

NEW HORIZONS

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IN THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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INFANT BAPTISM AND THE RED SEA CROSSING



J. V. FESKO

“Infant baptism does not appear on the pages of the Bible” is one of the regular claims I hear from my Baptist friends. I think the claim is common given that many Christians look to the New Testament to shape their understanding of baptism. After all, John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, and Jesus commissioned the church to baptize the nations (Matt. 28:18–19). But does this New Testament–only approach to understanding baptism hold water? Whenever I teach on any doctrine, I encourage my students to look at the unfolding history of redemption and trace the doctrinal line from Genesis to Revelation to ensure they get a full-orbed picture. In this case, the Apostle Paul’s inerrant and infallible commentary on the Old Testament shows us that Scripture does indeed reveal infant baptism. Paul’s explanation of the Red Sea crossing gives us a typological picture of baptism, even the baptism of infants. But this typological portrait is not pointing forward to the sacrament of baptism. Rather, both the

Red Sea crossing and the sacrament of baptism point to the baptism of the Spirit that Christ performed when he ascended to the Father’s right hand. A clear view of the Red Sea baptism thus better equips us to appreciate Christ’s baptism of the church and the significance of baptism, especially infant baptism.

PAUL ON THE RED SEA BAPTISM

God miraculously delivered Israel by parting the waters of the Red Sea. When all the people made it across, God then collapsed the walls of water upon Pharaoh and his army in judgment (Ex. 14). Miracle of miracles, God saved Israel through the waters of the Red Sea, but the first clue that something more transpired comes from the Song of Moses: “You breathed out your Spirit; the sea covered them” (Ex. 15:10, translation mine). God breathed out his *ruach*, or his *pneuma* in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Spirit’s presence is something that church father Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339–397) observed; he concluded that “holy baptism was prefigured in that passage of the Hebrews, wherein the Egyptian perished, but the Hebrew escaped” (*De Mysteriis*, III, *NPNF* 2/10:318). Ambrose draws a solid conclusion supported by both the prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul. The prophet Isaiah looked back upon the Red Sea crossing and asked his contemporaries: “Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit” (Isa. 63:11)? How does Paul explain the Red Sea crossing?

Paul writes: “Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1b–2). When Paul writes that “all were baptized,” he reminds the reader that the whole nation passed through the waters, including adults and “little ones” (Ex. 10:24; cf., e.g., Num. 14:3, 31). The whole nation was baptized “into Moses,” which means that they were “baptized into the discipleship of Moses” and “into the participation of the privileges which the Mosaic economy entailed” (Murray, *Romans*, 214). That Israel was “baptized into Moses” might suggest that this baptism was temporal rather than spiritual, as Moses did not save Israel unto eternal life in the same way that “baptism into Christ Jesus” sacramentally proclaims saving union with Christ (Rom. 6:1–4; Westminster Confession of Faith 28:1). Yet, Paul explains that God baptized Israel into Moses “in the cloud and in the sea.” Paul’s mention of the sea makes sense, as we know the waters of the Red Sea were present, however ironic this baptism was: Israel remained dry while Pharaoh and his army got wet. But what does Paul mean when he says that God baptized Israel into the cloud?

The cloud by day and pillar of fire by night were visible signs that pointed to the presence of the Holy Spirit (Ex. 13:21–22; 14:19). The Old Testament associates the cloud with God’s very presence (Ex. 14:24; Num. 12:5; 14:14; Deut. 31:15; Neh. 9:12; Ps. 99:7), but Moses, Isaiah, and Paul all connect the cloud at the Red Sea specifically with the Spirit’s presence. Thus, God baptized Israel, including their “little ones” into “Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:2). God baptized infants into the Spirit when Israel crossed the Red Sea, and as Paul goes on to explain, “Now these things happened to them as a type, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor. 10:11, translation mine). That Paul designates the Red Sea crossing, among other events, as a *type*, or foreshadow, means that this event anticipates a still greater fulfillment at the end of the ages.

CHRIST’S BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

There is a complex of events to which the Red Sea crossing points. First, we should take a step back and look at the large-scale portrait God painted in the miraculous crossing. Israel was God’s firstborn son who went through the waters and received the Spirit (Ex. 4:22; 15:10; Isa. 63:11; 1 Cor. 10:1–2). We find an antitypical counterpart to this event when God’s only begotten Son went down into the waters of the Jordan, emerged, and then the Father poured out the Holy Spirit upon him (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22). The Father anointed his Son to equip him to carry out his gospel ministry (cf. Isa. 11:1–5; 42:1; 61:1–3; Luke 4:19–21). When Jesus spoke of his impending crucifixion, he went to a mountain where he was transfigured as he discussed, not merely his “departure” (ESV) but literally his “exodus” with Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:28–36, esp. v. 31, translation mine). That Luke invokes the term *exodus* to characterize Christ’s ministry takes us back to the Old Testament complex of miraculous events surrounding Israel’s redemption and especially their Red Sea crossing.

On the heels of Christ’s own exodus—his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—he baptized the church at Pentecost with the Holy Spirit. Remember that John said that he only baptized with water but that Jesus would baptize with “the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). This baptism occurred at Pentecost as the Apostle Peter explains: “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing” (Acts 2:33). Like the wind that blew the waters back and the Spirit’s presence in the cloud at the Red Sea crossing and the pillar of fire that led Israel at night, so at Pentecost “there came from heaven a sound

like a mighty rushing wind . . . and divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them” (Acts 2:2, 3). Christ baptized the church at Pentecost, and thus Peter exclaimed: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Notably, Peter’s statement did not stop with adults who were able to make a profession of faith. Tiny feet were carried by parents, and small children also walked upon the dry bed of the Red Sea as they were baptized into the cloud. Thus, Peter proclaimed: “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:39). God delivered whole households through the Red Sea baptism, and so God continues to save entire households in the New Testament (Ex. 12:3; Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31, 34; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16). Moreover, when Joseph went to bury his father, his whole household went with him along with the households of his father and brothers, yet, “Only their children . . . were left in the land of Goshen” (Gen. 50:8). Here Moses brackets out the children when he mentions the household participation in the burial of Joseph’s father, Jacob, yet no such exclusions occur in the New Testament household baptisms. In short, the baptism of infants at the Red Sea crossing shows the church that we should baptize infant members of Christian households.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

When we look at baptism through the lens of Paul’s explanation of the Red Sea crossing, we see that infants should receive the sacrament of baptism. Given that they are the children of professing Christian parents, they have right to the sign of the covenant. They have right to the sacrament of baptism, which proclaims through preached and visible Word that Christ has come and has baptized the whole covenant community in the Holy Spirit as he leads us on our final exodus. In our present context, Christians characterize baptism as an individual rite of admission unto salvation, whereas Reformed and Presbyterian churches have historically defined baptism as the admission of individuals and households into the visible covenant community, the church. In the words of the Westminster Confession: “The visible church . . . consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation” (25:2). But there are two important points that we should observe regarding baptism: It is a testimony of God’s sovereignty and of the need for faith in Christ.





Exodus: Red Sea
by Baruj Salinas,
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First, there are many Christians who define baptism as *their* testimony of *their* saving faith and *their* commitment unto Christ. There is some truth to this, as even the Westminster Confession states that baptism is a sign of the believer “giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life” (WCF 28:1). However, baptism is more than a sign of our surrender and dedication to Christ. As a sacrament, a holy sign and seal of God’s covenant promises in Christ, baptism is a visible word that heralds the gospel to our senses of sight and touch. What the preached Word is to the ear, the sacraments are to the other senses. Word and sacrament work in concert to herald the gospel. When we think of the sacraments, we should ask two questions: (1) what am *I* saying by the sacrament? And (2), more importantly, what is *God* saying through the sacrament? The second question invites further thought and meditation.

In this case, the sacrament of baptism proclaims that Christ has lived, suffered, died, arisen, and ascended to the Father’s right hand and baptized the church in the Spirit (Acts 2:33). But we see two powerful truths among many others in baptism. God saves adults through a profession of faith. Baptism also proclaims, however, that God reaches out to us when we are incapable of reaching out to him, and he marks us as his own by placing his covenant sign of baptism upon the children of believers. The Red Sea crossing powerfully illustrates this point. God saved the whole nation of Israel through the Red Sea baptism, but who ultimately reached the Promised Land and entered it? The infants and children of Israel, not the adults. The

adults heard and received the message of the gospel but did not believe, so God barred them from entering the Promised Land (Heb. 4:6). He gave the Promised Land to the children and infants who were baptized in the Red Sea. Infant baptism, therefore, mightily teaches us about God’s sovereignty in salvation. He chooses us; we do not choose him.

