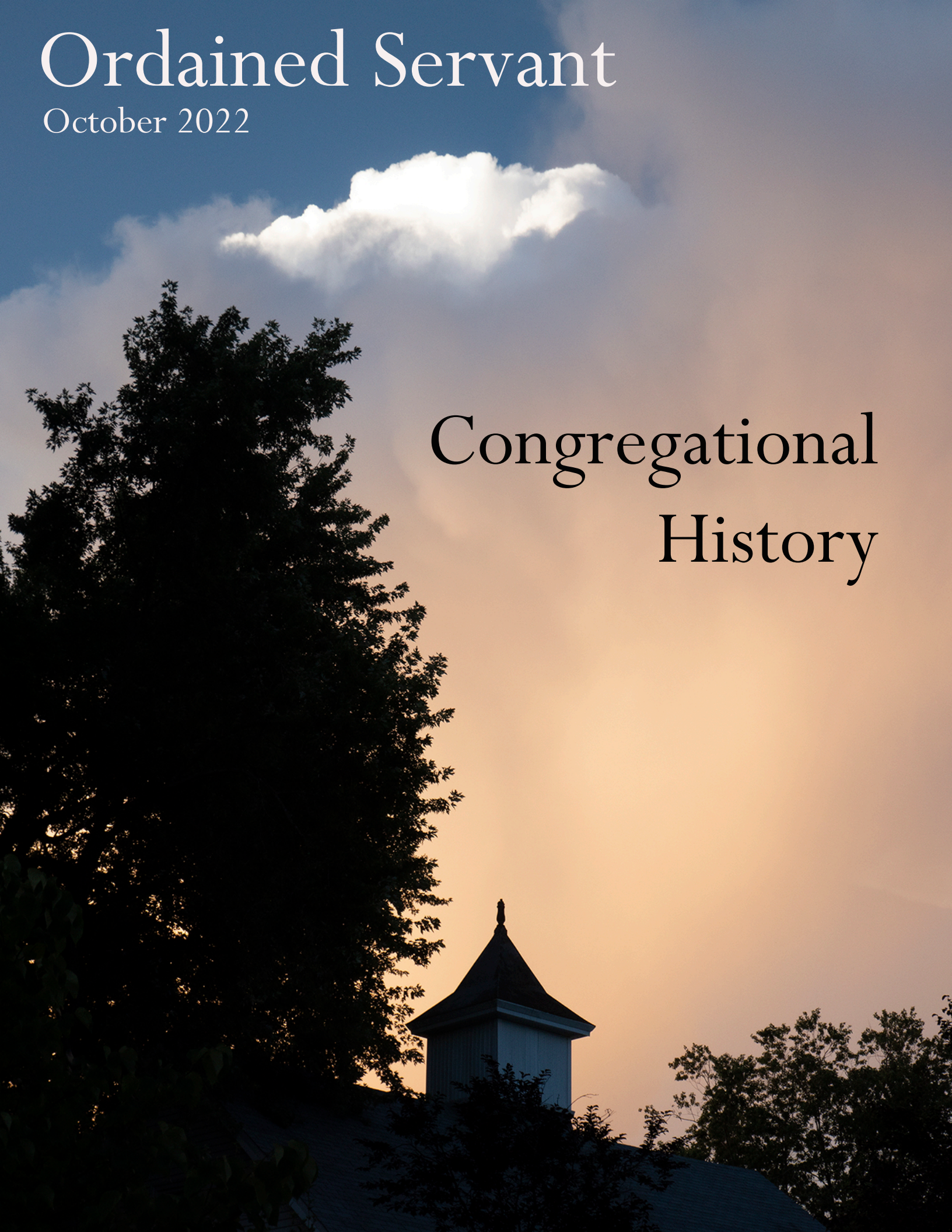


# Ordained Servant

October 2022

## Congregational History



# *Ordained Servant Online*

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**CURRENT ISSUE: THE IMPORTANCE OF CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY**

**October 2022**

### *From the Editor*

On becoming a Christian fifty years ago, one of the first changes that took place in my thinking was a new interest in history, especially church, family, and local history. Christianity is, of course, inherently historical, rooted in the history of redemption—of our covenant God redeeming his people. When I asked John Muether to write an article appropriate to his retirement as the historian of the OPC, I was thinking more along the lines of articulating a Christian philosophy of history; however, John came up with a topic more immediately important to help foster a sense of the importance of history, especially the particular histories of our congregations. What he refers to as “pastlessness” reminds me of another problem—presentism. Recently James A. Sweet, professor of history at University of Wisconsin at Madison and president of the American Historical Association, had to apologize for an essay he published in which he takes on presentism:

The present has been creeping up on our discipline for a long time. Doing history with integrity requires us to interpret elements of the past not through the optics of the present but within the worlds of our historical actors. Historical questions often emanate out of present concerns, but the past interrupts, challenges, and contradicts the present in unpredictable ways. History is not a heuristic tool for the articulation of an ideal imagined future. Rather, it is a way to study the messy, uneven process of change over time. When we foreshorten or shape history to justify rather than inform contemporary political positions, we not only undermine the discipline but threaten its very integrity.

Congregational histories are a unique kind of historiography; they are not as easily subjected to presentism, and they help cultivate an antidote to pastlessness. Muether’s article should motivate congregations to elect a historian and encourage congregational participation in recording that history. An example of such local congregational histories can be found in the church I helped plant: *Heritage: A History of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church* <https://www.amoskeagchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/APC-history-Orig.pdf>.

Having commented on the preface of his “Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church” last month, Alan Strange now begins with part 1 of

his commentary on Chapters 1–2, which should prove enormously helpful to ministers and sessions.

Darryl Hart reviews *Reformed & Evangelical Across Four Centuries: The Presbyterian Story in America* by Nathan P. Feldmeth, S. Donald Fortson, III, Garth M. Rosell, and Kenneth J. Stewart. He continues to make a cogent case for the uniqueness of Presbyterianism, distinct from evangelicalism.

Ryan McGraw reviews *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Volume 3: The Works of God and the Fall of Man* by Peter van Mastricht. This is the third of seven volumes in this monument to the power of post-Reformation dogmatics. Unlike modern systematic theologies, Mastricht applies his theology to the Christian life and the church, while maintaining precision of thought and depth of insight. Perhaps some modern theologian will attempt to imitate this method.

My review article, “Theology in a Time of Persecution,” is a review of *The Theology of the Huguenot Refuge: From the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to the Edict of Versailles*. This volume, edited by Martin I. Klauber, gives profound insight into the history and theology of the Huguenot refugees. It also provides encouragement to Reformed Christians in a time such as ours.

Our poem this month is by Ann Bradstreet (1612–72), “In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth.” She was the first and the most prominent colonial American writer to be published. This is a long poem well suited to remembering Queen Elizabeth II, whose reign was so long. Her old-fashioned virtues are those that come from historic Christianity. Modernity can barely fathom such.

The cover photo is of the barn cupola behind our home in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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*Ordained Servant* exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

# ServantHistory

## Needed: Congregational Historians

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by John R. Muether

When I stepped down as historian of the OPC last year, after the privilege of serving for two decades, I left with the joy and satisfaction of working with wonderful colleagues on the Committee for the Historian. Among the highlights of my tenure were establishing the Grace Mullen Archives room in the denomination offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the denomination, and offering daily features of OPC history on the church website.

Yet I also left the post with one unfulfilled ambition. Over time I grew in the conviction that training in local history was lacking in our church. It was my hope to develop resources to encourage the writing of congregational histories throughout our denomination. But for a variety of reasons, this goal was unrealized.

A recent conversation with a Presbyterian minister has rekindled this interest. My friend pastors a well-educated, established congregation that recently exited the mainline Presbyterian denomination. He conducted a brief survey of his congregation's historical awareness and found that few members had any knowledge about the history of the church prior to their joining. They knew almost nothing about its founding or the history of their former or new denomination. Most could not name the church's former pastors.

These results were eye-opening to him, but they hardly took me by surprise. After all, a disregard for history is a long-established feature of the American temperament. This church is simply displaying our predilection toward "pastlessness." History is a burden that Americans, even American evangelicalism, are all too eager to shed. The result is a lack of historical consciousness in the life of many congregations.

My initial reaction also contained a measure of pride. This problem generally does not bedevil the OPC, I thought. On the contrary, Orthodox Presbyterians have a far better appreciation for history. As I have visited OP congregations, it has always impressed me how many members of our churches are familiar with the events surrounding the founding of our denomination. They have read about the life of Machen, and they are aware of significant events like the founding of Westminster Seminary and the leadership of its early faculty. Instruments like *New Horizons* make possible a strong sense of connectionalism within our denomination.

Upon further reflection, however, I wondered how well we know the stories of our own congregations. When and why did the church begin? Who were the former elders and pastors of the church? Increased geographical mobility presents a particular challenge to remembering local stories. This heritage will often disappear with the passing of the founding generation. While stewardship of our history seems well maintained on a General Assembly level, congregational memory is at greater risk.

Where might one go to find that information? Perhaps to church websites? I conducted my own survey of forty-five randomly selected Orthodox Presbyterian congregational

websites and discovered that our congregations approach their history unevenly. Only a third (15) devoted any attention to its story. For those that did, the length varied from as little as 65 words to as many as 800. The median was 350 words – which is not a lot of attention. I will grant that a website may not be the best place to cover at length a congregation’s history. But ought not it to say *something*? Might it not serve even an evangelistic purpose, as witness to the work that God has done in and through this little flock?

