

faith in
focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

Volume 42/9 October 2015



The **Single** STATE

Contents

The single state (1) Singles and the church	3
The single state (2) One is a whole number	5
The single state (3) Charles Simeon	8
The single state (4) Faithfully serving God: Recommended reading on singleness	11
Feminine focus Being a helpmeet – biblical or unwelcome idealism?	13
World in focus	16
Books in focus	17
Focus on home Gleanings Wellington Presbytery report	19
The miracles of Yom Kippur	20
The legacy of Geerhardus Vos	22

.....
All correspondence regarding editorial content and advertising should be sent to:

The Editor:

Walter Walraven
7 Winchester Avenue, Pinehaven
Upper Hutt 5019
Email: fnf@rcnz.org.nz
Reformed Churches Home Page
<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

Copy Deadline:

Six weeks preceding the month of publication.
Church and family notices are free, subject to
sufficient space and editorial acceptance.

All correspondence regarding distribution and
payment of subscriptions to:

The Secretary:

Mrs Nicola Wharekawa
79 McLeod Street
Upper Hutt
Email: ricwhare@paradise.net.nz

Subscription per volume:

\$40.00 (eleven issues)
Bulk Rate: \$35.00
Overseas: \$60.00
Electronically Mailed (overseas only): \$40

Production Staff:

Distribution: M. & D. van der Zwaag
Design & Layout: Matrix Typography
Printed by: Flying Colours

Editorial

Next time you are in church, have a gaze around after the worship service is over. You should notice there are three distinct groups of people that make up your congregation – married, children and single. The singles may be unmarried, never married, widowed or divorced.

For brevity, I will restrict my comments to those who are unmarried and who, providentially, may never marry.

When I left home and went flatting just before my 20th birthday, I entered into a realm for which I was not well prepared. I wasn't a Christian, all my friends were doing their own thing, and life was lonely at times. Five years later, I ended up in a small church, and life was transformed. All of a sudden, I had a whole new family and life was looking more positive.

There was a ministry to the singles by the mature and married. They would invite the young single people to their homes for lunch after church, or during the week, and created an environment where there was fellowship for the young people in the context of a family home.

What I learnt there was that our marital status was no hindrance to fellowship. We weren't left to our own devices – we were very much a member of the body of Christ and included in the body-life of the congregation.

By now you might be protesting that your church is not like that. You might say that the singles are lonely and never get invited for lunch after church or at any other time, and that it has been this way for years. You might protest that your best friend got engaged to be married, and now you never hear from him/her. There may be many such stories that could be told.

This issue looks at the state of being single and the problems – perceived or real – that single people (widows and widowers too) have to deal with. Our contributors investigate the state of singleness from a variety of angles, which I think all readers would appreciate.

Mr John Haverland investigates a common failure in churches' response to single people

Miss Janice Reid offers some insights on the single state.

Mrs Sally Davey writes about the single life of Charles Simeon.

Mrs Veronica Hoyt recommends some worthwhile books on singleness.

Mrs Jenny Waldron looks at ways Christian women can be helpmeets to their husbands.

World in focus gives a snapshot of some current events.

Mr Danny E. Olinger writes about the legacy of Geerhardus Vos for our 2015 Reformation Day article.

Mr Mike Moore (from the Herald, CWI) writes about the Miracles of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). This festival was held on September 23rd.

Images: Cover and p11 Mrs Sally Davey. Subject: Mr Sergei Chernov of Ukraine. We thank Sergei for assisting us in this way.

Correction

In the editorial of the July 2015 issue, Mr Heon Soo Kim, was identified as a member of the Kosin Church in Korea, when in fact he is a member of the Independent Reformed Church in Korea. My apologies for the error. **ed.**

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

NB: In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

Singles and the church

John A Haverland

I suspect that many of you who pick up this issue will be married. You will see the title of the issue, and of this first article, and will be inclined to turn the page looking for something else to read that relates more to you and your situation. You will think, "I'm not single so this doesn't apply to me." But wait! Keep reading, because this article applies to all of us in the church, young and old, married and single.

A problem

I want to begin by addressing a problem in our Reformed Churches of New Zealand: the strength of our families.

You are probably thinking, "I should have turned the page. Pastor Haverland is barking up the wrong tree! Our strong families are a great *plus* in our Reformed churches, not a problem!" And that is true. Our churches hold a clear covenantal theology, we emphasise God's faithfulness to his promises from one generation to the next, and we urge parents to teach their children to love God and obey his commands. When we gather for worship there may be three, or even four generations of some families present in the church all worshipping the Lord together. This is a great strength and a wonderful blessing.

But often our strengths are also our weaknesses. Our churches are some-

times so focused on family members and relationships that those outside of these family circles are ignored. Family members may not see much of each other during the week and when they see each other after the services on Sunday they immediately gravitate to each other to enjoy a good catch-up. As they prepare to go home they invite their children and grandchildren for lunch or dinner. There is, of course, nothing wrong with having family members over for meals, and nothing wrong with building strong families and maintaining strong ties. My concerns are expressed in the following questions: "Who is looking out for those who do not have family members in the church? Who is caring



“The Lord places all of us in different situations of life: single or married, young or old, healthy or ill, newly married or widowed after a long marriage.”

for the singles who lack the extensive family network you enjoy? Who talks to them after church? Who invites them home for lunch or for dinner?” Sadly, all too often, the answer is, “no one”, or “hardly anyone”. Singles in our churches can feel isolated and lonely.

The appropriate response is not to downgrade our emphasis on the covenant, nor to loosen off our family ties but rather to widen the scope of our conversation, hospitality and ministry so as to include those not directly connected to our families. In this article I want to offer some suggestions about how to do this. But first, what does the Bible have to say about being single?

Biblical teaching on being single

On the sixth day of creation God created Adam; “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” Later that day the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” So God made Eve, “a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:7,18). This means that the usual or typical pattern for human relationships is for a man to be married. Most men and women seek to be married.

The entrance of sin into the world, however, has disturbed this general pattern. When people give way to the temptations of their sinful nature they may break their promises of marriage,

commit adultery and walk away from the partner of their youth. As a result many people who were married are now single. Others look for companionship and even “marriage” with someone of the same sex, and we are seeing an increase in same-sex marriages and civil unions. Many older women are widows because their husbands have died, often many years before them. The widespread effects of sin mean that there is sometimes an imbalance between the number of men and women in a country. Times of war, such as the two World Wars, and the civil wars that have troubled many countries have caused the death of millions of young men leaving many young women without a man to marry. The one child policy of China, and the cultural preference for a son, means that many of the young men in that country will never marry.

Yet singleness is not always a result of sin. One day Jesus was in a discussion with the Pharisees about marriage and divorce and the disciples were listening in. Jesus gave a strict limitation on divorce citing “marital unfaithfulness” as the only ground for such an action. When the disciples heard this they said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and a wife, it is better not to marry.” In response Jesus spoke positively about being single, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it” (Matt 19:9-12).

Jesus himself was single. So was the apostle Paul. He wrote to the church in Corinth, “I wish that all men were as I am. But each one has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that” (1 Cor 7:7). His singleness enabled him to travel extensively as a missionary because he was free from the concerns and obligations of looking after a wife and children. He wrote, “I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs – how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world – how he can please his wife – and his interests are divided” (1 Cor 7:32f). He went on to make the same applications to women who were unmarried and married. A single person can serve the Lord with undivided and focused energy. Paul

gave this advice “because of the present crisis” (v 26). He wrote this letter to the church in Corinth in 55AD from the city of Ephesus. Fifteen years later the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Roman armies. The Romans were already persecuting the Jews and the evil emperor Nero was extending this persecution to Christians. In view of those troubled times of distress Paul, out of pastoral concern for their well-being, advised those who were unmarried to remain so; “Those who are married will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this” (1 Cor 7:28).

What Paul wrote about that situation applies to many other situations. Married men and women are concerned about how they can please their spouse and so their interests are divided. Single men and women are able to serve the Lord very effectively because they can devote all their time and energy to “the Lord’s affairs – how he can please the Lord” (1 Cor 7:32ff). This is evident in the way many singles in our churches have a compassionate ministry to the needy, widows and elderly. Often they have the time that many families do not. Two striking examples of single men having influential ministries are The Rev Charles Simeon (b. 1759) and The Rev John Stott (b. 1921); you can read about their lives and influence in the following pages of this issue.

Suggestions to singles

Accept your situation: The apostle Paul wrote that he had learned to be content whatever the circumstances, in any and every situation (Phil 4:11f). He applied this to being well fed or hungry, to living in plenty or in want. He could also have mentioned that he had learned to be content in his single state. Have you learned the secret of being content in your situation? Have you accepted God’s providential ordering of your life? Are you content in the circumstances in which God has placed you?

Offer hospitality: The Bible commands us to offer hospitality to others (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2). Often singles expect families to invite them into their homes, but the command to be hospitable is addressed to all of us, no matter what our situation. As a single you could invite a family to your home, or invite in other singles. To do this you would need to be well-prepared, and you may need to accept (or ask for) some assistance from those you have invited. Showing such hospitality is a wonderful ministry

to others as well as providing you with opportunities for conversation, fellowship and friendship.

Seek to serve: Some singles are tempted to become introspective and introverted. This is certainly a temptation to resist! Rather, look for opportunities to serve others. Perhaps you could start a ministry for other singles in your church. What about beginning a Bible study group? What gifts and abilities has the Holy Spirit given to you? Are you using these in the church to your full capacity? Can you teach a Sunday school or catechism class? Are you able to contribute to the ministry of music in worship? Is there an opportunity to be a counsellor in Cadets or Gems? How about going to visit the widows and widowers of your church? Is there a need in the wider community that you can address? Can you be more active in the ministry of evangelism? There are endless opportunities for service in the church and kingdom of Christ. You can't do everything but you can do something.