Second, we must not think that infant baptism is the only form of the sacrament that we practice. Presbyterian and Reformed churches also practice believer’s baptism. That is, when an adult convert makes a profession of faith, a church admits him into membership into the visible church. That adults require a profession of faith for baptism sacramentally preaches that only faith in Jesus Christ saves a person. Paired together, infant baptism and believer’s baptism remind us both of God’s sovereignty in salvation and the need for salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The waters of baptism alone do not save. Rather, when the church administers an infant’s baptism, it does so with the eager hope and anticipation that the infant will grow up in the bosom of the church, receive instruction, be discipled, and eventually make a profession of faith in Christ. As Israel ratified the covenant at Sinai and the elders ascended the mountain and ate unharmed in the presence of God (Ex. 24:9–10), so only those who profess faith in Christ can come to the Lord’s Supper to ratify the covenant and eat unharmed in the sacramental presence of Christ. Only the person who can “examine himself” and discern Christ’s body in the sacrament can consume the bread and drink the cup of the new covenant in Christ’s blood (1 Cor. 11:27–32). As such, the Lord’s Supper is an anticipation of the final judgment where only those who have received the gift of faith through Christ’s baptism of the Spirit will escape God’s wrath.

When we read about the Red Sea crossing, remember that it is a type, or foreshadow, of Christ’s baptism of the church. As adult and infant alike were baptized into the cloud, so now Christ has baptized the church to save whole households, and thus we baptize infants and children to proclaim this glorious truth. **NH**

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THE BEAUTY OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM



JEREMIAH W. MONTGOMERY

The Christian church has been baptizing new disciples for more than two millennia. As Christianity expanded through the centuries, spread across continents, and permeated new societies, it is no exaggeration to say that several billion souls, from diverse tribes and in different tongues, have felt the waters and heard the precious words, “I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Yet as this wonderful history has unfolded, much confusion and sharp controversy have arisen within the church as to how we are to understand baptism. It is therefore worth taking some time to consider: What is the meaning of Christian baptism? Who is to be baptized? And why is baptism so important, so beautiful?

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

To understand the meaning of Christian baptism we should first remember its context. What other practices existed in ancient culture that provided early Christians with a framework to understand it?

The Old Testament law included situations where believers washed with water for ceremonial purification (Num. 19:11–12). By the first century, the Pharisees had extended this to cups, pots, and even furniture (Mark 7:3–4). Shortly before Jesus began his own ministry, John the Baptist appeared, “baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4).

With such practices in the background, it’s not difficult to see how the early church would have seen baptism as both sacred and spiritual. It was sacred because it involved the relationship between God and man. It was spiritual because the washing with water, while not magical or mechanical, signified deeper spiritual realities.

Yet the specifically Christian form of baptism originated with Jesus himself. When he met his apostles in Galilee after his resurrection, he gave them the following command:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18–20)

In this great commission we see three important things regarding Christian baptism. First, we see its formula. The church is to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Christian baptism is “Trinitarian”: There is only one God (“the name”), but this one God is three Persons (“the Father . . . the Son . . . the Holy Spirit”). Second, we see the responsibility that comes with Christian baptism. The church must teach those it baptizes all the commands of Jesus: “Teaching them . . . all that I have commanded you.” We who receive baptism must learn to believe and obey Jesus: “To observe all that I have commanded.” The third thing we see here is the central meaning of Christian baptism: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. . . .” What is baptism? According to Jesus, baptism is a mark of discipleship. This is its basic definition.

Careful attention to this definition helps us to avoid a serious error that has plagued the Christian church for centuries—the error of thinking that baptism automatically changes human hearts. Discipleship is a lifelong

process, not a onetime event. As a mark of discipleship, baptism is likewise a beginning. Like raindrops of a better world, baptism calls us to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). But this newness of life involves gradual growth, not an instantaneous transformation. Indeed, the New Testament shows us the tragic reality that a person can be baptized yet remain unconverted (1 John 2:18–19).

Understanding baptism as a mark of discipleship also helps us to clarify the connection that the New Testament makes between baptism and many spiritual realities experienced by Christians. For example, the Apostle Peter connected baptism with forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Similarly, the Apostle Paul wrote that baptism connects us to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rom. 6:3–5)

We can understand these connections by considering the nature of Christian discipleship.

Discipleship is both a picture and a promise of life with Jesus. It is a picture because, as we learn to love and follow Jesus, our lives slowly become a picture of his life—and the life of the church gradually becomes a picture of the life of heaven. The life of discipleship is also a promise. It is a promise because we learn and follow Jesus by faith, not by sight. Even when we struggle to feel his blessings, we believe his promises.

Because baptism is a mark of discipleship, baptism is also a picture and a promise. It is a picture and promise of the gospel, a “sign and seal of the covenant of grace” (Westminster Confession of Faith 28.1). Through “washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” baptism pictures and promises “our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s” (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 94). As we see these blessings pictured in the washing, we believe that Jesus gives them to us.

This latter point must be emphasized: the blessings of baptism only become ours as we believe the gospel promises. The connection between baptism and the blessings it

depicts is not automatic. Pictures and promises are powerful, but they are not mechanical. The link is real, but it is spiritual (WCF 27.2). The New Testament is clear that forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and every other blessing of being united with Christ, require personal faith in Jesus (John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8–9; 1 John 1:9; see also WSC Q. 91).

All of this is just another way of circling back to our central definition. Baptism is a mark of discipleship. And the chief mark of a disciple is that we believe the promises of Jesus.

WHO IS TO BE BAPTIZED?

One of the greatest controversies among Protestant Christians today is this question: Who is to be baptized? In other words, is it okay to baptize infants, or should the church only baptize adults?

If we remember that baptism is a mark of discipleship, then a clear principle follows: We should baptize a person as soon as they become a disciple of Jesus. This principle adjusts the question to: Who is considered a disciple of Jesus, and when does one become a disciple?

Adults become disciples of Jesus as soon as they believe and confess their faith. At the day of Pentecost, those who were “cut to the heart” and believed the gospel were immediately baptized: “Those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:37–41). The same practice was followed in the conversion of Lydia (16:14–15) and the Philippian jailer (16:25–34).

But adult converts are not the only persons described in the New Testament as disciples of Jesus. The Apostle Paul is very clear that the children of Christians are also to be seen as Christian disciples: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). If the children of Christians are disciples, then should they not also receive baptism as the mark of their discipleship?

This is in fact what we see in the rest of the New Testament: the “households” of adult converts were baptized along with the head of the household. Lydia’s household was baptized when she believed (Acts 16:15). The household of the Philippian jailer was baptized when he believed (Acts 16:33). The Apostle Paul later writes of baptizing the “household of Stephanas” (1 Cor. 1:16).

Can we be sure that “households” in the New Testament included children? The answer is yes. When the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy to describe the qualifications for church overseers, he explicitly included children as part of an overseer’s household: “He must manage his

own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” (1 Tim. 3:4–5). The Greek word translated “household,” used twice in these verses in a way that clearly includes children (“keeping his children submissive”), is the exact same word (*oikos*) that is used when households were baptized (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:16).

It is worth noting that this New Testament pattern of household discipleship is not new at all. We see the same concept in the Old Testament. When the book of Genesis described the household of Abraham, it included both children and servants (Gen. 17:27). When Joseph cared for his father’s and brothers’ households, he included their dependents (Gen. 47:12). Furthermore, the Old Testament commanded that children be raised as disciples: “These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut. 6:6–7). “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

Christians can disagree on the significance of the parallels between the Old and New Testaments. However, even without parallels from the Old Testament, the New Testament alone answers the question of whether we should baptize children. The New Testament clearly includes children as part of households. The New Testament clearly describes households being baptized. The New Testament clearly commands Christians to raise our children as disciples of Jesus. Therefore, it is appropriate and necessary to conclude that the children of Christians should receive baptism, the mark of discipleship.

THE BEAUTY OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Jesus had beautiful purposes in commanding us to baptize both adult believers and their children. Baptism is beautiful because it is the promise of the gospel in a form we can see and feel. As a “sign and seal,” it calls us to remember and believe many truths essential to our Christian lives. What are these truths, and how should they affect us?

We have already seen baptism does not automatically change our hearts. However, baptism does permanently change our team: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). As a mark of discipleship, baptism is a mark of our new allegiance.

As a mark of new allegiance, baptism is a mark of our new destiny. Consider again the verses just quoted. Can any of us imagine what it means, both for the present and for the future, to be joined to the body of Christ that transcends every nation, tribe, people, and language? Can any of us fathom the full goodness of what it means to “put on Christ”—to be made fully and forever clean in his righteousness, to the very bottom of our being?

As a mark of new destiny, baptism promises God’s power to change us even now. “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). “Newness of life” means Christians must “no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor. 5:15). How? “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). As we walk by the Spirit, we begin to experience and grow into the life of heaven and the new creation. Baptism is thus a mark of new life.