### What Local History Provides

As beneficial as congregational histories can be for visitors and inquirers, they can accomplish a lot more. The history of your church will augment officer training and new members classes. An incoming pastor will gain helpful insights into your congregation. In addition to enhancing a church website, excerpts can be an occasional feature in the church bulletin. Local history can prompt healthy congregational reflection and recommitment to the church, especially as it celebrates an anniversary.

Harry Reeder in his book *Embers to Flame* even goes so far as to suggest that “connecting to the past” is the first step toward the revitalization of a struggling congregation. He writes:

Connect your church to the vibrancy of its past. Do it with celebration and worship for what God has done, just as the Israelites would pile up stones to teach the next generation what the Lord had done. Celebrate the past victories, investigate and identify the principles that the Lord blessed, and then contemplate how to implement them in the present, remembering that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The goal is to have a church that does not live in the past, but does learn from the past, and then lives in the present in order to shape the future.<sup>1</sup>

Yet even these suggestions do not exhaust the value of congregational history. Consider, for example, a study of worship in the OPC. One important window on worship is the hymnody of the church. We can review the denominational efforts that produced the original *Trinity Hymnal* (in 1961), the revised *Trinity Hymnal* (1990), and the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (2018). By this we can judge what Orthodox Presbyterians consider the proper songs of public worship.<sup>2</sup>

But what do Orthodox Presbyterians actually sing? The canon of song of a particular church is far smaller than the more than 600 selections in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. How many of those pages are dog-eared, and which of them remain pristine? Reviewing congregational worship practices (from church bulletins or other records of hymn selections) would provide a fascinating window on the music of the church.

We can say the same about other worship practices across the OPC. What are the versions of the pew Bibles in our churches, and when did that change? How has the Lord’s Supper frequency changed throughout our history?

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<sup>1</sup> Harry L. Reeder III, *Embers to Flame: How God Can Revitalize Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 192–93.

<sup>2</sup> See especially chapter 2 (on the *Trinity Hymnal*) in Darryl Hart’s *Between the Times: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Transition, 1945–1990* (Willow Grove, PA: Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 2011).

Even more significantly, congregational histories can tell the stories of the people in the pew. My predecessor as OPC historian, Charles Dennison, has argued that “the unknown have contributed more to the progress of the church than the known.” This is especially true, he writes, about the women of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church:

Many unknown but remarkable women have forged the OPC. Their modesty has not meant any lack of assertiveness by way of positive example, clarity of vision, or decisiveness, at times surpassing that of the men in the church. In fact this modesty has been matched by something of the “frontier spirit.” One OP woman, while reflecting on the early days of the church, was heard to say, “It was thrilling, an actual revival. We all were exhilarated about the movement and sensed we were involved in something of overwhelming importance.” Another told her husband, who was about to lose his church and the security it promised for her and their children, “John, you do what you know is right and leave the rest to the Lord.” Later, as her husband finished his farewell sermon and walked out of his large mid-western PCUSA congregation, she rose, “dragged” her children from the pew, and marched out the door behind him. Three hundred followed.<sup>3</sup>

These are the stories we risk losing, and they can only be stewarded by congregational historians.<sup>4</sup>

### **Getting Started**

My hope is that these reflections might encourage some readers either to take up this calling or to encourage budding historians in their churches to narrate their story. If this sounds too daunting a task, let me offer some suggestions for beginners to dip their toes in these waters.

If your church lacks an archivist, perhaps the best place to start is to offer your services. Good history requires access to primary sources. Gather together sermons (written or recorded), bulletins, annual reports, pastoral letters, and other communications. Photographs, of course, are also a vital feature of your history. Collect and organize photographs of your church, taking care to label each one as best you can. For historical purposes, an unidentified photo is a useless photo. Some churches may have stashes of unlabeled photos with little clues of their significance. A creative way to solve that problem is to gather the senior saints and long-standing members of the church, perhaps over a meal, and make a collective effort to jog memories in order to identify occasions, people, and dates of your pictures.

If your congregation is in the habit of producing a series of reports for an annual congregational meeting, volunteer to write a “year in review” of your church. By saving the weekly church bulletins and other church communications over the course of the year, you

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<sup>3</sup> Charles G. Dennison, ed., *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1936–1986* (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1986), 313.

<sup>4</sup> Inspiring profiles of many women serving in the OPC have been captured well by Pat Clawson and Diane Olinger in their editing *Choosing the Good Portion: Women of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, PA: Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 2016). But as they note, there are many more stories to tell.

have the raw material to compose the review. After a few years, you have amassed a portfolio of accounts, and you have gained a little experience in telling a congregational story.

Another opportunity is to contribute to the daily feature on the OPC website, “Today in OPC History.” The Committee for the Historian of the OPC is always eager to get brief accounts of milestones in the life of OPC congregations—church anniversaries, new buildings, pastoral transitions, and the like. Consider how an episode from your church can become a feature story.

If you want to write a fuller narrative, perhaps on the occasion of a church anniversary, there are further steps you can take. Read many different congregational histories. For a fine example of a collaborative effort by professional historians, read the story of Tenth Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup> Read amateur efforts as well. You will find accounts that vary widely in size and quality. Plenty of them are nostalgia masquerading as history or enthusiasm that focuses entirely on positive and upbeat stories. Take note of the strengths and weaknesses, the features emphasized and topics omitted. I remember finding a pamphlet-sized history of the church my mother-in-law grew up in. I was stunned to find that this celebration of three centuries of congregational life failed to mention either God or Christ even once! (That it was a Unitarian Church perhaps lessens the shock a little.)

In addition, look for local histories of your community or histories of other churches in your town. These will alert you to local issues that have affected congregational life. Consult local and regional historical societies for information they might have on your community and its patterns of church life.

Session and Presbytery minutes will reveal key decisions that shaped the story of your church. Financial reports will reveal times of plenty and want that have affected church life at various times. Work through annual membership statistics; put them in a chart and study the trends they suggest. Write up brief biographies of former pastors<sup>6</sup>. Write up the stories of the missionaries your church has supported and about their visits to your church.

One important way to begin to capture the lived experience of members is by conducting oral history interviews. There is an art to effective interviewing that I cannot claim to have mastered. But I have found some helpful advice for conducting effective interviews. Among the things I have learned:

Remember that an interview is not a dialogue. You must decrease so that your interviewee may increase. Avoid saying too much, and do not seek to control the conversation. Rather, welcome whatever anecdotes your guests relate. Careful follow-up questions can guide their reminiscences. And strive to avoid “yes or no” questions: you will likely get one-word responses! Especially seek to evoke your narrator’s eyewitness testimony: what was particularly noteworthy about your pastor’s pulpit presence? What did his sermons sound like? What did you appreciate (or dislike) most about Sunday school?

There are limits to oral history, to be sure. Memory is fragile and malleable, and you will want to confirm where possible from other sources the accounts you have recorded. Many of your stories will be positive and encouraging, but not all of them. All churches

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<sup>5</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, ed., *Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia: 175 Years of Thinking and Acting Biblically* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004). Another model is David B. Calhoun, *The Glory of the Lord Risen Above it: First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina, 1795-1995* (Columbia, SC: First Presbyterian Church, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Here you will find enormously beneficial the *Ministerial Register of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, produced by the Stated Clerk of the OPC and now in its seventh edition.



experience seasons of growth and retrenchment with struggles and controversies along the way. Exercising discretion while telling the truth will be one of your greatest challenges.

There are additional resources you should be aware of. The Presbyterian Historical Society's website contains guides for the aspiring congregational historian, including the article "[Writing Congregational Histories](#)." Wayne Sparkman, the archivist of the Presbyterian Church in America, has done a remarkable job of curating the story of his denomination at the PCA Historical Center in St. Louis (and he has generously lent his time and insights in the establishment of the OPC Archives). The PCA Historical Center's website has several helpful materials, including an introduction to [writing local church history](#). Under the able oversight of archivist Abby Harting, the OPC Archives continues to expand its holdings, including files on local congregations. Whatever the form your church history takes, be sure to deposit a copy in the OPC Archives.

### Why Now?

The OPC's centennial, fourteen years away, suggests that this is a particularly opportune time for churches to take on this challenge. A previous effort to encourage congregations to tell their stories took place for the OPC semi-centennial in 1986, with the production of the large commemorative book, *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1936–1986*, edited by Charles G. Dennison. Through text and pictures, this oversized book captured the accounts of the twelve presbyteries of the church and over 250 congregations, including ones that shut their doors or left the denomination. (One entry was a two-sentence description of a church's coming into the OPC from independency and returning to independency eleven months later.) Relying largely on the contributions from churches, these accounts included tales of humble service and faithful cross-bearing. I am not aware of anything like this, at least among American Presbyterian denominations. The Committee for the Historian (on which I continue to serve) is hoping to gather congregational stories again for the OPC centennial in 2036. What the final product may look like remains to be determined. But to do anything effectively it is wise to begin planning now, over a decade in advance.

Psalm 78 instructs us to look back at history, draw lessons from the past, and pass it on to the next generation. The "mighty acts of God" in that psalm focus on the miraculous wonders of redemptive history. But congregations do well also to reflect on their own history and the particular blessings that God has graciously bestowed on them. Telling the story of a local church, how it came to be and how God has sustained it over the years, is always a worthwhile task.

So consider how you might serve your church and your denomination in this way. In doing so, you will also help me meet my unfulfilled ambition.

