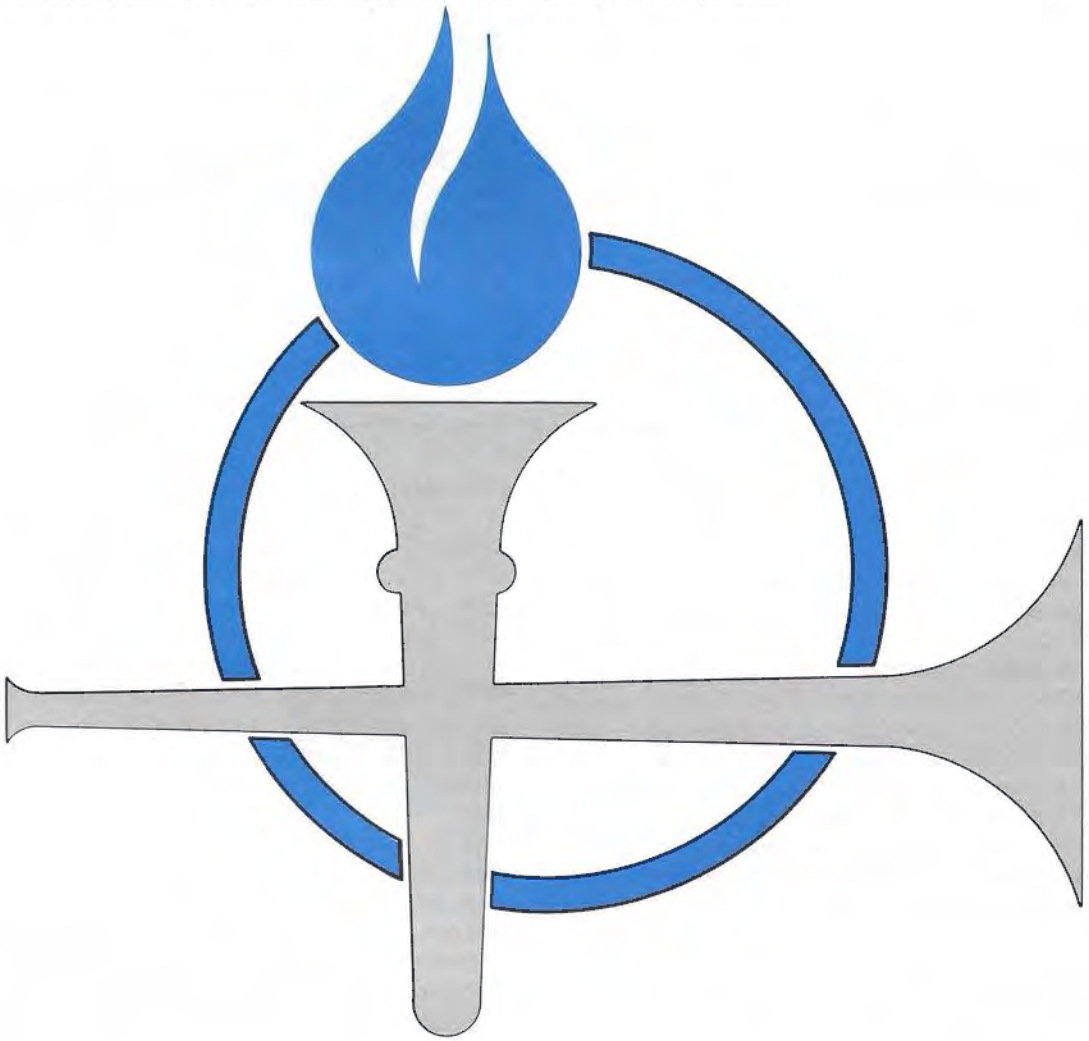
# THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JANUARY 1985



## BIBLE AND CULTURE
## SOUTH AFRICA
## THE JUDGMENT

# Our South African Debacle

Peter De Jong

*BLOOD RIVER:* The Passionate Saga of South Africa's Africaners and of Life in their Embattled Land, by Barbara Villet, 1982, Everest House, New York, 255 pages, cloth-bound $16.95.

A few weeks ago an old friend called to suggest that we ought to review this extraordinarily good book, observing that a wider acquaintance with it might have kept the last C.R.Synod from deciding what it did about South Africa. Although I had previously bought the book and carried it along on a vacation trip, I had not read it. This recommendation prompted me to discover what a superb introduction veteran journalist, Barbara Villet and her South Africa-born husband, Grey, a photographer, have given us to this remarkable country.

The praise that the book deserves should not lead one to overlook the usual gross caricatures that appear every time the writer has occasion to refer to John Calvin and the convictions and creed of the Calvinists. She betrays no sympathy for and virtually no understanding of these, even when she attempts to analyze them in some detail in a manner reminiscent of Freud or Weber (pp. 39ff. 87ff.). Despite this glaring deficiency, this 16-year veteran reporter for *Life* magazine, by becoming familiar with the history and carefully interviewing a wide variety of people, succeeds in conveying a sympathetic understanding of that troubled land that is rare in the reports and information that we usually encounter concerning it.

The title, *Blood River*, is taken from the battle of Dec. 16, 1838 when 500 Africaners withstood the attack of 15,000 Zulu warriors determined to annihilate them. The author early observes that the general condemnation of South Africa and its *apartheit* policy (in which our synod has now joined, denouncing it as a "heresy") is "simplistic", disregarding both "the awesome complexity of South African life" and "the ironic truth that in the last twenty years the land of 'apartheit' had done more to advance the cause of black development than any other nation on the continent" (p.16). This policy had proposed "to give to blacks and other non-whites precisely what the Africaners had always wanted for themselves: political independence and racial isolation." "As I had moved among them", said the author, "I had realized that no matter how contrary to my own liberal predilections the politics of 'apartheit' might be, the Africaners were not a nation of brutal cynics, wholly concerned with the preservation of their economic privilege, but zealots, committed to what they believed to be a just if not holy cause. Persuaded that order must prevail if black as well as white South Africans were to be saved from the kind of regressive chaos that had begun to overtake much of the rest of Africa, and cognizant of the special risk they faced as the last 'white tribe' on the continent, they had worn their convictions like an armor against both their fears for South Africa's future and the world's condemnation of their policies" (p.17).

The writer's development of her subject reminds one of James Michener's *The Covenant* in that she tries to portray faithfully the centuries of history and the roles of leading participants, but her readable and vivid account is much briefer and often seems fairer than Michener's fiction. By means of interviews with a variety of people we are given some idea of the complexity of the problems of the nation and its peoples.* The obvious injustices and the real movement towards their correction are plain, but so are the political forces seeking to exploit and promote conflict instead of fair solutions. The question that concerns South Africans and ought to concern the world is whether the forces seeking constructive correction can win against those promoting revolutionary destruction in the intensifying struggle of that land.

In our November *Outlook* New Zealand delegate to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, Rev. G.I. Williamson, describes the unique opportunity which that body has had to exert a constructive influence on the Africaner churches in their need to deal correctively with the apartheit problem. Because of the determination of the Christian Reformed delegates to join those of the liberal Dutch churches in blindly condemning the Africaners, they have destroyed that opportunity and discredited the synod. It is ironic that Mrs. Villet's book, plainly devoid of sympathy for the faith of Calvinists, should deal far more fairly and sensitively with these South African matters than do our Reformed churches who are supposed to share that faith.

Our delegation to the ecumenical synod, like our own synod in dealing with the same matter, instead of trying to treat it Biblically and fairly, insisted on simply parrotting the irresponsible judgments of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches, which in Africa as elsewhere works to advance the Anti-Christian Communist movement. How does one account for such foolishness? How does it come about that our synod

— while persistently refusing to even recognize the real heresy that is tearing apart our churches, the compromise of the Bible's authority — hastily and without troubling to ascertain facts or to give any significant Biblical grounds, brands the South Africans as guilty of heresy? Answers to such questions are not hard to find if we consider these actions in the broader historical context of our time. The Liberal movement in the churches, having lost faith in Christianity and its doctrines as a religion, has replaced them with a social program (a "social gospel"). Since man has replaced God in the churches' concern, the sciences of man, psychology and sociology, have replaced theology in its studies. Forty years ago my room-mate in a brief Navy assignment, a Presbyterian chaplain, remarked that the only way we deal with God is through our fellow men. He could not see that sin should be considered important either. When I asked him what he intended to preach and teach, he answered that he had been taught some excellent psychology with which he hoped to help people make better adjustments. Within our churches, perhaps few even now would state things quite as bluntly as my Presbyterian colleague did, but the continuing movement in this secular, humanistic direction within Liberal church bodies and their World Council is unmistakable.

Our church executives, educators, and missionaries appear increasingly eager to join, or at least establish their credentials with, this ecclesiastical "mainstream." If the current fashion in the church world is to concentrate on social and political matters, should we not join in that discussion? Calvinists are supposed to have a "world and life view" and Christ came to "liberate." If people today are interested in this as liberation from poverty and oppression is it not prudent for us to also stress such social and political implications of the gospel? Thus one can rationalize our churches' joining instead of opposing the current secularization of the Christian faith. That is what they are at present more and more plainly doing. Their action regarding South Africa is a rather glaring example of such, undoubtedly well-intended blundering. As G.I. Williamson observed, we ought not to support apartheit, but neither should we support the enemies of Christ in their efforts to destroy His gospel and church in South Africa and elsewhere even when they call it "liberation." May exposure to some of the facts about South Africa, as the Villet book effectively presents them, help us recover from our churches' policy that in today's world supports the Lord's enemies rather than His Gospel and people.

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**We can get some appreciation of the magnitude of South Africa's problems if we consider that in the U.S. where we may have to deal with racial minority populations of perhaps 20% we are still far from resolving the problems of achieving equitable treatment for all. Consider that in South Africa the percentages involved are the reverse of ours. There is a 10 to 20 percent white minority who have led and developed the society and economy over centuries, facing the problems of how to organize a society and economy that will equitably accommodate the rapidly increasing 80 to 90 percent who are comparable to our minorities (pp. 102ff., 123ff.). Our answer is to argue, "Why don't they do the obviously fair thing and convert immediately to giving each individual an equal vote? The answers that are offered are that if that is done it will precipitate an immediate civil war, not so much between black and white as between the black tribes to determine who will now rule the country — a civil war that may be expected to destroy the society and economy on which all depend, entailing starvation and massacres — just look at the tragedies and atrocities that have occurred in other countries of Africa in recent years. Is that the direction in which we are telling them they must go? Our official answer is to ignore such considerations, saying, in effect, that they are of no concern to us. Our synod has now simply decreed that if anyone does not vigorously reject the policy of the South African government he is a heretic!*


# THE OUTLOOK

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*"And the three companies blew the trumpets ...and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands...and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon"* (Judges 7:20).

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**January 1985 Volume XXXV No. 1**

# Impressions of South Africa

June Harris

*Miss June Harris, a retired school teacher in Sydney, gives her very vivid impressions of a recent visit to South Africa.*

Towards the end of 1982 I had the opportunity of traveling with Dr. and Mrs. Campbell Andrews and Mrs. Lex Colville who had been missionaries for nearly thirty years in King William's Town (in a semi-rural setting), associated with the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. Mrs. Colville still owned a house and a car there, so the four of us lived in comfort from October 1982 till January 1983 and travelled extensively throughout South Africa.

## The Scenery

An abiding impression is the beauty and variety of scenery, from exquisite coastlines and beaches to the rugged grandeur of the Drakensberg mountains; from fertile acres of vineyards, orchards, wheat, maize and cane fields, pineapple and banana plantations to the barren but beautiful velds of the Karoo; from myriads of bright flowers and birds to the elephants, giraffes, zebras, antelopes, wildebeests, lions and other animals we saw in their natural habitat. Everything is on a vast scale. Blooms on silky oaks, Illawarra flames, jacarandas and bougainvilleas were more brilliant than I've ever seen.

