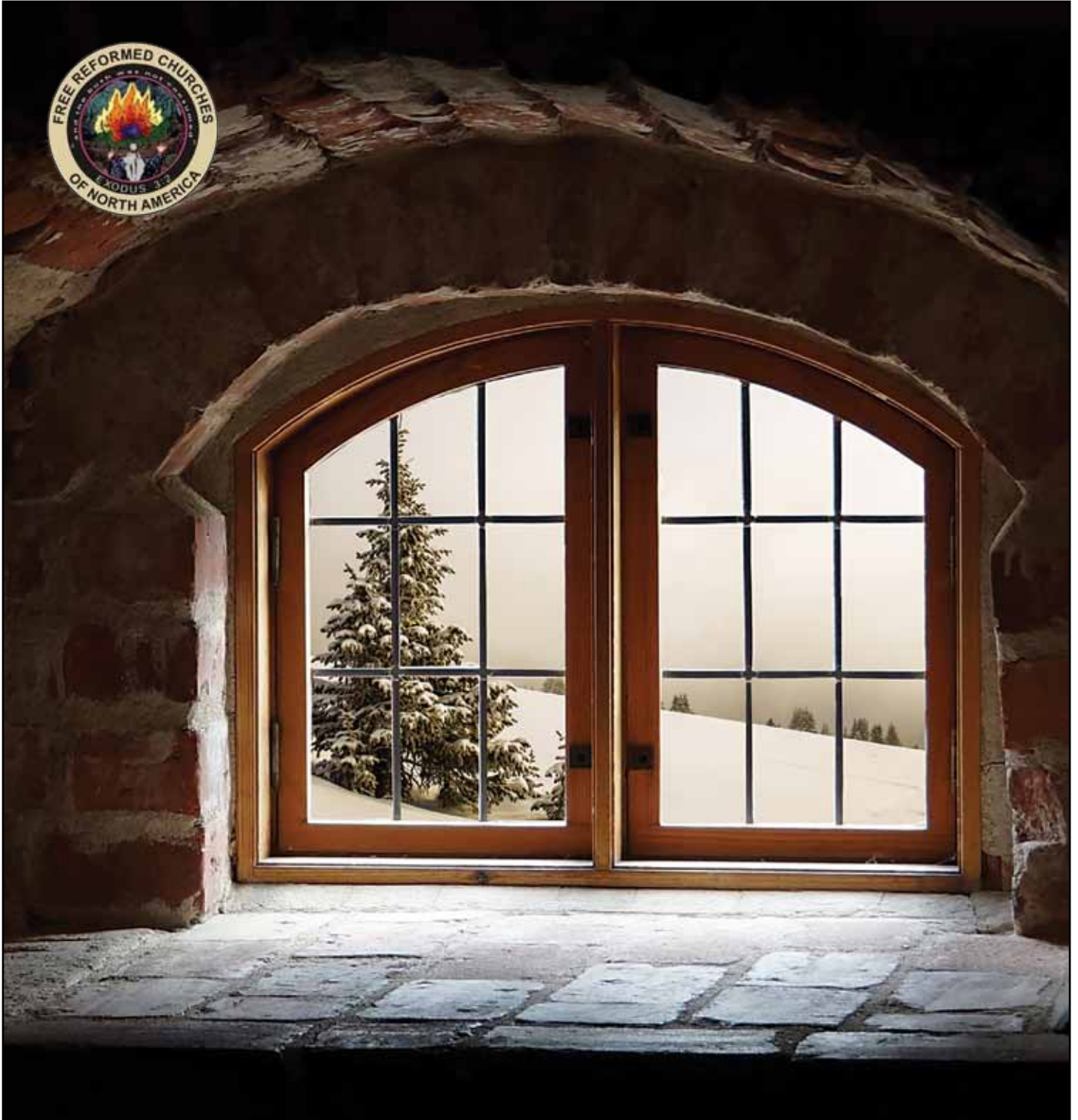


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THE MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA



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ON BEING PREPARED FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Stand therefore, having ...your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace
Ephesians 6:14-15

At this season when we pass from one year into the next, we often review the events of the past, consider the changing trends we see before us, and then speculate as to what we might witness in the days ahead. While none of us knows what a single day may bring, it should be clear to all that we are living in rapidly changing times. The world is presently making a far greater impact on the church than the church is on the world. As Christians, we need to remember how our God, who does not change (James 1:17), calls us to stand in the ways and see, to ask for the old paths where the good way is, and to walk in it (Jer. 6:16).

This call to seek the old paths is not about doing the things we have always done, or about doing those things in the way we have always done them. It is about searching the Scriptures, pursuing the will of the Lord, and committing ourselves to pleasing Him. Was that not the way of our forefathers, of those who were so richly blessed before us? It is like Isaac digging again the wells which his father Abraham had dug in a previous drought. He did so because he was confident of his finding more water in those same wells. When he found water there, he dug up even more of them (Gen. 26). Similarly, it is not about being afraid of every new thing we learn, but, following the example of the Bereans, we need to search the Scriptures to find out whether these things are so (Acts 17).

I had occasion recently to preach again on the spiritual warfare of Ephesians 6, where the soldier of the cross finds the call of God to shoe his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace (v. 15). This is a helpful reminder to us at any time, and something we must continue to do. Yet, it is particularly important now when we see our society so divided against itself and moral standards quickly disintegrating. Christianity is under attack, and Satan, like a roaring lion prowling about seeking whom he may devour, loves to seize upon Christians, his most desired prey, when they are least aware of his presence and power, and when therefore they are most vulnerable to his wicked devices.

Just imagine how it would interfere with any soldier's fighting skills, if he went out onto the battlefield wearing the wrong foot-gear, wearing boots so heavy that he could only lift his feet with the greatest difficulty? How fast could he go with those and how far

could he get? Clearly, every foot-soldier must have quick and efficient mobility. In the same way, every Christian needs to be prepared for the battle before him and needs to be ready to fight the good fight of faith and to move with considerable speed if he is to resist the devil and have him flee from him.

Consider the Christian who thinks that he is doing something special, maybe even exceptional and laudable, by going to a place of worship on a Sunday morning. When he first gets out of bed, he is not sure if he will even go to church – it is an effort, after all. But at last (as a matter of duty perhaps, or even out of mere habit) he decides to make the effort, hoping that the service will not be too long or too demanding. What is the matter with this fellow? Why does he not long for the sabbath day, for the services of worship, for those times of soul-feeding and seasons of spiritual refreshment which have been such a blessing to so many others? Well, I will tell you what his problem is: he is dead on his feet! He is not wearing the shoes of that peculiar readiness which the gospel of peace gives.

To be heavy-footed, slow moving, and lethargic – having to be whipped up, as it were, and constantly prodded into doing what needs to be done, instead of running to it and rejoicing in it – is a regrettable misrepresentation of living the Christian life. People who have to drag themselves out to church get little or nothing out of the service. The problem is likely not that there is nothing to get, but that they are not personally equipped to take anything out of it.

What can the Christian do if he finds himself in such a bad spiritual condition? If his hands hang down, his knees are feeble, and he is barely able to stand, what can he possibly do to rid himself of that undesirable state of sluggishness and become a nimble-footed soldier of Christ? He needs to put on the shoes of that readiness which only the gospel of peace will give him.

Do you want to put a spring in your step, believer, and be happy to serve the Lord? Only as you think about the gospel – only as you consider what Christ has done for you, only as you meditate on what He has achieved for you and continue to contemplate all that you have in Christ, only then will you wake up and find yourself raring to go! This gospel grace will constrain you!

