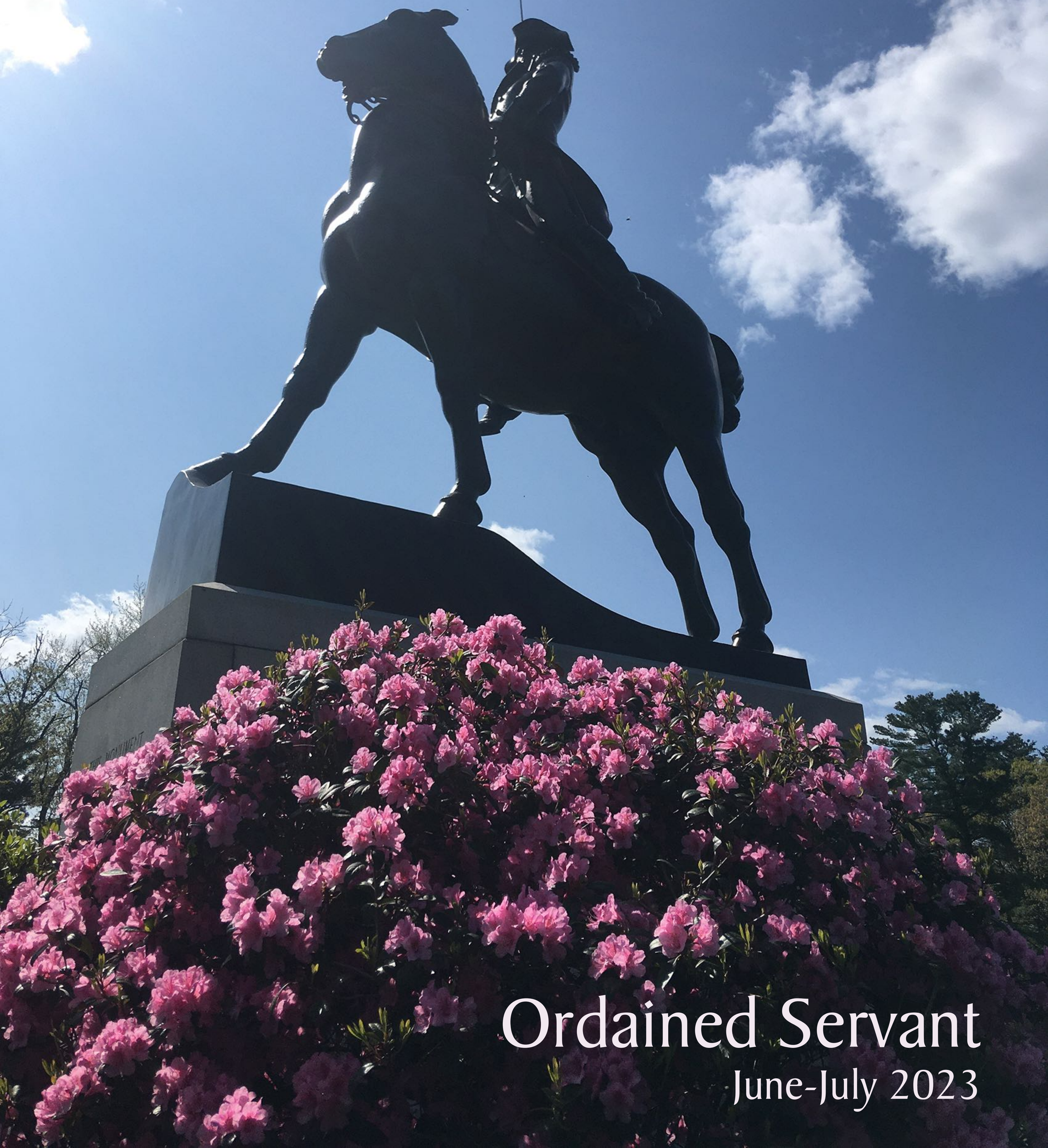


Happiness



Ordained Servant
June-July 2023

Ordained Servant Online

A Journal for Church Officers

E-ISSN 1931-7115

CURRENT ISSUE: HAPPINESS

June-July 2023

From the Editor

In this double issue Andy Wilson explores a topic that is always in view in every human culture—happiness. Since there is little consensus in our pluralistic society, it is important to distinguish a Christian view, which is rooted in the historic incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wilson also reviews a popular book on happiness from a secular perspective, *The Good Life*. It is important, especially for church officers, to know what the best secular thinkers are thinking. They often have excellent insight with good advice because of God's common grace to all his image bearers. Also, in this case it is nice to contrast a secular view of happiness with a biblical view.

I present chapter 5 of my book *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*. Chapters 3 and 4 dealt with the primacy of preaching in the Bible and church history. Chapter 5 begins part 2 of the book (chapters 5–8), "The Good Shepherd Speaks Today," and sets forth an understanding of preaching as a medium in "God's Medium: Tongues of Fire." This situates preaching among all media of communication, distinguishing it as a natural medium in the midst of a plethora of electronic inventions. The hubris of post-Enlightenment modernity leads us to believe that electronic means are always superior; thus, Christians and their leaders need to be encouraged to highly value live pastoral preaching, i.e., the regular preaching in the local church.

Alan D. Strange continues his "Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church" with chapter 5 dealing with cases without full process. This chapter is used frequently by sessions and should be paid careful attention to.

An Older Elder presents us with letter #6 to a younger ruling elder. He discusses the importance of elders getting to know their pastors. These letters would be worth reading aloud at session meetings or shared in print with younger elders.

Ryan McGraw presents a mixed review in his review article "Muddying the Baptismal Waters?" He reviews *Washed by God: The Story of Baptism* by Karl Deenick, applauding his coverage of the history of baptism, including its Old Testament roots. However, several important weaknesses that McGraw discovers in the book "stem from a defective view of the sacraments in relation to the covenant of grace."

John Fesko's review of *The Holy Spirit* by Robert Letham recommends the book as a "very good contribution to the field" but suggests three ways to enhance the book: 1) covering the nineteenth-century development of the doctrine; 2) referring more to the

Westminster Standards; 3) expansion of some important sections of the book.

In *Servant News*, I am repeating our announcement from last month. The board of trustees of Great Commission Publications is seeking a new executive director as Mark Lowery intends to retire after his many years developing the Sunday School curriculum (as well as many other publications) and his recent years of guiding this joint venture between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America through the difficult time of the pandemic.

As of July 1 the Mobi format will no longer be available for *Ordained Servant* or *New Horizons*. Over time it has proved to be difficult to set up and access. Our webmaster Stephen Pribble will be sending around a more extended explanation.

Our poem “Sonnet LXXII” (72) by Edmund Spenser (1552–99) is from *Amoretti* (little loves), a book containing eighty-nine sonnets and several poems. It was published with *Epithalamion*, a long poem in honor of his bride, in 1595. Spenser was one of the greatest English poets of his age. This sonnet was written about the courtship of Spenser’s wife and laments mortality but resolves to find a bit of heaven on earth. Notice that earth is an anagram of heart.

The cover photo is of John Stark, whose victory at the battle of Bennington (VT) marked a turning point in the Revolutionary War. I have chosen it as a pointer to heaven where our real happiness lies.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

CONTENTS

ServantLiving

- Andy Wilson, “Two Paths to Happiness, and Why Only One Can Lead to a Happy End”

ServantWord

- Gregory E. Reynolds, *The Voice of the Good Shepherd*, “God’s Medium: Tongues of Fire,” chapter 5

ServantStandards

- Alan D. Strange, “Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Chapter 5”

ServantWork

- An Older Elder, “Letters to a Younger Ruling Elder No. 6: Getting to Know Your Pastor”

ServantReading

- Andy Wilson, review article, reviews *The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness*, by Robert Waldinger and Marc Schultz
- Ryan M. McGraw, review article, “Muddying the Baptismal Waters?” reviewing *Washed by God: The Story of Baptism*, by Karl Deenick
- John V. Fesko, reviews *The Holy Spirit*, by Robert Letham

ServantNews

- Position Available: Executive Director of Great Commission Publications
- Cancellation of the Mobi format for *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant*

ServantPoetry

- Edmund Spenser (1552–99), “Sonnet LXXII”

FROM THE ARCHIVES “HAPPINESS”

http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-30.pdf

- “Psalm 1: The Pursuit of Happiness.” (Larry Wilson) 20 (2011): 76–80.
- “Flying with Wax Wings: The Secular Quest for Happiness.” (Gregory E. Reynolds), review of *Perpetual Euphoria*, by Pascal Bruckner and *Exploring Happiness*, by Sissela Bok. 20 (2011): 143–49.

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

ServantLiving

Two Paths to Happiness, and Why Only One Can Lead to a Happy End

By Andy Wilson

In our relativistic age, happiness is seen as a matter of personal taste. If you come across someone whose happiness aesthetic differs from yours, you are expected to shrug and politely say, “Whatever makes you happy.” This makes sense to those who see human beings as more authentic when they act in accordance with their feelings. On the other hand, those who see all people as sharing the same human nature will conclude that some things are universally conducive, and others universally detrimental, to personal fulfillment. These differing perspectives correspond to two different paths to happiness, only one of which can lead to a happy end.

