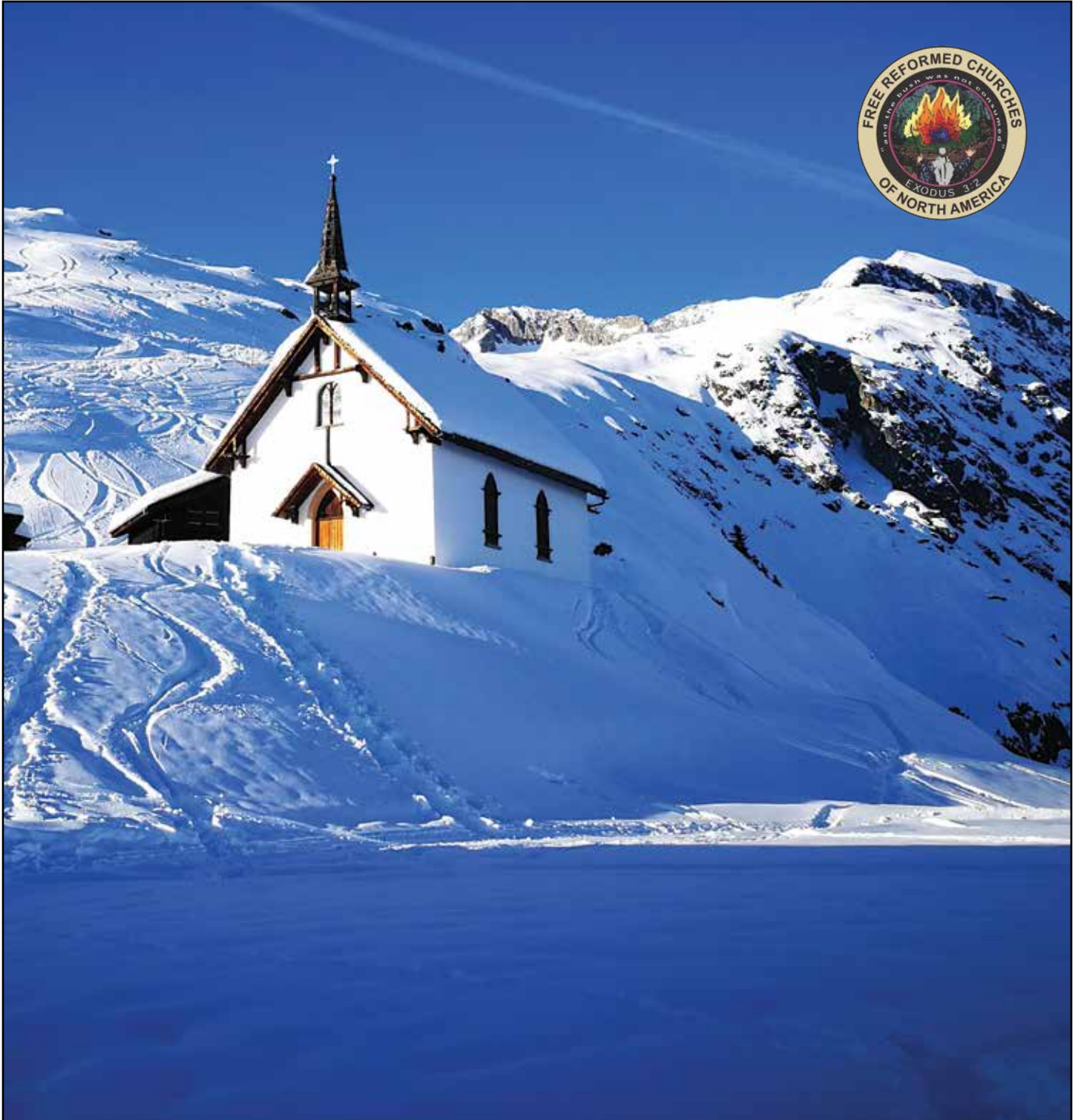


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GOD'S PILGRIMS

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

Hebrews 11:13-16

We have begun the journey through another year. When we realize that our journey is quickly leading us to the throne of God, we need not wonder how we must travel through this year: certainly not on the broad road to destruction, but on that narrow way to life. What travelling on the narrow way involves is captured by John Bunyan in his famous work, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Those on the narrow way were born in the city of destruction, but have been awakened to flee God's wrath, led to see God's salvation in Jesus Christ, and thus are pilgrims travelling to the celestial city. Bunyan did not invent the term “pilgrim.” We find the pilgrim life of faith in Hebrews 11:13-16, among many other passages.

The Pilgrim's Faith

Our text refers to the patriarchs and Abraham in particular. At one time, he was settled in a city he knew well: Ur of the Chaldees. But God called him out of his familiar surroundings and brought him to Canaan. Much was different there: the landscape, language, and customs. There he owned no land except a burial plot. He was a sojourner in a strange land.

Some of us can identify with that because we have immigrated from one country to another, whether recently or decades ago. Yet, those who experience the deepest kinship with Abraham do so because they have what was in Abraham's heart: faith. Hebrews 11 is about faith. Verse 13 shows that faith is focused on God's promises. Notice, “these all died in faith.” They died trusting God would still fulfil His promises because His promises concerned what He would do not just during their lives but also after their death. That is clear from the further expression: “not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.” They did not yet enjoy the promised realities which were still “afar off,” and therefore lived and died in faith.

Abraham did not enjoy the fulfilment of God's promises of receiving all the land as his possession, or that "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 17:8; 22:18). Christ and His Spirit would not come for many centuries. But if those were the only promises, then only the Old Testament saints would need to die in faith and not New Testament believers, because Christ has now come.

Yet, Abraham saw an even greater fulfilment of God's promises. Hebrews 11:9-10 says the patriarchs were "heirs of the promise" who would receive an inheritance in "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." That city is a heavenly city. That is why verse 14 records that they were seeking a better, heavenly homeland. There all God's promises would be fulfilled! There God would be all in all as the one dwelling amid His people fully redeemed from sin and its consequences in order to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So God's promise is about the consummation of salvation through Christ. As 1 John 2:25 declares, "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

The spiritual pilgrim journeys to the fulfilment of God's gracious promise of eternal life! That is why she journeys by faith, which involves "seeing," "being persuaded of," and "embracing" the promise (v.13).

First, faith sees the promise afar off. They knew and saw by faith what God promised. The Lord Jesus said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). With the Spirit-enlightened eye of faith, believers behold the promises of eternal life.

Second, seeing them, they can't but be "persuaded of them." There can be no neutral spiritual spectators of God's promises. Seen promises come with a persuading power. Those who truly see the Promised One are persuaded that He is trustworthy. This action is primarily that of the will, which is turned by the promise to the promise.

Third, by faith, they "embraced them." Literally, they "greeted" them. Today, we may greet with a nod, but in Bible times people were much more affectionate. Though the patriarchs saw the promises afar off, they greeted them affectionately. Faith brings them close enough to embrace and cherish in the heart.

God is showing us faith involves seeing, being persuaded of, and embracing the promises. Faith thus involves our whole heart. Does that description of faith resonate with you? That God's promises are not just some words for you, but your eyes have been opened to see their greatness, your heart has been persuaded to trust the God who promises grace in Christ, and you have embraced His precious promises in Christ Jesus? Can you confess with the Belgic Confession: "the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more besides him" (Art. 22)? That faith makes a sinner a pilgrim and keeps him a pilgrim.

The Pilgrim's Desire

True faith cannot but give desire for what God has promised in Christ for this life and eternally. The smallest beginning of the fulfilment of God's promises stirs up desire for the complete fulfilment. The greatest enjoyments of what God promises only make a pilgrim realize there is so much more in store.