**John R. Muether** serves as a ruling elder at Reformation Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Oviedo, Florida, Dean of Libraries at Reformed Theological Seminary, and former historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

# Servant Standards

## Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapters 1 & 2, Part 1

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by Alan D. Strange

### Chapter I The Nature and Purposes of Discipline

1. Ecclesiastical discipline is the exercise of that authority which the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to the visible church for the preservation of its purity, peace, and good order.

**Comment:** As we saw in the FG, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only head and king of the church. No earthly ruler has proper authority over the church (no monarch, e.g., is properly styled “head of the church”). Since Christ is the only head of the church, he has committed to the visible church both the government and the discipline of the church.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that not only the government of the visible church is committed to it by Christ but also the discipline: in the Reformation, in reaction to the maladministration of discipline by the church’s clergy (especially the papacy), some civil leaders and others sympathetic to the Reformation claimed that the exercise of church discipline ought not to be in the hands of the clergy but in the hands of the civil magistracy.

We as Presbyterians, however, strenuously oppose this Erastianism, part of which, in asserting that the state is over the church in some ways, is the notion that church discipline is within the civil rulers’ discretion; we argue, rather, that all discipline in the church is properly in the hands of those who, by Christ’s appointment, are the due and rightful governors in and of the church: the ministers and ruling elders that co-jointly rule the church in all her judicatories. This was an important contention of Calvin, Knox, and the Reformed and Presbyterian stalwarts that followed, especially in resisting the attempts of civil authorities to usurp that which has been committed to the special office-bearers to whom the rule of the church has been entrusted.

The last phrase (“for the preservation of its purity, peace, and good order”) reflects that the purpose of church discipline, within the visible church that is governed by her

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<sup>1</sup> For his comments on this section, see also Stuart R. Jones, “Ministerial Training Institute of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church syllabus, “Presbyterian Polity: Form of Government and Book of Discipline,” (unpublished manuscript, 2020): 7–9. In his commentary, Jones, a careful student of the history of Presbyterian and Reformed books of discipline, deals with many of the ecclesiastical legal antecedents of the OPC BD. My commentary, while leaning on that work and engaging in some historical reflections, largely sticks to interpreting and applying the current edition of the BD (2020). Those interested in his work should consult Mr. Jones as to its availability.

own office-bearers, is three-fold. As noted in the preface and below, the three-fold purpose of church discipline is often said to be the honor of Christ, the purity of his church, and the reclamation of offenders. Here we see three purposes set forth that overlap with those three but are put in slightly different terms. By such discipline the church secures her purity, censuring the wicked and encouraging the good. This purity makes for her peace insofar as a proper dealing with sin is necessary for peace in the body, both by rendering justice to victims and helping to free sinners from their slavery to sin. This obviously has to do with the reclamation of offenders and care for those sinned against. And all of this makes for the glory of Christ, which is part of good order: all glory goes to the one who is the Lord and King of the church, and when this occurs, the well-being of all and good order in all things, which redounds to his praise, is secured.

2. Administrative discipline is concerned with the maintenance of good order in the government of the church in other than judicial cases. The purpose of its exercise is that all rights may be preserved and all obligations faithfully discharged.

**Comment:** Our Book of Discipline classifies all ecclesiastical discipline as being one of two types: either administrative or judicial discipline. Here, administrative discipline is delineated. Administrative discipline concerns itself with the maintenance of good order in the government of the church. In other words, administrative discipline is in view in the actions of judicatories engaged in the ordinary government of the church; when a session or presbytery, for example, takes an action (adopts a motion or motions) that a party having standing (as defined in BD 8.1–2 and 9.1) regards as unbiblical or unconstitutional (the latter being a violation of the doctrinal standards or the church order), the party alleging an error or delinquency on the part of said judicatory may record a contrary vote, file a protest, or file a complaint. This is administrative discipline, and it is to be distinguished from judicial discipline. The details of these matters will be commented upon at the proper places below. Suffice it to say for now that administrative discipline is what is in view when dealing with alleged errors of judicatories, and judicial discipline is what is in view when dealing with alleged offenses of individuals.

The last sentence of the section gives the purpose of administrative discipline. Recorded votes, protests, and complaints are all for the purpose of preserving rights and seeing that the obligations of all judicatories are faithfully discharged. This means that a protest or a complaint, on the one hand, makes sure that all the rights of parties with standing are preserved by being given due consideration. On the other hand, administrative discipline concerns itself not only with the rights of aggrieved parties but also with the obligations of all judicatories to carry out all their duties in a biblical and constitutional fashion. So administrative discipline concerns itself with attending to those who believe a wrong has occurred and making sure that judicatories can have such wrongs called to their attention so that they can duly and properly attend to them.

It is the case that both administrative and judicial discipline should be pursued formally only if and when all informal exercises of such have proven fruitless. Let us suppose a minister believes that his session or presbytery has erred by not following the provisions of the Form of Government. He may, and would be advised to, do whatever he can, short of a complaint, to resolve the matter. This might include, but not be limited to, talking to individuals, writing a letter, even filing a protest. All this is noted here because it is the case that someone filing a complaint, as will be seen in the commentary below (in

comments on BD 9.1 and the forms provided for the BD), must affirm that they have done everything to remedy the situation, short of filing a complaint.

3. Judicial discipline is concerned with the prevention and correction of offenses, an offense being defined as anything in the doctrine or practice of a member of the church which is contrary to the Word of God. The purpose of judicial discipline is to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of his church, and to reclaim the offender.

**Comment:** Judicial discipline is the way that our BD describes how a trial judicatory handles the sins of a party or parties. While administrative discipline addresses errors or delinquencies on the part of judicatories, judicial discipline addresses alleged offenses on the part of specific person(s). It is concerned with the prevention and correction of offenses. In the first place, at a lower level, the prevention and correction of such offenses occurs in the ordinary exercise of the means of grace, in public and private. In preaching, in counseling, in the self-examination that occurs at the Lord's Supper, in personal challenges issued by a Christian friend, all of this may involve, informally, the prevention and correction of offenses.

Offenses are described in the second part of the first sentence as "anything in doctrine or practice . . . which is contrary to the Word of God." This highlights that offenses are not defined by societal norms, personal preferences, or anything else. An offense is that which violates God's law as set forth in his Word. In other words, an offense as herein defined is not something that some person finds offensive, as a secularist might deem Christian opposition to same-sex marriage as harsh and unloving. The world, lying in wickedness as it does, regards some of what we know to be sin as good (same-sex marriage) and what we regard as good to be sin (opposition to same-sex marriage), even though we all, in some measure, know what a holy God finds offensive, as testified to by the revelation of the moral law in the Word and in our consciences (Rom. 2:14–15). Sinners, of course, suppress the truth of general and special revelation, as it testifies against sin, in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18) and often celebrate what should be repented of, particularly in the post-Christian West.

As in the case with administrative discipline—it ought to be resolved as informally as possible—so also in the case of judicial discipline: with respect to a charge of an offense, personal appeal to the party thought to have offended is appropriate in many circumstances. It should be noted that personal dealings may not be the best course in certain circumstances in which concerns about abuse or misuse of power, or like allegations, render contact of the offended with the alleged offender inappropriate. The security and well-being of offended parties must be secured during ecclesiastical discipline. Having acknowledged that, however, all things being equal, it is ordinarily advisable that matters be resolved "out of court," as it were, which is to say, by informal process, before resorting to formal judicial process.

Before filing a charge, then, one ought to do what is within one's power to rectify the situation, particularly with a view to making sure that Matthew 5, 18, Luke 17, and the like, are observed in the requirements of those passages that all dealings with an offending brother or sister should be handled as privately as possible and as locally as possible. Certainly, if one is offended by another, going to that one first (and perhaps several times) is in order, not "telling it on the mountain," or spreading it digitally over the Internet. As Ephesians 4:25–32 would direct, we are not to attack the person

but the problem, never acting in a way with each other that “tears down” instead of “builds up.” Pursuing judicial discipline both informally and formally with a humble spirit is part of proper building up, rather than tearing down, of the body (Gal. 6:1–5).

When informal attempts (like preaching and counsel) prove insufficient in addressing sin(s), then one becomes liable to more formal processes of church discipline. This is also the case when hidden sins are uncovered—whether by one coming as one’s own accuser or through the testimony of others—or sins are committed publicly. In all these cases judicial discipline may come into play, as judicatories may find it useful or necessary. The final sentence reflects the three-fold purpose of such discipline (as noted above and in the preface to this commentary): the vindication of the honor of Christ, the promotion of the purity of his church, and the reclamation of the offender. Note that Christ’s honor is the first purpose of discipline because sin besmirches his honor, and our chief interest and obligation is that all things are to be done to his glory, honor, and praise. Sin also compromises the church’s purity, requiring purging as it goes forward in its service to the Savior. Last, but quite important, is the desire not to crush the offender but to reclaim him for his good and God’s glory.

4. All members of the church, both communicants and those who are members by virtue of baptism only, are under the care of the church, and subject to ecclesiastical discipline including administrative and judicial discipline.

**Comment:** Only those who are members of local or regional bodies of the visible church are under the church’s care and subject to its discipline (including administrative and judicial discipline). This is because only those who take the requisite oaths for membership, together with their children (for whom they take baptismal oaths), or for office-bearing, are properly subject to formal discipline. Even regular attendants are not subject to discipline if they remain outside the local church they attend (and fail to “join”).