## The Population

My first impression was of teeming multitudes of blacks everywhere and of their animation and good humour in spite of living conditions, very poor by our standards. In supermarkets, banks, post office in King Williams's Town blacks outnumber whites at least ten to one. The situation was similar in East London, but in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg blacks did not seem to predominate in city streets to the same extent. To me it was strange and "wrong" that all men working on building sites, all roadworkers, factory workers, farm labourers, gardeners, house-maids, cooks, waiters and so on were black. People brought up in South Africa, both blacks and whites, seem to take this for granted. The labouring work force is black. It is some consolation that increasing numbers of blacks now also work in banks, offices and in professions, requiring tertiary education.

## The Godliness

Another early impression was how much less godless the country is than Australia. In an ordinary state secondary school for blacks I visited the daily morning assembly is opened with prayer and Bible reading. In a mainly white university (Stellenbosch) at least 85 per cent of the students go to church every Sunday. I heard leaders of the black independent governments in both Franskei and Ciskei openly acknowledge God and stress the need for obedience of His laws. The general atmosphere is not as humanistic, agnostic or atheistic as it is here.

### The Government

Accustomed to hearing the white South African government totally condemned here, I was surprised to learn how much it is spending on raising the standard of living of the blacks, on education at all levels, on social welfare, on amenities of various kinds. In many ways it seemed to me a good government and willing to institute reforms. But it needs to be courageous, to withstand the bias and intolerance of opposition and to begin now to do away with the harsher prohibitions of the apartheid policy like the control laws. Some apartheid problems are very complex indeed and have no easy or quick solutions. Highly educated blacks with whom we talked think it will be best for the country if changes are gradual. But they resent strongly now things like not having access to holiday accommodation, restaurants, hotels, etc.

### The Friendliness

It seemed to me that the blacks are more friendly and welcoming to whites than they are to other black tribes. On several occasions I was conscious of inter-tribal hostility and dislike, whereas the usual feeling towards whites was one of admiration and esteem.

Worshipping regularly with the blacks was a source of inspiration and challenge. They love to sing, and the psalms were sung in beautiful natural harmony. They do not try to hide what they are feeling, and although I could not understand the Xhosa language, I could feel the devotion, the love and reverence for God and the sense of urgency in their prayers.

### The Missionaries

I can't conclude this report without expressing my profound admiration for the missionaries I met, for their commitment to the cause of Christ in this land, for their childlike faith and trust in God to provide. I commented on this to one of them and his answer was: "We've just got to rely on God. The task is beyond us." They have to turn their hand to so many different tasks.

Prayer for all of them would be appreciated.

All were lovable people. All made one feel closer to God, because God is in them and working through them. Black pastors are, of course, assuming more of the responsibility, but, with the exception of Rev. Bryce Taho, not yet much of the leadership.

### What of the Future?

Towards the end of my stay I sensed an underlying fear of the future on the part of most of the white inhabitants. We should pray for the South African Government that strength of purpose and wisdom might be given to enable them to act decisively to give justice to the blacks before it is too late, and to be willing to relinquish some of their power. Blacks and whites need one another, and the blacks must ultimately find a common political destiny with the whites. ●

*Reprinted from the* Monthly Record *of the Free Church of Scotland.*

*Correction*

*The title of the poem on page 13 of the December issue should have been "The Chosen Town."*

# A Significant MEETING

Arthur Besteman

On Thursday evening, November 8, 1984 a capacity audience filled the large auditorium of the North Street Christian Reformed Church of Zeeland, Michigan. The large assemblage had gathered to hear an address by the Reverend Henry Vander Kam, Professor Emeritus of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Orange City, Iowa. The title of the address was "An Analysis of Synod's Decision on Women in Office: Where Do We Go From Here?"

This reporter was thrilled to notice that many young people were in attendance. The audience listened attentively and responded enthusiastically to the address, a summary of which appeared in the November issue of *The Outlook* in a report of a similar meeting which was held in Northwest Iowa. An offering of over $700 was received for the support of the Committee of Concerned Members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America which had sponsored the meeting.

The Committee of Concerned Members was organized early in 1984 in response to many requests for leadership and assistance in the face of the crisis which has arisen in the Christian Reformed Church because of the women in office issue. The appeals for help which came from throughout the denomination, both in the United States and in Canada, could not be ignored and so the committee came into existence.

In May of this year the committee sponsored a conference for office-bearers which was held in Berwyn, Illinois. Both the attendance at the conference and the response to it were very encouraging to the committee. The excellent address given at the conference by Dr. George Knight, III, Professor of New Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary was entitled, "The Biblical Requirement of Male Leadership in Marriage and the Church." The address is available in booklet form for the price of $1.50 and may be ordered from the Sec.-Treas. of the committee, Rev. Harry Kwantes, 3138 Birchwood, S.W., Wyoming, MI. 49508.

The committee is grateful for the response to its activities. A newsletter is issued periodically by the committee. Individuals sharing a concern in common with the committee will upon request to the Secretary-Treasurer be placed on the mailing list for the newsletter. ●

# THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

# The Judgment

Jerome M. Julien

As Jesus continues His explanation of last Things in Matthew 24 and 25, He says, "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory (25:31)." The Judgment will be the next event to take place after Jesus' appearance.

Contrary to what some teach, there will be only *one* Judgment and that will take place at the Last Day (John 5:28, 29; Acts 17:31; II Pet. 3:7; II Thess. 1:7-10).

Two passages, in particular, tell us about the Judgment: Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 20:11-15. We shall first focus on the important points in each of these passages.

In Matthew 25, our Lord tells us that along with the splendor of His throne — a splendor which is His essence. there will be angels present who will enhance His glory. These are the angels who will have gathered all men to the Judgment (Matt. 13:41, 42; 24:31).

He tells us (v. 32) that "all the nations" shall be there, that is, the entire human race. Some, of course, make quite a point of this word "nations." They indicate that this means "nations" and not individuals. However, how can "nations" visit brethren in prison, for example? If they are correct, does this mean that "nations" will be sent to eternal fire in hell? Dispensationalists also insist that these "nations" do not include the Jews. Are they, then, also to be omitted in Matthew 28:19? What Jesus actually says is that everyone — the entire human race will be present at the Judgment — both Jews and gentiles.

The separation which will take place in the Judgment will be based on God's electing grace (v. 33). The sheep — God's elect — will be received of God.

Matthew 25:34-45 sometimes confuses the reader, for it seems to say that our works will determine our eternal state. Actually, however, Jesus is saying that the works of the elect have demonstrated their salvation (25:34-40) and the neglect of the reprobate has demonstrated their lack of faith (25:41-45). Notice that the elect are unaware of their works (vv. 37-40). Apparently these are merely evidences of a transformed way of life.

When we turn to Revelation 20:11-15 we learn some more about the Judgment.

The picture language of verse 11 reminds us that this event is majestic in character. The Judgment Throne is said to be "great" thus emphasizing the magnitude of the Judgment. It is said to be "white" thus emphasizing the glory, holiness and righteousness of the Judge.

Whereas Matthew 25 tells us that all the living will be at the Judgment, verse 12 of Revelation 20 tells us that all the dead will be there, too. Why only the dead? The preceeding verses remind us of the terrible struggles which will take place just before Christ comes. As you read these verses do you notice another difference from Matthew 25? There is no surprise here. According to Dr. Albertus Pieters, these will not be surprised. Being dead, they will already know their destiny.

We read "the books were opened" (v. 12). This means that all men are to be revealed as they are, in their true, ethical character. Our works will be exposed before our consciousness and the world (see *Belgic Confession*, Art. 37). "And another book was opened, which is *the book* of life." This is God's record of His saints (Luke 10:20).

Again in Revelation 20:12, we are told that judgment will be according to works. This means that the ethical value of *all* of man's works will be manifest, even faith and repentance! Praise God for His grace, especially at that moment!

Revelation 20:13 is not giving the next item in the chronology of things. Rather, it is an explanation of how the event of verse 12 can take place: the sea, death and Hades give up their dead.

Then is recorded the condemnation of judgment. Death, Hades and all whose names are not recorded in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire (vv. 14, 15).

What will be the purpose of the Judgment?

The Judgment will *not* be *investigative*, that is, it will not be so that our eternal destiny can then be decided. It will not be the time when we will be declared saved or lost. Our eternal destiny has already been decided. We have been chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). God's chosen shall never perish (John 10:27, 28). We are told that believers shall not be condemned (Rom. 8:1; John 3:18).

This being clear Biblical teaching, the question comes: why

will *all* have to stand in the Judgment? Besides being the clear teaching of Scripture (Matt. 25:32; II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10), there is reason for all men participating in the Judgment. God will clearly be seen as God in this event. God's sovereignty and glory will be demonstrated in salvation by grace. In spite of the sin of His people, He will show grace! Matthew 25 demonstrates this grace. The sheep are called "the blessed of my Father (v. 34)." They are objects of undeserved favor. They are told to "inherit." An inheritance is never earned; it is always given. God will demonstrate His sovereignty in showing grace. But He will also demonstrate His justice in giving condemnation. God will show that He is God by assigning the eternal dwelling places of all men. Thus, *all* must stand in the Judgment.

On that Day of Judgment all will be before the Judge. The Bible says that this will be God the Father (I Pet. 1:17; Rom. 14:10; II Thess. 1:5; I Pet. 2:23), but the Bible also says that Jesus Christ will be the Judge (John 5:22; Acts 17:31; II Tim. 4:8; II Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:32; II Tim. 4:1; Acts 10:42).

How must we understand this? God the Father will judge all through Christ whom He has made Mediator and Judge (Phil. 2:9, 10). In this Judgment He will be assisted by angels and the saints (Matt. 13:41-43; I Cor. 6:2,3).

Now, let us stand back and get a view of all that will be judged on that Great Day.

Of course, *all* the living and the dead will be there (II Tim. 4:1; I Pet. 4:5). No one will be left out (Rev. 20:12; Matt. 25:32; Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10). Both the wicked and the believers (Heb. 13:4; Deut. 32:36; I Pet. 4:17; Mark 12:40; Jas. 3:1) will be there.

Leon Morris, in his *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*, comments, "It is worth noting that the people who will be surprised on that day are not the rank outsiders, but those who think themselves safe within the church (p. 64)." Is this not just what Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:22, 23)."

One other aspect of the Judgment Day — one which we often forget — is the judgment of the world. Peter, in his second epistle, tells us that this will happen on the Judgment Day (3:7). Then, in verses 10-13, he graphically portrays what will take place. D.M. Lloyd-Jones' posthumously published *2 Peter* contains these words of explanation:

> What it means is that the fire will have burned out from the cosmos every taint of sin, thorns and briars, diseases, everything that causes pestilences, everything that leads to earthquakes and calamities. All will be removed, the earth will be purged of every such thing — that is the meaning of fire. It will burn out everything evil, and the result is that there will be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," of surpassing beauty and wonder and glory (p. 200).

All of sin's corruption will be gone, and we will inhabit the new heavens and earth.

The basis for judgment, according to Scripture, is works (Matt. 16:27; 25:35-40; Rom. 2:6; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12, 13b; 22:12). This includes the secrets of our hearts (Rom. 2:6; I Cor. 4:5; Luke 12:2) and *all* things (Matt. 12:36). In the Judgment we shall all be turned inside out, as it were (Matt. 10:26; I Tim. 5:24, 25). question is raised in our minds: why works? After all, we *do not* earn our salvation.

Why works? They are the response to God's Word. They are the outworking in our lives of God's revealed will which we are to obey.

While faith is never earned by works, works are, nevertheless, intimately related to faith. If faith is genuine, there *will* be works (Matt. 7:21; Jas. 2:18, 26).

