as a clear demonstration of "police brutality" is not as clear as it initially appeared to be. This tragic incident serves as a reminder of the importance of due process for all involved and the danger of rushing to judgment.

Andy Wilson
Laconia, NH

REVIEWS

How Shall They Hear? Why Non-Preachers Need to Know What Preaching Is, by Ryan M. McGraw. Evangelical Press, 2019. Paperback, 150 pages, \$10.99 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Lowell Ivey.

What if you could find one book that concisely and clearly explains what preaching is, what it should accomplish, how it ought to be done, and why it matters so much? And what if that book were written mainly for the *hearers* rather than the *preachers* of sermons? This book was written to equip ordinary Christians to hear the voice of Christ in preaching and, hearing him, to love and follow him more faithfully, by the grace of God.

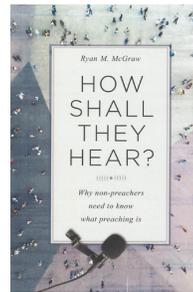
McGraw's approach is to unfold what the Bible itself says about preaching. He does so in chapters 1–6 by developing six passages of Scripture that help the reader discover what preaching is (2 Cor. 5:20–6:2), why it is necessary (Rom. 10:14–17), how it should be done (1 Cor. 2:1–5), what are its general aims (Col. 1:28–29), what are its aims in relation to the person and work of Christ (John 16:8–11, 14–15), and how preaching relates to the work of the Trinity (John 4:21–24). This last point is classic McGraw. He reminds us that preaching can only be Christocentric as it is Trinitarian. The ultimate goal of preaching is to bring redeemed sinners into the worship of the Father, through the person and work of the Son, by the powerful ministry of the Spirit, through the revelation of the Word (46).

Chapters 7–10 address the question of methodology in preaching. Here McGraw carefully balances the need to hear Christ preached exegetically, redemptive-historically, theologically, and devotionally. Acknowledging that preaching is best learned by example, McGraw illustrates his preaching principles from several biblical passages and preachers (chapters 10–11). A chapter on sermon application (chapter 12) emphasizes both the purpose and nature of biblical application.

Application "should direct people to respond in specific ways to the work of the Triune God in redemption." It should be "direct, pointed, specific, searching, and it should address many kinds of hearers" (86). The two concluding chapters address how every Christian is involved in preaching, even far more than they may realize (chapter 13), and what to do if we find ourselves under preaching that we think is deficient (chapter 14). An appendix on following sermon structures fits with the overall purpose of the book, and the bibliography, for such a short book, is thorough and useful.

My only complaint about this book is that some of the pages fell out during my first read, due to poor binding issues.

As a preacher, I came away edified, sharpened, and better equipped to help God's people benefit from the chief means of grace. This is a book to have on the free literature table in the

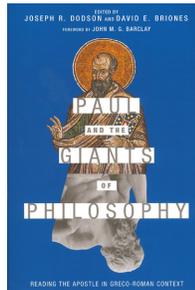


Paul and the Giants of Philosophy: Reading the Apostle in Greco-Roman Context, edited by Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones. IVP Academic, 2019. Paperback, 200 pages, \$14.89 (Amazon). Reviewed by professor S. M. Baugh.

C. S. Lewis once wrote that people who want to read about Platonism make the mistake of reading "some dreary modern book ten times as long" about Platonism rather than simply reading Plato himself, a classic author who is still in print for a reason. I have followed this practice throughout my career. Yet, as time permits, some modern works are certainly worth reading or consulting. Which brings us to the book at hand.

Paul and the Giants of Philosophy consists of fourteen brief essays from thirteen authors comparing Paul with various Greek and Roman philosophers ranging over time from Plato and Aristotle to Cicero to Seneca and ending with Epictetus and Plutarch. (See the helpful table of ancient writers referenced in the book with their dates and brief biographical information.) The essays in this collection are all quite short, averaging about a dozen pages each, and they often conclude with a

table summarizing the similarities and differences between the chosen philosopher and Paul. The essays close with discussion questions and select bibliography of both primary and secondary literature. The discussion questions show that this collection is aimed primarily at introductory level college students.