Let me ask you, then, when was the last time that you really thought about the Lord Jesus Christ as your peace, as the One who broke down the middle wall of division between men – creating in Himself one new man from the two – that He might reconcile both, not only to each other, but even more importantly to God the Father Himself, through the cross, and thereby putting to death once and for all the enmity between us? When was the last time you really sought to think through the reality that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for through Him who has established this bond of peace we both have access by one Spirit to the Father?

Do not tell me that you have thought about it carefully and that still it has not moved you. No, my friend, if you have been made a new creation in Christ Jesus, that cannot be! So, if you are a believer, think through these things again. We are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God (1 John 3:1), and, if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17)!

Now, having considered such precious truths, and having weighed each benefit as a particular blessing to you, does it not drive away the superficiality of mere externals, the hollow formalities of a lifeless religion? Does all that carelessness about so much preciousness not give way to a genuine thirsting for God and hungering for righteousness? This reflection, along with fervent prayer, crying out for the grace of the Holy Spirit, is the only means to become agile, to gain mobility and speed in your conflict with the principalities and powers which assail you, as well as to

If his hands hang down, his knees are feeble, and he is barely able to stand, what can he possibly do to rid himself of that undesirable state of sluggishness and become a nimble-footed soldier of Christ?

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MEDITATION

find joy and gladness in all your service to the Lord. You must first comprehend and be constrained by the love of Christ for you, believer, to know something of the width and length and depth and height of that love! Then you will also be assured that no one, not even Satan and all the spiritual hosts of wickedness, can separate you from that love of God to you in Christ.

This, as I say, is the way to prepare for battle that you may stand your ground against the vain philosophies and ever-changing ideologies of our day. What other people, including many in positions of authority, are saying and doing may be very troubling to you. You need to address those issues, to be sure, yet how you do so is of great importance. If, on the one hand, you focus too much on the problem, it will increase your anxiety, worry, and fear to the point that you are overwhelmed by it and lose all hope. You will see society spiraling out of control, plus your own life and that of your loved ones in grave danger. But if, on the other hand, you switch your focus to Christ, to the victory you have in Him and that you can do all things through Him (Phil. 4:13), the problem itself will seem much smaller and your own duty will appear much clearer. Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, you will gain a greater confidence in the Lord for seeing you through to the end of every trial and discover that He makes you ready, willing, and able to resist the assaults of the devil. ①

Rev. Tom Aicken is a pastor emeritus and member of the Free Reformed Church of Langley, BC.



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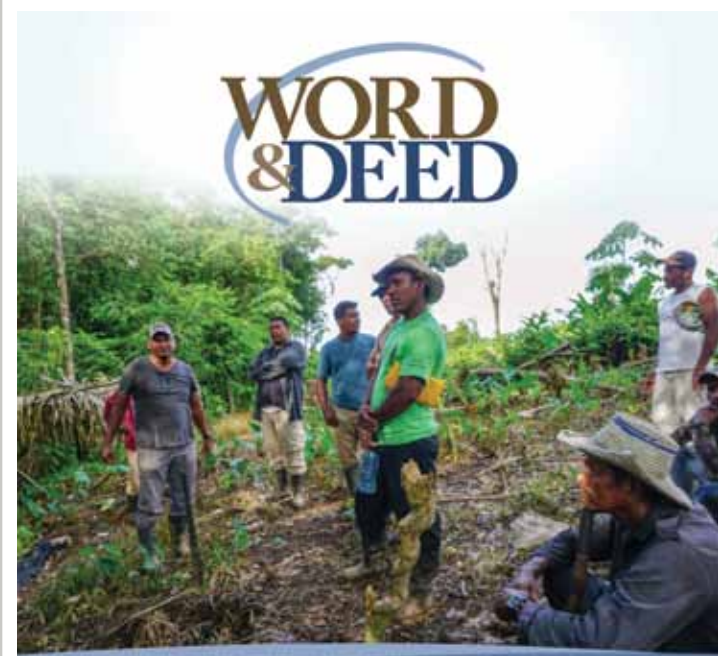
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Colossians 3:17

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SPIRITUAL- MINDEDNESS (2)

Amid all the worldly din that surrounds us and the proneness within us to seek the things below, spiritual-mindedness shines as a great duty and a great grace to exercise. Last time, we saw that spiritual-mindedness involves a mind drawn to think of and delight in spiritual things. Now, continuing to draw from John Owen's book entitled Spiritual-mindedness, we will pass on further guidance.

What fills the Spiritual Mind

The Glories of Heaven

Owen's first focus is on the glories of heaven. We might have expected him to say our first focus is to be God or Christ. But his point is that the spiritual mind is a heavenly mind, focused on the things above. The spiritual mind is the mind of one who is born from above, has his citizenship above, and thus is drawn above. He stresses that the spiritual mind does not just think of a self-defined "better place," but the place revealed in Scripture as the place without sin. A mind sensitive to sin longs to be delivered from it. "What breaks the hearts of those who are truly spiritually minded and makes them go mourning all day long is that there is something in them which God hates." It knows the preciousness of God's love in Christ and longs to give all love to Him in return!

If we have a spiritual mind, we are drawn to "the glory of the infinite wisdom, grace, love, kindness and power of God in Christ.... the eternal counsels of God's will and how they are accomplished to the eternal salvation of the church, in and by Christ."

Jesus Christ

The spiritual mind is also filled with Jesus Christ. Owen's section on Christ is briefer because he had written other books about Christ and communion with Him. He begins this section by saying, "Christ should be most in our thoughts because he is the life and centre of all the glory of heaven." He then asks: how can we think to enjoy Christ forever if do not bother thinking of Him here? He probes our hearts with the observation: "it is no wonder that we have such little experience of the power of this holy fellowship with Christ when we spend so little time thinking of him." Consider then what Christ has done in His incarnation, perfect life, suffering, resurrection, ascension, and session at God's right hand. Be guided by the Word to the true Christ and not "invent a false Christ." Being filled with Christ is such a blessing as the way to receive His grace and have all His graces stirred up in fellowship with Him.

The Only True God

In his third focus, he becomes more fundamental. The spiritual mind is filled with a sense of God as the God who exists, is powerful, and is all-knowing. "All spiritual thoughts come from God and return to God. He is the centre and circumference from which they begin, meet, and end (Rom 11:36) When our thoughts do not directly, or by logical inference, end in God, they are not spiritual" (1Peter 1:21). Concerning the carnal man, "God is not in all his thoughts" (Ps. 10:4). But the spiritual man has been made alive to God as the "infinite centre of all perfections." As a result, "that God is what he is, is their highest joy." This joy is combined with "godly fear and reverence." This wonderful combination can only be present in a spiritual mind which lives in the sense of the reality that God is. Owen observes, "Many have no real faith in the existence of God. If they did, it would make quite a difference to their daily lives." They lack a "personal experience of the existence of God." However, amid all the desert sands of practical and theoretical atheism, only the "frequent retreat into thoughts of God's existence" will give "peace or refreshment." Amid Satan's blasphemous suggestions about God, "when the soul bows down in worship before God's infinite greatness and glory, finding itself to be nothing and God to be all, then it will find rest and peace in infinity."

The spiritual mind also lives with a sense of God's omniscience, or all-knowingness. "We cannot take one step in our walk with God unless we remember that always and, in all places, he is present with us." In temptation, this "will do more to cool lustful desires than anything else." Among others or alone, in times of prosperity or great danger, the psalmist confessed, "I have set the Lord always before me" (Ps. 16).

This God is the God of almighty power. As God instructed Abraham, "I am God almighty, walk before me and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). The spiritual mind compares every need and danger to God's power and joins every promise of God with His power to perform it.

