

NEW HORIZONS

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IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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OF LIONS, LAMBS, AND THE TRUE POWER OF GOD



MICHAEL J. SEUFERT

As much as I love C. S. Lewis, and as effective as his Narnia Chronicles are, I suspect he could have done better in his selection of the supreme symbol of our Lord. Aslan is a lion. It is not difficult to understand why. Not only do lions continue to evoke images of power, majesty, and victory, but there is some biblical warrant for the Christ as lion.

The association of lions with royalty goes very far back. In fact, it would be fair to say that ancient kings were obsessed with lions. Nowhere is this more clearly on display than in Neo-Assyria. If you look at the palace reliefs of the time of Ashurbanipal, the depictions of lions are stunning (just google “Ashurbanipal lions”). There is an intense identification of the king with the lion in several ways. Most interesting are the reliefs of royal lion hunts: The king would hunt lions, sometimes in hand-to-paw combat in which the king killed the lion or captured them for display. The significance is far reaching, but the basic meaning is plain:

If you would not mess with a lion, best not mess with the king. If the lion is an image of pure power and victory, how much more the one who conquers the lion?

THE POWER OF A LION

To be fair, Scripture knows this layer of significance for the lion and does not entirely shy away from using it as a somewhat positive image for kings. David’s elegy for Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:23 is quite moving:

Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!
In life and in death they were not divided;
they were swifter than eagles;
they were stronger than lions.

Their prowess and their nobility, embodied in part by the image of the lion, fuel the sadness over their death. There are times when Scripture moves us to be impressed by the conventional power of the warrior rightly employed. With a certain awe and pleasure, 2 Samuel 23 rehearses David’s own heroic feats of strength alongside his three and thirty. You get the sense that these heroes of God could stand toe-to-toe with the greatest warriors the world has ever seen. Had they been at Troy, doubtless Helen would have lingered long over them, rehearsing the splendor of their might for King Priam atop the wall surveying the field.

However, for all the conventional glory of the warriors of God, there remains in Scripture a certain ill-at-easedness with the lion and the power and victory it brings. When the princes of Israel are lamented in Ezekiel 19, they are lamented as lions. It is easy to feel that this is a different lament altogether than David’s song for the fallen warriors, Saul and Jonathan. Ezekiel laments the lion-kings of Judah as lions, with all their devouring of men and seizing of widows as no small part of their rejection by God (Ezek. 19:6–7).

This ambivalence toward the lion appears even earlier, if you would be patient with me, in Genesis 49:9:

Judah is a lion’s cub;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched as a lion
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

Certainly, there are overtones of power and majesty and victory in the image of Judah as a lion—but there is also a violence that is problematic in this context. It is striking that in the immediately preceding verses, Jacob has just rebuked Simeon and Levi for their violence (49:5–7). So when we hear of Judah as a lion, rising from the prey, there is a lingering discomfort. Furthermore,

Judah's oracle is full of allusions to the violence against Joseph, recorded in Genesis 37, where the brothers became lion-like and Joseph became their prey (see especially Gen. 37:31–33). Overruled by God, yes; shameful nonetheless. Thus, it is not surprising when we learn that David, the best of Judah for a long time, is emphatically disqualified from building the temple because he is a man of violence. "But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth'" (1 Chron. 22:8).

It seems then, that while there is something of the warrior/lion that is worth celebrating, there is something more basic that is problematic when it comes to ushering in the fullness of God's blessing to this sad earth, stained with violence. Another way to state it is this: While David the warrior possessed the strength God to save in a certain sense, the conventional warrior could not bring the fullness of salvation, the salvation which men really needed. A different power, a more excellent power, would be necessary.

THE POSTURE OF A LAMB

This brings us to Revelation. When John weeps greatly because no one worthy is found, at any time in any place, one of the elders comforts him: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev. 5:5).

John hears of true power, true worth, true victory, all conventionally associated with the Lion. Then he sees what this looks like in actual fact, and it is rather surprising, indeed, arguably a wholesale inversion of the strength of the lion: "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6).

Passing strange indeed. What John sees enlarges the power and majesty and victory of the lion. His preeminence is plain: he is the center, encircled by the four living creatures, encircled by the elders. His power is plain, yet strange: innocence and righteousness and self-giving love. This is no conventional warrior. For his glory radiates from his passion. The glory of the warrior is in no small part bound to the number he has slain; David his tens of thousands (1 Sam. 18:7); he and his three and thirty felling many and mighty (2 Sam. 23:8–39). The glory of this heavenly warrior is that *he* was slain and yet stands in the power of his purity and his self-giving love.

This is by no means a new development in the New Testament's delight in Christ as effectual, albeit unusual,

King. When he arrives on the scene in Matthew 2, the juxtaposition between the two kings, Herod and Christ, couldn't be plainer: a man and a child; the man who kills the least to retain power, the God who became the least to give his life as a ransom for weak and helpless sinners. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:10–11).

The history of man is plain: sadly, it's not all that difficult to take life, it's a different task entirely to give life. The power of the lion suffices for the one; for the other, only the power of the Lamb will do.

This is the vision of conquering power set before the churches. John beholds the King in his resurrection might. This power, according to Rev. 5:6, is not something other than his innocence and his self-giving love, rather, the innocence and self-giving love is the very heartbeat of his utterly unique power. What do the churches desperately need as they sojourn in a world gone mad with fear, as wave after wave of God's judgment washes over the earth? They need more than the power of the lion. They need the power of the Lamb. For this is the only power that overcomes. "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death" (Rev. 12:11).

Strange conquering this: not slaying, but slain; not taking life, but laying it down in the service of the King. Where would they get such a vision of triumph? Where would they come by such power? Only in taking hold of the Lamb by faith.

The King as Lamb, standing as one slain, likely would not have sold as well as the Chronicles of Narnia did. This vision of true power does not appear on any ancient palace reliefs that I am aware of. It is, however, the unique glory of our God and King. And what's more, it is the only power and glory that truly saves.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24–25)

Behold the Lamb. Behold the King. May we be conformed to the glory of his cross, that we may share in the glory of his resurrection power, now and forevermore. **NH**

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CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AS COVENANTAL FULFILLMENT



HARRISON PERKINS

Without Christ's resurrection, Christian hope disappears. Among many indispensable articles of our faith, Christ's resurrection crowns the list. Part of the reason for its critical role is because we worship the risen Christ, who is God the Son in power with all authority in heaven and on earth (Rom. 1:4; Matt. 28:16–20). He is the risen, reigning king, and the truth claims of our religion come to naught if Christ is not the living God who conquered death (1 Cor. 15:17–19). So, Christ's resurrection is crucial due to its significance as the historical foundation of our faith.

Christ's resurrection is nonnegotiable also because of its theological significance. It is not only the historical foundation in the sense that our beliefs and practices flow downstream from when the apostles saw and proclaimed the risen Christ. It is also the reason that salvation comes to us and that we can trust God with full assurance. As Peter explains,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:3–5, emphasis added)

The blessings of our new life in salvation and the guarantee of incorruptible life in glory all come *through* Christ's resurrection.

This essay focuses on the two aspects of hope flowing from Christ's resurrection that we have already highlighted. Our personal reception of Christ's benefits, often called the "order of salvation" or *ordo salutis*, comes from how Christ earned those blessings for us. The fulfillment of all that God long promised his people that he would do, known as the "history of salvation" or *historia salutis*, comes to a head in Christ rising from the grave. Christ's resurrection is pivotal for the *ordo* and *historia salutis*.

Both aspects of hope connect to our covenant theology. Christ earned those saving benefits for us specifically as the last Adam, the covenant head of all his people. Christ also fulfilled the promises that God had made throughout redemptive history to his *covenant* people. Christ's resurrection is, then, the ground of covenant blessings and the fulfillment of covenant promises.