Finally, as a mark of new life, baptism reminds us that we are part of a better story—a journey which, however dark the path, ends in pleasures unfading: “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11); “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Baptism is beautiful because it reminds us of the gospel. Every time we witness a baptism or recall our own, we should refresh and reassure our souls with the goodness and promises of God in Jesus Christ. As we do this, our lives will bear new fruit. “By serious and thankful consideration” of our baptism and its benefits, “by being humbled for our sinful defilement” yet “drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized” and “endeavoring to live by faith,” we will grow up “in holiness and righteousness . . . and . . . walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body” (Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 167). **NH**

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PRAYING THE PROMISES FOR OUR COVENANT CHILDREN



MATTHEW A. FIGURA

God’s people ought to delight in God’s gift of baptism for covenant children. John Murray wrote in *Christian Baptism* that “the ordinance of infant baptism is intended to encourage and confirm faith in the covenant faithfulness of God. Baptism is the sign and pledge and seal that God’s mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him and His righteousness unto children’s children” (89).

DELIGHTING IN GOD’S GIFT OF BAPTISM FOR COVENANT CHILDREN

Baptism is a delight for God’s people precisely because it is a sign and seal of the most glorious spiritual realities and, as Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, “the promise is for you and your children” (Acts 2:39). J. Gresham Machen in *The Christian View of Man* wrote:

In baptism, God receives the child into His covenant family. By baptism, God assures us that our children, like ourselves, are included in the covenant of grace. Thus, baptism becomes an anchor of assurance, binding our children to Christ and His church.

If we are to delight properly in God’s gift of baptism for our covenant children, we must never lose sight of the glorious truths signified and sealed in baptism (see Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 165) and ever put them

before our children as they grow up in the covenant.

First, baptism is a picture and pledge of union with Christ. All the other blessings and benefits of the covenant flow to us through this rich vein. The one for whom this promise is realized will declare with Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world” (see Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:4).

Second, baptism is a picture and pledge of the forgiveness of our sins. As the old hymn says, “What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” Not all the blood of bulls and goats can take away my sin, but “where there is forgiveness of [our sins and lawless deeds], there is no longer any offering for sin” (Heb. 10:18). “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph. 1:7).

Third, baptism is a picture and pledge of regeneration, or the giving of the new heart. Our children have no hope apart from the gracious gift described in Ephesians 2 as simply, he “made us alive.” In John 3, Jesus taught Nicodemus of his great need to be “born of water and the Spirit” (v. 5), echoing Ezekiel 36:25–27. The one who receives the new heart believes the gospel and worships the triune God now and forever.

Fourth, baptism is a picture and pledge of our adoption into God’s family. He “predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself.” The one adopted cries with the Apostle John, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1 NKJV). J. I. Packer in his modern classic *Knowing God* wrote, “Adoption [to be loved and cared for by God the Father] is the highest privilege that the gospel offers” (206).

Fifth, baptism is a picture and pledge of our resurrection to everlasting life. “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Rom. 6:5). Our baptism points us to the eschatological climax of redemptive history and causes us to long for that day.

PRAYING FOR GOD’S COVENANT CHILDREN

What an incredible privilege we possess—to pray for God’s precious covenant children!

Given the scope of what baptism signifies and seals, together with the baptized entering into an “open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord’s” (WLC Q. 165), we have a powerful way to pray: “Gracious Father, please work by your Spirit such that our covenant children would be what you have marked them off from the world to be. In your sovereign mercy, savingly unite them to Christ, grant them a new heart, forgive all their sins, robe them with Christ’s justifying righteousness, confirm them as true sons and daughters of the King, make

them “wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 1), and bring them safely to their eternal inheritance in heaven. Father, please cause them, by faith, to lay hold of all you’ve pictured and pledged in their baptism.

We also have numerous Scripture passages to inform our prayers for God’s precious little ones. In Isaiah 44, the Lord declares,

Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; *I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. This one will say, “I am the LORD’s,” another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, “The LORD’s,” and name himself by the name of Israel.* (2–5, emphasis added)

Considering such an encouraging text, let us cry in prayer: “Our covenant-making, covenant-keeping God, we bless your name for the promises of your covenant. We confess that we and our children are worthy of your everlasting judgment but rejoice that you blot out the transgressions of your people. We further confess that we are prone to fear for the souls of our children. Our faith is weak, but you are strong. O Lord, pour out your Spirit and all the blessings of your covenant on our children according to your Word of promise. You formed them from the womb, O Lord; please help them! Cause them to spring up and name the name of Christ and bless the name of the triune God into which they were baptized.”

“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the LORD. “And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, *or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,*” says the LORD, “from this time forth and forevermore.” (Isa. 59:20–21, emphasis added)

From this text we might plead, “Holy Father, may your Spirit and your Word never depart from us, from our children, or from our children’s children, now and forevermore. May it be according to your gracious and faithful word, to the praise of your glorious grace.”

Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this

place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, *for their own good and the good of their children after them.* I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

(Jer. 32:37–41, emphasis added)

We continue to learn to pray through the promises of Jeremiah: “O Lord, our children are prone to wander and would forsake the covenant in an instant if not for your grace. Thank you for your promise to be God to us and to our children after us. Please never turn away from doing good to them and cause them to grow in godly fear of you all their days. Even as you rejoice over them, cause them to lay hold of all the good that you have promised in their baptism, that they may never turn away from you.”

My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. *They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever,* and David my servant shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Ezek. 37:24–27, emphasis added)

Finally, let us hear the word of God from Ezekiel and pray: “Heavenly Father, establish the work of your hands with all our covenant children. Unite them to your servant David’s greater Son, our Lord Jesus. Make them to walk according to the Spirit, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, to call upon their Father who is in heaven. Make their hearts and lives your holy habitation. Dwell with them in covenant grace forever, according to your promise to be their God and to have them as your people.” **NH**

The author is pastor of Faith Presbyterian in Silver Point, Tennessee.

GIVING AND WORSHIP

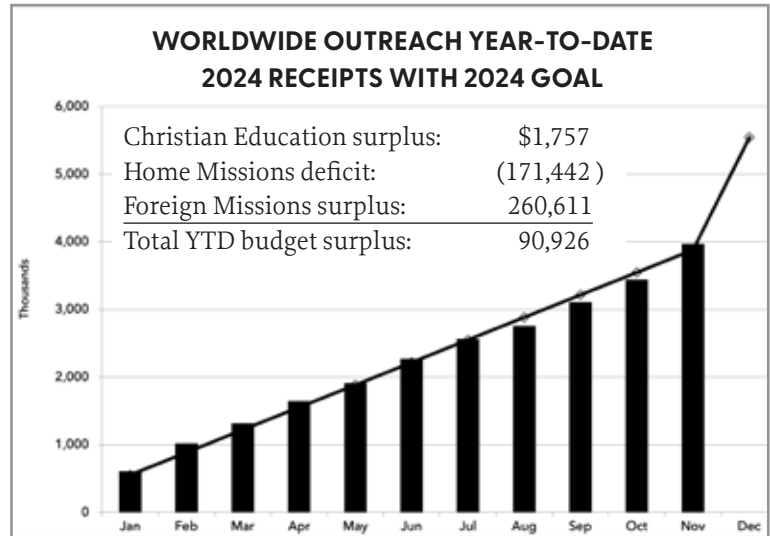
DAVID J. KOENIG

Each Lord's Day, when it comes time for the offering, one of the things I try to remind the church I serve is that giving is a part of worship and that our giving is a grateful response to God for all that he has done for us. Understanding this should cause a change in our attitudes toward our earthly possessions. If we believe that we have these things as gifts of God meant to glorify him, this should naturally change the way we use them.

One of Scriptures' examples of this comes in a passage in which the worshiper is actually accused of bad stewardship! In John 12:1–11, we find the familiar account of Mary anointing Jesus's feet. The significance of this act is revealed a moment later when Judas accuses her of bad stewardship and mentions that the ointment cost around three hundred denarii. A little background is in order here: three hundred denarii is roughly the yearly wage of an ordinary day laborer. Think about this for a moment. A year's earnings! Now, this act is predicated on Jesus's bodily presence, and our giving to Christ and his kingdom in our age will likely take on a different expression. However, this act of worship still has much to tell us about how we give to God. Consider three examples:

First, giving is an act of humble submission. Giving to God requires a certain humility on our part. This humility comes when we understand that all we have comes as a gift of God. Consider Mary: Often when we see her in the gospels, she is at Jesus's feet. It is a way of consciously placing herself beneath her Lord. Worship requires humility, and giving is no exception. It is a way of using our actions and resources to show what it is that we value above all else.

Second, giving is an act of sacrificial devotion. There is some speculation that the ointment in this passage might have been a family heirloom. While we do not know for sure, it adds an intriguing dimension to this text. Either way we look at it, Mary is offering up the very best she has to God. This is the way we should view our stewardship. The best of what we have is what we offer to God. This



requires a whole different way of viewing our possessions, our time, and even ourselves.

Third, giving is an act of extravagant adoration. Ultimately, Mary's act tells us more about the object of her worship than anything else. This act is meant to show us the surpassing worth of Christ. Mary offers up the best she has to Christ because he is worth it—and much more besides. It cannot be emphasized enough that the very best we have could never add anything to the glory of Christ. Our giving to God will never be adequate to express the true worth of Christ or what we owe to him. For this reason we need to be reminded that our giving, like our worship, is received only in Christ.

The author is pastor of Pilgrim Presbyterian in Dover, New Hampshire.