Verses 14 and 16 use intense words. First, they "seek" or long, wish, and even crave that country, just as a wearied desert traveler craves his destination. Second, they "desire a better country." The idea here is of stretching out to touch or grasp something. The pilgrim's heart stretches to reach the fulfilment of all God's promises. Oh, let that day come!

Has faith stirred this desire within you? Has God has convinced you of the emptiness of all apart from Christ, persuaded you of the preciousness of Christ, and inclined your heart to stretch toward eternal life in Christ? Then you cannot but desire to be a pilgrim. That desire makes a pilgrim life so blessed.

God is showing us faith involves seeing, being persuaded of, and embracing the promises. Faith thus involves our whole heart. Does that description of faith resonate with you?

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Ask a pilgrim walking by faith and filled with desire for heaven: Why do you live as you do? He will say: it is no sacrifice to exchange hurtful sins for joy in God, smaller earthly pleasures for greater spiritual ones! The pilgrim life is no morbid asceticism or fearful legalism, but is rooted in grace.

If you lack that faith and desire, do not simply put on pilgrim clothes and try to imitate them. Confess to God what is lacking in your heart and plead Him to so bring home His Word that you would see the things not seen, embrace Christ, become a citizen of the heavenly country, and so confess you are a pilgrim here below.

If at bottom you desire such a life and yet find much lacking, begin with the heart. Let your focus be on the *object of faith* in whom all the promises are yea and amen, Jesus Christ! Plead to again so see God's free and gracious promised salvation in Christ, delight in that free grace, and desire for its complete fulfillment. That motivates and enables to walk as a pilgrim.

The Pilgrim's Walk

These patriarchs confessed they were "strangers and pilgrims." From the Greek word for stranger (*xenos*), we get our word *xenophobia*, meaning fear of foreigners. Foreigners are not of our nationality and culture. They stick out as different. Often foreigners eventually assimilate to the country in which they live. But these patriarchs were not just foreigners but also "pilgrims"—ones only sojourning in a place that never became their home because their home was not simply Ur but heaven. As Jonathan Edwards preached to the native Americans in Stockbridge, "This life ought so to be spent by us as to be only a journey towards heaven."

What does that pilgrim walk involve? First, they "confessed" they were of another citizenship from those around them. We hear the psalmists confess that to God: "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were" (Ps. 39:12). They also confessed that to *others*. When his wife Sarah died and Abraham wanted to buy a burial plot, he confessed to the heathen sons of Heth: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you" (Gen 23:4). When Jacob met Pharaoh he confessed: "the days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Gen. 47:9).

If God has made you a citizen of a far better country, you needn't be ashamed to humbly confess that to others. We are not called to be secret fugitives, but open pilgrims, confessing who we are by grace, where we are going, and the only way that leads there. The best way to declare plainly that you seek another country is not just by saying: "I am going to heaven." Too many say that and yet live as if they want to live here forever like the world. The best confession is the testimony of the pilgrim *life*. This life seeks to heed several calls.

First, hold all with an open hand. A pilgrim need not sell everything and become a monk. Abraham was "very rich in cattle,

in silver, and in gold" (Gen. 13:2). But a pilgrim is to receive what God is pleased to give as travel money, using it to be sustained and serve others, and being willing to part with it when God takes it. Abraham willingly let Lot take the lush land, paid tithes to Melchizedek, and did not cleave to his goods. A man travelling to his coronation may enjoy scenes on his journey and a good bed to rest in, but his focus is on his destination. A pilgrim begins to understand Paul's exhortation that "the time is short" and therefore we are to be "they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it." (1 Cor. 7:30-31).

Second, live by the standards of heaven, not of the world. Foreigners show they are different by living according to different customs or standards. The issue is not being different for the sake of being different, but being conformed to the standards of the heavenly King rather than to the mold of the world. Abraham had dealings with people around him, but did not become part of them. In His High Priestly prayer, Jesus describes all believers this way: "These are in the world ... [but] they are not of the world." They are like Christian and Faithful in Vanity Fair. Why are we easily ashamed to stand out and refuse to go along

with the world's customs, priorities, mindsets, entertainments, appearance, and practices? The world has reason for shame for living to the dishonor of their Maker. Romans 12:2 calls: "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Third, live with spiritual priorities. Desire to receive more heavenly graces and to learn more of heavenly King. A pilgrim appreciates what furthers her along her journey and ignores what hinders and distracts her. Jonathan Edwards counsels: "When a man is on a journey, all the steps he takes are subordinate to the aim of getting to his journey's end.... whatever business we are setting about, whatever plan we are engaging in, we should inquire with ourselves, whether this business or undertaking will forward us in our way to heaven? And if not, we should quit our design." The pilgrim asks: Does this help on the journey? Does it make me prize what God has promised? Does it stir spiritual desire? Does it make me more sensitive to sin?

Knowing ourselves to be pilgrims will make us dependent on divine helps for the journey. We will then seek supplies from the heavenly city of eye-salve to see the things not seen, spiritual food to strengthen to travel God's way, supplies of refreshing water to enliven the soul, supplies of armor to stand amid dangers, supplies of wisdom to discern the way. A pilgrim cannot travel on his own resources, but only with grace from above. A pilgrim makes the means of grace a priority, seeking the things above where Christ is.

We are all called to live this way, regardless of our spiritual state. God calls us away from paths of sin and destruction to the narrow path to life! If you say you have been saved, does it show

If you lack that faith and desire, do not simply put on pilgrim clothes and try to imitate them.

in a pilgrim walk? Have you become like one in a country full of cruelty who seeks to help others and at the same time is so thankful he belongs to a better country and seeks to show that? Have you become like a businessman in a strange country, who does his business, enjoys a taste of the country, but is no tourist wanting to stay as long as possible. His heart is at home.

Citizens of the heavenly country are pilgrims here below who will not remain pilgrims but will soon enjoy the full bliss of citizenship. When these pilgrims “died in faith,” they entered the city with foundations. What a reality! Sometimes the question can rise amid the struggles with sin here below: shall I arrive one day in that city? There is one source of hope.

The Pilgrim’s God

The treatment of pilgrimage is between two pillars: the promises of God in verse 13 and the God of promises in verse 16. This passage begins and ends with God’s grace.

Verse 16 is amazing: “God is not ashamed to be called their God.” Sometimes people are ashamed of their family members, but God is not ashamed to be called the God of His pilgrims. That is because He is their God. He is not their God because they are good pilgrims; they are pilgrims because He is their gracious God. When pilgrims and others confess that, God is not ashamed of that confession.

We are ashamed when we fail to meet expectations and let people down. But God is never ashamed in that sense because He is faithful. Unbelievers may say: “what poor people those pilgrims are! What was the use of them trusting in their God?” But God is not ashamed because He has proven Himself to be the God of the patriarchs and all pilgrims who have entered glory. On the final day, He will show to all the world that He is the God of His pilgrim people. As pilgrims, we may be ashamed of our sin and can think: “how can I call God my God? God would be ashamed to have me as His own.” But God is not ashamed to be called the God of His needy people.

The evidence of that grace is that “he hath prepared for them a city” (v.16b). This is the “kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world” in God’s decree (Mat 25:34). This city is further prepared by the Saviour who secured entrance into it through His redemptive work and ascended “to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-3). Pilgrims, if that place is prepared for you by Christ, will He let you perish on the journey to it and let your place be empty? He went the worst of journeys through not just a hostile world, but the very agonies of hell and is now in that city. He will not rest until He has made all His chosen ones to be pilgrims and gathered all His pilgrims into this city.