THE RISEN CHRIST AS GUARANTOR OF COVENANT BLESSINGS

Christ's resurrection is God's statement that his Son earned exalted status. Hence, we distinguish Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Before rising from death, Christ endured his state of humiliation, as Westminster Shorter Catechism 27 explains: "Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time." We should remember that Christ, as the Nicene Creed says, "for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven" to endure this humiliation. He did it for us.

Once Christ completed this suffering, he rose from death in exaltation. Reflecting upon the results of the Son assuming our nature and dying for us, Paul said,

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9–11)

Strikingly, Christ's reception of this highest glory in this way came to him because he successfully passed through his state of humiliation and attained this state of glory for fulfilling the mission that the Father had given him. Why would that shift from humiliation to exaltation be necessary for our salvation?

When God created Adam, he covenanted with him to reward his perfect and personal obedience with everlasting, heavenly life for himself and his posterity. If Adam had not sinned and had kept the whole law, God would have granted him entry into new-creation existence. When Adam broke this covenant by sinning, he plunged us all into misery under God's curse. We now owe God a twofold debt: a principal debt still to fulfill the law perfectly and an accrued penalty debt to endure the everlasting curse of death in this life and the next.

In this covenantal context, Christ came as the last *Adam*. He came to pay, through his work of humiliation, this twofold covenantal debt on our account. He fulfilled that covenant's conditions to earn everlasting, heavenly life for us. This reality about how God created us to achieve this state of higher blessing is the focus on Paul's reflection on creation's relationship to the resurrection: "If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:44–45). The last Adam, Jesus Christ, gives spiritual life because he has done all that the first Adam—and we as Adam's descendants—was supposed to do to obtain life in the new creation in deeper communion with God.

Jesus rose from death because he had fulfilled all these covenantal conditions for his people to enter this everlasting life. In this respect, his resurrection had twofold significance. First, it was God's legal declaration that our new representative had fulfilled all righteousness and achieved the legal status needed for entry into the new creation. Christ "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4). By the resurrection, the Spirit legally declared the Son's exalted status to have all authority in heaven and on earth. Commenting on the same reality, Paul explained, "God was manifest in the flesh, *justified in the Spirit*, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:16 KJV, emphasis added). The resurrection was a legal announcement that Christ satisfied the covenantal condition for righteousness and attained that legal status

of being justified. Because he attained this righteousness, he was exalted unto glory. The resurrection demonstrated that, for us, he fulfilled every condition and satisfied every covenantal debt that his people owed to God.

Christ lived, died, and rose *as the second Adam* and, so, for us and for our salvation. Reflecting on how God counted Abraham's faith to him as righteousness, Paul connects that truth to how our justification is bound into Christ's resurrection: "It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:24–25). Jesus died to forgive the sins of his people and rose to prove that he had earned *our* justification—the declaration that we are righteous in God's sight and have citizenship in heaven with the right to enter the new creation city (Phil. 3:20; Rev. 22:14).

Because Christ secured the legal ground to enter glorified life and has entered that blessed state as the forerunner of his people, we have full confidence that we will one day rise from death and be made like Christ in glorified life. Hebrews points to this certain hope of our entry into the holy places: "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh" (Heb. 10:19–20). Moreover, so sure is our entry into glory that God has "made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5–6, emphasis added). The new life we have in Christ means that our resurrection and life in glory is so sure that we can say we already have it. These blessings come to us from the risen Christ.

The risen Christ procured and grants these blessings that secure our future life with him but also pours the Spirit upon us now so that we experience a measure of that life in the age to come even in this age. This blessing is still connected directly to his role as our covenant representative. Having earned his resurrection glory by fulfilling the terms of the covenant for us, Christ gained new possession of the Spirit, whom he then gives to us: "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing" (Acts 2:33). Since we have Christ's righteousness imputed to us, we have right to new life in the Spirit. So, Christ gives us his Spirit to indwell us so that we might walk in newness of life as we wait to receive that life in full measure at the resurrection.



"Panels from an Ivory Casket with the Story of Adam and Eve," Byzantine, tenth or eleventh century, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

[God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Tit. 3:5–7)

We have hope because our salvation is grounded in Christ rising from death as the second Adam, our covenant representative who fulfilled everything we need to possess life.

THE RISEN CHRIST AS GOD'S FULLEST "YES" AND "AMEN"

These blessings are also the fulfillment of all that God had promised to his people before Christ came. Christ's resurrection is the high point in the story of God's covenant people. As God made covenants with his people throughout redemptive history, he used those covenants to push history forward toward the culmination of his plan of salvation. Christ's resurrection is the climax of that plan, fulfilling all God's covenants.

Because Christ's resurrection secures all the saving blessings that we considered above, it is the way that God fulfills all the covenants he had made with his people in the past. We already saw how Romans 1:4 shows Christ's resurrection as the announcement that he has earned exaltation, which, as Paul just before explained, is linked to "the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son" (Rom. 1:1–3). The gospel of the risen Christ fulfills all that old covenant Scripture. For this reason, "all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is

through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory" (2 Cor. 1:20). The story of all God's covenants comes to its completion in Christ's resurrection as he fulfilled all the covenantal conditions for us to enter life with him forever.

Hope in the resurrection gives evidence that we faithfully adhered to the teaching of the Old Testament, showing how the resurrection is the high point of Scripture's covenantal drama. When Paul addressed Felix, the governor at Caesarea, he invoked the resurrection as the reason of his hope:

But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. (Acts 24:14–15)

Paul worships "the God of our fathers," referring to the Old Testament patriarchs, and believes everything written in the Old Testament Scriptures. This connection shows that Christ's resurrection is the grand fulfillment of many things formerly promised.

GREAT HOPE

Christ rose from death to secure salvation as the fulfillment of the story of redemption that God had been orchestrating across redemptive history. For those twin reasons, we have great hope. Because the story before us is that, since Christ rose from death as our champion, he will raise us with him: "we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thess. 4:13–14). As we celebrate Christ's resurrection, we rest assured that we look forward to joining him in resurrection life forever. Great is our hope because Christ is risen and our covenantal communion with God is everlastingly secure. **NH**

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WISDOM FROM ABOVE



JOHN A. HARTLEY

What do you want to accomplish in your conversations, in your relationships? What do you want to accomplish when there is a disagreement? When the peace is broken? When someone opposes you? When someone outshines you? When someone is not honoring you? When someone is failing you? What do you want to accomplish?

There is always an answer to this question. Always. Even if you are not mindful of the answer yourself, the answer is always there, being unveiled in each sentence you speak and each moment of silence you keep. We are always engaging people in order to accomplish something, whether that something is selfish or noble, known or unknown. What we really want is always disclosed.

And be sure of this, says the apostle James, what you want to accomplish is not inconsequential. James argues throughout chapter 3 of his epistle that the tongue can set

on fire the entire course of life, or it can bring peace where there had been war. Right there, says James, found in your everyday speech, you can discover how rich you are in the wisdom of Christ or how enslaved you are to the wisdom of demons.

In James 3 the apostle is not tiptoeing around the truth about our nature or its most dangerous public instrument, the tongue. By the time he gets to verses 13–18, he is ready to show what we too often want to accomplish is quite simply, quite darkly, the exaltation of Self: I want to make myself larger. I want people to know I am smarter or better than they are or better than others are. I want people to know I am right, or clever, or amazing, or interesting, or important.

A PLATFORM FOR WHOM?

It is very easy for us all to use relationships to build a platform on which we promote ourselves instead of Jesus Christ. James asks, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” (v. 13). He knows my sinful heart is attracted to this question. I want to raise my hand. The exalted Self is happy someone is finally looking for it and needs its wisdom, giving opportunity for it to be noticed and heard. James’s question makes me salivate.

James, however, is being shrewd. He knows how easily we think that if people just had more of us, they would be better off. We are quick with answers. We are sharp with our tongue. We are skilled at finding holes in people’s logic. We are effective with zingers that put people in their place.