G.C. Berkouwer, writing in his better days in *Faith and Justification*, wrote:

> The mere fact that Paul speaks so often and fervently about justification by faith and equally often and fervently about judgment according to works should lead us to expect a dove-tailing between them. . . . There is no dualism between faith and these works, though there is a dualism . . . between faith and the works of the law. The relation between faith and works is so intimate that Paul can say that all which is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23. . . . Though it is difficult to characterize this relationship between faith and works precisely, we may speak of works as *giving form to* faith. . . . Barth has called it the "lived-out rreality" of faith. . . . Judgment according to works, then, is not an analytical ethical judgment, but an infallible perception of works in their relation to faith. Recall the definition of good works in the Heidelberg Catechism, where only those works are called good which rise from a true faith and aim at the honor of God.

Of course, there are objections raised against this view of the Judgment, even by brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Some point out that this Judgment is superfluous. After all, those who are already dead know where they will be for eternity. However, what of those still living when Jesus comes again? Besides, it is only the soul which is now in its eternal place. The body must also be consigned and this can only happen after the Resurrection of the Last Day. Also, the righteousness of God and His Christ and the honor of His people must be vindicated publicly. Indeed, the Judgment is not superfluous.

Someone else points out that the sins of believers are pardoned or blotted out. After all, God said that He would remember them no more. However, this does not mean that God can forget, as do we, but that He does not hold them against us. When, in the Day of Judgment, the sins of believers are revealed they will be seen as *forgiven sins* through Christ. The Judgment will declare God's matchless grace.

Still another says, "What of Romans 8:1? We are told, 'There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' Besides, is not justification the answer to the Judgment? We are said not to come into judgment in John 5:24."

First, Romans 8:1. This familiar text refers to being sentenced, along with the results. Sentencing is the opposite of justification. The word for "condemnation" means "penalty" (Cf. Rom. 5:16 and 8:34). Romans 8:1 does not speak against our participation in the Judgment, but that believers will not be given a penalty for sin.

John 5:24 does not mean that we will stand in, or participate in the Judgment. Rather, it also says that the believer will not be condemned or sentenced in the Judgment because of sin. Once again, we have the message of grace!

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be. . . . ●

# The Road Ahead

Peter De Jong

The past week was bracketed by two meetings, one on Monday and the other on Friday evening, both of them concerned with the same subject. The subject of interest was last June's Christian Reformed synod decisions and their expected consequences.

### A Feminist View

The first, held on Monday, Nov. 5, in the Calvin Seminary auditorium, was sponsored by the Committee for Women of the Christian Reformed Church. First Sandra L. Vander Zicht, associate editor of *The Banner*, presented a capable, seven-minute summary of the long synod discussions and conclusions regarding women in church offices. In short, the synod said that while the Bible does teach a male headship in home and church this does not bar women from holding church offices and that women may be admitted as deacons with their work distinguished from that of elders and that churches may put this decision into practice.

Next Rev. Roger E. Van Harn, who was the president of that synod — speaking, he said, "confessionally" — welcomed the decisions as a victory of the Holy Spirit, the gospel of Christ, and the authority of God! Although the issue had not arisen among us until 1969, "the Holy Spirit had laid the foundations" (for it) long ago in the Creeds, specifically, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Bible. Because we are saved by grace, any male restrictions obscure the gospel. Since the synod decisions the "pain" which some had experienced with the old restrictions has shifted so that now others are pained by the changes. He counseled sympathy and patience toward them. He explained that the Holy Spirit had "pulled aside the blinders" to make us now understand the meaning of gender. Because the authority of office is that of serving, the office of deacon may now be the leading office of the church.

The last member of the panel was Rev. Louis Roossien, a first-time delegate to the synod. He was amazed at how much of the synod work was done during coffee breaks and joked that perhaps if there were more coffee breaks more work would be done. He suggested further that instead of voting the synod might cast lots and "let the Holy Spirit decide"; in the voting the Holy Spirit seemed to work with confusion. He traced his own experience especially in mission situations. On an occasion where women had early taken leading roles, later men saw the Bible as pointing in a different direction and brought about a split which he considered Satanic. He objected to the local option provisions of the decisions and felt that the churches should work together in ministry and not get into theological argument about such secondary matters as these.

In the ensuing discussion it soon became apparent that the small number of attenders (filling perhaps half of the auditorium) were by no means all in agreement with the speakers. Considerable discussion concerned the inconsistencies in the synod decisions. One woman asked Rev. R. Van Harn for the biblical evidence to which he had referred for the synod decisions to open offices to women. He referred her to the five study reports, and she replied that she had been unable to find it there and that the Bible seemed to support men's headship and authority. Rev. R. Van Harn anticipated and welcomed the opening of all church offices to women and advocated working for that goal. At this point in history he saw some women who seek office having to pay a price which had never been paid before and he hoped would never have to be paid again. He suggested that women keep on applying for candidacy, perhaps to experience rejection, until some synod would finally give them approval. He thought that the process might take a long time. Will there be a split in the denomination as a result of this issue? He felt that there will not. There is too much denominational loyalty for that to occur.

### The Issue is not Women's Rights But the Bible

Attending the meeting provoked some reflections. Did this rather poorly attended and unenthusiastic gathering represent a growing feminist movement powerful enough to revolutionize the structure and offices of the Christian Reformed churches? This evening's meeting suggested nothing of the kind. To understand this change we must look in another direction. The speakers had emphatically and repeatedly assured us that the Holy Spirit had been guiding the synod decisions. They had, however, made virtually no appeal to the Bible to prove that this was the work of the

Holy Spirit. They had only been telling us their "feelings" about the matter. When asked for Biblical grounds for his position the president of the synod had simply appealed to the reports of study committees. As his questioner had intimated, those study committee reports did not really provide such Biblical evidence either. Although they were ostensibly studies of the Bible, their arguments were often excuses for dismissing the Bible teachings as no longer applicable to our changing culture. Dominating the committees have usually been some of the professors who have also been training the churches' leaders in the college and seminary. It becomes increasingly evident that the training of ministers in recent decades has stressed understanding of and adjustment to our times instead of Biblical doctrine and ethics. It has been brought to our attention that while the *Systematic Theology* of Louis Berkhof is being more and more widely used and translated in other church circles, in our schools it is often dismissed as hopelessly out-dated. Evidently the confusion and radical change in the churches' course is traceable to the growing confusion and Biblical and doctrinal weakness of many of our ministers promoted by such training, rather than to any powerful feminist movement in our churches. [1]

## A Concerned View

The Friday evening (Nov. 9) meeting in the East Church of Cutlerville, dealing with the same subject of the synod decisions and their consequences, was one sponsored by a committee of concerned Christian Reformed Church members. There had been some uncertainty about the amount of interest one could expect to find in such a meeting in this area, and the weather was exceptionally bad — heavy rain and thunderstorms. To our surprise, the church was crowded to overflowing. At some length Rev. Henry Vander Kam traced, as one closely involved, the origin and development of the proposal to place women in our church offices. The issue had not arisen in our churches but had been injected into them by the Reformed churches in the Netherlands by way of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The successive study committees, although sometimes doing extensive Bible study, had repeatedly jumped to conclusions that did not at all follow from the studies. Because an earlier presentation of this address was summarized in the November *Outlook* (pg.10), we pass over some of the details to notice the speaker's 5-point concluding advice. It was (1) to ask consistories to decide that no women would be nominated for church offices in their churches, and (2) to ask consistories to overture for a reversal of the 1984 decisions. Although such actions might appear to be futile, previous overtures concerned a movement while these will concern decisions. (3) Do not pay quotas to support — teach, defend or implement — the 1984 decisions. This means paying no quotas for our college and seminary or home or world missions, because all of these have been promoting and already practicing the un-Biblical policy. He advised not putting the money in escrow, but giving it to causes that adhere to the Scripture and need our support. (4) Wait for the decisions of 1985 and if these do not reverse the erroneous course, seek a convention to continue the Christian Reformed Church. The time is too late for temporizing. If we do not act now our children and grandchildren may blame us for not acting in church reform while there was opportunity for it. (5) Pray increasingly for the church, in order that God may soon give us a place in a church faithful to Him and His Word.

## We Must Act Now!

The remarkably large and enthusiastic attendances at this meeting and at one the night before in Zeeland, as well as at earlier meetings elsewhere, confirm the impression that is also supported by communications from members throughout our denomination that many of the people are ahead of church leaders in seeing the urgent need of such drastic actions as are now being proposed. Unless there is a real movement now to correct the erroneous and destructive course the denomination has chosen, many more people than ever before will be in good conscience compelled to seek church homes outside of it.

The proposal to stop the payment of church quotas may strike some as far too radical and irresponsible. But we must remember that quotas have never properly been the tax-like "assessments" which they used to be called and are still often misrepresented to be. They are *recommended average contributions*. But are not decisions of assemblies "settled and binding?" They are to be considered that only as long as they conform to the Bible, creeds and church order. When assemblies disregard the Bible, creeds and church order, as the recent synod did, the decisions are invalid and may not compel members to support what violates the Word of God. [2] This is what Rev. Henry Vander Kam has properly pointed out. There have recently been panic requests for support from the World Mission Board and from the World Relief Committee, because each finds itself hundreds of thousands of dollars short of its expected contributions. Does this also show the growing loss of confidence of members in our church agencies as these agencies in their practice, show the same confusion of direction and purpose that the synod does?

But some will charge that we who object to the recent denominational actions are destroying the unity of the church. That is not true. That unity has been destroyed. One of the speakers at the Monday meeting referred to the Lord's prayer in John 17 that His people "may be one." He neglected to mention the fact that the Lord prayed for the achieving of this unity by "sanctifying" them in the truth of His Word (v. 17). Our church unity is to be a unity of faith in God's Word and in the creeds derived from it as our "forms of unity." When the synod disregarded these it was breaking the bonds of faith that tie us together. The feminist issue is not causing but revealing this loss of unity. It is simply exposing what has been happening to our churches. That will have to be corrected by our returning to God's Word in our confession and life. Let us pray that this may still be brought about within the denominational fellowship. If it cannot be achieved through appeal to synods it may have to be sought by way of Rev. H. Vander Kam's suggested "convention" of churches and church members who want to be faithful to God's Word. We may not settle for anything less than faithfulness to that Word. ●

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*Notes:*

[1] *Rev. Clarence Boomsma writing in the* Calvin Theological Journal *("What Has Happened Theologically to the CRC?" April, 1984 issue, pp. 41ff), although critical of the militancy of the Reformed Fellowship, expresses his own apprehensions about the indifference or hostility to doctrine that increasingly characterizes Christian Reformed ministers. Because of this, he describes the church as "somewhat comparable to a wheel without a hub, in which the spokes point in different directions."*

[2] *We should not forget that in our Belgic Confession (Art. XXXII) "we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever." Compare also Acts 5:29.*

# Pilgrims and Strangers in 1985

John Blankespoor

*"For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14).*

A "new year" has arrived. Something that is new usually is different from the old. A new year hopefully will bring with it new and better things. The old was not satisfactory, not what we wanted it to be. Accordingly, people wish one another "a happy new year." In the Bible the word happy means to be blessed. As Christians we can surely wish one another the blessings of the Lord in the year that is to come.

Usually the expression "a happy new year" has a different meaning. People want a better new year, a better world and more earthly happiness in the same old world. In the United States we have just had another presidential election. It was preceded by all kinds of promises by the candidates of a better America. But, in fact, we know that what the wise Solomon said long ago is still true, "What has been will be again; what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). This doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to change adverse and wrong conditions where we can. It is our Christian moral responsibility to try. But we're not going to fundamentally change the world. There will always be sin in this world, even an increase of it in the last days, with the results of immorality, sickness and pain, suffering, war, poverty, and death. We must remember, as the letter to the Hebrews says, "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city that is to come."

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The author here speaks of a city and of Christians seeking the city that is to come. A city suggests permanence. In cities people live in houses in contrast with camping in tents which are usually temporary. Tent living is also more insecure and less protected than living in a house or city. In Bible times cities usually had surrounding walls for protection. Abraham lived in tents all his life. It taught him that life in this world was not permanent and not secure. In this text we read that we do not, here, have "an abiding" city. Nothing in this world is permanent, lasting. 'All good things come to an end," we say. This is true of everything in this world, health, good things we may enjoy for a time, marriages, friendships and even life itself. Considering this gives us a feeling of insecurity, perhaps even discouragement, and makes us look for something better. This will also be true in 1985.