That anticipation makes the pilgrim life so blessed. As the Reformed churches have confessed for over 450 years, “Therefore we expect that great day with a most ardent desire to the end that we may fully enjoy the promises of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN” (Belgic Confession, Article 37). To live out of that confession is to be a pilgrim. ①

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“Let the people praise Thee, O God; let ALL
the people praise Thee” Psalm 67:5



ABUSE IN THE CHURCH (3): GOD AND ABUSE

In this brief series, we first considered the soul of abuse, namely, how abusive actions proceed from the mind and heart of an abuser, as well as how abuse has a deep and often abiding impact of trauma in those abused, affecting them at deep emotional, spiritual, and mental levels. Secondly, we looked at how the church sadly can make things worse for those who have been abused and also suggested ways in which the church can become a safe place for those who have suffered abuse. Much more could be said about this important topic; however, we conclude with what the Scripture reveals about how God looks at abuse.

God Sees Abuse

Abusers like to keep abuse hidden, but nothing is hid from God. In Psalm 10, the Psalmist takes comfort and hope from the fact that “Thou hast seen it” (Ps. 10:14). After she ran away and the angel of God met her, Hagar spoke out of the consciousness that God had seen her: “Thou God seest me” (Gen. 16:13). God heard the groaning of the Israelites oppressed in Egypt, and “God looked upon the children of Israel and God had respect unto them” (Ex. 2:25). When David is oppressed by his enemies, he appeals to the Lord in prayer: “Thus thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me” (Ps. 35:22). Solomon writes about the oppression that is done under the sun: “Behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter” (Ecc. 4:1). Then, speaking of the Lord, Solomon writes: “If thou seest the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they” (Eccl. 5:8). God saw when Ahab killed Naboth and spilled innocent blood. Elijah said to Ahab: “Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD” (1 Kings 21:20). No sin is ever hid from the Lord, and the sin we try to hide, the Lord especially marks.

God Condemns Abuse

The Lord does not simply see abuse. In His Word he makes so clear that he condemns those who oppress the weak or those who have no helper. The Lord makes His will known, including his opposition to evil designs and devices. Leviticus says: “Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 25:17). David writes: “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him” (Ps. 12:5). In another Psalm, David speaks similarly: “For thou art not

a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing (falsehood): the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. ... For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee” (Ps. 5:4-10).

God Holds Leaders Accountable

The Lord is very angry when those whom He has appointed to lead His people treat them harshly or allow others to mistreat them. He upbraids the leaders in Micah’s day: “The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever” (Mic. 2:9). He writes extensively against false shepherds who allow His flock to be scattered. He exposes the crime of leaders when they neither bind up that which is broken, nor bring back what is driven away, and especially when they treat the flock “with force and with cruelty” (Ezek. 34:4). The Lord becomes very graphic when He describes how the leaders of His flock “thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad” (Ezek. 34:21). The Lord’s own dealing with His flock is exactly the opposite. He binds up that which is broken, leads those who are with young, and carries the lambs in His bosom (Ps. 147:3; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:16).

The Lord’s own dealing with His flock is exactly the opposite. He binds up that which is broken, leads those who are with young, and carries the lambs in His bosom.

God Will Judge Abuse

In Psalm 10, from which we already quoted, David writes that God will “judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress” (v. 18). Elsewhere in the Psalms we read that God “executeth judgment for the oppressed” (Ps. 146:7). He may do this in time, or He may wait to do this at the final judgment, but God will most certainly judge for the oppressed. We read in 1 Timothy, where it says: “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24).

God Stands With His Abused People

We see God standing with the abused in how the Lord dealt with the nation of Israel when it was severely oppressed in Egypt. The way Pharaoh enslaved the Hebrews and treated them harshly, giving the people less and less, threatening, manipulating, one time promising to ease the oppression and then further enslaving the people precisely fits the pattern of abuse. God came down and redeemed His people with a strong hand and a stretched-out arm. God is far better than an unjust judge, for “shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily” (Luke 18:7-8).

David confesses in Psalm 118: “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me” (vv. 6-7). This passage makes clear that the Lord shows His help through those who “take the side” of His people who are oppressed.

When the Son of God came down to earth in our nature, He was not born into the family of a priest or a high-powered official. Herod sought to swallow Him up the moment He was born. He had to flee to Egypt to escape the murderous intention of Herod, and only after those who sought His life were dead, could He return to Galilee (Matt. 2:22). To fulfill His mediatorial mission, He “was oppressed, and he was afflicted” (Isa. 53:7).

God Can Turn Evil for Good

One of the most vivid accounts of abuse in Scripture is how Joseph’s brothers treated him. The

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brothers are predatorial toward Joseph, finally selling him into slavery like an animal to get rid of him and deceiving their father into thinking a beast killed him. We all know how these brothers needed to be dealt with harshly to awaken their consciences and bring their sin into the open. Yet, through it all, we see how God was with Joseph and finally turned the evil of the brothers into good for many. “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen. 50:20).

In the same vein, Paul proclaims that “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). In the Lord Jesus enduring the greatest evil was committed by the hands of sinners, God had His “determinate counsel and foreknowledge,” which ensured that what “wicked hands” did, God turned to the greatest good the world has ever known. Obviously, apart from the revelation of God, there are many riddles, and we do not know in many cases how God will bring good out of the evil of abuse. Yet, we may believe that He will for each of those who trust in Him and look to Him.

God Will One Day Wipe All Tears Away

Though not all God’s children suffer abuse, we have many reasons to shed tears in this “valley of tears.” Yet, God has the tears of all his people in His “bottle: are they not in his book” (Ps. 56:8). There are comforts in our journey here, and times when the Lord can give “the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isa. 61:3).

Yet, many of the tears of God’s children will not be wiped away on earth. We will need to wait for the time when “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:4-5). In the new heavens and the new earth, there will be no “revilers” (the Greek word means “verbal abuser”) (1 Cor 6:10) or “murderers” (Rev. 22:15). There “they will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35:10). 

BOOK REVIEW Endnotes

1. Complementary means that the Bible teaches that the roles of men and women are different by God’s design and this has implications in marriage and in the church. Egalitarianism, on the other hand, posits that the roles of men and women in the church are equal and interchangeable. The complementarian view has been widely disseminated and defended by the Council of Biblical Manhood & Womanhood (CBMW), which also issued the Nashville Statement (2017), a statement of faith relating to human sexuality and gender roles.
2. All the authors in this book agree that the apostle Paul is “arguing for the man’s natural and spiritual headship and the woman’s role as his helper [and he is] appealing to creation itself” (p. 163) in *Women in the Church* by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, editors. Baker Academic, Second Edition, 2005.
3. Köstenberger, p. 114.

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction by Kevin DeYoung. Published by Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2021. Softcover, 170 pages.

Increasingly, in conservative Reformed denominations, women are striving for ordination to church offices which were always held by men. I am thankful that I have not heard this issue raised even once in our denomination. We hope and pray it stays this way and that we are spared from the divisions on this issue being experienced in our Dutch sister churches, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken.

The author of this book aims to explain the Bible's teaching about men and women in the church in a way that the interested layperson can understand and read in a few hours. It is also intended to help pastors and church leaders to give guidance on this subject. As the author unequivocally states in the Introduction: "This book is about the divinely designed complementarity of men and women as it applies to life in general and especially to ministry in the church" (p. 15).