The question is really meant to capture us, not recruit us. James is getting our attention to teach us to look at ourselves quite differently. We once thought the wise and understanding among us were those who talked the most, or those with a clever tongue in criticizing opponents, or those with a bold tongue in tearing down authority. But James comes to make us thoroughly re-evaluate ourselves by a new standard. He adds: “By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom” (v. 13). Boom.

James wants the wise to show up. He wants the wise to stand out. But he wants us to understand this: Wisdom is not exclusively found in words you speak; it is found in the peace you leave behind. This is what he means by “works done in the meekness of wisdom” (v. 13). Such works are identical to the work described later in verse 18: “sowing in peace to make peace.” So James is saying, “Don’t just let your words before men show you are wise. Let your good conduct among men show it—especially your meekness.” Meekness proves the presence of true wisdom.

MADNESS OR MEEKNESS

What is meekness? Meekness is gentleness with a purpose in the midst of provocation. Or as Matthew Henry put it: “They are the meek who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified.”

Meekness is being careful with the troubled hearts of others in order to sow the seed of peace. Meekness cautiously makes space for people to turn to Christ and hope in Christ and rest in Christ and not so much turn to me and hope in me and rest in me. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is for me to clear the path to him.

Paul once said to Timothy:

The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with meekness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim. 2:24–25)

Meekness is the best climate for someone who is hard toward God to become soft. God, of course, remains free to grant the soft heart or not to grant it, but the relational climate he requires from his wise servants is one of meekness.

Those filled with wisdom from above know it is their job to become less and less heavy in all conflicts and confrontations. Why? So the truth of God becomes the issue. So righteousness becomes the issue. So goodness and the cross of Christ become the issue. Which means I must not become the issue.

Unfortunately, this does not always happen. James says, “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth” (v. 14).

There are two things that pull people away from God toward me. Two things that make me the issue: “jealousy and selfish ambition.”

Think about jealousy for a minute. Jealousy is an angry lament for the Self. Your spirit becomes fixated on what you are not getting from other people. Jealousy whispers in your heart, “You should be getting that. You should be getting that recognition. That opportunity. That respect. That admiration.” Jealousy is frustrated the Self does not have what others seem to have. Someone is being praised, why am I not being praised? Someone is being listened to, why am I not being listened to?

Now think about selfish ambition. Selfish ambition is a plan to exalt the Self. To assert Self more forcefully, more visibly, more loudly, more noticeably. It is a plan to become heavier and heavier in a situation. If jealousy is a bitter lament, selfish ambition is a sinister plan to cure it,

a plan sometimes hatched in seconds or over the course of hours, even days.

Do you remember the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son? He saw an ocean of grace and joy flow out of his father upon his once lost younger brother, but he could not share in it. There was a celebration in the house, but of the older brother it says: “He was angry and refused to go in” (Luke 15:28).

He had hatred in his heart toward his younger brother and he did not want to be anything like his father. Why? Because he was not being exalted. His heart was full of jealousy and selfish ambition. He was so important in his own eyes, he could not see what all of life is really about: the exaltation of God. It is about the praise of God’s glorious grace, the divine grace which seeks, finds, and welcomes sinners and bears all the costs of their restoration to the glory of the Redeemer Son.

James, knowing we like to hide our jealousy and selfish ambition, adds, “Do not boast and be false to the truth” (v. 14). In other words, do not add a second evil to the first. Do not add to your selfish ambition false statements about how you are the wise one and the understanding one. James is continuing here his whole thesis about the tongue in verses 1–12. Don’t use your mouth to try to wall-paper over the grim reality of your conduct.

WISDOM FROM BELOW OR ABOVE

James wants us to come to grips with a grim reality: when we rely on a selfish tongue instead of works done in the meekness of wisdom, we are controlled by a wisdom that is “earthly, unspiritual and demonic” (v. 15).

The cure of this disease of the present evil age is not to abandon life, hide in a cave, or cut out your tongue. The cure is to seek the wisdom that comes down from above. Which is always the wisdom from the Man who has come down from above, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is he who gives his wisdom freely to those who ask (James 1:5). But remember, when Christ shares his wisdom with you, it will make you a living sacrifice. You will suffer, but without regret.

Wisdom from below does not produce meekness. Wisdom from below does not want to accomplish the exaltation of God and the praise of his glorious grace. It wants to accomplish the exaltation of Self. Wisdom from below is the primordial wisdom of the devil. It is slick. It is learned. It is shrewd. It is logical. It is subtle and skillful. It is all these things for the advancement of Self—to gain praise, respect, and followers. It is wisdom for the deification of man, of Self.

The wisdom from above is quite different, as different as death is from resurrection. As different as Adam is from Christ. Wisdom from above is wisdom given by grace. It is the wisdom celebrated forever in the age to come. It is the wisdom delivered by the Holy Spirit from the throne of the risen Christ. It is the wisdom not natural to fallen men but gifted to all made new in their union with Christ by faith. It is the wisdom that now sees the world not as Satan sees it—a platform for the exaltation of the creature—but as a platform for the risen Christ to be revealed as the only exaltation the makes true and pure and happy the souls of men.

Think of it this way. The wisdom from above looks at a situation and says, “This situation is not a platform for me to promote myself, to show off what I know, to do better than someone else. This situation is a platform for making a godly peace. Not a platform for pride. It is a platform for drawing men and women to the peacemaking God, not to me.” Wisdom from above does not feed the soul on the failures of other men or women. Wisdom from above does not need someone to be put in their place to be happy.

Even deeper, wisdom from above feeds the soul on its identity in union with the crucified and risen Christ. “This situation does not need more of me,” says wisdom from above. “It needs more of Christ. This situation needs a clear window through which someone might look and see that my own soul is at rest in Christ, that everything I need for my reputation, my honor, my approval, I already have in Christ crucified for my sins and Christ raised for my justification.”

And this is why in verses 17 and 18 James says the wisdom from above—when it is flowing out of us—showers people with the things we see so beautifully and perfectly flowing from our Lord Jesus:

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Everything James has just said in those two final verses could be the résumé of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is even more vivid if we, for a moment, swap out the word “wisdom” for the word “man.”

But the Man from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by the Man who makes peace.

The true farmer from heaven sowed his own life into the ground by way of the Cross to make peace. “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God,” Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:24. He sowed his own life into humiliation, so he might gather a harvest of righteousness from souls once ruled by jealousy and selfish ambition.

His lowly ways of bringing us to peace with God now must become our lowly ways with all men, to the praise of His glorious grace.

PRAYER

Almighty and gracious God, fill us with the wisdom from above that belongs to the Man from above, Jesus, our God and Savior; grant us to see all we have in Christ and how we have obtained it; make self-exaltation look absurd, ugly, and boorish to us; teach us to add gentle things, slow judgments, carefully chosen words. Keep us from using our tongue as a consuming fire that burns down worlds; grant that our ways and words will allow righteousness to prosper, that men and women will love the Savior more because of how we have dealt with them. In his name, Amen. NH

The author is pastor of Apple Valley Presbyterian in Neenah, Wisconsin.

REFLECTING GOD’S MERCY IN NC

MIKE CLOY

In late September 2024, Hurricane Helene stunned residents in western North Carolina with record rainfall, unprecedented flooding, and mudslides. Over two hundred lives were lost. Homes, vehicles, and belongings were carried away by the persistent force of water and mud.

One of the affected residents is Mike “Clyde” Huffman. Clyde’s younger brother was killed in the flood after being trapped in his mobile home. Clyde nearly lost his life while he attempted to travel the one mile up the road to check on his brother. Floodwaters tossed Clyde, along with his truck, onto a high bank, saving him from being dragged down into the swollen creek. He’s physically OK, but in addition to losing his brother, he lost his home to a mudslide.