Suggestions to couples

At the beginning of the year my son-in-law was elected as an elder in another Reformed church. Under his care he has a number of members who are single, over a spread of ages. Recently he asked me, "How do we minister to the widows and singles in our churches?" That is a good question. Here are a few suggestions.

Accept them: Sometimes we look at single men and women with pity as

though they have missed out on the joy and fulfilment of marriage. But Christian single people can and do find their fulfilment in knowing God and in serving the Lord Jesus. We have two elderly women in our church who have been single all their lives and have led full, active and interesting lives. Single men and women need to be accepted as full members of the covenant community, affirmed in the church and encouraged in their service of the Lord.

Offer hospitality: When we invite others into our homes we tend to ask those who are similar to us – people of the same age, the same background, having the same family situation. But this is too narrow. There are many single people in our churches who are looking for company and conversation and who would love to join with your family for coffee or a meal. When you invite in another family what about inviting in a single person as well? Look out for singles at special times of the year such as the New Year, Christmas and Easter; these can be lonely times for those who are on their own. Have you thought of "adopting" a single in your church or in your wider community and taking a special interest in him or her, remembering in particular birthdays and anniversaries, especially the anniversary of the death of a husband or a wife? Sometimes we use the excuse that inviting single people into our family homes will only make them feel more lonely and jealous of our situation, however that is assuming too much. We are commanded to offer

hospitality to all, not only to those of similar situations in life.

Start a ministry: Some of the single men in the Pukekohe congregation have told me about one family in the earlier days of the Pukekohe church who often invited the young people of the church to their home. This family had a wonderful ministry to the singles that is still remembered and appreciated. I can think of another family in this church in more recent times that had a generous ministry to young men. Is this something you could do? Is the Lord calling you to this area of service?

Conclusion

The Lord places all of us in different situations of life: single or married, young or old, healthy or ill, newly married or widowed after a long marriage. Some of you reading this may be single and may desire to be married, and that is a legitimate biblical desire, which you may pray for and look for. Others of you may be separated, divorced or widowed. Whatever your family status is Jesus calls you as an individual to follow and serve him with all your energy and passion. He calls you to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, to love your neighbour as yourself, and to serve the Lord in your various callings, making the best use of the time and opportunities he gives to you.

Mr John Haverland is the minister in the Reformed Church of Pukekohe.

The single state (2)

One is a whole number

Janice Reid

Why am I single? Some would say it's because the statistics are not on my side: it's long been common wisdom that women outnumber men; but the facts say otherwise. Globally there is more or less parity in numbers between the sexes¹.

So, maybe I'm single because I'm not trying hard enough to find a mate, or I'm trying too hard, or I need to lose weight, or maybe it's because men like a particular type of personality that I just don't have. Too often, the fallback question for singles is: "Is something wrong with me?"².

Ronald Koteskey has a different

answer: he says the reason I'm single is because I was born in the 20th century – the first one on record where marriage of choice (in western countries) became more common than arranged marriage³. Add this to the results of emancipation and feminism, and western women are studying more, and working more, before they get married. As Jen-

nifer Marshall says, “While our feminist forebears were frustrated by barriers to fulfilling work, today we are frustrated by obstacles to lasting love, some of which seem to be the result of the feminist movement itself”⁴.

So, why am I single? The real answer is, “none of the above.” I’m single because a sovereign God, who loves me so much He gave His Son, has decided that it should be so for now. He withholds no good thing from His children (Psalm 84:11), and He has promised that I am complete in Christ (Col 2:10). So

and many married people are desperately lonely, it’s also the case that acute and prolonged loneliness is often the unique burden of single people.

When I was at Bible College, I was very happy in my close friendship with another female student. Then she met her future husband, and *our* relationship came to a screeching halt, as she spent all her time with him. I remember feeling shocked by the sudden change, and one night I went to the College chapel to enjoy a wallow in self-pity. There in the chapel, I had what seemed

would be called children of God; and such we are” (NASB).

Sexuality is yet another characteristic of single people. Being single doesn’t negate the fact that we are created as sexual beings, with the same hormones as anyone else, and with needs that married people are able to meet ... but we cannot. Single people often wonder how to deal with sexual desires, and many question God’s lovingkindness for giving them such desires, yet with no way to fulfill them – the Bible is clear that sex is to be shared only between

“But in truth we are complete already, because we are complete in Him (Col 2:10).”

if you’re single as well, I hope you can take comfort from the fact that *one* is a whole (complete) number! Don’t ask yourself “why am I single”; ask “what is God doing with and through my singleness?”⁵.

Characteristics of singleness

What’s it like being single? About the same as being married, with a few exceptions. In her booklet, “*Singleness: how to be single and satisfied*,” counselor June Hunt lists several characteristics that are common for singles⁶.

For example, singles often struggle with their self-image. This can be compounded by people who imply that singleness is second-best – a waiting period until we find a spouse. But no: Jesus made it clear that some people were not to get married (Matt 19:10-12), so perhaps the better prayer is for contentment within the will of God ... whether we are single or married, or single again after marriage.

Another characteristic of being single, says Hunt, is loneliness. While it’s true that marriage is not a cure for loneliness,

like a vision of the future – alone, all down the corridor of years. The prospect overwhelmed me with grief. Was the vision a true one? I don’t think so. It was a deception, because while I am still single after all these years, I have never been *alone*. “I am with you always,” says Jesus⁷ ... and He is.

Rejection is another characteristic that singles may experience differently from married people. While rejection by one’s spouse (or parents, or children) has to be among the worst sort of hurts, the rejection of never being chosen in the first place has its own pain. It leads us up the garden path (as my mother used to say). It tempts us to believe the myth that if only we were married, we would be fulfilled, accepted, and loved⁸. The answer to this is found in 1 John 3:1 – God’s great love for us goes beyond any acceptance (or rejection) by humans. “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we

husband and wife. What does that mean for singles? We should recognize that our sexuality reflects who we are, and not merely what we do ... and strive to bring glory to God by remembering that our bodies belong to Him⁹. McDonald gives some tips that can help singles to guard not only our hearts, but our eyes and our minds – avoiding temptation in this area (1 Cor 10:13).

Bitterness is another common characteristic of singles. It manifests itself in accusations that God is punishing us, or that life is unfair. The truth is that life *is* unfair: God in His grace allowed you and I to be born in a great country with many opportunities, foremost among them the exclusive membership of His covenant community. We *could* have been born as Asian labourers and captured to work as slaves on a fishing-boat; we *could* have been north African women married off in early puberty to be somebody’s second or third wife, with



no chance to ever learn to read – let alone enjoy the freedoms we do today. Saying that God isn't fair for not giving us a happy marriage is in itself an unfair complaint. And remember the exhortation to the Hebrews: "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (12:15).

This list seems filled with negative traits; the characteristics of single people. But every one of them can also be characteristic of those who are married! What married people *can't* enjoy is the

beginning with Adam and Eve, and continues on to show how vital marriage was under the old covenant: the blessing was passed through Abraham's seed (Gen 21:12). Even God's promise to David incorporated the idea of blessing through physical offspring (2 Sam 7:9b-16). In fact, this idea was so important, the Old Testament contains "no known examples of those within Israel who voluntarily chose to remain single. To have done so would have been to voluntarily embrace God's judgment"¹².

Moving on from there, Danylak

offspring are not related genetically, but spiritually.

All of this comes to fulfillment in the new covenant through Jesus Christ. He is the promised *holy seed* (Isa 6:13) and represents a change in the way the Bible treats marriage and singleness. As Danylak explains, "The essence of this paradigm shift represented by the very core of the Christian gospel has profound implications for all areas of life ... whereas marriage and physical procreation were the necessary means of building the physical nation of Israel, the



“So, singles: look for happiness where it is best found: in God Himself, and in his people, the family of faith.”

freedom to be alone when they want. And I don't know of many young parents who have the freedom (or the money!) to go out for coffee now and then. There is definitely an upside to being single!

Finally, single people have always been vital to the missionary enterprise. If there had been no single missionaries, Christianity would be much less a world-wide religion than it is today. Imagine the world without the apostle Paul ... and without a quarter of the missionary force today¹⁰. And imagine the world without the most notable single of them all: Jesus!

A theology of singleness

An interesting perspective on singleness comes from Barry Danylak, himself single. He has developed what John Piper calls a "theology of singleness"¹¹.

Danylak looks at the role of marriage in the Old Testament. He traces the development of the concept, be-

describes how the sins of the Israelites led to the removal of covenant blessing through offspring, for both the royal line (Jer 36:30b-31a, Jer 22:30) and for the people themselves (Amos 8:1ff). But, "though both the people and their rulers failed, the hope embodied in God's eternal covenant promises remained. On account of their disobedience, the Israelites were subject to the loss of their land, their offspring, and, for some, their name ... but God would raise up David's offspring and establish the throne of his kingdom forever"¹³.

This new promise of God, rather than coming through offspring, was to be received by faith (Heb 9:15). Danylak explains several OT passages, including the prophecies of Isaiah that confusingly describe how the suffering Servant of God has offspring after he dies (Isa 53:10) ... and how the barren woman in chapter 54 has more children than one who is married. How can this be? Because the

spiritual people of God are built through the process of spiritual regeneration"¹⁴.

There's a lot more, but perhaps you get the point, here: God is not building His holy nation through physical birth, but spiritual birth. Marriage is more than having children, but marriage in the OT was the vehicle through which descendants were brought into the covenant. Now, that is no longer the case: we come to the covenant through Christ alone (Rom 8:28).

I can't do credit to Danylak's theology of singleness in such a short space (he took a whole book to do it, after all!), but the upshot is that singleness can be a powerful witness for the gospel, showing other people the sufficiency of Christ in our lives. So it's wrong to ask, "Why am I single?"