From the outset, the author makes clear that he believes "the whole human race is, always has been, and will be for the rest of time, comprised of two differentiated and complementary sexes," male and female (p. 14). This is by God's design. "I am a convinced complementarian," he states (p. 19). This means "that God's design is for men to lead, serve, and protect, and that, in the church, women can thrive under this leadership as they too labor with biblical faithfulness and fidelity according to the wisdom and beauty of God's created order" (p. 19). DeYoung explains what this means by starting with "Biblical Exploration" in part 1 and then moves to "Questions and Applications" in part 2.

So, in the first chapter there is an exposition of the first three chapters of Genesis, where he postulates that "Once we understand the first chapters of Genesis and how God has embedded sexual differentiation and sexual union (in marriage) in the natural order of the created world, everything else we see in the Bible about being a man or being a woman makes more sense. All good theology starts in Genesis but it never stops there" (p. 25). DeYoung gives fifteen reasons why "the opening chapters of the Bible establish the shape of sexual differentiation and complementarity that will be lived out, applied, and safeguarded in the rest of Scripture" (p. 33). God blessed them both, male and female, whether single or married. For the woman to be designated helper carries no connotation of diminished worth or status, for God is sometimes called the Helper of Israel (Ex. 18:4; Ps. 33:20; 146:5). How this differentiation in roles, yet equal in worth before God, flows out of Genesis is dealt with in subsequent chapters.

In the second chapter, a survey of the Old Testament, the controversial positions of women such as Deborah as judge; Miriam, Deborah and Huldah as prophetesses; and Esther a heroic queen, are not omitted. There were also women who assumed more of a helper function – Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and others. Godly women displayed a wide range of heroic characteristics, yet "From start to finish, leaders among God's Old Testament people were men" (p. 36) and women acted under the authority of men. It should be noted that in the New Testament more explicit instructions for men and women especially in the *church* are given. But the "Old Testament *does* show us a lot about men and women in general, and these patterns ought to shape how we think of sexual differentiation and complementarity in life and ministry" (p. 36).

This is where Jesus' interaction with women clarifies the worth of both women and men. In a culture that minimized the dignity of women, He affirmed their worth and gladly benefited from their ministry for His personal needs, addressing them as "daughters of Abraham," thereby placing them

on the same spiritual level as men (Luke 13:16). This pattern was consistent with God's design before the Fall, when there was a harmonious relationship between Adam and Eve. Jesus did not change this relationship of leader and helper, but confirmed it by choosing only men to be His disciples and to later become New Testament apostles.

In the chapter, "Marriage Made in Heaven," Ephesians 5:22-33 is explained, where DeYoung states: "It may sound archaic, if not fundamentally sinister, but God's design for the home is a thoughtful, intelligent, gentle, submissive wife and a loving, godly, self-sacrificing, leading husband. Whether we live in the first century or the twenty-first century, Ephesians 5:22-33 is God's plan for marriage: wives submit to your husbands and husbands, love your wives" (p. 64). Paul's command aims to reverse the effect of the curse and have Christian husbands love rather than domineer. This chapter is filled with loving admonishments for both husbands and wives.

DeYoung is very fundamental in affirming complementarianism and does not shun the more difficult passages such as 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, which mentions that the head of a woman (wife) is her husband, and that every woman [wife] who prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. He takes great pains to exegete this difficult passage, offering his own opinion and acknowledging different viewpoints. However, the teaching from 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 indicates that "In the corporate worship women are not to be teachers, but quiet learners" (p. 79).

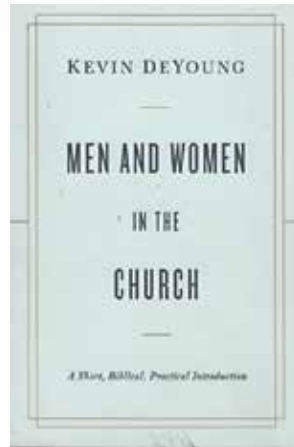
Chapter 6 brings us to "The Heart of the Matter," 1 Timothy 2:8-15, where the apostle Paul makes some explicit statements about the teaching ministry in the church. Here, the author refutes all the modern arguments for women as office bearers, drawing from another book which deals exclusively with this passage. One of the authors in this book states: "Women have vital spiritual gifts. No one is denying that. Women can even have gifts of teaching and leadership... But the Bible stipulates certain ways in which these gifts are to be used."

Part 1 ends with chapter 7, where DeYoung deals with church government as stipulated in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. He makes no apologies for the New Testament, stating that there are two distinct church offices for men: overseers (3:1) and deacons (3:8), concluding that the consistent pattern of leadership in the Bible is by men, while pointing out that there are multiple opportunities for women to complement this role, such as serving in administrative functions, ministering to the sick, the dying, the handicapped, and so much more.

Part 2, "Questions and Applications," begins with answering "Common Objections," where disputed texts are explained. Here the author emphasizes the spiritual equality of men and women before God. Part 2 has some overlap with part 1, but "Growing up as Boys and Girls," will appeal to parents as they raise their children in an anti-Christian culture. Similarly, the chapter, "Following Christ as Men and Women" is a persuasive argument to see God's wisdom and grace in designing men and women in His image and to delight in God's wisdom by living out our God-ordained roles in the church.

In a fairly lengthy Appendix, DeYoung refutes the view of theologians who admit to be "broadly complementarian" yet promote the legitimacy of women preaching sermons in Sunday services. They argue that preaching is not teaching, a position which is sadly, finding a foothold among some conservative Presbyterians.

The author of this book is a rather young theologian, serving as a senior pastor in a large Presbyterian church in North Carolina, a seminary instructor, Gospel Coalition board chairman, and author of several books. He is also the father of nine children. The book is refreshing and a convincing affirmation for all who desire to maintain the Reformation view of the roles of men and women in the church. ①



THE ORDER OF SALVATION (5)

HOW AND TO WHOM THE GOSPEL CALL SHOULD BE EXTENDED

Last month, we examined the hyper-Calvinist view of the free offer of the Gospel and learned how representatives of this movement, such as Dr. Herman Hoeksema, strongly opposed the idea that God extends His grace to all sinners, elect and reprobates alike. In his view, the Gospel promises are addressed only to the elect, while the reprobate receive only commands, warnings, and reminders of their damnation. Hyper-Calvinists do not see the logic of God offering grace to those whom He has already decreed to condemn. Whether we can understand the logic of this or not, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that they repent and believe the Gospel.

On one thing, however, both the proponents and deniers of the free offer agree: only the elect will be saved. That becomes clear when we examine the effect of the general gospel call on those who are the recipients of it.

God Calls Us by His Word and Spirit

All of God's Word, both law and gospel, comes to us. The ministers whom God sends must preach the law with the command that we are obliged to keep it in its entirety, even though we are unable to do so by nature. The faithful preacher's task is to diagnose our plight as sinners, showing us our sin and guilt to lead us to see the seriousness of our natural state and condition. The Holy Spirit uses this approach to awaken us and prepare us for the message of the Gospel of free grace. The function of the law, therefore, is to convict us of our sin and guilt and thereby of our need of the only remedy for our dreadful situation.

But – and this is crucially important – this convicting function of the law must never be separated from the comforting ministry of the gospel. If we separate them, we face two possible dangers. We either become legalists trying to earn salvation by keeping God's law, which inevitably brings us to despair, or we do not take the demands of the law seriously and end up with a superficial grasp of the gospel. Many hear the gospel call, but it does not lead to godly sorrow for sin. They like to hear of God's mercy but pay little attention to His justice and holiness. However, coming to terms with God's law is essential, if we hope to be saved. Lord's Day 2 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* asks, "Whence knowest thou thy misery," and the answer is, "Out of the law of God."