Christians, according to this passage, "seek the city that is to come." This "city" is the "new Jerusalem," also called "the new heaven and earth." It is the place to which the Lord will take us when our life on earth is finished. The writer states that we are *seeking* the city that is to come. We are looking for that city, living for it is our goal.

This anticipation of the future makes us pilgrims in this world. What is a pilgrim? He is not merely someone who has left his home. A person who has only done that may be a drifter. A pilgrim is one who has left his own home because he is on his way to another home. He has a vision, a goal, and he is determined to "hang loose" on everything else until he possesses that.

Seeking that city means more than we know that we will be saved when we die. The heavenly life will not merely be a "hereafter", something that will *follow* this life as we sometimes regard it. No, heaven and the Lord's heavenly things are to be our *goal*. The apostle Paul said, "To me to live is Christ; to die is gain." True Christian living means that now we live for Christ and want to serve Him. Then to die will be gain, because we will do it perfectly in heaven.

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The basic principle of Christian living has implications for other aspects of our lives. Because we are not looking for a city in this life, this world isn't our "home." The text reads: "*For* we have here not an abiding city, but we seek after the city that is to come." In the context we read of Christ having been crucified outside of the gate of Jerusalem. He was rejected by people, by the world and the nominal church. Christians must be willing and ready to bear this reproach with Him, also being rejected. Jesus said that because they have hated Him they will also hate us who follow Him. Seeking the city that is to come affects our attitude towards material and secular things. The apostle John said that we should not love the world nor the things that are in this world. Paul says that we must use this world, but not misuse or abuse it. Why? Because we do not look for a city here below, but one that is to come. How different this is from the attitude which we often see in our own lives and in the lives of other professing Christians.

We are materialistic. We profess to be children of God. We believe in Jesus Christ. When we die we expect to go to heaven. But the Scriptures tell God's people to seek the heavenly things *in this* life. If we are children of God we must begin to do this now.

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Another year has arrived. It will be another year in the same old sinful world. Everything will be affected by time and change, for nothing here is permanent. That need not disturb us if we are seeking not earthly but heavenly things. May the Lord forgive us for and deliver us from our preoccupation with the earth and our conformity to the world. May He also give us grace to live according to this direction of the Scripture. Let us daily pray that He will enable us to seek the city that lies in the future, and to prepare by the way of sanctification to live in it. Living in this way, may we all experience real blessings and happiness in 1985. ●

# A Missionary Looks at Political Revolution

J. Samuel Hofman

The murder of four Roman Catholic missionaries in El Salvador, and the more recent murder of a Wycliffe missionary in Columbia, are harsh evidences of the brutal political struggles going on in Latin America. Christian missionaries increasingly are getting caught in the crossfire of warring political groups. Even those missionaries who avoid all political activity sometimes fall victim to a radical group that assumes that the missionary is on the other side.

There is much discussion and difference of opinion as to whether or not missionaries are to be involved in political struggles in the countries where they serve. Those church leaders and missionaries who are advocates of the new Liberation Theology proclaim that social and political liberation are an essential part of the new life that God gives. They insist that missionaries have to identify with the people they serve and stand by them in their struggles for equality and freedom.

At the other extreme are missionaries who say that Christians should disassociate themselves from the wicked world. They see their task as missionaries to call people out of that world to faith in Jesus Christ, who promises them eternal life in heaven.

Most of us missionaries are somewhere between those two extremes. We are concerned about the suffering of the people among whom we serve. But we are unwilling to participate in or encourage violence to bring about political change.

Here in Chiapas, we missionaries of the Reformed Church partly because we realize that we are guests in this foreign land, and we have no right to force our political views on others. Non-intervention is a favorite phrase of all of the political leaders of the nations of the world. No one appreciates a neighbor who tries to get involved in their personal family affairs.

But there is another reason for not being politically active as a missionary. It is because we realize that the solution for Latin America's problems is not the replacing of one political party with another. Even when a political change takes place through elections or through revolution, there is so little improvement that it does not balance the violence, the bloodshed, the suffering, and the chaos that is costs. Often much more is lost than gained, as in a successful Communist revolution that ends up destroying personal liberty. Or as in Uganda, where a successful political revolt gave birth to a ruthless, murdering tyrant who destroyed hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens.

The dictatorships of both the right and left have much in common. When they come into power they empty the prisons, giving freedom to all the political opponents. And then they immediately refill the prisons with their political opponents. They point out the corruption of the previous regime and then proceed to exploit and rob the people in the same way.

Something much more fundamental must change than just a rotation of political parties. The root problem is in the unregenerate human heart, which is evil and in rebellion against God. We cannot expect fresh water suddenly to begin flowing from a salt water well — even though we may change the pump and piping. We cannot expect justice and truth from men who still are ruled by their own pride and greed. We cannot expect an increase in social justice and freedom as long as the society and its rulers are estranged from God.

The only way we will have justice and righteousness in our nations is if the political leaders are men who have been remade by God and belong to Him. When their lives and decisions are directed by God, then truth and honesty and freedom and justice and equality will thrive.

Consequently, the greatest contribution that a missionary can make to the political well-being of his adopted country is to share the good news of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible, with the hope that these servants of God may some day become the kings and rulers of their nations. That alone will open the door for peace and justice to enter. ●

*Buenos Aires, Chiapas, Mexico*

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# Prayer

Henry Vander Kam

## The Voiceless Prayer of God's People

### Lesson 9 Romans 8:26-27 and Psalm 123:2

We teach our children to pray as soon as they are able to do so. Later in life we are also able to pray silently, but we still put our prayers into words even though we do not speak them aloud. Yet, the Bible teaches that there is also another non-spoken form of prayer which we seldom consider. Although we do not consider this a form of prayer, we frequently engage in it. Often we are not able to put into words the deepest feelings of the heart. These feelings come as a prayer before God even though we have not put them into words.

The beautiful and well-known words of Romans 8:26-27 speak of this form of prayer. The writer says that we do not always know how to pray as we ought. We, at times, do not know what is the proper content of our prayers; nor do we know if our prayers will be well-pleasing to our God. What must a believer do under such conditions? Must he refrain from prayer? No, this would be contrary to his new nature as a Christian. There are deep feelings of the heart which he must express to his God. Paul had experienced something like this. He prayed, as was observed earlier, for the removal of the thorn in his flesh. However, he did not know if this was well-pleasing to his God. Nevertheless, he prayed for its removal. But, there are other times when we just don't know how to put our needs into words. May our hearts then remain silent toward our God?

### The Holy Spirit's Help

We must realize that the situation described by the Apostle in these verses points up our infirmity. It is not an indication of wisdom or strength that we are not able to put into words the deepest needs of our souls. But, we must also realize that we can only pray according to the revelation which our God has given us of Himself. This revelation is not deficient, but it deals, not with our individual needs and desires, but only with the broad lines of God's relation to us. Although there is much more teaching in these verses than we will deal with in this lesson, we must recognize that the Spirit of God is associated with the prayer-life of the believer. This fact concerns the most intimate spiritual life of every believer. The Spirit applies the work of Jesus Christ in connection with the prayer life of every believer.

Paul plainly indicates this. Even though we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us! This is a *voiceless prayer*. He prays for them with groanings which cannot be uttered! His prayer for the believer is a "groaning." Paul has earlier spoken of the groanings of the entire inanimate and animate creation. We also groan within ourselves, says the Apostle, waiting for the redemption of our bodies. When something very important is seen ahead, he cannot express himself better than to say that it is a groaning. The deepest thoughts are thereby revealed. When the Spirit prays for us He does so with groanings which cannot be uttered. Of course they cannot be uttered! How would we ever be able to put into words the things which the Spirit of God does within us? These verses refer to the mysterious workings of the Spirit of God.

### A Continuing Intercession

It must also be remembered that He continues this work of prayer within us. We are admonished to pray *without ceasing*. While we often refrain from praying, the Spirit continues His work within us. Our own prayer-life would wither if the Spirit were not constantly at work within us even in regard to such a practical activity as prayer. He helps His people. Thus the work of Jesus Christ is completed within the hearts of the people who have been chosen as His own.

From all of this it again becomes evident how great the blessing of Pentecost was for the church of Jesus Christ. When our Lord was about to ascend to heaven, His disciples were appalled at having to do without His physical presence. However, He told them that it would be profitable for them if He would go away, because then the Spirit would come to abide with them forever. This Spirit now dwells within them. He intercedes for them. The place of *Immanuel*, "God with us," is now supplied by the Holy Spirit, as God in us! The Lord knew our needs far better than we ourselves do.

He who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit. Of course! The mind of the Spirit is the mind of God. The intercessions of the Spirit need not be articulated beause God knows the mind of the Spirit. He knows it immediately. This is precisely what His people need. Prayers must

be sent up to the throne of grace for them which are in tune with the will of God and are acceptable to Him.

### According to God's Will

He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Again we would say, of course! How could the Spirit pray for the saints in a way that would not be according to the Will of God? It had been said of Jesus Christ ages before His coming that He came to do the Will of God (Ps. 40:8). The same may also be said of the Spirit of God. He knows that Will of God to perfection because *it is also His own will*! The saints may therefore rest assured that the groanings of the Spirit are acceptable to God. They are completely in tune with His will. It will never be said of the Spirit's groanings as Jesus said to the sons of Zebedee "Ye know not what ye ask" (Matt. 20:22). The Spirit knows what He is asking and what He asks is well-pleasing to God.

How rich are the people of God! Their riches cannot be put into words, nor can they be compared to any other. Notice: Christ is at the right hand of God (as the Apostle says in this same chapter vs. 34), where He makes intercession for us. Here he tells us that the Spirit of God also dwells within the hearts of God's people to make intercession for them. We have One Advocate above, Jesus Christ the righteous, and we have another Advocate within us, the Spirit of God. Neither One has ever lost a case! God's people are perfectly safe. Both the second and the third persons of the Trinity are praying for them.

### Our Assurance

The prayers which God's people utter are of great importance. Therefore are they commanded to come before the throne of grace constantly with all their needs. But, there is more to it than this. Not only our own prayers but the prayers of the Spirit of God are instrumental in ensuring the spiritual prosperity of His people.

We may never overlook the tremendous importance of the Spirit's voiceless prayers for the believer, but the question naturally arises: does the believer himself also engage in voiceless prayers at times? Are we still able to call it prayer if it is not expressed in words? The answer is: yes.

### An Old Testament Example

We are given a very good example of the voiceless prayers of God's people in Psalm 123:2. The Psalmist describes some of the difficulties at times encountered by the people of God and, particularly, some of the difficulties he has experienced. Some people are not in agreement with him at all in his service of God. He usually describes these as his enemies. They scoff at him. He, together with other believers, are held in contempt. Is this the way in which His people ought to be treated? Yet, what must the Psalmist do about it? Must he ask God for their destruction? He did this at times. He does not know why the Lord allows this to happen and he has to leave the problem in God's hand.

However, to leave things in God's hands does not mean that he is not deeply involved in the outcome and that he is not concerned about this state of affairs. He comes to his God in a different way. He recognizes the huge distance between himself and his God. He lifts his eyes to the One who sits in the heavens (vs. 1). That is all he does! He does not articulate a prayer — he only looks to his God. He says that this looking to God is like the oriental servant watching the hand of his master. He doesn't ask for anything, he just watches for signs! Or his expectation may also be likened to the maid who watches the hand of her mistress. She is ready to do the bidding of her mistress. She is also totally dependent on her mistress.

### Patient Expectancy

The examples which the Psalmist uses make it clear that there would be no place for articulation of requests in this situation. How would a servant or a maid dare to ask for anything? The servant and the maid look for signs whether or not they will find favor in the sight of those before whom they stand. What will be the attitude of the one who has the power? There is so much at stake.