One is a whole number

Complaining about singleness is understandable – our hormones, our emotional desires, and seeing other people in relationships

may militate against satisfaction with single life. But however understandable, it's still the wrong approach. In 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul (a single) calls singleness a gift. Who are we to say that God is mean or has bad timing in the giving of it?

Single people sometimes feel incomplete, that something fundamental about them is "not right." Our friends may suggest that the antidote is to get married. But this – however lovingly it is intended – can lead us to a works-based mentality¹⁵: we may think that if only we can succeed in finding a mate, we will have "arrived," and the reward will be happiness. But in truth we are complete already, because we are complete in Him (Col 2:10). So, singles: look for happiness where it is best found: in God Himself, and in his people, the family of faith¹⁶.

- 1 www.ined.fr/en/everything_about_population suggests that in 2010, out of every 1,000 people on the planet 504 were men, and 496 were women. The increasing imbalance since then is largely attributable to India and China's preference for male children, and consequent abortion of female babies (www.qz.com).
- 2 McDonald, S. (2005) *And she lived happily ever after: Finding fulfillment as a single woman* [iBook version]. InterVarsity Press. Retrieved from www.christianbook.com. Chapter 1.
- 3 Koetsky, R.L. (2011). *Missionary Singles Issues*. ebook. Wilmore, Kentucky: GO International. Retrieved from www.missionarycare.com.
- 4 Marshall, J.A. (2007). *Now and not yet: making sense of single life in the twenty-first century*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, p.49.
- 5 McCulley, C. (2004). *Did I kiss marriage goodbye? Trusting God with a hope deferred* [iBook version]. Crossway. Retrieved from www.christianbook.com. Chapter 1.
- 6 Hunt, J. (undated). *Singleness: How to be single and satisfied*. Ebook. Hope for the Heart Ministries. Retrieved from www.christianbook.com.
- 7 Matt 28:20, NASB.
- 8 June Hunt, section 2, "Definitions."
- 9 McDonald, chapter 6.
- 10 Koetsky, p.15.
- 11 Danylak, B. (2010). *Redeeming singleness: how the storyline of Scripture affirms the single life* [iBook version]. Crossway. Retrieved from www.christianbook.com. Foreword.
- 12 Danylak, chapter 2.
- 13 Danylak, chapter 3.
- 14 Danylak, chapter 4.
- 15 McCulley, chapter 1.
- 16 Chin, P. W. (2014). Really, it's okay to be single. [blogpost, 14 October 2014] Accessed from www.christianitytoday.com

Miss Janice Reid is a member of the Reformed Church fo Hamilton and works as a radio trainer for Reach Beyond.

The single state (3)

Charles Simeon

Sally Davey

It is one thing to agree, in theory, that the single Christian life can be a good and useful one. It is quite another to see its possibilities realized in the life of a faithful believer. A picture, after all, says a thousand words. That is why I offer here this brief introduction to Charles Simeon – preacher, discipler of men and single servant of Christ.

Simeon's life

The story of Simeon's life is quite easily told. Born in 1759 to the family of a wealthy lawyer in Reading, England, Simeon was educated at Eton, then King's College, Cambridge. His mother had died when he was young, and his father and brothers did not believe. In his very first term at Cambridge he discovered, to his horror, that he would be required to attend communion. Though





ignorant of saving grace, he knew enough to understand that he was completely unworthy to eat the Lord's Supper. But by Easter he was a changed man. A book he was reading on the Old Testament explained how the Jews transferred their sins to the head of their offering; and suddenly he grasped the idea of Christ's atonement. By Easter Sunday he was convinced, and from that day on knew that Jesus' sacrifice had removed his guilt.

In Simeon's day Cambridge was almost completely unreligious, and he found no one with whom to discuss his faith. Eventually he found fellowship with Henry Venn, vicar of Yelling, twelve miles outside Cambridge, and this was greatly encouraging to him. After three years he received a fellowship at the university, which gave him a stipend and certain rights as a member of the college. Such fellowships required that those holding them remained single, but his biographer H.C.G. Moule said he deliberately and resolutely chose it "that he might the better work for God at Cambridge."¹ It was his dream one day to be vicar of Holy Trinity Church in the centre of Cambridge, though – and God granted this to him when the Bishop of Ely ordained him a deacon, and after he had spent a summer preaching interim in St Edward's church in Cambridge.

On 10th November 1782 he preached his first sermon at Holy Trinity; and there he stayed until his death on 13th November 1836. Simeon's church had wanted another man to be given the charge, and put up a stubborn and hostile resistance to him for 12 years. Doors were locked against him and against those who wanted to hear him preach. Pews were locked so that anyone attending

services had to stand in the aisles or at the back. When Simeon brought chairs for them himself, the recalcitrant parishioners threw them out. But God gave Simeon grace: it made him humble and patient, and he persevered. Eventually he won the respect and love of the church people, and tremendous affection among many students. Over the decades of his ministry, hundreds of young men were trained by his preaching and warmed to his evangelical faith. In the view of Lord Macaulay, son of his friend Zachary Macaulay, writing to his sister in 1844, "if you knew what his authority and influence were, and how they extended from Cambridge to the remotest corners of England, you would allow that his real sway over the Church was far greater than that of any Primate [Archbishop]."²

Walk with God

One might well ask where the perseverance of such a man came from. It is hard to imagine anyone patiently enduring such opposition and general contempt for two years, let alone twelve. Where were Simeon's reserves of strength? Those who have studied his life have only one conclusion: his personal walk with God was rock-solid. Simeon was convinced of his own sinfulness, found joy in his salvation, and devoted a great deal of time each day to Bible reading, prayer and fellowship with God's people. He lived simply in a suite of rooms in King's College, first on the ground floor, then after 1812 on the top floor of the building. This gave him considerable quiet and privacy, and he could even walk up and down on the roof (which his bedroom gave access to) completely unseen. Up on the roof he could look over the town and pray for its inhabitants. His time alone with the Lord was the great source of his remarkable ministry in the heart of Cambridge.

A friend of Simeon's named Housman lived with him for a number of months and described Simeon's daily devotional habits:

"Simeon invariably arose every morning, although it was the winter season, at four o'clock; and after lighting his fire, he devoted the first four hours of the day to private prayer and the devotional study of the Scriptures ... Here was the secret of his great grace and spiritual strength. Deriving instruction from such a source, and seeking it with such diligence, he was comforted in all his trials and prepared for every duty."³

It is not hard to understand how this

single man, so committed to following Christ, was able to achieve so much in one lifetime.

Preaching

At the centre of Simeon's ministry was his preaching. This was his first priority during the 54 years of his service at Holy Trinity church. Sunday by Sunday he preached through books of the Bible; and he is credited with reviving the Puritan system of expository preaching. Moderate by nature, he did not want to be labelled either Calvinist or Arminian, but he was known as an evangelical Calvinist, and for good reasons. Above all, he wanted Scripture to speak for itself – and made deliberate effort not to intrude between his hearers and the text: "My endeavour is to bring out of Scripture what is there, and not to thrust in what I think might be there. I have



a great jealousy on this head; never to speak more or less than I believe to be the mind of the Spirit in the passage I am expounding."⁴

One reason we are able to have such a clear picture of how Simeon preached is that he completed a collection of his sermons in 21 volumes, and lived long enough to place a set of *Horae Homileticae* into the hands of King William IV in 1833. It is known to preachers today as a Bible commentary, but it is really an outline of sermons on the entire Bible, which is a huge achievement, and a gift to the church at large. As *Logos's* introduction puts it, "Simeon's aim with this commentary is "Instruction relative to the Composition of Sermons." To this end, his exposition of the Scriptures is de-

signed to maintain a focus on the more general aspects of a passage over and above possible treatments of particulars. His test for a sermon, as he teaches in *Horae Homileticae*, is threefold: does it humble the sinner, exalt the Saviour and promote holiness?" Simeon had in mind what might help young preachers as they approach a passage; and the book is a kind of Paul-to-Timothy production; a passing-on of accumulated wisdom to younger men.

Discipleship

Living in King's College and preaching at a nearby church, Simeon became known to generations of students. Though he had been the object of scorn and ridicule in the university community in the early years of his ministry, over time he won the respect of town and gown alike. Students usually first encountered him



through his preaching at Holy Trinity; but those who wanted to learn more would be invited to join him for conversation and instruction in his rooms at King's College. He began sermon classes on Sunday evenings for those intending to enter the ministry in 1792, as at that time, though a high proportion of Cambridge students were intending to be ordained, there was no formal instruction for them in either preaching or pastoral work. In 1812, when he moved to larger accommodation upstairs over the archway in the Gibbs building, he began his famous Friday evening tea parties for conversation. These continued until 1830. Every Friday from 6 to 7pm he was available for the students to ask him anything they liked, while his two servants passed around tea. Sometimes sixty or eighty were present. In this way

Simeon disciplined a multitude of young men, and had an enormous impact on the Church of England.

But in addition to the large numbers who came once a week, Simeon made himself readily available to those who became his friends. Among these were the future missionary to India, Henry Martyn, and the young man who became the founder of the CMS mission in New Zealand, Samuel Marsden. Simeon kept up a tender, watchful and prayerful correspondence with such men after they left Cambridge. His grief was deep when Martyn died at the age of 31. Simeon also took care of the son of Thomas Thomason, another missionary, when the boy was sent home to be educated. Young James received the love and care of a son from Simeon, right through his years at school until he later returned to India. Foreign missions, as well as the encouragement of evangelical pastors in England, were two of Simeon's dearest projects.

Simeon's influence spread beyond England. Many summers he travelled to Scotland, and while on a semi-holiday he would visit churches, especially those of the evangelical ministers of the Church of Scotland. Wherever he went he found opportunity for fellowship or to offer encouragement to those in pastoral ministry. He was simply the kind of man always ready to see a need and offer help. He was frequently asked to preach, and enjoyed it immensely – particularly so in that it meant extending the hand of friendship from the English (episcopal) church to the Scottish (presbyterian) church.