Jimmy Laughridge, a member of nearby mission work Landis OPC and a licensed general contractor, got to work in the aftermath of Helene. He proposed a plan to build 640-square-foot homes that would be safe and affordable housing for some of Landis OPC’s most vulnerable neighbors, including Clyde.

The church’s provisional session embraced the vision, excited to combine prayer and the ministry of the Word with this practical act of mercy. They named the initiative “Chalmers Homes,” in honor of Thomas Chalmers, a nineteenth century Scottish churchman.

MERCY AND THE GOSPEL

Two hundred years ago in Edinburgh, Chalmers ambitiously combined the preaching of God’s Word with acts of tangible mercy. He believed ministry could flourish by encouraging families to structure their homes around prayer, teaching, and acts of mercy. His parishioners’ homes became extensions of the church, places where the gospel was shared, and, through the Holy Spirit, lives were changed. Landis OPC’s session is committed to embracing Chalmers’s approach.

Each Chalmers Home includes two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchenette, laundry facilities, storage, and a living room—all constructed to meet North Carolina building codes. Volunteers, including skilled laborers, work together to complete a home in six to eight weeks at a cost of approximately \$30,000, thanks to partnerships with generous

The author with Clyde Huffman (center) and Johnny Serafini



local businesses. By comparison, a similarly sized contracted home could cost over \$200,000.

Oversight is provided by the Landis Disaster Oversight Committee, a team of thirteen drawn from Landis OPC, the Presbytery of the Southeast, and OPC Disaster Response. The committee manages logistics, funding, and volunteer coordination, ensuring each project is executed with care and integrity. Donations have been generous, reaching nearly \$370,000 across two funds for 2024 hurricane relief.

The individuals being served through this ministry include four elderly residents, two single parents, and one single mother with nine children, who’s receiving two connected Chalmers Homes. These families not only receive new homes but also ongoing spiritual care. Pastor Serafini and I visit regularly to pray, study Scripture, and share Christ’s love. Host families from Landis OPC provide fellowship and encouragement, inviting them to participate in the life of the church.

The Chalmers Homes are more than shelters; they are a living testament to God’s mercy and a reminder of his provision. As John Calvin wrote in his sermon on Galatians 6:9–11, “We must see our own faces reflected, as by a mirror, in the faces of the poor . . . who tremble under their burdens.” This ministry invites homeowners to trace the compassion they receive back to the heart of God.

Through this unique blend of Word and deed, Landis OPC is not only restoring homes but also rebuilding hope, for the love of Christ is a light in even the darkest storms.

Mike Cloy is an elder at Landis OPC.

THAT HIS HOUSE MAY BE FILLED

C. MARK JENKINS

All of God's Word is always relevant, but sometimes in the life of a church a passage hits with such force that you can feel the wonderful jolt of God's reshaping work. This was the case in our ministry as God used the parable of the great banquet recorded in Luke 14:15–24 to reshape our vision at Resurrection Presbyterian, a mission work of the OPC in Placentia, California.

In the parable, a king began inviting people to a great banquet. His first invitations are rejected because people were distracted by other things. They felt no need to attend the king's celebration. So he commands his servant, "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame" (v. 21). The servant returns and reports that he has done so, but there is still room. So the king says, "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet" (vv. 23–24). Christ's point is that those who are saved will not be the self-righteous who think their place is secure even though they reject Jesus's invitation (like the unbelieving Pharisees who first heard it). Rather, it will be the outcasts, the poor in spirit—the unexpected who are saved. He will send his invitation to the broken and lost and fill his house with them.

THE EXPECTED GUESTS

It is this determination of Christ's to fill his house with the unexpected that has taken shape in our congregation. We are in the densely populated, suburban Bible-belt of California—Orange County. It's a congested mix of the very wealthy, the struggling middle-class, the poor, the drug-addicted, and the homeless. When you enter a grocery store, you will have just walked past an exotic sports car, a cosmetic surgery customer, and a beggar. When my family moved here in the middle of 2021, we were expecting our ministry to be focused on reaching the lost. We also expected that we would be taking special care not to let non-Reformed folks feel out of place. But the type of lost and non-Reformed people we were imagining were the



Mark Jenkins speaking at the Wednesday gathering of the homeless ministry *Charity on Wheels*

“normal” kind, folks who would, in short order, fit in with the sort of middle-class people we all were, with some of the exotic-sports-car-driving folks eventually joining to make budgeting easier.

But God had other plans. The middle-class people in our community, it turned out, simply weren't interested in Jesus, at least not anymore. And if they were, they would rather go to one of the big, highly polished productions of Christianity found in every neighborhood in the county. A small church with zero programs? No thanks. We had hit a roadblock. We weren't growing. We were simply wondering why God had us here.

THE UNEXPECTED GUESTS

And then he opened doors that wonderfully disrupted our expectations and our vision of who we should be targeting. We got connected with a homeless ministry called *Charity on Wheels* that got its name from their practice of driving a truck into the local homeless encampments along a riverbed to minister Jesus. Participating with this ministry began providing countless opportunities for evangelism. Suddenly, we were in the streets and lanes—literally—inviting the poor and drug-addled to know the

God of love who isn't put off by how low we've fallen, the God of grace who doesn't ask us to put our lives together before we come to him, the God of hope and renewal who takes the dead, raises them, and seats them next to his Son at his banquet.

Serving with Charity on Wheels then led to more doors being opened at a local homeless shelter, and more opportunities for evangelism and discipleship followed. Currently, we conduct two Bible studies a week at one shelter, preach at a service there once a month, and preach once a month at a meal for the homeless put on by another ministry. In addition, we pick up people at the homeless shelter to come to worship on Sunday mornings and to join us for fellowship times.

God has used our efforts to bring a few to faith and some into membership. But the work is not easy or glamorous. We are weak people trying to help broken people, and we have a lot to learn about how best to do that! But there's one thing we are sure of: The King of the greatest banquet there will ever be doesn't simply want us to invite *our* expected guests and shrug when they respond with a nice excuse. He wants us to go *out*—wherever we need to, to find lost sinners, because our King will have his house filled.

GO INTO ALL THE WORLD

In your context, going out might not mean homeless ministry. (We don't want to push the imagery of this parable beyond the point Christ was making!) But whatever your context, your mission as a church and as a believer is to reach out patiently but persistently, never being satisfied until the King has filled his house. We are to go into *all* the world (Matt. 24:14; 28:19; Acts 1:8), *every* crack and

Charity on Wheels regularly visits people living here, along the riverbed in Orange County.



At Resurrection Presbyterian, a mission work of the OPC that began support in 2021



crevasse, *every* neighborhood—and to *every* kind of people. Your first steps toward that might mean renewing your focus on being hospitable to your nearest neighbors. Going out to the “highways and hedges” might mean targeting a local campus. But one thing is clear—we can't stop inviting. We are not allowed to sit in our complacency, comfortable with the folks who have already come. We must keep delivering the awesome invitation of the King to the rich and the poor, those who look like us and those who don't, those we could see visiting our church and those we can't imagine would ever come. And we do this trusting the promise that the King is with us, and he will not fail to fill his house!

Through your prayers and funding through the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, God has blessed our little church with great opportunities. Our prayer is that he continues to provide us with funding, faithfulness, and fruit so that we can continue to have a front row seat to his amazing work.

If you would like to know more about our ministry to broken and homeless, please reach out to us through our website: ResPresbyterian.com. And please pray!

The author is pastor of Resurrection Presbyterian Church in Placentia, California.

REVIEW: MARK BROWN'S *ORDER IN THE OFFICES*

JOHN R. MUETHER

Originally published in 1993, this anthology of Presbyterian studies of church office is now back in print, thanks to Reformed Forum. The second edition adds a chapter by Alan Strange and an expanded and updated annotated bibliography (itself an informative read); altogether, seventeen entries, enhanced with subject and Scripture indexes, and now in an attractive cloth edition.