So, says the Psalmist, our eyes look unto Jehovah our God, until He have mercy upon us. Although the believer does not come to his God as a servant comes to an oriental despot, yet *so* our eyes look unto Jehovah! We may not lose sight of this element of patient expectancy in our prayer-life. We are standing before our God much as Nehemiah stood before his sovereign when he had received the bad news of his people who had returned to their homeland (Nehemiah 2). The believer, however, comes to a God Who is much more powerful than any oriental ruler and is yet merciful. When the Psalmist says that he will so look to his God *until* he have mercy upon us, he is telling us that God will have mercy! There is no doubt about it. It is only a matter of time. He does not know why God is allowing his "enemies" to scoff and hold him in contempt, but He will have mercy at His time.

The things which have been sketched briefly in this lesson form an important part of our prayers. God's people are often brought to the stage where they are not able to utter a prayer. They can only *look* to their God! At such times they must also have the assurance that the Spirit of God is praying for them with groanings which cannot be uttered! Much more goes on in the hearts and in the spiritual life of believers than they themselves realize.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Why don't we know what to pray for or how to pray as we ought?
2. Do we do justice to the work of the Spirit? What happens when a church does not do justice to the work of the Spirit?
3. Do we celebrate Pentecost properly? What is its meaning?
4. When do God's people come to the stage at which they cannot articulate their prayers? Does this happen too at the time of great physical weakness?
5. Does the "looking" to the hand of our God benefit us? Do you think we are often too "bold" in our prayers? What does it mean to "come with boldness to the throne of grace?" Does this have anything to do with our common idea of boldness?
6. Do the intercession of the Spirit and the intercession of Christ have any connection with our assurance of faith? Explain.

## Abraham's Prayer for Sodom

**Lesson 10** **Genesis 18:16-33**

The Bible contains the prayers of individuals which were offered under various circumstances. David uttered a prayer

in almost every Psalm he wrote. When we think of the prayers of our Lord and the prayers of Solomon and of Daniel, we realize that we are dealing with some of the best examples of prayer one would ever be able to find. While we need "a theology" of prayer, we must also learn from the examples of prayer which have been included in the Sacred Writings. No one year of study will ever be able to do justice to the whole field of prayer revealed to us in Scripture, but we seek to explain some of the prayers which have come to us.

### Friend of God and Father of Believers

Abraham has an important place in the sacred history. He is called a "friend" of God. To him God makes Himself known as to no other man in his time. He exhibited a faith which has seldom been equalled and is included in the catalog of "heroes of faith" in Hebrews 11. He is even called the "father of believers."

He received the promise of a numerous seed and of a large land when he had no children and was living as a stranger in this land of promise. God had promised him! Therefore it is sure to happen! Although he is a hundred years old and his wife only ten years younger, God's word must stand!

It is, therefore, not surprising that Abraham was a man of prayer. He lived in close communion with his God and had constant fellowship with Him. In the verses previous to those we study in this lesson, God engages in a soliloquy. He is counseling with Himself. Should He withhold from Abraham the news of what He is doing in his community? Abraham will become great and a channel of blessing to the world and will instruct his family after him so that they may walk in the way of Jehovah. If he is to do this properly, he must also know the *reason* for the destruction which is about to take place. His children must do righteousness and justice. Abraham must be able to point them to the righteousness and justice of God. God will not hide the things which are about to happen from Abraham.

The setting for the prayer of Abraham is very strange. Moses is here speaking anthropomorphically, that is, he is speaking of God in a very human way. He is going "to go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." The account leaves the impression that He must investigate to see whether the state of Sodom and the neighboring cities is as bad as has been reported! He is going to go down to Sodom so that He may be in possession of all the facts. Yet, only the two angels go down to Sodom and the Lord is still with Abraham. He is now, so to speak, taking Abraham into His council because he is His friend and he will have to teach the future generations. That which he will have to teach the coming generations is a warning. God is indeed merciful, but His justice will never be sacrificed.

### The Intercessor

The fact that the Lord takes Abraham into His confidence is an indication that He now elicits the prayer from Abraham. Abraham, as a child of God, is to pray for Sodom! Who is there in Sodom to pray for deliverance? He is to be the intercessor.

Abraham prays for Sodom — not only for the few righteous people who may be found in Sodom, but for the city! Jonah found something very similar in his lifetime when he was commissioned to the great city of Nineveh. He failed to pray for the city, for he could not understand that God would be gracious to a city like that. He stumbled at the grace of God! Abraham is not of the same mind as a Jonah. He prays for the thousands of people who are not able to discern between their right hand and their left (Jonah 4:11). This idea lies at the root of all mission fervency. Thousands of people are about to perish and should this not affect the true child of God? Abraham knows about the wickedness of Sodom and the other cities in the neighborhood. Their wickedness is indescribable. It is shown only a little later when the angels come to the house of Lot. Yet, Lord, is their not still place for mercy? This man, Abraham, whom the Sodomites may not even know, is the greatest friend they have. Lot is not interceding for them! He does not even seem to be aware of the impending doom.

But, how can a believer really pray for such a wicked city as Sodom? Is its wickedness not proof enough that it ought to be destroyed? Of course, but notice the way in which Abraham prays, that is, the structure of his prayer. He is the one who is standing in the breach between God and these godless cities. If God destroys the wicked, no one may question this action. They have deserved this destruction by their godless actions. But, says Abraham, wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? This is the ground on which he pleads. Surely, the righteous, that is, those who are not guilty of the same sins as the other inhabitants of these cities, should not have to pay for the unrighteousness of the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Abraham knows that it would not be right to cause the righteous to suffer the same fate as the wicked.

Abraham shows a certain boldness when he approaches God in this way. Is it conceivable that God might have had in mind to let the same judgment fall on both the righteous and the wicked? If so, Abraham would seek to dissuade Him! That be far from Thee! It should not even have to be said. Surely, God's righteousness would not allow this.

Is Abraham here pleading for God's mercy as opposed to His righteousness? It almost seems so. But God will not have one of His attributes played off against another. He will be righteous and He will be merciful. No one will ever be able to accuse Him of unfairness. Although we can never get the two, mercy and love, to agree, He can! He spoke of it already in Psalm 85 and showed it in His Son's coming. There mercy and justice meet. Abraham is living many years before *that* event. He would love to have been able to see the day of the Son of Man (John 9:56; Heb. 11:13).

### For A Godly Minority?

Suppose there are fifty righteous people in these cities. That is not very many. In fact, it would be such a miniscule percentage that it would hardly count. But, if there were so many, would God destroy the *place*, that is, the cities, if there are so many righteous? The answer is: No! God doesn't require many righteous to spare the whole *place*! Ye are the salt of the earth. It doesn't take much salt to preserve the whole lump. The wickedness of these cities has become proverbial, but, let us not fail to see the mercy which our God is still willing to extend to such places for the sake of a few righteous. The believers keep this world standing! This is not recognized by the world, but it is the clear teaching of the word of God. Notice that he is praying for the existence of these cities and not only for those few righteous who may still be living there.

As we follow the rest of the prayer of Abraham for Sodom

we are indeed allowed to look into the heart of this true child of God. Does he have second thoughts? He has prayed for these cities if there are but fifty righteous people in them. Does he know fifty righteous people there? No, and therefore, the prayer takes on the particular structure of which we spoke in the beginning. He really fears to speak further. Behold, he says, I have taken upon me, who am but dust and ashes, to speak to Adonai, the Almighty Ruler! How dare he come with his petitions before this great God? That is the beauty of the teaching of Holy Writ: those who know themselves to be but dust and ashes may come into the presence of the God of heaven and earth!

Should there not be fifty righteous in these wicked cities, will Abraham's prayer have been for nought? How many righteous does it take to save the cities of the plain? He drops his figure by only five and asks whether God will save the cities if there are forty-five righteous people in them. The answer again is positive. The Lord will not destroy these cities if there are only forty-five righteous. He continues to drop the figure another five: for forty? No, the cities will remain standing even if there are only forty righteous. One can see that Abraham is groping — Lord, what if there are only thirty? If there are only twenty? Now let not the Lord be angry, but he will speak once more. Suppose there are only ten righteous people to be found in all the cities of the plain. The Lord assures him that if there are only ten righteous people there, the cities will be saved.

But, there were not even ten righteous people there! Consequently, the cities were destroyed utterly. There really was no preservative found in all these cities. There was Lot! His wife? She couldn't consent to leave it all behind. Their two daughters? They had been so infected with the prevailing sins of Sodom that they deliberately chose the way of incest to keep their names alive. In the final analysis there was only one righteous man in all these cities and we are indebted to the New Testament for the teaching that Lot was a "righteous" man (II Peter 2:7).

Why didn't Abraham lower the figure once more? Certainly he didn't know fifty righteous people in Sodom but neither did he know ten. Yet, to lower the figure even below ten would have degraded his plea. It would also have been indicative of the fact that he was praying only for his relatives. No, this man of God is the intercessor for many more than his own blood relatives.

Was Abraham's prayer in vain? No, he obtained more than he could have hoped for. There were not even ten righteous in these cities and therefore they were completely destroyed. Yet, the righteous who were found in it were led out so that they would not persist in the destruction of these cities. This was because of Abraham's prayer (Genesis 19:29).

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Must we pray for the "world"? (Cf. John 17:9.)
2. What type of prayer life is necessary to fulfill the mission imperative? Do we pray enough for those still in heathendom? How must we pray for them?
3. Is it profitable for us to know, for our prayer life, that the Judge of all the earth will do right?
4. Is the justice of God a comfort for God's people? Is it usually considered to be comforting?
5. How can a merciful and loving God destroy thousands of people as He did in the destruction of Sodom and surrounding cities?
6. What was the difference between the Sodom of Abraham's day and the Nineveh of Jonah's day?

# Regarding Bible and Culture

John Byl

It is amazing how many people in the CRC believe that we can change our stance on the role of women without suffering ill effects elsewhere. Amazing because the arguments advanced for opening the door to women in office are virtually identical to those employed to promote more liberal views on other topics such as, for example, homosexuality. This phenomenon showed itself clearly at a number of events which I have recently attended.

### The Banner Editor's View

On October 12 I heard Rev. A. Kuyvenhoven, editor of *The Banner*, speak in the Burnaby, B.C., CRC on "Bible and Culture." The main thrust of K'S talk was defense of women in office. Interestingly enough, however, his prime argument was based not so much on Scriptural insights as on the changes that have taken place in our society. According to K, the restricted role of women in the church, as taught in Scripture, is no longer applicable in our modern culture. There are two reasons why the church should change its position on this matter. First, because the Spirit of God can express itself also through our society. Although K did not specify how we can identify these divine utterings, he did feel that in this particular case there could be little doubt. Secondly, K argued that we should not let relatively minor things stand in the way of the presentation of the Gospel. If our traditional stance on the role of women hinders members of our modern society from coming to church, then we should change. On the other hand, in the question period that followed, K affirmed that he strongly opposed homosexuality and that he had criticized the Dutch Reformed churches (GKN) on this matter. This was followed by hearty applause.

### More Liberal Dutch Precedents

My thoughts went back to an earlier meeting (Sept. 28 in the Langley, B.B., CRC) where the response had been rather different—where there had been no applause but only a general feeling of disgust. There I had heard Professors Bakker and Schippers of the GKN defend their church's liberal stance on homosexuality. It seems clear that most CRC supporters of women in office are still vigorously adverse to homosexuality.

Yet it struck me that there was a remarkable similarity between the arguments employed by Kuyvenhoven for women in office and those of the brothers Bakker and Schippers for more tolerant views regarding homosexuality. For they, too, informed us of the difficulty of Bible interpretation, the need to listen to society, and the folly of letting

secondary issues hamper the spreading of the Word. Shouldn't this argument work equally well in both cases?

And why stop there? Once we grant the validity of K's approach to Scripture it takes little ingenuity to extend it to other ethical questions such as, for example, abortion, divorce, and pre-marital sex. Moreover, if we are to listen to the world on ethical matters, why not also on historical things? Could not the same argument be used to defend the adoption of more liberal views also regarding the creation account in Genesis, miracles, the Resurrection, etc.?