In summary, "God requires our hearts, and there is no other way we can give him our hearts than by our love and by thinking about him with joy and delight."

The Blessedness of a Spiritual Mind

Romans 8:6 confesses that "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." What a blessing comes with spiritual mindedness.

First, the spiritual mind sees the light of God's glory shining upon all things and views all of life in the light of who God is. Therefore, he thinks "about what God is saying to him in the daily circumstances of life, especially in times of great calamities and disasters." When you recognize God's hand in all that occurs, all those happenings draw you to God for an eye to recognize what He shows of Himself in them and a heart to yield to Him in them. Especially in affliction, this is such a blessing, for "those who by faith have seen the uncreated glories of heavenly things, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, will find strength and comfort in times of trouble" (2 Cor. 4:16-18; Rom. 8:18).

In temptation, he exhorts to think of God. The carnal mind only sees the attractive bait, but the spiritual mind sees the deadly, God-dishonoring hook, because it looks to God in Christ. "Only Christ can give us victory over our temptations and keep us from falling into sin. So, our great duty in times of temptation is to continually think of the love, care, compassion and kindness of Christ, with his ability to help, strengthen and save those who believe, and that in such a way as will strengthen their faith and trust in him."

Second, this mind experiences more of God's grace. Spiritual-mindedness strengthens faith. "Meditation of heavenly things will greatly increase and strengthen faith.... heavenly things will become more and more real to us." "The more we discern the glory and the excellence of heavenly things and what rest and happiness they bring us, the more will grace within us hunger and

In summary, "God requires our hearts, and there is no other way we can give him our hearts than by our love and by thinking about him with joy and delight."

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thirst after these things and the more will faith be established in embracing them.” Faith feeds on heavenly things by meditation.

Hope is also enlivened. He gives this example: if you set sail for a far country where an inheritance awaited you, but only had a vague idea about it, you would be easily be distracted by enticements and discouraged when storms came. Similarly, vague spiritual hopes are powerless, but a true view of the inheritance set before you stirs up perseverance-inducing hope.

Spiritual mindedness also draws from love of the world and stirs up love to God. Many justify themselves in worldly pursuits and excuse their failures in spiritual duties and opportunities. Others force themselves to do religious duties, but their hearts remain worldly. “Worldliness is a mortal disease and will not be thoroughly cured except by spiritual-mindedness,” which stirs up a love to the One who fills your mind in a way that mortifies other loves.

Holiness is also promoted by spiritual-mindedness. When a seal is pressed on wax, it leaves an impression. So “when spiritual things are impressed on our hearts and embraced by our hearts, they leave the impression of themselves on our hearts, transforming our hearts into their image.” Thus, “the heart which has been led by faith to embrace spiritual and heavenly things is gradually transformed into their image and likeness.”

Hindrances to Spiritual-mindedness

Hearing of spiritual-mindedness, we can easily excuse our lack by our busyness. But did God give us a mind to simply focus on the things of the earth? What is the real problem? Owen writes: “I would never discourage any from working hard in their lawful callings. But with many, providing for one’s family is only an excuse to hide a shameful love for the things of the world.” He then adds: “Spiritual thoughts will do no more to hinder a person from doing his job well than will foolish, worldly, lustful thoughts – and all sorts of men find plenty of time to indulge these while working!”

Owen says God created earth good, but now it is “Satan’s bait to tempt men from God.” The deceitfulness of this bait lies in the lawfulness of many things in themselves and the temptation to let them grip our mind and heart, rob us of blessing, and keep us from the purpose of our existence. Distraction is one of the greatest plagues furthered by all our technology. How we must remember that “Spiritual-mindedness cannot flourish and grow if the heart is immersed in the evil swamps of worldliness.”

Sin also opposes spiritual-mindedness. If we engage in known sin, we deaden our hearts for any thoughts of God. Who living in sin wants to think of God being everywhere and almighty? Who can feed on sin and have his mind drawn with delight to the thought of God? Thinking “it is only one sin and only a little sin,”

and yet holding onto it is enough to keep from or harm a spiritual mind. Owen puts it strongly: “A man who deliberately lives in any known sin is a liar if he says that he loves God.”

The worst problem is the corruption of our carnal heart that does not flow out to God in delight and reverence. Have we come to trace our problem through our excuses to this root? What then is the remedy for this problem?

Owen writes: “I would never discourage any from working hard in their lawful callings. But with many, providing for one’s family is only an excuse to hide a shameful love for the things of the world.”

The Renewal of Our Minds

Owen gives guidance to those who recognize the need and value of spiritual-mindedness, but find it so lacking within themselves.

“Start by thinking how weak and foolish your mind is not to be able to meditate on spiritual and heavenly things. This ought to greatly humble you.” Owen is very honest: “Say to yourself, ‘I began to think of God, of his love and grace in Christ Jesus and of my duty to love him. But after a few minutes, I found my thoughts wandering to the ends of the earth. Instead of thinking of God, I began to think of

useless, earthly things, and, O, how difficult it was to drag my thoughts back to God. ‘O wretched man that I am!’ What a cursed enemy I find in me. I am ashamed of myself”

Second, “consider next your own inability to stir up your mind to think rightly and steadily of heavenly and spiritual things.” Often, we think we can do what God requires when we want to and therefore think we can postpone doing so. But the reality is that “as the streams of a mighty river run into the ocean, so the thoughts of the natural man run through self into hell. To build a dam to try and stop this mighty river is useless.” We need evil thoughts cured in their fountain, like the evil fountain was cured when Elisha threw salt into it. Regenerating grace redirects our thoughts and gives new aims, goals, and focus. Confess the carnality of your heart before God and your dependence on such grace.

I might add to Owen’s list of directions that there is only one place to go with a carnal mind: the Christ who bore the curse that the carnal mind deserves, even while His mind was filled with the Holy Spirit and devoted to God. He died the just for the unjust. He shed His blood to cleanse the carnal in His blood, cover them in His righteousness, renew them with His Spirit, and thus make them spiritually minded.

Owen’s next direction is to set aside time for holy duties, such as prayer, reading, and meditation. “Choose a time which is free from all worldly concerns,” he advises. Do not just leave the sleepy remnants of day for Him. “Take time to prepare your mind for spiritual thoughts.” Do not come to meditate on heavenly things only out of a sense of duty, but “cry to God for help” to do so aright. Practically speaking, “It is good and helpful to choose a specific subject to meditate on.” “Do not be discouraged when, after all your efforts, you find you accomplish little,”

but persevere in these holy duties as means by which God gives grace.

A direction mentioned repeatedly is to seek reminders of God throughout the day. “The soul united to Christ and to spiritual things should be so set on them that the mind is always filled with spiritual thoughts and meditations.” “To think of Christ as we should, we must pray that the Holy Spirit may abide with us to remind us of Christ, for this is what he came to do. A portion of Scripture where he is set forth, either in his person, office, or grace, will also help us.”

The great encouragement is that God gives grace. “The reality of heavenly things will be proved to our hearts when they suddenly come to mind at times when they are most needed, and when our hearts are filled with love for them and look for every opportunity to fully enjoy them.”

The day before his death, Owen wrote to a friend, “I am going to Him whom my soul has loved, or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love—which is the whole ground of my consolation.”

The day he died (August 24, 1683), William Payne, a Puritan minister, arrived to tell Owen that the first sheets of *Meditations on the Glory of Christ* had been printed. With uplifted eyes and hands, Owen replied, “I am glad to hear it; but, oh brother Payne, the long wished for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing, in this world.”