This is a direct quote from Romans 3:20, where Paul states that by the law is the knowledge of sin. Here the apostle views the law as the revealer of sin. But showing us our sin was not the law's original purpose. Adam delighted in His creator's law and

commandments as holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12). When man fell into sin, all this changed radically. The law became a negative force, not in itself, but as far as its relation to sinful man is concerned. When man transgressed God's commandment, he came under the curse of the law. God's justice demanded punishment for the transgressor. So, as Paul says, "The commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death" (Rom. 7:10). Since the Fall, the law has taken a condemning function, exposing sin wherever it was found. This became especially necessary when man in his foolishness thought that he could still satisfy God by some kind of outward obedience to His law.

The history of mankind is the history of fallen man trying to come to terms with God and His demands. In all men is an awareness that something is wrong in his relationship to God. Many attempts have been made and continue to be made to repair that broken relationship, although today fallen man has reached a very low level of human depravity. Our anti-Christian anarchical society disregards all laws divine and human, and will not rest until every man will do that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

To Whom the Gospel Call Must be Addressed

As noted earlier, we disagree with the hyper-Calvinist restriction of the gospel call to God's elect. Still, we need to be careful here. Our opposition must be firm but also well-founded. Hyper-Calvinists do agree with us that only the elect will be saved and that Christ died only for them, as the Saviour Himself stated in John 10:11, John 17:9, and other passages. But they are wrong in teaching that those who do not yet show evidences of election should not be invited to come to Christ. Yet, hyper-Calvinists recognize not all unconverted hearers are reprobates. They may still come to faith later in life; so the gospel must be brought to them also.

We know that some hyper-Calvinists cannot help being kind and gentle to their hearers who dare not say they are elect. John Gill, a well-respected, mild hyper-Calvinist, English theologian would preach: "Come to the Lord as humble penitents. Let sensible sinners come to the person, blood and righteousness of Christ for justification and salvation... And he would encourage preachers to 'fervently' and 'boldly' set forth the lost and miserable estate and condition of men by nature, the danger they are in, the necessity of regeneration and repentance, and of a better righteousness than their own, and of faith in Christ, which things are blessed for the turning of men from darkness to light."

Similar attempts to soften the impact hyper-Calvinism tended to make on seeking souls were also made by some Dutch preachers during the controversies surrounding the "well-meant offer" in the Secession churches. Also in the early years of the Netherlands Reformed Church, preaching was often evangelical and winsome, until in its later years a kind of theological rigor mortis began to set in and preachers became less generous with their gospel overtures.

The history of mankind is the history of fallen man trying to come to terms with God and His demands.

A Brief Sketch of the Free Offer Debate in the Netherlands

Our Free Reformed denomination has its origin in the Dutch Secession Church of 1834 and its continuation in 1892. During its formative years and lasting well into the mid-nineteenth century, the Secession congregations were divided on the issue of the free offer. The so-called Drenthe segment was strongly opposed and the Gelderland party was strongly in favour of the doctrine of the "Well-meant Offer of the Gospel."

Brummelkamp and other members of the Gelderland wing were influenced by Thomas Boston and other spokesmen for the Scottish movement called *The Marrow Men*, associated with the so-called *Marrow Controversy*. Boston, along with the Erskine brothers, Ralph and Ebenezer, was known for his strong defense of the free offer and the issue of the warrant of faith. In doing so, he used

some expressions and statements which were misunderstood by his Presbyterian colleagues, who quickly accused him and other *Marrow Men* of teaching a universal atonement and an "easy believism" that encourages a false sense of security.

When the Drenthe people heard Brummelkamp and others of the Gelderland party using similar expressions, they immediately accused them of heresy, or at least presumption. In some cases these expressions may have been wrongly used or even with a different meaning attached to them than Boston and the other *Marrow Men* intended. What the Drenthe ministers found lacking in the preaching of their Gelderland colleagues was the experiential aspect. "You talk of faith in Christ," they said, "but you do not explain how sinners are brought to faith in Him; there is not enough stress on the function of the law in conviction of sin, there is hardly any mention of being lost and undone, fear of the wrath of God, a deep sense of inability and absolute dependence on the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit."

These elements were present in the *Marrow Men*. Boston certainly taught that union with Christ involves being cut off from Adam and being grafted into Christ. For him, severing the sinner's union with Adam in preparation for being joined to Christ by a Spirit-wrought faith was an essential aspect of his soteriology. Unless and until a sinner is completely cut off from the Adamic stock, he cannot be united to Christ, the second Adam.

Some in the Gelderland party did not recognize sufficiently that the offer of grace must not be seen in isolation from the sinner's *preparation* for accepting that offer. In a *Banner of Truth Magazine* article, W.T Atkinson writes,

The Gospel presents to us unrestricted overtures of grace, and it is in these that a sinner finds his warrant to come to Christ for salvation. It must be emphasized, however, in this connection, that it is the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit alone who convinces man of his sin, of his need of a Saviour, making him willing and enabling him to comply with the overtures of grace that are revealed in the Gospel. We must never lose sight of the fact that man in sin is neither able

nor willing to come to Christ for salvation... But yet it must be maintained with equal emphasis that it is not the Spirit's work within the heart that gives the sinner the right to come to Christ for salvation. This important distinction has all too often been overlooked and as a result the Gospel of free grace has been obscured at the very point where its freeness is most precious. We must be careful not to confuse *that which is necessary to enable a sinner to believe in Christ with that which gives him the right to do so. We must not confuse the preparation for faith with the warrant of faith.*

Atkinson goes on to say that those who teach that the warrant of faith is not to be found in the overtures of the Gospel, but rather in the sinner's internal qualifications, strike at the very heart of the gospel of free grace. If the overtures of the Gospel are addressed only to those who possess evidences of regeneration, we must first determine whether we possess these evidences to some degree before we dare to lay hold of Christ and His promises. As a result, my hope of salvation will be based completely or in part on inward qualifications.

The reality is that the warrant or right to come to Christ is given to us not as saved or regenerate sinners but as lost hell-worthy sinners. "A Gospel in which overtures of grace are addressed only to the regenerate is a Gospel for saints, but the Gospel of Christ is a Gospel for sinners and these are Good Tidings of great joy."

Elements of Confusion Among the Seceders

If an insufficient understanding of human depravity and inability, as well as an underestimation of sin's convicting seriousness, was a problem for some of the Gelderland wing, the Drenthe pastors tended to overemphasize self-examination. They often stressed looking within to find marks of grace that gave them the right or warrant to appropriate the promises of the Gospel. For many, this led to a complete denial of a free or well-meant offer extended to sinners. Theirs was at best a conditional offer that left many seekers in perpetual doubt regarding their spiritual state. This focus on the subjective work of the Spirit rather than the objective Word of God caused Brummelkamp and his followers to turn away from the theology of the *Further Reformation*, a focus Brummelkamp believed was due to the stifling and constricted style of preaching exemplified by his Drenthe colleagues.

This criticism was only partly correct, as he tended to paint all the "old writers" with the same brush. Some did deserve this characterization. Especially during the last phase of the *Further Reformation*, some rejected any notion of a free offer of salvation to all sinners. These served as models for the Drenthe preachers. But among the mainstream *Further Reformation* divines, even those who emphasized election had sufficient room in their preaching for free and generous gospel offers, albeit in a carefully guarded way. However, both the Gelderland and Drenthe pastors tended to ignore this fact, the latter because they thought these *Further Reformation* leaders were too free

with their offers, and the former because they deemed them too restricted. The Drenthe faction was more aligned with the late eighteenth century divines who focused more on works of grace rather than Christ, the *Dispenser of grace*.