I questioned K. personally on this afterwards. Could his approach not be applied equally well to homosexuality? And did it not lead to a totally subjective reading of Scripture? K. denied the latter, but was unable to give any clear criteria as to where to draw the line. As to homosexuality, all he could offer was a "gut feeling" that it was against God's will.

Such fuzzy thinking is not found in our Reformed confessions, where we are urged to test the spirits (particularly, it would seem, those arising from our sinful, atheistic modern society) and to reject all that is contrary to God's word (cf. Belgic Confession, Art. VII).

### Standard Liberal Procedure

It is of interest to note that K. had spent the first portion of his speech defending himself against the accusation that he was a liberal. He declared that he was not a liberal and that theologians such as Albert Schweitzer and Rudolph Bultmann, who denied the reality of essential historical events, should be called "liberal." This is somewhat ironic, for Bultmann also considered himself to be combatting liberalism. Furthermore, the motivation behind Bultmann's demythologization of the New Testament was exactly the same as K's — to remove unnecessary stumbling blocks for modern man so that he may accept the essentials of the Christian faith. Bultmann merely applies more consistently the same methodology that K invokes capriciously.

But let's not be too harsh on K. Many others share his views on women in office, but few of these supporters are as forthright in revealing the influence of the secular world on their thinking. Some even insist that they were guided only by exegetical considerations.

I have been somewhat unfair to Professors Bakker and Schipper, for they presented also some exegetical support for their view on homosexuality. It is instructive to examine these. They cited Gal. 3:28 ("there is neither male nor female") as being in their favor. As to those texts (e.g. Rom. 1:27) that appear to speak rather forcefully against homosexuality, the professors explained that Paul was here reacting to the then-current practice of masters forcing homosexual acts on their slaves. The situation today (i.e. voluntary homosexuality between equals) is, of course, quite different.

Does this explanation sound rather contrived? Yet the hermeneutical tactics used here are identical to those often employed by advocates for women in office; they make the same appeal to texts which, when read in their full context, really do not speak on the issue (Gal. 3:28 is abused in similar fashion by the feminists); they resort to the same invention of little "behind the scenes" stories to explain away unfavorable Scripture passages (cf. Minority Report II on Headship, Acts of Synod '84, p. 365).

### Evading the Bible Destroys Morals

Few Biblical precepts are as well grounded as those regarding the subordinate role of women. (I Tim. 2:11-15, for example, refers to both the original creation order and that after the Fall, and is thus clearly still in force). If we can dismiss these texts as "culturally conditioned" then we can do the same with virtually any other Biblical command. The hermeneutics used to justify women in office will, if consistently applied, result in the complete loss of Scriptural authority.

If we can swallow women in office while still choking on homosexuality, it is not because Scripture speaks any more clearly on the latter, but only because the CRC has — by the grace of God — *not yet* been undermined by secular thought to the same extent as the GKN.

Sadly enough, K's position has become very popular in the CRC. And the Synod of '84 has in fact opened the door for women in office. You, dear reader, should be very much concerned about these developments. It is now just a matter of time before our hermeneutical chickens will be coming home to roost. ●

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# Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

Have you ever felt rejected? Have you ever felt that nobody paid any attention to your words? I felt the same, for although I called aloud and raised my voice in the public squares, nobody listened to me. Even in the gateways where the city-council meets, I made my speeches, but no one mended his way. Am I a prophet? No, but I am a female, and my enemies are fools. Who am I?

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How many of us have been blessed with saintly parents and grand-parents? How many of us have benefited from their godly instruction, their exemplary lives and their prayers for us? I am one such grandmother who had a "sincere faith." The same faith characterized my daughter, _____, as well as my grandson, _____. We lived at Lystra.

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I am dearly loved by my husband. He gives me a double portion to offer to the Lord, but the Lord had kept me from having children. Despite my husbands interest in and concern for me, I could not be comforted, especially when his other wife continued to irritate me. In desperation, I wept and prayed fervently to the Lord for a son. The priest mistakenly imagined that I was drunk, just like the onlookers on Pentecost imagined that regarding Peter and the other apostles. But the Lord answered my prayer and He inspired me, as He later did those apostles, to speak of His grace.

# Because of a Banana Peel

Dr. Aaldert Mennega

While quietly sitting at my office desk, and concentrating on my reading, a small, brown ant came speeding across my paper. Without paying too much attention, I brushed him off the desk and continued my reading. But it was not long and the same thing happened again. This was enough to get my thoughts away from my reading and pay attention to what was going on. I then noticed a large number of ants all scurrying around, not only on my desk, but also on the floor. And my waste paper basket was just crawling with them.

Wondering what the great attraction could be, I recalled that the day before I had left a banana peel in the waste basket to which a lot of ants had been attracted. But cleaning the waste basket carefully and shaking out all the ants should have taken care of that problem, I thought. Apparently the ants remembered the banana peel, even though it had been removed long ago. But how could they remember the way?

And why were they on my desk at this time, acting as though they had business to do? A careful check of my desk revealed a forgotten candy, slightly sticky, but obviously appealing to the ants' taste. Having lost my interest in the candy, I disposed of it and figured that would be the end of that. But not so! The ants kept coming and coming in a long file. Knocking them off really did little good, because they were constantly replaced by others.

This set me to tracing where this whole battallion might be coming from. I could see them coming up the leg of my desk, so I traced them back, along the base of the filing cabinet, around the corner, and then off at an angle to the base of the book case. When I got to the door I stopped looking.

What puzzled me for a while is that they all came along the same track. And when the comers met the goers, they would stop momentarily, exchange some kind of signals or information, and scurry right on. But when they crossed the floor from the filing cabinet to the book case without any object to guide them, they would always cross at the same place. There had to be some way they could tell which way to go.

What was their traffic sign? There could be a chemical deposited along the way to guide them. Having heard about pheromones, the chemicals which insects release to give various kinds of messages, I figured that I had just found a practical illustration of one.

But if the pheromone gave them the signal where to go, I was interested in changing their signals, so that they would stop coming to my desk to bother me. So I rubbed their trail with concentrated liquid soap. This apparently erased all the traffic signs. At least they stopped coming. It worked!

After a while I checked their trail to see if any were still searching for my discarded candy, but found no ants except at the door, where large numbers of them were coming and going. A tiny crack in the floor appeared to be the front entrance to their hide-out. A little wad soaked in liquid soap pressed on the crack took care of that. By now my signal to the ants was very clear — they were not welcome in my office. Not that I don't like ants. It's just that I don't want to compete with them for space. In fact, I would be willing to give them the whole candy if that would keep them satisfied and away.

Feeling smug about having solved my problem, I just hoped that they would take care of theirs. But my thoughts stayed with the ants for a while, and I began to wonder what these little fellows really looked like. When curiosity got the better of me, I picked up one of the casualties, took it to the lab and had a close look under the microscope.

Here I saw a gigantic-looking creature, all brown, except for black eyes, and ten black rings on each antenna. What a fantastically marvelous creature this turned out to be. Its mandibles looked formidably strong. Its legs were tipped with two hooks that stuck out like a ship's anchor. And the body had some very fine bristles. I did feel a little sorry for the ant because its abdomen looked awfully flat, making me think that he probably had been very hungry. But now it was too late.

Reflecting on all this, I feel I should confess that basically I was at fault in unwittingly inviting them to my feast. After all, I set up signposts telling them about free banana and candy, thereby saying to them they were welcome. I think I was right, though, in not feeling that the ants were welcome at my desk. I was there first, and it would be very difficult for me to move my territory. And they are so much more flexible in this. Too bad some of them had to bite the dust before I found a way of redirecting them and separating our territories.

But I benefited greatly in that I learned to appreciate their beautiful structure more; I had opportunity to respect the ants' existence; I was reminded that it is not necessary to destroy God's creatures when they "interfere" with us; I was strengthened in my conviction that there are good alternatives to getting out the ubiquitous killer spray can; and I had a glimpse of their intricate communication system, which helps me to understand just a little better the ways of the ants. What reason to praise their Maker!

And all this because of a banana peel. And a candy. ●

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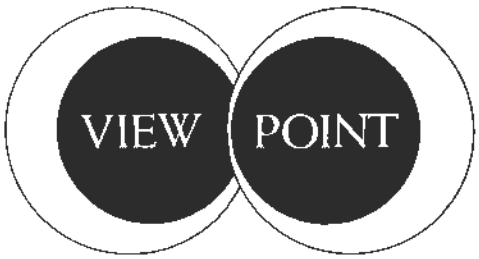


# When Foundations are Being Destroyed

Cecil Tuininga

The above words are taken from a question fouud in Psalm 11:3, which was faced by David. Friends advised him to run and hide because his life was in real danger. Open warfare is one thing, but to shoot from ambush is quite another. One might, so David's friends reason, fight fire with fire. There is an old saying that, "All is fair in love and war!" But these friends are saying that one has to have something to fight for. They suggest that for David there isn't. Accordingly, they answer the question, "It's no use to fight, David, because the foundations are being destroyed. What can you or any other of God's children do when that occurs? Why risk your life for a lost cause?"

The exact occasion in David's life that prompted such a question isn't really known. It seems to best fit the time of Saul's reign. Saul went his own way, not God's way. He obeyed God's will when it suited him, but set it aside when it didn't. Occasionally he shed some crocodile tears in apparent repentance but went his own way anyway. That meant that the very foundation on which the church and nation of Israel were built was being destroyed. Saul led the people away from, and in rebellion against, God's clear commands. He even dared to seek the life of David whom, Saul knew, the Lord had anointed. Then we can understand the counsel of David's friends. Things were going from bad to worse. What's left to fight for? Just throw in the towel and run for a safe hiding place.

David's answer is, in effect, that God's cause is never in vain. It cannot be defeated. Those who disobey, put aside or tamper with the Truth cannot win. They are bound to lose, because they have to answer to the Lord. Besides that, when the battle gets hottest and toughest, God's soldiers must not run and hide, but stand up and be counted. They are sure to win because God is with them. In the end they will stand with the Lord, but "on the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulphur" (Ps. 11:6). Or, to say it with Luther, "The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still." In other words, David's answer is simply this: Never quit the fight, for the victory is assured.

Today questions similar to the above are being asked by members of the Christian Reformed Church. Such questions arise from what members see happening among us. Many sense that the kind of thinking in our deuomination, brought on by a new way of interpreting the Scripture, is destroying the very foundations on which the Church, home and society are, and only can be, built or established. They see, and I judge, correctly, that we are following with alarming speed, the thinking and practices found today in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. When we bring in the new hermeneutic, as we see it being introduced among us today, foundations are being destroyed. They are being destroyed because the Scriptures, the only sure foundation for all of life, are being attacked.

The Scriptures have much to say about foundations. The apostle Paul declares, "By the grace of God given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, . ." (I Cor. 3:10). He spoke of the church of Corinth as being "God's building," (I Cor. 3:9) and to the Ephesians he said that they were "members

of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the Chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22). The Scriptures warns us that we must be careful that we do not destroy the building of God because we are not building on that one foundation, that is Christ Jesus (I Cor. 3:12-15). We are called to "prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 13). That call goes to those in the special offices in the first place, but the whole church is involved in this program of building up in the faith, building on the sure foundation.

It is here that we face our gravest problems today. The only way one can build is ou the foundation of the prophets and apostles, that is, God's Word. But how can we build when that Word of God is being disannulled by those who are leaders in the church? What can the members of the church do when that Word of God is taken away from them? And here the question of Psalm 11:3 is applicable, "What can the righteous do when the foundations are being destroyed?"

What answer shall we then give? The answer David gave to it: Don't yield. Don't succumb to the new hermeneutic. Stand up for God's Truth as the Church through past ages has understood it. Don't let the smoke-screen of learned, yet erring, leaders beguile us. Uphold the Truth, contend for it with all your might, and prayerfully seek to stem the terrible tide of the foundations - destroying power of the new hermeneutic. Once we give up and yield to it we are undone.