Keeping on to the end

Simeon's busy life of service contains another lesson for us: that of labour to the very end. He was active in preaching and teaching right until two months before his death at the age of 77. Three years before he died he even preached five University sermons in one month. (These preaching occasions were open to the whole university community, and to be chosen to preach them was a special honour). Simeon himself believed his durability was a special providence, given to him because of his earlier disobedience. He tells that, in his younger days, he had promised himself a very active life up till the age of sixty, and then a "Sabbath rest" – ie, retirement. However, in 1807, after 25 years of ministry, his health deteriorated suddenly, to the point that he could hardly speak or walk; and

preaching was difficult. This condition lasted for 13 years, until his last visit to Scotland. On crossing the border he suddenly felt his strength revived. From that day on he laboured diligently. He seemed to hear his Master saying to him:

"I laid you aside, because you entertained with satisfaction the thought of resting from your labour; but now you have arrived at the very period when you had promised yourself that satisfaction, and have determined instead to spend your strength for me to the latest hour of your life, I have doubled, trebled, quadrupled your strength, that you may execute your desire on a more extended plan."

John Piper responds to Simeon's use of his old age by asking: "Is there any biblical warrant for the modern, western assumption that old age or retirement years are to be years of coasting or easing up or playing? I am not aware of such a principle in the Bible ... Who knows whether God would give awakening and revival if we would renew our dreams of ministry to the perishing world and not just the 'ministry' of playing with our grandchildren?"⁵

When Simeon died, he was honoured by all in Cambridge. Every bell in the town rang at his funeral. Where there had once been almost universal derision of the gospel he preached, there was now respect. This could not have been achieved without the commitment and energy of a life spent like Simeon's. He never married, and had no physical children, yet his sons throughout England numbered in the hundreds. His good work lived long after him.

Endnotes

- 1 Quoted by John Piper in *The Roots of Endurance* (Intervarsity Press, Nottingham, 2002), p.84
- 2 Quoted by Handley Moule in *Charles Simeon* (London, Intervarsity Press, 1965; first published 1892), p.148
- 3 Quoted by John Piper, *Roots of Endurance*, p. 106
- 4 Quoted by Piper, pp.89-90
- 5 Piper, p.96

.....

"A stale church can be refreshed by him [the Holy Spirit], a sleepy church awakened, a weak church strengthened, and a dead church made alive."

John Stott

.....

The single state (4)

Faithfully Serving God: Recommended Reading on Singleness

Veronica Hoyt

A healthy perspective on singleness requires a proper understanding of marriage. Indeed, the Bible begins and ends with a marriage. In Genesis 2:18 God says that “it is not good for the man to be alone” and consequently he provides a wife for Adam, Eve. Similarly, at the end of Revelation we read of another marriage: “Let us rejoice and be glad

and give him the glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7). Sandwiched in between these two pivotal events, are various references in the Bible to the importance of marriage. Psalm 128 presents the blessings of wife and children in the Old Testament. In many other places in the Old Testament, God uses the metaphor of the marriage covenant in poignant ways to demon-

strate his covenantal relationship with his “bride”, the nation of Israel. The sentiments in Exodus 6:7, where God says “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God,” are repeated throughout the Old Testament, culminating in the death of the Lord Jesus, heralding in a new era, which includes not only Jews but also Gentiles as “the people of God” (1 Peter 2:9), the bride of Christ, all of which will climax at the end of



“Single and married Christians share the same purpose, to be faithful in their service of God in the set of (marital) circumstances given to them, as they walk on that path towards the wedding of the Lamb..”

this age in that final marriage feast (Revelation 21:2,3).

Marriage is an important picture in the Bible of God (the husband's) relationship with his people (the wife). Indeed, Paul makes this very clear when he uses the metaphor of marriage to speak of a greater reality, "Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32) – of Christ's unending faithfulness, his love even to the point of death, and the church's trust in Jesus as its saviour and king. In this way marriage is a picture of cosmic proportions (Colossians 1:18-20) that looks forward to the ultimate marriage referred to in Revelation.

Faulty understanding

Despite this high view of marriage in the Bible, we need to be careful not to inflate the importance of marriage or being in a "relationship" to the point where being

single is seen as living a life that's incomplete. I think that many Christians have fallen into faulty ways of thinking about marriage and singleness. We easily make an idol of marriage and assume that singleness is always less than desirable, rather than another way of serving Jesus. How many of us assume that we need to be married, that marriage is what it's all about and to be single is to be short-changed? It is good to remember that marriage is a temporal institution (for this life only). It is not even the best that this life has on offer, but is actually a picture of something better that has already started in part (with the new era ushered in by Jesus' death and resurrection) and will be completed when he returns in glory, a relationship with the Lord Jesus himself. Married and single Christians alike are both on that joyful, but also difficult, road that leads to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

At the same time, it's fair to say that our marital status shapes us; it is formative and should be shaping us towards greater faithfulness in our service of God. Is this true for you, whether you are single or married? Do you see your marital status as a means of serving God, bringing him glory? I'd like to explore this topic by highlighting a number of resources that address this issue in relation to singleness.

*Married for God*¹ by Christopher Ash has a healthy perspective on marriage, and hence also of singleness. He debunks popular Hollywood views of self-centred marriage, with its focus on my needs (hopes, desires) and where life's ultimate quest is in finding that one-and-only, perfect other half. Moreover, he argues very convincingly that marriage is not fundamentally God's remedy for loneliness (neither Genesis 2 nor the rest of the Bible supports this idea), but that, instead, marriage is a particular way in which two people faithfully live out God's purposes for them, in the service of God. We are all, whether married or single, called to serve God in this world (Genesis 1: 26-28) and marriage simply changes the ways in which we serve him. In his chapter titled "Is it better to Stay Single?" Ash reflects on the benefits (and otherwise) of being single in God's service as Paul outlines them in 1 Corinthians 7. He concludes that marital status doesn't determine the value of our contributions to the kingdom, but that they will, to some degree, look different. He adds some examples of serving that are better done by singles. But, in all cases,

where there is legitimate choice, we are free to choose whether to marry, or not.

Singleness not a tragedy

For many, their singleness is at best a quiet regret and at worst viewed as a personal tragedy. Two books that help put this in perspective are *The Heart of Singleness*² by Andrea Trevenna and *The Single Issue*³ by Al Hsu. Both books highlight the pressures that singles are under, keeping in mind that no two singles' lives are alike. Trevenna's book is helpful for singles who struggle with contentment. She argues that singleness is a gift: "... if I can only see it, I can use it to serve my Lord ... When we find our relationship status in knowing Jesus, we are able to see that singleness is not a quiet tragedy, but a great opportunity" (62). Her final chapter gives wise advice on how to deal with potentially stressful situations for single people such as engagements/weddings, holidays, when friends have children, special days such as Christmas. One of her appendices includes a number of short biographies of single women (never married, divorced, widowed). In each we get a sense that each single person's story is unique, but that in each situation God generously and faithfully provides what that person needs.

Following Christ – highest calling

Al Hsu's book is a longer, more in-depth practical theology of what it means to be Christian and single. He challenges traditional views that have relegated singles to a second-class status, and argues that the western fairytale of being married "happily ever after" is not the only paradigm for a successful life. Among other things he writes about: the myth of the gift of singleness; aspects of God's will and singleness; freedom and opportunities that singles can enjoy (and use in God's kingdom); and the importance of community for singles. He concludes his book with two helpful, practical chapters, one a thoughtful discussion on romance, dating, and sex and the other on challenges/temptations that singles face, such as: putting life on hold as if real life hasn't yet started; being over-committed; being self-centred; being unaccountable; living a life of regret. Hsu concludes his book with a call to singles: "... singles can choose the way of the cross – the path of single-minded, Christian discipleship that demonstrates to the world that following Christ is the highest calling and greatest adventure for all people, single

or married ... the most important thing in life is not whether one is married, but whether one knows God ... We can encourage other singles to live the dynamic lives God intends for us ... Let us put our lives on hold no longer" (196-97).

Another longer, weightier treatment of this subject is *Redeeming Singleness* by Barry Danylak.⁴ He states: "The starting point for this book is to reflect on the purpose of biblical affirmation of the single life by exploring how singleness itself fits into God's larger purpose of redeeming a people for his glory" (15). He traces the development of the theme of singleness in redemptive history, showing how, in Jesus, it finds its place in the kingdom of God. He notes that while "in much of the Old Testament we generally find a negative disposition toward one who is single and unmarried, in the New Testament the view we find is much more positive" (21). This is a thorough study and it's impossible to do it justice in an article like this one. Nevertheless, I recommend it for anyone who would like to read an in-depth theological investigation of this topic.

Grounded in Jesus alone

A personal reflection on living faithfully as a single person and the importance of

the church family in the lives of singles can be found in "The S-Word: Some Thoughts on Singleness."⁵ In this article we glimpse something of Valerie Ting's faithful response to God's purposes for her: "God has burnt into my heart the truth that my identity, value, and belovedness are grounded in Jesus alone ... As I learn to frame my life in terms of singleness, God is teaching me that this frame has a beauty to it that is comparable to the more popular frame of marriage. This beauty might be fragile, but it is rewarding. I am – for now, for however long God ordains – a single Christian woman, and God looks at me and my life, and he says: it is very good." She also comments in her article on the cultural and social weight placed on singles by the Christian community, ranging from clumsy matchmaking efforts and awkward comments to mixed messages coming from the pulpit. She writes: "If pastors and married people in the church tacitly assume or explicitly state that marriage is what it's all about, the clear corollary for single people is that we are short-changed, second-rate people." She also notes the importance of married people including singles in their lives, to welcome them into their families.