All Presbyterians agree that the church is governed by “presbyters.” But what is in mind when Scripture mentions “bishops” or “elders” or “pastors”? How ought we to distinguish those who preach from those who rule? Herein lies division among Presbyterians today. These essays defend the three-office view (ministers, governors, and deacons) of historic Presbyterianism. Editor Mark Brown’s skillful gathering and editing of diverse voices underscores the depth and breadth of this tradition, including OPC and PCA authors, the great ecclesiological voice of Old Princeton, Charles Hodge, and Presbyterian voices from the British Isles. A particular pleasure for the reader is discovering the “forgotten” Thomas Smyth (1808–1873), the Irish immigrant who pastored First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina, for over forty years.

In the last two centuries the two-office view (that combines ministers and ruling elders into one office) has gained popularity, especially among Southern Presbyterians in what Iain Murray calls the “great agitation” of the nineteenth century (135). He blames James Thornwell and Robert Dabney for championing a position that Hodge and Smyth decried as “novel, anticonstitutional, and revolutionary” (98). (Although the case is made by other contributors, including editor Brown, that Thornwell and Dabney themselves were essentially three-office.)

One consistent theme running throughout the anthology is the importance of the Old Testament for new covenant church polity. The question of how Christ rules

his church must begin with the Old Testament, where we find the governing role of elders, notes Edmund Clowney (37–39), Smyth (89), Robert W. Eckardt (146), Leonard Coppes (179–184), Robert Rayburn (196), and Strange (248). Clowney perceptively notes that when Luke introduced elders in Acts 11:30, he sensed no burden to explain who they were, because he could safely assume his readers

understood the Old Testament background.

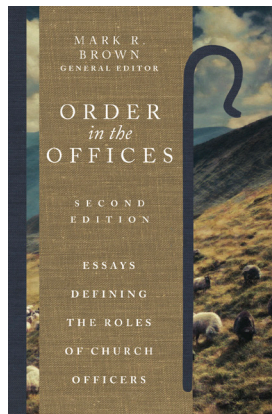
Charles Dennison argues that this biblical theology of office is lacking in many current studies that restrict themselves to “New Testament argumentation” (238).

As one would expect, proper attention is devoted to key New Testament texts. Regarding 1 Timothy 5:17, where Paul directs honor to elders who rule well and especially those who preach and teach, Strange notes that “there remain considerable exegetical differences in interpreting this verse” (250). Some of those differences are found among the

Princetonians and even with the contributors to this book. The text is a challenge to all Presbyterian views of office, and Clowney puts the matter well: that ministers and elders are both called elders “by no means demonstrates that their office is identical” (51).

Another important consideration is the qualification of elders to be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2 and 2 Tim. 2:24). Eckhardt explains that Paul cannot refer to a general teaching ability, because this is expected of all believers (Heb. 5:12). Rather, he describes the public ministry of the Word, and if this is demanded of all elders, “we are required to make them all preachers” (65).

Two-office advocates often claim their zeal is for the “parity of elders.” However, several contributors remind us that historic Presbyterianism focused not on a parity of teaching and ruling elders but rather a parity within the ordained ministry, and specifically against a prelaty that elevates bishops to higher status and power over other



ministers (93). Broader pleas for parity, Strange warns, risk heading in either one of two unpresbyterian directions: a practical episcopacy that “clericalizes” the church or a functional congregationalism that denies the set-apartness of ministerial office (252). The latter refers to the egalitarian temptation that is the focus of Gregory Reynolds’s chapter. Reynolds takes care not to suggest that an egalitarian impulse birthed the two-office view, but he warns that the popularity of the position under cultural conditions that render it plausible may yield unintended consequences, such as the devaluation of preaching and an erosion of ministerial authority in the church.

Readers will not find complete uniformity on historical assessments among the contributors. John Calvin’s teaching on office, for example, has divided interpreters in the past, and it prompts disagreement in this book. Peter Campbell argues that Calvin himself was inconsistent (70). But Jeffrey Boer comes to Calvin’s defense: “Calvin’s statements are regularly misemployed,” he claims, and Boer presents a way of reading Calvin consistently (118–119).

Boer captures the spirit of all the contributors when he expresses less interest to “press the numerical point” than to guard a “clear-cut distinction between presbyters with both teaching and ruling authority and presbyters with ruling authority” (124). There are hybrid positions that propose “two-and-a-half” offices or “two orders of elders,” many of whom are, as Reynolds observes, “functionally three office” (205). However, this book raises questions about the coherence and sustainability of such models.

Three decades ago, it was liberating for me to read these essays as a recently ordained ruling elder. Rather than diminish my sense of calling, it clarified my ruling authority while allowed me “to focus on the application of what the minister teaches from God’s Word” (217). Rereading these essays today, I am even more impressed with the timeliness of their arguments. Respect for governors cannot come at the expense of confusion about pastoral ministry. Ambiguity on this matter obscures the genius of Presbyterianism and disrupts the health of the church. *Order in the Offices* directs us to respect all offices while maintaining the sacred office of ministry, which historic Presbyterianism has always claimed is “first in the church, both for dignity and usefulness.”

The author is a ruling elder at Reformation OPC in Orlando, Florida, and professor of church history at RTS Orlando.

Order in the Offices: Essays Defining the Roles of Church Officers, Mark R. Brown, general editor. 2nd ed. Libertyville, IL: Reformed Forum, 2024. Cloth, 277 pages, \$34.99.

ON READING OLD BOOKS

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

—C. S. Lewis

***The Power and the Glory* (1940) by Graham Greene**

The twentieth-century British author Graham Greene spent some months in the Mexican state of Tabasco before writing this novel, and it reflects that time and place. For much of the 1930s and ’40s, Tabasco was overseen by a radically socialist, atheist government that outlawed and persecuted the Roman Catholic Church. The unnamed protagonist of Greene’s novel is a “whiskey priest”—an alcoholic driven by the guilt of his own moral failings yet possessing a competing awareness of the holiness of his vocation. He has been on the run from the government for years, pursued by a police lieutenant with a fanatical devotion to his vision of a purely secular state. The priest’s flight has progressively stripped him of all outward signs of his office. Though seeking to cross the border and be free, he is thwarted by the call of his office to serve those in desperate need. Throughout the narrative we are given recollections of his younger, vainer self, when he enjoyed a comfortable parish life. All of that is long past and has been replaced with a truer sense of himself as a sinful man, and yet with a deeper sense of his calling to follow Christ in suffering and sacrifice. He ends his life as a martyr, inglorious in his person but made glorious in his calling. While I cannot enter completely into the Catholic perspective of the book, as a pastor who preaches and teaches better—far better—than I am, there was much in this story that speaks to me.

—Clifford L. Blair

CONGRATULATIONS

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

- **Scott Denny**, Redeemer OPC, Dayton, Ohio

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

- **Abigail Keusal**, Grace OPC, Columbus, Ohio
- **Keziah Keusal**, Grace OPC, Columbus, Ohio
- **Geneva Keusal**, Grace OPC, Columbus, Ohio
- **Bethany Keusal**, Grace OPC, Columbus, Ohio

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

- **Andy Keusal**, Grace OPC, Columbus, Ohio
- **Mark Keusal**, Grace OPC, Columbus, Ohio

LEARNING ABOUT GIVING FROM KING DAVID

KEVIN M. KISLER

First Chronicles 29:1–19 records a scene electric with anticipation. Elderly King David gathered the people to finalize preparations for Solomon to build the Lord’s house. At the center of this exuberant gathering was stewardship—God’s grace motivating his people to acknowledge he is Lord of their lives and their treasures. The temple required vast quantities of precious commodities. David and the people reached deep into moneybags and brought forth prized heirlooms to lay all before their Redeemer. These saints of old challenge us to give our possessions to Jesus to build and beautify the spiritual temple of the church through the Word and sacraments. What does this great moment in sacred history teach us?