“Life and Peace”

The Triune God is the God of life and thus a spiritual mind focused upon Him is “life.” This life is “a cheerful, joyful life, a life worth living.” “Spiritual things are lovely and of great value because they flow from the infinite fountain of Divine goodness and so they alone can fully and eternally satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts.”

This life brings peace with it. This peace is a “a gracious peacefulness and calmness of the mind in all difficulties, temptations, troubles, and all other things that are apt to fill us with fears, depressions, and anxieties.”

This life and peace come by knowing Romans 5:1: “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “This is the first and only foundation of all our peace and joy,” Owen says.

“Spiritual-mindedness fixes our thoughts and desires on the grace and love of God and enables us to treasure up in our hearts every hint and pledge of his love to us, and so our hearts are continually filled with love and gratitude to him for his mercies.”

In a hectic, fearful, miserable world chasing so many things, let us remember: “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

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PILGRIMS AND PURITANS IN AMERICA (13)

ROGER WILLIAMS AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE - I

Our knowledge of New England history would be incomplete if we only knew something about its leading theologians, such as John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, and Thomas Shepard, and its first governor, John Winthrop, who played a key role in the development of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. We also need to pay attention to two individuals who posed serious challenges to the New England community: Ann Hutchinson and Roger Williams. We have already mentioned Ann Hutchinson in connection with the Antinomian Controversy, but we will now turn to Roger Williams, a man who, according to many historians, was one of the most important personalities of America. Although he was well-known to his contemporaries, he is almost forgotten and, if remembered, often misunderstood today. Many think he was a rebellious heretic or champion of modern liberties, while, in reality, he was a devout Christian with deep Puritan convictions. Conservative Christians are puzzled about his views of church and civil government, while many scholars consider Williams the father of the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States, which concerns the separation of church and state.

Historical Context

Williams was likely born in 1603 in London, England. That same year King James of Scotland ascended the throne of England as successor to Elizabeth I. She was a daughter of Henry VIII, who had severed the Church of England from Rome to secure his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Since Elizabeth had no children, the legal heir to the throne was James, the son of Mary, Queen of Scots. James had been trained and groomed from his youth by his Presbyterian mentors to become king of Scotland. So, when he became king of England, the Puritans in England had high hopes that their new king would promote further reformation of the Church of England. But they were soon disappointed. From the start of his reign, James resisted Puritan aims to move the Anglican Church into a more Reformed direction.

By Williams' time, the Reformed faith had grown in many parts of Europe. While Reformation churches were united in the essentials of Reformation theology, there were significant differences among them concerning the nature and use of the sacraments and the relationship between church and state. With the exception of Anabaptist churches, all sixteenth century Protestant denominations retained the Roman Catholic view of the close relationship between church and state. The church and the state were viewed as inseparable, the former exercising authority over the latter, and vice versa.

Church and State Relations in England

In England also, the prevailing view was that the church and state were closely related. This view dates back to the fourth century, when Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian and made Christianity the official religion of the state, himself becoming head of the Church.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church was the only church and tolerated no rivals. But, when several European countries broke with Rome during the sixteenth century, they established Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican churches, which became the new official churches in their region, and they also tolerated no rivals.

Under James I and Charles I, the Anglican establishment became increasingly hostile to the growing number of Puritans and especially separatists who broke from the Church of England. In the Civil War of the 1640s, many Puritans revolted, Oliver Cromwell became the leader, Charles I was executed, and Roman Catholics were oppressed. After Cromwell's death, Charles II was restored to the throne in 1659 and the roles were reversed, such that persecution of Puritans intensified.

Standard was for kings or queens to serve as heads of the state and of the church. Citizens were to submit to whoever was on the throne, regardless of their theological preferences. Anyone disagreeing with the ruling monarch could expect imprisonment or death.

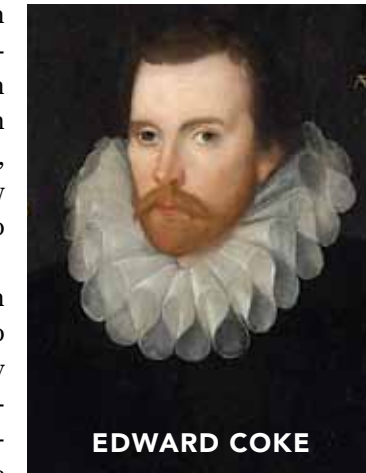
Church and State Relations in New England

The Puritans who established the Massachusetts Bay Colony brought with them similar views regarding the inseparable union of church and state. However, John Winthrop, their first governor, was well aware of the problems related to the union between church and government and was determined to avoid them if possible. He understood that church involvement in politics and government meddling in ecclesiastical matters were potentially divisive. The magistrates he appointed had to be godly men, but pastors were not to hold political office.

Yet, he did not want a clean break between church and state. Only church members could hold public office and the salaries of the pastors were paid by the government by assessing all residents, including those who were not church members. Everyone was required to attend both worship services on the Lord's Day. As in old England, those who failed to attend church for invalid reasons were fined.

The Divine Right of Kings Issue

This was the environment that awaited the arrival of Roger Williams in 1631. He had grown up in a culture of social unrest due to strained relations between church and state. These persistent tensions had reached a boiling point by William's time due to the issue of the so-called divine rights of kings. King James I, and even more so his successor, Charles I, claimed that



EDWARD COKE

they had been called by God to rule their subjects with absolute power. The common people had no rights at all, and even members of Parliament, who represented the people, increasingly saw their authority curtailed.

James was Protestant, but sought to match his son with a Spanish Catholic princess, filling Puritans with concern the Church of England was softening toward Catholicism. In politics, he injected the theory of the divine right of kings into English history, claiming that "the monarch is the law." *Rex est lex loquens* ("the king is the law speaking") was the motto. Supporting him in this innovation was his courtier, Sir Francis

Bacon, a famous philosopher, foremost scientist, and lawyer. He became Lord Chancellor of England, second in power only to the king.

Opposing King James was Sir Edward Coke, one of the greatest jurists in English history. Like all scholars who did business with government authorities, Coke took an apprentice or law clerk with him to take short-hand notes of important proceedings and visits with officials at the Star Chamber, Privy Council, Parliament, and even with the king himself. This young man, whom Coke loved as his son, was Roger Williams, who was only thirteen years old!¹

Coke's conflicts with King James and King Charles I were serious and acrimonious. In 1621, Coke was sent to the Tower of London. Six years after his release from prison, he wrote the *Petition of Right*, which imposed limits on royal power. He maneuvered the passage of his petition through both houses of Parliament, persuading even King Charles to accept it. This petition was later referred to as "the main foundation of English freedom ... the charter of every self-respecting man at any time in any land."

Only months later, in 1629, Charles broke his promises and dissolved Parliament, leaving the country in a state of chaos. By dissolving Parliament, Charles entered an eleven-year period of dictatorship, known as his "Personal Rule," during which his network of spies crushed political and religious dissent.²

Roger Williams' Early Life

Roger Williams was an eyewitness to the turmoil of that time, first as a youth accompanying Coke, then as a brilliant university student serving his mentor as a trusted messenger between parliamentary leaders. Supported financially by his benefactor, Sir Coke, young Roger attended Pembroke College of Cambridge University, a hotbed of Puritan politics and theology at the time. How long Williams remained at the university is unknown, but records show that his initial goal was to study law. This turned out to be a valuable



FRANCIS BACON

choice because his expertise in legislative work would serve him well in New England. Yet, his real desire was to become a preacher of the gospel. Upon graduation, he was ordained to the ministry in the Church of England, serving as chaplain to Sir William Masham in Essex. During those early years Williams became a close friend of many intellectuals including the great poet, John Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*. As Leighton H. James writes:

Already he had embraced the tenets of the persecuted Puritans, and so, with the intolerable oppression of [Archbishop] Laud, and the demand of absolute submission to the ceremonies of the Church of England, Williams was forced to seek amid the wilds of America that religious liberty for which his soul longed.... In the summer of 1629, Williams attended a Conference of Puritans at Sempringham. Among those present were John Cotton and Thomas Hooker, gathered with others to consider the possibility of emigration to America.³

Following this meeting, Williams decided to take the momentous step of leaving the country he dearly loved. He felt that it was under the tyranny of a wicked government, supported by a false church, and therefore would leave no room for him as a minister of the gospel.