The Path of Deified Desire

It is widely assumed in our time that happiness consists in having positive feelings (or at least not having negative ones). Closely related to this is the notion that subjective preferences should be the determining factor for how objective reality is ordered. As C.S. Lewis once put it, modern man has rejected the approach to life that focuses on how to conform the soul to the natural moral order, replacing it with an approach that seeks to subdue everything to his desires.¹ This outlook is now in full bloom, and it is being implemented politically on the basis of various supposed “existential threats.” In the words of professor Russell Berman, the formidable “nexus of government, media, major corporations, and the education establishment . . . aspires to a permanent state of emergency to impose a new mode of governance by intimidation, censorship, and unilateral action.”² The powerful in our society claim to have the knowledge and expertise needed to fashion a new world that corresponds to their imaginations, all the while ignoring the constraints of the actual world. Psychologist Mattias Desmet explains this rise in coercive control as “the logical consequence of mechanistic thinking and the delusional belief in the omnipotence of human rationality.”³ Theologically, it is a manifestation of what Martin Luther was talking about when he said that “man cannot of his nature desire that God should be God; on the contrary, he desires that he himself might be God and that God might not be God.”⁴

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 83.

² Russell A. Berman, “State of Emergency,” *First Things* (June 2022), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2022/06/state-of-emergency>.

³ Mattias Desmet, *The Psychology of Totalitarianism* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2022), 7.

⁴ Cited in Gene E. Veith, *Reformation Spirituality: The Religion of George Herbert* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 44.

The same dynamic is evident at a personal level in the embrace of expressive individualism, which Carl Trueman defines as “a prioritization of the individual’s inner psychology—we might even say ‘feelings’ or ‘intuitions’—for our sense of who we are and what the purpose of our lives is.”⁵ Note how expressive individualism undergirds the response of William “Lia” Thomas (winner of the 500 meter freestyle at the 2022 NCAA Women’s Swimming Championships) when he was asked about his biological advantage when competing against women:

There’s a lot of factors that go into a race and how well you do, and the biggest change for me is that I’m happy, and sophomore year, when I had my best times competing with the men, I was miserable. . . . Trans people don’t transition for athletics. We transition to be happy and authentic and our true selves.⁶

As anyone who followed Thomas’s story knows, the thing that made him happy brought unhappiness to female swimmers who were forced to share a locker room with and compete against a biological male. When one person’s pursuit of happiness gets in the way of someone else’s pursuit of happiness, the conflict has to be adjudicated by something beyond individual feelings. But in a relativistic and therapeutic society that makes feelings ultimate, it simply boils down to which side has more power. This is exactly what happened in Thomas’s case, as the cultural ascendancy of transgender ideology resulted in his teammates and competitors being bullied into silence.

Such things are to be expected when a society unmoors itself from any sense of objective moral order. Trueman shows how the modern West has done this by employing Philip Rieff’s taxonomy of “worlds” to describe the various types of culture that societies embody. In this taxonomy, first worlds are pagan, second worlds are epitomized by the Christian West, and third worlds describe modernity. Trueman explains,

First and second worlds thus have a moral, and therefore cultural, stability because their foundations lie in something beyond themselves. To put it another way, they do not have to justify themselves on the basis of themselves. Third worlds, by way of stark contrast to the first and second worlds, do not root their cultures, their social orders, their moral imperatives in anything sacred. They do have to justify themselves, but they cannot do so on the basis of something sacred or transcendent. Instead, they have to do so on the basis of themselves. The inherent instability of this approach should be obvious. . . . Morality will thus tend toward a matter of simple consequentialist pragmatism, with the notion of what are and are not desirable outcomes being shaped by the distinct cultural pathologies of the day.⁷

Lewis foresaw this when he wrote, “When all that says ‘it is good’ has been debunked, what says ‘I want’ remains.”⁸ And as Desmet notes, this produces a level of

⁵ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 23.

⁶ “Swimmer Lia Thomas Breaks Silence about Backlash, Future Plans,” *Good Morning America*, May 31, 2022, <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/video/swimmer-lia-thomas-breaks-silence-backlash-future-plans-85081325>.

⁷ Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 76–77.

⁸ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 74.

destabilization and anxiety that causes people to long “for an authoritarian institution that provides direction to take the burden of freedom and the associated insecurity off their shoulders.”⁹ This is why today’s West is simultaneously marked by libertinism and legalism. The rise of authoritarianism (or what Rod Dreher describes as “soft totalitarianism”)¹⁰ is yet another manifestation of how fallen man slavishly looks to law for his deliverance. This is what the apostle Paul is talking about in Galatians 4 when he speaks of being enslaved to the “elementary principles of the world,” a phrase that describes the legalistic religious principle that was active for Jews under the law of Moses and for Gentiles under the law of nature. In the words of John Fesko, the phrase “elementary principles of the world” in Galatians 4 refers to “the creation law that appears in both the Adamic and Mosaic covenants.”¹¹ Because of fallen man’s enslavement under the law, when a society makes feelings and desires preeminent, the inevitable result is not happiness, but tyranny. This further demonstrates that the good order for which human nature was designed cannot be restored by human effort but only by receiving salvation as a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ, in whom we are accepted as righteous in God’s sight and renewed in the whole man after the image of God.¹²

The Path of Rightly Ordered Desire

Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430) expounds on the other path to happiness in his dialogue *On the Happy Life*, written soon after his conversion to Christianity.¹³ In this dialogue, Augustine discusses the connection between desire and happiness by saying, “If [a man] wants good things and has them, he is happy; but if he wants bad things, he is unhappy, even if he has them.”¹⁴ In other words, happiness cannot be separated from goodness, which is defined not by individual desires but by the objective moral order that God has inscribed in his world. What matters is not desire itself, but whether what we desire is good or bad. A similar point is made in one of Plato’s dialogues when an interlocutor contends that happiness consists in having the strongest possible appetites and being able to satisfy them. Socrates exposes the silliness of this notion by asking its proponent if it would be good to have a desire to itch as much as possible and to be able to follow through on that desire.¹⁵ A contemporary postliberal feminist makes the same point, saying,

Liberal ideology flatters us by telling us that our desires are good and that we can find meaning in satisfying them, whatever the cost. But the lie of this flattery should be obvious to anyone who has ever realized after the fact that they were wrong to desire something, and hurt themselves, or hurt other people, in pursuing it.¹⁶

⁹ Desmet, *The Psychology of Totalitarianism*, 84.

¹⁰ Rod Dreher, *Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents* (New York: Sentinel, 2020).

¹¹ J.V. Fesko, *Adam and the Covenant of Works* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2021), 271.

¹² See Westminster Shorter Catechism Question #33.

¹³ Augustine, *On the Happy Life: St. Augustine's Cassiciacum Dialogues*, vol. 2, trans. Michael P. Foley (New Haven: Yale, 2019).

¹⁴ Augustine, *On the Happy Life*, 27.

¹⁵ Cited in J. Budziszewski, *How and How Not to Be Happy* (Washington D.C: Regnery, 2022), 17.

¹⁶ Louise Perry, *The Case against the Sexual Revolution* (Cambridge: Polity, 2022), 20.

For the above writers, desire itself cannot be the measure of happiness, because some desires are good, and some are bad. If we want to find true happiness, we need to cultivate good desires and suppress bad ones. True happiness, like true freedom, must be ordered towards the good.

Augustine also points out that approaches to happiness that are focused only on the things of this life will inevitably fail, because they are based upon that which is ephemeral and thus bound to disappoint us. As Michael Foley summarizes in his commentary on Augustine's dialogue,

Wealth, bodily health, honor, or success, the affairs of the heart—all these are to some extent products of good fortune and therefore vulnerable to misfortune. Therefore, building one's happiness on these vulnerable goods is building one's house on sand.¹⁷

When Augustine speaks of “fortune” and “misfortune,” he means that, try as we might, there are always going to be things in this life that are beyond our control. No matter how carefully we try to promote and protect our interests, we will not always succeed. Even when misfortune does not befall us, its possibility makes us anxious, and this keeps us from being perfectly happy. This is why the Scriptures tell us that it is only when our hearts are fixed upon that which cannot be shaken that we can face the prospect of bad news without fear (cf. Ps. 112:7; Heb. 12:26–29). In short, the transitory nature of this life makes it incapable of fulfilling our longing for happiness.

In his dialogue, Augustine's concern is with *supreme* happiness, which does not exist on a spectrum but is something we either possess or do not possess, like life itself.¹⁸ Foley explains,

Augustine is not interested in lessening the pain and despair of our frail and mortal existence. . . . Augustine wants to identify and *reach* supreme happiness and bliss, and as such he is seeking the source of total human fulfillment. The value in Augustine's approach. . . . is that in forcing us to consider what ultimate happiness would consist of, it forces us to discover our human nature—that which is to be perfected.¹⁹

Of course, the suggestion that there is such a thing as a human nature that exists outside the individual will is abhorrent to those who are intent on bringing reality into alignment with their desires. This is tragic, but understandable. As professor Joshua Mitchell notes, “A lost civilization, like a lost soul, is seldom drawn to what will heal it; it is repulsed by the medicine it most needs.”²⁰ While there is significant enthusiasm these days about technologies that promise humans greater control over the world, the counterfeit realities

¹⁷ Augustine, *On the Happy Life*, 53.

¹⁸ Augustine, *On the Happy Life*, 40.

¹⁹ Augustine, *On the Happy Life*, 77.