God’s people give when graciously challenged. David did not use pressure-packed, guilt-laden tactics. However, he boldly invited them to participate. He established the need clearly. He made himself an example to pave the way for others. And he closed with a moving appeal, asking “who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the Lord?” (29:5), echoing the priests’ ordination (Ex. 29:33). Rather than feeling manipulated, the people rose to the occasion. Whether promoting the Thank Offering, proposing an ambitious ministry budget, or highlighting a Christ-honoring benevolence cause, we entreat believers to meet the opportunities God sets before us.

God’s people give from the heart. Some claim Old Testament figures practiced external religion. However, the text highlights the people’s joy in offering gifts “with a whole heart” (29:9). Like us, these saints served God with hearts freed from dominating selfishness and sin. But because stewardship is a grace starting inside us, we follow David in praying for God to do what only he can: direct our hearts toward himself (29:18).

God’s people give as a community. That assembly showed we accomplish more together than alone. Furthermore, as the generosity of the body stirred rejoicing (29:9), we recognize the exponential encouragement derived when God works among the brethren. We do not advertise our

individual contributions, yet publicizing the aggregate giving of our congregation, regional church, or denomination honors God’s power to move many to generosity and unity.

God’s people give out of humility. David acknowledged that what had been given to God had first come from God (29:14, 16). So, too, Paul posed the soul-searching question, “What do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7). Humbled by God’s providence, which distributes riches and honor with inscrutable wisdom (1 Chron. 29:12), we make everything borrowed from the Lord in dependence available to the Lord in service.

God’s people give, seeking Christ’s glory. David fittingly marked this occasion with sacrifices. Though majestic, the temple would be a place of blood and death, anticipating the atonement accomplished by God’s Lamb, the Lord Jesus. Our giving provides for the sending and supporting of those who proclaim peace in Jesus’s name. Every convert won and every saint sustained magnifies the precious name of Jesus, which is always our ultimate goal.

The author is pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York.





APR 2025 PRAYER CALENDAR

1
Mike & Jenn Kearney, Mbale, Uganda. Pray for their preparations to go to Uganda. / Pray for **Mike (Elizabeth) Diercks**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Ohio.

2
Home Missions general secretary **Jeremiah Montgomery**. / Pray for Stated Clerk **Hank Belfield** and his administrative team as they prepare the agenda for the upcoming General Assembly.

3
Pray for **Fred & Kaling Lo**, Mbale, Uganda, to have growing zeal and fruitfulness for the Lord in Uganda. / Pray for US Army active military chaplains **David (Jenna) DeRienzo** and **Joshua (Stephanie) Jackson**.

4
Gregory & Ginger O'Brien, Downingtown, PA. Pray that the Lord would bless the ministry of Christ Church Downingtown. / Pray for **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda, to wisely balance ministry and family responsibilities.

5
Bruce (Sue) Hollister, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Midwest. / Pray that the Lord would prepare the hearts of those who will hear the gospel through various **Short-Term Mission Teams** this summer.

6
Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray that the women on the Community Health Team would know the Lord. / Pray for **Danny Olinger** and the trustees of **Great Commission Publications** as they meet later this month.

7
Pray for missionary associate **Beatrix Taverner**, Nakaale, Uganda, to have wisdom and creativity as she teaches the Verdick girls. / **Mark & Celeste Jenkins**, Placentia, CA. Pray for the continued growth and spiritual development of Resurrection Presbyterian Church.

8
Nate & Anna Strom, Sheboygan, WI. Pray the Lord would build his church in Sheboygan, WI. / Pray for **Gregory Reynolds** as he edits *Ordained Servant*.

9
Pray for associate missionaries **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda, as Christopher takes on administrative responsibilities for the Timothy Discipleship Program. / Pray for ruling elders and congregations to be uplifted by *The Ruling Elder Podcast*.

10
Home Missions associate general secretary **Al Tricarico**. / Pray for tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**, Nakaale, Uganda (on furlough), to have mutually encouraging visits with Christian brothers and sisters in the United States.

11
Jim (Bonnie) Hoekstra, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Wisconsin & Minnesota. / Yearlong intern **Mitchell (Cali) Watson** at Knox OPC in Silver Spring, MD.

12
Pray for the **African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEP)**, Kenya, as they hold their General Assembly this month. / Yearlong intern **Vince (Eri) Lam** at South Austin OPC in Austin, TX.

13
Affiliated missionaries **Dr. Mark & Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. Praise the Lord for new adult baptisms. / **Sam & Milda Lukosius**, Springfield, OH. Pray for the Lord to bless the outreach efforts of Living Water OPC.

14
Bill & Margaret Shishko, Commack, NY. Pray that The Haven OPC would deeply experience God's immeasurable power at work through their ministry. / Pray for the ongoing **OPC Disaster Response** efforts to serve McDowell County, NC, communities following the devastation of Hurricane Helene.



The Los (day 3)



The Lams (day 12)

.....
15 Pray for Foreign Missions administrative coordinators **Ling Lee** and **Joanna Grove** and for general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as he travels. / Yearlong intern **Joseph (Myranda) Scherschligt** at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, DE.

.....
16 **Mark (Peggy) Sumpter**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Northwest. / **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray that the Maldonado Bible study group is able to begin worship services before June.

.....
17 Pray for Home Missions administrative coordinator **Lauren LaRocca**. / Yearlong intern **Jon (Stacey) Jung** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.

.....
18 Affiliated missionaries **Jerry & Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic. Pray for God to save family members of children who attend Bible club. / Yearlong intern **Josiah (Hannah) Stockwell** at Pilgrim OPC in Bangor, ME.

.....
19 Associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for believers to remain steadfast in faith, trusting in the Lord's sovereignty and care. / Pray for **Brian (Nicole) Tsui**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Northern California & Nevada.

.....
20 **Johnny & Berry Serafini**, Marion, NC. Pray for unity and growth



The Stockwells (day 18)

within the congregation of Landis OPC. / Yearlong intern **Stuart (Simone) Ireland** at Covenant OPC in New Bern, NC.

.....
21 Pray for the church in East Africa to grow despite severe persecution. / Pray for OPC.org technical assistant, **Stephen Pribble**.

.....
22 **John & Grace Jee**, Columbia, MD. Pray for the congregation of Word of Life to be strong in the Lord. / Pray for retired missionaries **Cal & Edie Cummings**, **Mary Lou Son**, and **Brian & Dorothy Wingard**.

.....
23 **John & Erin Nymann**, Suffolk, VA. Praise the Lord for blessing All Saints Presbyterian Church with the opportunity to purchase a building. / Pray for **Anna Hall**, administrator of the Committee on Ministerial Care.

.....
24 **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for future leaders to develop from the six to eight attendees of a weekly men's group. / Pray that the **Committee on Diaconal Ministries** would be used of the Lord to help train, equip, and encourage deacons across the denomination.

.....
25 Pray for wisdom and perseverance for affiliated missionaries **Craig & Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. / **Andrew & Cheyenne Farr**, Klamath Falls, OR. Pray for the congregation of Klamath Reformed Church as they plan spring outreach events.

.....
26 Pray for **Andrew (Rebekah) Miller**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / Pray for Loan Fund manager, **Mark Stumpff**.

.....
27 **Ben & Heather Hopp**, Africa & Haiti. Ask the Lord to bless



The Tsuis (day 19)

connections with the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC) in Kenya. / Pray for accounts manager, **Charlene Tipton**.

.....
28 **Mark & Lorie Wheat**, Sugar Land, TX. Pray for regular attendees of Good Shepherd OPC to become members. / **Mr. and Mrs. F.**, Asia. Pray for Mrs. F.'s active witness to the women and girls the Lord brings to her.