Before setting foot in New England, he had already acquired a reputation for being a gifted theologian, powerful preacher and pastor, and above all, a man of winsome godliness. When he arrived in Boston in 1631, he was welcomed by Governor Winthrop and other dignitaries as someone of great potential value to the colony.


William's First Years in Massachusetts

Shortly after his arrival in New England, Williams received a call from the church in Boston whose pastor had travelled back to England to fetch his wife and children in order to bring them to the New World. Since this transaction would take at least a year, the congregation was in urgent need of temporary pulpit supply, so they asked Williams to help them. To their great surprise and consternation, however, Williams declined their invitation on the grounds that he could not have fellowship with them as long as they continued to have formal relations with the Church of England.

Williams was a separatist, like the Pilgrims who had first gone to New England. But he had joined the second group of emigrants who were non-separatist Puritans. They had problems with the Anglican Church doctrinally and morally, but they did not see her as false. Williams, however, was convinced that the Church of England was a corrupt church which admitted "whores and drunkards" and baptized infants as members of the church. For this and other reasons, Williams would not join the church in Boston. She had not denounced and separated herself completely from this apostate church.⁴

Shortly thereafter, the congregation at Salem, having heard what had happened in Boston, agreed with William's negative evaluation of the Church of England and asked him to be their pastor. But he turned them down too, because some of them, while still in England, had worshipped at a Church of England congregation. Williams' view was that they should have heeded the apostolic command: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17). However, shortly after his decision to decline Salem's request, Williams changed his mind and agreed to preach for them. The result was that the majority of the membership ended up fully agreeing with his radical separatist views.

This development troubled Winthrop and other leaders in the colony, especially when Williams' real position became known. Asked why he was so opposed to the Church of England, he divulged that he did not believe that there was still a pure and apostolic church in existence and that no government or any group of people, no matter how godly and sincere, could form such a church.

What did Williams mean by this statement which greatly upset Governor Winthrop? Winthrop's consternation became even greater when Williams brought additional charges against the New England community. We will examine these charges next time, the Lord willing. 

Endnotes

- 1 John M. Barry, "God, Government and Roger Williams' Big Idea," *Smithsonian Magazine* (Jan. 2012); <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/god-government-and-roger-williams-big-idea-6291280/>.
- 2 Barry, "God, Government and Roger Williams' Big Idea."
- 3 Leighton H. James, "Roger Williams -- The Earliest Legislator for a Full and Absolute Liberty of Conscience," in *The Puritan Experiment in the New World*, Westminster Conference 1978, 52.
- 4 Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma*, 158.

QUESTIONS WOMEN ASKED, AND STILL ASK TODAY

QUESTIONS WOMEN ASKED – Historical Issues, Timeless Answers by Simonetta Carr. Published by Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan USA, 2021. Softcover, 274 pages.

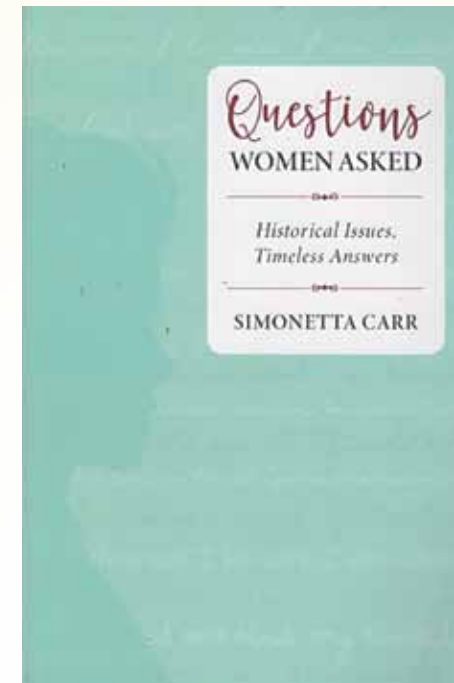
Sometimes women in churches like ours, that hold to the scriptural teaching of the female/male relationship, known as complementarianism, wonder if they can be useful in God's kingdom in addition to being mothers and homemakers. Simonetta Carr, an author who confesses to hold to the classic Reformed values and directives of Scripture, has done a great service to women (and the church) by delving into a variety of women in history, focusing on the important issues they faced, thereby challenging us today.

Carr thoroughly researched the lives of thirty-one women. She began with a prominent woman in the early church, Marcella, who lived ca. 325-410 and was a contemporary of the church father Athanasius, and ended with Jeanette Li (1899-1968), a Chinese Christian. To make us think through the lives of these women and how they could relate to women today, each chapter ends with "Food for Thought" questions and notes for "Further Research."

Marcella asked, "How Can I Understand Scripture Correctly?" A member of a prominent family in Rome, she became a widow after only seven months of marriage. The Christian culture of that period was marked by monks who established monasteries, some choosing a life of extreme hardship in the desert (e.g. the monk Anthony). Christians were no longer persecuted because of Constantine's edict that raised Christianity to a recognized religion. Instead of martyrdom, many sought to live a devoted life of chastity, and that was Marcella's choice too. Soon, she was joined by a community of women. Marcella decided to ask Jerome, an Early Church Father and theologian, to teach her to be able to read the Scriptures in the original languages and teach these to others. Although Jerome first shunned her, Marcella did not give up and later Jerome encouraged her, even though some church leaders frowned on this relationship. In time, Marcella was able to study the manuscripts of the Scriptures and gain a wealth of biblical knowledge so that both men and women in Rome sought her advice. When differences arose among church leaders about doctrinal issues, Marcella stepped in and brought the matter to the church leadership in Rome.

Marcella died during an invasion of the Goths who made inroads into the Roman empire. She is remembered as a woman with an insatiable love for God's Word who constantly asked, "How Can I Understand Scripture Correctly?" "At a time when Christian doctrine was still in its formative stage, she found an answer in her quest for proper understanding by studying the original Scriptures and consulting teachers she trusted — always comparing the two and drawing well-informed and careful conclusions" (p. 8).

Most of the women featured in this book are relatively unknown, but there are others who are more well-known, such as Monica, the mother of Augustine. They are women from all periods and drawn from many positions in life, each being confronted with important questions




in specific situations. Elizabeth Aske Bowes (ca. 1505-1572), friend of John Knox, had an all-consuming question: "How Can I Be Sure I Am Saved?" (chapter 8). Renee of France lived during the time of Calvin and experienced much difficulty in marriage, in her family, and in war, and asked "Should We Pray For God's Enemies?" (Chapter 9). Olympia Morata (1526-1555) asked, "What Can I Do If My Husband Neglects me?" (chapter 11). Kata Bethlen (1710-1759) asked, "Can I Marry a Nonbeliever?" (chapter 21). Phillis Wheatley (ca.1753-1784), sold to U.S. Christians as a very young black slave girl, asked, "How Can I Not Oppose Tyranny?" (chapter 25). Lydia Mackenzie Falconer Miller (1812-1876) asked, "Can True Science Disagree with the Bible?" (chapter 28).