To conclude, single and married Chris-

tians share the same purpose, to be faithful in their service of God in the set of (marital) circumstances given to them, as they walk on that path towards the wedding of the Lamb. Christopher Ash thus concludes his book by pointing to this larger marriage story in the Bible, of God and his church: "Every human being is invited to be married in the end, and not only to be married, but to be blissfully married in the marriage to beat all marriages ... This is an amazing and beautiful prospect: a time when all the deepest yearnings and longings of the heart will be fulfilled. And it is open to all who will come in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ in this age" (167).

1 *Married for God: Making Your Marriage the Best it Can Be* by Christopher Ash. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007.

2 *The Heart of Singleness: How to be Single and Satisfied* by Andrea Trevenna. The Good Book Company, 2013.

3 *The Single Issue* by Al Hsu. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997.

4 *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of the Bible Affirms the Single Life*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010.

5 Web: <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2012/07/the-s-word-some-thoughts-on-singleness/>

Mrs Veronica Hoyt is a member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

Feminine focus

Jenny Waldron

Being a helpmeet – biblical or unwelcome idealism?

God's way works! Whether it is for our salvation, for our lives, or for our very being! His plan for us is perfect and wonderfully suited for us, as the human race, but also for us as sisters (and brothers)! He is the author and finisher of our lives, having chosen us before the foundations of the world were laid. He created each one of us, precious in his sight, and He will carry us through until our last breath here on earth when we will join Him forever and ever. Amen!

His way also brings peace and harmony into our lives, homes and marriages. God's way gives glory to Him as we live our lives how He has prescribed for us. We are not to buy into the world's thinking, because a Christian's standard is the Bible. It is the truth and we are to stand on it, even if it is directly opposite to what the world promotes. It is not easy to live for Christ but, if you are willing, the Holy Spirit will work in your life to help you do what God commands.

As we look at God's plan for married women, we are going to look at how He created us to be a helpmeet, or helper, to our husbands. In Genesis 2:18, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him'." A helper "corresponding to" him. God prescribed this before the fall; when all was still perfect and very good. The Geneva Study Bible footnote says that "The word 'helper' entails his [the man's] inadequacy, not

her [the wife's] inferiority, for elsewhere the same word is used of God.¹" The Holy Spirit is described as our Helper denoting our need for help and our inadequacy to do all that we need to do.

Barbara Hughes beautifully expresses this about the Helper:² "In John 14:16 Jesus comforts his disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit, referring to Him as "another Helper" (NASB). By addressing the Holy Spirit as a helper, Jesus forever elevated the position of the one who assists. Trace the Holy Spirit's actions through the New Testament, and you'll find the Spirit repeatedly encouraging, comforting, coming alongside, and helping. The work of the Holy Spirit, the Helper, is beautiful! And women are never more regal and lovely than when they follow His example, cherishing their responsibility as helper." Being a godly wife is a high calling and although challenging is also full of blessing.

When we tie being a helpmeet together with being a submissive wife, the reason for being a suitable wife for our husbands has clarity and purpose. Our husbands need our help! Most married women will have already realized this in many ways but, (and there is always a "but") are we being truly helpful? Do we merely co-exist in the same house or do we offer our help grudgingly? Do

we look for opportunities to help?

Practical help

Look for ways to help your husband. Be proactive! This is a modern word that simply means being watchful and anticipating and then doing! Recently, our family had been invited to a friend's place for dinner, and as my husband, David, was out and about doing pastoral visits we had arranged to meet there. He rang me, just as I was leaving home, to say he had become quite wet as he had been caught in the rain and asked if I could bring him a change of trousers. Thinking about how cold and wet he probably was, I slipped his fluffy slippers into the bag too. Well, you would have thought all David's "Christmases had come at once!" as the saying goes. He was so delighted! Not so much that he needed the slippers but he could see that I had extra carefully thought about him and thereby clearly showed my love for him.

Think about areas that you could help your husband. Be in the practice, if your husband asks you to do something, of responding with a "Sure!" or "Yes, Dear," or "Yep, on to it!" As we do this more and more, it becomes a practised response. I recently read how Elizabeth George is in the regular prac-

tice of saying "sure" to her husband's requests. He rang from Singapore late one night, and told her that they really should go there and minister. She straight away replied "Sure!" then asked "Where is it?"³ Later on they did go to Singapore and had a wonderful year of ministry there.

As we practice being a helpmeet to our husbands and being submissive to them, we show to our children, our extended families and friends, the love the church has for Christ. We show them the gospel. Christian marriages should be a shining light in the dark world we live in – the world of divorces, arguments, abuse and uncertainty.

I think this is where feminists (or the feminist part of ourselves) start jumping up and down, shouting "Doormat!" Anyone who knows me well knows I am not a doormat, but I do (try to) live my life in submission to my husband, being his helper so that he can do what God has called him to do. We can help our husbands in many small ways as well as in more meaningful ways. We should try to help him in whatever capacity we can to encourage him and help him. Whether it is making him a cup of tea while he is preparing a sermon/studying/working in the garage, accompanying him on a pastoral visit, helping him fit



“Our marriages should be loving, faithful, submissive, and intimate, just as the church loves Jesus because we are to reflect the close relationship of Christ and the church.”

a car part, attending a conference with him, having tea on the table in time so he can attend a meeting, keeping the lounge clear of junk so people can visit. Ask your husband for ways that would help him, in his daily life, in his work, his ministry and his times of rest and play. This is a very practical part of marriage that bonds one another closer and closer.

Spiritual help

As I was writing this article I realized how much each of us are influenced by people around us and how, as wives, we can be a godly influence on our husbands. We often talk about marriage being the “great sanctifier” but what does that actually mean? In a marriage, we live in such close proximity to another person that there is no hiding sin, but there is also every opportunity to learn to become more and more holy. As we live together we learn to act in more godly ways, and through God’s strength, we then influence the people around us, including our spouses and children. Sometimes we help best by just listening to him as he pours his heart out. Maybe, at times of trouble and concern,

he needs you to be your most gentle, quiet, kind and loving, and your most prayerful.

Prayer is another key to being a spiritual help. Prayer is so often underrated and left to the last resort. Yet it is our primary avenue of communicating with God, and accomplishes much.

“Prayer lays hold of God’s plan and becomes the link between His will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit’s prayer.” ~ Elisabeth Elliot.

The beauty of prayer is that God uses it to shape and mould us, first and foremost, as well as whomever we are praying for.

“It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone.” ~ Hudson Taylor .

This is true for the unsaved, the missionary and our husbands. When we see our husbands struggling with an issue, we can pray for them. This can often do more than us opening our mouths and offering our piece of wisdom into the situation. It is letting God do the changing and all glory then goes to Him. When a big decision needs to be made or an issue crosses your, or your husband’s, path you can be very helpful, by praying about it first. So often we make decisions as we talk, out loud, not in any particular order or having given much thought to it. Take time to pray about it. We often underestimate the power of prayer, but God loves hearing us and answering our prayers. Are we helping our husbands, spiritually, when we are grumpy, angry, prickly, nagging and/or argumentative? Or are we more likely to help him, spiritually, when we are patient, kind, faithful, peaceful and self-controlled?

Start being a helper

It is never too late to start becoming a helpmeet for your husband and being submissive to him. Yes, the journey will be more difficult the longer you have been doing your own thing and not following God’s pattern for marriage, but, oh, it is so worth the effort! If you are reacting strongly against this, (I know I certainly did early in my Christian walk!) ask the Lord to renew your mind and show you the right way to go. Only the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, can change our minds, hearts and attitudes so that we can change our actions. God did not promise us an easy life but He did promise that He would send His Helper to help us, so that we can help

our husbands! Sometimes, it seems too hard and we feel like we are just a “dogs-body”, but as we keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, being enabled by the Holy Spirit, we will become more and more like Jesus in character, in deed and in spirit. There is no other earthly relationship where two people are so closely bound to each other more than marriage. Not even a parent/child relationship is as intimate or close. Our marriages should be loving, faithful, submissive, and intimate, just as the church loves Jesus because we are to reflect the close relationship of Christ and the church. Our time here on earth is short, and we need to redeem that time by fulfilling the role that God has laid before us.

As we flavour our helping with submission it no longer becomes a burden, but a delight and an expression of our deep love for our husbands. It is a wonderful, blessed role that the Lord God has given married women.

- 1 Geneva Study Bible – Footnote for Gen 2:18
- 2 p.152 *Disciplines of a Godly Woman* – Barbara Hughes – Crossway
- 3 p.88 *A Woman After God’s Own Heart* – Elizabeth George – Harvest House Publishers



The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts, p.121-122

There is among all sorts of persons a crying need to take a dose of moral courage. The need is not for more cleverness or more education, now for more analysis or more research into man’s problems. It is for more straightforward speaking. It is for more openness. It is for more boldness to call things what they are and to set them in the light of God’s Word. The man who will courageously refuse to play the popular game of deception is the man who will win the title of prophet to this generation.

This is what every pulpit should be doing. It is the glory of the pulpit that there a man speaks as the interpreter of heaven’s mind, no matter what the world may say. Our people come to God’s house weary. Their minds have been numbed by the secular argument which eliminates God and anaesthetizes moral judgement. When they come to the congregation, they thirst for renewed ethical and spiritual rearmament. The task of the pulpit is to sharpen blunted convictions in those who hear us and to renew their confidence in the things they have believed out of God’s Word.



Presbyterian pastors imprisoned in Sudan set free

Two Presbyterian pastors imprisoned for their faith in the Republic of Sudan for nearly eight months have been released.

Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)'s office of World Mission received a communication earlier on 5 August 2015 from the Rev. Philip Akway Obang, general secretary of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC), confirming the release of the Rev. Yat Michael and the Rev. Peter Yen Reith of the SSPEC.

Michael was detained by Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) on 14 December 2014, at the end of a service at Bahri Evangelical Church in Khartoum. On 11 January 2015, Reith was detained by the NISS after attending a prayer meeting in Khartoum. On 4 May 2015, a range of charges were filed against the pastors, some that could have resulted in life in prison or the death penalty if they had been convicted.

+ Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

+ Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church

Korea: Still divided 70 years on

Gahee-Dong Catholic Church, Seoul. On 15 August 1945 the Korean peninsula was divided along the 38th parallel: Russia and Japan to temporarily administer the North, the USA to administer the South. This arbitrary division of Korea exactly 70 years ago has resulted in the very different halves of the peninsula we see today – one “god-less”, the other (one could say) “super-godly”.

The legacy of the first Christian missionaries in the 1800s could not look more different in North and South Korea. In the North is a regime which routinely jails, tortures and executes people for their faith, while the South has some of the largest churches in the world and sends out more missionaries than anywhere except the US.

But what of Korea before it was divided? The rich Christian history of the North is a surprising fact. In the early 20th Century Pyongyang came to be known as the “Jerusalem of the East”,

with so many church crosses dotting the horizon.

Unlike today, the North was always more open and tolerant than the traditionally agricultural backwater of the South. With its position bordering the rest of the continent, it was the place for commercial and cultural exchange with China and Manchuria. The young American missionaries who came in the 1880s found success using a three-pronged approach of evangelism, education and medicine. They built churches, schools and hospitals and used the recently translated Korean Bible. Decades of missionary work culminated in the Great Pyongyang Revival of 1907, with emphasis on public prayers of confession, including repentance for hatred of the Japanese, who had been occupying the city since 1904. Mass conversion meant churches sprouted up everywhere.

However Japan's formal rule from 1910-1945 was a traumatic time; Buddhist and Confucian traditions suffered, along with the Church. After the end of the Second World War and partitioning in 1945, the North began attacking the Church. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was officially established in 1948 – and thus began the steady persecution and elimination of Christianity from the national psyche under the leadership of Kim Il Sung. Many Christians at this time escaped the Stalinist utopia and fled to South Korea.

Following the Korean War (1950-53), any form of public Christian worship was banned and surviving Christians had to take their belief “underground”.

North Korea is today atheistic and totalitarian, but missionary activity is still alive and well along the north-east Chinese border. According to Andrei Lankov, a political scientist, the regime is “deadly afraid of Christianity”, fearing it could spread as it has in South Korea and become an alternative power source and ideology. As testimonial evidence points to the growth of underground “catacomb” churches with Christians ready to face torture, prison camps and execution, perhaps it should be.

In South Korea today, about a third of the population is Christian. This phe-

nominal growth (from just 2% before the Korean War) can be explained partly by social and economic factors. The 1950s were dark days, following that war. There was a sense of national emergency to rebuild the country and the Protestant work ethic appeared to encourage hard work as a way towards achieving worldly success. Some also saw this as a sign of God's blessing. The Church's association with the US appealed to Korea's striving for modernity, but its growth was also authentically spiritual.

Prior to the war – under occupation and during times of persecution – many Christians had ascended the mountains around Seoul in the hours before dawn to pray and intercede for their country. They became known as Prayer Mountains and the practice continues to this day, but now at purpose-built retreat centres. Korean prayer is intense, often with many voices out loud, simultaneously. Many churches still have early morning prayer before the day begins, as well as overnight prayer on a Friday night.

However, in the 1990s church growth began to slow. Some analysts point to complacency with rising living standards, and also to scandal and bickering in some of the larger churches, although the Koreans' attitude of resilience and hard work, coupled with their desire for community, means the Church today remains very strong.

World Watch Monitor, August, 2015

Nepali constitution could render Christianity illegal

In Nepal, 80 per cent of the population is Hindu; Christians comprise between 1.5 and 3 per cent. Nepali Christians fear that proposed amendments to Nepal's new constitution, likely to come into effect on Monday (10 August) after seven years of parliamentary discussions, could eventually render all Christian activity illegal.

Attempting to convert someone to another religion is already prohibited in Nepal, but the proposed amendments would mean that anything perceived as “evangelistic” could be punishable by law.

Article 31(3) states that “any act to convert another person from one religion to another, or any act or behaviour

to undermine or jeopardise the religion of another [will be] punishable by law".

Christians fear this will pave the way for an "anti-conversion clause" to be written into the penal code, which could result in prison sentences or hefty fines for "offenders".

On paper, the proposed amendments read the same for all religions, but no specification is given for what constitutes an "act to convert" and, in a country where 80 per cent of the population is Hindu, the hammer is likely to fall hardest on minorities, including Christians.

Christians are concerned that if the latest draft is passed, regular Christian activities – such as holding church services accessible to all, or even simply organising events to aid the disadvantaged – could be interpreted as "evangelistic" and, therefore, punishable by law.

Nepal's first democratic election was held in 2008, after a bloody civil war led by Maoist guerrillas overthrew the Hindu monarchy. But seven years later, Nepal is yet to complete its transition to a secular democracy by declaring its

new constitution. Its Constituent Assembly has missed several deadlines for the announcement.

The Church has never been recognised as an official religious institution within Nepal, and Nepali Christians complain that they have suffered inequality and persecution for decades. Christians had hoped that a new constitution enshrined by the new secular democracy would guarantee equal rights and religious freedom for all.

"We have defined full religious freedom [as] every citizen [having] the freedom to choose the religion of his or her choice ... [That] people will be free to share their faith with fellow citizens. And then, also, people should have the freedom not to believe in any religion," Dr. K. B. Royaka, a former member of Nepal's National Human Rights Commission, told *World Watch Monitor* in April.

However, Royaka acknowledged that "secularism does not always mean religious freedom, as we have seen in other parts of the world".

Now there are those within the Nepali government who are pushing for the

country to throw off its "secular" tag and revert to its position as the world's only official Hindu nation.

Vishal Arora, who has reported for *World Watch Monitor* from Nepal, says the influence of India's BJP government is a "key factor" driving some of Nepal's high-caste Hindu politicians to demand that Nepal be restored as a Hindu nation.

There are others calling for the word 'secular' to be replaced in the constitution by the words 'religious freedom'.

However, a recent editorial in the *Kathmandu Post* notes that although "in theory the words 'religious freedom' sound positive ... "in practice [they] could have damaging consequences ... In Nepal, the majority religion is Hinduism, and almost all the powerful people belong to this religion. They have the capacity to push for demands that Hinduism enjoy special status in Nepal, and the clause that enshrines religious freedom in the constitution will enable them to do so. By contrast, members of minority religions have relatively little political and economic clout."

World Watch Monitor, August, 2015

Books in focus

John Stott's Right Hand

by Julia Cameron

Reviewed by Tim Challies

Here's a new book that combines two things I love: Books that come from off the beaten path, and ones that deal with interesting but ordinary people. As it happens, *John Stott's Right Hand* was privately published after being turned down by trade publishers, and it tells the life of a fascinating but relatively unknown individual.

John Stott's name is known around the world. For decades he was one of Evangelicalism's most prominent voices. His ministry impacted millions and his legacy will endure for generations. What most people do not know is that for 55 years Frances Whitehead served alongside him as his secretary. But she was more than that. She was his gatekeeper, stenographer, typist, encourager, and enabler. Fittingly, before he died he also made her executor of his estate. This

book tells her story.

Whitehead first encountered Stott when she, as an unbeliever, began attending his church. She was a young woman working for the BBC and would sometimes walk across the road to visit his church on her lunch break. Going into that church she would hear Stott preach, and over time the words he preached began to take root, and she came to faith. It was not too long after her conversion that Stott asked her to serve as his secretary. She accepted the position, little knowing that she would hold it for more than five decades.

For all those years Stott and Whitehead labored side-by-side, both of them remaining single and both of them remaining singularly focused. She typed his books, she kept people from interfering with his rigid schedule, she organized his life, she drove him to and from the airport, and she even traveled with him on many occasions. She sat beside him in the nursing home when

he went to glory, and eulogized him at his funeral. She was his helper and right hand through almost his entire ministry.



Of course people will naturally wonder about the nature of the relationship. Was it romantic? Did they ever struggle with feelings for one another? Is it even possible that they could work together so closely and for so long while maintaining a platonic relationship? Indeed, it is.

John's and Frances's ability to work together so closely for so long was a mark of grace. Two single people of similar age working long hours, under pressure, in pursuit of the same goal, would, for most mission agencies or churches now be avoided. It is a tribute to both of them that for twenty years, before the study assistants arrived, they succeeded in working so closely as a team of two. They both had a high level of inner discipline, partly innately and perhaps partly the product of their upbringing and education. While unspoken to one another, they resolutely did not allow for romantic hopes to take root; embarrassment and awkwardness would have undermined a remarkable working friendship.

It was a unique partnership, and one for which the English language perhaps has no word. In an age which underplays the dignity of serving, it is hard to understand that aspect alone of Frances's make-up, a woman so able in her own right. Her role was texture, layered, diverse. It has been described as a kind of "marriage without the marriage."

What kept them from transgression, or even true and godly romance, was their shared sense of calling. Stott believed God had called him to a life of singleness so he could give himself to writing, teaching, and raising up leaders. Whitehead believed God had called her to a life of singleness so she could serve Stott. Mark Labberton says, "It was a relationship of mutual honor and love, respect and affection, playfulness and partnership, independence and interdependence. John was able to do what he did because Frances was able to do what *she* did."

Whitehead's life is interesting because she is an interesting person, but it is interesting as well because it intersected the life of such an important figure. She allowed him to be who he was, and she allowed him to do what he did. Those of us who have benefitted from Stott's books and commentaries and other efforts have unknowingly benefitted from Whitehead's long service. She is one of those unsung and unknown Christians who faithfully served her Savior by serving one of his servants. I am thankful that we can now know her story as

well as Stott's, because it is, really, just one story in two parts.