With such short chapters, the authors had to be very selective. For example, you will not find a full comparison of Plato or Plutarch with Paul, but selected topics only, including things like suffering (two of the contributions), friendship, faith, the good life, and the afterlife. Even with focused topics, the comparisons cover only one or two writings from each author. For example, in his comparison on the topic of slavery in Paul and Seneca, Timothy Brookins treats Seneca's *Epistle 47* and Paul's Philemon. This means that the chapter cannot treat all of what Paul has to say on slavery, or, more importantly, what Paul writes to slaves (unlike Seneca who only writes for elites like himself). Nevertheless, despite some necessarily very general statements that could stand expansion or qualification, the author does a good job in the comparison, which can also be said for most of the contributors. The chapter by Randy Richards on Paul, Cicero, and Seneca as letter writers was particularly interesting. Where else are you going to read that Paul's Romans would have cost him the equivalent of today's \$2,275 to produce?

In a work with such varied contributors, some of whom are obviously less expert in Paul (or in the Greek language) than in their chosen philosopher, I would have to say that overall this is an interesting and worthwhile book for the chosen audience, though it also has some curiosities. For example Justin Allison treats Philodemus's fragmentary remarks toward his disciples as a sort of "therapy" session because "centuries-old philosophical traditions led immature students out of their emotional and mental illnesses toward health" (21). This is just odd at best. And it

gets odder (and bowdlerized) when we are told that Philodemus recommends calling one's students "kind names like 'dearest' and 'sweetest'" (25).

At its best, this book will inspire its young readers to follow C. S. Lewis's advice and read ancient philosophers—and Paul!—themselves. And there are many, many other ancient authors and sources that must be reckoned with before one can fulfill the subtitle of this book and "read the apostle in Greco-Roman context." But this book adds a nice entryway into that world for beginning students.

Francis Bacon, by David C. Innes. Great Thinkers Series, P&R, 2019. Paperback, 176 pages, \$11.50. Reviewed by OP elder James S. Gidley.

"Why should a thoughtful, modern reader care about Francis Bacon (1561–1626)? The most pressing reason is that we live in Bacon's world" (xxi). *Francis Bacon* is clear and concise, but it is still a scholarly work. At the beginning, there is a series introduction, a foreword, a preface, an introduction, and a list of abbreviations. At the end, there is a glossary, a bibliography, a Scripture index, and an index of subjects and names. Throughout the book, there are copious references to Bacon's writings.

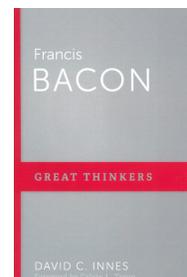
Though Bacon was not himself a scientist, he is rightly regarded as the founder of modern science. A philosopher, Bacon laid the foundations of modern science by expounding its method and aim. This makes it clear that science is philosophy; in Bacon's day, it was called natural philosophy. Scientists today would bristle at the suggestion that they are engaged in philosophy, but the truth of the matter is that they have adopted Bacon's system as the one true philosophy. He says:

Man, being the servant and interpreter of Nature, can do and understand so much and so much only as he has observed in fact

for of ~~thought~~ the course of nature. Beyond this he neither knows anything nor can do anything. (45)

This presupposition is embodied in the scientific method. For modern scientists, all knowledge is derived from observation and experiment.

Bacon also prescribed the aim of modern science: to generate useful knowledge for the benefit of mankind. Science should produce inventions that enhance material prosperity, and medical science should give us the good health to enjoy it. Thus, Bacon is the father not only of modern science but also of modern technology.



Innes presents a sustained biblical and theological critique. Perhaps his most important point is this: Jesus Christ has given us heaven, and Bacon was deliberately trying to supplant the heavenly hope with a

worldly one. The challenge for Christians living in Bacon's world is to hold on to heaven in the presence of so many worldly goods. Nevertheless, Innes does not propose the outright rejection of science and technology. His final chapter is entitled, "Redeeming Bacon's Legacy: A More Godly Dominion."