²⁰ Joshua Mitchell, “By the Sweat of Our Brow,” *First Things* (August/September 2022), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2022/08/by-the-sweat-of-our-brow>.

produced by such things will never be able to bring real happiness.²¹ In Mitchell's words, "Our Tech Wizards seek now to give us the ultimate drug to lift us from the stupor of loneliness that they themselves have manufactured: the metaverse, the high that never crashes. This will not end well."²²

When people see happiness only as a matter of feeling good, they are actually conceiving of themselves as the highest good. The reason why this does not work is because happiness is the result of the satisfaction of longing, which is by nature directed toward something outside ourselves. Happiness is a by-product, not an end in itself. None of the things of this world can fully satisfy man's deepest longing, because they all stubbornly point beyond themselves to something greater.²³ Consider philosopher J. Budiziszewski's thoughts on earthly beauty:

I can spend all day looking at the beautiful earth and sea, until I no longer want to. I can tire myself out feeling the breath of the beautiful air, diffused and spread abroad. I can take in so much of the arrangement of the constellations that I need to go indoors and catch my breath. Yet the longing for that *something more* will follow me inside.²⁴

The only way we can find supreme happiness is by obtaining that which is perfectly good and endures forever. This is why knowing the living and true God is the only thing that can truly satisfy us. As Augustine prays in his *Confessions*, "The happy life, in fact, is joy in truth: and that means joy in you, who are Truth, O God my light, the health of my countenance, my God."²⁵ This leads Budiziszewski to say that

not yet being fulfilled is a sign not of something wrong but of accurate perception, for we are not fulfilled here. . . . St. Paul spoke searchingly of how we "groan" in the longing that what is mortal in us may be "swallowed up by life." These very tears and groanings are promissory notes of joy, for if we were perfectly adapted to the way of the world, we would not have such tears and groanings; the ordinary satisfactions would satisfy us. . . . Blessed are those who refuse to drug their discontent with futile satisfactions.²⁶

Dissatisfaction and sadness are to be expected in this world. Attempts to find fulfillment here will always end in frustration. In the words of Bosnian war survivor Emina Melonic, "Western society demands to free itself from pain but such freedom is always just an

²¹ See Ronald W. Dworkin, "The Politics of Unhappiness," *First Things* (May 2022), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2022/05/the-politics-of-unhappiness>, and Mary Harrington, "'Love Drugs' Are More Dangerous than You Think," *UnHerd* (June 10, 2022), <https://unherd.com/the-post/love-drugs-are-more-dangerous-than-you-think/>.

²² Mitchell, "By the Sweat of Our Brow."

²³ This point is beautifully described in George Herbert's poem "The Pulley." See Gregory E. Reynolds, "The Pulley: A Theological Reflection," *Ordained Servant* 26 (2017): 16–18, *Ordained Servant Online*, https://opc.org/os.html?article_id=653.

²⁴ Budiziszewski, *How and How Not to Be Happy*, 133.

²⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2019), 10.23.22.

²⁶ Budiziszewski, *How and How Not to Be Happy*, 205.

illusion. Our lives demand attention, and sometimes painful reflection. This is something no pill or an app can provide.”²⁷

Of course, Christians should not be gloomy and see this life merely as something to endure until we can enter into the permanent joys of heaven. Even though supreme happiness cannot be found in any of the things of this world, those of us who have been reconciled to God through faith in Christ already participate in his victory over this sin-cursed world (cf. Jn. 16:33). This is why the Latin term Augustine used for “happy” in *On the Happy Life* was not *felix*, which was associated with good fortune, but *beatus*, which can also be translated as “blessed.” Consider this definition of “blessedness” by Old Testament scholar Willem VanGemeren: “Even when the righteous do not feel happy, they are still considered ‘blessed’ from God’s perspective. He bestows this gift on them. Neither negative feelings nor adverse conditions can take away this blessing.”²⁸ As recipients of God’s redemptive blessing in Christ, Christians can receive the good things of this life as foretastes of the eternal bliss that lies in store for us in the life to come. We can even maintain a hopeful and positive attitude in the face of the evils, frustrations, uncertainties, and sorrows of this life. This does not mean being a Pollyanna, but cultivating what Melonic describes as “Slavic joy,” or honest optimism.²⁹ We do this by always keeping in mind the big picture set forth in Scripture, which assures us that the Lord is superintending over all things in order to establish an eternal kingdom in which evil and sorrow will be fully and finally vanquished.

This is not to be confused with being optimistic about the prospects of a particular society. After all, while we are called to seek the well-being of the earthly cities in which we sojourn (see Jer. 29:7), the fate of nations and civilizations ultimately lies in the hands of the Lord. Furthermore, honest optimism does not require that we embrace the postmillennial notion that history will culminate in a golden age in which Christ will rule over the world through his church prior to his return.³⁰ Christian hope transcends this present age, regardless of one’s eschatology. This is why believers can laugh at the inevitable manifestations of corruption, absurdity, and futility in our fallen world without falling into cynicism or despair.³¹ The evils of this world throw the glories of the gospel into sharp relief.

One of the most important ways we can cultivate honest optimism is by paying careful attention to our thought patterns, so that our feelings are kept in their proper place. As pastor David Murray points out, “Feelings have big muscles. They are often the most powerful force in our lives. They can bully our minds, our consciences, and our

²⁷ Emina Melonic, “There’s a Pill for That,” *American Greatness* (July 26, 2022), <https://amgreatness.com/2022/07/26/theres-a-pill-for-that/>.

²⁸ Willem A. VanGemeren, *Expositors Bible Commentary, vol. 5: Psalms*, eds., Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 78.

²⁹ Emina Melonic, “Why America Needs Slavic Joy, or How to Be an Honest Optimist,” *American Greatness* (September 28, 2021), <https://amgreatness.com/2021/09/28/why-america-needs-slavic-joy-or-how-to-be-an-honest-optimist/>.

³⁰ See R. Scott Clark, “Stop Saying that Amillennialism Is ‘Pessimistic’ but Postmillennialism Is ‘Optimistic,’” *The Heidelbergblog* (September 5, 2022), <https://heidelbergblog.net/2022/09/stop-saying-that-amillennialism-is-pessimistic-but-postmillennialism-is-optimistic/>.

³¹ See Carl Trueman’s reflections on Martin Luther’s sense of humor in *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 198–200.

wills. They can even knock out the facts and bring the truth to its knees.”³² Instead of letting our feelings dominate our thoughts and color the way we view reality, we should train them under the yoke of truth, remembering that “he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Prov. 25:28 KJV). It is no surprise that the apostle Paul, while writing from prison, accompanied his famous imperative “Rejoice in the Lord always” with this charge: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil. 4:4, 8). This is not a habit that comes naturally to many of us, especially not in our present cultural context. But it can be cultivated through the use of readily available practices and resources, most notably memorizing and meditating on Scripture and reflecting upon great hymnody and poetry.³³ Professor Leland Ryken promotes this function of poetry in the introduction to his recent anthology of devotional poems, contending that such poems can be read as “setting our thoughts and feelings in right tune, and also some of the time correcting them,” adding that “the same is true when we read the Psalms.”³⁴ Let us endeavor to turn our focus away from our feelings and circumstances and toward the Lord, remembering that his praise is both pleasant *to* us and fitting *for* us (cf. Ps. 147:1).

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! (Ps. 34:8)

Andy Wilson is the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Laconia, New Hampshire.

³² David Murray, *The Happy Christian: Ten Ways to Be a Joyful Believer in a Gloomy World* (Nashville: Nelson, 2015), 1.

³³ Two excellent, accessible books on Christian poetry are Jim Scott Orrick, *A Year with George Herbert: A Guide to Fifty-Two of His Best Loved Poems* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) and Leland Ryken, *The Soul in Paraphrase: A Treasury of Classic Devotional Poems* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018).

³⁴ Ryken, *The Soul in Paraphrase*, 15.

Servant Word

The Voice of the Good Shepherd: God's Medium: Tongues of Fire,¹ Chapter 5

By Gregory Edward Reynolds

*And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind,
and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the
Spirit gave them utterance. . . . telling . . . the mighty works of God.*

—Acts 2:2–4, 11

*The media have, indeed, provided the devil with perhaps the greatest opportunity
accorded him since Adam and Eve were turned out of the Garden of Eden. . . .
the only antidote to the media's world of fantasy is the reality of Christ's kingdom
proclaimed in the New Testament. . . . our amazing technology has a built-in
reductio ad absurdum, whereas the Word that became flesh, and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth, in the most literal sense, speaks for itself. . . .
That almighty Word was the medium, and the message was Christ.*

—Malcolm Muggeridge²

*This Life's dim windows of the soul
Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole,
And leads us to believe a lie
When we see with, not through, the eye.*

—William Blake³

*I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways*

¹ This chapter is based on Gregory E. Reynolds, *The Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Preaching in the Electronic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 333–38.

² Malcolm Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 15, 24, 42, 59.

³ William Blake, “Camera Obscura,” in Malcolm Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 62.

*Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.*

—Francis Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven*⁴

Considering the modern assessment of various media, particularly the visual media and their electronic associates, preaching has been deemed by many to be an inefficient, ineffective anachronism—a poor means of communication. Because the focus on form instead of substance has been properly viewed as a modern problem, orthodox homileticians have tended to shy away from dealing with the form of preaching as a medium.⁵ I would like to challenge modern media assessments of preaching along the lines of a biblical assessment of preaching *as a medium*. Assuming the existence of a sovereign and omniscient God, modern media are no surprise to the One who ordained preaching to be the most effective medium to communicate his Word. Thus, we must never forget that preaching is, despite its lack of technology, a medium. Everything created is, in a general sense, a medium, analogous to and revelatory of the glory of the Creator. A medium is a channel, instrument, means, or agency through which a force acts or an effect is produced. Communication media are both primary or natural and secondary or technological. Preaching is a natural medium raised to a new height, and for a unique redemptive purpose, by the supernatural power and definition of God. The agency includes the man, body and soul, his voice, and his message. As we have seen in chapter 1, each medium has its unique grammar and environment. In this chapter I will explore the unique excellencies that make preaching without peer among media or means of communication, and therefore irreplaceable as the center of the church's worship and life.

Preaching is God's Choice

This grand fact should be first and foremost in our consideration. We have demonstrated the primacy of preaching in Scripture. The centrality of preaching in Scripture is, in itself, sufficient warrant for us to place it first among the means of grace. When God commands something in his infallible Word, the believer understands by faith that the God who gives commandments to his beloved people is an all-wise Shepherd. Since none of God's commands is arbitrary, we expect to find biblical reasons for them. While it is not illegitimate to search for the reasons for a particular commandment, the ground upon which the believer accepts and obeys that commandment is God's sovereign lordship in the believer's life. But the quest for reasons is itself an act of faith. It is a believing reflection on the wisdom of God revealed in his Word. This is the great motive force behind all theology in the church. Theology is never simple speculation, but rather it is a faithful explication of God's grandeur and glory through his Word in the present historical situation. God says, "Preach the Word!" and so we must.

⁴ Francis Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1954), 45.

⁵ Cornelius Trimp, "Preaching as the Public Means of Divine Redemption," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, Theme Issue: Preaching, Vol. 10 (1999), 39–75. This is a powerful defense of the monologic nature of preaching and a plea to view preaching not only as a complete event but also in the context of the church, the liturgy, and pastoral care.

Preaching is an Authoritative Monologue

While we must not isolate the medium from its message or its context in the worship and life of the church, Scripture bids us consider the *nature of the medium* God has ordained. When attention is drawn to the medium, it is usually only negative in the sense that the importance of the medium is downplayed. While the *content* of the message is clearly at the center of the Bible's emphasis on preaching, and while the medium, due to the fallenness of preachers as men, is imperfect, we need to appreciate the suitability of the medium itself to the unique message of the gospel.

The late modern age,⁶ including many of its homileticians, has tended to elevate the dialogical and the interactive aspects of communication almost to the exclusion of the monologue.⁷ The reason for this is not difficult to discover. Authority at every level has been repudiated. The very idea of authorship is perceived to be an instrument of oppression. Thus, the single voice of the monologue carries with it the idea of authority and, therefore, oppressive hubris. This is entirely unacceptable to the contemporary mindset. The modern antipathy to preaching is reflected in the oft repeated assertion, "We don't want to preach to people," or the more colloquial "Don't preach at me!"

We should also remember that the monologue of preaching as God's proclamation has never been acceptable to the autonomous mind. In Paul's day, rhetoricians were held in highest esteem due to their skills in persuasion. In these types of oral cultures the singer, the poet, and the bard were purveyors of cultural tradition.⁸ Despite the presence of widespread pre-Gutenberg literacy, orality was still highly respected in the first century. The Greeks would never have thought of the medium of public speech *per se* as "foolish." So many Christians and biblical scholars have decided that the context of Paul's statement reveals that what the Greeks thought foolish was the *message* of the gospel of the crucified Christ (1 Cor. 1:21, 23). The *New King James Version* makes an interpretive decision in favor of this distinction: "it pleased God through the *foolishness of the message preached* to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21, emphasis added). The *English Standard Version* does the same, "the folly of what we preach." But, as we shall see in the next chapter, what Paul refers to as foolishness is not only the message of the gospel but also the kind of public rhetoric that Paul thought most appropriate for the gospel message—the proclamation of a herald, to whose message he is called be faithful. He was thus not a gifted persuader, but a faithful messenger.

"Our word-weary generation sometimes forgets how our grandparents before the days of telecommunications considered it a great privilege to go into town to attend a public meeting at which someone would give a public address."⁹ It is only in light of the vaunted sophistication of modern electronic media that the act of monological speech is thought to be foolish. We must not submit to this estimate. Since God has ordained preaching, we are foolish not to cultivate an appreciation for its excellencies *as a medium* for communicating the gospel. Late moderns dislike all monological speech, because it is inherently authoritative. In addition, gospel monologue is disliked because of the message, which

⁶ See fn. 47 in Chapter 1. Keyes, "The Idol Factory," 29.

⁷ Cf. Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 19. Modern homiletics is filled with depreciation of the monological aspect of preaching.

⁸ Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 73ff. The entire book deals with this question.

⁹ Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, vol. 1, 82.

claims to be the only true way of salvation. Preaching is hated above all, because, at its best, it is the most authoritative kind of monologue conceivable, coming ultimately from God. The electronic media, especially the visual, appeal to the immanentistic, multi-cultural agenda of late modernity. Modernity is autonomous man come into his own. There are no authors or authoritative texts; there is no reality under the surface of anything, much less the words of a man who claims to speak for God.

There is, of course, a real sense in which preaching *is* dialogical, but I hesitate to use the term due to the late modern baggage with which it is presently freighted. Preaching is dialogical, because it is *covenantal*. God's Word evokes and demands a response from those to whom it is addressed. The spoken word is more personal, and thus evokes a higher level of trust than other forms of communication.¹⁰ But preaching is not in the strictest sense dialogical, because the two parties of the dialogue are not at all on an equal footing, as in the modern egalitarian use of the term. Perhaps the term *interactive* is more appropriate, although that term, too, is freighted with late modern baggage. There is also a pugnacity in some preaching, which is confused with authoritativeness, which bears little resemblance to the biblical model, and should be eschewed by every true herald of the gospel.

The excellence of the monological nature of preaching is seen more clearly in its immediacy. As Ong reminds us, "Sound . . . advertises presentness."¹¹ For the preacher this is to be the presence of God himself. As a living voice, preaching is not the same as the immediacy of the visual media in several respects. Because preaching is content heavy, it is, as McLuhan has observed, *hot* communication. Furthermore, when spoken in the church, it is spoken in a context in which knowledge of the message of special revelation already exists. The church possesses the written Scriptures, in which it meditates day and night. The church's knowledge of Scripture allows it to search the Scripture like the Bereans, even in the act of listening, as the church ransacks its memory in the preaching moment, as the church receives the preaching through the collective and individual grid of Scripture knowledge.

Furthermore, even the unbelieving audience, such as Paul encountered in Athens, brings knowledge of God from its own cultural texts to its hearing, despite its inherent tendency to reject that knowledge (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). The hope of every right thinking preacher is that the message will be discussed after the worship, and even raise questions. As we have seen, one of the strengths of the written Word is its reflective nature. It invites dialogue with the reader; it seeks to change the reader's perception, and it allows the reader to stop and reflect on the message as it impinges on his consciousness. Most importantly then, preaching reinforces and informs the Bible reading of the church, and vice versa. Thus, the combination of various aspects of the media which function in the church, i.e., oral, written, and visual, works together to accomplish God's goal in the giving of his Word. It never returns to him empty (Isa. 55:11).

On the other hand, preaching has all the power of *cool* communication in its immediacy. For in as much as it is God's Word, it is inarguable, and there is no space in the preaching event for argument. This is God's design. The preacher is not distracted by the audience but is able to address it with singularity of purpose and effect, rooted in the text of Scripture. Unlike the preaching which is transmitted on television the hearer cannot turn off the messenger with as much ease. As a totally *cool* medium television lulls the watcher into

¹⁰ Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 29.

¹¹ Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 101.

mental and spiritual sleep. The preacher is not and cannot be a real part of the watcher's life. And he is, after all, just a *watcher*, not a true hearer. Even so-called "live" television is only an illusion of reality, a virtual reality. The truly live preacher demands and commands the listener's attention. "When we hear the Word of God spoken by the mouth of men, we are ready to confine our attention to the visible speaker."¹² The Scottish reformer John Knox asserted, "What efficacy hath the living voice above the bare letter read, the hungry and the thirsty do feel their comfort."¹³

While we have referred to preaching as a medium, there is clearly a difference between the direct experience of a speaker's presence and the mediated experience of the electronic image. One is historical reality; the other is only an appearance. As Knox pointed out, even the read word does not have the same effect that the living voice of the preacher has. Thus, the church is never addressed by the living God in the way he intended without the living presence of preaching in its midst. Iain Murray, in his biography of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, observes that Lloyd-Jones's commitment to writing was quite secondary to that of preaching. Ministers

were called to be preachers, not writers. He did not view the readiness of contemporary Christianity to allow the pulpit to be overshadowed by other means of communication as a wise adjustment to modern conditions but as a loss of faith in *the* means to which God has attached the special promise of His power.¹⁴

Along with being direct and inarguable, the monological nature of preaching is inescapable. The challenge it brings is ultimately from God himself. True preaching is God's challenge to change. He confronts us with the need to repent and believe his Word. The grand errand of true preaching is the transformation of sinners. This should not leave the preacher with the idea that he is "six feet above criticism." Indeed, the priesthood of all believers should always place us in the position of Paul in Berea—open to inspection. The common call for "feedback" among sixties critics of preaching should alert us to the need for openness to and encouragement of questions from the congregation, after worship.¹⁵ We do not need to cave in to egalitarianism to provide forums for discussion of God's Word—we should encourage it. Properly understood, this enhances, rather than diminishes, the authority of the ministerial office. The wise preacher will be constantly aware of his congregation's response to his preaching, both during the act of preaching and in his other pastoral contacts.