.....
29 **Nate & Amy Jeffries**, West Norriton, PA. Pray for the health of members with serious illness. / Pray for **Esther Parks**, office manager.

.....
30 **Mr. and Mrs. M.**, Asia. Pray that the materials Mr. M. translates will be useful for the growth of the church. / Pray for **Anneke Fesko**, care coordinator for ministers' wives for the Committee on Ministerial Care.



Andrew Chang (center, blue tie) with members of the presbytery at his ordination and installation

NEWS

CHANG ORDAINED AND INSTALLED AT QUEENS, NY

On February 8, Andrew Chang was ordained and installed as pastor of Reformation Presbyterian Church in Queens, New York. Chang, a graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary, was previously a member of the congregation and several years ago was motivated and encouraged by the congregation to pursue gospel ministry. Rev. William Shishko, Rev. Richard Gerber, and Rev. Ha Kyun Whang, Chang's father, participated in the special service in Queens Village.

MEN'S RETREAT AT GREEN LAKE

Bill Muether

On February 21–22, we were blessed to have Rev. David Veldhorst speak at the twelfth annual Presbytery of Wisconsin and Minnesota Men's Retreat in Green Lake, Wisconsin. The event, titled "Christian Men in the Home," included a study from Psalms 101, 127, 128, and 131, and the men were reminded of their calling to emulate Christ's integrity and discipleship and to uphold proper ambitions, all for the glory of God.

WILLIAMS INSTALLED AT GAINESVILLE, FL

On February 7, Rev. Charles B. Williams was installed as a pastor at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, Florida. Rev. David B. Carnes gave the charge to Williams, and elder Josh A. Downs gave the charge to the congregation.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On January 7, **Michael J. Kearney**, previously pastor of Covenant OPC in Cedar Falls, IA, was installed as a missionary evangelist to Uganda.
- On January 24, **Zachary Johnson** was ordained and installed as a pastor at Immanuel OPC in Bellmawr, NJ.
- On February 7, **Albert J. Tricarico Jr.**, was installed as a pastor of New Life OPC in Williamsport, PA. He will continue to labor as associate general secretary of the CHMCE.
- On February 7, **Charles B. Williams** was installed as a pastor at Redemption OPC in Gainesville, FL.
- On February 8, **Andrew Chang** was ordained and installed as pastor of Reformation Presbyterian Church in Queens, NY.

REVIEWS

When Christians Disagree: Lessons from the Fractured Relationship of John Owen and Richard Baxter, by Tim Cooper. Crossway, 2024. Paperback, 184 pages, \$18.99. Reviewed by OP elder James Gidley.

It is a sound maxim that you should not meet your heroes. Their heroic stature is diminished by a close-up view of their faults and failings. Therefore, if either John Owen or Richard Baxter is your hero, beware of this book, for it provides a close-up view that will take your hero off his pedestal.

Cooper attests his high regard for both men: "The achievements and the example

At Williams's installation: Timothy Van Steenburgh, Robert Tarullo, Williams, Josh Downs, and David Carnes



Retreat attendees in Green Lake, WI

they have left behind are mightily impressive” (7). But, at the same time, “they are a lived example of how even the most godly Christians disagree and do a pretty poor job of it” (7). What follows is a concise parallel biography of the two seventeenth-century ecclesiastical giants and the influences that led to their theological differences and their intense dislike for each other.

Owen (1616–1683) and Baxter (1615–1691) lived through the same era in the same country, and each entered the gospel ministry, but they had very different experiences. Owen was educated at Oxford University (11–12) and eventually became its vice-chancellor. Baxter lacked the benefit of a university education and was largely self-taught (12). Owen’s position at Oxford kept him near the center of the swirl of national events during the turbulent period of the English Civil War and the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. Baxter came to prominence through his remarkable effectiveness as the pastor of a Church of England parish in Kidderminster and was directly and deeply affected by the fighting and the theological radicalism of Cromwell’s army. Cooper sees these differences in life trajectory as largely responsible for their differing viewpoints, even largely explaining their theological differences.

Cooper’s aim is to encourage us to be more kind and gentle in our assessments of those with whom we disagree. He believes that our distance from Owen and Baxter in time and circumstances will make it easier for us learn from their story: “We have nothing at stake in these two men, so we can observe them dispassionately and objectively” (4).

For Calvinists committed to the Westminster Standards, this is the Achilles heel of Cooper’s project. We cannot be dispassionate about Baxter’s heterodoxy, which makes our own faith rather than

the righteousness of Christ the ground of our justification. Baxter’s view has been labeled Neonomianism, because he conceived of the gospel as a new law. Owen, on the other hand, was the champion of Reformed orthodoxy. Cooper emphasizes that Owen and Baxter “shared an enormous amount of common ground” (69) and believes that they should have given more weight to their areas of agreement. Nevertheless, their differences on justification

strike at the heart of the gospel. The theological part of the controversy between Owen and Baxter is very much alive to us, and rightly so.

I recommend this book to anyone who would like a brief and accessible introduction to the lives and times of Owen and Baxter. However, I cannot recommend the author’s approach to their controversy on justification.

***God and the Civil War: Lincoln in Moral and Theological Perspective*, by Mark J. Larson. Stone Tower, 2024. Paperback, 173 pages, \$19.95. Reviewed by OP minister Sam Logan.**

Mark Larson’s new book, *God and the Civil War*, is Reformed, orthodox, and superb! It is an incredible irony that, on the very threshold of the Civil War, Christianity permeated American society. Protestant church buildings were everywhere. These houses of worship were likely filled on any given Sunday in the months preceding the Civil War. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of the nation’s population would have been in attendance. Americans were a Christian people. As Abraham Lincoln put it, “Both North and South read the same Bible and pray to the same God.” There were, nevertheless, “differences of opinion” about how the Bible handles certain theological and other matters. A few of the “differences of opinion” identified by Dr. Larson are listed below.

(1) Should ordained ministers be allowed (or possibly even required) to fight in what we have come to call the “Civil War” (40)?

(2) How should biblical Christians respond to continued racial injustice in their countries and, in fact, how should “racial injustice” be defined? Specifically, is any racial discrimination always wrong (42–55)?

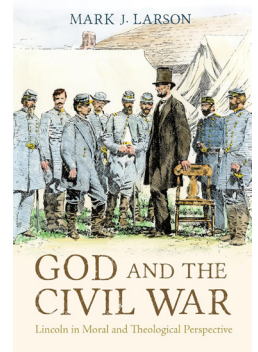
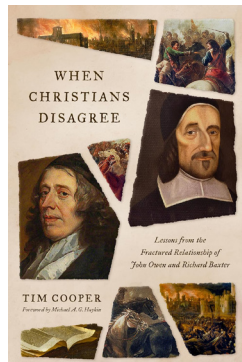
(3) In his sermon, “A Strong Rod Broken and Withered” delivered on the occasion of the death of John Stoddard, the preeminent American theologian Jonathan Edwards asserted: “The removal of legitimate rulers from a people by death is to be looked upon as an awful judgment of God on that people and is to be greatly lamented.” Was Edwards *biblically* correct?

Dr. Larson briefly but excellently discusses the political views of Jonathan Edwards Jr., James Henley Thornwell, Robert Lewis Dabney and, in his sixth and seventh chapters, provides an extensive interpretation of “The Hand of God in the Life of Lincoln” and an excellent examination and interpretation of “The Work That God Had Done.”

I hope and pray that this book will be assigned and widely read in both secondary and college-level American history classes.

***Reclaiming the “Dark Ages”: How the Gospel Light Shone from 500 to 1500*, by Iain Wright and Yannick Imbert. Christian Focus, 2024. Paperback, 152 pages, \$10.49. Reviewed by OP pastor Brian L. De Jong.**

Imagine you are learning the German language. You have made progress but remain far from fluent. In your zeal for mastery, you travel to Germany. Once there, you realize your dilemma. As you converse



with native speakers, you understand a percentage of what they say but miss as much as you grasp. Everything seems simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. You are aware that your knowledge of German history, philosophy, and culture is incomplete. You know certain things, but there is so much more to learn.