This is a challenge for me, as I draw near to the end of my career as a professor of engineering, ostensibly aiding and abetting

Position Available

Church-Planting Pastor: Harvest OPC, a congregation in Wyoming, Michigan, is seeking a full-time church-planting pastor to lead a core group of members in establishing a vibrant, Reformed church in the Dorr/Wayland/Moline corridor through preaching, training, evangelism, and leadership. The ideal candidate will be a man of God devoted to prayer and studying the Word who is characterized by humility, love, and hospitality. Inquiries should be directed to andrew.gent@harvestopc.org.

Bacon's project. This fall I will point my senior civil engineering students, perhaps for the last time, to Psalm 104. There God provides not only plants, but also oil, wine, and bread (vv. 14–15). The sea is the home not only of Leviathan, but also of the ships (vv. 25–26). God provides not only nature, but also technology.

***Recovering from Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: How the Church Needs to Rediscover Her Purpose*, by Aimee Byrd. Zondervan, 2020. Paperback, 240 pages, \$15.35 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP minister William D. Dennison.**

Aimee Byrd's volume was the object of criticism even prior to its release. After its release, many attacks have continued. As a member in good standing in the OPC, Byrd has written a fine book for an open discussion about biblical manhood and womanhood. At the heart of her presentation are pertinent insights into facets of biblical revelation, e.g., the centrality of Christ, union with Christ, an eschatological perspective, the bridegroom/bride theme, submission to the authority of Scripture, and a serious respect for the church and her officers.

At the core of Byrd's concern is that both males and females live in integral unity and communion as disciples in Christ's church, reflecting the new heavens and new earth. There are gender stereotypes that hamper the church's ministry to enhance the dynamics of Christ's calling both genders to mutually benefit from one another in service to Christ's kingdom and church. Fundamental to Byrd's point is the positive notion that "there isn't a male version and female version of Scripture . . . [rather] we learn from both men and

women in Scripture" (43) as "all of Scripture is meant for coed reading and understanding" (51). There is instruction from both females (e.g., Huldah, Ruth, Rahab, Deborah, Abigail, Elizabeth, Mary, Mary/Martha) and males for the benefit of the church in Scripture. Byrd definitely realizes that the male voice is the dominant interpreter of God's activity recorded in Scripture (64). Even so, the church is hindered by a false patriarchal reading as well as by the patronizing marketing of the Bible to women.

Byrd presents an outstanding critical analysis of an evangelical environment that is primarily characterized by its desire not to mimic the culture. She ably challenges the evangelical world with the integrity of historic orthodoxy on the Trinity and the elite status/power of the parachurch from her own confessional ecclesiastical alignment. Her criticism of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood on the Trinity and its position on the eternal subordination of the Son should be heard, especially as it affects the gender and complementarian discussion, noting the position of ontological subordination of women to men (103; see 192–93). In light of this theological problem, she powerfully affirms the Nicene Creed and reminds us that "Jesus commissions the church to make disciples," not parachurch organizations (156). In this context, it should not be the parachurch providing the primary voice for women, but the covenantal body of Christ's church under the rubric of discipleship (163–65). After all, Scripture does not speak of lay-

women being subordinate to laymen at the lay level of teaching (177).

Upholding the biblical position for male ecclesiastical office, Byrd wishes to press a view of discipleship in which men and women are called to the "same mission: eternal communion with the triune God . . . pursu[ing] the same virtues . . . to behold Jesus" (109). She is not oblivious to the "distinct relational responsibilities" of men and women as disciples, nevertheless she points out that "Christian men and women don't strive for so-called biblical masculinity or femininity, but Christlikeness" (114).

Here are a few areas of caution. With respect to the pre-Fall narrative between the man and the woman, Byrd is vague on Adam's federal position of headship, which affects Federal theology (116). Her clarity in support of Federal theology elsewhere would have been helpful here. Second, Byrd maintains that male ordination is a "secondary" and "not a primary" doctrine for the church (121). Here, she would do well to reevaluate by reversing her fine eschatological perspective. The model for the present ordination in the church is the twenty-four male elders around the *final* throne of Christ (Rev. 5). This point elicits a third caution; in view of Byrd's ecclesiastical vows, she may be served well by a study of the government and worship documents (regulative principle) at the Westminster Assembly and the fine exegetical work of our church father, George Gillespie. Nevertheless, the volume is a good read, worthy of discussion in Christ's church!