What attracted Brummelkamp and other members of the Secessionist Gelderland wing was the clear teaching of the *Marrow Men* on the warrant of faith, i.e., that all sinners may come to Christ for salvation just as they are, without having to meet any qualifications. They recognized in their approach a strong resemblance to the soteriology of Calvin and other early reformers. That is why they became more and more convinced that salvation essentially consists of faith in the promises of the covenant of grace.

Undoubtedly, this is true. The Gospel and its offer of salvation goes out to sinners one and all. A key passage here is Isaiah 55:1. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." But let us not forget what this offer implies. Only those who feel their need of a Saviour (everyone who is thirsty) and know that they cannot save themselves (he who has no money) will receive the offered salvation. These are not conditions we must meet before we may come to Christ but ways in which the Holy Spirit prepares us as he draws us to our Saviour.

The problem is that some preachers draw up their own lists of requirements before giving us the "green light" to come to Christ. Many evangelical pastors lamented the strictures some of their colleagues imposed on their sermons. One of them, John Newton, could not hold back and issued a stern warning against "teachers who abound with distinctions in their experiential teachings, which are suited to cast down those whom the Lord would have comforted, including the requirement of profound submission to God before trusting Christ." Instead, he expressed the simplicity of preparatory grace and regenerating grace in his famous hymn, *Amazing Grace*, in these words:

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.⁷

Endnotes

1. Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 300.
2. Cornelis Pronk, *A Goodly Heritage*, p. 265.
3. Thomas Boston, *Complete Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 190-198.
4. W. T. Atkinson, "The Warrant of Faith," *The Banner of Truth*, no. 20 (April 1960):22-23.
5. Atkinson, *The Warrant of Faith*, p. 24.
6. Cornelis Pronk, *A Goodly Heritage*, p. 268.
7. Quoted by Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 329.

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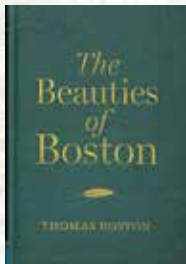
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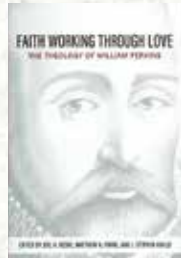
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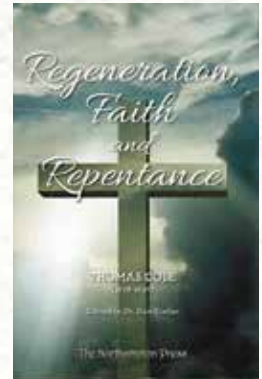
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WHAT IS FREEDOM AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?



We hear a lot of talk these days about freedom, about political freedom or freedom from government overreach at least. Such freedom is a wonderful thing, something well worth fighting for if one does not have it, and something worth every effort to preserve if one has it. Like good health, however, freedom of any sort is often not fully appreciated until it is gone, and, sadly, it can go very quickly.

But what is freedom? For all the talk we hear about freedom, we are far from all talking about the same thing. People have very different ideas of freedom and of what it means to be free, and in this article, I propose to talk about four of those ideas, namely, freedom (a) to a socialist, (b) to an anarchist, (c) to a libertarian, and (d) to a biblical Christian. The last of these is a much broader subject and stretches well beyond individual rights and duties within the political realm.

Freedom to a Socialist

Freedom to a socialist, first of all, is really freedom from having to think critically about anything and from having to accept any great measure of responsibility whether for himself or others. This ideology is very appealing to many people. Especially those who are lazy or fearful like the notion that there will always be others there to provide for them. Oh, the socialist knows that he will have to work alright, to contribute some minimum stan-

dard of productivity to appease the state, but he likes to think that government (whom he regards as his “big brother”) is the great protector and ever reliable provider for both him and his family. What he is promised—and he is quick to believe it—is that big brother will put food on his table, pay his bills, educate his children, cover his medical expenses, and continue to provide for all his needs even in the care home when at last he must go into one. That to him is freedom, or at least that is how he thinks of it until it all falls apart.

The problem is that socialism has never worked anywhere or at any time in history. Its promises are means for elected officials or self-appointed elites to manipulate the masses into serving them and thereby providing themselves with whatever they want. While socialism speaks of equality, it entrenches a class system in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. It robs people of incentive, of opportunity to get ahead, and of all hope that things can ever change. “Big brother,” as every socialist regime has boldly demonstrated over time, cares for no one but himself and is willing to trample on all the God-given rights and liberties of his underlings in order to establish his own sovereign powers over them.

President Reagan used to warn people about politicians who come to one’s door offering government help. It is a fair warning because men, despite whatever appearances they give, are not

fundamentally good but evil and self-serving (Jer. 17:9). Good political leaders, compassionate and unwilling to take a bribe, are an anomaly; we celebrate them in recorded history, but they are few and far between. Most politicians, especially with some perceived success in the public eye and an insatiable taste for power, will turn on their constituents very quickly in order to achieve their own aspirations. This is why government checks and balances are often written into national constitutions, but when these supposedly protected liberties are cast aside, they can be difficult (if not impossible) to restore.

Talk to people who have fled socialist countries. They will tell you that what they will sacrifice much to attain is not the freedom of socialism but freedom *from* socialism, from its bondage, tyranny and hopelessness.

Freedom to an Anarchist

Freedom to an anarchist, secondly, is freedom to do whatever he wants, without restriction. Anarchists want to get rid of all government control, the rule of law and every effort to police it. If this seems extreme, it is. According to this view, freedom is an end in itself, or, even worse, a license to sin. It is no surprise therefore that criminals, the fascists of Antifa, and other terrorists are attracted to it. One has to wonder, though, how blind to human depravity these people must be to suppose that any society could actually prosper, or even survive, without due punishment for the crimes they so flagrantly commit. Are they not aware that, what atrocities they bring on others, others will surely impose on them? Or do they think that as long as they stay on top of their game, a step ahead of everyone else, they will surely win in the end? If it is the latter, why is it that no one has ever won that game (Hebrews 9:27)? The proper role of government is to reward good behaviour and to punish bad behaviour (Romans 13: 3-4).

The failure of anarchism, like all creaturely systems, is that it begins with a faulty view of fallen man. The anarchist does not know how corrupt he and everyone else is to the core of their being or how the wages of sin is death (Rom. 3:23). He has never really thought or cared about such things. His definition of freedom, doing whatever he wants without restriction, is actually a form of slavery, a self-imposed bondage to his own sinful nature like any addiction to a lethal substance. It may bring some momentary pleasure, an adrenaline rush and even a vain hope that he is creating for himself a more secure future, but in reality, he is under the wrath of God and subject to eternal condemnation.

Why is lust for money or power insatiable, always demanding more money or greater power? The initial pleasure soon wears off and lust seeks another fix. Such misdirected, short-term pleasure leads to long-term sorrow. Hence one driven by such self-serving desires spirals down from bad to worse. Even a drug addict will come to see in time that he is on a wrong path, but not an anarchist, at least not apart from God's grace. Blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 3-4), the anarchist does not see the need to develop responsible and lasting social norms.



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- **Part Time and Full Time Secondary Teachers**

HCS is a dedicated and supportive Reformed Christian community with a student body of 640+ students from K-12 and a cohesive, professional faculty and staff of 70+ persons.

We seek qualified enthusiastic rookies or seasoned applicants who seek to serve Jesus Christ in Christian education, submit to Holy Scripture as confessed in the Reformed creeds, desire to lead students to a life of dedicated service to our Lord.