In addition to these communicant members of the local church (as just described), it is also the case that baptized youth who have not yet professed faith and been admitted to the Table of the Lord are also, by virtue of their baptism, members of the local church (though non-communicating ones) and subject to discipline. Such discipline may include admonition or rebuke and, in cases in which baptized members fail or refuse to profess faith, may be disciplined by erasure or like actions. It is the case that at an earlier point in Presbyterian history baptized members that were not communicants were not subject to ecclesiastical discipline, but that error has been properly corrected.

## Chapter II Jurisdiction

### A. General Provisions

1. Original jurisdiction over an individual belongs to the judicatory of the body of which the individual is a member. Original jurisdiction over judicatories belongs to the next higher judicatory.

**Comment:** Jurisdiction is the concept of “right to rule.” Thus, when the first sentence describes the scope of “original” jurisdiction as belonging to the body of which the

individual is a member, this serves to highlight that every judicatory of the OPC does not have original jurisdiction over every member of an OPC congregation. For a member of the local church, only his own session has original jurisdiction over him, even as a presbytery has original jurisdiction only over its own members.<sup>2</sup>

A presbytery does not have original jurisdiction over all the members of the various congregations in the regional church, though it does have appellate jurisdiction over all the sessions and members of the regional church. The general assembly has jurisdiction over the whole church, even as does the presbytery over the regional church, but only the local session has “original” jurisdiction over the members of the church that session oversees. The last sentence reflects that original jurisdiction over a session belongs to the presbytery or original jurisdiction over a presbytery to the general assembly, the “next higher judicatory” in both cases.

2. All certificates of dismissal shall specify the particular body to which the person is dismissed, and shall be sent directly to that body by the dismissing judicatory. The receiving body shall notify the dismissing judicatory of the fact of reception when accomplished.

**Comment:** Jurisdiction is transferred when someone moves membership from one body to another: a communicant to another congregation and a minister to another presbytery. This transfer of jurisdiction occurs when a certificate of dismissal (a letter from the clerk of session) is drawn up and sent from the dismissing body to the receiving body. A certificate of this sort must specify both the current good and regular standing of the member being transferred and the body to which he is being transferred. The clerk of the dismissing judicatory shall send the certificate of dismissal directly to the clerk of the receiving judicatory. The reception shall be considered accomplished only when the receiving body notifies the sending body (the dismissing judicatory) of the fact of reception on the part of the receiving body.

3. If a person charged with an offense requests that he be dismissed to another body within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the judicatory of jurisdiction shall grant this request only for reasons which it deems weighty. If the request is granted, it shall inform the judicatory to whose care the person is being committed of the charge which has been brought against him and also of any action which the dismissing judicatory may have taken with reference to the charge, and the judicatory which receives him shall conclude the case.

**Comment:** If a person, either a member of a local church or of a presbytery, is in judicial process, that is he is either in the beginning of such process, charged with an offense, or in a judicial trial for the offense(s), that process should normally proceed uninterrupted. If that person, either at the beginning or in the midst of judicial process,

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<sup>2</sup> Stuart Jones, in his “Commentary on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church Book of Discipline,” (unpublished manuscript, 2020), 10–25, offers fairly detailed comments on BD 2, noting on page 10 that “Jurisdiction in the Book of Discipline particularly relates to personal membership and the entities having jurisdiction over individuals. That is to say, it does not concern itself at any length with the church’s spiritual jurisdiction over certain questions, per se, nor geographic and confessional considerations that define judicatories of jurisdiction. These are more germane to the Form of Government.” FG 12, for instance, on governing assemblies, treats jurisdiction in this latter sense.

requests that he be dismissed to another body in the OPC, the judicatory that has jurisdiction over him shall grant this request only for weighty reasons. A dismissal to another body of a person involved in judicial process is considered irregular and should be accomplished only in a situation that involves what the judicatory being asked to transfer regards as sufficiently weighty reasons to merit such an action. Perhaps weighty concerns might include the nature of the charge(s), the state of the person charged, the removal of the person charged from the charging judicatory, etc. Sound (defensible) discretion must be exercised both by the dismissing and the receiving judicatories.

If the request for dismissal to another OPC body is granted by the dismissing judicatory, that judicatory shall inform the prospective receiving judicatory of all the circumstances of the judicial case against the member being dismissed. This means that the dismissing judicatory should minimally inform the receiving judicatory of what charge has been brought against the one seeking dismissal and any actions taken with respect to such charge(s): whether there was a preliminary investigation and, if so, what its outcome was, whether there has been a first meeting of the trial, etc.

In other words, the precise nature of the judicial proceedings must be laid before the judicatory that has in view the possible reception of one against whom judicial actions are in process. The receiving judicatory should proceed with the judicial case until its conclusion. It should be noted here that the matter of receiving a transfer under these circumstances always remains in the discretion of the prospective receiving judicatory. The would-be receiving judicatory is, of course, not obliged to do so; in any case, both the transferring and receiving judicatory should agree that the process herein described is beneficial to all parties concerned.

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# ServantReading

## One More Time: If Presbyterians Are Evangelical, Why Aren't Evangelicals Presbyterian?

### A Review Article

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by Darryl G. Hart

*Reformed & Evangelical Across Four Centuries: The Presbyterian Story in America*, by Nathan P. Feldmeth, S. Donald Fortson, III, Garth M. Rosell, and Kenneth J. Stewart. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022, xix + 364 pages, \$29.99, paper.

Presbyterian history does not come packaged in tidy, dispensable containers, like the processed meals that David Bowman (played by Keir Dullea) ate on the spaceship in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Historians generally start by locating a given Presbyterian communion's ties, first, to Scotland. For American Presbyterians, only the Seceders (ARPC) and the Covenanters (RPCNA) still take historical cues directly from Scottish church history, though in each of these instances Seceders and Covenanters do not identify with the Church of Scotland but with groups that ministered outside the Kirk. American Presbyterians, the PCUSA and its descendants, the OPC and the PCA, evolved more or less as melting pot churches with leaders from Scottish, Ulster, and English backgrounds (along with the French, German, Hungarian, Armenian, and other ethnic groups that would find a home among the American branches of Presbyterianism). Canadian Presbyterianism is decidedly different from the American article in this respect. The communions that united to form the Presbyterian Church of Canada in 1875 were all of distinctly Scottish background (Kirk, Seceder, Free) and had to overcome rivalries inherited from the Old World. Attachment to Scotland persists in some way for any denomination in Canada or the United States. Most histories of Presbyterianism in the New World imagine and, in some cases, draw direct connections to the original Presbyterian churches of sixteenth-century Scotland along with inspiration supplied by John Calvin's church polity for Geneva's churches.

The fly in the ointment of Presbyterian history, already unkempt in its own right thanks to the tribulations of religious establishment, is Presbyterianism's relationship to evangelicalism. If someone wants to understand the Reformation simply as evangelical—an interpretation that will struggle to make sense of Anglicanism and Lutheranism—then the difficulties disappear. But if evangelicalism is a form of pietism, and if it took shape in the awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and if it came into its own after World War II in the work of Billy Graham (who was baptized as a Presbyterian infant), then the overlap between evangelicalism and Presbyterianism is anything but simple. Throw into the mix American Presbyterians splitting over the awakenings inspired both by George Whitefield (Old vs. New Side, 1741) and Charles Finney (Old vs. New School, 1837), and the picture begins to look like something painted by Picasso in the Cubist period. Evangelicalism is its own thing in the history of Christianity, just as Presbyterianism. To be sure, many Presbyterians identify as evangelical. Many of those same Presbyterians may be surprised how many evangelicals reject Presbyterianism.



Such a lengthy introduction to a review of *Reformed and Evangelical* is necessary if only to capture how breathtaking the narrative of this book is. Instead of a rocky path that negotiates hill and dale, this book presents a chronology that runs smoothly, never far from a rest-stop, from John Knox to Harold John Ockenga (first president of Fuller Seminary and the National Association of Evangelicals). Along the way, the PCUSA supplies much of the institutional coherence.

To underscore how gobsmacking this argument is, consider that J. Gresham Machen receives barely a mention while his student, Ockenga, is a prominent figure. In a chapter on the fundamentalist controversy, that runs from debates about inerrancy (Charles Briggs versus B. B. Warfield) to the Scopes Trial, Machen shows up on two pages, once in connection with the founding of the League of Evangelical Students, the other in a sentence about the creation of Westminster Seminary. Nowhere do the authors discuss Machen's book, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923), which Sydney Ahlstrom called the "chief theological ornament" of fundamentalism. Machen makes one more appearance as a passing comment about the 1930 missions controversy that led to the OPC. In contrast, Ockenga, who studied with Machen at Princeton and Westminster and drew inspiration from Old Princeton's commitment to a scholarly defense of Protestant orthodoxy for Fuller Seminary, receives more attention as part of the authors' coverage of the neo-evangelical movement and its various institutions—the National Association of Evangelicals (Ockenga was its first president); Fuller Seminary (the founding president), and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (the first president of the merged Gordon and Conwell divinity schools). Machen was a Presbyterian his entire life. Ockenga was Presbyterian for a brief period, 1931–1936, before ministering as a Congregationalist for the better part of his life. A reader could well receive the impression that Ockenga was more "Reformed and evangelical" than Machen.

That the book does not include the history of Puritanism and Congregationalism under the umbrella of "Reformed and evangelical," but devotes more attention to post-World War II evangelicalism than to sideline Presbyterians (such as the OPC and PCA), is indicative of the authors' outlook. Although their purpose is to provide an up-to-date history of Presbyterianism, one that would "help students and Christian leaders grasp the thread" of such a difficult plot, their title is likely more indicative of a desire to tell the history of American Presbyterianism in a way that accents evangelicalism's ecumenical side more than Presbyterian cussedness. That move also helps the authors to avoid a narrative of declension—Presbyterianism was once great (the Scottish Reformation of Knox) but then fell on hard times (the squishiness of mainline Presbyterianism). But if post-World War II evangelicalism is the culmination of Reformed and evangelical convictions, then this book is what such a perspective might yield.