Challies.com/book-reviews
December 2014

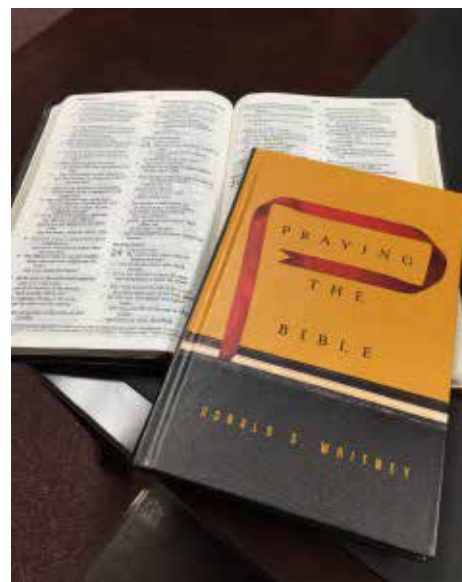
Praying the Bible

By Donald Whitney

Published by Crossway – 2015

Reviewed by Pastor Andre Holtslag

I will keep this review short and to the point. We love the Lord and we know it is good and necessary to pray. However, our experience of prayer is often like this: Five to six minutes of prayer can feel like an eternity. We find ourselves repeating the same lines, over and over again. Our minds wander, quickly and often. We don't *feel* like praying. And dare we admit it out loud? Prayer feels boring. So we come to the conclusion that we must be second-rate Christians. Is this the problem? No, says Donald Whitney in his new book, *Praying the Bible*, the problem is our method. As Whitney says, "We pray the same old things about the same old things ... I am convinced this problem is almost universal. Virtually from the beginning of their Christian life, it seems that nearly every Christian suffers from this habit." So with this short, 90 page book, Whitney reminds us that it is very normal to pray about the same old things. They are the stuff of everybody's life! What he urges



us to learn, however, is to pray about the same old things *using the Bible*, and especially the Psalms. He is convinced that every Christian can have a meaningful, satisfying prayer life. Our Father in heaven does not want prayer to be so difficult or confusing that we may never *enjoy* communion with Him. I will leave you to discover his simple methodology from the book. He breaks it down into easily learnable, bite-sized chunks (He even includes an appendix on learning to do this with a group). And I assure you that if you get a hold of a copy and read it, your prayer life will be immeasurably helped. It is available from www.gracebooks.co.nz



www.personalisedhollandtours.com

a taste of Holland and Portugal

We offer all holiday makers from Dutch expats to those who simply want to see Holland for the first time the chance to spend time discovering the wonders of the Netherlands and the Algarve region in Portugal. Your personal tour guide Jan Veltrop will take care of everything for your entire stay.

The miracles of Yom Kippur

Mike Moore

At sunset on 25 September, the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar will commence.

Synagogues around the world will be filled to capacity with men and women seeking atonement for their sins and hoping to be inscribed in the Book of Life. But apart from afflicting their souls by fasting, on Yom Kippur not a single Jewish person will be able to follow the order of service set out in Leviticus 16. For almost 2,000 years the Jewish people have lived in exile without a temple, without a priesthood and without sacrifices. Everything in the biblically prescribed rituals focused on the temple, the high priest, and two goats: one goat for the Lord, the other 'for Azazel'. But all that came to a dramatic end in 70AD.

According to the Talmud, the rabbinical text central to mainstream Judaism, forty years before the temple was razed to the ground by the Romans some disturbing changes occurred. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Jerusalem Talmud, known as the *Yerushalmi*, and the longer, more authoritative *Bavli*, or Babylonian version.

'Forty years before the destruction of the Temple,' says the Jerusalem Talmud, 'the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open' (*The Yerushalmi*, translated by Jacob Neusner, p.156f).

According to the Babylonian Talmud, 'Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['for the Lord'] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the western-most light shine; and the doors of the *Hekal* would open by themselves' (*The Soncino Talmud*, tractate 'Yoma,' 39b).

The four miracles

According to both versions of the Talmud, between AD30 and AD70, every night the gates of the Temple would open by themselves. In *Yoma* 39b, the Babylonian Talmud records that 'Rabban Johanan [ben] Zakkai rebuked [the doors], saying: "O Temple, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself? I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah b[en] Ido has already prophesied concerning thee: 'Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars'."'

Leviticus 16 states that the high priest was to cast lots over two goats, one of which was sacrificed on the altar while the other was driven into the wilderness symbolically bearing Israel's guilt. During the last forty years in which this ritual took place, according to the Talmud, 'The lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand'.

Two stones were taken as lots from the high priest's breastplate. The 'lot for the Lord' designated the goat to be offered on the altar. For the Lord's lot to come up in the left hand two years in succession was regarded as unpropitious. For that to happen every year for forty years was deeply troubling because the mathematical odds against such an occurrence are 2^{40} , two to the power of forty, to one. For the benefit of non-mathematicians, two to the power of forty is 5,500,000,000 to 1!

A third miracle apparently took place during the final generation of the second temple era: every night 'the western light went out'. The western light of the Menorah, the seven-branched lampstand, was the 'eternal flame'; it was to be kept burning perpetually. The doors of the temple faced east and during the day, only the western lamp and the two eastern lamps remained alight. In the evening, the middle four oil lamps were re-lit from the flames of the western lamp but, says the Talmud, every night for forty years, the western lamp went out. There are 12,500 nights in forty years. Mathematically, the odds against

the same lamp going out every night for 12,500 consecutive nights is $7^{12,500}$ to 1, or seven to the power of 12,500 to one (the reason we can't print that many zeros is because they would occupy about six pages of Herald!).

The fourth miracle of Yom Kippur was that 'the crimson thread remained crimson'. The Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt was noted for his almost eccentric painstaking attention to detail. When he painted *The Scapegoat*, he travelled to Palestine to set up his easel on the shore of the Dead Sea in the Judean wilderness. Hunt was aware that according to Jewish practice, in the first century, the scapegoat had a scarlet cord tied to its horns. If the cord turned white, it signified that atonement had been achieved. A scarlet thread was also attached to the temple doors where, in the glare of the Middle Eastern sun, it would quickly be bleached. During the last forty years of the ritual, according to rabbinic tradition, the wool remained red.

More questions than answers

All this is, of course, tradition. But why would the rabbis record these things if they were mere legend with no basis in fact? The compilers of the Talmud were aware that there was deep significance in the destruction of the Temple. Orthodox Jews still regard the Talmudic record of the miracles as true, even though they recognise the dark overtones. Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587BC because of the rampant idolatry and social injustice in Judea; what could account for the fact that Israel has been without a temple for nineteen centuries?

'Why was the second Sanctuary destroyed, seeing that in its time they were occupying themselves with Torah, [observance of] precepts, and the practice of charity?' asks *Yoma* 9b in the Babylonian Talmud. The answer it gives is, 'Because therein prevailed hatred without cause.'

When Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak

Rabin was gunned down by one of his own people in November 1995, a shocked *Jerusalem Post* editorial lamented that such 'causeless hatred' had resulted in Israel's temple being removed. When I read that JP editorial 17 years ago, the hair on my arms stood up because it brought to mind John 15:25: 'But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their Torah, "They hated me without a cause".'

Addressing the Talmudic claim that the scarlet cord did not turn white, anti-missionary Rabbi Tovia Singer of Operation Judaism says, '... the reason this miracle [of the cord turning white] ended 40 years before the destruction of the second Temple was due to the deplorable lack of social justice and brotherly kindness among the Jewish people ...'

The explanation raises more questions than it answers. First of all, there appears to be a contradiction because, according to *Yoma* 9b, the Jewish people 'were occupying themselves with Torah, [the observance of] precepts, and the practice of charity.' How could there have been, simultaneously with Torah study and charity, a 'deplorable lack of social justice and brotherly kindness'? If both conditions co-existed, why do Orthodox Jews insist that man's 'evil inclination' (the *yetzer hara*) can be overcome by Torah study? If there was a lack of social justice and brotherly kindness, Israel was in greater need of atonement than ever; so why was the nation's only means of atonement removed? If, as Orthodox Jews believe, repentance and good works are more efficacious than sacrifices, the long term effects of the removal of the temple must have been ultimately beneficial; so why do Jews mourn the loss of the temple and pray for a third temple?

Ultimate answers

A simpler and more satisfying answer is provided by the New Testament, an answer that holds out hope for the Jewish people. Hebrews 10:12 expresses the point clearly and succinctly: 'But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.' The only seat in the Holy of Holies, where the blood of sacrifice was presented on Yom Kippur, was the Mercy Seat, the throne of God. No high priest, however holy, could sit there. According to Hebrews, Messiah presented his blood in the true Holy of Holies, of which the one in the Jerusalem temple was a mere symbol.

Depending on which system of dating you follow, forty years before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple Jesus was either baptised and anointed by the Spirit or else he was sacrificed for the sins of his people. Following the chronology of Colin Humphreys in *The Mystery of the Last Supper* (see the March issue of the Herald), I take it that Jesus was baptised in 30AD, and his subsequent anointing by the Spirit of God set him apart as the Messiah.

The casting of lots for the two goats on the Day of Atonement was not

have 'the light of life'. In chapter 12 verse 46, he declares, 'I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness.'

With the coming of the true 'light of the world,' the menorah had served its useful purpose; a greater temple with an infinitely greater light was now in the world. After the conquest of Jerusalem by Rome a generation later, the beautiful seven-branched temple lampstand would be taken to Rome as part of the victor's spoils, never to be seen again.

These things being so, is it any wonder



The Scapegoat. Holman Hunt

a matter of chance of luck. Proverbs 16:33 is clear about that: 'The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.' A lot did not have to be cast to determine the role of Jesus because, according to Revelation 13:8, he was chosen as God's Lamb before the creation of the world. Jesus took on himself the role of both goats; the one which was sacrificed and the other which symbolically took away the sins of Israel. With the coming of the Lamb of God who would bear away the sins of the world, what need was there for further offerings?