How to apply: Submit a cover letter, résumé, a statement of faith, and references, (including one from your current pastor). Teacher applicants, please submit your philosophy of education as well.

Please forward inquiries and/or applications to:

Mr. Brian Kemper, Principal

Heritage Christian School, 2850 Fourth Ave., Box 400,
Jordan Station, ON, Canada L0R 1S0

Phone (905) 562-7303 • Fax (905) 562-0020

Email: bkemper@hcsjordan.ca • Website: hcsjordan.ca

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord." Ps. 127:3

OXFORD REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Invites applications for the 2023-2024 school year:

- **Special Ed. Teacher**
- **Full-time Elementary Teachers**
- **High-School Teachers**

ORCS is a dedicated, Reformed, parent-run school with an expanding student body of 350+ students from K to 12 and a unified, professional staff committed to Christ-centered education in new facilities in rural south-western Ontario (Mount Elgin)

We are looking for enthusiastic, qualified teachers who have a passion for Christian education, and submit to the Holy Scriptures as summarized in the Reformed confessions. Seasoned veterans or young beginners are both encouraged to apply.

Applications must include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian education, and references. Email applications to Mr. William Van Brugge (principal@orcschool.ca). Visit our website (orcschool.ca), or come and visit our school: 333182 Plank Line, Mount Elgin, Ontario.

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Freedom to a Libertarian

Freedom to a libertarian, thirdly, is every person having absolute authority over his own life and liberty to do whatever he wishes with his own person and property, as long as he respects the same liberties of others. This last phrase, “as long as he respects the same liberties of others,” is the distinguishing feature of libertarianism from anarchism, but it does represent a major breakthrough. It makes room for small government with limited powers, gives place to the rule of law and recognizes the need for policing it.

There are still, however, major flaws with (“right-wing”) libertarianism. For one thing, it fails to acknowledge that all men are ultimately responsible to God, their Maker and Judge, and that even their obedience to the civil magistrate is less than adequate unless it is based on a commitment to God Himself. It is wrong, for instance, to say that freedom is to have absolute authority over one’s own life and property. In God we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). We are as creatures of the dust subject to Him in every way, wholly dependent upon Him for every breath and heartbeat, and fully responsible to Him for everything we do, say, and even think. To define freedom, therefore, in terms of what man himself wants without reference to what God wants and deserves is to miss the mark by a country mile.

Along with the other ideologies we have just considered, libertarianism also fails to see the seriousness of sin: how widespread, deep-rooted, and utterly destructive it truly is. It is very naïve for anyone to presume that sinners in a fallen world could ever on their own build a just society, a culture of peace, and growing prosperity. It has never happened, and it never will. The countries that came furthest in this pursuit were initially founded on the Word of God and the necessity of keeping His commandments. These governments were far from perfect, but they gave us a good start and goal. The reason for the failure of these same nations today is in their moving right away from the Bible into irrational woke mythology.

The Church in new covenant times is instructed to acknowledge and submit to the authority of the civil magistrate even in heathen lands (1 Peter 2:13-16). This is not an absolute or unqualified submission (Acts 5:29), but it does recognize that there is a place for submitting to the magistrate as a part of one’s commitment to the Lord (Rom. 13:1-7). There is no real freedom in this world without it being governed and carefully supervised. People can find Libertarianism most appealing as what seems the right way to go, at least until they come to think through it a little more and realize (if they ever do) that man is not “basically good” as he likes to think himself to be (Rom. 3:10-18), nor is he capable in his morally degenerate state of creating that new earth where righteousness dwells.

Freedom to a Christian

This brings us, finally, to biblical Christianity. Freedom to the Christian who is committed to the full inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture, and who seeks to live by it, is altogether different

from what he hears about freedom in the world around him. By his study of the Scriptures, he comes to see this difference. He discovers that God-honouring and Bible-based freedom begins at a different starting point, proceeds along a very different path, and takes him to a completely different place.

To understand biblical freedom we have to go back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam was created sinless, and was therefore free. When he ate the forbidden fruit, however, he became a sinner and lost that freedom. His sin, in turn, was then imputed to all his descendants, and hence all the rest of us are born into sin. He fell into it; we are born into it. This is a tragic story, to be sure, but it does not have to end that way. On the very day that Adam plunged himself into sin, subjecting him and all his posterity to death, God promised to send a Redeemer, Eve's own Seed who would crush Satan and destroy all the powers of evil (Gen. 3:15). There would be no salvation and freedom for anyone *apart* from Him, but there would also be no loss of such benefits for anyone *in* Him.

When this Redeemer came into the world in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, He first fulfilled all righteousness and then offered Himself up on the cross to pay the penalty for the unrighteousness of all whom His Father gave to Him and was pleased to save. Their sins were at that time imputed to Christ, and on the cross of Calvary He paid their penalty in full (John 19:30). In the Father's appointed time, each one would come under conviction and be converted, and, when that happened, the perfect righteousness of Christ would be imputed to them. Think of it! They go from being unrighteous in the first Adam to being declared through faith fully righteous in Christ—the last Adam! (2 Cor. 5:21)

Freedom to such people is not a license to sin, or even (as others might think of it) a freedom to go their own way, but freedom from their previous bondage to sin, freedom to do the will of God, God working in them to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Being made so willing in a day of God's power, this now is what they want above everything else. Oh, they are still sinners, sinners saved by grace, and they will continue to suffer the afflictions of this fallen world as long as they continue to live in it, but now they have a new life and power in Christ. They testify that, for them, to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21), that they count everything else as loss for Christ (Phil. 3:7-11), and that, as weak as they are in themselves, they can fight the good fight of faith and overcome through Christ who gives them strength (Phil. 4:13).

Do you know such freedom? If you do, fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13); if you do not, you will find it only in Christ (John 3:35,36)! ①

Rev. T. Aicken is an emeritus Free Reformed pastor in Langley, British Columbia.

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EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

"Thus far the Lord has helped us" 1 Samuel 7:12

Eben-Ezer Christian School invites applications for possible openings for both **teaching and EA positions**, commencing September of 2023.

We have been blessed with a dedicated school society, as well as a cohesive and enthusiastic staff. Eben-Ezer is a small school with a big mission in a close-knit community.

We are seeking qualified applicants who are committed to the Reformed faith and are passionate about educating God's covenant children.

Requests for further information can be directed to our principal, Mrs. Kathleen DeBoer: k.deboer@eecsatham.com. Applications, including a resume and statement of faith, can be submitted to the Human Resources Committee: hr@eecsatham.com

School Address: 485 McNaughton Ave. E. Chatham, ON N7L 2H2
 Phone: 519.354.1142 | Fax: 519.354.2159 | info@eecsatham.com



Invites applications for:

- **Elementary and secondary teachers**
- **Elementary and secondary educational assistants**

We are looking for qualified individuals with a vision for Christian education to join our committed, vibrant community of learners. Rehoboth Christian School is a K-12 parent-run school serving the families of four local Free Reformed Churches and beyond. Located in a beautiful rural setting between Hamilton and Brantford, Rehoboth has been blessed with a strongly supportive community, and since our inception in 1978, has grown to an enrollment of 310 students. Please send a cover letter, resume, statement of faith, and references, including a pastoral reference (teacher applicants are also asked to include a philosophy of education), to the attention of:

Adam Klootra, Principal
 198 Inksetter Road P.O. Box 70,
 Copetown, ON L0R 1J0
 t. 905.627.5977
 e. principal@rehoboth.on.ca
 w. www.rehoboth.on.ca



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Margaret Heemskerk, mheemskerk.peacehaven@gmail.com or 519.770.8816

JORDAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is seeking a

Kindergarten teacher beginning in the 2023-2024 school year.