Such might be the experience of a reader of this book by Iain Wright and Yannick Imbert. From a shared love for church history, these brothers have produced a helpful introductory survey of the so-called “Dark Ages.” Highlighting ten Christian leaders from the year 500 to the year 1500, the authors seek to demonstrate that the light of the gospel shone throughout Europe during the medieval period. Those centuries were not as dark as they are sometimes characterized.

The book introduces approximately one theologian per century, and includes Leo the Great, Boethius, Alcuin,

Gottschalk, Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Waldo, Bonaventure, John Wycliffe, and Jan Hus. Some of these names are familiar, others are more distant, and a few may be altogether unknown.

Each chapter provides a brief biographical sketch of the individual as well as information on the broader context of the era. Theological contributions (and controversies) are discussed, as well as important works by that leader. Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo?* is one example. Finally, the chief contributions of the leader in view are reviewed, as are lessons learned for modern life.

But why would the reader be like our budding German speaker? Why would he or she find this volume simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, exhilarating and puzzling?

Because this book is aimed at a casual student of church history and not at the seminarian or graduate student, many will consider the entire medieval era entirely foreign and largely unintelligible. For instance, what do most of us know about Charlemagne? Perhaps we’ve heard the name and have a vague sense that he was a king or an emperor of some sort, but that exhausts our knowledge.

Modern education (both Christian and secular) has severely shortchanged the study of history. Particularly emaciated is any understanding of medieval Europe. Many Christians (including most church officers) have almost no general knowledge of the one thousand years under consideration in this book. Recognizing Charlemagne’s

name is not the same as understanding his importance to Western history.

Ecclesiastical history is also frequently deficient. As members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, we love the Reformation. We also appreciate Puritan England and the Westminster Assembly. We further delight in the study of the OPC from 1936 to the present. All of that is well and good. But our areas of ignorance are sadly

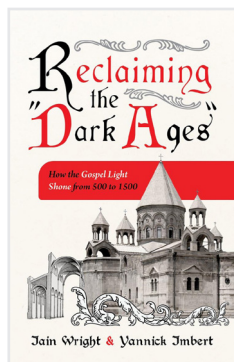
profound. Not only do we not know who Gottschalk was, but it is hard to grasp the nuances of his ninth-century perspective on double predestination and divine grace.

Readers with an interest in church history will likely find this a hard book, but a good book. It will take mental effort to understand these figures, but the effort is worthwhile. Dr. Norman De Jong maintained that real education is necessarily painful because true learning confronts our ignorance. It reveals to us what we do not know, in order that we can gain new information and receive truly new insights. Readers may find this volume humbling and somewhat painful, but faithful are the wounds of these friends.

***The Character of Christ: The Fruit of the Spirit in the Life of Our Saviour*, by Jonathan Landry Cruse. Banner of Truth, 2023. Paperback, 176 pages, \$13.00. Reviewed by OP pastor Nathan P. Strom.**

Most know Marcus Aurelius from the fictional blockbuster *Gladiator*. The real Marcus Aurelius wrote *Meditations*, a classic treasury of virtue and self-improvement—think of a Stoic version of Proverbs. My personal favorite is when Aurelius says life is like wrestling. We firmly fix our feet, ready to withstand life. In short, life and wrestling are about keeping your balance.

Take it from an old wrestler—ministry mimics the push and pull of life. Pastors



POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Pastor: Covenant OPC in Cedar Falls, a university town in northeast Iowa, seeks a full-time pastor. Contact elder Ed Olthoff for more details: edjolthoff@gmail.com. Website: cedarfallsopc.org.

Pastor: Little Farms OPC is looking for a senior pastor who has a passion for shepherding members to be Christ-committed, biblically literate, and culturally aware; who desires an outwardly focused church without compromising the Scriptures or the doctrines of the Westminster Standards; and who desires biblical worship that brings honor and glory to our Lord and Savior. Send résumés to employment@lfcopc.org.

Pastor: Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Elmer, New Jersey, is seeking an energetic, distinctly Reformed full-time pastor to preach, teach, and shepherd the flock. We are a medium-sized congregation blessed with substantial facilities and located in beautiful, rural, Southern New Jersey. Please send your résumé and contact information to Rich Duggan at richduggan98@gmail.com.

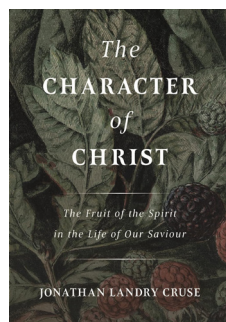
use truth to push and pull hearts where God intends them to go. Occasionally, we get people off balance to move them in the right direction.

Jonathan Landry Cruse's book, *The Character of Christ*, illustrates this push-and-pull dynamic well. Cruse scores a reversal—toppling our “stoic” intuitions about the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16–24, esp. 22). We assume it's a list of virtues we pursue.

Cruse wisely shows they are something, or better put, *someone* else first. “Since the fruit of the Spirit is not a to-do list, this is not a how-to book. This is a he-did book. This is a he-is book. This is a book about the sheer unmatched beauty of Christ” (9).

Cruse advances the thesis that beholding Jesus's magnificence produces the fruit of the Spirit, quoting 2 Corinthians 3:18: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Cruse states, “When we look *to* our Saviour, we start to look *like* our Saviour” (149, emphasis original). These are glorious truths—worship is root and transformation is fruit.

I worshiped as I read. Enjoy this sample from the second chapter. Children's love for Jesus proves the joy in the God-man's heart. “Children were drawn to him and he to them. It takes a spark of joy to enter the world of chil-



dren.” Whose heart isn't softened by seeing the elderly and young laughing together? Imagine Christ brightening a schoolboy's day with a nudge and a wink! Consider his gentleness: “Others see that same child and have the opposite reaction: the helplessness of the baby draws them to it. . . . Precisely *because* it is weak and delicate, they want to protect and cherish it. . . . He [Jesus] is drawn to us” (124).

Cruse means to elicit worship in our hearts so we might become the radiance of Christ's beauty. I experienced the former, and pray the latter happened as well.

The book also calls for saving trust in Christ while Christ's return looms (71). As a busy church planter, I need books that woo sinners to the beauty of Christ. This short book does this with crisp, energetic prose. I will be giving copies away in my church and neighborhood.

***Dinner with the King: How King David's Invitation Shows Us God's Love*, by Paul Tautges. P&R, 2024. Hardcover, 32 pages, \$19.99. Reviewed by OP member Cheyenne Farr.**

This children's picture book, written by a pastor and father of ten children, asks: “What if a king invited you to his palace?” Color illustrations illuminate the exciting possibilities and skillfully introduce the

child to Mephibosheth's story in 2 Samuel 9. The child hears a brief history of King Saul and Prince Jonathan, Mephibosheth's grandfather and father. This backstory creates tension as King David summons Mephibosheth. Why does King David invite Mephibosheth to the palace? The stunning answer—to be part of King David's family.

Mephibosheth needed grace from a king, and so do we, Tautges explains, but not from an earthly king. Because of our disobedience, we need grace from Jesus, “the King of the whole world.” Illustrations of children acting poorly help show how we are sinners, sinners who deserve to be punished, yet who have received grace. The book ends with a beautiful reminder of Christ dying on the cross in our place and our hope: One day we will be with King Jesus, eating at

his table in his heavenly palace. The climactic illustration shows adults and children around the table with a glowing silhouette, representing King Jesus. In my view, this was tastefully done in ways that uphold the Westminster Standards' teaching regarding the

second commandment.

Although written for ages five to nine, *Dinner with the King* helps children as young as three see how the story of King David's grace to Mephibosheth points to our gospel hope in Christ.