In John 8:12, Jesus announced in the temple courts that he was 'the light of the world' and that whoever followed him would not walk in darkness but would

that the gates of the temple were supernaturally thrown open each night? Following the death of the Lamb he had provided, Israel's God threw open the doors to his house for all. This Yom Kippur, pray that God's Spirit will open the eyes of the Jewish people in synagogues everywhere to this great reality.

Reproduced from the Herald, official magazine of Christian Witness to Israel.

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) is celebrated by the Jewish community on 23 September each year.

The legacy of Geerhardus Vos

Danny E. Olinger

“He was probably the best exegete Princeton ever had,” Benjamin B. Warfield once told Louis Berkhof. Abraham Kuyper was so taken with his academic acumen that Kuyper offered him the chair of Old Testament studies at the Free University of Amsterdam when he was only twenty-four years old. J. Gresham Machen commented that if he knew as much as he did, he would be writing all the time. Cornelius Van Til considered him the most erudite man he had ever known.

Testimonies like these abound concerning Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949), professor of biblical theology at Princeton Seminary from 1893 to 1932. Possessing the rare combination of first-rate exegetical, philosophical, and linguistic ability, Vos produced books and articles that remain standard reading today in Reformed theology. Although he never joined the Orthodox Presby-

terian Church, Vos befriended many of his former Princeton students who did, and his theological influence remains in the church to this day.

And yet, few men ever avoided the spotlight as much as Vos did. Irenic to a fault, he did not have the constitution to engage in controversy like his Princeton colleagues Warfield and Machen, although agreeing with their positions. Cosmopolitan in an age of nationalism, he was often ignored in the classroom by American students turned off by his thick Germanic accent. By the end of his tenure at Princeton, he had to resort to self-publishing what would become his most influential book, *The Pauline Eschatology*. In retirement, he became better known as the husband of Catherine Vos, whose *Child’s Story Bible* sold more copies than all of his books combined.

Vos himself attributed his quiet disposition in part to his Dutch upbringing. He wrote to a friend, “I have always been more averse to, rather than a friend of, a personal ‘stepping into the limelight.’ This is perhaps a residue of the somewhat world-repudiating spirit of the Old-Seceder Pietism in which my parents lived and in which I grew up.”¹ Although Herman Bavinck said of Vos, “A man can be too modest,” Vos’s disinterest in self-promotion was consistent with his theology. Vos taught his students that their focus should be on God himself and the accomplishment of redemption, which has at its center the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As a biblical theologian, the particular area that Vos specialized in was eschatological studies – not in the narrow sense that dispensationalism promotes, but in the broader sense of what constitutes the believer’s hope and goal. An eschatological goal – communion with

God in full in a higher estate – was set before man from the beginning. Forfeited through the sin of Adam, this goal has been achieved on behalf of sinners through the work of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Vos believed that this hermeneutic insight was a distinguishing hallmark of the Reformed faith and covenant theology.

Vos’s work at Princeton was distinguished from that of other biblical theologians of his era in that he staunchly defended the Bible as God’s inspired and inerrant Word. He believed that those who attacked the Bible frequently underestimated God and overestimated man. What man as the creature owes to God the Creator is to receive God’s self-revelation at its full divine value. Said Vos, “It is our duty to emphasize, especially as Reformed believers, that submission to the revealed truth is of the very essence of the Christian religion, being one of the fundamental aspects of that absolute dependence on and surrender to God in which true religion consists.”²

In his book *The Biblical Theology*, Vos further explained how revelation and redemption were intertwined. Scripture is the record of God’s self-revealing activity, and that activity is oriented to salvation in Jesus Christ. What is revealed in seed form in Genesis 3:15, with the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, comes to fruition with the Savior’s arrival in the New Testament. At the heart of the biblical story from beginning to end is Jesus Christ.

Vos believed that the church’s preaching should reflect that reality. Liberalism in Vos’s day had turned the message of the Bible into moralism, aiming to follow the example of the good man Jesus. “Oh the pity and shame of it,” said Vos, “the Jesus that is being proclaimed but too



Geerhardus Vos as a young man.



Van Til in his study with a photo of Vos.

often is a Christ after the flesh, a religious genius, the product of evolution, powerless to save."³ Vos admonished future preachers to do something much different. He urged them in every sermon to leave their hearers with the impression that "it is impossible for you to impart to them what you want other than as a correlate and consequence of the eternal salvation of their souls through the blood of Christ, because in your own conviction that alone is the remedy which you can honestly offer to a sinful world."⁴

In *The Pauline Eschatology*, his last published work while he was at Princeton, Vos argued that the apostle Paul grasped through the inspiration of the Spirit that Jesus Christ had ushered in the kingdom of heaven now through his life, death, and resurrection. The Christian has the members of his body upon earth, which are to be mortified, but as a whole, the Christian belongs to the high mountain-land above. The state of having one's citizenship above with Christ while having one's body still on earth was described by Vos as "semi-eschatological."

In July 1932, Vos retired from Princeton with little fanfare. The greater excitement on Mercer Street that summer was Albert Einstein's arrival six doors down from the Voses. Vos quietly slipped away to California, where he wrote poetry. Following the death of his beloved wife, Catherine, in 1937, he moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he lived with his daughter (Marianne Radius) and her family.

But, even then, the bonds with his students at Princeton who helped to form the OPC remained. Upon hearing

of J. Gresham Machen's death on January 1, 1937, Vos wrote to Machen's brother Arthur: "Dr. Machen for a short while was my pupil at Princeton Seminary. Afterwards for many years, we were associated as members of the faculty, and the time soon came that I learned more from him than had ever been my privilege to impart to him as a teacher. He was indeed a profound scholar, but what counts for more than that, a great man of God and a true defender of our Christian faith in its Presbyterian form. His name will not be easily forgotten, for the impression he made on the religious and theological mind of the church was too deep for that."⁵

After Machen's death, Vos was informed of developments in the OPC by his son Bernardus, a member of Calvary OPC in Middletown, Pennsylvania, and during the visits of Ned B. Stonehouse and Cornelius Van Til to Grand Rapids. Earlier, in 1928, when Van Til was an apologetics instructor at Princeton, he sought Vos's advice on whether he should become engaged in the Presbyterian conflict. Vos told Van Til, then a ministerial member in the Christian Reformed Church, "Look, this is going to be a much broader matter than a single, denominational issue. Princeton may be a Presbyterian seminary under the direction of the General Assembly of the PCUSA, but don't forget that it is a rallying point for many, many wonderful Christian people all over the world

– people who love Reformed doctrine and life ... You cannot, you dare not, stand by and look on like an indifferent spectator when a conflict is being fought in the arena."⁶

Van Til would later honor the man he considered his theological mentor above all others by having Vos's portrait hang above his desk during his tenure at Westminster Seminary. In return, Vos's deep friendship with Van Til was seen in his request that, upon his death, Van Til officiate at the funeral service. Vos died on August 13, 1949, and Van Til, accompanied by OPC minister John J. DeWaard, conducted his memorial service at Roaring Branch, Pennsylvania. Van Til preached from 2 Corinthians 5:1, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (kjv).

The author is the general secretary for Christian Education.

Reproduced with permission from New Horizons, October 2012

- 1 Letter to Albertus Eekhof, October 28, 1932.
- 2 Vos, review of James Denney's *Jesus and the Gospel*, in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, 515.
- 3 Vos, "The More Excellent Ministry," in *Grace and Glory*, 102.
- 4 Vos, "The Gracious Provision," in *Grace and Glory*, 238.
- 5 Letter to Arthur Machen, January 5, 1937.
- 6 William White, *Van Til: Defender of the Faith*, 48.



"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."
Prov 1:7

Teacher Vacancy

Silverstream Christian School is seeking the services of a Reformed Primary/Intermediate School Teacher for the 2015 school year. Silverstream Christian School is a school set up to provide Christian education to our covenant children. Our aim is to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students based on the Reformed Faith. Applicants must be committed to the Reformed Faith and Reformed Christian Education. This is an opportunity to be a part of a vibrant covenant community.

If you have any questions or wish to apply please email:

board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz
or phone Koen van der Werff on (04) 5297 558

Heidelberg



(above) Oldest hotel in Heidelberg, with “Soli Deo Gloria” motto on the gable below the round window.

(below) Gate to the Neckar Bridge in Heidelberg with Church of the Holy Ghost behind it.

Photos courtesy of John Goris

REFORMATION TRUTH ... FULL CIRCLE*

Lovers of Reformation truth
have cherished as from early youth
an input that is clear and sound
in which God’s grace is truly found.

With nurtured Reformation zeal
those truths became a joy so real.
They were spelled out in glad refrain:
this sure foundation to maintain.

It may well be a “shibboleth”
to mark a living faith from death.
So far, so good, but more’s at stake
for truth should lips **and** life remake.

This wondrous truth affects **all** life:**
it brings assurance amid strife.
For like sheep slaughtered some are killed...
Not cut off from His love, **nor** chilled!

Yet *this world* draws:wants us **conformed**:***
But God seeks lives that are **transformed**:
with mind and heart and life made new,
approved by Him who’s wholly True.

Thus soberly we should regard
another better by the yard!
So that by grace that’s given us
we view ourselves with lesser fuss.

Hence gracious love begins to shine
reflecting sweetly ... Love divine;
and added to that basic trait
are hope and patience, joy so great.

In humble praise this grace prolong
that utters oft in joyful song,
anticipating with great mirth
the heav’nly praise revealed on earth.****

So overcoming ill with good,
-As Christ did while on earth he stood-
While graciously we are renewed
He paves our path distinctly viewed.

And so my friends, staunch and reformed:
Seek by God’s grace to be **transformed**:***
Thus celebrating scripture truth,
affecting likewise age and youth.

John Goris
Wellington, July, 2015

*Romans 1:16,17;

**Romans 5-8

***Romans 12:1,2

**** e.g. Revelation 4,5,19