This is an exciting opportunity for someone eager to inspire young students to learn. The successful applicant will be an energetic and motivated team player, committed to the Reformed Christian worldview, with training and skills suited to this important task. Please send your application to the attention of **Mr. Paul Wagenaar** at principal@ourjcs.ca.

ANDRE KNEVEL

50TH ANNIVERSARY AS A CONCERT ORGANIST



It all started with a little pump organ at the Knevel home where Andre, the oldest of four children, grew up. He started with organ lessons at the age of 8 from some amateur teachers and later from Dr. J.A.M. van Stokkum, Rutger van Mazijk, and Willem Hendrik Zwart.

Andre immigrated to Canada in 1975 to be married to his wife, Willi. He completed his studies in performance and church music with Dr. John Tuttle, Associate Professor of the University of Toronto.

A long career as a concert organist has followed and been blessed. Presently, he regularly gives many recitals through-



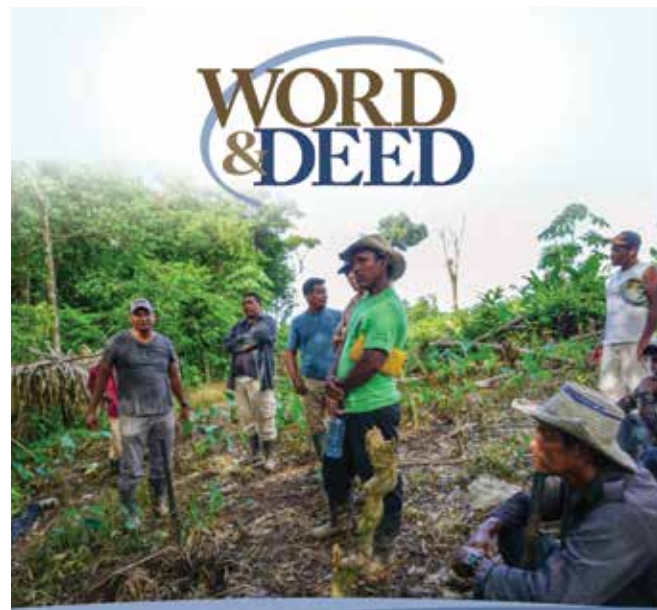
out Canada, the USA, and the Netherlands. He travels back to his native country every year during the summer for a concert tour of approximately 30+ concerts. Concert tours have also taken place in such places as South Africa, Germany, Romania, Czech Republic, Finland, Poland, and Russia.

Just before Covid, a highlight organ solo performance was given upon invitation in the famous Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah. Andre also was invited to do a recital in the magnificent Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris, France, in 2020, but due to the fire at the Cathedral, this had to be postponed.

The year 2020 was his 50th anniversary as a concert organist, but again due to Covid, celebrations had to be postponed to this past summer. He gave 33 anniversary recitals in the Netherlands with a final special jubilee concert in the Cathedral of Dordrecht with its majestic organ.

He has made numerous CD recordings of organ solo albums and recordings with different instruments. He has also made many recordings with choirs, including the Mattaniah Male Choir, Hosanna Choir, and the Rehoboth Christian School (Copetown) Choir, all of which have many Free Reformed members. Many recordings have encouraged the singing of *The Psalter* and Hymns rich in content.

Looking back at a very blessed concert career, where the Lord has blessed him greatly, he wishes to give all the glory and honour to Him who is the giver of all good things. "Soli Deo Gloria". 🙏



WORD & DEED

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:17

www.wordanddeed.org

THE UNKNOWN WATERS OF THIS YEAR

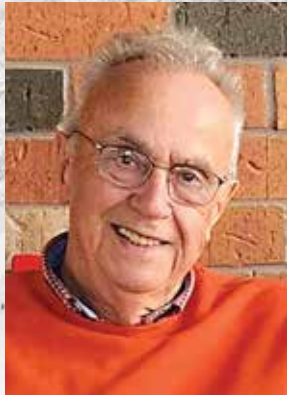
O Lord,
Length of days does not profit me
except the days are passed in Thy presence,
in Thy service, to Thy glory.
Give me a grace that precedes, follows, guides,
sustains, sanctifies, aids every hour,
that I may not be one moment apart from Thee,
but may rely on Thy Spirit
to supply every thought,
speak in every word,
direct every step,
prosper every work,
build up every mote of faith,
and give me a desire to show forth Thy praise;
testify Thy love,
advance Thy kingdom.

I launch my bark on the unknown waters of this year,
with Thee, O Father as my harbour,
Thee, O Son, at my helm,
Thee O Holy Spirit, filling my sails.
Guide me to heaven with my loins girt,
my lamp burning,
my ear open to Thy calls,
my heart full of love,
my soul free.

Give me Thy grace to sanctify me,
Thy comforts to cheer,
Thy wisdom to teach,
Thy right hand to guide,
Thy counsel to instruct,
Thy law to judge,
Thy presence to stabilize.
May Thy fear be my awe,
Thy triumphs my joy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

80TH BIRTHDAY



Psalm 91:1

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my
fortress; my God, in Him I will trust."

With thankful hearts, we praise God for His
goodness in sustaining our father

PASTOR C.A. SCHOOLS

on the occasion of his **80th Birthday**,
born December 24, 1942 in Zierikzee, The
Netherlands

An **Open House** celebration to take place
January 21, 2023 from 1pm-4pm D.V.
at the Vineland Free Reformed Church
3685 King St., Vineland, ON

Debbi & Bill Sluys

Samuel & Megan Sluys
Leah & Josh Post (Judah, Darcie)
Hannah & Michael Price (Billy)
Reuben Sluys

Brenda & Wayne Otten

Eryn & Kevin Wursten (Maks, Callan, Rhett)
Danielle & Ron Bosman (Quin, Olive)
Veronica Otten
Levi Otten
Jordyn Otten & Johnny Beeke (fiance)

Best Wishes only

3502 Heritage Lane, Vineland ON L0R 2C0

OBITUARY



"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" Lamentations 3:24

JELTJE (JOANNE) POSTMA

Born February 25, 1926 in Zwaagwesteinde,
Friesland, The Netherlands

In the early hours of December 12, 2022,
Joanne Postma passed peacefully into the
eternal joy of her Lord, in her 97th year. Joanne
was pre-deceased by her beloved husband,
Hank (Oct. 27, 2015).

Much loved by:

Ted and Heidi Postma

- Shalena and Greg Neven
- Cathenia and Adam Schat
- Steven and Kearin Postma
- Ryan and Cheryl Postma

Garry and Marietta Postma

- Kerri and Adam Radsma
- Rachel and Erik VanDyk
- Heather and Mark Beeke
- Renee and David VanderMeyden

Jackie and Gerry DeJong

- James and Kelly DeJong
- Brian and Valerie DeJong
- Jolene and Mark Ollerenshaw

Rick and Diane Postma

- Colin and Corine Postma
- Kayla and Jonathan Vanderlinde
- Evan and Chantelle Postma
- Gareth and Josie Postma
- Shanelle


... and 46 great-grandchildren.

Joanne Postma is survived by two sisters, two
sisters-in-law and one brother-in-law.

A private interment service took place at
White Chapel in Hamilton, on Friday,
December 16, 2022. It was followed by the
memorial service in Vineland Free Reformed
Church. **Pastor Pieter VanderMeyden**
officiated both services.

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