NEW MISSIONARIES TO UGANDA

C. FREDERICK LO

After thinking about ministry and missions for so long, I still can't believe that I'm writing this as your new foreign missionary. My wife, Kaling, and I look forward to traveling to Uganda this month to serve as missionaries at the Knox School of Theology in Mbale. We want to spend and be spent for Christ and his church. May God be gracious to the Uganda Mission, such that many in Africa become stewards and lovers of the gospel of God's Son.

Our call was confirmed in late summer 2024, when we visited the field. There we saw how the long-term work of the OPC is bearing fruit in both Karamoja and Mbale: Young men in Karamoja who heard the gospel from our missionaries are becoming students at Knox, desiring to become pastors and elders of their churches or church plants, and students from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and other African countries are coming to Knox because of their zeal for Reformed theology and ecclesiology. We saw how I can make an impact even as a teacher unknown to the people of the region by training up pastors and elders who are known to their native countries, tribes, and villages, so that Christ himself may be known, embraced, and magnified.

CONFRONTED BY THE TRUTH OF GOD

I was born and raised in Hong Kong. Fulfilling my mom and dad's dream, I came to America for undergraduate and graduate studies, married, and raised a family. Working

With Douglas Clawson at Lo's ordination



Kaling and Frederick Lo

as a research biologist in a pharmaceutical company appeared to be the cherry on top of my life's accomplishments. Yet, I was unexpectedly confronted with the truth of God when our first daughter was born.

Her birth, along with the dawn of the human genome age, coalesced in my mind to make me question life itself. The twin questions of "How am I going to be a moral example?" and "What makes us human?" woke me up from my dogmatic slumber. Kaling was already a Christian, so I began to seek God by attending her church. Through reading the Bible, I came to faith in Jesus. I realized that there is no conflict between science and faith; through God's Word, we see his world in greater light and clarity.

A TASTE FOR TEACHING

Soon after my conversion, I had a burning desire to learn and to tell people about Jesus and the Bible. After discovering Reformed theology, I enthusiastically embraced it. I began seminary education and a church internship, and I loved every minute of learning and serving. There were times that I contemplated teaching overseas, but I had mixed feelings. On the one hand, it was a motivation to obtain higher theological degrees to prepare myself. On the other, I felt doubtful. Had I started pursuing ministry too late? Was I too entrenched in my work and life in New Jersey? After all, why would God send me when there were so many younger, more experienced, and qualified full-time ministers and missionaries at his disposal?

Coming to the OPC changed my view radically, yet slowly. After I was licensed in the Presbytery of New Jersey and Puerto Rico, I was encouraged to take the OPC's Ministerial Training Institute classes. One seemingly insignificant conversation with Douglas Clawson, general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions who taught the preaching class that week, changed everything. He encouraged me to pursue the office of ruling elder and to serve the local and regional church in a more dedicated manner. Out of the blue a year later, Douglas called and asked if I was interested in going with him to India for a week with the Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps. I was very excited and signed on immediately to teach pastors and elders in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI). That was my first taste of teaching in a foreign country. And it tasted good and sweet.

COVID and political events put all trips to India to a halt. Still, I was growing in my love of Christ's church and desire to be a minister of the gospel as I served my local church, Calvary OPC in Ringoes, New Jersey, and the presbytery on the candidates and credentials committee. I was ordained as a tentmaking teacher at Calvary OPC in October 2023.

At the 2023 General Assembly, I was elected to the Committee on Foreign Missions. I had a wonderful experience learning from all the faithful ministers and ruling elders on the committee. The fruits and needs of our mission fields heightened my desire to be more involved in their work. A whirlwind of interviews and a field visit finally led to a call by the Committee on Foreign Missions this past September.



The Los with the ministry team in Karamoja

SERVING CHRIST IN A MEANINGFUL WAY

Kaling Lo

In March 2024, a missionary opportunity opened up in Mbale, Uganda. At that time and during most of the application process, I took a wait-and-see attitude.

Then, in late summer 2024, we visited Uganda and saw the gospel reaching to the ends of the earth. When we arrived, we first went to Karamoja, a remote region where people are extremely poor and don't even have enough to eat. One day we visited a village, and I saw and heard the children singing gospel songs and reciting the Westminster Shorter Catechism in the Karimojong language. I also spoke with the two young men who taught the children the Shorter Catechism. Both of them were being disciplined through our OP Uganda Mission. I saw the fruits of the work of the missionaries and was very touched.

We then went to the city of Mbale, where I had the chance to attend a few classes at Knox School of Theology. Fred was invited to give feedback on student preaching, and his comments were eagerly received. By then, I was thoroughly convinced that we would be serving Christ in a meaningful way at Knox. I am now looking forward to seeing Fred teach at Knox and take part in training up church leaders in Africa.

As we prepare to leave this month, we appreciate your prayers for a good transition and quick settling in to life in Uganda; for our two daughters who are living in the United States; for good working relationships with the faculty and students at Knox; and for our love toward and service with the mission team.

WHAT'S NEW

After completing nine and a half years of service in Mbale, Uganda, **Rev. Dr. and Mrs. L. Charles (Connie) Jackson** returned to the United States.

Missionary associates **Mr. and Mrs. Lucas J. (Erica) Payson** (Providence PCA, Fort Wayne, IN) completed a six-month term of service in Montevideo, Uruguay, in December 2024.

Rev. and Mrs. C. Frederick (Kaling) Lo will arrive on the field in late January 2025, when Fred will take up his labors at Knox School of Theology in Mbale, Uganda.

IMAGINING WITH PAUL

JEREMIAH W. MONTGOMERY

Imagine you are the Apostle Paul. It is a late spring day in AD 54, and you are sitting in a rented room in the city of Ephesus. Your friend Sosthenes is sitting nearby, carefully writing as you dictate the opening of a letter to the church in Corinth—a church you planted just a few years earlier. You listen to his pen scratch across the parchment as you ponder your next words.

The Corinthian church is in trouble. A trusted sister has recently sent you news, and the news is not good. Factions, immorality, and lawsuits are tearing the church apart. There is confusion about marriage, misbehavior at the Lord's Supper, and disorder in worship. The report from Chloe's people was lengthy and upsetting.

You sigh, closing your eyes as you remember Corinth. Long days toiling in the shop alongside Aquila and Priscilla, followed by late nights of pouring and praying over Scripture—all of it to teach the Corinthians the way of Christ. Now what?

The room goes quiet, and you open your eyes. Sosthenes is waiting. You rest your head on your hand for a moment. What do you say to a group of immature believers who are struggling on so many fronts at once? What will empower them to overcome divisions, reconcile offenses, and resist temptation? What will refresh their unity and witness?

Of course there is only one answer: Jesus Christ and his cross-shaped, self-giving love. You look up at Sosthenes and nod. As you speak, God breathes out his words:

The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.¹

You pause, waiting for your friend to finish writing. Will the Corinthians take these words to heart, or will the church continue to fall apart?



"The Apostle Paul," Rembrandt van Rijn, c. 1657, public domain

From a human perspective, the "word of the cross" is absurd. How could any Jew who knew their Torah ever accept a Messiah cursed by God?² How could Greeks, whose philosophy preached that the soul should escape the body, ever embrace the "folly" of a God who came in the flesh, "born of woman"?³ And how could the Romans, who worshiped Victory as a goddess, ever bow to a Savior executed like a slave?

Yet it had happened to you. "Formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent,"⁴ you whisper, remembering your own history.

Even in your most zealous days as a Pharisee, you had never been able to escape a deep sense of your own failure. The commandment against coveting had consumed you with guilt and shame. "When the commandment came, sin came alive and I died,"⁵ you mutter. You had been too well trained in the Scriptures to believe that God would grade on a curve: "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law."⁶ Behind the mask of your self-righteousness, you had been deeply afraid and insecure.

But Jesus changed all that. Oh, how you remember that day! The road to Damascus, "the light from heaven, brighter than the sun"—and then his voice, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"⁷ From that moment, you were a new man. And every day since, you have marveled afresh as you repeat to yourself words that you wrote in a letter to the Galatian churches: "The Son of God . . . loved me and

gave himself for me.”⁸ “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . . so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”⁹

Your eyes shine. The Spirit of Christ! The Holy Spirit is the one who magnifies Jesus and makes us new. He is the one who must change the saints in Corinth. After all, he is the one who changed them in the first place.

Sosthenes is ready again, and again you speak the words of the Holy Spirit: “For consider your calling, brothers. . . . I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”¹⁰

MARVELING WITH PAUL

The Apostle Paul is such a hero of the Bible that we may forget he was also human. Like us, he experienced weakness and fear. Like us, he faced a culture that embraced evil and scorned the gospel. And like us, he realized that behind all this opposition stood a darker and more diabolical enemy. It would have been easy for discouragement to paralyze Paul’s mission. What kept him going in gospel witness?