That latter approach, ironically, makes the first four chapters (on Scotland and England) a bit of a non-sequitur for the American part of the story (from page 100 on). Those early chapters document well the recalcitrant side of Presbyterianism as it emerged in Scotland, England, and Ireland as an effort to carry out further reforms in those respective national churches. In the process, Presbyterians were hard to please. They took issue with any notion that a monarch could be the head of the church (they reserved that status for Christ). Presbyterians were also constantly complaining about the dangers of episcopacy and pointed out frequently the defects of specific bishops (especially if they imposed prayer books). Meanwhile, Presbyterians did not agree among themselves and by 1750 had produced dissenting communions such as the Covenanters (Reformed Presbyterian), Seceders (Associate Reformed), and the Relief church. Behind those divisions were often elaborate and thoughtful arguments for maintaining the integrity of Presbyterian witness.

From here the authors switch course dramatically and bring into the Presbyterian narrative the awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (even as they switch to the United States to the exclusion of Canadian Presbyterianism). One thread that connects revivals to Presbyterianism is the Scottish communion season. That tie is much less evident in the revivals associated with Finney a century later. The authors do acknowledge that these so-called “Great” awakenings split Presbyterians for a time (New Side vs. Old Side; New School vs. Old School). But the book does little to explain why some Presbyterians, on grounds supplied by their own doctrine and practice, might contend that the categories, Reformed and evangelical, are at odds in important respects.

After the Civil War, a section of the book that allows the authors to cover debates about slavery, the book reads more like the history of the United States and her Presbyterian churches. The authors let national politics set the categories—war, immigration, urbanization, industrialization, feminism, civil rights—for understanding how Presbyterians ministered during this period. At the same time, the book chronicles the ways in which mainline Presbyterians and evangelicals cooperated after World War II to forge a conservative Protestant voice within American Christianity.

By the end of the book, the authors provide readers with the “continuities, shared passions, and underlying similarities” that tie Presbyterians and evangelicals together. These themes provide the rationale for calling Presbyterianism evangelical and why so many Presbyterians identify as evangelical: biblical authority, support for spiritual renewal, missions, theological seriousness, and cultural transformation. Had these topics set the agenda for the book from the start, the authors’ story would have more coherence than it does. But because some of them—spiritual renewal, missions, and cultural transformation—were late comers to Presbyterianism, their explanatory power is limited. This is especially so since cultural transformation itself was a weak version of the ideal of Christendom that informed Presbyterianism originally embodied. It was the creation of twentieth century (non-evangelical) authors, such as Abraham Kuyper and H. Richard Niebuhr, partly to compensate for the absence of an established church. Cultural transformation was the best Presbyterians and Reformed could do outside the political establishment.

The authors’ conclusion is instructive for assessing the book more generally. As commendable as their efforts to juggle the many balls of Presbyterian history, their finished product reads in a Whiggish manner, as if a broad Presbyterianism is what sixteenth-century reformers originally had in mind. Just as notable is the authors’ approval of the post-World War II neo-evangelical movement that attempted to bridge gaps among mainline and sideline Presbyterians through a series of large interdenominational institutions. That era of evangelicalism may well be on its last legs as flagship neo-evangelical seminaries such as Fuller, Gordon-Conwell, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity face economic challenges perhaps as dire as theological incoherence. The recent decision by the Presbyterian Church in America to leave the NAE is another sign that the “Reformed-and-Evangelical” momentum of the second half of the twentieth century has run out of steam. If so, if evangelicalism no longer adds vigor and purpose to Presbyterianism, then the authors of *Reformed and Evangelical* have not prepared readers well for the next chapter of American Presbyterian history.

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# Theoretical-Practical Theology, Volume 3: The Works of God and the Fall of Man, *by Peter van Mastricht*

## A Review Article

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by Ryan M. McGraw

*Theoretical-Practical Theology, Volume 3: The Works of God and the Fall of Man*, by Peter van Mastricht. Ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Todd M. Rester, vol. 3, 7 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021, xlvii + 631 pages, \$38.00.

Classic Reformed theology is often different in character, presentation, and, sometimes, even in content than contemporary expressions of Reformed thought. This does not so much mark the absence of continuity in the Reformed faith as it does the fact that older authors lived literally in a different world than we do. Their scholastic methods and categories are often as foreign to us as our modern questions over things like gender and sexuality would have been to them. While older voices like Peter van Mastricht cannot address every issue facing the church today, they often bring a razor-like precision and depth of piety to the table that cannot fail to help us as we engage the Scriptures in the context of our modern world.

Matters related to creation and providence are particularly pressing at the present time. In addition to gender ethics, virtually every topic related to creation, mankind, and sin is controversial today. This includes things like human identity and the image of God, the days of creation, the covenant of works, the historical Adam, and many more. While van Mastricht could not have had modern controversies in view, he treats most of these topics without being weighed down by the polemics that press themselves upon us. For this reason, his theological project continues to have great potential for the church today, making an old voice a fresh one and bringing “outside counsel” to bear on our questions and concerns. This review evaluates both the content of Mastricht’s third volume as well as the translated and edited form of his work, illustrating both areas of value and room for improvement.

Mastricht’s content includes a wide-ranging and satisfying treatment of God’s decrees and his works of creation and providence, concluding with the doctrine of sin. Continuing his distinct format, each chapter opens with exegesis of a particular passage of Scripture, followed by dogmatic, elenctic, and practical sections. The first part of the volume, which is book three of part one, includes twelve chapters spanning God’s decrees, predestination, election, reprobation, creation, the days of creation, good angels, bad angels, the image of God, providence in general, and the covenant of nature, or covenant of works. Book four directs reader’s attention to “man’s apostasy from God” through sin. Its four large chapters explore the violation of the covenant of nature, original sin, actual sin, and the penalties of sin.

In the preface, the translator and editor note four distinctive points of Mastricht's work: "his mediating lapsarian position," his rejection of Copernicanism, his views of demons and magic, and "his doctrine of the third heaven" (xxvii). Regarding the first, Mastricht sought to adopt elements of both supra and infralapsarianism, attempting to cut through divisions among Reformed authors regarding the logical order of God's decrees as they respect redemption in Christ. Whether or not he succeeded is up for debate, since he posited an initial decree of election and reprobation to display God's glory (supralapsarian), followed by a later decree to elect and reprobate particular created and fallen individuals (infralapsarian). Regarding Copernicanism, Mastricht rejected the idea that the earth revolved around the sun on theological rather than scientific grounds, since the earth was the central focus of God's works of creation and redemption. Even rejecting his scientific conclusions, readers should appreciate his theological concerns. Demons and magic were important to Mastricht due to his stress on genuine spiritual warfare, and while excluding the power of miracles from demons, magic existed as a real influence of natural demonic power above human ability. As far as the third heaven, Mastricht taught that it was both a real created place in which God dwelt with glorified saints and angels. The translator and editor rightly flag these areas as marking distinct points of contribution to Reformed orthodoxy with relevance to contemporary issues.

At least a couple of doctrinal issues stand out for their pervasiveness in this book. One outstanding feature of Mastricht's work, common to Reformed orthodoxy but largely absent from Reformed theology in the past two hundred years, is his persistent appeal to the Trinity (e.g., 1, 3, 5, 57, 102–103, 117, 124, 156, 175, 254, 299, 303, 306, 310, 353, 370, 497). One interesting example of his appeal to the Trinity is in relation to man as God's image: hinting at God's Triunity through the simplicity of his soul while having many faculties, and in the distinction between his faculties and his essence. Both point to unity and plurality in God (299). Unlike Augustine's famous treatment of vestiges of the Trinity in man, Mastricht refused to make such parallels overly specific or concrete. Unity and diversity in a human soul imply, point to the fact, that unity and diversity existed in his Creator. Through countless such examples Mastricht always gives the impression that the Triune God is the central theme of systematic theology. Since the Bible, the Trinity, and Jesus Christ have always stood at the heart of any genuinely Christian theology, this refreshing feature continuously reminds readers that theology is about glorifying and knowing the Triune God. The other pervasive doctrinal feature is Mastricht's constant assertion and defense of the idea that God is not the author of sin (e.g., 9, 47, 88, 96, 219, 283, 319, 333–334, 424, 460, 465, 472, 485, 512, 541). Sin in relation to God's goodness and sovereignty have always been at the heart of the so-called "problem of evil" in Christian theology, and Mastricht provides a consistent and persistent Reformed answer to this issue. While this volume is filled with other profound theological insights, these two stand out as emphases that Mastricht seems to have prioritized as worth special attention.