This sampling indicates that women of all times and ages asked the same questions as women do today. These were by no means the only questions these women asked, but Simonetta Carr focusses in on some of the most

burning questions in the lives of these women. She skillfully brings these women to life. By placing them in their historical setting, she helps us understand why they asked these questions.

Simonetta Carr is a masterful story-teller and student of history. If you have read her *Christian Biographies for Young Readers* and other books she authored, including a book on the life of her son with schizophrenia, you will want to read this book as well. By writing about these prominent and lesser-known women, Carr does not intend to elevate women to an ordained position of church leadership, but shows that, without ordination, women did and can have important and useful positions in God's kingdom.

The book is interesting, informative, and inspiring. Read it for personal enrichment and reflection or study it in women's groups. By discovering women of the past who struggled with similar thoughts and questions as we have today, you will be challenged and enriched. 

This book may be purchased in Canada at Reformed Book Services in Brantford, Ontario, and at Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A.

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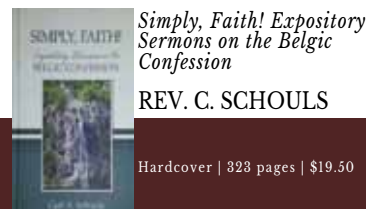
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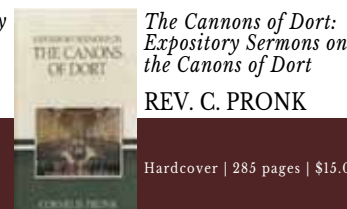
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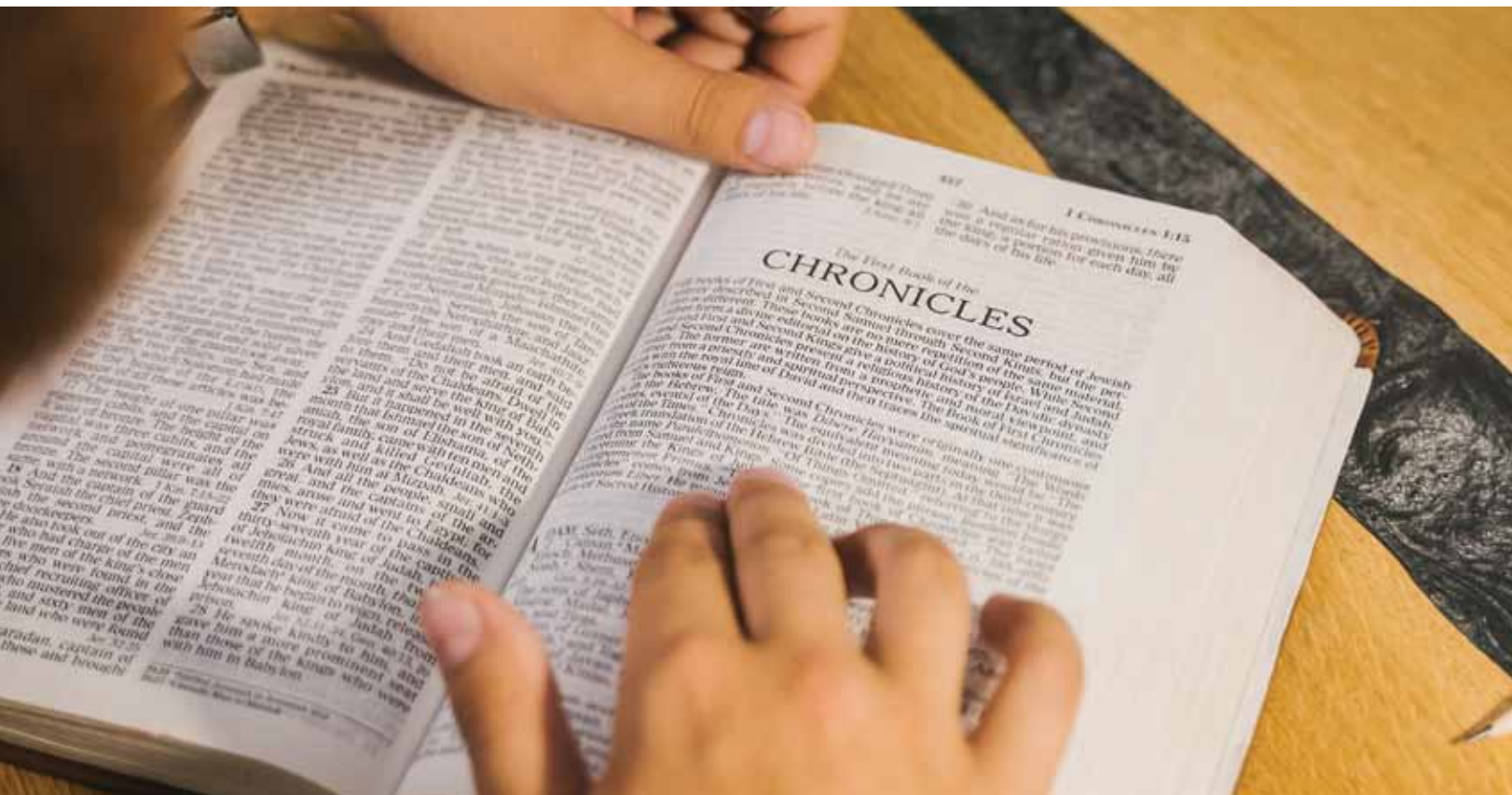
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THE STUDY OF THE WORD



There are two principal reasons among many which ought to provoke a diligent study of the Word of God. These are: the difficulty and the utility of the Scriptures.

Not all Difficulty

The Scriptures are difficult and hard but first, **not to all**, but to them which perish and to them which are natural and have not the Spirit: to them which have received the enlightening Spirit, it is otherwise. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined into their hearts and given them the light and the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, they are difficult but **not always**, for the Lord more and more scatters the darkness of the minds of His elect children by His Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, they are difficult but **not all**, for in the foundation of the doctrine of salvation and of faith and practice they are easy and plain. But some places indeed are astonishingly hard. There is milk for babes, that is easy; and meat for strong men, that is difficult. The ancient writers concerning this have spoken well: one said, “the Scriptures are like a mighty river, in which a

lamb may walk safely yet an elephant be drowned.” And another: “the writers of Holy Scripture are in some things as angels, descending to the capacity of the simplest; and in some things as angels, transcending the capacity of the most learned.” And again, “in the Holy Scriptures some things are open, and some things obscure: those open are for our nourishment, the latter for our exercise: the former stays our hunger, the latter our pride.” And indeed this variety adds to the excellency of the Scriptures as in the globe of the earth there is some land and some sea which makes the both more appreciated; and in the land there are some hills and some valleys which make the

both more delightful; and as the summer is so much more welcome after a hard and stormy winter, even so this mixture in the Word makes both the more pleasing and continues the sharpening of our desires to study: which if it were all alike would soon be dulled.

Yet with Difficulties – why?

These reasons may be given why the Lord would have some things in His Word be enclosed in clouds of obscurity, making, as it were, darkness their pavilion.

“We must take heed, that we feign not a meaning of our own, and thrust it upon the Word; lest we prove heretics. Therefore the right, true, and fit sense is to be sought out; which of one place can be but one. It must be, not according as we think; (for no Scripture is of private interpretation,) but according to the Scriptures, which are the only best expounders of themselves.”

First, that we might know and acknowledge the understanding of the Word to be the gift of God.

Secondly, to tame the pride and arrogance of our nature which would soon appear if all things were obvious and easy at first sight.

Thirdly, that we should not reject and make of light account the Word, for this is our corruption which does not esteem or appreciate offered kindness or grace.

Fourthly, that impure dogs and swine be kept from holy things.