Facing the darkness, Paul remembered the One who had met him amidst blazing light on the road to Damascus—and he knew that light was capable of overcoming any darkness: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”¹¹

Facing division and difficulties in the church, Paul remembered that the church is formed and transformed “not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” He actively relied on the Holy Spirit to change himself and others: “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”¹²

Behind it all, however, Paul never ceased to marvel at the cross-shaped, self-giving love of Jesus. If Jesus had not done it, who in all of history could ever dare believe that “the Son of God . . . loved me and gave himself for me”?

As we begin a new year in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, perhaps we feel closer to Paul’s experience than we have ever been in our lifetimes. Where I live in suburban Philadelphia, there seems to be an increasing interest in the occult. As our neighbors turn away from the Author of Life, they seem to be inevitably sliding further and further into the embrace of death. This is as tragic as it is unsurprising, for between heaven and hell there is no third way.

We also face a rising tide of public scorn for the gospel. I am not yet fifty years old, yet when I was growing up one

could use words like “God” and “sin” with almost anybody—and it was safe to assume they’d have some acquaintance with biblical teaching. In my teens, even those who did not confess Christ agreed with the Westminster Confession of Faith that “marriage is to be between one man and one woman.”¹³ Yet today, the very definitions of “man” and “woman” are contested—and those who persist in confessing a biblical understanding of gender and sexuality are maligned as enemies of human dignity.

If we sense ourselves moving closer to Paul than ever before in our experience, let us also move closer to Paul in our response. The world, the flesh, and the devil have not changed in the last two thousand years. But neither has our God! The light of Jesus Christ still shines undimmed. His Spirit still shines that light into our hearts, magnifying the marvel of his love: captivating souls, expelling sin, and implanting new life. The gospel is still the best news the world has ever heard.

The love of Jesus, magnified by the Spirit of Jesus, was the fire which fueled evangelism in the early church:

Here were men and women of every rank and station in life, of every country in the known world, so convinced that they had discovered the riddle of the universe . . . that nothing must stand in the way of their passing on this good news to others. . . . The discovery that the ultimate force in the universe was Love, and that this Love had stooped to the very nadir of self-abasement for human good, had an effect on those who believed it which nothing could remove.¹⁴

As we enter a new and uncertain future, let us not just imagine the experience of Paul. Let us also marvel with Paul. May the Spirit of Jesus soak our souls in the cross-shaped, self-giving love of Jesus as we meditate on these words: “The Son of God . . . loved me and gave himself for me.”

The author is general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.

Notes

1. 1 Cor. 1:18; 22–25.
2. Gal. 3:13; Deut. 21:23.
3. Gal. 4:4.
4. 1 Tim. 1:13.
5. Rom. 7:9.
6. Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26.
7. Acts 26:13–14.
8. Gal. 2:20.
9. Gal. 3:13–14.
10. 1 Cor. 1:26; 2:3–4.
11. 2 Cor. 4:6.
12. Gal. 5:16.
13. Westminster Confession of Faith, 24.1.
14. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, revised ed. (Eerdmans, 2003), 273–274.

REVIEW: JOHN ARROWSMITH'S *PLANS FOR HOLY WAR*

DANNY E. OLINGER

John Arrowsmith (1602–1659), a leading Presbyterian at the Westminster Assembly, has not received over the years the recognition of such Scottish divines as George Gillespie, Thomas Henderson, or Samuel Rutherford. Part of this is due to the fact that his post-assembly Latin masterpiece, *Tactica Sacra*, remained untranslated in English. OP ministers Chad Van Dixhoorn and David Noe have provided a wonderful service to the Reformed community in resurrecting Arrowsmith by presenting his treatise for the first time in English, *Plans for Holy War*.

Van Dixhoorn's splendid biographical sketch, "John Arrowsmith: A Theological Life," places Arrowsmith's contributions at the Westminster Assembly in context. According to Van Dixhoorn, among "the assembly of divines, where there were serious theological divisions, Arrowsmith became a contributor of outsized importance." Acknowledged as a master Latinist and scholar, he preached two sermons before the assembly that were universally praised. Robert Baillie described Arrowsmith at the assembly as a "learned divine, on whom the Assemblée putt the writing against the Antinomians" and other errors.

David Noe's translation of *Tactica Sacra* is an accomplishment of the highest order. Beautiful is not a word that often accompanies theological translation work, but that is the first thought that came to my mind. Noe's loving care of Arrowsmith's text is accompanied by pedagogical assistance throughout with English equivalents from Arrowsmith's abundant use of Greek and Hebrew, in addition to the Latin.

But what stands out most of all in *Plans for Holy War* is Arrowsmith himself, and that because of his relentless passion to exalt Jesus Christ. Starting with Genesis 3:15, Arrowsmith asks, "How did Christ crush the serpent's head *for us*?" Arrowsmith also asks, "How does the seed of the woman in us trample the serpent's head? For there is in us as well a 'snake.'" Regarding the two questions,

Arrowsmith explains, "If you want to state it precise, How did He and how does He abolish death and sin." In regard to the first question, Arrowsmith declares that "Christ trampled the serpent's head *for us* by dying in our place, to satisfy divine justice for the sins of all His own." In regard to the second question, "Christ tramples his head by abolishing death, whose sting is sin, then sin itself, the wages of which are death, in the manner and at the time that pleased Him." What is so pleasurable in watching

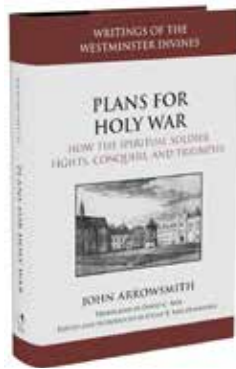
Arrowsmith fill out the answers is that he confronts the question from every angle for pages. Admittedly, if one is rusty in reading the Puritans as I was, the level of detail is exhaustive, but the theological reward for staying the course is immense.

In the middle portion of the book, Arrowsmith moves to redemption accomplished and applied, with a particular emphasis on the benefits earned by Christ and given to the church through a detailed look at Ephesians 6. Along the way, he includes

detailed discussions about church and the magistrate, and the necessity of standing over against Roman Catholicism on the one hand and the Remonstrants on the other hand. The book ends with "A Modest [Outline] of the Heavenly Triumph," which drives the reader to the final triumph found in Christ.

Arrowsmith's knowledge of the writings of his theological guides—Augustine, Luther, Calvin and others—is a treasure matched only by his knowledge of the theological adversaries that he disagrees with but respects, such as Bellarmine. Arrowsmith's skill is to insert the proper point from the proper theologian to address the doctrinal issue being considered.

Plans for Holy War: How the Spiritual Soldier Fights, Conquers, and Triumphs by John Arrowsmith, trans. by David Noe, ed. by Chad Van Dixhoorn. Reformation Heritage, 2024. Hardback, 560 pages, \$38.00.



PRAYER CALENDAR
JAN 2025

1 **Ben & Heather Hopp**, Africa & Haiti. Pray for continued good health to the Hopps as they labor in Africa. / **Lacy (Debbie) Andrews**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

2 **A.J. & Chelsea Millsaps**, Athens, TN. Pray the Lord would grant abundantly thankful hearts to Zion OPC for his many blessings. / Pray for stated clerk, **Hank Belfield**, as he begins administrative work for the 2025 General Assembly.

3 **Presbyterian Church of the Reformation (IPRC)**, Colombia. Pray for church planting and Reformed teaching in Pasto, Sincelejo, and Cajica. / Pray for the **Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplaincy and Military Personnel** (NAPARC entity).

4 **Micah & Eileen Bickford**, Farmington, ME. Pray for Grace Reformed OPC's outreach efforts and for the Lord to bless the congregation as they grow in faith and number. / Pray for **Mr. & Mrs. F.**, Asia, as they spend their vacation month visiting their elderly moms and adult children.

5 **Charles (Margaret) Biggs**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. / *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant* editorial assistant, **Ayrian Yasar**.

6 **Mr. and Mrs. M.** (on furlough), Asia. Pray for the presbyteries in Asia, especially as they work through matters of sin and repentance. / Pray that the Lord would prepare opportunities for individuals to serve through **OPC Short-Term Missions** this year.

7 Pray for strength for Foreign Missions general secretary **Douglas Clawson** as he travels to the fields to encourage the missionaries. / Home Missions associate general secretary, **Al Tricarico**.

8 **Melaku & Meron Tamirat**, Clarkston, GA. Pray the Lord would bless Redeemer Mercy Ministry and their evangelistic efforts. / Pray for **Danny Olinger** as he edits *New Horizons*.

9 Pray for the Lord to use the **Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps (MTMC)** to effectively build up churches beyond OPC mission fields. / Yearlong intern **Mitchell (Cali) Watson** at Knox OPC in Silver Spring, MD.

10 **Brad (Cinnamon) Peppo**, regional home missionary of the Miami Valley for the Presbytery of Ohio. / **Stephen & Catalina Payson**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for new church members Julia, Tomas, and Diego, to grow in grace.

11 **Joseph & Christina Wan**, Madison, WI. Pray for the Lord to provide Madison Chinese Christian Church with candidates and colleagues for the church offices. / Yearlong intern **Vince (Eri) Lam** at South Austin OPC in Austin, TX.