Also noteworthy is the fact that some aspects of this volume illustrate the intersection of science and biblical exegesis, with which the church has wrestled in every age. Readers may find it surprising that Mastricht argued emphatically that "the Reformed deny" the theory of Copernicus, and Descartes in Mastricht's view, that the earth revolves around the sun (160, 171). He drew this conclusion from exegesis rather than from science, on the grounds that Scripture refers to the earth as fixed and unmoved. Though

he regarded versions of the Copernican theory as “philosophical conjectures” (161), he referred to the alternative theory of the famous scientist, Tycho Brahe, as better fitting the phenomena in Scripture. Christians should conclude that Mastricht’s principle that Scripture and exegesis take priority over science is sound. However, the issue is whether or not his interpretation of Scripture was sound in rejecting the revolution of the earth around the sun. As fixed and permanent, the earth is established and sure, yet this fact says nothing about the relationship between the earth and the sun in scientific terms. Proper use of Scripture often limits the range of conclusions we can accept through scientific investigation, but we must remember that Scripture is not a scientific textbook. Instead, it aims to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ, equipping us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:15–17). While we must decide other matters, such as the days of creation, on exegetical rather than scientific grounds, we must be wary of making Scripture say more than it does as well. Mastricht was right that the certain Scriptures always trump merely probable science, but his teaching on Copernicanism should chasten us into caution regarding how much scientific knowledge Scripture supplies us with. In the end, however, Mastricht rightly asserted that the earth, as man’s dwelling place with God, is the central focus of the biblical narrative.

Finally in relation to content, the practical part of this work will likely always stand out to most readers, since this feature has been largely absent from most systematic theology in the past hundred years plus at least. Mastricht does not disappoint in this regard, furnishing us with imaginative and interesting uses of various doctrines. For instance, he concluded from God’s decree that we should follow God’s example by acting with wise counsel because “in this also we bear the image of God” (22). Even something incommunicable in God, like an eternal immutable decree, thus finds dim reflection in practical Christian living. Likewise, he noted that God’s elect should imitate him in that we should choose for our companions in love those whom God has elected (75). Similarly, regarding providence, we should imitate God’s attributes displayed in his providence as far as we are able in a creaturely way (340). However, Mastricht’s practical application was not forced, but natural, and sometimes indirect for that reason. For example, in applying the covenant of works, he noted that it is “not so much practical, as it is the basis and foundation of all the practice which belongs to the states that succeed it, namely those of sin and grace, inasmuch as that practice cannot, apart from a knowledge of the covenant of nature, set any roots in our heart” (403). Even such indirect application could remind readers why various doctrines were important to them on a wider scale.

Turning to the translated and edited form of the work, the translation and organization of the material is solid and easy to follow, with a few critical caveats. In some places editorial comments would have made this seventeenth century work more accessible to modern readers. For instance, Mastricht ascribed vegetative and sensitive souls to animals in his discussion of the days of creation (167–168, 173, 181, 257). Flowing from Aristotelian categories, familiar at the time, vegetative souls referred to a mere principle of life, while sensitive souls distinguished animal life from plant life. Mankind alone among physical living things possessed rational souls, which lay at the heart of being God’s image. In modern terms, Mastricht was not teaching that animals had “souls” like human beings do. He merely followed the customary categories current in his time for distinguishing various classes of living things, which are no longer familiar to most of us. Explaining such facts would make better sense out of Mastricht’s inclusion of plants

under “ensouled things” (288). The same comment applies to antiquated or technical or historical terms like “genethliacs” (172), “microcosm” (254), “positive law” (359-360), “ambrosia” (385), and “the fabulous revelations of Brigitta” (471). Mastricht lived in a very different philosophical, scientific, and historical world than we do, which requires some explanation.

In a few places, translating Latin terms more literally would have conveyed a clearer meaning. The example that comes to mind is Mastricht’s assertion, “the Decalogue as the substance [*materiam*] of the covenant of works” (396). “Material” would likely be a better translation here, since Mastricht believed that the Mosaic covenant was the covenant of grace, though the epitome of the law under this covenant was identical to the law under the covenant of works. “Substance” could lead some modern readers to assume that he meant that the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works. Instead, he believed that the law and terms of the covenant of works were published under Moses, only to a different end than they were under Adam (389). “Material” in the first reference is likely opposed to “form,” indicating that the components of the covenant of works were present without formally placing Israel under that covenant. Admittedly, this is a thorny question in historical theology related to seventeenth century covenant theology, with many modern readers missing the nuances of older Reformed views on this point. This point simply illustrates the difficulty inherent in translating theological Latin into English.

Lastly with respect to form, readers should learn what to expect from Mastricht in order to know how to use his work. The dust jacket to this set of books famously cites Jonathan Edwards as saying that Mastricht is “better than Turretin.” Yet this statement can be potentially misleading because these two authors had very different aims in their theological works. Mastricht is better than Turretin but, for modern readers, likely only after reading Turretin. Mastricht is often less explicit than Turretin in his explanations, but fuller than Turretin in his exposition and application. For example, while Mastricht stated that second or subordinate causes are both necessary and contingent in different respects (331), Turretin added that they are contingent in production (divided sense) but necessary in the event (composite sense). Mastricht hinted at this common distinction by appealing to the “divided” and “composite” sense of an action elsewhere (e.g., 334, 425, 527). However, where Mastricht stated a fact using and assuming the meaning of technical terms, Turretin often gave the explanation of the fact as well as of the terms. This is true also where Mastricht assumes ideas like habitual and actual sin, without providing precise definitions for them or distinct explanations of them (492). In short, Mastricht is less systematic and precise than Turretin, while he is fuller in the scope of the material he treats. Turretin can help readers understand Mastricht better, while Mastricht can supply elements muted by the narrow scope of Turretin’s work.

Volume 3 of Mastricht’s theological magnum opus will spur readers simultaneously to deep contemplation of the Reformed faith and to heart-felt devotion to the Triune God. He will not answer every question that a modern audience has, but he will promote theological maturity and Christian piety among readers who live in a different world but under the same Lord of all.

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# ServantReading

## Theology in a Time of Persecution

### A Review Article

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by Gregory E. Reynolds

*The Theology of the Huguenot Refuge: From the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to the Edict of Versailles*. Reformed Historical-Theological Studies, edited by Martin I. Klauber. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020, viii + 334 pages, \$25.00, paper.

In 1988 New Rochelle, New York celebrated the tercentenary of the Huguenot founding of the city, based on the immigration of refugees from La Rochelle, France in 1688.<sup>1</sup> I was asked to present lectures at the public library, which I did in four parts: “The Huguenot Christian,” “The Huguenot Family and Education,” “The Huguenot Citizen,” and “The Huguenot Craftsman.” The research for these lectures was done largely at the libraries of Huguenot Society of America and the Huguenot-Thomas Paine Historical Association of New Rochelle. The background of the refugees in France was not the focus of the lectures since I was investigating the refugees in New Rochelle, New York. So the present volume under review has refreshed and expanded my knowledge and appreciation of the situation in France during the long period of persecution from 1685 to 1787. It is easy to forget that, although the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 represented the end of religious wars in Europe, persecution by various governments did not cease.

The Huguenot theology developed in France, and by the exiles, is located in what Richard Muller calls the second phase of high orthodoxy (1685–1725) when Post-Reformation orthodoxy was losing intellectual dominance in the church (142).<sup>2</sup> Even though the period of persecution went all the way to 1787, the theologians cited in this volume wrote during this period of high orthodoxy.

The title of the book is a bit misleading. There is much more history than theology in this fascinating volume. Five very informative chapters look at the history of the Huguenot refuge from various perspectives; they are followed by seven chapters that explore the theology and activity of the exiled French Reformed churches through the lens of the individual lives of prominent theologians and preachers. The book is really a chronicle of many dimensions, highlighting theological themes appropriate to the Huguenot situation.

The importance of the volume lies in the ways in which aspects of Reformed theology were accentuated and amplified by the experience of the Huguenots who remained in France, and the refugees. Thus, the theology of comfort in persecution, the doctrines of religious tolerance, and the relationship between church and state feature prominently in the

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<sup>1</sup> This review was originally published in *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, Volume 31 (2020): 227–33.

<sup>2</sup> See Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: Volume One, Prolegomena to Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 30–32.

stories of the seven prominent preachers and theologians. The final chapter examines the first sermon of the fiery preacher Antoine Court.

## **A Brief Sketch of the History of the Huguenot Refuge**

A few odd terms that are unique to the French Huguenot church of the seventeenth century appear in the book. Temple, for example, is the name for a church building. The volume is meticulously researched and footnoted with an excellent selected bibliography. Footnotes are at the bottom of the page for easy access.

The Edict of Nantes (1598), its revocation, the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685), and the Edict of Versailles or Tolerance (1787), mark the boundaries of this history. In 1598 “the best-loved king of France, Henry IV,” proclaimed the Edict of Nantes (9). The edict granted French Reformed Christians, known as Huguenots, the freedom to worship, establish educational institutions, and hold colloquies and synods in certain places. Some cities were allowed to be armed, and Huguenot judges were appointed to some courts (9). Rather than religious toleration, the edict was a peace settlement that ended a decades long war (10). However, this did not end the controversies or the conflicts between the Reformed and Roman Catholic factions in France.

For example, La Rochelle resisted the return of Roman Catholicism until its surrender in 1628. From 1629 on, the Huguenots throughout France were “shorn of their military power” (19–20). After the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 the Huguenots experienced a period of peace. However, after 1661 Louis XIV eroded the liberties of the Edict of Nantes, enticing converts from Protestantism to Catholicism, closing Reformed churches (temples), and forcing some Reformed pastors to leave the country (24–25). In 1681, French soldiers, known as the *dragonnades*, began persecuting Huguenots by entering and living in their homes and pillaging and abusing their inhabitants (25, 39–40).