Fifthly, that we should make of high account the ministry of the Word, ordained for the opening and interpreting of the same.

Sixthly, to stir us up to prayer, and to continue with diligence and care in the hearing and reading of it, as matters of great difficulty are not surmounted with ordinary effort.

Many because of the difficulty of the Divine Oracles give away the study of them like a sluggard or idle person who says, “A lion is in the way.” But as ambitious and noble spirits are not daunted or dismayed by the dangers of great enterprises, but rather are more inflamed with courage to tempt them, even so the difficulty of Holy Scripture should not dampen our efforts but rather it should all the more whet our diligence without which not only no excellent, but no ordinary comfortable measure of knowledge can be achieved. Is the Word difficult? Then it requires of thee so much the more industry in reading, hearing, conference, meditation, prayer, in which things if we did exercise ourselves in a diligent manner, we should soon become men of ripe age with these hidden mysteries.

The Profit of the Word

The second reason to excite our diligence is the utility and profit that comes by the Word. For among men, whose heart

is so hard that profit and gain cannot persuade him? But the Scriptures are profitable: by them we believe, by them we are converted and made wise, by them we are regenerated, by the preaching of them we receive the Holy Ghost. By them we are saved, therefore they are called the words of eternal life and of salvation.

The Word is compared to light to enlighten us; to rain, snow and dew to make us fruitful in good works to a sword to defend us. It is a key to direct us to Christ the treasury of all happiness.

It is a sincere milk to feed us and to make us grow; as flagons of wine and apples of paradise to comfort us; as salt to season, purge, cleanse and preserve us. It is preferred before honey for sweetness, before tried silver and gold for price an inestimable value.

What shall I say? The praise and excellency of the Scriptures exceeds all the praise and commendation that can be given unto them. If I had the tongue of angels I could not express it, but must be compelled to echo the apostle “O the depth of

the riches of the Wisdom of God and of His Word.”

Is there anything so profitable as this? O what a base slavish and foolish nature we have which runs and hunts after the feathers of the world, neglecting the true and certain treasures of the Word. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.” Yea, if we study in the Word, we have the angels as fellow-students, searching, enquiring, and desiring to behold the things that are revealed to us by the preaching of the gospel.

Elnathan Parr (1577-1622) was a minister of the Church of England in Palgrave, Suffolk. He was known as a “faithfull and painefull [i.e. diligent] preacher.” This extract is taken from his “Short and Plain Exhortation to the Study of the Word.”

“When you read, then, be reverent, and pray. Pray, for this is the way to obtain wisdom, and to obtain the Spirit. This Spirit leads unto the knowledge and practice of all truth and reveals unto us the hidden things of God. Use reverence also, for the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and the secret of the Lord is revealed to them who fear him.”

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RELATIONSHIPS (6):

AT FATHER'S FUNERAL

SCRIPTURE READING: GENESIS 35:27-29

How many marriages end in separation? The answer may surprise you, but it is 100%. 40% of marriages in the Netherlands end in a legal separation in the form of divorce. The rest of the marriages last, as is promised, “until death do us part.” Like all other relationships and bonds, the marriage bond is temporal. There is only one relationship that never ends. As Paul writes, nothing – not even death – can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:38-39)! How we need to keep that reality before us as we seek to maintain all human relationships. We also see the temporality of human bonds when we witness the end of a family bond that was established by Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac’s death brings about separation.

Burying the Father

Having one’s parental home fall away is a major event in anyone’s life. That is what happens in Genesis 35. Many years passed since Genesis 28. At that time, Jacob and Esau were 40 years old, and now they have both reached the age of 120 years, when their father Isaac dies at the age of 180 years. In the meantime, they have reconciled with each other (Gen. 33) and each formed their own extended family.

When Jacob returned from Haran to Canaan, Genesis 31:18 records that his intention was to be near Isaac. However, we do not read of this taking place until Genesis 35:27. We only know from that verse that Jacob did indeed meet his father, not for a little visit, but as an abiding home-coming. The location of their meeting is significant: in Mamre near Hebron. This is the place where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned as strangers in the land and where Abraham had been buried (Gen. 25:9).

What does this tell us about Jacob? Did he simply have a bond with his ancestors? The reference to them sojourning there as strangers shows that there is more taking place here. Jacob consciously includes himself in the row of spiritual resident aliens on earth with whom God had established his covenant. Jacob will sojourn in Canaan, but never be truly home there. This identity is seen in all his spiritual family members as they continue through the generations to the present day.

Unlike his brother Esau, who dwelt outside of the promised land in the mountainous area of Seir, Jacob went in the path of his father Isaac. Then came the moment of his father’s death. For Isaac, this was not just an end of his life here, but a new beginning. He went from being a sojourner in tents to a citizen of a city (Heb. 11:10). The funeral of someone who makes such an exchange is such a testimony to those who attend it.

The Battle-Ax Buried

God enabled Isaac to live to 180 years of age, yet, in another sense, he re-

mained a child: a child of Abraham and a child of God. He was not the most prominent patriarch. He also was not perfect (Gen. 25 and Gen. 27), but through God’s faithfulness he became and remained a stranger on earth as one saved by grace alone.

What about Isaac’s sons? They are both mentioned in verse 29. They are identical in age, but for the rest differ greatly, whether it be in appearance, character, or spiritual state. So much had happened between them that you would not dare imagine that they would now stand side by side by their father’s grave (cf. Gen. 27:41). But there they stood. The text emphasizes: “and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him” (Gen. 35:29). It is as if the author is noting how special that was. Together they paid their last respects to their father.

We realize from Genesis 33 that there was reconciliation between the two brothers, but that does not mean that they both stood together on one spiritual line. Esau remained the one who was content with the “much” that this world has to offer. God’s grace had taught Jacob that we can only be satisfied to have “everything,” namely, God’s blessing for this life and the life to come (Gen. 33:9,11).

What is nice to see is that the battle-ax had been buried, even though these two brothers did not have a spiritual bond. It is painful – and actually incomprehensible – that this would not be so in families that confess the same faith. Sometimes siblings are even members of the same church and yet persist in fighting each other. Those who fight always have excuses and lay the blame on the other. But can we maintain that stance over against God and our family members? No one has become less by becoming the least.

If it is well, reconciliation continues through the generations. However, like took place with Ishmael earlier (Gen. 25), so also here Esau is mentioned and then fades from view. The Scriptures continue with the line of the covenant on the way to the coming of Christ. Esau and his posterity fall outside this line. Was that because he was a reprobate? We could also say it was because he despised God and His promise. That was his own choice.

After Isaac’s funeral, Jacob and Esau never met again as far as we know from the rest of Genesis. This confirms what was already hinted at in Genesis 33 when they met each other on Jacob’s return from Haran. Someone says, “Esau was so friendly and cordial. Was this parting of the ways again not because of Jacob’s attitude?” In a certain sense it was, and that through

an approach that was typical of Jacob. He was not altogether forthright, but used some excuses. Yet, the deepest reason for this distance between them arose not from “Jacob,” but from “Israel.” In other words, this distance had a spiritual root. By grace, Jacob had become a spiritual man, even though he continued to feel that battle with the old man. That is a battle every child of God knows in the daily exercise of mortification of the old man and vivification of the new man. That process involves

taking distance from what is not of God and does not want to align with His covenant. As Hieronymus van Alphen wrote, “Go away, worldly din, I must go to heaven! Do not hinder me!”

That brings us back to the relationship with God. That relationship requires sanctification, which has two aspects, including the dying and burying of the old man. Does that involve breaking with all sorts of friendships? It can. Does that involve having no contact with unbelieving family members? You do not choose family members, you receive them. Family remains family, but faith can give a distance from certain family members. That distance should not make you loveless or cold and distant when they are in need. Yet, your bond is first with the Lord and then with your family.