12 Pray for **Fred & Kaling Lo**, Mbale, Uganda, to have an orderly move and a good beginning to their ministry. / Yearlong intern **Joseph (Myranda) Scherschligt** at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, DE.

13 Tentmaking missionary **Tina DeJong**. Pray for the Reformation Church of East Africa denomination to foster healthy churches and church members. / **Caleb & Erika Smith**, Thousand Oaks, CA. Pray for Thousand Oaks Presbyterian as the congregation strives to deepen in grace and reflect Christlikeness.

14 **David & Rebekah Graves**, Wichita Falls, TX. Pray that the Lord would build his church in Wichita Falls and strengthen the congregation of Living Stone Mission. / Yearlong intern **Jon (Stacey) Jung** at Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA.



The Smiths (day 13)



The Tricaricos (day 7)

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15 **Christopher & Chloe Verdick**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Nakaale Presbyterian Church as they seek to elect qualified elders and deacons. / Pray that the *Ruling Elder Podcast* would edify those who listen.

.....
16 **Chris (Megan) Hartshorn**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / **Travis & Bonnie Emmett**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for God to raise up more missionaries to serve him in Uganda and elsewhere.

.....
17 **Jefferson & Ellen De Oliveira**, Springfield, OH. Pray that the Lord would strengthen the faith of the Springfield Hispanic congregation and bless them with a richer understanding of Reformed biblical theology. / Yearlong intern **Josiah (Hannah) Stockwell** at Pilgrim OPC in Bangor, ME.

.....
18 Missionary associate **Beatrix Taverne**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for clarity of mind and open doors for the gospel through language study. / Yearlong intern **Stuart (Simone) Ireland** at Covenant OPC in New Bern, NC.

.....
19 Missionary associates **Josh & Danielle Grimsley**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for their move back to the United States; praise God for the ways they've seen him work. / Home Missions general secretary, **Jeremiah Montgomery**.



The Wheats (day 26)

.....
20 **Christopher & Sara Drew**, Grand Forks, ND. Pray that the Lord would bless the congregation of Faith OPC with unity and peace. / OPC.org technical associate, **Stephen Pribble**.

.....
21 Associate missionary **Leah Hopp**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the mission-sponsored students beginning a new school year. / Pray that the *Reformed Deacon Podcast* would be an encouragement to deacons across the denomination and beyond.

.....
22 **Andrew (Rebekah) Miller**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania. / **Heero & Anya Hacquebord**, L'viv, Ukraine. Praise God for a healthy college ministry and for several students attending worship services.

.....
23 **Matt & Christine Ezzell**, Wake Co., NC. Pray the Lord would bless Zion OPC as they seek to mature as a congregation. / *Ordained Servant* editor, **Gregory Reynolds**.

.....
24 Affiliated missionaries **Dr. Mark & Laura Ambrose**, Cambodia. Pray for the local church to grow in depth of faith and love for Christ. / **Judith Dinsmore**, managing editor of *New Horizons*.

.....
25 Pray for retired missionaries **Cal & Edie Cummings**, **Mary Lou Son**, and **Brian & Dorothy Wingard** to have fruitful interactions with loved ones. / Home Missions administrative coordinator, **Lauren LaRocca**.

.....
26 **Mark & Lorie Wheat**, Sugar Land, TX. Pray for the congregation of Good Shepherd OPC as they coordinate hymn sings and outreach opportunities. / **Melisa McGinnis**, financial controller.

.....
27 Associate missionaries **Octavius & Marie Delfils**, Haiti. Pray for Haiti's leaders to seek the security of their people, not just their own good. / Loan Fund manager **Mark Stumpff**.



Leah Hopp (day 21)

.....
28 **Nate & Amy Jeffries**, West Norriton, PA. Pray that new visitors at Good News OPC would understand the gospel and commit their lives to Christ. / Affiliated missionaries **Craig & Ree Coulbourne** and **Linda Karner**, Japan. Pray for Japanese people to seek the Lord and attend church.

.....
29 **John & Katie Terrell**, Dorr, MI. Pray for Living Hope OPC's growth in Christlikeness and for the congregation to increasingly reflect his character with love and grace. / **Anneke Fesko**, Committee on Ministerial Care's coordinator for ministers' wives.

.....
30 Pray for those persecuting the church in **East Africa** to repent and turn to the Lord for forgiveness. / Pray for **OPC Disaster Response volunteers** as they show the love of Christ to those affected by disaster.

.....
31 Affiliated missionaries **Jerry & Marilyn Farnik**, Czech Republic. Pray for church members to grow in commitment to God and love for neighbors. / **John Paul & Corinna Holloway**, Manassas, VA. Pray the Lord would fill the hearts of Acacia Reformed Church with praise for his many blessings.



2022 MTIOPC participants at the Van Dixhoorn home

MTIOPC SPRING 2025 COURSES

What are the Spring 2025 courses?

Westminster Standards, taught by Dr. Chad B. Van Dixhoorn

Book of Discipline, taught by Mr. Mark T. Bube

When do the MTIOPC courses begin?

Classes will begin on February 2, 2025, with online assignments. Mandatory in-person intensive training session for Westminster Standards and Book of Discipline will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina, on May 13–15, 2025. The classes on the final day, May 15, will be concluded no later than noon.

Who can attend?

Admission is open for OPC ministers, ruling elders, licentiates, and men under care.

How much does it cost?

All students must pay a \$50 registration fee, which is fully refundable upon successful completion of the course. To help defray the cost of travel to Charlotte for the intensive training, travel scholarships up to \$400 are available for ministers, licentiates and men under care. If necessary, an additional \$100 in travel reimbursement is available if the student's session or presbytery matches the amount.

Where do I apply?

Applications are available at OPC.org. Go to Worldwide Outreach, then Christian Education, then Ministerial Training. If you have any questions, please contact MTIOPC coordinator Judy Alexander (alexander.1@opc.org).

When is the deadline?

The deadline for registration is January 29.

ON READING OLD BOOKS

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

—C. S. Lewis

Gospel Revelation (1660) by Jeremiah Burroughs

This work by an esteemed member of the Westminster Assembly is a series of sermons he preached to awaken concern in his people that “men who live without God are in a dreadful condition” (1). To instill this urgent concern, Burroughs was convinced he should start by extolling God as the most excellent being above all else. Over the course of three sermons, he mines the depths of Scripture to provide a penetrating description of what it means that God’s “name alone is excellent” (Ps. 148:13 KJV).

Burroughs’s impassioned pleading with souls continues in six sermons on the glory of Christ and what it means that “his name will be called Wonderful” (Is. 9:6). After unfolding thirteen particulars of Christ’s wonders, eighteen wonders of his kingly power, eleven wonders of his priestly work, and eight wonders of his prophetic ministry, Burroughs still laments that he “cannot tell the thousandth thousandth part of the glory of Christ” (149) that has “darkened all the glory that there is in the world” (159).

The last nine sermons provide an incisive exposition of the misery of a soul that forsakes the excellent God and wonderful Christ, in an attempt to gain the world (Matt. 16:26). You won’t want to miss Burroughs’s description of the ten ways people lose their souls (260–273) and thirteen things a soul must know to obtain salvation (300–331).

As a minister of the gospel who has been entrusted with the responsibility to watch over and care for souls, this book roused me to plead with the “Great Bishop of Souls” to give me the zeal he has for them. Would that all God’s people had the earnestness of Christ for lost souls in and out of church! *Gospel Revelation* will inspire it.

—Jeffrey M. Scott

OUT OF THE MOUTH . . .

After Sunday school, our seven-year-old daughter, Anissa, recounted, “We learned about the ten leprechauns. They had dots all over their bodies. Jesus healed them, but only one came back to say thank you.”

—Dave & Coreena Detrich
Hollidaysburg, PA

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



At Gehrman's ordination (center, tartan tie)



At David Wright's (seated) October ordination and installation as an evangelist in Illinois



At J. Wesley Scheidt's (front row, red bowtie) November ordination and installation as pastor at Covenant OPC in Buford, GA

NEWS

GEHRMANN ORDAINED AND INSTALLED IN KOMOKA, ON

On November 8, Joe Gehrman was ordained and installed as a pastor of Covenant OPC in Komoka, Ontario, by the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario. The service was held at Providence URC in Strathroy, Ontario, with four United Reformed pastors and one Canadian Reformed pastor joining in the celebration.

- On November 8, **Joseph M. Gehrman** was ordained and installed as a pastor of Covenant OPC in Komoka, ON.
- On November 8, **J. Wesley Scheidt** was ordained and installed as a pastor of Covenant Presbyterian in Buford, GA.
- On November 8, **Samuelis Lukosius** was ordained and installed as a pastor of Living Water OPC in Springfield, OH.
- On November 9, **David Charles Myhren** was ordained and installed as an evangelist at Covenant Presbyterian in Vandalia, OH.