Finally, in 1685 the king revoked the Edict of Nantes. Reformed pastors were given two weeks to leave or deny their faith; a minority of Huguenots chose to convert to Roman Catholicism, and a few chose imprisonment. Pastors who refused to leave or convert were executed; ordinary Christians were made galley slaves. Church (temple) and school buildings were destroyed. Huguenots began to emigrate to the Netherlands, Switzerland, Brandenburg-Prussia, Hesse, the Palatinate, England, Ireland, and the American colonies of Virginia, New York, Massachusetts, and North Carolina (40–44), thus dividing them between the exiles and those who chose to remain in France (26–27). From peasants to craftsmen and professionals, the Huguenots proved a blessing to most of the places of their exile (44–46).

Chapter 3 explores the Camisard rebellion, the rebellion of the peasants of the mountains of Languedoc (coastal region in southern France, extending from Provence to the Pyrenees Mountains and the border with Spain). They were Reformed Protestants without pastors of ecclesiastical structure who ambushed royal patrols and burned Roman Catholic churches (51). Under the influence of the apocalyptic views of Rotterdam exile Pierre Jurieu, itinerant preachers, known as *prédicants*, like Claude Brousson, preached that the persecuted Huguenots, known as the “desert church,” were represented in the Book of Revelation as part of end times events (54). His charismatic, prophetic preaching spawned a generation of self-proclaimed prophets, many of whom were women and children, versed in apocalyptic biblical vocabulary (56). In the end these beleaguered, unorganized Protestants



surrendered, but they formed the “base on which Antoine Court and the pastors ‘of the Desert’ would attempt to rebuild the shattered Reformed church in France” (68–69).

Apart from those who converted to Catholicism, the remnant, known as the “Church of the Desert,” worshipped and held Bible studies clandestinely (28–30). Chapter 4 focuses on this church, whose existence was entirely denied by the French throne (71). Despite 130,000 Protestants being “officially” converted in the September after the revocation (1685), the church went underground and survived for over a century (72). Pauline Duley-Haour helpfully divides the period of persecution into three eras: 1) 1685–1715, thirty years of the “relative absence and silence for the exiled pastors,” a time of “isolation and sometimes despair for French Protestantism”; 2) 1715–44, a period in which several pastors restored the discipline of the French Reformed churches, along with the support of the exiled churches and the Protestant churches of Europe; 3) 1744 to the French Revolution, the church was emboldened to make their presence more public and seek legal status (72).

Several important preachers led in the preservation of the church during its desert period. Pierre Jurieu, exiled refugee pastor in Rotterdam, published letters of pastoral encouragement to the desert church. In France preachers such as Claude Brousson risked their lives to minister to the persecuted church (73–77). During the period of reconstruction, Antoine Court initiated reform of the French Reformed church at the Synod of the Desert (1715). The “reinstitutionalization was one of the strongest factors in preserving Protestantism in France” (89). From 1744 until the French Revolution, the desert church made a broad appeal for support to the exiled Huguenot churches and the Protestant churches of Europe.

Chapter 5 completes the historical section by exploring the conclusion of the desert church history with the Edict of Versailles or Tolerance of 1787. Marjan Blok makes a very important point: “the use of the word *tolerance* already implies a superior position of some sort, assuming the power to allow others a measure of existence. The word *pluralism* may hence be more accurate in general. For the study at hand, *tolerance* is likely the more appropriate term” (91, fn. 2).

The king’s desire to have a unified religion in his realm had proved untenable and thus, over time, he was forced to move toward pluralism (92). Blok traces the origins of the idea of religious tolerance and notes that the invention of the printing press played a crucial role in the movement towards pluralism (94). Enlightenment thought exemplified in Voltaire was a major component in this transformation, but Huguenot theology also made a significant contribution. While the Edict of Versailles failed to grant full citizenship to Huguenots, it was a move in the right direction.

## **The Theology of Eight Huguenots**

In chapter 6, Martin Klauber describes the ministry of Pierre Jurieu (1637–1713) as a preacher of apocalypticism and “one of the most prominent voices of the exiled Huguenots” (114). Jurieu wanted the Reformed church to be the official church of France. He ardently believed that the pope was the antichrist (119). He interpreted parts of the Book of Revelation as a prophecy of the Huguenot situation (120). Unlike most of his peers he supported the miraculous events connected with the prophets of the Cévennes of Languedoc.

In chapter 7 David Martin (1639–1721) is presented by Richard Muller as typical of the Reformed Huguenot exiled pastors, who ministered at a distance via the written and printed word. In true Post-Reformation orthodox form he was first and foremost an exegete of the biblical text in the context of the biblical languages, commentaries, and the church fathers (129). Muller has been a most persuasive apologist for the biblical orthodoxy of the so-called Scholastic theologians of the Post-Reformation era. With his keen insight into hermeneutical concerns, he is alert to Martin's opposition to the "historical-critical exegesis" (136). Thus, "Martin sought to oppose the attraction of rationalist argumentation against Christian doctrine and piety" (140). Muller's chapter is among the most theologically oriented in the book. Martin's theology "bears witness to the philosophical transformation of Reformed orthodoxy in the waning years of Protestant scholasticism" (142). The challenge of Cartesian rationalism (of René Descartes) was coordinated by Martin, as is seen in his assertion that "'Divine Revelation' offers 'doctrines infinitely higher than natural Reason'" (143). "The presence of both a priori and a posteriori patterns of argument in Martin's *Traité de la religion naturelle* (*Treatise on Natural Religion*) is quite characteristic of the Cartesian Reformed theologies of the era" (146). Martin sought to overcome the doubts of the persecuted Huguenots by using proofs of the existence of God (145).

Claude Brousson (1647–1698) was the "bellicose dove" in Bryan Strayer's account in chapter 8. He risked his life as a lawyer turned preacher in a way that few others did during this era. He sought, as an ardent Calvinist, to help reorganize the church of the desert (153). As a gifted lawyer he successfully resisted very attractive bribes to convert to Roman Catholicism (156). He advocated obedience to the government, except where it demanded what was contrary to the Word of God (159). But he launched a powerful campaign against revocation of the Edict of Nantes, citing the perpetuity of the edict stated in the document itself (160). He eventually personally renounced the use of force in defying the king, while enlisting the help of other armed Huguenots to fight his battles (167–68). He advocated a "carefully reasoned . . . plain-speaking, hard-hitting, prophecy-laden style of preaching" (172). He was martyred in 1698 (181).

In chapter 9, another of the three chapters written by Klauber, Jacques Basnage (1653–1723) is described as heir to "distinguished lawyers and Huguenot pastors" (183). He was educated at the Reformed Academy of Saumur and the Academy of Geneva, which exposed him to the debates surrounding the adoption of the Helvetic Formula Consensus, in which Pierre du Moulin opposed the hypothetical universalism of Moïse Amyraut (184). As a pastor Basnage also refuted subtle arguments luring Huguenots into the Roman Catholic fold as *nouveaux convertis* (188, 191). He advocated trusting God in the worst circumstances of the persecuted French Protestant church (189). He did allow that one could be a *nouveaux convertis* as long as one "professed one's true faith in public and refused to participate in the Mass" (193). The Mass, Basnage insisted, was idolatrous (194) and insulted the perfect efficacy of the cross of Christ (199). In his effort to comfort Huguenots who remained in France, he also "advised them to flee rather than remain subject to such enormous pressure to abjure their beliefs" (200).

In chapter 10 John Roney shows the influence of three major works of Jacques Abbadie (1654–1727) that influenced the progress of religious freedom in Europe. Remarkably his writing had a "wide appeal among both Protestants and roan Catholics" (201). The first volume, *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne* (*Treatise on the Truth of the Christian*

*Religion*), was a work of apologetics written during Abbadie's pastorate in Berlin and published in 1684.

His second volume, *L'Art de se connoître soimême; ou, la recherche des sources de la morale* (*The Art of Knowing Yourself; or, The Search for the Sources of Morality*), was composed during his ministry in England and Ireland and published in 1692. "Abbadie reflected traditional Reformed theology and also engaged the currents of contemporary intellectual thought" (201). He interacted with the rationalism and "more radical ideas" of René Descartes (1596–1650) and especially the pantheism of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) (206). He responded brilliantly to the challenges of the early Enlightenment presented by "a small but vocal group of atheists . . . , Deists, and Socinians who had employed the methods of Stoicism and Epicureanism to establish an understanding of a viable social system" (208). Abbadie also defended the inspiration of Scripture and the deity of Christ.

The third volume, *Défense de la Nation Britannique ou les droits de 'Dieu, de la nature, & de la société clairement établis au sujet de la révolution d'Angleterre, contre l'auteur de l'avis important aux Réfugiés* (*Defense of the British Nation or the clearly established rights of God, Nature, & Society regarding the Revolution of England, against the author of the Important Notice to Refugees*), was also written during this same period in England and Ireland and published in 1693. This work "became one of the most important arguments in support of William of Orange and Mary Stuart's accession to the throne in England's Glorious Revolution" (201).

Roney presents an interesting discussion of the influence and presence of Aristotelian categories in Post-Reformation dogmatics (211–12). He rightly refuses to condemn the Reformed scholastics as rationalistic, concluding: "Abbadie's appropriation of Aristotelian logic offered a common field of argument in which he could engage skeptics in his day" (212). This chapter is on a par with Muller's in terms of theological analysis, demonstrating the important legacy of Abbadie in defending historic Christianity and promoting religious freedom.