Recently we had the privilege of speaking briefly to two men from the Netherlands. They were sent by the synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) to speak to leaders in the Christian Reformed Church about the importance of maintaining strong ecclesiastical ties with the GKN. They were the professors J.T. Bakker and K.A. Schippers. In our discussions with these men we learned that they have no Bible left, that is, what we understand by the word "Bible." The new hermeneutic has gone so far there that men grope for some guidance as to how to behave in this modern world. No longer is Scripture a guide but a kind of "source" out of which they may hopefully ferret some kind of knowledge which way the Lord wants us to conduct ourselves in present society. That is sad beyond words to express it. And we are running swiftly after them. Do they perhaps know this and want us to run just a bit faster? To follow that course will be fatal.

Discussions with such leaders from the Netherlands alert us to the crossroads at which we are presently standing in the CRC. Unless we act now it may be forever too late. For the destroying of the foundations of our whole life as Church, family and society leads to their sure destruction. Today we must stop that destruction and keep building or start rebuilding that which has been destroyed, so that the CRC will not go under. Obeying Scripture's call, we must all contend with all of our might for the faith once delivered to us. May God give us the courage to do so.

*Cecil Tuininga, Edmonton, Alberta*

The saddest, and, from a biblical point of view, the most devastating aspect of the 1984 synod's action on the women issue is its complete lack of biblical evidence. Trying to salvage something for which there was no biblical grounds, synod grasped at straws by appealing to some vague "exceptions" in the Bible and in church history. It is generally said that the exception proves the rule, but in this case the exception became the rule and the plain rule of Scripture was set aside. Prof. Runner correctly described it (in *Chr. Renewal*) as a "dreadful decision," "surrounded by so much muddled thinking and a complete confusion, to the point of mental bankruptcy."

What the CRC did in the synod of 84 was to accommodate to the spirit of the age around us. And as Francis Schaeffer reminds us in his latest book, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, "to accommodate to the world spirit about us in our age is the most gross form of worldliness in the proper definition of the word." He goes on to say that "the mentality of accommodation is indeed a disaster. . . . It is this same world spirit which is destroying both church and society." Notwithstanding all the pious rhetoric on the part of many delegates, the synod of 1984 showed that the CRC would rather be conformed to the spirit of the age than to be led by the Spirit that is from above. It is this compromising attitude, this fear of being out of step with the secular spirit of our society that is the most prevalent and sickening characteristic of the CRC in recent years. It's the mentality of Laodicea: being neither cold nor hot. Says God: "I wish you were cold or hot." A clear stand in either direction is better than this half-hearted, tepid mentality which tries to cover worldliness with pious icing.

I am happy that Mid-America Ref. Seminary came out with a clear statement on this matter. I follow in those steps by publicly serving notice herewith that I will not serve any congregation that nominates women for the special offices. This kind of lack of respect and even disdain for what the Bible says must be opposed. It is to be hoped that many churches, consistories and members will stand up and be counted. Now!

*J. Tuninga, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.*

# Separate CALVIN COLLEGE from the Church

J. Tuininga

It was, of course, no surprise that the synod of '84 turned down the overture of Classis California South which asked that Calvin College be put under society control. But it is, nevertheless, annoying and disgusting to take note of the *arguments* that synod used for its decision. In no way did Classis California South get a fair hearing, and in no way did the decision of synod do justice to the well-worked-out overture of this classis. Much the same happened several years ago when Classis British Columbia presented a similar overture — a principled and well-documented and worked-out overture. But it did not get to first base either. It is very obvious that the "establishment" in Grand Rapids is not impressed with principal arguments. Calvin must remain under church control, come what may. And too many synodical delegates (many of them products of Calvin) are ready to nod their approval to maintain the status quo. They have been so mesmerized by the "onze school" slogan that they can't entertain any other possibilities. And meanwhile the quotas keep coming in, which is, of course, the key to the whole problem. As long as that faithful old cow keeps giving milk, she will be milked. It's too bad that a lot of consistories and classes don't stand up and say: Enough is enough! Calvin has no more right to denominational quotas than any of the other church-related colleges. Even a child can see the justice of that statement.

Note the *grounds* of synod's decision as found on p. 588 of the 1984 *Acts* of synod:

> "1. The overture does not demonstrate that the maintenance of Calvin College by the church violates scriptural principles."

That is a total cop-out. That has been demonstrated time and again throughout the history of the CRC, not only by Classis California South & B.C., but by countless other writers. And synod itself has said on more than one occasion that on biblical, principal grounds, it was wrong for the church to operate a liberal arts college. It was always said that the "time was not ripe" to implement the principle. Here the synod denies what previous synods have clearly stated. Any Reformed person who understands something of the biblical principle of sphere-sovereignty knows very well that the church-institute has no business running a school or labor union or political party. Ground One has no validity at all. The wish is father of the thought and replaces principle.

> "2. The overture does not present new, persuasive, or substantive reasons for a change in the governance of Calvin College."

Reply: Of course not. All the arguments have been presented in the past, and they were persuasive and substantive too. It's simply a matter of listening to those arguments and putting them into practice. The fault lies not in the arguments, but in those who do not want to listen to biblical arguments.

> "3. It is advantageous to the church, its related colleges, Calvin Seminary, and other educational institutions that Calvin College remain under the control of the church."

Now that is a real humdinger! One wonders who in the world concocted such a dandy! For years those connected with other CRC-related colleges have said that it simply was not fair and just that Calvin should receive preferential treatment. And that is why they asked synod to put Calvin under society control like the rest of them. But here synod turns this around and tells them that synod knows better what is good for them than they do themselves! That reminds me of Russia telling the citizens of East Berlin who want to escape over the wall that they really don't know what's good for them: they have it much better inside the wall.

A statement is made here without a shred of evidence. One would like to have some demonstration for what is said here. *How* it is advantageous to the other colleges that Calvin remains under church control? And who are those "other educational institutions?" How do they fit into the picture? It's all very strange and very confusing.

> "4. Church ownership and direct control assure the continued integrity of Calvin College as a Reformed Christian institution."

This ground is patently false. Church ownership has proved to be a hindrance rather than a help in maintaining the Reformed character of Calvin. Witness the numerous protests that have come to the Board of Trustees and synod over the years regarding matters of teaching, administration, etc. And how many of them "died on the paper" simply because Calvin was a church institution, and to touch Calvin was to touch the church? It resembles the practice of having the coyote guarding the chicken coop. It is extremely difficult to discipline an institution which has such intimate ties with the church. Fact is, at times the loyalty borders on idolatry, worshipping our "sacred" institutions. It is much easier to "clean house" in a private institution, for the simple reason that people will withhold their money if they don't like the institution or the product. But with our quota system we are "locked into" supporting Calvin, no matter what. Which is one very bad aspect of the quota system which the churches should reject.

It simply is not true that church control of Calvin has maintained its Reformed character. The contrary is true.

In short, none of the grounds given for the decision of synod holds any water whatsoever. They are hollow arguments, as any observant reader can see. What the synod is really saying is: We've been wrong for so long; let's just continue to be wrong. Only it tries to cover this up by nice-sounding words. ●

*J. Tuininga, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada*

# Who Causes DISUNITY?

This past summer a large group of Christians gathered around a campfire. During the course of the evening conversation turned to matters of interest within the church. Since most of the campers were members of the Christian Reformed Church a discussion arose about the decision of the Synod of 1984 by which the office of deacon was opened to women. Many dissenting opinions were expressed in regard to the action taken by the synod but the prevailing thought was that we had better learn to live with the decision since opposition to it might result in a split in the church. It seems that such thinking is becoming prevalent.

Recently I listened to three lectures delivered under the guise of sermons which dealt with the matter of women and office in the Christian Reformed Church. The "sermons" were sadly lacking in biblical exposition. They were, however, heavily freighted with emotional appeal. The preacher with great indignation made reference by name to two women whom he described as highly gifted who had been "forced" to leave the Christian Reformed Church because they were denied ordination.

As I reflected upon these two episodes I was confronted again with the questions "Who is causing division in the church?" and "Who is forcing whom to leave the church?" Often those who seek to remain true to the Word of God and who seek to uphold our historic Reformed faith are declared to be the culprits. But is that really so?

C.S. Lewis in the essay, "On Moving with the Times" wrote:

> But I insist that wherever you draw the lines, bounding lines must exist, beyond which your doctrine will cease either to be Anglican or to be Christian: and I suggest also that the lines come a great deal sooner than many modern priests think. I think it is your duty to fix the lines clearly in your own minds: and if you wish to go beyond them you must change your profession. This is your duty not specially as Christians or as priests but as honest men.

Those who dishonestly use the pulpit, the classroom or the pen to propagate ideas which do violence to the Scriptures and the Reformed faith are guilty of disrupting the peace of the church. Those who ignore the Scriptures and violate our creeds and church order as they introduce their own doctrines and practices are the ones who rob the church of her unity. Those who can no longer abide by the historic position of the church force themselves out of the church. As C.S. Lewis says in the quotation from "On Moving with the Times" they ought to be honest enough to acknowledge this and leave rather than seek sympathy and cause unrest by charging that they have been forced to leave.

When the Word of God is ignored as it was at the Synod of 1984 and decisions are made on the basis of emotional appeal and pragmatic argumentation, must the concerned member of the church remain silent and passively submit lest he be accused of causing division? Indeed not! He has no choice but to protest for he canuot remain silent when the truth is attacked and the church is destroyed. John Calvin said it well many years ago when he wrote: "A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward, if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent without giving any sound."

*Arthur Besteman, Zeeland, Michigan*

# Reverse Discrimination

We hear a lot about discrimination nowadays, both in society in general as well as in the church. Everyone is against discrimination — at least if you can believe what they say. There are certain prime targets of the anti-discrimination campaigns — such as South Africa.

But listen carefully and pay a little extra attention, and you begin to see that there is such a thing as Barbara Amiel (in her book *Confessions*) calls "reverse " discrimination." Says Amiel:

> "All the talk about racism nowadays is not ridding society of this evil. Instead, we are creating a society that will determine all according to the colour of skin or the degree of hair wave or the arrangement of sexual organs.... Such is the price to be paid for those in a hurry to create absolute equality in defiance of the basic principle of equality before the rule of law. It's no bargain.

She's not the only one making the point. Podhoretz in his book, *Breaking Banks*, does the same. So does Herbert Schlossberg in *Idols for Destruction* (Christian Faith and its Confrontation with American Society). He writes that humanitarian literature "is almost unanimous in denying that people are unemployed because they prefer not to work. . . . To link the rejection of the work ethic with poverty is to invite harsh rejoinders that speak of reaction and racism." Elsewhere he cites an author who "spreads the blame for the plight of the poor countries on those who have the effrontery not to be poor," and the leaders of poor countries "find it convenient to play on these themes in order to extricate themselves from the consequences of their own policies."

One hears it all the time: The U.S. is to blame for the situation in the third world countries; it is also to blame for the nuclear threat in today's world. White Christians are to blame for the situation among the blacks, and in Canada, for the situation among the natives.

But what we have a lot of here is discrimination in reverse. The poor, the blacks, the natives, Russia, etc. become the standard by which we are judged. We are so eager, it appears, to do penance for some actual instances of discrimination that we fall into the opposite trap: reverse discrimination.

It's even present in the church. The "poor" have God on their side. (No analysis as to who the "poor" in the Bible really are!) The rich ought to feel guilty for being rich. The 1984 synod of the CRC tried to make it more difficult for ministers from other denominations to come into the CRC, but make the way easier for those from other races and nationalities to enter it! And race appears to be more important in the appointment of college and seminary professors than Reformed orthodoxy. Reverse discrimination! But *discrimination* no less. One delegate to the 1984 synod told me he was almost ashamed to say that he was white, Anglo-Saxon and Dutch. Strange business indeed.