UPDATE

MINISTERS

- On October 21, the Presbytery of New York and New England dissolved the pastoral relationship, at his request, between **Gordon H. Cook** and Living Hope Presbyterian in Brunswick, ME, and granted him retirement status, effective Dec. 31, 2024.
- On October 21, the Presbytery of New York and New England dissolved the pastoral relationship, at his request, between **Mark A. Marquis** and Immanuel Chapel in Upton, MA, and granted him retirement status, effective Dec. 31, 2024.
- On November 1, **Timothy M. Marinelli** was installed as pastor of Reformation Presbyterian in Virginia Beach, VA.
- On November 6, **Ying-Ju Chen** was ordained and installed as a pastor of Lynnwood OPC in Lynnwood, WA.

MILESTONES

- **Dr. Dennis James Prutow**, 85, former OPC minister, died on October 30.
- **Marlene Hoogerhyde**, 93, wife of Garret Hoogerhyde Sr., died on November 13.
- **Dr. Robert B. Strimple**, 89, retired OP minister and former professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and Westminster Seminary California, died on November 17.

LETTERS

Editor:

"From Incarnation to Second Coming" (December) hit the mark in its assessment of the religious and political environment into which Jesus was born: It was a time of "profound darkness." What I found open to healthy critique was what followed: "The second coming of the Lord will be similar." As a graduate from a

dispensational seminary, I am no stranger to eschatological doom and gloom. The current amillennial trend that calls for a peace-keeping tie with evil forces is preferable to the prognostication of premillennial devastation. But after two thousand years of gospel preaching through the power of the Holy Spirit, should we not expect any eschatological uptick when it comes to the spiritual and moral condition of the world Christ came to save? I am not proposing heaven on earth, or culture wars at the expense of gospel preaching. But in the same way a regenerate, justified sinner should expect a life of sanctification, we should expect, and work toward, a world that bows the knee to Christ in all categories of life.

Paul Viggiano
Torrance, CA

REVIEWS

***The Gospel of Jesus: The Four Gospels in a Single Complete Narrative*, by Loraine Boettner. P&R, 2023. Hardcover, 224 pages, \$29.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Christopher B. Cashen.**

What is a “diatessaron”? That question pops up as one opens *The Gospel of Jesus*, a republication of Loraine Boettner’s 1933 book. The original version was more appropriately entitled *A Summary of the Gospels*. “Diatessaron” is an English transliteration of two Greek words, meaning, according to the editor, “out of four.” Here it is used to reference the four gospel accounts. Boettner’s work was a product of his teaching at Pikeville College in Kentucky where he brought together all four gospels into a single account of Jesus’s earthly ministry. The “book” then is a “cut and paste” of Scripture, humanly reorganized to string together the four into one chronologically ordered account. Boettner notes that “the *Summary* . . . differs from



the ordinary ‘harmony’ of the gospels in that the separate accounts are not printed in full parallel columns, but are woven into one unified story.”

This republication differs from the original. Obviously, the title has been changed. When first published, the 1901 American Standard Version was used. The 2023 P&R version uses the Christian Standard Bible. Additionally, some of the headings and dates that Boettner assigned to events have been changed, along with a bit of his chronological arrangement.

While both the new publisher and Boettner rightly note that this book is no substitute for reading through the four gospel accounts as given by the Holy Spirit, it does serve significant purposes. First, the book provides a notably different reading experience. Gone are chapter and verse numbers from the text (marginal notes only). It reads like a novel, flowing in a way that differs from the individual books. Second, jumping between gospel accounts to obtain the full picture of a particular event is not necessary. Boettner brings them all together. Third, readers may find details that they had previously overlooked. Take for example the account of Jesus’s baptism. Here, Boettner uses Matthew’s account as his “base” text. He then adds to it (in parentheses) one single word from Luke’s account: “When Jesus

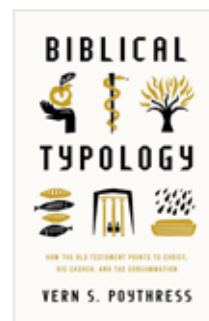
was baptized, he went up immediately from the water (praying)” (Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:21). Jesus went up praying? How did I miss that? Well, that is one of the benefits that can be gleaned from Boettner’s work. It tends to highlight certain lesser known or underappreciated aspects of Scripture.

Families might consider this volume for a season of family worship. Or, this work could be a blessing to any who are looking to dig deeper into the good news as presented by the four Evangelists. While it has been rearranged according to

human wisdom, it is pure Scripture, which will always be profitable for growth “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18).

***Biblical Typology: How the Old Testament Points to Christ, His Church, and the Consummation*, by Vern S. Poythress. Crossway, 2024. Paperback, 230 pages, \$24.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Samuel A. Alvira.**

At the beginning of *Biblical Typology*, Dr. Vern Poythress refers to Luke 24. There we read that, on two separate occasions, Jesus says that the entire Old Testament speaks of him. More specifically, in verses 46–47, Jesus says that in the Old Testament Scriptures it is written “that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” Yet, as we confront the Old Testament, reaching this conclusion proves to be a bit of a challenge. How is it that the entire writings of history, the Psalms, and prophecies reveal Christ?



Considering how Jesus describes the Old Testament Scriptures, it is clear that God’s intention all along was to reveal his plan of salvation through his Son. This is further confirmed, as Poythress points out (7), when we read the rest of the New Testament. No doubt, finding Christ in the Old Testament is difficult, but as we investigate further how God chose, in is wisdom, to reveal Christ in history, perhaps we can see the deep and rich truth that permeates Jesus’s person and work, leaving us in awe.

One of the ways that God revealed the person and work of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament was in types. While there are many nuances that come with defining a “type,” Poythress gives a good starting

point, defining a type as “a symbol specially designed by God to point forward to a fulfillment” (1).

The body of the book establishes and develops the biblical warrant, nature, and method of typology and its use for preaching and application today. In part, Poythress does this through a design by Edmund Clowney, which he calls “Clowney’s Triangle.” Examining Old Testament texts, Poythress uses Clowney’s Triangle to first point to its application in its immediate historical context, then how it points to Christ, and finally how we are to think about it now that Christ has risen and has ascended on high.

The reader will appreciate Poythress’s insistence that “Scripture interprets Scripture.” Also, there is great respect for the real benefit that the Old Testament saints would have received as immediate hearers of these prophecies. The progressive nature of God’s revelation in history is established and respected throughout the entire book. At the same time, Christ is established as the true content of the Old Testament Scriptures.

I encourage readers to slow down when Poythress begins to speak about the differences and similarities of types and analogies. While these sections of the book may be difficult at first, they will give clarity and encouragement. Also, take time to read the appendices, which will prove helpful as you travel through the book. This book will be valuable to all Christians, but particularly to the pastor as he thinks about preaching Christ through the Old Testament.

***Proclaiming Christ in a Pluralistic Age: The 1978 Lectures*, by J. I. Packer. Crossway, 2024. Hardcover, 168 pages, \$23.49. Reviewed by OP pastor Shane P. Lems.**

In 1978, five years after publishing *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer gave a series of lectures at Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Later, in 1978, Packer slightly revised these lectures and gave them at Moore Theological College in

Sydney, Australia. These lectures have now been edited and published by Crossway with the title *Proclaiming Christ in a Pluralistic Age*. The book includes a short biographical introduction about Packer’s life and ministry as well as general and Scripture indexes.

Proclaiming Christ is an accurate title. This book is about the person and work of Christ and what it means to preach the truth that salvation is found in Christ alone. More specifically, the first part of this book is Packer’s exposition and application of 1 Corinthians 1:23–24. In this section, Packer discusses the contemporary reality that the gospel is still a stumbling block to some and folly to others. Packer then explains how the gospel is a story: “This is a narrative. This is history. This is a proclamation of what God has done” (18). Packer also mentions various strands in the story of the gospel, for example, kingdom, mediation, and victory.

The next two parts of the book include explanations of the humanity and divinity of Christ. Packer uses the gospels to show who Jesus is: God’s Son, our Savior, the Lord. Packer also explains the reality of the incarnation, that God became flesh and dwelt among us. The fourth part of this book covers the topic of Christ’s work as Savior. Here Packer points to Scripture’s explanation of Christ’s death as a sacrifice, ransom, and propitiation. Packer defends the penal substitution of Christ and its importance in the Christian faith. He says that “penal substitution is in the very heart of the gospel, for it speaks directly to the very heart of human need” (101).

The final part of *Proclaiming Christ* is all about the uniqueness of Christ and the importance of the cross. Packer notes that “[Christ] is the sufficient and adequate Savior and deliverer in all human need and extremity” (130). In this section, Packer explains the purpose of the cross, the truth

of the cross, the preaching of the cross, the need for the cross, and other aspects of the cross. He then refutes various forms of universalism and ends with a positive emphasis on the cross and evangelism.