When all is said and done, the monological nature of preaching has been and will always be offensive to a fallen world, because it is in essence a resounding "Thus saith the Lord." In this sense there are, as Charles Dennison has aptly said, no *modern* preachers, only preachers.¹⁶ Our understanding of unique factors in the modern world should only reinforce our commitment to the age-old task before us as heralds of the gospel. The Christ

¹² George Lawson, *The Life of Joseph* (1807 Reprint. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 87.

¹³ Quoted in Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939-1981* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 345. John Knox, *The Works of John Knox*, David Laing, ed. (Edinburgh: James Thin, vol. 5, 1895), 519.

¹⁴ Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, 345.

¹⁵ Cf. Clyde H. Reid, *The Empty Pulpit: A Study in Preaching as Communication* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

¹⁶ Charles Dennison, "Preaching and Application: A Review," *Kerux* 4:3 (December 1989), 52.

of Scripture has commissioned his ambassadors, not to “share” the gospel, though we are called to share many things, but to announce and proclaim it with the authority of our King, to give full force to the imperative “repent and believe the gospel.” While this message must be preached with great humility, it must in humility be preached with great authority, the authority of God himself.

God Still Speaks¹⁷

Charismatics insist that God still speaks. We should agree, rather than disagree, because the Reformed tradition has always insisted that God still speaks through the ministry of his Word. Thus, the basic instinct of Charismatics is healthy. God is a living God who continues to communicate with his people. How he does this is another matter. This is where we strongly disagree with our Charismatic friends. We properly insist that God speaks—with reference to special revelation—through his written, infallible Word, and that alone. The Charismatic response would be something to the effect that we believe in a dead letter. That is not living speech. The rejoinder to this accusation, which many of us have sadly forgotten, is that the primary way in which God addresses his people is through the preaching of the Word. This is a living speech in which the living God directly addresses his church. To underestimate or deny this is to denigrate God’s power and undermine his primary means of communicating grace to us. Ministers and members of the church must cultivate this awareness.

In our important effort to protect the inspiration and authority of Scripture, we oppose the neo-orthodox notion that the Bible becomes the Word of God during the act of preaching. We properly maintain that the Bible on our bookshelf is still the Word of God. However, in our defensive posture, we may fail to appreciate that the primary means of God addressing his people since the close of the canon is the public reading and *preaching* of his infallible Word. It is easy to forget that few believers before Gutenberg had access to the text of the Bible and that the text itself is crafted to be heard not seen. Our seminary training is almost exclusively literary in nature. This is as it should be, since we are a people formed by the text of Scripture and the tradition of interpreting God’s Word. But we have underestimated, and thus undervalued, the place of orality in preaching and in the seminary curriculum. I will explore this topic in more detail in chapter 11.

Gregory E. Reynolds is pastor emeritus of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Manchester, New Hampshire, and is the editor of *Ordained Servant*.

¹⁷ Adapted from Gregory E. Reynolds, “God Still Speaks Today: The Power of Orality,” *Ordained Servant* 17 (2008): 25–31.

Servant Standards

Commentary on the Book of Discipline of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

by Alan D. Strange

Chapter V Cases without Full Process

1. When a person comes before a judicatory as his own accuser, the judicatory may proceed to judgment without full process, determining first, what offense, if any has been committed, and, if a serious offense (cf. Chapter III, Section 7.b [6]) has been committed, what censure shall be pronounced.

Comment: This section needs to be attended to minutely; its details are quite important. There are various ways, first, that a person may “come before a judicatory as his own accuser.” Such frequently does not start with a person distinctly saying to their session, e.g., “I hereby come as my own accuser.” Instead, such a process might start with someone confessing sin to the pastor that the pastor then thinks is serious enough to warrant bringing before the session under this rubric.

This is a bit tricky here. The pastor may be counseling someone, in the course of which various sins emerge. If the party seeking counsel (though perhaps they have been required to seek counseling, which gives a different cast to the case) appears open and honest, much sin can be dealt with in the course of counsel that does not warrant being brought out of the counseling room and into the session meeting for its consideration. What should be brought out of the counseling room and into the session meeting is a matter of discretion for a wise pastor reporting to and interacting with his session.

We should be clear with parties seeking pastoral counsel in our churches that they can ordinarily expect and enjoy confidence in their pastoral counseling, acknowledging, at the same time, that the session will get a report that counseling is occurring, and a general description of the counseling will be given to the session as well. Two cases occur, however, in which those receiving counseling cannot expect such confidential treatment of all counseling matters: when the counseling discovers/uncovers sin that the counselee refuses to deal with and thus necessitates discipline, and matters need to be brought to the attention of the session; and when matters, like various sorts of abuse that are in violation of law, come to light in such counseling that demand reporting to the civil authorities—this is the other circumstance in which the situation overrides the need for or expectation of ordinary confidentiality.

So sin may emerge from counseling that needs to be dealt with by the session and constitutes an instance of someone coming forward as his own accuser. Thus, the confession of sin may occur in a purely voluntary way (e.g., in counseling, someone calls up the pastor and confesses that they have committed sin, say adultery, and the like) or be otherwise discovered (a woman may find incriminating evidence—a credit card charge or

a receipt—and her husband confesses infidelity to her). All of these may be construed as instances of someone confessing sin in a way that the offender might be encouraged to come forward as his own accuser to the session, specifically under the rubric of BD 5.1.

These examples may be understood, then, as instances furnishing the grounds for someone to come as his own accuser. Take a man who is “caught” in some fashion and confesses adultery to his wife. The pastor may speak with him and ask if he is willing to “come before the judicatory as his own accuser,” basically coming before the judicatory in the confession of his sin. This is listed in the first section of a “case without full process,” because when someone confesses sin there is no need for a trial to establish guilt. Recall that the purpose of a trial is to establish the facts of the case and to apply the law of the church to the facts. In the case of someone confessing sin, or coming as his own accuser, the facts of the case are not in dispute; rather, they are stipulated. Coming as one’s own accuser means someone comes saying, “I sinned in this way,” and the judicatory may thus proceed to consider matters beyond the question of guilt, since guilt has already been acknowledged.

It is important here to note that, however a person precisely comes to appear before a judicatory as his own accuser, whatever he confesses to is what he is judicially guilty of. If someone confesses something less than he should in the eyes of the judicatory and fails or refuses to confess what the judicatory believes the evidence warrants, then the judicatory will have to charge and try him of that which the judicatory believes his confession lacks. Someone cannot confess gossiping and end up having such a confession recorded as adultery. A person may well need to be encouraged to confess all that he is guilty of, so that there is no need for a trial; otherwise, the judicatory will need to try him for anything of which they regard him guilty but for which he fails or refuses to confess.

Assuming that someone’s confession is deemed adequate, let us say it is a seventh commandment issue, the judicatory then does two things: It determines what sin, if any, has been committed, and it also determines whether such a sin is serious enough to warrant trial (as if the judicatory were conducting a BD 3.7 or 3.8 preliminary investigation). Sticking with the example of the husband confessing infidelity (say, it is sexual relations with a woman not his wife), the judicatory would determine that this is, first, a violation of the seventh commandment (with all the relevant Scripture and Standards citations) and, second, that it is indeed serious enough to warrant a trial, were one needed, in accordance with BD 3.7.b.(6).

Having ascertained these two things (the offense and its seriousness), the judicatory shall then proceed to consider what censure shall be pronounced. First, though, the censure shall be proposed and the contemplated censure reported to the party that came as his own accuser. Some think that coming as one’s own accuser means that one has no (or has given up any) right to appeal. A right to appeal in a judicial case, however, not only applies to the verdict (guilty or not guilty) but to the proposed censure (as to its degree). Take the case of a man confessing drunkenness: the session could determine the proposed censure to be excommunication. He would have the right to appeal and to argue for a lesser censure. Coming as one’s own accuser does not mean that whatever the judicatory may propose to do by way of censure lies beyond appeal.

Note, returning to the two steps (determining the offense and its seriousness) that the judicatory engages before proposing censure, a judicatory may conceivably do things other than proceed to propose censure. There was a case in which some folks new to the

OPC “confessed” to their session the sin of having a glass of wine at a wedding. After ascertaining that no drunkenness was involved, but, in this case, only a single glass of wine was consumed, the judicatory explained to them that no offense had occurred. Or perhaps someone confesses gossip, and the judicatory determines it to be an offense, but not one meriting censure. They instruct the person, who was convicted by preaching on the subject, to work with the pastor (or other counselors) to address this characteristic sin in their life and to seek to die to it and live to righteousness.