Daniel de Superville (1657–1728) spent most of his career as an exile in Rotterdam according to Martin Klauber in chapter 11 (225), but he had been educated initially at the Reformed school in Saumur where he was born. The school was made famous by "its illustrious and controversial faculty, led by Moise Amyraut" (225). Superville then studied at the Academy of Geneva in the midst of the controversial adoption of the Helvetic Formula Consensus (1675). This confession condemned some of the errors taught in Saumur, including Amyraut's hypothetical universalism, mentioned in chapter 9 (226). Having escaped the persecution that eventually came to Saumur, he generally avoided controversy and focused on consoling the exiles in the large church in Rotterdam and the persecuted Huguenots in France (228). This was done through publishing sermons and letters under three major titles: *On the Duties of the Afflicted Church* (1691), *The Truths and Duties of Religion* (1706), and *The True Communicant* (1718) (229). Thus, he developed a theology of consolation, exploring themes such as God's providence, the vanity of the world, and devotion to Christ.

This chapter, in a pointed way, shows how history shapes theological concerns. For Superville these concerns expressed in his sermons "displayed an amazing degree of empathy for the displaced French Huguenots" (240).

Michael Haykin describes "extraordinary pulpit oratory" of Jacques Saurin (1677–1730) in chapter 12. After fleeing France with his parents at age nine, he studied in Calvin's

Academy, graduated with high honors, and ended up taking a call to the ministry in London. He went on to become the chaplain in the royal palace of the House of Orange (245). The religious tolerance of the Netherlands also provided fertile soil for the rejection of religious authority (247–48). Saurin sought to replace autonomous reason with reason subordinated to the authority of the Bible.

Saurin's preaching emphasized the love of God, especially as it has been revealed through the person Jesus Christ and his work on the cross. He asserts that the mystery of God's love for sinners demonstrated by the cross could never be discovered by the reasoning of the greatest philosophers (250).

The final chapter (13), by Otto Selles, explores the preaching of Antoine Court (1695–1760) through Court's first sermon. While he begins by declaring that "Court was no theologian," he describes Court at age ten being known in his town as "Calvin's eldest son" (257). At age twenty the autodidact "turned a meeting of fellow preachers into what has become known as the 'first synod' of the Church of the Desert" (258). Court "effectively pivoted the Desert churches away from both armed rebellion and worship based on extemporaneous prophetic preaching" (260). He almost single-handedly, along with Claude Brousson of chapter 8, restored order to the Desert church, demonstrating that the church that abandons the means of grace and the basic ecclesiastical structure of the New Testament will not survive.

Court's first sermon is given in full, based on the text of Hebrews 10:25 "Let us not abandon our mutual assemblies, as some have the habit" (266–82). Court's knowledge of Scripture (learned initially at the knee of his mother) is extensive and his quotations from the Reformers and the Fathers (no doubt due to two years spent in exile in Geneva) show what a quick study this zealous young man was. He understood the mode of the church's existence as one of pilgrimage. This serves as an inspiration to every pastor who preaches from week to week in an increasingly hostile environment.

This volume reminds us of the special importance of Reformed orthodoxy to God's people in extremely difficult times. The presence of the French Confession of Faith (1559), trained pastor-preachers, and the means of grace in an organized church—these are what sustain the church at all times, but especially in hard times. The seven pastor-theologians portrayed in this book were also, and really foremost, preachers who desired to bring strength and comfort to Christians in France as well as the exiles to whom they directly ministered. Brousson and Court, of course, were exceptions, since they risked their lives by ministering to the Church of the Desert in France.

Evil powers during the Huguenot refuge sought to cancel the truth of God's Word through political force, similar to the soft persecution of contemporary forces like cancel-culture in America today. We may apply the same robust theology to ourselves as we endure the hardship our Savior told us we would inevitably face in every culture and under even the most benevolent governments. Biblically the church of Jesus Christ is always the church of "strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). This volume simply amplifies the importance of the means God has provided for his church in this present evil age. I highly recommend this fascinating, inspiring, and detailed exploration of the French Huguenots of the refuge.

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# Servant Poetry

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## In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth

by Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672)

### *Proem.*

Although great Queen, thou now in silence lie,  
Yet thy loud Herald Fame, doth to the sky  
Thy wondrous worth proclaim, in every clime,  
And so has vow'd, whilst there is world or time.  
So great's thy glory, and thine excellence,  
The sound thereof raps every human sense  
That men account it no impiety  
To say thou wert a fleshly Deity.  
Thousands bring off'rings (though out of date)  
Thy world of honours to accumulate.  
'Mongst hundred Hecatombs of roaring Verse,  
'Mine bleating stands before thy royal Hearse.  
Thou never didst, nor canst thou now disdain,  
T' accept the tribute of a loyal Brain.  
Thy clemency did yerst esteem as much  
The acclamations of the poor, as rich,  
Which makes me deem, my rudeness is no wrong,  
Though I resound thy greatness 'mongst the throng.

### *The Poem.*

No *Phoenix* Pen, nor *Spenser's* Poetry,  
No *Speed's*, nor *Camden's* learned History;  
*Eliza's* works, wars, praise, can e're compact,  
The World's the Theater where she did act.  
No memories, nor volumes can contain,  
The nine *Olymp'ades* of her happy reign,  
Who was so good, so just, so learn'd, so wise,  
From all the Kings on earth she won the prize.  
Nor say I more than truly is her due.  
Millions will testify that this is true.  
She hath wip'd off th' aspersion of her Sex,  
That women wisdom lack to play the Rex.  
*Spain's* Monarch sa's not so, not yet his Host:  
She taught them better manners to their cost.

The *Salic* Law had not in force now been,  
If *France* had ever hop'd for such a Queen.  
But can you Doctors now this point dispute,  
She's argument enough to make you mute,  
Since first the Sun did run, his ne'er runn'd race,  
And earth had twice a year, a new old face;  
Since time was time, and man unmanly man,  
Come shew me such a Phoenix if you can.  
Was ever people better rul'd than hers?  
Was ever Land more happy, freed from stirs?  
Did ever wealth in *England* so abound?  
Her Victories in foreign Coasts resound?  
Ships more invincible than *Spain's*, her foe  
She rack't, she sack'd, she sunk his Armadoe.  
Her stately Troops advanc'd to *Lisbon's* wall,  
*Don Anthony* in's right for to install.  
She frankly help'd *Franks'* (brave) distressed King,  
The States united now her fame do sing.  
She their Protectrix was, they well do know,  
Unto our dread Virago, what they owe.  
Her Nobles sacrific'd their noble blood,  
Nor men, nor coin she shap'd, to do them good.  
The rude untamed *Irish* she did quell,  
And *Tiron* bound, before her picture fell.  
Had ever Prince such Counsellors as she?  
Her self *Minerva* caus'd them so to be.  
Such Soldiers, and such Captains never seen,  
As were the subjects of our (*Pallas*) Queen:  
Her Sea-men through all straits the world did round,  
*Terra incognitæ* might know her sound.  
Her *Drake* came laded home with *Spanish* gold,  
Her *Essex* took *Cadiz*, their *Herculean* hold.  
But time would fail me, so my wit would too,  
To tell of half she did, or she could do.  
*Semiramis* to her is but obscure;  
More infamy than fame she did procure.  
She plac'd her glory but on *Babel's* walls,  
World's wonder for a time, but yet it falls.  
Fierce *Tomris* (*Cirus'* Heads-man, *Sythians'* Queen)  
Had put her Harness off, had she but seen  
Our *Amazon* i' th' Camp at *Tilbury*,  
(Judging all valour, and all Majesty)  
Within that Princess to have residence,  
And prostrate yielded to her Excellence.  
*Dido* first Foundress of proud *Carthage* walls  
(Who living consummates her Funerals),  
A great *Eliza*, but compar'd with ours,

How vanisheth her glory, wealth, and powers.  
Proud profuse *Cleopatra*, whose wrong name,  
Instead of glory, prov'd her Country's shame:  
Of her what worth in Story's to be seen,  
But that she was a rich *Egyptian* Queen.  
*Zenobia*, potent Empress of the East,  
And of all these without compare the best  
(Whom none but great *Aurelius* could quell)  
Yet for our Queen is no fit parallel:  
She was a Phoenix Queen, so shall she be,  
Her ashes not reviv'd more Phoenix she.  
Her personal perfections, who would tell,  
Must dip his Pen i' th' Heliconian Well,  
Which I may not, my pride doth but aspire  
To read what others write and then admire.  
Now say, have women worth, or have they none?  
Or had they some, but with our Queen is't gone?  
Nay Masculines, you have thus tax'd us long,  
But she, though dead, will vindicate our wrong.  
Let such as say our sex is void of reason  
Know 'tis a slander now, but once was treason.  
But happy *England*, which had such a Queen,  
O happy, happy, had those days still been,  
But happiness lies in a higher sphere.  
Then wonder not, *Eliza* moves not here.  
Full fraught with honour, riches, and with days,  
She set, she set, like *Titan* in his rays.  
No more shall rise or set such glorious Sun,  
Until the heaven's great revolution:  
If then new things, their old form must retain,  
*Eliza* shall rule *Albian* once again.

*Her Epitaph.*

*Here sleeps T H E Queen, this is the royal bed  
O' th' Damask Rose, sprung from the white and red,  
Whose sweet perfume fills the all-filling air,  
This Rose is withered, once so lovely fair:  
On neither tree did grow such Rose before,  
The greater was our gain, our loss the more.*

Another.

*Here lies the pride of Queens, pattern of Kings:  
So blaze it fame, here's feathers for thy wings.  
Here lies the envy'd, yet unparallel'd Prince,  
Whose living virtues speak (though dead long since).  
If many worlds, as that fantastic framed,  
In every one, be her great glory famed.*