Jacob maintained a certain distance from his brother, not just physically, but especially spiritually. They make different choices, speak a different language, and pursue different goals. In that way he confessed with Asaph: “it is good for me to draw near to God” (Psa. 73). Nothing and no one may come as a wedge in that relationship.

This bond with God can also stir up misunderstandings and loneliness in God’s child today. Jesus foretold that even family members may be against you (Matt. 10:36). But He also gave a rich promise: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).

Rev. A. van der Zwan serves the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk of Dordrecht-Centre in the Netherlands. This Bible Study was taken with permission from De Wekker (April 30, 2021), the bi-weekly periodical of our sister churches in the Netherlands. This is the last of the series.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 01 Do you think of what memories your life, funeral, grave, and pictures will leave behind? How can you leave behind a spiritual testimony in them?
- 02 Discuss: “our relationship towards others is a test of our relationship with God” (1 John 4:20). How do you apply that test in your dealings with others?
- 03 Where and how does Esau’s posterity appear in the Bible after Genesis? What light does that shed on Jacob’s distancing of himself from his brother’s family?
- 04 What lessons have you learned from these Bible studies about Isaac’s family for your own relationship to God and others?

NAPARC Conference 2021



Our church federation is a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). This is an association of several Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the United States and Canada which meets annually.

From November 9-11, 2021, four members of our federation, Elder Ed Laman and Pastor David VanBrugge, both from Brantford, Elder Bert DeJong from Vineland, and Pastor Gerald Procee were present at the annual meeting of NAPARC. The venue of this meeting changes every year. This year, the meeting was held at the Shiloh Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The basis of NAPARC is that all member churches underscore biblical inerrancy and agree with the "Six Forms of Unity": the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. The purpose of NAPARC is to facilitate cross-denominational conversation and co-operation. Practically, NAPARC functions as a platform upon which delegates from various Reformed and Presbyterian denominations within North America can meet and consult one another. The first NAPARC meeting was held in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania in the fall of 1975, and had the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP) as its founding members. In 1997, the membership of the Christian Reformed Church was suspended, largely due to its 1995 deci-

sion to open the offices of elder and minister of word and sacrament to women.

Since its inception, NAPARC has grown to include 13 Reformed and Presbyterian denominations:

- Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) with 32,000 members, established in 1782.
- Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) with 19,000 members, established in 1950.
- Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ) with 5 congregations, established in 1988.
- Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) with 5,000 members, established in the late 1940s.
- Heritage Reformed Churches (HRC) with 2,000 members, established in 1993.
- Korean-American Presbyterian Church (KAPC) with 72,000 members, established in 1978.
- Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KOSIN) (KPCA) with 130 congregations, established in 1985.
- Orthodox Presbyterian Churches (OPC) with 32,000 members, established in 1936.
- Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) with 383,000 members, established in 1973.
- Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC) with 7 congregations, established in 1965.
- Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) with 3,500 members, established in 1746.
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), established in 1798.

REV. G.R. PROCEE



- United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), established in 1995.

The Protestant Reformed Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church currently send observers.

The 2021 conference was opened by Dr. L. Anthony Curto, professor of Missions and Apologetics at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He read Psalm 122 and led in prayer.

The representatives of each denomination were in turn given the floor to explain how matters within their denomination were faring. Afterwards, the other delegates had opportunity to ask questions and one would be assigned to offer prayer for this particular denomination. It was good to pray together, for above all we need the blessing of God's Holy Spirit upon our denominations. Many churches shared struggles they had. Some were involved with difficult denominational discipline cases. Several denominations are focused on church planting in North America and performing mission work in foreign countries. Overall, a dire need was expressed for more laborers in God's Kingdom, especially more missionaries to bring the gospel to other nations.

On the first evening, Pastor Matt Holst of Shiloh OPC preached a sermon on Psalm 93. This psalm explains that the Lord reigns. This unshakeable truth must be established in our hearts if we are to stand firm in the faith. He noted:

- 1) The Lord, not the king, reigns.
- 2) That reign had no beginning and will have no end, meaning it has and ever will be present through all that occurs.
- 3) All opposition to that reign is futile. Verses 3-4 use visual imagery of floods and thunders to display the continual vehement and insidious opposition, but God is mightier than all opposition, even when His power is not always visible.
- 4) The proper response to the Lord's reign is one of trust and worship, and living in holiness with faith and worship.

The second evening Dr. Jonathan Master, the new president of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, delivered an edifying message on aspects of public prayer, using the book *Thoughts on Public Prayer* by Samuel Miller. He addressed the frequent faults of public prayer, as well as the means to cultivate public prayer.

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Speech begins at 8:00PM

Refreshments provided
Freewill offering to cover the cost of the evening

Any Questions you can email
walkbyfaith.speakerseries@gmail.com



CALL TO THE MINISTRY

Do you feel the Lord is calling you to the ministry in the Free Reformed Churches of North America? If you sense He is, the Free Reformed Theological Education Committee wishes to receive your application by March 1, 2022. Please contact the secretary of the committee for the most recent edition of the Handbook for Theological Education, which contains the application prerequisites and requirements.

Rev. L. J. Bilkes, Secretary
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Cell: 289-683-4065 • E: ljbilkes@frcna.org

**BUT THEY THAT WAIT UPON
THE LORD SHALL RENEW
THEIR STRENGTH; THEY SHALL
MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS
EAGLES; THEY SHALL RUN,
AND NOT BE WEARY;
AND THEY SHALL WALK,
AND NOT FAINT.**

ISAIAH 40:31

NAPARC CONFERENCE ... *Continued*

One interesting note was a presentation delivered by the brothers Mr. James and Dr. Joel Beeke as well as Dr. Adriaan Neele on a new Reformed College to be formed in Grand Rapids. Increasingly, the need is felt among Reformed believers in North America for a liberal arts college, based on a Reformed and Biblical worldview. To implement that, a multi-denominational board has been established consisting of members from various NAPARC churches. This new college will adhere to the inerrancy and veracity of Scripture, subscribe to the Reformed confessions, and reflect the Biblical revelation of creation, marriage, male and female distinction, sin and grace, and male office-bearers. The academic instruction will offer an antidote against critical theories, while upholding that cultural transformation takes place through the grace of God working in individual hearts. Its focus will be upon rigorous academic and spiritual formation.

Upon receiving this introduction, the NAPARC delegates unanimously expressed their support for this initiative.

Overall, we are grateful that we, as a small federation, are able to be part of this organization. Let our prayer be that the Lord, in His grace, will cause the Reformed truths to be widely proclaimed and adhered to in North America. ①

Rev. G. R. Procee is an pastor emeritus serving as a teaching elder in the Free Reformed Church of Dundas.



Free Reformed Historical Centre

"What do I do with these things?"

Contact the Free Reformed Historical Centre

The Free Reformed Historical Centre is to gather and preserve materials relating to the Dutch roots and North American establishment, development, and ongoing life of our churches.

Specific materials are classified as unrestricted access (available to all), restricted access (available only to approved persons), and/or time-specified access (available after a specified future date).

The Historical Centre is looking for:

- Printed materials from the churches.
- Audio recordings of worship services and speeches.
- Personal materials (letters, diaries, sermon notes, essays, etc).
- Publications from our 'mother' churches.
- Pictures of people and events.
- Interviews with 'founding' members.

If you or your (grand)parents have materials that may be of interest to the centre, please contact:

Rev. D. Kranendonk (secretary)

Cell: 616-290-4125 • Email: kranendonk@frcna.org