All this is to say that not all sin that one confesses to a pastor or elder warrants coming before the session for censure. If the pastor or elders (or session as a whole) is convinced that a man is taking his sin seriously and taking the steps necessary to address his sin, it may continue to work with him pastorally as it sees fit. More serious sin, and the session’s discretion and judgment in the matter is key here, may warrant coming before the session for, say, an admonition or rebuke, while the offender either continues or starts counseling with the pastor or other competent parties who can furnish progress reports to such agreed upon by the pastor/session. There is a proper flexibility here enjoyed by judicatories in engaging parties who come as their own accusers to the judicatory.

2. Erasure is an act of discipline without full process.

a. The names of members may be removed from the roll of the church by erasure according to the following provisions:

(1) When a member desires dismissal to a church of which the session cannot approve as a church of like faith and practice, nor a church which will advance his spiritual interests, and he cannot be dissuaded, it shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the session institutes disciplinary action against him; on being informed that he has joined such a church the clerk shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(2) When a member of a particular church, whether or not he be charged with an offense, informs the session that he does not desire to remain in the fellowship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the efforts of the session to dissuade him from his course have failed, it shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes, unless the session institutes or continues other disciplinary action against him.

(3) When a member unites with a church of another denomination without a certificate of dismission, the session may erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(4) When a member cannot be found, the session may, after two years, erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in its minutes.

(5) When a member, without adequate reason, persists in attending a church of another denomination in preference to his own, or persistently and over an extended period of time, absents himself from the stated services of the church, his name may be erased from the roll according to the following procedures: he shall be earnestly and personally dealt with by the session. If this effort fails, he shall be notified that at a meeting of the session not less than two months later his standing shall be reviewed. The session shall inform him of the time, date, and place of this meeting and invite him to show why his name should not be erased from the roll. If satisfactory reasons are not presented, the session shall erase his name from the roll, record the circumstances in its minutes, and send notification to him.

(6) When a noncommunicant member neglects the ongoing exhortation of the session to profess faith in Christ and rejects the covenantal responsibility of submission to home or church, the session may upon prior notification erase his name from the roll.

b. The names of ministers may be removed from the roll of the presbytery by erasure according to the following provisions:

(1) When a minister, whether or not he be charged with an offense, informs the presbytery that he desires to renounce the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church by abandoning his ministry and membership therein, or by declaring himself independent, or by joining another body without a regular dismissal, the presbytery shall seek to dissuade him from his course, and, if these efforts fail, it shall erase his name from its roll and record the circumstances in its minutes unless the presbytery institutes or continues disciplinary action.

(2) When a minister has been absent from the meetings of presbytery for two years and the presbytery after diligent search is unable to find him, his name shall be erased from the roll.

Comment: This section has material regarding erasure that is identical with some of the material on erasure in BD 2. BD 2 deals with jurisdiction and addresses both the ways in which a judicatory may add a member and remove a member, the latter being described under BD 2.B.3.d. Reference should be made to this section in BD 2 for commentary on the erasures described in BD 5.2.a.

Since the language in both chapters is the same, one might wonder why the two different treatments of the same material: erasure of members at the sessional level. The first instance of treatment, in BD 2, is under the rubric of jurisdiction and treats the question of erasure in what may be arguably described as an administrative matter.

In this section of the book, BD 5, erasure is treated as an act of discipline without full process, which is to say that erasure under this rubric is akin to a light form of excommunication. Since comment has already been made on this under BD 2, here let me only note further, in my opinion, that a session that seeks to make clear that it sees the particular erasure in question as a form of discipline, should treat that erasure under this rubric in BD 5 rather than the jurisdictional rubric in BD 2.

One might well ask whether treating erasure under two different headings, one dealing with jurisdiction, as does BD 2 (arguably, in context, an administrative approach to erasure), and the other treating erasure as an act of discipline without full process, as does BD 5 (which means it is clearly judicial and not merely administrative), is purposeful and meaningful. In other words, does the treatment of the same thing under two different rubrics mean that judicatories can variously regard erasure? Can it be viewed in some cases as an administrative act and in others as a judicial act?

Or is it just a matter of treating it in BD 2 under jurisdiction (because jurisdiction is at issue in erasure) and then treating it under acts of discipline without full process in BD 5 because it is an act of discipline in any and all cases? This is a matter that has been and remains controverted. It is this commentator's view that the judicatory is given discretion in the case for the way that it views erasure, allowing the judicatory to treat some cases more lightly (under BD 2) and other cases more strenuously (under BD 5). One supposes that the debate will continue, and judicatories will employ which rubric they regard as most fitting in the given case.

Now we turn to consider erasure for ministerial members, a matter that is not treated by BD 2, perhaps strengthening the argument that this sort of erasure (in BD 5) is always viewed as an act of discipline, but perhaps all sorts (for regular members of the church) are not. As for erasure of members of presbytery, in other words, ministerial members, erasures are strictly an act of discipline, and they can occur in two instances.

The second cited instance of erasure (BD 5.2.b.2) makes for easier comment: concerning a minister who has not been to presbytery for two years, the presbytery,

having made diligent search but being unable to locate him, shall erase his name from the roll. This provision has become increasingly unused, since the time in which we now live makes it possible to locate parties more readily than ever. In the past, persons might more readily simply disappear—not as much now in the internet age in which search for missing parties is made easier. Nonetheless, this provision remains and is to be used in the rare case of not being able to find a ministerial member of presbytery who no longer attends.

The other, more common, case is when a minister, whether charged with an offense or not, tells the presbytery (usually in writing) that he desires and intends to renounce the jurisdiction of the OPC. There are three circumstances given in which such a situation might be envisioned to occur. First, a minister may inform the presbytery that he has, or intends to, abandon his ministry and membership in the OPC. Second, a minister may tell his presbytery that he wishes to declare himself independent and no longer under the jurisdiction of the OPC. Third, a ministerial member of a presbytery may inform them that he has joined (or intends to join) another body without a regular dismissal from his presbytery.

In all these cases, the presbytery shall seek to dissuade the minister in view from renouncing the jurisdiction of the OPC. This would commonly involve appointing a committee to meet with him, perhaps asking him to come to presbytery—whatever course the presbytery thinks might make him think better of his desire to leave the OPC. Men come to such conclusions for a variety of reasons: some are chagrined with the OPC (or Presbyterianism); others have come to incompatible positions—such as rejecting infant baptism or becoming Roman Catholic.

If the efforts to dissuade him from leaving fail—as they, sadly, commonly do—the presbytery has two options. It can erase him from the roll and record the circumstances of such erasure in its minutes (and report this action to the broader church). Or it can institute or continue the process of discipline if it thinks that such is warranted in the case. The action to be taken here is up to the discretion of the presbytery. It is most common in such cases for the presbytery to erase the minister, record the circumstances in the minutes, and report its actions to the wider church.

Alan D. Strange *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and serves as professor of church history and theological librarian at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana, and is associate pastor of First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of South Holland, Illinois.*

Servant Work

Getting to Know Your Pastor

Letters to a Younger Ruling Elder, No. 6

By An Older Elder

Dear James,

I received your letter last week Thursday. I would have written back sooner, but it seems the good Lord preferred that I spend the last few days in our local hospital. It all started with some stomach pains and nausea on Friday, not long after my breakfast with Pastor Sam. When it did not subside by noon, I drove myself to urgent care and was subsequently taken by ambulance to Mercy Hospital, where I remained for four days. Pastor Sam visited me; God bless his soul. He was quite concerned it was the breakfast that got me. I told him they ruled out food poisoning, so it must have been the company! We had a good laugh, which seemed to help (Prov. 17:22). Anyway, after four days at Mercy it is nice to be home. I have a follow-up next week with my regular doctor.

I am glad you found some help in my last letter on the importance of the relationship of a ruling elder and his wife. When the Lord gives an elder a wife, He gives him much needed help (Gen. 2:18). You asked me if there are *other relationships* which are crucial to the effective ministry of a ruling elder. That is a very good question. If you do not mind, I would like to start with that relationship which is *so obvious that it is often ignored*. What I am speaking of is the immensely important relationship of a ruling elder with the pastor.

Our Lord Jesus Christ took great pains to promote a spirit of unity and love among his apostles. Whenever he found them disputing, he immediately set them aright: once by means of a little child (Luke 9:47) and once by means of a lesson about service (Luke 22:25). Maybe his most memorable lesson was when he took a towel and washed their feet, telling them, “You also should do just as I have done to you (John 13:15). Your relationship with the pastor must be marked by and maintained by this servant attitude of the heart. This is very important.

James, allow me to speak very plainly to you here. I do not believe I am exaggerating when I say that within the congregation no relationship will predict the overall health, growth, and maturity of the flock as this relationship between the pastor and his ruling elder(s). It is foundational. This relationship has often been the special target of Satan’s most forceful attacks upon the church. He knows that a house divided cannot stand (Matt. 12:25). Therefore, in the language which Paul used in Romans 12:18, “so far as it depends on you,” ensure the protection and nourishment of this relationship with your pastor.