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# A New Curriculum

In the early sixties the United Church of Canada wrote a new curriculum. The reason for this new curriculum is stated in the introduction to Book I, "God and His Purpose," as follows: "In a time of confusion, men and women look to the Church for a clear statement of those things most surely believed among us. . . . The Church exists for the people who must live in the world. The Church's message must be clear for adults who hope to carry out the Church's mission" (Introd. pp. VII, XI).

Scripture speaks of the church as "the pillar and foundation" of the Truth (I Tim. 3:15). To be that, the members must know and live that Truth. Most Reformed churches are deeply concerned with the education of their members from their youngest years up. Hence we can subscribe to this statement of the United Church. We have indeed a mission in this world which can only be carried out by an informed membership.

The new curriculum is well written. Able men formulated its teachings, most of them masters in the important art of pedagogy. This new curriculum addresses itself to and seeks to answer three questions, found in the book, "The Word and the Way." They are stated in the introduction, page V, as follows, "First, how can we know God today, hear his word, and respond to his claim? Second, who is Jesus Christ and what is the meaning of his life for us? Third, what is the church and what does it mean to belong to this community?"

Reflecting on these questions we wonder why a church should be asking them. Most of our younger members could answer them without hesitation. But as we read into this new curriculum it becomes clear why these questions have been formulated in this way. For the United Church the old answers no longer suffice. For this day and age we must find a different God and Saviour and directives for our life. The Bible was good for the time in which it was written, but not for our time. We can indeed learn from the writers of the Bible, but it is not at all a true guide for our lives today, and it certainly has no authority.

The reading of this new curriculum is an eye-opener. Those who are somewhat acquainted with the history of the United Church are not surprised that it came to its present predicament. In 1925 it came into being when the Methodist, Congregational and Presyterian churches (about 70% of the latter) joined to form one large denomination. One of the reasons for this was that the Roman Catholic Church was growing rapidly in the new world, and the forces of Protestantism were too divided and thinnned out to counter-act the mission work of the Catholic Church. A drive began to unite all Protestant churches. But many drew back when they realized that this would mean, as was only too evident, a compromise of that which a denomination holds confessionally as precious and according to God's Word. It follows that when a new denomination is born out of a compromise of the Truth that compromise will affect the entire life and thinking of the

compromise will affect the entire life and thinking of the members. Unity at the expense of the Truth spells disaster. Disaster certainly followed. The writing of the new curriculum was an attempt to salvage something from this disaster.

But how can one salvage what is called "Church" except it be through the sound preaching and teaching of the Word of God? How can the United Church of Canada hope to effect a renewal except it return to the faith of the fathers, that is, the sound historic Christian faith? And the new curriculum does anything but that.

Why should we be interested in this history and its consequences? Everyone should be fully aware of history's lesson for us as a Christian Reformed denomination. Although the new curriculum was born out of a desire to revive the United Church, the hermeneutic or method of Bible interpretation used to accomplish this will bring it to still further disaster, if such is possible. For the new curriculum has set aside the Word of God and put in its place the word of men. Here are a few examples of how the Bible is set aside. On page 92 of *The Word and the Way* we read, "When Jeremiah says, 'the word of the Lord came to me,' he is not talking about being given some words of wisdom to pass on, but about coming face to face with holiness and justice and majesty, about being shaken in his shoes by seeing the truth. He is talking about encountering God himself." On page 95 we read, "So the revelation of God can never be merely something written in a book; it must be always meeting a person. We call the Bible the word of God because it tells us about meetings with God, about how God encountered men in their lives, and because through this book we also can encounter God." Then on page 96 we read, "Christian faith doesn't really mean believing the things that you read in the Bible: it means believing in the God that the Bible tells you about, trusting him and obeying him."

Many more such quotes could be made from these very vague writings, but enough is said in the above quotes. It is saddening that a denomination should seek to bring its members to a renewal through writings that disclaim the authority and infallibilty of the Scriptures. Then the norm for human behavior is made the experiences of each person as he or she thinks to meet, understand and worship God. Perhaps one should write "god" for no one comes to know the living God in Christ Jesus except it be through obedient hearing of the Gospel of Salvation. If we do not have an infallible Word of God we have nothing!

What has this to do with the Christian Reformed Church? One hardly needs to ask that question. We have among us a new way of interpreting Scripture that will surely end up where the New Curriculum is. We are told that in the Bible there are things only meant for one time. That would be true if one would say, for example, that the Bible gave directives for the practices of a certain time. It is false when we say that this was only true for that time, for then we make the Bible a book that is determined and speaks only for a certain time and culture. It is alleged that what the apostle Paul has said (as though God is not speaking through him) concerning the role of men and women in the church was for that time only. What we have to do is discover just how God wants us to be relevant in this time. And since Paul's teachings do not apply to our times, we are on our own.

Scripture warns us against such distorting of Scripture (2 Peter 3:15, 16). The apostle Peter referred to the apostle Paul's writings as "the Scriptures", and the apostle Paul did no less. To the Galatians Paul wrote, "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned,... I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:9, 11). To the Corinthians Paul wrote, "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored" (I Cor. 14:37). It is a serious matter to tamper with God's Word (Rev. 22:18, 19; Deut. 4:2).

To reject part of the apostle's writings as culturally conditioned and hence of no force today is to reject all of his writings. Where do we then draw the line as to what is for us today and what is not? And what is this but saying that the Bible is indeed the infallible rule for faith and life but contains teachings that are not for our present faith and life. They have had their day, so to speak. Then the declaration of Prof. R.B. Kuiper applies when he wrote, "He who would decide by his own wisdom what in the Bible is the Word of God and what is not, is not going to lose the entire Bible but has lost it. By the very act of setting himself up as the judge of the Bible he has denied that it is the Word of the sovereign God" (*The Bible Tells Us So*, p. 24).

Leaders in the church today tell us openly in writing and speaking that if the apostle Paul lived today he would write a very different set of directives that would be applicable for the culture in which we live. Some dare to suggest that the apostle Paul contradicts himself. What is this but to declare that not the Sovereign God is speaking in these Scriptures, but only a mere man? Where then is our teaching different from the doctrine in the New Curriculum? With such "new" views we too cannot be satisfied with the old answers our forefathers found the Scripture to give, and we can no longer be satisfied with the old creeds and teachings of the Church.

In this kind of a development among us, the result of a new hermeneutic, it does not surprise us that two of our leaders, in obtaining Doctor of Ministries degrees, should address themselves to this question in writing a thesis for these degrees (*Banner*, Oct. 15, 1984, p. 7). And what do they suggest? A break with the past and a striking out on unchartered courses not known before. How go about this? Let the Spirit work among us and somehow things will work out for the better. That is also what is suggested by others questioning Paul's directives regarding office bearers in the church. We are, it is suggested, on our own now and must somehow let the Spirit show us how we today are to adjust to our culture and fulfill our calling within it.

That leaves us with some questions as to what we must do with the admonitions of Scripture when it declares, "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you,..." (2 Thess. 2:15). "Remember therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it and repent" (Rev. 3:3). "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). "Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Rev. 3:11). Let us not be misled! The Holy Spirit has always led and kept the Church in the Truth of the Scriptures. If we cut loose from that the Holy Spirit will no longer guide and keep us in the truth. By all means, let us hold to our rich God-given heritage.

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**Book Review**

*Trumpeter of God*, A Biography of John Knox, by W. Stanford Reid. 1974, paperback edition by Baker Book House 1982, 353 pp. $8.95.

After the Reformed Fellowship began a third of a century ago its periodical for most of the first two decades was called *Torch and Trumpet*; then, perhaps because the old name was considered too flamboyant, it was changed to the present, less colorful, *Outlook*. Some have questioned the wisdom of that change, and we have continued to use the motif of the torch and trumpet on our covers. The symbols, recalling the story of Gideon and his tiny group of followers, pitted, on the orders of and in the strength of God, against the overwhelmingly large pagan hosts of Midian, appealed and continue to appeal to those who would be Bible-believing, Reformed Christians in our similarly difficult times.

Considering especially our present problems, many readers may find *Trumpeter of God*, the life story of Scotland's famous Calvinistic Reformer, of much more than passing interest. Our attention has recently been drawn to Knox's book, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, occasioned by the bitter pposition of ruling queens against the cause of church Reformation (December *Outlook*). His use of the trumpet illustration in this case must not be understood as an extraordinary expression of opposition to women's rule. It was rather a favorite expression which Knox used throughout his career for his calling as a preacher of the Gospel to "blow his Master's trumpet." Reid, the Canadian church historian's designation of him as the "Trumpeter of God" seems singularly appropriate. Although Knox was criticized by these who did not share His faith and convictions, for being stubborn, abrasive, and contrary, just as others who share those Biblical convictions right up to the present often are, he felt compelled to hold the position that he did, because he saw that as the Lord's order. If God had spoken, neither he nor anyone else had any right to contradict it. Changing fashions or cultural conditions did not change what the Christian must say and do. This firm conviciton was not always easy to hold in practice. It at times put him in opposition to highly-placed politicians, including some who for a while favored church reform and later succumbed to bribery or pressure to change their position. At times Knox was compelled to stand almost alone against apparently overwhelming odds. By the grace of God he stood, and so became the leader of the Scotch Reformation. All this Reid traces for us in careful, pains-taking detail. Reading the book with a sense of our own confrontation with essentially similar problems makes it unusually interesting and profitable.

Knox's life-story is probably unfamiliar to most of our readers. It is sprinkled with interesting and colorful detail. He was one of the body-guard selected to protect the early Reformation preacher, George Wishart. After Wishart was martyred for his preaching, Knox found himself called somewhat as Elisha was to take up the prophetic task of Elijah (p. 30). Caught in the political and religious turmoil of the country, after St. Andrews Castle fell to the French, Knox spent 19 months chained at the oar of a French galley. Although his health suffered, his convictions became the stronger through this hard experience. "His sense of calling and mission from this time on was directed not just to an academic desire to refute Romanism, but to destroy it as the Israelites did when they blew the trumpets around the walls of Jericho" (p. 69). Upon his release he served for a time as a Reformation preacher in England and then spent some time in Germany and Geneva where Calvin led what Knox called the "most perfect school of Christ." Following this training in Calvin's "school" he was able to return with ever firmer conviction to lead the struggle for Reformation to his homeland.

We cannot here trace the ups and downs of that complicated struggle. Although Knox was adamantly and militantly committed to reform according to the Bible, he was patient and kind as a pastor and was not inclined, as some of his fellow-countrymen were, to engage in battles over secondary matters such as details of liturgy.

Although not much is known about Knox's private and personal life, his first wife was Marjory Bowes, who was praised by Calvin during Knox's pastorate in Geneva. When she died after about 5 years he was left with two small sons. Three years later the 50-year old Knox married 17-year old Margaret Stewart, a fact which infuriated the queen to whom the bride was related. (The queen's reaction, Reid suggests, may have amused Knox.)

It would be an appropriate ending to Knox's story if after a prolonged struggle he would have been able to see the triumph of the Protestant cause in his old age. As occurs often in the experience of God's people, events did not move in that way. Because of the internal strife between political leaders Knox was compelled to leave his pulpit in Edinburgh for the north and he was able to return to Edinburgh only shortly before his death. Although the Lord's cause ultimately triumphs, Knox saw more of the struggles than of the triumphs in his lifetime. Some of Reid's comments seem especially appropriate. "Ever conscious of his calling to blow his master's trumpet, he recognized that soft words would achieve little in the Scotland of his day." He had labored, in his own words, "to utter . . . intrepidly whatever the Lord put into my mouth, without any respect of persons. Therefore, I profess before God and his holy angels, that I never made gain of the sacred word of God, that I never studied to please men, never indulged my own private passions or those of others, but faithfully distributed the talent intrusted to my care for the edification of the church over which I did watch. . . ." (p. 280). How desperately the increasingly confused church of our time also needs that kind of Reformed leaders and Reformation. May this book help us to seek, pray for and appreciate them. "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:7, 8).

PDJ