Proclaiming Christ is a straightforward presentation of the person and work of Christ from a historic Christian and Reformed point of view. It also explains some aspects of what it means to preach Christ and share the gospel. To be sure,

some parts of this book are dated. For example, Packer spends time talking about the Kenosis theory (68–70). He also interacts with some 1970s forms of humanism and several 1970s views of universalism (xxiii, 113). Although it is understandable why Packer would address such issues in these

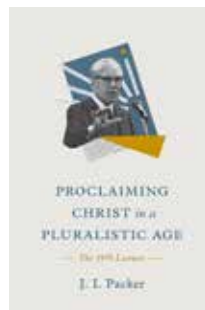
1978 lectures, it does slightly date parts of the book.

Proclaiming Christ doesn’t necessarily fill a void in Christian literature, as there are other good Reformed resources that also rightly explain the person and work of Christ in a biblical manner. However, readers who appreciate Packer’s style or who want to hear more about these great gospel truths will profit from this book.

***Ruined Sinners to Reclaim: Sin and Depravity in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, edited by David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson. Crossway, 2024. Hardcover, 1040 pages, \$65. Reviewed by OP pastor Paul Viggiano.**

At over a thousand pages, I am tempted to say that *Ruined Sinners to Reclaim* by David and Jonathon Gibson is a deep dive. But thirty essays by twenty-six skilled pastors and theologians give it the feel of numerous brief plunges into the deep end of the pool.

Second in the Gibson brothers’ series, *The Doctrines of Grace*, this volume plumbs the depths of total depravity. One might falsely conclude that taking



residence in a study of sin for such a lengthy season would inevitably yield a skosh of spiritual or psychological morbidity. Not the case. The happiest rooms in hospitals are not always in the maternity ward. Greater glee can be found in oncology when a potentially fatal diagnosis is accompanied by the good news of a cure. This happens with regularity in this volume. The writers, almost all, highlight the bad news of our corrupted human hearts, only to shine the brighter light of the good news of deliverance. But without a proper diagnosis, the patient will remain unaware of their dire need and the only solution.

A point made early and frequently is that a false view of original sin (not what Adam did but what we inherit) will lead to an errant view of human nature. This errant view colors everything, especially how deep our problem, what is necessary to solve it, and what we are capable of contributing to the solution, which amounts to nothing.

The opening section, “Sin and Depravity in Church History,” brings

the discussion to the patristic tradition and works its way through Augustine, Pelagius, and various views of original sin. It moves on to Luther versus Erasmus, then through and past the Reformation. Clearly, our views regarding the damage of the fall will play a significant role in our understanding of the gospel. The Augustine/Pelagius, Luther/Erasmus, Calvin/Arminius disagreements on depravity have birthed approaches on how to reach sinners. These exist to this day. There’s nothing new under the sun.

The second section, “Sin and Depravity in the Bible,” surveys various examples and definitions of sin through Scripture. Though the way sin is presented might vary from Genesis to Revelation, there is an astounding hamartiological unity found in the Scriptures. That our greatest evil is not what we do but whom we love and serve instead of God, is not at odds with Luther’s, “There is no greater sin than unbelief.” It is difficult to get through

a single page of the Bible without some example or definition of sin, revealing the singular author of the text.

“Sin and Depravity in Theological Perspective” is the third section. Here is a systematizing of the depravity found in the Bible. Nathan D. Shannon opens this section with a brief examination of comparative religions and alternative philosophies of sin. In a Reformed era where cultural involvement appears to be ebbing, he observes, “Christian attention to religions in their increasing social and political proximity is delayed only at great cost to the church.”

He continues, “The gospel-and-culture question

... cannot be only a hobbyhorse of urban church planters or the theme of a poorly attended outreach event; it demands the careful attention of anyone charged with the care and shepherding of the body of Christ.” Theodicy, covenant, imputation, concupiscence, and the sinlessness of Christ are pursued in this section as well.

Finally, section 4 hits on the purely ministerial: “Sin and Depravity in Pastoral Practice.” How has secularization invaded the church? I particularly enjoyed James N. Anderson’s chapter on evangelism and

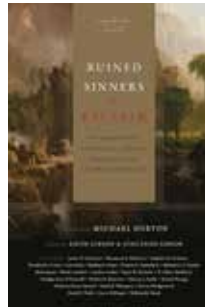
apologetics. Evangelizing those dead in their sins is quite different than those who are merely unconscious. A recurring theme is that the gospel is not a command to stop sinning, or an exhortation to sin less, or a warning to flee from sin, as essential and morally upright as those imperatives might be. It is a call to flee to Christ, the sinless Savior.

Anderson also does a thorough, albeit brief, treatment of the various apologetic methods, culminating with a solid defense of presuppositionalism, founded on the effects of sin on the human mind. “Sinfully suppressing God’s self-revelation is our nature’s fallen skill.” Neither evangelism nor apologetics ought to ignore or deny that truth.

The only difficulty I had with the book was where to place it in my library. Is it a reference book or a book for a sit and read? It’s a bit long for the latter. But the beauty of the work can be summed up in the thematic sentence, “The ugliness and awfulness of sin is no match for the goodness and beauty of God.”

Choose Better: Five Biblical Models for Making Ethical Decisions, by T. David Gordon. P&R, 2024. Paperback, 144 pages, \$16.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Jonathan Landry Cruse.

T. David Gordon has done the church a great service with his recent book, *Choose*



POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Pastor: Immanuel Chapel OPC in Upton, Massachusetts, seeks a full-time pastor to preach, teach, and shepherd the flock. We are a medium-sized congregation in a beautiful New England community that we believe is capable of and ready for growth. The position comes with a modern three-story parsonage on the church property. Interested inquirers should send a resume, cover letter, and MIF to the Pastoral Search Committee at psc@immanuel-chapel.org.

Pastor: Covenant OPC in New Berlin, Wisconsin, is seeking a pastor to serve its small congregation of all ages located in the Milwaukee suburbs. Pastoral strengths should include preaching, a heart for people, love for evangelism, and some previous pastoral ministry experience. For more information or to apply, contact Covenant elder John Nyenhuis at john662221@gmail.com.

Better: Five Biblical Models for Making Ethical Decisions. The little book is the author's attempt to help us think "Christianly about decision-making" (123)—something that many do not give much thought to at all. The book is an accessible, comprehensive, and pastoral introduction to the subject of ethics.

The book is written in the clear and compelling style that we have come to love from Dr. Gordon. On this subject, nothing else could be more helpful. "Ethics" seems to be locked away in an academic and philosophical ivory tower, yet it is the most practical subject imaginable! It is, after all, "the study of how to live and how to live well" (ix). How crucial it is that we have a resource that can help us understand it and think through it. What Gordon does for us in this book is synthesize the scholarly jargon and present us a palatable and useful work on an important and overlooked subject.

This does not mean that the book is trite or simplistic. On the contrary, one of its strengths is comprehensiveness. Gordon presents five models for making ethical decisions, which serve as an exhaustive examination of the Bible's teaching on ethics. That each model is biblical is key; in other words, he is not pitting one model against another, but showing us the wide array of resources that the

Scriptures afford to us when it comes to thinking through difficult decisions: "My point throughout this work is that the five models derived from the Holy Scriptures are complementary . . . and that, therefore, we gain the fullest ethical perspective when we permit each of the models to bring its own particular cluster of questions to bear on the matter at hand" (xiv).

The first of the five models that Gordon presents is the imitation model, which "emphasizes more what one is than what one *does*" (2). The good life, therefore, consists in our being like God on a creaturely scale, pursuing a full recovery of what it

means to be the *imago Dei*. The law model, in contrast, focuses more on the doing. Gordon presents the clear imperatives of Scripture (like the Ten Commandments) as representative of this approach to ethics. A question asked in this model, for example, is, "Has God commanded anything relevant to that matter at hand?" (31). The wisdom model contemplates the outcome of decisions, acknowledging that even "within the realm of that which is lawful, not everything is equally helpful" (54). A helpful comment made under this model is that "it permits us to *commend*, in areas where we have no authority to *command*" (73)—a lot of division in the church would be alleviated by grasping this distinction.

The fourth model, the communion model, enjoins prayer and spiritual disciplines, and the fifth model, the warfare model, acknowledges that the decisions we make are often the battlefield upon which sin wages war against our regenerate souls.

Even in this brief survey, it should be clear that Gordon's interests are primarily pastoral. He wants us to do that which is pleasing to God. He calls us to know the Scriptures in order to live well. But he also cautions that *knowing* more does not guarantee a better life: "Thinking rightly about life does not mean that one will live rightly" (xv). That's why living well isn't the goal of the Christian life; the goal is knowing Christ, "who became to us wisdom from God" (1 Cor. 1:30). Gordon concludes with a comment that might sound absurd coming from an ethicist but makes perfect sense coming from a pastor:

As a minister of the gospel, I would remind my readership that the "work of God" is to believe in the One whom he sent (John 6:29). I would rather that all my readers believe in Christ and live badly than not believe in Christ and live well. (123)

Because of this sort of tone that undergirds the entirety of the book, the comprehensive survey of the Scriptures, and the compelling way the material is presented, I would highly commend (not command!) *Choose Better* to you.