To drive this point home a bit more clearly, allow me to give you three reasons why this relationship with your pastor must maintain a very high priority for you as a ruling elder. First, the pastoral ministry, conscientiously and earnestly practiced, is subject to

more discouragements, disappointments, and depression than almost any other work. Your pastor will know spiritually dark days and often cry with Paul, “who is sufficient for these things? (2 Cor. 2:16).” He will often, like his master, be a man of sorrows. It was Spurgeon’s experience that “those who are honored of their Lord in public have usually to endure a secret chastening, or to carry a peculiar cross, lest by any means they exalt themselves, and fall into the snare of the devil.”¹ A good ruling elder will have his finger on the pulse of his pastor’s state of mind, and this can only be done by fostering a friendship with him.

Second, allow me to remind you of the obvious fact that your pastor is just a man, with the same nature as you and me (James 5:17). Charles Bridges (1794–1869) helpfully reminds pastors (and elders!), “Were we angels by nature as well as by office, the difficulty would be of little account.”² But pastors are not angels. And like all men they need friendship, encouragement, recreation, refreshment, and rest. I knew an elder once who told me he never complimented his pastor’s preaching, fearful that it would go to his head. I felt bad for that elder, but worse for his pastor. Pastors are people too. They bleed. They bruise. Encourage your pastor regularly and foster a relationship with him that provides frequent opportunity for healing words (Prov. 16:24).

Third, and finally, you will need a strong bond of affection and trust to provide, from time to time, some needed mutual correction. Remember what the preacher said, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov 27:6). A friend! Note that carefully. A loving and faithful elder is in the best position to share with the pastor observations about his ministry or preaching that may promote its effectiveness. The art of doing so in a way that builds up, rather than breaks down, can only be cultivated in the context of a sincere friendship.

Allow me to close with some practical advice. First, make the matter of your relationship with the pastor a subject of frequent prayer. Ask God for this, and for his help in protecting and fostering it. Second, spend some time with your pastor in which the subjects of conversation are mostly *not* about church, ministry, or the flock. Find out what interests him and learn enough about it to connect over it. Finally, the best way to encourage your pastor is to keep becoming more Christ-like every day.

Your soul’s well-wisher,

An Older Elder.

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Minister’s Fainting Fits,” in *Lectures to My Students* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 169.

² Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 14.

ServantReading

Secular Insight on Happiness

A Review Article

by Andy Wilson

The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness, by Robert Waldinger and Marc Schultz. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023, 341 pages, \$29.99.

For the past three decades, psychiatrist Robert Waldinger and clinical psychologist Mark Schultz have served as the director and associate director, respectively, of the Harvard Study of Adult Development (HSAD), which “has followed two generations of individuals from the same families for more than eighty years” (ix). This longitudinal study began by focusing on two groups of young males from the Boston area: 268 sophomores from Harvard College and 456 fourteen-year-old boys from disadvantaged neighborhoods. One might expect that the Harvard students’ privileges and prospects would have made their pursuit of happiness more successful compared to the boys in the other group, but this was not invariably the case. The HSAD reveals that there are other, more significant predictors of a person’s long term health and happiness.

In their book *The Good Life*, Waldinger and Schultz draw upon the many interviews conducted over the course of the HSAD to explore the question of what makes for a good life. The basic insight that they derive is that good relationships are the key to happiness. Throughout the book, they consider different facets of our relationships and use examples drawn from the lives of the study participants to illustrate the points they make.

The reason why healthy relationships are linked to happiness is because human beings are social creatures. While Waldinger and Schultz explain this as the result of evolutionary history, Christians know that it is rooted in God’s declaration at creation that “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18). *The Good Life* shows that through the various stages of life there are many ways in which we are helped by the connections we have with others. Stable and supportive relationships provide us with security, equip us to become responsible adults, help us turn our focus outside ourselves, embolden us to take chances in the pursuit of new goals, and support us in times of adversity.

One contemporary challenge to relationships that Waldinger and Schultz address is the widespread use of social media and digital technology. With the advent of these tools, even our closest interactions are often “filtered through devices and software whose design subtly—and sometimes not-so-subtly—shapes each interaction” (127), and it is not clear whether the net effect is to deepen or inhibit our ability to connect to each other. While such technologies do bring benefits, the authors warn of the detrimental developmental effects that they have on children and stress the inability of virtual tools to

duplicate the experience of being physically present with others. Common sense advice is given on how to use digital tech in a wise manner.

The chapter “Social Fitness” provides guidance for evaluating the health of our relationships and makes three practical suggestions for how to improve and deepen them. First, we should be generous in our dealings with others, thinking first and foremost not about what we hope to receive from our relationships but about the time and attention that we can give to others. Second, we need to resist the tendency to let past negative experiences in relationships dominate our lives and prevent us from taking the risks needed to make new and better connections with others. And third, we should cultivate curiosity and ask questions of others, as this “opens up avenues of conversation and knowledge that we never knew were there” and “helps others feel understood and appreciated” (113).

The authors offer advice on how to deal with challenging situations in our relationships, providing a model that we can use to process our emotional reactions when difficulties arise. Using the acronym W.I.S.E.R. (watch, interpret, select, engage, reflect), they walk through five steps we can take to think through what is happening, why we are responding in the way we are, what we should do, how to address the challenge, and how to assess how our effort went. While we may be inclined to avoid confronting the difficulties that arise in our relationships, the authors note that this can lead to other problems and leave us in relational ruts. They also remind us that the differences and disagreements that we experience in our closest relationships can be opportunities to grow.

Several chapters focus on relationships with spouses, family, and friends, explaining and illustrating the challenges and benefits of these intimate connections. Consideration is also given to everyday encounters with people whom we do not know very well. An entire chapter is devoted to relationships in the workplace. This bears consideration given that many people spend significantly more time at work than they do in activities with friends and family. On the one hand, our work can contribute to our happiness by giving us a sense that our lives matter and that others value our contributions. On the other hand, when a person’s workplace relationships are strained, the unhappiness he experiences at work will likely spill over into his life outside of work. While there are things in our workplaces that are beyond our control, the authors’ advice on how to make the most of work relationships is well worth considering.

In addition to the workplace, Waldinger and Schultz note the positive impact that interactions with casual acquaintances and strangers can have on our state of mind. Chatting with someone on the subway, taking an extra moment to have a meaningful interchange with a store clerk, or greeting the mailman may not seem like much, but research indicates that such seemingly insignificant human connections do contribute to a person’s happiness. A kind word and a smiling face make more of a difference than we realize.

Given the importance of relationships for happiness, it is no surprise that isolation is often connected with unhappiness. The authors discuss this at various points in the book, and they repeatedly call attention to the negative impact of the suppression of in-person interactions during the Covid crisis. Unfortunately, they imply that the damage was done by the pandemic itself, apparently accepting the oft-touted notion that we had no choice but to respond to Covid in the way we did. This is not true. The unprecedented mitigation

strategy employed during Covid had been rejected by eminent public health scientists long before this pandemic struck,¹ and many scientists and medical practitioners opposed the strategy while it was being implemented.² Now that the pandemic is over, numerous studies³ have shown that the novel mitigation measures did no good while bringing about a massive amount of personal, relational, social, economic, and political harm.⁴ This dovetails with Waldinger and Schultz's assertion that people who have a sense of disconnection from others are less healthy and have shorter life spans than those who are more connected to family, friends, and community (21). Considering this, it is disappointing that the authors do not at least raise the question of whether mandated health protocols that radically suppress human interactions and train people to view others primarily as potential vectors of disease are respectful of human dignity and compatible with the fundamental principles of medical ethics. Waldinger and Schultz are willing to apply their research to other matters of public policy (279). Why would they not do so with respect to the Covid policies?

There are points where *The Good Life* is in clear conflict with Christian beliefs. One reason for this is because the authors define the good life as "a state of deep well-being in which a person feels that their life has *meaning* and *purpose*" (18, italics original). While this is better than a hedonistic conception of happiness, it still falls short of the biblical perspective, because it makes a person's feelings the standard for what is good. Feelings can be misleading. The authors' failure to reckon with this sometimes leads them to deem things that are immoral to be good. For example, one of the study participants is presented as finding the good life by ending her marriage to someone she described as "one of the nicest men on the planet," so that she could embrace a gay identity (140). The authors also call a drag-queen-ballroom-dancing community "a rich example of nontraditional family," because of how it "offers an enduring social sanctuary for those who have been rejected by and marginalized within their families of origin, religious institutions, and society at large" (202). Of course, people should always be treated with dignity, but this does not mean that they should always be affirmed for acting on their feelings and desires. God's law is the objective standard of what is good, and we are not free to call things good when God calls them evil (cf. Deut. 22:5; Matt. 19:9; Rom. 1:26–27). The fact that the prevailing cultural winds of LGBTQ+ ideology are reflected in a

¹ See Thomas V. Inglesby, Jennifer B. Nuzzo, Tara O'Toole, and D.A. Henderson, "Disease Mitigation Measures in the Control of Pandemic Influenza," in *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Practice, and Science*, vol. 4, no. 4, (New Rochelle, NY: Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., 2006), 373, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.552.1109&rep=rep1&type=pdf>. Dr. Henderson was the epidemiologist who led the successful campaign to eradicate smallpox.

² See "The Great Barrington Declaration," <https://gbdeclaration.org>. This document was authored by epidemiologists from Harvard, Oxford, and Stanford universities. It has been signed by over 60,000 public health and medical scientists and medical practitioners. Accessed March 11, 2023.

³ The findings of two especially notable meta-analyses are summarized in these articles: Joel Zinberg, "No Benefit, Many Costs," *City Journal* (February 4, 2022), <https://www.city-journal.org/new-study-finds-covid-lockdowns-had-no-benefit>; John Tiemey, "Approximately Zero," *City Journal* (February 17, 2023), <https://www.city-journal.org/new-cochrane-study-on-masks-and-covid>.

⁴ The problems with the pandemic response are adeptly explained in Aaron Kheriaty, *The New Abnormal: The Rise of the Biomedical Security State* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2022). Dr. Kheriaty taught psychiatry at the University of California-Irvine (UCI) School of Medicine, was the director of the Medical Ethics Program at UCI Health and was the chairman of the ethics committee at the California Department of State Hospitals.

book like *The Good Life* demonstrates fallen man's proclivity to value social acceptance over truth. Christians should remember that we are by no means immune to this temptation.

In his common grace, God bestows ingenuity and insight upon both believers and unbelievers, so that secular enterprises can be a source of knowledge and temporal blessing for all people (see Gen. 4:20–22; Acts 17:28). This means Christians can benefit from the lessons that Waldinger and Schultz derive from the HSAD. Having said that, we need to be aware of the ways in which worldly notions affect some of their judgments and advice. We also need to remember that while the good relationships that we have with other people certainly do strengthen and enrich our lives in this world, the things of this world will not endure forever. The key insight that is missing from *The Good Life* is that our longing for human connection points to the fact that we were made for relationship with God, and that being reconciled to him through Christ is the only way to find lasting happiness (see Ps. 16:11).

Andy Wilson is an OPC minister and serves as the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Laconia, New Hampshire.

The Holy Spirit *by Robert Letham*

by John V. Fesko

The Holy Spirit, by Robert Letham. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2023, xxii + 343 pages, \$29.99, paper.

Robert Letham has established himself as an expert on the doctrine of the Trinity with his 2004 work *The Holy Trinity*, which makes him an ideal person to write a book on the Holy Spirit.¹ This book culls from his earlier book on the Trinity and his systematic theology.² The book has two sections. Part 1 gives a historical-theological overview of the doctrine and sets forth basic theological axioms. Part 2 surveys the doctrine in Scripture from the Old Testament (ch. 5), to the ministry of Jesus (ch. 6), Christ's resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost (ch. 7), the ministry of the apostles (chp. 8), New Testament gifts (ch. 9), eschatology (ch. 10), and the nature of the Spirit's redemptive work (ch. 11). The book concludes with a critical appendix on "Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Renewal."

The book has a number of strengths that commend it to readers. First, Letham provides a historical overview of the doctrine that spans the patristic to the contemporary period. For those unfamiliar with the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the survey covers many key persons and events. Second, the book gives a redemptive historical overview of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments. In the day of hyper-specialization and books that focus on either biblical theology or conversely systematic theology, this book covers both. In short, one need not choose between ontology or history but rather may study and appreciate the intra-trinitarian processions as they become manifest in their historical missions as they relate to the Holy Spirit. A third strength of the book is that it explores and critiques Pentecostal theology. These days much of our culture, and thus sadly the church, is given to experience-driven ideologies and theologies. Thus, Letham's final analysis of Pentecostalism gives readers important food for thought: "A movement that has no discernible distinctive theology and is based not on the textuality of the Bible but rather in experience cannot, *as such*, be judged to be in harmony with the biblical gospel and the Christian tradition" (297). A fourth strength of the book is that Letham provides a glossary of key theological terms to assist the uninitiated and students in navigating the book's contents and concepts.

Letham's book is a very good contribution to the field, though there are several desiderata that would enhance it. Letham covers the history of the doctrine but skips over nineteenth-century developments. The influence of G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) upon nineteenth- and twentieth-century theology is considerable. Hegel's "trinitarianism" and his own understanding of the "Spirit" caused orthodox theologians to respond and write works on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate and contrast the Bible's teaching from Hegel's. Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), George Smeaton (1814–89), and James

¹ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, rev. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019).

² Letham, *Holy Trinity*, 131–352; idem., *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 212–13, 296–97, 860–65. For this information see publication information page of *The Holy Spirit*.

Buchanan (1804–70) wrote in response to Hegel.³ Letham cites Kuyper periodically, but Smeaton and Buchanan do not appear in the book at all. The fact that so many contemporary theologians have written on the Holy Spirit is arguably due to Hegel’s influence, which explains the explosion of works on the Spirit in the twentieth century, yet the book says very little about this significant development.⁴

A second desideratum is greater attention to the Westminster Standards—they only appear as supporting cast, yet for all the complaints of an absence of the Holy Spirit in the documents, the Spirit features quite prominently in chapter eight on Christology, among many other places. In this vein, one of the missing works in Letham’s book is Thomas Goodwin’s (1600–80) *The Work of the Holy Ghost in Our Salvation*.⁵ Goodwin was a Westminster divine, and his work gives insights into the nature of the Spirit’s work as it relates to Christology. When Letham rightly states that Christ offered himself on the cross through the power of the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), he neither mentions nor cites Westminster Confession 8:5. By not integrating analysis and citation to the Standards, Letham misses an opportunity to showcase the theological riches that some might otherwise not realize are in these documents.

A third desideratum is that, at times, certain sections cry out for greater exposition but get the briefest treatment. For example, when he treats the Holy Spirit and justification, Letham rightly highlights the forensic nature of justification and says that because of Christ’s justification believers share in his legal status (178). But Letham mentions nothing of 1 Timothy 3:16, that Christ was “justified in the Spirit” (translation mine). What role does the Spirit play in Christ’s justification? Or, Letham rightly notes the Spirit’s work in equipping Bezalel and Oholiab to construct the desert tabernacle (115) and correlatively treats the gifts of the Spirit (197–231), but he does not fully close the circle to connect these two giftings. Just as the Spirit gave the Old Testament gifts for the construction of the tabernacle, so the Spirit gives New Testament gifts for the construction of the church, God’s final dwelling place. Closing the loop between the Spirit’s work in the Old and New Testaments would further strengthen Letham’s overall arguments.

These three desiderata notwithstanding, Letham’s book is a fine treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that lays out the issues and points to avenues for further research. Students and laymen should carefully study this book if they want to learn more about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The book also bodes well for the two prospective follow-on volumes on the Father and the Son. Letham’s contributions to the study of the doctrine of the Trinity will undoubtedly contribute to the church’s understanding about the God we love and serve.

John V. Fesko is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and serves as Harriett Barbour Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at *Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi*.

³ Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri DeVries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1900); George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882), 95–109; James Buchanan, *Office and Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York, NY: Robert Carter, 1847).

⁴ E.g., Nicholas Bye, Liz Disley, and Nicholas Adams, eds., *The Impact of Idealism*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013), IV: 48–112.

⁵ Thomas Goodwin, *The Work of the Holy Ghost in Our Salvation*, in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862).

ServantNews

Position Available: Executive Director of Great Commission Publications

The board of Trustees of Great Commission Publications (GCP) is seeking a candidate, preferably ordained or ordainable in The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) or the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), to be its next Executive Director. A successful candidate should have experience in publishing and education and will possess a demonstrated ability in administration and personnel management. Compensation will be competitive based on the experience of the candidate.

Great Commission Publications is the joint publishing arm of The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, overseen by The OPC's Committee on Christian Education and the PCA's Committee on Discipleship Ministries. GCP produces a graded, biblically faithful Sunday school curriculum, adult Bible studies, *Trinity Hymnal* (both original and revised), and other materials to further Christian education and worship.

For more information, please read the executive director "[Job Description 2023](#)" and the "[List of Professional and Personal Qualities](#)."

If you wish to apply for this position, please contact the secretary of the Board of Great Commission Publications, Archibald Allison, at Allison.1@opc.org.

The deadline for applications for this position is June 30, 2023.

Mobi Format for Ordained Servant and New Horizons Canceled

Brethren:

Since January 2012 the OPC Committee on Christian Education has offered its online magazines *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant* in EPUB and MOBI editions (for E-book readers), as well as HTML and PDF. E-books were easier to read on small screens, such as cell phones. But in recent years, developments in coding have made HTML content display just fine on most small screens, making the E-book editions redundant.

Because of the proprietary nature of the MOBI format, and consequent problems creating and accessing MOBI files, the CCE Subcommittee on Internet Ministries has made the decision to

drop the MOBI editions of *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant*. The HTML, PDF and EPUB editions will still be posted. Previously-posted MOBI editions will still be available.

Beginning July 1, 2023, OPC.org will no longer produce MOBI editions of *New Horizons* and *Ordained Servant*. Thank you for understanding.

In Christ,

Stephen Pribble, senior technical associate

OPC.org

ServantPoetry

Amoretti, Sonnet LXXII

by Edmund Spenser (1552–99)

Oft, when my spirit doth spread her bolder wings,
In mind to mount up to the purest sky,
It down is weighed with thought of earthly things,
And clogged with burden of mortality;
Where, when that sovereign beauty it doth spy,
Resembling heaven's glory in her light,
Drawn with sweet pleasure's bait, it back doth fly,
And unto heaven forgets her former flight.
There my frail fancy, fed with full delight,
Both bathe in bliss, and mantleth most at ease;
Ne thinks of other heaven, but how it might
Her heart's desire with most contentment please.
Heart need not wish none other happiness,
But here on earth to have such heaven's bliss.

